

**CIVIL SOCIETY IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES:
AN ANALYSIS OF DONOR INTERVENTIONS**

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ABSTRACT

The paper presents a critical analysis of the civil society discourse emanating from development agencies, and investigates its implications for political and civil society in developing countries. Civil society is a normative ideal, a political concept, as well as a political/social reality and can be conceptualized in multiple ways. Operationalizing the concept for policy purpose is a normative process that privileges the associational view of civil society. This largely ignores the role of 'non voluntary' groups. In most developing countries ascriptive ties are an essential part of the fabric of society; ethnic, communal and religious groups are influential political and social actors. The paper highlights the historical and cultural specificity of the discourse of civil society. It argues for a more inclusive conceptualization of civil society, that acknowledges the importance of local forms of collective action.

Keywords: Civil Society; Eurocentrism; Developing Countries; Donor Agencies

Subject Terms: Civil Society; International Agencies; Economic Development; Development Assistance; Developing Countries; Colonialism

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1: INTRODUCTION

With the collapse of communism civil society gained prominence as the most crucial element for establishing and sustaining democracy. A strong civil society is seen as important for a robust liberal democratic order not only in the post communist countries but also in the so-called 'third world'. In its 'social capital'¹ variation it is seen as a solution to the political apathy and the liberal dilemma of atomistic individualism facing advanced democracies. Cohen and Arato² argue that the concept of civil society is the primary locus for the expansion of democracy and rights. International development agencies increasingly rely on civil society organizations as 'partners' in development. Hence civil society is assigned a key role in promoting/sustaining/establishing good governance, reducing poverty and supporting a liberal/neoliberal economic order. It is seen as a panacea for the 'ills' plaguing the developing nations of the world.

Civil society is a normative ideal, a political concept, as well as a political/social reality and hence can be conceptualized in multiple ways. The concept of civil society was largely confined to the realm of political philosophy and political theory till the early 1980s. It was revived by East European academics to lend intellectual support to their struggle against totalitarian states. The subsequent success of civil society over the state led to a renewed interest in the concept as well as in actually existing civil societies. This resulted in a number of studies which analyzed the nature and characteristics of civil

1 Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone : The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (Simon & Schuster, New York, 2000)

2 Jean L Cohen and Andrew Arato. *Civil Society and Political Theory*. (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992)

society, traced its history and analyzed its importance for democracy, markets, and development, Cohen and Arato³1992, Keane⁴ 1988, Chandhoke⁵: 1995, Hall⁶: 1995, Ehrenberg⁷: 1995, Putnam ⁸1999; leading universities established centres dedicated to research on ‘civil society’.⁹

The developments in Eastern Europe coincided with the adoption of *Laissez-Faire*, neoclassical economic management strategies by the western industrialized nations. The concept of civil society provided a useful analytical purpose for policy makers in their efforts to reduce the size of the state and increase the role of ‘private’ actors. International development agencies *striving* to ‘develop’ the South/third world, used the discourse of civil society and its presumed role in democratization, and promotion of open liberal economies, to accelerate their move away from the traditional state centric development policies. The debate surrounding ‘civil society’ takes on a heated turn as multilateral and other western aid agencies try to operationalize the concept of civil society and use development funds to construct ‘civil society’. Hence, establishing or strengthening of civil society, as the case may be, in developing countries has become an important part of the democracy and governance initiatives of development agencies.

3 Ibid.

4 John Keane, *Old Images, New Images* (Cambridge, UK Polity Press, 1988)

5 Neera Chandhoke, *State and Civil Society Explorations in Political Theory* (New Delhi, Sage Publications, 1995)

6 John Hall, *Civil Society, Theory, History, Comparison*, (Cambridge, UK, Polity Press, 1995)

7John Ehrenberg, *Civil Society: The Critical History of an Idea*. (New York: New York University Press, 1999)

8 Robert, D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone, The collapse and revival of American community*,(New York, Simon Schuster , 2000)

9 Johns Hopkins University Institute for Policy Studies: Center for Civil Society Studies, University of Maryland: Civil Society Initiative NonProfit Pathfinder ,Yale University: Organizations Harvard University: Resources on Civil Society, The Hauser Center for Nonprofit Organizations Case Western Reserve University(levland): Mandel Center for Nonprofit Organizations Institute of Development Studies: Civil Society and Governance Programme, London School of Economics: Centre

Donor-civil society relations have been explored by Van Rooy¹⁰, Howell and Pearce,¹¹ and more recently by Edwards's.¹² These studies provide a detailed analysis of donor-civil society relations and suggest ways to improve those relations. The studies while reproaching the donor agencies for ignoring the 'historical and cultural specificity' of the concept, and the power imbalances of actually existing societies, go on to suggest ways donors can work with civil society.¹³ Van Rooy concludes that 'long term vision and small doses' make aid effective. Jude Howell and Jenny Pearce want multilateral agencies to devote their aid to 'creating and protecting the arena of civil society and ensuring that the poorest and most vulnerable have a say in it' as well as 'provide opportunities and fora for dialogues with civil society organizations'. The studies while providing some well meaning advice to donor agencies on 'strengthening civil society' are mired in a western 'organizational' view of civil society, and largely ignore the role of 'non institutional' civil society. In most developing countries ascriptive ties are an essential part of the fabric of society; ethnic, communal and religious groups are influential political and social actors. The discourse ignores the political and social consequences of restructuring these traditional societies from external sources.

Research Question and Objective

The importance assigned to civil society in development discourse calls for an interrogation of the civil society discourse emanating from development agencies. The paper will scrutinize the civil society discourse emanating from multilateral agencies,

10 Alison Van Rooy, ed. *Civil Society and the Aid Industry: The Politics and Promise*. (London: Earthscan, 1998)

11 Jude Howell and Jenny Pearce, *Civil Society and Development: A Critical Exploration*. (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2001)

12 Micheal Edwards, *Civil Society*, (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2004)

13 Howell and Pearce, *op.cit*, P:236

especially the World Bank, and USAID and investigate its implications for political and civil society in the developing countries. As most developing countries are dependent on donor aid, the policies of these multilateral institutions have a direct and significant impact on civil society in these countries. The concept of civil society did not develop in a vacuum it is based on a very specific (western) historical trajectory. The concept of civil society evolved with the rise of commercial society in the west. The move from feudal to commercial and industrial society entailed a restructuring of the state, society as well as the 'individual'. These transitions were observed and analyzed by the Enlightenment Philosophers, especially the Scottish and German philosophers such as Ferguson and Hegel, considered to be the 'founding fathers' of civil society'. Hence, the paper will underscore the importance of historical and cultural, as well as economic circumstances in shaping 'actually existing civil societies, and highlight the historical and cultural specificity of the 'concept of civil society' in order to problematize its acceptance as a universal truth.

A dilemma that will be explored here is why this important category of society, that 'Atlantic society is endowed with,'¹⁴ seems so elusive in developing countries. As the South is deemed to be lacking 'civil society' the multilateral and bilateral donors use the development funds at their disposal which are enforced by loan conditionalities to establish/strengthen civil society. Here, important questions need to be asked about what is being promoted as civil society and to analyze whether civil societies can be established by external funding and 'blue print models' imposed by development agencies.

¹⁴ Ernest Gellner, *The Conditions of Liberty, Civil Society and its Rivals*, (London H. Hamilton, 1994.) P:13

More specifically, the project investigates whether donor funded civil societies in the South are achieving the objectives assigned to them, such as promoting democracy and human rights, providing the space for public discourse and keeping the state's authoritarian tendencies at bay; or whether civil society reduced to associations financed by external funds is just a 'technique of governance'. The analysis intends to illuminate some of the dilemmas that arise from implementing an 'alien' 'blue print model' of civil society that does not address the predicaments facing the actually existing civil societies in the South. The analysis will focus particularly on three areas that have become central in the donor discourse on civil society and 'good governance': *state-society relations*, *agenda setting*, and *participation*. The project of strengthening civil society in the South, using donor funds also raises issues about sustainability and autonomy, hence a section of the project will discuss briefly issues arising from 'aid dependency'.

Central Thesis/ Argument

Most international organizations tend to take a neoliberal, associational view of civil society and identify it as non political, and equate it with non governmental organizations. The concept of civil society makes certain assumptions about the state, market and individual, based on the experiences of the industrialized West. Developing countries measured against this yardstick are designated as 'traditional' and 'underdeveloped' and become the object of development missions. This is reminiscent of the eighteenth century discourse of the colonial era when the contemporary South was designated as 'uncivilized' and was subjected to colonial imperialism, disguised as a 'civilizing' mission.

The Donor policies vis-à-vis civil societies are presented as neutral and technical, yet this neutral stance ‘tends to mask political agendas’.¹⁵ The ideological underpinnings of the donor discourse can be discerned by analyzing the definition of civil society employed by the donors, and investigating its underlying assumptions. Donors are very specific about their vision of ‘development’; hence, they set the agenda, provide training and delineate the tasks between civil society, the market and the state to achieve this objective. The main contention of this paper is that the policies to strengthen and establish civil society using donor funds based on preconceived notions of civil society, are potentially contradictory and self defeating, as these divest civil society of the very features that make it so valuable for democracy and development. Civil society dependent on donor funds may lose its autonomy, and its capacity and credibility to act as the ‘conscience of society’.

Furthermore, the ‘blue print models’ adopted by donors assume that certain structures and institutions are ‘natural’ and universal, such as free unfettered markets, small state, and a society free of the ‘tyranny of kith and kin’ where individuals are free to form ‘non voluntary associations. In many parts of the South, however, individuals are still tied to community, and many of the associations they belong to are non voluntary and based on ascriptive ties. These realities are treated in the donor discourse as anomalies to be corrected by funding ‘voluntary associations’. The blue print models do not take into account the specific nature of the state, society and market, or the historical and contemporary pressures, external as well as internal, that the developing states have to deal with.

¹⁵ Howell and Pearce, *op.cit.* P: 115

Most developing countries were under colonial rule, gaining their independence from the late 1940's onwards, and are still struggling to build cohesive national societies, and devise workable ways to share political and economic resources in societies that are heterogeneous culturally, ethnically, linguistically, racially and religiously. In the contemporary era of neoliberal globalization, they are attempting to do so in the face of more intrusive aid conditionality, inequitable trading relations with industrialized countries, and unfavourable terms of trade in the global market economy. As policies that propose to strengthen civil society are implemented, and come into contact with these realities, they create contradictions and exclusions in the developing countries. These manifest themselves in a variety of spaces and relations — between the state and society, in politics of representation and participation as well as autonomy. Reliance of civil society on external funds is a contentious issue; it places civil society in a dependent relationship with the donors, and perpetuates and sustains the unequal power relations between the North and the South.

Methodology and Empirical Evidence

I will employ a critical discourse analysis to investigate the relationship between discourse and reality. Parker¹⁶ defines a discourse as an interrelated set of texts, and the practices of their production, dissemination, and reception that brings an object into being. Howarth¹⁷ includes 'all types of social and political practice, as well as institutions and organizations' in the concept of discourse. As a specialist language that enables

16 Nelson Phillips and Cynthia Hardy, Discourse Analysis, Investigating Processes of Social Construction, (CA, Thousand Oaks, : Sage Publications, 2002), P: 3

17 David Howarth, «Discourse Theory», in David Marsh and Gary Stoker eds, Theory and Methods in Political Science, London Macmillan, pp 115- 133

social power by describing the world in particular ways, discourses privilege certain constructions of reality while simultaneously marginalizing alternatives. These constructions of reality are presented as ‘truths’ that justify particular courses of action. A discourse constructs a particular object of knowledge and creates a structure of knowledge and power around that object. Interventions are then carried out on the basis of this structure. Discourse analysis thus provides a useful analytical tool for exploring the ‘role of discursive activity in constituting and sustaining unequal power relations’.¹⁸ It also helps in the exploration of how certain policies and actors are privileged at the expense of others.

The donor discourse on civil society can be understood as involving a discursive re-articulation and reconfiguration of ideas and values (such as state, society, market, production, exchange, etc) in particular ways to produce meanings that privilege particular identities, interests, values and practices while simultaneously marginalizing alternatives. A discourse analysis entails deconstructing the structure of knowledge created by the donor discourse on civil society to show that as with all policy discourses quite a gap exists between the rhetorical articulation and representation on one hand, and the empirical reality on the other.

I will use evidence from publications of the World Bank and USAID and draw on relevant empirical evidence drawn from selected developing countries to analyze the effectiveness of civil society in achieving the goals assigned to it by the multilateral agencies and by political theorists. The policy statements and other periodic publications layout the policies and provide guidelines for actors involved in development. A

¹⁸ Phillips and Hardy, *op.cit.*, 2002, P: 25

discourse analysis is a useful tool in exploring how this discursive activity constructs ‘civil society’, encouraging certain forms of participation, while rejecting others.

Most developing countries today were under colonial rule. Standing on the South of the North-South divide and using insights from post-colonial thought, certain continuities of the colonial discourse and structures can be discerned in the present global governance arrangements. Hence the project will provide a brief look at the historical evolution of the civil society concept; its application in the context of colonialism, and the continuing legacies of colonialism. While the research does not claim to provide a detailed analysis of the specificities of the colonial encounter for specific countries, it seeks to provide a more historically informed analysis.

The analysis will be at a very general level, pointing out certain contradictions and anomalies using evidence from various countries, rather than concentrate on a specific case study. This is not to deny the uniqueness of the experience of each postcolonial/developing state, but due to the nature of the research investigation. Donor agencies treat the South as a homogenous mass that has to be ‘tamed’ and governed, as did their predecessors while administering the colonies. The research interrogates the civil society discourse of donor agencies and highlights the chimerical nature of ‘establishing’ civil society by external sources.

The project will be composed of the following sections; the first chapter will provide a brief overview of the contributions made to the evolution of the concept of civil society by major thinkers like Locke, Hegel, Ferguson and Gramsci, and go on to look at some contemporary literature. An important part of this review will be to analyze ‘what is civil society? Chapter two will explore the representation of the contemporary South in

the Enlightenment philosophy, and highlight the continuing legacy of these seminal texts in contemporary 'development' discourse. The chapter will provide a brief overview of the impact of the colonial encounter, and the subsequent decolonization process. The decolonization process reshaped the relation between the colonizer and the colonized, and coincided with the formation of the current structures and institutions of global governance. A brief look at the evolving perceptions of development and the relations between the North and the South in light of the colonial encounter will help in illuminating the current power asymmetries.

