Human Rights Activism and the (De-)securitization of the 'Other'

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Abstract

The article contributes to the scholarly debate through casting light on the (de-)securitizing character of human rights invocations by civil society organizations (CSOs) in ethno-political conflicts. The securitization concept is an innovative tool for understanding the effects of human rights activism on inter-group relationships: A securitizing move asserts an existential threat to a reference object and demands all necessary means to prevent it. Securitization reinforces the hostile 'self'-'other' conflict divide and, thus, contributes to violent escalation. Reversing securitization necessitates de-securitizing communication challenging the portrayal of the 'other' as a threat. Asking under which conditions human rights CSOs issue a securitizing or de-securitizing move, puts the interface between contextual factors, organizational behavior, and political opportunity structure at the center of interest. The empirical part examines two human rights organizations in the Zapatista conflict, highlighting the influence of the social capital from which the CSOs emerge and the applied discursive strategies.

Keywords

Human Rights, Securitization, Conflict Transformation, Ethno-political Conflict.

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Introduction

The nexus between ethno-political conflicts and civil society is increasingly being recognized by academics and international policy-makers alike. In the aftermath of the Cold War, ethno-political conflicts, where the incompatibility at the conflict's core relates to identity groups self-defined in ethnic terms and their invocation of contesting needs and interests (see Gurr 2000: 53 pp. and Horrowitz 2000), have become a dominant cause of mass political violence (Wimmer 2004). Studying possible pathways for reconciliation, recent research emphasizes that civil society organizations (CSOs) are a force to be reckoned in the progression of ethno-political conflicts. Hence, empirical evidence, drawn particularly from the Balkans in the 1990s, demonstrates that CSOs are key players that might not only act as drivers for peaceful change, but also entrench status quo or even fuel discords further (Marchetti and Tocci 2011a, Kaldor and Muro-Ruíz 2003, Belloni 2001, Rüb 2000, Tocci and Kaliber 2011). The question at hand is not whether, but how policy-makers should partner with civil society. Scholarly debate now attempts to discern which CSOs are conflict-fuelling, with the overall goal to mitigate their effects and to reinforce civil society engagement spurring peaceful transformation (Pishchikova and Izzi 2011: 50, Paffenholz 2010, Forster and Mattner 2006).

This article examines two CSOs advocating for human rights in the ethno-political conflict between the Mexican state and indigenous communities between the uprising of the Ejército Zapatista Liberación Nacional (EZLN) in 1994 and the final blow of the San Andrés peace talks in late 1996. The so-called Zapatista conflict in the federal state of Chiapas is regarded as a prototype for civil society engagement in conflicts (see Mattiace 1997: 32, Collier 2005). Violent clashes between the Mexican state and indigenous communities, organizing in the Zapatista movement, provoked several clusters of civil society activities throughout Mexico which remarkably influenced the conflict's development (see Bob 2005). Much ink has been spilled over the role of the Zapatista supporter network in keeping the struggle for autonomy alive (see i.e. Olesen 2004b). Promising legitimacy and increased international awareness (see Risse and Sikkink 2008: 5, also Franklin 2008), human rights were adopted as central frame at that time by the consolidating Mexican civil society (Stavenhagen 2003). Mushrooming human rights activities called national and international attention to the violent escalation in Southern Mexico and, by this means, significantly influenced the ratio of conflict actor's behavior. Two organization were particularly important as they both represented regional hubs for civil society engagement: The Human Rights Center Fray Bartolomé de las Casas (CDHFBC/FrayBa) established in 1989 on an initiative of the Catholic Diocese in Chiapas and became a pivotal source for information on the conflict and regional port of call for national and international human rights organizations after the outbreak of the violent conflict in 1994. Enlace Civil was founded in 1996 on the initiative of indigenous communities organized within the newly created Municipios Autónomos Rebeldes Zapatistas (Rebel Zapatista Autonomous Municipalities – MAREZ). The organization established as the major hub for the national and international solidarity network in support of the Zapatistas. Albeit both organizations operated within the Chiapanecan conflict context and the same political opportunity structure (POS), the effect of their human rights work differs significantly: While FrayBa's human rights invocations resemble a de-securitizing move calling for inter-group reconciliation, the activities of Enlace Civil rather issued a securitizing move reinforcing hostile inter-group stereotypes and counteracting conflict transformation.

Grasping the process by which contextual factors, the POS, organizational identity and framework of action determined the (de-)securitizing character of the human rights organizations in the midst of the Zapatista conflict shall allow inferences on generalizable patterns and, thus, stimulate further theory-building. For this purpose, the article is divided in five sections. The first section presents and discusses key theoretical concepts, building on previous research by the European SHUR project[42]. The article proceeds introducing the research framework and the background of the Zapatista conflict to the reader. The fourth and the fifth section present the findings of the in-depth case analysis and analyze the conditional mechanisms. The article concludes by two sets of hypotheses on the conditions that determine the role of civil society organizations in conflict transformation processes.

Theoretical Concepts

Securitization and Conflict Transformation

Although an accruing body of literature has led to a broad variety of meanings, conflict transformation is distinguished from other approaches in the field of peace and conflict studies since it perceives conflict as endemic to social systems and asks for the conditions of prevailing conflict systems. The focus is on deeper structural, cultural and long-term-relational aspects that move the social system producing patterns of violence to a peaceful system where conflicts are handled constructively (Mitchell 2002, Botes 2003, Austin et al. 2004, Baechler 2004, Kriesberg 2004). The approach, thus, analytically grasps the kind of transformation human rights activism in conflict often envisions (see e.g. García-Durán 2010, Tate 2007, Lederach 1995).

Approaches to conflict transformation differ with respect to their primary target dimension and subsequent strategies, ranging from structural transformation of societal institutions to relational and actor-centered approaches (Botes 2003: 5, Väyrynen 1991: 163). Understanding ethno-political conflicts as discursive in nature, conflictual discourses constructing incompatibilities and hostile stereotypes are regarded as the central dynamic that moves conflicts from situations where conflicts are debated in the political sphere into stages of renewed violence (see Jabri 1996, Fearon and Laitin 2000). Accordingly, a social-constructivist perspective on systemic conflict transformation asks for the discourses that construct hostile inter-group relationships. The perspective implies that conflict systems giving rise to violence only appear if positions are referred to as incompatible and mutual exclusive, so that material issues might be at the core of interest incompatibilities, but they do not constitute a conflict in itself (Bonacker et al. 2011). Thus, the discursive terrain in which antagonistic identity positions are constructed is understood as decisive in explaining why a certain difference (e.g. different ethnic identities) transforms into a (violent) destructive conflict (cf. Sen 2006). In contrast to actor-centered approaches which exclusively focus on actors and their behavior, a systemic approach draws attention to the self-referentiality of conflicts and postulates that they escalate due to effects that the actors cannot understand nor control (Bernshausen and Bonacker 2011: 24). Thus, systemic approaches not only look at

[42] *SHUR. Human Rights in Conflicts: The Role of Civil Society*. STREP project funded by the European Commission. Website: www.luiss.it/shur. The project was based at LUISS University and involved seven European research institutions with over 20 researchers. The results of the project's work between 2006 and 2009 were published in the monograph: Marchetti and Tocci (eds) (2011a): *Civil Society, Conflicts and the Politicization of Human Rights*, Tokyo: United Nations University Press. A related publication is Marchetti and Tocci (eds) (2011b): *Conflict Society and Peacebuilding*, New Delhi: Routledge

conflicts from the perspective of the actor but also incorporate the process perspective, which puts more emphasis on the dynamics of conflicts.

