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POTENTIALS AND CHALLENGES OF CIVIL SOCIETY ACTIVISM IN AN INCREASINGLY GLOBALIZED WORLD

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***Abstract:** Civil society has come to be an essential element of contemporary global politics, taken either as a normative concept linked to the idea of democracy or as a descriptive concept that refers to the activism of global activities of NGOs, Social movements, and global advocacy networks. It is therefore very imperative to engage ourselves with the critically complex global civil society, especially in relation to the third world countries and specifically Nigeria as a major player in world politics and member of committee of nations, hence we should be able to analyze and asses the potentials and challenges of civil society activism in the context of our increasingly globalized world. We are tend to believe that global society holds the key to the future of progressive politics, thus, civil society is the way forward for solidarity, citizenship and democracy; however, the most important question we should acquaint ourselves with as per this discourse is, what substance does it portends for the notion of global civil society and what implications does it have with regard to the positives and negatives its emergence and growth hold, especially in contemporary world politics? Certainly, it is interesting to note that we have witnessed an upsurge of global civil society in the late twentieth century and that it has no doubt, played a significant role in recasting world politics; this is to say, global civil society certainly offers much potential for enhancing security, peace, solidarity, equality social, economic, democratic paradigm shift in our contemporary global relations.*

**Keywords:** Activism, Challenges, Civil Society, Democracy. Global, Globalize, Globalization, Nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs), Non State Actors, Potential, Social Movements, World Politics.

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## MATERIALS AND METHODS

Materials were obtained through existing literature, e.g textbooks, magazines, journals and online resources.

## INTRODUCTION

Civil society is among the most widely discussed and frequently deployed concepts in contemporary political science. To normative political theorists it is a critical concept representing an ideal of inclusive participation and deliberation. Many empirically minded students of democracy emphasize its role in fostering democratic transitions and facilitating democratic consolidation. Moreover, political scientists of many stripes have taken an interest in the various actors who populate civil society—from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and new social movements to the more traditional interest groups emphasized in the pluralist framework. Over the past three decades, the wide range of social, political, and economic changes that have accompanied globalization have radically transformed opportunities for progress in the developing world. Entire classes, sectors and nations have been lifted from poverty, representative democracy has spread, and new modes of communication have made us more aware of our shared fate. But at the same time, globalization has produced new forms of social exclusion, new sources of insecurity and precariousness, and new security threats ranging from extremist movements to environmental degradation. Most significantly, globalization is transforming how power is organized and how legitimate power is authorized. The contours and substance of the nation-state, the traditional container of authorized decision-making, are being transformed. Nation-states are losing the regulatory control they have long enjoyed over the economy as well as the sovereign authority they have traditionally exerted over their citizens. Conceptions of nationhood, and with it, social integration, are being challenged by transnational flows of ideas, identities and information. The post-national groupings (Habermas 2001) pose fundamental questions around national integration, popular sovereignty, social protection and economic regulation.

Globalization has considerably weakened traditional governance processes. Increasing global economic integration has reduced the power of national governments while granting other economic and political actors access to the world stage. The 1990s witnessed a dramatic increase in the involvement of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in global governance (Charnovitz, 1997). Taken together, these developments have triggered a crisis of democracy. The great irony of the opening of the 21st century is that just at the moment in history when democracy has become the global norm, and precisely when a global economic crisis demands new modes of national and global democratic governance, the two great institutional pillars of modern governance—representative democracy and bureaucratic organization—are both suffering from increasing deficits of effectiveness and legitimacy. In policy-thinking and contemporary politics, the responses to these deficits have more or less taken one or two forms. The first sees the problem as one of increasing complexity and in particular an excess of demand-making, and argues that contemporary institutions are simply being overloaded by societal pressures. The prescription essentially involves protecting institutions—in particular the market and the state—from politics. Many current versions of

'good governance' essentially follow this line of thinking and place enormous faith in the virtues of self-regulating markets and shielded expert-run administrative bodies. In this context, democracy is reduced to representation through periodic elections. The second response raises concerns with the limits of representative institutions of democracy, and points to the need to strengthen democratic practices and forces. Here, the concern is not that there is too much demand-making, but rather that the system is dominated by organized and powerful interests, and that existing mechanisms of accountability are inadequate. The call is for more, not less democracy, and in particular a strengthening of citizenship. This view has taken concrete form in two separate but analytically parallel developments. At the national level, efforts to deepen democracy have entailed a wide range of experiments in various forms of participatory democracy, ranging from new attempts to directly engage citizens in development projects, to large-scale state-driven reform projects that build participation into new institutions of governance.

At the global level, the role that social movements and global civil society have played in the past decade in promoting political openings in authoritarian societies and driving the spread of human rights, ranging from the Arab Spring to indigenous movements in Latin America, have drawn attention to how popular contention can transform politics and development. But for all, the new attention that academic literature has given to social movements and civil society, there have been very few efforts to integrate the theoretical and empirical lessons from this literature into understanding of the challenges of development in an increasingly globalized world. Most lacking of all has been any concerted effort to systematically relate the claims made for 'bringing civil society back in' to the specific conditions of institutional development and democratization in the global Society. This paper is not an exhaustive analysis of the concept of civil society activism, but it intends for better understanding to briefly examine five major areas; thus, a brief meaning or definition of civil society, theories of civil society, global civil society, models of global civil society, potentials and challenges of global civil society in our present day globalized world: other Non state actors in world politics, types of non state actors and conclusion.

## **DEFINITION**

The term civil society is of course highly disputed as a category, and certainly has not enjoyed the sustained and focused analytic attention of the market or the state. The vocabulary of politics is today spotted with terms such as 'civil society', 'social movements', 'non-governmental organizations' (NGOs), 'non-profit associations' (NPAs), 'private voluntary organizations' (PVOs), 'independent advocacy groups' (IAGs), 'principled issue networks' (PINs), 'segmented polycentric ideologically integrated networks' (SPINs), and more. 'Civil society' is the oldest of these concepts, dating back to English political thought of the sixteenth century. The contemporary proliferation of broadly related terms perhaps in part reflects uncertainty, confusion and disagreement about the meaning of the older notion.

What, indeed, is civil society? The concept has been understood very differently across different time periods, places, theoretical perspectives and political persuasions. Thus, for example, 'civil society' for Hegel, as an academic philosopher in Prussia and Baden in the early nineteenth century, has not been the same as 'civil society' for a grassroots eco-feminist group in India in the late twentieth century. We therefore need not a definitive definition, but a notion of civil society that, with due regard for cultural and historical contexts, promotes insight and effective policy in the contemporary world. We might begin by stressing what civil society is *not*. For one thing, civil society is not the state: it is non-official, non-governmental. Civil society groups are not formally part of the state apparatus; nor do they seek to gain control of state office. On this criterion, political parties should probably be excluded from civil society, although some analysts do include party organizations (as distinct from individual party members who might occupy governmental positions). Other unclear cases arise in respect of non-official actors that are organized and/or funded by the state, this suggest that such bodies cease to be 'non-governmental'? In addition, some agencies outside government help states and multilateral institutions to formulate, implement, monitor and enforce policies. To what extent can 'civil society' be involved in official regulatory functions? Clearly, the precise boundaries of 'non-governmental' activity are a matter for debate. Nevertheless, it is generally agreed that civil society lies outside the 'public sector' of official governance.