Chapter three will analyze the contemporary donor conception of civil society, and will look at the goals and objectives assigned to civil society. The focus will be on the civil society discourse emanating from the World Bank and USAID. The World Bank is a key player in linking the dominant economic and political paradigms to specific policy actions and plays an important role in shaping the policies of the developing countries. USAID as the largest bilateral donor of civil society funding is an influential player in the development arena. Chapter four will explore the issues arising from strengthening civil society using donor funds. This chapter will investigate the underlying assumptions of the liberal notion of civil society and test their relevance for developing countries. The chapter will engage with issues arising from 'funding' civil society,' focusing on issues of participation, agenda setting, lack of autonomy arising from aid dependency. The last section will provide some concluding remarks.

2: CIVIL SOCIETY

The importance assigned to civil society as a normative ideal and a political reality, makes it a highly contested concept. The story of civil society follows the trajectory of modern Western liberal political theory. Changing historical contexts, social, political, and economic shaped and reshaped the concept of civil society. In the recent revival of the concept the term takes on various permutations and is described as an ‘essentially contested concept’. This section will provide a brief historical overview of the concept and will later look at some contemporary literature.

Conceptual History of Civil Society: An overview

For all its ‘modern’ connotations, the concept of civil society can be traced back to the earliest recorded political texts. Philosophers, since the time of Aristotle, have reflected on the nature, structure and constituents of (political) society, and the role of the various actors involved in it. Early political philosophers did not differentiate between political and civil society; these were considered as a single category, hence Aristotelian ‘society’ or ‘politike koinonia’, subsumed political society/community.¹⁹ Social Contract theorists contrasted civil society with a hypothetical ‘state of nature’; the concept of civil and political society was used interchangeably, and signified a ‘politically organized commonwealth’.²⁰ Hobbes the ‘major architect of modern liberalism’,²¹ contrasted political/civil society with a hypothetical state of nature, where the absence of authority

19 Steven M. DeLue *Political Thinking, Political Theory, and Civil Society*. 2nd ed. (New York: Longman, 2002) P 43-62

20 John Ehrenberg, *Civil Society: The Critical History of an Idea*. (New York: New York University Press, 1999), p: xii

21 DeLue, *op.cit.*, P:123

and law made life 'solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short'²², hence, men contracted to enter a 'politically organized society'. Hobbes' systematic study of the political society, and his conceptualization of 'methodological individualism', and the comparison of civil/political society with the 'state of nature'²³, became important building blocks for the study of politics. Locke²⁴ witnessed the chaos and turbulence of the English Revolution of 1688, and was an advocate of the new property rights that were challenging the old feudal structures. Men contract to enter political society to preserve their property; hence, ownership of property²⁵ is the chief criterion for being a member of this polity. A 'Lockean' civil or political society²⁶ is distinguished from the state of nature by 'common established law' and a state whose chief purpose is the preservation of property²⁷. 'Locke understands civil society to be the association of individuals beyond the family which are based on the symmetric reciprocity of strangers, who equally and individually give up the state of nature in order to enter into a society.'²⁸ Here we witness the formulation of the assumptions that form the core of liberal civil society, property rights, individualism.

With the advent of commercial society, a new dimension was added to state-society theorizing, one based on material relations. The concept of civil society starts

22 Thomas Hobbes, "Leviathan", in David Wootton ed, Modern Political Thought, Readings From Machiavelli to Nietzsche (Indianapolis/Cambridge Hackett Publishing Company Inc, 1996) p 171

23 Colás, Alejandro International Civil Society, Social Movements in World Politics. (Cambridge, Eng.; Malden , MA Polity, Blackwell, 2002), p:28

24 John Locke, "Second Treatise of Government", 1689, in David Wootton ed, Modern Political Thought, Readings From Machiavelli to Nietzsche (Indianapolis/Cambridge Hackett Publishing Company Inc, 1996), pp:310-386

25 Property for Locke was life, liberty and land

26 Locke's "Second Treatise on Government" has a chapter entitled 'Of Political or Civil Society'

27 Locke, op.cit. p 336

28 Keith Tester, Civil society.(London ; New York, NY: (Routledge 1992), p: 40

In opposition to the mercantilists, scholars of Scottish Enlightenment urged the separation of politics and economics. Smith and Ferguson played an instrumental role in the separation of the spheres of politics and economics, as well as in establishing the primacy of commerce as a constituent of civil society, where the division of labor and exchange were the defining moments of civil society. Hence, with the rise of commercial society as new property relations came into existence individuals detached from ties of kinship and family entered into relations with strangers based on a 'system of needs'. Here, issues like 'trust and reciprocity' gained importance; civility and good manners were the hallmarks of this new society. The negative impact of commerce on society was mitigated in civil society; civil society was seen as a 'realm of solidarity held together by the force of moral sentiments and national affection'.²⁹

The ideas of Scottish Enlightenment traveled to Germany and influenced the major thinkers of German Enlightenment. Hegel, the 'representative theorist'³⁰ of civil society was highly influenced by Ferguson, Hume and Smith.³¹ Hegel in his elaborate philosophy of society defined 'civil society' (Bürgerliche Gesellschaft) as a distinct area of ethical life mediating between the family and the state.³² 'Civil society for Hegel contains three moments, a system of needs, administration of justice, and police, and the corporation.'³³ Hegel defines civil society as 'an association of members as self subsistent individuals in a universality which, because of their self subsistent is only abstract. Their

29 Adam B. Seligman, The Idea of Civil Society, (New York, The Free Press, 1992), p:33

30 Jean Cohen and Andrew Arato, Civil Society and Political Theory ,(The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England, 1992)

31 See Norbert Waszek The Scottish Enlightenment and Hegel's Account of Civil Society (Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1988) for a detailed analysis of the influence of Scottish Enlightenment philosophy on Hegel

32 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Philosophy of the Right, tr and T. M. Knox (Oxford: The Clarendon press, 1962), pp181-256

33 Ibid, para 188, p: 126.

association is brought about by their needs, by the legal system, the means to security of person and property ---and by an external organization for attaining their particular and common interests.’³⁴ For Hegel this external organization was the state seen as ‘an actuality of an ethical idea’.³⁵

Hegel’s conceptualization of political and civil society subsumes the ideas of the Scottish Enlightenment, and is the starting point for most contemporary theories of civil society. Hegel saw civil society as an arena of conflicting particular interests. The state stands above the particular interests and guides them towards a common public good. State is the ‘end and actuality of both the substantial universal order and public life’.³⁶ The three classes in civil society are the substantial, or the agricultural class, the formal or the business class and the Universal class of the civil servants.³⁷ Those who do not belong to these classes most notably the poor are not a part of this ‘civil society’. Hegel labels these the ‘rabble’.

Hegel, like his predecessors, was preoccupied with reconciling the particular and the universal. The pursuit of private interests in civil society’s system of needs turned it into a ‘battleground of competing private interests’.³⁸ State, for Hegel, was the embodiment of universal good and was above the particular interests that plagued civil society. ‘State is the embodiment of ethical and universal ideals and guided civil society towards the attainment of public good,³⁹ civil society had to be ‘tamed by the state’.⁴⁰ As

34 Ibid para 157 B: p:110

35 Ibid, para 257, p:155

36 Ibid, para 257:p: 155 and Para 157 C: p 110.

37 Ibid, p: 188

38 Colas, *op.cit.*, p: 41

39 Ehrenberg , *op.cit.*, p:237

Cohen and Arato, point out Hegel's theory of civil society is important as it contains most of the elements of the current theorizing of concept of civil society, 'legality, privacy, plurality, associations, publicity, and mediation'.⁴¹ Cohen and Arato, assert that their theory of civil society adds a new element to these list i.e. social movements.

Marx in his influential critique of Hegel's 'Philosophy of the Right' criticized the conception of state as a universality, which according to Marx actually represented the particular interests of the dominating class. Marx saw civil society as a network of economic relations that has a decisive influence in shaping the state⁴². Civil society's 'network of particular material interests structured the state and seriously compromised its ability to serve as mankind's "ethical whole".⁴³ The pursuit of wealth by particular interests resulted in dividing society between the workers and owners of capital. Here, Marx is influenced by Hegel's description of it as the sphere of selfishness, exploitation, and poverty, as well as by the increasing exploitations and disparities that he witnessed in actual society.

Marx critiqued the dichotomization of political and civil society, and the different roles assigned to the individual in the two spheres, 'in political society he regulates himself as a communal being; but in civil society he is active as a private individual, treats other men as means, and reduces himself to a means and becomes the plaything of

40 Neera Chandhoke, "What the hell is civil society", http://www.opendemocracy.net/democracy-open_politics/article_2375.jsp, 2005, P:8

41 Jean L Cohen and Andrew Arato, Civil Society and Political Theory. (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press) 1992

42 Ehrenberg, op.cit, p:256

43 Ibid p:133

alien powers'.⁴⁴ Marx's critique of civil society was influential in shifting the debate away from civil society.

The other major contribution to the concept of civil society came from the Italian academic/political activist Gramsci. His analysis of the failure of communist revolutions to take root in Europe, led him to acknowledge the importance of civil society. For Gramsci, civil society is used by the state to promote its ideology, it is the 'the sphere in which a dominant social group organizes consent and hegemony, and where the subordinate social groups may organize their opposition'.⁴⁵

Hence, for Gramsci it is the realm of diffused political power, which can also be the site of a counter hegemonic force. Gramscian theory/conceptualization of civil society is more than just abstract theorizing, as an active member of the Italian communist party, he was interested in harnessing the forces in civil society to bring about a proletarian revolution. Gramscian concept of civil society, as articulated in his Notebooks, is ambiguous and the borders between civil society and state keep shifting. Gramsci uses state and civil society interchangeably, 'by "State" should be understood not only the apparatus of government, but also the "private apparatus of hegemony" or civil society'? At another point, 'civil society__ which is "State" too, indeed is the State itself'⁴⁶ or, 'State = political society+ civil society'.⁴⁷ Civil Society organizations like the church, trade unions and the school work in conjunction with the state to strengthen the dominant ideology. Gramsci's major contribution to political theory is the concept of hegemony;

44 Karl Marx, "On the Jewish Question", in David Wootton ed Modern Political Thought, Readings From Machiavelli to Nietzsche, (Hackett Publishing Company Inc, Indianapolis/Cambridge) p:769

45 Roger Simon, Gramsci's Political Thought, An Introduction, (London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1991), p:68

46 Antonio Gramsci, Selections From the Prison Notebooks, ed and tr Quintin Hoare and GN Smith, (New York, International Publishers, 1971) pp:261-263

47 For a detailed analysis see Perry Anderson, "The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci", in New Left Review, 100 (1976-77), pp.5-78

hegemony is established by fostering consent amongst society, and to add a further division of society in the civil, political, and economic spheres.

Another strand of civil society, which is highly influential in contemporary policy circles, comes from de Tocqueville, whose observations of civil society in America have inspired contemporary theorists of the associational version of civil society, most notably Robert Putnam.⁴⁸ Tocqueville's description of American non-state associations and their role in articulating the interests of the minority groups provided a way out of the dilemma posed by the 'tyranny of the majority'. Tocqueville concluded that free and voluntary associations, by mediating between the individual and the state ensured that democracy functioned properly and kept the government in check.

As this brief overview shows the concept of civil society is complex and value laden and has evolved in particular cultural, economic and political milieus. The concept has multiple strands, and refers at once to a normative ideal, as well as 'actually existing societies'. Civil Society is characterized by trust, reciprocity, civility, plurality, and publicity. It is a realm separate and autonomous from the state, yet needs the state to provide the legal and protective apparatus to keep it civil. It provides a space where public opinion is formed, and is a way around the tyranny of the majority through associations as well as a site for establishing hegemony and a counter-hegemony.

Contemporary Revival

With the collapse of communism in East Europe civil society gained prominence as the most crucial element for establishing and sustaining democracy. A strong civil

⁴⁸Robert D. Putnam. *Bowling Alone : The Collapse and Revival of American Community*.(New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000)

society is seen as important for a robust liberal democratic order not only in the post communist countries, but also in the so-called ‘third world’. A strong civil society was seen as vital for ensuring that authoritarian governments do not capture the states.⁴⁹ This rediscovery of civil society inspired a plethora of studies, which looked at the European origins, historical contexts, and the relation of civil society to democracy. Tracing the history of the concept, delineating its forms and functions, and its role in establishing or stabilizing democracy virtually became an ‘intellectual industry’.⁵⁰

The revival also led to a debate amongst contemporary ‘western’ political philosophers as diverse as republicans, communitarians, libertarians, and liberal egalitarians all of whom emphasized one or the other elements of civil society — civility, civic virtue, associability, and plurality — to understand the current dilemmas facing Western liberal societies and their solutions. Charles Taylor, Edward Shills, Michael Walzer and Daniel Bell are some of the prominent names in this debate.⁵¹

The current discourse on civil society is varied and ambiguous; the relation between state and civil society is seen as either cooperative or antagonistic; and the boundaries between the two are a matter of debate. From its origins to the present day, it has subsumed the various developments and is used by academics and practitioners of various ideological standpoints. The dominant strands in contemporary civil society theorizing see civil society variously as social movements, as public sphere, or as associational life.

49 See Seligman, *op.cit.*, as well as John Keane, *Civil Society: Old Images, New Visions*. (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1998). John Hall, *Civil Society theory, history, comparison*, (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1995), Keith Tester, *Civil society*. (London ; New York, NY: Routledge 1992)

50 Alison Van Rooy Ed *Civil Society and the Aid Industry: The Politics and the Promise*. (London, Earthscan, 1998)

51 For details refer to Seligman, *op.cit.*, p:2

The associational strand espoused by Robert Putnam emphasizes voluntary associations and networks and takes its inspiration from Tocqueville. Putnam is concerned with the decline of the 'civic' spirit', and political apathy that is eroding democracy in the industrialized west. Robert Putnam's study of the decline of voluntary associations and networks in the USA in 'Bowling Alone'⁵² is the most influential in shaping the policy agenda of the international development agencies. According to this view, as citizens join groups and form associations, they establish networks of trust, solidarity and reciprocity that are not tied to kinship bonds. These generate social capital, which refers to the 'collective value of all "social networks", which people know, and the inclinations that arise from these networks to do things for each other lead to "norms of reciprocity"⁵³. These are essential not only for democracy but for the economy as well.⁵⁴ skeptics see the ascendancy of the associational view of civil society as an ideological and political maneuver, 'Tocqueville's, notion of civil society performs a normalizing function by making it difficult to see the economic roots of contemporary problems and blinding us to the political avenues'.⁵⁵

The second major contribution to the theory of civil society uses Jurgen Habermas's concept of the 'Public Sphere'⁵⁶ to look at the role of social movements in the construction of a democratic public sphere. Cohen and Arato's reconstruction of civil society is a 'political 'translation' of Habermasian critical theory.'⁵⁷ Here, civil society

52 Putnam, op.cit.

53 Saguaro Seminar, Civic Engagement in America, <http://www.ksg.harvard.edu/saguaro/measurement.htm>

54 For a critique of Tocquevillian ascendancy in American debates and its implications for civil society see Ehrenberg, op.cit.

