Linking "Good" and "Bad" Civil Society:

How Local Networks Promote Peace or Renewed Violence

in Civil Wars



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Abstract

The notions of "good civil society" and "bad civil society" in early peacebuilding scholarship helpfully challenged prevailing essentialized notions of civil society. This study explored whether international aid to "good civil society" and the marginalization of "bad civil society" has actually helped promote peace in protracted conflicts, as this peacebuilding scholarship has asserted and is largely reflected in international aid practice. Choosing the ability to restrain "own-side violence" as one key measure of influence on peace, the study examines how international aid has impacted civic actors' ability to restrain violence in protracted conflicts in Kosovo and Georgia. The cases compare pre-war periods marked by locally rooted forms of civic activism with post-war periods when international assistance supported the growth of a large local civil society along the lines of the "good civil society" normative model. The cases examine local civic dynamics on only one side of each conflict, to enable a detailed picture of the broad spectrum of civic actors present and probe the relationships amongst them. The study found little evidence that international support for local "good civil society" helped civic actors gain the legitimacy and influence with domestic constituencies needed to restrain own-side violence. Instead, in Georgia and Kosovo across these time periods, three other interlocking factors appeared to support the ability of civic groups to restrain violence. Applying a complex systems analytical lens illustrates how these multiple factors interacted with each other to support the influence and legitimacy of local civic actors. The study also showed that international *certification* of local civil society rarely was decisive for civic actors' efficacy in restraining violence, but their credibility with their own ethnic constituency, or bonding social capital, was an indispensable asset.

Acknowledgements

This project aimed to answer pressing questions from my two decades of straddling peacebuilding practice and research. Over those years, I have been fortunate to meet many inspiring, brave civic activists who hope their efforts will help end vicious cycles of conflict and create just societies. I want to thank the many Ossetian, Georgian and Abkhaz peace activists, colleagues and friends who shared their insights and challenges with me and who I hope find some of their own concerns reflected in this study. I also thank the many determined civic activists in Kosovo I encountered doing this research who were generous in helping a stranger understand the painful processes their society has undergone. I am deeply grateful as well for my many colleagues, scholars and practitioners, from the international peacebuilding community whose impressive capacity for critical self-reflection spurred me to dig deeply into why the prevailing models of international support for local civil society so often fell short of supporting powerful local constituencies for peace. To my advisor, Dr. Neil Macfarlane at Oxford, I owe a great debt. He believed in this project, contributed many useful critiques and insights, and his support and solidarity through the challenges of the DPhil process and of life itself over this period was invaluable and I'm very grateful.

My parents likely wondered when their daughter was ever going to finish school, but were always supportive. Both of them inspired many elements of my career and this research. My mom, Emilia Olson, who came to Canada at 19 after a childhood in wartime Soviet Union and communist Poland gave me a fascination with the tangled histories of this region and the warmth of the people caught in its many social and political upheavals. My dad, Orval Olson, was an explorer at heart with a deep passion for history, and through our many heated debates over world events when I was a teen taught me always to be tough in interrogating the received wisdom. I embarked on this DPhil after a twenty-year career and with 3 kids, Andre, Nico and Hanna. They have been my greatest joy in life, and they tolerated my absences and listened patiently to my many stories of peace activists and politics in far away regions. And finally much gratitude to my husband Pablo. He shares my passion for politics and justice and digging into the complexity of social change and I am eternally grateful for his love and support through this project.

Acronyms

ABL	Administrative Boundary Line
AAK	Alliance for the Future of Kosovo
BCS	Bad Civil Society
CIPDD	Caucasus Institute for Peace, Democracy and Development (Georgia)
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CMG	Conflict Management Group (U.S.)
DAC	Development Assistance Committee (OECD)
DFID	Department for International Development (U.K.)
EC	European Council
EULEX	European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo
EU	European Union
GCS	Good Civil Society
GD	Georgian Dream
ICG	International Crisis Group
ICO	International Civilian Office (Kosovo)
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
INGO	International Non-governmental Organization
IO	International Organization
ISNC	Institute for the Study of Nationalism and Conflicts (Georgia)
IR	International Relations
JCC	Joint Control Commission (Georgia-South Ossetia)
KAN	Kosovo Action Network
KFOR	NATO Kosovo Force
KLA	Kosovo Liberation Army
KP	Kosovo Police Service
KSF	Kosovo Security Force
LCSO	Local Civil Society Organization
LDK	Democratic League of Kosovo
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NDI	National Democratic Institute (US)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
OSV	Own-side violence
PDK	Democratic Party of Kosovo
SRSG	Special Representative to the Secretary General
UNDP	United National Development Program
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNM	United National Movement (Georgia)
UNMIK	United National Mission in Kosovo
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VV	Vetëvendosje (Kosovo, *Self-determination Movement* in Albanian)

Note on Place Names, Terminology and Maps

The case studies presented here concern unresolved conflicts, where the use of terminology, place names, and maps is politically contested by the conflict sides. This report takes no position on the legitimacy of either side's arguments in conveying the research findings.

For the Georgia case study, when naming government institutions or positions within Abkhazia and South Ossetia in this report, I do not use such terms as 'de facto', 'unrecognised', or 'partially recognised'. Furthermore, when describing place names, I use those forms most familiar in English such as Georgia, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia and the term "border" to denote the respective dividing lines between Abkhazia or South Ossetia and Tbilisi-controlled territory.

For the Kosovo case study, though Albanian and Serb names differ for cities and towns in Kosovo, I use the forms most familiar in English such as Kosovo, Pristina, Gjakova, etc.

These language choices do not convey any personal political positions on status but rather to facilitate access to non-specialist audiences and facilitate ease of reading.

The maps provided here also do not take any positions on the political status of the areas represented.

Maps



Figure 1: Map of Kosovo

Cartographer of the United Nations, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons
https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/bc/Kosovo_map.png



Figure 2: Map of Georgia showing South Ossetia and Abkhazia

United Nations Cartographic Section, with amendments by User:ChrisO, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons; https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Georgia_high_detail_map.png

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For Dina Alborova and Zaal Kikodze

Two brave champions, who each in their unique ways fought for truth, peace, and justice, who gave so much, were loved by so many,

and were taken too soon.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1. Promoting "Good Civil Society"

An important modality of international assistance to conflict-affected countries has been promoting local civil society, through supporting the creation of local civil society organizations (CSOs) and through partnership, capacity building, and directly funding a wide range of civil society initiatives seen to support both democracy and peace. While support to local civil society is only one component of multi-level international peacebuilding strategies, a robust civil society is usually framed as critical to the legitimacy of the postwar governance arrangements and ultimately the sustainability of peace. In early peacebuilding scholarship, a corrective to the predominant view that all civil society is positive for democracy and peace stated that civic actors that supported cross-factional compromise, democracy and nonviolence should be thought of as "good civil society" while those local civic actors which promote exclusivist political goals or who may condone violent methods should be understood as "bad civil society" or "uncivil society", the latter a term in use since the 1990s.[1] Among Paris' conclusions in his influential 2004 study of peacebuilding, *At War's End,* was that "[T]he challenge for peacebuilders, therefore, is to promote 'good' civil society while simultaneously restraining its 'bad' variant."[2]

Good or bad for what, and whom? The reference point for these labels clearly reflects the preferred goals and norms of actors supporting liberal peacebuilding reforms rather than other international or local actors with other possible goals. Such dichotomous frameworks (good or bad, and civil or uncivil) were initially helpful correctives in early peacebuilding scholarship, reframing civil society as diverse with important distinctions between actors, given a romanticized notion of civil society had become essentialized as an inherent good in democracy and peacebuilding scholarship and in international aid practice. However, these labels indicate little about the legitimacy of these (externally-designated) types of civil society within their own societies, nor about the relationships and dynamics between them. Yet, support to "good civil society" in conflict areas has, in practice, become a cornerstone of international peacebuilding policies and is assumed to be a critical society-level strategy

[1] Chambers and Kopstein 2001 as cited in Paris 2004, 160; Belloni 2008, 183.
[2] Paris 2004, 194.

supporting the shift from war to peace. It is closely aligned with a dominant peacebuilding model that emerged at the same time, that promotes linking such "good civil society" on opposite sides of the conflict. Emerging from conflict resolution practice and research on social capital, promoting linkages across opposing groups or "bridging social capital" was championed as the civil society-level antidote to inter-group violence.[3]

Transnational aid actors like international NGOs, donor states, and international organizations have broadly followed this prescription to support "good civil society" and marginalize "bad civil society", though rarely use these terms explicitly. They have provided resources, partnership and political support for local civic activists and organizations working for peace, development and democracy in many countries experiencing conflicts and democratic transitions. Yet, despite decades of such international support, we know little about how such transnational support impacts the local legitimacy and influence on peace of the local civil society organizations (LCSOs) on the receiving end.

This thesis explores the question, does the international aid practice of supporting local "good civil society" and marginalizing "bad civil society" actually help promote peace? In many societies where international support has fostered the creation of hundreds or thousands of local NGOs that appear to fit this "good civil society" norm, peace is no closer and violent conflict has recurred. Why violence recurs is the result of multiple factors, with civil society often seen as peripheral. To probe how international aid for local civil society impacts the subsequent influence of such local civic actors on peace, the project narrows *influence on peace* down to one very specific criteria, the ability to prevent own-side violence. Thus, the study examines how a society's ability to restrain violence from actors within its own community is affected by external assistance to local civil society.

It examines these questions through two cases of protracted conflicts where there has been significant international peacebuilding support for local civil society over an extended period - Kosovo and Georgia. Each of these conflicts has extended for three decades with no final resolution, with periods of calm and stability and periods of recurring violence of different scales. Thus each case covers the experience of more than 30 years, in two parts. The first part focuses on the period of very minimal international support and largely indigenous civic mobilization that culminated in major violence with some form of international involvement.

[3] Woolcock, 1998.

The second part of each case covers post-war periods of major international assistance to local civil society, which led to a numerically large civil society fostered according to the "good civil society" norms. Each case then examines the spectrum of civic actors that emerged in the dominant majority community and their agency in restraining violence across these distinct periods. The cases enable a comparison within each conflict context along different time periods, political dynamics, and different levels of international support to local civic actors, as well as comparison across the two conflict settings.

This introduction proceeds by first laying out the project in brief, and then reviewing key explanations for conflict recurrence and peace consolidation and why these remain inadequate. It then examines the core concepts used in the study and how the analysis aligns with work in IR that centers on notions of complex causality as a framework for explanation. It then reviews the literature establishing that civil society in fact matters to peace outcomes, though this scholarship is underdeveloped. It traces how the role of civil society is framed in liberal peacebuilding policies and the origins of the typologies of "good civil society" and "bad civil society". Finally, it reviews the research design and roadmap for the thesis.

2. Protracted Civil Wars and Recurring Violence

This project focuses on a subset of civil wars known as "protracted conflicts", longstanding conflicts where the worst violence is over but the conflict remains unresolved, and which are remarkably resilient despite years or decades of concerted international efforts to build peace. Protracted civil wars are particularly virulent as they have huge costs for affected populations while posing major risks for regional and global stability.[4] In many protracted conflicts, such as Israel-Palestine, Congo, Colombia, Somalia, Afghanistan, Kosovo, Sudan, Nagorno Karabakh and Georgia-South Ossetia, over the last two decades violence has waned or ceasefires have been forged, only to collapse into new hostilities. The two cases examined here, Kosovo and Georgia, have seen no long-term resolution in terms of formal peace agreements while having been recipients of international peacebuilding aid for almost two decades and developing a large domestic civil society. Each case offers within case comparisons to look at more stable phases where peace seemed closer and periods where violence erupted anew.

[4] Azar 1990; Ramsbotham, 2005.

The concept of protracted conflict developed by Edward Azar refers to prolonged, violent struggles between groups for basic needs such as security, political access, recognition, and economic opportunities, often involving zero sum trade-offs over religious or ethnic identity issues.[5] Features such as "violence against civilians, long-term fighting, and subsequent large-scale refugee or exile communities make continued or renewed conflict more likely".[6] Furthermore, abuse of the civilian population hardens attitudes, and creates difficulties for former victims to reconcile with their opponents in cases where a settlement has been reached.[7] War leaders may enjoy strong legitimacy, since where group mobilization occurs along identity lines, leaders often exhibit protective rather than predatory behavior towards populations, and gain popular authority based on group identities and appeals.[8] So while some longstanding conflicts barely show up in conflict databases because annual casualties remain low, they are often highly volatile and can explode suddenly again with massive consequences inside and beyond their borders. The protracted conflicts in Kosovo and Georgia share these attributes and though low intensity conflicts, they have had massive consequences for international peace and security given they are located in volatile regions with major engagement of powerful states.

What Explains Renewed Violence in Protracted Civil Wars

Studies exploring civil war onset, recurrence and termination have identified economic factors, regime type, ethnic grievances, and weak state institutions as national level risk factors for conflict onset.[9] Recent studies of both conflict onset and recurrence point to the importance of legitimacy gaps, and political and social exclusion as additional key factors.[10] However national-level measures such as GDP or annual battle deaths used in most large n studies obscure important aspects of internal conflict dynamics; intra-state conflict studies point to strong regional and subnational variations in the dynamics of violence.[11]

Cases of recurring conflict are a distinct category from conflict onset. Quantitative studies have identified high risks of civil war recurrence as a dark cloud in the overall good news story that global conflict onset rates are in steady decline.[12] They show that the rate of conflict recurrence in countries that have already experienced a civil war is greater than 60%

[5] Azar 1990.
[6] Nilsson and Kreutz, 2010, 4.
[7] Ibid., 6.
[8] Podder, 2014.
[9] Collier 2003.
[10] Stewart 2008; Papagianni 2008; Podder, 2014; Call 2012.
[11] Varshney 2002; Wood 2003; Idler 2014.
[12] Pinker 2011; Human Security Report 2012, 171-73.

since the end of the Cold War, and in fact may be increasing.[13] The World Bank World Development Report (WDR) noted in 2011, "90 percent of conflicts initiated in the 21st century were in countries that had already had a civil war."[14] The Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) data show that 60 percent of the conflict terminations between 2000 and 2004 were followed by renewed violence in less than five years.[15] Protraction and conflict recurrence are closely related but there is less consensus over whether the incidence of protracted conflicts is growing.[16]

While the quantitative studies tell us about aggregate risk factors for conflict onset, they are less helpful on the local dynamics and subnational variations in violence and peace once civil conflicts are underway. Kalyvas' study of the micro dynamics of civil wars explained local and regional variations in violence in terms of how military entities interact with civilians.[17] In many studies however, decision making models treat governments or insurgents as unitary actors, that make rational cost-benefit calculations. Staniland and Lilja forgo these unitary actor assumptions to examine the social networks behind insurgencies and how internal accountability and legitimacy shape the flexibility insurgent groups have to negotiate peace, or prosecute war.[18] Another exception is Chenoweth and Stephan's work on nonviolent civic movements, showing they actually succeed more than violent insurgencies and that links to constituencies in the security forces are often critical to successful outcomes.[19] This research focuses much needed attention on the local social bases and legitimacy of peacemaking and war making among civilian populations but neglects how transnational actors influence these dynamics, including through the prominent modality of international support for local civil society. Much more research is needed that probes civilian dynamics in protracted civil wars in general, and how transnational actors and factors influence these societal dynamics.

Alternative Explanations for Recurring Violence in Protracted Conflicts

A very brief synopsis of conflict patterns in Kosovo and Georgia over the last 30 years is laid out below. As with many protracted conflicts, some episodes of violence are substantial, while others appear minor. However, as Azar's notion suggests, even the small episodes fuel a dynamic of insecurity, grievance, hardening of identity and allegiance, and mistrust that

[13] Human Security Report 2012, 171-2. Call, 2.
[14] World Bank, 2011, 57.
[15] Human Security Report 2012, 171.
[16] Methodological disputes across data sets such as whether long conflicts are measured as episodes of violence, or continuous conflict, and how conflict termination is defined prevent clear comparisons.
[17] Kalyvas 2006.
[18] Staniland 2014; Lilja, 2012.
[19] Chenoweth and Stephan 2011.

fosters continued conflict, and hence are more significant in perpetuating the conflict than casualty rates alone would imply.

Kosovo's recurring violence: An autonomous province of the Serbian Republic within Yugoslavia, Kosovo's Albanian majority faced extreme economic and political repression in the 1990s which birthed a strong nonviolent civil resistance movement that lobbied the international community for support for Kosovo independence. They had massive popular support held until 1997/8 when an insurgency, the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), increased its military attacks on Serbian security forces, leading to a violent crackdown and intensified fighting between security forces and the KLA, the mass exodus of Kosovo Albanian refugees and ultimately the 1999 NATO military bombing campaign against Serbia. After the war, as Kosovo Albanian refugees returned, the province's Serb minority fled reprisal attacks and Kosovo became an international trusteeship under the UN, but in 2004 massive anti-minority riots occurred that stopped the process of minority Serb returns underway. Since 2004 there have been continuous low level interethnic violent incidents, mostly affecting Kosovo's minority Serb populations. These risk igniting larger conflict as there is still no negotiated peace with Serbia, while the recognition of Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence in 2008 by many powerful states means it has consolidated its defacto independence, while still hosting international security and rule of law institutions.

Georgia's recurring violence: In the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic of the USSR, a powerful civic nationalist movement emerged that ultimately achieved defacto Georgian independence from the Soviet Union in April 1991. Amidst the accompanying struggle for power and collapse of Soviet structures, the growth of powerful militias resulted in Georgia's 1990-92 war with its autonomous region of South Ossetia, followed by interfactional fighting and a coup ousting post-Soviet Georgia's first president, Zviad Gamsakhurdia. Georgia's new leader, Eduard Shevardnadze, presided over the outbreak of a second internal war with its autonomous republic of Abkhazia in late 1992. Ceasefire agreements in both conflicts left South Ossetia and Abkhazia with defacto control of their territories, with Russian peacekeepers in place monitored by a UN observer mission (Abkhazia) and OSCE mission (South Ossetia). In South Ossetia a period of quiet normalization of relations with Georgia began in the late 1990s but the 2003 Georgian *Rose Revolution* brought to power reformist leader Mikheil Saakashvili, whose attempts to resolve the conflicts led to renewed small-

scale fighting with South Ossetia in the summer of 2004, and a major war in South Ossetia that led to Russian military intervention in August 2008.

Prominent explanations for recurring violence in protracted conflicts illuminate some aspects of what happened in Kosovo and Georgia but leave many remaining questions. These explanations revolve around the factors of economic incentives, institutional weakness, political exclusion, elite instrumentalism and interference from external states.

Economic Drivers of Conflict Recurrence

The quantitative research on civil war onset has identified economic risk factors for civil war such as low GDP, age sets of young men, and *the feasibility of predation by* armed groups given 'lootable' commodity resources.[20] Related work on war economies shows how civil wars can enable self-sustaining economic systems for actors who control revenues streams through their control of territory.[21] In longstanding protracted conflicts, such war economies inevitably develop and give certain powerful actors vested interests in maintaining the status quo. Alternatively, new violence may be in the interests of competing elites or outside states who want to disrupt the existing system to get in on the economic spoils. In both Georgia and Kosovo these factors appear to have played some role. There are groups which gain from instability, but in both cases when violence recurred some time after the original wars, established illicit groups were profiting substantially from the status quo, and the disruption caused by the Kosovo 2004 riots and the 2004 and 2008 violence in Georgia-South Ossetia harmed the interests of many of these groups.

Institutional and State Weakness Enables Conflict Recurrence

Another set of explanations highlights state fragility and weakness as driving recurring violence. Paris' study shows that the competitive pressures of political and economic liberalization leave states in transition from autocracy to democracy highly prone to violence.[22] Other studies concurred that weak institutions during war to peace transitions meant conflict is likely to recur[23]and that states with low income and level of development face significantly higher risks for recurrence.[24] Weak states have little control over their own

[20] Collier 2000.
[21] Le Billon 2012; Le Billon 2000.
[22] Paris 2004.
[23] Ghani and Lockhart 2008.
[24] Walter, 2004.

borders and are more apt to harbor spoilers capable of sabotaging peace agreements.[25] However, these explanations point to aggregate national level factors to explain violence which showed strong sub-national variations. For the Georgian state, the 2008 war occurred in South Ossetia but not in Abkhazia. In Kosovo, the 2004 anti-minority riots hit some cities and regions far worse than others in a way that state strength does not explain. Furthermore, in both contexts, the state institutions were weakest in the years immediately after the original wars, while the renewed violence occurred 4 years later in Kosovo, and 10-15 years later in Georgia, when the most unstable period of political and economic liberalization had already passed.

Political Exclusion enables Conflict Recurrence

Research shows that recurring violence is most likely when a peace agreement has little local "horizontal legitimacy", specifically little effort at power sharing and weak inclusion in government structures of former members of armed groups and the social groupings they claim to represent.[26] In Kosovo and Georgia, since the ceasefires largely cemented the ethnic segregation of separate self-governing communities there were no common government institutions at all. In South Ossetia there was a defacto separatist state, and while the Georgian central government institutions included some ethnic Ossetians, these were minorities resident in Georgian controlled areas who had no legitimacy in South Ossetia. In Kosovo in 2004, much of the Kosovo Serb population lived in separate Serb municipalities administered directly by Serbian institutions, while Serb minority members later included in the government structures were deemed not representative of local Kosovo Serb populations. In both cases political inclusion was not even a realistic policy until common governance institutions had been agreed, and is therefore an inadequate explanation for recurring violence in these conflicts.

Foreign Interference produces Conflict Recurrence

Both cases involved a clear and major role for powerful foreign states, most notably the United States, Russia, and various European powers, supporting opposite sides of the conflicts, a fact which has made both cases so geopolitically volatile. Claims of overt Russian (and American) interference in terms of supply of weapons, political support and

[25] Stedman, 1997.
[26] Call 2012, 223.

involvement of actual troops are realities in both conflicts, where former superpowers have played outsized roles. There is abundant analysis of the role of external states and actors in both these conflicts, however these tend to overstate the ability of external actors to entirely shape events and that their material and political inducements to elites and populations always function as intended. They leave little role for the agency of local actors nor do they provide enough insight into the mechanisms through which the preferences of external states translate into change in the positions of war leaders or publics. Foreign interference is undoubtedly a factor in these cases, but not the lone or possibly even decisive factor in either Kosovo or Georgia, hence the need for studies that examine as closely the roles and agency of local civilian and political actors.

Elites' Instrumental Use of Violence leads to Conflict Recurrence

A common explanation for violence is that it is unleashed deliberately by political or military elites to achieve economic or political goals. Moral hazard, or that insurgents may deliberately provoke violence from more powerful forces to draw in external allies, is one powerful explanation for the pre-1999 KLA insurgency strategy against the much stronger Serb military.[27] Related explanations for ethnic conflict emphasize the instrumental use of ethnic violence by political elites for political gain.[28] In the cases in this study, there were elites for whom renewed violence had political payoffs but these explanations share the same weakness of assuming that leaders are able to decisively realize their preferences with little opposition from the public or their social bases. A convincing explanation still requires tracing how elite strategies were actually realized (or not) in a context involving many other layers of actors and factors.

3. The Inadequacies of Existing Explanations and the turn to Complexity Concepts

While each of the above explanations for conflict recurrence has some value, none of them explains entirely the patterns of regional and subnational violence and stability and the variation over time in the protracted conflicts in Georgia and Kosovo. The civil society level largely disappears in all these explanations, and yet in these settings you have resources, political capital, and international diplomatic attention invested in large numbers of local civil society organizations because they are assumed to be critical actors in internal peace. This

[27] Kuperman, 2008.
[28] Varshney 2007.

study explores what you see when you put civil society dynamics nearer to the center of these stories, and what new insights this brings, while recognizing that civil society level factors are acting in conjunction and in interaction with many of the factors identified in the scholarship above. The weaknesses of existing research methods to bring all these factors together into the same picture has propelled increasing experimentation with complex systems concepts applied to peacebuilding, whose use in this study is explained below.

Complex Systems: Evolving Interactions of External and Internal Factors

Protracted conflicts are anything but static; they are highly dynamic, open to new external and internal factors of all kinds and continually evolve. To capture this dynamic state of change, some studies have shifted to framing conflict and peacebuilding as complex adaptive systems, like an ecosystem or the human body, which are constantly evolving with the interaction of new inputs.[29] In protracted conflicts like those in Kosovo and Georgia, assistance measures undertaken by states, international organizations and international NGOs under the rubric of liberal peacebuilding interventions can be framed as external inputs that interact with an existing conflict system. They include classic liberal peacebuilding and statebuilding measures to support security, relief, development, and governance assistance and the focus of this study, to develop a local civil society. Other external factors like the activities of the diaspora, foreign states, transnational business and criminal networks also affect the system. Framing protracted conflicts as such complex systems highlights the fact that these open systems continually produce new outcomes (or rather outcomes emerge) through the interaction of all these factors, and the flip side of this is that complex systems are unpredictable and resistant to engineering.[30] The dynamics of complex systems can be discerned, but only after the fact when patterns and interactions can be traced backwards.

The analytical model for this study, thus frames local civil society as one (understudied) element of a complex system in the protracted conflicts under study. In focusing on civil society, the project does not claim that civil society alone determines the outbreak or lack of violent conflict, nor does it aim to determine the relative weight of civil society as compared to all other factors. Rather it conceives of civil society dynamics as a component of the system that, as a whole, has produced the outcomes of relatively stability and lack of violence in some historical phases for Kosovo and Georgia, and new outbreaks of violence in others. Even if the relative importance of civil society as compared to other factors ends up being

[29] Ricigliano 2012; Loode, 2011; De Coning 2012.
[30] Mitleton-Kelly 1997; Loode, 2011.

small (if this could be determined), this does not diminish its importance to a complex notion of causality. A property of complex systems is that given their complexity, small shifts can create unpredictable, non-linear interactions that can cascade across the system. Chaos theory pioneer Edward Lorenz showed how sensitive dependence on initial conditions means that small changes in a system can create large impacts, citing the example that a butterfly flapping its wings could cause a hurricane weeks later in another part of the world.[31]

In focusing on the mostly unexplored factor of dynamics within local civil society, this study aims to contribute to the understanding of how the large outcomes of peace or renewed violence emerge as a result of the interaction of numerous factors. Qualitative approaches and process tracing will be used to track the role of diverse types of civil society in the outcomes that emerged over time in Kosovo and Georgia. But the overarching framing is of peacebuilding contexts as complex adaptive systems where international and national inputs are constantly interacting and producing new unpredictable (or emergent) outcomes. Complex systems mapping will be lightly used to illustrate the interactions of multiple factors that may shape civil society roles in restraining violence or in violence recurrence. This represents a fundamentally different framing to the mainly linear models of causality that dominate current thinking about international interventions in conflict and international aid practice.

The desire to better capture "dynamics" of international-national interactions is being probed in work in IR through various angles. The inherent interdependence of outcomes within peacebuilding missions has generated a turn to complex adaptive systems concepts by some peacebuilding scholars.[32] Constructivist scholars like Acharya have called for approaches to understand transnational norm diffusion that capture dynamic processes of interaction between external and internal norms, actors, and processes in a "dynamic process of matchmaking".[33] Mac Ginty, Richmond and Mitchell, and Visoka among critical peacebuilding scholars have highlighted the evolution of hybrid peace outcomes through complex interactions between international peacebuilders and the resistance of local societies to international norms and models.[34] The literature on hybridity and hybrid forms of peace shows how the results of international liberal peacebuilding inputs are generated by contestation and resistance as much as more linear notions of diffusion and uptake of

[31] Lorenz, 1963.
[32] De Coning 2012; Loode, 2011.
[33] Acharya 2013, 186.
[34] Mac Ginty, 2010; Richmond and Mitchell 2012; Visoka, 2012.

international models, as the model of externally supported "good civil society" inherently assumes. Thus the complexity analytical lens used in this study means that there is no search for *a smoking gun* in examining what international support of "good civil society" has produced in Kosovo and Georgia, but rather the aim is to uncover what combination of factors are important in shaping outcomes, and how they interact to do so.

4. Liberal Peacebuilding in International Interventions in Conflict

This study aims to contribute to scholarship about the norms, practices and efficacy of international peacebuilding and it is important to situate the work in this broader area. Since the end of the Cold War, international efforts to stop intra-state conflicts, and support the economic, political and social bases of sustainable peace have evolved dramatically. Structured as formal UN, EU or AU missions, or looser coalitions, in conflict areas around the globe a collection of intergovernmental organizations, military forces, states, and NGOs undertake complex, multilevel efforts to create the conditions for sustainable peace. The term "international peacebuilding" has become the commonly used umbrella term to encompass this broad array of multi-level efforts, united only at the broadest level of intending to stop violence and create the conditions for sustainable peace.[35]

Since the early 2000s, conflict prevention and peacebuilding have become important parts of the global development agenda as well. After 9/11, developed states began to see their security interests tied to addressing internal conflicts that had allowed weak states like Afghanistan to become havens for extremist groups. This created a new linked security-development policy approach by the UN, World Bank, and OECD among others, which aligned the welfare of the global south and the security of the global north, expressed most clearly in the 2005 UN Secretary General's report, "In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security and Human Rights for All."[36] Further evidence of how much peace has become integrated into development thinking is that the "peace development goal", SDG 16, was included in the new Sustainable Development Goals.[37]

[35] With the establishment of the UN Peacebuilding Commission in 2006, peacebuilding joined earlier UN language of peacekeeping, peace operations, conflict prevention. There is no global consensus on the terms used for this domain, the US's language of stabilization and reconstruction, or the EU's language of crisis management to name just a few variations. While recognizing there are important nuances in each, I will use the term peacebuilding.

[36] UN Secretary General 2005.

[37] United Nations, n.d.

The track record of peacebuilding in practice remains very mixed. While these expansive multilateral civil-military missions were largely able to stop violence they have not produced self-sustaining peace in most places they have been conducted.[38] Of the countries that were the focus of explicit efforts by the UN Peacebuilding Commission since 2006 (Burundi, Central African Republic, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Sierra Leone, Liberia), half have by 2015 experienced cycles of renewed violence or military coups.

The mixed results have fueled a pragmatic strand of scholarship focused on practical measures to improve liberal peacebuilding.[39] This school takes liberal democratic and free market models as desirable (or the best we have to offer) and focuses on how to achieve them - how to support democratic institutions, build civil society, foster economic development, and ensure security and rule of law in internal conflicts.[40] Some of these scholars have highlighted better coordination and more local ownership as the solution to the accountability gap - highlighting the tension that international missions aim to create democratic institutions through undemocratic means.[41] Other 'critical peacebuilding' scholarship argues for *a post-liberal peace,* and has shifted the debate in a much more normative direction.[42] These scholars question the underlying assumptions of efforts by powerful states and international organizations to promote liberal Western economic and political models in conflict affected areas; some frame peacebuilding as a 'new imperialism' promoting the strategic and economic interests of the world's powerful countries under the guise of humanitarian intervention and human rights.[43]

Both schools point to the core international-local interface at the heart of peacebuilding efforts, recognizing that the dominance of externally imposed models and lack of local ownership create weak legitimacy and accountability to host country populations.[44] Recent inputs into this debate come from scholars pointing to 'hybrid models of governance' involving locally-rooted, though non-liberal, adaptations to the liberal peace model as creating functional 'good enough' governance as alternatives to the liberal peace.[45]

[38] Fortna, 2004; Doyle and Sambanis 2006.
[39] Paris, 2010.
[40] Newman, Paris, and Richmond 2009.
[41] Caplan 2005; Chesterman 2004; Donais, 2009.
[42] Mac Ginty and Richmond, 2013; Richmond 2012.
[43] Duffield 2001; Mac Ginty 2011; Richmond 2005; Richmond and Carey 2005.
[44] Chetail and Jütersonke 2014; Newman, Paris, and Richmond 2009.
[45] Mac Ginty 2011; Menkhaus, 2008; Richmond and Mitchell 2012.

These debates and lessons from practice have led peacebuilding policy to emphasize the importance of "local ownership" and local legitimacy of peacebuilding interventions. However, in conflicts characterized by ethnic, religious or other deep-seated divisions and weak institutions for accountability of leaders to people, it remains unclear which "locals" need to own the peace and how this can be brought about? Research on bottom-up legitimacy,[46] the importance of social cohesion and social capital to sustainable peace,[47] and the role of horizontal inequalities in fueling conflict[48]all focus on the societal-level dynamics of peace and conflict that remain poorly understood and where empirical studies are needed. This study's examination of the micro-scale dynamics within one side of a conflict, aims to illuminate the messy diversity of local civic and political networks (something that Richmond has referred to as the "local-local"[49]) including externally supported civil society. In this sense, it spans both the pragmatic and the critical streams of peacebuilding scholarship and hopes to contribute to both.

Tensions between International Norms and Local Legitimacy

> "[O]ften, forced by the requirements of international donors, civil society representatives focus only on supporting contacts across the divide, and because of this lose their credibility inside the community."
>
> *Larissa Sotieva, peacebuilding activist from the Caucasus*[50]

The way that external actors understand and frame internal social dynamics in civil wars has had enormous power in shaping the international peacebuilding interventions by states, intergovernmental organizations and international NGOs described above. In turn, those interventions have important impacts on domestic political and social dynamics - but these are often not noticed as international actors and agencies focus on achieving their own stated goals and proving cost-effectiveness and success to their own constituencies.[51] In conflict-affected societies as everywhere else, local actors (political personalities, civic leaders, religious leaders, academics, war heroes) are involved in complex internal social networks that even the most perceptive, locally integrated "outsiders" struggle to discern. The Do No

[46] Papagianni 2008; Podder, 2014.
[47] Brown and Zahar, 2015; Putnam, Leonardi, and Nanetti 1993; Woolcock, 1998.
[48] Stewart 2008.
[49] Richmond 2011, 14.
[50] Sotieva 2015.
[51] Campbell, Chandler, and Sabaratnam 2011.

Harm movement amongst aid agencies helped mainstream the notion that international aid, when injected into these contexts, inevitably influences these local dynamics and can inadvertently worsen internal divisions.[52] These dilemmas of international – local partnerships have long been debated within global peacebuilding and aid networks since the 1990s, generating insights for international-local partnerships to avoid the worst pitfalls.[53]

These debates within the global aid community have coalesced around the stated priority of "local ownership" in peacebuilding, namely to ensure international aid supports locally generated, legitimate and accountable civic movements that can influence war leaders and mobilize their own publics to support the consolidation of peace.[54] However in practice this agenda is full of contradictions given the power imbalance where international actors control external resources that local civic actors need. Furthermore, dependence on international funding shifts the attentions of local civic activists towards the priorities of external supporters rather than their own publics.[55] Scholars of civil wars and democratic transitions have examined aspects of this international-local interface, revealing some organizational, structural and political factors that shape transnational support for local civil society and for peace.[56]

Despite this commitment to "local ownership", the reality of international peacebuilding aid is that it risks becoming inherently tied to external norms and models, some in fact emerging from learning projects and international-local dialogues but that are turned into implementable checklists by the international aid machinery. Furthermore, international policies of NGO promotion often produce many LCSOs seen by the society as unrepresentative elites who are favoured by donors in what some identify as new patronage networks, while civic activism and public participation remains weak – creating an 'NGO-ocracy" disconnected from the wider society.[57] The dilemma then for local civic activists like Sotieva suggests that the dynamics unleashed by international norms and models backed up with funds mean that dominant modes of international aid risk undermining activists' local legitimacy.

[52] Anderson 1999.
[53] Anderson and Olson 2003; Anderson 1999; Barnes 2006; Paffenholz 2010.
[54] Lee and Özerdem 2015.
[55] Cooley and Ron, 2002; Bob 2005.
[56] Autesserre 2014; Bob 2005; Lutsevych 2013; Paffenholz 2010.
[57] Lutsevych 2013, 4.

5. Does Civil Society Matter to Peace? Research, Practice and Theory

Within the larger landscape of global peacebuilding policy, does civil society matter? Most of the literature on civil society comes in the form of case studies, though the quantitative studies by Chenoweth and Stephan, and Nilsson do show the importance of civic actors in peace processes and civil resistance.[58] However, there is poor data at the national level for local civil society, especially in states affected by conflict. For example, Nilsson's study of the inclusion of CSOs in peace accords can only track overall numbers of civic actors, conflating vastly different civic actors and telling us little about what types matter more than others.[59] A large practitioner literature on civil society peacebuilding profiles individual LCSOs, highlighting their agency in specific conflicts, but does not aim to discern the independent role of civil society actors. Some studies have produced taxonomies of broad roles and functions civil society actors play in supporting peace.[60]

Much of this literature acknowledges that civil society efforts rarely directly change war systems, but also that "it is not possible for these wider systems to be transformed without stimulating changes at the community level."[61] Civil society peacebuilding is framed as part of multilevel, wide ranging work needed to span levels and layers of society, often representing the mid-strata of society between leaders and the general public. At the policy level, civil society has a significant presence in peacebuilding frameworks used by donors, and it represents significant aid allocations by donor states. It is an explicit element of UN or other civil-military peacebuilding and peace support missions, usually positioned as a sub-area of the larger governance agenda.

The literature on civil society however is vague on what kinds of civil society matter to peace and generally tends to frame civil society as a uniform factor or an essentialized construct. While there is a consensus that civil society is important, support to civil society is often reduced to a standard recipe of promoting local NGOs. In the peace and democracy literature, NGOs are seen as both a good in and of themselves, and also instrumentally – as a bottom-up counterbalance to new state structures,[62] as vehicles to channel popular pressure for peace, and as "schools of democracy" that build the social capital needed to "make democracy

[58] Nilsson, 2012; Chenoweth and Stephan, 2008.
[59] Nilsson, 2012.
[60] Barnes 2006.
[61] Barnes, 2009, 145.
[62] Belloni 2008; Paffenholz 2010; Paris and Sisk 2008.

work."[63] However, some note these rosy depictions leave out the bulk of society or "other civil society" whose role in war and peace is less clear.[64] Other types of civil society (churches, cultural associations, civic associations of all types) indifferent to, or even antagonistic to Western-funded NGOs often have much more legitimacy with the population but few links to the international aid machinery.

A Needed Corrective: Good and Bad Civil Society

As noted above, some influential peacebuilding scholarship posits a basic dichotomy between "good civil society" and "bad civil society". Paris made this distinction starkly, stating that the challenge for peacebuilders was to promote a "good civil society" which he defined as "pluralist organizations" that can "help to break down social barriers between formerly warring communities and provide grassroots support for political organizations that support intergroup accommodation".[65] This was to be done while "simultaneously restraining its 'bad variant', particularly during the early phases of a peacebuilding mission when governmental institutions are still being constructed."[66] "Bad civil society" has been defined in various ways. Belloni uses the term "uncivil society" instead, and for him the key is attitudes toward violence, whereas uncivil groups are willing to endorse and employ violence, civil groups are not."[67] Other definitions focus more on the content of beliefs and political positions, as in Chambers and Kopstein's work[68] as conveyed by Paris, referring to "private political activity that rejects the liberal principle of toleration", and "organizations that preach hatred and intolerance" and spread "prejudice, insularity and extremism."[69] Bad civil society is seen as the dark side of social capital, examples being the Rwandan génocidaires[70], Nazism[71], or the mafia.[72]

However as the above definitions show, the concept of bad civil society has fuzzy boundaries and can be understood to encompass nationalist or religious groups, veterans' associations and cultural groups or, essentially, anyone who may resist external, liberal models for peace. While perhaps not violent actors themselves, they may tacitly condone the use of violence

[63] Putnam, Leonardi, and Nanetti 1993.
[64] Belloni 2007; Pouligny, 2005; Paffenholz 2010.
[65] Paris 2004, 194.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Belloni 2010, 111.
[68] Chambers and Kopstein, 2001.
[69] Paris 2004, 160.
[70] Colletta and Cullen 2000.
[71] Berman, 1997.
[72] Putnam 2000.

against what they perceive to be existential threats to group survival. Some critics have pointed out that such explicit norms have resulted in oversimplified constructs of civil society in conflict as meaning only pro-peace, pro-democracy formally constituted NGOs.[73]

Clearly, for international agencies and donors promoting development, democratization and peacebuilding, these labels convey implicit subjective judgements about the utility of different LCSOs for peacebuilding goals, but they may also signify important value distinctions between types of civic actors. By using them as categories in this research, I recognize that peacebuilding policies have been heavily influenced by this dichotomy and it is important to examine its effects in practice. For those purposes, in this project I will roughly follow the Chambers and Kopstein criteria for "good civil society" (GCS) as groups with pluralist goals, who support democracy and negotiated peace, and do not support violence, and "bad civil society" (BCS) as groups whose goals are exclusivist, nationalist and who may support the use of violence.[74] A simple matrix based on these criteria will be used to help plot the spectrum of local civic actors encountered in the cases.

Figure 3: Good and Bad Civil Society Matrix

	Exclusive Values	**Inclusive Values**
Condone or Use Violence	***Bad Civil Society***	**?**
Reject Violence	**?**	***Good Civil Society***

It is worth noting here that other prominent concepts in the study of civil wars such as *spoilers* or *hardliners* have spawned objections as highly normative, but are still seen as

[73] Paffenholz and Spurk 2010.
[74] Chambers and Kopstein, 2001.

analytically useful.[75] The notion of "peace spoilers" introduced by Stedman in 1997 identified as spoilers any actors for whom a peace agreement threatened their interests and power base and was thus tied to a normative notion of peace.[76] It is not a technical description of violent actors in the context of a peace process since as Mac Ginty notes, "it involves the labeller adopting a normative position in relation to the peace process or accord that is broadly supportive of the peace on offer and critical of those opposed to it".[77] Thus the term is widely used, though it is clearly subjective; "one side's "reasonable demands may be nothing more than spoiling from the other side's perspective."[78] The label spoiler also assumes a great degree of intentionality about the impacts of actions. As Mac Ginty points out, 'accidental spoiling' categories of violence (riots, feuding, crime) can have equally damaging effects in derailing a peace process and reducing perceptions of public security.[79] Newman and Richmond deduce that a spoiler is essentially "any actor that obstructs the liberal peace, since the overall liberal peace package underpins all international perspectives on settlement in conflict zones in which international organizations, regional organizations, donors, NGOs, diplomats and other officials participate."[80] The use of the term "spoiler" thus has been useful in provoking further scholarship challenging its premises and identifying its normative basis and that is the spirit in which the terms GCS and BCS are employed in this study.

The Bridging Social Capital Model: How Civil Society Matters to Peace?

Though civil society peacebuilding encompasses a wide variety of approaches, a dominant "bridging social capital" model emerged in the 1980s and 1990s focused on a linking civil society and elites across a conflict's divides to support peace. Research on ethnic and identity conflicts found that such intercommunal links at the civil society level were critical for inhibiting violence, in Varshney's study of Hindu-Moslem riots in India.[81] The value of "bridging social capital" emerged as well from social capital researchers in the early 2000s.[82] These studies found that intra-community links were irrelevant or downright detrimental for

[75] Reiter, 2015. Newman and Richmond, 2006.
[76] Stedman, 1997, 5.
[77] Mac Ginty 2006, 115.
[78] Newman and Richmond, 2006, 103.
[79] Mac Ginty 2006, 118-31.
[80] Newman and Richmond, 2006, 108.
[81] Varshney 2002.
[82] Woolcock, 1998.

peace because they reinforce exclusivist group identities.[83] Though some conflict resolution practitioners and NGOs defend the value of work within one side of the conflict,[84] mostly this approach to working for peace has been eclipsed by the bridging model over the last two decades. (These core concepts will be expanded upon in Chapter 2.)

As a result, in today's protracted conflicts, international aid supports numerous local civil society organizations to engage with counterparts from the "other side" to build contact, communication and trust across conflict lines, and support joint concrete projects. Though initially championed by conflict resolution pioneers and NGOs as one of many possible approaches to civil society peacebuilding, this joint projects or bridging model came to be supported directly by the much bigger budgets of outside states and major development organizations as core tool of what is termed "conflict-sensitive development"[85] in multiethnic societies. Consequently, what started as one tool in the tool kit became the dominant framework for civil society peacebuilding. This exclusive focus on joint projects often faced resistance from local civil society organizations, who argued that before "bridging" could be productive, work on social needs and internal democratization was needed within their society, but faced an uphill battle as such work does not appear to be "peace work" to the donor community.[86]

As liberal peacebuilding interventions expanded through the 1990s, strengthening local civil society became a policy agenda for state actors and international organizations, driven partly by the new activism of international NGOs in supporting local peace groups and building transnational NGO advocacy networks.[87] Thus, whether directly from donor governments or channeled through Northern CSOs or multilateral agencies, large amounts of funding are now provided to develop LCSOs in areas of protracted conflicts. The specific models they use and the ultimate impact of these approaches on peace have seen few studies to date, despite the large number of such local civil society organizations in many post-war transitions and their increasing policy prominence in fact, under the imperative of greater "local ownership".

[83] Varshney 2002, 47.
[84] Church, Visser, and Johnson, 2004.
[85] For an explanation of this concept see, Conflict Sensitivity Consortium, http://www.conflictsensitivity.org/
[86] Interview with Larissa Sotieva, London, U.K., 10 May 2018. Sotieva has worked for 25 years leading programmes in the former Soviet Union, her native Caucasus, and in the UK was formerly senior strategy adviser for International Alert's Eurasia Programme until 2019.
[87] Keck and Sikkink 1998.

Certification and Decertification: Relevance to Local Civil Society Promotion?

This key concept from Tilly and Tarrow's studies of social mobilization is used in this study to investigate the specific dynamics underway in these international donor-LCSO relationships. "Certification" is one of the key mechanisms identified in the dynamics of contentious politics of all types and occurs when "a recognized external authority signals its readiness to recognize and support the existence and claims of a political actor…which changes both the new actor's strategic position and its relation to other actors."[88] Though intended to apply primarily to political actors, it appears relevant to the civil society domain as well, where internationally-funded CSOs are embedded in networks of influence and power at two levels, both internationally and locally. In this study, international "certification" of local civic actors by international support may be happening, but another possibility is that instead, international funding is resulting in the "decertification" of local CSOs, reducing their credibility and leverage domestically as Sotieva has suggested. It may be that these notions clarify the distinction between the assumptions driving international donors' policy of support for local civil society, namely to certify local civic actors as "good civil society" through funding, partnerships, mentoring and relationships. However, in the end the encounter of international assistance modalities with the complexities of these environments and the dynamics between multiple local civic actors may mean that such external support ends up having quite different effects.

The above discussion aimed to situate this project in schools of thought on international peacebuilding, and briefly review key concepts to explore the roles civil society plays in societal transitions from war to peace that will be used in this study. The next section explains the research design and provides a roadmap for the thesis.

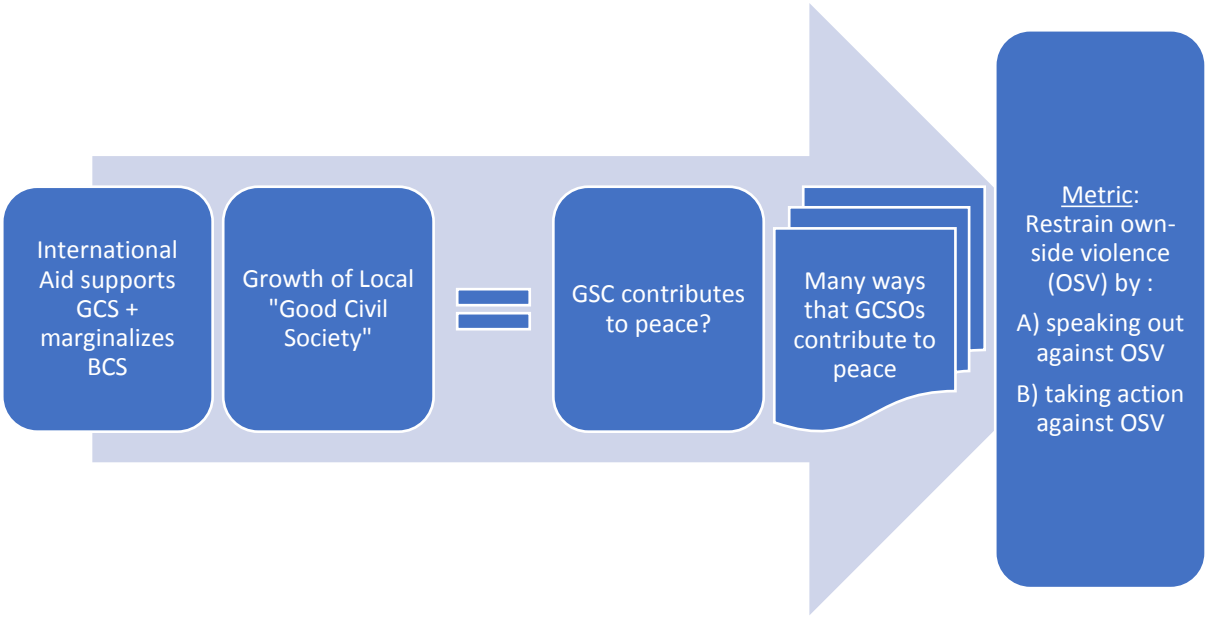
6. Research Design: Own-Side Violence Restraint & Civil Society Influence

This project aims to illuminate the impact of transnational support and its associated norms of good and bad civil society on how local civic actors influence peace and violence in their own societies. This thesis explores the question, does international aid to local "good civil society" and marginalization of "bad civil society" help promote peace? The research design will test with empirical evidence the proposition that international aid to "good civil society"

[88] Tilly and Tarrow 2007, 75.

leads to an influence on peace, measured as the ability to restrain own-side violence. This basic framework is represented in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Investigating Whether International Aid to GCS Contributes to Peace



Working Definition of Civil Society in this Study

For the purposes of exploring the full range of civic activism in the cases, civil society is defined broadly and non-normatively as individuals or groups which come together for any defined purpose, outside of government, the market or the family. This includes formally constituted NGOs, but also CSOs, individual civic activists, clubs, formal and informal associations, religious organizations, and broader civic movements. The terms civic activists, CSOs, and civic groups will be used interchangeably to indicate this broad notion and the term NGO will only be used when the intention is to emphasize formally constituted NGOs. This definition remains intentionally very broad to better capture the real diversity of local civic life in conflict settings and the relationships among various local civic actors that shape their legitimacy and influence in their own societies. At the same time, the study will apply the concepts of "good civil society" and "bad civil society" from the literature in the analysis of the spectrum of civic actors. These concepts are normatively defined and will be used to subsequently categorize the civil society organizations encountered along values criteria.

The Case Studies and the One-Side Focus: The cases cover almost 3 decades of local civil society evolution in the two protracted conflicts of Kosovo and Georgia. Each conflict is split into two separate cases distinguished by the level of international support for local civil

society in pre-war and post-war phases. In each case the ability of civic actors from the dominant majority community to restrain or prevent violence from its own community is compared and contrasted over these distinct periods. The rationale for the one side focus is the need to understand the deeper societal dynamics behind the influence of civic actors on their own society. This is uncommon in studies of peacebuilding, which normally focus on both sides of the conflict, and on relationships across the conflict lines. This perspective however normally oversimplifies the very wide range of civic actors that exist, often essentializing them as an undifferentiated "civil society" on each side, which this study aims to counter. To answer the questions set out by this study, a much deeper understanding of the relationships between various types of civic actors and their own populations, political and military leaders is needed.

Choice of the Metric "Restrain Own Side Violence" to Measure Influence on Peace

Central to the research design is the choice of the variable to indicate "influence on peace", the ability of civic actors to prevent, restrain or stop violence emanating from their own side of the conflict. As Figure 4 shows, this is further defined as involving either speaking out against violence, or taking actions to prevent or stop violence. This is an admittedly high standard to adopt for the efficacy of civil society efforts to contribute to peace, but it is one solidly rooted in the practitioner literature as one of the most important ways that civil society influences peace in situations where renewed violence is a risk. In protracted conflicts with geopolitical implications like the two cases, the risk of recurring violence is high and the consequences of a reversion to fighting are significant, hence this goal is either an explicit or implicit goal of most peacebuilding efforts in such settings. In the academic-practitioner literature, the highly related role of "protection" figures as one of the seven core functions of civil society in Spurk's functional model of civil society, [89] and Paffenholz's 2010 study found it to be among the most effective civil society roles, along with advocacy and facilitation.[90]

A model for civil society peacebuilding highly celebrated within the practitioner community involves this kind of intracommunity violence restraint, where civic actors organized a multilayered system to act as 'fire fighters" to restrain local outbreaks of fighting in Wajir district of NE Kenya that could quickly spread into bigger conflicts, which was later scaled

[89] Spurk 2010, 24.
[90] Paffenholz 2010, 428-29.

up to a national level of peace committees.[91] Such criteria may be criticized as emphasizing only negative peace that is the absence of violence[92], and undervaluing many contributions CSOs make to other dimensions of positive peace. However the practical intention in the study is to have a clear standard that can be tracked, rather than a looser definition of influence on peace that can be very long-term and indirect (and hence harder to operationalize for the purposes of the study). The ability to restrain own side violence through speaking out or taking action is one of the most direct and visible ways that civil society action can impact peace, and one that is measurable to some degree by participant and observer accounts or documentation of efforts undertaken. In selecting this variable however, the study is not claiming restraining violence is the only way civic actors meaningfully contribute to peace.

Field Work Methodology and Data Collection: These questions required extensive semi-structured interviews with local civil activists in these settings and among international officials and donors. The contemporary cases involved significant field-based interviews with present day civil society organizations, government elites, members of a range of civic organizations including nationalist societies, church groups, etc. along with international personnel in the setting and at headquarters level. Over 100 interviews were conducted by the author for this study, across the two cases and with international aid donors and INGOs (for full information see Appendix 1.) In addition, the Kosovo case was able to draw on a rich resource of archived interviews from individuals active in the 1990s through the Oral History Kosovo initiative, and interviews with Charles Dennison Lane covering in detail his three years as a UN municipal administrator in Kosovo in the immediate post-war years. The Georgia case drew on my own personal archives described more fully in Appendix 1.

There are acknowledged weaknesses of interview research in terms of participants' bias, and imperfect memories of events years earlier. I have tried to control for these by drawing on other corroborating accounts and triangulating multiple sources on a given event, as well conducting enough interviews on each topic to allow patterns to surface and major discrepancies in accounts to become clear. The research also draws on the voluminous practitioner literature and from think tanks active on the South Caucasus and the Balkans.

[91] Menkhaus, 2008.
[92] Galtung and Fischer 2013.

My personal history working with the civil society peacebuilding community through global learning projects and as a developmental evaluator with international peacebuilding NGOs shaped how interviewees saw me and enabled access to senior leaders in international agencies. Existing relationships from my professional world were leveraged to get access to activists and policy makers for both cases, though more explicitly in Georgia where I have a long history of engagement on conflict issues starting in 1996. Drawing on existing relationships is double edged, but in this case it enabled greater depth and openness in the interviews than would have been possible otherwise. I made concerted efforts to go outside those existing contacts however and explore other important viewpoints and political perspectives. As my positionality in each case was somewhat different, more details are provided in the case study sections.

Working Hypothesis: Going into the research, my intuition was that international aid allocated according to the "good civil society" criteria impedes organic existing networks in these small societies between local peace and non-violence activists ("good civil society") and nationalist, exclusivist civic actors ("bad civil society"), networks which in fact enable restraints on own-side violence. The mechanism may go like this - international actors supporting peace processes seek local civil society counterparts who appear to share liberal democratic norms and avoid groups who espouse nationalistic or exclusive values or who condone the use of violence to address historical or other injustices. However, because the conflict has been protracted and costly, the broader society supports nationalist, religious, and cultural groups and leaders who resist accommodations with former enemies[93] and the "bridging" programs championed by external states and donors. Thus large swaths of society may feel hostility and suspicion towards the LCSOs who take part in these agendas. In such a dynamic, the visible international support only to an externally-defined "good civil society" may paradoxically isolate these groups and weaken their existing linkages with the rest of society and with groups more likely to condone and use violence.

Each of the cases documents the internal societal dynamics on one side. If the working theory about the importance of local social networks to peace outcomes is correct, then in the cases where violence restraint occurred there will be evidence of social networks and social capital between pro-peace, pro-democracy local "good civil society" and "bad civil society" composed of nationalist and hardline organizations. In cases where there was a reversion to

[93] Paffenholz 2010; Pouligny, 2005.

violence, there would be weak to non-existent social networks and social capital between these groupings.

Case Selection

The initial research plan was to undertake four country cases, namely Kosovo, Georgia, Northern Ireland and Guatemala, contrasting country-level cases of conflict recurrence (Georgia and Kosovo, which were intended as contemporary field based studies) and peace consolidation (Northern Ireland and Guatemala, which were intended as shorter historical or shadow cases to be based mostly on existing case literature.) At the inception of this project, I was intrigued by practitioner studies showing that in Northern Ireland, connections between peace activists and former IRA and loyalist paramilitaries in the prisons had proven instrumental in the Good Friday Agreement, and by research showing how in Guatemala's long civil war, some peace activists had close connections to the guerillas that informed civil society's large role in Guatemala's OAS-led peace negotiations.[94] However, the process of conducting the first field case, Kosovo, led to a realization that to be able to capture the roles played by diverse local civic actors, the scale had to be moved down from the initial "peace at the country level" and that the interactions of local actors could best be traced by focusing on particular significant incidents of tension or violence, embedded in the context of the larger protracted conflict. This decision was initially driven by level of detail required to capture these local dynamics from multiple (triangulating) local perspectives, given the paucity of existing data and the need to rely on interviews, archives and other qualitative data to piece together the picture. Furthermore it became clear once the research on Kosovo got underway that below the national-level scale, there were examples of both violence recurrence and violence restraint within each case where particular civic actors' roles and relationships could be traced, and it would be more effective to focus on fewer overall contexts and more specific micro examples within them. As well, given the overarching interest in isolating the role of international support for local civil society, comparing and contrasting periods before and after major international support for local civil society appeared promising. These corrections to the original design enabled the project to better answer the questions it posed about the nature of local actors' networks and influence on violence.

The Kosovo and Georgia cases make sense in this project for the following reasons:

[94] Adams 2011; Fitzduff and Williams 2007; Jonas 2018.

They are both protracted conflicts with significant international peacebuilding assistance to local civil society, with visible periods of violence and calm over time. Each experienced significant international democratization and peacebuilding assistance that produced a large number of local civil society organizations involved in activities under the broad umbrella of peacebuilding.

Significant cases: Kosovo and Georgia are both inherently important cases, though small societies their dynamics have captured the attention of much bigger international actors, and the outcomes have affected the stability of their broader regions, and in fact the global geopolitical balance. These are small societies that punch above their weight in terms of geopolitical significance, and both have experienced the direct and indirect involvement of powerful neighbouring states. This has also meant that in both cases, much more scholarship has been undertaken on the geopolitical aspects, and the role played by local actors and dynamics is understudied.

Most likely to see the effect given small size: As well, given the difficulty of getting micro-level data on these civic issues, the choice was to work with small societies. Kosovo's population is only 1.5 million, and Georgia's is 3. 5 million and both societies have a small interconnected elite for historical and geographical reasons. Therefore, evidence of local networks between "good civil society" and "bad civil society" should be more visible in these relatively small societies.

Most likely to see effect given large resource flows: Given the geopolitical importance of these cases, there have been more international resources per capita devoted to these conflicts, than many others. Many studies have pointed out that Kosovo received 3 to 4 times the aid per capita that other conflicts did. Georgia at one point was the fifth largest recipient of US aid. This reflects the geopolitical significance of these two conflicts, and as well makes them "most likely cases" to see an impact from international aid.

Finally, a key factor given the highly local level of the study is the availability of within case evidence[95] given that the goal of the studies is to compare micro-level experiences of civic activism. The need to get enough micro data on these cases for this research required language skills, and prior expertise, as well as networks of initial contacts within local civil

[95] Gerring and Cojocaru, 2016, 411.

society who would be inclined to be direct and forthcoming about their experiences with international aid. My role as a longtime researcher in these two contexts was indispensable to access interview candidates among civil society leaders and public figures who, given prior relationships, or referrals through trusted contacts, would be inclined to be direct and forthcoming.

The Organization of this Thesis:

The remainder of the study is organized as follows. Chapter 2 examines the core theoretical literature and debates around the concepts employed, related to the nature and proposed types of civil society, its local legitimacy and its assumed roles in peace and democracy. Chapter 3 explores the experience of Kosovo in the 1990s and the ability of its unique civil resistance movement to restrain own-side violence for many years but ending in the ascendance of the KLA armed insurgency in 1998. Chapter 4 examines the case of Kosovo post-war with massive international investment in reconstruction, peacebuilding and statebuilding, including to local civil society but experiencing country-wide anti-minority riots in 2004 and volatile incidents of low-level violence since. Chapter 5 examines Georgia in the Soviet phase and its strong indigenous civic activism that led to independence from the USSR, but also fostered violent conflict with South Ossetia and a civil war between Georgian factions. Chapter 6 explores Georgia after the breakdown when the regime of Eduard Shevardnadze attracted Western aid that fostered a dynamic civil society; that same civil society later ousted Shevardnadze through the 2003 Rose Revolution but was unable to restrain renewed violence in South Ossetia in 2004 and 2008. Chapter 7 explores the overall findings from the cases, and discusses their relevance to international relations debates, and to international aid and peacebuilding policy.

Chapter 2: Why Does Civil Society Matter to Peace and Democracy?

This chapter will explore why civil society promotion is perceived as a powerful tool of both peace and democracy, and what theories and evidence inform its prominence in international peacebuilding policy. It will then review how the existing literature defines key issues of this project: the concepts of social capital, bridging social capital, and bonding social capital, the tensions between international and local norms as sources of legitimacy, and the concepts of certification and decertification of local civic actors.

Civil society has a both vague and ambitious mandate, seen as supporting the cooperation, trust and 'social capital' necessary for democratic state formation, and as able to mobilize the people power needed for civilians to counter war elites.[1] Furthermore, the liberal peacebuilding paradigm that prescribes liberal democracy and free markets as the template for building peace after civil war is based on the claim that liberal democracies are more inclined to peace externally (they do not go to war with each other) as well as internally.[2] These dual rationales place civil society promotion as a key ingredient of liberal peacebuilding.

As a result, fostering and supporting local civil society in conflict areas has been promoted by major aid donors and been championed by transnational civil society activists and transnational NGOs. Policy-focused studies of civil society roles in peacebuilding have identified a wide variety of ways civil society organizations support norms, institutions, processes and structures that together foster momentum towards peace. A study by the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict, distilled from a massive review of NGO experience found more than a dozen identifiable peacebuilding roles across numerous conflicts.[3] These included shifting public perceptions through people-to-people dialogue processes, analysis and stimulation of public debate, mobilizing vocal peace constituencies, promoting community level security, providing early warning and civilian monitoring, providing multitrack dialogue processes, unofficial backchannels and sometimes direct mediation efforts with elites focusing on political level agreements. Other roles centered on creating enabling environments for peace by putting societies together again after war - addressing causes and consequences of conflict in terms of relief, development and

[1] Chetail 2009; Pouligny 2006; Paffenholz 2010; Putnam, Leonardi, and Nanetti 1993.
[2] Doyle, 1986; Paris 2004; Russett et al., 1995; Russett and Antholis 1993.
[3] van Tongeren et al. 2005.

livelihoods support, demilitarization, trauma healing, and efforts at transitional justice and reconciliation.

A further issue makes civil society promotion a dominant aid modality in protracted conflicts, many of which are separatist or ethnic conflicts where different groups claim legitimacy and de facto control territory won through military victories. In such settings, international organizations and external states eschew statebuilding approaches to avoid legitimating secessionist or irredentist groups. However, external aid channeled through NGOs carries few political implications (or implied recognition of claims to sovereignty) and so aid to civil society is a much more dominant part of the international aid toolkit in such separatist conflicts.

Many international aid agencies working in protracted conflict areas have devoted significant resources to local civil society promotion because of the posited multiple, overlapping and positive functions that local civil society is understood to serve. With a strong civil society, the claims are, people power can hold governments accountable, mobilize local constituencies for peace talks and influence elites to make concessions for peace through bottom up pressure on elites and governments. In holding new post-conflict governments accountable, LCSOs play an important role in building the legitimacy of new and fragile states. These conceptions have become so widespread, that according to some there exists a "slogan variety" of civil society as a grassroots force capable of vanquishing authoritarianism, corruption, war economies, and ethnic violence.[4]

Civil society peacebuilding efforts have become more organized on a global scale over the last two decades. Dedicated global peacebuilding networks have emerged to play important roles in policy development at the UN, OECD, as well as EU and other regional organizations and in lobbying donor governments. Some of the most prominent of these are the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC), the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding, the US-based Alliance for Peacebuilding, the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office, and the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform.

Given these expansive claims for local civil society in peacebuilding and the way it has been taken up by powerful countries and aid donors, it is important to examine whether they stand up to scrutiny beyond the slogan level. When we talk of civil society promotion over the last

[4] Hann 1996.

twenty years as part of the liberal peacebuilding agenda, what exactly is being promoted and why? While Chapter 1 reviewed the broader debates around the liberal peacebuilding project, this chapter aims to illuminate the concepts and debates that lie behind civil society promotion as a tool of democracy and peace. A clear understanding of where these internationally promoted norms and practices hail from is important to then, through the case studies, probe the fit of such concepts in these conflict settings.

To do so, I examine the core concepts that drive debates about the role of civil society in peace and democracy drawing on the social movements, democratization, social capital and IR literatures that have tackled this question from different angles. The questions to be explored are as follows: How and where did today's international norms about the inherently positive value of civil society arise and under what conditions? In what ways have these claims been challenged and with what evidence? How do the notions of good and bad civil society advanced by scholars more recently relate to these arguments? What is known about the legitimacy and accountability of civil society actors more generally, and specifically in conflict zones?

1. Civil Society Theorized and Problematized

The origins of the concept of civil society are found in the birth of capitalism and the democratization of the European absolutist state. Many scholars trace how these developments first opened up possibilities for private economic association among self-interested individuals outside the direct control of the state[5] and then shifted to include the concept of intermediary groups between the individual and the state that were more "group oriented and politically involved" with a purpose to protect against the excesses of the state.[6] Debates over the concept have a long lineage in Western political thought from Aristotle to the present and revolve around the nature of individual freedom, democratic legitimacy and distinctions between society and the state.[7] However, as Varshney pointed in 2002, a lot of political philosophy has been devoted to civil society but not a lot of empirical political science.[8]

[5] Gellner 1994.
[6] Kurzman, 1995, 346.
[7] Cohen and Arato 1992.
[8] Varshney 2002, 39.

The most widely used definition of civil society in political theory today comes from Cohen and Arato's expansive 1993 book, *Civil Society and Political Theory*. What they call their 'working definition' reflects the breadth of the concept as well as the many areas of contention. Civil society is "[a] sphere of social interaction between the economy and the state, composed above all of the intimate sphere (especially the family), the sphere of associations (especially voluntary associations), social movements, and forms of public communication.[9] They further see that civil society is "institutionalized and generalized through law," and is distinct from "a political society of parties, political organizations, and political publics (in particular parliaments)" and also distinct from "an economic society" made up of firms, cooperatives, partnerships, etc.[10] Furthermore, civil society is different from society itself, the much wider sphere in which it is rooted; it has an organized character and is presumed to be the "result of voluntary, private contractual relationships that individuals make in their private capacities."[11]

The link between civil society and democracy is generally dated back to Alexis de Tocqueville's 1835 observations on the state of democracy in America where he connects the tendency of Americans to join voluntary associations of civil society with equality and democratic legitimacy.[12]

Given its pivotal role in the development of capitalism by freeing individuals to voluntarily engage in free markets, whether civil society was progressive or reactionary was the subject of heated debate throughout the twentieth century. Western intellectuals struggled to make sense of the 'statist' evils of fascism and communism and the harsh economic inequalities of capitalism guaranteed by the same ethos of pluralism and individual liberties that underpin the notion of civil society. Debates amongst intellectuals revolved around the nature of individual freedom as opposed to these statist models and led some to embrace the civil society concept. Critics however saw the norms and organizational principles of modern civil society – from "the idea of rights to the principles of autonomous association and free, horizontal communication" as bourgeois and simply serving the function of reproducing capitalist relations of inequality (Gramsci) and hidden forms of domination in society (Foucault).[13]

[9] Cohen and Arato 1992, ix.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Tocqueville 1954.Chapter 5.
[13] Cohen and Arato 1992, Chapters 3-6.

In practice, the key roles played by mass mobilization and civil society in the 1970s and 80s against communist regimes in Eastern Europe and the military dictatorships in Latin America did the most to shape contemporary notions of 'civil society against the state'.[14] The later experience of civil society movements in the colour revolutions in the former communist countries and especially the successful cases of democratic transition through elections forced by civil society on reluctant autocratic governments in Slovakia, Croatia, Serbia, Georgia and Kyrgyzstan increased the attention of both scholars and policy makers to civil society as a force to foment democratic change.[15]

However, critics claim that today's civil society concepts are more of a superficial slogan than a serious social construct, and reflect a particular evolution of society in the West that is often imposed on other cultures (with the purpose of supporting capitalist markets and liberal democratic governance models). Prevailing models of liberal peacebuilding based on Western norms and institutions give an important status to formal associations and NGOs supporting democracy, human rights and markets. This "ties civil society to liberal individualism and sees it in opposition to the state" as opposed to organizations and structures that reflect traditional norms and practices in society such as kin groups or traditional cultural societies.[16] In more traditional and non-European societies, kinship and religious networks are more prominent and debates about the relevance of the civil society concept can only be resolved through an open-ended investigation of the "specific practices and normative codes through which people are made accountable and responsible to other members of society".[17] Hann and other political anthropologists argue for more inclusive notions of civil society, defined not in opposition to the state but positively in the context of practices by which cooperation and trust are established in social life. However, they also recognize that the slogan variety of civil society exists as a social reality in the world today that holds great appeal across a wide swathe of societies, and this cannot be ignored or theorized away.

> "When students under some repressive regime take up the call for 'civil society' and make this central to their struggles for 'democratization', is the anthropologist to

[14] This concept of civil society as an inherently opposition force to government, exists alongside equally strong notions of civil society working cooperation with the state, fulfilling needs of communities in partnership with the state that is prevalent in international development field of NGOs and private voluntary organizations (PVOs) sometimes termed the 'third sector' and focused on service provision.
[15] Bunce and Wolchik 2011; Chenoweth and Stephan 2011.
[16] Hann 1996, 5.
[17] Ibid.

advise such youth that their models of democracy and civil society are flawed, due to their western bias?"[18]

Other big debates center on both the form and characteristics of civil society and their central purpose. On the issue of whether civil society is characterized by voluntary vs ascriptive association, Gellner contends that the key factor is individual freedom, and the ability to voluntarily change associations at will and without negative consequences (a concept he calls 'modularity'); without this, he claims, traditional societies would simply replace the *tyranny of kings* with *a tyranny of cousins*.[19] Varshney however claims that association can be based on ascriptive categories like ethnic, religious, or family affiliation and that civil society can also be informal like street corner activity, with the criteria being "so long as they connect individuals, built trust, encourage reciprocity and facilitate exchange of views on matters of public concern - economic, political, cultural and social".[20] The evaluation of civil society as "good" or "bad" is premised on a similar assessment of its purpose and values. Is civil society purely a procedural matter, marked by the *act of associating with others* for any reason, be it bowling, to advance women's rights, or to organize terrorist attacks? Or are the values inherent in that association what qualifies an activity as civil society - namely do associations have to have progressive purposes and use only non-violent means, for example to promote democracy or human rights?[21]

A further important concept for understanding civil society is the notion of social movements, such as the labour movement, women's movement, environmental movement, anti-slavery movement etc. While social movements are included in Cohen and Arato's broad definition of civil society presented above, this is disputed by others, and often the terms appear to be conflated. According to Tilly, social movements emerged only in the 18th century in Britain and they are a specific form of political action that advances three specific types of claims – a political program, a distinct identity and the political standing to advance these claims – all presented through a common "repertoire" of actions including associations, meetings, processions, petitions, demonstrations etc.[22] Civil society and NGOs are an important element of social movements, but they are not the same thing; as Tilly puts it, social movements are a campaign, they have a direction of change while civil society and NGOs are actors.[23] This

[18] Ibid.
[19] Gellner 1994, 7.
[20] Varshney 2002, 46.
[21] This distinction between procedures and content is made clearly in Chambers and Kopstein, 2001.
[22] Tilly 2004, 3,12.
[23] Ibid., Chapters 1-2.

distinction is very important to the legitimacy of LCSOs and the posited relationship between civil society and democracy as Tilly's work addresses whether civil society promotes democracy as many have claimed, or in fact, it is democracy that promotes civil society.

