Stratified differences: the mediation role of international non-governmental organizations

Jingyue Han
Huairen No.1 Middle School, Huairen, 038300, China;

Abstract. Since the end of the Cold War, the world has become increasingly multipolar, and internal conflicts have gradually become one of the main forms of armed conflicts in the world. In order to better promote world peace, it is essential to mediate conflicts through multiple forces. With the continuous development of international non-governmental organizations, the mediation of international non-governmental organizations has become the mainstream in this field. However, the statute of limitations of mediation by international NGOs has always been a hot issue. On the basis of summarizing previous literatures, this paper classifies the conflict levels according to the bottom and top conflicts, and further examines the effectiveness of international NGOs in regulating conflicts from the intensity and degree of conflicts, so as to judge whether international NGOs can cope with crises in a reasonable way. Based on the analysis of the effectiveness of international NGOs in conflict resolution and the current international situation, this paper puts forward corresponding suggestions for China to better participate in international governance.

Keywords: international non-governmental organizations; conflict hierarchy; bottom-level conflicts; top-level conflicts.

1. Introduction
Since the end of the Cold War, the world has become increasingly multipolar, and internal conflicts have gradually become one of the main forms of armed conflict in the world. In this regard, mediation of conflicts is indispensable. In this regard, mediation by international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) has become the mainstay. However, the statute of limitations for mediation by international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) has always been a subject of great controversy. On the one hand, international NGOs can effectively mediate internal conflicts due to their neutrality and moral superiority; but on the other hand, due to the lack of coercive power, international organizations are difficult to act effectively in some of the real implementation aspects. Despite the extensive participation of international non-governmental organizations in the global traditional security governance process, there are significant differences in their governance paths in the field of traditional security. In this regard, different conflict logics apply to different levels of conflicts; different conflict logics occur in different conflict situations. Therefore, to judge the effectiveness of the participation of international non-governmental organizations in conflict mediation, it is not possible to make a generalization, but it is necessary to choose a reasonable analysis by determining the level of conflict.

2. Conflict and International Non-governmental Organizations
Scholars Zhou Yiqi and Xu Yi have categorized "conflict levels" into two main categories: bottom-level conflicts and top-level conflicts. Due to the fragmentation of conflict patterns and the coexistence of multiple actors, in grassroots conflicts, INGOs are able to address the root causes of similar societal problems and are better able to mediate in-depth. The logic in the top level conflicts is obviously different. In the top level conflicts, international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) can hardly stop the conflicts effectively due to the lack of coercive power, and the effectiveness of the corresponding mediation is also questionable. Based on the complexity of the different conflict levels, international NGOs must, on the premise of maintaining the main body of international law, national sovereignty and the stability of the international system, join hands with
multiple governance actors as much as possible, so as to maximize the possibility of conflict mediation.

For the actor discussed in this paper, the international NGO, the United Nations defines it as "a non-profit organization that is independent of government and is organized at the local and international levels to support issues of public interest". International NGOs are unique and representative, and often intervene on the front lines of war in a unique capacity. The mediation of INGOs is unique and representative, and they are often active on the front lines of war by intervening in conflicts in a unique capacity. In addition, INGOs not only play a role in the reconciliation process, but also actively help and improve the social reconstruction after the war. For example, the Center for Humanitarian Dialogue (CHD), headquartered in Switzerland, has been active in mediating the bitter conflict between the FARC and the government, and has participated in activities such as post-war land reform. International NGOs thus play an important role in advancing the peace agenda. Despite the precariousness of mediation effectiveness, it is undeniable that INGOs have a significant role to play in the mediation process. Due to the more redundant structure of international NGOs, there has been a clear polarization as to whether or not the organizations have a real role to play; the corresponding statements have been clearly polarized.