55 Ehrenberg, op.cit., p:234

56 Elaborated in Jurgen Habermas, The structural transformation of the public sphere : an inquiry into a category of Bourgeois, tr Thomas Burger (Cambridge, Mass. : MIT Press; Cambridge, England : Polity Press, 1989)

57 Cohen and Arato, op.cit., p: 15

offers a public arena, separated from both the market and the state, where ‘individuals and collectivities, through successful mobilization, realize the full potential of modern liberal citizenship’. For Cohen and Arato ‘modern civil society is created through forms of self –constitution and self mobilization. It is institutionalized and generalized through law, and especially subjective rights, that stabilize social differentiation.⁵⁸ Hence, ‘both independent action and institutionalization’ are necessary for the reproduction of civil society.⁵⁹ They define civil society as a ‘sphere of social interaction between the economy and the state, composed of the entire intimate sphere (especially the family), the sphere of associations (esp. voluntary associations), social movements, and forms of public communication. These social movements are ‘self limiting’ and aim to achieve social rather than political goals.

Hence, the current civil society theorizing divides society into the civil, political, and economic spheres, ‘the inhabitant of this sphere is the rights bearing and juridical-defined individual, i.e., the citizen’.⁶⁰ Powers of civil society are seen as ‘residing in the economy, in property rights and markets where such rights may be freely exchanged’.⁶¹ Three definitions of civil society by three contemporary academics underscore the importance of the rule of law, a legally protected public sphere, and a state that is above the ‘particular’ interests for civil society.

Civil Society is that set of diverse non-governmental institutions which is strong enough to counterbalance the state and while not preventing the state from fulfilling its role of keeper of peace and arbitrator

58 Ibid, p:, ix

59 Ibid, p:43-53

60 Neera Chandhoke, *State and civil society: Explorations in political theory*. (New Delhi ; Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1995) p::9

61 Sudipta Kaviraj and Sunil Khilnani eds *Civil Society, Hisory and Possibilities*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001)

between major interests, can nevertheless prevent it from dominating and atomizing the rest of society.⁶²

‘Ideal typical category that both describes and envisages a complex dynamic ensemble of legally protected non governmental institutions that tend to be non violent, self organizing, self reflective, and permanently in tension with each other and with the state institutions that ‘frame, constrict and enable their activities’.⁶³

‘civil society as the locus of both democratic legitimacy and rights composed of private but also of political relevant public and social spheres in which individuals speak, assemble, associate, reason together on matters of public concern and get in concert in order to influence political society and indirect decision making.⁶⁴

Hence, in its present, popular context, civil society is defined as distinct from the state, the market, and the political sphere. ‘Its voluntary associations, international groupings, social movements always strive to maintain a measure of autonomy from the public affairs of politics and private concerns of economics’.⁶⁵ It encompasses non-governmental organizations (NGOs), social movements, and individuals involved in non-governmental activities. The theories of civil society assign civil society certain functions and values, a strong civil society keeps the state from encroaching on citizens rights, resolves the dilemma of the ‘tyranny of the majority’, cultivates a civic culture, generates social capital, and provides a metatopical public sphere, where social movements emerge. Rule of law, civic virtue, public sphere, associational life characterized by civility and trust lead to democratic polities.

62 Ernest Gellner, *Conditions of Liberty, Civil Society and its Rivals*, (London, H. Hamilton), 1994, p.:5

63 Keane, *op.cit.*, p.:6

64 Cohen and Arato, *op.cit.*, p.:565

65 Ehrenberg, *op.cit.* p:237

The brief overview of the conceptual history of civil society reveals that the concept developed in the context of western industrialized countries and evolved as an integral feature of the liberal western political theory. Missing from this discourse are any voices representing the South. The next chapter will reexamine the Enlightenment texts to examine the role played by these discourses in the construction of the contemporary 'South'.

3: COLONIAL PASTS AND CIVIL SOCIETIES IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

The Eighteenth century narrative of civil society which forms the basis of current civil society theorizing was formulated in the West. The context for this narrative was the demise of feudalism and the rise of commerce and industry, and the concomitant changes in the fabric of society. In the contemporary period where the ‘quest’ for establishing or strengthening civil society spreads across the globe, the narrative needs to be scrutinized to search for how the ‘South’ was represented in the colonial narratives and to see the implications of these discourses on current theorizing and policy making. As Laclau and Mouffe⁶⁶ argue discourses are historically contingent, hence, this chapter will situate the ‘Other’, the contemporary ‘South’, in these historical narratives and will attempt to discern the remnants of these historical discursive formulations in current discourses of civil society.⁶⁷

Moving from concept to context, the events of the Eighteenth century, which helped the countries of the West, remove their feudal shackles, and laid the foundations of contemporary liberal, economic, and political institutions, had a vastly different impact on the ‘South’. During the Eighteenth century most of the countries currently designated developing/underdeveloped/South’ were under formal or informal colonial rule. These events have relevance for a study of ‘actually existing societies’.

66 Cited in David Howarth , “Discourse Theory”, in David Marsh and Gary Stroker, eds Theory and Methods in Political Science(London, Macmillan, pp:115-133)

67 This will be the subject matter of chapters 3 and 4.

The chapter is divided in three parts. After a brief look at the representation of the 'South' in the works of some representative theorists of 'Enlightenment' civil society; I will provide a brief analysis of the colonial encounters' restructuring of the state and civil society in the postcolonial states. The analysis will then look at the impact of the decolonization process on the contemporary civil society in the South. A brief look at these historical legacies will help in understanding the current anomalies that plague the civil societies in the South. The purpose of this exercise is to underscore the importance of historical events, as well as the influence of the discursive formulations of the concept of civil society in shaping contemporary civil societies; and ask questions about the 'philosopher's aspirations about universality and cross cultural significance'.⁶⁸

The Enlightenment and the 'Other'

The contemporary discourse of the concept of civil society relies heavily on its conceptualization and development by philosophers of the Enlightenment. The importance of these eighteenth century discourses in laying the foundations of a liberal world order are well recognized; yet, little is written about how these formative and influential texts were also constructing the 'other' as uncivilized, barbarous and in need of redemption. The discovery of new lands and new people by the European explorers with vastly different cultures and religions posed a dilemma for the Europeans in terms of how to treat this 'difference'⁶⁹. Tales of strange customs, habits, religions, and cultures of these newly discovered 'species' were brought back by the explorers, traders and later the

68 Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze, *Achieving our Humanity : the idea of a postracial future* (New York : Routledge, 2001), p:21

69 For detailed analysis see Naem Inayatullah, and David L. Blaney, *International Relations and the Problem of Difference*. (New York: Routledge, 2004)

missionaries. This 'difference became a 'deviant deficit'.⁷⁰ and these newly discovered people designated savages and barbarians, 'surrounding darkness, out of which the light of Europe's reason would be delineated.'⁷¹

Enlightenment scholars imbued with a sense of cultural, racial and civilizational superiority, in comparison to these newly discovered 'pre-modern' societies, used reason and science to explain the latter's lack of civilization and industry. Ferguson, Hume, Kant, and Hegel, 'the remote discursive precursors'⁷² of civil society theories, regarded the Africans/Negros, Indians (of Hindustan as well as the Native Americans) as a lower species. Lack of commerce and agriculture, hot climate, 'blackness', a lower intellect, nature's design, and lack of Christian values were enlisted as the probable causes of the depravity and uncivility of the 'barbarians'.⁷³

Ferguson contrasted 'civil society' with 'rude' societies, Western societies, according to Ferguson had moved out of the 'rude' stage and with the rise of commerce had acquired polished manners and civility. Africa and Asia were still in their 'rude' stage and lacked the polished manners of the European societies; Africa in particular suffered a 'weakness in the genius of its people',⁷⁴ and was considered inferior to the Europeans. Property according to Ferguson was a 'matter of progress';⁷⁵ he differentiated

70 John L. Comaroff, John and Jean Comaroff, eds. Civil Society and the Political Imagination in Africa: Critical Perspectives. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999). p: 17

71 Eze, op.cit., P:15

72 Chakravorty Spivak, A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present. (Cambridge, Mass.; London: Harvard University Press, 1999)

73 For a detailed critical analysis of the 'philosophical racism' of Enlightenment philosophers see Eze op.cit., Scientific explanations built around these factors can be found in Hume, Kant and other Enlightenment philosophers.

74 Adam Ferguson, An Essay on the History of Civil Society. Translated by Fania Oz-Salzberger New ed. (Cambridge ; New York, N.Y: Cambridge University Press, 1995) p:108

75 Ibid, p:81

the nations that had achieved ‘advanced state of mechanic and commercial arts’⁷⁶, from their ‘rude counterparts’. Rude societies were designated ‘savage’ or ‘barbarian’ according to their ownership of property, ‘the acquiring of property distinguishes the savage who is not yet acquainted with property; from the Barbarian, to whom it is, although not ascertained by laws, a principal object of care and desire’.⁷⁷

Ferguson’s knowledge of these societies is largely based on travel accounts brought back by the traders and missionaries. Lack of knowledge of the arts, literature and poetry, or even the property systems (the hallmarks of civility) of these nations, leads Ferguson to conclude that they are not capable of the polished manners of the ‘commercially’ advanced societies. Ferguson devotes a section to of the ‘influences of climate and situation.’⁷⁸ According to Ferguson the hot climate of Africa and Asia led to their inferior intellect, ‘regions of the earth, on which our species, by the effects of situation or climate, appear to be restrained in their national pursuits or inferior in the powers of the mind.’⁷⁹ According to Ferguson,

‘Man, in his animal capacity, is qualified to subsist in every climate. The intermediate climates, however, appear most to favour his nature; and in whatever manner we account for the fact, it cannot be doubted, that this animal has always attained to the principal honours of his species within the temperate zone. The arts, which he has on this scene repeatedly invented, the extent of his reason, the fertility of his fancy, and the force of his genius in literature, commerce, policy, and war, sufficiently declare either a distinguished advantage of situation, or a natural superiority of mind.’⁸⁰

76 Ibid, p:80

77 Ibid, p: 81

78 Ibid, p:106

79 Ibid, p:141

80 Ibid, p:106

A deracialized version of this was later used by development economists such as Gunnar Myrdal. Myrdal argues that ‘all successful industrialization in modern times including that of Japan and Soviet Union has taken place in the temperate zones; this cannot be an accident of history’.⁸¹ The classification of societies and the values attributed to them, during the Enlightenment era shaped the knowledge production and theories associated with development.

Ferguson is not alone in this enterprise, the prevalent wisdom declared that these ‘non European Societies, remained backward because they lacked civil society, and property rights, the hall marks of civilization, they were deemed incapable of developing one without European help’.⁸² Similar sentiments can be found in other Enlightenment philosophers.⁸³ Hegel, one of the most prominent figures in civil society theorizing considered Africa as the ‘land of childhood’, ‘removed from the light of self conscious history and wrapped in the dark mantle of night’.⁸⁴ Hegel claims that the true theatre of history is the temperate zones; Africans were considered to be in an ‘untamed state’ and ‘not capable of developing culture’.⁸⁵ Hegel’s formulation of civil society, as a ‘system of needs’, led him to the conclusion that civil society is driven to found colonies.⁸⁶ Hence,

81 Gunnar Myrdal Asian Drama: An Inquiry into the Poverty of Asian Nations. (New York: Pantheon, Twentieth Century Fund, 1971), p: 677

82 Bikhu Parekh, “Putting civil society in its place”, in Marlies Glasius, David Lewis, and Hakan Seckinelgin, .ed Exploring Civil Society : Political and Cultural Contexts. (London ; New York: Routledge, 2004), p: 16

83 Hume says, for example, that Negroes have “no arts, no sciences,” drawing conclusions from his highly sophisticated theory of mind, a theory within and from which it can be shown that he believed that the Negro does not possess specific mental abilities needed to produce science and culture. for details refer to Eze, op.cit: p: 693

84 Cited in in Eze op.cit: p: 24

85 For details, refer to Eze, op.cit.

86 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Philosophy of Right, translated by T. M. Knox, Oxford: The Clarendon press, 1962

the countries with developed civil societies embark on colonial conquests and acquire colonies while those lacking such civil societies are destined to be colonized.⁸⁷

Tocqueville, whose accounts of associational life and democracy in America have influenced the 'social capital' strand of civil society, considered the native Indians and Africans/Slaves outside of civil society as a danger to civil society. While, acknowledging the cruelty inflicted by the West on the native Indians and the Africans, Tocqueville, characterizes both as resisting 'civilization' and inferior to the Whites; 'the servility of the one dooms him to slavery, the pride of the other to death'.⁸⁸ The exclusion of the Indian and the African from associational life does not diminish Tocqueville's admiration for these associations.

Interestingly, instead of an attempt to understand the culture, customs and governance methods of these societies, their 'difference' is treated as deviant and they are relegated to a lower rung of the species ladder. Enlightenment Philosophers, preoccupied with classification and notions of progress, 'produced a range of ranking schemes which placed Europeans at the top of the human hierarchies and the darkest skinned peoples at the bottom'.⁸⁹ These were not the isolated musing of eccentric philosophers, but were a central part of the Enlightenment discourse. These discursive formulations were echoed in the policies of major western powers, as they embarked on a 'civilizing mission' and colonized most of Africa and Asia. 'Discourses of progress and civilization were used to

87 Karl Marx an ardent critic of the colonial extraction of Indian resources was an ardent critic of the 'Asiatic mode' of production and regarded colonialism as a necessary evil.

