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Enhancing the Role of Civil Society Organizations in a Post-Conflict Setting: A Review of Central American Conflicts in the 1990s

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ENHANCING THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS IN A POST CONFLICT SETTING

A review of the Central American conflicts in the 1990s

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List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Explanation
CONARA	National Commission for the Restoration of Areas
COPAZ	*Comisión Nacional Para la Consolidación de la Paz* (National Commission for the Consolidation of Peace)
CSO	Civil society organization
FMLN	*Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional* (Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front)
FSLN	*Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional* (Sandinista National Liberation Front)
FOCES	Forum for Economic and Social Accommodation
FONG	*Federación de organizaciones no gubernamentales* (Federation of NGOs)
MINUGUA	United Nations Mission for the Verification of Human Rights and of Compliance with the Commitments of the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights in Guatemala
NGO	Non-governmental organization
ONUCA	United Nations Observer Group in Central America
ONUSAL	The United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador
ONUVEN	The United Nations Observer Mission to verify the electoral process in Nicaragua
PKO	Peacekeeping operation
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNO	*Unión Nacional Opositora* (National Opposition Union)
URNG	*Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca* (Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity)
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

Abstract

The 1990s marked an opportunity for change for three Central American countries facing the end of their civil wars: Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala. Efforts to contribute to democratization and the reconstruction of war-torn societies grew with the increasing presence of United Nations missions and international organizations and donors, but the primary organizations overlooked in these efforts were local civil society organizations (CSOs). Based on the role of CSOs in the post-conflict phases, I intend to answer the following question: How can the role and image of CSOs be enhanced in a post-conflict setting? Improving the role and image of CSOs in post-conflict settings relies on improving their presence and roles in three distinct arenas: at the negotiation table, how they work with UN missions, and how they work with international donors. Studying these three arenas in Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala will reveal that improving their roles in each gives CSOs the ability to make more impactful and positive contributions necessary to transition their countries out of the reconstruction and redevelopment phase and into the final stage of lasting peace and development.

Introduction

How can the role and image of CSOs be improved in a post-conflict setting? To improve their role and image, CSOs must improve their presence and role in three areas. CSOs must be present at the negotiation table to provide essential contributions to negotiated peace agreements. They must also have good working relationships with UN missions, as they have overlapping goals in terms of contributing to reconstruction efforts. CSOs must also have better relationships with donors that are contributing to reconstruction efforts, as they can be a source of strength and support for CSOs seeking to assist local communities in a post-conflict setting.

Debates over how valuable CSOs truly are to post-conflict reconstruction efforts often focus on the concept that they are only a roadblock in the process of reconstruction, as their increased input and contributions create a more complicated process for all parties involved. In today's post-WWII era where most state conflicts are civil wars, it is worth trying to understand how the greater presence of CSOs in all facets of the post-civil war phase translates to a better reconstruction phase and a more comprehensive and lasting peace.

One facet that is not often analyzed is the relationship between CSOs and UN missions in post-conflict settings. Because they have the same goals of democratization, reconstructing institutions, and helping citizens transition to a more peaceful way of life, they are often seen as clashing entities, with the UN undertaking most of the work CSOs aim to do. By reviewing how CSOs and UN missions can work together, there is evidence to support that CSOs are in positions to contribute more significant changes with assistance from the UN. The ultimate insight I want to provide in my thesis is that CSOs should not be overlooked and are significant sources of support in the post-conflict era.

My thesis begins with a review of the literature surrounding the standard role of CSOs and their value, the debates on whether or not CSOs should be involved in peace negotiation processes, the role of UN peacekeeping operations (PKOs) and their relationships with CSOs, and the relationship between international donors and CSOs. Following this, I discuss the methodology for my thesis and why it is important to compare and contrast these three case studies. Prefacing my case studies is an overview of the Esquipulas Agreement, which provided the regional foundation for peace negotiation and post-conflict reconstruction that each country signed on to. Each case study then elaborates on five different topics: historical context, CSO involvement in peace negotiations, UN missions, CSO environment, and donor influence. My analysis section compares and contrasts the role CSOs played in each country's peace negotiation, UN mission, and its relationship with donors. My thesis concludes with final questions that posit opportunities for further study.

Literature Review

The Importance of Civil Society Organizations

Understanding why CSOs are important in the post-conflict period of a civil war requires a study of what CSOs are and why they are vital parts of the democratization process following a civil war. Manuela Nilsson elaborates on the concept and function of civil society, defining it as "a space of voluntarily, non-state, not-for-profit, and autonomously organized social life within the public sphere and independent from as well as interacting with the state, the family, and the market" (Nilsson 2018, 137). Civil society actors encompass a wide range of groups, organizations, and associations free from any state control, such as trade unions, community organizations, religious and cultural associations, women's groups, indigenous organizations, academia, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and many more. These organizations serve

various purposes, such as promoting human rights, protecting workers' rights, or ensuring the protection of indigenous communities, with each catering to a specific group of people. As a widely contested but mostly accepted understanding, political parties, private businesses, and the media are not included in civil society, as their purposes and functions exist outside of and/or are dependent on the exploitation of the public sphere (Nilsson 2018, 138). Nilsson also explains that the relationship between civil society and the state creates a power dynamic between the two. Because civil society actors have legal protections over their autonomy and liberty of action, they serve as a constraint on the power of the state and as an entity that legitimizes it (Nilsson 2018, 137).

In the case of countries experiencing civil war, with an unstable government comes an unstable civil society, unsure of where and how to fulfill its functions. Robert Belloni (2008) examines the role of civil society in the transition from conflict to peace. He seeks to address how civil society can be a positive influence on democratization and peacebuilding. Belloni identifies civil society as a larger reflection of society's interests and opinions. The concept of civil society also brings about the concept of "uncivil" society, which he identifies as actors that are undemocratic, violent, xenophobic, and nationalistic that come about in times of conflict, such as paramilitary gangs and mafia-like groups (Belloni 2008, 183). These groups find themselves thriving on the instability the conflict has to offer, making it hard for civil society groups championing inclusion and an end to the conflict to operate. Despite the pushback from "uncivil" society, civil society proves incredibly beneficial in the post-conflict setting, as Belloni identifies that these organizations can increase trust within and between affected communities and provide public goods the state fails to provide (Belloni 2008, 186). Examples of civil society organizations operating how the government should in times of conflict include civilian patrol

groups protecting communities in the absence of functioning police, the creation of their own

judicial systems in the absence of a functioning or impartial state judicial system, or the creation

of programs to educate youth when schools are not operating properly. By rebuilding the

confidence and security of innocent civilians, CSOs function as a necessary tool to legitimize the

state and foment the reconstruction of stable political and social institutions.