Conflicts arise when incompatibilities between selves and others are communicated. Once they emerge, a social system establishes that re-produces these boundaries and continues conflict. Addressing violent and destructive ethno-political conflicts needs the transformation of hostile inter-group relationship that renders substantial negotiations about the societal system as impossible (Lederach 1997: 34-35, Bonacker et al. 2011: 16, also Dukes 1999). Restructured relationships – in Lederach's terms sustainable reconciliation – form in their totality new patterns, processes, and structures that manage conflicts constructively, enable the discursive revision of identity frames, and create "new social relations, institutions, and visions" (Väyrynen 1999: 151). However, re-articulated identities need to develop from within the conflict discourse and should not be imposed from outside to ensure that the new narrative truly integrates society and does not appear as a cultural alien constructing a new other within a different form of particularity (see Gheciu 2006: 109). Therefore, the focus civil society engagement within the conflict appears to be of high analytical relevance.

The discursive positioning of threats and the consequences concerning the self/other dimension at the core of the securitization theory appears to be a useful analytical tool to comprehend such conflict transformation processes (c.f. Bernshausen and Bonacker 2011). Developed by the so-called Copenhagen School, the securitization theory claims that any issue may turn into a security issue, if an actor presents it as an existential threat to a reference object. Following John Austin's philosophy of language, the mere speech act – uttering security – changes the situation and transforms an issue from e.g. being an economic question, into a security problem (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998: 23, Balzacq 2011). Consequently, security is understood as the performative effect of speech acts and not as something that can be defined objectively (ibid: 31, Roe 2004: 281). Security problems are distinguished from other issues since they endanger the self-determination and possibly even the mere existence of a societal unit (Roe 2004: 281). As survival is at stake, the securitizing actor claims that the issue needs to be shifted from *normal politics* to *emergency politics* (Jutila 2006: 168, Balzacq 2011). Thus, security is "the move which takes politics beyond the normal rules of the game" (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998: 23). The use of all necessary means, in turn, breaches the institutionalized rules of normal politics (Buzan & Wæver 2003: 71; Gromes and Bonacker 2007: 2). This means entering an unconstrained situation where combatants try to function at maximum efficiency in relation to a clearly defined aim, the "loser is forced to submit and the outcome is defined in polar terms: victory-defeat" (Wæver 1995: 53-54).

However, it is decisive to distinguish between a *securitizing move* and *securitization*. While asserting an existential threat and requesting extraordinary measures constitutes a securitizing move, securitization only occurs if an audience accepts the allegation and approves a response by emergency measures (Roe 2004: 281). Subsequently, the securitizing move fails when the addressed audience does not agree on the threat and/or the proposal to use extraordinary means. This emphasizes that the impact of securitizing moves is not pre-determined (Gromes and Bonacker 2007: 4). In a nutshell, securitization means that an issue or an actor is framed as threat to a referent object and consists of two constitutive components: The mere claim that a threat to survival exists coupled with the demand for extraordinary measures (securitizing move) and the acceptance of

the claim by the addressed audience (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998: 25). Proclaiming a threat to society, reversely, constructs a reified, monolithic form of societal identity being threatened, challenging narratives of heterogeneity and negotiability (Williams 2003: 519). Thus, securitization rests essentially on social constructivist insights and Carl Schmitt's hazardous theory of the political stating that a particular issue becomes political "if it is sufficiently strong to group human beings according to friend and enemy" (Schmitt 1996 [1932]:37 and Williams 2003: 516). Two conditions are required for successful securitization: The internal, linguistic-grammatical, which requires to follow the rule of the act, and the external, contextual and social urging the speaker to hold a position from which the act can be made (Buzan et al., 1998: 32, Balzacq 2005: 172, and Huysmans 2006).

Fundamental criticism has been put forward against the concept of securitization raising to question the coherence of the theory and provoking intense academic debate. On a conceptual level, it has been particularly emphasized that the central dimensions political sphere and state of emergency, the oscillation between which the (de-)securitization process describes, are severely under-theorized and that their distinction appears analytically blurred. The respective context seems decisive in order to define the realm of the political and the state of emergency, but the strong emphasis on speech acts precludes such analysis. Concentrating on the securitizing speech of dominant actors, institutionally authorized to speak on behalf of the collective, further mutes subordinated voices and the gender perspective, as well as it precludes other forms of security representation like images (McDonald 2008: 564 pp., also Hansen 2000, Williams 2003 and Bigo 2002). The sole focus on the moment of intervention cannot grasp the construction of security over time through a range of incremental processes or 'little security nothings' (see Huysmans 2011). This underestimates the Foucauldian perspective on the role of bureaucratic professionalization, institutional practices and struggles inside institutions (Bigo 2002: 73, Foucault 1969). Besides, conceptualizing securitization as an inter-subjective practice, on the one hand, and the strong reference to a single securitizing actor, on the other hand, appears to be contradictory. The classic concept of the Copenhagen School calls not only the securitizing move, but also the process of securitization a speech act (Gromes and Bonacker 2007: 4, McDonald 2008: 572). Balzacq (2005), thus, claims that the logics of illocutionary acts – the act performed in articulating a locution – and perlocutionary acts – the consequential effects that the utterances may cause – are confused (Austin, 1962: 14–15, Searle 1968, Balzacq 2005: 176, see also Butler 1997). Either security is a speech act, reducing it to an illocutionary act or self-referential practice, in which case perlocution with the related acquiescence of the audience is abandoned, or the concept of security is a perlocutionary effect, in which case the response of the audience to the speech act is decisive. Yet, the addressed audience and the relative power positions involved are not concerned or severely under-theorized (Balzacq 2005: 175-176). Speaking security as a conventional practice according to universal principles neglects the context-dependency of security discourses and the meaning they produce. Having euro-centric origin, securitization rests on the commitment to the idea that security is constituted in oppositional terms, wherein identity is determined by the designation of threatening others, setting the implicit logics of exclusion and inclusion as timeless and inevitable (see Balzaqc 2005, 2011, Stritzel 2012, McDonald 2008: 578 pp.). According to the Welsh School, the framing of security as the failure of normal politics rather than recognizing it as a site of contestation and therefore for – even emancipatory – change finally implies a strong normative positioning (Browning and McDonald 2011: 12 pp.).

Despite the severe critiques on the concept's ability to explain the construction of security, the increase in spread and depth of securitization can indicate the level of conflict escalation (see Bonacker et al. 2011: p. 17). Securitizing moves are communicative act by which actors constitute themselves as being threatened by something or someone and establish a conflict system (Bernshausen and Bonacker 2011: 27). As social processes, conflicts materialize from threat communication. The more widely accepted securitizing moves become and the more existential the threat is constructed to be, the more intense the conflict becomes. In ethno-political conflicts, securitization means that the other cannot longer be dealt with within the realm of the political institutions at hand, but needs to be addressed through the adoption of extraordinary measures. This might include legitimizing violence and, in some cases of high escalation, even mass atrocities.

Nevertheless, securitization scholars also provide venues for how conflicts can be positively transformed. Insofar constructivism-based systemic conflict transformation targets at the restructuring of hostile inter-group relations, the key issue is – through the lenses of securitization – how securitized situations become de-securitized. Wæver and Buzan use the term *de-securitization* to refer to moving issues off the security agenda and back into the realm of public political dispute (see Wæver 1995: 57, Williams 2003, 523). De-securitization, as the supplement[43] of securitization, means the withdrawal of emergency measures and the choice for political negotiation. This requires a change in the perceptions so that the other is not seen as an existential threat anymore, but as a partner with diverging interests (Bonacker et al. 2011: 224 Hansen 2012: 533). Similar to securitization, de-securitization is composed of a de-securitizing move – referring to direct interventions aimed at changing the conflict parties' discursively constructed perceptions and the prevalence of emergency measures – and the approval of an addressed audience which moves back to normal politics (Roe 2004: 285 pp.). Therefore, de-securitization can only appear if securitization has taken place and the decision to apply extraordinary means is still in force. De-securitization of the conflict environment contributes to reconciling the incompatibility of subject positions (Marchetti and Tocci 2011b: 67). Referring to the typology proposed by Huysmans (1998), de-securitizing moves may present three types of arguments: the asserted existential threat never existed or the existential threat has been avoided (*objectivist strategy*); ordinary measures suffice to address the threat while emergency measures are not effective, the extraordinary measures might avoid the existential threat, but their side-costs are too high (*constructivist strategy*); the other is not a threatening cultural alien, but a partner who can be lived with within the realm of mutual recognition (*de-constructivist strategy*).