88 Alexis de Tocqueville *Democracy in America*, translated by Henry Reeve. (New York : G. Dearborn & Co., 1838)

89 Jane Samson, *Race and Empire*, (Harlow, England ; New York : Pearson/Longman,2005), p:27

legitimize slavery, genocide, colonialism and all forms of human exploitation'.⁹⁰ Hence, Enlightenment discourse entrenched the conception of Africa and Asia as lacking civilization, civil society and civility.

Colonization

The impact of the colonial experience on the former colonies is a highly debated and controversial topic. While, some academics⁹¹ argue that it brought good governance, education and communication networks to the colonized countries, others see the colonial imposition as the 'greatest calamity of humanity'.⁹² This is not the place to engage in a cost benefit analysis of colonization, rather the objective is to determine the influence of colonial administrative practices in shaping the state and society in the colonies; and to discern the impact of this restructuring on contemporary postcolonial states and civil societies. Most of these postcolonial states constitute the 'Third World' and are considered 'underdeveloped' or 'developing'.

Colonial administration restructured the agriculture system, the economy, and the polity to the advantage of the colonizer. The impact of this restructuring had important implications for civil and political society. Colonial rule was justified as bringing modernity and civilization to the regions. An important issue facing the colonial administration was how to deal with the 'the Native question'.⁹³ The colonial administrators devised a novel scheme for managing their colonies. Local elites,

90 Ronaldo Munck, and Denis O'Hearn, eds. *Critical Development Theory: Contributions to a New Paradigm*. (London; New York; New York: Zed Books; Distributed exclusively in the USA by St. Martin's Press, 1999). p:5

91 Niall Ferguesen, *Empire : how Britain made the modern world*, (London : Allen Lane, 2003)

92 Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, tr, Howard Greenfield (New York, 1965)

93 Mamdani, Mahmood. *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996).

tribal/ethnic chiefs or feudal landowners were enlisted to rule over the rural areas, while the urban areas were governed by a modernist state apparatus. Mamdani, calls this centralized and decentralized despotism,⁹⁴ ‘the ultimate result of this state of affairs was not just despotism and unaccountability but also the consolidation and politicization of ethnic boundaries’. This pattern was followed in Asia as well as Africa; the introduction of modern state system was accompanied by the strengthening of traditional structures.

This had a long lasting impact, and created in Africa as well as Asia ‘two public spheres, the civil and the primordial’.⁹⁵ As a result of this ‘doubling’, ‘natural rights bearing citizenship, and primordial ethnicized subjection- modernist inventions both were made to exist side by side.’⁹⁶ This rural/urban divide with concomitant divides in civil society can still be discerned in the postcolonial world. Colonial administrators imposed the modern state system on the colonies. The imposition of the state led to a ‘discourse in terms of a state/civil society distinction’.⁹⁷ Civil society, according to Chatterjee, made its appearance to ‘create a public domain for the legitimation of the colonial rule’.⁹⁸ This was also used by colonial administrators to justify inaction by claiming non-intervention in matters that were deemed to be those of ‘civil society’ and thus out of jurisdiction of the colonial state.⁹⁹

94 Ibid

95 Ekeh.cited in Comaroff and Comaroff, op.cit P 16

96 Mamdani, op.cit., P:23

97 Sudipta Kaviraj and Sunil Khilnani eds Civil Society, History and Possibilities. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p:4

98 Partha Chatterjee, The Nation and its Fragments, (Princeton, New Jersey, 1993), p:237

99 Kaviraj and Khilnani, opcit, p: 4

This, bourgeois civil society inhibited by the urban elite, proved inadequate for the anticolonial movements. The ‘properly constituted’,¹⁰⁰ public sphere of the colonies was based, in principle, on liberal notions of rights and liberties, yet, in actual practice these were limited by the exigencies of maintaining order in the colonies. As this ‘liberal’ civil society did not allow space for dissent; the narrative of nationalism and national identity, was formulated in the ‘cultural domain’ for example the Negritude movement in Africa and the Gandhian Sathyagarha¹⁰¹ in India. These anti colonial struggles were organized using the apparatus of community organizations, based on ties of kinship, clan, tribe, and ethnicity, for example, the Mau Mau struggle in Kenya.¹⁰² These organizations performed the functions ascribed to civil society — associative, public as well as the anti hegemonic function envisaged by Gramsci. ‘Resistance to colonial rule constituted the organizational essence of civil society’,¹⁰³ even though it was based on ascriptive relations of kinship, ethnic ties and community, characteristics anathema to liberal notions of civil society. Ironically, as soon as the colonies gained independence and embarked on ‘nation building’, these networks were seen as a threat to ‘modernization’ and were ‘demobilized or disbanded’.¹⁰⁴

Decolonization and Development: Civil or Uncivil Society

The decolonization process reshaped the relation between the colonizer and the colonized, and restructured the state as well as the political and civil society.

100 Kaviraj, p:175

101 Sathyagarha, resistance through mass civil disobedience used cultural and religious symbolism.

102 Jude Howell and Jenny Pearce, Civil Society and Development: A Critical Exploration. (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2000) op.cit:p:180

103 Ibid, p:180

104 Ibid, p: 181

Decolonization coincided with the formation of the current structures and institutions of global governance. The post Second World War reorganization of the world political and economic order and the ideological rivalry between the USA and USSR had a huge impact on the postcolonial states and civil societies.

These newly independent societies faced a ‘crisis’ of governance, as well as an economic and social one. Problems like underdevelopment and poverty,¹⁰⁵ which were largely ignored by the colonizers, were discovered. Eradication of poverty and modernization of the newly formed states became the mission of the newly formed multilateral institutions and the industrialized West, especially the USA. The USA, which emerged after the Second World War as the ‘strongest economic and military power;¹⁰⁶ and as the global Hegemon, was influential in shaping the global economic order through the newly formed international organizations such as the World Bank and the IMF. The British Empire, it seemed, had passed into the hands of the USA.¹⁰⁷ The multilateral agencies and the USA had similar policy prescriptions for the developing countries; they only had to follow the trajectory of the developed countries. Developing countries had the choice to accept the policy advice and ‘opt into a powerful new economic bloc or to be excluded from it.’¹⁰⁸

The prevalent economic wisdom of the Industrialized countries articulated in the ‘Modernization theory’, with its linear view of development was translated into policy as

105 Arturo Escobar, The Making and Unmaking of the Third World through Development, (Princeton, N.J, Princeton University Press, 1995), P:22

106 Ngaire Woods, the Globalizers: The IMF, the World Bank, and their Borrowers. (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2006) P:130

107 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present. (Cambridge, Mass. ; London: Harvard University Press, 1999) P: 76

108 Woods, op.cit. p: 17

a 'How to develop manual for the developing countries.'¹⁰⁹ According to the most famous version of the modernization theory,¹¹⁰ societies were seen to pass through five stages, traditional, preconditions to takeoff, takeoff, maturity and high mass consumption.

Developing countries were either at the precondition or the take off stage,¹¹¹ and faced some bottlenecks that hindered their move to the next stage. Developed countries were to provide the 'missing components' such as 'capital, foreign exchange, skills and management'. Hence, with modernization theory, the 'Provincialism of the European experience becomes the universal history of progress'.¹¹² Modernization theory establishes the rationale for 'international capital aid, technical assistance trade and foreign private investment'.¹¹³ And here we see the historical beginnings of official development assistance, through the World Bank and other multilateral and bilateral institutions.

The interest in the development of the 'third world' were not only economic, but also political and strategic. As emphasized by Busumtwi Sam, the objective of development aid in these initial years was to promote strategic and political interests of the donors 'in the evolving context of the cold war contest', interest in economic growth was driven by a mixture of altruism and self interest.¹¹⁴ Preoccupied with containing the USSR, as it was thought that socialism needed to perpetuate itself, 'USAID's first

109 Ankie M. M Hoogvelt, Globalization and the Postcolonial World: The New Political Economy of Development. 2nd ed. (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001) p:35

110 W. W. Rostow, The stages of economic growth : a non-communist manifesto (Cambridge, Eng. : University Press, 1971)

111 Gerald M Meier, Leading Issues in Economic Development: Studies in International Poverty. 2d ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), p:105

112 Dipesh Chakraborty, Provincializing Europe : postcolonial thought and historical difference, (Princeton, N.J. : Princeton University Press, 2000) p:22

113 GM Meier op.cit.ed, p:11

114 James Busumtwi Sam, "Development and Human Security", International Journal, Vol.57, Iss.2, (Spring 2002) p:257

emphases were on countering the spread of communism, particularly the influence of the People's Republic of China'.¹¹⁵ Decolonization was not accompanied by a dismantling of the deeper structures of imperialism that perpetuate the social and economic division within and between nations.¹¹⁶

Politics/Governance

The decolonization movement had been fought on a nationalist agenda, which united the various factions and ethnicities. The nationalistic elites who replaced the colonial rulers, failed to accommodate the various factions. The dominant theme of decolonization was nationalism and development,¹¹⁷ yet most states failed on both counts. The postcolonial state failed to 'adjust to the needs and priorities of the different factions after liberation and succumbed to the greed of bourgeois elite who appropriated the machinery of colonial power'.¹¹⁸ The fear of mass unrest, socialist sympathies of some populist leaders, and the neglect of 'political' aspects of economic growth, alarmed academics like Samuel Huntington. In 'Political Order in Changing Societies', Huntington, emphasized the need for order in 'developing' societies, and even endorsed authoritarian rule while political institutions were being built. In a detailed analysis of praetorian societies, he looks at the role of the 'soldier as an institution builder'.¹¹⁹ Huntington, warned policy makers of 'economic development outpacing political development', according to this view, increased economic development if not

115 USAID, http://www.usaid.gov/about_usaid, accessed July 2006

116 Chris Dixon and Michael J. Heffernan ed, *Colonialism and development in the contemporary world* (London, England ; New York, NY, USA : Mansell Publishing NY: 1991), P:3

117 Shirin Rai, *Gender and the political economy of development : from nationalism to globalization* (London : Polity Press, 2002.) pp 11-43

118 Robert Young, *Postcolonialism* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2003),p:382

119 Samuel Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*,(New Haven : Yale University Press, 1968) p:237

accompanied by political development, will lead to chaos and even revolutions. The 'Native question' which had plagued the colonial empires, now resurfaced as the need to contain the masses and revolutions.

Hence, a mixture of economic and political prescriptions for postcolonial states such as policy advice, loans, and development aid, as well as 'military aid, military bases, media propaganda, and even CIA subversions',¹²⁰ were used to contain the USSR, and industrialize the Third World. These prioritized the interests of the industrialized countries over those of the developing ones and resulted in a collaborative effort between the elites, multilateral institutions and industrialized countries. Some countries like India with a stronger political and economic base pursued a policy of 'non alignment' and successfully used the cold war rivalry to their national advantage.

Difficulties and the Disillusionment

The cold war meant that civil society had to be tamed; and order and authoritarianism were preferred over democracy and human rights. Aid was used as a tool in the ideological battle between the 'great powers'. Community organizations based on tribal, ethnic and religious ties that had joined forces against the colonial rule and formed a 'civil society' 'soon withered under the weight of political repression'.¹²¹ Political oppression, external as well as internal, combined with economic non-development, proved detrimental to the formation of an institutionalized civil society. As the newly

120 Brian C. Smith, *Understanding third world politics : theories of political change and development*, (Bloomington : Indiana University Press, 1996), p:81

121 Howell and Pearce, *op.cit*, p: 181

independent nations discovered it was not easy to ‘eradicate the dependent relations that had become embedded over a long stretch of history’.¹²²

Conclusion

The colonial interlude and its aftermath are important as they have bestowed a legacy of ‘underdevelopment’ on most of the former colonies which form the bulk of the Third World. Over the years, poverty, income inequality, high foreign debt burdens, and economic underdevelopment combined with political instability and ethnic strife have become the norm for most of Africa and Asia. Of the 177 countries in the Human Development Index, the lowest positions are taken by countries in Africa, from Kenya at 154 to Niger at 177. The roots of these problems lie in the exploitative policies of the colonial administration. Moving beyond the root causes to the present complex of trade and development institutions, the colonies now transformed into the Third world, face declining terms of trade, large debt burdens, as well as civil and ethnic strife.

The construction of the Asian and African as ‘inferior’, ‘uncivilized’, and lacking in civility’ entrenched in Enlightenment philosophy and Colonial policy, finds its way in the contemporary development discourse, as ‘underdeveloped’, ‘inefficient’ and ‘poor’. This predicament has given rise to a ‘development industry, which through its knowledge production and material power tries to show the Third world ‘how to develop’. This ‘development’ entails not only ‘economic’ development, but also incorporates social and political factors as well. In its post Cold War phase ‘lack of democracy and good governance’ have been ‘discovered’ and become the focus of donor policies. Civil

¹²² Harry Magdoff *Imperialism : from the colonial age to the present*, (New York : Monthly Review Press, 1978), P139

society plays a big role in the Democracy and Governance programmes of donor agencies.

4: CIVIL SOCIETY IN DEVELOPMENT DISCOURSE

With the end of the Colonial empires, the discourse and practice of development became a ‘space for the systematic creation of concepts, theory, and practice’.¹²³ The task of ‘developing’ the postcolonial states was taken up by the ‘developed’ states as a ‘moral’ as well as a ‘strategic’ imperative. Development seeks to foster open, liberal democratic economies; the path to these is through free and open markets. The liberal/neoliberal economic order assigns or delineates the societal tasks between the state, the market, and civil society. Markets promote competition and allocate resources efficiently; generating jobs and income; markets are seen as ‘the deepest truths about human nature and as a result they will ultimately be correct’.¹²⁴ The state creates a political and legal environment guaranteeing rights to property and business; ‘civil society facilitates political and social interaction – mobilizing groups to participate in economic, social and political activities’,¹²⁵ generating social capital and trust. Development of these ‘modern’ structures in developing countries is taken on by multilateral and bilateral development agencies.