Another concept relevant to our analysis is the subfield of *contentious politics* in which social movements are situated as a distinct form of "claim making that involves governments" or powerful authorities, and that also includes other forms such as revolutions, ethnic conflict, nationalism and civil war.[24] Civil society is an actor and factor in this broader dynamic but only one element of many that includes the state. Previously seen as disparate fields of inquiry, these phenomena are seen to be united by what proponents call "dynamics of contention" and include core causal mechanisms that operate across these contexts.[25] This approach situates the phenomenon of civil society activism as one of many repertoires of political action in broad processes of political change where outcomes are open ended.[26] Which of the possible outcomes (civil war vs. social movements for example) emerges from the cycles of contention depends on the interaction of many different factors - among them the repertoires of contention used by claim makers including civil society, the nature of the regime and its response, the political opportunity structures, and whether all these dynamics reach large enough numbers.[27] Both of these more recent interdisciplinary schools of social analysis (social movements and the broader contentious politics area) present a messier, less optimistic picture of the possible end results of civil society activism than the popular 'slogan variety' of civil society as an 'engine of democratization' suggests.

2. Social Capital as the Core Mechanism

Yet, at the same time as these approaches gained currency, another notion, "social capital" reinvigorated the old Tocqueville concept of civil society associations as an inherently positive force. Field points out that social capital has gained such prominence because it provides the link between overly individualistic rational choice notions of human behavior and the idea of social bases of people's decisions.[28] Three main thinkers (Bourdieu, Coleman and Putnam) in the late 20th century have shaped the notion of social capital in currency today, though the idea that social ties have value, is much older. The notion is intimately tied

[24] Tilly and Tarrow 2007.
[25] Ibid., 28.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid., 104-06.
[28] Field 2003, 9.

up with the concept of social networks; social networks are the structure of relationships between individuals and social capital is the content, or what is created within networks, commonly understood as connection, relationships and trust.[29]

The first of these three major theorists, French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, in the 1980s undertook to explore class inequality and hierarchy in France and identified social capital as networks, acquaintances and relationships that were akin to an economic asset and that, like cultural capital, helped the French upper classes maintain their social and economic dominance.[30] In the US at the same time, rational choice sociologist James Coleman's study of educational outcomes among the poor in inner city ghettos found that social connections were also an asset for the poor – that social capital in poor neighbourhoods created better educational outcomes and lower drop-out rates.[31] As he noted social connection was valuable - "a group within which there is extensive trustworthiness and extensive trust is able to accomplish much more than a comparable group without that trustworthiness and trust."[32] Other examples Coleman explored were the New York diamond markets (where families are deeply connected, intermarried, and attend the same synagogue) and the common practice prevails of handing over bags of diamonds for inspection with no guarantees of return. Another was the Khan El Khalili market in Cairo, where shopkeepers bring each other customers if they can't serve their needs, not always for commission but to create social obligations that have a potential economic value in the future.[33] Coleman later found that 'closure' in interpersonal networks mattered, meaning when members are so densely connected so that the consequences of actions are felt across the network, this closure creates trustworthiness.[34] Other scholars have explored the link between specific network structures and group decision making dynamics. For example, Charles Tilly proposed the notion of 'trust networks' consisting of nondyadic and reciprocal relationships, which a study of rebel groups in peace negotiations found enabled flexibility and risk taking between rebel leaders and civilian negotiators on their own side.[35]

In 1993, Robert Putnam published his major empirical study of Italy's regions and has since become the most widely recognized proponent of social capital, and the one who made the

[29] Ibid.; Putnam 2000; Putnam, Leonardi, and Nanetti 1993.
[30] Field 2003, 16-17.
[31] Coleman, 1988.
[32] Ibid., S101.
[33] Ibid., S100.
[34] Ibid., S108.
[35] Lilja, 2012; Tilly 2005.

most direct connection between social capital, civil society and democracy. His thesis is that healthy associational life (aka civil society) is responsible for the 'social capital' that is critical to 'making democracy work' since voluntary associations foster the trust, reciprocity and cooperative behavior that is necessary in a healthy democracy. [36] His study of Italy concluded that participation in voluntary associations in Italy's northern regions created social capital that benefited society and led to greater prosperity, modernity and more democracy than in the South.[37] By social capital, he referred to "the features of social organization such as trust, norms and networks that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions."[38] Putnam's later study of the role of associations in American society amassed empirical data showing evidence of decline of social capital in U.S society, symbolized by the notion of 'bowling alone'.[39]

Bridging Social Capital over Bonding Social Capital in Intercommunal Peace

Putnam's work on the US introduced more nuance into the debate, delimitating two key forms of social capital. *Bridging social capital* involved bringing people together across diverse social divisions, and was better for linkage to external assets and for information diffusion; it provided a "sociological WD-40" that can "generate broader identities and reciprocity".[40] *Bonding social capital* tended to reinforce exclusive identities and maintain group homogeneity. It is good for "undergirding specific reciprocity and mobilizing solidarity" while serving as a "kind of sociological superglue" in maintaining strong in-group loyalty and reinforcing specific identities."[41]

Putnam's notion of bonding vs. bridging social capital echoed insights from sociologist and pioneer of social network theory, Mark Granovetter, and his influential notion of the strength of weak ties. In Granovetter's original studies, unemployed people with weak ties outwards found employment faster because they gained access to new information, therefore social groups with weak ties to other groups facilitated the faster dispersion of ideas across society than highly socially cohesive groups without such weak ties outwards.[42] To use Putnam's

[36] Putnam 2000; Putnam, Leonardi, and Nanetti 1993.
[37] Putnam, Leonardi, and Nanetti 1993.
[38] Ibid., 167.
[39] Putnam 2000.
[40] Ibid., 22-23.
[41] Field 2003, 32.
[42] Granovetter, 1973.

categories, disparate groups with some connection would have *bridging social capital* or *weak ties* while *socially cohesive groups* would have *bonding social capital* which Granovetter called strong ties. According to Granovetter, social systems lacking in weak ties across homogenous groups will be fragmented and incoherent; "new ideas will spread slowly, scientific endeavors will be handicapped, and subgroups separated by race, ethnicity, geography, or other characteristics will have difficulty reaching a modus vivendi.[43] These insights reinforced the notion that bridging social capital carried a strongly positive value for groups, even if the ties observed were relatively sporadic and weak.

The research streams reviewed above all converged on a largely positive role claimed for social capital and, especially bridging social capital and by the late 1990s the concept experienced huge uptake by international economic development agencies and specifically the World Bank. By the early 2000s, the Bank had established a *Social Capital Initiative* that conducted research, surveys and disseminated policy advice for incorporating social capital into mainstream development programs. The concept also attracted attention from the conflict research community and scholars of ethnic conflict where research established a link between bridging social capital and peace. Varney's study of Hindu Moslem riots in India compared pairs of similar cities where deadly riots had occurred and those where they hadn't and found that interethnic associational ties "not civic life per se" are the key to peace in settings where ethnic communities are intermixed."[44] Furthermore his study showed that intra-communal networks did not contain or stop violence."[45] His conclusions had major uptake in the practitioner and donor peacebuilding community for whom supporting local civil society associations and promoting bridging ties across conflict divides (bridging social capital) became something close to an iron law of peace practice. Conversely, working within one side of a conflict to increase unity, trust and community capacities (known as single identity work) was seen as highly risky, because it would promote bonding social capital which would reinforce exclusivist identities and undermine prospects for peace.

The Dark Side of Social Capital and the Notion of Bad Civil Society

At the same time as much research was fostering this positive conception of how social capital contributes to democracy and peace, the rosiness of this view was being challenged. As the bonding vs. bridging distinction suggests, "not only can domestic organizations

[43] Granovetter, 1983, 202.
[44] Varshney 2002, 282.
[45] Ibid., 14.

promote cooperation and trust among its members and society at large, but also they can foment discord and violence."[46] Putnam's notion of civil society as a school of democracy was subsequently criticized for ignoring the dark side of civil society - social organizations like the mafia, the Nazis, and the Oklahoma City bombers.[47]

Berman added depth to these insights by her portrayal of the breakdown of democracy in Germany during the Weimar republic that demonstrated how rich associational life actually enabled the rise of the Nazi party.[48] She pointed to the critical role of the strength of the state and political institutions and showed how civil society both deflected citizen's energies into private associations and weakened the political parties that opposed Hitler and while also allowing citizens to develop organizational and political skills that were ultimately coopted by the Nazi movement.[49] She concluded, "[f]or civil society to have the beneficial effects neo-Tocquevillians posit, the political context has to be right: absent strong and responsive political institutions, an increasingly active civil society may serve to undermine, rather than strengthen a political regime."[50] Another angle of critique focused on the content of associational life as a key overlooked variable. Political theorists Chambers and Kopstein, in their 2001 article pointed to the KKK and the Nation of Islam as examples of civil society activism and coined the term "bad civil society" to describe groups that have the attributes of civil society but that promote hate and exclusivist identities, and because of this, were not good for democracy.[51]

This work articulated a clear critique of the procedural focus for civil society characterized by Tocqueville and Putnam, that focused on the act of voluntary association or participation in civic life as the key defining feature. Rather, Chambers and Kopstein contended that the "substantive values that are promoted within associations" are more important.[52]

> "Particularist civility contains all the goods that are associated with participation (trust, public spiritedness, self-sacrifice), but only between members of a particular group, and it often encourages the opposite sort of attitude to members outside of the

[46] Belloni 2008, 187.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Berman, 1997.
[49] Ibid., 422-25.
[50] Ibid., 402.
[51] Chambers and Kopstein, 2001.
[52] Ibid., 842.

group. Democratic civility, in contrast, extends the goods learned in participation to all citizens regardless of group membership."[53]

Thus, by the late 1990s social capital was recast as a neutral category referring to the "norms and networks that facilitate collective action" that can be positive or negative, and even Putnam acknowledged that he had underestimated this negative aspect of social capital.[54] In divided societies, assertive nationalist or religious groups were deemed a potentially dark side of civil society that had or could play a role in the violence. In practice, this meant that international agencies often became very wary of engaging with nationalist or religious groups who espouse an exclusivist agenda, despite the fact that in many cases these groups represented large core constituencies in society.

In his influential review of peacebuilding missions, Paris reflected these correctives, and cautioned that international donors needed to discern which groups were "good civil society" versus "bad civil society" and avoid strengthening the latter.[55] Concluding a later wide-ranging study of peacebuilding and democracy, Sisk went further to advocate international efforts should proactively identify and work "diligently against those civil society groups that are deemed not constructive to peacebuilding aims".[56]

However, while avoiding funding violent xenophobic groups seemed sensible, scholars and practitioners perhaps too readily accepted the premise that external actors, and the goals of the externally promoted liberal peacebuilding agenda, could credibly assess which civil society groups were "good" and "bad". This simplistic dichotomy did not generate much debate or commentary, leaving strangely unexplored the questions of, good and bad for whom, or what? Despite now adopting the rhetorical commitment to 'local ownership', the same international peacebuilding missions whose policies are informed by this dichotomy set as initial conditions the delegitimization of some local social organizations and the anointing of others (good civil society) as agents of desirable social change. The easy acceptance of such constructs shows the neglect of the civil society realm in the broader peacebuilding scholarship as these distinctions did not merit further exploration. Furthermore, given the

[53] Ibid., 841.
[54] Putnam 2000; Woolcock, 1998, 9.
[55] Paris 2004, 194-6.
[56] Jarstad and Sisk 2008, 255-56.

relatively poor results of international peacebuilding policies to date, there is little evidence that employing this good/bad dichotomy has worked to produce more peace or democracy.

These dynamics of engagement between transnational actors and local civic activists are at the center of this project, and the reason that these questions of the internal social networks and internal legitimacy of civic actors are important to international relations. The subfield of contentious politics calls this mechanism "certification", namely when "a recognized external authority signals its readiness to recognize and support the existence and claims of a political actor" and thus "changes both the new actor's strategic position and its relation to other actors that could become its oppressors, rivals, or allies."[57] Clifford Bob's concept of a marketplace between domestic groups seeking aid and international NGOs who have resources, access and clout shows how this dynamic of certification is a sought-after commodity and local groups strategically vie with each other for the beneficial impacts of international attention, adapting their mandates and tactics to be more amenable to potential international supporters.[58] However, Bob's analysis also shows that achieving such external support is not the same thing as achieving a local movement's goals, and the cost of such external support may be a loss of domestic legitimacy.[59] Acharya's notion of localization also turns on this balance between the external leverage of international norms and the credibility and agency of local actors motivated by distinct values that end up contesting, reframing and localizing international norms, a very different outcome than outright acceptance or rejection of international norms by local actors.[60] Thus the good/bad civil society dichotomy posed by the literature relates directly to the notion of local legitimacy and local ownership in peacebuilding.

3. The Legitimacy (and Influence) of Civil Society

Legitimacy is one of the most central concepts in the study of politics. Though the term *legitimacy of civil society* is used casually in modern scholarship and implied in the notion of *local ownership*, there has been scant theoretical exploration of what legitimacy means at the civil society level. In the realm of peacebuilding practice, however, which activists or social

[57] Tilly and Tarrow 2007, 75.
[58] Bob 2005, 179.
[59] Ibid., 182-3.
[60] Acharya 2013, Chapter 8.

organizations have local legitimacy, why, and how is this maintained (or disrupted) is, as one peacebuilding donor commented, "the foundation of everything we do".[61]

Most of the legitimacy debates in political philosophy have focused on political legitimacy, concerned with how people come to accept the political authority of the state, what, if any, obligations this entails, and why people accept the state's ability to coerce its citizens.[62] Classical debates in political philosophy in the works of Hobbes, Rousseau, Kant and Locke among many others sought to understand legitimacy in terms of a social contract between state and citizens, where people respect the rules laid out by a particular government in exchange for certain benefits and protections, with much debate over whether this carries with it political obligations for citizens. Sociologist Max Weber's influential descriptive notion of legitimacy as belief or faith in a certain social order "whereby persons exercising authority are lent prestige", identified the three main sources of such legitimacy as tradition, charisma or rule of law.[63] Weber's other key notion of a state's legitimacy as stemming from its monopoly on the legitimate use of coercive force has become the most widely used definition of state sovereignty.[64]

Rich and ongoing theoretical debates around three core sources of such political legitimacy (consent, beneficial consequences, and democratic procedures) highlight issues that may help assess the legitimacy of local civil society.[65] Consent as the main source of political legitimacy of a state has been a key theme in Western political philosophy, with Locke the most prominent proponent though Hobbes, Grotius and others before him had already shifted the concept away from notions of natural law. Hume and the utilitarian view saw consent as not feasible, since states were often born in violence, but rather emphasized the beneficial consequences of authority as the source of legitimacy.[66]

Democratic procedures as approved by 'public reason' as the key source of legitimacy are associated with the contemporary work of Rawls but draw on Kant's philosophy, and much recent work has coalesced around democratic forms of political organization as a core criterion for legitimacy, though there are dissenting voices.[67] These dissenters assert that it is the quality of outcomes of democratic procedures that matter most, generating big debates

[61] Interview with a senior representative of a major government donor agency, July 17, 2016. Name withheld.
[62] Peter 2017.
[63] Weber 1964, 382.
[64] Weber 1965.
[65] Peter 2017.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid.

with those who contend that elements of both criteria (quality outcomes and democratic procedures) must be present for a state to have legitimacy. Habermas's notion of 'deliberative discourse' and modern scholars Cohen and Sabel's focus on the 'deliberative process' inject criteria around the quality of deliberative procedures in democratic institutions as the criterion for how "quality of outcomes' can be judged.[68] These theoretical approaches to political legitimacy are helpful in illuminating the assumptions behind the core statebuilding goals described in Chapter 1. The core agendas of security provision, reconstruction and provision of basic services, and democratic governance and rule of law in peacebuilding/statebuilding missions with the intention to build a legitimate state track closely with the criteria of political legitimacy in the classical body of political theory.

In protracted conflicts, however, the central state's monopoly on the use of force and prior social contract with citizens has broken down. Many studies of war contexts describe this receding of the authority of the central state and a retreat to other trusted networks and more traditional structures and identity-based communities fueled by overwhelming security fears.[69] A study of Rwanda, Cambodia and Sri Lanka shows how conflict weakened social trust and cooperation[70] while others showed how xenophobic and mafia like groups grow stronger and clientelism along conflict lines increases as a result of the retreat from the broader definition of the community.[71] Other studies depict conflict societies as highly atomized after periods of very personalized experience of violence,[72] where information doesn't flow, and, hence, rumours are very volatile. A society emerging from civil violence is also strongly shaped by the intimate patterns of the violence that may have occurred, with some civilians complicit in 'indirect violence' through denouncing fellow civilians to occupying military forces and others having forged strong social relationships through acts of courage and kindness.[73] Thus, legitimacy and influence of individuals and groups aspiring to state leadership derive from such complex pre-war relationships and conduct, especially where the war produced a social unity since it was perceived as a legitimate struggle for existential or cultural survival. (However, international agencies who partner with civil society organizations in conflict settings often assume their partners are 'blank slates', whose influence is related exclusively to their efficiency and technical capacities.)

[68] Ibid.
[69] Pouligny, 2005, 498-99.
[70] Colletta and Cullen 2000
[71] Belloni 2007, 102-09.
[72] Kalyvas 2006.
[73] Ibid.

What does legitimacy mean for the civil society level, for civic groups and individuals that do not aspire to *become the state*, though they may aspire to make political claims. As Pouligny describes, a common response to the chaos of war is to retreat into traditional networks and ways of organizing; such community networks may represent the "most vivid actual civil society in most post-conflict settings" but involve political cultures very different from the dominant Western one and hence are not recognized as local democratic forms.[74] Sociologist Mark Suchman's definition of legitimacy as applied to a broad set of sub-state organizations is helpful here – he describes legitimacy as "a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions."[75] He further defines three types of legitimacy. *Pragmatic legitimacy* where the constituency scrutinizes actions and behaviors taken by the organization in order to determine their effects or outputs. *Moral legitimac*y, which is dependent upon whether the actions of an organization or institution are judged to be moral. The final category is *cognitive legitimacy*, which is created when an organization pursues goals that society deems to be proper and desirable.[76]

Suchman's focus on socially constructed group norms as the reference point for legitimacy highlights that with such contextual criteria ("a system of local norms") each context will produce its own system of norms, values, and beliefs. In situations like the peacebuilding dynamic where the interaction of international norms and local norms is what determines outcomes,[77]whose norms are the reference point for civil society legitimacy becomes the critical question. By contrast, the canon of classical political philosophy on political legitimacy reviewed above is clearly focused on debating and resolving the question of *universal standards* for state legitimacy.

4. Certification & Decertification: International and Local Norms

Focused discussion of the legitimacy of civil society is rare in civil wars and peacebuilding scholarship, though some have tackled the related issue of NGO accountability.[78] In protracted conflicts with ample international assistance, "local civil society organizations

[74] Pouligny, 2005, 498.
[75] Suchman, 1995, 574.
[76] Ibid., 577-84.
[77] Acharya 2013.
[78] Cooley and Ron, 2002.

grow numerically, but often fail to be recognized by citizens as representative of their interests and needs and are challenged by traditional societal structures and authorities."[79]

International peacebuilding frameworks emphasise upward accountability, to donors and leading organizations, while for local CSOs working for change in their context, downward accountability is the key, to their own populations and constituents. In terms of norm contestation, Acharya points out "the credibility of local agents depends on their social context and standing" and ""if they are seen by their target audience as upholders of local values and identity and not simply 'agents' of outside forces or actors, as well as whether they are part of a local epistemic community which could claim a record of success in prior normative debates."[80] At a practical level, however, assessing local legitimacy for individual LCSOs is very difficult. Traditional measures of representativeness of social organizations taken from stable countries where the Western notion of civil society presides (membership numbers, composition of boards, levels of local fundraising) don't easily apply to settings of protracted conflict where civil society is highly dependent on external aid and external partnerships.

However, the reality of the peacebuilding enterprise is that in protracted conflict settings, legitimacy is often presumed to be generated from external sources, rather than from any local social bases.[81] The political economy of the conflict also impacts the basis of legitimacy for armed groups and wartime governments. One study concluded that when sources of income come from predatory relations between armed groups and the population, armed groups do not see governance as essential.[82] These political economy explanations are equally illuminating for international sources of resources. Where international resources levels are high and the *de facto* governments can control the movement of these goods, governments may 'borrow' sources of legitimacy from international counterparts based on these false premises that they are providing material support for populations.[83] As many studies in the late 1990s confirmed, humanitarian aid can 'do harm' by indirectly legitimizing warring parties.[84]

[79] Belloni, 2012, 22.
[80] Acharya 2013, 189.
[81] Pouligny, 2005, 504.
[82] Podder, 2014, 222.
[83] Ibid., 230-1.
[84] Anderson 1999, 50-1.

As the above points show, the credibility of political actors and civil society is not static, but changes in response to external inputs and internal dynamics. Transnational support and partnerships can enhance, but also can undermine, the legitimacy of their local civil society partners, the process Tilly and Tarrow called *certification* and *decertification*, and that Bob points to in his marketplace concept of transnational support for social movements.[85] This notion has been echoed in a recent policy study by INTRAC; their review showed that, "external support can weaken local civil society groups by undermining their local legitimacy" and contribute to shifting accountability from local communities to donors."[86] Pouligny captures well the resulting conundrum facing local activists, but which is hardly acknowledged in the peacebuilding enterprise.

> "International and local mechanisms of legitimating may actually contradict one another. For an activist or a professional from a war-torn society who becomes caught in the international sphere, the issue is a disconcerting one: how to maintain your contacts and roots and actual interaction with 'your base' while the international sphere transforms you (the way you talk, the systems of reference you use, the way you arrange your agenda, etc.) – whether you desire it or not – and takes up most of your time. Many feel that, at some point, they must choose between the two."[87]

As the above discussion has tried to illustrate, in the civil society sphere the transnational side of international-local partnerships puts too much focus on compliance with external norms, and too little attention to local norms and values, and the risks international partnerships carry for local partners' credibility and standing in their own community. Expectations in the liberal peacebuilding playbook that local civil society will be able to act as agents of broad social change, or support war to peace transitions through grassroots action, hinge on this credibility and standing with their own community. The social movements literature identifies a group's 'standing' (meaning the political standing to speak publicly on the issues at hand) as one of the three core claims that define a successful social movement, along with a political program, and a clear and autonomous identity.[88] The social capital concept discussed earlier in the chapter offers a useful micro-level lens on this question of local 'standing', namely it suggests that the lack of credibility, legitimacy or standing of local civil

[85] Bob 2005; Tilly and Tarrow 2007, 75.
[86] Popplewell 2015, 11.
[87] Pouligny, 2005, 504.
[88] Tilly 2004, 35.

society actors with the broader society can be explained at the mechanism level by the notion of social capital.

The analysis above lends theoretical depth to my contention that bonding social capital between internationally supported civic organizations and their broader communities is pivotal in war to peace transitions but has been misconstrued by both scholars and policy makers. In transnational partnerships, too little attention has been paid to understanding, preserving and strengthening the bonding social capital between local CSOs engaged in development and peacebuilding efforts and the broader public within their own countries. This is largely the product of the dominance of the bridging social capital notion as the template for peace work, but also because the simple dichotomy between "good civil society" and "bad civil society" encourages aid donors to narrowly focus on supporting only this externally defined "good civil society". Those LCSOs that gain external legitimacy, recognition and funding from international partners (certification) may in fact weaken or lose altogether local legitimacy that presumably gives them influence and leverage to move peacebuilding initiatives forward with their communities. If such a dynamic in fact exists, those LCSOs most favoured by international funders could, in fact, risk being the least legitimate in the eyes of the local population.

Such a dynamic would severely challenge the international policy response in recent years to calls for greater local ownership in peacebuilding[89]; those policy responses have amounted to international donors divesting more decision making control over peacebuilding interventions into the hands of their best LCSO partners. While the 'optics' of such local ownership strategies may be better, in that local people appear to be in decision making roles, the public may ultimately perceive such CSOs as promoting an internationally driven agenda for peace, accountable to donor countries and world powers rather than to local populations and resist what is perceived as the imposition of foreign norms. Even more alarming though, these dynamics may promote the growth in popularity of groups with an exclusivist, particularist identity as a reaction; in short, aid to so called "good civil society" may not only neglect so called "bad civil society", but may in fact fuel its expansion.

[89] von Billerbeck 2016.

5. Does Civil Society Promote Democracy and Peace?

The diverse strands of research about civil society suggest some clear if troubling conclusions. Despite the compelling nature of the "slogan variety" of civil society as a school of democracy, there is very little evidence to date that it promotes democracy and peace. Furthermore, the theoretical debates between various literatures covered above lead to some disconcerting suggestions, such as that civil society promotion, like democratization overall, can be very risky in situations of unstable or weak governance. This is especially troubling given that all the settings where peacebuilding efforts do occur match this profile. Civil society may itself be a positive force supporting the articulation of political claims in established democracies, but civil society promotion in the midst of or aftermath of conflict may be significantly riskier. Whether claims advanced by civil society end up fostering a social movement or civil war appears to depend on regime response, political opportunity structures and many other highly contextual factors.[90] However, in today's policies, the agenda of local civil society promotion is seen by most donors and aid professionals as a relatively low profile, low risk general prescription for all societies lacking both democracy and peace. The theoretical literature raises serious questions about such assumptions.

Another issue that the theoretical literatures covered above highlight is a neglect of the role of the state in relation to civil society. Much of the research showed that civil society does not build democracy but is instead is itself a product of a developed democratic state. Therefore, civil society promotion, while part of a healthy democratic transition strategy, can only be justified alongside efforts to strengthen state capacities as well. Tilly's historical analysis found that while democracy and social movements (composed of broad civil society) are fostered by common factors, while democracy did promote social movements, social movements did not always promote democracy. He found that the conditions under which civil society promotes democracy are where there is a strong central administration and "a modicum" of democracy already.[91]

Fundamentally, civil society as a concept relies on the countervailing concept of a functioning and effective state.[92] There is debate over whether civil society can exist without the state to provide the basic framework and security for civil society to operate.[93] This

[90] Tilly and Tarrow 2007, 102-6.
[91] Tilly 2004, 142.
[92] Paffenholz 2010.
[93] Cohen and Arato 1992.

clearly challenges the notion of civil society in conflict situations where the state and rule of law are inherently weak. Others disagree however, citing disrupted states such as Somalia where the absence of a central government has allowed local economies and civil society organizations to flourish.[94]

Most alarming for the field of peacebuilding, is the suggestion that increased civil society activism and political claim making can tip societies into conflict in certain conditions. Tilly and Tarrow suggest that it is the interaction of the claim-making activities with the nature of the regime and its response that drives outcomes; contentious politics in a low capacity or undemocratic regime, creates a dynamic that may lead to lethal ethnic or civil conflict.[95]

Overall, analyzing all the arguments, it appears that the scholarship does not support an uncontroversial role for civil society promotion in weak and failing states, and doesn't support the claims of causal links between civil society activism and democracy except in very specific conditions and alongside developing state structures and capacities. Against this somewhat disconcerting theoretical backdrop, the study now turns to tracing these dynamics across the two cases.

[94] Menkhaus, 2007.
[95] Tilly and Tarrow 2007, 153-61.

Chapter 3: Civic Actors, Intra-community Dynamics and Restraints on Violence in Kosovo

> *We are people from Mother Theresa but also we are people from Adem Jashari, from Skanderbeg, we also know the way of force.*
>
> *Zef Shala, Exec. Director, Mother Theresa Association*

> *They come, and everyone is an expert when they come. They teach us what to do, some knowing it is not supposed to function and others really hoping it will. It has made people passive…it has turned activism into a prize-winning talent show.*
>
> *Blerta Avdili, VV Women's Executive Committee, Pristina*

This case study explores the role of local civic actors in restraining violence in Kosovo's protracted conflict from the early 1990s to the present. It explores the range of civic actors within Kosovo-Albanian society over these thirty years, and their influence on intra-Albanian violence, and violence emanating from the Kosovo Albanian community towards Kosovo's Serbian and other minorities. Through Kosovo's recent history, there are periods (1990—97) where the majority Kosovo Albanian community fostered strong civic actors that were able to restrain both intra-communal and inter-communal violence. Since the 1999 war however, while international aid has helped create a numerically large, and technically sophisticated local Kosovo-Albanian civil society, this CS has had little impact in restraining continuing intra-ethnic and interethnic violence. Did the international support for local "good civil society" in Kosovo help restrain violence from the Kosovo Albanian side of the conflict, and if so, how and why? This section examines how the intra-communal dynamics within the Kosovo Albanian community interacted with international assistance factors in order to produce these different outcomes across these time frames.

Understanding the capacity of one side in a conflict to restrain violence from within is an important yet neglected area in studies of peacebuilding. Kosovo is a protracted conflict where violence levels since the 1999 conflict have been kept relatively low by the continued presence of international peacekeeping forces, but ongoing interethnic violent incidents

continue to feed tensions that undermine chances of a peace agreement with Serbia and risk the recurrence of war. Thus, understanding how local civic actors have influence on the potentially violent actors within their own community is an important factor in explaining the outbreak and recurrence of interethnic violence.

1. The Reality of Kosovo's Ethnically Divided Society and Separate Civic Societies

Today Kosovo Albanians make up 92% of the population, Kosovo Serbs make up 6% and the remaining 2 % consist of other minorities such the Roma, Ashkali, Egyptian, Gorani, or Turkish groups. Kosovo is also Europe's youngest country, where 42% of the population is under 24.[1] Kosovo-Albanians and Kosovo-Serbs are almost entirely physically separated into mono-ethnic communities as a result of the patterns of wartime/post-war violence, separate institutions, and continuing fear and insecurity. Historically, societal and language divisions, and repressive Serbian policies meant that social mixing was rare and intermarriage rates were very low.[2] As a result of these factors, Kosovo's civil society is largely segregated: there is a majority Kosovo-Albanian civil society and a small, separate Kosovo Serb civil society, with a few exceptions of mixed NGOs.[3]

This chapter will show how from 1990 up until 1997 during the Serbian police crackdown on its then internal province, a robust, internally generated civil society emerged in tandem with the Kosovo-Albanian independence movement. The political movement and this civil society created strong in-group unity that generated the ability to restrain intra-group violence among Kosovo Albanians and prevent retaliatory violence against Serb forces and civilians. In contrast, in the post-1999 era of massive UN-led international intervention that included major international support for Kosovo's domestic civil society, the numerically strong, high capacity "good civil society" that grew up in Kosovo has had weak local legitimacy and little influence on restraining ongoing low-level violence towards Kosovo's minority populations or the larger 2004 riots. They also have had few ties to the bad civil society who appeared to have the networks and the ability to control violence (both to restrain it and, in some cases, to initiate it).

Methodology

This study uses qualitative methods to provide a rich, contextualized picture of the intra-societal dynamics in Kosovo from the early 1990s to the present. It is informed by a review

[1] Central Intelligence Agency 2017.
[2] Mosse 2012, 803.
[3] Maksimovic et al. 2013.

of the academic and policy literature on Kosovo and two research visits over 2017 and 2018. These visits yielded 57 in-depth semi-structured interviews - 17 with women and 40 with men. The interviews involved visits to Kosovo Albanian majority areas of the capital city, Pristina, the second largest city of (southern) Mitrovica, and the western Kosovo city of Gjakova, as well as to Kosovo-Serb dominated enclave areas of Northern Mitrovica and Gracanica. Given the focus on local dynamics, 77% (44 interviews) involved locals in or from Kosovo. Groups represented were leaders of local NGOs (21), Kosovar senior staff of international agencies, embassies or donors (7), political activists and party members (7), academics and journalists (5), representatives of religious groups (2), and of the Kosovo government (2). Of these local interviewees, the majority were part of the K-A community (including two of mixed origins - Bosniak and Ashkali), and five were Kosovo Serbs living in the Serbian enclave areas of Mitrovica and Gracanica. Of the 13 internationals, nine worked for international organizations or donors/embassies, two were prominent academics, and two worked for NGOs. A further dozen interview transcripts of key figures in the 1990s were obtained from the Kosovo Oral History Initiative, a Pristina based organization dedicated to "record life stories that intersect with the broader history of Kosovo.[4] I also was granted access to a large personal archive of a senior international official in the UN Kosovo mission from 1999 to 2003 that showed the local political dynamics outside of the capital in that early period.

The focus of the interviews and data collection was to capture the perspectives of various local actors on how civil society and civic activism played out in relation to broader social and political dynamics, the levels of intra-ethnic and inter-ethnic violence, and specific instances where local actors had played a role in restraining or preventing violence. The interviews sought to understand local and international perspectives on who may constitute "good" and "bad civil society" in Kosovo. I use these terms throughout this project in quotations (and qualified them in the interviews themselves) to acknowledge their highly subjective nature. The project explores whether these normative categories of civil society have resonance for the societies involved and yield insights into the intracommunity dynamics at play. I found interviewees responded to the category of "bad civil society" with clear categories of actors who were seen as bad for peace or risks for further violence in Kosovo. The term "good civil society" resonated less with interviewees. An additional goal of the field research was to gather locally generated data on the perceived legitimacy of civil

[4] Kosovo Oral History Initiative 2012-present.

society with the Kosovo public. The study benefited from the annual UNDP Pulse public opinion studies, the Kosovo Civil Society Index, a bi-annual report undertaken by the Kosovo Civil Society Foundation, and the Kosovo Security Barometer, conducted by the Kosovo Center for Security Studies, which provide some measures of legitimacy or trust in local civil society through selected indicators.[5]

2. Historical Drivers of Kosovo's Protracted Conflict

A brief outline of the origins of the conflict and the historical divisions within the Kosovo-Albanian community are necessary to understand how its civic activism relates to the broader societal dynamics. The conflict between Kosovo and Serbia is tied to the nationalist aspirations of ethnic Albanians across the Balkans. An independent Albania declared in 1912 was partitioned by the great powers after World War I, and large ethnic Albanian areas were transferred to Macedonia, Montenegro, Greece and Serbia, leaving the much smaller independent Albania of today. Kosovo was granted to Serbia as it housed important medieval Serbian monasteries and churches, though Serbs had dwindled to roughly 25% - 30% amongst a majority ethnic Albanian Moslem population.[6] World War Two saw Kosovo re-absorbed into Italian-controlled Albania briefly but then regained by Tito's communist partisans, who eventually overcome a major revolt in Drenica, the central region in Kosovo and heartland for resistance groups.[7] Post-war, Kosovo's allegiance to ethnic kin in Albania was caught up in the fierce intra-communist struggle between Tito and Stalin, with Albanian leader Enver Hoxha closely allied with Stalin. As a result, Tito's regime saw Kosovar Albanians as a fifth column for its enemies and maintained very repressive policies in Kosovo until the mid-1960s.[8] Tito then liberalized, allowing Kosovars national symbols and decentralization, and in 1974 giving Kosovo (and Serbia's ethnic Hungarian northern region Vojvoidina) the status of "autonomous provinces" within Serbia with broad self-government powers, [9] but stopped short of Kosovo-Albanian nationalists' demands for equal status with the 6 constituent republics of the Yugoslav Federation.

Kosovo's autonomy brought improved relations between Serbs and Albanians, along with major societal changes – including the development of a "unified and well connected

[5] UNDP Kosovo 2013-Present; Kosovar Civil Society Foundation (KCSF) 2014; Kosovar Civil Society Foundation (KCSF) 2016; Marku and Vrajolli 2019.
[6] Pavlović 2009.
[7] Pettifer 2012, 25-8.
[8] Ibid., 33.
[9] Pula, 2004, 801.

Albanian intellectual elite" with the founding of the University of Pristina in 1969.[10] Rapid industrialization transformed Kosovo's social structure, moving people out of agriculture and increasing university enrollment, but economic decline in the late 1970s meant Kosovo's thousands of new graduates could not find employment.[11] The outmigration of Kosovo's Serbs claiming discrimination by the ethnic Albanian local authorities, plus traditionally high Albanian birthrates and the demands by Albanian intellectuals for greater powers fueled increasing fears of Kosovar separatism in Serbia, and led to greater Serbian police and military presence in the province.[12]

Amidst these tensions, student riots erupted in 1981 over conditions at Pristina University, which spread across the country including demands for full republic status in Yugoslavia. Mass arrests of Kosovo Albanians followed along with calls to restrict Kosovo's autonomy and protect Kosovo's Serbs from discrimination at the hands of the autonomous local Albanian government.[13] In 1981, small radical Marxist revolutionary groups coalesced into the clandestine Kosova People's League (LPK), which became the early political training ground for a whole generation of KLA war leaders.[14] Serbia reduced Kosovo's autonomous powers and replaced the communist Albanian leadership, leading to a hunger strike by miners at Trepca mine in northern Kosovo in 1989, whose brutal suppression turned almost all Kosovo-Albanian society against the Serbian regime.[15] In this context of increasing confrontation and increasing pluralism in Kosovo, the earliest civic organizations emerged to play key roles.

3. The 1990s: Civil Society Unites Kosovo's Fragmented Society to Face the Serbian Threat

From the late 1980s up until 1997, a robust non-violence civic movement emerged among Kosovo-Albanians characterized by strong in-group unity, high local legitimacy and the ability to restrain intra-group violence (blood feuds) and prevent retaliatory violence towards the Serb authorities or Kosovo's Serbian minority. This was remarkable as the ethnic Albanian population of Kosovo up until that point, was highly fragmented - by regional,

[10] Matic 2003, 3.
[11] Pula, 2004, 801.
[12] Pavlović 2009, 9-13.
[13] Ibid., 8, 24.
[14] Pettifer 2012, 50; Schwandner-Sievers, 2013, 956.
[15] Pula, 2004, 803.

economic, and class-based internal differences as well as between a communist era elite and a new Albanian nationalist elite.[16] Also surprising was the focus on non-violence, which was completely contrary to the dominant culture of Kosovo Albanian society; the "self-appraisal of the Albanians primarily valued the honor of a highlander and the so-called ethics of an 'untarnished face' which assumes vehemence, bravery, invincibility, readiness to sacrifice oneself for national freedom and ideals…"[17] In the early 1990s, the biggest task for the LDK movement as to suppress the Marxist Leninist factions in Kosovo Albanian society that wanted violent insurrection, according to political insider Shkëlzen Maliqi.[18]

The prominent civil society actors of this era were deeply tied to the political movement for Kosovo independence and motivated by an existential threat to Kosovo Albanians. Maliqi called this new unity a "defensive homogenization" of Kosovo Albanian society forged by Serb repression.[19] As societal shifts forged a new nationalist Kosovar Albanian intelligentsia under communism, Serbian state repression of student demonstrations resulted in thousands of students serving harsh prison terms throughout the 1980s. A mass political movement from late 1989, the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK), united the growing number of nationalist organizations that had emerged in the late 1980s. The LDK's leader, Ibrahim Rugova was a Pristina-based writer and intellectual, the chair of one new civic association, the Association of Kosovo Writers. Rugova championed a strategy of non-violent resistance over other prominent Kosovar Albanian intellectuals of that era, such as Adem Demaci, who argued for a policy of civil disobedience, active resistance and protest, and Rexjep Quosa, who called for an Albanian intifada.[20] Rugova was "was very clever and knew we could not go into open conflict with Serbia," and even refused an offer by then Croatian leader Tudjman arms to provide arms to support a Kosovar armed uprising.[21] The LDK grew rapidly to half a million people when the communist-era mass organization, the Socialist Alliance of Working People, swung its support behind the movement.[22] The LDK goals were to secure recognition of Kosovo's independence from the international community while avoiding

[16] Pettifer 2012.
[17] Maliqi 1998, 61.
[18] Interview with Shkëlzen Maliqi, Pristina, 27 April 2018. Maliqi is a long-time Kosovar politician, intellectual, political activist, and publisher. He was one of the founders of the Social Democratic Party of Kosovo in the early 1990s and its first president and held leading positions in civil society organizations.
[19] Maliqi 1998, 11.
[20] Gashi 2018.
[21] Interview with Shkëlzen Maliqi, 2018.
[22] Pula, 2004, 805.

provoking killings or mass expulsions of Kosovo-Albanians by the Serbian state, which had already happened several times through the 20th century.[23]

While Rugova and the LDK were the face of Kosovo for the West, the civic pillars of the societal response are not well known outside of Kosovo. These were a grassroots "Blood Feuds Reconciliation" initiative, an impressive human rights monitoring network, the Council for the Defence of Human Rights and Freedoms (CDHRF), and the local charitable NGO, the Mother Theresa Association. In December 1989, alongside the LDK, the human rights group CDHRF formed, urging Albanians to resist Serbian provocations to retaliate and record the Serbian human rights abuses instead; it established an impressive monitoring network across Kosovo and publicized abuses to international human rights networks.[24] The Mother Theresa Association (MTA) was a humanitarian organization that opened in May 1990 with 123 members present and had a remarkable 7200 volunteers by 1992. [25] The intertwined efforts of these civic forces helped the LDK and Rugova maintain the strategy of non-violence through the first half of the 1990s. Their activities and networks connected across Kosovo's deep rural – urban divisions, regional identities and traditional versus modernizing values. At that time, the vast majority of the Kosovo Albanian population was very rural, traditional, agrarian and closed. While the cities of Pristina, Mitrovica in the north, and Gjakova in the West had developed some industrial base and a middle class under Yugoslav communism, the central Kosovo regions remained rural, traditional and very poor.

> "[T]he vast rural hinterland was occupied by small and middle-sized landowners who held their land in fierce rivalry with their neighbours…The minor conflicts over such matters as grazing rights were endemic and were regulated by the ancient rules of the Kanun. This was a law code based on local custom and a code of revenge dating back to the Middle Ages and embodied a deeply patriarchal and reactionary ideology, but it was all the Albanian majority had in the absence of a respected or democratic state."[26]

Months after the creation of the LDK, in 1990 Serbia instilled direct rule from Belgrade and fired all ethnic Albanians from state jobs (which included heath care and education) for

[23] Ibid., 807-12.
[24] Clark 2000, 53-56.
[25] Unpublished report given to the author by Don Lush GJERGJI *I,* "A brief history of Mother Teresa Humanitarian and Charitable Association", Pristina, September 3, 2015 *(Translated in English by Dhurata Berisha)*
[26] Pettifer 2012, 23.

refusing to take an oath of allegiance to Serbia. The LDK and the new civic organization that emerged soon after, the Mother Theresa Association, mobilized and ran alternative medical and education services and provided basic food aid to the entire Kosovo Albanian population for almost a decade – efforts that became known as the "parallel society" or the "parallel state."

> "We divided things, the LDK worked in the political sphere, the charity the Mother Theresa Association ran the parallel medical system and the humanitarian effort, and the Council for the Defense of Human Rights and Freedoms worked on human rights."

The Mother Theresa Association:

The Mother Theresa Association was created to support people in need regardless of religion or nationality. Though only 3% of Albanians are Catholics, the Catholic church in Kosovo had historically acted in solidarity with Kosovo Albanians, undermining Milosevic's narrative that Christians in Kosovo were being threatened by Moslem fundamentalists. Mother Theresa, the world renowned Catholic Albanian nun, agreed to lend her name to the effort, and Catholic priest Don Lush Gjergji, was asked by his Bishop to head the organization.[27] It gathered support from a large group of societal leaders and intellectuals, officially registered with the Yugoslav authorities and formally opened in May 1990 with 123 members present.[28] It was entirely volunteer driven (over 7000 volunteers by 1992) and refused cash donations from foreign organizations. They had a strong branch structure across all of Kosovo, with a central office, branches in all municipalities and sub-branches in all the villages. It also had an unorthodox way of operating, as Mother Theresa had insisted "don't do anything with money - everything should be free and money should not function."[29] Many foreign organizations purchased the food and medical supplies, the MTA got the goods through Yugoslav customs (as an official organization registered with Belgrade) and MTA volunteers distributed the aid, and provided 1700 doctors, nurses and other health professionals to run 96 mobile clinics (who were given food and non-food items as

[27] Interview with Don (Father) Lush Gjergji, Vicar General, Catholic Diocese of Pristina, Pristina, Kosovo, 15 May 2017. Gjergji is the Catholic priest who was the original director of the Mother Theresa Association from its inception in 1990.
[28] Unpublished report by Don Lush GJERGJI *I, "*A brief history of Mother Teresa Humanitarian and Charitable Association", 2015.
[29] Interview with Zef Shala, current director of the Mother Theresa Society, Pristina, Kosovo, 16 May 2017.

payment).[30] The money-free mode of operation also made sure that Belgrade had no pretext to shut down the operation; there were no financial transactions and when financial controllers from Belgrade asked, only "lists of flour, sugar and oil for 800,000 beneficiaries" could be provided.[31]

Though Catholic in origin, the Mother Theresa Association reflected the population at large. Father Gjergi notes, "we had imams in the leadership team, we had branches and sub-branches in locations where there were no Catholics, we were simply inspired by the life and deeds of Mother Theresa and this is why we were supported by everyone."[32] According to its early leaders, its spiritual approach, the direct, personal contact with the people and its organizational structure also mattered. "It was the branch structure that made it easier for us to reach and mobilize the whole country and diaspora and motivate the population to live and care about each other. The personal contact meant that we didn't only share our food with each-other but our lives and love for each-other."[33] Father Gjergi also emphasized its dependence on the results of the blood feuds reconciliation campaign that took place in the early 1990s: "without reaching the point where people would forgive each other we would not have been able to get all the people mobilised and supporting the association."[34]

International NGOs helped the Mother Theresa Association by funding its supplies - by 1994/5 there were 58 international NGOs in Kosovo, including Mercy Corp International, the Caritas European network, Catholic Relief Services, Oxfam, Doctors of the World, and People in Need.[35] According to Zef Shala, MTA's current director, the foreign organizations didn't just give food but also advocated for peacebuilding and reconciliation; "they knew that if we started to use military forces against the Serb regime we would be kaput, and said to us, wait a little bit, go the way of peace."[36] Beyond these foreign inputs, the broader parallel state at this point was mainly self-funded. The bulk of the funding was gathered from Kosovars themselves, by the LDK through a 3% levy for all employed Kosovar Albanians at home and abroad called "the 3% fund".[37]

[30] Interview with Zef Shala, 2017.
[31] Interview with Zef Shala, 2017.
[32] Interview with Don (Father) Lush Gjergji, 2017.
[33] Interview with Don (Father) Lush Gjergji, 2017.
[34] Interview with Don (Father) Lush Gjergji, 2017.
[35] Interview with Zef Shala, 2017.
[36] Interview with Zef Shala, 2017.
[37] Interview with Lulzim Peci, Pristina, 10 May 2017. Peci is the director of prominent Kosovar NGO "KIPRED" (Kosovar Institute for Policy, Research and Development), a former Kosovo diplomat and founder of multiple Kosovar think tanks, including KIPRED, in the early 2000s.

These interconnected activities of civil society and the LDK movement, led by a common group of Pristina-based intellectuals, by all accounts solidified strong in-group unity within a divided Kosovo Albanian society. The LDK and Rugova personally had enormous authority. The LDK's legitimacy with the public is clear from the fact that after declaring Kosovo an independent republic in 1990, when Presidential elections were held in 1992, Rugova received 99 % of the votes.[38] As Lulzim Peci, who worked with the LDK then commented, "this was a remarkable period, a social unity prevailed, and everyone supported the LDK and its approach."[39] Some of Kosovo's political elite were concerned about the monolithic character of support for the LDK, Kosovar political leader Shkëlzen Maliqi explained that "we said stop, we want pluralism not a new communism," but it became clear that Rugova had become so popular no others could oppose him.[40] Some Marxist Leninist groups, supporters of Adem Demaci, who began to prepare for war did not agree with this line, but the people did not support them, neither here nor abroad."[41] Rugova also strategically spread his influence in the US, and US support was very important to his authority in Kosovo and the credibility of his strategy. American expert Fron Nazhi noted that "the LDK had chapters all over the US, and Rugova used the photo-ops with congressional leaders and statements they made to say, the 'US is behind us' we need to just keep this pace and the US will come and help us…this had a huge impact on Kosovo-Albanians back home and gave them hope."[42]

The social unity as well as the organizational structures that developed over the course of that experience, in turn, proved able to exert a powerful influence over Kosovo-Albanian society to prevent violence in two deeply interconnected ways. The first expression of this was a remarkable effort from 1990-1992 to stop intra-Albanian violence – the deeply entrenched tradition of blood feuds. The second was a system of restraining retaliatory violence from Kosovo-Albanian communities in response to Serbian state repression, from 1990 to approximately 1997.

[38] Maliqi 2001, 32.
[39] Interview with Lulzim Peci, 2017.
[40] Interview with Shkëlzen Maliqi, 2018.
[41] Interview with Shkëlzen Maliqi, 2018.
[42] Skype Interview with Fron Nazhi, 24 April 2018. Nazhi is an Albanian American international development expert who was born in Kosovo, was involved with the LDK movement in the late 1980s in the US, and ran aid programs across the Balkans from 1991-2008 including opening up the Soros Foundation offices in Albania and Kosovo.

Example K-1: Stopping Intra-Albanian Violence - Blood Feuds Reconciliation

The Blood Feuds Reconciliation initiative was a civic mass movement that began on February 2, 1990 and lasted until May 17, 1992, though the most dramatic phase was early 1990, a period known as "the Big Spring". This effort was little known outside of Kosovo, initiated by a group of students who were ex-political prisoners recently released from Serbian jails, including Hava Shala and Myrvete Dreshai, who in interviews described how they were incensed by how traditional blood feuds still had Albanians killing each other, when they needed to unite to resist Serbia.[43] Approached by the students to be the public face of the movement (to deflect attention away from the former political prisoners), leading intellectuals agreed "it was the right idea at the right time".[44] By all accounts the skill, personal integrity and sensitivity of these leaders, and the passion and credibility of the students and former political prisoners in their direct appeals to the village elders were key to its impact in Kosovo's rural areas where the blood feuds were most prevalent.[45]

Clearly a key to the ability of the movement to stop blood feuds was the common threat posed by the Serbian state, but participant accounts suggest that the identity and credibility of the organizers gave this process such influence, as well as the careful way the movement was conducted. The young students, ex-prisoners who had suffered harsh conditions and torture in Yugoslav jails were the motors of the campaign. They generated public sympathy and trust in the villages, at a time when so many deaths and arrests of young people were happening across Kosovo. As well, the intellectuals and religious leaders from Pristina brought their leverage to the situation. They were respected leaders of an Albanian cultural and intellectual renaissance centered around the University of Pristina, and their prestige plus deference for Kosovo's traditions conveyed respect to the rural elders. The public leader of the campaign became academic folklorist Anton Cetta, who knew Albanian rural culture deeply and knew how to speak to *the oda,* the traditional Albanian men's council in the villages. Cetta's main collaborator was the respected Catholic priest Don Lush Gjergji, the first leader of the Mother Theresa Association (and now the Vicar General of the Kosovo Diocese).

[43] Dreshaj 2005; Shala 2016.
[44] Shala 2016.
[45] This comes through in multiple interviews reviewed with direct participants, documented by the Kosovo Oral History Initiative, such as Dreshaj 2005; Shala 2016.

The careful, sensitive approach was reportedly key to its impact and something only possible for insiders in the society to conduct. A group made up of the youth and ex-prisoners, intellectuals, representatives of different faiths, teachers, public figures, would go out to the villages and approach each family of a victim, who was obliged to *revenge the blood,* and appeal to them to forgive "in the name of the people, the youth and the flag."[46] The youth and the intellectuals learned through "trial and error" that it mattered deeply how many people came, who they were, how they showed sensitivity and respect, to allow time for decisions and multiple meetings, to acknowledge people's resistance in respectful ways and to always signify solidarity with people's tragic personal losses.[47]

Structurally, the campaign developed a dense, interconnected network right down to the village level; there was a Central Council in Pristina and every municipality had a Municipal Council of Reconciliation. The campaign resulted in bridging Kosovo Albanians' historic differences, between modernizing Pristina and traditional rural areas, and between elites and common people, between students, women and traditional elders. Judging from many first-hand accounts, the social mobilization of the broader Kosovo Albanian public around eradicating blood feuds signaled a fundamental shift in the way Kosovar Albanians saw their situation and their sense of group unity in the face of a common threat. The act of coming together in massive gatherings, often with Serbian tanks present at the periphery, was for many who participated, deeply empowering. One of the student leaders described "a magical scene!…a massive gathering, a unity, a mobilization, an awakening of the national awareness, an oath."[48]

Through the campaign, 2000 blood feuds were reconciled in a very short period, and some 18,000 people were released from being essentially imprisoned in their own homes.[49] The initiative shows the power of in-group unity to influence behavior, in this case asking people to go against a deeply entrenched communal code (the Kanun) to which their honour was linked. It grew quickly to have huge convening power and legitimacy, able to draw a crowd of 500,000 at the biggest gathering at Verrat ee Llukes on May 1, 1990 despite the presence of Yugoslav tanks and police. It brought people out of their homes in large numbers and

46 Clark 2002, 22.
47 This evident from the interview with Don Lush Gjergji, 2017, and in the following archived interviews: Dreshaj 2005; Shala 2016.
48 Rexha n.d.
49 Interview with Shkëlzen Maliqi, 2018.

united them at a time when Kosovo Albanians were terrorised by the repressive measures, curfews, and police killings.[50] It encompassed patriotism but also a future oriented, westernizing message in the campaign, which included calls to modernize and 'civilize' traditional Kosovo Albanian society. At one mass ceremony in 1990, Cetta commented, "[w]e hope to enter the European Community, and we should go in without these old burdens from the ancient past."[51]

Example K-2: Limiting Counter Violence through Integrated LDK-CSO Networks

The sense of Kosovo Albanian unity forged through the blood feuds campaign, and the organizational networks of the civil society groups and the LDK were critical to maintaining non-violence from Kosovo Albanians towards Serb police or Kosovo's Serb minority, according to first-person accounts. Milosevic's strategy was to provoke a war, and the LDK's strategy depended on restraining predictable reprisal attacks from Kosovo Albanian communities when Serb police and military had targeted them. Maintaining this strategy of non-violence across the far-flung villages of Kosovo was a huge challenge and accomplished only through a complex network of influence and social control managed by the civic organizations. The interconnected human rights monitoring by the Council for Defense of Human Rights and Freedoms and the LDK created a "dense network of monitors that could quickly react to any instance of violence in their locality."[52] When Serb patrols would visit a village, soon after representatives of the LDK or the CSOs would come to speak to the villagers and press them not to undertake violent retaliation which could provoke more dramatic Serb repression.

> "These individuals were usually prominent members of the local community, and in severe incidents they would be accompanied by delegations from the capital. The monitoring network they were part of had dual purposes. Besides recording cases of police violence, it concurrently served another function, which was to monitor and control the behavior of the local populace so as, first, to ensure that the local community was acting in accordance with the policy set in Pristina, and, second, to prevent any acts of counter-violence against police action that would fulfill Rugova's

[50] Dreshaj 2005; Shala 2016.
[51] Sudetic 1990.
[52] Pula, 2004, 808.

worst nightmare of giving Serbia "a pretext to initiate a massive campaign of murder and expulsion." [53]

This approach kept attacks or fatalities involving Serb security forces or civilians very low in the period up to 1997, remarkable in a society bound by the medieval code of the Kanun. The CDHRF's reporting of the human rights violations helped the LDK movement attract support from the Diaspora and from foreign governments and raised consciousness in Kosovo as well. Its founding directors, academician Idriz Ajeti and the energetic but "mercurial historian Zekeria Cana" transformed "the passive attitude to repression which had been typical up to then, of the Kosova Albanian masses and media" through collecting a large number of testimonies on violations of human rights and police terror, and also on the mistreatment and even murder of Albanians in the Yugoslav Army." [54]

The strong organizational branch structure was also a key element in this restraint on reprisal violence; it helped CDHRF, the LDK, and the MTA together and separately reach the population down to the village level. It enabled direct contact between the leaders of the movement and the common people in the villages. One participant claims despite rumours that Rugova was reclusive, in fact "Rugova spent a lot of time meeting the village elders, he kept those guys informed, spoke to them and made them part of the process."[55] This direct contact between the urban elites and Kosovo's isolated villages initiated through the blood feuds campaign, and common awareness and the trust it generated, was critically important according to Father Gjergi. "In this way, we united the people and created a spirit of brotherhood and cooperation in order to survive."[56]

However, these structures and networks were reportedly not only used by those behind the LDK's non-violence strategy. Some accounts allege that the more militant Marxist groups worked within these LDK-led structures in these early years. The strong Marxist Leninist currents associated with prominent Kosovo Albanian intellectuals Adem Demaci, and Rexhep Qosja, sought Kosovo's self-determination and unification with Albania through more militant means. Neither directly challenged Rugova's dominance of the movement in

[53] See Ibrahim Rugova, *C¸ e¨shtja e Kosovo's: based¨ me Marie-Franc¸oise Allain dye Xavier Galmiche* (Pena, Kosovo: Dukagjini, 1994). Quoted as FN 44 in Pula, 2004, 808.
[54] Maliqi 1998, 17.
[55] Skype interview with Fron Nazhi, 2017.
[56] Interview with Don (Father) Lush Gjergji, 2017.

the early years but they took part in LDK structures and at various points challenged and unseated Rugova loyalists.[57] Demaci was in fact President of the CDHRF from 1991 to 1996, before breaking completely with the LDK. Later, in August 1998 Demaçi was appointed General Political Representative of Kosovo Liberation Army, KLA.[58]

4. The Link between Social Capital within Kosovo Albanian Society and Violence Prevention

The social capital lens helps us see how the interconnected activities of civil society and the LDK movement enabled direct contact, relationships and trust across Kosovo Albanians' divided society, creating social capital within the society that had not existed before. As numerous interviewees and oral history accounts attest, from 1990 up until 1997, a strong social unity prevailed, and even the more militant groups who publicly disagreed with Rugova's strategy remained within the LDK movement. One account claims that negating Serbian propaganda of Albanians as "barbaric and uncivilized" became central to the Albanian concept of selfhood and statehood; "Warriors went out of fashion overnight" and the non-violence concept was embraced as both pragmatic self-defense and tied to the powerful idea of dignity and democracy.[59] Organization also mattered - the civic groups that formed an interconnected network with the LDK, like the Mother Theresa Association and the Council for the Defense of Human Rights and Freedoms had a mass constituency of both volunteers and beneficiaries. They had a strong organizational network down to the village level that provided information flow two-ways and connected regular Kosovar Albanians face to face with these organizations, which generated trust. In the words of Iqballe Rugova, a long-time civic activist and head of the Kosovo Women's Network, "[A]t that time there was great solidarity. All of Kosovo was doing work in the parallel society, volunteering. The Serbs tried to kill our society, but we woke up instead."[60]

As Figure 1 shows, these 3 elements, the Blood Feuds Campaign, the human rights monitoring network of the CDHRF, and the Mother Theresa Association & the parallel health and education systems were highly interdependent phenomenon. They were all established more or less in the same time and brought students and intellectuals from Pristina to the

[57] Maliqi 2011.
[58] Gashi 2018.
[59] Maliqi 1998, 62.
[60] FN 2 in Clark 2000, 95.

villages and increased awareness and solidarity across the urban-rural divides, all efforts that in turn enabled the peaceful non-violent resistance strategy led by the political movement of Rugova and the LDK.[61] The engagement with the problems across Kosovo reportedly spurred many other civic initiatives, as organizers from the cities became aware of the extreme poverty in some remote regions.

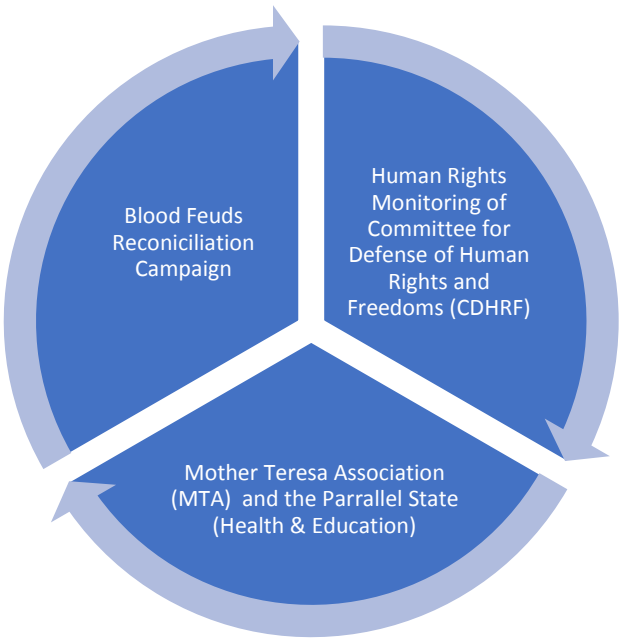


Figure 5: Linkages Across Civic Initiatives in the 1990s – A Virtuous Cycle

As this history of the 1990s makes clear, Kosovo's early civic organizations were deeply tied to the larger resistance movement. As one analyst has framed it, they were "Siamese twins" or "different kinds of bread made of the same dough," though clearly distinguished by the fact that the LDK aspired to govern.[62] The unity that each line of activity fostered, in turn enabled the other actions and allowed Kosovo society to maintain the largely non-violent strategy for those years. Citing "certain mechanisms that allowed for controlling the mood of the masses" that operated in the movement until 1997, a group of Kosovar analysts state that, "the success of this large and unique grassroots movement depended on its ability to control critical situations, that lead to war."[63] This may have in fact been less purely voluntarist than it appears on the surface, as one interviewee reported that in some ways the LDK mirrored the approach during the communist period, "everyone was a member of the communist party,

[61] Interview with Don (Father) Lush Gjergji, 2017.
[62] Dugolli 2001, 151.
[63] Maliqi 2001, 43.

you had to be if you wanted to survive. Rugova took a similar model, if you wanted to benefit from the parallel structures you had to be a member of the LDK."[64] Thus the aid to the population clearly reinforced the social unity of the period, and material factors (food, education, and medical care) likely also had some role in powering this self-reinforcing virtuous cycle. As well, there was a large (if quiet) role for foreign support in this period, as the food and medical aid was mostly provided by foreign aid organizations, but these had little visibility and no real role in the process, so the local actors were seen as accountable and were credited for these actions.

However, these were ethnically exclusive networks and the Albanian nation was a powerful unifying theme. This reflected Kosovo's segregated reality - Serbia's policies had isolated Kosovo Albanians from their Serb neighbours and former co-workers and fueled deep mistrust between Kosovo's Serbs and Albanians. However, within the highly fragmented Kosovo Albanian community in that era, these networks were inclusive, bringing together urban and rural, traditional and modernizing, Muslim and Catholic Kosovar Albanians, and even uniting the fractious Kosovo Albanian intelligentsia in a new national consciousness. These new networks created new social capital, and trust between traditional, rural Albanians most affected by blood feuds and the new, urban, modernizing Albanian intelligentsia rooted in the big cities.

The interconnected CSOs and LDK movement demonstrated its strong local legitimacy through its ability to deter blood feuds, and retaliatory violence against Serbs through social and community pressure (or social capital). One observer also noted that he was also amazed by the general lack of crime in Kosovo society at that time, also suggesting strong internal social capital."[65] The accounts make clear that this strategy was not driven by an ideological commitment to non-violence, and nor did it align with Kosovo Albanian's culture or norms, ruling out these alternative explanations.

What kind of social capital is at play here though? One interpretation is that this was a case of the positive impact of bonding social capital, a sense of strong ingroup affinity and ties. However, the bonding versus bridging social capital distinction becomes more difficult with awareness of the strong internal divisions within Kosovo Albanian society in terms of

[64] Skype Interview with Fron Nazhi, 2018.
[65] Skype interview with Fron Nazhi, 2018.

regional identities, living standards, education, traditional vs. modern values, etc. Kosovo's experience of the 1990s might be best defined by internal bridging social capital, namely Granovetters' notion of "weak ties" across the diverse poles of Kosovo Albanian society - the traditional, rural masses and the modernizing, urban intellectuals, students and activists, united by the need for survival and a newly acquired sense of K-A ethnic identity, compassion and mutual accountability. From pragmatic motivations to avoid mass expulsions by Serbia, the parallel system came to represent a rich civic movement and more; one participant commented, "it became an identity, based on the idea of sacrifice for the nation… the ethnic community came together and said, we know who we are and who is ours and we will outlast Milosevic."[66] It is clear that this social capital across Kosovo Albanian groups enabled the mechanisms of non-violent resistance in the early 1990s. However, it is very likely that this new social capital also enabled mass support for the violent insurgency under the KLA from 1998 onwards. In this sense, the case illustrates social capital as a neutral force.

Social Cohesion and the Promise of Western Support

Whether these organizations represent civil society or a social movement or a shadow state is unclear and draws attention to the difficulty of making the civil society concept fit a context outside the classical liberal democratic state. Many Kosovo Albanians interviewed tend not to see this period as "civil society". Former LDK activist Lulzim Peci stated, "it was not exactly civil society, it was a political party which had its civil society instruments," and claims that under the conditions of the struggle for survival and liberation, the lines between civil society and political parties were "very blurred".[67] One contemporary of Rugova argues that the whole parallel state was actually built much more on the backs of communist era organizations and structures.[68] Maliqi criticizes the Rugova era for adopting a new kind of monolithic ideology rather than true democratic pluralism.[69] Several CSO leaders interviewed

[66] Skype interview with Fron Nazhi, 2018.
[67] Interview with Lulzim Peci, 2017.
[68] Maliqi 2011, 29. Maliqi notes that a book by one of the LDK's founders, Mehmet Kraja, Vitet e humbura ("The Lost Years"), published in 1995, categorically affirms that Ibrahim Rugova and the LDK leadership did not make one single decision regarding the creation of "parallel" institutions and a "parallel" government in Kosovo," but rather it was the communist era ideologues who were the behind the scenes creators of these moves that laid the foundations of the Kosovo state.
[69] Interview with Shkëlzen Maliqi, 2018.

saw the 1990s as a time of "weak civil society" as there were only these few CSOs.[70] Others see this phase as exhibiting as a very rich civil society, just one not conforming to outsider's notions. Fron Nazhi, then leading the Soros Foundation's efforts in Kosovo claimed, "we thought we came to develop civil society and to a large extent civil society was there, especially civic participation".[71]

Kosovo's civil society was deeply tied to politics and the ethnic Albanian nationalist liberation movement that had mobilized around strategic non-violence. As the above case attempted to show, whether civil society or not, this alliance of political and civic organizations managed to restrain violence through social capital, relationships and trust within the group, and this in turn helped restrain violence against Serbian police and Kosovo Serb civilians. Material incentives of the food and medical aid provided through the MTA and parallel state clearly played some role in maintaining the social cohesion of the era, but by all accounts this was because they fueled social unity and the sense of common threat and purpose rather than as crude economic incentives to deter violence. Kosovo of the early 1990s represents a case of bonding social capital under strong political leadership, which through robust organizational networks played an important role in preventing intra-ethnic blood feuds, prevented violent attacks on Serb forces, and contained or constrained the more militant factions for nearly 8 years. The strategy was unusual among national liberation movements, a strategy of non-violence and 'playing the victim for a while' to avoid a violent crackdown and gain the world's sympathies while cultivating support in foreign capitals and the Diaspora through documenting human rights abuses. It was a strategy which ultimately, did not work because the expectations of rescue by the international community didn't materialize; Kosovo Albanians were ultimately left to face Serb repression without the international support Rugova and the LDK movement had banked on. By the mid-1990s, the LDK movements' ability to restrain violence eroded as external and internal support were pulled towards groups supporting violent strategies.

[70] Interview with Bekim Blakaj, Pristina, Kosovo, 19 May 2017. Blakaj is the director of the Humanitarian Law Center and a long-time Kosovar human rights activist. Also interview with Feride Rushiti, Pristina, Kosovo, 23 April 2018. Rushiti is a medical doctor and founder and director of the Kosovo Rehabilitation Center for Torture Victims in Pristina.
[71] Skype interview with Fron Nazhi, 2018.

Nonviolence went against the grain of Kosovo-Albanian culture and history. The expectation of external Western support for the non-violence movement was also a key element of why this strategy worked; it legitimized the strategy in the eyes of the public, according to interlocutors. Fron Nazhi, the Albanian American activist recalls how Rugova and allies in the Diaspora cleverly courted support in the US and Western capitals, to convince domestic audiences. For example, for Kosovo Albanians, seeing Rugova treated as an important leader with a special security detail in TV clips from a visit to Washington, D.C. was reportedly very important to the faith invested in his strategy back in Kosovo.[72] The factor of Western and American support and cause of democracy had strong appeal for the post-communist population.

5. The Breakdown of In-Group Violence Restraint

The Kosovo-Albanian story of the 1990s however ends in the society's abandonment of non-violence for armed insurgency led by the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) that emerged from the early militant Marxist groups, and ultimately in the Kosovo war in 1999. After the Western powers failed to address Kosovo's situation under the 1995 Dayton Accords that ended the war in neighbouring Bosnia, Rugova's strategy with its promise of rescue by the West was badly undermined. The LDK was reduced to listing human rights violations and appealing to the outside world for help.[73] It faced an increasingly well-financed, well-armed, clandestine KLA insurgency drawing on the traditional Albanian heroic ideals of courage, vengeance and self-sacrifice that had the backing of elites in neighbouring Albania, funds and recruits from the Diaspora and from foreign countries.

Factions supporting armed struggle to liberate Kosovo had roots in the small Marxist and nationalist revolutionary organizations, based mainly abroad. The Kosovo-based KLA membership was small, rooted in the central Drenica region and in Dukagjini on the western border with Albania; historically the sources of Albanian nationalist rebellions in the 18th and 19th centuries.[74] After Dayton ignored Kosovo's situation, some activists broke with the LDKs strategy, and in 1997, student frustration led to large scale demonstrations demanding a return to the universities, signalling a major a break with Rugova's patient non-violent strategy. A group calling itself the Kosovo Liberation Army, or KLA (in Albanian *Ushtria*

[72] Skype interview with Fron Nazhi, 2018.
[73] Bekaj 2010, 14.
[74] Pettifer 2012, 71.