Notwithstanding the concerns that have been raised concerning the inherent danger of taking important issues off the agenda (Hansen 2012: 535), the article holds the position that in the face of warfare and de-humanization, some sort of de-securitization is necessary to start a shared future. The purpose of analyzing the securitizing character of human rights invocations, however, is not to label civil society organizations as overall 'good' or 'bad', but to understand their role in conflict transformation. CSOs issuing securitization moves in ethno-political conflicts reinforce antagonisms between conflict groups, thus nurturing further escalation. De-securitizing moves, on

[43] Referring to Derrida (1976), Lene Hansen (2012) speaks of de-securitization as the supplement to securitization, the derivative term that determines the structure of assumptions (Hansen 2012: 530).

the contrary, convey the kind of change envisioned by conflict transformation: The re-articulation of relationships where the other is not seen as an existential threat anymore (see table 1).

Table 1: Conceptualization of securitizing and desecuritizing moves

Human Rights Invocation	Components	Sample Phrases/Arguments
Securitizing move	Articulation of an irreconcilable self-other relationship Invocation of the other as an existential threat (to survival, self-determination, and/or core values) Demanding emergency measures	Evil, bad, a threat to survival, genocide, extinction Slaves, colonialism, loss of roots/ homes To be or not to be, fight, struggle, resistance, revolution
Desecuritizing move	Call to respect and comply with human rights standards addressed to all involved actors Claim for political debate Proposed starting points for political process to reconcile positions	Threat never existed, threat has been avoided (objectivist argument) Ordinary measures suffice to deal with the threat, emergency measures are not effective, the side costs of emergency measures are too high (constructivist argument) The other is not a threatening cultural alien, but a partner who can be lived with within the realm of mutual recognition (de-constructivist argument)

Source: Created by author.

Context – Civil Society in Conflict

Civil Society resists easy definition, especially when discussed on a global scale. There is no general framework that is agreed upon within the international scientific community which is due to the distinct political contexts and forms of organization, as well as state and economic structures - all of which are central to civil society (Barnes 2005: p. 7). Following a functional model approach, civil society is not perceived as an autonomous and firm array of actors or specific historic form, but as representing a distinct space of interaction in between the societal sectors state, market, and private life (see Merkel and Lauth 1998, Edwards 2004). As an analytical category, civil society is defined by its function as it relates to public institutions (Paffenholz and Spurk 2006: p. 7). The activity of an actor therefore determines the position as civil society, rather than its pure organizational form. Although a variety of actors can act as civil society, the term 'civil society organization' is distinguished as it refers to non-governmental and not-for-profit entities that perform civil society functions (see table 2), have a presence in public life and express the interests of either their members or advocate for others[44] . Function-oriented models appear to be better

[44] This definition roughly follows World Bank 2006: 2.

suited than actor-oriented models in non-Western contexts since they enable the consideration of a broad spectrum of collective action beyond formal requirements (World Bank 2006: p. 4).

Civil society is both an independent agent for change and dependent on an enabling environment, which is dramatically affected by conflict (Marchetti and Tocci 2011c: 12, also: Glasius, Lewis and Seckinelgin 2004, Kurtenbach 2000a, Dudouet 2007). Within highly securitized ethno-political conflicts, societal networks are often destroyed, trust disappears, and society faces the risk to become fragmented along the conflict divide. Formal governance structures to which civil society addresses its activities can be seriously weakened or irresponsive (Kaldor and Muro-Ruiz 2003, Coletta and Cullen 2000). Paffenholz and Spurk (2006), thus, suggested seven functions reflecting civil society's role in the face of violent conflict.

Table 2: Civil society's functions in conflicts and human rights related activities

Civil Society Function in Conflicts	Examples for Human Rights Related Activity
Protection	Human accompaniment (e.g. BRICOs - Civil Brigades of Human Rights Observation) Maintaining 'Zones of Peace'
Monitoring and Early Warning	Observation of conflict Reports on human rights violations
Advocacy and Communication	Advocacy for a societal group/own membership (e.g. ethnic minority group) Advocacy for an issue-based agenda (e.g. ban on land mines)
Socialization and Culture of Peace	Education on human rights
Conflict Sensitive Social Cohesion/Community Building	Creating community networks Facilitating collective action (e.g. protests, social movements)
Intermediation/Facilitation between all involved actors (state/non-state armed actor/civilians)	Facilitating contacts (Track II diplomacy) Mediating between conflict parties
Service Delivery	Workshops and training programs Juridical support Supporting local population in conducting projects Build-up of peace constituencies

Source: Civil society functions taken from Paffenholz and Spurk 2006: p. 32
Examples for Human Rights Related Activity created by author.

A flourishing civil society requires not only the mere existence of state structures, but also necessitates responsive authorities creating an enabling environment for engagement (Marchetti and Tocci 2011c: 14, Paffenholz and Spurk 2006: 14). The relationship between state and civil society influences the direction of activism, since cooptation or intimidation might urge existing civil society to securitize identity groups that challenge the authority of the elites and not to securitize human rights violations perpetrated by the state. This is of particular relevance in the Central American context, where authoritarian regimes with patrimonial and corporatist

characteristics significantly shaped the character of emerging civil societies, setting well-defined ideological and political confines. If basic rights and freedoms of association are curtailed, such as in Mexico in the 1990s, civil society engagement conducted beyond legal boundaries often turned against the state instead of interacting with it (Marchetti and Tocci 2011b: 50, Olvera 2010). Therefore, the degree to which human rights are formally granted and respected by state authorities and non-state armed actors is an important contextual condition as well. The human rights situation marks the point of departure for human-rights activities. If human rights are not even formally granted and the violation of even basic standards prevails, the security situation scarcely allows human rights organizations to operate and severely confines the scope of their activities. The gravity and kinds of violations perpetrated by conflict parties further defines the securitization potential and influences prospects for mobilization of transnational advocacy networks (Brockett 2005: 37 pp., Tarrow 2005: 120 pp., Risse and Sikkink 2008: 22, also Franklin 2008).

Yet there is another condition which is of significance in the rise of ethno-political conflicts, namely social cohesion. Social cohesion refers to the absence of latent societal polarization (e.g. wealth inequality or ethnic tensions) and the presence of social bonds, such as norms of reciprocity, associations bridging social division, and institutions of conflict management like democratic political structures and independent judiciary (Berkman and Kawachi 2000: 175). Insofar as state structures are responsive to citizenry and cross-cutting network relations among diverse communal groups prevail, a society possesses the inclusive mechanisms necessary to manage conflicts non-violently. As social cohesion weakens, dynamics of inequality, oppression, and exclusion potentially engender violent conflict (Colletta and Cullen 2000: 4-5). In the midst of armed ethno-political conflicts, the social fragmentation along ethnic lines dissolves social cohesion, significantly determining the political landscape of operating civil society organizations. Discourses re-producing hostile stereotypes and securitizing the ethnic 'other' favor the rise of securitizing CSOs with a clear ethnicist agenda and aggravate the work of CSOs trying to build up inter-groups relationships (Belloni 2008, Tocci and Kaliber 2011, also Lederach 1997: 13).