Inclusion of CSOs at the Negotiation Table

The question of whether or not CSOs should be included in the peace negotiation process

to end a conflict is a controversial one, with advocates on both sides. David Lanz (2011)

examines whether or not certain actors' participation augments the chance of reaching a

sustainable peace settlement. Basing his argument on literature from negotiation theory and

empirical analysis of peace processes, Lanz concludes that two factors determine whether or not

an actor makes it to the negotiation table: practical requirements (such as if the actors are seen as

fit to contributing to sustainable peace) and normative requirements (such as if the actors'

engagement in the peace process aligns with the values and norms they promote on the global

stage) (Lanz 2011, 291). How these two requirements interact determines whether an actor is

eligible to be at the negotiation table. Many CSOs fall in the category of "include-exclude," in

which including them in the discussions would be a good decision (passing the normative

requirement), but their presence could bring in ideas that can further complicate the negotiation

process (not passing the practical requirement) (Lanz 2011, 289). This categorization of CSOs

causes a complication, as he importantly notes:

> If civil society and moderate political parties are excluded, peace negotiations might be
>
> perceived as cynical elite pact-making and consequently lack international support. If all

of these actors are included, however, the negotiations become nearly impossible to

manage for mediators (Lanz 2011, 289).

One remedy to this situation, he suggests, is that mediators launch public information campaigns

to keep civil society actors in the loop of the negotiations, as well as engaging in separate

consultations with civil society actors to make sure their opinions are reaching the negotiation

table (Lanz 2011, 291). Lanz does note that the "include-exclude" scenario varies in many cases,

as some negotiations have given seats to CSOs with success, leaving his study open to critique.

When do the benefits of CSO "inclusion" outweigh the costs? Wanis-St. John and Kew

(2008) argue that civil society's involvement is crucial when there are undemocratic conflict

parties. Studying 15 years of peace negotiations, they conclude that "the more democratic and

broadly representative the conflict parties, the lower the need for civil society to have an actual

seat at the negotiation table" (Wanis-St. John and Kew 2008, 30). If the conflict parties are

undemocratic, meaning they have indicated no interest in restoring or establishing a proper

democratic government, CSO involvement in the negotiation process is essential to achieving

peace. Without the involvement of CSOs, governing elites or resistance groups are highly likely

to cut deals on their own with little to no participation of other groups or elites, often leading to

the resurgence of violence between the conflicting parties (Wanis-St. John and Kew 2008, 28).

Durable peace agreements reached by undemocratic elites often feature direct civil society

participation. In the cases of democratic elites negotiating peace, the pressure of political

representatives from CSOs was just as effective as direct participation in the negotiation process.

To counter the notion that involving CSOs at the negotiation table can complicate discussions,

they importantly note:

Mediators may choose to limit civil society participation to reduce the complexity of peace negotiations and thus facilitate a deal, but in doing so they may be sacrificing future peace at the altar of expediency. If actors are not representative of the populations in question, then civil society can offer not only skills to reach a more comprehensive deal, but also voices for the public interest that may prompt greater societal stakes in the deal that is reached (Wanis-St. John and Kew 2008, 33).

UN Peacekeeping Operations and CSO Relations

UN missions and CSOs operate on the same ground with the same intention: seeking to improve and reconstruct a war-torn society. Despite having common goals, CSOs and UN peacekeeping missions often operate in separate spheres, creating a divide in work that could easily be done together. It is important to understand how the UN defines peacebuilding operations and how they work with CSOs.

Michael Harbottle (1996) outlines the dimensions of peaceful settlement of conflicts and the role of UN Peacekeeping Operations (UN PKOs). conflict resolution is not just about ending the fighting, but also restoring, reconstructing, and rehabilitating political, social, and economic structures to ensure the protection of human rights and bring order and law back to a deeply wounded state (Harbottle 1996, 124). He outlined the three dimensions of conflict resolution as:

Peacemaking: The diplomatic resolution of the politics of conflict;

Peacekeeping: The positioning of military forces to achieve the peaceful resolution of violence in a conflict, without the use of force;

Peacebuilding: The deployment of social and humanitarian initiatives which can assist in the process of rehabilitation, reorganization, reconstruction, in the pre-crisis, crisis, and post-crisis phases of conflict (Harbottle 1996, 112).

Peacemaking and peacekeeping fall under the umbrella of peacebuilding, therefore making it the necessary facet for ending disorder and violence.

UN PKOs have received their fair share of criticism. They need clear strategies and mandates to operate, as historical cases lacking either of these have proven to have catastrophic consequences (Harbottle 1996, 116). UN PKOs often tend to operate with international staff with a lack of cultural knowledge of the region in which they are working, creating a disconnect between the PKO and those it intends to help (Harbottle 1996, 117). Issues regarding how to train UN peacekeeping officers also shed light on the difficulty of trying to achieve a given mandate in unfamiliar territory, as officers are often trained in a manner that excludes any opportunities for them to learn about the setting in which they are going to operate in. To address these issues, he emphasizes the need for an inclusive approach to peacebuilding, in which the scope of UN operations should include civilians and train outsiders to understand the settings in which they are working (Harbottle 1996, 123).