Çlirimtare e Kosovës – ***UÇK***) remained a shadowy force behind attacks on Serb police until 1997, when they publicly emerged at the funeral of a teacher killed by Serb police. After this point the KLA stepped up military attacks on Serb security forces, and some studies argue that KLA leaders chose a strategy to attract international military support for their cause by targeted violent attacks provoking Serbian forces, knowing they would retaliate harshly against Albanian civilians.[75] A domestic turning point came in 1998,when 'legendary' senior KLA commander Adem Jashari fought back against a Serb special forces attack on his family compound in Prekaz, and was massacred with 56 members of his extended family; with the Prekaz massacre sympathies shifted to the KLA and recruitment jumped dramatically.[76] While the OSCE's Kosovo Verification Mission worked to quell the localized fighting, the January 1999 Racak massacre by Serb forces was the international turning point, mobilizing world opinion against Serbia. The failure of the internationally convened peace negotiations at Rambouillet when Serbia refused to sign led to the 1999 NATO bombing campaign against Serbian targets. Serb withdrawal 3 months later led to Kosovo's designation since as a UN protectorate, and the introduction of NATO forces and a UN mission to directly administer the province under Security Council Resolution 1244. The war killed an estimated 10,000 people, 863,000 Kosovo Albanian and other non-Serb minorities became refugees, while 590,000 became IDPs.[77]

A fuller accounting of how the social unity and restraints on violence from 1990 to 1997 shifted to domestic support for a violent KLA insurgency from 1998 onwards is beyond the scope of this thesis, but there are few points to highlight. Though leaders who criticized Rugova as too passive were well known, the military groups were highly secretive. Fron Nazhi, who had been heavily involved with the LDK movement at the time both in the US and Kosovo, claims that mostly, Kosovo Albanians were surprised to find to there were serious groups with a military agenda, and he realized that in his circles "not one of us actually knew those people". He further claims he was surprised to later discover that the Council for Human Rights and Freedoms "was a front for the KLA guys, and they had used it as a way to gather information and spy".[78] Consistent with the notion of social capital as a neutral multiplier (rather than inherently supporting peace and tolerance) it seems the social

[75] Kuperman, 2008, 69; Perritt 2010, 43.
[76] Schwandner-Sievers, 2013.
[77] Independent International Commission on Kosovo 2000, 90.
[78] Skype interview with Fron Nazhi, 2018.

unity forged by the LDK and the early CSOs running the parallel society shifted from 1998 onwards towards supporting the KLA. Eventually international support shifted towards the KLA too - in an astounding reversal, since the KLA had been called a terrorist group by the US.[79] The "good civil society" committed to non-violence no longer had social influence directly on those factions that advocated violence. But perhaps more importantly, the LDK and the civic associations lost their influence on the Kosovo Albanian public whose allegiance had previously kept the KLA contained. In fact, in 1998-99, moderate Albanian leaders and LDK members were victims of targeted killings by the KLA, reigniting inter-Albanian violence.

The role of external support, both covert and open, clearly played a role in these dynamics. According to Fron Nazhi, when Western governments began to show some kind of support for the KLA in 1997-98, that also influenced the Kosovo Albanian public. Domestically, the presence of the KLA at funerals of Kosovar Albanians killed in Serb police violence also was effective at legitimizing the KLA as avengers of innocent victims in the public consciousness. Furthermore, the divisions between the non-violent and militarist factions in Kosovo Albanian society were perhaps not as great as it appeared. As the interviews with many of the originators of the blood feuds campaign in the Kosovo Oral History Initiative reveal, many were motivated by the need to face an inevitable situation of war by the Serbian state. Furthermore, the Mother Theresa Association, one of the pillars of the parallel state and non-violence movement, provided food to KLA fighters and their families – and in turn the Serb regime did not discriminate as in the late 1990s Serbian forces killed 150 volunteers from MTA, and 40 are still missing.[80] The shift from mass support for Rugova and the LDK to the KLA in 1997-8 dissolved the previous social unity and fueled a fierce and violent intra-Albanian political struggle, though the violence was one sided and used against the LDK.

After the 1999 war, the international military and civilian intervention became enmeshed in the intra-Albanian political struggle that emerged in the late 1990s. Many critics claim that the international community supported former KLA leaders turned politicians like Thaci and Haradinaj immediately after the war for the sake of stability, but that prioritizing stability has

[79] Kuperman, 2008. United States Senate Republican Policy Committee 1999.
[80] Interview with Zef Shala, 2017.

fatally poisoned Kosovo's democracy.[81] Some studies have referenced this as the "Gordian knot" of the Kosovo problem for the international community.[82] One local civil society leader interviewed called the outcome of this dynamic, today, quite bluntly, a "completely captured state".[83]

[81]King and Mason 2006; Chesterman 2004. Many interviews with Kosovo-Albanian and minority group members advanced this notion that internationals have consistently supported corrupted elites in Kosovo for the sake of maintaining stability and because they are "good listeners" meaning they can be pressured to follow international agendas.
[82] Richmond and Franks 2009.
[83] Interview with senior policy maker in a leading Kosovar "democratic development" civil society organization (name withheld), Pristina, Kosovo, 2017 (name and date withheld).

Chapter 4: Post-War Kosovo and Kosovo-Albanian Civil Society Restraints on Violence

1. The Violent Intra-Albanian Power Struggle and the Post-War Political Order

Immediately after the war, massive international resources came into Kosovo – a "flood of money" that raised the stakes in the game for political power in Kosovo".[1] After Serb forces withdrew, the KLA quickly appointed its own interim municipal authorities while much of the LDK leadership remained abroad in the camps. Despite the presence of 50,000 NATO troops, a wave of retaliatory violence against Kosovo's remaining Serb civilians and other minorities accused of involvement in the war swept Kosovo, often by men in KLA uniforms.[2] By early November, approximately 100,000 Serbs had fled Kosovo for safety in Serbia or to Serb majority enclaves and Northern Kosovo, about half of the pre-war population of 200,000 Serbs.[3] This period was also marked by crime and intimidation against Kosovo Albanians as well as murders of moderate Albanian politicians. The former KLA clustered in the new institutions of the Kosovo Protection Force (KPC), a civil response agency created by the international mission to eventually demobilize the KLA, and the Kosovo Police Service but maintained the pre-war KLA networks and command structure.[4] The whole demobilization process was a failure in the view of one scholar, and, "NATO blinked, their disarmament order was largely ignored and they accepted not to have a monopoly on the use of violence in Kosovo."[5]

The former fighters claimed political legitimacy for the groups who fought to liberate Kosovo through promoting the memory of the war and championing the rights of war veterans and families of martyrs.[6] However, Rugova's LDK resoundingly won the first municipal elections in fall 2000, with the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) and the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK), the two political parties created by KLA leaders relegated to minor roles in public rejection of the excesses and criminality of the former fighters. Beginning in 2001, the ICTY and the UN began arrests of some former KLA commanders for crimes committed during the conflict but faced public protests, attacks on international offices, and witness

[1] Skype interview with Andrea Capussela, 30 November 2017. Capussela is an academic expert on competition policy, rule of law and corruption, and from 2008-11 served as the head of the economics unit of the International Civilian Office in Kosovo.
[2] Boyle 2012.
[3] Ibid., 103.
[4] Bekaj 2010.
[5] Skype interview with Andrea Capussela, 2017.
[6] Schwandner-Sievers, 2013.

intimidation (and killings) through 2003 and few of those arrested were successfully prosecuted.[7] In 2002 elections for a national assembly, the Kosovo public elected Ibrahim Rugova president and the LDK party, again decisively rejecting KLA political leadership, though a PDK Prime Minister was chosen in a national unity government.

This power struggle between the KLA war leaders and the LDK played out both nationally as well as locally across Kosovo's regions. A UN municipal administrator's experience was that LDK leaders supported the UN's focus on a democratic and multiethnic Kosovo involving the return of Serbs and other minorities, but they were constantly discredited by local politicians from the PDK and the LKCK (another KLA linked militant faction) for being soft on the Serbs and betraying Albanian war victims.[8] At the local level, KLA interim officials built patronage networks through diverting international funds and illegally occupied property to war veterans and their families and while legitimating themselves as true patriots through displays of the Albanian flag, war memorials and commemoration ceremonies.[9]

This post-war struggle for political and economic power between the KLA successor parties and the LDK was also explicitly violent, and assassinations of LDK leaders from 2000 to 2002 were clearly linked to KLA factions.[10] In 2009, a former KLA intelligence agent claimed the agency had targeted and killed 450 people in the aftermath of the war, most of them political opponents from the LDK and other groups.[11] Most of these intra-Albanian murders have never been resolved. Historian James Pettifer sees 2000-2002 as pivotal in shaping post-war Kosovo, noting that some in the LDK thought that the end of the war meant that they should restore the parallel structures that had prevailed during the 1990s, but in the war a lot of new leaders emerged.[12] The arrest of prominent KLA commanders Remi and Haradinaj (among 60 KLA former commanders arrested by the UN that year) provoked mass protests and a public outcry from Kosovo Albanian society.[13] After the March 2003 conviction of the Kosovo Police Force's (KPC) Sali Veseli for murder of another former KLA commander, a major purge of the KPC was planned by KFOR but was strongly

[7] King and Mason 2006, 142-6,49-50.
[8] Interview with Charles Denisson Lane, Washington, D.C., 24 October 2018. Lane is a retired colonel of the US Army Special Forces who worked across the Balkans for two decades and was the former United Nations' Municipal Adminstrator for Vucitrn/Vushtrrri and Peje/Pec municipalities of Kosovo from 1999 to 2003.
[9] Interview with Charles Denisson Lane, 2018.
[10] International Crisis Group 2000. Also interview with Andrea Capussela, 2017.
[11] Boyle 2014, 213; Jonsson 2014, 193.
[12] Skype interview with James Pettifer, 1 December 2017. Pettifer is a British academic, author and journalist, who teaches Balkan history at St. Cross College, Oxford and has published extensively on Kosovo.
[13] Mitchell 2002; *The Guardian*, 15 Aug 2002, World.

opposed by British Major General Andrew Cumming who was in charge of the KPC's retraining, as a threat to the legitimacy of the international presence.[14] In the end the international mission stopped the arrests, and many of the former commanders were released without prosecution.[15]

Rugova remained Kosovo's iconic leader until his death from cancer in 2006. Since then, the LDK has been remained one of Kosovo's leading parties but has entered into governing coalitions with the KLA successor parties, resigning themselves to cooperation with the post KLA factions. By the mid 2000s, all the main parties, the LDK, PDK, and AAK shared an interest in keeping this governance system, which allowed them to capture funds through corruption, and avoid political accountability because the UN was there.[16]

As this brief overview of post-war Kosovo shows, this widespread use of violence by the KLA affiliated groups to consolidate political and economic control was not checked either by intra-Albanian social cohesion or by the international mission in Kosovo. Kosovo Albanian society remained deeply divided between the old elites represented by the authority of the LDK and intelligentsia, and the KLA leaders, many from Kosovo's poorer, rural regions, and whose sources of their legitimacy in post-war Kosovo were linked to heroic status as liberators and martyrs for Albanian freedom.[17] Their legitimacy was also linked to patronage bases reflecting the family and economic networks in the home regions of key commanders.[18] While the LDK can be said to have a civil society constituency (as this study will show) supported by international resources, the former KLA parties had a business base that grew up post-war.[19] The fundamental conflict between these two political forces and their distinct demographic and economic bases has shaped Kosovo's post-war civic activism as well. As the next section will show, while the internationally funded civil society in post-war Kosovo mimicked transnational forms of civil society (support for democracy, human rights, multiethnicity, women's' rights, tolerance), other civic actors emerged driven by more exclusive vales of Albanian nationalism, the rights of war veterans, victims and martyrs, and pan-Islamic loyalties.

[14] Cited in FN 29. King and Mason 2006, 150.
[15] Ibid., 149.
[16] Skype interview with Andrea Capussela, 2017.
[17] Schwandner-Sievers, 2013.
[18] Bekaj 2010.
[19] Skype interview with Andrea Capussela, 2017; Interview with James Pettifer, 2017. Both noted that certain wealthy families are known to be the backers of key leaders Ramush Haradinaj (AAK leader) and Hashim Thaci, PDK leader, both of whom have served as Prime Minister and Thaci was President from 2016-2020.

The violent consolidation of political power by the KLA successor parties after the war occurred as the UN Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) was establishing self-governing institutions, and promoting the liberal peacebuilding agenda of multiparty democracy, civil society, free media, minority rights and economic development. The 2007 elections were won by the PDK, for the first time and they invited the LDK to be its coalition partner. It was this LDK/PDK coalition government that in Feb. 2008 unilaterally declared Kosovo's independence, which was quickly recognized by the US, UK, France, Germany and many others. Kosovo entered a period of international supervision by recognizing countries, though many states (and some EU members) have withheld recognition. That period of supervised independence ended in 2012, though the UN mission and agencies (and the EU, OSCE, and KFOR) remain in Kosovo under the legal framework of UNSC resolution 1244, which considers Kosovo part of Serbia. Approximately 6,000 NATO peacekeepers and 1,000 European Union police officers, prosecutors, and judges remain as part of the European Union Rule of Law (EULEX) mission since 2008 tasked with tackling deep-rooted corruption and continuing incidents of inter-ethnic violence.[20]

In 2014, after inconclusive election results, the LDK agreed on another coalition with the PDK. This situation of current PDK domination of government, and the LDK's loss of its principled independence mean that these two parties, once representing diametrically opposed constituencies, appear more and more similar to the Kosovo public. Widespread corruption and patronage by the parties in government means that people support the leading parties to attain state jobs – "we now have a system where 40% of people vote on loyalties based on opportunities they get from the parties in power".[21] On the political status issue, a high level dialogue between Serbia and Kosovo to "normalize relations" was launched in 2010 by the UN, and is personally facilitated by the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs Federica Mogherini, but has made little substantive progress.

After the war, the social fabric of Kosovo communities also changed dramatically, with refugees from the villages moving into urban areas and community networks and values disrupted. At the same time, Kosovo's small society is unified around Kosovo Albanian nationalism and the desire for independence from Serbian domination. The LDK represents

[20] RFE/RL 2012.
[21] Interview with Kosovar policy analyst and civil society activist, 2018 (name withheld, date withheld).

more moderate Albanian nationalism and a stronger desire to align Kosovo with modernizing, Western, cosmopolitan values. Today's Western-oriented local CSO community is clearly affiliated by class and outlook with the LDK, the party of Rugova, and some of the senior civil society leaders interviewed for this study had worked directly with the LDK in the 1990s. The KLA legacy parties, the PDK and the AAK, have roots in rural, more traditional Albanian values and in more conservative regions. But they have the structures for political control (from the insurgency days) and the allegiance of the majority in the countryside based on their narrative of heroic resistance as the source of national pride and identity. Since the war, the ongoing economic crisis in Kosovo and inability to work in Europe means massive unemployment especially among youth and deep disaffection, and many young people are choosing to leave Kosovo legally and illegally. The failures of internationally sponsored democratization and peacebuilding and the pervasive corruption of the current governance system has led to deep societal disaffection among Kosovo Albanian society.

2. International Support "Rebuilds" Post-War Kosovo Civil Society

The post-1999 era of UN-led international intervention to create security, local self-government, rule of law, and a functioning market economy also included major support for Kosovo's domestic civil society. The rationale was in line with transnational models of a strong civil society as a goal in itself, as a support for democracy, an aid in reconstruction and services and later, in peacebuilding between the Kosovo Albanian majority and Kosovo's Serbian and other minorities. Fron Nazhi, a American aid expert who established the Soros Foundation in Kosovo in the early 1990s, recalled; "we didn't need to develop civil society within Kosovo, civil society was already extremely rich there and functioning."[22] However, Kosovo's remarkable 1990s civil society was seen by others as "too politicized" when the international structures arrived in Kosovo after the war, and hence was avoided while another neutral type of civil society was fostered. The neglect of Kosovo's rich pre-war civil society was also shaped by the chaotic post-war scenario. International humanitarian NGOs (more than 1000) flooded into Kosovo in the months after Serb forces withdrew, while many of the pre-war civic activists were still in refugee camps outside of Kosovo. Emergency assistance took immediate priority, where international NGOs had standard protocols, so the circumstances meant that international actors simply behaved as if starting from scratch.

[22] Skype interview with Fron Nazhi, 2018.

When activists from the 1990s parallel society era returned to Kosovo, many found themselves recruited quickly into helping donors initiate new programs. Some continued with the old models of volunteerism; the Mother Theresa Association, resumed humanitarian assistance in partnership with the foreign NGOs until July 2002, when it handed off its beneficiaries to the Kosovar social welfare institutions.[23] Many former parallel society activists were also influenced by the Western model of a pluralist civil society. Former LDK strategist Peci described how he was inspired to play a role in building a real democracy out of the legacy of communism and civil resistance period.

> "My mission was finished in politics, and I decided to be involved in civil society - my personal goal was to create conditions for a democratic society with diversity and different thinking within civil society." [24]

He was approached by a Danish organization to manage a very large EU civil society program in Kosovo, and established the Kosovo Civil Society Foundation, a prominent local organization today, and then KIPRED, one of Kosovo's most prominent think tanks. There was a lot of seed money available from donors for civil society at that time. Jehona Gjurgjeala was a young activist in that era and recalls, "money was just falling from the sky and there was this frantic drive for everyone to get their hands on this free-flowing cash."[25] Gjurgjeala had already been active in civic affairs, a member of the Post-Pessimists, a cultural youth group active from 1995 to 2003 that published a youth magazine and organized cultural events, many of whom became prominent civic activists.[26] NGOs and international organizations hired many of the most experienced civic activists from the parallel society, depleting the ranks of the pre-war mass based organizations, whose ethic of self-help and voluntarism were felt to be no longer needed. After the emergency reconstruction phase ended, external donor funding focused on peacebuilding, interethnic dialogue and multiethnic projects designed to bring Kosovo Albanians, Kosovo Serbs and other minorities together. However, these donor-driven programs are widely seen to have had poor results and left

[23] Interview with Zef Shala, 2017.
[24] Interview with Lulzim Peci, 2017
[25] Interview with Jehona Gjurgjeala, Pristina, 17 May 2017. Gjurgjeala is the founder and director of the Kosovar NGO " TOKA" that focuses on youth empowerment through experiential learning and service.
[26] Oral History Kosovo n.d.

Kosovar-Albanians resenting the international focus on multiethnicity as a model for Kosovo society.[27]

For some Kosovo Albanians, the multi-ethnicity framework promoted by internationals in Kosovo and taken up by foreign funded civil society was seen as a direct threat to Albanian identity and independence. Soon after the international intervention, an Albanian daily newspaper editorial claimed:

> "Alongside imposition, [UNMIK] uses enticements through privilege and money – money in particular, which in Kosovo continues to be poured relentlessly towards those channels which seek the destruction of Kosovo's Albanian identity and the creation of so-called civil society, without an identity or with a transplanted one. All NGOs in Kosovo [...] are financed for this reason: that Kosovo's new society not be projected through Kosovo's eventual independence, but that its status be made relative through a tolerant society and an abandoned identity."[28]

A 2005 study by KIPRED presents a hard hitting critique of UNMIK and the OSCE's role in NGO development since the war as promoting a "sanitized vision" of civil society as non-political service providers and "keen assistants to Kosovo's international administrators" rather than politically engaged civic actors helping to shape the new Kosovo.[29] It also faulted internationals for not building on the strengths of civil society before the war.[30] The result, according to the study's author, was enormous fragmentation and NGOs with no clear political purpose or vision for Kosovo's future.

The Scale and Spectrum of Kosovo's Post-War Civil Society

In 1999 there were 46 NGOs registered, by 2000 another 439 new NGOs registered, in 2001 another 621 new NGOs appeared, and NGOs have grown steadily at about 500 new NGOs registered each year since.[31] By 2016, there were 8500 domestic NGOs registered with the Kosovo government, though only 1500 are assumed to be currently active.[32] Most analysts agree, both internationals and Kosovars, that Kosovo has a technically skilled, and highly

[27] Chigas 2006; Landau, 2017.
[28] FN 1, in: Pula 2005, 1.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid., 4.
[31] Kosovar Civil Society Foundation (KCSF) 2016, 18.
[32] Ibid.

capable civil society active in a range of sectors and has some remarkable achievements. But though polls show there is trust towards civil society compared to other institutions, a key advisor to the Kosovo Civil Society Foundation (KCSF) whose mandate is to support local civil society noted it is very difficult to measure the legitimacy of local civil society and it is not clear to her "why Kosovar civil society has no constituency".[33] In the post war period, many Kosovar and foreign experts have assessed Kosovo's local civil society as donor-driven, not responsive to people's needs and with weak domestic legitimacy.[34]

The majority of Kosovo's new civil society organizations supported by internationals after the war, appear to easily fit the category of "good civil society" used in this project. These CSOs promote democratic institutions, free media, human rights and interethnic peacebuilding, and several strong (donor-funded) networks mean they are well connected with each other. Many of the seasoned leaders of Pristina's "good civil society" described a background of activism with the LDK and Rugova during the 1990s. However, the post-war international model of politically neutral civil society shifted the focus from the internal needs of Kosovo Albanian majority society and focused instead on bridging the Albanian-Serb divides within Kosovo and creating the basis for a multiethnic democratic society. The resulting local "good civil society" is technically skilled, very active implementers of the liberal peacebuilding agenda, but largely seen today as disconnected from the public's core needs and as politically passive.

The "other" civil society that emerged in Kosovo (KLA veterans and war victims associations, the Vetëvendosje (Self-Determination) movement, foreign funded radical Islamic groups) had little engagement with the Western-funded CSO community or funders; in many cases, were not seen to even be part of civil society by the Western-supported CSOs interviewed. They were largely not seen by external actors as civil society and were either off the radar or deliberately avoided by international institutions and Western funders in Kosovo. The most prominent example is the left-oriented civic movement called Vetëvendosje that since 2005 has vocally decried international interference in Kosovo's internal affairs and demanded real "self-determination". VV together with the veterans' associations are seen as exclusionary in nature and promoting ethnic Albanian nationalist agendas and as condoning

[33] Interview with Edona Krasniqi, Senior Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, Kosovar Civil Society Foundation (KCSF), Pristina, Kosovo, 17 May 2017.
[34] Pula, 2004; Pula 2005; Chigas 2006; Schwandner-Sievers 2013; Kostovicova and Bojicic-Dzelilovic 2013; UNDP 2008.

violent methods; international actors have been openly critical of VV as “"radical and dangerous, as exploiting political uncertainties and endangering a peaceful political process".[35]

The good civil society - bad civil society distinction resonated somewhat with those interviewed, though was seen as overly simplistic. Applied to Kosovo’s civic spectrum, “good civil society” included the NGOs committed to values of liberal democracy, tolerance, minority rights, pluralism and non-violence, and most had been created with foreign funding since independence. As “bad civil society’ in Kosovo today, interviewees named Vetëvendosje, the veterans and war heroes’ associations and radical Islamic groups that have grown up over the last decade, seen to be funded by Arab states (as distinguished from Kosovo’s moderate Moslem traditions historically). Kosovo’s religious communities were not mentioned generally in discussions around civil society - the Islamic community, Catholic church, and Sufi communities are important parts of the Kosovo-Albanian community and the Serbian Orthodox Church is a very influential voice in the Kosovo-Serb community.

3. Civil Society ‘s Legitimacy and Constituency in Kosovo Today

In Kosovo today, local CSOs and the international policy of CSO promotion face a paradoxical situation – a large and sophisticated local civil society that has a serious legitimacy problem, as acknowledged by many CSO leaders themselves. As in many post-conflict environments, the influx of donor funding created an ‘entrepreneurial’ culture - “civil society in Kosovo today is simply an entrepreneurial stratum to suck all the foreign funds,”[36] one long-time activist commented. Another stated that the more established CSOs especially, are really seen as “donor fund processing machines”, and are “uninterested, or unwilling or irrelevant to what the public perceives as important.”[37] Another activist stated that “civil society looks like a lot of opportunists in the eyes of the Kosovo public.”[38] Another commented, “there is no healthy civil society in Kosovo, we have a business entrepreneurial culture, with local CSOs driven by personal interests”.[39] This widespread cynicism about

[35] See UN Security Council Report S/2007/134 cited in footnote 70 in Schwandner-Sievers 2013, 170; Visoka 2016.
[36] Interview with civic activist based in Kosovo, name withheld, date withheld.
[37] Interview with Jehona Gjurgjeala, 2017.
[38] Interview with Garantina (Tina) Kraja, Pristina, 24 April 2018. Kraja is a journalist, civic activist and analyst who served as policy advisor to Kosovo’s former President Atifete Jahjaga.
[39] Interview with civic activist based in Kosovo, name withheld, date withheld.

CSOs is a legacy of past international funding approaches, as "international funding to civil society was built on the model of contractors instead of activists."[40]

Interlocutors agreed that today there is very low social trust and little solidarity of any kind in Kosovo-Albanian society, the diametric opposite of the strong identity and social cohesion of the 1990s. The Kosovo Civil Society Foundation (KCSF) has operated foreign grants for local CSOs and found that NGOs which work with short-term project funding end up feeding this public mistrust. Senior KCSF staff commented that they are "re-thinking whether funding some grassroots efforts does good or does harm to them," and experimenting with different modalities that avoid these pitfalls.[41]

Local Civil Society Tainted by Association with Donors' Policies?

Since local civil society is widely viewed as a foreign creation, its legitimacy is also tied to the reputation of Kosovo's foreign donors and their overall policies. Many civic activists voiced deep skepticism about the intentions of international donors' in supporting local civil society to promote social change, while turning a blind eye to corruption and impunity amongst Kosovo's political elite. One CSO leader noted the "massive dichotomy between what the international actors do at the civil society level and what they are doing (or not doing) at the institutional level…supporting compromised politicians because they are useful to maintain stability but then give a bit of money to CS to hold these same politicians accountable and fight corruption."[42] Given these impossible odds, many CSOs actually "punch above their weight", in her view.[43] Burim Ejupi, the Executive Director of INDEP sees Kosovo's NGO sector as among the strongest in the region. In his view, however the public doesn't appreciate it since many CSOs and think tanks, like INDEP, have goals to promote fact-based policy making in specific areas like energy, the environment, sustainable development, and much of that is done quietly.[44]

The deep political engagement of powerful countries who have backed Kosovo's independence means donors have strong incentives to make sure local CSOs don't rock the

[40] Interview with Tina Kraja, 2018.
[41] Small focus group of senior staff from Kosovo Civil Society Foundation (KCSF), Pristina, 17 May 2017.
[42] Interview with Jehona Gjurgjeala, 2017.
[43] Interview with Jehona Gjurgjeala, 2017.
[44] Interview with Burim Ejupi, Pristina, Kosovo, 11 May 2017. Ejupi is Executive Director at the Institute for Development Policy (INDEP), a think tank in Kosovo focused on research-based public policy solutions.

boat too much. Andrea Capusella was a senior economics official at the International Civilian Office (ICO) from 2009 -2011:

> "The international community, and especially the Americans which were the most influential player there, had taken a decision that it was not worth it to try to insist too hard for better governance - there was this overall policy of not perturbing the superficial stability in Kosovo, so contacts with civil society were all made under this caveat. So I suppose they would typically choose people, relatively tame organizations, those that the government was happy to talk to and those that were financed by the international community, those very same embassies that were supporting that policy."[45]

Many CSO leaders across the spectrum claimed that internationals deliberately withhold evidence of wrongdoing by Kosovo's political leaders to maintain leverage over current political elites. Mother Theresa Association executive director Zef Shala claims, "they say to the leaders, if you don't go to dialogue with Serbia than we will be opening these files."[46] Bekim Blakaj of a prominent human rights NGO asserts that "international missions have tolerated this 'unrule of law' just for the sake of some temporary peace, etc. We don't want to arrest this or that person because we might have some protests on the street."[47] Avni Zogiani, an anti-corruption activist and former prominent journalist, claims that only those corrupted Kosovo politicians who are "not good listeners" to the internationals end up being prosecuted for corruption, and so the EULEX rule of law mission is not trusted by the public as upholding impartial justice.[48] These perceptions show the deep mistrust of international policies in Kosovo. These beliefs contribute to public mistrust of CSOs, who are seen as part of foreign donors' political agendas, and international and local interviewees claimed that local CSOs self-censure so as not to antagonize their international donors.

[45] Skype interview with Andrea Capusella, 2017.
[46] Interview with Zef Shala, 2017.
[47] Interview with Bekim Blakaj, 2017.
[48] Interview with Avni Zogiani, Pristina, Kosovo, 20 May 2017. Zogiani is a well known Kosovar journalist, was the director of anti-corruption civic organization "Çohu" (Arise) as well as the Center for Investigative Journalism, and from 2014 has been a member of the civic movement/political party Vetëvendosje as a candidate and parliamentary advisor to the VV faction.

Some international policy makers and activists interviewed concurred that international policies helped legitimize Kosovo's current leaders. UK Ambassador Ruari O'Connell claimed that the Western countries, "need to be more honest with ourselves, the PDK is our joint project…we took sides." He characterized the current political situation as essentially "feudal in nature, with political control of the state vital to keep patronage networks" and that these structures are maintained in society by "maintaining the existential threat and perpetuating the conflict, in case it is needed."[49] Fred Abrahams, an international human rights activist and expert on Kosovo, claims that even the best civil society could not have countered the fact that in Kosovo "former guerillas controlled all facets of life, political and economic" and that "the international community's tolerance for improper deeds from day one legitimized the guerilla movement and helped them maintain control".[50]

Another civic leader spoke of how local patronage networks had infiltrated donor organizations themselves over time in Kosovo, as the local staff of missions "become the bosses, with all the institutional memory, and the work of the international agency gets connected to local politics."[51] One interviewee who worked with international organizations claimed CSOs are "more corrupted than the political parties because no one demands accountability of them" and if you dig deep, many are a "family business, where the senior researcher is a sister in law or cousin of the executive director."[52]

All these concerns point to a broader issue in Kosovo, that the post-war scenario is characterized by both local and foreign interlocutors as a "captured state", driven by patronage networks of clientelism linked to all the major political parties that control everything in Kosovo. Tina Kraja noted, "they translated their wartime networks into political party networks, they offered people jobs, we had socially owned enterprises that became their hub, this is where they employed their party militants and their families."[53] Thus, reportedly the credibility of Kosovo's democracy itself is deeply compromised as people vote according to these patronage networks. This manipulation can be very transparent, despite the heavy international presence. Zogiani recounted how during the 2010 election campaign, then Prime

[49] Interview with UK Ambassador to Kosovo Ruari O'Connell, Pristina, Kosovo, 26 April 2018.
[50] Skype interview with Fred Abrahams, Associate Director for Program, Human Rights Watch, 17 April 2018.
[51] Interview with Shehj Lulzim Shehu, Secretary General of the Sufi Union of Kosovo Tarikats, Pristina, Kosovo, 17 May 2017.
[52] Interview with Besa Ismaili, Pristina, Kosovo, 19 May 2017. Ismaili is a professor of English in the faculty of Islamic Studies at the University of Pristina and an advocate for Islamic women in Kosovo.
[53] Interview with Tina Kraja, 2018.

Minister Thaci pledged to increase teachers' salaries by 50%, and offered other civil servants major pay rises, "so no teacher was going to vote against that", and in this situation "the IMF and other international organizations in Kosovo remained silent".[54]

Civil Society Movement into Government

In many contexts, the movement of civil society leaders into government can be a positive force for effecting political level change. However, given the deep public disillusionment with Kosovo's democracy, the constant movement of CSO leaders into government instead has reportedly eroded public trust in the integrity of civil society. A CSO activist reported, "every election it happens, the key leaders of civil society, the ones that the international community invests in, the ones that the community begins to trust, they get into politics…and you see the disappointment of people."[55] "Civil society is just a job training ground' or a "stepping stone" or "preparation for a political career" were common views reported by several civic activists. They claimed that now government is the best place to work, as wages are higher and it is more stable, whereas 8 years ago, NGOs were the best place to be. According to Andrea Capussela, the logic of the system makes it "individually rational for Kosovars to be part of clientelistic networks", and that "being critical voices in civil society can be quite costly… you forgo many opportunities that other people capture by agreeing to be part of these patronage networks".[56] Long-time civic activist Shkëlzen Maliqi described the issue simply as - "people have skills and they need to survive" in Kosovo's difficult economy.[57]

Some civic leaders insisted the movement into government could be a positive force. Feride Rushiti, prominent leader of the Kosovo Rehabilitation Center for Torture Victims (KRCT), served with many political leaders in an international commission right after the war and has former staff working at senior levels in the government. KCRT was able to secure state recognition and a pension for women survivors of wartime rape in 2014, a taboo topic in Kosovo (and they were actually allocated a higher pension than war veterans.) Rushiti called KRCT an "academy" for young people. In a society with few private sector opportunities,

[54] Interview with Tina Kraja, 2018; Interview with Avni Zogiani, 2018;Çollaku 2010.
[55] Interview with Besa Ismaili, 2017.
[56] Skype interview with Andrea Capussela, 2017.
[57] Interview with Shkëlzen Maliqi, 2018.

this is an important mechanism for the development of talented young people, and some of her former staff are now ministers.[58]

Ardian Arifi, Political Advisor in President Thaci's office, was himself a former civic activist and prominent critic of the government before he joined the government in 2014. He said that government members asked him, "so you think you can do better" and he decided he had to join or he would not have the "moral right to criticize the government any more". He claims he has "tried to do my best for Kosovo in any job I had, for civil society, and then think tanks and now here as advisor to the President," but claims that in government there is the advantage of being much nearer to decision making.[59]

However, former civic activists like Arifi are widely perceived as failing to bring progressive agendas into government because of the basic structure of Kosovo's politics. One "cannot change anything because the owners remain the same and take the decisions, the business interests behind the parties."[60] Bekim Blakaj, director of the Kosovo NGO, the Humanitarian Law Center, stated, "it is terrible to see so many people from media and from civil society joining different political parties and then we see them in the Assembly sticking to the interests of this or that party, this shows how it works in Kosovo."[61] These dynamics have made the public cynical about CSOs as simply "fresh faces" or "window display" for the very corrupted political parties. Arifi claims that while in government, he has been able to pursue his long-time goals of "changing the long-established Balkan narratives that have fueled the conflict" as he was tasked by President Thaci to lead the process of the proposed Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Kosovo. Once it is fully established he hopes it will be run by CSOs, because, he acknowledged, "people don't trust politicians and political institutions".[62]

In this context, many long-time civil society activists have become disillusioned, and "some people that actually believed in those ideals, eventually leave, and eventually just fade away, or they are silent."[63] According to Zogiani, there is also a sense of hopelessness amongst CSOs since in the end, you take risks to expose corruption, but there will be no action by the state, and "a foreign structure like EULEX is going to decide cases, with no accountability to

[58] Interview with Feride Rushiti,
[59] Interview with Ardian Arifi, Political Advisor to President Thaci, Pristina, Kosovo, 24 April 2018.
[60] Interview with Arber Zaimi Advisor to the Presidency, Vetëvendosje (VV), Pristina, Kosovo, 26 April 2018.
[61] Interview with Bekim Blakaj, 2017.
[62] Interview with Ardian Arifi, 2018.
[63] Interview with Tina Kraja, 2018.

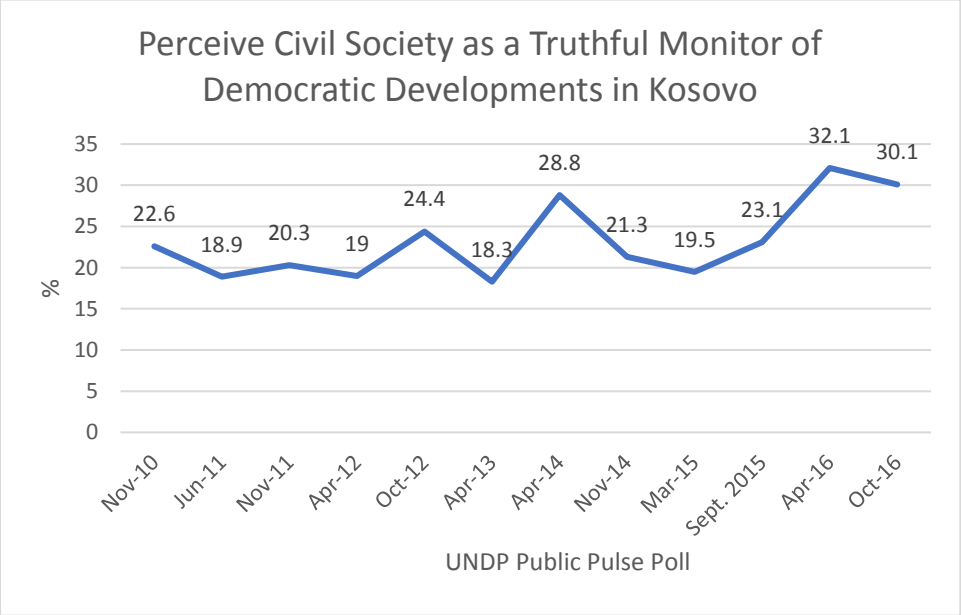
Kosovo society, based on political calculations."[64] Tina Kraja, a journalist and policy advisor to Kosovo's former President Atifete Jahjaga claimed, "I am not sure what the society stands for, it has become completely demobilized in part because of the international community, because of their prioritization of security over democracy, stability over reforms…the biggest problem is the disenchantment with the democratic process."[65]

All the above views suggest a low level of legitimacy for contemporary civil society in Kosovo, but legitimacy remains difficult to measure. Edona Krasniqi of KCSF stated that her organization and donors struggle with the problematic question of measures of civil society legitimacy. "For me personally its initiatives or protests organized by civil society and whether they can get people out?"[66] In terms of public perceptions, UNDP's "Public Pulse" perception surveys (2013-2016) report a very mixed picture, with participation low as only 3-5% of citizens are members of a CSO, have benefited from or participated in a CSO activity, while in 2015 as high as 60.7% agreed that "in general, civil society is doing a good work" and 59.2% agreed that "civil society can be trusted."[67]

KCSF experts and several major donors commented on this seeming paradox - that trust is high in the civil society sector, while participation is very low. Some felt the high trust levels could be attributed to the very low credibility of the government and politicians in Kosovo, as the civic sector is trusted far more than most of Kosovo's formal government institutions. For comparison, a 2018 survey found that public trust in justice sector is around 30% and the Assembly of Kosovo and the Government at only 15% (while trust in local security institutions on the other hand is high, reaching 61% for the Kosovo Police and 78% for the Kosovo Security Force).[68] UNDP's polls as well speak to the trust in NGOs as watchdogs on government, showing that since 2010 only 20-30% of the population sees civil society as truthful watchdogs on government (see Figure 6). This likely reflects the public perception voiced in the interviews that CSOs are seen as part of the patronage systems around the Kosovo state.

[64] Interview with Avni Zogiani, 2017.
[65] Interview with Tina Kraja, 2018.
[66] Interview with Edona Krasniqi, 2017.
[67] These UNDP survey results reported in Kosovar Civil Society Foundation (KCSF) 2016, 54.
[68] Kosovo Center for Security Studies 2018, 10-18.When the views of Kosovo Serbs only are reported, trust in police and security institutions however reaches only 2-5%.

Figure 6: Public Perceptions of Civil Society



*Data sourced from UNDP Public Pulse 12.[69]

Having reviewed broad patterns, the next section turns to a more detailed description of types of CSOs that coexist in this post-war civic arena, encompassing those deemed to be both "good" and "bad civil society".

Kosovo's "Good Civil Society": Main Clusters

The following five broad groupings represent the main clusters within the thousands of CSOs who would mostly fit the category of "good civil society", namely those that are working for progressive agendas like development, democracy and peace from an inclusive, non-violent orientation.

1) 1990s Mass-Based NGOs

The grassroots, voluntarist groups from the 1990s like the Mother Theresa Association (MTA), the Council for Defense of Human Rights and Freedoms (CDHRF) or the Kosovo Women's Network (KWN) have a high profile due to their past reputations though are now smaller and far less active. The Mother Theresa Association retains its branch structure, with 5 regional offices and has "1-2 volunteers in every village" with a total membership of 700 people. It works on refugee return, on civic dialogue and support to war victims, and

[69] From Table 2: Trend Analysis of Democratization Index Components in UNDP Kosovo 2016, 9.

continues small scale direct aid with a European network of supporters. The once powerful CDHRF network had by 2005 shifted from human rights reporting and advocacy towards "a variety of short-term projects, such as elections monitoring, monitoring municipal assemblies, and the organization of one-time events, based on the availability of donor funds".[70] It is also criticized by peers for doing little to report violations of crimes committed against the Serbian minority after the war, and according to one human rights activist, "they lost a unique opportunity because they did so much for Albanians and had the legitimacy to take a stand against violations of Serb rights".[71] The Kosovo Women's Network however, which brings together over 70 women's NGOs, is today still very active. These voluntarist groups are connected through CIVIKOS, a network of 120 such NGOs, among them Caritas Kosovo, Handikos of Kosovo Disabled Peoples, Red Cross of Kosovo, and Women for Women of Kosovo.[72]

2) Pristina-based Policy NGOs and Think Tanks

A large group of CSOs represents professional NGOs and think tanks focused on research, policy and advocacy regarding development, energy policy, privatization, election monitoring, media, and peacebuilding. Many were founded and are directed by the Kosovo-Albanian intellectual elite around the LDK and received significant donor foreign funding early on. The leaders of this group have moved in and out of government positions and have developed strong connections with the political parties since, "with the declaration of independence, although internationals remained powerful, it was clear who is the boss, basically the local establishment".[73] These CSOs are seen as very strong by international officials, "one of the strongest in the region" in terms of technical capacities.[74] However, since these types of policy-focused organizations work quietly, providing expertise to both donors and the Kosovo government, the general public often does not appreciate their role. Some of the most prominent are Kosovo Democratic Institute, KIPRED, REINVEST, INDEP, ATRC, BIRN network, the GAP Institute, and the Center for Minority Rights. Albanian researcher Roland Gjoni described this group as playing the role of "system maintenance", acting as intermediaries between the internationals and local politics and

[70] Pula 2005, 20-21.
[71] Interview with Bekim Blakaj, 2017.
[72] Interview with Zef Shala, 2017.
[73] Skype interview with Roland Gjoni, 6 November 2017. Gjoni is a Researcher on ethno-national conflicts at University College Dublin with over 15 years experience in legal and policy advisory roles with international organizations in Kosovo.
[74] Interview with senior official of international organization, Pristina, Kosovo, 16 May 2017, name withheld.

"saying the words the West likes such as rule of law and media and democracy," but are increasingly connected to the political parties and the PDK which has been in power since 2007.[75]

3) Human Rights Organizations

This cluster of CSOs combines the older human rights organizations related to the conflict and its victims, with a younger network of NGOs focused on a wider range of marginalized groups.[76] A key actor is the Humanitarian Law Center (HLC) set up in 1997 (a branch of an existing Serbian organization) with a main focus on war losses and missing persons. Executive director Bekim Blakaj described that it aims to combat politicized myths with evidence, and to "create a fact-based narrative about the war in Kosovo focusing on individual victims" in the Kosovo Memory Book, a 3-volume record of the crimes during the war. It is also part of a NGO coalition to establish a regional commission on human rights (RECOM) as a multi-state body to "establish a joint narrative about the wars" and to get away from "national narratives about the past that further divide the region".[77] Other important human rights organizations are Youth Initiative for Human Rights, INTEGRA, the Kosova Rehabilitation Centre for Torture Victims (KRCT), CRDP Center for Research, Documentation and Publication, and FORUM DMZ (a German organization), and Kosovo 2.0, an alternative media site. In a major accomplishment, in 2018, the KRCT secured compensation for the victims of sexual violence during the war, which had been resisted by many domestic constituencies. The suffering of war victims, the missing persons and especially taboo issues such as war rape are far from settled in Kosovo twenty years later, and these organizations argue that "if we do not deal with the past in a proper manner, after some decades we may have some fighting again."[78] Activists claim that dealing directly with the painful issues of the war, was ignored by the internationals, with one Kosovar expert stating that Kosovo society was told to "just move on and forget the past, embrace a multiethnic society" and these issues have only gotten more acute.[79]

4) Youth Volunteerism NGOs

Another cluster encompasses the growing trend in recent years towards CSOs that focus on long-term civic education to create a socially engaged voluntarist culture among today's

[75] Skype interview with Roland Gjoni, 2017.
[76] Avdyli and Mulla 2017.
[77] Interview with Bekim Blakaj, 2017.
[78] Interview with Bekim Blakaj, 2017.
[79] Interview with Tina Kraja, 2018.

youth. More than 70% of Kosovo's people are under 35, and the youth unemployment rate is near 50%.[80] These CSO leaders described an acute need to combat political apathy and cynicism among Kosovo's young population by giving them the experience (and confidence) that youth can make real change. One activist commented that the democratic model in Kosovo is so corrupted, that "the only thing we can do is to work on the mental and moral formation of youth."[81] They undertake activities like work camps, sports, summer camps, cultural events on film, rock music, theatre, and foster activism on Kosovo's dire environmental problems. Some efforts have an explicit goal of bridging Kosovo's ethnic communities and denting the strong nationalist ethic promoted by all the political parties. One CSO leader of the NGO TOKA, explained "our ultimate goal is to increase the critical mass of adults in Kosovo who are skilled, hardworking and open minded."[82] GAIA, a local organization that is part of the European Volunteer Service Network, runs workcamps for all nationalities with foreign volunteers. "We are not trying to influence policy or government but trying to build our society…my only hope here are young people…who are fed up with everything and I just hope they will develop some other base of thinking."[83] The NGO "Play International" uses sport as a tool of informal education, running programs on "Olympic Values" or "Human Rights Clubs, teaching the values of, friendship, excellence, and respect for everyone," and also brings groups together with Serbs and other minority youth.[84] For many of these civic activists interviewed, the corrupted politics in Kosovo creates the need to form active, critical citizens from the bottom up.[85] Zef Shala of the Mother Theresa Association noted the very unhealthy ethos among young people, with kids as young as 5 or 6 saying, "I am with Ramush or Hashim because they believe they will get jobs this way when they are older".[86] Youth activist Monogllu sees subtle but important changes in the 8-10 year old kids in his programs, "they are now more respectful to each other, more friendly to each other."[87] Many civic activists interviewed emphasized basic values as a key problem in Kosovo's young society today as compared to the 1990s. "There is no solidarity, there is no

[80] Kosovo Agency of Statistics 2019.
[81] Interview with Edona Krasniqi, 2017.
[82] Interview with Jehona Gjurgjeala, 2017.
[83] Interview with Helena Poučki, 2017.
[84] Interview with Allem Monogllu, Mitrovica, Kosovo, 18 May 2017. Monogllu is a resident of Mitrovica south and volunteer coordinator for the international NGO "Play International".
[85] Interviews with Jehona Gjurgjeala and Helena Poučki, 2017 as well interviews in 2017 with staff of two international NGOs, names withheld.
[86] Interview with Zef Shala, 2017. Ramush Haradinaj and Hashim Thaci are former KLA leaders and commanders who now head two of the main political parties and both have been Prime Minister of Kosovo.
[87] Interview with Allem Monogllu, 2017.

trust between people, nobody can turn to anybody" and "through your families and your friends, you hear very often that hard work doesn't pay off." [88]

5) "Local Issues" Grassroots NGOs in the Regions

Another emerging cluster of CSOs are civil society organizations in the regions working on specifically local issues and to influence local municipal levels of government. Liridon Shurdhani, a participant in civic initiatives since the war, commented, "I think those outside Pristina are the real NGOs, with real aims and objectives and real activities, the community would see their impact directly, not just through trying to satisfy donors with reports etc."[89] Many work on community infrastructure, cultural heritage protection, and better urban planning, rather than today's perceived foreign agendas – widely viewed as LGBT rights or animal welfare. KCSF's Krasniqi commented that the majority of the population "will not support these things, they say, come on, I don't have anything to eat and you are coming to me and saying, don't kill dogs".[90]

These civic activists outside Kosovo's capital don't always speak English and because of financial instability people can't stay involved over the long term.[91] An example mentioned often was a Prizren-based group called *EC Ma Ndryshe* ("Different Civic Emancipation") which works on local urban renewal and cultural heritage and gets a great deal of community participation.[92] Many mentioned a local CSO in Peja, *Syri i Vizionit.* Some donor agencies like the British, Swiss and Danish reported they are trying to increase flexible funding streams for such local initiatives. These approaches allow donors to start small, to allow the organization to get better organized and decide their own priority areas and so "we don't shift accountability to donors".[93] However, working with such a model is challenging. One activist observed that donors always want CSOs to "get people politically active, but that means changing people's attitudes and it takes a lot of dedication, a lot of time and ground work and it is not something that the funding is there to support."[94] He pointed to fundamental problem of lack of trust, and "low social capital" in post-war Kosovo in that to work on any issue in

[88] Interview with Edona Krasniqi, 2017.
[89] Interview with Liridon Shurdhani, a Kosovar legal specialist and longtime civil society activist, Pristina, Kosovo, 9 May 2017.
[90] Interview with Edona Krasniqi, 2017.
[91] Interview with Visare Gorani Gashi, Programme Officer, Swedish Embassy, Pristina, Kosovo, 12 May 2017.
[92] Interview with Liridon Shurdhani, 2017.
[93] Interview with Visare Gorani Gashi, 2017.
[94] Interview with Kosovar CSO leader from Prizren region, Pristina, Kosovo, 2017. Name withheld.

his city, he "needed to expend huge energy just to create that initial trust of my neighbours that I am not doing something for my personal interests."[95]

Kosovo's "Other Civil Society" or "Bad Civil Society": Main Clusters

The following clusters fall more in the category of other civil society, uncivil society or "bad civil society" as some express exclusive (nationalist) values and condone violence, and some evidently have been involved in violence themselves. It must be noted that while some local activists and international officials see them as civil society, others do not, showing how norm laden the popular use of the term civil society is.

1) War Veterans and War-Affected Associations

Multiple registered NGOs represent former fighters and war-affected populations, organizations that provide financial support to their members and advocate for government pensions. The largest is the Association of War Veterans (SHVL) and the Association of War Invalids (SHIL), with a combined membership of 10,000 in 2005, as well as the "Families of War Martyrs" and the Council for the Protection of the Rights of KLA Fighters.[96] Roughly 18,000 people fought in uniform and most quickly resumed normal life, and the War Veterans Association's active membership is only about 1000 and much stronger in the West of Kosovo, in Prizren, Peja, Gjakova, where there was much more violence.[97] These organizations emerged after the war connected within the networks of former fighters. According to CSO activists and international experts, these associations however, are not transparent in their activities and are widely seen as opaque structures within the powerful post-KLA political parties. Over Kosovo's post-war history, they have repeatedly protested and threatened "instability" to defend nationalist causes, the war legacy or to protest the UN's arrest of KLA war commanders. Interviewees claimed that many former KLA fighters themselves prefer to keep their distance from these organizations.

Local views on the war veterans' associations were largely negative and many interviewees described them as the groups that could "make trouble". Lulzim Peci stated that, though formally civil society, "they are a kind of para political structure… which does not represent actually the veterans, but it is a group of people who are very connected to the political

[95] Ibid.
[96] Pula 2005, 23.
[97] Skype interview with James Pettifer, 1 December 2017. Pettifer is a British academic, author and journalist, who teaches Balkan history at St. Cross College, Oxford and has published extensively on the KLA.

structures, mainly the PDK."[98] HLC's Bekaj sees that these groups are indeed civil society, and HLC has tried to establish cooperation with them but without success as they are very "nationalistic" and since HLC supports human rights for all nationalities, "we were seen as kind of traitors, there is a wall between us."[99] Most Kosovars interviewed did not see these groups as part of civil society: one commented, "they are in their own cosmos, getting funds for their members only."[100] Another saw them as "an interest group" that doesn't offer any service but wants veteran pensions, kick backs and jobs, and are quite nationalist and "they react if anyone tries to slight or discredit the KLA."[101] They reportedly do not engage with the rest of civil society or take part in broader NGO networks, while another commented they "do not have expertise" and "are not run by professional people."

IOM supported demobilization efforts for individual excombatants right after the war, and in the early years these associations made frequent appeals to the UN authorities for support, which were mostly rebuffed.[102] They get most of their funds from the government, and have been granted the use of buildings, or parking lots in every municipality to earn revenues.[103] Former KLA commanders have become wealthy and are now the ruling elites, but the associations apparently are people that "feel left out from whatever happened after the war - they contributed, they fought, and were just neglected."[104] According to one interviewee, they effectively put themselves on the agenda through threats to take to the streets "so there is this bias towards their interests, because they will be trouble."[105] On the other hand, people feel there is no need to work with the war veterans organizations because their interests are already fully represented by the two governing parties of former fighters - the PDK and AAK, as most of the government ministers are part of these organizations.[106]

The special privileges and the widespread perception that PDK and AAK have manipulated the war memory to win votes has reportedly weakened public sympathy for veterans' groups and angered many veterans themselves. One interlocutor referred to the War Veterans Association cynically as "the parking lot guys" (as they have a concession to charge for parking in Prizren). It is clear that the veterans' groups and the CSOs inhabit very different

[98] Interview with Lulzim Peci, 2017.
[99] Interview with Bekim Blakaj, 2017.
[100] Interview with Kosovar civic activist, Pristina, Kosovo, 2017. Name withheld.
[101] Skype interview with Roland Gjoni, 2017.
[102] Interview with Charles Dennison Lane, Washingon, D.C.,2018.
[103] Interview with civic activist, Pristina, 2018. Name withheld.
[104] Interview with civic activist, Pristina, 2018. Name withheld.
[105] Interview with Tina Kraja,2018.
[106] Interview with Edona Krasniqi, 2017.

worlds in the way the civic sector has grown up in Kosovo. "CSOs have no need to even cooperate or reach out to veterans and others. They have a distinct audience and distinct funders and sources of finance."[107]

Some Kosovar analysts argue that UNMIK and the international aid organizations neglected the rehabilitation and needs of these former fighters and their families in the early years.[108] One former UN municipal administrator recalled that the local PDK leaders heavily lobbied the UN municipal authorities for funds, office space, or staff positions for these groups. They "proposed levying a tax on everyone in the Municipality that would be paid to the families of the martyrs," and the PDK local leader asked the municipality to establish a special office of Martyrs and War Veterans, but these ideas were refused because they were not seen as municipal-level issues. [109] The former UN administrator's recalled the local dynamics with the PDK and other KLA veteran-dominated parties assuming a prominent role as champions of the war victims (and their associations) through commemoration rituals and practical support networks, channeling resources, jobs and land to these groups, who were at the same time populated by ex-KLA leaders.[110] In turn, the veterans' associations led protests over the UN's arrests of a former local commander in that municipality in 2001 for crimes against Serb and minority civilians. The archives portray the UN official's frustration with these groups' focus on the past and the war, since the logic of the UN presence at that time was to promote peace through multiethnicity and the return of Serbs and other minorities. At a daily level, this UN attitude was perceived (and resented) as neglecting the needs of the Kosovo Albanian war veterans and victims, including the thousands of Kosovo Albanians still missing. This early dynamic appears to have allowed the former KLA commanders to solidify their influence with the public as the "champions" of the veterans and victims, and discredit the LDK leaders' cooperative approach with the UN.

Interlocutors reported there was a big gulf between the majority of KLA ex-combatants and the leadership of the war veterans' associations, and many questioned their actual role given that a final compensation law was passed only in 2014. While the leadership of these associations have become highly connected political actors, many of the rank and file live in poverty, with PTSD and trauma from the war years that has never been addressed. Catholic

[107] Skype interview with Roland Gjoni, 2017.
[108] Pula 2005, 23-24.
[109] Interview with Charles Dennison Lane, Washington, D.C., 2018.
[110] Interview with Charles Dennison Lane, Washington, D.C., 2018.

Vicar Don Lush Gjergi, believes that this is an open wound in society. He stated that "veterans have reasons to be angry because they did not get support from the government. Politicians take part in different events and build statues in their honor, but this is not what they need", rather they need "solidarity for what they went through, their sacrifice and their loss".[111]

One 2019 study of "ex-combatant civic activists" who work with these associations reported they were motivated by feelings of giving back and making a contribution to others like them, and emphasized their unique ability to work with and understand this group (some were invalids themselves). [112] Many justified their exclusive focus on the Kosovo-Albanian population, as "the war was fought in 1999 for the welfare of the Albanian population" and "Albanians suffered a lot."[113] Participants expressed that "they weren't excluded or judged by society because they were fighting for the rights of Albanians...but they were perceived by the international community and government officials as peace spoilers."[114]

A major scandal on inflated numbers of veterans receiving pensions erupted in 2018 and exposed the murky relationships between the KLA-successor political parties and the War Veterans' Associations. In September of 2018, 12 former members of the government's commission on verification of the status of Kosovo Liberation Army veterans were indicted for allegedly misusing their official authority, among these was head of the War Veterans' Association, Xhavit Jashari, along with former Prime Minister and KLA wartime leader Agim Ceku, the head of the government's commission. The Kosovo-Albanian prosecutor resigned in August 2018 claiming his life had been threatened; his report found that inflated veterans' lists had more than 40,000 people receiving pensions, and with more than 19,000 of these people falsely verified.[115]

Many international experts interviewed expressed skepticism that these "war associations" were really civil society actors. Fred Abrahams commented that "they do have legitimate needs, grievances, etc. requests…and seek policy changes so I wouldn't discount that entirely. On the other hand they are also very clearly paid shock troops, and they can be mobilized with a phone call to demonstrate, protest, riot and whatever else is in the interest of

[111] Interview with Don (Father) Lush Gjergji, 2017.
[112] Agusholli 2019, 52.
[113] Ibid.
[114] Ibid., 57.
[115] Morina and Ahmeti 2018.

the political leadership."[116] Abrahams described them as directly tied into the patronage networks and business interests that govern Kosovo, and "defending and supporting a certain political leadership because its providing them with cover, support, jobs, I believe it is that simple."[117] The U.K. Ambassador to Kosovo has dealt with the war veterans' groups and that they "act as a shield for the PDK, AAK and NISMA political parties" but they are not necessarily irreconcilable actors, and they express that if their leaders have betrayed them and if people committed crimes they should be tried." However, he continued, "they feel they need the parties in power to secure their rents and pensions".[118]

Families of Missing Persons Organizations

Multiple civic organizations represent relatives of those still missing since the war. Local Kosovo human rights organizations like CDHRF and the HLC were involved right after the war in compiling lists of missing persons and available information. A total of 6,057 persons were reported missing to the ICRC as a consequence of the 1998–1999 armed conflict and its aftermath; of those 4,407 persons have been traced.[119] Of the 1,653 people that remain missing, 1,092 are Albanians, and 562 are Roma and Serbs.[120] According to the ICRC, of these remaining cases, only seven cases were resolved in 2018 and many people have passed away waiting for closure on the fate of their loved ones. There are 22 groups created by family members, mostly along ethnic lines; they started initiatives in their municipalities and found they were more powerful acting together.[121] Though they have had ongoing partnership from the ICRC, according to these organizations and other commentators the rest of the international institutions neglected them until quite recently. "Right after the war, there was a lot of focus on other civil society organizations but they didn't pay much attention to the missing people organizations," according to Bajram Qerkinaj, leader of one ethnic Albanian families of the missing group, whose son went missing in August 1998.[122]

[116] Skype interview with Fred Abrahams, 2018.
[117] Skype interview with Fred Abrahams, 2018.
[118] Interview with UK Ambassador Ruari O'Connell, 2018.
[119] International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) 2018.
[120] Abrahams 2019.
[121] Interview with Bajram Qerkinaj, Pristina, Kosovo, 28 April 2018. Qerkinaj is the representative of the Kosovo Albanian families of missing persons and the co-founder of the Multi-Ethnic Missing Persons Resource Center in Kosovo.
[122] Interview with Bajram Qerkinaj, 2018.

These groups were deeply frustrated by the lack of action on their missing loved ones all these years, both by the international community and the Kosovo government. The ICRC has worked with them from the beginning, but the lack of acknowledgement and cooperation from the Serbia authorities has meant very slow progress and no closure for the families and the missing persons question is a huge open wound for the society, according to many interlocutors. Leaders of these groups described a bitter process of being ignored by the internationals and after the first few years, being marginalized also by the mainstream society which had mostly "moved on". Tina Kraja, a long-time civic activist, journalist, and political advisor was critical of both Kosovo society and the international community for neglecting the war victims. "The civilian victims, that were the primary reason why the international community ever got involved in Kosovo, were swept under the carpet."[123] Kraja blames the international community for ignoring the tough issues in Kosovo;

> "[w]e were told do not talk about this, to move on, look forward, create a multiethnic society…people could not find peace in these last 20 years because the society at large never recognized their pain."[124]

The HLC's Kosovo Memory Book project has collected detailed information on each person killed or missing from Jan. 1, 1998 to Dec 31, 2000. HLC's Blakaj believes the regional commission (RECOM) initiative would be a way for families get answers as it would allow evidence to be pooled across the countries.[125] Ardian Arifi from President Thaci's office leads the process of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Kosovo, which will build on existing research in focusing on "the right to know" and "will work very closely with associations of the missing persons from all communities because they are very interested in that truth part."[126] However, in the views of the missing persons' associations interviewed, the government has done little, "its just words and promises that the politicians give, to the opposition parties or civil society people or to us. Its just promises, promises, promises but no actual work," claimed Qerkinaj, citing the difference between the pensions for war veterans (around 450 Euros) and pensions for families of the missing (around 162 Euros) as proof of how little the government cares about missing persons.[127]

[123] Interview with Tina Kraja, 2018.
[124] Interview with Tina Kraja, 2018.
[125] Interview Bekim Blakaj, 2017.
[126] Interview with Ardian Arifi, 2018.
[127] Interview with Bajram Qerkinaj, 2018.

The missing persons organizations do not appear to be well connected to the bulk of the internationally funded CSO sector and reportedly represent a completely different demographic. Shkëlzen Maliqi commented, "they have had very little money, and their basic interests are different. They lost a child, and they are not interested in anything else, just to bury them properly."[128] According to Bajram Qerkinaj, these organizations have good links to the war veterans and war victims associations as they "work towards the same mission" and "these organizations also have missing persons."[129] They have staged high profile actions, hunger strikes and demonstrations over the years, and have strong public sympathy. Some have travelled internationally to raise the profile of this issue but claim that the lack of cooperation from the government of Serbia is the main block. Given their bitter personal experiences and the indifference of the Serbian government to their appeals, it is common to hear anti-Serb and nationalist sentiments from these groups.

UK Ambassador O'Connell described these groups as "the load bearing bit" in the Kosovo picture.[130] There was not much funding available for them after the war, and so these organizations did not grow up in order to access funds, though the UK and the US are giving them core funding now. In 2017 the UN opened the Multi-Ethnic Resource Centre on Missing Persons in Kosovo, which enables family associations from across all ethnic lines to communicate and cooperate. This has resulted pooling their information and contacts, and some small progress in certain cases.[131] However, of the 22 organizations, 7 are against this new centre and do no want to work with organizations from the other side.

Islamic Religious Associations

Approximately 96% of Kosovo's population identifies as Moslem, though Kosovo is a secular state: the Constitution recognizes the Muslim, Catholic and Orthodox communities as the traditional religious communities, and the majority of Muslims as Sunnis, with small communities of Sufis and Bektashi.[132] Traditionally, Kosovo society represented a moderate form of Islam and national identification was considered more important than religion, as expressed in a common saying, "the religion of Albanians is Albanianism". The country's official Islamic organization, the Islamic Community Association, Bashkësia Islame e

[128] Interview with Shkëlzen Maliqi, 2018.
[129] Interview with Bajram Qerkinaj, 2018..
[130] Interview with UK Ambassador Ruari O'Connell, 2018.
[131] Interview with Bajram Qerkinaj, 2018.
[132] Ismaili 2014, 352-3.

Kosovës (BIK), operates on a self-funding model with significant volunteer engagement; it appoints clergy and oversees mosques. Public perception surveys rank religious associations among the most trusted institutions.

Since 1998-99, there has been "significant penetration and then expansion of charity organizations" from Saudi Arabia, Qatar, other Gulf countries and Turkey and funds from these countries have poured into Kosovo to rebuild housing and mosques and provide basic humanitarian aid. Kosovo now has 800 mosques, with 240 of them built since the war.[133] In the view of scholar Roland Gjoni, "civil society for me are two distinct worlds in Kosovo now, *the Western and the Islamic*, and Islamic civil society groups are the real counterpart to Western-funded liberal civil society.[134] Krasniqi of the KCSF noted that religious networks have a broad base, constituency and legitimacy in Kosovo, all things that liberal civil society largely lacks.[135] In terms of foreign funders, Turkey is regarded as the most influential actor, along with the Gulf states. Turkish investment is very high and there is a strong Turkish influence in both Kosovo and Albania.[136] Historian James Pettifer noted that contrary to popular conceptions that the US and Germany are the most influential countries for Kosovo, "Turkey has a very big influence because in eastern and central Kosovo virtually every family has members who live in Istanbul, Erdogan is viewed quite favourably, and Kosovars go en masse to Turkey for their holidays."[137]

Visible identification with Islam has grown amongst the Kosovo population since the war and in the view of some interlocutors, is pulling non-elite populations away from the centuries-long hold of Albanian nationalism. One prominent Islamic women's activist, Besa Ismaili, suggests the new strength of belief is an authentically local phenomenon but acknowledges the role of poverty and hopelessness among Kosovo's population.[138] According to Ismaili, these new foreign Islamic groups have influence because they address people's very real material needs; "the eastern NGOs from Turkey, Arab countries, Gulf countries, they were just giving people food, clothes, and very basic things and reconstructing housing, mosques, schools, etc."[139]

[133] Gall 2016.
[134] Skype interview with Roland Gjoni, 2017.
[135] Interview with Edona Krasniqi, 2017.
[136] Skype interview with Fred Abrahams, 2018.
[137] Skype interview with James Pettifer, 2017.
[138] Interview with Besa Ismaili, 2017.
[139] Interview with Besa Ismaili, 2017.

A culture shift is also evident, with more women wearing headscarves in public and other symbols of Islamic practice. This has divided Kosovar society, and many in the more liberal, Westernizing CSO community, especially women's organizations, were critical of this newly assertive Islam. For example, prominent Kosovar women's NGOs petitioned parliament to ban headscarves in 2011, which deeply offended Moslem women's associations.[140] Ismaili faults Kosovo's Western-funded local civil society for missing key opportunities to engage with moderate religious organizations and leaders. "It was an exclusivist approach; they don't regard religious communities as part of the civil society. Yet at the grassroots level people turn to churches and the mosque with more confidence and trust than to NGOs."[141]

Alongside this growing Islamic identity has come Islamic radicalization, with more than 300 Kosovars having gone to fight in Syria for the Islamic State, the highest per capita number in Europe.[142] These alarming figures drew attention to the expansion of Islamic civil society in Kosovo, which had been happening "largely unnoticed in the periphery and outside of Pristina," according to Gjoni.[143] Explanations for the growth of radicalism include the infiltration of more extremist preachers from Macedonia, a lack of community and political response to attacks on the authority of the BIK (Kosovo's Islamic Community), and the use of social media platforms by extremist groups.[144] One study of Kosovo communities with high recruitment to ISIS, found that local recruiters used personal and friend networks to mobilize young people to fight jihad in Syria, and Kosovo's Islamic Community claims that when they sounded the alarm, the political authorities did not heed early warnings nor take assertive action.[145]

According to Ismaili, the tragedy is that in the years since the international intervention the Islamic Community has been neglected; "no one invested in moderate Islam in Kosovo".[146] Another Islamic leader, Lulzim Shehu, the leader of Kosovo's small Sufi community points to a "values vacuum" given Kosovo's deep political corruption and "a surface layer of adherence to Western values".[147] He explained that as the core of Kosovo society is the extended family network (roughly three generations or 100 people) 300 ISIS fighters means

[140] Interview with Besa Ismaili, 2017.
[141] Interview with Besa Ismaili, 2017.
[142] Gall 2016.
[143] Interview with Roland Gjoni, 2017.
[144] Jakupi and Kraja 2018.
[145] Ibid., 9.
[146] Interview with Besa Ismaili, 2017.
[147] Interview with Shej Lulzim Shehu, 2017.

approximately 30,000 people are strongly influenced by this ideology, and "radicalized people will answer to Islam." [148] He is very concerned about the presence of Wahibbis in Kosovo, who have attacked Sufi religious sites in recent years. In his view liberal civil society "simply would not exist without foreign money", because it focuses only on the individual, which is alien to Kosovo society.[149]

Other activists saw that the corruption and lack of integrity of Kosovo's current political system has increased the attraction of religious ideologies. "Pious virtuous people" can be attractive given all the corruption scandals constantly, and, when people hear everyday that "politicians and certain business interests are getting richer and richer while their lives are getting worse."[150] Another view was that greater integration with Albania would help Kosovo prevent further growth of Islam since Albania's larger Catholic and Orthodox communities and a more atheist tradition from the communist years would be a positive balancing influence."[151] Given these trends, there is currently a lot of foreign donor money going towards deradicalization efforts, but KCSF's Krasniqi worries that such programs can do harm given the rural-urban divides and cynicism about NGOs; "imagine the impact in the rural areas of elite CSOs coming from Pristina telling you that are you not good!"[152]

Peacebuilding initiatives in Kosovo have tried to work with the influence of the religious groups and created some promising interreligious dialogues over the years with cooperation between leaders,[153] but there is no influential interreligious peace movement in Kosovo. What is clear is that Islamic groups represent strong networks with broad appeal, though internally divided. The radicalized groups certainly are perceived as "bad civil society", by Kosovo's moderate Islamic Community, as well as Kosovo's Western oriented elites and Western backers. However, there appear to be few ties between even the moderate Islamic Community (BIK) and Kosovo's "good civil society", unlike in the 1990s when the LDK movement and Kosovo's religious communities worked closely together.

[148] Interview with Shej Lulzim Shehu, 2017.
[149] Interview with Shej Lulzim Shehu, 2017.
[150] Interview with Edona Krasniqi, 2017.
[151] Interview with Avni Zogiani, 2018.
[152] Interview with Edona Krasniqi, 2017.
[153] Interview with Shenaj Zeneli, Pristina, Kosovo, 12 May 2017. Zeneli is a long-time civic activist from Mitrovica and has worked on interreligious peacebuilding initiatives funded by international agencies in Kosovo.