CSO Identity –Social Capital and Political Identity

Although contextual conditions define the working environment of civil society, the field of CSOs in ethno-political conflicts is by no means homogeneous with regards to the organizational identities. Civil society functions are carried out by a variety of actors featuring different kinds of memberships, operating structures, and political agendas, all of which are adapted to the constraints imposed by conflict. The respective organizational backgrounds and political identities play a major role in determining the (de-)securitizing character of activism (Marchetti and Tocci 2011b). Hence, an organization that is affiliated with a conflict party, or that overtly adopts an ethnicist agenda to represent its clientele, is more likely to nurture escalation, than an organization working on cross-ethnic understanding.

In his case study on rural Southern Mexico, Jonathan Fox (1996) points out that particularly in an authoritarian environment the emergence and growth of building-block civil society organizations depends on the spread of social capital. Social capital depicts "systems that lead to or result from social and economic organization, such as worldviews, trust, reciprocity, informational and economic exchange, and informal and formal groups and associations" (Colletta and Cullen 2000: 2). There is little contention over the importance of "norms of reciprocity and networks of civic

engagement" (Putnam 1993: 167) in facilitating collective action and, thus, increasing the breadth and density of societal organizations (see Fox 1996: 1089, Putnam 1993, Grootaert 1998, Corrochano 2005). In contexts characterized by authoritarian rule and ethno-political conflict, the collaboration between local and external civil society organizations is an important causal pathway in accumulating social capital (Fox 2007: 61 pp.). External non-governmental actors can provide positive and so-called anti-negative incentives to local and regional organizing efforts: Positive incentives include direct material inducements, enabling institutional frameworks and ideological resources. Anti-negative resources reduce the costs that repressive authorities may threaten to impose on those engaged in constructing autonomous social capital through 'naming and shaming' strategies and public campaigns. (Fox 1996: 1096, 1098). Since authoritarian regimes do not offer an enabling environment for civil society organizations, the leverage and protection provided by external actors might partially help to overcome restrictions (ibid: 1092, Fox 2007: 68, 70 pp.).

From a securitization point of view, the kind of social capital from which a CSO emerges is of importance. Robert D. Putnam differentiates between bridging social capital, incorporating all sectors of a community across diverse social cleavages, and bonding social capital, which develops alongside ethnic lines, social cleavages or conflict divides (Putnam 2000: 22-23). The kind of social capital is reflected in the political identity, which can be measured according to a nexus of exclusive/inclusive and egalitarian/non-egalitarian (Marchetti and Tocci 2011b: 54). Exclusive CSOs are only open to a limited section of the population, while inclusive organizations are open to the needs of all members of society. The egalitarian viewpoint represents a perception of all individuals as equal, whereas non-egalitarian associations proclaim the primacy of one group of individuals over another. Those characteristics combined, an agenda can either be labeled as multiculturalist (exclusive/egalitarian), civic (inclusive/egalitarian), assimilationist (inclusive/non-egalitarian) or ethnicist (exclusive/ non-egalitarian). Bridging social capital induces a CSO to have a cross-cutting constituency, connecting adversary groups and increasing social cohesion, while bonding social capital is rather expected to generate multiculturalist or ethnicist organizations.

Framework of Action – Different Kinds of Human Rights Articulations

CSOs can choose from a range of rhetoric strategies in framing their concerns. The language of human rights serves to gain legitimacy, alert Western public opinion, and put pressure on authoritarian regimes (Risse and Sikkink 2008, Franklin 2008). Human rights-related activities, however, bear a securitization potential as they articulate the transgression of the border that separates the acceptable and the unacceptable (Pia and Diez 2009: 20). Even if the overall goal is the institutionalized guarantee of human rights, the articulation of a threat to the very basic rights of an individual or group may have immediately securitizing consequences (Bonacker et al. 2011: 38-39).

Yet, it is not the articulation per se, but rather how human rights are invoked that has, intendedly or unintendedly, major implications for the (de-)securitizing effect of human rights work. In this regard, Pia and Diez (2009, 2010 and 2011) call attention to two significant attributes of human rights articulations: The collective or the individual as reference point of the human rights being invoked and the inclusivity of a human right. Collective rights do not only refer to, but also inscribe group identities, which may reinforce stereotypes or even be at the conflict's core. Individual and collective rights can clash with each other, if for example the claim for a collective right reasserts

the traditional community over the individual. Nevertheless, collective rights also represent a necessary tool to preserve the living conditions of cultural groups particularly in contexts where they are marginalized (Pia and Diez 2010: 51). The second dimensions asks whether human rights are invoked inclusively or exclusively on behalf of one conflict group. Even though individual rights are universal and thus inclusive by definition, in conflicts they are often only invoked for individuals belonging to a certain identity groups. So-called 'group rights' serve to address the selective violation of human rights (ibid). In contrast to inclusive human rights, exclusive rights, whether they refer to the individual or the collective, reinforce the conflict antagonism, risking securitizing effects. Pia and Diez, therefore, conclude that human rights articulations are most likely to have a de-securitizing effect, if they are inclusive and refer to the individual (ibid: 53, Pia and Diez 2009).

In most cases, activists can articulate human rights in more than one way. Albeit collective cannot be reduced to individual rights, it is a matter of decision to pursue a social aim by either invoking individual or collective, inclusive or exclusive rights. Equally important from a securitization perspective is the kind of threat to human rights identified in the articulation. While framing the social identity of a group as threat will inevitably securitize the conflict antagonism, de-securitizing articulations detach threats from social identities and focus on concrete issues or the violent past as threatening 'other'. De-securitizing activism emphasizes shared responsibility which also acknowledges own failings and does not uphold conflict identities (see Pia and Diez 2010).

Political Opportunity Structure – 'Filter' of Human rights activism

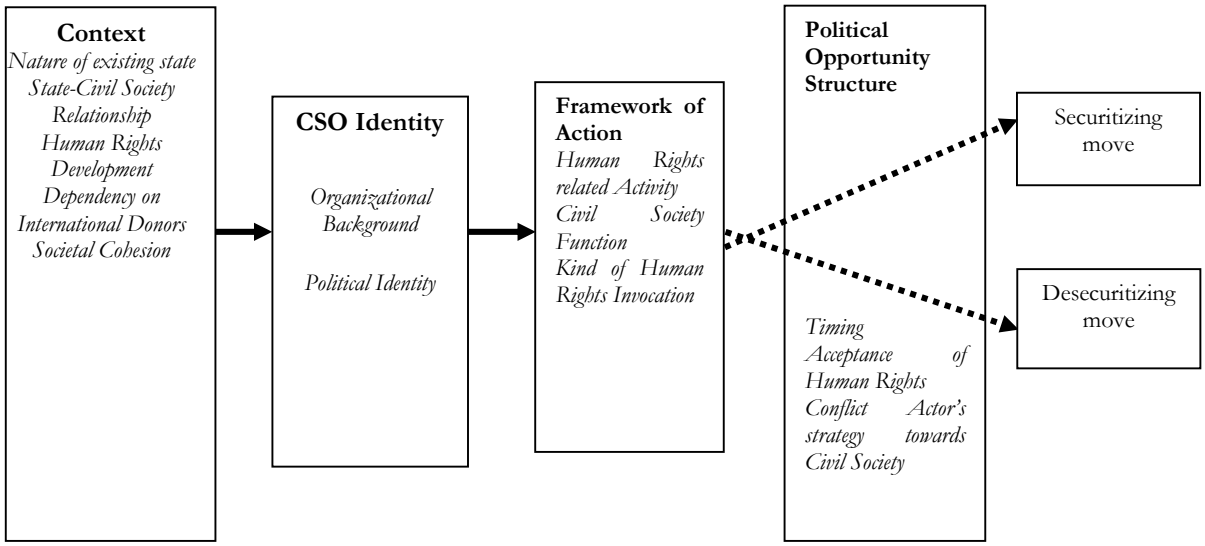
Instead of determining the (de-)securitizing character of human rights activism, the POS must rather be understood as a 'filter' that facilitates certain human rights interventions and aggravates others. In phases of escalating ethno-political conflict where subject positions are highly polarized, the environment tends to be more conducive for the conflict intensifying potential of an ethnicist agenda, whereas the space for maneuver increasingly narrows for civil society organizations working on cross-ethnic reconciliation (Marchetti and Tocci 2011b: 63, Ramsbotham et al. 2005). In addition to the timing of human rights work, the overall acceptance of human rights as universal, inalienable, and indivisible principles of social conduct decides upon the viability of de-securitizing activities. If human rights are solely perceived as a mere tool to legitimize political claims or even oppressive measures, reconciling human rights activities are not likely to fall on fertile ground and civil society rather refrains from adopting the framework (see Speed and Collier 2000: 901).

