

Review of Salient Versions of the Global Civil Society Emergence

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Abstract

This paper presents the historical, global and political factors that contributed to the emergence of civil society as different and independent of the state and market sectors. Specifically, the paper presents the various debates and scholarly views on the emergence of civil society and illustrates the major factors that contributed to its emergence in international and academic communities. Particularly, Mary Kaldor's four-versions of the emergence of civil society are adopted in this paper because they present a systematic conceptualization of the term – identifying key theorists, global economic and political conditions as well as social actions that popularized the concept of civil society in the academia and global discourse. The paper aims to provide an understanding of the meaning of civil society and the space for debating the credence of its relevance in international development.

Keywords: Civil Society, Classical Ideology, Neoliberal ideology, Postmodern Ideology, Activist Ideology

Introduction

Over the years there have been debates amongst scholars in the conceptualization of Civil Society. Ottaway (2008) commented that the term is laden with theoretical assumptions, unsolved problems and value judgments. For Seligman (1992) and Ehremberg (1999) the universal appeal of the civil society label is inherent with ambiguity of the underlying concept. This ambiguity enables various authors to use the concept as a hook on which to hang their own favourite ideologies. Yet what is interesting about the term is that despite these controversies, ambiguities and difficulties in understanding its real context, it has gained widespread popularity especially in international and political discourses. This interest has given rise to the various literature that make efforts to explain its content and contexts – whether it connotes a certain social structure, mode of behavior or political ideology? Kaldor (2003) noted that various factors have encouraged the usage of the term in the international community, such as concern for individual autonomy, self-organization, private space – which became important in Eastern Europe and elsewhere in the world, as a way of replacing unfavourable government; and the growing need for networking and creation of a global movement for democracy, economic development and social welfare. To present a less ambiguous conceptualization of civil society, Kaldor (2003) presented four versions which describe how civil society emerged as a conceptual issue in intellectual and international discourse.

Four of the five versions of civil society conceptualization postulated by Kaldor (2003) are adopted in this paper because they reflect various perspectives on civil society scholarship. These versions were original connotations given by classical theorists such as Hobbes, Locke, Hegel, Marx, Gramsci - on what constitute social order and growth in the society. These versions include are – the classical version, activist version, neoliberal version and the post-modernist version. The Classical version reviews the various perspectives of prominent classical theorists on the development of the society and the inception of civil society scholarship; the Activist version as demonstrated in the activist movements at the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union; the neo-liberal version as explained in the utilization of non-governmental and non-profit organizations in pursuit of neo-liberal agenda abroad; and the postmodernists versions as depicted in the struggle for economic autonomy from neo-imperialist hold. These versions of the emergence and conceptualization of civil society as third sector of society are discussed below.

The Emergence of Civil Society in International Discourse

1. The Classical Version

According to Kaldor et al. (2001) the origin of the concept of civil society can be traced back to the theories of early thinkers such as Thomas Hobbes and John Locke. For Hobbes and Locke, there was no distinction between state and the civil society. Civil Society was a type of state characterized by a social contract – where the ruled and the ruler enter into a special agreement that is expected to stabilize the polity and society. The ruler was expected to provide the ruled with the needed social security and welfare, while the ruled were expected to show a sense of loyalty and reverence to the authority of the ruler. At this time, civil society was a state governed by prescribed law - the law checks and balances social relations and as such members of the society become subject to the rule of law. This ideology was what facilitated the social contract entered by the members of the society and which enabled social order.

This notion of civil society changed in the nineteenth century with the writings of Hegel, who for the first-time distinguished civil society from the state. According to Hegel quoted by Comaroff (1990:3), “ Civil Society is the achievement of the modern world; the territory of mediation where there is free play for every idiosyncrasy, every talent, every accident of Birth and fortune and where waves of passion gust forth, regulated only by reason glinting through them”. Hegel’s definition of the meaning of civil society is expressed by Kaldor et al (2001) as the intermediate realm between the family and the state, where the individual becomes a public person and through membership in various institutions is able to reconcile the particular and the universal. For Hegel (1991) cited in Kaldor (2001), civil society is the negation of the abstract ethical moment of the family. He noted that:

“In civil society, each individual is his own end, and all else means nothing to him. But he cannot accomplish the full extent of his ends without reference to others; these others are therefore means to the end of the particular. But through its reference to others, the particular end takes on the form of universality, and gains satisfaction by simultaneously satisfying the welfare of others.” (Hegel 1991: 220 cited in Kaldor 2001).