If they work together, CSOs and PKOs are capable of making effective efforts in achieving their goals of assisting affected people in a post-conflict setting. Dorussen and de Vooght (2018) examine the relationship between CSOs and UN PKOs, specifically looking at how UN PKOs can support local NGOs' work to foster peace and stability in a way that remains in line with their mandates. To better understand the perspective of civil society actors, Dorussen and de Vooght interviewed NGOs that operated in areas with existing UN PKOs. The findings revealed that the relationship between CSOs and UN PKOs still has room for improvement. Although the UN does encourage cooperation with local communities and CSOs to achieve their mandates, these communities and organizations are often unaware of the work the PKOs are trying to do and their responsibilities (Dorussen and de Vooght 2018, 4). They also align

themselves more with the civil work PKOs do, as opposed to the work PKOs conduct with military and peacekeeping forces. Another issue NGOs have with UN PKOs is their reliance on quick impact projects (QIPs). Not only are they perceived as "wasteful and distorting," but they do not align with the idea that peacebuilding missions should be long-term to ensure a lasting peace (Dorussen and de Vooght 2018, 1). Although NGOs value their independent role in post-conflict peacebuilding, and the increasing weariness of UN PKOs has proven to be a setback in achieving their mandates, Dorussen and de Vooght emphasize the need for more civilian components in UN PKOs as a way to build a stronger relationship between PKOs and CSOs (Dorussen and de Vooght 2018, 5). Achieving a better relationship contributes to a more efficient peacebuilding process.

CSOs and Donor Relationships

Because CSOs are non-profits, many are reliant on funds from international donors. This reliance on external donors comes with many drawbacks. As Belloni (2008) elaborates, CSOs play an important role in service delivery during periods of conflict, giving external donors a valuable, affordable, and reliable source to which they can direct their resources, but the reality of most situations is that donors believe that a war-torn society signifies an unstable civil society environment (Belloni 2008, 200). This instability contributes to concerns donors may have about directing funds to CSOs, leading to two different scenarios for the CSO environment: either donors become less inclined to contribute resources, resulting in a consolidation of the pro-democracy CSO environment, or donors are willing to donate on such strict terms that CSOs become more focused on fulfilling the desires of the donors than on the needs of the community they are serving (Belloni 2008, 200). Both scenarios lead to a deviation from the ultimate goal of creating a stronger CSO environment meant to address the conflict's aftereffects. Another issue

that arises with donor contributions is that many of their goals tend to be short term, making it

difficult to focus on larger-scale issues and/or plan for long-term peace. Belloni believes the best

way to improve the relationship between CSOs and donors is to revise the vision of donors to not

be one of filling needs, but of being a source of help for CSOs in their journeys to reconstruct

their communities (Belloni 2008, 210). While he also believes that CSOs' reliance on donors

should decrease, the reality of this is that donors are a vital source for CSOs in conflict areas

where they cannot rely on the communities they help or the state for any assistance (Belloni

2008, 209). As opposed to trying to change the agenda of some CSOs and control how groups

use the resources, donors should be more willing to work with the existing agendas of the CSOs

they intend to help. In doing so, donors would make a larger contribution to the flourishing of a

strong civil society, and in turn, a stronger peacebuilding effort.

Based on this literature review, I intend to deny and build upon claims made to prove that

CSOs are undervalued, and their lack of representation in any facet of the post-conflict

reconstruction phase is damaging to the entire process. As sources of trust and providers of

goods and services during the conflict period, CSOs are in a unique position in the post-conflict

period. Although the government would begin to operate well enough to provide what CSOs

once did, CSOs must still find ways to contribute to the same people that needed them during the

conflict. Their roots in their communities provides them with a value and input that neither

conflict party can provide during the negotiation and reconstruction phases, making CSOs a key

part in the post-conflict phase.

Methodology

Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala provide the best opportunity to study how the role of

CSOs in the post-conflict setting can determine the outcome of a negotiated agreement and how

the agreement translates to the reconstruction phase. Each case's foundation relies on a Central American peace agreement, and how each country adheres to that agreement varies. Because these countries also ended their civil conflicts in succession, with Nicaragua's conflict ending first, El Salvador's ending second, and Guatemala following right after, each country's peace process uses the previous country as an example for how they want to operate with CSOs in their post-conflict phases. This range of CSO involvement in the negotiation processes, with UN missions, and with international donors best articulates the concept that how involved a CSO is can determine how well a country can democratize and reconstruct itself after a civil war. Studying each country on its own would omit the influences the other countries had on them. Studying these cases together shows the complete picture of how CSOs can have better roles and images in the post-conflict setting, starting with cases of low CSO involvement, to cases with higher amounts of CSO involvement.

Case Studies

Esquipulas II: A Regional Precursor for Peace

Having the only demilitarized country in Central America in the late 1980s, Oscar Arias, the president of Costa Rica, took it upon himself to assume the rule of peace broker in the region. Having provided a haven for Nicaraguans, Salvadorians, and Guatemalans evading their conflicts, Arias believed that a regional solution could only be achieved by the Central American states working together (Oliver 1999, 153). On August 6, 1987, Arias successfully convened all Central American heads of state in Guatemala City to negotiate the *Procedure for the Establishment of a Firm and Lasting Peace in Central America*, also known as Esquipulas II. This document called for a region-wide cessation of all irregular forces and hostilities, free elections, democratization, timely negotiations, the safe return of refugees and displaced persons,

and cooperation on freedom and democracy for peace and development (Fernandez 2004, 73).

This agreement was contingent on three acting principles: Simultaneity (who will act first and

when will they act?), calendarization (when will implementation begin and how will it be

planned out?), and transparency (how will we know what an actor is doing?) (Wehr and

Lederach 1991, 90). To address these principles, different commissions were created through this

agreement. The International Support and Verification Commission worked on coordinating the

Central American states through their peace processes. A national reconciliation commission was

created in every Central American state that would work with warring parties to reach peace

agreements. Each country would then be met with their respective UN missions to increase

transparency and ensure that progress was being made on ending their internal conflicts. While

the level at which the states decided to abide by the Esquipulas II terms varies, it is clear that this

agreement served as the foundation for the peace processes and reconstruction phases in each

country.

