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Global Civil Society

"It is not straightforward to transpose the concept of civil society into the concept of global civil society, since... the key to understanding what is new about contemporary meanings is precisely their global character."
Mary Kaldor (2003, p. 7)

"It is not enough that thought should seek to realize itself; reality itself must also tend towards thought."
Karl Marx ([1844] 1963, p. 54)

From Civil Society to Global Civil Society

WHAT HAPPENS when "civil society" goes international, becomes "global civil society"? Does it change its meaning along with its referent? Are we talking about the same structures and processes in both cases? Is global civil society simply an extension, on the international plane, of the institutions and practices of national civil society – civil society writ large, or global? Or does the move entail a disruption, both conceptually and practically, with (national) civil society as normally understood? Do we need new tools of description and analysis?

It is evident that the concept of global civil society derives from its "parent" concept, civil society. It is also clear that, as in the older term, global civil society mixes descriptive and normative, politics and ethics, history and rhetoric, in almost equal measure, and with something of the same problematic consequences. Then there is the further concept, "globalization", also freighted with several meanings, and – though less clearly or commonly so – also generally serving both as a description of contemporary reality and a certain aspiration for the future.

What is the connection between these three? How is the fate of the one – "civil society" – likely to affect the fate of the other – "global civil society"? Is global civil society an expression of globalization, a realization of its tendencies? Or is it better seen as a response to globalization,

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and in some measure a resistance towards it? It can be both, of course, and in much of the literature that seems to be the way it is portrayed. But it may be helpful, at least initially, to disentangle these two possible ways of seeing the relationship between globalization and global society. That might help us in our assessment of global civil society as a movement and a concept. The primary intention of this piece is conceptual – to distinguish and discuss some of the principal meanings of global civil society in the current literature – but some reference to actual institutions and movements seems relevant and helpful.

To take the original concept of civil society first. It is possible to argue that this has always been global in its connotation, even if not always so expressed. Such an understanding, for instance, is implicit in the Marxist concept, in which the market and economic relations generally have always lain at the heart of civil society under capitalism. Since, for Marx, capitalism was always global in its tendency, civil society too was always inherently global, though for practical purposes of the struggle it might be necessary to suppress that awareness for a later time ("the proletariat of each country must, of course, first of all settle matters with its own bourgeoisie") (1).

There is also a cosmopolitanism and internationalism in some other early concepts of civil society, most notably that associated with such eighteenth-century writers as Kant, Vattel, and Paine (2). For Kant, the freedom gained through membership of a law-governed civil society can only be secured by passage to a higher order, a "federation of peoples'; the original social contract between individuals that created civil society must be repeated at a higher level, so that states as well as individuals are taken out of the "state of nature". Mere "international law", the regu-

(1) Marx and Engels ([1848] 1962a, p. 45). When, in the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels say that the bourgeoisie "creates a world after its own image", they mean that in the literal sense that their activities are global in every dimension, and with respect to every area of life, moral and intellectual as well as material or practical. "The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere. The bourgeoisie has through its exploitation of the world-market given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country [...] In the place of old local and national seclusion and self-sufficiency, we have intercourse in every direction, universal interdependence of nations. And as in material, so in intellectual production. The intellectual creations of individual nations become common property. National one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness become more and more and more impossible, and from the numerous national and local literatures, there arises a world literature" (1962, pp. 37-38). In this mixture of admiration and repulsion for the achievements of the bourgeoisie, we get a foretaste of the conflicting attitudes, born of the conflicting tendencies that go towards its shaping, that are held towards "global civil society" today. For a fascinating account of the global influence and history of the Manifesto itself, see Puchner 2006, p. 11-66.

(2) See the helpful accounts in Archibugi 1992; Mazlish 1998; Rosenfeld 2002; Fine and Cohen 2002.

lation of belligerent international relations, must be replaced by a "cosmopolitan law" (*das Recht der Weltbürger*), a global legal order, overseen by a "global public sphere", that replicates the principles established within individual states, and makes both individuals and states "citizens of a universal state" (3). Such a conception, in the absence of a supranational supervisory authority, has its problems, as Habermas among others shows. But Habermas also argues that, shorn of its eighteenth-century presuppositions, such a conception of cosmopolitan law, "appropriately reformulated for contemporary conditions", might today find support from a variety of contemporary developments.

> The requisite revision of Kant's basic conceptual framework is made easier by the fact that the cosmopolitan idea has not remained fixed: ever since President Wilson's initiative and the founding of the League of Nations, it has been repeatedly taken up and implemented at political level. Since the end of the Second World War, the idea of perpetual peace has taken on more tangible form in the institutions, declarations, and policies of the UN (as well as those of other international organizations). The challenge posed by the unprecedented catastrophes of the twentieth century has also given new impetus to Kant's idea. Against this somber background, the World Spirit, as Hegel would have put it, has lurched forward. (Habermas 1998, p. 178; see also pp. 171-172) (4).

