



SHUR Newsletter No 1

On 1 July 2006, the European research project **Human Rights in Conflict: the Role of Civil Society (SHUR)**, was launched.

The European Union has identified peace-making, the respect for human rights and the development of civil society as key priorities in its external relations. Non-governmental actors have become key players in ethno-political conflicts, both as violators and as promoters of human rights. Yet neither have the precise inter-relationships underpinning the human rights-civil society-conflict nexus been fully understood, nor has the potential complementarity between non-governmental and EU actors been sufficiently explored.

Shur overall objective is to analyse the impact of civil society on ethno-political conflicts through a focus on human rights, and to identify the means to strengthen the complementary actions of civil society and EU actors. It does so by analysing four case studies in the European neighbourhood: Bosnia-Herzegovina, Cyprus, Turkey-Kurds, and Israel-Palestine. Through the comparative examination of these cases, Shur will draw-up policy guidelines tailored to governmental and non-governmental civil society action.

Shur research team is composed by the following institutions:

- **Luiss University**, Italy
Center for the Study of Human Rights (Cersdu)
- **University of Birmingham**, United Kingdom
Department of Political Science and International Studies (POLSIS)
- **University of Marburg**, Germany
Centre for Conflict Studies (CCS)
- **Maison des Sciences de l'Homme**, France
- **European Public Law Center**, Greece
- **Lunaria**, Italy

- **International Peace Research Institute** (PRIO), Norway
- **University of Oslo**, Norway
Norwegian Centre for Human Rights (NCHR)

See more on SHUR's website: <http://www.luiss.it/shur>

This is the first SHUR newsletter that is circulated among scholars, activists, and policy-makers that are working in the area of conflict studies, civil society, and human rights. Shur newsletters will keep you updated, with reports and working papers, on the development of this 3 year project. You have been included in this internal mailing list because we thought you might be interested. In case you do not want to receive the newsletter anymore, please reply to this e-mail with a unsubscribe subject. We will appreciate any feedback or suggestion on future event or publication related to the issues of SHUR research, i.e. the nexus conflict/civil society/human rights. Please send them to shur@luiss.it

SHUR working paper series

Shur working paper 1 ***Conflict and Human Rights: A Theoretical Framework***

Emily Pia and Thomas Diez, University of Birmingham

This paper is written as part of a wider project investigating the link between human rights and ethno-political conflicts, and the role of civil society in positively transforming such conflicts through the advocacy, institutionalisation and observance of human rights. In the first section, our aim is to contribute to such a more thorough theorisation and to pave the way for an empirical assessment of the linkage between human rights and conflicts in a number of case studies. The next section introduces a discursive definition of conflict, central to which is the concept of "securitisation". We link this to a literature review of different conceptualisations of conflict change, which we argue are, often implicitly, linked to specific, substantive understandings of the nature of conflicts. The third section provides a brief overview of different forms of human rights, and most crucially differentiates between individual and group rights. We argue that neither form of human rights can be reduced to the other, but that they stand in tension with each other, and that the challenge lies in the creation of spaces for the articulation of group rights that do not rely on a form of Othering and violate individual human rights. As will become clear in our final section, this is central to the relationship between human rights and conflicts, and indeed often neglected in interventions on behalf of a specific "ethnic" group. In this final section, we advance a series of hypotheses about the linkage between human rights and conflict, which we argue can be positive under certain conditions and if human rights are articulated without being intrinsically tied to a specific group. However,

we also argue that in practice, the advocacy of human rights often has adverse effects if these conditions are not met.

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Shur working paper 2 **Conflict and Human Rights: A Gender Analysis**

Diana Copper, LUISS

With the end of the Cold War and the recrudescence of ethnic conflicts throughout the world, the focus of conflict studies has shifted from realist paradigms to a more complex and multifaceted way of understanding war, introducing variables previously underplayed, such as gender and race. Feminist scholarship, moreover, has expanded to the domain of international relations; until very recently highly resistant to gender as an explanatory tool for inter state relations and conflict. It is widely, if still insufficiently acknowledged therefore that gender is a key variable for explaining, understanding and ultimately transforming armed conflict. Gender is also a key dynamic for the intersection between understanding and halting conflict, defining and securing human rights in conflict situations, as well as postulating and explaining the role of civil society in the context of war. Gender, therefore, is a productive analytical lens within the SHUR project, building theoretical and empirical bridges between the three pillars of this endeavour: conflict, human rights and civil society

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Events

- ❖ **Facing Violence: Justice, Religion, and Conflict Resolution. Forum 2007**
<http://www.rockroseinstitute.org/>
- ❖ **Human Rights Watch International Film Festival**
<http://www.hrw.org/iff/>
- ❖ **Capacity for Peace and Democracy in Palestine**
http://www.cbiworld.org/Pages/Training_CPDP.htm
- ❖ **Peacebuilding and Trauma Recovery: Integrated Strategies in Post-War Reconstruction**
<http://www.du.edu/con-res/center/February2007Conference.htm>

Recent publications on SHUR themes

Goodhand, Jonathan. (2006). *Aiding Peace? The Role of NGOs in Armed Conflict*. Burton on Dunsmore: ITDG Publishing.

The role non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are playing in the international response to armed conflict is growing. Previously offering mainly support to

development aid in a context of peace, NGOs and international NGOs has increasingly turned in the nineties to be relevant actors in the context of war. The final wave of war on terror has only accentuated a tendency of NGOs to be tightly linked, if not embedded into war economy. Within this scenario, the politicisation of NGOs activity cannot be avoided. Yet the studies on the exact function played by NGOs in conflict situations are still insufficient.

Goodhand's *Aiding Peace?* investigates the new functions acquired by NGOs in the context of war. Produced in association with the International Peace Academy, the book is based on an examination of a fairly large set of case studies (i.e. Afghanistan; Azerbaijan-Armenia; Kyrgyzstan; Liberia; Moldova; Nepal; Sri-Lanka). From mitigating the effect of war to helping to end violence, the non-governmental actors studied by Goodhand provide a much needed overview of the new interrelation between local conflict and international intervention. But this is a valuable study also for a second reason: It is the product of a nice combination of empirical findings coming from the author's activist experience and theoretical considerations coming from his scholarly research. It will thus be a significant point of reference for SHUR research.

(Raffaele Marchetti)

Spini, Debora. (2006). *La Società Civile Postnazionale (Post-national Civil Society)*. Rome: Meltemi Editore.

In the last two decades, the growing weakness and the ineffectiveness of national-states have highlighted the emergence of a global civil society as crucial factor for enhancing democracy at the global level. Debora Spini explores the role and the possibilities for a post-national civil society in a perspective of democratic control over emerging processes of globalisation.

According to her, any reflection on Global Civil Society needs to pay attention to the heritage of Modern political thought. In particular, she appeals to the Hegelian system of needs and the Habermasian idea of public sphere as the starting points for any contemporary analysis of civil society.

At a global level, a post-national civil society has to face new challenges. According to Spini, it is difficult to overcome these challenges without considering that contemporary notions of Global Civil Society lacks a network of guarantees able to protect civil society actors from the power of individuals, states and super-national organisations. At the same time, the emergence of a vital and dynamic post-national civil society cannot represent the only guarantee for the future of politics.

This work offers a precious analysis of the theoretical and normative content of contemporary notions of Global Civil Society. For this reason, it represents an important resource for students and scholars that intend to approach the issues related to the emergence of a global civil society from the side of political theory and social philosophy.

(Valentina Gentile)