This chapter will analyze the deployment of the concept of ‘civil society’ by donor agencies. As donor agencies increasingly rely on civil society ‘organizations’ as

123 Arturo Escobar, *The Making and Unmaking of the Third World through Development*, (Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press, 1995), p.:39

124 Quote by Greenspan cited in Robert Wade, “US Hegemony and the World Bank: the fight over people and ideas”, *Review of International Political Economy*; Vol. 9 Issue 2, (May 2002), p: 201

125 UNDP, “Governance for sustainable human development”, A United Nations Development Programme, Policy document, January 1997, <http://magnet.undp.org/policy/default.htm>, downloaded, 7th June, 2006

‘partners’ in development, civil society is assigned a key role in sustaining/establishing good governance, reducing poverty and supporting a liberal/neoliberal economic order. Hence, establishment or strengthening of civil society in developing countries has become an integral part of development policies. The first section will briefly look at the changing perceptions of development in order to explain the rise of the ‘civil society agenda’ in development discourse. The next section will analyze the civil society discourse emanating from donor agencies, especially the World Bank and USAID. A deeper analysis of the ‘diverse normative assumptions donors make about the relationship between civil society, development and democratization’¹²⁶, as well as the conceptualization of an ‘essentially contested concept’¹²⁷ such as civil society, reveals the ideological underpinning of the ‘civil society’ agenda in development discourse.

The World Bank is a key player in linking the dominant economic and political paradigms to specific policy actions and plays an important role in shaping the policies of the developing countries. The Bank’s role as a creator and disseminator of ideas and knowledge is emphasized by various analysts; it is defined as an ‘an international actor that creates, interacts, facilitates, absorbs, disseminates, and applies ideas’.¹²⁸ The Bank is a source of funds as well as a source of ideas about the effective ways to organize an economy – and increasingly a polity too.¹²⁹ The World Bank is a key player in linking the dominant economic and political paradigms to specific policy actions and plays an important role in shaping the policies of the developing countries. USAID as the largest donor to ‘civil society’ plays an important role in ‘development’ of the developing world.

126 Jude Howell and Jenny Pearce, *Civil Society and Development: A Critical Exploration*. (Boulder, Colo: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2001) p:3

127 J.A. Hall and Frank Trentmann, eds, *A Reader in History, Theory, and Global Politics*. (Palgrave Mcmillan, New York, 2005.) p:21

128 Ben Fine, “Neither the Washington nor the Post Washington Consensus, an Introduction”, in Ben Fine, Costas Lapavistas, Jonathan Pincus (eds) *Development policy in the twenty-first century: beyond the post-Washington consensus*.(New York, Routledge, 2001) p:12

129 Wade, *op.cit* p: 202

These organizations can be taken as representative of the general direction and priorities of the 'aid industry'.

The changes in the discourse and practice of development can be traced to shifts in the broader ideologies of Western donor governments, from Keynesian demand management economics to neoclassical, laissez-faire economics. Development has passed through various permutations, from state centric, import substitution and export led growth to human development, good governance and comprehensive development for poverty reduction. Each stage has structured and restructured state-society relations through a combination of development funds, policy advice and the coercive power of Structural Adjustments Policies.

Initial Years

As the previous chapter shows, with decolonization the postcolonial states enter the 'Third World' and embark on a 'modernization' process. In this initial phase, the objective of development was quite unambiguous 'rapid and sustainable economic growth'¹³⁰; benefits of growth would trickle down to the masses. Most of Bank's lending to Third World countries was project lending, a model based on Keynesian economics. The state played a major role in providing infrastructure and a regulatory environment for investment. It soon became apparent that increases in national income and output were not trickling down to the poor; in fact, the gap between the rich and the poor was increasing. This was the high period of the Cold War where aid was used to 'control friends and contain enemies'. In some parts of the newly emergent 'Third World,' nationalist leaders, sympathetic to socialism were replaced by military and autocratic

130 Gerald M Meier, Ed, Leading Issues in Economic Development. 4th Ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 1984.p.:22

regimes.¹³¹ Democracy and human rights were not high on the agenda of development agencies.

Neoclassical revival: Emergence of NGOs

Beginning in the 1980s the World Bank and other multilateral and bilateral donors started placing importance on non state actors for implementation of projects, and made these non state actors 'partners' in development. Several interrelated events can explain this shift including the rise of conservative governments in the UK, USA and Germany, the increasing recognition of non state actors as players in governance, and the failure of state centric development.

The conservative governments of Reagan in the USA, Thatcher in UK and Kohl in Germany adopted Laissez-faire, neoclassical economic management policies, 'the new agenda was about rolling back the state and unleashing the market forces'.¹³² According to the neoliberal logic, as the state shrinks, the private sector steps in to take over the functions traditionally carried out by the state, such as health care, education and provision of other public goods. The prevalence of 'complex 'interdependence'¹³³ theories also emphasized the role of non-state actors in national and international, inter-governmental as well as intra-governmental, economic and political arenas. Hence, the rise of neoliberal economic ideology, loss of faith in state as an agent of change, increasing income disparities and unemployment in the South, led the policy makers to

131 Lumba of Congo and Nkrumah of Ghana

132 See also Ngaire Woods, The Globalizers: the IMF, the World Bank, and their Borrowers. (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2006), P: 46

133 Keohane and Nye, "Interdependence in World Politics", in Geroge T.Crane and Abba Amawi,eds The Theoretical Evolution of International Political Economy,(London, Oxford University Press, 1997),p:125

recruit non state actors. Donor states started ‘subcontracting’ development and humanitarian assistance to International NGOs (INGOs).

The failure of postcolonial states to look after the needs of their populace, and the failure of the advantages of economic growth to ‘trickle down’ to the masses, left large segments of the population without access to basic services such as education, health, and sanitation. In the South elites disillusioned with their government’s failure to deliver the benefits of growth, welcomed the chance to participate in development. For professionals, excluded from public institutions, for ideological and political reasons, by autocratic and military regimes;¹³⁴ NGOs provided an opportunity to continue their social and political agenda for change. For the donors, NGOs in the South were an answer to government failures, and were given the responsibility for implementation of projects and delivery of certain services to the poor, at the behest of the donors. ‘NGOs were seen as more effective deliverers of development goods and services; especially to populations that were socially politically or spatially marginal’.¹³⁵ NGOs were portrayed as the ‘good’ against the ‘bad’ of the state. This led to a major restructuring in state-society relations.¹³⁶

Furthermore, the debt crisis of the 1980s, resulted in the introduction of Structural Adjustment Programs, which aimed at restructuring the economies of the debtor countries, and required the introduction of macroeconomic reforms specifically deregulation, liberalization and privatization. These structural adjustments had an adverse

134 . For details see Akbar Zaidi, *Issues in Pakistan’s Economy*. (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999)

135 Paul Francis,, “Social Capital, Civil Society and Social Exclusion”, in Uma Kothari and Martin Minogue eds *Development Theory and Practice, Critical Perspectives*, (New York, Palgrave Publishers Ltd, 2000) p:72

136 Kendall Stiles ,” A Rational Choice Model of Grassroots Empowerment”, in Kendall Stiles ed, *Global Institutions and Local Empowerment, Competing Theoretical Perspectives*, (Basingstoke : Macmillan Press ; New York : St. Martin's Press,2000), p:124

impact on the vulnerable groups and resulted in increased income disparities, unemployment and high inflation rates, resulting in growing ethnic and civil unrest. 'Debt crisis undermined Third world development and state autonomy relative to donors and International Organizations.¹³⁷ Economic deprivation resulted in social and political unrest, and growing disillusionment with the state. The incomes of twenty nine Sub-Saharan African¹³⁸ countries undergoing Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs), declined by 30 percent over the period 1980-8.¹³⁹

The decade of 1980s saw a phenomenal rise in NGOs, as larger percentage of aid was channeled through these organizations. Development aid was either disbursed directly, through western NGOs or indirectly through governments. Donors recruited the services of Western NGOs to deliver aid to the South; these NGOs became much larger players in the delivery of official development assistance providing as much as 30% in Sweden, 29% in Switzerland, 25% in Norway, 14% in the Netherlands, and almost 28% in the case of the of US Agency for International Development (USAID).¹⁴⁰ The increased availability of donor funds proved to be a catalyst for the growth of CSOs. Indeed, the rise in the number of CSOs/NGOs is attributed to the availability of development funds. The World Bank cites the following reasons for its increased partnership with NGOs "innovation, sustainability and participation as well as low cost and replicability"¹⁴¹. According to the Bank, NGOs' smaller size, flexibility and lack of

137 Stiles,op.cit.:121

138 Ankie M. M Hoogvelt, *Globalization and the Postcolonial World: The New Political Economy of Development*. (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001) p:182

139 As Hoogvelt op.cit. Notes that while civil unrest and political turmoil contributed to the loss in income, the main factors responsible for the decline in incomes are structural adjustment and debt management.

140 Ian Similie,"NGOs and Development Assistance: A Change in Mind-Set"? *Third World Quarterly*, Vol 18, No 3, (1999), p:564

141 World Bank, http://siteresources.worldbank.org/CSO/Resources/CS_REVIEW_FY0506.pdf, 2006, accessed, 23rd May 2006

bureaucratic procedures makes them more innovative, while participation by the community makes development sustainable. The scope of these engagements broadened with the end of the Cold War, as development became 'holistic' and incorporated political and social aspects as well as economic ones.

The fall of communism in 1989 was seen as a triumph of liberal market ideology, market forces were seen as the harbingers of prosperity, liberty and democracy' scholars like Fukuyama heralded the 'end of history'.¹⁴² The revival of the concept of 'civil society' in East Europe was co-opted by donors to further roll back the state and widen the agenda of the private actors via civil society, and markets.

Comprehensive Development/Good Governance: From NGOs to Civil Society

The new donor discourse identified the main reasons for aid ineffectiveness as stemming from 'lack of ownership and participation and a poor policy environment emanating from lack of good governance'.¹⁴³ To address these issues the World Bank introduced a new development framework incorporating the social and political spheres. This new development paradigm 'the Comprehensive Development Framework' and the accompanying poverty reduction strategy papers, place civil society at the centre of their policy making. Since, then participation, ownership, and poverty reduction have become the buzzwords for most development agencies.

The criteria for receiving aid are a commitment to poverty reduction and good policy environment; hence, to the usual prescriptions of liberalization, deregulation and

¹⁴²Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1992)

¹⁴³ World Bank , [op.cit](#)

privatization are now added 'good governance, ownership and participation'. All the major donors emphasize the political and participatory aspects of development. For example, the OECD in 1990 issued a policy 'Statement on development cooperation' that emphasized political and economic benefits of participatory development, and declared a 'vital connection between open democratic and accountable political systems, individual rights and effective and equitable operation of the economic systems'.¹⁴⁴

Since the early 1990s, 'democracy and governance' have played a major role in development discourse, and donors have created Democracy and Governance units within their aid-granting agencies to give advice and administer aid. 'Good governance employs the concept of civil society within the wider initiatives of supporting the emergence of more competitive market economies, building better-managed states with the capacity to provide more responsive services and just laws, and improving democratic institutions and deepening political participation'.¹⁴⁵

Civil society is assigned a key role in sustaining/establishing good governance, reducing poverty and supporting a liberal/neoliberal economic order. This vital component of modern liberal democratic societies is deemed missing/weak in 'traditional' 'developing' societies. Hence, the task of establishing or strengthening civil society in developing countries is taken on by donor agencies and has become an important part of their mission. From the civilizing missions of the colonial era we enter the era of civil society. Development discourse now attributes the absence or weakness of civil society in the South to the existence of traditional structures, cultural and religious

144 Helmut Furher, "The Story of Official Development Assistance", Organization For Economic Co-operation and Development, Paris 1996, OCDE/GD(94)67, P: 52 http://www.oecd.org/about/o,2337,en_2649_33721_1_1_1_1_1,00.html , accessed, June, 2006
145 UNDP , www.undp.org, accessed 6th june, 2006

practices and the prevalence of ethnic and communal networks. Hence, development aid and policy prescriptions enforced by loan conditionalities are deployed to strengthen/establish civil society in the developing world.

This new phase places increased emphasis on democratization, which is seen as a precondition for development.¹⁴⁶ Theorists such as de Tocqueville, Robert Putnam, and Nancy Rosenblum have shown that ‘civil society’ plays an important role in strengthening democracy and fostering civic virtue. The World Bank extols the virtues of civil society in the following way:

‘A strong civil society has the potential to hold the government and the private sector accountable. Civil society can be a crucial provider of government legitimacy. Civil society gives a voice to the people, elicits participation, and can pressure the state’¹⁴⁷

Hence, civil society along with multiparty elections, rule of law and good governance are the components of World Bank’s ‘Democracy and Governance’ agenda. A central part of this agenda is to support and strengthen NGOs, and here, the World Bank uses Robert Putnam’s¹⁴⁸ analysis for its support of NGOs; According to Putnam, active citizen participation is essential for democracy;

‘Citizens who are active in local organizations, even non-political ones, tend to take a greater interest in public affairs. This interest, coupled with interpersonal social capital between government officials and other citizens which is fostered when both belong to the same groups and associations, renders the government more accountable.’¹⁴⁹

146 Previous theories emphasized development as a precondition for democracy.

147 World Bank, <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/CSO/>.html, accessed on 30th May 2006

148 Robert Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: civic traditions in modern Italy*, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993).

149 World Bank, [op.cit](#)

Participation in organizations generates social capital, ‘the informal relations and trust which bring people together to take action, is crucial to the success of any non-governmental organization because it provides opportunities for participation and gives voice to those who may be locked out of more formal avenues to affect change.’ Civil society organizations are seen as a source of social capital. Donors can help developing countries build this stock of social capital through civil society strengthening programs¹⁵⁰.

NGOs are often used synonymously with civil society, and in fact the terms Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and NGOs were used interchangeably. Criticism by analysts led to a change in this stance as trade unions and media organizations were added to a description of civil society. While the role of NGOs, which are now identified as part of civil society, is broadened to include political aspects, provision of public goods is still a part of their agenda. According to the Bank, ‘emerging evidence suggests that the provision of public goods and services is most effective when government works with the private sector and civil society’.¹⁵¹ Hence, civil society is assigned the task of promoting democracy, accountability, human rights, as well as providing services like education and health care and is seen as a partner in development.