Nicaragua

Historical Context

The Nicaraguan civil war resulted from years of interference from the US in Nicaraguan

affairs and the abuse of power of the Somoza family. After conceding to US demands for

decades and exploiting the lower class through land seizures, unfair taxation, and seizure of

international aid for personal benefit, President Anastasio Somoza was overthrown by

Sandinistas in 1979 (US Congress 1987, 17). The Sandinistas, formally organized as the Frontera

Sandinista de Liberacion (FSLN), promised freedoms that Somoza failed to provide, such as a

free press, free elections, improvement of social welfare programs and institutions, and an end to

political oppression (US Congress 1987, 21). The new head of government became Daniel

Ortega. While there were visible improvements in education, health, defense, and the economy, the promises made by the Sandinistas were starting to fall through, with the canceling of an election planned for 1985 and the seizure of land by Sandinista leaders (US Congress 1987, 22). This rollback on promises prompted the growth of an anti-Sandinista movement, known as the Contras, that was organized, trained, and funded by the US that reached upwards of 30,000 willing combatants (US Congress 1987, 23). Fighting between the FSLN and Contras started in 1983, but lack of resources to fight 300,000 FSLN soldiers left the Contras with little hope of making change (Kruijt 2011, 73). The end of the Cold War also meant the US wanted to back out of the region. The involvement of Oscar Arias provided Daniel Ortega with the forum necessary to make concessions and end the war between the Sandinistas and the Contras with no concern over US intervention. According to the Correlates of War Project, by the end of the Nicaraguan Revolution, the death toll had reached 78,000.

CSO Involvement in Peace Negotiations

While some records indicate that civil society was not involved in the peace negotiation process, a study of documents by Manuela Nilsson (2018) revealed that the Catholic and Protestant churches were involved in the negotiation process. Civil society played an important role in the National Reconciliation Commission, led by archbishop Miguel Obando y Bravo, heads of the Moravian Church, the Council of Protestant Churches of Nicaragua, and president of the Nicaraguan Red Cross (Nilsson 2018, 141). It is important to note that Obando was a prominent opponent of the Sandinistas. His role as a spiritual leader for anti-Sandinistas during the conflict was important for reconciliation, especially since Daniel Ortega chose him himself (McKenna 1989, 72; Wehr and Lederach 1991, 7). The commission's role was that of a facilitator, improving communication between the contending parties, helping set the agenda for

discussions, and contributing recommendations for solutions between the parties. Although no

records exist indicating what specific recommendations or proposals were brought forth to the

meeting by these civil society actors, it appears that their presence was not to promote the

inclusion of civil society or any ideas they may want to share, but rather to legitimize the talks as

major leaders in civil society (Nilsson 2018, 142). While their influence in the discussions was

not recorded, the discussions did commit all parties, including CSOs, to working with

humanitarian organizations to resettle refugees and internationally displaced people.

Civil society's limited role as a mediator through negotiations proved fruitful.

Archbishop Obando's presence as a mediator was important, especially when looking at his

success rate. Major agreements that Obando mediated included the Sapoa Agreement (1988), the

Toncontin Agreement (1990), and transitional agreements following the victory of National

Opposition Union (UNO) candidate Violetta del Chamorro. The Sapoa Agreement was the first

successful ceasefire between the Sandinistas and the Contra forces. Many previous agreements

quickly fell apart, and notably, were reached without Obando as a mediator (McKenna 1989, 75).

The Toncontin Agreement established a ceasefire and outlined the process for Sandinista

disarmament and demobilization (UN Doc. A/44/931). There was no denying Obando's value as

a mediator, but with limited ability to express civil society's concerns, it is not possible to say

that the negotiation process in Nicaragua considered and implemented civil society's ideas and

positions.

UN Missions

Nicaragua's negotiation process brought two UN missions to the country: the United

Nations Observer Group in Central America (ONUCA) and the United Nations Observer

Mission to verify the electoral process in Nicaragua (ONUVEN).

ONUCA was established via UN Security Council resolution 644 on November 7, 1989. ONUCA was mandated for six months to conduct verification of compliance by Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica to the agreements made in the Esquipulas II Agreement. Offices for ONUCA were established in each of the five countries' capital, with smaller verification centers established throughout different regions of each country (*Central America - ONUCA – Background* 2003*)*. In Nicaragua, ONUCA was responsible for ensuring the cessation of aid to irregular forces and insurrectionist movements and preventing the use of media, such as the radio or television, to direct or aid the mobilization of irregular forces (Fernandez 2004, 73). ONUCA's mandate was expanded later on March 27, 1990, via Security Council resolution 650, to enable it to play a part in the demobilization of Contra forces in Nicaragua (*Central America - ONUCA – Background* 2003*)*. The final mandate came on April 20, 1990, via Security Council Resolution 653, following the signing of a series of agreements relating to the voluntary demobilization of the Contra forces in Nicaragua, in which it was decided to include additional tasks of monitoring the ceasefire and separation of forces, and the demobilization process (*Central America - ONUCA – Background* 2003). To handle conflicts in the process, ONUCA investigated any complaints made regarding breaches of the agreements made between the parties, often reported by the parties themselves.

ONUVEN was established on August 25, 1989, and ended following the Nicaraguan presidential election on February 25, 1990. ONUVEN's purpose was to monitor different aspects of the electoral process, such as the organization and participation of political parties, the media's role and bias in reporting the election, voting procedures, conduction of the vote, ballot counts, and results (Bendano 1994, 264). This was the first type of mission the UN undertook where they oversaw the entire electoral process, whereas, in previous scenarios, the UN only oversaw the

election (Bendano 1994, 264). ONUVEN declared in its final report that the election was a success, with no concerns over a fraudulent election, especially since the opposition (UNO) beat the Sandinistas.

Based on the documentation, civil society actors played no role in contributing to ONUCA or ONUVEN's missions (UN Doc A/44/931; Bendaño 1994, 264; Nilsson 2018, 143). Instead, civil society actors focused on the returning soldiers, ensuring they were protected and integrating well into civil society.

CSO Environment

The Sandinista rise to power in the 1980s led to a growth of CSOs in Nicaragua. Most of these CSOs became politically affiliated with the FSLN and got assistance from them. Any CSOs affiliated with the opposition were often ignored by the government and had difficulty accessing funding or support. By the end of the 1980s, only 114 NGOs were legally recognized (Borchgrevink 2006, 22). Recognition of a growing CSO environment led to the creation of the Federation of NGOs (FONG), which only had ten NGOs coordinating their efforts to support the FSLN cause, but this was the only effort to coordinate CSOs at the time.

