Deliberation in Post-Conflict Societies

Anastasia Shesterinina

Department of Political Science

The University of British Columbia

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Abstract

Few, if any, studies have considered the potential of deliberative democratic processes in societies emerging from violent civil conflict, though the application of the model of deliberative democracy to less severe cases of divided societies has found resonance with a range of theorists. Merging basic insights of deliberative democratic theory with observations in post-conflict societies and social psychology of conflict, I advance a model of post-conflict deliberation as follows. Despite little attention to post-conflict deliberative processes in the literature, these processes are not just possible or normatively desirable, but vital to post-conflict transformation. The post-conflict context, while far from the deliberative democratic ideal, provides windows of opportunity for initiation of deliberation on the most difficult dividing issues – a necessity if post-conflict societies are to transform the deadlocks of civil conflict. The post-conflict context, on the one hand, entails enduring civil violence. Hence, deliberation in this context cannot conform to the ideal deliberative conditions of inclusion, equality, and reasonableness. On the other hand, however, this context pressures the parties to find functional solutions to problems underlying and arising from violent civil conflict, which is highly difficult to achieve if deliberative conditions are not created. The initial task, therefore, is to locate entry points that would provide a platform for deliberation in post-conflict societies. Such entry points are most likely to be found in areas where the parties have had cooperative experience in the past and require cooperative work to derive indispensable mutual benefits. When these conditions are met, deliberation can be expected to tend towards the ideal and facilitate post-conflict transformation. I illustrate my argument with contrasting cases in the Georgia-Abkhazia post-conflict environment.

Theorists of deliberative democracy have, until recently, either rejected or overlooked the possibility of deliberative democracy in divided societies, not to mention those severely fractured along, particularly, ethnic lines or societies that have in the recent past emerged from violent civil conflict (O'Flynn, 2006). Deliberative democrats who have addressed divided societies have, furthermore, followed a rationality-based approach, characteristic of deliberative democratic theory, to analyze the potential of deliberative democratic processes in these societies (e.g. Addis, 2009). As a result, the analysis has focused on formal decision-making at the state level, where the model of deliberation could most easily be envisioned, in particular the institutional provisions that could facilitate rational deliberative engagement on formal state decisions (O'Neill, 2006; James, 2002; Reilly, 2002). The discussion of civil society and the public sphere has as well been largely limited to their relationship with the formal processes of the state (O'Flynn, 2006; Dryzek, 2005).

No study to date, to the best of my knowledge, has addressed the potential of deliberative democracy in societies that have emerged from violent civil conflict. The literature on deliberative democracy in divided societies outlined above comes closest to the concerns encountered in post-conflict societies and provides a departure point for the current study. Shifts in focus are needed, however, if we are to look at post-conflict societies through the lens of deliberative democracy.

First, a conventional rationality-based approach to deliberation does not speak to the post-conflict context, marked by experiences and motivations of violence. Any theory of post-conflict deliberation needs to recognize constraints and opportunities embedded in this context. Second, a concern with institutional provisions introducing deliberative democracy at the formal state level is not the most immediate one in post-conflict societies. Rather, the focus here needs to be shifted to creation of entry points for deliberation among the conflicting parties on urgent issues. Finally, while these entry points are often seized by the elites, civil society and the general public should be seen as relevant actors in their own right rather than simply in relation to the formal processes.

With these clarifications in mind, I merge basic insights of deliberative democratic theory with observations in post-conflict societies and social psychology of conflict, to advance a model of post-conflict deliberation based on the following logic.

Though deliberative processes in post-conflict societies have not been given their due attention in the literature, these processes are not only possible to envision, I argue, nor are they merely desirable in the normative sense: The post-conflict context, though far from the deliberative democratic ideal, opens windows of opportunity for initiation of deliberation among the conflicting parties on the most difficult dividing problems – a necessity if post-conflict societies are to transform the deadlocks of civil conflict and advance peace processes. The post-conflict context, on the one hand, entails enduring violence. Thus, deliberation in this context cannot conform to the ideal deliberative conditions of inclusion, equality, and reasonableness. On the other hand, however, this context pressures the conflicting parties to find functional solutions to critical problems underlying and arising from violent civil conflict, which is highly difficult to achieve if deliberative conditions are not established. The initial task, therefore, is to locate entry points that would provide a platform for deliberative processes in post-conflict societies. Such entry points are most likely to be found in areas where the conflicting parties have had cooperative experience in the past and require cooperative work to derive indispensable mutual benefits. When these conditions are present, I find, deliberation can be expected to tend towards the ideal deliberative conditions and facilitate post-conflict transformation.

