

Civil Society

The concept of civil society originates in Cicero's notion of *societas civilis*, itself a development of Aristotle's idea of *koinonia politike* (political community). The contemporary use of the term can be directly linked to modern European thought and refers to a "dense network of groups, communities, networks, and ties that stand between the individual and the modern state" (Kenny 2007). It is commonly understood as the "third sector" of society, distinct from the state and market. According to the World Health Organization, civil society refers to the arena of collective action around common interests, purposes and values. Although its institutional forms are normally described as distinct from those of the state, family and market, the boundaries between state, civil society, family and market are always blurred and negotiated. Civil society includes different spaces, actors and institutional forms, "varying in their degree of formality, autonomy and power. Civil societies are often populated by organizations such as registered charities, development nongovernmental organizations, community groups, women's organizations, faith-based organizations, professional associations, trade unions, self-help groups, social movements, business associations, coalitions and advocacy groups" (WHO 2007). The United Nations (UN) considers partnerships with civil society crucial for advancing the organization's ideals and helping to support its work (www.un.org). The UN view reflects a general attitude in the humanitarian sector to use the notion of civil society in a vague sense and, at the same time, as a means to implement grounded interventions via local partners.

The "third sector" has grown rapidly since the 1990s. What many defined as the "global associational revolution" of the aid industry was linked to at least three main elements: a widespread crisis of the state in providing welfare and protection, the growth in number and scale of organized private and voluntary actors (also stimulated by new information and communication possibilities), and the impact of neoliberalism (Salamon et al. 1999). Notwithstanding this rapid growth and the consolidation of the idea of a "global civil society," the very notion of civil society continues to bear a certain degree of ambiguity and remains open to questions regarding its proper definition and the different ways in which it has been applied in various times and places (Foley and Edwards 1996). Civil society has been used, for example, to promote political and economic transition in former communist countries as well as to promote democracy and human rights in fragile states (Roy 2005). Critiques also emphasize the ways in which global civil society increasingly "represents a retreat from universal rights and reinforces official donor government policies disciplining populations" (Pupavac 2005: 45).

Another key question is whether it makes sense to distinguish “civil” from “political” society. Different groups in civil society, from interest groups to religious organizations, are constantly mobilized for political goals. A rigid distinction between political and civil groups can be misleading. Therefore, the notion of civil society is intrinsically ambivalent as it does not make it clear when the “civil” becomes the “political” (Foley and Edwards 1996).

Beyond semantics, some see civil society, or global civil society, as a humanitarian actor itself, which is essential in order to claim a right to humanitarian assistance (Miglinaitė 2015), while others remain skeptical about the universalistic nature of the term and its propensity to make the roles, capacity, and intentions of different social groups, organizations, and other collectivities involved in humanitarian settings less evident.

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Civil–military Cooperation

Since the 1990s, military operations and warfare organization have become increasingly bureaucratized. This shift is associated with the changing objectives of and expectations from military interventions, in terms of the desired political order, state-building, civil society formation, and so on. The new era has