In this view, civil society is the reign of political economy as described by Adam Smith, where people are in competition with each other for scarce resources and every man struggle for his own self-interests (Kaldor 2001). Therefore, in pursuing his own private interest, the individual comes to realize, however, that he is not in isolation, that in order to make his own interest known he has to interact and collaborate with others (e.g. through commerce or the division of labour). In this way, he starts changing his own individuality and recognizing himself as part of a whole. The essence of this change is accomplished when the individual identifies with the state which is played by the corporations – which are associations officially recognized by the state but not a part of the political state (Hegel 1991:454 cited in Kaldor 2001). Hegel argued that the corporations begins the process of identifying the boundary between the state and public space; internalizes the objectives and private goals in members, thus making them conscious of their commonness. In other words, the corporations initiate the principles of solidarity among members of the society - a process which according to Hegel will be completed and perfected by the state (ibid). This view has been particularly criticized of Hegel’s work (Krishna 1993). Krishna observed that Hegel was criticized on the ground of conceptual ambiguity and his inaptitude to separate civil society from political society in his postulations (Krishna 1993:375). From this perspective, Ottaway (2008) argued that in as much as political society and civil society have a common role – to ensure democratization, both have distinct interest in pursuing this course. Whereas civil society aims to influence governmental policies to favour public interest; political society aims only to control government and power.

She further argues that separating civil society from political society will ascertain the actual mission of civil society organizations in the society (Ottaway 2008: 167-168).

Moreover, Ottaway (2008:168) argued that Hegel's perspective generated conceptual confusion by his definition of civil society comprising of all voluntary associations between the family and state, which insinuates inclusion of uncivil groups like terrorist organizations. She argued that in practice, the word civil society is often used to indicate organizations that share certain positive civil values (ibid). Hence, Ottaway noted that the shortcomings in Hegel's definition and conceptualization of civil society have encouraged limited usage of his postulation by scholars and civil society practitioners in recent times. Notwithstanding this criticism, Krishna (1993) argued that the contributions of Hegel gave rise to the modern liberal views of civil society as an economic sphere and gave birth to the ideologies of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels who conceived civil society as a market society or what they referred to as 'a theatre of history' in their own melodramatic words. The characteristic of this line of thinking is the idea that society has a life of its own, independent and even prior to political organizations, as Taylor (1990:88) have argued – "society is composed of a self-standing sphere of pre-political activities, mostly of economic nature, with its intrinsic laws of functioning and transformation." This means that within civil society is the superstructure reflecting power struggles and relations of production.

Marx's view of civil society was rather complex. He viewed civil society as an economic sphere where the exploitation of the majority without property by the minority with properties took place (Taylor 1990). Marx did not agree with Hegel that the state had the capacity to free civil society from its inner antagonisms. On the contrary, he argued that the state reinforced antagonism in social relations characterizing the civil society (Taylor 1990:89). From this view, Marx's theory of civil society turned the work of both Locke and Hegel and developed a powerful critique of their postulations of civil society by depicting civil society as the reign of inequality, exploitation, and un-freedom (ibid). For Marx, it is within civil society that the expected societal reformation - which is preceded by a class struggle between the two notable social classes- the bourgeoisie and proletariat - will be achieved. Thus, he conceived civil society as the economic base where the mode of production, relations of production and division of labour takes place. The relations of production are the super-structure which gives rise to productive forces in the society that conflict. The aftermath of this conflict is a transformation of the superstructure and the base and the ushering in of Communism which engenders social equality enshrined in principle and practice. Within this regime, civil society could become a productive sector to ensure wellbeing of the masses (Krishna 1993).

This notion of civil society narrowed again in the twentieth century when civil society became construed as a realm not just between the state and family, but occupying the space outside the market, state and family (Ehrenberg 1999). In other words, it turned out to be regarded as a realm of culture, ideology and political debate. The Italian Marxist – Antonio Gramsci was most associated with this principal shift. Ehrenberg (1999) noted that Gramsci was preoccupied with the question of why communism became effective in Russia as compared to Italy where it was completely ruled out. Gramsci found out that the major factor for this transformation in Russia was the power of mass movements and associations, in other word, the strength of the civil society sector (ibid). Krishna (1993) observed that Gramsci discovered that in Russia there was a reciprocal relationship between state and society, such that when the state quavered, a sturdy structure of civil society was at once revealed. In Krishna's view, Gramsci articulated a concept of civil society that differentiated it from both the economy and the state, what later became known as his 'Three-fold Society Concept'.