In what follows, I, first, offer an empirical record and a normative account of democracy in post-conflict societies. Second, I discuss the prospect of introducing deliberation into the post-conflict context. Finally, I propose a model of deliberation in post-conflict societies and illustrate it using two contrasting examples in the Georgia-Abkhazia post-conflict environment.

Democracy in Post-Conflict Societies
Empirical Account

The core concern of this paper is the potential of deliberation in facilitating the search for solutions by the conflicting parties to problems underlying and arising from civil conflict. I define post-conflict societies as cases where a peace agreement has been determined, but the conflicting parties have not resolved their problems, freezing the peace process. Georgia is one such society, where separatist bids have taken place for over a century and still persist, especially in Abkhazia.

Democratization has been the most widely recognized and applied peacebuilding strategy in such societies since the end of the Cold War. Boutros Boutros-Ghali succinctly defined peace-building as "action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict" – arguing that these structures are democratic ones (Boutros-Ghali, 1992, 21). However, the majority of societies that have undergone post-conflict democratization, including Georgia, have fallen back to violent civil conflict.

Democratization has not succeeded in transforming violent to non-violent forms of conflict and has often exacerbated conflict due to a number of factors. First, democratization in most post-conflict cases results from external intervention rather than mobilization by internal social actors. This usually creates problems of legitimacy for a new regime. As O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986) find, for a transition to be accepted as legitimate, forces endogenous to a society should play key roles at its every stage. Second, the narrow democratization model informing intervention – what Ottaway (2007) calls the 'democratic reconstruction model' – does not address injustices likely to have spurred conflict in the first place. This all-purpose solution of constitution-making, elections within a year of the end of hostilities, institution-building, and civil society promotion as a means to transition post-conflict societies from war to peace neglects such underlying injustices. What is more, it assumes the existence of functioning states, able to exercise control over the territory and regulate the negative effects of democratization, and a national identity binding the population in spite of ethnic or other divisions, essential for non-violent democratic transition (see Huntington, 1968; Rueschemeyer et al., 1993; Rustow, 1996; Snyder, 2000). Electoral competition initiated in post-conflict societies in the absence, or weakness, of social, political, and economic institutions, furthermore, does not transform gravely antagonistic relationships sustaining conflict. According to Mansfield and Snyder (2005), it, rather, creates conditions for leading political actors to incite inter-group hatred and foster exclusion (see also Paris, 2004). In the context of high insecurity, as the security sector is yet unreformed and the conflicting parties are not fully transformed into political parties, these factors tend to exacerbate the already severe social tensions. Jarstad and Sisk (2008) demonstrate the generally adverse effects of peacebuilding and democratization on each other as these goals are approached by international actors in the post-conflict context. By giving insufficient attention or postponing apt responses to the pressing problems of peacebuilding, in particular demilitarization of politics and demobilization of soldiers, and instead focusing on the introduction of inherently competitive formal processes of democracy, international actors make possible the use of electoral mechanisms for a re-incitement of violence in post-conflict societies. This story echoes most conflicts studied here, and speaks particularly well to the case of Georgia, where post-conflict democratization has not led to conciliatory processes but, in fact, exacerbated the existing tensions between the Georgians and Abkhazians across the society.

What post-conflict societies undergoing democratization are faced with, then, is a vicious circle of perpetuating violence. Although democratization is widely regarded as a pacifying force and adopted by actors in the international community as a magic bullet to transform post-conflict societies from war to peace, problems inherent in the thorny process of democratization, imposed without due regard to peacebuilding goals, actually impede advancement of the peace processes.

Normative Account

Given the record of democratization, is democracy desirable in post-conflict societies? A conception of democracy more substantive than that currently adopted may be so.

Broadly defined, deliberative democracy is a form of political association in which "public deliberation of free and equal citizens is the core of legitimate political decision-making and self-governance" (Bohman, 1998, 401 in Held, 2006). It is best understood in procedural terms, as the process of opinion- and will-formation, in which citizens engaged in deliberation aimed at solving collective problems are expected to understand other participants, criticize them, and justify their own positions while being open to transforming their positions in light of criticism. Decisions are then made with regard to others, particularly, all those potentially affected, or significantly conditioned by them in terms of their options for action (Young, 2002). As an ideal condition, therefore, "no force except that of the better argument is exercised" and the arguments are based on reasons that all those potentially affected would agree to if asked (Habermas, 1976, 108 in Held, 2006).