Secondly, civil society is not the market: it is a non-commercial realm. Civil society bodies are not companies or parts of firms; nor do they seek to make profits; thus, the mass media, the leisure industry and cooperatives would, as business enterprises, not normally be considered part of civil society. To be sure, the distinction between the market and civil society is in practice sometimes far from absolute. For example, companies often organize and fund non-profit bodies, including foundations like Packard and Sasakawa that bear a corporate name. Meanwhile business lobbies like chambers of commerce and bankers' associations promote market interests even though these organizations themselves do not produce and exchange for profit. Many voluntary groups engage a salaried workforce in commercial activities like catalogue sales in order to fund their charitable operations. The environmentalist lobby Greenpeace has considered licensing its name as a brand. At what point does the market presence become so strong that an activity ceases to qualify as 'civil society'? No doubt there are borderline cases, but it is generally agreed that civil society lies outside the 'private sector' of the market economy.

Establishing what civil society is *not* only partly establishes what it *is*. Thus far we have identified civil society as a 'third sector' that, while sometimes being closely related to, is distinct from the state and the market. Yet is this to say that any and all nongovernmental, non-commercial activity is part of civil society? Presumably we would not label, for example, the everyday routines of households or idle chatter in a park as 'The Limits to Growth?' *The*

*Economist*, 348 (1 August 1998) p. 79.- 4 -'civil society'. Negative terminology like 'non-governmental organization' and 'nonprofit body' is in this respect not very precise or helpful. What is the *positive* content of civil society? For the purposes of the present discussion, activities are considered to be part of civil society when they involve a deliberate attempt from outside the state and the market, and in one or the other organized fashion to shape policies, norms and/or deeper social structures. In a word, civil society exists when people make concerted efforts through voluntary associations to mould rules: both official, formal, legal arrangements and informal social constructs. 'Civil society' is the collective noun, while 'civic' groups, organizations, etc. are the individual elements within civil society. Civil society encompasses enormous diversity. In terms of membership and constituencies, for example, it includes academic institutes, business associations, cooperative groups community-based organizations, consumer protection bodies, criminal syndicates, development cooperation groups, environmental campaigns, ethnic lobbies, foundations, farmers' groups, human rights advocates, labour unions, relief organizations, peace activists, professional bodies, religious institutions, women's networks, youth campaigns and more. In terms of organizational forms, civil society includes formally constituted and officially registered groups as well as informal associations that do not appear in any directory. Indeed, different cultures may hold highly diverse notions of what constitutes an 'organization'. Some civic bodies are unitary, centralized entities like the Ford Foundation and the Roman Catholic Church. Other civic associations like the International Chamber of Commerce or Amnesty International are federations where branches have considerable autonomy from the central secretariat. Other civic groups like the Asian Labour Network on International Financial Institutions (which links trade unions in four countries to campaign on labour rights and welfare issues) are coalitions without a coordinating office. Still other civic bodies like Slum Dwellers International (which arranges periodic exchange visits between community leaders of poor neighborhoods in major cities of Africa and Asia) are loose networks that maintain limited and irregular contacts.

In terms of capacity levels, civil society includes some bodies that are very generously resourced and others that struggle for survival, frequently without success. Some civic associations are richly endowed with members, funds, trained staff, office space, communications technology and data banks yet, other groups lack these material means; some civic organizations have a clear vision and value orientation, a powerful analysis, an intelligently conceived campaign, a set of symbols and language that can mobilize a broad constituency, and an effective leadership. Other groups lack such human and ideational capital; while some civic bodies can exploit close links with elite circles, while others are completely disconnected from established power centers. In terms of tactics, civic associations use a wide variety of means to pursue their aims. Many groups directly lobby official agencies and market actors. Others also or instead put the emphasis on mobilizing the general public through symposia, rallies, petitions, letter-writing campaigns, and boycotts. Some appeals

from civil society aim primarily at the heart (with images, music and slogans), while others aim primarily at the mind (with publications, statistics and debates). Quite a few civic associations are skillful users of the mass media (even hiring professional communications consultants for this purpose), while others rely wholly on face-to-face contacts. Some civil society organizations make great use of the Internet (including list services and websites as well as person-to-person e-mail messages), while many others are not connected to cyberspace. On a broader tactical issue, some civic associations pursue their aims through cooperation with public authorities and/or market agents, while others adopt a confrontational stance and reject all engagement with established power centers. Finally, in terms of objectives, civil society includes conformists, reformists and radicals. The general distinction is important, although the lines can give vague impression in practice. Conformists are those civic groups that seek to uphold and reinforce existing norms. Business lobbies, professional associations, think tanks and foundations often (though far from always) fall into the conformist category. Reformists are those civic entities that wish to correct what they see as defect in existing regimes, while leaving underlying social structures intact. For example, social-democratic groups challenge liberalist economic policies but accept the deeper structure of capitalism. Many academic institutions, consumer associations, human rights groups, relief organizations and trade unions promote a broadly reformist agenda. Meanwhile radicals are those civic associations that aim comprehensively to transform the social order. These parts of civil society are frequently termed 'social movements'. They include anarchists, environmentalists, fascists, feminists, pacifists and religious revivalists, with their respective implacable oppositions to the state, industrialism, liberal values, patriarchy, militarism and secularism.

The distinction between means and ends needs to be stressed. It would be mistakenly assumed that quiet lobbying, painstaking research, and collaboration with authorities *ipso facto* imply a conformist programme. On the contrary, reformists and radicals can and often do adopt such tactics. Likewise, it would be wrong to suppose that street demonstrations, impassioned television spots, and a refusal to engage with official agencies *ipso facto* imply a radical vision. On the other hand, various business associations have sponsored boycotts and strikes, and some academic institutes have declined on principle to work with governance bodies. In short, when assessing civil society activity, it is important to distinguish between tactics and objectives. The height of the profile sought can bear little relation to the depth of the transformation pursued. By and large, civil society exists whenever people mobilize through voluntary associations in initiatives to shape the social order. Civic groups have a wide range of constituencies, institutional forms, capacities, tactics and goals. Apart from this broad definition and the acknowledgement that civil society is highly diverse, it is difficult to generalize about the phenomenon. Circumspectly, to make sense of the effects that civil society can have on developmental trajectories, first requires a clear theoretical understanding of what civil society is, what its boundaries are, and most importantly, how civil society is

differentiated from other domains of social action, most notably the state, market and community. Following the most recent developments in theory and research on civil society, it could be defined as the full range of voluntary associations and movements that operate outside the market, the state and primary affiliations, and that specifically orient themselves to shaping the public sphere. This would include social movements, independent unions, advocacy groups, and autonomous non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community-based organizations. From a sociological perspective, actors in civil society rely primarily on "social (as opposed to legal/bureaucratic or market) modes of mediation among people [organized collective actions] through language, norms, shared purposes, and agreements" (Warren 2001, p. 8). This civic or communicative (Habermas 1996) mode of action is as such distinct from the pursuit of political power, profits or the reproduction of primary ties and identities that characterize social actions in the state, market and community. At the heart of any conception of civil society is the ideal-type notion that citizens might be able to interact, deliberate and coordinate with each other based on their believes an capacity to reason ,especially linking it with democracy and development. Though civil society is distinct from the state, it is nonetheless intimately linked to how state power is authorized. As political theorists from Aristotle to John Elster have argued, civil society provides the normative basis for legitimating democratic rule. This is true in two fundamental respects. In a democracy, decisions can be made through three mechanisms: voting, bargaining and deliberation. Voting and bargaining play critical roles in any democratic system; thus, Voting allows for the aggregation of preferences, and bargaining for voluntary coordination across different interest groups. But these procedural bases of democracy both have their limits. The aggregative logic of voting is a very blunt tool of representation, and bargaining leads to outcomes that are a static reflection of existing distributions of power.