Vetëvendosje (VV): Self-Determination Movement

Vetëvendosje (VV) is a unique hybrid phenomenon, a civic movement formed in the early post-war years that registered to compete in elections in 2010. VV's political program lists two key priorities as statebuilding (with full sovereignty for the Kosovo state "free from foreign interference"), and the socio-economic development of the people.[154] VV's unconventional combination of both civic and political activism defies rigid categorization. Though some argue it has become purely a political party since 2010, others assert that its CSO origins and its ongoing activism outside of parliament meant that it spans both politics and civil society.[155] VV appears to some as "bad civil society" and international officials have strongly criticized the movement. However, many of its positions are viewed positively by local civic activists and international experts on Kosovo, and most importantly by the Kosovo public as it won the most seats of any single party in 2017, and again in 2019 elections. VV President and founder Albin Kurti claims that VV has not been concerned with formalism or "defining itself" but rather with substance - "what we think and what we are going to do about it?"[156] VV political advisor, Arber Zaimi, explained "we don't call ourselves a party, we call ourselves a movement, and this distinction is important for us" because "we see ourselves as working towards larger goals that belong to the whole society".[157]

VV was born out of a post-war civic group called Kosovo Action Network (KAN) made up of young liberally minded activists, many of whom had supported the KLA. Kurti was a prominent student leader who broke with Rugova's pacifism to lead the 1997-8 student protests, joined the KLA briefly as a political spokesman (with Adem Demaci), and spent the war in prison in Serbia. KAN was an initiative of foreign activists who brought in locals, it focused on active citizenship and missing persons and reportedly did get some project support from international donor agencies at that time.[158] When it became Lëvizja VETËVENDOSJE! (which means Self-Determination Movement) in 2005, its focus shifted

[154] Vetëvendosje! 2010.
[155] Kelmendi 2012, 49.
[156] Interview with Albin Kurti, Pristina, Kosovo, April 26, 2018. Kurti is the president of the movement and party Vetëvendosje (Self-Determination), and prior to that a long-time civic activist (head of the Kosovo Action Network) and student leader in the 1990s. He was Prime Minister of Kosovo from February 3 to June 3, 2020.
[157] Interview with Arber Zaimi, Pristina, Kosovo, April 26, 2018. Zaimi is a longtime civic activist from Albania and has been the Political Adviser for the Vetëvendosje (Self-Determination) movement since 2011.
[158] Interview with Liridon Shurdhani, 2017; Interview with Arber Zaimi, 2018. Both confirmed that initially KAN did have interest and some funds from the embassies and foreign missions. Sorensen cites from a 2004 interview with A. Kurti that KAN received international funding, in Stilhoff Sörensen 2009, 96.

to a direct critique of the international community in Kosovo as neo-imperialist, as propping up corrupted political elites to guarantee stability and denying Kosovars the right to true self determination and real democracy. VV's "direct action" methods included street protests, and anti-UNMIK graffiti and damage to UN vehicles and property. In 2007, during a VV demonstration against the UN's Ahtisaari Plan, UNMIK police opened fire with rubber bullets, killing two VV activists and injuring many others. Kurti was arrested on charges of "being a member of a group obstructing a law enforcement officer," and spent 11 months in prison and under house arrest.[159] Many see this incident as the UN's politicized attempt to silence Kurti, given VV's mobilization of public opposition to the Ahtisaari Plan through protests and provocative public actions - in one incident he orchestrated the painting of "Ahtisaari" on trash cans across the capital.[160]

According to Kurti, VV's decision to enter electoral politics in 2010 came after intensive internal debates and a commitment to maintain their identity as "a civic movement" through core principles, namely "loyalty to the direct action methods" meaning their MPs would be at the front of their protest actions, "remaining middle-class people " and not becoming a haven for wealthy elites, and through expanding its discourse into economics, education, and healthcare.[161] "We wanted within the frame of the social democratic movement, to create bridges between the middle class and the poor," Kurti claimed, while "avoiding the trap of populism."[162] VV has developed an expansive grassroots organization with over 400 "VV points" in neighbourhoods and villages, each with between 15-200 members who focus on local problems, and then feed delegates to 30 regional centers and then to a central council.[163] Members report a strong culture of internal party debate and internal democracy,[164] and even critics praise VV's "very good system of internal decision making, that is unique for political parties in Kosovo."[165] (Transparency International reportedly credited VV for much greater transparency in its finances compared to most other Kosovo political parties.[166]) Furthermore, VV is mostly volunteer run, and engages volunteer experts in committees on energy,

[159] Humanitarian Law Center 2010.
[160] Skype interview with Andrea Capussela, 2017; Marquand 2007.
[161] Interview with Albin Kurti 2018.
[162] Interview with Albin Kurti 2018.
[163] Interview with Arber Zaimi 2018.
[164] Interview with Blerta Avdili, Vetëvendosje's Women Activists Secretariat, Pristina, Kosovo, 26 April 2018; Interview with Agon Batusha, Gjakova, Kosovo, 27 April, 2018. Batusha has been a Municipal Council Member for Vetëvendosje in Gjakova since 2013, and prior to that had worked with NGOs for many years but left out of frustration with "how little change the NGO sector could bring".
[165] Interview with Liridon Shurdhani, 2017.
[166] Interview with Visare Gorani-Gashi, 2017.

environment, transport and so on, which meet weekly to discuss policies.[167] These participatory structures are key to VV's approach; Kurti asserts that "power comes from organization, the power of ideas without organization is nothing."[168]

Nationalist Radicals?

VV claims it is unfairly discredited as radical movement given its actual policy positions. In Kurti's view, its 3 pillars are its ideological commitment to "European social democracy" and leftist economics, the second is commitment to public actions that open spaces for discussion and, third, to provide "a social democratic answer to the national question…since the nation is too important to leave it to the right wing."[169] VV's rallying cry of "self-determination" refers to the right of Kosovo's citizens to decide on controversial issues without international interference. This includes the use of the traditional black and red Albanian flag, the structures of autonomy for minorities, and whether the Kosovo people can decide through a referendum some form of unification with neighbouring Albania.[170] According to Kurti, nationalism became VV's focus with the flaws of Kosovo's independence in 2008, whose terms focussed on appeasing Serbia. The nationalist theme was a reaction to "the kind of artificial engineering of a new Kosovar identity as a national one, so the Albanian flag became a flag of resistance as well…it is possible to see nationalism as a force for good, for equality."[171]

VV's positions include relentless attacks on corruption of Kosovo's current leaders (especially the PDK), on neo-liberal economics and privatization, on the failures of justice under EULEX, as well as on internationals' focus on appeasing Serbia. It is opposed to negotiations with Serbia until Serbia recognizes Kosovo and addresses war crimes and rejects the agreement on an association of separate Serb municipalities inside Kosovo, arguing this structure serves Belgrade's interests and will lead to a weakening ("Bosnia-ization") of Kosovo. VV advisor Zogiani acknowledges that these positions "look like nationalism" but are a really a rejection of "the Serb veto on Kosovo's development" but that get unfairly distorted: "you are perceived to be talking against Serb rights in Kosovo, even if you are careful, they twist it and call VV a fascist party, which is absurd."[172] VV political advisor

[167] Interview with Arber Zaimi, 2018.
[168] Interview with Albin Kurti, 2018.
[169] Interview with Albin Kurti, 2018.
[170] Wallin 2014.
[171] Interview with Albin Kurti, 2018.
[172] Interview with Avni Zogiani, 2018.

Arber Zaimi claims, "we are not anti-minority, we make this clear in our actions, in our texts, what we oppose is this way of organizing politics without even representing local minorities or local people, but directly negotiating with Belgrade, which is hostile towards Kosova."[173] Several Serb civic activists interviewed however, respected VV's radical critique of the corruption in Kosovo's politics though perceived them as hostile to the Kosovo Serb minority's rights and did not trust them. Serb civic activists recalled cases where VV-led demonstrations that took an anti-Serb tone, such as about the Serb monastery in Decani.[174] "When it comes to VV people, there is of course a big gap between us but at least they are more honest" than other Kosovo Albanian organizations " prominent Serb activist Nenad Maksimovic stated".[175]

In turn, VV leaders pointed to their outreach to Serb municipalities where Kurti has held public discussions and their proposals of equal citizenship and integration for all Kosovo citizens rather than minority enclaves and "walls" between Kosovo's communities.[176] VV's local defenders claim that there has never been a VV protest against Serbs themselves; "No calls for their expulsion. No incitement to violence. No policies of segregation. No use of ethnic slurs."[177] Kosovo analyst Abrahams however, described VV as a "fiercely nationalist movement" and "in terms of condoning or creating an atmosphere where interethnic violence is possible, I always see them as consistent with that, at least not putting a brake on that." [178]

VV's main support comes from Kosovo's youth, who face bleak economic prospects and have been emigrating from Kosovo in large numbers. VV has also drawn in liberal reformers, the centrist political party (FER) led by Shpend Ahmeti joined VV in 2011, as well as disaffected members of the PDK and of leftist parties, some who "see VV as some kind of ideologically more pure faction of what the KLA stood for back in 1999".[179] Prominent activists from Kosovo's liberal civil society joined VV including Avni Zogiani, the high profile anti-corruption crusader. Shpend Ahmeti's election as mayor of Pristina in 2013 gave

[173] Interview with Arber Zaimi, 2018

[174] Interview with Miodrag Milićević, Executive Director at NGO AKTIV, Mitrovica North, 18 May 2017. Milićević works with AKTIV since 2015 and previously spent 13 years working with the OSCE Mitrovica North office.

[175] Interview with Nenad Maksimović, Gračanica, Kosovo, 19 May 2017. Maksimović re-established the Kosovo Serb NGO, Center for Peace and Tolerance (CPT) based in Gračanica in 2009 and serves as the director. He has worked with many international agencies in Kosovo since the war.

[176] Interview with Arber Zaimi, 2018.

[177] Marku 2017.

[178] Skype interview with Fred Abrahams, 2018.

[179] Skype interview with Roland Gjoni, 2017.

VV control of Kosovo's capital city (though Ahmeti left VV in 2018 in a big split). Recently, VV has also attracted groups that want a stronger role for Islam in public life, as VV is more tolerant of public religiosity.[180] Schwandner-Sievers found that VV gains support from those non-elite sectors of society alienated by both Kosovo's Western backed politicians and what Kurti in a 2011 interview called "the international locals - a species that differs from their compatriots in Kosova", in which he explicitly included Western funded civil society groups.[181]

VV jumped from approx. 12% of the vote in 2010 to 27% of the vote in 2017 elections, emerging as Kosovo's single most popular political party, though blocked from forming government by the KLA-affiliated political parties. In early 2018 however, an internal split within VV saw 13 MPs from its new, more liberal leadership leave, reportedly opposed to Kurti's decision to run for VV president again.[182] This split divided former allies and friends across the organization, though VV retained its core public support.

Bad Civil Society or a Force for Violence Prevention?

The charge that VV supports violence is made frequently by international and local detractors. VV's controversial methods have included disrupting sessions of parliament with whistles, and throwing eggs and tear gas to block debates on key issues VV opposes. VV activists defended these tactics as necessary given Kosovo's institutions are deeply compromised and "every single day in Kosovo is violence".[183] Public views appear sympathetic to these tactics though many CSOs are not. One VV activist recalled when "well-known foreign funded CSOs" demonstrated outside of parliament with umbrellas with "no violence" written on them when VV used eggs and teargas.[184] Public commentators in Kosovo have argued that VV's "violence" must be seen in Kosovo's true context, where foreign embassies and international missions are quiet about the two decades history of "political killings, thuggery, nepotism, corruption and outright theft by Kosovo's political establishment" and so "there is no comparison or equivalency to be made here… with VV"s tear gas canisters and protests."[185] VV's defenders claim that most VV protests are peaceful,

[180] Skype interview with Roland Gjoni, 2017.
[181] Schwandner-Sievers 2013, 98-99. Footnotes 30-31; Kurti, 2011, 92.
[182] Interview with Arber Zaimi, 2018.
[183] Interview with Blerta Avdili, 2018.
[184] Interview with Blerta Avdili, 2018.
[185] Marku 2017.

there are always protest marshals present to prevent violence and confrontations with police, but "sometimes, in crowds of thousands, those attempts fail".[186]

Furthermore, VV activists claim instead of promoting violence, its mass-based activism actually prevents violence against Kosovo's minorities. Its leaders claim that VV's organized network and its engagement of Kosovo's young people in study groups, discussions, and public actions helps them see the issues "more clearly" and makes them more resistant to manipulation into violence by political actors. VV's political advisor Zaimi stated, "anyone who has anything to do with VV, have been attending lectures and meetings etc. knows that that our perspective for the republic is a republic of all the citizens. Minorities should be respected…and be represented, but we don't need the intervention of Belgrade."[187] Zaimi cited an incident in 2012 when Albanian graves were desecrated with Serbian slogans, and VV issued a communique, "we instructed our activists to stop every kind of organization that would aim at retaliation, and basically it worked. Because in every village that we are active, our activists are perceived as somehow people that should be asked in such cases."[188] Zaimi claims that both the Serbian and Kosovo governments continually attempt to "motivate their electorate with nationalist feelings", but that VV has done a lot of work explaining things to people, and "even in the countryside they are not being fooled anymore." VV's leader Kurti, clarifies their strategy,

> "VV's actions aim to channel the public dissatisfactions towards the institutions of the state: all the dissatisfaction of the people we pour it into the square of the republic and not towards Serbian homes. If VV would have been strong then as we are now, 2004 would never have happened."[189]

Has VV's mass-based political activism since 2005 created a bottom up, grassroots restraint on violence and resistance to the manipulation by Kosovo's postwar elites and international sponsors, as Kurti claims? Proving this would require investigating specific incidents where violence seemed likely at a very micro-scale and teasing out what factors were most important in restraint, and that is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, many international interlocutors commented that given Kosovo's economic and social discontent,

[186] Ibid.
[187] Interview with Arber Zaimi, 2018.
[188] Interview with Arber Zaimi, 2018.
[189] Interview with Albin Kurti, 2018.

they would expect more social unrest than has actually occurred; they would also expect a more activist stance from mainstream civil society given the scale of Kosovo's problems.[190]

International Actors View Vetëvendosje (VV) as "Nationalist Radicals" and "a Threat"

VV's harsh critiques of Kosovo's international intervenors and provocative protest methods have led most international actors to view VV as nationalist radicals and as dangerous for Kosovo's democracy; as a result in the early years there was little engagement with VV. Andrea Capussela, a senior economics official at the ICO from 2009 to 2011 claims, "my perception was that everyone saw them as a threat, because their approach was totally contrary to the set up in Kosovo, and they wanted no negotiations with Belgrade in particular."[191] Ruari O'Connell, Kosovo's UK ambassador, tried to engage the VV leadership when they were still the Kosovo Action Network (KAN), but found they were "a revolutionary movement" and "looking for conflict" and more recent attempts to build relations between VV and the British Labour party withered, as "they claim tear gas isn't violence but we say it is."[192] In 2015, then US Ambassador Tracy Jacobson denounced VV protestors for physically accosting her as she tried to enter the parliament during a vote on Serb autonomous structures, and claimed she was "bruised" in the scuffle.[193] In 2018 the US ambassador directly criticized VV's use of tear gas in Parliament to prevent an important vote on border demarcation with Macedonia, issuing a statement saying, "people with bankrupt ideas resort to political violence to try to achieve their goals."[194] Capussela recalls many statements by international diplomats that were "saying to the Kosovo people be careful, because VV's policies would be detrimental to Kosovo especially on the international plane."[195] One British commentator and former official called VV "ultranationalist and populist", with comparisons to France's Marie le Penn and the U.K.'s Nigel Farage.[196]

VV advisor Zogiani stated that international embassies discrediting VV, "has an effect in Kosovo", and as a result VV does less well in elections than it should given its public

[190] Personal interview with several senior officials of an international organization, names withheld, Pristina, May 2017.
[191] Skype interview with Andrea Capussela, 2017.
[192] Interview with UK Ambassador Ruari O'Connell, 2018.
[193] Qena 2013.
[194] U.S. Embassy Pristina 2018.
[195] Skype interview with Andrea Capussela, 2017.
[196] MacShane 2017.

support.[197] VV member in Gjakova, Agon Batusha, claimed that the US critiques of VV demotivate the Kosovo people from protesting huge injustices to their government.

> "I am not against the US embassy, but they have to see what people want - because we are going to live here. We know for sure that Ramush [Haradinaj, Kosovo's then Prime Minister] is a criminal, or Hashim Thaci [Kosovo's then President], but then the US embassy says, ok VV is bad, Hashim is good. The US embassy are saying we have to fight crime -- but they are protecting the boss of the crime! And then citizens say, oh the US Embassy doesn't support VV so why should we vote for them?"[198]

Kurti claims that international institutions in Kosovo marginalized VV from the beginning, "they never bothered to engage with us, and discuss with us, and try to understand us. UNMIK categorized us as a security threat, and they don't deal with you anymore, the police deal with you." [199] This changed once VV entered Parliament, as "they had to communicate and cooperate with us because we are legitimate. But always they said, yeah but we condemn your violence."[200] Zogiani claims "almost no international diplomat or representative in Kosovo has any sort of understanding of what VV really is", and that the main problem for internationals is that "VV is not corrupt" so the international community has no leverage with them, unlike Kosovo's other leaders."[201] In the smaller city of Gjakova, VV's Batusha noted that he cannot recall any international donors coming to talk to him and his VV colleagues to find out their views, and that "internationals from the EU or OSCE only come to monitor elections".[202] Long time Kosovo watcher Fred Abrahams commented, "writ large, I think they were always viewed as both irrelevant and very annoying. The overarching argument was that 'these guys are a real pain' combined with a historical arrogance of the Western powers that we can dictate the terms here and can keep them at arms length".[203] UNDP Representative in Kosovo, Andrew Russell, acknowledged that VV appealed to a lot of his younger staff and commented that in his experience, the internationals "still behave and act in many instances as if we actually run the place" and with civil society, have generally fostered a passive, client-oriented, donor-driven civil society in Kosovo.[204] One Kosovar employee of a foreign donor that funds local civil society found the internationals' aversion to VV

[197] Interview with Avni Zogiani, 2018.
[198] Interview with Agon Batusha, 2018.
[199] Interview with Albin Kurti, 2018.
[200] Interview with Albin Kurti, 2018.
[201] Interview with Avni Zogiani, 2017.
[202] Interview with Agon Batusha, 2018.
[203] Skype interview with Fred Abrahams, 2018.
[204] Interview with Andrew Russell, Head of Mission, UNDP, Pristina, Kosovo, 20 May 2017.

paradoxical, since as a movement it seemed to meet all the donor criteria for "connected, bottom-up civil society" that foreign donors were always looking for.[205]

However, several external experts on Kosovo interviewed expressed respect for the movement's principled positions and positive elements, and not all saw VV as "bad civil society". Beyond the tear gas incidents, in Parliament VV is credited for serving as a healthy opposition and presenting serious policy platforms that have created pressure on the other political parties to come up with the same. Capussela studies Kosovo's embedded patronage networks and claimed, "my impression is that their rise has not changed their nature…which is cleaner and more genuine than the other parties or civil society movements, they don't seem to have built their own patronage networks."[206] Gjoni argues that VV has serious policy platforms rather than just relying on "some kind of legitimacy coming from nonviolent resistance and war" as Kosovo's other parties have, and that "if VV was not present more people would go to political Islam, so it has become a bit of a social safety net."[207] VV's Zaimi says relationships with the international presence in Kosovo are improving and meetings with the ambassadors and the missions take place on a regular basis, partly because of VV's growing strength, but also because "what has been done in Kosovo is not working, it is actually failing".[208]

Experienced Activists from Civil Society

Interviews with a range of VV representatives in Pristina and Gjakova revealed educated, motivated young people angered by the corruption across Kosovo society, international manipulation, and genuinely inspired by VV. "VV is a clean movement, it has a vision, it has a philosophy, it is well researched, it has integrity," according to Blerta Avdili. of VV's Women Activists Secretariat.[209] Many had stories of becoming deeply disillusioned with civil society through their personal experiences working with CSOs. Arber Zaimi had worked at the grassroots level with the *Myach (Enough)* youth movement in Albania funded by NDI and Open Society but quit: "I was not happy with the way it was used, it was very much linked with neoliberal politicians in Albania."[210] Avdili had worked with CSOs in the US, and then in Kosovo, where she discovered that the lowest paid employees were forced to give

[205] Interview with staff member of a foreign donor organization, Pristina, name withheld, May 2017.
[206] Skype interview with Andrea Capussela, 2017.
[207] Skype interview with Roland Gjoni, 2017.
[208] Interview with Arber Zaimi, 2018.
[209] Interview with Blerta Avdili, 2018.
[210] Interview with Arber Zaimi, 2018.

some of their salaries to the organization's board president, but when she reported this to the US and Finnish donors, their response was to suspend funding for just a couple of months - "that was it."[211] Former journalist Avni Zogiani founded an anticorruption organization Çohu and uncovered many cases involving high officials but in 2009 was told by a senior official from the US embassy that his reports were "harming the process" and he should "stop writing what you are writing." [212] Soon afterwards Çohu's funding from the US organization, National Endowment for Democracy, dried up; Çohu was able to raise money more easily again only after Zogiani left the organization.[213] Agon Batusha, of VV in Gjakova, described how CSOs that get funding from the Kosovo government usually had to promise not to take part in protests. Also, in his work with a youth CSO funded by the Ministry of Education to monitor school testing, there was zero reaction from the Minister when his group reported serious irregularities. "So I said stop with NGOs, and I had other offers from political parties but the only offer I had from VV was an espresso. When I heard the program and I heard Albin [Kurti] talking in public, I said this party is for me."[214]

Complex Relationships with the rest of Kosovo Civil Society – Good and Bad

VV has strong ties to the most war affected groups for reasons of history and its demands for justice for war crimes and opposition to negotiations with Serbia. As KAN, it had lobbied on behalf of Albanian prisoners of war, families of missing persons and called for investigation and prosecution of war crimes – which gave it affinities to various KLA war veterans and ex-political prisoner associations.[215] Kurti claims it was "wrong" that these important local organizations were neglected by the internationals along with the trade unions and student organizations. Kurti saw strong clear evidence of the international norms of good and bad civil society in Kosovo in the actions of international funders; "these NGOs that they consider to be good are the ones that they created, so it's a redundancy, a tautology. For the internationals the good NGOs are 'themselves'".[216]

VV's relationship with Kosovo's range of humanitarian, human rights and liberal CSOs is complex, with supporters and detractors. Many Kosovar activists interviewed applaud VV's relentless critiques of the corruption of government officials, its internal party democracy and

[211] Interview with Blerta Avdili, 2018.
[212] Interview with Avni Zogiani, 2017.
[213] Interview with Avni Zogiani, 2017.
[214] Interview with Agon Batusha, 2018.
[215] Schwandner-Sievers 2013.
[216] Interview with Albin Kurti, 2018.

transparency, but are put off by its nationalistic stances, antagonism towards the EU, UN and US, and stated goal of unification of Kosovo with Albania. Some were very positive about VV's alternative to the "neutral civil society" model. "VV is the greatest success story in the sense that they were civil society actors that at some point realized the limits of their impact outside the institutions, and they decided to step up to this other side."[217] Another activist discounts their nationalist sentiments as a tactic to get attention, as "they are too well read and articulate to be so short-sighted… but Kosovo needs more of this type of civic organization, that says things, that brings change, rather than donor oriented or project oriented organizations."[218]

Many activists appeared to support VV's goals but avoid supporting their campaigns directly for fear of compromising their political neutrality as NGOs. For VV's Zaimi, the liberal CSO's notion of remaining apolitical and neutral "at any cost" is naïve and marginalizes them, since they become "irrelevant for the society."[219] He argues that such neutrality may make sense in liberal democracies, but "when you have a lot of corrupt elites, and criminal organizations that joined politics to clear their face, it does not make sense," and 'if you see violence going on and you remain neutral, this is always taking the wrong side."[220] Some CSO activists feel they have to be careful about publicly attending VV events, but according to Gjurgjeala, "most people work around that by just coming out and protesting in in their individual name, and lots do."[221] Despite this underlying support for much of VV's platform, many activists also have serious concerns. One activist praised VV for its regular, active participation in discussions organized by civil society in Pristina on key policy issues, though also reported that its "shaming strategies" on social media or in debates antagonize people and shut down discussion.[222] One local civil society activist summed up the complex attitudes towards VV as both inspiring but too extreme on many issues, saying as, "I will vote for them, but I don't trust them."[223]

[217] Interview with Jehona Gjurgjeala, 2017.
[218] Interview with Visare Gorani Gashi, 2017.
[219] Interview with Arber Zaimi, 2018.
[220] Interview with Arber Zaimi, 2018.
[221] Interview with Jehona Gjurgjeala, 2017.
[222] Interview with Liridon Shurdhani, 2018.
[223] Kosovar civic activist, Pristina, May 2017, name withheld.

4. Post-War Civic Actors' Ability to Restrain Violence

This next section examines continuing interethnic violence in Kosovo and how the spectrum of civic actors described above have responded. Low level violence between Kosovo's separated ethnic communities has continued since the war, with most incidents targeting the remaining Serbs and other minorities. The 2004 riots have been the most serious episode but constant tensions and the lack of a peace agreement with Serbia mean interethnic incidents risk igniting major internal violence again and provoking further Serbia-Kosovo conflict. To deter such outcomes approximately 3500 international troops under NATO's Kosovo Force (KFOR) were still stationed in Kosovo in 2020.[224] A 2015 OSCE report claimed 479 incidents over the previous 12 months that fueled minorities' perceptions of insecurity, with "incidents varied from theft, verbal assault, and severe damage and illegal occupation of property (including cultural heritage sites and cemeteries) to incidents inciting hate and nationalism, aggressive and actual physical assaults or intimidation (including to religious pilgrims)", with more than half affecting the Kosovo Serb community.[225] This included 87 attacks on religious heritage sites and intimidation and threats to religious minority communities such as nuns and priests.[226] Another 2014 OSCE report noted that of the recorded incidents, 20% affected sites of minority refugee return and mainly Kosovo Serb returnees ranging from petty thefts and harassments, to shooting incidents and arson of returnee houses.[227] The most recent OSCE report covering 2015-2018 reported 1,518 security incidents affecting the security perceptions of minority communities, with 25% affecting sites of minority return and overall patterns constant since 2015.[228]

Off the record, a senior international official whose agency tracks these incidents, acknowledged that "interethnic violence continues to exist as a serious issue in Kosovo….though overall interethnic relations are not necessarily getting worse."[229] Another international official commented, off the record, that after many years in Kosovo he sees no real energy in the society around improving interethnic relations, and that "people don't believe Kosovo should be an interethnic society".[230]

[224] KFOR HQ Pristina 2020.
[225] OSCE Mission in Kosovo 2015, 9.
[226] Ibid., 32-33.
[227] OSCE Mission in Kosovo 2014, 16.
[228] OSCE Mission in Kosovo 2019, 24.
[229] Interview with international official, Pristina, 2017 name withheld.
[230] Interview with senior international official, Pristina, 2017, name withheld.

A 2016 study of interethnic violence by Kosovo-Serb NGO, the Center for Peace and Tolerance (CPT), claimed that Kosovo Serbs experience very high levels of insecurity and that there was chronic underreporting of interethnic violence by the domestic and international agencies tasked with monitoring this, with incidents masked by different reporting protocols and unrealistic or untrackable standards of proof.[231] The report singled out UNMIK, the Kosovo Police and EULEX for misleading reports that interethnic incidents are declining.[232] It called on local Kosovar CSOs to be more vocal in standing up on cases of minority rights violation as "[a] lack of response to these crimes can be understood as social acceptance and therefore lead to further hate crimes".[233] An earlier 2015 report by the European Center for Minority Issues found that the low number of reported incidents of interethnic violence don't reflect the perceptions of communities in Kosovo.[234] It found that only 35 interethnic crimes were investigated in 2011, falling to 16 in 2015[235] and that reporting and investigating protocols in Kosovo's justice institutions end up obscuring the ethnic motivations involved in violent crimes. The report's co-author Helen Nilsson told journalists that "officials sometimes focus more on reducing numbers of recorded incidents than on accurate reporting, possibility due to international attention."[236]

Bekim Blakaj, director of the Humanitarian Law Center, stated that he hoped Kosovar CSOs would be more vocal against abuses of minorities, but claims that, "there are individuals attempts to do something good, but not organized enough and not brave enough."[237] He says he struggles to understand why; "if HLC organizes something for the rights of families of disappeared persons, then of course everyone would go, but when we need to react for violations of Serbian rights or to criticize Kosovo institutions for not preventing such incidents, then nobody will join you."[238] The lack of response to anti-minority violence from Kosovo's large "good civil society" constituency challenges the assumptions reviewed in Chapter 2, that internationally supported local civil society is inherently a support for tolerance, violence reduction and peace in Kosovo. One of the originators of Kosovo's post-war civil society, Lulzim Peci, lamented contemporary Kosovo's weakness on defending human rights;

[231] Maksimovic 2016, 2.
[232] Interview with Nenad Maksimovic, 2017.
[233] Maksimovic 2016, 16.
[234] European Centre for Minority Issues Kosovo (ECMI) Kosovo 2015, 8.
[235] Statistics for 2011-15 in ibid., 15.
[236] Wilkinson 2016.
[237] Interview with Bekim Blakaj, 2017.
[238] Interview with Bekim Blakaj, 2017.

> "I don't know why this is missing. If I had known that we would end up like this, instead of a policy NGO I would have created a human rights organization. But after the war, I thought there are strong groups from the 1990s that can do this job."[239]

This lack of attention by Kosovar CSOs exists amidst indifference at various levels of government to continuing incidents of violence against minorities and returnees. The OSCE found that "municipalities are failing to comply with their obligations, with many local mechanisms not functioning adequately or regularly."[240] The OSCE's 2015 Community Rights Assessment Report faulted the government for inaction and claimed "efforts to promote dialogue, reconciliation, tolerance and diversity remain weak, ad hoc and mostly donor-driven" and that "persistent security incidents targeting non-Albanian communities, particularly returnees, continue to affect communities' perceptions of security."[241] This continuing insecurity is reflected in returnee numbers as well; of the 220,000 persons displaced outside of Kosovo since the 1999 conflict and by the 2004 anti-minority riots, only 26,098 have returned.[242] Security remains a significant concern for those wishing to return to Kosovo, along with housing restitution and jobs.[243]

The following section examines two specific instances of interethnic violence in post-war Kosovo and how the range of civic actors described above influenced the dynamics.

Example K-3: Civic Actors and the March 2004 Anti-Minority Riots

In 2004 mass riots against Kosovo's remaining Serb minority erupted over several days in March and decisively shifted the post-war dynamic. The post-war years had seen intensive international efforts to promote the return of Kosovo's Serbs and other minorities and promote reconciliation and multi-ethnicity as the framework for post-war Kosovo. At the same time, there were increasing demands for the UN to devolve power to the Kosovo Albanian majority and growing public resentment of the "neocolonial" UNMIK administration. The key reports on the riots point to a context of growing frustration by Kosovo Albanian elites and society that status talks were not progressing, a sense that UNMIK and KFOR were appeasing Serbia and resentment that the liberation struggle of the

[239] Interview Lulzim Peci, 2017.
[240] OSCE Mission in Kosovo 2014, 22.
[241] OSCE Mission in Kosovo 2015, 35.
[242] UNHCR quarterly statistical overview, June 2015
[243] UNHCR 2017, 10.

KLA was being denigrated by the UN's arrests and allegations of criminal behavior against prominent KLA veterans.[244] This context combined with incidents of interethnic violence and inflammatory commentary by local actors and irresponsible reporting by local media triggered the initial violence in the divided northern city of Mitrovica that led to 3 days of massive rioting and attacks on minority communities and returnee sites across Kosovo, as well as on UNMIK itself.[245]

The reports detail a series of immediate triggers for the explosion of violence. On March 15, the drive-by shooting of a Serbian youth in the main Serb enclave outside of Pristina led to local Serbs barricading the two main highways into Pristina. On March 16, KLA veterans' associations organized protests in almost all ethnic Albanian dominated cities and towns, part of continuing protests against the UN's arrests of several prominent KLA commanders for serious crimes in February. Then in the evening of March 16, Kosovo media reports blamed local Serbs for the drowning deaths of 5 ethnic Albanian boys in the Ibar river in the divided northern city of Mitrovica. The next morning angry crowds from the south side rushed the bridge to the Serb-held northern side, leading to a shoot out and several deaths. As unrest quickly spread to other towns, crowds attacked Serb and other minority communities (Ashkali and Roma) including sites of recent returns.

Over 48 hours at least 33 riots broke out across Kosovo involving an estimated 51,000 people and UNMIK police and KFOR units across the country almost completely lost control.[246] Given restrictive national rules of engagement for some of the KFOR units, many Serb communities were left largely undefended. The local Kosovo Police responded unevenly; some bravely rescued minorities besieged by mobs, but in many cases KPS officers passively watched crowds burn Serbian homes and in some instances, took an active part.[247] In the end, 19 civilians were killed (11 ethnic Albanians and 8 ethnic Serbs), 954 people were injured and 730 houses belonging to minorities, mostly to Kosovo Serbs, and 36 Serbian Orthodox churches and religious sites were damaged or destroyed.[248] Around 4100 Serb, Roma and Ashkali were displaced and in many locations, including the capital Pristina, the entire Serb population was forced out.[249] In some cities and villages, witnesses claimed that the violence

[244] International Crisis Group 2004, 13.
[245] Chigas 2006; Human Rights Watch 2004; Humanitarian Law Center 2004; Amnesty International 2004; International Crisis Group 2004; United Nations Security Council 30 April 2004.
[246] International Crisis Group 2004, 15.
[247] Human Rights Watch 2004, 3; International Crisis Group 2004, 20.
[248] United Nations Security Council 30 April 2004, 1.
[249] Human Rights Watch 2004, 2.

was perpetrated by outsiders who "arrived on buses" from other regions of Kosovo, while in others, victims claimed to recognize local people who looted and burned their houses.[250]

On day 3 of the protests, with the violence mostly quelled, the three war organizations (the KLA Veterans, KLA Invalids, and the Families and Martyrs) and the University of Pristina Students Union (UPSUP) announced their suspension of the "protests", but threatened their resumption unless key demands were met, including the complete transfer of governmental competencies to the local government, the release of all former KLA fighters from prison and the "removal" of Serb enclaves.[251] These statements were widely perceived however as opportunistic, rather than reflecting the real control these groups had exerted on the crowds.

Initially, the 2004 riots appeared a spontaneous eruption of frustration. However, the UN Secretary General's subsequent report emphasized the role of Kosovo-Albanian extremists and called the riots "an organized, widespread and targeted campaign"[252] to create pressure on the international community over Kosovo's unresolved status. Several independent reports found they were likely a combination of "both spontaneous and organized" [253] -- spontaneous frustration that was taken over and steered by organized elements, including the veterans associations and some speculated, the secret services of the main political parties.[254]

There has never been adequate criminal accountability for the riots, which fuels fears within minority communities that renewed violence is "likely".[255] The 2004 riots halted minority refugee returns, and fueled security fears and demands for physical separation by Kosovo's Serbs. They also deeply undermined Kosovo's international image as a victim, eroded faith in Kosovo's elites and fledgling democratic institutions, and buttressed Belgrade's claim that Serbs and minorities could not be protected in Kosovo. Much is still not clear about who was responsible for the 2004 riots. Some Kosovo Albanian civic activists believe it was very well orchestrated and that international actors know far more than they have disclosed;"the real story remains on the shelves of foreign intelligence agencies" one interviewee claimed.[256] The lack of real accountability has left many Kosovo Serbs and other minorities fearing "it could happen again."[257]

[250] Humanitarian Law Center 2004, 5,59; International Crisis Group 2004, 15,47.
[251] International Crisis Group 2004, 52.
[252] United Nations Security Council 30 April 2004, 1.
[253] Human Rights Watch 2004, 27.
[254] A detailed discussion in International Crisis Group 2004, 15-17.
[255] Human Rights Watch 2006, 3.
[256] Interview with Lulzim Peci, 2017.
[257] Interview with long-time civic activist, name withheld, date withheld.

The Role of Kosovo's "Good" and "Bad" Civil Society in 2004

Many interviewees and reports noted the clear role of the KLA Veterans Associations, who had held demonstrations in many cities just the day prior and so were present in large numbers. Roland Gjoni worked for the UN in Kosovo at that time and recalls it was well established that the veterans' organizations played a heavy role in steering the riots and in some cases, also stopping them, but there was also big element of "things getting out of hand" as students, youth, and all sorts of people were involved."[258] Interviews and archival material show that some civic organizations inflamed the violence or justified it after the fact. The 1990s human rights network, CDHRF, played a negative role, as the representative in Mitrovica gave an inflammatory interview to Kosovo Albanian television blaming local Serbs for the boys' deaths, which helped trigger the riots.[259] The Kosovo Action Network (precursor to VV) "aligned themselves with Kosovo Albanian grievances and victimisation and were slow to acknowledge the horror of what the "protests" had quickly turned into" though they later blamed UNMIK and the provisional government.[260] An OSCE report strongly critiqued all the Kosovo-Albanian media outlets for reporting the unsubstantiated rumours and inflaming the situation.[261]

In contrast, Kosovo's numerous "good civil society" organizations had little if any positive influence on events, though some reportedly tried to stop the violence. Lulzim Peci, was then the prominent head of the Pristina think tank, KIPRED:

> "I went against it publicly, saying, "for Gods sake what are you doing, these are our monuments how can you do this? Many people called me a traitor and I didn't give a damn about it. But this was the case, because it was so orchestrated, and been done in such a way that arguments didn't play a role. "[262]

According to interlocutors, the only organization with enough of a mass presence across Kosovo to make a difference in 2004 was the Islamic community. Some imams reportedly did play a role in trying to stop the violence locally; "there were individuals attempts to do something good, but not organized enough and not brave enough".[263] The Mother Theresa

[258] Interview with Roland Gjoni, 2017.
[259] Footnote 53, International Crisis Group 2004, 14.
[260] Ibid., 18.
[261] OSCE 2004.
[262] Interview with Lulzim Peci, 2017.
[263] Interview with Besa Ismaili, 2017.

Association "wanted to do something but were not able to reach all the people" as its extensive networks from the 1990s had atrophied.[264] In Mitrovica, a representative of the peacebuilding NGO, Community Building Mitrovica, claimed its leaders tried to stop the violence, which began and was most intense in Mitrovica, but with no success as "the visibility was too low."[265]

A 2006 study revealed individual efforts to stop the violence by community leaders and clergy but these were very locally specific and unorganized, and there was a lack of response by civil society actors that revealed "at best a lack of initiative or a fear to step out of line", and at worst "a quiet acceptance".[266] It further reported that the most important factors in why some communities resisted violence lay in intra-community ties or "bonding social capital", and leaders' credibility with their own ethnic constituencies, and status as a fighter or victim of the war made leaders more persuasive.[267] Incidents of local leaders stepping in to stop the violence on a larger scale involved prominent KLA-affiliated political leaders, or former war heroes. However, their influence was context specific as sometimes such leaders tried to stop the violence and failed, or only succeeding in diverting the crowds temporarily.[268]

Caglavica

A notable example of political leaders stopping the violence occurred in Caglavica, the Serb enclave outside of Pristina where the teen had been shot and Serbs were blockading the highway. On March 17, large crowds including students from the University of Pristina had marched to Caglavica and faced off against international forces and police - and the heavy fighting killed 4 Albanians.[269] Initially, Kosovo's provisional authorities remained passive but finally on the evening of the second night, the PDK Prime Minister of the Provisional government, Bajram Rexhepi and several of his cabinet ministers went to Caglavica and appealed to the crowd to stop, and several reports claim that "the crowd dispersed just minutes later".[270] Rexhepi intervened only after two days, when it became clear that the riots were damaging the international reputation of his government but the immediate response

[264] Interview with Don Lush Gjergji, 2017.
[265] Interview with Miloš Golubović, Project Manager, Community Building Mitrovica (CBM), Northern Mitrovica, May 18, 2017. Golubović is a Kosovo Serb from Northern Mitrovica with CBM for many years; CBM facilitates contact and dialogue between citizens in the whole of Mitrovica municipality.
[266] Chigas 2006, 19.
[267] Ibid., 29.
[268] Such attempts described in FN 71 in International Crisis Group 2004, 17.
[269] Human Rights Watch 2004, 20; International Crisis Group 2004, 45-46.
[270] Human Rights Watch 2004, 20; International Crisis Group 2004, 49.

suggested that the riots could have been brought under control earlier by such decisive actions.

Decani

Another prominent example occurred in the Decani region, the home of former KLA commander and AAK leader Ramush Haradinaj - which houses a 14th century medieval Serbian Orthodox monastery, designated a UNESCO heritage site. The AAK municipal president and the head of the local veterans' association diverted a crowd on its way to attack the monastery, broadcasting a telephone call over a megaphone from Haradinaj himself with orders to stop.[271] (The veterans' association leader was later arrested by the UN for his role in starting the riots.)[272] Numerous interviewees and Haradinaj's own statements claim that his personal intervention stopped the destruction of the monastery. In fact, it was later revealed that back in 2001, then US Senator Joe Biden personally wrote to Haradinaj after a visit to the Visoki Decani monastery, and asked him to promise to protect the monastery; in August 2004, Haradinaj told a visiting US delegation, "tell Senator Biden that I kept my promise."[273]

The Caglavica and Decani incidents show that Kosovo's war leaders from the post-war KLA political constituencies had legitimacy and influence on the veterans' organizations and students who were among the instigators of the violence. They show that Kosovo's "bad civil society" had some ability to stop violence (and likely played a role in starting it). However the March 2004 riots showed little role for Kosovo's "good civil society" in restraining violence. Some civic leaders did try to influence the crowds through public statements, but this had little impact. Even the most influential CSOs had little public profile and legitimacy with those parts of the population (youth, veterans, people from more hardline regions) that were actively participating in the riots. Liridon Shurdhani was a civic activist at that time with the Kosovo Action Network, and he does not recall ever hearing of a role for CSOs during the riots. "NGO people are very civil, they don't have any influence on this kind of level, they could write policy papers etc, but I don't think anyone actually cares what NGOs leaders say on this kind of situations."[274]

[271] International Crisis Group 2004, 50.
[272] Ibid.
[273] Haltzel 2020.
[274] Interview with Liridon Shurdhani, 2017.

It is also clear that unlike the 1990s, there was no civic organization in 2004 with strong networks across Kosovo that could have mass influence on the riots. The 1990s LDK-led networks had atrophied, and pluralistic "good civil society" built up with international support was so diverse and fragmented into individual NGOs, made up of largely urban elites based in the capital and often competing for funding rather than cooperating. Kosovo's numerous "good civil society" CSOs had few levers and entry points to communities outside Pristina, and no unified fronts to try to influence the angry crowds and broader public across the country.

Example K-4: Violent Protests Against Serb ex-Residents Visiting Gjakova from 2015

A second case of recurring interethnic tensions involves localized violent protests in the city of Gjakova since 2015. Gjakova is a smaller regional city in Western Kosovo near the Albanian border. It has become a flashpoint of interethnic tensions nation-wide over a group of Serb ex-residents (called "pilgrims" in the local press) who come to visit the one remaining Serbian Orthodox Church and graveyard on Orthodox Christmas and other religious holidays.

In the Yugoslav era, Gjakova was home to Kosovo's communist elite and had a strong industrial base, with a predominantly Kosovo Albanian population and a small Serb minority (approximately 3%). Gjakova saw some of the worst violence of the war, with residents believing it was targeted by Serb forces because of its location, its militancy and its concentration of Kosovo Albanian communist elites.[275] Gjakova has been neglected by the Kosovo authorities since the war (as Kosovo's post-war leaders have come from other regions) and so economic decline and a very high unemployment rate has compounded the war trauma.[276] As well, Gjakova has had very little international funding; local residents perceive this is because so few minorities remain and "all the projects that internationals were doing were minority oriented."[277]

There are virtually no Serb residents or other minorities left in Gjakova, from a pre-war population of several thousand.[278] Local residents claim that much of the terrible wartime violence was perpetrated by local Serbs, and as a result most of Serb minority was forced out

[275] Interview with Kaltrina Kusari, Calgary, Canada, 30 October, 2017. Kusari is a youth activist from Gjakova studying for her doctorate in social work in Canada.
[276]Interview with Agon Batusha, 2018.
[277] Interview with Kaltrina Kusari, 2017.
[278] OSCE Mission in Kosovo 2018, 1.

after the war. The only active Serbian Orthodox church, the Church of the Assumption of the Virgin, was tended by 4 elderly Serb women (who had remained after 1999). During the 2004 riots, the Italian KFOR unit protecting the church failed to disperse the advancing crowd and ended up evacuating the women as the rioters burned down both the church and the parish house.[279] The Church of the Assumption of the Virgin was fully rebuilt however by 2010 and has resumed functioning with the nuns in residence.[280] The three other abandoned Serbian churches in Gjakova were completely burned down during the 2004 riots and were not rebuilt. In fact, in 2008 the municipal authorities built a city park hosting a KLA war memorial on the site of the ruins of the Cathedral Church of the Holy Trinity (this church had been constructed only in 1998 under Serbian President Milosevic and was perceived by Kosovo Albanians as an oppressive reminder of Milosevic's policies).[281]

Beginning in 2015, a group of Serb former residents began to travel to Gjakova on Serbian Orthodox Christmas, to visit the rebuilt Church of the Assumption of the Virgin and the graveyards of their relatives.[282] Each year, they were blocked by angry crowds of ethnic Albanian protesters pelting them with ice, eggs and stones; the protesters claim that some in the group are guilty of war crimes during the conflict, including the former Serbian mayor of Gjakova and that the group is there to provoke local residents.[283] A local association of the families of missing persons,"Mother's Call" (Thirrjet-e-Nenave in Albanian), organizes these protests together with other victims' organizations. The leader of "Mother's Call" is Nesrete Kumanova, whose son's wartime fate still remains unknown, one of 35 people still missing from Gjakova almost twenty years later.[284] Since the war Kumanova has searched for her son and Mother's Call has led many national protests, including a two-week "mothers' hunger strike" in 2009 at the Pristina morgue to demand action on hundreds of bodies that had been waiting years for identification. In Gjakova, Kumanova claims she organizes the protests at the Serb church because she knows the former Serbian mayor of Gjakova and other "war criminals" are part of the visiting group and she has evidence against them.[285] She holds these individuals responsible for her son's death and many others.

[279] International Crisis Group 2004, 52; Humanitarian Law Center 2004, 48.
[280] Council of Europe 2011, 122-3.
[281] Balkan Insight 2008; Maier 2012, 26.
[282] Hajdar 2015.
[283] Nushi 2016.
[284] Interview with Nesrete Kumanova, head of the NGO "Thirrjet-e-Nenave" (Mothers' Call), Gjakova, Kosovo, 27 April 2018. Kumanova founded the organization with other mothers from Gjakova, her son and 5 other males were seized from her house during the war in 1999.
[285] Interview with Nesrete Kumanova, 2018.

The protests have had national consequences. In 2015, the ethnic Serbian Minister for Returnees in the Kosovo government called the protesters "savages" for pelting the elderly Serbs with ice and stones. That sparked a massive demonstration in Pristina against the Minster that spread across the country, showing how easily public anger can be directed toward the Serbs, and though he apologized he was relieved of his post. These protests repeated in 2016, and 2017, in 2018, the Serb's annual visit was called off due to fears of serious violence, though protesters still showed up and blocked the nuns inside their house for several hours.[286]

Many people and organizations in Gjakova support the protests and believe the pilgrim groups do include war criminals, though the ethnic Serb organizations involved deny this.[287] The Vetëvendosje (VV) branch in Gjakova has supported Kumanova in organizing the protests and also helped initiate a lawsuit against the former mayor.[288] VV municipal assembly member, Agon Batusha, claims that they communicate in advance with the Serb ex-residents' organization and explain to them that while the group is welcome, certain individuals cannot be on the bus. But he says this is disregarded and sometimes the visiting Serbs provoke the crowds and get off the bus and "then local people started throwing things," as "they become outraged".[289]

Interviews confirmed that many regular townspeople come to the protests, and several CSO activists stated they support the protests and they also take part. "Everyone goes to those protests," is how one civic activist put it simply. Gjakova has about 10 established NGOs, and a relatively new group of 35 youth NGOs under the umbrella of a local youth council (with youth groups, women's groups, NGOs, sports groups, and cyclists groups, all working on local projects); it was the youth council in fact that formally launched the court case against the former Serb mayor four years ago, though the authorities have not responded and it may be dismissed on procedural grounds after 5 years.[290] One senior civic leader explained her support for the protests:

[286] Rudic, Muqaj, and Morina 2018; United States Department of State 2018, 10.
[287] Rudic, Muqaj, and Morina 2018.
[288]Interview with Agon Batusha, 2018.
[289] Interview with Agon Batusha, 2018.
[290] Interview with Agon Batusha, 2018.

> "It is mothers of people who are killed and missing during the war. They want at least to find the bodies of their loved ones… we are not against ordinary people that come to do their religious rituals, that is fine…but the former mayor is a criminal, he did a lot of crimes in Gjakova, and is leading that group of people coming to the church, this is why the people are against it."[291]

When asked about the violence that occurs at the protests, Kumanova is not apologetic, and decries the lack of justice for the crimes in Kosovo: "I have tried to behave like they wanted. I have tried sometimes to be calm and not to be stressed, thinking that things will change if I behave like that, but it hasn't…"[292] She wants the internationals and the Kosovo government to pressure the Serbian government to reveal where the missing are, but mistrusts both. She is outraged that both parties want to move on with peace talks while these cases are unresolved and says simply, "they must bring these bodies home first."[293]

The Role of Kosovo's "Good" and "Bad" Civil Society in the Gjakova Protests

In Gjakova, the war victims and missing persons groups together with Vetëvendosje play clear roles in instigating the tensions and taking part in the violence (throwing stones and ice, breaking bus windows) fueled by outrage over the lack of justice for the city's war victims. The focus on only Kosovo-Albanian victims and the turn to violent methods by such "families of the missing" groups means such groups can be categorized as "bad civil society" as defined by Chambers and Kopstein. Such localized incidents are potentially explosive in Kosovo and can lead to wider interethnic violence or a crisis with Serbia. This study tried to uncover what role Kosovo's numerically strong "good civil society" actually plays in this dynamic and found that no Kosovo-Albanian NGOs or civic groups have ever gone to Gjakova to try to stop the violence or ease tensions. While VV, "Mother's Call" and other victim's organizations organize the protests, in fact many local civil society groups and NGOs both support them and take part themselves. The Humanitarian Law Centre in Pristina appears unique in taking any public stand against the protests. The first year, in 2015, the HLC wrote a press release about the incident, but no other NGO joined in condemning the incident, according to executive director Bekim Blakaj. "Nobody signed that. No other

[291] Interview with Mirlinda Sada, Executive Director of Medica Gjakova, Gjakova, Kosovo 27 April 2018. Medica Gjakova is an NGO that aims to improve the physical and mental health of women survivors of sexual and gender-based violence during the war in Kosovo.
[292] Interview with Nesrete Kumanova, 2018.
[293] Interview with Nesrete Kumanova, 2018

NGOs. We just circulated it, and nothing happened. Most probably there were organizations who support that, but none were brave enough to put their signature."[294] To Blakaj the lack of response from the CSO community, was puzzling and disappointing.

> "We have a great group of NGOs who do elections monitoring, dozens of them who do a really good job, but I would really like to have, organizations or NGOs who would be ready to go to Gjakova and say to those who are organizing protests when Serbs are coming to visit their church, to say "please don't. But there are none brave enough."[295]

Of Gjakova's many local CSOs who attend, none have reportedly tried to restrain the crowds and instead report feeling solidarity with the protests. "Mothers' Call" and the other victim's groups garner huge respect in Gjakova. Given Gjakova's tragic wartime history, where reportedly every family lost loved ones, there is intense sympathy and solidarity with those who still suffer the most, victims' families. Another critical piece of the influence of such "families of the missing" groups is their personal integrity, in an environment where government and every other social institution is seen to be corrupted, the families of the missing are not seen as opportunists.

Finally, the broader context shapes these outcomes. These protests mobilize people because there are so many unresolved injustices still twenty years after the war. Kumanova and other missing persons organizations speak bitterly about how those in Serbia who "know where the bodies are" but have not revealed the locations, leaving families in "permanent pain".[296] There has been no acknowledgement from Serbia for the crimes committed nor any apology. The Kosovo state itself has done little to address the formal claims of Mothers' Call and other groups. Thus, the formal mechanisms for justice, with international oversight from the EULEX mission, simply do not work and leave people few options besides angry protest.

As the co-organizer of the protests and given its history, VV gets blamed for the violence. VV's Batusha refutes that:

> "people accuse us of causing the trouble, they say it is your activists, but it is actually regular people like my father who was in the war, and when he goes, he starts getting agitated and he starts."

[294] Interview with Bekim Blakaj, 2017.
[295] Interview with Bekim Blakaj, 2017.
[296] Interview with Nesrete Kumanova, 2018.

He said that none of the NGOs actually participate in the violence though acknowledges some VV people do participate. "I am against violence in the protest. But when I see the eyes of the people, they are so frustrated, and I start to understand."[297] According to Batusha, VV helps organize these protests because "we think the government should see that NGOs and the people are organized, not just us." Batusha suggests that the clear audience for the protests is the Kosovo government and their international backers; "If you want to bring the Serbs who used to live here, you have to bring justice for us first."[298]

This case illustrates then that the war victims' organizations and the hybrid social-political movement VV have strong connections and legitimacy with the public in Gjakova on these issues. It seems clear that VV could be doing more to prevent violent actions that do occur, but that in the end, VV's activists are local people who are aligned with the grievances of their community. The 'good civil society" actors such as Gjakova's many humanitarian, development and victim's rights organizations do not act to stop, defuse or even condemn the violence and share the outrage at the lack of justice 20 years after the war's end. While the strength of such local allegiances among Gjakova's citizens is not surprising, no outside NGOs and or prominent and celebrated human rights organizations from Pristina engage or attempt to influence these events, with the exception of the HLC, whose efforts to voice concerns were ignored by the rest of Kosovo's "good civil society." Though many CSOs in Kosovo have been involved in multi-ethnic dialogue and bridge building activities from the early 2000s to the present, with a lot of international donor funding poured into peacebuilding efforts, when it comes to issues of the human rights of the minorities, Kosovo's "good civil society" appears largely silent.

5. Conclusions: Has Civil Society Prevented Violence in the Post-War period?

To recap the findings of this study of civic activism in Kosovo, contrary to the expectations of liberal peacebuilding models, Kosovo's large, externally-fostered, local civil society in the post-war period has not demonstrated the ability to directly prevent or restrain incidents of anti-minority violence. As well, it has often stayed silent on threats to the security and basic human rights of Kosovo's minority communities that are a primary threat to sustainable peace inside Kosovo. The norms and values of internationally sponsored "good civil society" have mostly not translated into the motivation or capacity of externally fostered local CSOs

[297] Interview with Agon Batusha, 2018.
[298] Interview with Agon Batusha, 2018.

to restrain provocative and violent actions from within the Kosovo Albanian community. This dynamic emerges in a context of weak rule of law and the lack of justice for atrocities on all sides that fuels hostility, mistrust and continuing violent incidents between Kosovo's ethnic communities. However, continuing interethnic violence, even at a low scale, threatens Kosovo's internal interethnic stability and peace with Serbia so preventing further interethnic violence is clearly a critical goal in Kosovo for civic actors working on peace.

This study's review of the 2004 riots showed that Kosovo's post-war liberal civil society had little influence on the violence, and though groups some did make statements these were largely ignored. In contrast, other civic organizations such as war veterans, student associations and the official Islamic community likely had the influence to stop their own constituencies in the crowds but were not motivated to do so and instead some of these groups aligned with the frustration and sense of victimhood among the rioters (and the veterans' organizations are widely seen as having helped initiate the riots in the first place). Kosovo's political leaders from among the post-KLA constituencies and war commanders did however manage to decisively stop the violence in some well documented instances – at Caglavica and at Decani - however this was belated and likely due to fear of mounting international repercussions for Kosovo.

The second example reviewed violent protests in Gjakova by missing persons organizations starting in 2015 and showed some civil society organizations (families of the missing and victims' associations) directly implicated in interethnic violent incidents – venting their outrage at the lack of justice for their relatives disappeared or killed during the war. In Gjakova, even many of the local NGOs attend the violent protests in solidarity and do not attempt to restrain the crowds. The VV movement co-organizes the annual protests and tolerates the stone throwing that erupts, and some VV members reportedly do participate. Despite VV's leadership's assertions that it works to stop violence at its events, this study did not find reports of any active efforts to do so. Rather the accounts suggest that VV prioritizes mobilizing public anger and demands for justice and accountability from Kosovo's leaders and their international sponsors over enforcing "civil" behavior or showing concern about the security perceptions of Kosovo's minorities. However, the broader context is that neither the Kosovo state, Serbia, the UN, or other international mechanisms provide legal means for Kosovars to seek justice for war atrocities even 20 years later. VV supported Gjakova residents to launch a court case against the former Serbian mayor alleged to be among the "pilgrims" who is accused of involvement in multiple murders and disappearances during the

war but, according to VV's Batusha, "no one cares" and no action has been taken for 4 years, and the case can be annulled on procedural grounds after 5 years.[299] Thus in the context of pervasive lack of justice for war victims and the inaction of legal justice mechanisms inside Kosovo, violent protest appears justified to many Kosovars and to many civil society groups, however "uncivil".

Civil Society in Post-War Kosovo

The experience of civic activism in Kosovo after the war reviewed here shows the weakness of the dichotomous model of "good civil society" and "bad civil society" and questions whether internationally supported "good civil society" is inherently a force for peace and tolerance, at least in terms of one of the most direct arenas for peace work - violence prevention. It questions the efficacy of international support for civic groups that embody inclusive values and non-violence but have little public constituency, while marginalizing other civic actors with stronger credibility and legitimacy with war-traumatized populations. In Kosovo, given the national liberation struggle and costly war, the groups with legitimacy among the Kosovo Albanian majority are strongly nationalist, and have strong social capital and links with former fighters and with victims' families. The associations of war affected groups and the Vetëvendosje hybrid social-political movement are unapologetically nationalist and garner strong support across urban and rural areas. To varying degrees they condone or rationalize various levels of violence in pursuit of their "just" goals – ranging from throwing projectiles at the Serbian ex-residents (pilgrims) visiting Gjakova, vandalizing property, deploying tear gas in parliament, to instigating the mass riots of 2004. In the case of the veterans' and war victims' associations, the goals are defending the rights of those who fought in the war or its direct victims. In the case of VV, the goals are ridding Kosovo of corrupted post-war leaders, demanding overdue justice from Serbia, and eliminating international actors' overt interference in Kosovo's new democracy.

Good Civil Society?

Kosovo's post-war liberal civil society groups that have been supported by international institutions and Western donors' funds number in the thousands and profess "inclusive values" and non-violence, and hence qualify as "good civil society" in the Chambers and Kopstein framework. While on many important issues such as human rights, youth activism,

[299] Interview with Agon Batusha, 2018.

democratization, economic development, humanitarian aid, and local community development there are dedicated Kosovar Albanian CSOs whose work is highly respected, overall this study found that Kosovo's externally-funded local civil society is not connected to or seen as very relevant to the broader population's priorities and needs. They have largely followed donor priorities since the war; some of these donor agendas were truly connected to Kosovo-Albanian aspirations like democratization, and statehood. Some, like multiethnicity, reconciliation and minority rights, had little resonance in a society still deeply traumatized by decades of brutal repression and a very violent war where Kosovo Albanians were by far the biggest victims and have not seen justice; in the end Kosovo's international sponsors and local people had quite different priorities and sources of legitimacy.[300] As well, from the mid-2000s a steady stream of prominent "good civil society" leaders has joined the ruling political parties they once fiercely criticized, leaving the credibility of their CSOs and Kosovo's civil society generally quite eroded. The research found that this 'revolving door' meant that many interlocutors had begun to see civil society as a stepping stone into power and a secure job with the state, when there were few other economic options. Given the increasing skepticism about the interests of international actors in Kosovo and growing local resistance to those agendas, international funding for civil society cuts two ways. As the same international donors have supported Kosovo's deeply compromised leaders since the war in the name of ensuring stability, this has undermined the credibility of their "good civil society" partners with an increasingly skeptical Kosovo public.

Bad Civil Society?

In theory these groups should be deemed "bad civil society" for their nationalist values and violent methods according to the Chambers and Kopstein definition. In practice, they reported that they were generally ignored, demonized or undermined by the international presence in Kosovo, as the good civil society / bad civil society normative model would expect. VV's Kurti reported that internationals marginalized him from the very beginning. The missing persons organizations reported being neglected by the internationals as well as their own government, while at the same time the war memory was used by politicians to attract local support and votes. In neglecting these other forms of civic activism in Kosovo, internationals missed the opportunity to engage key local civic actors dealing with concrete problems important to the society. In post war Kosovo, the missing persons organizations, the

[300] Landau, 2017; Lemay-Hébert, 2013.

left-wing protest movement that became VV, or moderate Moslem groups all appear to have had a strong local constituency, even if some of their positions were difficult to reconcile with inclusive values and the liberal peacebuilding model. The fact that these groups were mostly outside the circles of local civil society supported and nurtured by external aid is very telling.

The evolution of the hybrid civic movement and political party, Vetëvendosje (VV) from 2005 onwards shows this paradox most clearly. VV, a civil society group denounced by Kosovo's international sponsors ended up gaining much stronger local legitimacy than any of Kosovo's "good civil society" who were officially supported by those same sponsors. VV's entry into electoral politics in 2010 while holding onto its civic movement identity and methods acknowledged the limits of civil society to effect change when the domestic government and the international community is unresponsive to its appeals. VV strong urban and rural constituency contrasts starkly with Kosovo's externally funded civil society, rooted in Pristina and in elite urban circles. VV is volunteerist, has a strong grassroots organization to the village level, and is widely credited for remaining outside of Kosovo's pervasive post-war patronage networks. Furthermore, it generates large turnouts at demonstrations, its has defenders in the media and across the broader spectrum of Kosovo's civil society, including both the war associations and among the liberal "good civil society". Since VV registered for elections, its constituency is most clearly demonstrated by its vote share - (27%) in the 2017 elections, and again in 2019 (26%) when it won the right to lead a coalition government.

VV's use of quasi-violent methods and tolerance for activists' violence at protests undermines its credibility in the eyes of many domestic and international interlocutors. However, VV leader Albin Kurti claims that the broader impact of VV's activism since 2005 has been to restrain violence against minorities through its extensive outreach and education which focuses people's anger at their own authorities - rather than towards minorities. Proving these claims was beyond the scope of this research, however several international officials commented off the record that Kosovo should be more volatile given how large the problems are.[301] Some of those interviewed conceded that VV may serve an important function as a safety value for the huge frustrations of Kosovo's youth and though many smaller scale interethnic security incidents occur annually, Kosovo has not seen an outbreak of major interethnic violence since 2004.

[301] Interview with two senior internationals official, Pristina, 2017, names withheld.

This case study suggests that in the post-war period, the lack of engagement of international institutions and donors in Kosovo with these 'bad civil society' groups had two important results. First, it alienated these groups further, making them even more mistrustful of the intentions of the Kosovo's Western donors and their agenda. Second, it may have increased their suspicion of their compatriots, those local civic groups who receive international support and were trying to move the society towards democracy, human rights and peace through external funding for such projects. As the case showed, there are strong historical divisions between the urban intellectuals and elites who tended to populate "good civil society" and the KLA-linked constituencies from other regions and the war affected populations. International aid to the former, may have further strained these local relationships and ties, increased existing societal divisions and reduced internal social capital across the society. To use Richmond's terminology, it complicated the "local-local" relationships[302] that also needed to be reconciled in Kosovo and that seemed off the radar of the international intervention.

Linkages Across Kosovo's Civil Society Spectrum

Kosovo is a small society of less than 2 million. Strikingly the study found that the "good civil society" groups interviewed all had little contact with, or awareness of the groups seen as "bad civil society". Kosovo's liberal CSOs had significant contact with each other and with their international donors, often through donor funded networks. However, by all accounts their civil society networks are entirely separated from the war veterans' and victims' associations, missing persons' associations, and religious communities that also constitute civic organizations- while these organizations tended to be well networked among themselves. In such a small society, these groups remained distinct and disconnected islands, though in recent years VV is the one entity that appears to span these groups to some degree as more liberal sectors of the population have joined VV.

Civil Society and Violence Restraint in Kosovo's Pre-War and Post-War History

This examination across the pre-war and post-war periods reveals strong contrasts in Kosovo-Albanian civil society's ability to restrain or prevent violence, with very different types of civil society emerging in each period. In the 1990's experience (covered in Chapter 3), an

[302] Richmond 2011, 14.

interconnected network of civic and political actors engineered powerful restraints within the Kosovo-Albanian community on in-group violence (ending traditional blood feuds) and restrained intra-group violence in terms of deterring reprisal attacks on Serbian security forces and local actors aligned with the Serbian state. The political LDK movement under Ibrahim Rugova and the civic organizations of this 1990s civil resistance phase set up direct contact and two-way communication with the broader Kosovo Albanian population that eased strong regional, urban-rural, and class divides and fostered social unity through the mass gatherings of the blood feuds reconciliation campaign. 1990s civil society involved a small number of organizations and overlapping identities between civic, political, and religious groups as well as Communist social organizations. These factors combined to create strong in-group or bonding social capital among Kosovo Albanians, fueling the voluntarist, self-help civic networks that provided material assistance to the population through the LDK-led "parallel state". The primary goal was Kosovo Albanians' survival given the Serbian state's violent repression and threats of wholesale expulsions; in service of that goal, these interlocking measures enabled the restraint on blood feuds and on reprisal violence for Serb attacks in an otherwise martial culture which had little sense of social unity in earlier eras. This social unity and the impressive societal restraints on violence lasted from 1990 until roughly 1995, when the outside world ignored Kosovo's plight in the Dayton agreement and undermined the logic of Rugova's non-violent approach. The 1997 emergence of the KLA and their appeal to traditions of heroic, armed resistance as the route to secure Kosovo Albanians' survival broke that social unity and undid the restraints on violence, as the KLA used violence against Serb forces but also against fellow Kosovo Albanians from the LDK and other political groups.

In contrast, in the post-war period of international administration of Kosovo until 2008 and then supervised (partially-recognized) independence, the large, internationally-funded civil society that emerged had little influence restraining episodes of interethnic violence from the Kosovo-Albanian community towards Kosovo's remaining Serb and minority populations, or on restraining continuing intra-Albanian political violence. Post-war civil society was large and diverse, with many areas of focus that followed the liberal peacebuilding agenda, but was very fragmented. Organizations competed with each other for increasingly scarce donor funds after the emergency phase ended in 2003-4. Their dependence on foreign funding and their ready adoption of foreign donor agendas appeared to have the negative effect of actually delegitimizing local CSOs in the eyes of the public. International templates conceived of a

Kosovo society based on a multi-ethnic democracy with minority rights, reconciliation and statebuilding that could be constructed while securing a final peace with Serbia, and envisioned "good civil society" as supporting this project. Other civic groups focused on much more home-grown priorities of the society like the memorializing of the Kosovo Albanian liberation struggle, championing of Albanian national identity, reviving Islamic religious values, justice for war victims and resisting the imposition of international agendas for Kosovo's future. These issues became strong sources of domestic legitimacy for other civic and political actors, most notably the hybrid social political movement Vetëvendosje, but also many other forces that did not fit the "good civil society" norm and did not prioritize "civil" methods in what they saw as a deeply unjust and corrupted environment.

This local civic activism in Kosovo determined the course of Kosovo's post-war experience far more than the internationally funded civil society groups, and demonstrated an ability to both mobilize Kosovo-Albanian national feeling and grievances, and then also to steer or restrain volatile incidents of continuing interethnic violence. The contrast between their influence and legitimacy with the population and the impotency to affect change of Kosovo's externally funded civil society suggests that international notions of the need to marginalize "bad civil society" and only support groups with inclusive values and who profess non-violence, may have badly backfired.

In post-war Kosovo, the civic groups modelled after the "good civil society" norm proved impotent against the patronage and corruption in the government that was tolerated by internationals and they lost legitimacy internally, and this cycle only worsened as many prominent civil society leaders moved into government and the political parties. This stands in contrast to the expected result of "certification" of local civic actors that international support is expected to deliver. This study suggests that actually "decertification" occurred in Kosovo as VV successfully challenged the credibility and intentions of the international supporters of Kosovo's post-war leaders, and that stain rubbed off on Kosovo's civil society - who had the same benefactors. As one interviewee commented on the VV movement, noting much about them was problematic, but" we need more groups like that, that say things and that can create change."[303]

[303] Interview with civic activist, Pristina, 2018 (name withheld, date withheld).

Chapter 5: Soviet Georgia's Civic Actors, Intra-Community Dynamics & Restraints on Violence

> "There is no guarantee that the civil society is always benign. But we must take the risk. The civil society corresponds to the historical possibilities of man and history as a drama of good and evil. This is the dignity of man: the choice of good and evil."
>
> Merab Mamardashvili, [1]
> Institute of Philosophy, Academy of Sciences, Georgian Soviet Republic.

Civic activism in Soviet-era Georgia emerged autonomously through the intertwined growth of the dissident, anti-Soviet movement and a broad-based but fractious ethnic Georgian nationalist movement. This case explores how the growth of indigenous civic activism in the Soviet period led to public mobilization around issues of language, cultural heritage, the environment, and human rights and fueled a mass nationalist movement that led to Georgia's declaration of independence in 1991. However, the chaotic pluralism unleashed in this period also fueled ethnic tensions inside multinational Soviet Georgia that resulted in military conflicts in its internal regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, and a civil war among Georgian factions that ended the polarizing regime of nationalist leader Zviad Gamsakhurdia, independent Georgia's first president.

Many studies of Georgia's tumultuous 1990s history neglect the agency and complexity of the varied local civic actors who played critical roles in these events, focusing instead on Gamsakhurdia alone, or the centrifugal forces of the Soviet collapse, or the role played by Russia. This study acknowledges these more macro explanatory factors, but asserts that they miss the micro societal-level dynamics that are critical pieces of explaining the outcomes in this period. This study takes a closer look at Georgia's civil society level to understand the role played by a wide spectrum of civic actors in the complex societal dynamics of the period. It explores how the civil society that emerged in Georgia relates to the "good civil society" vs. "bad civil society" distinction in international peacebuilding intervention models[2] and what roles the wide spectrum of Georgian civic actors played in the emergence of

[1] Mamardashvili, 1989.
[2] Chambers and Kopstein, 2001; Paris 2004, 194.

Georgia's internal interethnic conflicts (focussing on the case of South Ossetia), and in the intra-Georgian violence that led to state failure by the early 1990s.

One-Side Focus: Activism within the Georgian Majority Community and Own-Side Violence

This case focuses primarily on internal dynamics within Georgian civil society and how they affected Georgian civic actors' ability to influence internally generated violence, or own-side violence. This is an unusual approach as the literature on Georgia's conflicts focuses on the dynamics between Georgia and the conflict regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Understanding the capacity of 'one side' in a conflict to restrain violence from within is an important yet neglected area in studies of peacebuilding in general, that this project hopes to advance. (Similar examinations of the spectrum of civic activism in South Ossetian or Abkhaz society are also required to understand the full picture of Georgia's ethno-political conflicts, but these are beyond the scope of this study.)

Civic Activism embedded in a Complex Causality Framework – no "Smoking Gun"

Civic activism is not presented here as the factor that single-handedly explains the events under study: it is not the proverbial "smoking gun". Rather the complex systems informed approach of this study frames societal dynamics of this period as an ecosystem of which civic activism was a part, and tries to trace its relationship to other key factors. As laid out in Chapter 1, this study frames conflict contexts as complex adaptive systems, like an ecosystem or the human body, which are constantly evolving with the interaction of new inputs and where outcomes emerge from the interactions of factors, rather than any one factor.[3] This is a very different notion of causality than more linear models, but in line with work in international relations that focuses on interactions between factors, such as work on norm localization, hybridity and resistance to international intervention models (discussed earlier in Chapter 1). In focusing on civil society, the project does not claim that civil society alone determines the outbreak or lack of violent conflict, nor does it aim to determine the relative weight of civil society as compared to all other factors. Rather it conceives of civil society dynamics as a component of the system that, as a whole, has produced the outcomes and then examines which civic actors play what roles. Even if the relative importance of civil society as compared to other factors ends up being small (if this could be determined), this does not diminish its importance to a complex notion of causality. A property of complex systems is

[3] Ricigliano 2012; Loode, 2011; De Coning 2012.

that given their complexity, small shifts can create unpredictable, non-linear interactions that can cascade across the system.