How does deliberative democracy address the issues overlooked in the current approach to democratization in post-conflict societies? Legitimacy in deliberative democracy is an outcome of deliberation among equals (Cohen, 1989). The process of deliberation, defined by the force of the better argument, rather than political power or coercion, by which decisions on collectively faced problems are made among equal citizens is the source of legitimacy of both the decisions and the political system which generates them (Valadez, 2001). For Habermas, therefore, "[d]eliberative politics acquires its legitimating force from the discursive structure of an opinion- and will-formation that can fulfill its socially integrative function only because citizens expect its results to have a reasonable *quality*" (Habermas, 1998, 304, emphasis in original). That is, decisions made in the political system cannot be understood as legitimate if they do not resonate with the public opinion communicatively generated by the public of citizens. In post-conflict societies, this suggests that, even if the process of democratization is externally driven, plural deliberation aimed at collective decision-making among the members of diverse groups and identities can afford legitimacy to the polity and its decisions (James, 2002). This brings us to the issues of justice and inclusion.

Given the need to address the injustices of domination and oppression, or control over and constraints on the conditions of one's actions and well-being, that are often at the root of contemporary civil conflict, I follow Young (2002) in defining justice through the ideals of self-determination and self-development. Self-determination corresponds to the general condition of injustice – an institutional constraint of domination – and means one's ability to determine own actions free from inference and institutional relations that award differential, dominative power to some over others. Self-development corresponds to the condition of oppression, implying the ability to learn and use skills in socially recognized settings to communicate with others and maintain well-being unconstrained by unequal distribution of resources or institutional organization of power. Justice, then, refers to "the institutional conditions for promoting self-determination and self-development of a society's members," and deliberation is the process through which the injustices at the root of the conflict can be addressed and justice furthered in post-conflict societies (Young, 2002, 33).

Deliberative democracy has a potential to further justice in post-conflict societies not only by facilitating dialogue on injustices associated with civil conflict and its resulting problems, but also by placing a set of requirements on the way in which discussion and decision-making should occur. For example, one of the greatest problems of democratization in post-conflict societies has been the establishment of competitive electoral institutions which, in the context of power politics and elite control over the media, can be easily manipulated by the elites who use exclusionary discourse to gain power. The requirements, or the ideal conditions of deliberative democracy, among which inclusion is the foremost, can help post-conflict societies overcome this and other problems.

Inclusion, for Young (2002), embodies the norm of moral respect. It requires that all who are potentially affected are included in discussion and decision-making, either directly or through representation. It, furthermore, entails the norm of equality. "Not only should all those affected be … included in decision-making, but they should be included on equal terms," that is, have an equal right and effective opportunity to justify their opinions and criticize those of others unconstrained by the conditions of domination and oppression (Young, 2002, 23). This can be attained only if all participants conform to the requirement of reasonableness understood as disposition to recognize others as equals, transform opinions in light of criticism, and seek mutually acceptable decisions.

Deliberation under these conditions provides knowledge of the interests of all potentially affected and motivation to take them into account. In post-conflict societies, where interests are clustered along identities involved in conflict, deliberation in principle has the best prospect, on a general level, "of transforming the hard parameters of… identity into the soft parameters of diversity" (Addis, 2009, 59). More urgently, deliberative processes have the potential to transform gravely antagonistic relationships across society that would otherwise sustain violent civil conflict.

It is this transformation that is a necessity for post-conflict societies to overcome violence as a primary means of conflict resolution. As Saunders (2001) says, we cannot understand conflict without reference to humans fuelling it or relationships among them sustaining it. A relationship, for Saunders, is "the context in which humans integrate their insights about life" (34). Sustained dialogue is one such relationship, informed, in Habermas' terms, by the life-world that groups of people share. Relationships take place at different levels; can be of different kinds and qualities. Importantly, relationships are built on organic interactions rather than mechanistic exchanges and can change in the process and over time. At the heart of conflicts this paper looks at lie conflictual relationships based on imbalanced interaction between ethnic, religious, and other groups.

The literature on social psychology of conflict can help us understand these relationships better. As Staub (1999) demonstrates, inter-group conflict is the product of normal psychological processes in individuals and groups. These processes include the frustration of basic human needs and their subsequent destructive fulfillment through, first, degrading ideologies and scapegoating and, in consequence, harm perpetrated against other people, which can escalate into full-fledged inter-group violence and even civil war. Harmful actions do not arise simply from the frustration of basic needs, however. They are, rather, made possible by such facilitating factors as the "lack or loss of concern with the welfare of other people; a lack of empathy with people; lack of self-awareness, the ability to understand one's own motives; having a negative view of others; a sense of entitlement, a focus on one's own rights; and devaluation, fear of, and hostility toward some or all human beings" (Staub, 1999, 181).