The World Bank calls the rise of civil society the most significant trend in development. Civil Society Organizations are described as ‘groups that do not belong to the government or the private sector’ and includes organizations such as, labor unions, NGOs, faith-based organizations, community groups, indigenous people’s organizations and foundations. These organizations are ‘important channels for the effective delivery of

¹⁵⁰ Howell and Pearce, *op.cit*,p:31

¹⁵¹ World Bank, *op.cit*

social services, especially in environments with weak public sector capacity or in post-conflict contexts'. The rationale for emphasizing civil society according to the Bank is that 'these organizations promote public sector transparency and accountability, contribute to enabling environment for good governance, promote public consensus and local ownership for reforms, national poverty reduction, and development strategies'.¹⁵²

The Bank's Articles of Agreement restrict it from interfering in the political affairs of its members.¹⁵³ Due to these restrictions, the bank does not promote 'democracy' per se, but concentrates on the technical and managerial aspects of 'Good Governance, participation and ownership'. According to the Bank, it 'facilitates dialogue and partnership between civil society and governments' in the process of formulation of the country's poverty reduction strategies (PRSPs), dialogues and consults with CSOs on issues, policies and programs. The World Bank also collaborates directly with CSOs through 'contracting technical assistance and training services, funding civil society initiatives, and managing joint programs'.¹⁵⁴

While the World Bank's principal activity is to provide loans to governments, the Bank has established numerous funding mechanisms to provide grants to CSOs. Grants are provided either indirectly via government-run grant funds with Bank financing or directly by World Bank-managed funding mechanisms. Over the past fifteen years the World Bank has financed over 100 social funds in 60 countries, for a total of nearly US\$4 billion, to rebuild war-torn communities, provide social services, and strengthen community organizations. Deliberate involvement of CSOs in the World Bank operations

¹⁵² World Bank, *op.cit.*

¹⁵³ Woods, *op.cit.* p: 34

¹⁵⁴ World Bank, *op.cit.*

has risen steadily over the past decade, from 21.5 percent of the total number of projects in FY 1990 to nearly 70 percent ending June 2002.¹⁵⁵

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) is an independent agency that provides economic, development and humanitarian assistance around the world in support of the foreign policy goals of the United States.¹⁵⁶ USAID is the largest provider of civil society assistance among bilateral donors, USAID was also the largest ‘democracy donor’ in 2005, implementing \$1.2 billion of programs in FY 2004. Programs are developed in cooperation with the State Department, the National Security Council, and U.S. embassies.¹⁵⁷ USAID describes "civil society" as ‘non-governmental’, ‘not-for-profit’, ‘independent’ realm of citizen activity’¹⁵⁸ and emphasizes the associational aspect of civil society: ‘the hallmark of a free society is the ability of individuals to associate with like-minded individuals, express their views publicly, openly debate public policy, and petition their government’.¹⁵⁹

USAID ‘promotes peace and stability by fostering economic growth, protecting human health, providing emergency humanitarian assistance, and enhancing democracy in developing countries’. Strengthening civil society organizations is part of the ‘Democracy and Governance’ (D&G) section of USAID. D&G Office makes a distinction between ‘programming which supports civil society writ large, and civil society programming which fits into a democracy strategy’. In stark contrast to the

155 <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/CSO/0,,contentMDK:20093161~menuPK:220423~pagePK:220503~piPK:220476~theSitePK:228717,00.html> accessed May 2006

156 USAID Office of Democracy & Governance: Civil Society http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/democracy_and_governance/ downloaded June 2006

157 Ibid

158 Ibid

159 Ibid

ostensibly neutral stance of other donor agencies, USAID is very open about its political agenda, and wants civil society to promote specific values and interests in countries that have strategic significance for the USA. The Agency notes that its ‘focus is not on how to encourage the growth of civil society organizations for their own good, but how to encourage elements of civil society to play a role in promoting certain kinds of democratic change’.¹⁶⁰

In keeping with its strategic use of aid, US assigns a very political role to civil society, noting that civil society is ‘essential in a democracy for political expression and influencing government policy choices’. USAID’s ‘Democracy and Governance Office identifies the major issues of democracy and governance in a country, and develops a reform agenda. Civil Society is recruited to advance ‘the reform agenda, through advocacy, informing public opinion, mobilizing constituencies and coalitions for reform, and engaging government and political parties in policy debate’.¹⁶¹

Civil Society is an essential part of the ‘Good Governance’ agenda espoused by donor agencies in the post cold war era. Good Governance is defined as ‘participatory, transparent and accountable. It is also effective and equitable. And it promotes the rule of law’.¹⁶² Good Governance has come under criticism for its ‘neglect of political and cultural contexts and its ‘technical or management solutions to what are actually political or political economy issues and problems’¹⁶³. Critics contend that under the influence of donors ‘governance has come to be associated with institutions designed to support

160 http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/democracy_and_governance/technical_areas/governance/

161 Ibid

162 UNDP, Governance for sustainable human development, A United Nations Development Programme, UNDP policy document, January 1997, <http://magnet.undp.org/policy/default.htm>, accessed, June 2006

163 D. Parthasarathy, “From White Man’s Burden to Good Governance”, in Cultural Imperialism: essays on the political economy of cultural domination / edited by Bernd Hamm and Russell Smandych Peterborough, ON : Broadview Press, 2005.p.203

market-led development'.¹⁶⁴ Others point out that 'donor conceptions of good governance tend to overlook important substantive and distributive political issues and outcomes'.¹⁶⁵ The link between democracy and development has also been a source of contention, empirical examples of countries like China 'whose highly imperfect institutions have not impeded vigorous growth following partial but progressive market reforms'¹⁶⁶ are used to debunk the myth of democracy leading to development. Similarly the experience of countries with strong but undemocratic regimes, such as Singapore and Taiwan and Korea are used to problematize the link between democracy and economic growth. While the focus of this project is civil society, these criticisms are presented to illustrate that the framework within which civil society is invoked is problematic and contentious for its faulty assumptions.

The analysis in this section has shown that donors subscribe to the associational view of civil society and the discourse slips unproblematically from civil society to civil society organizations, 'civil society organizations underpinned by an implicit associational idea arguably becomes a metaphor for civil society itself'.¹⁶⁷ Associations supported/established by donor funds, are used to implement the 'good governance' agenda. The financing of associations and organizations is seen as strengthening civil society. USAID considers 'support to NGOs, be they agricultural cooperatives, women's health care associations, or business associations' as 'support for civil society

164 Rob Jenkins, "Mistaking 'Governance' for Politics", Kaviraj, Sudipta, and Sunil Khilnani, eds. *Civil Society: History and Possibilities*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001, p: 485

165 James Busumtwi Sam, "Governance, Participation and Ownership", in J. Busumtwi-Sam and L. Dobuzinskis, eds, *Turbulence and New Directions in Global Political Economy* (Basingstoke: Palgrave), 2003, p::97

166 Dani Rodrik, cited in John Roberts, "Thirty-five Years Later in Development Assistance: Have We Moved On, or Just Performed a Minuet"? *Development Policy Review*, 22 (5),(2004): P:491

167 Hakan Seckinelgin , «Civil society as a metaphor for western liberalism», Working Paper 21, http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/CCS/publications/cswp/cswp21_abstract.htm, jan, 2002, p:8

development' (USAID). The rhetoric of civil society is superimposed on the previous policy of 'partnering' with NGOs, although in its present manifestation it is given a wider agenda.

Hence, the mainstream discourse on development privileges a liberal version of civil society that places emphasis on associations as the core element of civil society. The 'associational' view of civil society is used to support the neoliberal emphasis on NGOs¹⁶⁸. Civil Society, via associations and organizations, has a mandate to implement donor projects, provide services, and act as a 'watch dog' on the state. The framework within which this mandate implemented is the liberal democratic order with free and open market. It is a testimony to the hegemony/soft power of the mainstream development discourse adopted by the World Bank and other multilateral and bilateral agencies including UASID that this discourse has gained wide spread acceptance. The discursive power backed by material resources, bestows the '*power to define*'¹⁶⁹ what civil society is, and its functions. After the values and norms have been delineated and functions assigned, the discourse enters policy literature and the public realm, as a '*good thing 'warts and all*'¹⁷⁰, which once created will solve the problem of development and democracy in the South. The reality of developing countries, where community and kinship bonds may be strong and institutionalized civil society comparatively weak is treated as an anomaly that has to be corrected. Hence, knowledge production and development funds all strive to replace communities with civil societies.

168 Howell and Pearce, op.cit., p: 29

169 Ziauddin Sardar,"Development and the Location of Eurocentrism", in, Ronaldo Munck, and Denis O'Hearn, eds. Critical Development Theory: Contributions to a New Paradigm (London ; New York; New York: Zed Books, 1999) p:45

170 Alison Van Rooy, ed. Civil Society and the Aid Industry : The Politics and Promise.(London: Earthscan, 1998)

5: CIVIL SOCIETY: IN OUR IMAGE¹⁷¹

Civil society, in donor discourse, is vaguely defined¹⁷² yet the description of and the tasks assigned to civil society privilege a liberal version of civil society. Donors adopt the associational view of civil society that places emphasis on formal organized associations as the core element of civil society. The underlying assumptions of this concept of civil society, regarding the individual the state and the polity, are based on the experiences of western industrialized societies. This ‘associational’ view of civil society is translated into policy, as part of the democracy and governance programs and used to support the neoliberal emphasis on NGOs as ‘partners in development’. Donors use their material and technical resources to create or strengthen civil society in developing countries. As donors funds are used to restructure society in developing countries, the disconnect between the donors’ conception of civil society and the realities of the actually existing societies in the South, manifest themselves in a variety of relations and spaces, such as between the state, society, and the individual.

Furthermore, donors assign certain tasks, such as service delivery and project implementation to this externally funded civil society. Important questions to ask here are whether a depoliticized, service oriented, donor funded civil society is capable of providing the space for public discourse, or keep the state’s authoritarian tendencies at bay; or whether civil society reduced to associations financed by external funds is just a ‘technique of governance’?¹⁷³ These issues will be explored in the following chapter,

171 Rob Jenkins, “Mistaking Governance for Politics”, in Kaviraj, Sudipta, and Sunil Khilnani, eds. *Civil Society : History and Possibilities*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), P:268

172 Alison Van Rooy, ed. *Civil Society and the Aid Industry : The Politics and Promise*. (London: Earthscan, 1998)

173 Sunil Khilnani, “The Development of Civil Society”, in Sudipta Kaviraj and Sunil Khilnani, eds. *Civil Society : History and Possibilities*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p.:26

using illustrative evidence from various regions and countries in the South. The first part of the chapter will analyze the underlying assumptions of the concept of civil society employed by donors, against the actually existing realities in the developing countries. The second part will explore the dilemmas that arise from implementing an ‘alien’ ‘blue print model’ of civil society that does not address the predicaments facing the actually existing civil societies. The analysis will focus particularly on state society relations, agenda setting and participation. The project of strengthening civil society in the South using donor funds also raises issues about sustainability and autonomy, hence the last section will give a brief overview of the issues arising from ‘aid dependency’.

Assumptions

The associational version of civil society adopted by development agencies uses de Tocqueville as inspiration. Robert Putnam, disturbed by political apathy and the erosion of democratic principles in industrialized countries especially the USA, uses Tocqueville’s insights to proclaim that effective political institutions depend on a developed civil society of intermediate associations that foster civic culture and mutual tolerance.¹⁷⁴ According to this analysis participation in organizations is a way of overcoming the alienation, atomism and political apathy engendered by advanced liberal societies. The context for this study are the societies and polities of advanced western countries, hence it mostly addresses issues that have relevance for ‘advanced’ liberal democracies. The issue of alienation and atomism are particular features of ‘advanced capitalist’ societies, inhabited by ‘discrete individuals’, ‘liberated’ from communal and ethnic ties. In many parts of the South, however, community ties are strong, and

174 Robert D Putnam, *Bowling Alone the Collapse and Revival of American Community*. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000)

individuals still identify with various types of communal groups. Hence, the issues arising from state-society relations in western liberal democracies may be very different from those faced by countries in the South.

The liberal conception of civil society requires the presence of ‘a particular type of self, one that is mutable, able to conceive of interest as transient and able to change and choose political loyalties and public affiliations’.¹⁷⁵ This modular man ‘can combine into specific purpose, ad hoc and limited associations’.¹⁷⁶ The lack of ‘modularity’ and the presence of ascriptive ties are blamed for the lack of ‘civil society’ in developing countries, and the ‘emergence or reproduction’ of the modular man becomes the ‘crucial problem of Civil Society’¹⁷⁷. This liberal version of civil society composed of voluntary organizations stipulates a rejection of traditional forms of ‘association’. Non-voluntary associations are criticized because they are not inclusive, do not allow easy entry or exit, and they have ‘rigid norms, narrow loyalties and frozen social identities’¹⁷⁸, their members are seen as ‘unfree, truncated, and even inadequate human beings’¹⁷⁹. This rigid Eurocentric criticism of traditional forms of collectivities is challenged by academics such as Chabal and Daloz, who argue for a need to ‘conceptualize ethnicity as a dynamic, multifaceted and interactive cluster of changeable self-validated attributes of individual-cum-collective identities’.¹⁸⁰ Hence, what should be criticized is the political

175 Khilnani, *op.cit.*:p:28

176 Ernest Gellner, *Conditions of Liberty: Civil Society and its Rivals*. (London: H. Hamilton, 1994) p:100

177 For detailed analysis refer to *Ibid*, p 97-108

178 Bhikhu Parekh, “Putting civil society in its place”, in Marlies Glasius, David Lewis, and Hakan Seckinelgin. eds, *Exploring Civil Society : Political and Cultural Contexts*.(London ; New York: Routledge, 2004), p:22

179 *Ibid*, p:21

180 Patrick Chabal, and Jean-Pascal Daloz. *Africa Works : Disorder as Political Instrument*. (London; Bloomington: International African Institute in association with James Currey, Oxford; Indiana University Press, 1999).p::56

instrumentalization of 'non voluntary' associations.¹⁸¹ Despite their rejection by mainstream theorists these associations perform the functions assigned by liberal theory to 'civil society'; they 'form public opinions and political pressure groups',¹⁸² generate trust and reciprocity which accumulates as social capital and provide network of support, sense of social obligation mutual commitment and spirit of self sacrifice.¹⁸³

While, most developing countries do not have highly institutionalized, formal associational forms of civil society, they have strong communities based on ties of blood, kinship, clan or religion. As Chabal and Daloz note, African societies are self evidently not mass societies composed of discrete individuals detached from their communal environment'¹⁸⁴ rather they are 'plural, fragmented and, organized along vertical lines.'¹⁸⁵ Similarly, Maina contends that 'ethnicity supplies the grammar and metaphor of African politics, even for the middle classes'.¹⁸⁶ For example, the leaders of Senegal's 'Islamic Sufi Brotherhoods are more powerful than the politicians, and their influence pervades every aspect of Senegalese life'.¹⁸⁷ The realities of actually existing societies in the South requires that policies should take account of the presence of 'communities', in both its negative and positive attributes. Instead of trying to dismantle these community organizations, steps should be taken to ensure that they do not become oppressive and deny exit to dissenting members.