Finally, the conflict actors' strategy towards civil society impacts the human rights discourse. If a conflict actor wins the heart and minds of civil society organizations and succeeds in establishing a narrative of fighting for a good cause, civic engagement is more likely to take sides and to re-articulate the rhetoric of the established narrative (Bob 2005: 4-6). Armed uprisings resulting from social grievance and authoritarian rule can create windows of opportunities for the mobilization of contentious civil movements who further securitize the conflict to push for change (Brockett 37 pp., 64, 324 pp.). On the other hand, when all armed actors are portrayed as destroying the social tissue and perpetrating human rights violations, de-securitizing interventions demanding all actors to withdraw violence are more likely (see Bob 2005: p. 26 pp.).

Research Framework

Context, CSO identity, Framework of Action, and POS are not independent of each other, but form a conditional mechanism where each part creates structural constraints and opportunities for the following (cf. Bonacker, Braun, and Groth 2011). The context provides the environment in which CSOs operate and to which they need to adapt their identity. The CSO identity, in turn, conditions the organization's goals and the applied framework of actions. The POS finally amplifies or mutes the (de-)securitizing move resulting from CSO activities. Accordingly, the case analysis applied variable-guided process tracing to shed light on the mechanism linking the factors (figure 1). Following George and Bennett, variable-guided process tracing frames social mechanisms as a sequence of variables with the aim to identify a series of covering-law explanations (George and Bennett 2005: 225–227, also Beach and Pederson 2013). Theoretical discussion served not only the conceptualization of factors, but represents also the grid to finally unveil the mechanism that links the systematic patterns in the empirical material. Own data on the four factors and the outcome was gathered through the analysis of the CSO's published material and interviews with academics and civil society representatives, following semi-structured and open narrative designs (see table 3).

Figure 1: Conditional mechanism with explanatory factors and their structural features



The Zapatista uprising – "making ourselves heard"[45]

The EZLN surprised Mexico and the world by taking over four municipal capitals in Chiapas on January 1, 1994. The first communiqués issued by the Committee of Clandestine Indigenous Revolution – General Command (CCRI - CG) – the EZLN's supreme command structure – declared that the indigenous peoples of Chiapas took up arms to call attention to the severe living conditions they faced and in the hope that their struggle would help to create a more democratic Mexico including all Mexican people (Mattiace 1997: 32). The Zapatista uprising has been framed by its leadership and supporters as the final revolt of the marginalized indigenous people calling "Ya basta" (engl. enough) and finally demanding the rights they have been refused for so long

[45] EZLN communiqué (January 6 1994): "January 1 was our way of making ourselves heard" (EZLN 1994:72-73)

(Bob 2005: 117). Thus, the public appearance of the EZLN and the mobilization of the Zapatista movement[46] in 1994 marks the intensification and transformation of the conflict that developed between the Mexican state and indigenous communities in Chiapas, having its roots back in the Mexican history (see also Stephen 1997).

Indigenous communities have a historical continuity with pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories and consider themselves as distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing (see UN 2004, 2008). Although they hold a relatively small share of the nation's total population, indigenous people in Mexico represent, with approximately ten million persons, 29 percent of Latin America's total indigenous population (Yashar 1998: 25). Yet the national ideology of *mestizaje* (engl. racial mixing or miscegenation) has served to neglect the existence of living indigenous peoples, who maintain distinctive languages, cultures, and communities, as well as underpinning a system of political and societal exclusion (Speed and Collier 2000: 883, Yoshioka 1998). This had severe consequences for living conditions, particularly in Southern Mexico, which has long been one of the country's most poverty stricken regions (Bob 2005: 120-121, Stephen 1997: 87). In the federal state of Chiapas, indigenous communities have accounted for a disproportionate share of those that face grievous social and economic conditions. A core issue in this context is the uneven land distribution resulting from Mexico's colonial legacy. Large landholders established patrimonial structures that secured their economic and political power (Olvera 1997: 107, Stavenhagen 2003, De la Peña 2006).

Conflicts resulting from the exploitation of small and landless peasants previously fueled the Mexican Revolution in 1910. In response, Article 27 of the Mexican Constitution stipulated the re-distribution of land and the establishment of permanent communal land (*ejido*) (Yashar 1998: 35, Dietz 1996: 70-71, Neil 1998). But due to the lack of an effective agrarian reform, power structures remained and conflicts between large landholders (*ladino*) and indigenous communities about land titles continued (Stephen 1997: 88-89). Local elites used fraud, repression and intimidation to oppress indigenous and peasant communities who invoked Article 27 to claim their right for land. But official state authorities cooperated with landholders to maintain control of the rural areas and largely ignored the needs of indigenous communities (Speed and Collier 2000: 886, Fox 1996: 1093). Hence, discriminatory state policies, denied recognition, and structural exclusion created an environment where indigenous communities perceived themselves as threatened in their identity. The preservation of cultural characteristics and, thus, the existence as a distinct ethnic group became the core of an increasingly overt conflicts between indigenous communities and state authorities in the 1980s (Fox et al. 1999, Stavenhagen 1993).

By the early 1990s, a myriad of factors intensified the conflict and triggered its escalation (Bob 2005: 124). A series of liberal economic policies provided the grounds for the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) that was supposed to attract new investments in order to overcome economic crisis. The suspension of price protection of coffee and the amendment of Article 27 of the Mexican Constitution, allowing for the sold of communal land (ejido), in 1992 deteriorated the living conditions of small peasants and indigenous communities (García de León

[46] The article defines social movements as a loose association of organizations and collective engagement centered on and pushing forward values, identities, or cultural paradigms (Olvera 1997: 106). The Zapatista movement includes the EZLN as well as the Zapatista supporter base.

2005: 511). In Chiapas, the opportunities to achieve positive change within the political system vanished as the governor purged existing reform proposals and landholding oligarchy increasingly reacted with violence and deceit in the wake of growing social mobilization (Fox 1996: 1096). The armed uprising of the EZLN significantly transformed the ethno-political conflict. The EZLN represented itself as an army of national liberation in the tradition of Mexico's revolutionary past that wages war against the Mexican president and army. The rhetoric of the numerous declarations severely securitized the conflict. Thus, the EZLN claimed to speak for the indigenous people in Mexico and strived for a nationwide uprising in order to conquer the Mexican army, advance to the capital, and initiate summary judgments (EZLN 1993). The threat to existence was now to be responded by revolutionary means (EZLN 1993). The reference to Emiliano Zapata – a symbol of the revolution in which the Mexican nation state grounded its ideological legitimacy – emphasized that the EZLN portrayed the Mexican government and its politics as betrayal of the revolution and national heroes.