In-group bias, or favoritism towards one's own group and negative evaluation of members of out-groups, is the key mechanism behind the psychological disposition for inter-group conflict. According to Fiske (2002), in-group bias derives from limited inter-group contact; is ambivalent, automatic, and indirect; and produces more negative evaluations of some out-groups than others. Typically, in-group bias motivates discrimination of out-groups and creates exclusion. In extreme situations, it leads to aggression towards out-groups. Brewer (2001, 2007) finds that it is possible to have in-group bias, in form of attachment and loyalty, in the absence of inter-group conflict. In-group bias, therefore, may be a necessary but not sufficient condition of inter-group conflict. It is likely to lead to extreme aggression towards out-groups and, as a result, violent conflict when the in-group is perceived to be or is in fact under threat of being disadvantaged, or competes with the out-group over the frustrated resources. Constructive inter-group contact, which increases mutual understanding through learning, and identification of common, superordinate goals are necessary to reduce in-group bias and transform conflictual inter-group relationships into cooperative ones.

Given the roots of civil conflict in antagonistic inter-group relationships, violent means of conflict resolution can only sustain these relationships and biases behind them, creating a vicious circle on a societal level that post-conflict societies need to exit. Given the possibility for relationships to transform in constructive contact, sustained deliberation resembling the ideal conditions can provide such an exit, changing the quality of relationships from conflictual to cooperative.

Potential for Deliberation in Post-Conflict Societies

Notwithstanding the perceived benefits, it is, however, unclear if it is possible to translate the deliberative ideal, to any degree, into a post-conflict reality. Can deliberation be introduced in the post-conflict context, hostile to the defining features of deliberative democracy? If so, how?

Theorists of deliberative democracy have yet to tackle these questions. As O'Flynn argues (2006), deliberative democratic theorists have been slow to respond to the pressing challenges of reducing conflict by introducing and/or deepening democracy in divided societies. James (2002), moreover, finds that there has been a disconnect between scholars of stability and those of democracy. These are, nevertheless, part and parcel of the same cluster of issues. An undemocratic but stable polity is barely a self-justifying goal, whereas democracy lacking stability, as we have seen in the discussion of post-conflict democratization, is a recipe for continued violence. A theory of post-conflict deliberation has to recognize constraints and opportunities embedded in this context.

The post-conflict context, on the one hand, is a context of enduring violence. The ideals of inclusion, equality, and reasonableness cannot be established in sufficient form in this context, as the underlying conditions for deliberation are wanting. Deliberation in societies divided across various identity lines for this reason is extremely difficult (Dryzek, 2005). If we move the discussion to severely fractured post-conflict societies, even more obstacles to deliberation arise.

The post-conflict context, as any context of transition or major societal change, is marked by uncertainty. This volatility is rooted in violence, which does not end with the beginning of the peace process, but rather spills over into the period of formal cease-fire or other peace agreement. The peace process itself adds to the volatility by creating winners and losers, with the latter likely to object to peacebuilding and democratization, the processes that offer these actors no guarantees of a sustainable power position in the future, or use the period of relative calm to gather resources and rearm. It is easier to maintain the established strategies based on might, rather than attempt at a transformation, if the future is marked by uncertainty. This uncertainty is further exacerbated by international actors who often fail to provide security guarantees for the most dangerous phase of post-conflict transition – implementation of the peace process (Walter, 2002).

In these wary circumstances, post-conflict societies have meager chances for non-violent democratization. Numerous motivations for opposition to peacebuilding and democratization and sustained violence exist. These include competition for scarce resources, security, political power, psychological status above other groups, and production of – and access to – information (James, 2004). Uncertainty about each of these still contested but potentially shareable goods cements the problem of deep-rooted mutual distrust. It is not only respect of citizens towards one another, but also initial trust necessary to move from conflictual to cooperative relationships that is limited in post-conflict societies. Conflictual relationships, thus, remain in a deadlock without a way out. In addition to antagonism among individuals and groups, moreover, experience of civil violence and trauma, including profound memories that violence provokes, can impede the mere idea of introducing deliberation in post-conflict societies, not to mention the functioning of deliberative processes. Experiences emerging from conflict are marked by deep sorrows and anger, fear for one's life and loss of hope, blame on those who have hurt and guilt for hurting or not being able to stop violence. The post-conflict context, therefore, might be the most difficult context for deliberation.

On the other hand, however, this context provides windows of opportunity for deliberative processes to initiate. The post-conflict context is characterized by a substantial number of critical problems, such as destruction of infrastructure basic to the functioning of society, high insecurity and criminal rates, and protection of and provision for internally displaced populations, that need immediate, often joint, attention and functional solutions by the conflicting parties. This context, therefore, pressures the conflicting parties to collectively respond to urgent problems underlying and arising from violent civil conflict, which are highly difficult to achieve under non-deliberative conditions where constructive, not to mention sustained dialogue is blocked by the persistence of violence on all sides of the conflict spectrum and a rigid unwillingness of the parties to talk.