(3) Kant's proposal for "perpetual peace" seems to envisage a hierarchy of rights, starting with "the *civil right* of individuals within a nation (*ius civitatis*)", moving up to the "*international right* of states in their relationships with one another *(ius gentium*)", and culminating in "*cosmopolitan right*, in so far as individuals and states, coexisting in an external relationship of mutual influences, may be regarded as citizens of a universal state of mankind (*ius cosmopoliticum*)": Kant ([1795] 1991, pp. 98-9). There is, however, as Habermas points out, no provision for an authority to supervise and enforce these rights; Kant places his faith in the rationally-understood self-interest of citizens in "constitutional republics". But Kant himself seems to recognize that this is but a second-best, temporary solution, one suited to the times but always precarious precisely because of the lack of an overarching public authority: "There is only one rational way in which states coexisting with other states can merge from the lawless condition of pure warfare. Just like individual men, they must renounce their savage and lawless freedom, adapt themselves to public coercive laws, and thus form an *international state* (*civitas gentium*), which would necessarily continue to grow until it embraced all the peoples of the earth. But since this is not the will of nations, according to their presemt conception of international right (so that they reject *in hypothesi* what is true *in thesi*), the positive idea of a *world republic* cannot be realized. If all is not to be lost, this can at best find a negative substitute in the shape of an enduring and gradually expanding *federation* likely to prevent war. The latter may check the current of man's inclination to defy the law and antagonize his fellows, although there will always be risk of it bursting forth anew" (Kant 1991, p. 105). Kant was more of a realist, and less of an idealist, than Habermas and others seem to allow.

(4) The concept of a "global public sphere" is Habermas's own gloss on Kant's account of growing public awareness of human rights as a result of the growth in contact and communication across the globe: "The peoples of the earth have thus entered in varying degrees into a universal community, and it has developed to the point where a violation of rights in *one* part of the world is felt *everywhere*" (Kant 1991, pp. 107-108). See also Kaldor (2003, pp. 36-38). Ulrick Beck's "cosmopolitan vision" seems of a like kind: see especially Beck (2006, pp. 45-46).

There are some, such as John Keane, who would wish to make a clear distinction between what they call these older visions of "world civil society" and the newer accounts of "global civil society". Though unconvincing, their reasons are understandable, given the rather sorry history of cosmopolitanism in the century or so following Kant (5). And there is no doubt that civil society lost much of its connection with cosmopolitanism in the nineteenth and for most of the twentieth centuries. This has to do with the fundamental shift, initiated by Hegel, from considering civil society as essentially a species of polity – a law-governed state – to a view, which saw civil society as the organizations and practices standing between the family and the state (6). Civil society came to have a largely domestic connotation. It related to the public sphere *within* states and societies. It lost the eighteenth-century conviction that no citizen was safe in his or her rights, however carefully these were formulated and protected by national constitutions, so long as anarchy and the state of nature prevailed in the relations between states.

Such a history is one source of the difficulties, alluded to by Mary Kaldor (2003, p. 7), of attempting to move in an uncomplicated way from "civil society" to "global civil society". Not only, if one wishes to establish a respectable pedigree, is there the problem of resuscitating a tradition that got largely buried under the rising tide of nationalism. There is also the difficulty of using analytical terms and categories, largely honed in a domestic, nation-state, context, for the analysis of civil society at the global level. From Hegel to Gramsci and beyond, theorists sought to define the nature and operations of a sphere of society where private citizens met in public to debate and discuss matters affecting their collective interest and well-being. It was also a sphere, in the eyes of at least some theorists, where individuals freely engaged in manufactures, trade, and the exchange of services with one another, thereby acquiring qualities no less "civil" than those generated by free public discourse. All this was done largely within the confines of the nation-state, whose sovereignty was indeed seen as one of the guarantees of an effective and thriving civil society.

(5) Keane's main objections to the older concepts of "world civil society" and "international society" have to do with their "governmentality or state-centredness". By contrast "global civil society" – words which "may well sound old-fashioned, but today [...] have an entirely new meaning and significance" – relates to "a non-governmental social sphere" (2003, pp. 20-23). But the non-governmental concept of civil society certainly seems much older than Keane suggests, as his own discussion of Gramsci shows. It may take on a wider significance within the context of global civil society, but the continuities seem undeniable. On the decline of cosmopolitanism in the nineteenth century, see MAZLISH (1998).

(6) This story has been told several times; for good accounts, see KEANE 1988a, 1988c.