Research Methods and Field Work Considerations: This two-part case study is based on literature by Georgian, Ossetian, Abkhaz and international analysts, scholars, and think tanks, and on 36 interviews conducted over several research visits to Georgia between March 2016-May 2018. The study also draws on reports and grey literature by international think tanks, policy groups and NGOs active in Georgia. It focuses as much as possible on sources from Georgian authors (those available in English or Russian) to prioritize local views and debates on these processes. The study's focus on local relationships requires a rich historical account of these events from multiple local perspectives. The study also drew on personal archives (journal entries, newspaper clippings, video footage, internal memos and reports) from my own work in Georgia, and on the South Ossetian and Abkhaz conflicts, over various periods beginning in 1996, which included many study trips to the region.

My lack of Georgian language skills has imposed limitations, though many materials were available in Russian or English, and my Russian proficiency allowed many interviews to be conducted in Russian, when the interviewee preferred speaking in Russian over having translation. Several interviews were conducted through Georgian-English translation. My identity as a female researcher from Canada inevitably impacted my research interviews, in general positively as politically, Canada is not associated with presumed political biases on Georgia's history and is seen relatively neutrally as a friendly, if distant and unengaged, Western country. Being female had unclear impacts as in the field of peacebuilding and civil society in the Caucasus, women are in fact the majority so my role was not unusual. As well, men and women were equally generous with their time and, I believe, quite open.

My identity as a foreigner studying these very local processes was more significant, and generally people were positively disposed and welcomed the attention to their issues. The most significant part of my identity appeared to be my interlocutors' recognition of my long professional experience in Georgia, the Caucasus and Russia and my existing network of contacts with Georgian and international policy makers through long-standing work with peacebuilding efforts on the Georgian conflicts. My profile as a serious, informed, and already "vetted" researcher was important to securing interviews in the first place, and I believe allowed interlocutors to be relaxed, more candid and more detailed once they understood my level of background knowledge and personal experience.

RoadMap of This Case

This Part 1 of the Georgia case study proceeds in the following manner. It reviews the violent history and societal dynamics that led to Georgia's 20th century status as a Soviet Socialist Republic. It then traces the emergence of independent civic activity in Soviet Georgia from the post-Stalin thaw to the late 1980s, as the Soviet Union began to unravel politically and ideologically. It goes on to profile two episodes in the pivotal year 1989, where internal civic actors were involved in key events that spiraled into violence and shaped Georgia's trajectory. The first episode examined is Soviet troops' attack on unarmed pro-independence protestors in Tbilisi in April 1989, and the second episode is the November 1989 "march on Tskhinvali" led by then nationalist leader Zviad Gamsakhurdia, that sparked fighting and ultimately a prolonged low intensity war in South Ossetia that lasted until 1992. It focuses on the period before the Georgian nationalist movement assumed political power in the October 1990 parliamentary elections, thus its "civil society phase". However, there is a very blurred boundary between civic and political actors in this period, when in fact all political parties except the Communist Party were outlawed. It concludes with a discussion of Georgia's very wide spectrum of civic activism that grew up in this period, and examines what applying the concepts of "good civil society" and "bad civil society" reveals about the relationships between these civic actors and their influence on violence.

1. Soviet Georgia And Its Embedded Minority Dilemmas

The Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic was one of the 15 constituent union republics of the USSR from 1921. Soviet Georgia was a very multinational entity, with approximately 30% of the population in 1989 consisting of minorities, namely Armenians, Azeris, ethnic Russians, Ukrainians, Abkhaz, Ossetians, and Adjarians (ethnically Georgia but Moslem). At the time of the breakup of the Soviet Union, Soviet Georgia included three internal ethnically-defined autonomous entities, South Ossetia, Adjara and Abkhazia, though the latter held equal status to Georgia as a republic until the 1930s.

Soviet Georgia was established after a Menshevik independent Georgian state created in 1918 was overthrown by the invasion of the Soviet Bolshevik Red Army in 1921. In the middle ages, Georgia had seen long periods of independence, though Georgians had lived in "various princedoms" which were absorbed into the Russian empire at different stages, accepting

Russian rule from the Treaty of Georgievsk in 1783 through the 19th century as protection against Turkish and Persian attacks.[4]

The struggle between the Menshevik government of independent Georgia and the Georgian and Soviet Bolsheviks took on ethnic dimensions in present day South Ossetia and Abkhazia. In South Ossetia, then a Georgian interior region of Shida Kartli, local factions' Bolshevik sympathies and ties to ethnic kin in the North Caucasus (already under Soviet control) led to three main Ossetian uprisings in 1918, 1919 and 1920 against the government and local ethnic Georgian landowners.[5] This became a military conflict when Ossetian groups attacked Georgian towns and civilians and harsh retribution by Georgian military forces against Ossetian communities killed hundreds of civilians, leading Ossetians to turn for help (and weapons) to Soviet Russia. In the biggest uprising in 1920, a Georgian counteroffensive killed 3,000-7,000 people and roughly 20,000 Ossetians fled to Soviet Russia.[6] In retribution, Ossetian fighters joined the advancing Red Army that overthrew the Menshevik government in 1921, and themselves engaged in violent reprisals against Georgian communities.[7]

In Abkhazia, a chaotic dynamic played out where control shifted from the Georgian government to pro-Bolshevik Abkhaz militias and back. Abkhazia had autonomous status under the Georgian independent republic from 1918 to 1921, though for much of that time it was occupied by General Denikin's White Army fighting both the Georgian government and the Red Army.[8] Though often framed as ethnically motivated, these conflicts were equally related to ideological affinity with the Bolsheviks given the minorities' marginalized economic position, as well as affinity with kin in the north Caucasus inside Soviet Russia. Independent Georgia from 1918-21 thus faced a constant battle for survival given the Bolsheviks' takeover in neighbouring Armenia and Azerbaijan, and subversion from Georgia's own local Bolshevik factions aligned with Georgian compatriots in the Soviet leadership. Archival research by Steven Blank shows that the February-March 1921 Red Army takeover of independent Georgia was engineered by Georgian born Bolsheviks Sergo Ordzhonikidze and Joseph Stalin, against opposition from Lenin and Trotsky, and that for Stalin, then Soviet Commissar for Nationality Affairs (Narkomnats), subduing Georgian

[4]Beissinger 2002, 178; Nodia 2005b, 63.
[5] Souleimanov 2013, 112.
[6] Ibid., 113.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid.

"bourgeois nationalism" and incorporating his native land into the Soviet Union was a personal crusade.[9]

The South Ossetian Autonomous Region (SOAR) was created inside Georgia in 1922 as a reward to the Ossetian communists, its borders drawn to include some majority Georgian communities.[10] A month after the Soviet Red Army occupied Georgia, the Bolsheviks created the Abkhaz Soviet Socialist Republic with an equal status to the Georgian SSR, with both republics joined in a confederation.[11] However, in 1931 Abkhazia's republic status and confederation with Georgia was revoked by the Soviet Caucasus Bureau and Abkhazia was demoted to the status of an autonomous republic inside Georgia. The fact that Stalin, already leader of the Soviet state by the late 1920s, was an ethnic Georgian as were prominent Bolsheviks Sergo Ordzhonikidze, and Lavrenti Beria, colours minorities' interpretations of Soviet decisions in that era as reflecting Georgian chauvinism. The intelligentsia in Georgia and across the entire Caucasus suffered greatly during Stalin's repressions, and whole peoples were deported for suspected disloyalty to the Soviet regime (Ingush, Chechens, and Georgia's Meskhetian Turks) and the totalitarian control of Stalinism meant this dark history was never discussed. These early twentieth century roots of the mistrust and fear between Georgians, Abkhaz and South Ossetians resurfaced to fuel antagonistic nationalist movements in the early 1990s as Soviet authority weakened. The civic groups that emerged then were strongly shaped by each group's narratives of historical grievance at the hands of the other and these buried pasts fuelled each groups' security fears and willingness to use violence to prevent a repeat of its national tragedies.

Soviet Nationalities Policies Foster Activism around Language and Culture

Many scholars see a direct link between Soviet policies to deal with its diverse ethnic groups and the emergence of ethnic and secessionist conflicts in general across the former Soviet Union, and particularly in Georgia. Soviet nationalities policy established political structures that cemented ethnically-based identities, and nurtured national-cultural elites and exclusivist national histories that created fertile soil for nationalism to emerge as Soviet control weakened.[12]

[9] Blank, 1993, 36-37, 39-40.
[10] Souleimanov 2013, 113.
[11] Ibid., 114.
[12] Cheterian 2008, 25.

Ethnic Georgians as a group were more internally cohesive, insular and more rural than most other nations of the USSR; in the 1970s an amazing 97% of Georgians lived in the Georgian SSR, and there was very little outmigration, the rate of Russian language fluency was among the lowest in all the republics and Georgians also had very low rates of intermarriage.[13] Georgian society was characterized by a rural urban divide, going back to the 19th century when Tbilisi was "run by Armenian businessmen and Russian administrators" and internal controls and capital intensive farming kept people in the villages; in 1989, Georgia was only 56% percent urban.[14]

The Soviet Union's asymmetrical federalist structures were a complex hierarchy of ethnically-defined territorial units with various levels of political and cultural autonomy. The union republics (Soviet Socialist Republics – SSRs) were the top tier of autonomy for large nations with international borders, described in the Soviet constitution as sovereign states with the right to secession. Within the 15 union republics were three other levels; autonomous republics (Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republics -ASSRs) for numerically significant groups, and Autonomous Oblasts (AOs or autonomous regions) and Autonomous Okrugs (within an oblast) for smaller ethnic groups.[15] For Soviet planners these ethnically-defined administrative divisions were justified by ideology, to recognize and reverse the colonial subjugation of peoples by the Russian Empire; to encourage the ""flourishing" (*rasvet*) of their ethnic culture" that would naturally lead "to a "drawing together" (*sblizhenie*) of these nations" until they completely merged into a new Soviet people.[16] However, they also clearly reflected more pragmatic divide and rule principles forcing the dominant nation to deal with the non-titular groups as "counterweights to any possible nationalist politics" and "gave the center the possibility of playing groups off against one another."[17]

This ethnically-based federal framework exerted a powerful force, and entrenched nationalist identities through the dominance of the national languages and culture of various ethnic groups. This occurred through the freedom given to the national intelligentsia "through structures such as writers' and artists' unions with subsidized national literature, national

[13] Suny 1994, 300.
[14] Jones 2012, 9-10.
[15] Zürcher 2007, 25.
[16] Suny 1994, 294.
[17] Zürcher 2007, 26.

symbols such as flags and hymns, museums commemorating the national past and its cultural achievements, and the production of national histories."[18] The net effect was to incentivize a prominent role for ethnicity and for nationalist intellectuals in promoting exclusive ethnic histories demonstrating a group's presence on the land.[19]

In Soviet Georgia, ethnic Georgian nationalism among the elites took the form of celebration of culture, language, and folklore both within Georgia and at the Union level as Stalin gave Georgian cultural practices prominence in Soviet culture.[20] Georgian Communist Party leaders tolerated and even celebrated the ethnic Georgian national cultural and literary intelligentsia, many of whom had special social status and connections to these ruling elites through family networks, though sometimes they were also censored, or even arrested.[21] Against this backdrop of officially nurtured nationalist feeling, the Soviet collapse left a vacuum of legitimating ideas that meant nationalist movements were "best positioned to mobilize masses" precisely because of the outsized role of national histories and culture.[22] As historian Stephen Jones notes,

> [T]he hapless Soviet promotion of ethnic segmentation, primordial attachment to territory, national language, and ethnographic myth-making undermined the concept of common citizenship and a common home for national minorities in Georgia.[23]

2. Civic Activism: Dissidents, Environmentalists, Nationalists and Militias

Contrary to popular belief that the Soviet Union had no independent civil society, "Soviet society was not static" [24] and according to civic activist Gia Tarkan-Mouravi many eras involved some form of civic activism. In Soviet Georgia as elsewhere in the Soviet Union, intellectuals (or intelligentsia) had an elevated historical role and some freedom to address public issues, usually on cultural and national themes.[25] However, the official "civil organizations" of the Soviet regime from the early 1930s like trade unions, the communist

[18] Cheterian 2008, 44.
[19] Ibid., 48.
[20] Ivanauskas, 2018, 7.
[21] Ibid., 10.
[22] Cheterian 2008, 22. Cheterian argues that most nationalist movements in the Soviet Union did not lead to violence. The few that did had 1) a buried historical trauma and 2) the decision by elites to use force against nascent nationalist movements that ultimately radicalized the nationalist movements.
[23] Jones, 2009, 94.
[24] Interview with Gia Tarkan-Mouravi, Tbilisi, 23 May, 2016. Tarkan-Mouravi is a Georgian intellectual, a physicist, a former journalist and prolific writer on political, social and cultural issues, and founder of multiple civil society organizations in Georgia since the late 1980s.
[25] Nodia 2005a, 12.

youth organization Komsomol, artists associations, writers unions etc. were state-organized and not an expression of voluntary civic activity.[26] These regime-controlled structures were used to legitimate communist rule, while under Stalin, massive repressions inhibited independent civic activity for many decades and activists risked "severe punishment including death or lengthy imprisonment".[27]

After Stalin's death, public activism emerged quickly in Georgia, paradoxically in defense of Stalin himself. In 1956, Soviet leader Khrushchev's "secret speech" unleashed criticism of Stalin and was seen in Georgia as having an anti-Georgian tone. On the anniversary of Stalin's death in 1956, large student-led demonstrations in Tbilisi commemorated the Georgian-born Soviet leader and demanded Khrushchev's resignation. These mass protests continued for several days until March 9, 1956 when the military used force to disperse the demonstrators, killing dozens and injuring and arresting several hundred young people.[28] Some saw these demonstrations as the "first open expression of Georgian nationalism" as the denigration of Stalin was a "symbol for the treatment of Georgian national consciousness at the hands of the Russian (Soviet) rulers."[29] To others, they reflected "the sensitivity of Georgians to racist overtones where Stalin is used as a scapegoat to hide the guilt of the Soviet system, which allowed Stalin to rule."[30] However some saw a strong nationalist identification with Stalin among Georgia's youth, who had been "bred on the panegyrics and permanent praise of the genius of Stalin."[31] Also, since Stalin had elevated the status of Georgian culture in the official Soviet milieu, the protests may have "reflected the alarm shared by Georgians who wanted to preserve their exceptionalism among other Soviet nationalities."[32] The 1956 demonstrations revealed Georgian society's capacity for street activism and courage in defying the authorities, though the harsh military response meant there were no further protests for twenty years.

In the aftermath of the 1956 crisis in Georgia, the Soviet leaders in Moscow attempted to calm the situation by allocating more power to the local elites, and making concessions to Georgian national consciousness. The result was a combination of "local political control and

[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Suny 1994, 303. Tarkhan-Mouravi 1997, 23.
[29] Suny 1994, 303.
[30] Dragadze, 1990.
[31] Tarkhan-Mouravi 1997, 23.
[32] Ivanauskas, 2018, 8.

ethnic favouritism" that led to the growth of "a vast network of illegal economic operations" and preferential access for Georgians to education that created "officially sanctioned discrimination against minorities within the republic."[33] Thus, Georgia in the 1970s was a society characterized by corruption, black marketeering and bribe taking among top party elites, and a society of closed familial networks of mutual aid and protection.[34] At the same time, the social stability and relative wealth of this period fueled the emergence of a stable strata of educated Georgians and "the new intelligentsia emerged, characterised with nationalistic aspirations and ideological pragmatism" which brought the revival of the arts and cinema and other sources of national pride.[35]

In 1972, the widespread corruption in Georgia led to Moscow's removal of the leader of the Georgian Communist party who had held power for twenty years, Vasil Mzhavanadze. Then Georgian Minister of the Interior, Eduard Shevardnadze was promoted to first secretary of the Georgian Communist Party and with Moscow's support conducted a "war on corruption", arresting more than 25,000 people, the majority of them Party members.[36] Shevardnadze also attacked what he termed "half-baked nationalism" and "national narrow mindedness" that had taken hold among both ethnic Georgians and also Georgia's minorities in this period.[37]

Initially the Georgian intelligentsia were supportive of the new leader for his "openness to dialogue" and his charisma, but they lost "hope and interest" when the arrests failed to reduce the corruption as the state and law enforcement structures were deeply corrupted as well, and they resented his "anti-nationalist rhetoric".[38] Georgia had changed demographically in the previous decades as intense rural migration to the capital meant that by the mid-1970s ethnic Georgians became a majority in Tbilisi. Accordingly the influence of Russian language diminished, the number of Georgians studying in Russian schools dropped for example and "the society gradually ripened" to resist Moscow's periodic attempts to diminish Georgian language and culture.[39] In this era, nationalism, Georgian language and the economic power of the underground economy strengthened; personal and family networks were the basis of

[33] Suny 1994, 304.
[34] Ibid., 306.
[35] Tarkhan-Mouravi 1997, 24/35.
[36] Alekseeva 1985, 113.
[37] Suny 1994, 307.
[38] Tarkhan-Mouravi 1997, 25/35.
[39] Ibid.

economic and social life, and society remained fragmented with few broader unifying values.[40]

The Soviet Union's language concessions to local Georgian elites negatively impacted Georgia's minorities who, like smaller nations across the Soviet Union, overwhelmingly used Russian as their official language in education and employment. Though Ossetians were a majority in South Ossetia's population of approximately 100,000, Ossetians bitterly remember how in 1938 the Ossetian language was converted to Georgian alphabet, and in the 1950s all education switched to the Georgian language, even if "almost no one knew Georgian; business and government dealings and all public signage had to be in Georgian."[41] Many Ossetians "Georgianized" their surnames under explicit pressure from their places of work, or school. In Abkhazia, ethnic Abkhaz leaders had seen their share of the population shrink from 53 percent by the end of the 19th century, to just 17.8 percent in the last Soviet census in 1989, the result of expulsions during the Tsarist Empire and mass in migration in the Soviet era.[42] Abkhaz leaders had repeatedly appealed to Moscow over the decades to restore their "republic status" stripped away in 1931, but their demands were rejected. However, Moscow did take steps to secure Abkhaz language, cultural rights, and political rights as the titular nation, especially under Soviet leader Brezhnev, which led Abkhazia's ethnic Georgian population to claim discrimination against their rights.[43]

Reissner calls this period of the 1960s and 70s "the incubator of nationalism" in Georgia, as the Georgian state apparatus became increasingly dominated by ethnic Georgians and policies of increasing Georgian identity and rights. [44] The minorities in the autonomous areas had official status as titular nations, but it meant that they "were simply privileged in terms of cadre issues within their region; otherwise they remained excluded from all other decision-making processes on the Republic level", their areas were economically disadvantaged and so minorities had to appeal to Moscow to "push through their interests vis-à-vis Tbilisi".[45] Georgia's largest minorities, the Armenians and Azeris, did not have their own autonomous regions and had even fewer protections. Thus as Georgians increasingly dominated the

[40] Suny 1994, 306-7.
[41] Kochieva and Margiev 2005, 3.
[42] Souleimanov 2013, 128-30.
[43] Ibid., 130.
[44] Reisner 2009, 265.
[45] Ibid., 246.

government, education, and other structures of the Georgian SSR, the third of Soviet Georgia's population who were not ethnically Georgian saw their interests as threatened by the increasing Georgian identity of the state, and by the increasingly confident Georgian nationalist movement.

Dissident Groups under Détente: Human Rights and Georgian Rights

With the era of détente with the West under Brezhnev, dissident groups emerged in Georgia in the mid-1970s connected to international human rights networks. Though they never gained a strong following in Georgia, they represented the first formal civic organizations and gave a platform and public legitimacy to nationalist issues and leaders. Zviad Gamsakhurdia was the most prominent individual behind the emergence of the Georgian dissident movement. He was a lecturer on American literature at Tbilisi State University and son of a famous writer Konstantine Gamsakhurdia, a key figure in the national cultural intelligentsia who had access to the highest party circles.[46] Gamsakhurdia (the younger) was imprisoned three times between 1956-1977, and all his life was under the control and monitoring of the KGB, and a close look at his writing shows that even in his dissident phase, "his focus was not on human rights but Georgian rights."[47] Through samizdat reports and contacts with the Russian dissident movement and Western press, Gamsakhurdia and a small group of likeminded figures raised public alarm about the destruction of Georgian historical monuments through corruption or indifference of Communist party decision makers. In one prominent case Gamsakhurdia publicized the theft of religious treasures from the Georgian Orthodox Church, and investigations by the party under Shevardnadze led directly to the wife and relatives of the former party leader Mzhavanadze.[48]

In 1974, Zviad Gamsakhurdia, Valentina Paylodze (a choirmaster) and Merab Kostava (a music teacher) formed the first formally registered dissident organization, the Initiative Group for the Defense of Human Rights. (Both Gamsakhurdia and Kostava had been active since the 1956 protests as part of a secret group, *Gorgasliani,* that had publicized the massacre and agitated for freedom from the Soviet "occupier".[49]) This new group saw itself connected to the broader Soviet dissident movement but it also opposed "Soviet cosmopolitanism" and championed the defence of Georgian national symbols, language and

[46] Ivanauskas, 2018.
[47] Jones 2012, 55.
[48] Suny 1994; Alekseeva 1985, 114.
[49] Ivanauskas, 2018, 12.

culture, and claimed the Red Army's invasion in 1921 made Soviet rule in Georgia illegitimate.[50]

After the Soviet Union's signing of the Helsinki accords in 1975 led to the establishment of human rights "watch groups" in the USSR, Gamsakhurdia and Kostava founded the Georgian Helsinki Watch group in 1977.[51] The Helsinki group publicized torture in Soviet prisons and took up the cause of the Meskhetian Turks, Moslem Georgians who Stalin had deported from Georgia to Central Asia and who had still not been allowed to return.[52] However, the dissident movement represented "a handful of energetic and like-minded people" who had no direct connection to the student movement and "it is not likely they had wide support ".[53] While originally the Georgian dissidents published their material in Russian samizdat (self-published newspapers and journals that were circulated by hand), by 1975 Gamsakhurdia and Kostava developed several Georgian samizdat publications. Disagreements with the Russian dissident movement emerged however when it became clear that Gamsakhurdia had little interest in reforming the Soviet Union, and in-fact wanted Georgia to leave the USSR.[54]

The Georgian dissident movement remained small and uninfluential.[55] However, these early activities became a springboard for Gamsakhurdia and Kostava to play key roles in the much more influential Georgian nationalist movement. Gamsakhurdia's human rights credentials also may have initially inclined Western countries to view the Georgian nationalist movement as a democratic force and Gamsakhurdia for a while was the representative of Amnesty International in Georgia, while US congressmen (unsuccessfully) nominated Gamsakhurdia and Kostava for the Nobel peace prize in 1977.[56]

In 1977 the regime cracked down and Gamsakhurdia and Kostava were arrested for "anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda", namely "preparing, possessing and disseminating anti-Soviet literature" including works by Solzhenitsyn and Sakharov among others.[57] This raised a huge public outcry in Georgia but was largely "an expression of nationalist sentiment rather than solidarity with the platform of the Helsinki Group."[58] At the trial, Gamsakhurdia publicly repented his dissident activities (though stated that his "national-patriotic views had

[50] Cheterian 2008, 159.
[51] Jones 2012, 55.
[52] Alekseeva 1985, 115.
[53] Ibid., 112.
[54] Ivanauskas, 2018, 14.
[55] Nodia 2005a, 13.
[56] Cheterian 2008, 160.
[57] Chronicle of Current Events 1978.
[58] Alekseeva 1985, 112.

not changed"), the authorities broadcast Gamsakhurdia's repentance on television, and his sentence was commuted to 2 years in exile in Dagestan, while Kostava was sent to Siberian exile until 1987.[59] Gamsakhurdia's public recantation was "a strong blow both on the emerging Georgian national movement and for Soviet dissent as a whole" and on return from exile he remained a marginal figure for many years. When Kostava was released from exile in 1987, he "came back to the center of the nationalist movement" and convinced others to accept Gamsakhurdia back by publishing a statement that Gamsakhurdia's confession had been their joint plan to avoid "orphaning of the dissident movement."[60]

Nationalist Themes Fuel Broader Protest Movement

With the dissident leaders exiled and silenced, loose networks of students and intellectuals took the lead in pressing nationalist themes, with less attention to broader human rights issues. In the late 1970s, students mounted demonstrations to defend Georgian language, culture, ecology, and historical monuments against infringements by the central authority of Moscow. The regime's interactions with these protests led to a sequence of concessions by the state seen as victories for the protesters and that fueled more activism.[61] A pivotal event came in spring 1978, when a group of university friends organized tens of thousands of students to demonstrate in Tbilisi against Moscow's constitutional proposals for equal status for the Russian language (with Georgian), and the students refused to back down in the face of Soviet military contingents ominously deployed to the capital.[62] In the tense standoff with the demonstrators, Georgian Party chief Shevardnadze chose not to use force to disperse the crowds, spoke directly with demonstrators, and obtained concessions from Moscow to maintain Georgian as the sole official language; protest organizers were not even prosecuted or expelled from university.[63] Many of these newly active students were from families of the cultural intelligentsia, and loosely connected to party circles in Georgia's intertwined elite networks. As well, the Georgian Orthodox Church emerged as an influential nationalist voice in this period with a great impact on the youth. From the 1960s, young Georgians attended church in large numbers out of a sense of patriotism, and certain church leaders often touched on patriotic themes in their sermons.[64]

[59] Chronicle of Current Events 1978.
[60] Nodia 1996, 4/14 pdf; Tarkhan-Mouravi 1997, 29/35.
[61] Suny 1994, 307-10.
[62] Alekseeva 1985, 111.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid., 108.

A new generation of young activists thus came to champion the Georgian language through public actions. In 1980, 364 intellectuals signed a protest letter against a new Soviet rule that all doctoral dissertations should be written and defended in Russian, and other groups protested Russification policies in the schools.[65] However, the focus on Georgian rights and language put the Georgian civic activists on a collision course with the rights of minorities. In April 1981, ethnic Georgian students from Abkhazia travelled to Tbilisi to protest discrimination against Georgians in education and state jobs – disproportionately occupied by ethnic Abkhaz as the "titular nation" of the Abkhaz autonomous republic.[66]

By the mid-1980s as Gorbachev's reforms opened up public debate, there was a high level of public activism around language rights and cultural issues in Soviet Georgia that mobilized students and intellectuals and, increasingly, the general public in the capital. The Georgian Communist Party sought to satisfy these aspirations to some degree, and many in the party shared the cultural concerns of demonstrators. However, the increasingly assertive Georgian national movement excluded in its approach and discourse the third of Soviet Georgia's population that was not ethnically Georgian who feared a loss of rights and status, and it became clear "the ethno-linguistic minorities in Georgia feared Georgian nationalism and considered the Soviet federal structures and Moscow as the guarantor of the *status quo.*"[67]

Glasnost Unleashes Open Debates over Georgian and Minority Grievances

The political liberalization under Gorbachev (glasnost) in the late 1980s opened up new spaces for public discussion around past wrongs. The historical injustices that had been buried under the guiding Soviet ideology of "international brotherhood" and effectively silenced by strict Soviet control were aired in the new freer press. Georgian's desire for emancipation from Soviet rule found a mirror image in Abkhaz and Ossetian movements for emancipation from Georgian domination, as historians in these societies utilized the new freedoms to publicize their claims of Georgian oppression, violence, cultural and linguistic assimilation policies and economic marginalization. Georgian historians portrayed the Abkhaz and Ossetians as recent arrivals from the North Caucasus, "guest peoples", and therefore according to the norms cemented by Soviet nationalities policies, claimed they had no legitimate rights to the land.[68] As well, the successes of Georgian civic activists in the 1970s and 80s to secure the primacy of Georgian language and culture ignored the fact that

[65] Ibid., 120.
[66] Ibid., 118.
[67] Cheterian 2008, 159.
[68] Gigineishvili 2007, 54-55.

for the minorities, Russian was their primary language, professional fluency in Georgian was not common, and many spoke no Georgian at all. These mounting tensions created very real clashes of interests and rights between Georgians and the minorities but the emerging civic leaders from all communities were ill equipped to deal with these complex issues. Georgian political analyst Ghia Nodia notes the lack of democratic skills and practices at this time as a big factor," though Georgia had "excellent mathematicians and film directors" it had little competence in "political action" and civil society was only "taking its first steps".[69]

Among the early civic activists, there was little awareness of how Georgians themselves could be considered oppressors of other nations; "the Georgian national movement repudiated the existence of an unequally *[sic]* high pressure to assimilate felt by the Abkhazians and Ossetians along with non-privileged small ethnicities, and did not assure them of any guarantee of existence or an appropriate political status." [70] One of the few Georgians "who recognized such a necessity and in turn demanded action by the emerging national movement was prominent philosopher Merab Mamardashvili, then head of the Tsereteli Institute of Philosophy of the Georgian Academy of Sciences and Professor of the Tbilisi State University."[71] Mamardashvili's work explored how the Soviet psyche prevented people from thinking and realizing themselves, and claimed it also made people resistant to real dialogue across cultures.[72] In a 1990 article attacking the "national chauvinism" of Gamsakhurdia and other radicals in the nationalist movement, he called on Georgians to defend universal human dignity.

> "Defending the dignity of the Abkhaz, Armenian, Ossetian - you defend your dignity, otherwise for me there is no high concept of a Georgian. I have lived with them and live with them. And I do not yield to anyone else the right to judge my degree of 'Georgianness'."[73]

But his stance was highly criticized by the national movement and his early death in 1990 removed an important voice from Georgia's civic debates. Russian dissident Andre Sakharov was also a strong advocate for minorities; he proposed in 1989 to create a new multinational union that equalized the status of all ethnic groups across the Soviet Union and called on

[69] Nodia 2005a, 156.
[70] Reisner 2009, 246.
[71] Ibid. FN 22, Reisner cites: Mamardashvili, Merab (1990): Verju v zdravyj mysl". in: Molodëzh Gruzii No. 37, 21 September 1990, p. 7
[72] Zakaradze, 2014, 77.
[73] *Molodëzh Gruzii,* September 21 1990.

Georgia and all the Soviet union-level republics to recognize they were "small empires".[74] (Gamsakhurdia clashed openly with Sakharov over the concept of the new multinational union.[75])

The past historical grievances of Georgians and the minorities weighed heavily on this era, as the nationalist aspirations of the minority groups in Georgia were perceived as directed by the Soviet center to threaten Georgian territorial integrity, just as in 1920. Even though they mirrored early Georgian nationalist mobilizations, the Popular Fronts, forums and cultural organizations of Abkhaz, Ossetians, Armenians and Russians in Georgia were viewed by many Georgian nationalists simply as tools of Soviet machinations.[76] The Georgian nationalists' demands to increase the dominance of Georgian language and culture fueled increasing fears among minority populations, but most strongly in Abkhazia. Public mobilization in Abkhazia had begun ten years earlier, in 1978, when after the Soviet Union granted the Georgian language concessions, crowds demonstrated for Abkhaz linguistic, cultural and political rights, with some calling for secession given Stalin's abolition of Abkhazia's republic status in 1931; the Georgian Communist Party defused the crisis through concessions like establishing an Abkhaz State University with an Abkhaz section, as well as Georgian and Russian sections.[77]

3. Georgia's Volatile Pluralism and the Role of Civic Actors in Restraining or Unleashing Violence

By the late 1980s, Georgian civic activism consisted of a dizzying array of social groups that competed to mobilize the ethnic Georgian majority as the once all-powerful Soviet state weakened. Independent political activity was outlawed by the Communist party, yet as Archil Abashidze recounts, though politics was banned, "nearly everyone was involved in politics back then."[78] Ghia Nodia recalls that there was literally "no demarcation line between political parties and non-political organizations" and both were guided by the values of anti-communism and nationalism, with some liberalism as well.[79] While some of these groups were democratic and qualify as "good civil society" embodying values of inclusion and non-violence posited by Chambers and Kopstein, many actors shaped by the cultural nationalism

[74] Sakharov (*Сахаров*) 1989, 27.
[75] Jones 2012, 55.
[76] Souleimanov 2013, 115.
[77] Cheterian 2008, 161.
[78] Abashidze 2007, 9.
[79] Nodia 2005a, 13.

of Soviet Georgia championed more exclusive values of Georgian ethno-centrism and national chauvinism along the lines of "bad civil society".

In the new permissive atmosphere of glasnost in the 1980s, new Georgian civic organizations ("societies") were created and some increasingly began to look like and call themselves political parties, though these were formally banned in Soviet Georgia. Former dissidents Giorgi Chanturia, Irakli Tsereteli, and Tamar Chkheidze formed the Ilia Chavchavadze Society in October 1987 that took up defense of Georgian language, heritage and historic monuments, and ecology, though it remained unofficial as the authorities refused to register the organization.[80] Its namesake, Ilia Chavchavadze (1837-1907), was a Georgian writer, political figure and "the acclaimed father of the modern Georgian nation", though Gamsakhurdia emphasized "more on his nationalistic aspirations rather than on the no less essential part of Ilia's mentality – liberalism and Europeanism."[81] The national movement began to espouse the idea "that Georgia is special (unique, exceptional), it bears a particular divinely set spiritual, messianic mission for the rest of the world."[82] However, the Chavchavadze Society soon split into distinct factions driven by different leaders. In March 1988, the more radical wing including leaders Zviad Gamsakhurdia and Merab Kostava split off, known as "the Fourth Group" which later renamed itself the Society of Saint Ilia the Righteous.[83] In late August 1988, a group of young nationalists led by Giorgi Chanturia split off from the Fourth Group as the National Democratic Party while Irakli Tsereteli created the National Independence Party. [84]

These groups were all considered "radicals" within the nationalist movement since they saw Soviet rule in Georgia as illegitimate, and any compromise with the existing political order as "morally unacceptable."[85] The splitting of the Chavchavadze Society into adversarial groups[86] was, Abashidze notes, a reflection of the complete disunity of Georgian society at that time, because of "personal ambition" and "inexperience" all political actors had "a marked inability to reach an agreement or compromise."[87] In October 1988 the "less radical" nationalists who remained in the Chavchavadze Society adopted a program that called for

[80] Beissinger 2002, 179.
[81] Gigineishvili 2007, 54.
[82] Ibid.
[83] Beissinger 2002, 179.
[84] Ibid.
[85] Cheterian 2008, 162.
[86] Reisner 2009, 265.
[87] Abashidze 2007, 9.

much greater self-government and use of national symbols but stopped short of independence.[88] Coopting the public mood, the Georgian communist authorities created the Shota Rustaveli Society in 1988 whose aim was also to promote Georgian culture, though firmly under the government's control. 1988 saw an intensification of nationalist mobilization by these groups and some regime concessions. In November 1988, after 200,000 people demonstrated in Tbilisi, Moscow withdrew a new law enabling Gorbachev's new Soviet Congress of People's Deputies to overrule union laws and remove union republics' right to secede from the Soviet constitution.[89] It was a major victory for the ethnic Georgian civic movement, and showed how Gorbachev's Soviet-wide reform efforts clashed with the interests of titular nations of the Union republics.

The new civic societies mobilized students and the public around issues of cultural heritage and the environment, and merged into loose movement in place of the unconnected protest events of the past. Moscow's plans for a giant railway tunnel to traverse the Caucasus (deemed 'The Project of the Century') had ignored the environmental concerns of mountain communities and when Georgian groups mobilized, the project was suspended.[90] Protests also caused the authorities to shelve a proposed Khudoni hydroelectric plant in Georgia's upper Svanetia region due to environmental concerns, and this campaign led to the formal establishment of the "Georgian Ecological Association" (which later became the Georgian Greens political party.[91]) These initiatives roused the broader public and, at least initially, had little direct connection to demands for political independence. Mamardashvili saw in the ecology movement the "strongest force for reform" and prospects for a conscious, active civil society in Georgia."[92]

In the fall of 1988, the new nationalist societies organized 10,000 students to demonstrate in Tbilisi against the Soviet Army's use of the David Gareja Orthodox monastery complex as a military firing range training ground, and the army base was finally removed.[93] In the fall of 1988 as well were the first protests focused on the minorities. The "Fourth Group" agitated about alleged discrimination against Georgians in the Azeri populated region of Marneuli,

[88] Beissinger 2002, 179.
[89] Cheterian 2008, 163.
[90] Tarkhan-Mouravi 1997, 29.
[91] Ibid., 29/35.
[92] Mamardashvili, 1989.
[93] Beissinger 2002, 180.

calling for closing the Azeri schools and protections for the local Georgian population and linking these complaints to calls for Georgia to secede from the USSR.[94] This reflected a growing pattern whereby radical nationalists "utilized public moods of frustration with Moscow over other issues to refocus national consciousness around demands for independence."[95]

Georgian Nationalist Societies: Radicals, "Irreconcilables" and Moderates

Within the increasingly powerful Georgian nationalist movement, all groups supported exclusive values, namely Georgian nationalism, but the moderates were also amenable to minority rights. The major divisions were not over the goal of independence itself, but "the means of achieving independence". The "romanticist radicals" proudly called themselves "irreconcilables" meaning they would not reconcile to the Communist "rules of the game" and rejected any compromise with the existing authorities. The "moderates", on the contrary, favoured a gradualist approach more akin to the Popular Fronts in the Baltics at that time, often using the keyword "reasonable" and were the most prominent in the movement initially.[96] They did not seek immediate independence, preferring to go through the Soviet parliament to gradually attain a more comprehensive status of autonomy and democratic reforms through to a constitutional state.[97]

Though any accommodation with Soviet state structures was deemed morally unacceptable, the radicals also realized that armed confrontation with the Soviet state would be "suicidal" and "proposed peaceful acts of civil disobedience: strikes, rallies, hunger-strikes, sit-ins".[98] They increasingly mobilized the masses (especially the youth) into the streets in a wave of protests from November 1988 and "fought their way to the forefront of the movement".[99] Georgia was the only Soviet republic where "the irreconcilable mentality dominated" in the national movement, perhaps because Georgia's Communist party leaders made no real compromises with the moderate pro-engagement groups, but yet avoided direct confrontation or criticism of the "irreconcilables". [100] The moderate Popular Front movements in the Baltic republics were much closer to independence at that point so Georgian analysts also speculate

[94] Ibid.
[95] Ibid., 181.
[96] Nodia 1996, pg. 2 of 14.
[97] Reisner 2009, 248.
[98] Nodia 1996, page 2 of 14.
[99] Reisner 2009, 265.
[100] Nodia 1996, pg. 3 of 14. Interview with Gia Tarkhan-Mouravi,

that the Georgian Communist Party may have seen the radicals as the less serious force.[101] However, the big shift to mass support for the radical, irreconcilable position came through the watershed event for Georgia's national liberation movement in April 1989.

Example G-1: April 9, 1989 - State Violence Closes the Space for Moderation

Intensifying nationalist mobilization among Georgians, Abkhaz and Ossetians in 1988-1989 culminated in the violent attack on protesters in Tbilisi in April 1989 by Soviet troops, that cemented the radicals' legitimacy with the public, and fatally weakened the Georgian moderate civic groups who advocated engagement with the authorities. The Tbilisi protests were initially a response to nationalist mobilization in Abkhazia; in this pivotal year, "nationalist discourse became supremely important" in both societies.[102] In Abkhazia, an Abkhaz Popular Front, Adigylara, had formed with demands for greater cultural, and political rights and redress of historical injustices and in 1988, 58 senior Abkhaz Communist Party members penned a letter demanding secession from Georgia.[103] However the mass expression of Abkhaz secessionist sentiment came on March 18, 1989 in the ancient Abkhaz village of Lykhny, where tens of thousands signed the "letter of the 58" demanding Moscow grant Abkhazia equal status with Georgia as a Union Republic.

The Lykhny declaration's call for secession provoked a strong response in Georgia and the radical groups, the Society of Ilya the Righteous of Gamsakhurdia and Kostava, the National Democratic Party of Chanturia and the National Independence Party of Tsereteli organized demonstrations on April 4 in Tbilisi "to demand punishment of the Lykhny organizers".[104] Some demonstrators began a hunger strike and the crowds grew on April 7 and 8 while their demands shifted to full independence for Georgia and an end to communism, and there were even calls for direct overthrow of the government.[105] A study of archival video and press coverage showed the crowds were unified against Abkhaz secessionist moves but divided on Georgian independence.[106] The director of the agency *Soviet Georgia* interviewed at the time stated: "Workers and staff of the agency, as well as the youth, support various claims like those about nature protection, cathedral restoration and the sale of land. However, we cannot

[101] Ibid. Interview with Gia Tarkhan-Mouravi,
[102] Markedonov 2010.
[103] Souleimanov 2013, 132.
[104] Beissinger 2002, 184.
[105] Ibid.
[106] Sartania 2019.

agree with the anti-Soviet and anti-Socialist slogans."[107] The study traced how independence goals and slogans overtook "issues related to Abkhazia", which at the height of the protest were "almost completely neglected".[108]

The arrival of Soviet tanks in central Tbilisi on March 8 signalled the regime's intention to end the demonstrations with force, but reports claim the crowds became more excited and defiant and some even managed to turn the tanks around by lying on the roads.[109] Akaki Asatiani, then leader of the Monarchist party (and later a close ally of Gamsakhurdia's government), recalled the euphoria in the crowd; "in the streets when the Russian tanks came, in April 1989, I remember how I felt, like an old Georgian knight."[110] There was a widespread expectation of violence, but also uncertainty, as the crowd discussed the two different past experiences, the harsh violence used in 1956 and Shevardnadze's decision against using force in 1978.[111] Georgian Communist Party leader Jumbar Patiashvili introduced martial law and many party officials came and appealed for the crowds to disperse, and late on the night of April 8, the Georgian patriarch conducted a mass prayer and appealed for the crowd to avoid violence and go home.[112] However, a crowd of 8-10,000 remained, surrounding a group of 300 hunger strikers.[113]

In the early hours of April 9, units of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia and Soviet Transcaucasian Military District troops moved in with tanks, shovels, and truncheons while the demonstration leaders urged people to sit down and "don't resist".[114] The troops brutally attacked the unarmed crowd, leaving 16 demonstrators dead (mostly young women); 4 others died over the following days and hundreds were injured and admitted to hospitals.[115] The Soviet leadership blamed the local Communist Party leader Patiashvili for ordering the attack and he resigned, however some claim that the request had been approved at the highest levels by Gorbachev and the Politburo.[116] The leaders of Georgia's unofficial groups were arrested and jailed. The Soviet leadership made clear it was not willing to resort to more violence and

[107] Ibid., 14.
[108] Ibid.
[109] Tarkhan-Mouravi 1997, pg. 31 of 35.
[110] Interview with Akaki Asatiani, Tbilisi, 7 May 2018. Asatia is a current member of the Georgian Parliament, former Chairman of the Supreme Council of Georgia during Gamsakhurdia's presidency.
[111] Tarkhan-Mouravi 1997, pg. 31 of 35.
[112] Cheterian 2008, 164.
[113] Physicians for Human Rights 1990, 12.
[114] Ibid., 13.
[115] ibid., 14; Sobchak (Собчак) 1993, Chapter 1.
[116] Ozhiganov 1997, 372.

initially blamed the turn to violence on provocateurs in the crowd,[117] while demonstrations, strikes and acts of defiance continued during a period of national mourning.

The April 9 violence fueled massive anti-Soviet feeling in Georgia and radicalized the public mood. Beyond the direct victims, hundreds who had later moved memorial flowers from the site reported to hospitals with strange respiratory symptoms and separate investigative missions by Russian dissident Andrei Sakharov and the International Committee of the Red Cross suggested that some toxic gas may have been used. The independent group Physicians for Human Rights came to Tbilisi in May 1989 and concluded that Soviet troops had likely used a toxic agent, called chloropicrin" along with regular tear gas, though the later symptoms reported by hundreds were more likely "psychological reactions to communal trauma".[118] Tarkhan-Mouravi recalls that the incident "created a neurotic state of mind" and "myths about hundreds if not thousands of victims of Russians' brutality were created and widely circulated, without any realistic grounds, nationalistic feeling dominated everything, seconded by anti-Communist emotion."[119] The widespread societal revulsion created an atmosphere conducive to the maximalist appeals of the radicals, and commentators noted that it simply became morally impossible to talk of engaging with the communist structures after this.[120]

Georgian analysts have written that some protest leaders saw a military crackdown as an opportunity. Tarkhan-Mouravi wrote of the event that, "some of the national leaders in their excitement could even welcome the use of violence on the side of Soviet troops, assuring the listeners that you had to pay with blood if you want independence, and that such violence shall necessarily awaken the people."[121] Peace studies scholar George Khutsishvili wrote that nationalist leaders brought the situation to the point where a "breakthrough to the nationalist advantage was possible…[t]he sacrificial mechanism was structured, but it could not move without fuel; which meant blood had to be shed."[122]

The April 9 massacre shifted Georgia's internal dynamics irrevocably. The authorities' decision to use force to suppress nationalist mobilization was a key driver of radicalism and Georgia's subsequent descent into violent internal conflict,[123] and destroyed any legitimacy

[117] Sobchak (Собчак) 1993.
[118] Physicians for Human Rights 1990, xii-xiii.
[119] Tarkhan-Mouravi 1997, 31/35.
[120] Cheterian 2008, 164.
[121] Tarkhan-Mouravi 1997, pg. 31 of 35.
[122] Khutshishvili 2018, 39.
[123] Suny 1994, 332.

that the local Communist Party had among Georgians.[124] As well it shifted public support to maximalist demands for independence. After the initial violence Shadiman Shamanidze, a playwright and former Soviet Supreme Council deputy, said, "[I]nitially, a large part of the Georgian population was totally indifferent to the idea of independence. Others were firmly opposed to the destructive nature of nationalist elements within the secessionist movement, but the events of April 9 laid the foundations for an aggressive strain of nationalism.[125] Beissinger finds the April tragedy "transformed the situation" and though support for independence had been relatively low prior to the events, "5 months later 89% of Georgians believed Georgia should be an independent country."[126]

Georgia's Moderates Outflanked by the "Radicals" and Ethno-Nationalist Wing

In this radicalized context, Georgia's moderate civic activists developed few sources of legitimacy with the broader population and were fragmented by internal divisions. They were outflanked by the radicals and their extreme wing under Gamsakhurdia, who used ethnonationalism to mobilize the public and outmaneuvered them, and then later, even his fellow radicals. Nodia claims that the authorities constantly impeded the efforts of the more moderate groups to organize while they avoided confronting the much more dramatic and, often illegal, actions of the radicals.[127] Months prior to April, there had been an initiative to establish a Popular Front movement as a broad umbrella of various groups, by notable intellectuals like philosopher Merab Mamardashvili, physicist Gia Tarkhan-Mouravi, philologist Nodar Natadze, historian Gia Zhorzholiani, and mathematician Guram Berishvili but they were not able to hold their founding Congress.[128] The delays were caused by lack of cooperation from the authorities, which would not provide a hall for the meeting; only in June 1989, after the April events, did the authorities allow the Popular Front to register.[129] In the meantime, the leaders of the radical movements while in prison had quickly formed a Main Committee of National Salvation and called for civil disobedience.

In July 1989, a Georgian Popular Front was finally set up at a founding congress. However, Gamsakhurdia and large numbers of supporters showed up and voted against the moderate candidate for chairman and in favour of Nodar Natadze, who was close to Gamsakhurdia and

[124] Cheterian 2008, 164.
[125] Subeliani 2000.
[126] Beissinger 2002, 185.
[127] Nodia 1996, pg. 3 of 14.
[128] Wheatley 2017, 42.
[129] Beissinger 2002, 179.

this neutralized the independent voice of the Popular Front.[130] The Georgian Popular Front ultimately remained marginal, and was unable to play the compromise role of similar movements in other Union republics.[131] Nodia notes that in the end the influence of the moderate groups on events was limited by their own approaches:

> "Groups committed to a "reasonable" form of political activity were unable to awaken much popular response from Georgian public opinion and, although they called themselves "parties", they were in fact small clubs of intellectuals who argued about political theory…."[132]

Various accounts of the role of Merab Kostava in the national movement suggest he had a strong following and credibility for his years as a Soviet political prisoner and may have steered things in a more moderate direction had he lived. Kostava was seen as an "integrationist" leader, who was committed to keeping the radical factions together, and whose views on the national minorities were less extreme than Gamsakhurdia's.[133] Kostava's death in what many accounts describe as a "suspicious" car accident in October 1989 left Gamsakhurdia the lone charismatic figure in a dissident movement where the radicals had become the dominant force. Gela Nikolaishvili recounts that Kostava tried to prevent the conflict between Abkhaz and Georgians that flared in July 1989, and stated, "sooner or later we will find our way to the hearts of our Abkhaz brothers".[134] By contrast, Gamsakhurdia's divisive personal style is cited by many as a key factor in the polarization that later occurred. "If Kostava was always trying to prevent disagreements within the national movement, Gamsakhurdia was always trying to intensify conflicts, as anyone who didn't agree with him was branded an 'agent of the Kremlin'".[135]

Gamsakhurdia was at odds with the rest of the radical movement when it came to the minorities; most of his counterparts argued against "any involvement in ethnic conflicts with minorities" as a "Kremlin provocation" against the Georgian independence movement."[136] The radicals' general strategy was to try to shift public attention to massive pro-independence and anti-Kremlin actions and away from ethnically-based slogans.[137] However,

[130] Tarkhan-Mouravi 1997, pg. 30 of 35.
[131] Wheatley 2017, 31,45.
[132] Nodia 1996, p. 3 of 14.
[133] Reisner 2009, 265.
[134] Moscow Helsinki Group 2014.
[135] Ibid.
[136] Nodia 1996, pg. 4 of 14.
[137] Ibid., pg. 4 of 14.

Gamsakhurdia instrumentalized the ethnic issue for populist aims and "ethnic populism helped him become the leader of the independence movement".[138] Other Georgian analysts concur that Gamsakhurdia personally encouraged massive polarization and set in play an "ethnocentric and isolationist" course.[139]

"Bad Civil Society": Nationalist Societies Ally with Violent Militias

Many inside the radicals' camp supported a more inclusive vision and eschewed violence. However, the Tbilisi massacre strengthened the turn to publicly sanctioned violence among the national liberation movement in the growth of patriotic militias. After April 1989, weapons raids on Soviet Army bases contributed to the formation of small illegal armed groups.[140] Nodia contends that the Georgian Communist Party "did not even attempt to oppose the creation of armed groups in support of different "radical" parties.[141] The most prominent of these paramilitary groupings, the Mkhedrioni (meaning "the Horsemen" or Knights") gained enormous numbers of recruits after the April massacre. Its leader, Jaba Ioeseliani was a convicted bank robber turned playwright and saw the Mkhedrioni as akin to the historical volunteer forces that Georgian kings had relied upon - the fact that it was mainly young women who were killed drew many Georgian young men who felt it was their patriotic duty to defend their kin.[142]

"Private armed groups emerged as an important form of civil activity", according to Nodia, though this was clearly "uncivil society".[143] The "White George Society" headed by Tengis Kitovani (a close friend of Gamsakhurdia) affiliated with Gamsakhurdia's political coalition and later became the Georgian National Guard.[144] Other Georgian paramilitary organisations at that time included the White Eagles, the White Falcons, the Black Panthers, the Kutaisi National Guard and the Merab Kostava Society.[145] Broers finds that such groups arose when radical nationalist leaders sought support from informal kin, friendship and patronage networks and in Georgia's informal economy these were "intertwined with the criminal

[138] Cheterian 2008, 170.
[139] Losaberidze 2007, 106.
[140] Cheterian 2008, 165.
[141] Nodia 1996, pg.3 of 14.
[142] Wheatley 2017, 45.
[143] Nodia 2005a, 13.
[144] Broers 2004, 163-64.
[145] Ibid., Footnote 123, pg. 63.

world".[146] The result was "the emergence of paramilitary organizations aligned with political factions"[147] and the use of violence as part of the competition for leadership within the national movement as well as a dramatic rise in crime and private sale of weapons by army and military personnel.[148] Though militia leaders may have been inspired by nationalist feeling initially, they became driven by private profiteering with a vested interest in inflaming the conflict to continue opportunities for plunder.[149] The alliance of the radical nationalist groups under Gamsakhurdia with such private violence entrepreneurs secured Gamsakhurdia's rise to power. This dynamic is illustrated by the first outbreak of hostilities in South Ossetia that came soon after Kostava's death, which this study turns to below.

Example G-2: November 1989 and the "March on Tskhinvali"

In fall of 1989, Gamsakhurdia's Ilya the Righteous Society led tens of thousands of people in a "March on Tskhinvali" that ended in a violent standoff and deepened the downward spiral of mistrust and fear between the Georgian national movement and ethnic Ossetians in South Ossetia. This study found little indication of efforts by Georgia's many civic groups to prevent this provocative act that would predictably inflame tensions with South Ossetia, despite the opposition of many within the radicals and the Popular Front to exacerbating tensions with the national minorities. In the South Ossetian Autonomous Oblast, the Georgian nationalist movement's successes and the open airing of anti-minority grievances in Georgia's newly free press had long stoked fears of a loss of basic rights. A draft new law in early 1988 proposing Georgian as the sole official language meant that South Ossetians "could no longer pursue a professional career…or occupy high positions" given the low level of proficiency in formal Georgian.[150] Most alarmingly, the nationalists' calls to return to the 1920 constitution of independent Georgia meant a legal regime where the SO Autonomous Oblast simply did not exist.[151] These positions had spurred the creation of an Ossetian student club ("Nykhas") at the local pedagogical institute, that by early 1989 grew into a wider Popular Front-type movement, "Ademon Nykhas".[152] In March 1989 in the wake of the Lykhny declaration in Abkhazia, Alan Chochiev, head of Ademon Nykhas and a historian at

[146] Ibid., 162-3.
[147] Ibid.
[148] Ibid., 164.
[149] Zurcher 2005, 137-40; Broers 2004, 165-66.
[150] Alborova 2016, 8.
[151] Cheterian 2008, 173.
[152] Alborova 2016, 8.

the Tskhinvali Pedagogical Institute, released an open letter that expressed support for Abkhaz sovereignty,[153] a move that suggested the desire to enhance South Ossetia's status as well in the face of the increasingly alarming rhetoric from Georgia's nationalist leaders.

Ossetian commentators note how in the late 1980s, "nationalistic Georgian voices emphasized their importance over others, claiming the autochthonous nature of the Georgian people and that Ossetians were merely guests on the Georgian land".[154] Ossetians own grievances included the violent repressions of 1918-1920, the restrictions on Ossetian language in the 1940s and 50s, the push to assimilate into the Georgian majority, the economic neglect of the region by Party leaders in Tbilisi which led to a much lower standard of living than the republic average, and many others that emerged from South Ossetia's "little brother" place in the hierarchy of Soviet federalism.[155] Given the radical nationalist slogans circulating in Georgia, for Ossetians the allegiance to the Soviet Union was seen as "a guarantee against physical extinction for the Ossetian people" given the violence that occurred from 1918-1920.[156]

The first clashes between informal groups of Georgians and Ossetians had broken out May 26, 1989 when irregular groups of Georgians, reportedly encouraged by Gamsakhurdia, fought with local Ossetians in Tskhinvali.[157] Overall ethnic tensions heightened that summer with serious violence between Abkhaz and Georgian students in Sukhumi over the attempt to launch an affiliate of the Tbilisi State University in the Abkhaz capital.[158] In August 1989 the Georgian Parliament had introduced a new law making Georgian the only official language to be used in public spheres anywhere in Georgia, and in response, the South Ossetia popular front, Ademon Nykhas, organized strikes and appealed to Moscow to bring South Ossetia into Russian jurisdiction.[159] Furthermore, they requested that the unification of North and South Ossetia to be discussed at the Central Committee plenum of nationalities.[160] In South Ossetia, "people began to self-organize to defend their homeland", and militias "were organized spontaneously on the basis of friendship, kindship, neighbourhood ties".[161] Georgians inside South Ossetia had complained of language discrimination and Georgian

[153] Ibid.
[154] Ibid., 7.
[155] Kochieva and Margiev 2005, 2.
[156] Ibid., 3.
[157] Sammut and Cvetkovski 1996, 10.
[158] Tarkhan-Mouravi 1997, pg. 32 of 35.
[159] Cheterian 2008, 174.
[160] Sammut and Cvetkovski 1996, 11.
[161] Alborova 2016, 8.

groups began to hold a series of "friendship meetings" in South Ossetian villages to discuss the independence of Georgia and the rights of Georgians in South Ossetia.[162] These "were attended by both Georgians and Ossetians, but they did more to exacerbate tensions than to alleviate them."[163]

Amidst these escalating tensions, on November 10, 1989, the South Ossetian Supreme Soviet unilaterally upgraded its own status to an autonomous republic level (like that of Abkhazia) within the Georgian SSR.[164] A week later, on November 16, the Georgian Supreme Soviet annulled this decision.[165] Against this backdrop, on 23 November 1989, Gamsakhurdia organised what he called "a peaceful meeting of reconciliation" which planned to march to Tskhinvali.[166] Gamsakhurdia had been particularly incensed by the November 10 South Ossetian declaration and regarded the Ossetians as "guests" whose real homeland was in North Ossetia, and "this view was shared by many others, even those from the so-called liberal intelligentsia at the time".[167] The Georgian Communist Party did not attempt to stop the march, but actually took part and helped organize. "Communist Party Secretary Gumbaridze provided hundreds of buses", in what Tarkhan-Mouravi claims was part of the Georgian Communists' constant effort to radicalise the national movement and make it be dominated by Zviad Gamsakhurdia whom they viewed as the lessor threat to their power, than the moderate groups.[168]

From the South Ossetian perspective, the march appeared to be the culminating point of a concerted "anti-Ossetian campaign" by Georgian radical nationalist leaders. Two South Ossetian researchers, Kochieva and Margiev, note that in that period a nationwide signature-drive had begun for the abolition of South Ossetian autonomy and,

> "nationalist leaders succeeded in projecting a consistent image of Ossetians as the 'enemy'… to convince the public that priority number one was to abolish [the] autonomous regions in Georgia, close the Roki Tunnel [that connects South Ossetia to North Ossetia] and expel the Ossetians."[169]

[162] Human Rights Watch 1992, 7.
[163] Ibid.
[164] The Corridors of Conflict. Abkhazia 1989-1995 @Memory__Project 2019.
[165] Resources 2019.
[166] Sammut and Cvetkovski 1996, 11.
[167] Wheatley 2017, 46.
[168] Tarkhan-Mouravi 1997, pg. 33 of 35.
[169] Kochieva and Margiev 2005, 4.

A Human Rights Watch report conveys a stark picture of the massive march on Nov. 23 that led to 6 deaths, 27 injuries from gunshot (with 140 people hospitalized) while groups of armed Georgians and Ossetians both took hostages.[170]

> "Between 12,000 and 15,000 people (estimates from Ossetian interviewees rose to 40,000) arrived in a caravan of busses and cars, seeking to enter Tskhinvali from the south. They were met by a mob of Ossetians who, along with the militia and soldiers from the 8th regiment of the Soviet Army, prevented the caravan from entering the city. Some Ossetians interviewed by Helsinki Watch viewed this gathering as an attempt to invade the city. Georgians interviewed maintained that they envisioned a peaceful meeting that would promote understanding between Georgians and Ossetians."[171]

One Georgian civic activist from Gori recalled the march as "a way of saying, we are more than you so let us live in peace".[172] But he acknowledged it backfired, "it polarized society and the Ossetian movement grew, and then Gamsakhurdia's movement grew and made things worse...this all happened before my eyes."[173] In a documentary about this era by Georgian independent TV, Studio Re, a young Georgian woman asks her mother why such aggressive actions by Gamsakhurdia were supported and her mother replies, "in those days these actions seemed patriotic and most people supported them…we wanted to see a strong and integrated Georgia, we just wanted to make them [the minorities] respect our country."[174]

Kochieva and Margiev note in their report an eyewitness account of Gamsakhurdia's return from Tskhinvali after the violence, early on November 24 to address a crowd in the nearby city of Gori. It claims Gamsakhurdia urged the assembled crowd to "[g]et rid of Ossetians in responsible positions - police and teachers first. I authorise you to search their homes and confiscate any weapons, daggers, big knives or axes you find. There will be an end to South Ossetia, and we shall close the Roki Tunnel!"[175] Reportedly many in the crowd called him extreme and "crazy". These accounts align with others that suggest a societal mood where extreme public statements and actions went unchallenged. Reportedly later though,

[170] Human Rights Watch 1992, 7.
[171] Ibid.
[172] Interview with Malkhas Abhazetti, Gori, 21 May 2016.
[173] Interview with Malkhas Abhazetti, 2016.
[174] Kuparadze 2009, 9:39.
[175] Kochieva and Margiev 2005, 5.

Gamsakhurdia's fellow radical Chanturia "disapproved of Gamsakhurdia's actions in South Ossetia, believing the goal of national independence to be far more important than disputes with the minorities" and the disagreement split the radical group and the Main Committee for National Salvation.[176]

The "march on Tskhinvali" was a singular event that often doesn't get featured in studies of this era but had major and lasting consequences. It marked the shift of the most prominent faction of the nationalist movement into "bad civil society" in terms of Chambers and Kopstein's criteria of embodying exclusive values and tolerance for violence. Members of the informal militia, the Merab Kostava Society, who participated, were loyal to Gamsakhurdia and took up positions near Tskhinvali leading to a prolonged, low intensity war between Ossetian and Georgian villages of the region.[177] It inflamed South Ossetians' fears that the Georgian nationalist movement posed a serious threat, and the sheer numbers and lack of opposition to the march demonstrated that Georgian society supported Gamsakhurdia's approach in what seemed to Ossetians like a "nationalistic psychosis."[178] This led to increased mobilization of South Ossetia self-defence militias, and increased support for secession, which then fueled military mobilization in the adjoining Georgian villages and a spiral of violence. Gamsakhurdia's subsequent surge in popularity in Georgia after these events only fueled the polarization further.

4. The Legacy of Bad Civil Society: Ethnic Conflict, Civil War, and State Failure

The chaotic pluralism of Georgia's civil society in this period fostered a multitude of social groups loosely allied behind the goals of independence but with little social unity and key leaders emerged who did not value unity, but rather drew mass support because of uncompromising "heroic" stances. Nodia claims that Soviet repression of any real political civil society left Georgia's intellectual elite, and the general public, with mostly heroic "medieval ideals of political behavior" and the radical mood in Georgian society "was characterized by a lack of (if not contempt for) political sobriety and tolerance."[179] Akaki Asatiani acknowledges that the movement in which he played a prominent role, was

[176] Wheatley 2017, 46.
[177] Cheterian 2008, 175.
[178] Kochieva and Margiev 2005, 3. 3
[179] Nodia 1996, 4/14.

dominated by romantic thinking; "we were an educated people, independence was our wish but we were not prepared for this…we wanted freedom, we had our great kings, King David, Queen Tamar, but we never knew what to do."[180] Historian Stephen Jones sees that Soviet nationalities policies encouraged "romantic dreams of superiority" and Georgia had no serious political movement or thinking.[181] Many contemporary Georgian intellectuals have condemned this period;

> "The result…was a national catastrophe which hampered Georgia's political development for at least a decade. Those responsible for this disaster are our national movement in general, and Gamsakhurdia with his political team in particular."[182]

In a 2007 volume, 16 Georgian academics and experts all assessed the Gamsakhurdia era as a very negative phase for Georgia, though some credited Gamsakhurdia with "mobilizing the public" and "achieving independence" despite huge failings. Others criticized him unequivocally as an "ethno-national extremist", a "failed fascist", "incompetent" and "authoritarian" and some even discount his role in Georgian independence, arguing that all post Soviet republics gained independence when the Soviet Union collapsed.[183] One contributor, Levan Gigineishvili notes that Gamsakhurdia's national program "was of an extremely ethnocentric nature" whose essence was reflected in his slogan "Georgia for the Georgians" and he encouraged a "pseudo-mystical national hysteria."[184] "As a result of the unbearable ideological climate, many ethnically non-Georgians left the country"…followed by an armed conflict, "which in turn made Georgians and Ossetians enemies in general when there was no grounds for it". [185]

As a consequence Georgia's national liberation movement left a very mixed legacy. The paradox that Georgia's early dissident movement that focused on human rights spawned political and paramilitary societies that used violence to support ethnic Georgian dominance was clear to some Georgian civic activists. The philosopher Mamardashvili in an article in September 1990, vowed, "If my people choose Gamsakhurdia, then I will have to go against my own people,"

[180] Akaki Asatiani, Interview by Author. Tbilisi, May 7, 2018.
[181] Jones 2012, 16.
[182] Abashidze 2007, 157.
[183] Nodia 2007.
[184] Gigineishvili 2007, 54.
[185] Ibid., 55.

> "How can a person who considers himself a member of the Helsinki movement absolutely have no idea what human rights are? Illiteracy and complete moral color blindness are evident here, mobilizing ignorance and dark passions in others. If this is not said out loud, then Georgia's misfortune will soon knock on the door."[186]

The politics of confrontation intensified as the Georgian Supreme Council adopted a law barring regionally-based parties in summer 1990, which effectively disenfranchised parties from South Ossetia, and Abkhazia in the upcoming elections. In response, South Ossetia declared full sovereignty as part of the Soviet Union on 20 September 1990. Then in October 1990 Supreme Soviet elections, Gamsakhurdia's *Round Table Free Georgia* faction won decisively (54% of vote) with the Communist Party in second.[187] At that point, Georgia's volatile pluralism had produced close to 200 political parties and clubs, and significant violence during the pre-election period, including arson of two party offices and an attempt to assassinate Chanturia, showing the presence of the private militias in the political competition.[188] Gamsakhurdia's faction won this election because the other radical groups continued their *irreconcilable* opposition to participating in the existing political structures and boycotted, while Gamsakhurdia unexpectedly reversed course at the last minute and was the only representative of the radical movement. His early dissident credentials, while heavily critiqued by the elites, drove his popular appeal; according to Asatiaini, "Gamsakhurdia won because, really people knew that all his life he was this same guy, fighting for freedom, against communists."[189]

From that point, equipped with political power Gamsakhurdia presided over a chaotic period in Georgia's history marked by both independence and war. After a brief "war of laws" between Tbilisi and Tskhinvali on Dec. 11, 1990, the Georgian Supreme Court abolished the autonomous district of South Ossetia all together and open hostilities ensued between the National Guard and Ossetian militias. After failing to subdue South Ossetia, Gamsakhurdia held a March 31, 1991 referendum in all areas of Georgia except South Ossetia and Abkhazia and 89.7% of eligible electors choose independence from the USSR.[190] On April 9, 1991 Georgia declared its secession from the Soviet Union, and on May 26, 1991 Gamsakhurdia

[186] *Molodëzh Gruzii*, September 21 1990.
[187] Cheterian 2008, 168.
[188] Ibid.; Broers 2004, 164.
[189] Interview with Akaki Asatiani, 2018.
[190] Jones 2012, 63.

was elected president, with over 87% of the votes, his approach massively endorsed by the Georgian public. However, Gamsakhurdia's presidency was short lived as his initial passive acquiescence to the August 1991 coup against Gorbachev caused his closest associates to turn against him and challenge his increasingly erratic, autocratic rule. The opposition mobilized its militias and a brief civil war took place from December 22, 1991 with fighting devastating downtown Tbilisi. On January 6, 1992 Gamsakhurdia fled and the Military Council assumed power, consisting of his former close allies, Tengiz Kitovani and Jaba Ioseliani, the leaders of the National Guard and Mkhedrioni victorious militias, and Tengiz Sigua, Gamaskhurdia's former Prime Minister. They invited former Soviet Foreign Minister, Eduard Shevardnadze back from Moscow to lead the interim council, while Gamsakhurdia and loyal supporters in his Western Georgian region of Mingrelia waged a campaign to regain power for another year.

International Engagement with Georgia's Civic Movements?

In this era, there is little evidence of any Western support to Georgia's civic movements, though there were some ties between the dissidents in the Georgia Helsinki group, the broader Soviet dissident movement and some Western human rights NGOs. There were few links to the outside world either in terms of funds or ideas. Despite some vague references to Western liberalism and democracy, as the case has shown, the Georgian national movement mostly drew on an entrenched Georgian cultural nationalism. The US government pursued a "Moscow first" policy in the early 1990s and was preoccupied with securing the Soviet Union's nuclear arsenal under Russian control; it did not have the expertise or presence to engage directly in most of the newly independent states of the Soviet Union until much later.[191] Further, the US was critical of Gamsakhurdia, and withheld recognition of Georgia due to the civil war; President Bush publicly denounced "suicidal nationalism based on ethnic hatred" in a pointed reference to Gamsakhurdia.[192] For Georgia's powerful northern neighbour, it was a time of tension and contradictory polices as Russian President Yeltsin was working to weaken the Soviet center to achieve independence for Russia itself. According to analyst Eduard Ozhiganov, the Yeltsin government initially supported Gamsakhurdia as a way to weaken the Soviet center and saw Abkhazia and South Ossetia as communist strongholds, while the Soviet Parliament supported the autonomous areas, in part

[191] Chayes, Olson, and Raach 1997.
[192] Jones 2012, 68.

at the demand of the North Caucasian representatives in Parliament. Only when full scale war broke out bringing tens of thousands of Ossetian refugees from inner areas of Georgia streaming into North Ossetia did Yeltsin's Russia see an interest in reigning in Gamsakhurdia.[193]

5. Conclusions: Weak Social Capital and Few Civic Restraints on Violence

Nearly thirty years later, contested views of this period inform the foundational narratives on all sides of Georgia's unresolved conflicts with South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Some activists interviewed for this study noted that the tumultuous nature of Georgia's young democracy since means that society has not deeply reflected on this period, and external scholarship on Georgia's conflicts often fails to adequately analyze its legacy.

In the late 1980s, the Soviet Union weakened and collapsed under the pressure of internal contradictions and nationalist forces unleashed by Gorbachev's efforts to reform the communist system. Indigenous civic activism flourished, motivated by a wide range of values such as anti-communism, national pride, political pluralism, human rights, and the powerful slogans of freedom and democracy. Georgia and the other smaller Union Republics of the Soviet Union were internationally isolated and hence the role of international actors was small – amounting to some uneven links with the Soviet dissident and human rights movement. Along with multiple nationalist but liberal-leaning civil society groups that developed among elites, other informal groups mushroomed, including strident national patriotic societies and informal militias of the "bad civil society" type, that embraced an exclusive ethnic Georgian identity and saw violence as legitimate to pursue and protect Georgia's independence, as well as their own self-interest.