Deliberation, defined as "decision making by discussion among free and equal citizens" (Elster 1998, p. 1) adds two essential ingredients to any democracy. First, it allows citizens and civil society organizations to actively debate and form preferences, and thus to improve the informational and evaluative basis of voting. Second, because deliberation can transform preferences both by bringing new information and new understandings (including other-regarding considerations) into the decision-making process, it represents a potentially far more effective form of coordination than bargaining. Relatively if civil society is considered in terms of how it might contribute to enhancing deliberation in democratic life, then it becomes essential to informing our thinking about development. Since the end of the Cold War there has been a global ubiquity to the concept of civil society among researchers and activists, and a widespread assumption among many policy makers in different parts of the world of its global relevance to strengthening development and democracy. The aim of this discourse is therefore, to provide some reflections upon whether or not the concept of civil society could be seen as useful—both in terms of understanding social and political

processes, and in terms of policy intervention aimed at poverty reduction and development—in the context of global societies and development. In the broadest sense, civil society has been characterized as a sphere of social life that is public but excludes government activities (Meidinger, 2001). Michael Bratton describes civil society as social interaction between the household and the state characterized by community cooperation, structures of voluntary association, and networks of public communication (Bratton, 1994). The term civil society is generally used to classify persons, institutions, and organizations that have the goal of advancing or expressing a common purpose through ideas, actions, and demands on governments (Cohen and Arato, 1992). The membership of civil society is quite diverse, ranging from individuals to religious and academic institutions to issue-focused groups such as not-for-profit or non-governmental organizations. In the realm of environmental governance, NGOs are the most prominent actors and therefore could be considered to be part of civil society; groups of individuals organized for the myriad of reasons that engage human imagination and aspiration. They can be set up to advocate a particular cause, such as human rights, or to carry out programs on the ground, such as disaster relief. They can have memberships ranging from local to global. (Charnovitz, 1997: 186) NGOs involved in environmental governance are highly diverse, including local, national, regional, and international groups with various missions dedicated to environmental protection, sustainable development, poverty alleviation, animal welfare, and other issues.

### THEORIES OF CIVIL SOCIETY

There are at least three major types of institutions which comprise the emergent global civil society: formal organizations linking national institutions (organizations of parties, churches, unions, professions, educational bodies, media etc.); linkages of informal networks and movements (e.g., of women's, gay and peace groups and movements); and globalist organizations (e.g., Amnesty, Greenpeace, Medicines sans Frontières) which are established with a specifically global orientation, global membership and activity of global scope (Shaw, 1994b, p. 650). For an increasing number of theorists, global civil society represents nothing less than the outline of a future world political order within which states will no longer constitute the seat of sovereignty, a status first bestowed on them by the Treaty of Westphalia in Europe (1648) and subsequently exported around the globe. Richard Falk, for example, suggests that global civil society 'recasts our understanding of sovereignty' as 'the modernist stress on territorial sovereignty as the exclusive basis for political community and identity is displaced both by more local and distinct groupings and by association with the reality of a global civil society without boundaries' (1995, p. 100). Lipschutz also sees the transnational political networks put in place by actors in civil society as 'challenging, from below, the nation-state system'. Indeed, 'the growth of global civil society represents an ongoing project of civil society to reconstruct, re-imagine, or re-map world politics' (1992, p. 391). The factors enabling such a role for global civil society are identified by Lipschutz as:



the 'fading away' of anarchy among states in an increasingly norm-governed global system; the functional inability of states to address certain welfare problems; and the growth of new forms of non-statist social and political identity such as are provided by human rights and environmental groups, for example (1992, p. 392).

Few projections of such a post-Westphalian order assume that the state will cease to be an important factor in global politics, however. More fine distinction accounts see the emergence of global civil society as in part a response to the transformation of state power, rather than simply its erosion. Along these lines Shaw argues that the appearance of global civil society is at once a reaction to *and* a source of pressure for the globalization of state power, which exists *de facto* in the 'complex of global state institutions that is coming into existence through the fusion of Western state power and the legitimating framework of the United Nations' (1994b, p. 650). Köhler also suggests that 'the transnationalization of civil society activities is intrinsically related to the state's increasing commitment to intergovernmental cooperation' (1998, p. 233). Yet this very process also undermines the Westphalian order of state sovereignty in that 'once legitimacy and recognition are granted to transnational coalitions, interest aggregation and policy formulation ... cease to be *national* affairs, subject to the indivisible loyalty requested by the state' (Köhler, 1998, p. 246). Extant global civil society is then, it seems, both an outcome of and a stimulus for the transformation of the states' system. The question is: can it be more than this? In particular, can it serve as a constituent part of, even a means to, a democratized world order?

## GLOBAL CIVIL SOCIETY

While references to 'civil society' go back to the sixteenth century, talk of 'global civil society' has emerged only in the 1990s. Commentators have spoken in a relative term of 'international non-governmental organizations', 'transnational advocacy networks', 'global social movements', a 'new multilateralism', and so on. Such discussions are part of a wider concern with globality (the condition of being global) and globalization (the trend of increasing globality). Our conception of global civil society is thus inseparable from our notion of global-ness more generally. As any glance at the growing literature on globalization indicates, little consensus exists on the precise character of globality. A new vocabulary has arguably developed in response to changes in concrete social relations. However, analysts disagree often quite profoundly on the nature, extent, periodisation and direction of these changes. Though we are not here to engage in a full-scale exploration of the character and consequences of globalization, but it is necessary to specify the concept of 'global' relations that is operative here; hence, five broad kinds of ideas about globalization can be distinguished. First, many people equate the term 'globalization' with 'internationalization'. From this perspective, a 'global' situation is one marked by intense interaction and interdependence between country units. Second, many commentators take the word 'globalization' to mean 'liberalization'. In this usage, globality refers to an 'open'

world where resources can move anywhere, unhindered by state-imposed restrictions like trade barriers, capital controls and travel visas. Third, many analysts understand 'globalization' to entail 'universalisation'. In this case a 'global' phenomenon is one that is found at all corners of the earth. Fourth, some observers invoke the term 'globalization' as a synonym for 'westernization' or 'Americanization'. In this context globality involves the imposition of modern structures, especially in an 'American' consumerist variant. Fifth, some researchers identify 'globalization' as 'deterritorialisation'. Here 'global' relations are seen to occupy a social space that transcends territorial geography. Only the last of these five conceptions captures a distinctive trend that sets the world of the late twentieth century apart from earlier periods. The other four notions merely apply a new word to preexistent circumstances. Internationalization, liberalization, universalization and westernization have all figured significantly at previous times a hundred or even a thousand and more years in the past. No vocabulary of 'globalization' was required on those earlier occasions, and it seems unnecessary now to invent new words for old phenomena. In contrast, contemporary large-scale deterritorialization is unprecedented, and 'globalization' offers a suitable new terminology to describe these new circumstances. In the present discussion, then, 'global' relations are social connections in which territorial location, territorial distance and territorial borders do not have a determining influence. In global space, 'place' is not territorially fixed, territorial distance is covered in effectively no time, and territorial frontiers present no particular obstacle. Thus global relations have what could be called a 'supraterritorial', 'transborder' or 'transworld' character. (The latter three terms will be used as synonyms for 'global' in the rest of this paper.)