In Gramsci's version of a threefold society (which includes the state, market and civil society), culture played an important role in providing societal cohesion and continuity in the event of societal chaos triggered by the failure of both an undemocratic state and a totalitarian economy (Ehrenberg 1999). However, Gramsci, an independent Marxist scholar, could not fully articulate the nature of and an independent role for civil society and had a difficult time freeing it from being an instrument of State politics (Krishna 1993). However, this problem was ingeniously resolved by another German philosopher Rudolf Steiner, who resolved the problems inherent in Gramsci's concept of the three-fold society concept and which found significance in modern day discussions of civil society (Perlas 2001). Perlas noted that Steiner made the important observation that culture which instituted the basic arguments raised by Gramsci's should be considered independent from the economy and state, even if functionally related to both (ibid). Steiner demonstrated that culture actually provided the creative scope for both the economy and the state, but must be separated from them (ibid). Perlas's ideas found widespread acceptance in an Europe devastated by the First World War (ibid).

However, the consequential inflation after the First World War in Germany hindered practical efforts by Steiner and his colleagues in bringing the threefold society (with an active and independent cultural sphere) to a reality (ibid). With the domination of both the State and the market economy after the Second World War and their partnership in controlling nations, any further attempts in the conceptualization of civil society was discarded. However, the resulting dictatorship of states and global economies triggered the re-emergence of civil society as a focal point for the articulation of peoples' agenda and concerns across Asia, Eastern Europe, Latin America, and Africa (Kaldor et al 2001). From this resurgence, the conceptualization of civil society took other dimensions – hence other perspectives on the concept started manifesting.

2. The Activist Version

According to Kaldor (2005:8) “the activist perspective is probably closest to the version of civil society that emerged from the opposition in central Europe in the 1970s and 1980s”. It is sometimes referred to as post-Marxist or utopian version of civil society. The breakdown of the socialist states in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe marked the uprising turmoil in the developing world and increased agitation for a more democratic government in this part of the world. Most developing countries hitherto were prevalent of authoritarian, militaristic and despotic leaders. Widespread call for just and fair government motivated social movements which aimed at challenging the rule of one-party, one-man and militaristic government, leading to regime transition and introduction of multi-party and party elections. The surge of this political cataclysm inspired the instances for the emergence of civil society as anti-state force and as well created space for academic research and studies of social movements and their viability in encouraging democratic structure and maximizing democracy level in Africa. Goody (2003:153) noted that “in the activism perspective, civil society is attached to the notion of civil liberties – of human rights embodied in formulae such as ‘liberte, egalite or fraternite’. Membership is by share solidarity to achieve a common goal. Keck and Sikkink (2003:200) noted that “members are primarily motivated by shared principled ideas or values’, engaging in the ‘voluntary, reciprocal, and horizontal exchange of information and service”. For them, it is the organization around shared values that distinguishes the activist perspective from other strands of civil society definitions. The essence of this activism is to create self-organizations existing outside formal political circles, where citizens can influence their social conditions directly through self-initiated organizations and political pressure (Kaldor 2005). This activism at the transnational level refers to all forms of civil /social movements and advocacy networks through which campaigns for a common cause can be brought forward to the international community.

The activist perspective further grew in the 1990s with the emergence of transnational networks of activists who came together on particular issues – Environmental changes, Human rights, HIV/AIDS, Corporate Responsibility, and made significant impact on strengthening processes of global governance especially in the humanitarian field (Kaldor 2003). During this time scope, the activist perspective became construed as ‘People Power Movement’, which is social movement that involves organized, collective and sustained attempts to promote social change that occur partially or entirely outside conventional politics. This change can occur through violent or non-violent means. According to Schock (2008:188), the violent methods include armed attacks, bombings, terrorism, kidnapping, imprisonment and torture, while non-violent methods include active process of bringing political, economic, social, emotional or moral pressure to bear in the wielding of power in contentious interactions between collective actors. However, Schock stressed that generally, people power movements rely mostly on non-violent movements or institutional methods of political action in their struggles against oppression and injustice. The essential parts of this version of civil society is the ability of the organizations to mobilize large number of people to participate in their various forms of protests and campaigns against undemocratic rulers– what Putnam (1993) referred to as ‘Social Capital’ and their ability to provide social services to the suffering masses (Schock 2008:189).