A particularly thorny question, coming out of the later civil society tradition, concerns the place of economic institutions and market relations in any concept of civil society, national or global. It seemed natural enough to both Kant and Marx, in their different ways, to include economic activities in their idea of civil society. For Marx indeed the economy, in its free-floating form, detached from the state and other communal institutions, was the defining essence of civil society; hence his comment that "the anatomy of civil society is to be sought in political economy'' (7). Kant too waxed eloquent on the growth of commerce and industry, but unlike the case with Marx, it was their "civilizing'' qualities that struck him. "The *spirit of commerce* sooner or later takes hold of every people, and it cannot exist side by side with war'' (Kant 1991, p. 114). For Kant, as for many other thinkers of the early-modern period, what Montesquieu called *le doux commerce* – "which softens and polishes barbarian ways'' – was one of the principal ingredients in the life of civil society, both national and internationally. Not only was commerce opposed to war; it stimulated qualities of trust, responsibility, and reciprocity, all qualities vital to a thriving civil society (8).

Hegel also held to the view that the market, and economic life generally, were at the heart of civil society – it was indeed from him that Marx took over his own conception, though characteristically modifying it for his own purposes. But Hegel's account of civil society in the *Philosophy of Right* also stressed the important role of non-economic institutions, such as civic associations, welfare institutions, religious and educational bodies. It was on this wider conception that Gramsci drew in elaborating his own influential account, in which civil society was distinguished not just from the coercive apparatus of the state but also from the economic institutions of society (Bobbio 1988; Kumar 2001, pp. 145-146, 149-150). One consequence of this was to confirm, with even greater force, the national context of the civil society idea. Trade and markets can be and usually are international; not so, or to a far lesser degree, trade unions, schools, churches and clubs.

Gramsci in effect set the terms of a Great Divide in the contemporary literature on civil society. There are those whom Victor Pérez-Díaz calls "generalists'', those who include within their concept of civil society not just markets but a whole range of liberal political institutions. The full-

(7) Marx [1859] 1962b, p. 362. For a further discussion of Marx's concept of civil society, see KUMAR 2001, pp. 144-148; FEMIA 2001.

(8) For the early-modern arguments in favour of trade and commerce, especially as the antidote to the pernicious wars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, see HIRSCHMAN 1977. For the "facilitating inputs'' into the "civil sphere'' supplied by the qualities developed in economic life, see also ALEXANDER 1998; 2006, p. 24-26, 205-207).

blooded generalists, such as Ernest Gellner and Pérez-Díaz himself, see themselves as followers of the Scottish thinkers of the eighteenth century in conceiving civil society as the ideal-typical liberal, commercial society in all its manifestations. More restricted generalists, such as John Keane, fully accept the importance of the market but are concerned to put the stress on non-governmentality: civil society decisively excludes the state (9).

Keane, in his most recent work, inveighs against the neo-Gramscian "civil society purists" who would exclude the market from their concept (2003, p. 75-91; see also Keane 2005). He has in his sights those whom Pérez-Díaz calls "minimalists", and who include theorists such as Andrew Arato, Jean Cohen, and Jeffrey Alexander (10). Their most immediate inspiration is undoubtedly Jürgen Habermas, for whom the Hegelian-Marxist understanding of civil society, proper for its time, is now decidedly outmoded.

> What is meant by "civil society" today, in contrast to its usage in the Marxist tradition, no longer includes the economy as constituted by private law and steered through markets in labor, capital, and commodities. Rather, its institutional core comprises those non-governmental and non-economic connections and voluntary associations that anchor the communication structures of the public sphere in the society component of the lifeworld. (Habermas, 1996, pp. 366-367).

But Keane's more immediate concern is those global civil society theorists such as Helmut Anheier and Mary Kaldor, whom he feels are in danger of repeating the errors of the minimalists in rejecting the role of the market (11). Certainly Anheier seems to be intent on excluding the market:

(9) See Pérez-Díaz 1998, p. 211. For the Scottish Enlightenment view of civil society, see Seligman 1992 and Jensen 2006. Pérez-Díaz characterizes his own "generalist" concept of civil society as follows: "By 'civil society' I mean an ideal type referring to a set of political and social institutions, characterized by limited, responsible government subject to the rule of law, free and open markets, a plurality of voluntary associations and a sphere of free public debate" (1998, p. 220). For Gellner's similar conception, see Gellner 1994. For both Pérez-Díaz and Gellner, "civil society" seems more or less equated with modern liberal society, and it is not clear why they need the concept of civil society at all (since they no longer have to fight the battles of the thinkers of the Scottish Enlightenment). For Keane's more restricted "generalist" view, see Keane 1998, pp. 17-19.