Examples of global phenomena abound in today's world. For instance, faxes and McDonald's are global in that they can extend anywhere on the planet at the same time and can unite spots anywhere on earth in effectively no time. Ozone depletion, CNN broadcasts and Visa credit cards are little restricted by territorial places, distances or borders. Global conditions can and do surface simultaneously at any point on earth that is equipped to host them (e.g. a Toshiba plant or an Internet connection). Global phenomena can and do move almost instantaneously across any distance on the planet (e.g. telephone calls or changes in foreign exchange rates). This is by no means to say that territorial geography has lost all relevance in the late twentieth century. We inhabit a *globalizing* rather than a completely *globalised* world. Social relations have undergone relative rather than total deterritorialisation. Indeed, territorial places, distances and borders still figure crucially in many situations as we enter the twenty-first century. Among other things, territoriality often continues to exert a strong influence on migration, our sense of identity and community, and markets for certain goods. Yet while territoriality may continue to be important, globalisation has brought an end to *territorialism* (that is, a condition where social space is reducible to territorial coordinates alone). Alongside longitude, latitude and altitude, globalisation has introduced a fourth, supraterritorial dimension to social geography. If we identify globality as

supraterritoriality, then what does global civil society involve? In a word, global civil society encompasses civic activity that: (a) addresses transworld issues; (b) involves transborder communication; (c) has a global organization; (d) works on a premise of supraterritorial solidarity. Often these four attributes go hand in hand, but civic associations can also have a global character in only one or several of these four respects. For example, a localized group that campaigns on a supraterritorial problem like climate change could be considered part of global civil society even though the association lacks a transborder organization and indeed might only rarely communicate with civic groups elsewhere in the world; on the contrary, global civic networks might mobilize in respect of a local development like the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. To elaborate these four points in turn, global civil society exists in one sense when civic associations concern themselves with issues that transcend territorial geography. For example, as well as addressing climate change, various civic associations have campaigned on ecological problems like the loss of biological diversity and the depletion of stratospheric ozone that similarly have a supraterritorial quality. Transworld diseases like AIDS have also stimulated notable civic activity. Many civic organizations have raised questions concerning the contemporary globalizing economy, in relation to transborder production, trade, investment, money and finance. Considerable civic activism has been directed at global governance agencies like the United Nations (UN), the Bretton Woods institutions, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and the World Trade Organization (WTO).

Human rights groups have promoted standards that are meant to apply to people everywhere on earth, regardless of the distances and borders that might lie between them. Some civil society bodies have also treated armament questions like bans on chemical weapons and land mines as global issues. A second way that civic associations can be global lies in their use of supraterritorial modes of communication. Air travel, telecommunications, computer networks and electronic mass media allow civic groups to collect and disseminate information related to their causes more or less instantaneously between any locations on earth. Jet aircraft can bring civil society representatives from all corners of the planet together in a global congress. In this way, for example, an NGO Forum has accompanied the various UN issue conferences of the 1990s as well as the Annual Meetings of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank since 1986. Telephone, fax and telex permit civic groups to share information and coordinate activities across the world as intensely as across town. As noted earlier, much civic activism has also become global through the Internet. Civil society is global in a third sense when campaigns adopt a transborder organization. According to the Union of International Associations, there were in 1998 some 16,500 active civic bodies whose members are spread across several countries

As noted earlier, the mode of organization can vary. Some supraterritorial bodies are unitary and centralized: for instance, the World Economic Forum (WEF), which assembles some

900 transborder companies under the motto of 'entrepreneurship in the global public interest'. Alternatively, the transworld association may take a federal form, as in the case of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU). Meanwhile some transborder organizations take the shape of networks without a coordinating secretariat. Illustrative cases in this regard are the Latin America Association of Advocacy Organizations (ALOP), which links 50 groups in 20 countries, and Peoples' Global Action against 'Free' Trade and the World Trade Organization (PGA), which mainly networks through a website. Other global organizations are temporary coalitions that pursue a campaign around a particular policy. For example, on various occasions grassroots groups have combined forces with development and/or environmental NGOs to lobby the World Bank on one or the other of its projects.

Finally, civil society can be global insofar as voluntary associations are motivated by sentiments of transworld solidarity. For example, civic groups may build on a sense of collective identity and destiny that transcends territoriality: e.g. on lines of age, class, gender, profession, race, religious faith or sexual orientation. In addition, some global civic activity (e.g. in respect of human rights, humanitarian assistance and development) has grown largely out of a cosmopolitan inspiration to provide security, equity and democracy for all persons, regardless of their territorial position on the planet. Taking these four manifestations of supraterritoriality in summary, global civil society has acquired substantial proportions in the late twentieth century. To be sure, by no means has all civic association acquired a global character. Nor has the global aspect of civic campaigns been equally pronounced and sustained in all cases. Nevertheless, owing to the contemporary growth of global issues, global communications, global organization and global solidarities, civic activity can today no longer be understood with a territorialist conception of state-society relations?

### MODELS OF GLOBAL CIVIL SOCIETY

The growing interest in the prospects for a global civil society should be seen against the backdrop of a number of developments. Crucial first is the conviction of many analysts that democracy cannot be maintained while tied exclusively to the nation state. This is because the nation state is understood to be increasingly losing its capacity to facilitate self-determination in a world of growing economic and cultural globalization; similar to this is the argument that the relationship between the nation state and democracy is nevertheless, only a historically conditional, rather than a necessary one. These observations, in turn, have helped focus attention on the emergence of transnational active social movements, which appear better equipped to organize around global policy issues such as ecology and human rights and, according to the very nature of their political practice, to go beyond the spatial boundaries that have confined politics to the sphere of the domestic state.

Thus, for Richard Falk, while we cannot yet testify to the emergence of a global civil society inclined towards cosmopolitan democracy ... such a potentiality exists at least to the extent

that the statist, territorial character of international society is being decisively superseded by a large variety of technical, economic and cultural trends (1998, p. 328). Whether or not the state is increasingly redundant as globalization theorists claim (and this remains a contentious thesis), it is important to note the normative aspect of much of the talk about global civil society, which is motivated as much by the conviction that global power *should* be democratized as by the empirical claim that power *is* increasingly globalised; yet, we should ask, what part is civil society understood to play here? One response to this question is provided within the model of cosmopolitan democracy. In perhaps the most well known of such models from David Held (1995), civil society provides for the public spheres which, taken together, operate as a basis for dispersed sovereignty in a system of global governance; generate critical resources directed towards the institutional power required by such governance; and provide opportunities for voluntary association at the 'local' level.