At present, some countries are also gradually realizing the importance of distinguishing between the levels of conflict in the mediation process, especially in the resolution of internal conflicts. In the Global Security Initiative Concept Paper issued in February 2023, the Chinese government proposed that "the international community should support all efforts conducive to the peaceful resolution of crises, and encourage all parties to a conflict to build mutual trust, resolve disputes, and promote security through dialogue". Generally speaking, domestic conflict resolution is often a very important part of promoting global peace. Generally speaking, in order to accomplish the promotion of global peace, domestic conflict resolution is often a very important part. It is a matter of concern, then, how third-party international organizations can make the most of their role in mediating internal conflicts. A great deal of research on conflict mediation focuses on the role and effectiveness of national actors while ignoring the important role of international organizations. In fact, in the post-cold-war era, non-State actors, represented by international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), have often played an important role. It was even said that regional conflicts could not be effectively resolved without the steady and neutral role played by third-party international organizations. While it is true that the effectiveness and role of INGOs directly involved in conflict mediation is controversial, it is undeniable that in the underlying conflicts in some countries and regions, the joint action of INGOs and state actors often has significant advantages.

3. The Moderating Role of International Non-governmental Organizations

Zhou Yiqi and Xu Yi takes the mediation of international organizations in Africa as the object of analysis, whereby it collects relevant data for empirical analysis to scientifically assess the veracity of the theory of conflict stratification. In analyzing the nature of conflicts within African countries, their article gives a perfect definition, the top tier conflict is the conflict between the state and non-state armed actors, and the bottom tier conflict is the conflict between non-state actors within a certain region of the country. Through data analysis, the article argues that the effectiveness of mediation by international NGOs in top-level conflicts is relatively small; the data finds that the effectiveness of mediation by international NGOs rises significantly after the establishment of a cooperative relationship with the associated sovereign state actor and the union of the two; furthermore, the characteristics and utility of mediation by international NGOs cannot be generalized. At the bottom of the hierarchy, international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) can play a good role in mediation due to the microscopic nature of the conflict, while at the top of the hierarchy, it is necessary to build a relationship with the associated sovereign state to increase the effectiveness of mediation.

In addition to the subjective view, the article of Zhou Yiqi and Xu Yi introduces the characterization of externality. In the study of conflict management and conflict resolution, the
resolution of conflict by external forces can be understood as the intervention of an external subject, and the process of controlling the scope and intensity of the conflict through strategies and actions. The process of external force entry is also the main way of conflict mediation. It is also because of this that the maturity of a conflict is also an important influence factor in order for it to end up in negotiation or reconciliation. When the conflict is in a situation that terrorizes both parties, it is easier to prompt reconciliation and negotiation; so whether the conflict is ripe for mediation or not, and whether the best time for mediation has come or not, need to be explored according to the subject of the conflict itself, and to find the key nodes of mediation.

It is clear that international non-governmental organizations can demonstrate a strong peace orientation in the process of mediation, which specifically reflects the rejection of war and the preservation of peace; this de-violent character can also be regarded as a mediation of great significance. Generally speaking, the qualities of international non-governmental organizations can be expressed as effectiveness and limitations. From the point of view of effectiveness, relevant studies have examined more about what kind of social networks are formed by intergovernmental organizations, and how such social networks influence conflict management to promote the peace process. Some scholars focus on the impact of conflict resolution networks constructed by NGOs on conflict events, and from the perspectives of elite interaction and information transfer, they explore that international NGOs construct conflict networks in the mediation process, thus arguing that information transfer and effective interaction among key personnel within a country can also reduce the possibility of conflict between countries. Other studies have found that NGOs tend to pay more attention to political roots in the process of mediation. There are also differences in the practical manifestations that these political roots bring to the conflict between the parties. The value and legitimacy of INGOs is further supported by the fact that they are often able to find possibilities for peaceful resolution in the midst of these political fissures. As for the limitations, INGOs also face many restrictions in the process of mediation. First of all, compared with sovereign states, INGOs do not have a national identity and lack stable financial support. International NGOs cannot guarantee either the stability of peace or the stability of mediation, so they cannot solve the conflict fundamentally. On the other hand, INGOs cannot have the limited political discourse that international governmental organizations have, and at the same time lack the unlimited mobility and potential of sovereign states, as well as the corresponding norms of rights. Even their own legitimacy is often questioned, and such substantive shortcomings are a significant obstacle to the mediation process.