The UNO party's victory brought sweeping changes to the CSO environment in Nicaragua, with over 300 registered NGOs in 1990 (Pearce 1998, 63). Coordination between CSOs started to become more apparent. The FONG's membership went from ten NGOs to 30 by the mid-1990s. Many CSO coordination structures were created in the early 1990s with different focuses, such as child and youth organizations, Grupo Propositivo de Cabildeo (lobbying CSOs with a focus on food security and foreign debt), the Movimiento Ambientalista Nicaragüense (a coalition of environmentalist CSOs), Coalición Nacional de Mujeres (a coalition of CSOs and leaders in support of women's rights on all parts of the political spectrum), and CITVAS (human

rights and democratization) (Borchgrevink 2006, 25). The domination of Sandinista CSOs also came to a halt as a result of the UNO victory. By the end of the 1990s, 1,729 CSOs from both parties were legally recognized (Borchgrevink 2006, 22).

Donor Influence

Having lost their primary source for funding and support, Sandinista-aligned CSOs in the 1990s struggled to sustain themselves and attract the attention of international donors (Borchgrevink 2006, 21). Most resorted to reducing staff or activity levels to stay afloat.

A UNO victory proved beneficial for ex-combatants struggling to reintegrate into civil society and previously excluded opposition CSOs. A plethora of newly-created NGOs offered resources and workshops for ex-combatants, reconciliation programs, and mediated local conflicts in rural communities (Borchgrevink 2006, 22). These peacebuilding efforts gave the new CSOs seemingly unlimited access to donor funding, mostly provided by international NGOs sympathetic to the revolutionary regime. Because these NGOs were so new, they were able to orient their missions around donors' demands to successfully secure funds and provide their services to civilians in need.

For NGOs that were not newly formed, donors' demands had a visible impact on the work they did. A 2009 study of Nicaraguan NGOs funded by international donors revealed that their strong accountability to donors led to weak accountability to their beneficiaries (Chahim and Prakash 2013, 501). The more an organization focused on pleasing donors, the less connected it was to its constituents. In contrast, grassroots organizations not dependent on foreign funding were deeply connected to their constituencies. They represented their concerns well, but their limited resources made it difficult for them to be taken seriously on a national level. Regardless of whether or not individuals were part of internationally-backed CSOs or

grassroots organizations, there were clear drawbacks directly related to how donors interacted with these organizations. These interactions translated to how well these organizations would then operate.

El Salvador

Historical Context

The beginning of the Salvadoran civil war was on October 15, 1979, after a successful military coup d'état was staged against President Carlos Romero. This coup sparked the union of five existing anti-military and radical leftist groups into an armed coalition organization known as the Frente Farabundo Marti para la Liberación Nacional (FMLN), named after the communist leader of the Salvadoran peasant revolution of 1932 (*Uppsala Conflict Data Program* 2019). The military government had tremendous support from the US, receiving nearly $2 million a day in aid and training from US military personnel (*Uppsala Conflict Data Program* 2019). The government's use of all available forces resulted in various human rights violations. Death squads throughout the country killed many civilians in support of leftist ideals, and many child soldiers were recruited (*Uppsala Conflict Data Program* 2019). The war between the FMLN and military junta lasted 12 years, with 85% of acts of violence having been conducted by the government. By the end of the civil war in 1992, in a county that had a population of 5 million before the war, over 75,000 civilians had died because of the conflict, 500,000 were internally displaced, and 890,000 had fled to surrounding countries for safety (O'Neil 1999, 146).

CSO Involvement in Peace Negotiations

The Catholic Church in the 1980s spearheaded early efforts of establishing peace talks between the FMLN and government. Church officials tried to establish formal proposals and

debates and successfully created a committee to institutionalize civil society for peace efforts in the late 1980s. The committee made efforts to make civil society voices heard in the negotiation processes by bringing proposals to the agenda and demanding seats at the negotiation table. Despite these efforts, distrust in a left-leaning civil society caused conservative actors to withdraw from any negotiations unless civil society was not present (Nilsson 2018, 142). As a result, civil society's role in the Salvadoran peace negotiations was nonexistent, but its value for the overall peacebuilding process was not ignored.

While peace talks were conducted behind closed doors with UN mediation, civil society did appear in the final agreement, known as the Chapultepec agreement, signed on January 16, 1992. Civil society involvement was confined to the implementation process, focusing on human rights monitoring and relief operations, reflecting the importance CSOs were expected to play in attaining and maintaining peace (Nilsson 2018, 142). Commissions were also established with members of civil society, such as COPAZ (Comisión Nacional Para la Consolidación de la Paz), which was meant to boost the participation of civil society in the peacebuilding process. Another organization created with civil society in mind was FOCES, the Forum for Economic and Social Accommodation, where civil society and political actors could unite to discuss economic and social problems (Nilsson 2018, 142). This inclusion of civil society in the final accords provided the foundation necessary for active CSO involvement in the implementation phase.

UN Missions

The UN Observer Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL) was created by Security Council Resolution 693 in May 1991. The mandate of the mission was to monitor any agreements made between the government and the FMLN and monitor human rights violations (UN Doc. S/RES/693; *El Salvador - ONUSAL Mandate* 2003). ONUSAL's activities transformed beyond

those of a typical observer mission. It also helped create new institutions, pressured the

compliance of parties with deadlines, and even negotiated new concessions between the parties

to further the peace process (*El Salvador - ONUSAL Background* 2003; O'Neil 1999, 148).

The value of CSOs in achieving their mandate was made clear by ONUSAL. A 1993

report from ONUSAL's human right's division indicated that "The Salvadorian NGOs…

constitute the most functional complement to the activities of international verification" (O'Neil

1999, 155). Despite this recognition, ONUSAL's engagement with CSOs was very limited,

mostly relying on a handful of organizations to provide information on known human rights

abuses, and the mission was even cited as carrying out the work of many existing CSOs (Holiday

and Stanley 1993, 431; O'Neil 1999, 155). Replacing valuable CSOs translated to a difficulty for

these organizations to sustain themselves.