Nevertheless, civil society is by no means self-governing in Held's model, being constrained within a wider framework of broad-based democratic law that 'delimits the form and scope of individual and collective action within the organizations of state *and* civil society. Certain standards are specified ... which no political regime or civil association can legitimately violate' (Held, 1993, p. 43). Of course, for this mixed democratic law to have any authority, global-level sovereign institutions are required, though Held imagines these also being constrained by such a law, particularly by the principle of subsidiarity (which break up sovereignty), but also by ensuring that these are representative global institutions. Held summarizes his model as involving the call for a double-sided process of democratization in both political and civil society. Thus although Held sees civil society as one of the agents of democratic global governance, it is as much acted upon as actor, object as well as subject of his cosmopolitan democracy. This feature is replicated in the theory of other cosmopolitan democrats. Archibugi, for instance, wants global civil society to participate 'in political decision making through new permanent institutions', but then states that such institutions 'would supplement but not replace existing intergovernmental organizations. Their function would be essentially advisory and not executive' (1998, p. 219). Yet although cosmopolitan democrats may not identify global civil society as particularly active within the post-Westphalian order that they desire, it remains necessary to such an order since, as another cosmopolitan, Andrew Linklater, acknowledges, 'post-Westphalian communities' are needed to 'promote a transnational citizenry with multiple political allegiances and without the need for submission to a central sovereign power' (1998, p. 181). Indeed, Linklater himself positively identifies these post-Westphalian communities as including 'non-governmental associations, social movements and national minorities that can enjoy membership of an international society which is not just a society of states ...' (1998, p. 209).

The second key approach to global civil society, although similarly cosmopolitan in intent, is focused far more directly on growing global civil society itself – on the potential for world

democratization 'from below', via the moral advocacy of transnational operational social movements focused on human rights and the environment, for example. The global civil society approach is thus chiefly concerned with forms of political action and organization operating *outside* of the state and international law, where these forms are, by contrast, very much in the background for cosmopolitans: The predominant way of thinking about NGOs in world affairs is as transnational interest groups. They are politically relevant insofar as they affect state policies and interstate behaviour ... it could be argued ... that they have political relevance beyond this. They work to shape the way vast numbers of people throughout the world act ... using modes of governance that are part of global civil society, thus, the best way to think about these activities is through the category of 'world civic politics' ... clarifying how the forms of governance in civil society are distinct from the instrumentalities of state rule (Wapner, 1995, pp. 336–7). Initially, from the standpoint of global civil society leads to questioning of the impression given by cosmopolitan democrats like Held that democratic global governance can be instituted almost in spite of action in civil society, through the neo-Kantian 'appeal to some supposedly already existing world politics or universal ethics, as if the untidy skin of modern statist politics can be cast off to reveal some essential or potential humanity beneath' (Walker, 1994, p. 673).

Walker in particular, criticized the cosmopolitical attempt to 'read off' social movements 'as agents of this revolution'; More interestingly, perhaps, it is possible to appeal to a rather less abstract and apparently more politically engaged account of an emerging global civil society. Indeed, much of the recent literature attempting to make sense of social movements or world politics has begun to draw quite heavily on the idea of a global civil society, not least so as to avoid falling back on some pre-political or even anti-political claim about an already existing ethics or world politics through which social movements can act without confronting the limits of modern politics in the modern state (1994, p. 674). Walker's critique here is interesting because it is true that Held, typically of cosmopolitical theorists, says very little about global civil society as such, focusing instead upon the role in global governance of more or less local or domesticated civil societies. From the global civil society perspective, Held and other cosmopolitan democrats were faced with the problem of accounting for agency in the transition to democratic global governance. This problem can be seen with Linklater, for example, who, having set out a immoderate normative defense of a cosmopolitan ethic, then makes only the following very general comments about its realization: Cosmopolitan citizenship requires international joint action to ameliorate the condition of the most vulnerable groups in world society and to ensure that they can defend their legitimate interests by participating in effective universal communicative frameworks ... Cosmopolitan citizenship acquires its most profound praxeological significance when it is regarded as a guide to the moral principles which should be observed in these circumstances (1998, pp. 206–7).

From the perspective of global civil society theorists, more problematic still is that such voluntarism involves comprehensive retreat from questions about the political itself at the global level. This retreat is evident from Linklater's summary of recent work on cosmopolitan citizenship as seeking nothing more ambitious than to 'defend the normative project of disengaging citizenship from the sovereign state so that a strong sense of moral obligation is felt by all members of the species' (1998, p. 204). The problem here for critics is that to stop at a normative critique of the union between citizenship and the state is to fall short also of an assessment of political possibility in terms of identifying potential new forms of citizenship. Ironically, although Linklater and Held want to move 'beyond' Westphalia (state sovereignty), states appear to be the only actors likely to be in a position to initiate their proposals. Linklater (1998, p. 207) actually concedes this, arguing that 'a post-Westphalian pattern of states committed to the ... transformation of political community is the most involved system of joint rule which can be realized in the present era'. For Walker (1994, p. 696), such a tendency to shy away from a non-statist definition of the political is actually one reason why claims for global civil society are currently rapidly increasing, 'as a partial response to the absence of ways of speaking coherently about forms of political life that goes beyond the bounds of the sovereign state'. Falk illustrates this hope in the agency of global civil society with his call for 'globalization from below' through the activities of transnational social movements. 'Globalization from below' is seen as an alternative to the hegemonic 'globalization from above' imposed by elites through a world-wide normative network premised not on human needs but on the needs of capital (neoliberalism). For Falk, echoing cosmopolitans like Held, there *can* be a democratic global normative framework, a 'law of humanity'. Yet unlike Held, with his weak notion of agency, Falk sees global civil society as the only means to this humane law – 'as the hopeful source of political agency needed to free the minds of persons from an acceptance of state/sovereignty identity ...' (1995, p. 101). Furthermore, such global governance, contrary to Held who seeks to achieve it 'from above' (his cosmopolitan law), must be built 'from the ground up' and continue to be anchored in global civil society itself.

This universalism 'from below' is also sought by Paul Ghils, who wonders whether the 'universality of action in association' – a phrase suggestive of Melucci's 'planetaryisation of action' (1989, p. 74) – makes 'civil society and its transnational networks of associations ... the *universum* which competing nations have never succeeded in creating' (Ghils, 1992, p. 429). It is present also in the work of Yoshikazu Sakamoto, who believes that democracy needs to be globalised from below, via 'the creation of a global perspective and values in the depths of people's hearts and minds, establishing the idea of a global civil society' (1991, p. 122). The core global civil societarian objection to the cosmopolitan perspective, then, is that the latter's emphasis upon juridical power – cosmopolitan law no less – would lead to a excesses of (top-down, statist) legal regulations and institutions, which could be read as an anathema to political agency in civil society (Hutchings, 1999, p. 168). It might be noted at

this point that despite objecting to the statist implications of cosmopolitical theory, global civil society theorists at least share the cosmopolitan concern for the emergence of a global democratic politics. Crucially however, understanding of the political differs dramatically with each approach. Cosmopolitans, despite a dramatic shift in the level of analysis, remain true to the liberal democratic emphasis on mechanisms of law as the framework for a global polity. Global civil society theorists, meanwhile, look instead to the agency of 'bottom up', 'solidarist' transnational social movements – to the struggle for a global ethic more than the construction of a global polity. What is meant by a 'global ethic' here? Simply put, is that the growth of an increasingly norm-governed world system appears central to claims for an expanding role for global civil society. Writing on transnational civil society and human rights, Risse, for example, claims that the growing influence of the former on the latter stems from the power of global civil society's 'moral authority and accepted claim to authoritative knowledge' (2000, p. 186). Such moral authority and objectivity on the part of civil society is presumed also by Archibugi who, while recognizing that one state's interference in the domestic affairs of another may be instrumental, believes that civil society can and should so interfere (1998, p. 218).