In Georgia, the social capital that bound these latter groups was directed against internal political adversaries, economic competitors, and Georgia's restive ethnic minorities whose own movements for security and self-determination provoked fears they were working against Georgian independence. There was little social capital and trust across the spectrum of Georgia's early civic groups as infighting and personal ambitions led to constant splits and bitter fragmentation. Given the harsh conditions of early Soviet rule and entrenched corruption of the post-Stalin decades, the bonding social capital within ethnic Georgian

[193] Ozhiganov 1997, 366-67.

society was restricted to small kinship networks. There appeared to be no civic actors, not even the revered Georgian Orthodox Church, who were unable to restrain or prevent the turn to intra-group and intergroup violence in this period. Many of these informal civic and political groups in fact became targets of violence, as the radical nationalists allied with criminal militias who then brought violence directly into the political competition.

The dominant narratives today suggest that Soviet Georgia had a very weak civil society in these early years, but this study shows the opposite – late Soviet Georgian society exhibited a very vibrant culture of pluralism and activism, especially among elites and students in the capital city, Tbilisi. However, the extremist wings of the Georgian dissident nationalist movement achieved dominance over larger, more moderate, liberal civil society forces. Most moderates were strong champions of Georgian rights and Georgian independence but also valued universal human and minority rights, and even many in the "radical" camp were against fueling problems with Georgia's 30% minority populations. The radicals' leading figure, Zviad Gamsakhurdia, mobilized the Georgian public around emotive issues of threats to ethnic Georgian language, culture and territory and outflanked both his rivals and his former allies to rise to forefront of the independence movement. However, his rise occurred in a context where the centrality of ethnic identity was cemented in people's psyche by the ethnically-determined political structures of the Soviet state itself, and where one-sided national narratives crafted by the cultural intelligentsia had been used by the communist regime to solidify its shaky legitimacy in Soviet Georgia.

The factor of state violence was also critical in mobilizing support for independence among ethnic Georgian society. Extremist ethno-nationalist voices were initially marginal, but the violent assault by Soviet troops on demonstrators in April 1989 and interethnic clashes in South Ossetia and Abkhazia that summer generated public outrage that helped the extremists to dominate Georgian societal discourse. In effect Georgia's "bad civil society" gained dominance and public legitimacy because of other parties' use of violence (the Soviet state, and later Ossetian militias) allowing Gamsakhurdia's faction and allied militias to claim status and legitimacy as protectors of the embattled Georgian nation.

Georgia's indigenous civil society encompassed both "good civil society" with inclusive values and supporting gradual change (non-violence) and an ethnonationalist uncivil or "bad civil society" which sanctioned and even encouraged violence to defend exclusive Georgian rights. The Georgian Orthodox Church played a dual role in this period, promoting Georgian nationalism but also promoting restraint such as urging the protesters to go home and avoid

violence during the April 1989 events. The church had huge importance symbolically and was insistent on not using force in the fight for independence, but despite its strong legitimacy with the population, showed itself unable to compel adherence from its followers.[194]

This period in Georgia ended very badly. Though independence was achieved earlier than some other Union republics, Georgia suffered two secessionist wars, in South Ossetia and later Abkhazia, a disastrous civil war itself, and near economic and social collapse. This case has shown a combination of factors at the societal level interacting to produce these disastrous outcomes. They are Gamsakhurdia's paranoid leadership style, the removal of more moderate integrationist voices among the radicals like Merab Kostava, the ineffectual response from the Georgian Communist Party whose concessions emboldened the radicals, the elitism, political inexperience and lack of popular legitimacy of Georgia's moderate intelligentsia and civic groups, and the popular revulsion against the April 1989 massacre by Soviet troops that completely discredited the Georgian Communists and further undermined the moderates who proposed engagement with the system. Consistent with complex systems explanations, the interaction of all these factors (and others) are what produced Georgia's very negative outcomes rather than any one in isolation.

This period shows how the Soviet state's use of force backfired badly – it radicalized the population, made martyrs of those who were brutally killed, fatally wounded the moderates, and thrust the extremists into center stage. In this case, Georgia's moderate "good civil society" embodying inclusive values and committed to non-violence was too divided to exert much influence, with weak public outreach beyond elite circles, and lacking key skills of compromise and coalition building – not skills easily developed in the Soviet one-party state. Also despite the small size of Georgia's elite networks, the moderate groups lacked social capital with constituencies more aligned with the radical forces, especially the youth who were impatient with talk of gradual change as Gorbachev's *perestroika* and *glasnost* dramatically widened the scope for debate. The type of solidarity forged during the Soviet era was to small family and kin networks primarily and did not extend across the larger society. The one idea that proved able to unify, at least for a while, was Gamsakhurdia's

[194] Reisner 2009.

ethnonational populism but that leaned towards exclusivism and violence, rather than supporting restraints on violence.

Chapter 6: Local Civil Society in Independent Georgia

This second part of the Georgia case study covers the period from the mid-1990s to renewed violence in South Ossetia and the larger Georgian-Russian war in 2008. Large amounts of international funding for developing local civil society occurred in this period in Georgia, along with the transmission of NGO models for civil society organizations and norms of conduct, supported not just with funds but through training, relationships and networks with donors and other like-minded local civil society groups.

South Ossetia and Abkhazia were two internal military conflicts that erupted in Soviet Georgia in the 1990s with its autonomous regions, ending in the central government's military defeat and defacto loss of control of both territories by 1993. This chapter proceeds by sketching post-Soviet Georgia's first decades to provide enough context to focus on specific examples of the roles of civic actors where violence broke out. The roles of civic actors are examined in the following examples;

1) The refugee return, freer movement and normalization of informal Georgian-South Ossetian economic relationships in the conflict zone from 1997-2003;
2) the government's influencing campaign targeting South Ossetia and renewed violence in the Georgian-South Ossetian conflict zone in the summer of 2004;
3) the CSO-led "Sorry Campaign" to counter rising militarism in Georgian society and support for the use of force to resolve the conflicts in 2007-2008;
4) the August 2008 escalation of local skirmishes, the Georgian government's military action in South Ossetia, and the wider Georgian-Russian war.

In these episodes, I examine the spectrum of actors within Georgian local civil society, their relationships to political elites and public opinion, and their influence with groups who engaged in or supported the use of violence. The case illustrates the range of civic activism in Georgia in this period and the blurred lines between civil society and the government after the 2003 Rose Revolution, which was made up of many former civil society activists and was known colloquially as "the NGO government". In this era, Georgia's civil society was large but far from unified. Some political factions and government leaders advocating violence to resolve Georgia's conflicts had deep origins in the biggest externally-supported "good civil society" organizations. Other long-time civic activists and peacebuilding organizations vocally opposed violence but found their public legitimacy and external financial support and political backing were greatly diminished as external donors shifted support and attention to

the Saakashvili government, who they saw as embodying democratic values. Still other high profile CSOs were publicly silent on Georgia's conflicts and some privately supported the state's use of force to resolve the conflicts with South Ossetia and Abkhazia. The biggest and by far most influential Georgian civic actor in this period, the Georgian Orthodox Church, played a contradictory role, on the one hand it was a strongly nationalist voice while on the other it insisted on non-violent approaches but never openly challenged the increasingly militarist mood.

1. Stabilization under Shevardnadze: State Consolidation, the Abkhaz War, & Stagnating Reforms

The Military Council that ousted President Gamsakhurdia in January 1992 included the leaders of the most powerful patriotic militias, Jaba Ioseliani leader of the Mkhedrioni, and Tengiz Kitovani, head of the former National Guard. They invited former Soviet Foreign Minister and Georgian Communist Party chief Eduard Shevardnadze to head the Military Council, and though respected worldwide he had little public legitimacy in Georgia. His initial focus was to consolidate a base of domestic support, rein in the militias, and move the country towards a rule-based state and reconciliation after the civil war - as deep societal divisions remained and a "romantic, premodern" nationalism prevailed, in the provinces especially.[1] Shevardnadze attempted to institute parliamentary rule, and strengthen institutions of democratic government but most analysts agree these efforts were half-hearted and in the end, he governed mainly through personal networks and patronage.[2]

Shevardnadze condemned the ethno-nationalist approaches of Gamsakhurdia, who he called a "parochial fascist"[3], and attempted to calm the fighting in South Ossetia. In June 1992, he signed the Principles of the Settlement of the Georgian-Ossetian Conflict with Russian President Yeltsin, known as the Sochi or Dagomys Agreement. Previously Yeltsin had famously urged the union republics to "take as much sovereignty as you can handle", had viewed South Ossetia as a communist stronghold, and in talks with Gamsakhurdia in March 1991 he had approved the abolition of South Ossetia's autonomy.[4] The Russian Parliament however sympathized with South Ossetia (and Abkhazia), and the internal Russian power

[1] Jones 2012, 78.
[2] Ibid., Chapter 4.
[3] Nodia 2005b, 47.
[4] Ozhiganov 1997, 358.

struggle in this period between Yeltsin and the Parliament fueled Russia's contradictory policies.[5] Only when the violence in Georgia created large numbers of Ossetian refugees fleeing north into Russia (who destabilized a territorial conflict between the North Ossetians and Ingush) did the Russian government react and demand a halt to the violence.[6]

The Sochi agreement formalized a ceasefire, a Joint Peace Keeping Force (JPKF) made up of Georgian, Ossetian and Russian peacekeeping battalions under Russian command and established a four-party negotiation forum, the Joint Control Commission (JCC) made of up Russia, South Ossetia, Georgia, and the Russian internal republic of North Ossetia. The formal mandate of the JCC was to "work with the JPKF to supervise the observance of the agreement and promote conflict settlement measures, including those that would further demilitarization, reconstruction and rehabilitation, dialogue, and the return of IDPs and refugees."[7] The Ossetian conflict since Dec. 1990 had led to a thousand deaths, tens of thousands of refugees both from the conflict zone and ethnic Ossetians from other areas of Georgia had fled to North Ossetia, and 100 people remained missing.[8]

In 1992-3 Shevardnadze faced an economy in free fall, mass unemployment and food shortages. Georgia also faced continued attacks from supporters of deposed President Zviad Gamsakhurdia in his home region of Mingrelia (an area in western Georgia bordering Abkhazia), with "Zviadist" groups attacking rail lines and taking government representatives hostage. In August 1992, Georgian troops led by then Defense Minister, Tengiz Kitovani, were sent to secure the railway lines and release the hostages but his troops pushed further into Abkhazia and captured Sukhumi, and the resistance of the Abkhaz with help from various North Caucasian allies meant the beginning of a full-scale war with Abkhazia. (Shevardnadze to his deathbed claimed he had not authorized Kitovani's move into Abkhazia and his assault on Sukhumi.[9]) The Georgian forces in Abkhazia were drawn from the ranks of the militias, the National Guard and Mkhedrioni and were responsible for looting and atrocities against civilians and the Abkhaz national archive was burned to the ground while these forces held Sukhumi.[10] Groups from the North Caucasus, from the Confederation of

[5] Ibid., 360-61.
[6] Ibid., 366-67.
[7] Frichova 2009, 14.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Kuparadze 2009, 5:22.
[10] Zurcher 2005. Zurcher and many other scholars claim the irregular nature of the forces contributed to the viciousness of the violence, looting and the lack of any normal military discipline.

Mountain Peoples (based in Sukhumi) and from Russia joined to fight on the Abkhaz side while various Russian forces supported the Georgian side initially, and then the Abkhaz side. The Abkhaz and their supporters retook Sukhumi a year later on September 27, 1993 in a brutal campaign, with many civilian casualties and atrocities, and approximately 200,000 ethnic Georgian civilians fled Abkhazia, many over frozen mountain passes. After the defeat in Sukhumi, Shevardnadze's government faced an invigorated Zviadist insurgency in Western Georgia and to prevent the fall of the government, exchanged Georgia's signature on the CIS treaty for Russian military aid - that enabled a quick defeat of the Zviadist forces.

The aftermath of the Abkhaz war created huge challenges for the Shevardnadze regime; hundreds of thousands of traumatized IDPs, tens of thousands of ex-combatants and the huge unemployment rate amid the crime and breakdown of Soviet institutions and a precarious security environment. In December 1994, Democratic Party leader Gia Chanturia was gunned down and his wife severely injured, and Shevardnadze himself survived an assassination attempt in August 1995. Shevardnadze consolidated control in this chaotic period through existing networks of Communists he had appointed when Georgian Party leader in the 1970s and through winning the allegiance of the lower ranks of the state and non-state militias to ensure their loyalty, and then jailing their leaders, Ioseliani and Kitovani.[11] By the mid-1990s the security situation had stabilized but efforts at democratization and rule of law remained superficial. By the late 1990s, "[s]ystemic corruption had infiltrated every sphere of public life; employment opportunities in both the private sector and civil service had price tags or were subject to nepotism; courts were corrupt, and all aspects of the rule of law system were undermined."[12] Bribe taking was normalized, certain networks gained control of lucrative business niches like gasoline, cigarettes, natural gas and electricity and corruption grew to include Shevardnadze's family itself.[13]

Western Support for Democratic Reforms Creates Large "Good Civil Society"

One of the areas where reforms under Shevardnadze did have significant results was the promotion of civil society in Georgia. The mass civic activism from the Gamsakhurdia era had shown Georgia's capacity for pluralism - in 1993 there were 54 registered political

[11] Darchiashvili 2003, FN 13, 230. Driscoll 2009.
[12] Frichova 2009, 10.
[13] Jones 2012, 195-99.

parties, 22 newspapers and 55 TV companies - but no formal civil society and "no security and economic conditions conducive to the growth of civil society".[14] However given Shevardnadze's good relationships with Western leaders, especially with US Secretary of State James Baker, the US government and European countries generously supported reform efforts in Georgia. Major support for civil society came from foundations such as the Open Society Georgia Foundation (OSGF) funded by George Soros, and the US government-funded Eurasia Foundation and ISAR-Georgia (later became the Horizonti Foundation) and some European donors.[15] As well, many international humanitarian, development and refugee assistance NGOs in Georgia funded local civic organizations as implementing partners for their work. As a result of these processes, from 1992 -1995 several thousand local NGOs were established, most dependent on financial aid from Western foundations who channeled civic activism into formalized NGO structures familiar in the donor countries, in what Georgian political scientist Ghia Nodia called the "NGOization of civil society".[16]

Nodia noted that unlike the Gamsakhurdia period, in the mid-1990s "a clear demarcation emerged between political parties and NGOs" and Western liberal values and principles were the priority, with key areas of democracy and human rights, peace and conflict resolution, civic education and environmental protection" prominent among other themes.[17] This dramatic growth in NGOs was entirely donor fostered; civil society was a core component of the democratization agenda of Georgia's foreign donors, which included support for the government in establishing a national legal framework for formal NGO registration, as well as start up grants, capacity building support and grant writing workshops for aspiring NGOs themselves.[18] Some of these early local NGOs developed professionally into strong organizations, employing large staffs and with contacts to global civil society networks. However, public views were mixed, as the manner in which Georgian NGOs closely followed foreign donors' priorities and the technocratic focus of many of them led to accusations that they were simply "granteaters" existing only to "eat up" foreign money, and such views were also fueled by the authorities who disliked growing criticism from the new NGO sector. The dependence on Western financial aid sustained Georgia's NGOs but also

[14] Ibid., 102.
[15] Nodia 2005a, 14.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Personal observations from work with an international NGO in Georgia and South Ossetia from 1996-98.

led the public to question their "authenticity…and their genuine devotion to their declared values."[19]

Some of the most prominent civic organizations and think tanks today were founded in this era and seemed to closely align with the "good civil society" criteria. Some were established by prominent moderate intellectuals from the national movement of the late 1980s. The Caucasus Institute for Peace, Democracy and Development (*CIPDD*) was founded in 1992, by Ghia Nodia and Gia Tarkhan-Mouravi, with a focus on publishing political classics, free media, information and conferences, and issued a monthly English language bulletin, the Georgian Chronicle.[20] Tarkhan-Mouravi was also co-founder in 1994 and member of the Executive Board of the "Open Society Georgia" Foundation (OSGF) that became known informally in Georgia as the Soros Foundation.[21] Others were founded by a new generation. The Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (GYLA) was formed in 1994 dedicated to promoting human rights and the rule of law, led initially by David Usupashvili, a former legal advisor to the State Council who helped draft the Georgian Constitution of 1995. The Liberty Institute was founded in 1996 in response to the government's attempt to censure independent television station Rustavi 2, and became a prominent NGO focused on defence of civil rights, particularly freedom of speech. Its founders were a group of friends, Giga Bokeria, Levan Ramishvili, David Zurabashvili and Givi Targamadze, all of whom later become key figures later either inside the Saakashvili government or supporting it.[22] The International Centre for Civil Development was founded in 1996 by Levan Berdzenishvili (later a board member of the Soros Foundation, Eurasia Foundation and Horizonti)[23]and also a key member of Saakashvili's inner circle. Many of these civil society pioneers went on to play key political roles and civil society appeared to be an incubator for Georgia's political class. MP David Darchiashvili started as a researcher at the think tank, CIPDD, and later led the Soros Foundation (OSGF) before joining government. He saw from the inside how in the absence of a functioning economy, civil society became "a kind of substitute of middle-class development in Georgia" and though "maybe that was not the direct purpose of the international donor community, but for me that still was a good result."[24]

[19] Nodia 2005a, 14.
[20] CIPDD, 2001.
[21] The Center for Media and Democracy, n.d.
[22] Wikipedia, n.d.
[23] Berdzenishvili 2001.
[24] Interview with David Darchiashvili, Tbilisi, 7 May 2018. Darchiashvili is a professor at Ilia State University, was a MP for the United National Movement from 2008-16, was Director at the Open Society Georgia

Salaries in the civil society organizations were high compared to other areas and so the Georgian elite found means of survival in the new NGO sector that focused largely on civil and political liberties and human rights, though labour and economic rights were largely ignored. However, they did not see civil society involvement as incompatible with political activities, and were simultaneously members of Georgia's new political parties too. The involvement of many international agencies in Georgia in the 1990s led to dense networks with Western institutes and donors that "contributed to a small, but exceptionally sophisticated Third Sector which as the Shevardnadze era dragged on became increasingly politicized and oppositionist."[25]

Shevardnadze's regime allowed for relative freedom of expression and free media, and the society's political discourse was quite open and often critical of authorities."[26] Georgia was increasingly seen as a civil society success, and "during the early years of Shevardnadze's presidency direct attempts to curtail civil society activity were rare, especially given the international plaudits granted to the regime by its existence."[27] Politically, Shevardnadze attempted to build a party base with a new coalition, the Citizens Union of Georgia (CUG). He proposed as chairman Zurab Zhvania, a young reformer from Georgia's Green Movement that had been very active in the late 1980s, and Zhvania brought in others among the younger generation with democratic ideas.[28] Zhvania's sober intellect and deep connections across Georgian society made him the critical figure in creating a favourable political environment in Georgia for independent media, civil society and Georgia's pro-European stance.[29] Through the 1990s a growing informal alliance emerged between these young reformist political leaders and the civil liberties-oriented civil society sector, as both became increasingly frustrated with the deep seated corruption and blocks to real reform under Shevardnadze.

Towards the end of the 1990s, this local NGO sector played an increasing role as watchdogs on the Shevardnadze government. Though there were strong personal relationships between

Foundation from 2004-8, and a researcher at the Caucasus Institute for Peace, Democracy and Development from 1993-2004.
[25] Jones 2012, 329.
[26] Frichova 2009, 10.
[27] Broers, 2005, 339.
[28] Devdariani 2005.
[29] Ibid.

Shevardnadze and US leaders, the American-funded National Democratic Institute (NDI) and other democracy promotion groups were increasingly critical of Shevardnadze and allied with the opposition. [30] The result was that "millions of American dollars" went to highly effective and committed NGOs and watchdog groups which largely opposed Shevardnadze.[31]

Civic Activism: Democracy, Human Rights, Refugees, Peace and Orthodoxy

The bulk of Georgia's new foreign-supported NGOs focused on democratization issues, media, human rights, refugees/IDPs and humanitarian assistance while only a handful of NGOs and activists focused on Georgia's conflicts. Among entirely indigenous social organizations, the Georgian Orthodox Church had very strong public authority but little connection with Georgia's foreign donor community or Georgia's new civil society, and has not taken any independent approach to the conflicts. Many interlocutors stated the church is nationalistic and patriotic, and does not use its popular influence as a force for peace. After the ceasefires in the early 1990s, Abkhazia and South Ossetia were defacto independent regimes largely not accessible to Georgians due to border controls on both sides. It was primarily international actors who could access these areas, and mainly international NGOs, since as non-governmental groups their visits did not inherently confer political legitimacy or status on these unrecognized entities. So peacebuilding activities with the conflict zones would typically be led by international NGOs who would engage local actors from both sides in internationally-facilitated platforms in neutral locations outside of Georgia.

The only formal NGO dedicated to peace and conflict studies in this early era was the International Center on Conflict and Negotiation (ICCN) established by academic Giorgi Khutshishvili in 1994. It received significant funding from American private foundations but its energies were mostly focused on projecting an understanding of Georgia abroad, and serving as a point of engagement for international conflict resolution NGOs.[32] Caucasian House, a local civic organization established in 1973 dedicated to dialogue between cultures and religions has become one of the most prominent local CSOs focusing on conflict issues. Pioneering think tanks led by Georgian academics in this early era, such as CIPDD and the Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies (GFSIS) had broad portfolios

[30] Mitchell, 2004, 346.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Interview with Paata Zakareishvili, Tbilisi, 20 May 2016. Zakareishvili served as Georgia's State Minister for Reconciliation and Civil Equality from 2012–2016, and has worked with government and the NGO sector on human rights, refugees and been a key interlocutor on direct dialogue on the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict since the early 1990s.

and provided strategic analysis on Georgia's conflicts and the geopolitical dynamics but engaged very little on the internal interethnic dimensions of the conflicts. CIPDD's remit was quite broad however and certain individuals became deeply involved in cross-conflict dialogues, including co—founder Tarkhan-Mouravi and senior analyst Marina Elbakidze. CIPDD also hosted an independent media group "Studio Re" which became a prominent peacebuilding organization, led by Mikheil Mirziashvili and Mamuka Kuparadze who developed televised debates and a wide range of media work on the Abkhaz and South Ossetian conflicts and strong relationships with Ossetian and Abkhaz civic activists. Beyond the formal organizations, there were prominent individual voices on the conflict issues from experts and intellectuals like Ivlian Khaindraiva, Archil Gegeshidze, Mamuka Areshidze, Naira Gelashvili, Gia Anchabadze, among others. Finally, local CSOs working with the IDP populations from Abkhazia and South Ossetia came to include a range of peacebuilding activities, such as the IDP Women's Network led by Julia Kharishvili, who became a vocal advocate for IDP rights and for engagement approaches to the Abkhaz conflict.

The most prominent civic activist on the Abkhaz conflict emerged in this era from the state apparatus. Paata Zakareishvili, was from 1992 the Head of Commission on Prisoners of War & Missing Persons from the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict, and involved with government bodies on refugees, human rights and national minorities throughout the 1990s.[33] These activities led to engagement with international conflict resolution agencies and from 1995 onwards, Zakareishvili was a key Georgian interlocutor for Georgian-Abkhaz direct dialogue projects involving US-based academic Paula Garb and UK-based peacebuilding NGO, Conciliation Resources.

Overall though, the vast majority of the thousands of Georgian CSOs in existence by the late 1990s did not engage with the conflict regions or issues. The bulk of international funding came for other broad democratization agendas, and some foreign government donors had policies explicitly prohibiting engagement with Georgia's conflict zones to avoid legitimating the defacto separatist regimes. So, the bulk of civil society in Georgia developed on a path focused on political and civil liberties and democracy promotion. The biggest local CSOs by the end of the 1990s such as the Georgian Young Lawyers Association (GYLA), Transparency International and the Liberty Institute had no experts on conflict issues or engagement with these questions. Marc Berendt worked with multiple foreign NGOs and the

[33] Zakareishvili n.d.

OSCE in Georgia in this period and observed that "all the strongest NGOs were completely isolated from the conflict issues – and they were the ones who needed to be involved in the conflicts."[34] He saw that the peace activists, like Zakareishvili and Khutshishvili were isolated from the NGO professionalization and development processes that took place for these bigger actors, and as a result despite their clear, deep expertise on the conflicts, "they were seen as amateurs". [35]

Hence the large and prominent democracy promotion CSOs and think tanks, and the much smaller civil society focused on the conflict issues developed quite separately. They also developed different international partnerships and even relied on different languages between international partners and local CSOs.[36] According to Zakareishvili, it was as if there were "separate islands", with one "island" dominated by English-speaking Georgians oriented towards Western scholarship and the geopolitical aspects of the conflicts, and another island dominated by Russian-speaking Georgians working on the internal dynamics of Georgia's conflicts and supported by outside conflict resolution groups who tended to be experts on the region, and Russian speakers themselves.[37] For Georgia's younger generation eager to leave the Soviet legacy of Russian domination behind, speaking English became a mark of one's Western orientation, with the big American funders especially focused on English as the language of partnerships. Zakereishvili's experience was that as a non-English speaker, the big American funders had very little interest in engagement with him.[38]

To recap, the character of Georgian civil society in the Shevardnadze years was a numerically large, externally supported local civil society sector that was predominantly focused on democracy building, and civil and political rights. While some activists and NGOs focused on Georgia's unresolved conflicts, these had far less external funding and visibility, though some were regular participants in internationally-sponsored dialogue platforms with Abkhazia and South Ossetia. These dialogue activities themselves had little visibility inside Georgia, often a deliberate decision by organizers of these platforms, as too much publicity in Georgian society could create problems for their Abkhaz or Ossetian counterparts with their own governments. This created a real dilemma for Georgian CSOs focused on peacebuilding

[34] Interview with Marc Behrendt, Washington, D.C., 19 July 2016. Behrendt worked for over 20 years in the Eurasia region on peacebuilding,governance and human rights, including with programs in the south Caucasus with UK-based NGOs, and the OSCE mission in Georgia.
[35] Interview with Marc Berendt, Washington, D.C., 19 July 2016.
[36] Interview with Paata Zakareishvili, 2016.
[37] Interview with Paata Zakareishvili, 2016.
[38] Interview with Paata Zakareishvili, 2016.

as too much (or any!) publicity jeopardized the effort but also limited their ability to create a supportive constituency in their own society.[39] According to Nino Kalandarishvili, a long-time participant and organizer of dialogue platforms and director of the Institute for the Study of Nationality and Conflict (ISNC), "if we would speak loudly that we are meeting with South Ossetians and Abkhaz, then also the authorities in those places would know about it, and that would be a big problem for them."[40]

Beyond the formal NGOs and civic activist spheres, the biggest civil society actor by far in this period was the Georgian Orthodox Church, which is independent from government and sometimes acts as a pressure group on government, though "it would hate be called civil society."[41] It has very strong public legitimacy, and does interfere in politics though most interlocutors did not see the Church or the Patriarch taking any strong independent stance on the conflicts. Many interlocutors reported they saw no peacebuilding role being played by the Church, though the church is very influential;[42] like the Russian church, they are a "servant of the state" and on this issue simply stand for the territorial integrity of Georgia.[43] Opinion polls are only available since 2008, beyond the timeframe covered in this study, but from 2008 -2012, a very high percentage (on average 83%) of Georgia's citizens identified as Orthodox, and roughly 85% claimed to trust religious institutions (while only 38 % reported trusting the government, and only 28 % over that same period claimed to trust NGOs).[44] The church is widely seen as nationalistic, and the current Patriarch Ilia II played an important role in the Georgian nationalist movement at the end of the Soviet period (as Part 1 of the case showed). The church's stance on the conflicts mostly aligns with the government in insisting on the territorial integrity of Georgia, though it also regularly laments violence, especially amongst Orthodox believers as South Ossetians, Abkhaz and Russians all follow the Orthodox faith.[45] Sometimes, the Georgian church's statements have played a negative role in the conflicts however. During the 1990s conflicts, Patriarch Ilia II's statement that "if Georgians kill Georgians that is the biggest sin" was interpreted by some as support for

[39] Interviews with multiple Georgian CSO activists, Tbilisi, May 2016.
[40] Interview with Nino Kalandarishvili, Tbilisi, 23 May 2016. Kalandarishvili is the Director, Institute for the Study of Nationalism and Conflicts, (ISNC) and a long-time participant in direct dialogues projects with South Ossetia and Abkhazia.
[41] Interview with Ghia Nodia, Tbilisi, 23 May 2016**.** Nodia **is** director of the International School of Caucasus Studies at Ilia State University, founding director of the think tank, Caucasus Institute for Peace, Democracy, and Development (CIPDD), and served as Georgia's Minister of Education and Science in 2008.
[42] Interview with Interview with Giorgi Karkulia, youth NGO activist, and founder and executive director, Academy for Peace and Development, an NGO focused on vulnerable youth, Tbilisi, 17 May, 2016.
[43] Interview with David Darchiashvili, 2018.
[44] Caucasus Research Resource Centers (CRRC) 2008-2012.
[45] Kishkovsky 2008.

killing non-Georgians and inflamed anti-Georgian perceptions and fears in the conflict areas.[46]

There is a common Georgian saying, that wherever the nation is, so is the church"[47] and the Georgian church is seen by interlocutors as both nationalist in essence, while also close to the Russian Orthodox Church in terms of its allegiances within global Orthodox denominations. This does suggest some potential for influence on the conflicts, though according to many interviewees both the Georgian and Russian churches are deeply nationalistic and would not go against their own governments, and the jurisdictional struggle of the Orthodox churches in the conflict zones appears to dominate the relationships of Georgian and the Russian churches.

In this early post-Soviet period, there were other informal organizations that were strongly nationalist, opposed Shevardnadze's authority, and condoned the use of violence, and hence fit the criteria for Chambers and Kopstein's "bad civil society". These were Zviadists (followers of Georgian's deposed first president Zviad Gamsakhurdia) as well as Georgian guerilla groups with political goals but involved in kidnappings, crime and smuggling operations. These murky worlds were far removed from Georgia's Western-oriented civil society organizations, though in Tbilisi groups of Zviadists were known to gather and protest the presence of foreign organizations. The most serious guerilla groups, known as the Forest Brothers and the White Legion, operated in Abkhazia from 1994-2004 and were accused of the murder of many Russian peacekeepers and Abkhaz civilians, as well as a failed attempt to retake control of Abkhazia in the summer of 1998.[48] These groups had some unclear links to the Georgian government supported Abkhaz Government in Exile,[49] so the degree to which these were spontaneous organizations or directed by some part of the authorities was always unclear. However, these and other less infamous informal groups were pat of the spectrum of non-governmental actors in the political dynamics of this era.

With these broad contours of post-Soviet Georgia's spectrum of civic and non-state actors, the study now traces Georgia's path from the late 1990s to 2008 and examines selected

[46] Interview with Marina Elbakidze, Tbilisi, 18 May 2016.
[47] Interview with Mamuka Tsereteli, Washington D.C., USA, 24 October 2018. Tsereteli is a Georgian academic, university lecturer and a Senior Fellow with the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, and founding director at the America-Georgia Business Council.
[48] Fuller 2011.
[49] Devdariani 2003.

examples where renewed violence seemed likely or did in fact occur. It examines the relationships of these diverse camps of civil society to each other at these times, the legitimacy of different groups with the broader public and what dynamics appeared to support an ability to restrain own side violence.

Example G-3: Normalization of Georgian-Ossetian Relations in 1998-2003 and Lack of Intercommunal Violence around Refugee Returns

> "In the late 1990s, the conflict in South Ossetia was practically resolved, only the status agreement was still needed but a real normalization of relationships had occurred."
>
> *Nino Kalandarishvili,*
> *Institute for the Study of Nationalism and Conflicts, Tbilisi*[50]

After the 1992 ceasefire in South Ossetia, military checkpoints between Georgian-controlled and Ossetian-controlled areas and deep mistrust dissuaded residents from travelling to areas controlled by "the other side". By the late 1990s however, increasing freedom of movement and normalization of economic and other ties emerged between the interspersed Ossetian and Georgian populated villages, and between the Ossetian capital Tskhinvali and the nearby city of Gori. Many Georgians perceived this as occurring naturally as a result of the passage of time, of traditionally close relations between Georgians and Ossetians, and because "a good relationship existed between Shevardnadze and South Ossetian leader Ludwig Chibirov." [51]

Important catalysts for this normalization of relations that were less well understood, were international NGO-led confidence building processes involving parliamentarians, government officials, and prominent intellectuals on both sides that signaled political will and supported the more productive dynamics that emerged in the official negotiating process in this period.[52] These consisted of a confidential, high-level, unofficial dialogue process facilitated by US-based NGO, Conflict Management Group, and the Norwegian Refugee Council along with a range of high profile public diplomacy activities undertaken by the British NGO, Vertic (Caucausus Links).[53] These informal initiatives supported gains in the formal

[50] Interview with Nino Kalandarishvili, 2016.
[51] Interview with Gia Tarkhan-Mouravi Tbilisi, 19 May, 2016. Tarkan-Mouravi is a Georgian intellectual, a physicist, a former journalist and prolific writer on political, social and cultural issues, and founder of multiple civil society organizations in Georgia since the late 1980s.
[52] Nan 2004.
[53] Ibid.; Nan 2005.

negotiations that produced a 1996 memorandum of understanding signed between Shevardnadze and Chibirov, followed by a 1997 agreement on voluntary return of IDPs and refugees from the Georgian-South Ossetian conflict, and three direct meetings of the two leaders between 1996-98. As well, security officials involved reached informal agreements to cooperate on cross-border crime, as criminals on both sides routinely escaped police by crossing the defacto border, and local police stopped the practice of fining cars with licence plates from the other jurisdiction, leading to a notable increase in car travel between South Ossetia, Gori and Tbilisi.[54] These measures led to a softening of the defacto border and spurred the rebuilding of functional trading relationships between residents of interspersed Ossetian and Georgian villages that comprised the conflict zone. By late 1998, South Ossetians had begun travelling to Tbilisi to see relatives or visit markets without fear of document checks, and regular bus and taxi services were set up. As well, a small informal market created in 1996 in the Georgian village of Ergneti just outside the borders of South Ossetia grew into a gigantic outdoor bazaar that drew people from all across Georgia to trade in low-priced Russian goods brought in through South Ossetia - and that were not subject to government taxes.

A UK-based NGO, Vertic, had become active in 1994 in Georgia and together with the OSCE, promoted direct contacts between South Ossetian and Georgian journalists, parliamentarians, academics, youth and business people.[55] The American-Norwegian effort emerged a year later and was known as "the Georgian-South Ossetian dialogue process." It offered opportunities for direct engagement between Georgian and Ossetian officials (without the presence of Russian officials who were part of the formal JCC negotiations) but in an unofficial capacity that enabled frank discussions and identification of potential areas of agreement, a process the CMG team called - track one and half diplomacy.[56] All discussions were held without commitments and strictly confidential, but participants could use any ideas that emerged, without attribution. The process started in 1995 when a Norwegian diplomat told Shevardnadze about Harvard-based American negotiation expert Roger Fisher, who was

[54] Personal notes and archives, author was the local coordinator of the Georgian-South Ossetian dialogue process from 1996-1998.
[55] Olson 1999; Sammut and Cvetkovski 1996.
[56] This was a term CMG used for an approach emerging among US conflict resolution practitioners at the Consensus Building Institute (CBI), CMG, the Institute for Multi-Track Diplomacy (IMTD), and the Carter Center. As Track 2 was understood to mean unofficial people's diplomacy and Track 1 referred to official negotiations, so Track 1.5 involved political officials participating in unofficial talks or "parallel informal negotiations". See: Martinez and Susskind, 2000. Also Diamond and McDonald 1996; Mapendere, 2005; Nan 2005.

then invited to Georgia to explore possibilities to help with Georgian-Ossetian negotiations. Fisher succeeded in getting both leaders' agreement for an ongoing process supported financially by the Norwegian government. Fisher's team impressed the South Ossetian leadership by visiting them first, immediately upon landing in Georgia, and spending the night in Tskhinvali with local hosts.[57] The South Ossetians were also moved by Fisher's personal story of serving in World War 2, and the deaths of close friends then, that motivated his life's work on resolving conflict.[58] Georgian officials at first resisted direct talks with the Ossetians; according to CMG team member Arthur Martirosyan, then Foreign Minister Menagarishvili asked, "why talk to the puppets if you can talk to the masters?" [59] Fisher reportedly broke through the resistance by sharing Martirosyan's findings that Georgian and Ossetian car smuggling networks were already actively cooperating, asking the Georgians, "if criminals are cooperating, why can't you?"[60] Also key to the effort was that CMG had good links to Russian officials through earlier work there, and had discussed it with them and received assurances that the Russians were "not against it".[61]

The project was funded by the Norwegian government, and brought the Conflict Management Group into a novel partnership with the Tbilisi office of the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), a global humanitarian NGO already present in Georgia assisting refugees and IDPs. In 1996, NRC opened an office in Tskhinvali when no other aid organizations were present, with an expat coordinator to support communication and follow up in between the dialogue meetings as well as manage NRC's assistance programs. The Georgia-South Ossetia Dialogue Process held direct dialogue meetings in third countries - two in Norway, and one each in the US and Spain - and the process continued from 1995 to 2001-2 until funding dried up. Its participants varied but included a core group of top Georgian officials including Irakli Machavariani, Shevardnadze's special envoy for the Georgian-Ossetian conflict, and Rusudan Gorgiladze, Shevardnadze's Chief State Advisor, along with many others. The South Ossetian core group included Kosta Dzugaev, Chairman of the South Ossetian Parliament, Leonid Tibilov, the head of the security services, and some of Chibirov's top advisors and ministers.

[57] Nan 2004, 63.
[58] Personal archives, author was the field-based coordinator of the Georgian-South Ossetian dialogue process from 1996-1998.
[59] Skype Interview with Arthur Martirosyan, 16 July 2016. Martirosyan is a Senior Consultant with the US company CMPartners and (former Conflict Management Group – CMG) who has worked for 25 years on conflict management initiatives in the former Soviet states and globally.
[60] Skype Interview with Arthur Martirosyan, 16 July 2016.
[61] Skype interview with Arthur Martirosyan, 2018.

Beyond informal agreement on some issues, the dialogues fostered mutual understanding and a notable change in the relationships. According to CMG team lead Arthur Martirosyan, the change was dramatic; when CMG first engaged in 1995 senior Ossetian officials said that "there is no point to talk to the Georgians" while by 1999, Georgian officials had strong personal relationships with their counterparts in South Ossetia, which included regular visits and exchange of information.[62] A study of the process found both Georgian and Ossetian participants and the official international mediators for the conflict reported a transfer of improved relationships, improved processes and concrete ideas from the unofficial dialogues to the official negotiation process.[63] By the early 2000s, the network of officials and influential Georgians and South Ossetians that had participated in the dialogue efforts grew to several dozen people who had new informal contacts and a deeper awareness of perceptions and constraints of the other side. In the official negotiations, the JCC quadripartite format involving the OSCE continued with an improved dynamic in those years, and an interim political settlement known as the "Baden Document" was drafted in July 2000, which failed to win Tbilisi's full assent at the time but continued to act as a basis for discussion until 2003.[64]

Bonding Social Capital plus High-Level Political Support Aids Local Restraints on Violence

The eased relationships and understandings between the Georgian and Ossetian political leadership also enabled the growth of humanitarian, refugee and development projects in the conflict zone after 1997. NRC tried to support the informal understandings reached through dialogue with concrete and visible assistance at the local level. The 1997 agreement on refugee return enabled a UNHCR-led refugee return process that resulted in a modest 6,085 people returning to their homes between 1997 and 2000, as poor economic conditions deterred more returns.[65] In Abkhazia in the same period, the spontaneous return of Georgian IDPs to the Gali region of lower Abkhazia was halted with the outbreak of new violence and a new exodus of 50,000 people in 1998. Unlike Abkhazia, the refugee return in South Ossetia did not result in any new rounds of violence - though the two scenarios are impossible to directly compare. The following account aims to show how the legitimacy and networks of the local civic actors involved in the refugee return process helped restrain interethnic tensions and any potential violence. Violence was in fact likely given many unresolved

[62] Interview with Arthur Martirosyan, 2016.
[63] Nan 2004, 67-70; Nan 2005, 170-71.
[64] Eiff 2009, 41-42.
[65] UNHCR 2000, 357.

wartime crimes and continuing fear between Georgian and Ossetian local populations. One potential returnee interviewed in 1997 summed up the insecurity people felt at the time; when informed Shevardnadze supported refugee return she shot back, "is President Shevardnadze going to stand outside my door at night then?"[66]

Multiple, positive, local-level interactions through the refugee return process became a key driver of the normalization of Georgian-South Ossetian grassroots relationships that followed. The process for the voluntary refugee return was discussed informally in the CMG-led dialogue process with officials and political elites from both sides. NRC became UNHCR's key partner for the return process in South Ossetia and both agencies designed the process itself to support functional ties between communities. This included creating mixed Ossetian-Georgian local building crews and a structure of daily interaction between the Ossetian team leads from Tskhinvali and Georgian staff from Gori, where UNHCR had located the warehouse for building supplies. Initially mistrust and resistance to working together among Georgians and Ossetians was high but by mid-1998, the system was working smoothly and good relationships had developed between Ossetian and Georgian staff of the program.[67]

In the villages refugees were returning to, the personal networks of local NRC staff and some new civic partners were important in handling tensions and minor security incidents that arose. All of NRC's Tskhinvali staff had lived through the conflict, some had lost loved ones, and some were former combatants - since all young men in South Ossetia had been pulled into the fighting in the 1990-92 war to defend their community and families. These local staff were deeply embedded in the close familial and friend networks of the small society of Tskhinvali. Their willingness to work with mixed Georgian-Ossetian work crews, and in Georgian villages were important signals to the broader community. Their personal credibility as patriots supported the politically sensitive work of returning Ossetian and Georgian refugees to villages that had been burned down by local militias from both sides during the war.

The South Ossetian team for NRC's housing reconstruction effort played a key role through their personal leadership and high level of social capital in the community. Many were

[66] Personal archives, author was also head of the NRC Offices in Tskhinvali and Vladikavkaz (North Ossetia) and in charge of NRC's refugee return work from 1996-1998.
[67] Personal archives, 1996-1998.

former "defenders" during the 1991 fighting, some had families of mixed Georgian-Ossetian heritage, spoke good Georgian and had many Georgian relatives still in the area as well as close friends among South Ossetian ex-combatant groups. The team's work with the mixed building crews and villagers from both communities modeled interethnic cooperation for the whole process. The reconstruction team leader's people skills and personal credibility helped him manage many situations where work crews travelling between the Ossetian and Georgian-held areas did meet with some local hostility.[68]

Political support from senior officials in Tbilisi and Tskhinvali for freer movement and for the refugee return process was also a critical piece of the picture. As refugee return got underway, UNHCR and NRC participated in the JCC talks as observers (and NRC participated in the informal CMG-NRC dialogues). So beyond dealing with the refugee ministries on each side, through these channels NRC (and UNHCR) could signal problems to other senior political officials, who would take up any issues with local counterparts.

The intensified aid work increased Georgian-Ossetian positive interactions at multiple levels. UNHCR and later other international NGOs supporting the refugee return process followed NRC in opening offices in Tskhinvali. Georgian media NGO, "Studio Re", made a documentary film about the return process to increase public understanding on both sides. A UNDP $2 million dollar economic development project and a 3.5 million Euro EU project were agreed through the formal JCC process in 1999, having been explored earlier in the CMG-NRC dialogue meetings.[69] This was a significant shift from Georgia's previous resistance to any longer term economic development aid to South Ossetia due to fears of legitimating the South Ossetian authorities. More INGOs set up offices and projects in Tskhinvali and the new activities fueled more contact between Ossetian and Georgian areas and increased small scale trade. Furthermore, the intensified international activity also stimulated the emergence of the first externally funded civil society groups in South Ossetia, taking on roles as implementing partners for these efforts.[70]

What kept things peaceful in the South Ossetian conflict zone through this politically sensitive process? Proving why violence never happened is always difficult, but the case suggests the positive interaction of multiple local level and high-level factors played a very

[68] Personal archives, author was the local coordinator of the Georgian-South Ossetian dialogue process from 1996-1998.
[69] Olson 1999, 27.
[70] Alborova 2016, 11.

big role. The high-level political relationships and understandings built through the Georgian - South Ossetian dialogue process and other confidence building measures that carried over into the formal negotiation process were one factor. However, at the local level in the war-damaged villages where tensions could easily spark, there were community-level actions by trusted, credible "good civil society" groups assisting the return process who had social linkages with members of the informal militias and former combatants. This suggests an element of intra-community relationships and bonding social capital within the society was an important factor that shaped outcomes, in a complex systems notion of interdependent causality. While the political support from senior leaders on both sides likely restrained political level "spoilers" through inducements and threats, at the local level NGO staff and the new Ossetian and Georgian civil society groups in the conflict zone had only personal networks, social capital and trust with their broader communities and potentially "bad civil society actors" who had reasons to resist the changes.

The positive, community-level Ossetian-Georgian interactions fostered through these reconstruction activities had an impact over time, as the absence of violent incidents gave Georgians and Ossetians increasing confidence to move back and forth and to trade through local markets, most notably one near the entrance to Tskhinvali in the village of Ergneti. By the end of the 1990s, the highway linking South Ossetia to North Ossetia in Russia through the Roki Tunnel (and by extension linking Russia to the Trancaucasus, Turkey and Iran) had become the main means of survival for the South Ossetian population given the Georgian economic embargo; as well "customs duties on goods transported across South Ossetia became the main source of income for the state budget, which was then used to compensate state employees".[71] The market in Ergneti thrived and became an important source of livelihoods for many local Ossetians and Georgians, and along the way rewove relationships and trust between ethnic communities. The eased atmosphere is illustrated by an interview with a Georgian apple trader in 2005, who described how it had been normal in the "Ergneti era" to drop off his applies and settle accounts later with his Ossetian counterpart because he "trusted him completely".[72]

The cumulative effect of these high-level political understandings, and local positive interactions in the conflict area through housing reconstruction, freer movement and small

[71] Ibid., 10.
[72] Personal notes, trip to Gori and South Ossetia in 2005.

trading gave many groups a vested interest in good relations. Trust developed and a growing benefit emerged for many groups, including the political elites, local law enforcement and the local militias who also benefited politically and financially from the increased unofficial trade. In complex systems terms, what emerged in the Georgian-South Ossetian conflict zone in that period was virtuous cycle of interlocking dynamics at many levels that deterred violence and eased political tensions. However, what was good for Georgian-Ossetian relations was problematic for other goals, as the spiraling unofficial trade and untaxed Ergneti market presented other challenges for the Georgian authorities.

2. The Rose Revolution Brings the Reformist Opposition and Civil Society to Power

By the early 2000s, deepening corruption and stagnating reforms united many Georgians against Shevardnadze's government, making the Nov. 2003 parliamentary elections a critical test. In advance of the vote, a massive effort to prevent election fraud was orchestrated by an alliance of Georgia's opposition parties and powerful coalition of Georgian NGOs with international sponsors. The Soros Foundation (OSGF) had supported a Georgian youth movement, Kmara (meaning "enough" in Georgian), modelled explicitly after the OTPOR youth movement that had ended Serbia's Milosevic regime. Georgian activists were trained and organized to use non-violent resistance and parallel vote tabulations should Shevardnadze try to falsify election results. When official results claiming Shevardnadze's victory conflicted with the parallel counts, protests disrupted the capital for many days until opposition leader, Mikheil Saakashvili, and protesters forced their way into Georgia's parliament with roses in hand, demanding President Shevardnadze's resignation in what became known as "the Rose Revolution". While the transfer of power was not in line with Georgia's constitution, it had at least been bloodless, as Shevardnadze chose not to use force against demonstrators. The strong, activist civil society that ultimately ousted Shevardnadze had been nurtured by his own policies of openness to Western financial support for civil society. Civic activist Mikheil Mirziashvili commented, that "huge money was spent on developing civil society in Georgia and the result was the Rose revolution and that would have been impossible if so many people had not gone through the school of civil society."[73]

Mikheil Saakashvili was elected President in early 2004, and his reformist allies Zurab Zhvania and Nino Burjanadze took on leading roles in the new government. Georgia

[73] Interview with Mikheil Mirziashvili, Tblisii, 20 May 2016.

embarked on a radical reform path of many sectors with a mission to modernize and transform Georgian society. Since so much of the support for the Rose Revolution had come from civil society actors and Kmara, and many NGO leaders directly joined the government, it was widely perceived both inside Georgia and outside as representing the triumph of pro-democracy forces, and was sometimes called the "NGO government".[74] Though irregularities in democratic practice became clear early on, the bulk of Georgian civil society was in alignment with Saakashvili and Zhvania because they thought that they would change society for the better.[75]

The Rose Revolution marked a big shift, as civil society and the media had been separated from party politics through much of the 1990s. The Shevardnadze regime had started clamping down on CSOs however, political parties launched lawsuits against journalists and NGOs were discredited as "granteaters" following foreign agendas.[76] There had been a rise in attacks on religious freedoms and CSOs supporting them, and a general shift against NGOs, so NGOs aligned increasingly with opposition political parties, especially NGOs funded by the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and the Soros Foundation.[77] Prominent young reformist ministers in Shevardnadze's Citizen's Union of Georgia quit citing corruption; former Justice Minister Saakashvili and chairman of the Parliament Zhvania had both left by November 2001. By 2003, some NGOs were ready to forgo neutrality - the Liberty Institute and Kmara notably became key supporters and allies of the opposition parties, and the parties in turn gained legitimacy from this association.[78] A powerful cooperation emerged between Kmara and the Georgian civil society organizations the International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED), the Georgian Young Lawyers Association (GYLA) and outside democracy groups like the US government-funded NDI in setting up the election monitoring system, training cohorts of people from 2001 to 2003."[79] Civil society played a very effective role in the Nov. 2003 elections and US $3 million was spent just on the election alone.[80] The role of transnational NGO networks in supporting Georgian NGOs was important, but Georgia's activist civic culture also played a critical role. Historian Stephen

[74] Interview with Ghia Nodia, 2016.
[75] Interview with Mamuka Tsereteli, Washington D.C., USA, 24 October 2018..
[76] Broers, 2005, 339.
[77] Ibid., 340.
[78] Ibid.
[79] Mamuka Tsereteli. Interview with author. Washington, D.C., 24 October 2018.
[80] Broers, 2005, 341.

Jones contends, "the Serbian model incorporated civic protests into an overall strategy, but Georgian activists were experienced organizers."[81]

Most of Georgia's civil society community supported this movement, which appeared to embody core democratic values, but in the euphoria of the Rose Revolution, early violations of democratic process were overlooked. Many of Georgia's civil society activists who joined the government or were closely allied with it, found their commitment to democratic values and non-violence challenged once their side was in power. In this era, Georgia's local civil society included camps of strong supporters and hostile critics of the government's methods, while many of Georgia's impressive, professional civil society actors and NGOs fostered by foreign funds and support in the previous era, remained largely silent on the government's methods.

Georgia's "NGO Government": The Saakashvili Era

> "Under Shevardnadze you needed NGOs to advocate for something, to watchdog the government. Under Saakashvili the guys in the government knew themselves what are the right values and what should be done. As usual, revolutions bring knights who fight dragons and then become dragons themselves. But it needed time to realize what was really going on. And that power corrupts." [82]
>
> *David Darchiashvili, European Georgia Party, former director of the Soros Foundation*

> "Misha [Saakashvili] was worse than Shevardnadze - he was cynical about NGOs. He did not value experienced people, he actually hated people of the older generation."[83]
>
> *Emil Adelkhanov, dissident & board member CIPDD*

[81] Jones 2012, 329.
[82] Interview with David Darchiashvili, 2018.
[83] Interview with Emil Adelkhanov, Tbilisi, 19 May 2016. Adelkhanov was a Georgian human rights activist and member of the Soviet dissident movement since the early 1970s, worked at the Caucasian Institute for Peace, Democracy and Development, and represented Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch in Georgia. Adelkhanov passed away in June 2016.

> "The government was called a kind of NGO government. The Saakashvili government was much more dependent on NGOs…on people who came from NGOs and who brought these reform ideas with them."[84]
>
> *Ghia Nodia, Director, CIPDD, former Minister of Education 2008*

The Saakashvili government was in power from 2004 through 2012 and left a strong mark on Georgia. The team of young reformers were initially hailed for their democratic credentials and many prominent NGO leaders joined the government, so it was widely assumed it represented Western democratic norms and values. Initially most Georgian analysts viewed the Saakashvili period as one of statebuilding and state consolidation[85], but by 2007 many former allies and much of civil society had turned against the government citing its authoritarian methods. Georgians today are highly divided on Saakashvili's legacy. Many acknowledge the functioning institutions that this era created, the ending of corruption in the police and customs, and major modernization of the country. Most feel that Georgia is better off than under Shevardnadze, but question if it could have been done through different, less authoritarian, means.[86]

Several interlocutors described the Saakashvili era as "neobolshevism", whose mission was to modernize Georgia fast by whatever means necessary, including violating democratic and human rights norms. Opponents like Paata Zakareishvili, claim that the government's pro-Western, democratic rhetoric concealed a one-party system where "Saakashvili controlled business, and controlled the press, controlled everything."[87] Supporters acknowledge there were democratic shortcuts but justify them as necessary given Georgia was "very backwards".[88]

The role of civil society amid the main dynamics of the Saakashvili era is presented below, with the caveat that this recent history is still highly contested inside Georgia. The following section aims to capture the contours of this period as seen by Georgian analysts, politicians and civic activists, and existing academic studies, and to examine dynamics within the spectrum of civil society groups and actors. Georgia's civil society played a big role in this

[84] Interview with Ghia Nodia, 2016.
[85] Nodia 2007.
[86] Interview with Giorgi Kanashvili, Tbilisi, 8 May 2018. Kanashvili was the executive director of the NGO, Caucasian House from 2011-2018 and an active participant in dialogue processes related to the Georgian-Abkhaz and Georgian-South Ossetian conflicts.
[87] Interview with Paata Zakareishvili, 2016
[88] Interview with David Darchiashvili, 2018.

era - some CSO activists and leaders joined government and became key architects of policy under Saakashvili, many others were supportive at first but later became opponents, and some were harsh critics from the start.

The binary notions of "good civil society" or "bad civil society" are a poor fit for Georgia's complex experience in this era but, as in this study overall, are used to shed some light on the norms and values operating behind the homogenizing civil society label. Under Saakashvili, the line became very blurred between civil society and his "revolutionary government". The impact of international assistance for civil society promotion in Georgia cannot be disentangled from what Georgia's graduates of the "school of civil society" (as Putnam and others define it), went on to do in government. The pro-Western democratic credentials of Georgia's NGOs and their foreign supporters had justified the ouster of Shevardnadze in the Rose Revolution, though there is no reliable public opinion data gauging just how much domestic public support CSOs had in this period.[89] Then CSO leader, Levan Berdzenishvili, stated in 2001 that, "actually, the non-governmental sector is stronger than political parties today in Georgia… their international connections, equipment, communication capabilities etc.".[90]

Unlike the earlier era of the 1980s and early 1990s covered in part 1, this new Georgian civil society was the direct product of international financial support and relationships with foreign funders and international NGO networks. The international norms of "good civil society" were central to the international support for democratization and local civil society promotion in Georgia. The Saakashvili government's claim to represent these democratic norms dramatically boosted Georgia's international standing and unquestionably increased the international support Saakashvili's government received for its particular brand of statebuilding project in a highly volatile region.[91]

[89] The World Values Survey includes Georgia in its 1995-99 wave, but with no questions relating to trust in civil society. The Caucasus Barometer has public opinion data on civil society but only from 2008 onwards. See: Caucasus Research Resource Centers (CRRC) 2008-2012.
[90] Berdzenishvili 2001.
[91] MacFarlane 2010.

3. Creating the New Georgia with "and" without Civil Society

> "You have to remember that their policy was like this – guys we are creating a new Georgia, either you are with us or against us."[92]
>
> *Giorgi Kanashvili, executive director, Caucasian House, Tbilisi*

Saakashvili's government came to power riding the euphoria of the Rose Revolution, and in a hurry. They planned to end the corruption of the Shevardnadze era, build real democracy, and restore Georgia's territorial integrity through peaceful means. Many figures from Georgia's strong civil society who followed Saakashvili into government became part of "a closed inner circle" around him that he trusted and had big influence on decision making.[93] The Liberty Institute was the most influential CSO brand in government, and three of its co-founders (Bokeria, Merabishvili, and Targamadze) were very close to Saakashvili. Giga Bokeria had been a former human rights defender and journalist; once in government he served on key parliamentary defense committees, as deputy Foreign Minister (2008-10) and as Secretary of the National Security Council (2010+). Vano Merabashvili was Interior Minister from 2004-12 and briefly Prime Minister, and Givi Targamadze was the Defense Committee Chairman of the Georgian Parliament (2004 – 2010). Another key Saakashvili confident was Gigi Ugulava, who had worked with NGOs Transparency International and the Eurasia Foundation, was a co-organizer of the youth movement Kmara, and had many governmental roles (most notably as the appointed Mayor of Tbilisi.) Another close advisor from civil society, Kakha Lomaia, had worked for the Eurasia Foundation (1995-2002), was Executive Director of the Soros Foundation (OSGF) from 2002-3, and then was Saakashvili's Minister of Education (2004-2007), Secretary of the National Security Council (2007-8) and ambassador to the UN (2009-2012). Former Defense Minister from 2004-2006, Irakli Okruashvili, was a member of the prominent NGO, Georgian Young Lawyers Association (GYLA). Other CSO leaders however stayed out of government, though were allies and supportive of Saakashvili's team. GYLA's founders, David Usupashvili and Tinatin Khidasheli with other civic activists like Paata Zakareishvili distanced themselves from Saakashvili early on, over constitutional amendments that strengthened the presidency.

[92] Interview with Giorgi Kanashvili, 2018.
[93] Interview with Mamuka Tsereteli, 2018.

The new government had youth, charisma, foreign support, a reputation as democrats with strong civil society roots, but were supported as much due to deep public disaffection with Shevardnadze as their own credentials. Though they inspired many in the younger generation, their revolutionary methods faced resistance from many others. Almost immediately after the January 2004 elections, tensions with the autonomous region of Adjara escalated, but in a major success, by May 2004 Adjara was brought back under central government control without bloodshed. This was achieved through the central government, Kmara and many CSOs supporting a popular uprising among Adjarians that forced long-time ruler Aslan Abashidze into exile, though helped by a Russian mediation role behind the scenes. Another accomplishment was strengthening and consolidating the security apparatus of the state as "paramilitary groupings like the partisans in Mingrelia and armed groups under Aslan Abashidze were crushed" by 2005 so that outside the conflict zones, the state now met the Weberian criterion of "the monopoly over the legitimate use of force."[94] The government undertook anti-corruption measures but with unorthodox methods at odds with their professed "rule of law" values, like firing all the police overnight in July 2004 to cleanse the notoriously corrupt force. They also fired all government employees over 30 to rid the bureaucracy of the "Soviet mentality".[95] The result was a very young government, many Ministers were under 30 and very inexperienced, and there was a culture of rapid results and an impatience with lengthy consultation processes. "There was this sense that there was a momentum of change which should be used very fast. If you don't do reforms fast you wouldn't do them at all."[96]

On the conflict areas, "in the first year after the Rose Revolution, everyone had high hopes for a peace process, that there would be real movement," according to Julia Kharishvili, long-time leader of the IDP women's network.[97] However, the resurgence of fighting in South Ossetia in summer 2004 almost led to war, and later renewed war itself came in 2008. Activist and expert on Georgia's conflicts, Giorgi Kanashvili, claimed that despite some

[94] Nodia 2005b, 71.
[95] Interview with Georgian NGO employee whose father was a senior official at the Ministry of the Economy and who was fired in this period, Tbilisi, name withheld, 2016.
[96] Interview with Ghia Nodia, 2016.
[97] Interview with Julia Kharashvili, Tbilisi, 20 May 2016.

major achievements in other areas for Saakashvili's government "where results have been the worst was peacebuilding and conflict resolution."[98]

Interviews revealed that many felt some of Saakashvili's initiatives on the conflict areas had merits, but like many other policies undertaken by the government, the processes used were impatient, untransparent and unaccountable. The closed circle of decision makers around Saakashvili were, like him, impatient for fast results, had little detailed knowledge of sensitivities around the conflicts, and few relationships with South Ossetians or Abkhaz counterparts themselves. Furthermore and most puzzling, interviews revealed that the Saakashvili team had no interest in advice from Georgia's peacebuilding activists and small CSO community that had focused on the conflict areas over the previous decade, even though some in this camp were former colleagues and even friends.[99] Those former government officials and civic activists who had engaged with Abkhaz and South Ossetian counterparts through foreign-supported informal dialogues were sidelined and ignored. The most prominent amongst them, Paata Zakareishvili, was openly vilified. David Darchiashvili became a close ally of the Saakashvili team and recounted how "Zakareishvili for them was a traitor…he was hated," and the other NGOs were not taken seriously and considered as "useful idiots".[100] According to Mikheil Mirziashvili, who also had been close to some of Saakashvili's key aides when they were in civil society, those in government saw the approaches of civil society as too slow; "we, the peacebuilding community, had not delivered any products quickly enough with our own approaches so we were not seen as useful."[101]

The Best of Civil Society Are with Us!

The governing team's attitude was also reportedly that "they already had the best of the CSO world inside government" and so why should they follow the advice of those who failed to qualify to come into government, according to Nodia, who was close to the leadership for some years.[102] In fact, the government maintained that CSOs had no real democratic legitimacy whereas they were elected, though they sometimes acquiesced to appear

[98] Interview with Giorgi Kanashvili, 2018.
[99] Interview with Misha Chitadze, Director, Gori Information Center, 21 May 2016. Chitadze ran the most established NGO in Gori, and was personally friends with several of Saakashvili's closest advisors; Interview with Mikheil Mirziashvili, 2016.
[100] Interview with David Darchiashvili, 2018.
[101] Interview with Mikheil Mirziashvili, 2016.
[102] Interview with Ghia Nodia, 2016.

responsive to CSOs in the eyes of their foreign donors.[103] Such views were partly driven by their own experience ousting Shevardnadze. "Many people who came from the NGO sector, saw NGOs as a quasi-political actor who helped overrun the Shevardnadze government, and now they were in government, they had the levers to change the country."[104] According to Nodia, for the UNM, if they liked something in civil society the best way was to take this person into government to implement their ideas, and they were not interested in the long consultations of the NGO community, which were "just for European guests to show them".[105] In fact, they had grown cynical about civil society possibly because in Georgia "it was all about grant writing and report writing."[106] Tarkhan-Mouravi noted that how the Georgian NGO community was created shaped its character; "almost all of it was international money, and for many people it was a way to survive, good salaries and income in a difficult time, and no one cared about the values."[107]

Another factor is that apart from individual voices like Zakareishvili, peacebuilding NGOs had little public profile in Georgia at the time, so there may have been little impetus for the government to pay attention. According to analyst Zaal Anjaparidze, "the most influential NGOs in Georgia worked on everything except peacebuilding,and those that work on peacebuilding do not advertise themselves very much".[108] Giorgi Karkulia, a youth peace activist noted, "this is work that is necessarily done with a very low profile,"[109] and many others voiced this dilemma that often peacebuilding work involves avoiding a high profile and big publicity in Georgia, as such exposure could be used to harm counterparts that their organizations were cooperating with in Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

In the end, Saakashvili's method of governing with a small circle of trusted advisors had few spaces for open debate, citizen input and civil society influence. Interlocutors agreed on this point: "Saakashvili knew everything" and though he would listen to criticism from those close circles around him, "often they were even more hardline and hawkish than he was".[110] According to Mirziashvili, the shift in the thinking of those close aides who came from civil

[103] Interview with Ghia Nodia, 2016.
[104] Interview with Ghia Nodia, 2016.
[105] Interview with Ghia Nodia, 2016.
[106] Interview with Ghia Nodia, 2016.
[107]Interview with Gia Tarkhan-Mouravi, 2016.
[108] Interview with Zaal Anjaparidze, Senior Manager, Eurasia Partnership Foundation, Tbilisi, 12 March 2016.
[109] Interview with Interview with Giorgi Karkulia, youth NGO activist, and founder and executive director, Academy for Peace and Development, an NGO focused on vulnerable youth, Tbilisi, 17 May, 2016.
[110] Interview with Cory Welt, Associate Director, Institute for European, Russian and Eurasian Studies (IERES) at the Elliott School Elliot School, George Washington University, 14 July 2016.

society was not so obvious, but rather it happened slowly. Many of them had been fighting for human rights during the Shevardnadze era and been beaten by police and so came into government "committed to modernizing society " but they began skipping steps and in the end "became a conspiratorial group who thought only they had the real answers."[111]

In this period, Western and particularly US donors, who had so generously funded Georgian CSOs as democratic watchdogs for the Shevardnadze regime, shifted their resources and political backing to the Saakashvili's government directly. Under the Bush administration's "Freedom Agenda", the US government tied itself very closely to Saakashvili's fortunes, as, given dismal results in its campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan, it "needed Georgia to be a success story."[112] While through the Rose Revolution civil society was in alignment with Saakashvili and Zhvania, critics within civil society emerged from 2004 around the constitutional reforms and by 2004-5 critical voices emerged from some of the bigger NGOs, like GYLA and Transparency International.[113] As government control over the media increased however, civic groups were increasingly ignored by the public and there was "almost no role for civil society".[114]

Example G-4: Closure of Ergneti Market and 2004 Violence in South Ossetia

> "Ergneti market had a higher importance in the peacebuilding process than any high-level political negotiations and discussions." [115]
>
> Lela Gaprindashvili, *The Sorry Campaign*

The stagnation period under Shevardnadze was good for Ossetian-Georgian relations. The Ergneti market was operating, and at the grassroots level Georgians and Ossetians had found a common language, so the only thing left was the political solution.[116] After the Rose Revolution, Saakashvili's new government began by dismissing Shevardnadze's special envoy for the South Ossetian conflict, Irakli Machavariani, as with all of Shevardnadze's senior officials.[117] Reportedly, Machavariani told Saakashvili that there was ten years of

[111] Interview with Mikheil Mirziashvili, 2016.
[112] Interview with senior US official in the Bush administration, Washington, D.C., 2016. Name withheld.
[113] Interview with Mamuka Tsereteli, 2018
[114] Interview with Mamuka Tsereteli, 2018
[115] Gaprindashvili 2010, 13.
[116] Interview with Nino Kalandarishvili, 2016; Interview with Paata Zakareishvili, 2016.
[117] Interview with Ghia Nodia, 2016.

experience of Georgian-Ossetian dialogue and offered to be available for questions and to share his personal archives of the dialogue meetings.[118] Saakashvili's team never asked for these notes or further briefings; "it was a huge wasted opportunity and there was no institutional memory" according to Arthur Martirosyan, CMG's team leader for the dialogue project.[119] Furthermore, there was no effort to tap into the existing relationships with South Ossetian counterparts. Martirosyan noted it was clear from his discussions with the new State Minister, Giorgi Khaindrava, and in a meeting with Saakashvili himself, that the new government blamed Shevardnadze's team for everything and he was told, "forget what was done under Shevardnadze, we have a great new strategy".[120] Ghia Nodia, then leader of the think tank, CIPDD, recalls that early on Saakashvili did seek consultation with the Georgian peacebuilding groups including Zakareishvili and asked them to draft a concept of what to do about the conflict areas, but they refused. "Saakashvili wanted this concept to be written very fast, a month or two…I think they said the timeline was unrealistic, and in the end this concept was written just within the National Security Council."[121] It became clear that the government's ideas for the conflict had nothing to do with the established unofficial dialogue processes. Rather it involved "a massive influencing campaign on public opinion in South Ossetia… a charm offensive that would affect the people and encourage them to rebel against their authorities," reflecting "a widespread illusion" at the time that the South Ossetian issue could be solved fast.[122]

A basic lack of understanding that the quick regime change in Adjara was a unique case with no relevance to South Ossetia influenced Saakashvili and his team.[123] The government didn't understand the sensitive ethnic basis of the conflict and felt the South Ossetian public would be happy to be rid of its corrupted elites[124] and its belief that it could repeat the Adjara scenario in South Ossetia backfired badly. It started as a police operation cracking down on smuggling and contraband trade through the Russian border, and closing the Ergneti market that had become a regional center for untaxed trade, and then moved to supporting a movement to encourage local Ossetians to overthrow South Ossetian leader Kokoiti.[125] The

[118] Skype Interview with Arthur Martirosyan, 2016.
[119] Skype Interview with Arthur Martirosyan, 2016.
[120] Skype Interview with Arthur Martirosyan, 2016.
[121] Interview with Ghia Nodia, 2016.
[122] Interview with Ghia Nodia, 2016.
[123] Interview with Nino Kalandarishvili, 2016.
[124] Interview with Giorgi Kanashvili, 2018.
[125] International Crisis Group 2004.

official rationale was to secure customs control over the Russian border as a means of revenue extraction, but many Georgian interlocutors claimed that this was only the public face of the strategy.[126] The Saakashvili team saw that the sprawling Ergneti market provided the bulk of the revenues for the South Ossetian government, and that its closure could weaken the South Ossetian government. Georgian politician Akaki Asatiani claimed that "the Americans advised Saakashvili to close the black market at Ergneti. Yes it was good for peace and for political stuff, but nobody was interested in this…It was the Bush years, Condoleezza Rice and Rumsfeld, they were very ideological."[127] Zakareishvili believes that closing the market was already part of Saakashvili's later strategy to take a military approach to the conflicts so, "he was against all structures where Georgians, Ossetians and Abkhaz interacted with each other".[128]

The first phase of the government's plan involved Georgian CSOs and youth groups bringing humanitarian aid, the Liberty Institute and Kmara especially - the civil society that was "politicized and on board with the Saakashvili line," according to academic and Georgia expert Cory Welt.[129] However, as a study by Welt found, these CSOs from Georgia proper had no resonance in Ossetian society – in contrast to Adjara, where there had been local Adjarian CSOs and youth groups involved in the protests.[130] His research found that one local Ossetian youth movement was involved, "but it had no traction in Ossetian society, and in fact, it may be it had a negative impact at the time."[131]

However, the Georgian introduction of large numbers of security forces into the conflict zone at the same time overshadowed the humanitarian gesture, and provoked a very negative reaction by South Ossetian society.[132] Serious clashes erupted between these Georgian security forces with Ossetian security forces that almost became a new war. Welt's study of the 2004 crisis found that Georgia's rapid overnight deployment of special forces troops on 31 May, triggered a cycle of action-reaction, and "was entirely avoidable" as it represented a Georgian overreaction to a perceived threat by the head of the Russian peacekeeping force that he would dismantle the new Georgian security check points that were part of the policing

[126] Interview with Malkhaz Abkhazeti NGO leader, Gori, 21 May 2016.
[127] Interview with Akaki Asatiani, 2018.
[128] Interview with Paata Zakareishvili, 2016.
[129] Interview with Cory Welt, 2016.
[130] Interview with Cory Welt, 2016.
[131] Interview with Cory Welt, 2016.
[132] Interview with Cory Welt, 2016.

operation.[133] In Welt's view, the Georgian government was disorganized at that point, and prone to overreaction but this move was interpreted in South Ossetia as evidence of Georgia's intention to launch a full scale offensive operation.[134] Firefights from mid-July intensified around Tskhinvali in August under the pretense of the anti-smuggling operation that grew to include defense of Georgian villagers, but instead made the Georgian villages a target - what both the Georgians and the South Ossetians did to enhance their security "caused reactions that made them increasingly less secure."[135]

The Georgian strategy reignited military conflict and poisoned the new government's relations with South Ossetia. In the fighting, 17 Georgians and 5 Ossetians were killed, and after negotiations through the JCC, a ceasefire was signed August 19, 2004. Later in November, Georgian Prime Minister Zurab Zhvania and South Ossetian leader Eduard Kokoity signed an agreement on demilitarization of the conflict zone.[136] This more or less held, broken by periodic small-scale violence, but relations were never the same. The fighting failed to weaken the South Ossetian leadership. Support for Kokoity in fact rose as he described himself as "the only leader capable of guaranteeing Ossetians' security" and the assistance sent by Tbilisi was successfully portrayed as "a cheap attempt to buy support."[137]

Civil Society Roles in the 2004 Crisis

In the 2004 crisis, Georgia's "good civil society" groups had little influence on those CSOs that took part in this action, nor as the above discussion shows, did they have influence on former NGO colleagues now in government. Some CSOs, the Liberty Institute and Kmara, were key civil society arms of the government's influence campaign. Their support for the action and the fact they remained closely allied to Saakashvili's government through its tenure suggest they were willing to condone the use of force to restore Georgia's territorial integrity, and potentially fit the criteria of "bad civil society" at this stage - though they did not promote exclusive, nationalist values.