In Chiapas, the indigenous supporter base of the EZLN invaded large landholdings, ejected the landholding elite, and started to develop autonomy structures (Stahler-Sholk 2010: 271, Mattiace 1997: 45). Zapatistas enforced the indigenous right to exercise autonomously their own cultural tradition and self-determination on a municipal and regional level against the federal government (Zibechi 2008: 136, EZLN 1995).

Case Analysis

Context

In the aftermath of the Mexican Revolution, lasting from 1910-1917, the United Mexican States constituted as a federal republic, which was recognized for its stable state structures, rather uncommon in Latin America (Maihold 1996: 13). On the fundament of formal democratic institutions inscribed in the constitution, an integrative authoritarian state developed that provided for the stability of Mexico's political system. The hegemonic Institutional Revolutionary Party (Partido Revolucionario Institucional, PRI) governed the country for roughly 70 years by means of a corporatist structure maintained through co-optation, patronage, and repression (Horn 2004: 121).

In the late 1980s, however, the PRI's regime foundations started to come under pressure. Mexico's economic import substitution model reached its limits of exhaustion as foreign debts and the decline in oil prices finally induced a financial collapse (Faust 1996: 38-39). The increasing dependency on international donor agencies forced the regime to yield concessions concerning the opening of the political system and economic liberalization, which led to tensions with elites benefitting from former subsidies, aggravated the economic conditions of the agricultural sector, and endangered the alliances that kept the PRI system in charge. As a result, the regime increasingly lost its capability to integrate different fractions of the Mexican society. In order to maintain political power, the PRI decided to rely upon clientelistic practices, but concessions to the landholding oligarchy and economic elites rather polarized the political environment (Maihold 1996: 21-22). Social movements that could not be co-opted through traditional means anymore started to mobilize, posing a significant challenge to the fusion of state and society that had been a core characteristic of the PRI system. The overt discrepancy between legal foundations stipulated

in the Mexican Constitution and the PRI's authoritarian system that governed the country now became the focal point of public action. (Bizberg 2003: 160, Olvera 2003: 42 pp., Fox 1996: 1095). In response, the state securitized civil society activities as treason on the Mexican national project (Grammont, Mackinlay, and Stoller 2009: 30). Although the political elite increasingly realized the urgent need for concessions and cooperation, state structure remained highly irresponsive and repressive, despite its vanishing capability to profoundly co-opt emerging civil society (Bizberg 2003: 155 pp.).

The massive protests in 1994 and the overt sympathy for the EZLN demonstrated publicly the massive discontent of the now establishing civil society with the political leadership (Grammont, Mackinlay, and Stoller 2009: 30-31, Olvera 1997: 117). Two factors created a window of opportunity for the growing public opposition: First, the political weakness of the newly elected president Zedillo, who was not able to integrate the different cliques and tendencies within the PRI, induced overt internal conflicts over the party's fate. As consequence, the PRI regime started to disintegrate internally. Second, the integration of Mexico into the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the ambitions to become internationally recognized as Central America's leading power increased international attention. The state yielded to international pressure for political opening, granted fair elections, and even accepted civil society monitoring of the human rights situation throughout the country.

With authoritarian structures prevailing, however, human rights violations, particular in southern Mexico, remained pervasive. Beyond restrictions on freedom of association and freedom of speech, the militarization as well as the counterinsurgent campaign severely aggravated the working environment of civil society organizations in Chiapas (Bizberg 2003: 147-149). Here, human rights violations have not only been directed against civilians and Zapatista supporter base, but also against human rights activists (see AI 1995: 356, AI 1996, AI 1997: 368, HRW 1995, HRW 1996). The protracted social conflict and the exclusive system of patrimonial reign contributed to high social fragmentation between mestizo-dominated society and indigenous communities, low levels of social cohesion, and the prevalence of bonding social capital with only little cross-ethnic activities (Braig 2004: 272-273, González de Alba 2010).

CSO Identity – FrayBa

The organizational background of the Human Rights Center Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas provided well-established links to international human rights organizations and policy-makers. The Catholic diocese in San Cristóbal under Bishop Samuel Ruíz, on whose initiative FrayBa was founded in 1989, had long been recognized for its work with marginalized people in Chiapas, which did not only provoke conflicts with Chiapanecan elites, but also within the Catholic Church (Kurtenbach 2000b, also Loaeza Tovar 1996: 124 pp.). The diocese convened the first state-wide public indigenous forum, trained lay activists and promoted local self-empowerment projects (Kurtenbach 2000a: 228, Kurtenbach 2009: 450 pp.) The international reputation of Ruíz as a defender of human rights, particularly of indigenous rights, has been important for FrayBa to establish transnational cooperation with Human Rights Watch Americas, Amnesty International, and governmental international organizations, as well as to gain the trust of Chiapanecan oppositional groups (Bob 2005: 172, Hernández Díaz 2010: 146, Kurtenbach 2000a: 226-227).

The Mexican authorities and allied landowners had been highly suspicious towards the work of Ruíz and FrayBa. Yet, as the conflict intensified and international pressure induced president Salina's willingness to negotiate with EZLN leadership, the Catholic diocese appeared to be the only remaining actor able to serve as an intermediary between the conflict parties in peace talks (Kurtenbach 2008). The Catholic diocese, thus, has traditionally been one of the few institutions in Chiapas providing for bridging social capital within the highly fragmented society and was, therefore, accepted, as a mestizo authority, by indigenous communities. Further, Catholicism is particularly deep-rooted and widespread in rural Southern Mexico vesting the Catholic Church with legitimacy and repute within large parts of society (Kurtenbach and Paffenholz 1994). Ruíz mediated in the first peace talks in 1994 in San Cristóbal and the human rights center FrayBa became acknowledged by the Mexican government and the Zapatista as a neutral monitoring source. This in turn reinforced the organization's importance as a local hub for verified information on the conflict for international human rights organizations and foreign governments, particularly for those who could not send their own observer.

The international network and the institutional resources of the diocese, in turn, provided for some degree of leverage and protection, necessary to become involved with human rights in Chiapas. FrayBa's organizational background, producing bridging social capital in the conflict, critically shaped its political identity. Although FrayBa was established on the fundament of Christian ecumenical convictions, the non-governmental and non-profit organization works independent of any political ideology or religious creed. The CSO pursued an inclusive approach with the overall aim to develop inter-group dialogue, a culture of tolerance, and reconciliation between fractions (cf. CDHFBC 2014a, 2014b, and 1995c). FrayBa did not serve a clear-cut membership or identity group, but conducted issue-centered advocacy. The civic agenda fosters multiple identities and wants them to be recognized in a pluri-ethnic society (CDHFBC 1994: 1-3). Hence, FrayBa established ties to all conflict actors, but remained distant in order to reinforce the position as an acknowledged observer, whose information can be trusted.

Framework of Action – FrayBa

After the Zapatista uprising, the activities of FrayBa became centered on dispatching civil observer brigades (BRICOS) in order to monitor the conflict and conduct human rights accompaniment in support of civilians amidst violent conflict. Indeed, the status as a neutral organization enabled the CSO to effectively discharge its activities (cf. Kenny 2001). International observers working in BRICOs have been permitted and recognized by Mexican authorities and were granted access to conflict territories. The acceptance by combatants enabled FrayBa to realize the monitoring, advocacy, and protection function. Later on, the organization also started to provide legal assistance to communities that have been denied basic rights.