Finally, it would be helpful to look briefly at one other conceptualization of global civil society that does not fall within the two categories outlined above, this being the neo-Gramscian approach. Prominent here is the work of Robert Cox, who internationalizes Gramsci in the sense of seeing civil society *itself* as a field of global power relations – involved, that is, in the reproduction of global capitalist hegemony but as also containing the potential to organize *counter*-hegemonic collaborator at this level. Thus in the first instance, states (as agencies of the global economy) and corporate interests seek to use civil society in order to stabilize the social and political status quo that is globalized capital, for example through state subsidies to NGOs which orientate the latter towards operations in conformity with neoliberalism (Cox, 1999, p. 11). Yet in the second dimension, and Cox is another to use the phrase 'bottom up' to describe this, civil society is the realm in which those who are disadvantaged by globalization of the world economy can mount their protests and seek alternatives. This can happen through local community groups that reflect diversity of cultures and evolving social practices worldwide ... More ambitious still is the vision of a 'global civil society' in which these social movements together constitute a basis for an alternative world order (Cox, 1999, pp. 10–11). Cox sees 'something moving' in this direction across the globe as a counterweight to hegemonic power (global capital) and ideology (neoliberalism), but is also quick to admit that such movement is still relatively weak and uncoordinated. 'It may contain some of the elements but has certainly not attained the status of a counter-hegemonic alliance of forces on the world scale' (1999, p. 13).

Such elements as are found occur when, following the renaissance of civil society, there is transnational coordination of popular movements; importantly for Cox, the forces of a



transformatory civil society *must* operate globally since this is the level at which hegemony prevails (1983, p. 171). In resisting this hegemony, however, the goal of civil society-based global action – and here Cox again, follow Gramsci – is to effectively challenge and replace political authority in the system of states (1999, p. 16, pp. 27–8). Whether or not global civil society can transform the class character of state power as Gramscians like Cox anticipated, is for now, a debatable point. No less difficult questions remain, however, when returning to our original focus on the relationship between global civil society and world-wide democratization.

### THE POTENTIALS AND CHALLENGES OF GLOBAL CIVIL SOCIETY

Having considered definitions, theories, causes and modules of global civil society, we have now come to the core of this discourse, although we have established some basis for normative judgments; but briefly, is the growth of supraterritorial civic activity a positive or a negative thing? As one might expect, this straightforward question does not yield a straightforward answer. In whatever domain – global, regional, national or local – civil society is not inherently good or evil. Some enthusiasts have depicted the ‘third sector’ as an arena of virtue that counters domination in government and exploitation in the market. Yet civic associations can themselves be oppressive hierarchical bureaucracies, and civic activity can involve violence (both deliberate and unintentional) toward vulnerable persons and groups. Hence we have both civil and *uncivil* society. Civic associations can improve or damage policy; they can increase or reduce human security, they can promote or undermine social equity. They can enhance or impair democracy. In short, we need to assess each association and campaign in global civil society on its own merits; yes, of course we need criteria against which to make such judgements. The following paragraphs first suggest seven general ways that civil society can contribute to a positive course of globalization. Then four potential dangers of global civic activity are highlighted. One way that civil society can advance a humane course of globalization is by *securing material welfare*. As noted earlier, voluntary associations can offer an alternative to the state and the market in the production and delivery of goods and services. Indeed, sometimes civil society mechanisms have supplied welfare more efficiently and equitably than the public and private sectors. Many of these civic programmes catch vulnerable circles with safety nets related to education, health, housing, and other material needs. However, the economic initiatives of civil society can also extend beyond the soup kitchen. For example, many civic associations have in the late twentieth century developed schemes of so-called ‘micro-credits’ for groups like women and the rural poor that commercial lenders tend to overlook.<sup>41</sup> In addition, several development cooperation groups have promoted alternative marketing schemes that provide producers (e.g. of coffee and textiles) in the South with higher returns than commercial dealers offer.

Second, global civil society can be an important conduit for *civic education*. In particular, transborder civic associations can improve public understanding of the various aspects of

globalization, alerting citizens to altered conditions of geography, politics, economics, ecology and culture in the contemporary world. Civic groups can in this vein prepare handbooks and information kits, produce audio-visual presentations, organize workshops, circulate newsletters, supply information to the mass media, maintain list services and websites on the Internet, and develop curricular materials for schools and universities. It is in good part thanks to supraterritorial civil society that the world public has become more (albeit perhaps still not adequately) aware of global issues. As people become gain greater cognizance of the new geography and its effects, the chances that globalization undermines human security and social justice can be reduced.

Third, global civil society can make positive contributions by *giving voice*. In other words, supraterritorial civic associations can provide channels through which citizens relay information, testimonial and analysis to each other, to market actors, and to governance agencies. In particular, global civil society can hand the microphone to circles like indigenous peoples, smallholder farmers, the urban poor and women who tend to get a limited hearing through firms and official agencies. In this way trans-border civic activity can be a significant force for equity and democracy. Fourth, global civic associations can while giving voice also *fuel debate*. Inputs from civil society can put alternative perspectives, methodologies and proposals on the agenda. For example, a number of civic groups have been instrumental in questioning orthodox economic theory, raising ecological issues, introducing qualitative assessments of poverty, and promoting various proposals for debt reduction in the South. Thanks to such contributions, discussions of social issues become more critical and creative. Wide-ranging, open debate is vital to a healthy democracy and can moreover often produce more clearly refined results. Fifth, civil society can enhance politics in the contemporary globalizing world by *increasing transparency and accountability*.

Many workings of global markets and global regulation have fallen outside public scrutiny, thereby increasing the dangers of abuse. Initiatives by civic associations can help bring into the open, for instance, global financial dealings, the activities of transborder corporations, and the operations of suprastate governance agencies like the BIS and the UN system. As a result, citizens can make more informed judgments about world politics, and actors in positions of power and responsibility must do more to account for their behaviour and policy choices. For example, civil society campaigns have called to book a number of global corporate wrongs like the marketing of baby formula to poor mothers in the South who were unable to afford it. Thanks in good part to pressure from a variety of civic organizations, the operations of the IMF and the WTO have since the mid-1990s become far more transparent. A sixth positive effect of global civil society can be to *promote legitimation*, especially in relation to suprastate governance. Legitimacy exists when people acknowledge that an authority has a right to govern them and that they have a duty to obey its rulings. As a result of such consent, legitimate governance tends to be less violent and more easily

executed than illegitimate authority. Legitimacy is also desirable on democratic grounds. In territorial states, legitimacy has traditionally been established mainly through political parties and popular suffrage; however, mechanisms such as referenda and direct elections of representatives are rarely available in respect of regional and transworld governance. Civil society can help to fill this legitimacy gap (that is, so long as the civic groups concerned maintain their own democratic credentials, an important qualification to which we will consider some other time). With consultation and monitoring and effective policy activities, civic associations can influence the respect accorded (or denied) to the policies of suprastate and private regulatory agencies. Likewise, global civic groups can affect the level of resources allocated to (or withheld from) governance institutions. In a word, then, civil society can act as an important check against dictatorship.