Conditions for Deliberation in Post-Conflict Societies

What are the conditions that could facilitate deliberation in post-conflict societies? I argue that the initial task for domestic and international actors involved in post-conflict transformation is to locate adequate entry points for deliberation among the conflicting parties. Urgent problems that the parties face together in the post-conflict context and that require cooperative responses in order for the parties to gain indispensable mutual benefits as a result are one such entry point. In particular, problems that are most likely to promote genuine deliberation are those in areas where the conflicting parties have had cooperative experience in the past and would lose significantly if they fail to cooperate in the present. The former yields the element of initial trust needed to start deliberation and move from conflictual to cooperative relationships. The latter provides a shared, superordinate goal that both parties are interested in and that transcends the divisions of conflict due in part to its urgency and equal importance for all parties. When these conditions are met, the conflicting parties are impelled to adopt the requirements of deliberation – the ideal conditions of inclusion, equality, and reasonableness – to a degree sufficient enough to initiate the joint search for acceptable solutions to common pressing problems and ways of collectively enacting them.

These processes have a potential to build shared identities, seen as an essential element of peacebuilding and democratization. Theorists of deliberative democracy in divided societies have focused particularly on creating shared identities at a national level. As James (2002) argues, such identities should be understood with regard to within-group diversity and the possibility for group boundaries to shift over time. Identities, for James, are neither inherited nor fixed, contrary to the primordial view. Individuals can choose to change their identities, if not impeded by institutions that impose certain identities on people to, for example, deprive them of scarce goods. As a result, James concludes, democratic institutions should be designed so as to both enable group representation and mitigate potential conflict rooted, at least in part, in such deprivation.

Addis (2009), however, finds that what is at stake in the creation of overarching identities is the rigidity of boundaries that define identities. Although constructed, some identities are more durable than others. Ethnic identity is among these. It can be characterized by the hard parameters around it, implying that it is not only culturally, but also, and primarily, politically salient. Thus, the aim of deliberative processes in divided societies is to transform the hard parameters of such durable identities as ethnicity, into the soft parameters of diversity, and institutions attentive to a society's history and specific points of fracture can be designed so as to make this possible.

O'Flynn (2006), similarly, asks how people perceive themselves and how they can engage with each other through deliberation to decide on a shared identity. He argues that in the absence of overarching *national* identity citizens will not perceive themselves as bound by state authority. Neither will they want to do their part in governing themselves. National identity should, thus, be developed for the democratic state to survive. Such identity can take different forms. In ethnically divided societies, it can be ethnic or civic. Since the former is durable, even though constructed, it is the civic identity, based on the institutions of the state, that deliberation can help create.

Shared identities are as important in post-conflict societies as they are in divided societies addressed by theorists of deliberative democracy. However, these identities here cannot be found at the national level, as suggested by most theorists, since most post-conflict societies lack a clear common conception of a nation or a state. Nation- or state-hood is, in fact, what is often disputed and fought over in these societies. Furthermore, deliberative democratic theorists focus on at least partially democratized states, where democratic institutions can serve as a binding national force. Democracy, however, is non-existent or extremely weak in most post-conflict cases. The spheres where shared identities can be developed in divided societies, therefore, may not exist in severely fractured post-conflict ones. One of the few sources of shared identities in these societies is common sets of goals that the conflicting parties can find in response to problems underlying and arising from violent civil conflict. It is these problems, urgent, shared, and requiring cooperation to attain results critical for all parties, that actors engaged in post-conflict transformation should encourage, and even press, the conflicting parties to tackle in a deliberative manner.

When such entry points to deliberation are located, actors involved in post-conflict trans-formation should arrange conditions that would facilitate the process of deliberation. Otherwise, deliberation will not take place. Cease-fires or other peace agreements, while often unsuccessful in bringing conflict to a conclusion, present alternatives to violence (Höglund, 2008). These basic elements of the peace process, driven by a combination of internal and external forces, can supply domestic and international fora for deliberation. If carefully devised and presented, with regard to the vulnerabilities of all parties involved, such fora can signal the presence of an environment free from coercion and fear. Neutral sites of engagement and mediation are vital to this environment. A secure forum for deliberation will be attractive to the conflicting parties who need to solve their pressing problems collectively.

A Model of Post-Conflict Deliberation

The model of post-conflict deliberation that arises from this discussion aims at specifying facilitating conditions for initiation of deliberative processes in the post-conflict context. On the one hand, a context of enduring violence, it is hostile to the very premises of deliberative democracy. On the other hand, it requires joint responses from the conflicting parties. Urgent problems that the conflicting parties face together and must solve collectively to gain mutual indispensable benefits can serve as entry points for post-conflict deliberation. As entry points are located, given the endemic insecurity of the post-conflict context, the task is to find neutral sites of engagement and mediation. Domestic and international fora of the peace process can satisfy these conditions. Finally, non-argumentative expression should be tolerated to enable sincerity of the participants.