Issued reports and public statements particularly referred to universal and individual human rights, but also emphasized the role of structural and cultural violence in the progression of the conflict. Therefore, FrayBa actively supported the empowerment of indigenous communities in their demand for collective cultural human rights as stipulated in ILO convention 169 and the ICESCR (cf. CDHFBC 1996a, 1996b). The articulations of collective rights, however, were inclusive in character. The invocation of integrational rights did not exclude certain social identities, but underlined the equal status of all Mexican identity groups and urged the conflict parties to grant

the same rights to all Mexican people. Referring to Article 4 of the Mexican Constitution, acknowledging different Mexican cultural groups, FrayBa demanded the inclusion of all societal groups into the Mexican society without cultural assimilation, but through recognition of the plurality of customs and traditions (CDHFBC 1995a, 1995b, and 1995d). The invocations of universal and integrational human rights, therefore, were met with understanding by the conflict parties.

CSO Identity – Enlace Civil

Enlace Civil emerged from bottom-up, grassroots mobilization of the Zapatista supporter base. The Zapatista movement and their creation of the Municipios Autónomos Rebeldes Zapatistas (Rebel Zapatista Autonomous Municipalities – MAREZ) demonstrated that bonding social capital in authoritarian contexts can thicken quite independently of external allies, through sustained collective action by autonomous, local political movements (Fox 1996: 1094, also Corrochano 2005: 8). Excluded from PRI-dominated institutions, indigenous communities in Chiapas organized within the highly fragmented society against the political elite and large landowners to preserve their ethnic identity independent of mestizo paternalism. This process demonstrated the enormous trust and loyalties produced in horizontal associations (Fox 199: 1097, Nash 1997, Skoufias et al. 2010).

Whilst independent mobilization from below was fundamental, representing a second pathway of social capital accumulation (see Fox 1996: 1094), the growth and maintenance of Zapatista structures within the authoritarian state still benefited enormously from external allies. Once the state's counterinsurgency campaign was launched, the mobilization of solidarity networks at national and international levels was essential to exert international pressure, urging the president to declare a unilateral cease-fire after less than two weeks of fighting, rather than pursuing a militarily dissolution of the rebellion as happened in many Central American countries (Andrews 2011: 140). Thus, external allies turned out to be essential for the sustained bottom-up mobilization in one of Mexico's most remote indigenous regions (Salazar 2013, Olesen 2004). The societal capital produced within the global solidarity network, however, remained bonding social capital since networks of civic engagement have been organized along the conflict divide.

Enlace Civil was established in 1996 as the coordinator of solidarity activities in Mexico and the outward voice of the Zapatista communities. The organization was entrusted with crucial task of maintaining the global solidarity network and, thus, the capacity of the movement to survive. Due to establishing international ties and activists, coming particularly from Europe and the USA to conduct projects in the MAREZ in coordination with Enlace Civil, the organization gained international prominence. The Zapatista movement, thus, vested Enlace Civil with external allies providing for leverage and some degree of protection in the face of hostile landowning elites and federal authorities criminalizing supporting organizations (Zibechi 2008: 137, Díaz-Polanco 1997: 171, Andrews 2011: 141-142).The bonding social capital produced by the movement also shaped the CSO identity. As major hub for the solidarity network, Enlace Civil represented the indigenous communities organized within the Zapatista movement and shared the goal of breaking the circle of marginalization and poverty through the unilateral declaration of autonomy (see Barmeyer 2008). The organization adopted a multicultural agenda and re-produced bonding social capital, facilitating civic engagement of indigenous communities along the ethnic and political conflict

divide. Further, close coordination with the EZLN has been maintained protecting the MAREZ and, ultimately, Enlace Civil's staff working in the autonomous territories (Hernández Díaz 2010: 144).

Framework of Action – Enlace Civil

Enlace Civil supported the MAREZ through human rights accompaniment and the coordination of international solidarity activities. Further, the organization distributed urgent action requests and Zapatista material through the communication channels of the supporter network in order to raise international awareness, advocate for Zapatista demands, solidify alliances, and gain new supporters (Enlace Civil 2014a, 2014b, 1999a, Olesen 2006: 192, Andrews 2011). The activities, therefore, cover the protection, monitoring, advocacy, and service delivery function.

Published statements denounced human rights violations by the Mexican state on Zapatista territory. Here, individual rights were invoked on behalf of the members of Zapatista communities. Apart from group rights, issued reports and urgent action requests condemned repressive state policies towards the Zapatista communities as a breach of collective social, economic, and cultural rights, as provided by the ILO convention 169, the Mexican Constitution and the ICESCR. Enlace Civil argued that the denial of such rights and the devastating living conditions of indigenous communities legitimizes the Zapatista autonomy project (Enlace Civil 1998d, 1999b). Even though the organization committed to the equal status of all Mexican identity groups, the advocacy for collective human rights focused exclusively on the rights of the indigenous Zapatista communities (c.f. Enlace Civil 1998a, 1998b, 1998c).

Political Opportunity Structure

The federal government immediately reacted to Zapatista uprising with grave counterattacks forcing the EZLN combatants to retreat to the Chiapanecan highlands. Violent clashes during the first days of 1994 left 145 confirmed dead, hundreds wounded, and 20,000-35,000 people displaced (Bob 2005: 125, SíPaz 2000a, Physicians for Human Rights and HRW/Americas 1994: 7). In the face of growing international attention and upcoming national elections, however, the Mexican president Salinas declared a unilateral cease-fire on January 12 and the Zapatistas tried to use the growing civil mobilization in Mexico around the 1994 elections, inviting thousands of CSOs to the National Democratic Convention with the aim to formulate alternatives to the political system (Bob 2005: 133-134, Collins 2010: 781). Yet, the election of the PRI candidate Zedillo demonstrated that the regime still inhabited sufficient popular support to maintain power in Mexico and disillusioned the Zapatistas.

Realizing that the momentum for national change began to vanish, the EZLN changed strategies and fortified positions around their indigenous supporter communities. Following the official declaration of 32 autonomous municipalities (see EZLN 1995), the conflict started to face a new period of securitization, as the newly established federal government issued arrest warrants for Zapatista leaders and began a new military offensive in February 1995. The renewed military escalation was again responded to by massive civil society mobilization which caused the government to halt its campaign after few days without substantial military success. The peace talks in San Andrés that followed at first showed substantial results, but as the Mexican government refused to implement what has been negotiated, the Zapatistas rejected the

continuation. Even though no major military campaign was launched after the final blow of the San Andrés talks in late 1996, the army tightened its grip around Zapatista areas and paramilitaries, associated with state authorities and landowners, have been responsible killings and massacres, targeting the civilian supporter base to create an atmosphere of terror and fear. Thus, levels of violence and securitization in Chiapas remained high.

Further, the low level of acceptance of human rights severely aggravated the operating conditions of human rights CSOs, particularly of those working for reconciliation. While the Mexican state invoked specifically individual human rights to curtail indigenous self-governance and to portray cultural customs as pre-modern and illiberal, indigenous movements since the late 1980s themselves started to draw upon the stipulations provided by international covenants on basic rights to legitimize their claim for recognition of their ethnicity (Speed and Collier 2000: 878 pp., Anaya Muñoz 2009: 46, Mattiace 1997: 49). The EZLN built on this strategy justifying the insurgency through reference to the rights granted to ethnic minorities by international law and the Constitution of Mexico (Bob 2005: 117, 152, García de León 2005: 515). Human rights therefore became to be perceived as an 'empty concept' which can be adapted to any context and instrumentalized for any purpose, without any inherent reconciling and, thus, de-securitizing essence.