Seventh and finally, in terms of beneficial impacts, global civil society can through the various positive influences described above *enhance social cohesion*. Contributions to material welfare, civic education, public discussion and transparent, accountable, legitimate governance can all help to counter arbitrary inequalities and exclusions in society; As a result, conflict can be reduced and social integration can be increased. Above all, a variety of major positive potentials make the furtherance of global civil society a worthwhile project for the twenty-first century. However, the operative word throughout the preceding discussion has been 'can'. Civic associations do *not* produce the above benefits automatically. For one thing, to yield its fruits, transborder civic activity needs to have adequate capacities in terms of human, material and ideational resources. In many cases to date, these means have been lacking. Next to governance institutions and the market, civil society has run a very poor third in terms of supporting staff, funds, equipment and symbolic capital. Compare, for instance, the level of recognition and mobilizing power of national flags and corporate logos with that of civic association insignia. So long as global civil society is underresourced, its benefits will remain largely potential rather than actual.

Furthermore, our endorsement of global civil society must be qualified with recognition that this activism can under certain conditions have negative effects. Thus it is not only that transborder civic associations may fail, owing to capacity shortfalls, to do well. They may also do actual damage. Civic activity can, in four broad ways, potentially detract from security, equity and democracy in contemporary globalization. For one thing, elements of 'uncivil society' can be *ill intentioned*. Such associations actively seek to undermine human well-being and social justice. Thus, for example, transborder criminal networks have become significant perpetrators of harm in the contemporary world. Meanwhile various groups of racists, ultra-nationalists and fundamentalists have used global communications to preach intolerance and violence.

In short, it must never be forgotten that civil society is not intrinsically virtuous. Other initiatives in global civil society can have laudable aims but suffer from a second failing, namely *flawed policy*. Like programmes of action in the public and the private sector, civic campaigns need to be carefully conceived and judiciously executed. True, an ill-informed and misdirected civil society effort can – in spite of itself – inadvertently produce beneficial results; equally, even the best laid plans can be twisted. More usually, however, poor policy preparation and implementation runs a greater risk of causing harm, including too vulnerable social circles that well-intentioned civic associations may be aiming to help. For example, some environmentalist groups have hurt their cause with careless treatment of scientific evidence. The arguments of global human rights advocates have sometimes suffered from cultural illiteracy. Some relief organizations have miscalculated client needs. Some business associations have misread public sentiments. Some development advocacy groups have not gone beyond protests to proposals with respect to the workings of the liberal world economy. Some research institutes have not got beyond theoretical models to political practicalities. Conclusively, global civil society can fall short of its potential – and indeed can have negative impacts – when its inputs are of a low quality.

A third potential fault in transborder civic activity relates to *undemocratic practice*. For reasons noted earlier, global civil society is often championed as a force for democracy: it can give voice, stimulate debate, confer legitimacy, etc. Yet civic groups – even those that actively campaign for a democratization of official institutions and market operations – can fail to meet democratic criteria in their own internal workings. For example, some civic associations offer their members no opportunity for participation beyond the payment of subscriptions. No less than a government department or a business corporation, a civic organization can be run with top-down managerial authoritarianism. In addition, policy making in global civic associations can be quite difficult to outsiders: in terms of who takes decisions, by what means, from among which options, and with what justifications. Civic groups can be further deficient in respect of transparency when they do not publish financial statements or even a declaration of objectives, let alone full-scale reports of their activities. Moreover, the leadership of many civic organizations is self-selected, raising troubling questions of accountability and potential conflicts of interest.

In short, civil society operations are no more intrinsically democratic than programmes in the public or the private sector. A fourth potential defect in global civil society – namely, *inadequate representation* – is arguably the most difficult shortcoming to redress and warrants more extended discussion. If civil society is suitably to provide welfare, educate citizens, give voice, fuel debate, secure transparency and accountability, establish legitimacy and promote social cohesion, then all stakeholders must have access – and preferably equal opportunities to participate. Indeed, biased access to civil society can reproduce or even enlarge structural inequalities and arbitrary privileges connected with class, gender,

nationality, race, religion, and so on. Regrettably, global civil society has in practice all too often manifested these problems, thereby further calling into question its credibility for promoting security, equity and democracy. Uneven representation in, if not downright exclusion from, transborder civic activity has taken several general forms. For one thing, residents of the North (the OECD countries) have had a far larger and stronger presence in global civil society than people from the South (the so-called 'Third World') and the East (the current and former state-socialist countries). In terms of civilization inputs, supraterritorial civic activity has on the whole drawn much more from Western Judeo-Christian traditions than from African, Buddhist, Confucian, Eastern Orthodox, Hindu, Islamic and other cultures. In relation to gender and race, parts of global civil society have, it is true, given women and people of colour greater voice than they have generally been able to obtain through the state, the market and political parties, strikingly however, on the other hand, striking gender and racial inequalities have often persisted in sections of civil society like academic institutes, business associations, professional bodies and trade unions.

Finally, global civil society has thus far shown a pronounced class bias. The initiative in transborder civic activity has lain disproportionately with urban-based, (relatively) high-earning, university-educated, computer-literate, English-speaking professionals. In summary therefore, participation in global civil society has revealed many of the same patterns of inequality that have marked the globalising world more generally. This is not to suggest that people from privileged circumstances cannot use global civic activism to advance the lot of their disadvantaged fellow citizens. As indicated earlier, global civil society has done much to advance human security and social justice. Nevertheless, subordinated groups have often lacked adequate opportunities to speak for themselves through transborder civil society, and civic campaigners from elite circles have frequently been negligent when it comes to closely and systematically consulting their supposed constituencies in vulnerable quarters. In a welcome trend, recent years have witnessed greater sensitivity in some quarters to issues of representation and participation in global civil society.

A new rhetoric of the 1990s has underlined 'dialogue' and 'partnership', particularly between South-based and North-based groups. Illustrating this spirit, a global conference of development advocates in July 1998 produced the Harare Declaration on Development Relationships, with the aim of overcoming a 'parent-child' mode of interaction between Northern and Southern civic activists. Many civic organizations have also become more proactive in promoting women and people of colour to positions of leadership. On the other hand, relatively few initiatives have yet emerged to address civilization and class inequalities in global civil society. Groups like the International Network of Engaged Buddhists and the Participation Resource Action Network (which has linked poor people across four continents) remain uncommon. In this respect, radical critics have grounds to regard global civil society in its current condition as predominantly a 'western' and 'bourgeois' project.

Clearly, then, there are no grounds for complacency regarding the contemporary growth of global civil society. Although this development holds substantial potential for good, it also carries significant dangers. The challenge is to take global civic activity forward in ways that minimize the potential pitfalls and maximize the potential benefits.

### OTHER NON STATE ACTORS IN WORLD POLITICS

Non state actors are non-sovereign entities that exercise significant economic, political, or social power and influence at a national, and in some cases international, level. Non-state actors (NSA) are entities that participate or act in international relations. They are organizations with sufficient power to influence and cause a change even though they do not belong to any established institution of a state. The admission of non-state actors into international relations theory conflicts with the assumptions of realism and other black box theories of international relations, which argue that interactions between states are the main relationships of interest in studying international events. Non-state actors can aid in opinion building in international affairs, such as the Human Rights Council. Formal international organizations may also rely on non-state actors, particularly NGOs in the form of implementing partners in the national context.