In another way, Ottaway construed the Activist notion of civil society as “a form of Traditional Civil Society which is organized more informally, often through networks and follow patterns that existed in earlier times – such as from colonialist movements” (cited in Burnell & Randall, 2005:171). They grow in new directions of contemporary needs of the people. This form of civil society lack formal organization, have less specialization and unlikely to have professional organizers. She noted that in countries where the state is weak, the traditional civil society becomes strong to provide social services and welfare to the people in the event of state incapacitation. Examples are drawn from some poverty stricken and war-torn countries of Africa, where food supplies and health/medication services were provided to the people in the absence of any structured or organized government or in the event of a state collapse or ineffectiveness.

However, over the years, democratic erosion and flexibility prompted donors to create a platform for revitalizing and engaging more of civil society involvement in maintaining democracy – hence the introduction of professionalized civil society groups called NGOs – Non-Governmental Organizations. This is discussed in the next version.

3. The Neoliberal Version

The Neo-liberal version of Civil society grew in the late 1980s and early 1990s and came with the western agenda for global market reform and pluralistic scheme for activating civil society movements in the East and South, to foster campaigns for parliamentary democracy. According to Kaldor (2003:9), “this version of civil society might be described as laissez-faire politics, a kind of market in politics”. Kaldor observed that in this context, “civil society consists of associational life – a non-profit and voluntary segment - what principally are now referred to as the “third-sector” – that not only bring under control state power, but also provide an alternative for many of the functions performed by the state” (ibid). Because of the non-existence of a global state, an army of NGOs (Non-governmental Organizations) perform the functions necessary to set a straight path for economic globalization.

The inclusion of the non-governmental organization (NGOs) in this version of civil society definition portrays them as agents propagating the neo-liberal agenda of facilitating democratic governance in their nations. Kaldor noted that the emergence of the neo-liberal view is as a result of social movements hitherto formed within the national framework to advocate for social in the event of weak state structure; however, in the 1990s, these movements became structured, organized and professionalized by the multilateral donor agencies to handle socio-economic and political issues that the state could not handle. According to Etzioni (1961) and Salmon and Anheier (1996), the neoliberal version is much associated with ideas about the ‘third sector’ or the ‘non-profit sector’ that developed in the US in the 1970s and 1980s. They noted that the idea is that, in the U.S, there is a group of organizations that are neither controlled by the state nor the market, but which play an essential role in facilitating the operation of both. This concept owes much to the Tocquevillian emphasis on ‘associationalism’ and is linked to neo-liberal ideas about minimizing the role of the state. In this Version NGOs, non-profit organizations (NPOs), charities and voluntary associations were viewed as being more flexible and innovative than the state. They can substitute for the state, in providing social services, for example; they can check state abuses and poor governmental practices – including corruption; and they can call multi-national corporations to order (Kaldor 2003). It is assumed that it is this version that was taken up by the international donors in the early 1990s (Obadare 2006). Civil society was fostered as mitigation against the shocks associated with the failure of structural adjustment programme in the developing countries of Africa; to provide socio-economic security, for example, in the absence of state provision of public services they acted as alternatives; and to foster democracy. It was hoped that Civil Society could correct all these limitations of the state.

Moreover, Abbott and Polland (2004) noted that with the challenging effects of the so-called Third-World debt crisis since the early 1980s and the collapse of socialism in 1989 - the neo-liberal version of the civil society was borne out of the western economic policies and agenda which they imposed on countries across the developing world by the IMF, the World Bank and its regional offshoots and the donor agencies alike. The progressive liberalization of markets since 1995 through negotiated trade rules among member states of the WTO has effectively enshrined neo-liberal ideas within a new (notwithstanding oppositions) framework of international law, while neo-liberal discourses on economic growth, efficiency, reform and governance emerging from World Development Reports have come to dominate development thinking (ibid). Lavalette and Ferguson (2007), Burnell (2008) acknowledged that this achievement had been heralded by the interplay between internal and external factors that have come to be significant in global politics. External factors include persuasions and various kinds of Western interference such as the involvement of the UN in ensuring democratic rule in the developing world. The UNDP has been the substantial tool for their democratic projects abroad. Also, regional organizations have facilitated the spread of democratic values, principles and practices in member countries. In Africa there is the NEPAD, which have been viable in the mobilization of projects and programmes for further democratization of member states. Internal factors include formation of strong opposing groups who are supported externally to facilitate democracy in states where despotic rules thrived. The western world ensured this through the following approaches:

1. Imposing economic sanctions on governments who refuse to comply with the mission of democratization
2. Provision of needed assistance in form of technology, finances, materials, symbolic supports of democratic projects and programmes in these countries namely – democracy Assistance which they do with professionalized NGOs in these countries
3. The third approach according to them is rare but includes the use of violence or armed forces to impose democratic rule in a particular country that resist democracy (Burnell 2008:281-283)

4. The Post-Modernist Version

This version of civil society conceptualization emerged to query the neo-liberal version on the grounds of authenticity and genuineness of their social justice, humanitarian and economic development campaigns in the developing world. Most of the views propounded lay emphasis on the influence of globalization on the developing economies, which instituted hegemonic control of global market economy and institutions by the advanced nations. Following this perspective, an argument was raised by postmodernist civil society proponents, which is of immense importance in this discourse, that globalization reduced the ability of the nation state to make economic and political decisions without facing dictates from international institutions like the World Bank, IMF and UN, etc. On this note, Evans (1997) argues that the global spread of the doctrine of neo-liberalism has everywhere reduced government ability to shape or protect their economies from the harsh forces of globalization. This has been noticed in the various deregulations that have restricted government from having political and economic autonomy over the last two decades.

With the end of cold war and the collapse of socialism in East Europe, a terrain for free market economy was opened. The collapse of the Soviet Union encouraged the unified countries of the USSR to develop trust and reliance on the neo-liberal ideology of economic openness for international or cross-border trade, which was intended to re-vitalize their devastated economies (Evans 1997). This revolutionized the neo-liberal agenda of global capitalism, both in principle and practice and triggered off various academic explorations on the issue (Evans 1997). Berger (2000) observed that the principal factor responsible for this revolution is the global acceptance of the failure of socialism engendered by the philosophy of capitalist economy paraded and advocated by the United State. According to Berger (2000) the U.S contributed by placing their country on a paramount position and unchallenged dominance in the global financial and trade institutions. Hence they are able to push for a rapid end to capital control across the world and making the International Monetary Fund and World Bank assistance conditional on the acceptance of the recipient countries to limit the role of government in the global market. From this perspective, the free market indoctrination in the global economic scene is far from reflecting the expectations of re-vitalizing the slouched economies of the divided countries of the USSR and elsewhere in the world, but is driven by covert politics of global control by the United States (Berger 2000). This argument purportedly encouraged revolted views on the authenticity of the neo-liberal mission in the developing world.

Another issue of importance in this discourse is the velocity at which the legitimacy of the central government has declined leading to a decline in citizen's reliance on national authority/government. Post-Modernist proponents argue that the democratic propaganda and free market ideology spread by the advanced industrial countries provided grounds for popular rejection of unfavorable government, giving space for the spread of the neo-liberal agenda abroad (Berger 2000). This perspective explains the emergence of NGOs as alternatives to unresponsive governments for advancing democracy and development agenda in the developing world (Kaldor et al. 2001). Following this perspective, Lavalette and Ferguson (2007) noted that the proliferation of NGOs across the globe is as a result of neo-liberal agenda of enhancing control and precedence on global matters. They stressed that neo-liberal politics of selection and operation in the developing world reveals the underlying suspicion that global society is a neo-imperialist ideology initiated by the western world to consolidate their hegemonic hold on the global economic and political institutions. Lavalette and Ferguson (2007) criticized the *romanticization* of the concept of civil society in recent times by the neo-liberal theorists and questioned the essence of the "philanthropic agenda" of the donor agencies who they argued are neo-imperialist organizations that facilitate hidden agenda in their development and democracy campaigns abroad. They went forward to question the "genuineness" and moral implications of their assistance in the developing countries of the south and east – and why these countries are forever dependent on their support, after much funding have been expended in addressing their problems? (Lavalette and Ferguson 2007). They also questioned the accountability of these NGOs and the genuine content of their existence and ability to attain set goals and targets in their countries of domain. Also the question of the continued absence of a forum for accountability to the people by these NGOs who claim to work for them, still lingers. Hence, there is the pertinent question of their importance (ibid).