CSO Environment

From 1952-1979, only 22 NGOs were registered in El Salvador. CSOs in El Salvador

mostly aligned themselves with the opposition, and in turn, became targets of the military death

squads and were forced to go into hiding (Nilsson 2018, 142).

The number of registered CSOs in El Salvador increased to 74 by the end of 1991 (Solis

and Martin 1992, 104). Estimates of the actual number of CSOs working in El Salvador were

over 700, with most being founded after 1985. Reasons for their exclusion from official

recognition points towards the fact that many of them were composed of radical activists that the

government did not want to work with, or, at the very least, acknowledge and legitimize (Pearce

1999, 63). At this time, NGOs were organized in five main categories: the church (Catholic and

Protestant); international NGOs; political parties; grassroots organizations; and groups sponsored

by the Salvadoran government, which the state still classified as NGOs. Because of the existing

definition of CSOs established in my literature review, I exclude political parties when I reference CSOs in El Salvador. Many grassroots organizations were involved in human rights and social and economic justice issues (Holiday and Stanley 1993, 431).

Although COPAZ and FOCES were created to improve the presence and activism of CSOs in El Salvador, both did very little for CSOs. COPAZ did not have any CSOs as members, and FOCES only focused on labor unions and members of the business sector, therefore making any agreements made only beneficial for the business sector (Nilsson 2018, 144). A lack of coordination and direction for many CSOs in the peace implementation phase led many to cancel operations.

Donor Influence

When it came to donor contributions, CSOs in El Salvador faced many difficulties. Because ONUSAL was assuming the responsibility of many existing human rights CSOs, the perceived need for aid was very low relative to its actual need (O'Neil 1999, 155). USAID's presence in the region was also a major influence on the CSO environment, as it was El Salvador's major source of external funding starting in the 1980s. El Salvador was USAID's third major recipient (Solis and Martin 1992, 107). USAID worked directly with the National Commission for the Restoration of Areas (CONARA), which was responsible for creating civic action programs to work in conflict areas as part of counterinsurgency strategies. Because European donors did not approve of CONARA's history of counterinsurgency, CONARA was reinvented by the Salvadorean government as the Secretariat for National Reconstruction (Foley 1996, 79). In the first year of its existence, the Secretariat directed funding to "safe" NGOs, which were those that had previously worked with USAID. Excluded CSOs included grassroots organizations with deep ties to their communities, FMLN associated CSOs, and cooperatives of

NGOs (Foley 1996, 79). This bias in fund distribution was combated by bilateral international

donors, such as Scandinavian and European governments, that made their aid conditional on the

greater involvement of NGOs in the peace implementation process (Solis and Martin 1992, 108).

Despite this push in demanding greater NGO presence and contributions in post-war

reconstruction, the Salvadoran government remained suspicious of many of the newly found

NGOs, translating into growing concerns for international donors. Many of them suspected that

because these organizations were new and often aligned with the FMLN, they lacked

professional skills to handle resources from donors and effectively help a community in need

(Pearce 1999, 63).

Guatemala

Historical Context

The Guatemalan civil war, fought between the prevailing right-wing government and

many left-wing insurgent groups, lasted from 1960-1996. The onset of the war was defined by

the historical domination of large-scale landowners and elites over the Guatemalan economy,

unfair land distribution, and tensions between the government and the left-wing groups (Paris

2002, 55). The government had strong US support, while the insurgents, who united under the

group Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG), had no external support.

Violence surged in the early 1980s when the military took total control of the government.

Between 1981 and 1984 alone, about 440 villages were destroyed by the military forces, over

50,000 people were killed, over 150,000 fled to Mexico, and over 500,000 were internally

displaced (Paris 2002, 56). A majority of the violence occurred against the indigenous

population, as the government understood they supported the URNG. Because it lacked a large

number of combatants and external support, the UNRG was very weak, but still managed to raise

awareness of the government's corruption for the past few decades. With Esquipulas II negotiated, the new government that succeeded the military dictatorship aimed to end the years of war.

CSO Involvement in Peace Negotiations

Efforts to negotiate peace between the government and URNG came as early as 1989 with the establishment of the National Dialogue, which was a forum for state representatives and civil society to discuss civilian concerns, such as human and indigenous rights, education, health care, and the environment (Nilsson 2018, 143). Although the National Dialogue was unsuccessful, it did serve as an opening for discussions between the URNG and civil society to work together in talks with the government. The biggest CSO was the Catholic Church, as it often served as the facilitator for talks between civil society groups, the URNG, and the government. The first major agreement between the parties was in the 1991 Querétaro Agreement, where civil society's importance in the peace process was agreed upon. This agreement helped civil society gain enough traction to form a Civil Society Assembly in 1994, which was responsible for giving recommendations to the UN mediator of the official negotiations between the URNG and government, as well as to the two contending parties.

Civil society's impact on the final agreement between the contending parties is widely debated (Nilsson 2018, 142). The Agreement on a Firm and Lasting Peace was signed on December 29, 1996. It encompassed a series of agreements made between both parties throughout the previous two years on issues such as human rights, indigenous rights, agrarian conflict, an official ceasefire, constitutional reform, CSO involvement, and reintegration of URNG militants into civil society (UN Doc. 51/796). While the level of CSO exclusion superseded that of Nicaragua and Guatemala, the high level of exclusion did not translate well

into the final agreement and implementation phase. None of the civil society's recommendations
to the parties were binding, and any input from civil society was never fully implemented past
the negotiation (Nilsson 2018, 143). Therefore, civil society participation was seen as a
legitimizing tool, as CSO endorsement of the final agreement made it easier for the parties to
proceed with the peace process.

Despite the ignorance of CSO recommendations, the final agreement did outline a variety
of tasks that civil society could do to contribute to the implementation process. CSOs were
encouraged to participate in the monitoring and delivery of services in rural areas. They were
also invited to aid in reforming the legal system, implementing the development agenda
established in the agreement, and participating in the National Architectural Development
Council, which was responsible for rural development.