Illustrations: Georgia-Abkhazia

Does this model hold in post-conflict cases? The following sections will briefly look at the application of the model in the cases of internally displaced persons and electricity production in the Georgia-Abkhazia post-conflict environment (see map below).

After a century of protectorate and rule by the Russian Empire, Abkhazia, an area in South Caucasus, came under Georgian rule in 1918. A short period of autonomy that Georgia granted to Abkhazia followed increasingly oppressive policies as the Russification of Georgia by the Soviet Union progressed and Georgian nationalism grew. Throughout the Soviet period, Abkhazia called Moscow to permit secession from Georgia. With these requests rejected and oppression sustained, an independence movement developed in Abkhazia. As the Soviet Union crumbled, Georgia was quick to declare independence, rejecting Abkhazian exit. Tensions between Abkhazia and Georgia escalated thereafter, culminating in an armed conflict in 1992, with violence persistent throughout the 1990s and into 2000s despite the Russia-mediated cease-fire and involvement of international organizations including the United Nations. Since then, the parties have met on various occasions

Map: Georgia

(Map No. 3780 Rev. 5, United Nations, Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Cartographic Section, Aug. 2004)

but the peace process has been frozen. Apart from the overarching issue of the status of Abkhazia, on which progress cannot be made due to rigidity of the conflicting parties' positions, two areas of particular importance have arisen out of their discussions. I look at these areas below.

To clarify, the actors I study in this case are high level officials of Georgia and Abkhazia. This is not to say that other actors, such as civil society and the general public, are not important. Theorists of deliberative democracy in divided societies have argued that these societal actors are vital in their relationship to the formal processes of the state and political elites. O'Flynn (2006), for example, sees civil society as a space for networks that cut across identity lines to be built and argues that one of the foremost functions of civil society consists in ensuring that political representatives on a state level are accountable and responsive to public opinion.

Dryzek (2005), on the other hand, sees civil society as most suited to the need for cross-cutting discourses. He separates state decision-making from deliberation and locates the latter "in engagement of discourses in the public sphere at a distance from the sovereign state" (220). With this division, Dryzek argues, deliberative democracy can process contentious, identity-associated problems, which cannot be properly addressed through the institutions of the state, in a politics of engagement in the public sphere. The focus of deliberation here can be shifted from particular, often durable identities, such as ethnicity, to specific needs – and discussed under broader identities. This is the immediate goal, similar to one I have identified in post-conflict societies. The ultimate goal, then, is impact public deliberation can have on the state by changing the terms of discourse.

In the case of Georgia-Abkhazia, this impact cannot yet be observed. Parallel efforts at the levels of the officials, civil society, and the general public have been taken to address both general and more urgent issues, such as the status of Abkhazia, provision for internally displaced persons, and joint electricity production. However, discussions at the levels of civil society and the general public have not reached the high level officials (see Nan, 1999, for an analysis of the relationship between first- and second-track initiatives; also, Mikhelidze and Pirozzi, 2008). Initiatives at each

level, notwithstanding, have often succeeded in engaging the particular audiences targeted in these initiatives. Meetings, trainings, and workshops, among other activities, organized by domestic and international organizations to foster dialogue have helped solve the more urgent problems of the participants engaged and, creating a better understanding of the participants' respective positions, transform their relationships from primarily conflictual to at least in part cooperative. Thus facilitating post-conflict transformation at the broader population level, I argue, actors in civil society and the general public should be taken as crucial in their own right rather than merely in relation to the formal processes of the state. Yet, given the constraints of this paper, I focus on the level of high officials to illustrate my model of post-conflict deliberation.

Internally Displaced Persons

On September 27, 1993, Sukhum/i[1], the capital of Abkhazia, occupied by Georgia for over a year, fell, and the Georgian forces were removed from the area. In the process, "the majority of the pre-war Georgian population [was] displaced in chaotic circumstances," and the first major wave of internally displaced persons (IDPs) flew form Abkhazia primarily to Georgia (CR, 2010). At the time, both sides lent accusations of genocide against each other and, in 1999, the Georgian officials accused Abkhazia of ethnic cleansing as a result of the 1992-93 conflict internationally.

The second wave of IDPs, the vast majority of the Georgian population of Abkhazia, fled Abkhazia after the major hostilities that took place in the Georgian populated Gali region in 1998 (ICG, 2009). Some of these people had earlier returned to Gali after the initial displacement. The flight resulted from intensive week-long fighting between Abkhazian militias and Georgian armed groups, including guerillas and Interior Ministry troops, and frequent sporadic attacks that the Georgian population had experienced in the Gali region throughout the last four years. For example, in early 1995, Abkhazian militias conducted raids on Georgian villages in the Gali region, leading to a number of deaths and the arrest of hundreds of locals (CR, 2010). At the same time, Georgian armed groups terrorized the local population for non-compliance. In early 1996, Abkhazian militias periodically swept through Gali, resulting in the back and forth movement of IDPs across the Ingur/i River, the border between Georgia and Abkhazia. Violence spread to the capital and other urban areas of Abkhazia a year later. An estimated 250,000 were displaced as a result, with thousands unable to return until this day (AI, 2010).