Due to the lack of power norms behind conflict mediation, the two-dimensionality of the mediation process varies across domestic and international conflicts of different intensity, structure and level. Therefore, when analyzing the performance of a conflict, it is necessary to analyze its various facets in detail. Furthermore, the hierarchical division of conflict leads to the fact that the external constraints on mediation must be very different at different levels, and the political space in which mediation can take place varies. Factors such as these ultimately affect the effectiveness of mediation. The diversity of motives in domestic conflicts leads to the intertwining of rights and social contradictions. For national sovereignty, countries have exclusivity to other countries, and conflicting interests can lead to political conflicts among big countries and gradually lead to a great tragedy; the pursuit of rights and land among countries is also different in non-state wars and state wars. At present, the rapid development of the global economy has led to a widening gap between the rich and the poor, the rise of terrorism in the world, and social unrest in some countries. This diversity of political conflict and political power struggles can be difficult for international NGOs to mediate, even at the grassroots level, because the root causes of civil conflict are often linked to group and systemic inequalities at the societal level.

The study of Zhou Yiqi and Xu Yi suggests that the mediation role of international NGOs is both more limited and more fragmented, focusing more on decentralized social conflicts with grass-roots enterprises as the main focus, where the mediation role of international NGOs would be greatly enhanced. In terms of the complexity of domestic conflicts, after World War II, the frequency and
intensity of international conflicts in international relations have generally decreased, and domestic conflicts have gradually become the dominant form of violent conflicts. Compared with traditional international conflicts, domestic conflicts are characterized by complexity in terms of conflict, conflict motivation and conflict resolution. Non-state armed organizations are increasingly becoming the main actors in security conflicts due to the diversity of conflict actors in the country, with state and non-state actors intertwined, and the plurality of actors involved in conflict mediation. United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres António Manuel de Oliveira Guterres has stated that non-state armed actors have become a serious factor affecting peace. The diversity of motives for domestic conflicts in today's world poses considerable difficulties for mediation. Because of the differences in the ideologies of different state actors or different domestic organizations and regimes, and the exclusivity of the security interests of different countries, there is a contradiction in interests, leading to the tragedy of the forces gradually moving towards conflict. This is compounded by the accelerating process of globalization, the profound reconfiguration of established global interests, and the rise of populism and terrorism across the globe, which constitute powerful radical social resistance movements that challenge the established political and economic order of today. Furthermore, the logic of today's conflicts is progressively diversifying. As a result of power games and social disorganization, internal conflicts often have the issue of regime affiliation as a central goal, different conflict resolutions are based on the logic of the majority power game, and the final outcome of the conflict is mostly dependent on the corresponding outcome of the power game. Therefore, there is a need to constantly update the information assessment in order to choose the most appropriate option. In other domestic conflicts, the conflict is not only a game of power and regimes, but also a manifestation of social discontent and disorder, which need to be addressed through a comprehensive strategy of social governance.

It has become a consensus of the international community that the level of conflict in an internal conflict is essential to the role of mediation. The underlying causes and the subjects of war are different between the bottom and top levels of conflict, which makes a difference in terms of the effectiveness of resolution. After World War II, traditional security conflicts were the most direct manifestation of international anarchy. Changes in conflict characteristics and security patterns mean that the mediation function of the traditional sovereign state is gradually being reduced. This also provides a certain space for international non-governmental organizations to intervene in conflicts with neutrality, morality and professionalism at the same time. It is undeniable that the hierarchy of conflict has been very effective in analyzing the multiple factors affecting the role of mediation. However, due to the questionable neutrality of international non-governmental organizations, the direction of their mediation is easily influenced by sovereign states, especially the big powers, which directly affects the effectiveness of mediation. It is questionable whether the conflict hierarchy can be reasonably and fairly divided, and whether the national sovereignty of each country can be strictly respected after the division. Although a good understanding of the hierarchy is to a certain extent conducive to the normal intervention of international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the participation of governments in the mediation process, there are still a lot of disharmonious factors in the process of the behavior of international NGOs due to the lack of relevant international laws. Therefore, to enhance the influence and recognition of INGOs, the enactment of INGO laws is particularly crucial. Generally speaking, regulating legitimate democracy within international NGOs is more conducive to promoting the peace process. In addition to the legitimization of international non-governmental organizations within the organizations themselves, the question of whether or not the major Powers are secretly manipulating them behind the scenes should also attract attention. In the era of great power competition, international organizations have become an important arena for great powers to compete for influence. According to the "principal-agent" theory, when the international organization as an agent deviates from the preference of the major power as a principal, the major power will control the international organization through the control mechanism.