UN Missions

Established by Resolution 48/627 of the UN General Assembly on September 19, 1994,
the United Nations Mission for the Verification of Human Rights and of Compliance with the
Commitments of the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights in Guatemala (MINUGUA)
was meant to carry out verification and institution-building activities throughout Guatemala. This
mission was established two years before a negotiated end to the conflict, with both parties
agreeing to this mission before reaching an official ceasefire. This mission came about following
one of the many UN-mediated agreements made between the parties—in this case, the 1994
Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights. As a result, MINUGUA's first two years
emphasized monitoring human rights and ensuring cooperation between URNG and the
government to reach a final agreement (Manz and Ross 1996, 530). After the final agreement in
1996, Security Council Resolution 1094 renamed the mission, which then became the United

Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala (still referred to as MINUGUA). It expanded its

mandate, which included supervision of both parties to ensure they were implementing the

provisions of the peace accord, such as helping demobilize the over 3,000 URNG guerillas and

establishing the new civilian police force (Paris 2002, 56).

The Secretary General's final report on MINUGUA outlined the role the mission played

in uniting the government and civil society, emphasizing capacity building. MINUGUA worked

to build the relationship between the government and civil society through a series of projects

aimed at rural development, constitutional reform, indigenous rights, and human rights (UN Doc

A/59/746, 7). The report outlines MINUGUA's direct involvement with civil society

organizations by giving them opportunities to participate in government policy debates, as well

as educational workshops specifically meant for CSOs to learn about how to navigate the

implementation process and handle issues, such as human rights violations to improving

advocacy techniques (UN Doc A/59/746, 12). To be as inclusive as possible, these programs

were conducted in various local languages, making it easier for the indigenous community to

participate in the peacebuilding efforts (UN Doc A/59/746, 10). In its final year, MINUGUA

worked with CSOs and local communities to ensure the peace process would continue by

providing human rights verification training to over 40 national CSOs, and internship programs

to locals with the prospect of a full-time position to aid in the peacebuilding process (UN Doc

A/59/746, 12). This final report cited civil society as the most important pillar of the

implementation process, as it served as a source of information, support, and trust for

MINUGUA (UN Doc A/59/746, 14).

CSO Environment

CSOs in Guatemala began emerging in the 1960s, with most being labor or student unions. The Catholic Church played a big role in their creation and development, but with the tension of the civil war, many of the organizations and movements spearheaded by the church were targets of counterinsurgency activities by the 1970s and 1980s (Van Leeuwen 2010, 95). The 1980s marked an emergence of more social CSOs (human rights, women's rights, indigenous rights, youth rights, etc.), and Guatemalan civil society defined itself as an entity free from political parties and the guerilla movement that encouraged political discussion and the establishment of a working democracy (Van Leeuwen 2010, 95). The Catholic Church worked in two capacities by this time: politically, where it would often take up roles in the debates between the URNG and government, and developmentally, as it would operate as an NGO with different offices centered on a variety of issues like human rights and agrarian reform (Van Leeuwen 2010, 95). Gaining attention for supporting democracy and human rights, NGOs became key players in the negotiations by 1989, in part by the Catholic Church's efforts in both its political and developmental capacities.

Although MINUGUA proved helpful for national NGOs and CSOs in the post-negotiation phase, grassroots organizations faced many issues as they began to lose their once prominent roles. Analysts and international donors began to realize that many GROs had organizational problems and incapacities, as they failed to redefine their relationship with the government and work to propose changes that would contribute to the implementation process (Van Leeuwen 2010, 96). While these organizations were successful at fundraising and institution building, they had difficulty making long-term strategies and policy proposals when invited to discussions with the government (Van Leeuwen 2010, 96).

Donor Influence

Failing to cooperate with the government created problems for CSOs. While denouncing the government prior to the negotiations was a way for CSOs to secure international funds, failure to comply no longer proved beneficial in the post-negotiation phase. Another concern was the diminishing impact of CSOs as they failed to redefine their missions to the time. To address these concerns, donors made capacity building and collaboration with the government conditions required to secure funding (Van Leeuwen 2010, 96).

For better established CSOs, their funding and assistance came from the United Nations development programme (UNDP) and other international donors. UNDP's approach centered on educating the stronger CSOs, emphasizing long-term projects to address the many issues mentioned in the peace agreements.

Analysis

CSO Involvement in Peace Negotiations

The varying degrees of CSO involvement in each of the Central American peace negotiation processes reveal many implications about the impact CSOs can have on final agreements between warring parties after civil wars. The CSOs present at the Nicaraguan negotiations were cited as only being legitimizing entities, serving as civil society's seal of approval on the discussions between the Sandinistas and the Contras. In the Salvadoran case, negotiations occurred behind closed doors, therefore excluding CSOs from making any impact on the negotiations or the final agreement. Guatemala's negotiation process proved to be the most inclusive, with CSOs highly active before and during the negotiation process. In all the cases, despite the role of CSOs being mentioned in the final agreements, their work in the

implementation phase was not as productive as it could have been, and the parties involved did not head many of the CSOs' suggestions.

In the Nicaraguan and Guatemalan cases, CSOs were considered legitimizing agents in the negotiation process. This perception of CSOs reveals that the warring parties tokenize CSOs and use them to solve the puzzle of conflict negotiations. Their inherent value as civil society representatives and major contributors in revealing what would be best for the country moving forward is overlooked as a result of tokenizing them. Designating CSOs as mediators or legitimizing agents at the negotiation table is counterproductive to the ultimate goal of negotiation settlement, which is to create an agreement between parties based on bettering the country and its society as a whole.

Ignoring society's needs and concerns and keeping CSOs present only to make good face only makes the parties look like they are rushing to reach an agreement that will most likely lack comprehensiveness. This lack of comprehensiveness can be seen when comparing the Nicaraguan agreements to those of Guatemala. The Nicaraguan agreements focus primarily on demilitarization, reintegration of ex-Contras, and ending violence between the Contras and Sandinistas. The final Guatemalan agreement is expansive, covering topics such as human rights, indigenous rights, agrarian conflict, an official ceasefire, constitutional reform, CSO involvement, and reintegration of URNG militants into civil society.

Ignoring CSOs entirely also has its drawbacks, as it leads to negotiations with an emphasis on ending hostilities. Civil society's demands for democratization and creating more transparent institutions do not take precedence when the negotiations are only between two parties and mediated by the UN. El Salvador's failure to include CSOs proved harmful, as many CSOs did not fare well in the implementation phase. Many lost the ability to work effectively

and, therefore, had to end their operations. The decision to exclude CSOs means that sustainable peace will be hard to achieve.