Other civil society organizations were caught unawares. For some, what was happening appeared to be "an aggressive humanitarian gesture" but "a lot of things were going on then

[133] Welt, 2010, 88.
[134] Ibid., 89.
[135] Ibid., 79.
[136] International Crisis Group 2004, page i.
[137] Ibid.

and the militarization of the issue was not very evident."[138] The leader of an influential Gori-based NGO in the conflict zone reported that at that time, people supported the "fight against corruption" and "there was no resistance to the move to lose the market" because the Saakashvili team had done a lot of good until that point. However, he commented, "there was no open consultation, they were themselves the NGOs, they didn't need the NGOs."[139] Kalandarishvili recalls that many people criticized the action while it was underway. MP Ivlian Khaindrava, spoke in Parliament and accused the government of having "one government by day and another by night" with "the nighttime government made up of 5 people who decide everything."[140] Kalandarishvili noted that countering the government's message with the public was very hard.

> "We had been telling people it is a long, difficult road (to peace) there needs a lot of time and effort put into it and then others say that within 5 minutes it will all be fine as long as those bad people are gone. People, and the young especially, start to believe it.[141]

The Aftermath of the 2004 Violence: Civil Society Silence

After the fighting had stopped, the impact in Georgian society was muted. Welt recalls that overall "there was still a sense of public euphoria about the Saakashvili government and there was very little civil society opposition even to the events of 2004."[142] Giorgi Kanashvili was a student at the time and recalls that "people were understanding; it was said they were inexperienced guys and they tried their best, there were not big casualties…."[143] Much later, a sense of regret was voiced in the CSO community for the lack of reaction to the events in 2004, suggesting that later at least, some in civil society saw they had been too passive. One activist wrote in 2010 about "my silence after the events of 2004", saying, "I can come up with a thousand justifications. If nothing else, I may say that I couldn't change a thing or convince anyone" but claims her conscience tells her that "my silence caused marginalization of "peace" and cultivation of militarism."[144]

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[138] Interview with Mikheil Mirziashvili, 2016.
[139] Interview with Misha Chitadze, 2016.
[140] Interview with Nino Kalandarishvili, 2016.
[141] Interview with Nino Kalandarishvili, 2016.
[142] Interview with Cory Welt, 2016.
[143] Interview with Giorgi Kanashvili, 2018.
[144] Gaprindashvili 2010, 13.

The 2004 crisis destroyed the normalizing relationships between interspersed Georgian and Ossetian villages as the Georgian government introduced strict measures to control trade and movement.[145] The violence created deep suspicion among South Ossetians towards the Saakashvili government and the mistrust shut down other points of contact, including many people's diplomacy programs that had emerged in recent years. One IDP organization in Gori had been cooperating with Ossetian civil society groups in sending children from both sides to summer camps since 2000 recalled that, "the South Ossetian side pulled back from contact, saying parents were scared and after that it got very difficult to work jointly on anything."[146]

Amidst these damaged relationships, ten months later, in March 2005 the government released its own "Peace Plan for South Ossetia" that it asked the international community to help support; it was an outline of self-government measures with protections for language and culture, reparations for the 1991-2 war and economic development of the region among others.[147] It invited Ossetian leaders to a peace conference in Batumi in July 2005 but South Ossetian leaders declined, calling it a "PR stunt for Georgia's Western friends".[148] OSCE chief Roy Reeves voiced support for the proposal, though commented that "a very tense situation" remained following the 2004 crisis.[149] One local conflict resolution NGO commented that they would have preferred to see the proposal the year before.[150] Several months later, the Soros Foundation office in Georgia released a policy paper on "A Solution to the Georgian-Ossetian Conflict" put together by peace activists and CSO leaders. The idea was to build on the positive elements of the government's proposal by assembling information on the conflict's key causes and dynamics.[151] However there was little government or public uptake of the document.

4. Growing Militarization and Public Support for the Use of Force

On the conflicts, until 2006 Saakashvili's government was very active, taking "unilateral steps to suggest projects which could please the political elite in Sukhumi and South Ossetia".[152] They withdrew the tacit support from the partisan groups in Gali region, they dismissed the hardline head of the Abkhaz government in exile, they officially apologized to

[145] Interview with David Darchiashvili, 2018.
[146] Interview with local Georgian IDP foundation, name withheld.
[147] Civil.ge 2005.
[148] Corso 2005.
[149] Ibid.
[150] Ibid.
[151] Open Society Georgia Foundation 2005, 3.
[152] Interview with Giorgi Kanashvili, 2018.

the Ossetians and appointed a commission to investigate the events of 1991 in South Ossetia.[153] After two to three years of such attempts however, "Saakashvili grew frustrated, and in the same period there were major Western investments in the military upgrade of the Georgian forces, and Saakashvili's confidence grew in the wrong direction".[154] Under Saakashvili, Georgia had become a major troop contributor to the US coalition in Iraq. Military modernization was undertaken from 2006 with major US funding from the Bush administration to train 7,800 troops to support U.S.-led coalition operations in Iraq, along with advisory assistance for defense reforms (US$124.2 million).[155] A 2002 $64 million Georgia Train and Equip Program (GTEP) already had U.S. troops providing training to 200 officers, 2,000 soldiers, and a small number of Interior (police) Ministry troops and border guards.[156] The size of Georgian military spending grew rapidly reaching US$923 million, reaching 9.2% of GDP in 2007 and 32% of all government spending.[157] In turn, the size of the Georgian armed forces increased dramatically from 8,620 in 2002 to 19,345 in 2007. [158]

Many interlocutors reported a visible shift in the government's orientation from about 2006 onwards, towards increasing militarism and confidence in solving the conflicts by force. Previously the faction within the government that was pro-peace was dominant, under Goga Khaindrava, as State Minister, and Irakli Alasiania, as special envoy for the Abkhaz conflict, who were "always suggesting some options and compromise positions, and inspired Saakashvili himself".[159] But in 2006-7, the government began to block Georgian engagement in unofficial contacts with the defacto authorities in Abkhazia, withdrawing Georgian participation from a UK-funded dialogue process, the Schlaining Process.[160] The Georgian government instead held elections for an alternative "Upper Abkhazia" administration in Kodori Gorge, the only portion of Abkhazia under Georgian control, and an alternative South Ossetian administration established in 2006 in the Georgian-controlled village of Kurta and led by David Sanakoev, a former South Ossetian minister. The projects aimed to create model autonomous administrations recognized by Tbilisi to shift the allegiance of Abkhaz and Ossetians away from their defacto authorities. According to CMG's Martirosyan, who met with the Georgian leadership at this time, they saw the "Sanakoev project" as a carrot and

[153] Interview with Julia Kharishvili, 2016.
[154] Interview with Giorgi Kanashvili, 2018.
[155] Nichol 2013, 31.
[156] Ibid., 30.
[157] See Table 3 in Kuimova and Wezeman 2018, 8.
[158] See Table 2 in ibid., 6.
[159] Interview with Giorgi Kanashvili, 2018.
[160] Zakareishvili, 2008. Interview with Marc Behrendt, 2016.

stick strategy, with the carrot being "to create a model of excellence where Ossetians would love to live", but "privately the Krajina model and use of force were in their back pocket."[161] Welt also recalls Georgian officials in the post-2004 period discussing how the Croatian recapture of Krajina militarily had received US government support.[162]

The Soros Foundation: Unable to Bridge Civil Participation and Revolutionary Government

The relationship between the former NGO leaders now in government and Georgia's remaining civil society was increasingly distant in this era, though the Liberty Institute and Kmara remained Saakashvili's NGO allies. The Soros Foundation occupied a unique role however in this era and its engagement was actively sought by Saakashvili's team[163]; it had the potential to be a key link between the former NGO leaders turned hardliners in government and Georgia's CSO and peacebuilding community. Then Soros director David Darchiashvili recalls being called to a meeting by Minister of Interior Merabishvili, along with other NGO people about restoring autonomy to the new South Ossetian Sanakoev administration, and while agreeing in principle with the idea, he objected that "the whole project was run by the security service" to counter the influence of Russian secret services in the area. He tried to advocate for NGOs to be involved, but "I was informed constantly in practice that NGOs in the field are not welcomed." The government welcomed help from the Soros Foundation though, he claims, but he "did not have a clear formula how to combine broader civic participation in this process together with unavoidable presence of security services."[164]

Darchiashvili claimed he had used his contacts with South Ossetian CSOs to arrange a meeting with Saakashvili to increase understanding and trust, but "it didn't work" and fed his own general loss of faith in civil society on both sides, as "working for something else always such as private interests, or the nationalist cause…"[165] In the end, Darchiashvili had little influence on the hardliners in the government, and it seems, the influence went the other way as he joined Saakashvili's party in 2008 as an MP. He explains that "so many people in civil society were pushing personal or political agendas" it was more honest "to join the political arena and do so openly".[166]

[161] Krajina was a Serb controlled region of Croatia that the Croatian army seized back in 1996 by force in a lighting operation.
[162] Interview with Cory Welt, 2016.
[163] Interview with David Darchiashvili, 2018.
[164] Interview with David Darchiashvili, 2018.
[165] Interview with David Darchiashvili, 2018.
[166] Interview with David Darchiashvili, 2018.

By 2006-7 the Saakashvili government's methods had turned many of the CSOs that had originally been supportive, into opponents of the government. There was increasing evidence of abuse of powers, including arbitrary arrests and jailing of businessmen to collect "tax contributions" for the state budget, extrajudicial killings, and increasing control of the independent media, unlawful surveillance and intimidation of civic activists. The sordid case of Interior Minister's Merabishvili's wife implicated in the killing of a young man after a heated exchange in a Tbilisi restaurant, and the removal of the two officials who were considered pro-peace, Goga Khaindrava and Irakli Alasania, made 2006 a watershed moment when "Saakashvili took the gloves off."[167] In South Ossetia, Khaindrava's removal was perceived by the leadership as a confirmation that the Georgian leadership supported the use of force, as in their view, Khaindrava had been tough but "against a forceful resolution."[168]

In November 2007, five days of massive peaceful opposition and CSO protests in Tbilisi were violently dispersed by police, the opposition-oriented television station, Imedi, was stormed by security forces and taken off the air and a state of emergency was declared. This caused widespread international condemnation and Saakashvili responded by calling early presidential elections. He was re-elected in the Georgian presidential election on 5 January 2008 with 52 % of the vote, though amid opposition charges of fraud and allegations that exit polls by CSOs friendly to the government had also been falsified.[169] Though international election observers certified the vote, the cloud of suspicion over the government's re-election remained. During the election campaign Saakashvili promised that Georgia would return the conflict areas in a matter of several months.

With Saakashvili's second term, while the majority of civil society was in visible opposition to the government after the 2007 violence, more CSO leaders joined the UNM government. For example CIPDD's director Ghia Nodia and Soros Foundation director, David Darchiashvili both joined the National Movement in 2008, and Nodia became education minister hoping to build on the far reaching education reforms started by Kakha Lomaia, his predecessor.[170] As well, co-founder of the Georgian Foundation for Strategic and

[167] Interview with Marc Behrendt, Washington, D.C., 19 July 2016. Behrendt worked for over 20 years in the Eurasia region on peacebuilding,governance and human rights, including with programs in the south Caucasus with UK-based NGOs, and the OSCE mission in Georgia.
[168] Corso 2006.
[169] Kilner and Antidze 2008.
[170] Interview with Ghia Nodia, 2016.

International Studies, Temur Yakobashvili, was appointed in 2008 as State Minister for Reintegration.

After the elections, tensions with Abkhazia grew in the spring of 2008, and there were widespread expectations that an active conflict would break out there. There was a visible rise in "war propaganda" on national TV channels and a growing "militarist hysteria", according to human rights activist Ucha Nanuashvili.[171] Analyst and peace activist Marina Elbakidze found the government propaganda was overwhelming at this stage, "every day you would hear - you have to return Abkhazia…we have such a strong army."[172] Nino Kalandarishvili remembers that "when you leave Tbilisi to go towards western Abkhazia there were huge billboards saying we will take Abkhazia. Don't forget Abkhazia. There were terrible television clips, songs."[173] An infamous case was an ad funded by the Ministry of Defense that quoted Adolf Hitler in a voice over saying that "the lost land…can only be won back by force of arms…"[174] that the Georgian NGO, Human Rights Centre, publicized on their website.[175] Elbakidze recalls that in this period, people were always asking the question, "will there be a war?"[176] In retrospect she sees that this atmosphere desensitized people to the possibility of war, as the rhetoric was that "we have such a well trained army, we can take Abkhazia or South Ossetia in 1 day…or 2 hours."[177]

Example G-5: "Sorry Campaign" – Georgian NGO Tries to Counter Rising Militarism

In this atmosphere of increasing militarization and aggressive rhetoric about the conflict zones, in March 2007 an NGO tried to influence public opinion with an alternative message. The Georgian NGO, the Human Rights Center, launched a "Sorry Campaign" with a public appeal and apology towards the Abkhaz people. The aim was to counter the militaristic approaches and shift the public debate towards Georgians' acknowledgement of some responsibility for the 1992 war with the Abkhaz and to "break the chain of hatred" according to director of the Human Rights Center, Ucha Nanuashvili.[178] The campaign was highly controversial, and many government leaders from the National Movement and other parties

[171] Nanuashvili 2010, 3.
[172] Interview with Marina Elbakidze, Tbilisi, 18 May 2016. Elbakidze is a senior analyst with CIPDD, teaches psychology at Tbilisi State University, and since 1997 has played a leading role in Georgian-Abkhaz peacebuilding and dialogue activities.
[173] Interview with Nino Kalandarishvili, 2016.
[174] Georgian Defense Ministry Tv Quotes Hitler, 2008.
[175] Tskitishvili, 2010, 2.
[176] Interview with Marina Elbakidze, Tbilisi, 18 May 2016.
[177] Interview with Marina Elbakidze, Tbilisi, 18 May 2016.
[178] Nanuashvili 2010, 1.

spoke out strongly against it claiming it was a destructive idea and some countered with reference to the Abkhaz atrocities against Georgians during the war.[179] Gia Gachechiladze of the Georgian Greens warned it would harm the negotiation process and that "it is only the Russian side that has to apologize for the situation".[180] Tina Khidasheli, leader of the opposition Republican party "appreciated the idea" but commented that it was the Georgian state itself that should apologize, not NGOs and people.[181] The Human Rights Centre received threats and condemnations, though some limited support as well from the public and some politicians.[182] President Saakashvili, speaking to groups of IDPs from Abkhazia later harshly criticized the campaign, asking "[S]ay sorry for what? Because our heads were cut and because we have been forced out of our homes?" [183] He then accused the group of launching the campaign to get international grants and of actually jeopardizing IDPs legal right to return. [184] The Sorry Campaign's funding was all from personal donations in fact, as several foreign donors and embassies refused to fund the campaign once they learned of the Georgian government's hostile position.[185]

The campaign had limited impact in Abkhazia in the end and the attacks from many of the Georgian political elite proved that "Georgian chauvinism" and militarism was very strong in the society" according to Nanuashvili.[186] However, he claimed it had achieved its goals because it broke a taboo, since "speaking about this topic was neither popular nor safe… [i]t is time to call Georgian chauvinism its name."[187] The campaign also reportedly did not get big support from other civil society groups, one activist noted that many people thought at the time that it makes no sense to say sorry when the other side sees your apology as weakness.[188] A 2016 article by Abkhaz and Georgian civil society activists analyzed the Sorry campaign as well intentioned but with limited impact. "It never really gained momentum in Georgia... And on the Abkhaz side it was largely dismissed as either naive or insincere… and arguably created more ill will in a context where acknowledgement, and even

[179] Gulua 2010, 2.
[180] Ibid.
[181] Ibid.
[182] Nanuashvili 2010, 4.
[183] United Nations Association of Georgia 2007.
[184] Ibid.
[185] Nanuashvili 2010, 4.
[186] Ibid.
[187] Ibid.
[188] Interview with Mikheil Mirziashvili, 2018.

more so apology, were absent at the official level."[189] The controversial campaign elicited some messages from some Georgian organizations and people supporting non-violence and inclusive approaches to relations with the Abkhaz. However, it also showed the limited influence of these views on the highly nationalist, and increasingly militaristic public discourse promoted by the government itself and prominent former CSO voices in government. The public anger it evoked and the many public attacks on the Human Rights Centre, including by the President, accused them of undertaking the campaign just to earn grant money. This illustrated how Georgian civil society's clear dependence on foreign funds was an easy target for politicians and the general public to question the legitimacy and integrity of civic activism on sensitive questions.

Example G-6: Georgian Civil Society and the August 2008 War

Though concerns about renewed war had centered on Abkhazia in 2008, war broke out in South Ossetia instead. In July 2008, an exchange of fire between Georgian forces around the South Ossetian conflict zone turned into serious confrontations and sustained attacks by Ossetian irregular forces on Georgian villages. IDP advocate Julia Kharashvili had just joined the Ministry for Refugees and recalls residents of the villages coming and saying "protect us".[190] On the night of August 7, after President Saakashvili announced a unilateral ceasefire on national television, Georgia launched a sustained artillery attack on the town of Tskhinvali, killing Russian peacekeepers and local civilians, and Georgian ground and air forces entered South Ossetia.[191] This led to Russian military intervention on August 8 with "the declared purpose of protecting Russian peacekeepers and residents who had become Russian citizens in recent years" and over 5 days the Russian military pushed Georgians forces back out of South Ossetia and went further to occupy the Georgian cities of Gori, and Poti, Zugdidi, and Senaki in Western Georgia.[192] Saakashvili two days later claimed that the Russian troops had invaded South Ossetia first and that his action had been a response to resist Russian invasion. The 2009 official EU fact finding mission concluded that Georgia had launched the attack on Tskhinvali first (as did later academic research based on classified diplomatic cables).[193] Many interviewees reported the widespread belief that Saakashvili had

[189] Clogg, Elbakidze, and Inal-Ipa 2016, 20.
[190] Interview with Julia Kharashvili, 2016.
[191] Human Rights Watch 2009 5.
[192] Ibid. Tagliavini 2009, Pt. 2 pg. 10, Pt. 14 pg. 19.
[193] Tagliavini 2009; Human Rights Watch 2009 ; Wivel and Mouritzen 2012; Klußmann 2010.

fallen into a Russian trap and that he had received assurances Russia would not respond militarily to an armed attack on South Ossetia. The Georgian-Russian war only ended with a French negotiated 6-point ceasefire agreement on August 12.

"We tried to stop the war"

A small part of Georgia's civil society tried to prevent the war in the months prior as tensions mounted with Abkhazia and skirmishes near South Ossetia intensified. A vocal group of civic activists spoke out regularly against Saakashvili's policies on the conflicts from a principled, pacifist perspective, most prominently Zakareishvili but also Ivlian Khaindrava, Mamuka Areshidze, Gogi Khutsishvili, Naira Gelashvili, Gia Anchabadze and others.[194] Voices from the political opposition were more pragmatic in their objections, and emphasized the need to consider what Russia could do in response. [195] Paata Zakareishvili believes that they did all they could. "We tried to stop war, we all the time shouted it can lead to war, and we noticed all the mistakes that can be steps on the ladder to war."[196] Many months before the conflict Zakareishvili was speaking out regularly, "I was always appearing in the press, each week I said, it will be a war, Russia is doing everything to draw us into war.[197]

For many years prior to August 2008, Georgia's conflict expert community and peacebuilding NGOs had all, in various ways, worked toward preventing renewed violence through longer-term peacebuilding initiatives that had been steadily dismantled by the Saakashvili government. The Schlaining Process of direct dialogue involving Georgian and Abkhaz officials[198], and the earlier US-Norwegian facilitated Georgia-South Ossetia dialogue process[199] along with other informal diplomacy efforts were aimed at creating understanding, sustained relationships, communication and trust that could prevent a slide back into violence, and perhaps enable progress towards peaceful settlement. The Georgian-Abkhaz Schlaining Process was initiated in 2000 and had held 20 meetings and was actually due to meet again in late July 2008 before Georgian officials suddenly withdrew.[200] These efforts were by their nature out of the limelight and the broader public knew little about the Georgian civic activists that took part in them. It is telling that both rounds of violence over South Ossetia (in 2004 and 2008) took place when the high-level Georgia-South Ossetia dialogue

[194] Interview with Giorgi Kanashvili, 2018.
[195] Interview with Giorgi Kanashvili, 2018.
[196] Interview with Paata Zakareishvili, 2016.
[197] Interview with Paata Zakareishvili, 2016.
[198] Zakareishvili 2012.
[199] Nan 2005.
[200] Zakareishvili 2012, 114.

had long ended due to lack of funds and the Saakashvili government had allowed the ties these efforts generated to die out, leaving no informal channels or relationships with the South Ossetian leadership.

Other long-term peacebuilding efforts reached the broader Georgian public. The independent media NGO, Studio Re, produced many documentary films and TV discussions illuminating the roots of the conflict. Many public diplomacy efforts among youth, IDPs, journalists, and other sectors aimed to foster a critical mass of people who rejected enemy images of the other side. However, in the end these longer-term peacebuilding strategies had not been enough to prevent renewed violence in either 2004 or 2008, and appeared to have had little impact on the key decision makers in the Saakashvili government.

On the day the fighting started, Zakareishvili recalls how on he was on Radio Free Europe. "I was the first one who came out and protested and said this is a crime and someone must answer for this, because we will definitely lose. And many people called me on the line, a traitor, scumbag, a no good."[201] One Georgian activist recalled Zakareishvili as the only one who spoke out to oppose the war, and saw during his news conference how "the national movement people threw things at him, there was open intimidation against people who spoke out."[202] Zakareishvili claims that many people thought the same as he did, but "were afraid to speak out publicly."[203]

A tiny group of civil society activists protested the war once hostilities had started, but most of Georgian civil society did not. Mirziashvili recalls that after the fighting started, "a few people met on Freedom square, ten people to be exact, this they called the peacebuilding community…at that time no strong civil society voices were being heard."[204] As in 2004, some civic activists recall there was a sense of being caught unawares. The small group who protested had no influence on the government, nor seemingly on other civil society groups who were either indifferent, were afraid to speak out, or supported the use of force. Interlocutors reported that the overall mood was one of patriotism, and once the war started

[201] Interview with Paata Zakareishvili, 2016.
[202] Interview with Tato Khundadze, Tbilisi, 18 May 2016. Khundadze is a lecturer in Economics at the Georgian-American University and a graduate student and researcher at the New School in New York, and formerly worked with NGOs and think tanks in Georgia on peacebuilding and development initiatives.
[203] Interview with Paata Zakereishvili, 2016.
[204] Interview with Mikheil Mirziashvili, 2016.

even those who were very critical of Saakashvili did not dare to say anything, "you are either with your nation, or against it" was the common view.[205]

Reportedly Saakashvili made the decision with only a few close aides, and after the war others said they were trying to stop him, but he wouldn't listen even to them.[206] Long-time human rights activist Emil Adelkhanov claimed that "Misha [Mikheil Saakashvili] was responsible, he and 2-3 people knew what to do and ignored the rest."[207] Several activists reflected that events moved very quickly, and recalled being very surprised when war broke out. Analyst and long-time peace activist Kalandarishvili commented that even if she had understood at the beginning of August that war was possible, "there was no way to stop this machine", only "for President Bush to phone Saakashvili and say don't you dare do it!"[208] But she believes that Georgia's international partners also couldn't imagine this would happen. The record suggests that the Bush administration and other foreign governments did make clear that force would be unacceptable.[209]

Many within Georgian civil society, opposition parties and the broader public appeared to support the war, or at least did not voice any visible protest. There was an effort to put out an anti-war statement, but most Georgian NGOs did not sign it, according to Nanuashvili.[210] "It was not a war between political elites only. Most parts of society and politicians supported it. Nobody supported anti-war statements even in civil society".[211] Human rights activist Adelkhanov recalled that though initially some people tried to exert influence on the Georgian elite on the conflicts, but "after a while it was considered *ne prinyata* (not accepted) and people with wide ranging views on it were considered not acceptable."[212] One activist noted that some members of civil society implicitly supported Saakashvili's military build up and even some involved in peacebuilding "quietly supported the option of retaking [the territories] by force."[213]

Darchiashvili was then in government, and is frank about his and others' support for the military action. He recalls being summoned from the Parliament to the National Security Council on August 7, also with some NGO representatives, and learning "that Georgian

[205] Interview with David Darchiashvili, 2018.
[206] Interview with Marina Elbakidze, 2016.
[207] Interview with Emil Adelkhanov, 2016.
[208] Interview with Nino Kalandarishvili, 2016.
[209] MacFarlane 2009.
[210] Nanuashvili 2010, 3.
[211] Ibid.
[212] Interview with Emil Adelkhanov, 2016.
[213] Interview with Tato Khundadze, 2016.

troops moved in and, to say frankly the emotion was positive. I mean, finally, we thought!...this was an emotional moment all Georgians were happy, even NGO representatives who were in the room." [214] He claimed they all had confidence that Georgia's well-trained troops would be disciplined and "not commit any war crimes" and "hardly any Georgians would be against the restoration of exterritorial integrity, as much as hardly any Abkhazian or South Ossetian would agree to that." In retrospect, to him these events showed the level of "nationalism on all sides" that is the real obstacle to peace.[215]

5. Aftermath of the 2008 War

After the war, domestic criticism of Saakashvili was muted. Marina Elbakidze recalls the TV the day after the ceasefire, showing Saakashvili and Tbilisi mayor Ugulava in the square with the victory sign, and her former CIPDD colleague Darchiashvili giving a speech, saying "we won against Russia".[216] She recalls it was "some kind of schizophrenic euphoria because people knew all the details and that Georgia had lost in fact."[217] The material and political costs of the war for Georgia were huge. They included the deaths of 412 Georgian military including civilians, 365 Ossetians and 67 Russian military personnel[218], the destruction of roads, villages, infrastructure and two new military bases built with US money, the displacement of some 80,000 residents of Georgian villages within South Ossetia."[219] As well they resulted in the loss of previously Georgian controlled territory in Akhalgori, adjoining South Ossetia, and the Kodori Gorge alongside Abkhazia, and the Russian recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia as independent states some weeks later on August 26, 2008.

Despite condemnation of Russia and early statements of diplomatic support for Georgia and major humanitarian aid from the US and Western countries, Georgia was perceived by the US and other Western powers as having acted recklessly and the war damaged Georgia's standing and undermined Georgia's case for NATO membership.[220] Saakashvili himself revealed the cost to Georgia's influence with the US in a 2019 interview, recounting how US President Bush had brushed him off in September 2008, saying"'[l]ook Misha we have a world economic crisis right now, we don't have time for you."[221] Saakashvili says that he

[214] Interview with David Darchiashvili, 2018.
[215] Interview with David Darchiashvili, 2018.
[216] Interview with Marina Elbakidze, 2016.
[217] Interview with Marina Elbakidze, 2016.
[218] JAM News 2020.
[219] Ibid.
[220] Interview with former US government official, Washington, D.C.,October 2018, Name withheld.
[221] Saakashvili 2019.

then realized, "we had no allies left" so was forced to agree to the EU fact finding commission on how the war started that he claims was "politicized" and "biased".[222]

After the 2008 war, many Georgians became less enamoured of the notion of "the West". Many opposition parties called for Saakashvili's resignation and were baffled by the Western media's continued positive coverage of Saakashvili after the 2008 war. Nino Burjanadze, opposition leader and fellow Rose Revolution leader alongside Saakashvili, decried Western media falsely portraying opposition leaders as radicals; "unfortunately, many in the Western media describe Saakashvili as pro-Western. But if that is true, then what is the West about? Georgians know the West favors democracy, equality, and the rule of law. But Saakashvili's actions don't correspond to these values."[223]

Georgia's peace activists shifted energies quickly to address the consequences of the war and to use their pre-war relationships with contacts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia to try to rebuild communication with the help of foreign NGOs and partners. A core team of Georgians and Abkhaz civic activists who had been involved in the Schlaining Process met already in October 2008 two months after the war, and a group of South Ossetian and Georgian women, among them civil society leaders and war victims, met in the US in December 2008, launching a new civil society level dialogue process for Georgians and South Ossetians.[224]

Saakashvili's government remained in power until 2012 when he was defeated by a coalition of opposition parties united under the leadership of Georgian billionaire businessman Bidzina Ivanishvilli, and accepted the election defeat -- reportedly with some urging from the US ambassador. Also decisive was the fact that the Patriarch of the Georgian Orthodox Church supported the election result and threatened to mobilize the public to resist any interference with the outcome.[225] Public outrage at video footage of physical and sexual abuse at Tbilisi's Gldani prison released weeks before the vote played a big role in Saakashvili's defeat.[226] The prison scandal exposed the lack of protections for human rights and the dark side of Saakashvili's much-praised anti-corruption reforms and "zero tolerance" policy for even petty crime, which had swelled prison populations dramatically. CSOs had reported about the

[222] Ibid.
[223] Burjanadze 2009.
[224] Interview with Nino Kalandarishvili, 2016.
[225] Thanks to Neil MacFarlane for this insight.
[226] Bichikashvili 2012.

government's lack of transparency about the prisons for many years but had been ignored.[227] The deeply distorted relations between Georgia's civil society and "the NGO government" was evident when National Security Council Chairperson, Giga Bokeria, himself a former frontline human rights activist with the NGP Liberty Institute, "conceded that the government had not paid enough attention to human rights activists' warnings."[228]

US Policy towards Georgia: The "NGO Government" didn't need Civil Society Watchdogs

A key way that Georgian civil society had influenced government before the Rose Revolution was through mobilizing support from country missions and ambassadors, especially the American ambassador. However, the positive aura of Saakashvili's "NGO government" dampened foreign governments' interest in the views of Georgian civil society. Under Saakashvili, external aid to Georgian civil society dropped dramatically, and funding that would have normally gone to civil society was redirected to the government. According to many civil society groups, it was very hard to survive in those years. One activist recalls that,"donors would tell us [NGOs] there was no funding available - but we are funding your ministry".[229] Ultimately as Georgian civil society lost international attention and resources for their watchdog role, they also lost much of their leverage on their own government.

Analyst and former State department official Paul Stronski acknowledged that "after the Rose Revolution, Georgia was seen as a 'shining star of democracy' and we had blinders on to Saakashvili's more authoritarian side."[230] There were several reasons; after 2004 it was the one place where Bush's Freedom Agenda was "not a disastrous outcome" and Georgia was the largest non-NATO contributor in Iraq, had modernized its defense capacities and was playing an important role in the coalition."[231] Hence the US government focused almost exclusively on Saakashvili, and though "this policy also made sense because governments focus on governments" in retrospect it was clear that opposition politicians and civil society were neglected.[232] Though some US NGOs and some inside the State Department had some concerns, there were no voices sounding the alarm bells about Saakashvili's excesses until the November 2007 violence against peaceful protestors, when US circles were stunned that

[227] Corso 2012.
[228] Lomsadze 2012.
[229] Interview with Giorgi Karkulia, youth NGO activist, and founder and executive director, Academy for Peace and Development, an NGO focused on vulnerable youth, Tbilisi, 17 May, 2016.
[230] Interview with Paul Stronski, Senior Fellow, Russia and Eurasia Program, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington, D.C., 15 July 2016.
[231] Interview with Paul Stronski, 2016.
[232] Interview with Paul Stronski, 2016.

Saakashvili allowed himself to appear as a "tinpot dictator".[233] After that point, concerns were higher but critiques were reportedly always balanced with the positive transformations in Georgia and the value of Georgia's help in Iraq and Afghanistan.

CSOs from Georgia did come through Washington or prominent opposition politicians like Alasania and Burjanadze and there was enough activity to "create a feeling that Saakashvili allowed an active civil society in Georgia" though also the sense that civil society under Shevardnadze had been freer.[234] Stronski recalled that the general atmosphere was that the Saakashvili government was pushing through so many things that were usually on the civil society wish list, that "perhaps you no longer needed advocacy around that."[235] The close association of the Rose Revolution with Georgian civil society and the implicit norm of "good civil society" that had developed in the international arena appears to have played a powerful role in US policy makers' perceptions. According to Stronski, people thought, "here was a case where the NGOs became government and they were running with it at the time."[236]

Interviews also revealed the US government's blind spot towards Saakashvili's democratic shortcomings were the product of Georgia's intense lobbying efforts and the close personal relationships that developed between Georgian government representatives and American officials, democracy promotion NGOs, conservative US lobbyists and prominent politicians like Senator John McCain.[237] According to Stronski, Georgia had an incredibly powerful lobby on Capitol Hill starting in the 2000s, comprised of both Georgians and many Americans.[238] Powerful American lobbyists for Georgia included Bruce Jackson, a neoconservative who had championed NATO expansion eastward since the mid-1990s.[239] Randy Scheunemann, a top aid to Senator John McCain, was a paid lobbyist for Georgia since 2004 for, among other issues, Georgia's goal of entering NATO (which came to light after McCain began calling for direct NATO involvement in the 2008 South Ossetian conflict).[240] The McCain group think-tank also strongly supported Georgia in Washington.

[233] Interview with Paul Stronski, 2016.
[234] Interview with Paul Stronski, 2016.
[235] Interview with Paul Stronski, 2016.
[236] Interview with Paul Stronski, 2016.
[237]Interview with Fiona Hill, Washington, D.C., 15 July 2016. Fiona Hill is a senior fellow with the Brookings Institution, served as a Senior Director on the U.S. National Security Council (2017 – 2019), and an analyst at the National Intelligence Council (2006-9) focusing on Russia and Eurasia.; Interview with Paul Stronski, 2016.
[238]Interview with Paul Stronski, 2016.
[239]Interview with Paul Stronski, 2016; Interview with Fiona Hill, 2016.
[240] Drogin 2008.

Stronski claimed that "there were highly personalized relations between US and Georgian officials, cabinet level officials, Pentagon level officials."[241] Furthermore, Americans acting as key advisors to Saakashvili were on intimate terms with other Washington insiders. The most prominent, Daniel Kunin, was paid as a consultant by USAID, and at one point complained to a journalist of regularly receiving calls for Saakashvili from the Bush White House on his cell phone, showing how informal the relationships had become.[242]

Fiona Hill, then a Russia and Eurasia analyst at the National Intelligence Council, observed the "very unhealthy relationships between Georgian officials, US government proponents of Georgia, and the US democracy promotion NGO community".[243] She described seeing too many inappropriate relationships and "there was a lot of playing favourites and a lot of zealots in democracy promotion."[244] Concerned about the abundance of personal agendas and no real oversight, she tried to voice concerns within the government but was rebuffed. In her view, "US officials wanted Georgia to be a success so we didn't rein Saakashvili in. He was our brilliant, prodigal child, but like a teenager that you give the keys to a Ferrari and he slams it into a wall." [245] She saw the US government's inability to rein in its own people and the lack of accountability for government policy towards Saakashvili caused a "massive disaster in South Ossetia" that no one was held accountable for.[246] In her view, the US government had far too little engagement with civil society in Georgia at that time.[247] These insights from US policy makers show how Washington's lack of attention to Georgia's internal democratic processes and neglect of Georgia's civil society in these years undermined its ability to adequately assess and respond to what was happening in Georgia.

From the perspective of civic groups inside Georgia, the war appeared to bring a reckoning from outside donors, as "after the war donors realized they needed civil society."[248] Funding increased dramatically after 2008. Fron Nazi, an American aid expert with deep experience in the Balkans, arrived in 2009 to lead a 14 million dollar USAID civil society program whose purpose was to develop the advocacy skills of the civil society sector "to engage the broader

[241] Interview with Paul Stronski, 2016.
[242] Weinberg 2008.
[243] Interview with Fiona Hill, 2016.
[244] Interview with Fiona Hill, 2016.
[245] Interview with Fiona Hill, 2016.
[246] Interview with Fiona Hill, 2016.
[247] Interview with Fiona Hill, 2016.
[248] Interview with Interview with Giorgi Karkulia, Tbilisi, 17 May, 2016.

community and hold the government much more accountable".[249] He recalls people in the State Department saying that "they hadn't been keeping very close tabs on Saakashvili", and needed stronger civil society groups to track things in Georgia. [250] Nazhi found that the Saakashvili government actually didn't respond to civil society, they said "they were way ahead of civil society in what they were trying to do".[251] Nazhi saw the lack of public accountability for CSOs given their dependence on foreign funding, and required grant recipients to hold town hall meetings for the public about their work. However, he recalls that even the strongest NGOs in Georgia such as GYLA and Transparency International were more about "pulling the government line" and the feeling was that the government had so much support from the West,… if you had actually gone against Saakashvili and his team, it was almost like saying you are anti-Western."[252] At that time, Nazhi had no engagement with NGOs that were working on conflict issues, and in fact USAID's rules meant he could not fund any CSOs who worked there.

The Church's Role as Highly Influential Civil Society but for "the Nation"

Through these tumultuous years of renewed violence over South Ossetia, the highly influential Georgian Orthodox Church has played a relatively passive role on the conflicts. Many describe it a nationalist church, and that being Georgian and being Orthodox are intimately connected. Georgian Patriarch Ilia had consistently supported Saakashvili's efforts to restore territorial integrity."[253] According to Orthodox priest Father Robert Chachava. the church is reluctant to take any leading role on the conflicts and could play a role together with international and Georgian organizations, but that is the most that could be expected.[254] During the build up to the 2008 war, the church was not visible but afterwards did engage on humanitarian issues, cooperating with the church in Ossetia to arrange the return of soldiers remains.[255] In this period, the church's role has focused on social issues, where it takes a nativist stance that resists the imposition of Western values and is very critical of incursions on the traditional family and efforts to protect the rights of religious and sexual minorities.[256] Its relationship with Georgia's "good civil society" is affected by these issues as civil society

[249] Interview with Fron Nazhi, Washington, D.C.,USA, 25 October 2018. Nazhi is an international development expert who has worked in leading roles globally and in the US, and led a USAID-funded civil society program with the East West Management Institute in Georgia from 2010-2013.
[250] Interview with Fron Nazhi, 2018.
[251] Interview with Fron Nazi, 2018.
[252] Interview with Fron Nazi, 2018.
[253] Liklikadze and Fuller 2009.
[254] Interview with Father Robert Chachava, Tbilisi, 7 May 2018.
[255] Interview with Father Robert Chachava, Tbilisi, 7 May 2018.
[256] Interview with David Darchiashvili, 2018.

groups are often promoting liberal values and see the church as a negative and illiberal force. In recent years, some civil society groups are trying to bridge the divide between Georgia's Western influenced civil society and the Orthodox Church and to educate Church leaders on the EU and NATO.[257]

In the later years of the Saakashvili era, the Patriarch uncharacteristically criticized Saakashvili for precipitating the war with Russia in August 2008. "This should not have happened and need not have happened," he said. "We had other ways of resolving those problems. When a ship is sailing on the open sea, the captain should know where the rocks are so the ship is not dashed against them and damaged, as Georgia has been."[258] Many interlocutors commented that despite its passivity on the conflict issues, the Church does not shy away from playing other political roles. In the 2012 elections, "many priests persuaded their flocks to vote against Saakashvili's party"[259] Its considerable potential to have influence on Georgian society to promote more inclusive solutions to South Ossetia and Abkhazia, and to champion the cause of non-violence has remained mostly unused potential so far, though the church has its own hierarchical relationships with the Orthodox churches in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and to the Church in Russia. For many interlocutors, the Church's strong identification with the Georgian nation and nationalism is a big obstacle to any positive role in Georgia's conflicts as its ethos does not offer any clear place for non-Georgian minorities.

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6. Conclusions: Civil Society's Hybrid Outcomes and Marginalized Peace Activists

Initially post-Soviet Georgia appeared a big success story for the international promotion of an activist, democratic local civil society along the lines of the "good civil society" model. Georgians embraced the Western model promoted and funded by external donors of formal organizational structures (NGOs) working on democratization, rule of law, civil liberties, peace, human rights and other progressive areas. This new NGO community was largely made up of younger Georgians, who quickly became highly professionalized and adopted English to communicate with the Western donor and civil society community. Only a small part of Georgia's new civil society focused on Georgia's unresolved internal conflicts in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, and many of these remained outside the new streams of NGO professionalization and capacity building; many were older, established civic leaders and

[257] Interview with Mikheil Mirziashvili, 2016.
[258] Liklikadze and Fuller, 2009.
[259] Darchiashvili, 2018, 30-31.

intellectuals, some did not speak English, and hence relied on Russian language in their communication with the outside world (and which was necessary to engage with the Russian-speaking Abkhaz and South Ossetians).

The new Georgian NGO community allied with reformist opposition leaders in the 2003 Rose Revolution that ousted Shevardnadze, and many prominent civic activists took up powerful positions within the reformist government of Mikheil Saakashvili. Despite these promising beginnings, these former civic activists in government and Georgian civil society did not prevent the weakening of democratic approaches that occurred during the Saakashvili era. Furthermore, despite a small, determined Georgian peacebuilding community committed to engagement and dialogue with the South Ossetians and the Abkhaz to reach non-violent solutions, large parts of Georgia's civil society tacitly (or actively) approved of the government's use of military force to try to resolve the unsettled conflicts.

After the Rose Revolution, many "good civil society" activists appeared to gain serious influence through powerful positions within Saakashvili's government, but events soon called into question whether these CSO leaders represented "good civil society" at all. Saakashvili's "NGO government" (as some called it then) once in power had little use for the rest of Georgian civil society that remained outside government. Over time many civic activists and NGOs became increasingly critical, but were ignored and had little influence on the "NGO government" where decisions were made by a small, closed, circle of former civic activists who embraced increasingly authoritarian methods to secure Georgia's modernization. Georgia's civil society in these years also had little leverage with Georgia's foreign backers and especially the US government, who focused financial and political support on Saakashvili himself and his governments reformist agenda, and until 2007-8 saw little need for civil society watchdogs.

This case demonstrates that the peacebuilding policy of "promote good civil society" did not result in a strong civil society in Georgia that promoted inclusive values and non-violence. Some such groups did emerge but alongside a much larger and more mixed spectrum of civil actors, and these in turn had weak local legitimacy and were often delegitimized as "grant eaters" for their dependence on foreign funding. Thus, Georgia provides a clear example of where the international policy of promoting "good civil society" did not neatly produce intended results in a linear fashion, but rather unexpected hybrid outcomes, that continue to

evolve.[260] Furthermore, the case demonstrates that the "good civil society" actors that did emerge had weak links and little influence on the "bad civil society" forces in Georgian society and thus had little ability to restrain episodes of violence emanating from Georgian actors either non-state groups or the government itself.

Of the four examples of local civil society dynamics examined, only the normalization of Georgian-South Ossetia relationships at the grassroots level between 1998-2003 illustrates how local civic actors' relationships and links with former combatants and members of informal militias played an important role in keeping a potentially volatile process of refugee return relatively peaceful. The study examined three other examples of civil society agency involving speaking out or taking actions to address likely or renewed violence; the closure of the Ergneti market and eruption of renewed fighting in South Ossetia in 2004, the Sorry Campaign to address growing militarism in 2007, and the August 2008 violence in South Ossetia and resulting Russian-Georgian war. All three show how little influence Georgia's "good civil society" had on former civil society counterparts who were leaders in Saakashvili's government, on those CSOs like Kmara, the Liberty Institute and the Soros Foundation who were government allies to varying degrees, and on the bulk of Georgia's numerous CSOs and the broader public who were supporters of nationalist values and at least tolerant of the use of force to resolve Georgia's longstanding territorial conflicts.

The local civil society promotion model needs to contend with the fact that many of the star students of the internationally supported "school of civil society in Georgia" came out deeply cynical about civil society, but skillfully used its rhetorical appeal. These same civil society activists once in power pursued other values than inclusive politics and non-violence (the substantive values the "good civil society" model encompasses). Exploring the concept of "bad civil society" in the Georgian case, those former CSO leaders who joined the government and the CSOs who allied themselves closely with the government's agenda on the conflict areas can be viewed through the lens of "bad civil society" according to the Chambers and Kopstein criteria. They both had prominent roles inside the government while still occupying the separate space of "civil society" that was allied with the government; these groups coordinated closely to embark on a modernization and revolutionary reform of Georgian society that did not always align with democratic and human rights norms. According to many accounts, once in power they saw little use for any civil society beyond

[260] Mac Ginty, 2013.

themselves. Georgia's "good civil society" of human rights organizations, independent media, peace CSOs, IDP associations, women's groups, etc. who were outside the "NGO government" were a mixture of some groups that did support the values of inclusion and non-violence, and many others who tacitly supported exclusivist nationalist goals and condoned the use of violence to achieve them, as the reactions to the 2008 war in South Ossetia illustrated.

Georgian Civil Society Over Three Decades

In both the Saakashvili era and the early 1990s independence movement, Georgia's moderates appear to have had little influence on those who had more strongly nationalist orientations and who tolerated or condoned the use of force to achieve these goals. In the Soviet Georgia period, the moderate groups opposed to Gamsakhurdia's ethno-nationalist agenda were seen as elitist, disorganized and had little public legitimacy. In the post-Soviet era, the Georgian "good civil society" actors had their public legitimacy undermined by two factors; the first was the evident dependence of the entire CSO community on foreign funding and the public accusations that they were only "grant eaters", and the second was the fact that strong civil society activists entered the Saakashvili government and appeared to embrace the ethos - the ends justify the means.

The findings of this study suggest that much of Georgia's internationally fostered civil society that emerged since the mid 1990s did not remain true to the values of inclusion and non-violence that the international "good civil society" promotion agenda presumes can and should be successfully incubated. Some of Georgia's empowered civil society went into government with Saakashvili and in fact championed many of the authoritarian measures undertaken to push through modernizing reforms quickly, and supported the use of violence to resolve Georgia's internal conflict with South Ossetia, first in 2004 and then in 2008. The vast majority of civic actors who helped create the Rose Revolution but split with the government in subsequent years and opposed Georgia's internal turn to authoritarianism, still apparently tacitly supported the use of state violence to resolve the conflicts in 2004 and 2008, or at least with the exception of a very small core of activists, did not speak out or resist these moves in any evident way. The much smaller group of explicitly peacebuilding CSOs that focused on Georgia's conflicts and mostly remained committed to values of non-violence, human rights, and ethnically inclusive approaches, did speak out and try to

influence events but were marginalized in Georgian society throughout this period and had little influence even on their former civil society allies that were the architects of these policies inside the government. In Georgia, the fact the civil society that did align with "good civil society" values were given little public support by Georgia's foreign supporters and especially the US government, further hobbled any restraining influence they tried to exert.

Chapter 7: International Aid, Local Civic Activism, and Violence Restraint

This study has probed a key international-local interaction at the heart of international peacebuilding efforts. It examined the theory and practice of promoting so-called "good civil society" and restraining "bad civil society" as part of international peacebuilding strategies for protracted conflicts, probing if internationally supported "good civil society" ends up being able to restrain own side violence, as a measure of its influence on peace. In examining this proposition against empirical evidence in two cases, Kosovo and Georgia, it aimed to shed light on how such transnational support impacts the legitimacy and influence of the local civil society organizations (LCSOs) on the receiving end. Ultimately, it puts the "promote good civil society" prescription in peacebuilding scholarship and international aid practice under the microscope. Does international aid to local "good civil society" and marginalization of "bad civil society" actually help promote peace?

I. The International Agenda of Local "Good Civil Society" Promotion

Before investigating these processes in conflict affected countries, the study explored the international side of the "good civil society" promotion policy from the perspective of bilateral donor agencies, multilateral organizations and international NGOs. There were three clear questions: 1) whether local civil society promotion was a significant focus for major aid donors; 2) how did aid donors understand local civil society; and 3) was the good vs. bad dichotomy evident in their policies?[1]

Local Civil Society as a Focus: The research found that local civil society promotion indeed occupied a major place in the policy and practice of liberal peacebuilding interventions. Promoting and supporting local civil society was an explicit policy goal across the top three bilateral aid donors (the US, UK and Germany) and by multilateral donors the World Bank and the EU. Just how prominent is clear from the 2018 UN and World Bank report, *Pathways to Peace*, which mentions civil society as a key actor in peace processes 109 times (while armed groups were mentioned only 70 times), and that the 2016 Millennium Development Goals explicitly cite local civil society as key actors and partners.[2] Donors' rationales for supporting LCSOs blended instrumental reasons (CSOs as needed for project

[1] Based on my (as yet unpublished) draft paper *"The Role of Local Civil Society in International Development and Peacebuilding Policy*, whose highlights are reviewed only briefly here for reasons of space.
[2] United Nations and World Bank 2018.

implementation) and an agenda of supporting civil society as an end in itself, as critical to the legitimacy of postwar democratic governance arrangements, with the latter rationale gaining in importance in recent years. The activism of prominent transnational advocacy networks promoting civil society peacebuilding appears to have been a key influence on the policies of bilateral donors and at the UN. However, actual financial flows to local civil society were very difficult to track given multiple subcontracting chains and weak centralized tracking mechanisms. While OECD reports reveal that approximately 15-16% of all bilateral aid currently flows to CSOs in general, only a small portion of this (roughly 6% of that CSO total) goes directly to CSOs in developing countries,[3] however this is likely highly underestimated because of poor tracking systems. Interviews with representatives of multiple donor agencies showed that the trend in recent years is for international donors to give increasing priority to funding local civil society in developing countries to reflect key global commitments for more "local ownership" in aid, and to develop better tracking systems to monitor these goals.

Understandings of Local Civil Society: A thorough review of policy guidelines for these major aid donors showed that overall donor policies tended to frame civil society as a harmonious, unified social actor and an unadulterated good, not a sphere marked by diverse political orientations and values, and conflictual relationships with other groups. The local civil society visible in the international aid policies reviewed was unquestionably in line with the "good civil society" concept of the early social capital and peacebuilding literature. While civil society used to be equated with NGOs, and not recognized in more traditional forms of citizen involvement like religious groups, or cultural and sports associations, the civil society concept has expanded recently and become more nuanced among these donors - to include religious groups, civic associations and traditional actors.

International NGOs are a key actor in direct support and partnership with local civil society groups. Interviews with international peacebuilding NGOs showed that while they operate according to this notion of partnering with "good civil society" they also as frequently question this framework. The direct work of INGOs in conflict settings illustrates to many that the sources of local legitimacy are different than these external norms. They attempt to highlight these tensions in their communication with their donors, while at the same time are bound by their own donor's policies, which are often values-based. Many of the INGOs

[3] OECD DAC 2018, 7.

interviewed are highly networked with donors, multilateral agencies, and each other in terms of collaborative research and advocacy. For donor governments, the existence of coordinating networks amongst their domestic NGOs and active policy dialogues these networks carry out with their own national ministries appear to have played a role in educating donor governments, and moving more nuanced thinking upstream recently. This was evident in interviews with multiple UK, US, and German donor and NGO representatives who recognized tensions between donor-promoted norms and local legitimacy, and this recognition is articulated in 2017 German aid policy guidelines.[4]

"Good civil society" and "bad civil society" in aid policies? The research found that though the specific term "good civil society" was not used by donor agencies, the current policy literature and interviews with senior officials revealed assumptions about local civil society as a uniformly positive normative concept -- describing organizations promoting democracy, development and non-violent conflict resolution -- and that these assumptions do generally guide funding decisions. Some donor representatives acknowledged the local legitimacy of civic groups as important but that they would have a hard time politically and organizationally in funding groups with very different values. Current donor policies also align with the notion of marginalizing "bad civil society" though do not use the specific term per se. Donor agencies do have public "red lines" laid out in funding directives banning funding for certain types of organizations, most often on the grounds of criminal convictions, inclusion on terrorism lists and sanctions lists, though certain countries also ban funding to groups supporting specific policies, for example the US ban on abortion services. However, the study found that aid administration is highly decentralized and most decisions about local CSO partners are made at the local level, by donor agency country offices, international NGO partners, and other subcontracting organizations. This leaves value-based judgements of "good" and "bad civil society" sometimes far removed from the actual aid donor. A related complication is that in protracted conflicts over decades, donor agencies often shift key roles to national staff, opening up the chance for local actors to program funds in line with their political and social networks, rather than the norms or values of donor agencies.

Amongst international NGOs, there was strong awareness of the range of groups that could be categorized as "bad civil society", and some interviewed even used the term. Some justified banning funding such local actors as they are perceived to undermine all the work

[4] Government of Germany 2017.

done to support the other kinds of civil society. Those working in the peacebuilding arena commonly felt that attention needed to be paid to the local networks and legitimacy of groups rather than any blanket bans. All donor agencies were concerned about shrinking civil society space and laws passed in many countries designating externally funded CSOs as "foreign agents", and this appears to have prompted a search for less top-down strategies. Furthermore, the prevalence of programs to "counter violent extremism" and address Islamic radicalization has donors searching for ways to engage more radical groups effectively, for these specific purposes.

As the above makes clear, this research established that the agenda of local "good civil society" promotion by international donors is a clear reality, though this explicit language is not used, and that support to local civil society has rhetorical prominence in global aid and peacebuilding strategies and significant resources (though actual amounts are hard to pin down). In fact, the prominence of local civil society in the policies of the biggest bilateral aid donors and multilaterals was surprisingly high (and contrasts strongly with the lack of attention in scholarly research). The orientation to avoid or restrain "bad civil society" also was a reality in practice, though also not discussed in those terms, and justified by donors as related to accountability to their own states' democratic values and taxpayers.

Establishing these orientations as a reality at the donor level enabled greater confidence of the project in investigating them in the field studies. The two case studies undertaken examined the role of local civic actors in restraining own side violence in protracted conflicts, contrasting periods of locally directed civic activism and later periods of major international support to local civic actors along the lines of the "good civil society" normative model. While some might argue that expectations that civil society should have a restraining effect on violence are unfair, that is precisely the peace dividend suggested by models of promoting "good civil society" in protracted conflicts. The study uses the lens of social capital prominent in the peacebuilding literature and enables a fresh look at the value of bonding social capital in intra-community dynamics among civil society actors and their broader societies.

The following section briefly summarizes each case. Each summary highlights the specific examples of civic actors restraining violence, or attempting to, from each period (designated in brackets as K-1, 2, 3 for Kosovo examples or G-1, 2, 3 for Georgia examples...for easy reference to subsequent tables) and then compares insights into what factors appeared to enable civic actors to restrain violence. Each case summary then reviews the spectrum of

civic actors identified in the case and how these different civic actors relate to the "good civil society" and "bad civil society" matrix.

II. Local Civil Society and Own-Side Violence in the Kosovo Case

Kosovo Pre-1999: Non-Violent Civil Resistance and War

In the early 1990s, a mass based political and civic movement mobilized among the majority Kosovo Albanian population of the Kosovo region of Serbia, to survive Serbia's repressive policies and to advance the longstanding drive for Kosovo's independence. This was accomplished under the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK), a social-political movement of Pristina nationalist intellectuals led by Ibrahim Rugova. The LDK successfully engaged religious groups, youth groups, ex political prisoners, women's groups, and the few formally registered CSOs in a common movement of non-violent resistance to Serbia's mass firing of Kosovo Albanians, denial of basic services and threats of expulsion. Through its campaign to end intra-Albanian blood feuds (example K-1), this civic movement fostered personal contacts and a strong network of local branches across Kosovo Albanians' rural-urban divides. It fostered social capital between the elites, students, CSOs and the broader population while reconciling thousands of blood feuds that had divided Kosovo-Albanian society.

This movement and its organized network was a channel for information and influence, and functioned to proactively restrain violent reprisals from within Kosovo Albanian communities towards Serb security forces, that would have provoked deadly violence from Serbia and served as a pretext for expulsion (example K-2). The multi-level social unity and massive voluntarism of Kosovo-Albanian society allowed the movement to run what became known as the "parallel state", which delivered food aid, education, and medical care to Kosovo-Albanians. Thus, the social mobilization was backed up with material aid, financed from the population's own contributions, the Diaspora and some in-kind donations from international humanitarian groups, and this dynamic led to very high local legitimacy for the movement and the CSOs involved.

Ultimately, after the international community chose not to address Kosovo's status during the 1995 Dayton accords over Bosnia, secretive insurgent groups gained in strength and emerged as the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA). As their guerilla attacks on Serb forces provoked

massive retaliatory Serb violence, the KLA gained increasing domestic and international support. The social unity and networks of the LDK and its civil society partners were no longer able to fully restrain violence after 1998, as student activists demanded more active resistance and the KLA used violence against Albanian moderates. The increasing Serb reprisals against Kosovo Albanian communities helped the KLA gained domestic legitimacy for their strategy and increasing international backing, and swung the radicalized population behind armed struggle which culminated in the 1999 NATO intervention and air war against Serbia.

Kosovo Post International Intervention

NATO's air war brought Serbian withdrawal and Kosovo was placed under United Nations' administration. The mass influx of aid included substantial international funding for "good civil society" that created a large, pluralistic civil society that followed donor priorities, focusing on democratic institutions, free media, elections monitoring, peacebuilding, minority rights, and a range of humanitarian services. However, this civil society had weak legitimacy with the larger public and little ability to restrain continuing interethnic violence. Other civic associations such as veterans' and war victims' groups, families of the missing, the official Islamic Community, student groups and the Vetëvendosje self-determination movement had greater credibility with the public, though they held openly nationalist positions and some used quasi-violent protests to raise grievances.

This was demonstrated in the 2004 anti-minority riots when some civic actors and the Kosovo media played inflammatory roles in the violence, and which appeared largely instigated by the war veterans' associations (example K-3). A few CSO leaders spoke out against the rioting but found they had little influence on the groups involved (veterans, students, youth, etc.) The strong civic networks from the 1990s had atrophied, and Kosovo's thousands of new CSOs had little legitimacy and influence with the broader population; those who did eventually restrain the rioters were former KLA commanders, politicians, and war veterans, some of whom were suspected of involvement in or condoning the violence. These events support the importance of leaders' credibility with ethnic constituencies and bonding social capital, that was suggested in a 2006 study of the riots.[5] Also noteworthy was the fact that many of Kosovo's "good civil society" groups made little attempt to restrain the riots.

[5] Chigas 2006.

Kosovo's externally-funded "good civil society" also demonstrated little ability to restrain the low-level anti-minority violent incidents that have continued since and that fuel insecurity and continued tensions inside Kosovo. One example of these dynamics is the violent protests against Serb ex-residents visiting their church and gravesites in Gjakova since 2015 profiled in the case (example K-4). Many local CSOs in fact, join the protests in solidarity with the organizers, a nationally known "mothers of the disappeared group" from Gjakova who still search for family members missing since the war. In general, Kosovo's large, professionalized civil society has very little public constituency for multiple reasons. Many see Kosovo's civil society as elite NGOs based in Pristina, working on "foreign" agendas that are not relevant to the bulk of the population. As well, a common view is that the "watchdog activities" undertaken by CSOs end up producing little governmental or international response, as the international community has supported Kosovo's post-war leaders for geopolitical reasons and has turned tolerated corruption in return for political stability. Furthermore, since international funding has decreased, many prominent CSO leaders joined the government or the political parties they once harshly criticized, but without provoking any visible changes once inside, which further undermines the credibility of CSOs as simply a step ladder to politics or lucrative government jobs.

Movements and associations with strong nationalist positions or affiliation with the war for Kosovo's liberation, as it is seen by Kosovo-Albanians, do have influence and more public credibility. The basic war issues remain unresolved 20 years later; there is no acknowledgement, apology or reparations from Serbia, and though defacto independent, Kosovo's status is still not recognized by many countries. All these elements nurture a strong sense of grievance and predominant focus on Kosovo Albanian rights among the population. International efforts to brush aside these nationalist sentiments and sources of legitimacy and instead induce the public to align with new multiethnic structures, symbols, and governance since the war have mostly failed.[6] Kosovo's international backers are perceived by the local population as having supported Kosovo's corrupted leaders since the war, at the same time as they fund civil society actors to fight corruption, and this seeming contradiction also weakens the credibility of externally supported NGOs.

The backlash against these contradictory international policies strengthens resistance to foreign templates for Kosovo. Many CSO leaders privately support the Vetëvendosje (VV)

[6] Landau, 2017; Lemay-Hébert, 2013.

social-political movement, a strong, vocal critic of international interference in Kosovo and very clearly perceived by internationals as "bad civil society". VV emerged from civil society in 2005 as a hybrid civic movement/political party, is voluntarist, with a strong grassroots organization, is widely seen as remaining outside of Kosovo's pervasive patronage networks, and is not funded by external donors. Furthermore, it has a significant constituency – generating large turnouts at demonstrations, and winning the most seats of any single party in both the 2017, 2019 and 2020 elections. VV makes provocative claims to have restrained violence against minorities though public discussions and awareness raising at its village-level branches across the country, as well as urging restraint in specific cases. Many domestic and international interlocutors see VV's form of protest acts as a "safety valve" for Kosovo's unemployed and disaffected youth. VV appears to tolerate low level violence at its protests and defends the use of quasi-violent tactics like disrupting Parliament with tear gas. Direct criticism of VV by the US government and other international actors for its nationalist positions and its tolerance for violence has both suppressed and bolstered VV's legitimacy among different sectors of the public.

Through Kosovo's history, there are 4 dynamics visible in the relationship between civic actors and the interethnic violence. These are as below (and given the complexity of civil society groups, more than one dynamic often applies to each event).

1. Civic actors didn't try to restrain violence
2. Civic actors tried but failed to restrain violence (spoke out, protested, took action)
3. Civic actors restrained violence
4. Civic actors actually provoked violence

Kosovo Examples:

K-1: Stopping Intra-Albanian Violence - The Blood Feuds Reconciliation Campaign

K-2: Limiting Reprisal Violence against Serb Police through Integrated LDK-CSO Networks

K-3: Civic Actors and the March 2004 Anti-Minority Riots

K-4: Violent Protests Against Serb ex-Residents Visiting Gjakova from 2015

Example	CSOs didn't try to restrain V	CSOs tried to restrain V but failed	CSOs restrained V	CSOs actually provoked V
K-1			X	
K-2			X	
K-3	X	X		X
K-4	X	X		X

Spectrum of Civic Actors in Kosovo

The research found that Kosovo's thousands of contemporary civil society organizations could be clustered under the broad categories of "good civil society" meaning those with inclusive values and who reject the use of violence and "bad civil society" meaning groups with exclusive values who accept the use of violence, or other civil society. At the same time, attempting to categorize groups this way with long histories meant that the same civil society organization can sometimes occupy more than one quadrant.

For example, VV supports minorities as full citizens of Kosovo with equal rights as Kosovo Albanians (hence holds inclusive values), but rejects what they see as an "ethnic cantonization" model of minority rights, so appears exclusive in relation to the international community's preferred federated frameworks; VV's strident opposition to these frameworks is portrayed as xenophobic and anti-minority.[7] Or due to VV's demands to fly the Albanian flag, or vote to unify with neighbouring Albania, its views are usually characterized as very nationalistic (and hence exclusive).

While the quadrants pertaining to "good civil society" (bottom right) and "bad civil society" (top left) reveal few surprises, plotting on this matrix reveals that the powerful 1990s civic movement and many post-war actors actually fall into the bottom left quadrant, as reflecting exclusive values but also rejecting violence. All the organizations that fall in this quadrant could be thought of as "nationalist organizations" and hence in some "other" category between "good" and "bad".

[7] Interview with Albin Kurti, 2018.

Figure 7: Kosovo Civic Actors Matrix

	Exclusive Values *(Kosovo-Albanian rights)*	**Inclusive Values** *(universal/minority rights)*
Accept Use of Violence	**"BAD CIVIL SOCIETY"** Radicalized Islamic groups (recruitment to Syria) War veterans/victims associations, Student groups (March riots) Families of the missing (Gjakova) since formal process yields no justice KLA and other military insurgent groups (1990s)	**OTHER CIVIL SOCIETY** Episodic: Some "good" CSOs support Gjakova protests (as justice denied war's victims) Vetëvendosje (VV) supporters (protest tactics, tear gas in parliament)
Reject Use of Violence	**OTHER CIVIL SOCIETY** Vetëvendosje (flag, referendum) Official Islamic Community Families of the missing associations War victims' associations Blood feuds reconciliation campaign Committee for the Defense of Human Rights and Freedoms (CDHRF) Most externally supported CSOs (think tanks, policy, youth, community development)	***"GOOD CIVIL SOCIETY"*** Mother Teresa Association (works across Kosovo with non-Catholics) Multi-Ethnic Resource Center on Missing Persons (K-Albanian and K-Serb) Human Rights Organizations (Humanitarian Law Center, others?)

Within Case Comparison: What mattered to violence restraint in Kosovo?

Across these two time periods, the following factors appeared important to the ability of Kosovo Albanians to restrain violence from their own community in the 1990s and today. (The following analysis assumes there is some credibility to Vetëvendosje's claims to be a systemic restraining force for interethnic violence through channelling grievances to the state through its grassroots education and activism - as suggested by the research - though the study has not specifically investigated this claim.)

1. **Organization and Outreach Mattered:** In the civil resistance period of the 1990s, there were strong formal networks of outreach and communication between leaders and rural communities, and in the current era VV and the Islamic community appear to have built serious organizations and outreach to the village level.

2. **Visible / Material Support Mattered**: In the civil resistance phase, food, medical aid and education cemented the social capital created, and augmented the LDK's legitimacy. In the post war phase, good civil society groups are mostly engaged in policy and advocacy work and are not associated with visible changes by the broader population. Foreign Islamist groups provide major material support. VV does not provide material aid to its constituency, but its key focus is on both corruption and jobs and livelihoods for the population.

3. **Credibility with Ethnic Constituencies Mattered:** In the 1990s, the blood feuds campaign, appeal for unity, and the self-help networks of the parallel state created a strong sense of Kosovo Albanian solidarity. In the post war phase, the heroic war memory, nationalist symbols, and solidarity with ethnic Albanian war victims led to social capital between masses and war veterans' and victim's associations, VV activists, and associations of families of the missing.

4. **Connection to "Bad Civil Society" Mattered:** The LDK and CSOs in the pre-war era had links to factions who supported a violent uprising, but managed to keep them in the camp until the 1997 public emergence of the KLA. In the current phase, Kosovo's large CSO community had almost no links to groups likely to use violence, while the groups who had more influence on the 2004 riots, and the incidents in Gjakova, were connected to the war victims and veterans' associations who had strong grievances.

5. **Position outside the circles of External Aid Mattered:** In the 1990s, the LDK movement, though a recipient of international humanitarian goods, self-financed most of its activities and was credited for the achievements of the parallel state, not international donors. In post war Kosovo, the groups with the most public credibility, the missing persons' organizations, the left-wing protest movement that became VV, or moderate Moslem groups did not receive significant aid from external donors and states (though some Islamist groups did distribute aid from Turkey and the Gulf states.)

6. **High-Level Political Support from National Politicians Mattered**: In the 1990s, the LDK, prominent intellectuals, and Islamic and Catholic religious leaders signalled

support for the non-violent resistance movement. In the 2004 riots, there was no strong message against the violence at first, though it came from the post KLA political leadership later once international condemnation mounted. Kosovo's leaders since have not sent clear signals on the need to end continuing interethnic violence.

III. Local Civil Society and Own Side Violence in Georgia

Soviet-era Georgia: Nationalist and Independence Movements to 1992

Local civic activism in conditions of post-Stalinist Soviet rule fueled an ethnic Georgian nationalist movement involving dissidents, students and intellectuals. As the Soviet regime made concessions to Georgian demands for language and cultural protections, interethnic tensions grew with Soviet Georgia's 30% minority populations (Armenians, Azeris, Russians, Abkhaz, and Ossetians) who relied on Russian language for their educational and professional advancement and looked to Moscow to safeguard their rights, and nationalist sentiments gained strength in the autonomous regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Protests against Abkhaz calls to separate from Georgia in April 1989 morphed into mass protests for independence that Soviet troops brutally dispersed with many casualties - a watershed moment that radicalized Georgian society and closed the space for moderation (example G-1). Radical nationalist leader Zviad Gamsakhurdia fueled fears of the minorities as an internal fifth column blocking Georgia's independence, and the alliances of private militias with factions of the nationalist movement led to violent clashes around South Ossetia in 1989, the abolition of South Ossetian's autonomous status, and open war in South Ossetia from 1991 - 1992.

In November 1989, a massive march led by Gamsakhurdia tried to enter the South Ossetian capital of Tskhinvali, and Ossetian resistance resulted in casualties on both sides; Georgia's many other nationalist groups did not stop the march or restrain the violence, even though most were against provocations against the minorities (example G-2). Georgia's 1991 declaration of independence and the election of Gamsakhurdia as Georgia's first president was followed by deep polarization, a short civil war and Gamsakhurdia's ouster in early 1992 by a combined front of opposition and militia leaders. In this volatile period, Georgia's civil society showed little ability to restrain own side violence despite the existence of many

Georgian moderate groups who tried to present an alternative agenda to Gamsakhurdia's polarizing ethno-nationalism.

Post Civil War to 2008 Georgian-Russian War

After Gamsakhurdia was deposed, the victorious Military Council invited former Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze back to lead Georgia in mid-1992, and his strong international relationships brought major US and other international aid for the agendas of state consolidation, economic liberalization and democratic reforms, which included the development of local civil society organizations. By the late 1990s Georgia had a large local civil society fostered by external funding and centered on norms of democracy, human rights, conflict resolution, rule of law and political freedoms. In the face of pervasive corruption and stagnating reforms under Shevardnadze, Georgia's externally funded civil society joined forces with the political opposition led by former justice minister Mikheil Saakashvili to mount civil resistance and prevent vote fraud. In the November 2003 parliamentary elections, they refused to accept Shevardnadze's declared victory and through non-violent protests, in what became known as the Rose Revolution, forced Shevardnadze's departure. As many CSO leaders joined the new government in key posts, some called Saakashvili's government - the "NGO government". Saakashvili was elected president and his UNM party held power from 2004-2012. Georgia's biggest external backer, the US, and other key donors shifted financial and political support to the reformist government, reducing external resources and political support for Georgia's civil society and disregarding mounting internal critiques of Saakashvili's authoritarian approaches. Saakashvili's government was deeply polarizing, and left a mixed legacy of rapid modernization, state consolidation, authoritarian excesses, and failed approaches to resolve the conflicts with South Ossetia and Abkhazia that culminated in the 2008 war. The case examined four examples of civil society dynamics and episodes of violence in Georgia's history since the 1990s.