According to Howell and Pearce (2001:111-119), there are insidious politics inherent in the instrumentalization of NGOs by donors and world institutions in their economic and development campaigns abroad. These are summarized under the following headings:

a) ***Politics of Definition and Choice***

The authors argued that the donor agencies define the NGOs they work with based on established interests, themes, goals and targets; thereby limiting the number of NGOs they work with in the developing world. The definition given to civil society by these donor agencies is usually based on their selective strategies. This limits prospects of working with reliable and genuine service delivery NGOs on the long run.

b) ***Politics of Partnership***

The authors argued that the assumption that the partnership between the state, civil society, market and donor agencies is complementary is actually a fallacy. This assumption conceals the actual agenda of the partnership. This assumption enabled a favorable environment for marketing strategies of multi-national corporations (belonging to the donor community) who aim to advance the sale of their products abroad not considering the consequences of such strategies for example – the environmental degradation inherited from crude oil production in some oil rich countries of the developing world. Many critics of the partnership assumption still question the equality of the partnership and the benefits inclusive.

c) ***Instrumentalization***

According to Howard and Pearce (2001), donor agencies operationalized CSOs by turning them into instruments for forging their imperialist agenda in the less developed countries of the world. In order to achieve this purpose, the donor agencies saddle themselves with the task of building capacity of these CSOs through training, initiating projects and programmes that suit this agenda and which further consolidate their hegemonic hold on their economic base. Careful observation of this fact shows that donors expend more of their resources on countries of interest to them.

d) ***Politics of Universality***

Howard and Pearce observed that the principle of the universality of Civil Society as propagated by the Donor agencies has proved questionable. For instance, there are the recent issues of bringing CSOs to the grass-root level and the vital question of the efforts made so far by the donor agencies in ensuring this. This notion is grounded on the fact that donors leave grass-root level matters to clan and kinship groups and consider them as traditional, uncivilized and anti-modernity. They consider them outside their focus, when actually in principle; kinship groups and clans are the bedrock of grass-root level associations. This argument explains the continued failure of their projects in most developing countries. And also question the actual universality of the phenomenon in practice.

e) ***Politics of Autonomy and Dependence***

According to the authors, the donor agencies have so streamlined the functioning of NGOs and their services abroad to consolidate continual dependence of these NGOs on their supports. Continual dependence entails working under their authorities, dictates, interests and goals. This limits the capacity of these NGOs to effectively initiate development strategies for outstanding impacts in their countries of domain. Dependence infringes on privacy, decisions, and initiatives and thus reduces autonomy.

Conclusion

The paper has particularly enabled appreciation of civil society as the third sector of the society, especially from the various versions of its emergence. The conceptualization of civil society from the classical theorists' view enabled an understanding of the sphere which civil society organizations could operate independent of state interference. This view according to available literature had motivated the activist context of civil society – which depicts the struggle of civil society groups against unsatisfied government and prompted the engagement of civil society actors in transnational networks. This engagement as we saw, established grounds for the formation of local civil society organizations in most developing countries in addressing challenges to development and democratization in their separate counties. From this perspective, civil society organizations is construed to assume development and democratization functions like service delivery and advocacy for the poor and marginalized through the support of neoliberal institutions and international aid organizations. Within this scope, the role of Civil Society Organizations as development facilitators becomes explicit and appreciated.

The neo-liberalist's version explained the proliferation of NGOs in the developing world through neo-liberal agenda of democratizing totalitarian governments in the developing world and explained the conditions that fostered the popularity of secular NGOs in academic and international discourses in the past decades. However, in analyzing the context of the proliferation of NGOs especially in the third world, the postmodernist view went ahead to point out the various challenges in the agenda of the neoliberal view of NGOization of the developing world. By doing this, the postmodernist version provided a space for debating the pragmatism of the secular content that dominates the perception of civil society organizations and queries the genuine content of the proliferation of southern NGOs by advanced economies. The argument being that the west may have promoted proliferation of civil society as tools for consolidating their imperial interest in the south. The scholars advancing this argument assert that the so-called international development/ multilateral agencies use global economic forces through their NGOization agenda to ensure that the developing economies still remains dependent on their political and economic slavery.

These versions of civil society provide grounds for studying the third sector in society, and the various debates that would emanate in the discourse of global civil society and its relevance in the society. Nonetheless, the various debates continue to provide further space for deliberation on the role of civil society as the third sector of society, especially in understanding the importance of civil society organizations in the development of the third world countries.

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