To improve the perception of CSOs in the negotiation process, CSOs must be taken into account on a greater level. The "suggestions" CSOs bring to the table should not be perceived as suggestions, but instead as firm proposals with evidence of why they must be heeded and included in the final agreement. These proposals should be just as binding as ceasefires or reintegration, as they are necessary for the peace process and democratization process. Seriously taking into account the proposals CSOs make also makes both conflict parties more trustworthy, as their trust in CSOs can be perceived by society as a trust in the process to improve the country's welfare. The mere mention of CSOs in final peace agreements is not enough to ensure that they will be given the space to be key players in the implementation process. Their concerns must be understood to be as valuable as the security concerns that are primarily being addressed.

UN Missions

UN PKOs need to have better working relationships with local CSOs. This is necessary for the PKOs to achieve their missions and for CSOs to establish themselves better and be able to achieve peace well beyond the presence of the UN. While UN PKOs are meant to help establish peace, their missions are meant to be temporary. It is easy to forget that while establishing peace is a very important process, thinking ahead about how to sustain that peace is just as valuable. The progress of the UN's role in each of the Central American cases reveals the UN's increasing awareness of the value of CSOs. While the Nicaraguan PKOs did little work with CSOs, and the mission in El Salvador recognized the importance of CSOs in achieving its mission, the importance of sustainable peace became most apparent in the Guatemalan case study. Not only did MINUGUA work side-by-side with CSOs on the ground in a series of developmental

projects, but it also focused on educating CSOs and amplifying their roles in its final year to ensure they could help enforce the terms of the peace agreement.

ONUCA and ONUSAL failed to form such a strong working relationship, which translated to the CSO environment's harm and a more fractured effort in implementing the terms of the peace agreements. MINUGUA's efforts in working with local CSOs reveal that CSOs are key players in the implementation phase. The UN must recognize that its missions are no different from those of CSOs working in a post-conflict setting. Instead of ignoring CSOs and leaving them to work on their own missions, uniting efforts with CSOs should be a core component of UN PKOs moving forward. Public education campaigns and training sessions held by the missions for CSOs are a step in the right direction that should be a requirement for UN PKOs in the future. I recommend PKOs have a department or unit dedicated to civil society and CSO cooperation. These units, which could set foot in areas with the most need, could work with the more grassroots CSOs in helping them orient themselves to the PKO's mission. The UN could help grassroots organizations through workshops or training sessions that teach them how to better run their organizations. These units could also assist CSOs in securing resources by connecting them with donors within and outside the UN network.

The value and success of UN PKOs should not be based just on the amount of human rights violations they were able to discover, or their ability to prevent the resurgence of violence, but on how they can establish peace and provide the resources necessary for locals to sustain it. Despite ONUCA and ONUSAL being deemed successes, their failure to provide the foundation necessary to foment sustainable peace makes MINUGUA the only successful UN PKO in the Central American cases. It was the only PKO with clear intentions of helping the country on a local level through its sustained engagement with local CSOs and informational programs. Its

mission in educating CSOs shows a strong inclination to resume the work the mission did, but in

a more localized effort that can reap greater benefits than the mission did.

Donor Influence

Improving the role of CSOs in the post-conflict phase also depends on improving the

relationship between donors and the CSOs to which they contribute. A common issue across all

the cases was that many donors were reluctant to work with grassroots organizations, despite

their stronger relationships with communities in greater need of the resources donors could

provide. As suggested previously, the UN could help establish better relationships between

grassroots organizations and potential donors. In this fashion, the UN could serve as the

legitimizing agent necessary to provide the trust donors need to commit to helping CSOs.

The terms donors set for beneficiaries are also important to improving the roles of CSOs

during the post-conflict period. Donors denying funds to anti-government organizations were

important in prioritizing the need for cooperation between warring parties in the conflict, but this

decision came at the cost of denying necessary resources for individuals that, regardless of what

side of the conflict they were on, needed assistance to bounce back from the devastating effects

of the civil war. Donors denying resources to poorly run grassroots organizations proved

harmful. Their inability to comprehend the impact and importance of these organizations on a

local level hindered progress in the implementation process. As Belloni noted, donors should be

more flexible and open to working with grassroots organizations. Instead of making CSOs create

new missions and adapt to their terms, donors should be equally invested and willing to make

changes to their terms to allow CSOs to develop the right agendas for their specific areas of

work. In relation to grassroots organizations, donors should consider supporting capacity

building to turn them into more efficient organizations. There is no "one size fits all" approach in achieving peace, and donors should be more mindful of this.

Conclusion

CSOs are an incredibly valuable component of the post-conflict phase of a civil war. The Central American cases reveal an increasing awareness of this idea, but there is room for improvement in all cases. Factors that determine the role of CSOs in the post-conflict phase are their role in the negotiation process, their relationship with established UN PKOs, and their relationships with donors. Improving all of these factors not only boosts the chances of the implementation process being successful, but it also boosts the image of CSOs as key components of post-conflict phases. A better influence and presence in the negotiation process leads to a more comprehensive agreement, which translates to a better working relationship with UN PKOs and better opportunities for CSOs with donors. Recognizing the importance of CSOs ensures a smoother road to democratization and development, with the final goal being sustainable peace.

My study of the Central American CSOs leaves open the opportunity to discuss other questions regarding the post-conflict phase of a civil war. One question remaining is: Does a more comprehensive peace agreement ensure a more effective implementation phase? While my research implies this, a case study spanning more countries would be needed to review how the comprehensiveness of a peace agreement translates to the implementation process's quality. A question regarding CSOs that also remains to be addressed is: How can CSOs orient themselves better during peace negotiations? Based on my case studies, the negotiation phase seems to be a critical period for CSO environments where many CSOS are either forming or are adapting to the changing conditions that lie ahead of them. Understanding the many factors that contribute to

how CSOs handle themselves amid the changes they face would be a great supplement to the

work I have done on improving the role of CSOs in this post-conflict period.

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