As early after the 1992-93 armed conflict[2] as in March, 1994, IDPs began to pose a serious problem for the Georgian government, unable to calm down and provide for the large numbers of IDPs flowing from Abkhazia or resolving the issue by negotiating IDP return with the Abkhazian officials. In 1994, together with the groups opposing Georgian cooperation with Russia, IDPs, in large numbers, demonstrated in Tbilisi. While some were able to return to Abkhazia unofficially, the lack of progress in official negotiations subsequently led to demonstrations on the border. The demonstrations and inability of the Georgian government to adequately respond to the demands of the IDP populations undermined the stability of the Georgian position as an independent state domestically and internationally.

On April 4, 1994, shortly after the demonstrations had started, representatives of Georgia, Abkhazia, Russia, and the United Nations signed a framework agreement on the voluntary return of IDPs in Moscow. Abkhazia, however, did not fulfill the requirements of the agreement, introducing hostile policies towards IDPs who, after a few official returns within the framework of the

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[1] Due to the difference in the pronunciation and writing of proper nouns in Georgian and Abkhazian languages, I use the neutral spelling, for example, Sukhum/i and Ingur/i, to avoid favoring a side in the conflict.

[2] I focus on the period between 1992 and 1999, after which the resolution of the issue has been frozen and the conflict has taken on a more pronounced international dimension in the form of the Russian role and interests in the Georgia-Abkhazia conflict in particular and the area in general.

agreement, had spontaneously returned unofficially with the assistance from Russia (Gegeshidze, 2008). Subsequent talks on the return of IDPs, including the Geneva talks under the auspices of the United Nations and private discussions between the leaders of Georgia and Abkhazia, froze as Abkhazia continued to demand sovereignty and an equal relationship with Georgia and put forth a precondition for the return of IDPs, that its political and legal status be defined (CR, 2010). What is more, as Abkhazia adopted a new constitution as a sovereign state subject to international law, Russia, with the support of Georgia and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), imposed sanctions on Abkhazia, which forbade adult males from crossing the border with Russia, restricted trade, and inhibited telecommunications and transport to and from Abkhazia. This move severely isolated Abkhazia from both Georgia and the rest of the region and cut the Abkhazian population off its main sources of economic survival, instilling mistrust of Georgia, Russia, and international actors among the Abkhazian officials and the broader population (Kvarchelia, 2008).

As a result, further attempts taken by these actors to engage Abkhazia on the issue of IDP return, such as a confidence building meeting in Athens in 1998, failed. Apart from the problem of mistrust, these attempts were ineffective as IDP return would restore a pre-war demography with a Georgian majority and make Abkhazia only more vulnerable to loosing its hard-won position.

Electricity

A contrasting outcome followed engagement among the Georgian and Abkhazian officials on the issue of electricity production. The Ingur/i Hydro Power Plant facility, situated on the two sides of the Ingur/i River separating Abkhazia from Georgia, was constructed in 1980. During the Soviet period, when Abkhazia became an Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR) within the Georgian SSR, little consideration was taken of placing the different, essential parts of the Power Plant along the border between the to-be warring Georgia and Abkhazia. In 1992, when the armed conflict started, both were dependent on the Ingur/i complex for electricity, and have remained so since then. The complex provides over 40% of Georgia's electricity requirements and is the only source of electricity for Abkhazia (EC, 2003). As the complex consists of the dam situated on the Georgian side and five power plants on the side of Abkhazia, neither party could run the complex without the cooperation from the other. Even during heavy fighting, the Georgian and Abkhazian officials, thus, maintained electricity generation to the benefit of both sides. And even though the parties have not been able to agree on the terms of the peace settlement, the only way for them to benefit from the complex and keep the essential electricity generated was for them to agree on the terms of joint management and financing of the complex (Garb and Whiteley, 2001).

As official negotiations on the conflict started, the Geneva talks above all, senior officials from both sides, together with the Russian commander of the CIS forces, were able to establish an informal structure of joint management of the complex. According to this structure, the Georgian Ministry of Fuel and Energy and the Abkhazian Chernomorgenergo State Stocholding Company jointly appoint the director of the complex and approve all important decisions on a daily basis. In 1998, the two sides had to negotiate the terms of external assistance to the complex, leading to the European support for repair and restoration (Garb, 1999; EC, 2003). As a result, this issue has led the peace process, as the only area where truly cooperative agreement was possible and achieved.