In the wake of oppression and severe human rights violations by Mexican armed forces in Chiapas, the Zapatistas achieved to embrace Mexican oppositional organizations and to establish a framing of the rebellion as a just fight against oppression, which caused widespread solidarity with the EZLN. The media coverage showed poorly armed Zapatista soldiers carefully targeted only military and government installations, while the army's massive counterinsurgency campaign included indiscriminate bombardments and the execution of indigenous civilians, conveying the image of a vengeful government (García de León 2005: 515, 516). The dismay over disproportionate government response rose and Zapatistas had come to be perceived as victims of long-term societal oppression and excessive government reprisals. In the face of growing civil engagement, repressive state measures were contrasted by Zapatista's responsiveness to forge a broad alliance with emerging Mexican civil society. The establishing Zapatista hegemony over the conflict narrative helped to create solidarity and mobilized anti-state activities, but also polarized the Mexican society and further securitized the conflict antagonism.

Outcome: De-securitizing move / securitizing move

FrayBa's activities after 1994 issued a de-securitizing move. Published statements and monitoring reports demand all conflict actors to comply with internationally acknowledged human rights and to find negotiated solutions on the basis of mutual respect and tolerance. The organization did not reinforce the position of one conflict actor over another, but rather focused on specific issues like the protection of unarmed civilians. On that note, albeit FrayBa acknowledged the threatening environment in Chiapas, the CSO detached the threat from a specific social identity through temporal securitization, advocating for a negotiated solution to overcome the threatening past. In de-securitizing the conflict, FrayBa applied a mixture of constructivist and de-constructivist strategies: The organization condemned all forms of violence to address exclusion and marginalization, as well as it used human rights to argue in favor of a pluri-cultural Mexican nation where mestizo and indigenous identity groups cooperate with each other.

Enlace Civil, on the contrary, pursued the securitization of the conflict, as a means to bring international attention to the injustice in Chiapas and the human rights violating behavior of the Mexican state. Facing a history of exclusion, marginalization and false state promises, Enlace Civil saw no point in reconciling conflict positions, but claimed – in the spirit of the Zapatista's '*Ya Basta'* – cultural and political rights for indigenous communities. The organization largely adopted the discourse of the EZLN that portrays the state as illegitimate and a threat to the survival of indigenous communities. In spite of Enlace Civil's strict commitment to peaceful means, the revolutionary fight was deemed necessary as self-defense. Enlace Civil's activities supported the MAREZ as a legitimate expression of resistance and the last option available. In this regard, the language of human rights was adopted as a tool to raise awareness for the threatening situation of indigenous communities, but also to define the state as a norm-violating threat and, ultimately, to transfer legitimacy to the rebellion.

Conditional Mechanisms

The conditional mechanisms of the de-securitizing move by FrayBa and the securitizing move by Enlace Civil illustrate that context conditions cannot preclude or cause a certain outcome; they rather restrict or enhance the options available to different CSOs. Facing the repressive state and a fragmented Mexican society, the cooperation with external allies was pivotal for operating in the conflict and bringing the neglected human rights situation in Chiapas to the national agenda. In the transition from the context factor to CSO identity, the organizational background appeared to be decisive. Since the context conditions did not provide an enabling working environment, both of the considered organizations strongly depended on the social context from which they emerged to provide leverage and protection. The kind of social capital produced within the respective social contexts critically influenced the political identity of the organization. In FrayBa's case, bridging social capital induced an inclusive civic agenda and issue-centered work. An organizational background characterized by bonding social capital induced Enlace Civil to advocate for a clear-cut constituency and adopt an exclusive multicultural agenda. The organizational background, more precisely the kind of social capital from which the organization emerges, represents the first tipping point in the conditional mechanism.

At first glance, the findings further prompt the conclusion that the framework of action is not directly related to the outcome. Both organizations delivered services, provided protection to communities, monitored the conflict and advocated for human rights. Additionally, both organizations adopted an egalitarian political identity. Yet, the level of inclusiveness of the political identity and its translation into concrete human rights activities is a second important tipping point in the transition from CSO identity to framework of action. Thus, in accordance with the inclusive political identity, FrayBa advocated for an issue-based agenda and demanded universal and integrational human rights applicable to all Chiapanecan citizens. Further, its activities transcended identity boundaries within the conflict focusing on the needs of those affected by violent conflict, regardless of their respective identity group. Enlace Civil, on the contrary, pursued an exclusive agenda advocating individual and collective human rights on behalf of the Zapatista communities. The case analysis shows that both human rights activities are political in nature and that the kind of political effect depends on the level of inclusiveness. Inclusive human rights articulations convey de-securitizing effects, since they challenge the 'self'-'other' divide. Exclusive articulations serve to

protect an identity group, but reaffirm the 'self' as threatened by the 'other' (cf. Laclau and Mouffe 1985).

The work of both organizations, finally, has been largely affected by the POS. The highly securitized conflict deteriorated working conditions and aggravated reconciling activities. The fact that collective human rights such as the right to cultural and political self-determination have been denied by the state and became conflict issues themselves and the state's framing of engagement on behalf of indigenous peoples as anti-state terrorism further intensified the securitizing character of exclusive activism.

Conclusion

The article examined the role of civil society organizations advocating for human rights within conflict transformation processes. Thus, the focus was not on how civil society can effectively pursue the implementation of certain human rights standards, but rather on the conditions that determine whether their activities facilitate inter-group reconciliation, entrench status quo, or even contribute to escalation in ethno-political conflicts. At the core of the presented theoretical approach lies securitization theory, whose attention on the discursive positioning of threats and the subsequent 'self'-'other' construction is of analytical importance to understand and transform the construction of antagonistic conflict identities. As the case illustrates, securitization can represent a vital strategy to make oppression and structural violence visible, which is why securitizing organizations are not necessarily the spoilers of peaceful and just transformation. Yet, from a constructivist conflict transformation perspective, highly securitized and violent ethno-political conflict need some de-securitization to set a basis where both identity groups accept each other as partners who can be lived with.

The case analysis of two human rights organization working in the Zapatista conflict served theory-building concerning the conditions under which CSOs issue securitizing or de-securitizing moves in ethno-political conflicts. Building on the insights of previous research by the SHUR project that there is no single sufficient explanatory factor, the article applied process tracing to comprehend the conditional mechanism by which context, civil society identity, framework of action, and POS determine the (de-)securitizing moves of CSOs. The close observance of both conditional mechanisms at hand unveiled two tipping points: The kind of social capital from which an organization develops and kind human rights discourse that is applied. Even though, as the analysis has shown, both tipping points cannot be singled out and only gain significance in the interaction with the context and the POS, the following hypotheses can be inferred that are worthwhile to be further worked on in larger-N designs: If an organization develops from bridging social capital, it shows an inclusive political identity and conducts integrational activities, which issue de-securitizing moves. On the contrary, if the social context from which an organization develops is characterized by bonding social capital, the CSO is exclusive in its identity and its activities reinforce the conflict antagonism, resembling securitizing moves. The second set of hypotheses concerns the inclusiveness of the human rights discourse. Integrational discourses, which include all social identity groups are the carrier for de-securitizing moves. Exclusive discourses, which invoke human rights exclusively on behalf one conflict group or the individual members of a group re-produce the conflictual 'self'-'other' narratives and convey securitizing moves.

Finally, the importance of the context, not only for the sheer ability for civil mobilization, but also for the political effects concerning conflict transformation, should prompt policy-maker to create an enabling environment for de-securitizing moves. Responsive and participative state structures, high social cohesion and inclusive societal structures, as well as de-securitized discourses are expected to provide the grounds for bridging social capital and reconciling activities. Yet, since context and POS alone cannot prevent securitizing moves, CSOs concrete strategies of engagement are of relevance as well. Advocating for the rights of people suffering from repression is sublime work, but the findings encourage organizations to pursue their aims carefully. The chosen agenda and instruments to put forward claims have (de-)securitizing effects and, thus, paramount implications for the prospects of conflict transformation.

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