An example is the contribution of COHRE (Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions), to the protection of land and property (HLP) rights in Kosovo by conceptualizing the Housing and Property Directorate (now Kosovo Property Agency) within the framework of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo. Another example that shows the importance of non-state actors in peace-building is the contribution of ICBL (International Campaign to Ban Landmines) to the international prohibition on the use of landmines. ICBL is a global network of NGOs that has operated in over 90 countries since 1992. Its primary goal is to make a world free of anti-personnel landmines. Their passionate advertising appealing for global cooperation drew Diana, Princess of Wales to become an ardent advocate. Together, they brought the issue to the United Nations General Assembly. ICBL's efforts led the international community to urge states to ratify the Ottawa Treaty (Mine Ban Treaty) in 1997, and its contribution was recognized and praised as it was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in the same year. There is no consensus on the members of this category, and some definitions include trade unions, community organizations, religious institutions, ethnic groupings, and universities in addition to the players outlined above. The bulk of the NIC-Eurasia Group discussions centered on organizations and individuals which are truly "non state," or which perform functions not typically associated with national governments in advanced Western economies:

### TYPES OF NON STATE ACTORS

1. Multinational corporations are enterprises that manage production or deliver services in at least two countries. Multinational corporations (MNCs)—for-profit

organizations that operate in multiple sovereign states. The International Media The traditional multinational is a private company headquartered in one country and with subsidiaries in others, all operating in accordance with a coordinated global strategy to win market share and achieve cost efficiencies. A significant portion of the discussion, however, centered on the relatively recent “multinationalization” of state-owned enterprises such as Russia’s arms-export monopoly Rosoboron export or Chinese oil company CNPC, which as state entities may or may not share the same incentives and goals as their private counterparts.

2. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs)—typically considered a part of civil society; NGOs (nongovernmental organizations) are organizations that are private, self-governing, voluntary, nonprofit, and task- or interest-oriented advocacy organizations. Within those broad parameters there is a huge degree of diversity in terms of unifying principles; independence from government, big-business, and other outside influences; operating procedures; sources of funding; international reach; and size. They can implement projects, provide services, defend or promote specific causes, or seek to influence policy. Discussion briefly touched on the contradiction-in-terms Government Operated NGO (GONGO), which may be set up by governments to garner aid money or promote government interests.
3. *Super-empowered individuals*—persons who have overcome constraints, conventions, and rules to wield unique political, economic, intellectual, or cultural influence over the course of human events—generated the most wide-ranging discussion. “Archetypes” include industrialists, criminals, financiers, media moguls, celebrity activists, religious leaders, and terrorists. The ways in which they exert their influence (money, moral authority, expertise) are as varied as their fields of endeavor. As bounded by seminar participants, this category excludes political office holders (although some super-empowered individuals eventually attain political office), those with hereditary power, or the merely rich or famous. There are far more shared interests between NGOs and super-empowered individuals (driven by normative agendas) than between either of them and multinationals (driven by a quest for profit and growth). At the same time they do not exist in isolation from each other; for example, NGOs may censure, lobby, or advise multinational corporations and super-empowered individuals may head a multinational or an NGO.
4. Violent non-state actors—Armed groups, including groups such as Al-Qaeda or criminal organizations, for example drug cartels.

5. Religious Groups—Quakers and other religious sects are quite active in their international advocacy efforts. They have in part founded other non-state actors such as Amnesty International, Greenpeace, and OXFAM.
6. Transnational Diaspora communities—Ethnic or national communities that try to influence their original and current territories.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this paper cannot claim to have exhausted the discussion on Potentials and challenges of civil society in an increasingly globalized world, but at least we able to examine and analyze the concept of global civil society, its definition, theories, models, as well as the potential it has on world politics and dangers that global civil society is likely to face in the pursuit of its goals, we have also been able to briefly explain what Non state actors are and their types. Although its proportions can be overstated, global civil society has become an important feature of contemporary world politics. As elaborated earlier, civic engagement with supraterritorial spaces has featured in the emergence of profound governance, in some privatization of regulation, and in redrawing the forms of collective identities, citizenship and democracy. In the process, civic associations have revealed significant potentials both to enhance and to undermine security and justice in the globalizing world. On the other hand, it would seem a reasonable assumption that transborder civic activity is unlikely to disappear and quite likely to expand in the future, we need to consider how its further development can be kept on the most positive possible course; consequently, five general suggestions might be offered in this regard.

First, as stated earlier, much attention needs to be given to *building capacity*, particularly in respect of global civic groups that represent underprivileged circles. Partly this is a question of increasing funds, in order to relieve the precarious position of many worthy civic associations. However, money is not by itself sufficient. After all, small budgets have not prevented, for example, women's groups from making a major impact on official agendas and public attitudes. Capacity building needs to be carefully targeted, *inter alia* at staff training in advocacy tactics, public speaking, cross-cultural communication, and leadership skills. In addition, civic associations need to develop modes of organization that most effectively inform and mobilize their constituencies and at the same time most successfully advance their policy goals *vis-à-vis* governance and market actors. Where civic groups currently lack global communications technologies, acquisition of these tools should have a high priority. Secondly, increased efforts could be directed at *expanding involvement* in global civil society. Transborder civic activism would better realize the various potential benefits detailed earlier if the campaigns could attract larger followers and higher profiles than most associations have acquired thus far. Greater emphasis on outreach initiatives to the general public would help



especially to advance the promise of global civil society in respect of civic education and the development of supraterritorial citizenship.

Third, the future development of global civil society should focus on *enhancing diversity*. As stressed at the close of the last section, transborder civic activism has to date been insufficiently representative. Existing efforts to expand access for women and people of diverse colours or races should continue, and they should be supplemented by greater attempts to involve rural circles, under classes and non-western cultures. Otherwise global civil society runs grave dangers of serving as an instrument of social inequality. Fourth, other potential shortfalls in democratic practice noted earlier suggest a need for *increasing vigilance* in respect of global civil society. This is not to support intrusive police-state surveillance of transborder civic groups, though democratic governance institutions have as much right and duty to monitor civic associations and vice versa. In addition, civil society workers can be urged to nurture a more self critical attitude toward their practices, thereby catching and correcting their own democratic deficits. At present most civic associations lack a programme of regular and systematic evaluation, conducted either internally or by external assessors (other than financial auditors).

Finally, for political as well as intellectual reasons, the future development of global civil society would be advanced by further research. In part, such investigations need to examine the general dynamics of globalization, in order that transborder civic groups (and others) can better understand the context in which they are operating. In addition, much more research is required on global civil society itself, especially empirical studies that assess the experiences of concrete associations and campaigns. Particular attention could be given in this regard to providing more marginalized circles of civil society with resources to undertake or commission research that addresses their agendas. These five suggestions reinforced the theme, expressed throughout this discussion, that global civil society *can* be a force for security and justice in the contemporary world if it is carefully molded to serve those ends. Transborder civic associations have great potential to help steer globalization toward efficiency, equity, democracy and ecological sustainability. However, complacency about these activities could lead them to promote the opposite results. A long haul of committed efforts still lies ahead.

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