181 Ibid p:56

182 David Lewis, "Civil Society in Non-Western Contexts; Reflections on the 'usefulness' of a concept" Working Paper 13, 2002 , http://www.lse.ac.uk/collectios/CCS/publications/cswp/cswp13_abstract.htm

183 Parekh op.cit., p:21

184 Chabal and Daloz, op.cit., p: 19

185 Ibid, P:20 (Vertical bonds are contrasted with 'horizontal functional bonds between those who are similarly employed or professionally linked')

186 Maina Wachira , "Kenya, The State, Donors and the Politics of Democratization" in Alison Van Rooy, ed. Civil Society and the Aid Industry : The Politics and Promise. (London: Earthscan, 1998), p:138

187 British Broadcasting Corp,<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/4268342.stm>

The ideal of collective action that underlies the concept of civil society can be premised on a variety of configurations, 'voluntary contractual relations between discrete individuals are just one of such arrangements'.¹⁸⁸ Hence, the blueprint models of civil society promoted by the donor agencies are criticized for not taking account of the realities of the actually existing societies into consideration. Here, it is pertinent to emphasize that the analysis does not draw the inference that 'developing' societies are not 'capable'¹⁸⁹ of civil society, but to point out that there are various ways of conceptualizing civil society. The prevalent concept of civil society is based on the historical and cultural specificities of the industrialized West and hence, should not be held up as a 'universal norm and used to mould the rest of the world'.¹⁹⁰

State and Civil Society

In the liberal conception, a thriving civil society requires a strong, confident and neutral state that can mediate between the particular interests represented in civil society. Civil society is made possible by the state, which protects associative freedom through the 'rule of law' and other political institutions. Hence, the state is seen as passive and maintains a degree of neutrality from the 'particular' interests of civil society. Yet, in many parts of Africa, as in other developing regions, the state is 'neither indifferent nor passive'. In many post colonial states, 'forms' of democracy, a legal system, judiciaries and civil society' are present, 'yet their form does not equal substance' and due to power imbalances 'these institutions operate as mechanisms for the entrenchment of

188 Elizabeth Dunn, "Civil Society among American Mormons", in Chris Hann and Elizabeth Dunn, eds *Civil society : challenging western models*, (London : Routledge, 1996), p:47

189 Here Ernest Gellner's proclamation that certain societies, are incapable of civil society, is highly problematic

190 Ibid, p:23

interests'.¹⁹¹ These factors are not conducive to the formation of an independent institutionalized civil society for the 'emergence of a properly institutionalized civil society, led by politically independent citizens, separate from governmental structures, is only possible when there are strong and strongly differentiated states.'¹⁹²

Most developing countries have weak states that do not engender strong civil society (in the way civil society is conceived in the liberal tradition). Since, decolonization most postcolonial states have been struggling with internal conflicts and external pressures. Internally the newly decolonized states faced the task of 'modernization', 'development' and political cohesion amongst various factions. As the postcolonial states entered the 'free' world, they faced an unfavorable position in the global economy. The newly forged ideological rivalry between the superpowers, which played itself out through a policy of patronizing autocratic and military regimes in developing countries, curtailed the 'freedoms' of the postcolonial publics. A UNDP report candidly admits,

'Until the end of the cold war much of what passed as aid was, at best, tenuously connected to Human development objectives. Brutal, corrupt and inefficient regimes were shown a benign tolerance by donors less interested in development than in geopolitical goals. President Mobutu Sésé Seko of Zaire and President Ferdinand Marcos of the Philippines got wealthy, while their citizens were left with large debts. From Afghanistan to Central America and the Horn of Africa aid was part of the rivalry between East and West.'¹⁹³

The anticipation of egalitarian and equitable distribution of political and economic resources, which drove the independence movements turned into despair and

191 Sheelagh Stewart, "Happy Ever After in the Marketplace: Non-government Organizations and Uncivil Society", *Review of African Political Economy*, (No 71:11:34, 1997 p.:20

192 Chabal and Dalozé, *op.cit.*, p:21

193 UNDP, *Human Development Report*, (New York, 2005, Oxford University Press, New York), p: 79

disillusionment with the state. These factors have left lingering legacies of nepotism, clientelism and oppression of dissent.

The end of the Cold War ushered in a brief period of hope as some of the brutal regimes in Africa were overthrown, such as Zaire's Mobutu Sese Seko by Laurent Kabila, the dismantling of apartheid in South Africa, and the success of the Zambia Movement for Multiparty Democracy'.¹⁹⁴ Similar trends were at work across the continent, for example in Kenya, where government's crackdown on protestors elicited a strong response from the donor community, and aid to Kenya was suspended and made conditional on a restoration of political freedoms.¹⁹⁵ The new regimes, however, faced similar insecurities and problems as their predecessors and succumbed to 'military, personalistic, or authoritarian forms of rule', and proceeded to misuse their executive and legislative powers to restrict civil society, by refusing to register them or controlling their access to foreign funds, as well as restricting their activities.

A study of civil society in Kenya shows that the state tries to restrict the space for 'civic' activism by using 'the NGO Coordination Act'. The study also shows how the state forms its own NGOs as rivals to those striving for 'democratic change'. In the 1990s the government of President Moi supported the 'Redeemed Fellowship churches of Kenya', to check the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK).¹⁹⁶ Similarly, the government of Egypt, one of the top ten recipients of USAID,¹⁹⁷ has enacted very 'restrictive' laws pertaining to the registration and operation of NGOs. These give discretionary powers to the Egyptian government, which uses the legal apparatus to

¹⁹⁴ John Mw Makumbe, "Is There a Civil Society in Africa?" *International Affairs*, Vol. 74, No. 2, (1998), p: 309

¹⁹⁵ Maina, *op.cit.*, p:154

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p:151

¹⁹⁷ OECD, DAC data. <http://www.oecd.org/dac>, accessed, 23rd June, 2006

harass organizations or individuals striving for ‘social reform and political liberalization’. In a highly publicized and controversial case, the Egyptian government, in 2000, arrested Saad Eddin Ibrahim, the director of the Ibn Khaldun centre for Development Studies, for accepting EU funds and tarnishing Egypt’s image abroad.¹⁹⁸ The capacity of civil society organizations to act as a counter hegemonic force is also circumscribed by the criteria set by donor agencies, most agencies support NGOs who are engaged in non political, service provision activities. Hence, Egyptian NGOs, as elsewhere are ‘consciously apolitical’, and ‘primarily concerned with issues such as the environment, education, and welfare’.¹⁹⁹

The availability of donor funds is seen to be availability of donor funding, which shows the ‘successful adaptation to the conditions laid down by foreign donors’. Available data shows a staggering number of NGOs in developing countries, for example in 2003 more than 16,000 NGOs were registered in Egypt, 8000 in Pakistan, and more than a 1000 in Kenya.²⁰⁰ The increase in the number of CSOs is seen as a sign of a growth in ‘civil society’. Relying on the number of NGOs as a sign of a thriving civil society, however, is problematic. The success of civil society can be gauged by its capacity to engender ‘civility’, mediate between the various actors, provide a space for political participation, and keep the state’s authoritarian tendencies at bay. Hence, analysts rather than relying on the number of civil society organizations as a sign of a thriving civil society have to ask questions about ‘how it is constituted, who exercises

198 For details, Daniel Swift, “Saad Eddin Ibrahim: through the Arab looking glass”

199 Kareem Elbayar, “NGO Laws in Selected Arab States”, *The International Journal of Not-for-Profit Law*, http://www.icnl.org/journal/vol7iss4/me_1.htm, accessed 5th June, 2006

200 Zaidi, *opcit*, p; 413

and benefits from associative freedom',²⁰¹ to really assess their claims to representation. As Chabal and Dalozé point out the proliferation of NGOs in Africa 'does not alter the 'prebendal and patrimonial character of politics'.²⁰²

Participation

Furthermore, an emphasis on associations serves to draw attention away from structural issues, related to the economy and the global economic environment.

Ehrenberg contends that de Tocqueville serves important purposes, as his notion of civil society performs a 'normalizing function by making it difficult to see the economic roots of contemporary problems and blinding us to the political avenues for their resolution'.²⁰³

This myopia towards structural issues is seen by critics as one of the main appeals of the associational version of civil society for donors. This associational view favored by the mainstream development discourse, envisions civil society as an arena of 'human emancipation'.²⁰⁴ Civil society portrayed as a benevolent sphere of society ignores the 'relations of exploitation and domination which irreducibly constitute civil society'.

These are exacerbated in the case of developing countries due to the presence of large disparities in income and unequal access to political and economic resources, which can restrict a large percentage of population from political participation. Donors despite addressing these issues rhetorically fail to address them when implementing policies.

201 Parekh, P:24

202 Chabal and Dalozé,p:23

203 John Ehrenberg, *Civil Society: The Critical History of an Idea*. (New York: New York University Press, 1999.), p::234

204 Ellen Meikins Woods, "Uses and Abuses of Civil Society", The Socialist Register, 1990 socialistregister.com/epublish

Agenda Setting

Donors are very explicit about their vision of development and the tasks they want civil society to perform. CSOs are seen as ‘important channels for delivery of social services and of other development programs’.²⁰⁵ Development funds are used to help CSOs ‘provide social services, support community development and help rebuild war-torn communities’²⁰⁶. Donors identify the broad framework within which they want CSOs to work, hence the World Bank collaborates with CSOs on a ‘range of issues from preventing AIDS and developing micro credit to fighting corruption and rural poverty, protecting the environment, and development of Internet and Communications Technologies’²⁰⁷. Donor discourse backed by aid and development funds sets the agenda for CSOs in developing countries, ‘shifting its more active associations away from contesting power relations to partnership and co-operation’²⁰⁸. Civil society supports and implements donor policies, and is seen as a partner in development.

In this, neoliberal view, civil society ‘organizations’ cooperate with the established power structures, rather than trying to transform them. The emphasis on associations for delivery of services legitimizes state inaction,²⁰⁹ which further corrodes the state as a political institution. The state absolved of its traditional responsibility of providing public goods, tends to be seen as ineffective and redundant. States in developing countries already constrained by economic factors, high debt burdens and ineffective institutions further lose their capacity to address the development challenges.

205 World Bank <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/CSO/0,,pagePK:220469~theSitePK:228717,00.html> , accessed , 7th june 2006

206 World Bank *op.cit*

207 Ibid

208 Howell and Pearce, *op.cit*, p:178

209 Parekh, *op.cit*, p: 24

Aid Dependency

Western CSOs rely on membership fees, donations, government grants, and corporate financing, to finance their organizations and activities.²¹⁰ Civil society organizations in the developing countries are dependent on foreign funds, and in many cases is a creation of these funds. According to Howell and Pearce, ‘the small size of the domestic middle class, low level of industrialization and poverty are cited as reasons for lack of domestic funding for civil society’.²¹¹ While these are probable causes, other less analyzed reasons are the domestic perceptions regarding the relevance of these civil society organizations, as well as the easy availability of donor funds. The prevalence of ‘un/non civil society’ networks based on ties of kinship, ethnicity and religion in developing countries performing the functions assigned to ‘civil society’ such as generating social capital, reciprocity and trust, influencing policy making and public opinion, have to be factored into an analysis of why ‘civil society organizations’ are not getting domestic support, either financial or through voluntary work.

Reliance of civil society organizations on foreign funding places them in a dependent position compromising their independence. Foreign aid is either dispersed through recipient governments, directly to Southern NGOs, or channeled through intermediaries, such as other Western NGOs²¹². Reliance of civil society on external funds results in asymmetric relations between the donors of aid and its recipients... NGOs dependent entirely on foreign funding, increasingly try to develop projects and agendas that will fit in with the foreign donor priorities to attract more funds. This weakens the

210 Howell and Pearce, *op.cit.*, p:109

211 Howell and Perce, *op.cit.*, p:109

212 Von Rooy, *op.cit.*:p: 60

capacity of civil society organizations in the South to act as independent agents, and raises issues about their autonomy to act as agents of change. Foreign aid creates a sense of rivalry between the state and civil society. It also places the state and civil society in a competitive position for foreign funds, which at times results in governments opening their own civil society organizations, known as Government run NGOs or GRINGOs.

Civil Society, via associations and organizations, has a mandate to implement donor projects, provide services, and act as a ‘watch dog’ on the state. The framework within which this mandate is carried out is the liberal democratic order with free and open market. Alternatives to the neoliberal economic order are not seen as an issue that should concern civil society; rather markets are established as the most efficient providers of goods and services that generate employment and income. Hence, civil society’s potential to act as a ‘metatopical’ public sphere where alternatives are debated is severely circumscribed by the construction of the liberal market based framework as the ultimate truth. Furthermore, civil society organizations work with the established powers rather than trying to transform them and thus lose their transformatory potential²¹³, and at times their legitimacy far as the poor marginalized are concerned.

Democracy and Governance²¹⁴ initiatives through civil society, lend themselves to formulation of intrusive aid policies. Here, ‘strengthening civil society is increasingly seen as a way to counterbalance the exercise of excessive authority by governments and economic and political elites, and as a way to encourage more open dialogue about public policy’. These provisions assist USAID, for example, design projects that harness civil

213 Robert Cox, *Political Economy of a Plural World, Critical reflections on power, morals and civilization*, (Routledge, London, New York, 2002) p:110

214 Information in this paragraph is based on USAID website’s ‘Democracy and Governance’ section, accessed, 6th june, 2006

society and keep dissident governments in check. The recent example of this is Venezuela, where in August 2002, USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) established a program to 'provide critical and timely assistance to maintain democratic stability and strengthen the country's fragile democratic institutions during a time of intense political crises.'²¹⁵ Since, 2001 the U.S. government has spent \$5-7 million annually in democratization programming', these funds are used to support business, political, educational, and labor organizations opposed to the *elected* government of Hugo Chávez.²¹⁶ Scholars question the 'appropriateness' of foreign governments taking actions to²¹⁷ 'strengthen' civil society in other countries. Similie cites cases of 'Soviet support for the 1984/85 British coal miners' strike, and Libyan support in 1996 for Louis Farrakhan's Nation of Islam, which met with contempt and even legal action in Britain and the USA',²¹⁸ to show the inappropriateness of donor's civil society agenda in the South.