It is worth noting that the differentiation and complexity of conflicts at the top and at the bottom of the conflict hierarchy bring about very different mediation logics, which poses uncontrollable risks
to the involvement of international organizations. It is true that conflicts at the top and at the bottom of the hierarchy are subject to different logics, which can lead to different mediation effects on the part of international non-governmental organizations, and this is already a great challenge for international non-governmental organizations themselves. On top of that, the differences in the regions where the conflicts are taking place add to the uncertainty of the original challenge. This is particularly evident in the case of conflicts in Africa and Europe, respectively. For Africa, the frequency of civil wars in the late first decade of the 21st century is half that of the mid-1990s, and the character of the wars has changed. Contemporary civil wars in Africa tend to be small, take place in remote areas, sometimes span multiple countries, involve factionalized rebels, the rebels often fail to take possession of important territories or capitals, and the incidence of mass killings of people is declining. It is true that for base wars and conflicts like those in Africa, NGOs are in a better position to address them. However, this logic is not true for Europe. Conflicts in Europe, including the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, often contain behind them a tug-of-war between major powers, even including the personal involvement of major powers, and the regional or even global power element is self-evident. On this basis, the mediation role of international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) has been very limited and has further affected the hierarchy of conflicts. Therefore, estimating the utility of NGOs in mediation cannot be based solely on the two logics of ground-level and top-level conflict, but rather on a multidimensional interpretive analysis that combines multiple mediation approaches to arrive at the most adaptive and authoritative solution. For example, the "Normandy Model" of mediation is the political program proposed by France and Germany, the core European countries, for a peaceful settlement of the Donbass issue, and is a concrete manifestation of their diplomacy of cautious engagement with Russia. Maintaining high-level dialogue, third-party monitoring by the OSCE, and Franco-German mediation are clearly the distinctive European approach to crisis management. The influence of international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) is in fact questionable in these conflicts, which are fraught with profound elements of balance of power and great power games.

4. Summary

In conclusion, based on previous studies, this paper further analyzes the effectiveness of international non-governmental organizations in regulating conflicts, but it not only examines the intensity of war conflicts like previous studies, but also focuses on the level of conflicts, so as to judge whether international non-governmental organizations can respond to crises in a reasonable way. The intensity of the conflict is contained in the conflict hierarchy, which is further divided into top-level conflict and top-level conflict. The subjective logic, the intensity, the subjects and the causes of both are different. In resolving conflicts at the bottom level, INGOs can do a good job of targeting grassroots socialization and promote social stability. However, the effectiveness of INGOs is usually very limited for regional issues that involve national sovereignty. The article comprehensively elaborates the mediation effectiveness of INGOs by analyzing the various problems of INGOs. On this basis, the authors propose to put forward rational policy recommendations. First of all, conflict mediation needs to address both the symptoms and the root causes, which requires attention not only to the understanding of the problem of distribution of political power at the top, but also to the handling of conflicts at the bottom. The concept of conflict hierarchy reveals the complexity of the conflict ecology in fragile States, and therefore addressing both the symptoms and the root causes is essential to maintaining long-term stability in the world. Secondly, it is impossible to mediate conflicts relying only on international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), there should be a synergistic participation of multiple subjects, which is an important basis for the advancement of the field of conflict mediation, and INGOs should be allowed to respect the sovereignty of the national subjects and to stimulate the motivation of their subjects in order to promote the development of the effectiveness of mediation by INGOs. Finally, the article argues that the Chinese government needs to establish a more inclusive collaborative body to participate in global governance. On the basis of
safeguarding the principle of sovereignty in international relations, China needs to explore, in accordance with its actual needs, coordination, cooperation and conflict mediation with some international non-governmental organizations with universal credibility, so as to give better play to China's image as a great power and highlight its positive and constructive role in hotspot issues.

References