Discussion

Why do we see such contrasting results in the similarly important cases of IDP return and electricity production? Why have the parties been unable to adequately respond to the former but achieved deliberation and tackled the latter with relative ease, notwithstanding the obstacles associated with conflict? I find that the facilitating conditions for post-conflict deliberation that I advance in this paper have not been sufficiently met in the case of IDP return, as opposed to that of electricity production.

First, deliberation, with a high potential for resolving an issue in the post-conflict context, is most likely to initiate on pressing problems that conflict creates and that the conflicting parties are affected by in similar ways. Georgia, however, appears to have suffered more substantially in the case of IDP return than Abkhazia. Georgia's inability to sufficiently provide for the displaced populations and negotiate their safe return with Abkhazia undermined Georgia's newly received, internationally recognized status as an independent state. In important part, this status implies the ability of the state to protect its own population. The IDP issue has demonstrated the opposite for Georgia. Abkhazia, on the other hand, although depleted in terms of the population with the major flows of IDPs, might have even benefited from the flows. The displaced populations have mostly consisted of ethnic Georgians, who constituted the majority in pre-war Abkhazia. A return of this group of people to Abkhazia would undermine Abkhazia's attempts to become a sovereign democratic country. Internally, this would shift the voting patterns preferred by the Abkhazia officials. Externally, it would support Georgia's claims to Abkhazia and international pressure on Georgia to protect its population there. The case of IDP return, therefore, does not meet the first criterion.

The problem of electricity production, on the other hand, impacts the parties equally. Both have depended on the Ingur/i Hydro Power Plant complex for most of the electricity supplies and have recognized the need for electricity for their respective state-building purposes. Despite these conflicting agendas, the parties have been forced to find joint solutions to the problem as a result.

Second, the problems most likely to serve as entry points for post-conflict deliberation require cooperative responses from the parties in order for them to gain mutual and, importantly, indispensable benefits. In the case of IDP return, cooperation between Georgia and Abkhazia on repatriation would asymmetrically benefit Georgia. Apart from lifting the burden of provision for IDPs, the Georgian officials have a strategic conflict-related interest in the return of the Georgian population to Abkhazia, which would re-establish a demography disproportionately favoring the Georgians there. Resolution of this problem, therefore, would be highly beneficial, if not essential for Georgia's state- and nation-building agenda. This is not the case for Abkhazia, however. As I discussed, extensive return would make the Abkhazians a minority within Abkhazia.

Electricity provision, on the other hand, is clearly a mutually cooperative enterprise in the Georgia-Abkhazia case, since the Ingur/i complex is spread across the two parties' territories and requires joint generation. It is, furthermore, indispensable for both parties and their state-building efforts. This issue, therefore, meets the second condition for post-conflict deliberation.

Third, successful post-conflict deliberation is likely if the parties have had cooperation on the problem at hand in the past. The nature of the case of IDP return cancels this issue out of the discussion. The problem is a purely post-conflict phenomenon in the Georgia-Abkhazia context, and the parties have not had to address it in the past, individually or collectively. Operation of the Ingur/i complex, though dominated by skilled labor from Georgia, has always been a cooperative endeavor, creating trust between individuals working on the problem in the post-conflict context.

Finally, even if these conditions are met, post-conflict deliberation might not take root due to insecurity of the post-conflict context and motivations and emotions associated with violence. Actors involved in post-conflict transformation, therefore, need to provide fora responsive to this environment. Russia and international organizations, such as the United Nations, have driven the Georgia-Abkhazia peace process, providing fora for deliberation. The Geneva talks in particular offered a safe environment where the parties were able to relatively freely express their positions, including fervent ones. However, the talks did not start with the more urgent concerns, electricity production being one, but rather tackled most of the important issues, above all Abkhazia's status and IDP return, at once. The talks quickly stagnated as a result, and electricity, the only issue that saw substantial progress, moved to other fora.

Conclusion

Post-conflict societies have much to accomplish in transforming to peace and democracy. In the long run, deliberative democracy could help post-conflict societies overcome the problems of legitimacy, justice and inclusion, rife in the current approach to post-conflict democratization, in part due to scarce attention to the equally important aims of peacebuilding. More immediately, deliberation is needed in post-conflict societies to transform relationships at the heart of conflict.

Theoretically, these arguments contribute to a broader conversation on deliberation in non-ideal deliberative democratic conditions by introducing the overlooked post-conflict context into the conversation. Policy-wise, my contribution to the discussion of post-conflict transformation lies in specifying facilitating conditions for post-conflict deliberation to initiate. The model I advance identifies some of such essential conditions, and could serve as a guideline for actors involved in post-conflict transformation to help post-conflict societies move the peace processes forward.

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