The first was the process of normalization of social and economic relationships in the Georgian-Ossetian conflict zone from 1997-2003, where a combination of factors at multiple levels, including the agency of local CSOs supporting refugee return, restrained violence and enabled peaceful refugee return, resumed trade and freer movement (example G-3). Local civic actors were embedded in dense social networks across the patchwork quilt of adjoining ethnic Ossetian and Georgian villages where return was proceeding, as well as had social ties with former combatants and militias given the social unity from the war. These links helped prevent local flares of violence in the volatile situation of returning refugees to areas where

interethnic violence had been perpetrated between neighbouring communities in the war. These local level linkages were backed up by national political level support given UNHCR and NRC's links to the official Joint Control Commission negotiation platform, and NRC's close links to an unofficial, track 1.5 dialogue process supported by the Norwegian government and the US NGO, the Conflict Management Group.

The other three examples illustrate some attempts by a small minority of civic actors to restrain violence through speaking out in various ways but ultimately, they were unable to affect events. In this period, the government was the main source of potential violence from the Georgian side, having consolidated state control over the informal Georgian armed groups that had been active in the conflict areas during the Shevardnazde period. Georgia's externally supported CSOs were split across many camps. Some top NGO leaders had joined the Saakashvili government and became key architects of its policies, but governed through a small-closed circle with no space for civil society influence. Most of Georgia's "good civil society" remained outside of government and despite professional and personal ties to their former civil society allies in the "NGO government", had little influence on government approaches.

In the summer of 2004, the Saakashvili government closed the informal Georgian-Ossetian Ergneti market where Georgians and Ossetians traded and interacted, and its humanitarian aid "charm offensive" to encourage South Ossetians to oust their leader was accompanied by a massive security presence leading to armed clashes between Georgian and Ossetian security forces (example G-4). Though a small part of Georgia's civil society (the youth movement Kmara and the Liberty Institute, whose former leaders had become government ministers), were part of this campaign, the bulk of Georgia's "good civil society" was either indifferent, or, reportedly, were caught off guard until after the violence started and there was no visible effort to protest or restrain the provocative campaign in South Ossetia and the ensuing fighting.

The Saakashvili government attempted many unilateral peace initiatives with the conflict zones after this violent episode in South Ossetia, but with little response, and then shifted to new strategies promoting alternative administrations for South Ossetia and Abkhazia, and increasing rhetoric about military solutions. A small group of CSOs led by the Georgian Human Rights Centre in March 2007 tried to counter the increasingly militaristic public mood through the "Sorry Campaign" apologizing to the Abkhaz people for the 1992-3 war (example G-5). This campaign broke taboos in acknowledging some Georgian responsibility

for the war, but met a hostile reaction from most of Georgian society and the political leadership, and from Saakashvili himself. Even most of Georgian civil society did not support the campaign.

The final example profiled concerned the Georgian civil society dynamics around the 2008 military action in South Ossetia that became the wider Georgian-Russian war (example G-6). Though a small group of vocal peace activists had raised the alarm for months before the August war about the government's approach, they had no influence on the closed circles of decision makers inside government or on public opinion, where they were vilified in the government-controlled press as "Russian stooges and allies". These Georgian civic activists with direct experience engaging with Abkhaz or South Ossetians in long-standing dialogues and confidence building efforts had long been sidelined by their former CSO colleagues in the government. A small group of these peacebuilding activists protested in Tbilisi's central square once the fighting started, but the bulk of Georgia's large, highly professional civil society either remained passive during Georgia's initial military action against the South Ossetian capital, Tskhinvali, or, reportedly, tacitly supported the government's use of force to restore Georgia's territorial integrity.

Georgia Examples

G-1: April 9, 1989 - State Violence Closes the Space for Moderation

G-2: November 1989 and the "March on Tskhinvali"

G-3: Normalization of Georgian-Ossetian Relations in 1998-2003 and Lack of Intercommunal Violence around Refugee Returns

G-4: Closure of the Ergneti Market and 2004 Violence in South Ossetia

G-5: "Sorry Campaign" – Human Rights Centre Tries to Counter Rising Militarism

G-6: Georgian Civil Society and the August 2008 War

As the above summarizes, there are 4 dynamics visible in the relationship between civic actors and the interethnic violence in each period. These are as below (and given the complexity of civil society groups more than one dynamic often applies to each event).

1. Civic actors didn't try to restrain violence
2. Civic actors tried but failed to restrain violence (spoke out, protested, took action)
3. Civic actors restrained violence
4. Civic actors actually provoked violence

Example	CSOs didn't try to restrain V	CSOs tried to restrain V but failed	CSOs restrained V	CSOs actually provoked V
G-1	X	X		X
G-2	X			X
G-3			X	
G-4	X			X
G-5	X	X		
G-6	X	X		

Spectrum of Civic Actors in Georgia

Applying the Chambers and Kopstein-derived matrix to the Georgia cases, a small set of organizations is clearly identified as "good civil society". The bulk of Georgia's civil society according to the cases sits more in the left lower quadrant, adhering to exclusive (nationalist) values but not necessarily supporting violence. Another part of civil society sits in the upper right quadrant, namely the civil society allies of Saakashvili's UNM government. The UNM government and its civil society supporters were not necessarily ethnocentric and in fact offered several unilateral peace proposals with strong protections for minority rights, but also supported the use of force to achieve the goal of reunifying Georgia. The Georgian Orthodox Church also occupies an "other" quadrant as well; it promotes Georgian nationalism, but also calls for non-violence in these conflicts pitting Georgian Orthodox believers against fellow Orthodox in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. As well, despite links with the Russian Orthodox Church and some humanitarian involvement, the church has avoided any decisive peacemaking role.

Figure 8: Georgia Civic Actors Matrix

	Exclusive Values (Georgian rights or Ossetian rights)	**Inclusive Values** (universal/minority rights)
Accept the Use of Violence	"BAD CIVIL SOCIETY" Local militias in Georgian-Ossetian conflict zone 1990s and 2000s "Radicals" willing to use force (1989-1991 national liberation movement) Nationalist militias 1989 + (Mkhedrioni, Merab Kostava society etc.)	OTHER CIVIL SOCIETY CSOs part of the 2004 campaign in South Ossetia (Liberty, Kmara) Liberty Institute, Kmara, former NGO leaders in UNM Government Many externally-supported LCSOs (supported ? use of force in 2008)
Reject the Use of Violence	OTHER CIVIL SOCIETY Georgian Orthodox Church Many factions within the 1989-91 nationalist movement (Popular Front coalition) Many externally-supported LCSOs in post-Soviet Georgia Many local CSOs in SO and Georgia	"GOOD CIVIL SOCIETY" Some moderate groups in the nationalist movement who supported universal rights (Mamardashvili, other intellectuals) Local civic groups supporting refugee return in G-SO conflict zone Peacebuilding activists and organizations (engaged in dialogue, joint projects, opposed 2008) Human Rights activists (Sorry campaign)

Within Case Comparison: What Mattered to Violence Restraint in Georgia

Both time periods in Georgia show some civic activists professed inclusive values and non-violence and a few were very vocal in speaking out, but mostly Georgian civil society did not demonstrate the ability to restrain own-side violence in these periods. In the Soviet era, there were moderate factions committed to inclusive values, non-violence and gradual negotiated change whose members spoke out publicly against the radical extremists and the polarizing policies of Gamsakhurdia but were unable to influence events and were themselves internally divided. Equally, there was a small, determined core of vocal peace activists in civil society during the Saakashvili government who spoke out frequently against militarized approaches, against the 2004 violence and against the 2008 war. However, they had no influence on the government and little influence with either the public or even most of Georgia's externally-funded civil society - many of whom supported exclusive, nationalist values, and some who supported the use of force to achieve them.

Looking at what supported the example of own-side violence restraint, the 1997-2003 normalization of relations in the Georgian-South Ossetian conflict zone, the dynamic appeared to be a largely local one, but, importantly, backed up by high level political support. The local networks of the staff of the INGOs and the local civic actors undertaking the refugee return program, their credibility and social capital with the broader community appear to have been very important in restraining provocations during the return and reconstruction program. However, this local level support relied on high level political signals and backup provided by the Georgian and South Ossetian senior leadership through the official negotiation process and the unofficial track 1.5 dialogue underway. In that example, the factors below seemed important, while in the other episodes where civic actors tried but were not able to restrain violence, many of the factors below were lacking.

Organized Outreach Mattered:

The return process had multiple levels of outreach from the national government to the villages. Information provision and transparency was crucial and UNHCR handled the government level contacts, while NRC handled the community level contacts and the informal channels to the dialogue process, while NRC's field teams provided two-way information at the village level. In the other examples, this type of multi-level outreach was lacking in different ways, and a strong pro-government bias in the media blocked the ability of CSOs to reach the broader public with their messages.

Material Support Mattered:

The material support to refugee return was a (small) incentive but the much bigger economic dividend for avoiding violence was the net benefit of increased movement and trade to all parties – Georgian and Ossetian residents of the conflict zone, as well as local officials and informal structures who also benefited from the unregulated trade and illicit networks. In the 2004 example, the material support provided as aid to South Ossetia by the Saakashvili government was not effective because the presence of Georgian security forces overshadowed any positive impact.

Credibility with Ethnic Constituencies Mattered:

In the 1990s, the moderates reportedly lacked credibility with the broader public as intellectuals who were seen as linked to the Soviet structures. However, in the refugee return process, the civic actors who played the hands-on role with the return and

reconstruction process were people embedded in their communities and with relationships and credibility with the communities affected by violence given their experiences during the war. In 2004, there was no credible link to the South Ossetian constituencies by the Georgian CSOs charm offensive in South Ossetia, the 2007 Sorry Campaign was not able to draw in any large constituency even among Georgian civil society itself, and in 2008 the Georgian peace activists had been marginalized (and demonized) by the government for years and had little influence with the broader public.

External Aid Helped but not Decisive (but External Political Attention did Matter):

Regarding the Georgia-South Ossetia normalization, international resources for reconstruction were part of the refugee return program and were an incentive for return, but personal security and jobs mattered more to potential returnees and local people. So while the external support for the effort and the presence of international aid agencies lent some legitimacy, it did not appear decisive. In the 2004 and 2008 examples, external aid did not buttress or undermine the credibility of local civic actors, though the lack of political attention from influential external states and donors meant objections by local civic actors to the government's use of force were easily ignored. In the 2007 Sorry Campaign allegations of external support publicly discredited the campaign (attacks including by Saakashvili himself dismissed it as an attempt to get foreign grants) though in reality, international donors avoided funding it given the government's hostility.

High-Level Political Support Mattered:

In the Georgia-South Ossetia normalization, this element was crucial as meetings by Shevardnadze and Chibirov, and decisions by their senior officials signalled support for normalization, such as removal of border controls and police checks, agreement on refugee return, and pressure on local officials, when needed, to ensure implementation of this new policy to reduce tensions, and encourage dialogue and cooperation. In the other examples, both during the national movement era and in the post-Soviet era, the high-level political support was for civic actors that promoted provocative moves and unilateral actions that fueled tensions, rather than restraint, dialogue and de-escalation.

Connection to "Bad Civil Society" Mattered (but the Issue was State Violence).

The case suggests that civic actors' social capital with ex-combatants and "bad civil society" enabled the LCSOs and the local staff of the international agencies supporting aid programs in the conflict zone to deal with local tensions and provocations in the 1997-2003 Georgia-South Ossetia normalization period. The other examples are more ambiguous, given the situation where the Georgian government had a monopoly on the use of force and was the actor to use violence, while those local CSOs allied with the government's agenda and who tacitly supported the use of force, had some links with Georgia's marginalized peace activist civil society. However the latter was not able to restrain the state's use of force or influence the bulk of Georgia's civil society.

IV. Cross-Case Comparison: Patterns in Ability to Restrain Own-Side Violence

Though Georgia and Kosovo had very different internal dynamics, across these time periods the three factors below appear to have played a role in the examples where civic groups did have an ability to restrain violence, and where civic groups did not restrain own side violence, they were not present.

Organization and Direct Outreach: outreach, engagement and direct contact between civic activists and the public.

Credibility with Ethnic Constituencies: local networks which connect civic actors to their own communities based on credibility, relationships and trust.

High-Level Political Support from National Leaders: signals of high-level support to the broader public, and practical actions to support the action in practice.

The following factors however, appeared in each case in more ambiguous ways.

Visible Material Support or Incentives: either direct material support to affected populations or economic incentives to restrain violence, or a focus on people's material conditions.

External Aid to local CSO Actors: Here results were mixed and in Kosovo those groups with the ability to restrain own-side violence were notably mostly outside the circles of international aid. In Georgia however, the groups able to restrain own-side

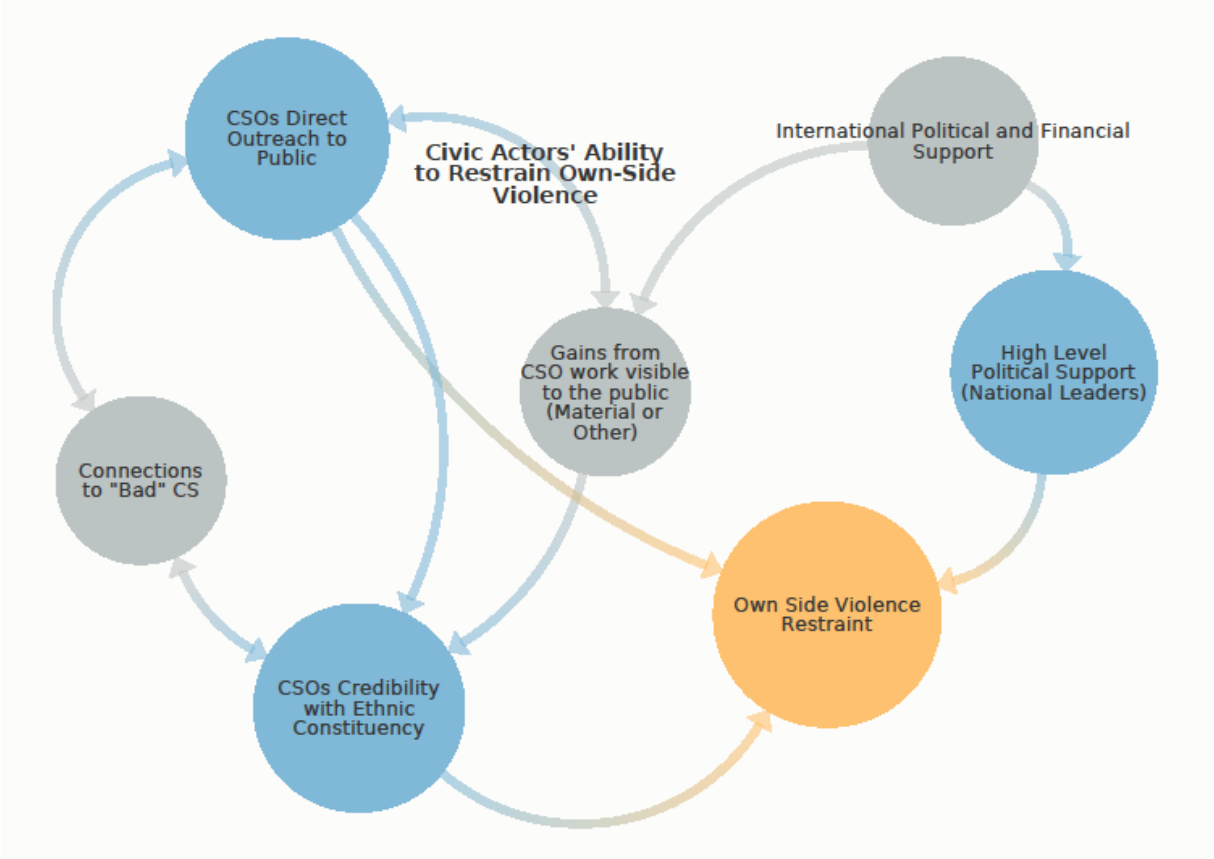
violence were recipients of some modest international aid (for refugee return, humanitarian work, some peacebuilding initiatives etc.) though the evidence suggests this was a second order factor, that is important because it affects other factors.

Connection to Bad Civil Society: Across these experiences, this element was important in most cases where CSOs had the ability to restrain own-side violence, though less important in the contemporary era in Georgia where the proponents of violence were inside the state, though supported by many CSOs. This may also be an important, but secondary factor.

The Complex Causality of Restraining Own-Side Violence

A complex systems mapping of these factors and their relationships enables the complex causality found across the cases to be illustrated. Below is a simplified map that aims to capture the interrelationships between these 6 factors observed in the cases.

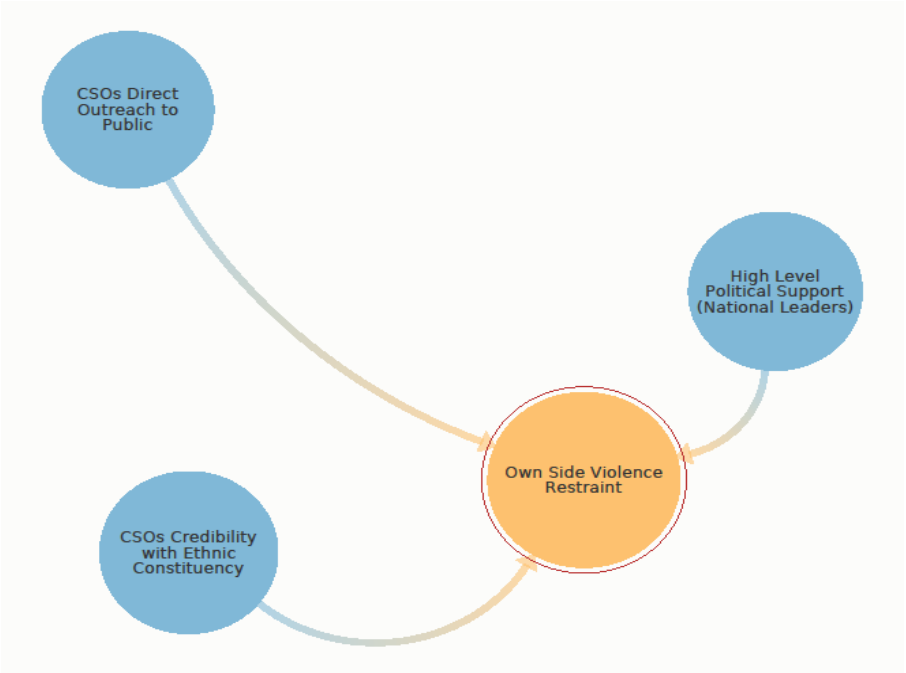
Figure 9: Systems Mapping of Factors Enabling CSOs to Restrain Own-Side Violence



In this rendition, the largest circle represents the outcome that the map is focused on explaining (CSOs ability to restrain own-side violence). The medium circles are the three elements identified in the cases as supporting CSO's ability to restrain own-side violence across time periods and contexts, and the smallest circles are the secondary factors, important elements that support the other elements. The arrows show the connections between these factors, and the direction of influence (some elements influence each other mutually, others exhibit only one-way influence). This mapping is a way of displaying the posited complex causality between all the factors identified, i.e. that the space for local civic activism to restrain violence depends on these multiple factors acting in concert and in interaction with each other.

The same map can be read to pull out the primary elements, with the most direct connections to the outcome, as in Figure 10 below – showing the three factors (credibility with ethnic constituency, direct outreach to the public, and high-level political support) that together enable CSOs to restrain own-side violence.

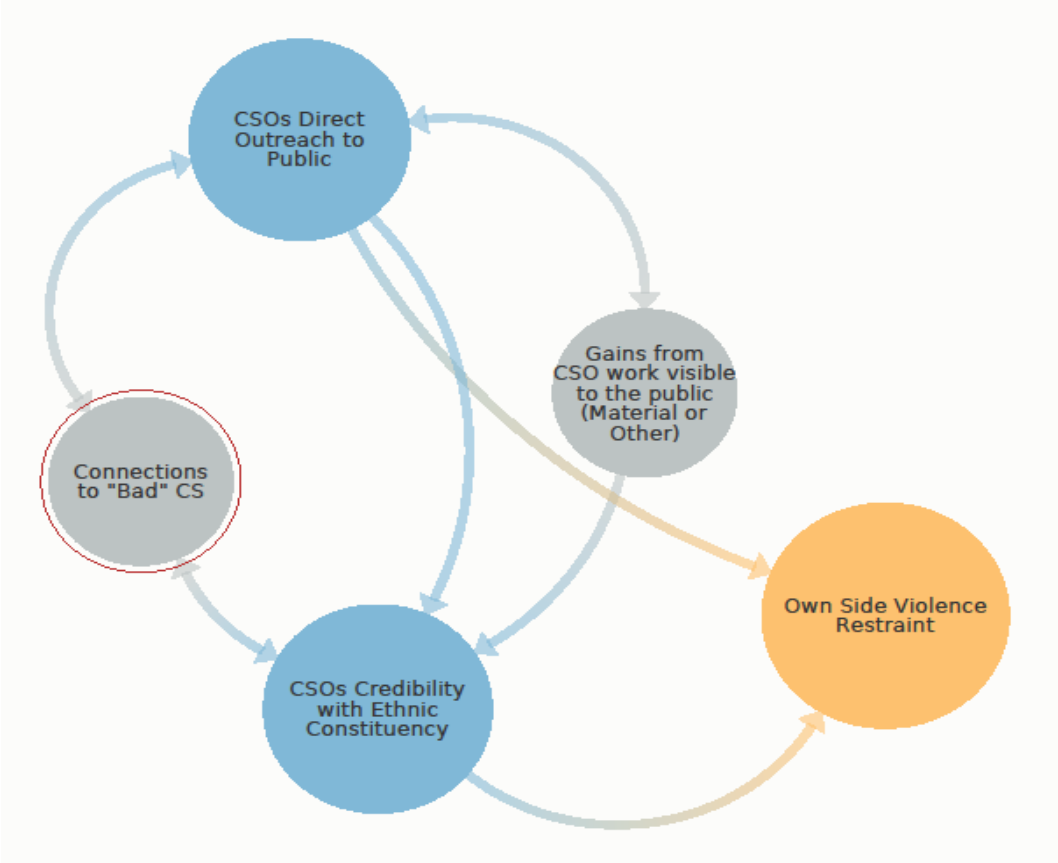
Figure 10: The three main factors that together enable CSOs to Restrain OSV



In addition, reading the map to understand what other factors might be behind CSOs' "credibility with ethnic constituency", this subsystem emerges as in Figure 11, which shows how CSOs connections to "bad civil society" and being able to demonstrate visible (material) gains to the public are both factors which support their credibility

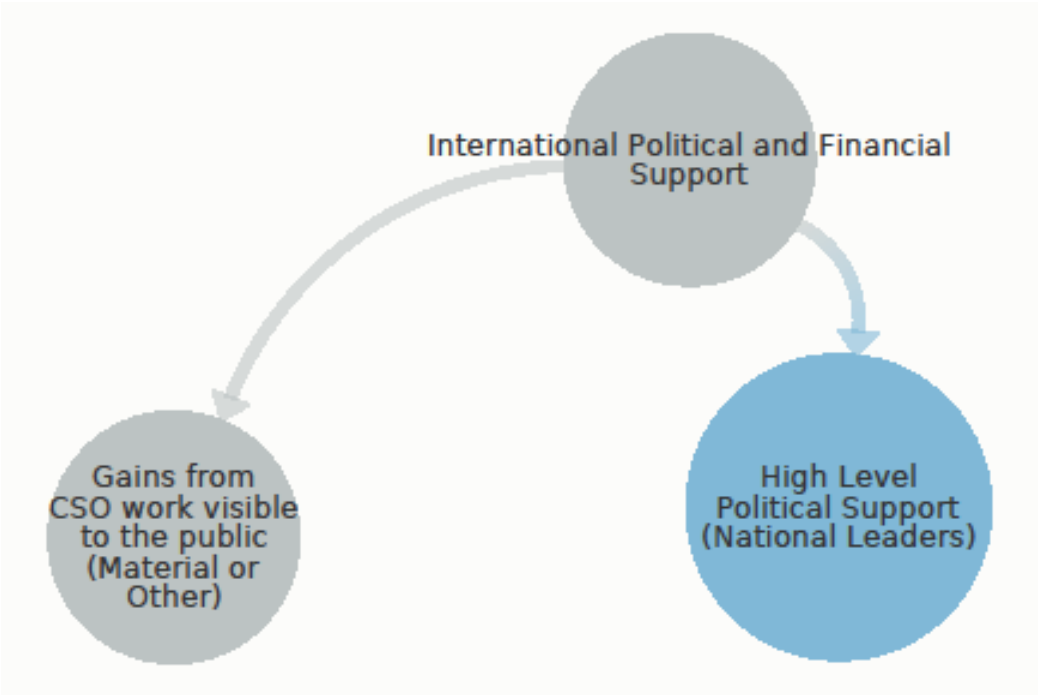
with their ethnic constituency. Thus, connections with “bad civil society” are an important source of credibility for CSOs, but not the only source either.

Figure 11: Subsystem of Credibility with Ethnic Constituency



Another part of the map pulled out separately in Figure 12 shows that international aid (and political attention) interacts with the system through enabling visible gains from CSO work (through funding), and through enabling high-level political support. These relationships point to a one (or two step) removed role for international aid in supporting the ability of CSOs to retrain own side violence.

Figure 12: Close up of the Role of International Inputs



Thus international aid shows up as a contributing factor to the primary forces enabling own-side violence restraint. This mapping of the interactions among factors suggests the conclusion that international peacebuilding assistance has a role in supporting civic actors' ability to restrain own-side violence (as one important way to contribute to peace and the variable at the center of this study) but it is much more complex than simply directly funding "good civil society" agents who will automatically be able to influence peace.

This type of mapping shows how multiple factors, operating in relation to each other, enable civic actors to have influence on own-side violence. Granted, this conclusion is based on limited examples and it can only be seen as a tentative hypothesis that must be explored through further research. However, these interlocking factors present a complex systems-oriented explanation of examples where civic groups and actors demonstrated the ability to rein in their own potentially violent actors and help explain the other examples in Kosovo and Georgia's protracted conflicts where this did not prove possible (as some of these factors were missing). The findings show that alone CSOs cannot restrain own-side violence, but this combination of enabling factors make it more likely. This tentative finding has direct relevance for civic

groups, for international funding agencies, and for researchers that will be discussed below.

Evidence for Links Between Good Civil Society and Bad Civil Society

The project started out with a working hypothesis that in societies in protracted conflicts there are organic links between the kinds of groups that Chambers and Kopstein and peacebuilding scholars have called, "good civil society" and "bad civil society".[8] The suggested mechanism involved civic actors having the ability to restrain own-side violence when they had social capital (networks, credibility and trust) with actors in the "bad civil society" camp, those inherently more likely to condone and use violence to achieve political or social goals.

In the finding that "credibility with ethnic constituency" was one of the key factors that mattered in the cases, there is some support for this hypothesis. In the case evidence, what appeared to give civic groups attempting to stop violence this "credibility" was in fact the existence of such links. In Kosovo in the 1990s, key intellectuals who were proponents of "an Albanian intifada" and critics of an exclusive strategy of non-violence were part of the civil resistance movement for some years, though broke with it later. In the 2015 protests in Gjakova, VV had strong links to the aggrieved mothers of the disappeared group that initiated the protests, and that condoned the violence out of frustration with decades of justice denied for their loved ones. In the 1997-2003 normalization phase in Georgian-South Ossetian relations, the civic activists and NGO staff supporting the refugee return program had links with former combatants, informal trade networks, and aggrieved war victims because of close links in the small society, a common search for survival and aligned political sentiments (and all these actors may be designated "bad civil society" according to the Chambers and Kopstein criteria). So, the cases provide some support to this hypothesis, while the level of data within each of these examples is still too general and illustrative rather than conclusive. However the existing evidence suggests these links were a contributing factor to that credibility, and are positioned this way in Figure 11.

The second part of the working hypothesis was that international aid disrupts these organic links between "good civil society" and "bad civil society", and therefore can undermine this influence and ability to restrain own-side violence. The next section turns that proposition.

[8] Paris 2004, 194; Chambers and Kopstein, 2001.

Does International Support lead to Certification or Decertification of Local Civic Actors?

The above findings allow us to come back to question of whether external assistance for local civil society leads to an increase (or decrease) in these civic groups' local legitimacy and ability to restrain own side violence. Tilly and Tarrow's work on contentious politics identifies the mechanism of *certification* that this study applies to relationships between international aid donors and local civic actors; certification is when an international actor's authority boosts an actor's domestic position in some way.[9] However, as the above discussion illustrates, the few examples where local civic actors were able to restrain own-side violence did not, in fact, show an important direct role for international/external assistance.

In Kosovo, the actors with the influence on own-side violence restraint, the LDK and the 1990s civic groups, had some in-kind international support, but this remained very low profile and the LDK and its Kosovar civil society partners were credited with running the parallel system. The political support from the US and other external states did boost the credibility of Ibrahim Rugova's strategy, and when international support did not materialize at Dayton, the non-violence strategy saw its credibility ebb away. In the contemporary period, international aid fostered numerous large and sophisticated CSOs in Kosovo however this civil society has only modestly positive approval ratings, and it has little active engagement from the broader public. There is widespread public disillusionment with civil society in fact. Kosovo's CSOs are seen as elitist and concentrated in the capital, not relevant to the bulk of the population, an entrepreneurial sector, a stepladder to lucrative employment with the government or political parties, and with little impact on government policy because Kosovo's government does not respond to its critiques. Public faith in Kosovo's CSOs is further undermined by the fact that the same international donors to Kosovo's civil society are the same states which were longstanding international backers of Kosovo's deeply corrupted post-war governments. In fact, the actors with the most legitimacy in Kosovo society in both phases were those that were not directly connected with significant external aid.

In Georgia, international aid fostered the creation of a very large and sophisticated CSO community since 1995. However, given that the public saw few tangible results of the work

[9] Tilly and Tarrow 2007. Chapter 4.

of many foreign-funded CSOs, as the case reviews, the derogatory term "grant eaters" was used widely for CSOs by the public in the 1990s and still in the contemporary era, and by politicians in both eras when it was useful in deflecting critiques of governmental performance from the NGO sector. In the 2003 Rose Revolution, initially the support from international democracy promotion NGOs and funders to the new CSOs did have some certification effect on these groups, and then this international certification was transferred wholesale to Saakashvili's "NGO Government" along with substantial funding, as international funding to Georgia's CSOs dried up. However, the continued support of Western states despite the Saakashvili government's stained democratic record after 2007 in fact helped the "NGO government" discredit and weaken Georgia's civil society sector, when Georgian NGOs critiqued their own government.

So, there is little evidence that international support for local civil society in fact helped support LCSOs' influence on peace, as measured by that civil society's ability to restrain own-side violence, except in indirect ways suggested by the systems maps. The large and sophisticated civil society that was fostered in Kosovo and Georgia did not demonstrate a greater ability to restrain own side violence, than those civic activists in the previous eras when there was little international support. In fact, the evidence reviewed here suggests mostly the opposite, that civic groups were less able to restrain own-side violence in these conditions.

The evidence in the cases also did not show that decertification was happening in any of these examples either. In fact, the evidence suggests that the net impact of international support for a civic groups' domestic legitimacy and credibility appears to be negligible, and dwarfed by the domestic sources of legitimacy of these civic groups. (It may be that international support means that local civic groups do not develop strong domestic sources of legitimacy because they are pulled into the concerns, agendas, and even mindset of international partners and pulled away from downward accountability to their domestic constituencies[10] but the cases do not suggest this is inevitable).

[10] Cooley and Ron, 2002; Pouligny, 2005.

V. The Binary, Normative Lenses of "Good Civil Society" and "Bad Civil Society"

The cases showed that applying these binary concepts to the real spectrum of civic actors is difficult. Groups appear in several categories at once, and in different periods of time. Civic groups also contain many individuals and distinct camps, who sometimes fit in different quadrants. That said however, using these categories to cluster types of civic actors has had a value in highlighting unexpected elements of some civic groups, and in looking into the relationships across these value-driven types.

Figure 13: Good and Bad Civil Society Matrix

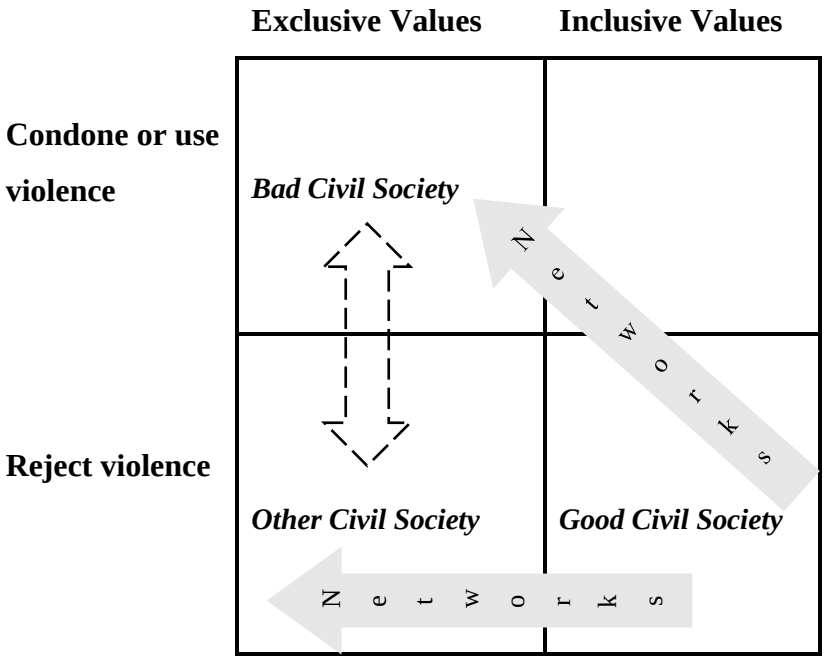
	Exclusive Values	**Inclusive Values**
Condone or use violence	***Bad Civil Society***	***Other Civil Society*** *(Revolutionary groups)*
Reject violence	***Other Civil Society*** *(Nationalists, Religious groups, etc.)*	***Good Civil Society***

A valuable insight is the identification of what fits in to the "other civil society" quadrant. Much of the peacebuilding literature critical of the uniformly positive notions of civil society refers to the need to consider the "other" civil society such as nationalist organizations, religious organizations, etc. groups with exclusivist values and indeed this gets captured in the lower left quadrant. The "other civil society" in the upper right quadrant refers to groups with inclusive values (universal human rights, minority rights), but who may condone the use of violence to achieve those, some examples might be socialist or democratic revolutionary movements. This distinction along such values helps sort these very different kinds of actors

and further break down the still overly homogenized notion of civil society into helpful, more nuanced sub-categories of civic actors.

Identifying Networks that Matter to Peace: As well, the matrix based on these binary concepts serves the useful purpose of showing groups which already have links across quadrants of the matrix, given this study's findings suggest that this linkage is important to have influence on own side violence. The options the matrix illustrates are direct linkage between "good civil society" and "bad civil society" groups, if that is possible (or defensible, depending on the nature of the "bad civil society" actors). However, another option for "good civil society" civic actors is to connect with groups in "other civil society" category in the bottom left quadrant (those with nationalistic or other exclusivist values but who reject violence), and through those groups establish connections to those actors deemed "bad civil society". These suggested means of creating both direct (if possible and defensible) and indirect linkages and networks between "good civil society' and "bad civil society" are shown in Figure 14 below.

Figure 14: Pathways to Good-Bad Civil Society Networks



Working with Civic Groups with Exclusive Values: (Lower left quadrant)

The matrix suggests the importance of engaging with the civic actors in the lower left quadrant. The case experience suggests the need to rethink the idea of not working with

nationalist groups (because they reflect particularistic values). In cases of protracted conflicts, if the bulk of society reflects a strong nationalist sentiment given the dynamics and legacy of the war, internationals may have to expand their frameworks for engaging with civil society and work with civic groups that reflect those nationalist sentiments, rather than assume one can successfully ignore these and transplant more cosmopolitan values.

Bridging and Bonding Distinction - Rethinking the Definition of "the Group"

Studies of conflict have ended up essentializing groups on either side of the central divide, and imposing on them an imagined coherence and uniformity, in many cases. This matters to our study because the theory of civil society's relationship to peace emphasizes the importance of bridging social capital across identity groups. The study finds that, in fact, the civic groups that focused on these bridging activities, did not always have strong networks, legitimacy or influence with their own ethnic constituency. This assumed legitimacy of "good civil society" actors on each side of the conflict ends up the Achilles heel of these initiatives when local activists cannot bring their compatriots onside to the necessity of dialogue and accommodation with 'the other side". The real diversity of viewpoints and values within one side of the conflict meant that "bridging" is often necessary across these internal divides within the society, as much as with the other side of the conflict.

For example, the blood feuds reconciliation campaign forged new bridges across very diverse communities inside a very divided, and very unequal Kosovo Albanian society where historically there were huge differences between the urban, educated elites and the bulk of the population who lived in desperate poverty in rural hinterlands. The social mobilization that occurred in that period, through the blood feuds campaign, human rights network and parallel state ended up spanning these vast intracommunal divides and all evidence suggests, enabled impressive societal restraints on violence in a traditionally very martial culture. In Soviet Georgia, the remarkable pluralism that erupted as Soviet controls loosened occurred in a society with similar urban-rural divides united only by the cultural nationalism that had been allowed under the communist regime to legitimate Soviet rule. However, this unifying force was championed differently by Georgia's fractious nationalist leaders who were unable to unite across Georgia's deep divisions, and Gamsakhurdia's leadership around an ethnonationalist agenda provoked division and polarization into different armed camps instead of bridging across internal divides.

This study's findings support the need to reconceptualize the parameters of peacebuilding beyond the bridging social capital model, and see that local civic actors working on the social unity within their own society and reaching across internal divides to build up an internal constituency is a core part of peacebuilding efforts in protracted conflicts. For local civic actors trying to influence their societies to move towards negotiated solutions to protracted conflict and avoid further violence, credibility with their own ethnic community (bonding social capital) is an indispensable asset and needs to be a core component of their work. This will not be news to many local peace activists, but it likely will represent a change for how international aid donors think about partnerships with local organizations and what supporting "peace work" means.

VI. How this Study Contributes to International Relations Theory?

Peacebuilding and the liberal peace agenda are deeply rooted in liberalism, international cooperation and the democratic peace hypothesis, hence civil society peacebuilding ultimately speaks to a central problem in IR of understanding the causes of war and peace.[11] This project sits in the interface between IR and comparative politics. Important studies of subnational dynamics in civil wars come from comparative politics[12] but do not focus on how international peacebuilding interventions in these same contexts interact with highly local dynamics. Within IR, this study contributes to understanding how key international factors (international aid and transnational civil society) concretely impact the local legitimacy and agency of domestic civic activists and civil society in conflict settings. Keck and Sikink's "boomerang effect" theory illuminated how transnational advocacy networks and NGOs can leverage positive change in international humanitarian and human rights norms and instruments, that if implemented in affected countries bring benefit to vulnerable groups.[13] This study suggests a more cautionary tale about international norms regarding civil society and shows how complex relationships between many interacting factors determine whether their effect is positive on the recipients, and further on recipients' ability to influence conflict dynamics.

Powerful norms about the inherently pro-peace, pro-democracy forms of civil society hold sway in the international system. When translated into international aid practice these norms

[11] Paris 2004. Chap 2: 40-54.
[12] Kalyvas 2006; Wood 2003; Varshney 2002.
[13] Keck and Sikkink 1998.

may perversely contribute to undermining locally responsive and effective civic activism in conflict-affected countries and to shifting the energies of local civic actors away from that critical task. At the same time, in the broader society they may be fueling nativist and illiberal reactions to these internationally fostered forms of local civil society that can shift the macro political dynamics in fragile, transitioning states.[14]

International actors supporting the growth of local civil society in civil war contexts have represented a very direct transnational process in recent decades, with very little critical scrutiny of its assumptions, impacts or messy complexities. Quantitative work in IR on the civil society domain in peace agreements has called for better data on interactions between civic groups in investigations of inclusion[15], and one study found that foreign support may have delegitimated civic non-violence movements domestically.[16] This study adds in-depth empirical accounts of such dynamics by examining the relationships of local aid recipients with other civic actors in the same setting.

For peacebuilding scholarship in IR, this study has some major implications as it set out to deeply interrogate certain accepted or at least unchallenged notions. Its results have direct relevance for both the pragmatic school and the critical school of peacebuilding studies. In a sense, the study spans both the pragmatic and the critical streams of peacebuilding scholarship and hopes to contribute to both, and perhaps generate more of a conversation between them.

Most directly, for the pragmatic stream of peacebuilding studies which aims to improve intervention modalities based on evidence, it shows that the prescriptions for international peacebuilding interventions around civil society need a serious rethink. The notion that international interventions should seek to foster local civil society by supporting "good civil society" and marginalizing "bad civil society" in early peacebuilding scholarship appears not to yield the intended results. In the micro-level case studies of Kosovo and Georgia, the civic actors funded by external donors in the post war peacebuilding phase did not inherently contribute to peace more than locally generated forms of civic activism prior to major international support. In some cases, such CSOs made less effort and were less effective, and

[14] For a feminist analysis of links bewteen international agendas and right wing populism in Poland, see: Korolczuk and Graff, 2018.
[15] Nilsson, 2012.
[16] Chenoweth and Stephan 2011.

in some cases, some actually supported and instigated violence. The findings here challenge the simplicity and the assumed linearity of the support "good civil society" equation.

However, interrogating this values distinction between "good" and "bad civil society" in a 2 x 2 matrix helped put some more precision around the need to recognize "other civil society" mentioned by other peacebuilding scholars, based on the values they embody, namely exclusive values but rejection of violence. This contributes by showing a middle ground between "good" and "bad" civil society, and a potential pathway to engage more radical actors indirectly. The "bad civil society" or "uncivil society" concepts have been helpful correctives to rosy notions of civil society as purely a force for good. However, they also hinder better understanding because they make value judgements about the strength of nationalist sentiments in protracted conflicts where both basic security and justice for deep grievances remains denied. Others have acknowledged the need to reach more nationalist constituencies, but this study has built on the underlying values distinction in early peacebuilding scholarship to suggest a reframing of whether to engage nationalists and hardliners, rather than only trying to marginalize or undermine them, and offers some ideas as to how that might be done.

For the pragmatic peacebuilding scholars, the study also shows the severe limits of linear models for understanding (and designing) peacebuilding interventions, where the intentions of international agencies can be assumed to translate directly into intended outcomes. The study has used a light complexity framing to illustrate how the interactions of international aid to local civil society with other key domestic factors helps explain certain outcomes (in this study the outcome selected being "civic actors' ability to restrain own-side violence"). In complexity models, there is no smoking gun to uncover, but rather sets of variables acting in concert to generate unpredictable, emergent outcomes. For scholars focused on improving practical peacebuilding modalities, this calls for ways of thinking about sets of interventions (versus focusing on any one factor) and also suggests the need for a radically different iterative, adaptive management approach in peacebuilding[17] that scholarship can contribute to.

For the critical school, this study contributes to work on resistance and hybrid outcomes of international interventions for peace that has already recognized outcomes are driven by complex interactions between international peacebuilders and the resistance of local

[17] De Coning coins the term adaptive peacebuilding for this kind of approach in De Coning, 2018.

societies to international norms and models.[18] The cases add to the body of empirical studies of such hybrid outcomes, and contribute additional nuance by unconventionally focusing on the local-scale dynamics within one side of a conflict only. This allows the cases to expand on the messy diversity of local civic and political networks that has been dubbed the "local-local."[19] It does so in a way that emphasizes the networks and relationships between grassroots civic actors, political actors and externally fostered civil society and explores the concept of bonding social capital between them. The study supports a rethink of the importance of bonding social capital as a potential force for peace, in this case as an enabler of own-side violence restraint.

Finally, this study challenges certain ideas in IR and civil war theory. One is that economic incentives alone are the key to understanding the onset and dynamics of civil wars, or that any macro-level factor alone is decisive. The suggestive hypothesis generated by this study is that indeed material support appears to matter to the ability to restrain violence, but it does so in conjunction with other equally important factors that need to be in place in a complex systems understanding of causality. This study's finding that credibility with one's own constituency is an equally important nonmaterial factor supports other work that has probed social networks, common social bases and emotions such as trust as key factors that affect participants in conflict.

Another dominant idea in IR theory this study challenges is the implicit bias that the motives and actions of elites and insurgents are more important than the broader population in determining war and peace outcomes. Societies and populations in war are often portrayed as passive actors, victims, and hostages to these more important forces – predatory elites, rebels, and powerful external states. Perhaps this elite bias is because studies in IR rarely delve into the messy details within states, and elites populate the national leadership roles and international institutions that are the traditional concern of IR. Given the focus on the men with the guns, many studies explore the worldviews, motivations and social processes within insurgencies and relationships between violent non-state actors. Far fewer studies have examined questions of their internal legitimacy with broader social bases.

[18] Mac Ginty, 2010; Richmond and Mitchell 2012; Visoka, 2012.
[19] Richmond 2011, 14.

Implications for International Aid and Peacebuilding Policy

The sobering evidence presented in this study about peacebuilding models based on dichotomous worldviews of "good civil society" and "bad civil society" should provoke new thinking and debate amongst aid donors. A shift in aid policy is needed to create incentives for local NGOs to shift attention from accountability to donors to accountability to a much broader spectrum of the local society.

This study yields some lessons around the thorny issue of engaging "bad civil society" or hardliners and potential spoilers with the purpose of supporting societal processes that aid peace. While international aid donors and operational agencies may not want to directly engage "bad civil society" this study suggests avoiding framings and policies that constrain local NGOs and civic actors from engaging with nationalist and even potentially violent groups in their own societies. Donors could consider reframing the ability to reach these "bad civil society" groups as an important asset that civic actors seeking their support bring to the table. Policies that enable some form of communication and contact between these broad categories of "good civil society" and "bad civil society" are an indispensable asset for local civic activists aiming to influence peace and aid donors should look for creative, non-linear ways to support such links.

This study also highlights the need for donor agencies and transnational civil society partners to think and act in complexity informed ways, and avoid simplistic linear thinking (of the type encouraged by logframes and other widespread project management approaches). Recognizing that conflict affected societies (all societies) are complex interdependent ecosystems is the first step. Funding only a certain type of actor, for example "good civil society", will inevitably interact with other elements. Planning in a systems way requires thinking of the bigger picture, and balancing this with other interventions to ensure that civil society partners are not isolated in the system as privileged agents of certain external donors, which may harm their relationships with other important local actors. Seeing peacebuilding as a complex system means thinking of multiple actions that can be taken simultaneously to nudge the system to a change, rather than a checklist approach or linear recipes expected to produce stand-alone results. In the same vein, donors should consider funding groups in ways which encourage networks and linkages across the different types of civil society, again thinking of affecting a system as a whole. The question, 'how does this affect the system as a whole" and some slimmed down analytical tools that capture a systems lens should be built

into frameworks used by funders, and in coordination efforts between key international agencies engaging in a common space.

Furthermore, this study suggests key changes are needed to approaches to supporting local civil society in conflict settings, especially if today's rhetorical commitment to local civil society is to be matched by resources. These findings suggest that bonding social capital is an important currency for local civic actors trying to effect change in their own complex societies, that it translates into a constituency, legitimacy and influence with the broader public, and even with radical groups who may possibly spur violence. This element has been severely undervalued in strategies to support war affected populations in favour of supporting CSOs to undertake direct cross conflict engagement and build contact and relationships (bridging social capital) across conflict divides. Without a strong local constituency, such "good civil society groups" engaged in cross-conflict trust building will not be able to ultimately bring war traumatized local populations along to any negotiated peace. Maintaining social capital across broad segments of the society, even and perhaps especially with those that appear illiberal, is an important lever to restrain further cycles of violence and support momentum towards negotiated, peaceful solutions.

Finally, the findings reveal the need to rethink assumptions about international aid to local civil actors, that such support is always a net positive for local groups. The prevailing assumption amongst the donor agencies of "the West" is that funding to local civic activists is always perceived as a net gain, that confers added credibility to the local CSOs, though the introduction of "foreign agents" legislation radically changes this picture in some places. This study showed that this assumed "certification" of local actors by international partnerships should not simply be assumed, and in many cases the picture is far more mixed. Donor agencies should cultivate a critical awareness among staff about the reputation of their own countries in that setting, and what risks this may bring to local partners. Local partners of course, have even more of an onus to analyze and weigh the risks in embarking on certain partnerships. This may mean forgoing resources in the short term while searching for other modalities and supporters that enhance one's local legitimacy and influence domestically as much as one's legitimacy with international partners. In resource scare environments this will always be a tough call.

Postscript:

In the many interviews conducted for this study, I was struck by how several senior civic activists interviewed in Kosovo and Georgia appeared perplexed by the huge gulf between their expectations of what they could do in civil society for their societies' peace and prosperity and the reality of the weakness of their civil society in preventing the bouts of renewed violence - that have occurred in both places. Some had left other professional endeavors to make a difference through civil society, and some had spent their entire careers in civil society, forgoing other paths, and had become cynical and demoralized to find their societies still stuck in a highly flawed democracy and with still no peaceful resolution to the conflicts that erupted decades ago.

One of them in fact deeply resented the whole notion of "peace work" and blamed "this construct" for many wasted years and efforts as it had encouraged a preoccupation with peace as stability over all else in Kosovo. Some activists had simply left civil society to do something else - joining political parties and their governments as a more effective way to get things done and a more stable way to feed their families. Some hang in there, still holding out hope that positive change was possible though seeing the many flaws of the civil society world they inhabited too. Such disappointments are not unique to activists in transitional societies and protracted conflicts, of course. However the simplistic concept of a "good civil society" as a vehicle to change complex, highly political societies remains a rhetorically compelling notion that those on the international side of international peacebuilding have implicitly promoted. I hope this study helps generate a rethink of these and other simplistic notions about civil society and peace that may be getting in the way of truly supporting people who are trying to move their societies out of destructive cycles of conflict.

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APPENDIX 1: Interviews Conducted

*When citing an interview in the text, on the first mention I have provided the full background statement on each interview subject, as below. After the first mention, I have used a short form noting simply the interview subject and the year. Given the number of interviews referenced and repeated references, this was necessary for reasons of space.

Interviews with Representatives of International Donor Agencies & International NGOs

*Many of the interviewees below spoke with me in their personal capacity and not as official representatives of their organizations. Their organizations are listed here to provide context and situate their professional expertise on these issues.

1. Interview (group) with Gretchen Birkle, Deputy Assistant Administrator for Europe and Eurasia, USAID and Nathaniel Hojnacki, Program Analyst, and Ana Luisa Pinto, Country Development Officer, Washington, D.C., 6 November 2018.

2. Interview with Andy Carl, independent consultant, co-founder and former Executive Director of international peacebuilding NGO, Conciliation Resources, London, U.K., 6 March 2017.

3. Skype interview with Ivana Cvetkovic Bajrovic, Associate Director, Europe, National Endowment for Democracy (NED), 18 January 2019.

4. Interview with Dr. Martina Fischer, Berlin, Germany, 4 July 2017. Dr. Fischer is the former Deputy Director and Senior Researcher at the Berghof Foundation, and Policy Advisor, Peace and Conflict Transformation, Bread for the World – Protestant Development Service.

5. Skype interview with Gerard Howe, Head of Department, Inclusive Societies Department, Policy Division, DFID, Skype interview, March 13, 2017.

6. Skype interview with David Jacobstein, Democracy Specialist, Democratic Rights and Governance sector (DRG), Civil Society and Media, USAID, 28 November 2018.

7. Phone interview with Alex Johnson, former Senior Policy Advisor for Europe and Eurasia at the Open Society Foundations, U.S., 23 January 2018.

8. Skype interview with Erin McCarthy, Civil Society Advisor, and Stephanie Flamenbaum, Democracy Specialist, Bureau for Europe and Eurasia, USAID, 16 November 2018.

9. Skype interview with Mark Segal, senior conflict advisor, Social Development Direct, and former head of Profession and Senior Conflict Advisor, DFID, 21 March 2017.

10. Interview with Saskia Stegeman, Civil Society Team, World Bank, Washington, D.C., Friday July 15, 2016.

11. Interview with Phil Vernon, independent consultant, and former Director of Programmes at International Alert, London, U.K., 6 March 2017.

12. Interview with Asbjorn Wee, Team Leader for the Recovery, Peacebuilding and Post-conflict Transition Program Fragility, Conflict and Violence group, World Bank, Washington, D.C., 26 October 2018.

Kosovo Case Interviews

All interviews that took place inside Kosovo are identified only by the city. Remote interviews were conducted on Skype. All other in-person interviews are identified by city and country.

1. Interview with Boiken Abazi, Secretary of External Relations, Member of the Presidency, Vetëvendosje, Pristina, 26 April 2018.

2. Skype interview with Fred Abrahams, Associate Director for Program, Human Rights Watch, 17 April 2018.

3. Interview with Ardian Arifi, Political Advisor to President Thaci, Pristina, 24 April 2018.

4. Interview with Muhamet Arifi, Executive Director of the Pristina-based NGO Balkan Sunflowers (BSFK), Pristina, 14 May 2017. Muhamet is a founder of BSFK, a leading NGO working on the social inclusion of the Kosovo's Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian (RAE) communities. Muhamet belongs to the Ashkali minority community and is a long-time activist for the inclusion of RAE communities in Kosovo.

5. Interview with Blerta Avdili, Vetëvendosje's Women Activists Secretariat, Pristina, 26 April 2018.

6. Interview with Agon Batusha, Vetëvendosje Municipal Council Member, Gjakova, 27 April, 2018. Batusha is Municipal Council Member for Vetëvendosje in Gjakova since 2013, and prior to that had worked with NGOs for many years.

7. Interview with Bekim Blakaj, Pristina, 19 May 2017. Blakaj is a Kosovar human rights activist and the director of the Humanitarian Law Center for the last twenty years.

8. Interview with Saranda Cana, Senior National Program Officer, Swiss Cooperation Office, Pristina, 17 May 2017.

9. Skype interview with Andrea Capussela, 30 November 2017. Capussela is an academic expert on competition policy, rule of law and corruption, and from 2008-11 served as the head of the economics unit of the International Civilian Office in Kosovo.

10. Interview with Burim Ejupi, Pristina, 11 May 2017. Ejupi is Executive Director at the Institute for Development Policy (INDEP), a think tank in Kosovo focused on research-based public policy solutions.

11. Interview with Visare Gorani Gashi, Programme Officer, Swedish Embassy, Pristina, 12 May 2017.

12. Interview with Don Lush Gjergji, Pristina, 15 May 2017. Gjergji is the current Vicar General, Catholic Diocese of Pristina, and was the original director of the Mother Theresa Association from its inception in 1990.

13. Skype interview with Roland Gjoni, 6 November 2017. Gjoni is a researcher on ethno-national conflicts at University College Dublin with over 15 years experience in legal and policy advisory roles with international organizations in Kosovo.

14. Interview with Jehona Gjurgjeala, Pristina, 17 May 2017. Gjurgjeala is the founder and director of the Kosovar NGO " TOKA" that focuses on youth empowerment through experiential learning and service.

15. Interview with Miloš Golubović, Project Manager, Community Building Mitrovica (CBM), Northern Mitrovica, 18 May 2017. Golubović is a Kosovo Serb from Northern Mitrovica with CBM for many years; CBM facilitates contact and dialogue between citizens in the whole of Mitrovica municipality.

16. Interview with Taulant Hoxha, Program Director, Kosovo Civil Society Foundation, Pristina, 17 May 2017. Hoxha was formerly the Executive Direction at the community based civil society organization in Prizren, Kosovo - EC Ma Ndryshe.

17. Interview with Besa Ismaili, Pristina, 19 May 2017. Ismaili is a professor of English in the faculty of Islamic Studies at the University of Pristina and an advocate for Islamic women in Kosovo.

18. Interview with Garantina (Tina) Kraja, Pristina, 24 April 2018. Kraja is a long-time journalist and civic activist who served as policy advisor to Kosovo's former President Atifete Jahjaga.

19. Interview with Edona Krasniqi, Senior Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, Kosovar Civil Society Foundation (KCSF), Pristina, 17 May 2017.

20. Interview with Faton Krasniqi, Kosovar aid professional with many years experience with multiple international humanitarian and development NGOs, Pristina, 10 May 2017.

21. Interview with Shqipe Krasniqi, Senior Officer for Donor Coordination and Relations with CSOs, Office of the Secretary General, Republic of Kosovo Assembly, Pristina, 17 May 2017.

22. Interview with Nesrete Kumanova, head of the NGO "Thirrjet-e-Nenave" (Mothers' Call), Gjakova, 27 April 2018. Kumanova founded the organization with other mothers from Gjakova; her son and 5 other men were seized from her house during the war in March 1999.

23. Interview with Albin Kurti, Pristina, April 26, 2018. Kurti is the president of the movement and party Vetëvendosje (Self-Determination), and prior to that a long-time civic activist (head of the Kosovo Action Network) and student leader in the 1990s. He was Prime Minister of Kosovo from February 3 to June 3, 2020.

24. Interview with Kaltrina Kusari, Calgary, Canada, 30 October 2017. Kusari is a former youth activist from Gjakova studying for her doctorate in social work in Canada.

25. Interview with Charles Denisson Lane, in Washington, D.C., 24 October 2018. Lane is a retired colonel of the US Army Special Forces who worked across the Balkans for two decades and was the former United Nations' Municipal Administrator for Vucitrn/Vushtrrri and Peje/Pec municipalities of Kosovo from 1999 to 2003.

26. Interview with Kris Pierre Litière, Office for Community Support, United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), Pristina, 19 May 2017.

27. Interview with Nenad Maksimović, Gračanica, 19 May 2017. Maksimović re-established the Kosovo Serb NGO, Center for Peace and Tolerance (CPT) based in Gračanica in 2009 and serves as the director. He has worked with many international agencies in Kosovo since the war.

28. Interview with Shkëlzen Maliqi, Pristina, 27 April 2018. Maliqi is a long-time Kosovar politician, intellectual, political activist, and publisher. He was one of the founders of the Social Democratic Party of Kosovo in the early 1990s and its first president and held leading positions in civil society organizations.

29. Interview with Miodrag Milićević, Executive Director at NGO AKTIV, Northern Mitrovica, 18 May 2017. Milićević works with AKTIV since 2015, and previously worked 13 years with the OSCE Mitrovica office as a National Professional Officer and in various other roles.

30. Interview with Allem Monogllu, Mitrovica, 18 May 2017. Monogllu is a resident of southern Mitrovica and volunteer coordinator for the international NGO "Play International".

31. Skype Interview with Fron Nazhi, 24 April 2018. Nazhi is an Albanian American international development expert who was born in Kosovo, was involved with the LDK movement in the late 1980s in the US and ran aid programs across the Balkans from 1991-2008 including opening up the Soros Foundation offices in Albania and Kosovo.

32. Interview with Ruari O'Connell, UK Ambassador to Kosovo, Pristina, 26 April 2018.

33. Interview with Valentina Pancaldi, Project Manager and Pedagogical Coordinator for the international NGO - Play International, Pristina, 16 May 2017.

34. Interview with Lulzim Peci, Pristina, 10 May 2017. Peci is the director of the Kosovar NGO "KIPRED" (Kosovar Institute for Policy, Research and Development), a former Kosovo diplomat and founder of multiple Kosovar think tanks, including KIPRED, in the early 2000s.

35. Skype interview with James Pettifer, 1 December 2017. Pettifer is a British academic, author and journalist, who teaches Balkan history at St. Cross College, Oxford and has published extensively on Kosovo.

36. Interviews (2) with Helena Poučki, in Pristina, 8 May 2017 and 12 May 2017 in Gračanica. Poučki is the co-founder and program director of Gaia Kosovo, a branch of

the Service Civil International (SCI), an international organization dedicated to promoting a culture of peace through voluntary projects.

37. Interview with Bajram Qerkinaj, Pristina, 28 April 2018. Qerkinaj is the representative of the Kosovo Albanian families of missing persons and the co-founder of the Multi-Ethnic Missing Persons Resource Center in Kosovo.

38. Interview with Feride Rushiti, 23 April 2018, Pristina. Rushiti is a medical doctor and founder and director of the Kosovo Rehabilitation Center for Torture Victims in Pristina. She has served on multiple government commissions.

39. Interview with Andrew Russell, UN Development Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Pristina, May 20, 2017.

40. Interview with Mirlinda Sada, Executive Director of Medica Gjakova, Gjakova, 27 April 2018. Medica Gjakova is an NGO that aims to improve the physical and mental health of women survivors of sexual and gender-based violence during the war in Kosovo.

41. Interview with Zef Shala, Executive Director of the Mother Theresa Society, Pristina, 16 May 2017.

42. Interview with Shehj Lulzim Shehu, Secretary General of the Sufi Union of Kosovo Tarikats, Pristina, 17 May 2017.

43. Interview with Oliver Schuett, Chief of Section, Public Participation Section, Democratization Department, OSCE Mission in Kosovo, Pristina, 16 May 2017.

44. Interview with Liridon Shurdhani (2), a Kosovar legal specialist who has worked with many international agencies and a long-time civil society activist, Pristina, 9 May 2017 and 26 April, 2018.

45. Interview with Srdan Simonović, Program Director at the NGO - Advocacy Center for Democratic Culture (ACDC), Northern Mitrovica, 18 May 2017.

46. Interview with Christopher Tuetsch, Director of the Democratization Department in the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, Pristina, 16 May 2017.

47. Interview with Caleb Waugh, Center for Peace and Tolerance (CPT), Northern Mitrovica, 18 May 2017.

48. Interview with Arber Zaimi, Pristina, 26 April 2018. Zaimi is a long-time civic activist from Albania and has been the Political Adviser for the Vetëvendosje (Self-Determination) movement since 2011.

49. Interview with Shenaj Zeneli, Pristina, 12 May 2017. Zeneli is a long-time civic activist from Mitrovica and has worked on interreligious peacebuilding initiatives funded by international agencies in Kosovo.

50. Interviews (2) with Avni Zogiani, Pristina, on 20 May 2017 and 26 April 2018. Zogiani is a well known Kosovar journalist, was the director of anti-corruption civic organization "Çohu" (Arise) as well as the Center for Investigative Journalism, and from 2014 has been a member of the civic movement/political party Vetëvendosje as a candidate and parliamentary advisor to the VV faction.

Georgia Case Interviews

***** *All interviews that took place inside Georgia are identified only by the city. Remote interviews were conducted on Skype or by phone. All other in-person interviews are identified by city and country.*

1. Interview with Malkhaz Abkhazeti, NGO leader, Gori, 21 May 2016.

2. Interview with Emil Adelkhanov, Tbilisi, 19 May 2016. Adelkhanov was a Georgian human rights activist and member of the Soviet dissident movement since the early 1970s, worked at the Caucasian Institute for Peace, Democracy and Development, and represented Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch in Georgia. [*Adelkhanov passed away in June 2016 in Tbilisi]*

3. Phone interview with Dina Alborova, 14 May 2016. Alborova is a Professor of Political Science at South Ossetian State University, a long-time activist and analyst, NGO leader and participant in unofficial Georgian-Ossetian direct dialogue initiatives.

4. Interview with Zaal Anjaparidze, Senior Manager, Eurasia Partnership Foundation, Tbilisi, 12 March 2016.

5. Interview with Akaki Asatiani, Tbilisi, 7 May 2018. Asatiani is a current member of the Georgian Parliament, represents the Union of Traditionalists party, and was former Chairman of the Supreme Council of Georgia during Gamsakhurdia's presidency.

6. Interview with Marc Behrendt, Washington, D.C., 19 July 2016. Behrendt worked for over 20 years in the Eurasia region on peacebuilding,governance and human rights,

including with programs in the south Caucasus with UK-based NGOs, and the OSCE mission in Georgia.

7. Interview with Megi Biburi, founder of the youth-oriented NGO "Kartlosi" (Bridge of Friendship) created in 2006 for residents and IDPs from the areas around South Ossetia, Gori, 21 May 2016.

8. Interview with Father Robert Chachava, Georgian Orthodox priest, Tbilisi, 7 May 2018.

9. Interview with Misha Chitadze, Director of the NGO - Gori Information Center, 21 May 2016.

10. Interview with David Darchiashvili, Tbilisi, 7 May 2018. Darchiashvili is a Professor of Political Science and International Relations at Ilia State University, was a MP for the United National Movement from 2008-16, director at the Open Society Georgia Foundation from 2004-8, and a researcher at the Caucasus Institute for Peace, Democracy and Development from 1993-2004.

11. Interview with Olga Dogorokha, an associate of the youth-oriented NGO "Kartlosi" (Bridge of Friendship) for residents and IDPs from the areas around South Ossetia, Gori, 21 May 2016.

12. Interview with Marina Elbakidze, Tbilisi, 18 May 2016. Elbakidze is a senior analyst with CIPDD, teaches psychology at Tbilisi State University, and since 1997 has played a leading role in Georgian-Abkhaz peacebuilding and dialogue activities.

13. Interview with Dustin Galbraith, Caucasus Research Resource Centers (CRRC), Tbilisi, 8 May 2016.

14. Interview with Fiona Hill, Washington, D.C., 15 July 2016. Fiona Hill is a senior fellow with the Brookings Institution, served as a Senior Director on the U.S. National Security Council (2017 – 2019), and an analyst at the National Intelligence Council (2006-9) focusing on Russia and Eurasia.

15. Interview with Nino Kalandarishvili, Tbilisi, 23 May 2016. Kalandarishvili is the Director, Institute for the Study of Nationalism and Conflicts, (ISNC) and a long-time participant in direct dialogue projects with South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

16. Interview with Giorgi Kanashvili, Tbilisi, 8 May 2018. Kanashvili was the executive director of the NGO, Caucasian House, from 2011-2018 and an active participant in

dialogue processes related to the Georgian-Abkhaz and Georgian-South Ossetian conflicts.

17. Interview with Giorgi Karkulia, youth NGO activist, and founder and executive director, Academy for Peace and Development, an NGO focused on vulnerable youth, Tbilisi, 17 May 2016.

18. Interview with Julia Kharashvili, Tbilisi, 20 May 2016. Kharashvili is chairperson at the IDP Women's Association "Consent" since its inception in 1995, and served in the government ministry working on IDP and refugee issues from 2008-11.

19. Interview with Tato Khundadze, Tbilisi, 18 May 2016. Khundadze is a lecturer in Economics at the Georgian-American University and a graduate student and researcher at the New School in New York, and formerly worked with NGOs and think tanks in Georgia on peacebuilding and development initiatives.

20. Interview with Giorgi Kokochashvili, engineer and project manager who has worked with a wide range of international humanitarian and development agencies in Georgia since the early 1990s, Tbilisi, 17 May 2016.

21. Interview with Mamuka Kuparadze, Director, Studio Re, Tbilisi, 20 May 2016. Kuparadze is co-founder and director for Studio Re, a media and peacebuilding organisation founded in Georgia in 1992 that has produced television programs and documentaries on the Abkhaz and South Ossetian conflicts.

22. Interview with Madlena Kvaratskelia, Tbilisi, 8 May 2018. Project coordinator of local NGO "Avangard" focused on women's rights and development in the Gali region of Abkhazia.

23. Skype Interview with Arthur Martirosyan, 16 July 2016. Martirosyan is a Senior Consultant with the US company CMPartners and (former Conflict Management Group – CMG) who has worked for 25 years on conflict management initiatives in the former Soviet states.

24. Interview with Mikheil Mirziashvili (2), Tbilisi, 20 May 2016 and 2 May 2018. Mirziashvili is the Chairperson and board member of the Center for Development and Democracy (CDD), has worked in Georgian peacebuilding organizations for 25 years and was co-founder and director of independent media organization Studio Re.

25. Interview with Ucha Nanuashvili, former Public Defender (Ombudsman) of Georgia from 2012-2017, and founder of the NGO, the Georgian Human Rights Center among many other civil society roles.

26. Interview with Fron Nazhi, Washington, D.C.,USA, 25 October 2018. Nazhi is an international development expert who has worked in leading roles globally and in the US, and led a USAID-funded civil society program with the East West Management Institute in Georgia from 2010-2013. [*Nazhi also interviewed separately for the Kosovo case*].

27. Interview with Ghia Nodia, Tbilisi, 23 May 2016**.** Nodia **is** director of the International School of Caucasus Studies at Ilia State University, founding director of the think tank, Caucasus Institute for Peace, Democracy, and Development (CIPDD), and served as Georgia's Minister of Education and Science in 2008.

28. Interview with Sopho Shubladze, Founder and Director of the NGO "Partners Georgia" 17 May 2016. Partners Georgia is a Georgian NGO established in 1996 to promoting civil society and a culture of conflict management.

29. Interviews (2) with Larissa Sotieva, London, U.K., 10 May 2018 and Aug. 9, 2015. Sotieva is co-founder of IndiePeace, a UK-based NGO focusing on peacebuilding in the Caucasus and has worked for 25 years leading programmes in the former Soviet Union, her native Caucasus, and in the UK was formerly senior strategy adviser for International Alert's Eurasia Programme until 2019.

30. Interview with Paul Stronski, Senior Fellow, Russia and Eurasia Program, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, and former long-time State Department employee, Washington, D.C., 15 July 2016.

31. Interviews (2) with Gia Tarkhan-Mouravi Tbilisi, 19 and 23 May 2016. Tarkan-Mouravi is a Georgian intellectual, a physicist, a former journalist and prolific writer on political, social, and cultural issues, and founder of multiple civil society organizations in Georgia since the late 1980s.

32. Interview with Mamuka Tsereteli, Washington D.C., USA, 24 October 2018. Tsereteli is a Georgian academic, university lecturer and a Senior Fellow with the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, and founding director at the America-Georgia Business Council.

33. Interview with Cory Welt, Associate Director, Institute for European, Russian and Eurasian Studies (IERES) at the Elliott School Elliot School, George Washington University, 14 July 2016.

34. Interviews (3) with Paata Zakareishvili, Tbilisi, 16 and 20 May 2016, 30 April 2018. Zakareishvili teaches at Grigol Robakidze University. He served as Georgia's State Minister for Reconciliation and Civil Equality from 2012–2016, and has worked with

government and the NGO sector on human rights, refugees and been a key interlocutor on direct dialogue on the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict since the early 1990s.

35. Mr. Irakli Zhorzholiani, former Director of the NGO "Children and Youth Development Foundation", Tbilisi, 12 May 2016.

Author's Personal archives:

*These are materials related to the Georgian-South Ossetian conflict, CMG-NRC Georgia-South Ossetia Dialogue project, and the NRC work on refugee return for refugees affected by the Georgian-South Ossetian conflict. These were drawn on as background materials in the preparation of the Georgia case.

The author was the field-based project coordinator of the CMG-NRC Georgian-South Ossetian dialogue process from 1996-1998, working in Tbilisi, Tskhinvali, and the North Ossetian city of Vladikavkaz inside Russia, where large numbers of Ossetian refugees were living. The author also headed up the NRC's small offices in Tskhinvali and Vladikavkaz, and was in charge of NRC's support for the UNHCR-led refugee return program and NRC's related humanitarian and peacebuilding projects. Materials used from this period include personal notes and memos, diary entries, and some organizational records. Additionally, the author visited Georgia in 2005 and conducted several informal interviews then for personal purposes with a range of interlocutors in South Ossetia and in the Georgian controlled areas around South Ossetia.