The strategic dispersal of donor funds to military and autocratic regimes is acknowledged as one of the major causes of the failure of past development projects.

'Past foreign assistance to corrupt and ineffective governments failed to help the populations in greatest need. Instead, it often impeded democratic reform and encouraged corruption'.²¹⁹

Yet, this acknowledgement has not led to a change in policy (or accountability). In fact, 'the War on Terror' has led to new initiatives that merge US foreign policy, security with

215 USAID, http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/crosscutting/transition_initiatives/country/venezuela/fact0605.html

216 Tom Barry, "Transitioning Venezuela", November 1, 2005, http://www.americas.org/item_22763 June, 2006

217 Howell and Pearce, *op.cit.*

218 Ian Similie, "NGOs and development assistance: a change in mind-set"? *Third World Quarterly*, Vol 18, (No 3, 1997) P: 565

219 The White House, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss/2006/sectionVII.html> accessed June, 2006

development. In the *New Compact for Development*,²²⁰ envisaged by President George Bush at the Inter-American Development Bank on March 14, 2002, development and security are linked together. *USAID* plays a vital role in promoting U.S. national security, foreign policy, and its 'global war on terrorism'. As stated in the President's National Security Strategy, 'USAID's work in development joins diplomacy and defense as one of three key pieces of the nation's foreign policy apparatus'. Promotion of 'democracy and funding civil society are a vital part of this policy'. The Agency's programs 'for democracy and political reform' in Afghanistan and Iraq are a part of this strategy.²²¹

Radicalization of society in many parts of the South since the early 1990s reflects its frustration with the authoritarian state and the failure of the democratization agenda.²²² The increased number of civil and ethnic conflicts and the rise of 'uncivil' society is a testimony to the lack of mediating institutions where 'various factions can meet and come to a common mind'. An antagonistic relation of civil society, or its actors, to the economy or the state arises only when these mediations fail or when the institutions of economic and political society serve to 'insulate decision making and decision makers from the influence of social organizations, initiatives, and forms of public discussion.'²²³

Conclusion

Donor policies are presented as neutral and technical; yet this neutral stance 'tends to mask political agendas and renders ideological hegemonies and values almost

220 The White House, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/developingnations/>

221 USAID, http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/democracy_and_governance/democracy_framework.htm

222 Sola Akinrinade, "On the Evolution of civil society in Nigeria", in Marlies Glasius, David Lewis, and Hakan Seckinelgin. *Exploring Civil Society : Political and Cultural Contexts*. London ; New York: Routledge, 2004, p:147

223 Comaroff, John L., and Jean Comaroff, eds. *Civil Society and the Political Imagination in Africa : Critical Perspectives*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 1999. p: xi

invisible'.²²⁴ Critics question the 'right of donors to strengthen empirical civil society in the name of a single, unproblematized and essentially normative interpretation'.²²⁵ Donor policies to strengthen and establish civil society fail to adapt to the 'realities' of 'societies' in developing countries. These actually existing societies are designated as 'traditional, deficient and lacking'. The important issue here is 'the power of one people or one nation to dominate and transform another according to its worldview',²²⁶ in the process altering, weakening and radicalizing already existing forms of civil society. Hence we see two civil societies in many developing countries, an institutionalized donor funded civil society comprised of western style voluntary associations, and a parallel civil society composed of various types of traditional, communal and other non voluntary networks. Lack of 'institutions of good governance and 'civil society' are identified as the main causes of lack of democracy and underdevelopment and donor funds are used to construct these missing elements.

External funding of civil society raises issues of autonomy and lends itself to misuse by donors as well as local actors. Donors have a history of using funds for strategic purposes to further their own political and economic interests. Availability of donor funding has stimulated the establishment of a large number of CSOs, which are used as evidence of the success of donor policies. Yet, as the analysis here has pointed out the success of civil society cannot be based solely on the number of organizations,

224 Howell and Pearce, *op.cit.* p:115

225 *Ibid.*, p. 6.

226 Vincent Tucker, "The Myth of Development", in , Ronaldo Munck and Denis O'Hearn eds Critical Development theory, contributions to a new paradigm, (Zed books, London, New York , 1999), p::5

rather it is the values of 'civility, toleration, mutual respect, inclusion and fairness and common deliberation'²²⁷ as well as autonomy which should be a measure of success.

227 Steven M DeLue, Political Thinking, Political Theory, and Civil Society. (2nd ed. New York: Longman, 2002).P:366

6:CONCLUDING REMARKS

The project explored the discourse and policy of donor funding of civil society in developing countries. Civil society strengthening programs constitute a major part of donor policies, as part of their ‘Democracy and Governance’ programs as well as through their collaboration with CSOs for various projects. The project showed how the donor discourse on civil society has privileged a particular conception of civil society and marginalized alternative forms found in many regions of the south, and analyzed the dilemmas and challenges posed by donor-funded programs to strengthen civil society in developing countries. In so doing, the project traced the historical evolution of the ‘civil society’ agenda in contemporary development discourse. Since most developing countries are dependent on multilateral and bilateral development agencies for material and technical assistance, the latter’s policies strongly influence the structure and shape of civil society.

Key Findings

Civil Society is not an immutable concept; rather it evolved over a period of time and is based on specific assumptions about the self, society and economy. Civil society as a concrete category enters political discourse with the rise of commercial society in the West, and the concomitant changes in the relations of production and exchange. The study of these phenomena resulted in discursive formulations of concepts such as civil society and economy and eventually led to a division of society into, the now familiar,

state-civil society-economy dichotomy. Hence, civil society refers at once to, a concept, a normative ideal (what ought to be), as well as to ‘actually existing societies’ (what is).

Civil society, along with the state and the economy, forms an essential political category, and is imbued with values such as civility, public participation, associability and plurality. It performs certain functions such as generating trust and social capital, providing a public sphere, where various groups can come together and articulate their demands, as well as a space for social movements. These functions are deemed important for democracy as they check the authoritarian tendencies of the state. Furthermore the trust generated by groups and individuals working together are important for the proper functioning of the economy.

Civil society can be defined in a variety of ways, and ‘part of the problem is that civil society is an unavoidably nebulous and elastic conception that does not easily lend itself to a great deal of precision’.²²⁸ Operationalizing the concept for policy purposes is a normative enterprise, as policy makers have to choose among various contenders. Mainstream development discourse favors the associational view of civil society. Hence, Civil Society via associations and organizations is given a mandate to implement donor projects, provide services, and act as a ‘watch dog’ on the state. The framework within which this mandate is carried out is the liberal democratic order with free and open markets.

As Seligman asserts, ‘before civil society can be used as a prescriptive or descriptive model we need to clarify what baggage we carry with us in the portmanteau

²²⁸John Ehrenberg, *Civil Society: The Critical History of an Idea*. (New York: New York University Press 1999), P:234

of civil society'²²⁹ Hence, the project investigated the underlying assumptions of the liberal concept of civil society regarding the individual, state and society. These assumptions reflect the experience and realities of western industrialized nations. Many developing countries in Africa and Asia have vastly different realities, as individuals are still tied to their communities based on ascriptive ties. The mainstream view of development treats these as a hindrance for development of civil society.

The representation of the South as 'lacking' civil society has historical antecedents. The discursive formulation of the South as deficient started with the discovery of these regions by the western explorers, traders, and missionaries. The strange customs, habits and cultures were explained by the Enlightenment philosophers and academics using scientific enquiry and rational reason and resulted in theories of racial inferiority. A brief look at the foundational texts of civil society theorizing, written during the Enlightenment, reveals that the regions comprising the developing countries were characterized as 'rude', 'barbarous' nations lacking civility, civil society, and civilization. This became a part of the official lexicon as the major western powers such as Britain, France, Belgium, and others formally colonized these regions. With decolonization, this discourse, sans the racist overtones, was entrenched in the discourse and policy of 'development' agencies. Development agencies took on the 'White mans pedagogical burden',²³⁰ to teach the developing world how to 'develop' and reach the level of advanced industrial countries.

229 Adam B. Seligman, *The Idea of Civil Society*, (The Free Press, 1992) P: 4

230 Naim Inayatullah and David Blainey, *International Relations and the Problem of Difference*: (New York: Routledge, 2004)

While the overt racist tones used by the Enlightenment philosophers have disappeared, the discourse still treats traditional societies as deficient and lacking. Gunnar Myrdal writing in 1967, found evidence of these attitudes;

Although, now more or less suppressed and never expressed publicly except in highly euphemistic forms, such attitudes are still widely held by Europeans working in the South Asian countries and by many individuals this presents an important problem for systematic research, for beneath the conventional egalitarian doctrine of these countries which is sanctioned by strong interests both foreign and domestic there survives a whole undergrowth of attitudes reflecting what we have called the 'colonial theory'.²³¹

The rejection of traditional societies as not capable of 'development' and their replacement by modern structures was confined initially to the political and economic spheres. With the rise of 'Comprehensive Development', the restructuring of society via 'civil society', strengthening programs became a key part donor policies.

This stipulates a rejection of various traditional authority structures and the numerous communal, non-voluntary groups and networks, based on ties of kinship, clan, and ethnicity, as 'uncivil' and replaces these with 'voluntary' associations. This leads to the presence of two spheres. A donor funded, 'voluntary', associational one which because it is externally sourced may lack legitimacy in the eyes of the population it is meant to serve; and a local indigenous one that may have greater influence on the lives of, and legitimacy for, the majority of the populations in many parts of the South but lacks official recognition. The project highlights the importance of these community networks for political and civil societies in the developing countries, as they perform

231 Gunnar Myrdal, *Asian Drama, An Inquiry into the Poverty of Nations*, Vol 1, (Pantheon, Random House, 1967) p: 981

many of the functions associated with civil society, such as generating trust, reciprocity and social capital, as well as influencing public opinion and state policies. Hence, rather than a rejection of these as 'traditional' and 'uncivil' policy makers need to make 'civil society' more inclusive. The cleavages and exclusions associated with ethnic and communal groups are often socially constructed, and conflict often follows from the instrumental political manipulation of group difference. This is the result of political as well as economic factors and calls for an equitable distribution of economic and political resources.²³²

The associational view favored by the mainstream development discourse, envisions civil society as an arena of 'human emancipation'. Civil society portrayed as a benevolent sphere of society ignores the relations of exploitation and domination, which are a part of civil society.²³³ These are exacerbated in the case of developing countries due to the presence of large disparities in income and unequal access to political and economic resources. Donor policies fail to acknowledge the unequal distribution of power which is an essential part of society and consequently of 'civil society' in the developing countries.

Donor policies adopt the rhetoric of participation and partnership, and the civil society agenda is presented as inclusive and participatory. Empirical examples presented in this research suggest that donors favor urban based, English speaking groups. Partnership is restricted to a select group of NGOs, perpetuating the existing power asymmetries. These select groups are seen as representative of the poor and hence they

232 James Busumtwi-Sam, "Sustainable Peace and Development in Africa" *Studies in Comparative International Development* 37, 3 (2002) pp91-118

233 Ellen Meikins Woods, "Uses and Abuses of Civil Society", *The Socialist Register*, 1990

appropriate the voices of the poor. Furthermore, donors set the agenda for civil society organizations and provide training to CSOs so they can provide services such as education and health, which were traditionally the purview of the state. This policy of replacing the state with non-state actors ties in with the neoclassical laissez-faire economic ideology favored by multilateral and bilateral aid agencies.

The reduction of state and its substitution by the private sector is hindered by the presence of autocratic and controlling states that seek to hold onto power and use the legal apparatus to exclude groups that advocate political reforms. They also circumscribe the public sphere through regulating the public discourse and using state coercion to harass the more vocal groups in society. The project problematized the political use of development funds, and showed how support to authoritarian regimes for geopolitical gains was a part of the Cold War strategy of containment of communism. Donors such as USAID explicitly tied their foreign aid agenda to their foreign policy goals. More recently, development aid is seen as part of the 'War on Terror'. Hence, the neoliberal policy of reducing the state is overshadowed by the geostrategic imperative of supporting cooperative states that can curb the power of 'revolutionary', 'terrorist' groups. Here, we see that states with dubious democratic credentials such as Egypt and Pakistan are amongst the highest recipients of USAID. Hence, the donors as well as states in developing countries circumscribe the boundaries of the public sphere when it suits their purposes.

The project also highlights the issues arising from aid dependency. Many CSOs are dependent on donor agencies for sustaining their organizations; in fact, many are a creation of these donor funds. This results in asymmetric relations between the donors

and recipients of aid that may compromise the autonomy and independence of recipient groups. The growth of CSOs in developing countries is held up as a sign of a thriving civil society. The project argues that rather than using the number of CSOs, the success of civil society should be measured by the prevalence of civility, plurality, tolerance, and trust. The persistence of authoritarianism, and civic strife in countries where civil society funding is the highest are disturbing phenomena that cast doubt on the ability of donor funded civil society to generate the values and perform the functions deemed important for democracy and development.

The debates about civil society have to be situated within the wider debates about the role of civil society in relation to the political and the economic society and their engagement with the global economy. Looking at one while ignoring the distortions arising from the other spheres, results in a partial analysis. It should be pointed out that the analysis is not intended to dismiss the importance of civil society organizations; rather the project problematizes the metanarratives of civil society employed by donors, and uncovers the anomalies that arise from the ideological pursuit of policies that may be ill suited to the realities of developing countries. It is a testimony to the hegemony/soft power of the mainstream development discourse espoused by the World Bank and other multilateral and bilateral agencies that this discourse has gained widespread (and in many cases uncritical) acceptance. The project calls for a more critical look at civil society and urges a more inclusive conceptualization of civil society that accepts local and traditional forms of collective action in the quest for 'development'. As Kaviraj asserts, civil society

advocates have to find 'some intelligible points of connection rather than advocate from the 'moral outside'.²³⁴

²³⁴Sudipta Kaviraj "In Search of Civil Society" in Sudipta Kaviraj and Sunil Khilnani, eds *Civil society : history and possibilities* 2001, Cambridge University Press, p:323

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