(10) See Cohen and Arato 1992, and, for a thoughtful critique, Hamilton (2003). For the latest statement of his position, see Alexander 2006, esp. pp. 23-36, an updating of his account in Alexander 1998. Keane admits that Alexander cannot be so neatly pigeonholed, though he still insists on his "purism" and his "heavily normative picture of civil society" (Keane 2003, p. 77 n 87).

(11) Though in Kaldor's case at least the ire seems misplaced. See Kaldor 2003, p. 6-14, pp. 44-49. Kaldor seems to veer between the acceptance of markets and distaste for them, though in the final analysis her point is the changing historical context of the civil society idea. At one point she says "for civil society to exist there has to be a relationship with markets, which secure economic autonomy" (2003, p. 11). At the same time she says that, normatively, she is closest to the "activist version" of

> Civil society refers to the set of institutions, organizations, and behaviours situated between the state, the business world, and the family. Specifically, this would include voluntary and non-profit organizations of many different kinds, philanthropic institutions, social and political movements, forms of social participation and engagement, the public sphere and the values and cultural patterns associated with them. (Anheier 2000, p. 17) (12)

Against this Keane urges the formula "no market, no civil society", and argues that "among the principal energizers of global civil society are market forces, or what is here called 'turbo-capitalism'" (Keane 2003, p. 66, 76; cf. Mazlish 2005, p. 8). Turbo-capitalism is capitalism in its global, most dynamic, multi-national, form. If, as Kant held, the "spirit of commerce" was producing a world-wide community, for Keane the more recent stages of the globalization of capital has carried this forward to unprecedented lengths. What this means is that "markets are an intrinsic *empirical feature*, a functionally intertwined prerequisite, of the social relations of actually existing global society", and that "global civil society as we know and experience it could not survive for more than a few days without the market forces unleashed by turbo-capitalism" (Keane 2003, p. 78).

Admittedly Keane immediately adds the caveat "no civil society, no market". Following Karl Polanyi on the "embeddedness" of market relations, Keane argues that capitalism and *a fortiori* global capitalism, depends and has always depended on "*other* civil society institutions, like households, charities, community associations and linguistically shared social norms like friendship, trust and cooperation" (2003, p. 78-79). Here, as is the case with other generalists such as Gellner, one feels the concept of civil society to be stretched almost to the breaking point, such that one is not sure why the theorist does not simply settle for something like "liberal" or "welfare" capitalism and be done with it (cf. Glasius 2005, p. 41). This impression is powerfully reinforced by Keane's

the civil society (and global civil society) idea: one that refers to "active citizenship, to growing self-organization outside formal political circles" and to a "space where non-instrumental communication can take place" (2003, p. 8). Later in the book she suggests that we have to see that there have been historical shifts in the meaning and content of civil society, and that while markets were relevant in the nineteenth-century context they have become decreasingly so in the twentieth and twenty first centuries. Much of this has to do with globalization, so that today "civil society has become trans-national. It remains distinct from profit organizations unless they provide a medium for public pressure but its focus is public affairs not the market" (2003, p. 48). The Habermasian perspective certainly seems dominant here.

(12) And cf. the following definition of global civil society given by Anheier, Kaldor and Glasius (2003, p. 4): "the sphere of ideas, values, organizations, networks, and individuals located primarily outside the institutional complexes of family, market, and state, and beyond the confines of national societies, polities, and economies". See also Anheier, Glasius, and Kaldor (2001). The conceptions of Anheier, Kaldor and their associates at LSE and UCLA are best studied in their co-edited annual yearbooks, *Global Civil Society* (2001-).

alarmingly generous – and verbose – definition of the "ideal-type" of global civil society, which he says properly refers to

> a dynamic non-governmental system of interconnected socio-economic institutions that straddle the whole earth, and that have complex effects that are felt in its four corners. Global civil society is neither a static object nor a *fait accompli*. It is an unfinished project that consists of sometimes thick, sometimes thinly stretched networks, pyramids and hub-and-spoke clusters of socio-economic institutions and actors who organize themselves across borders, with the deliberate aim of drawing the whole world together in new ways. These non-governmental institutions and actors tend to pluralise power and to problematise violence; consequently, their peaceful or "civil" effects are felt everywhere, here and there, far and wide, to and from local areas, through wider regions, to the planetary level itself. (Keane 2003, p. 8)

The saving thing here, presumably, is non-governmentality, and the "civilizing" effects of non-governmental institutions (13). It is this that prevents the simple equation of global civil society with global capitalism or the global liberal state, as conceived in various schemes for world government. The destructive and divisive effects of global capitalism are to be countered, regulated or re-directed by the institutions and agents of global civil society, understood as a plethora of NGOs and INGOs, social movements – including the "anti-globalization movement" – and ideas of human rights and "transnational" citizenship. These will additionally resist or refuse incorporation into state institutions, either at national or international level. Global civil society, like civil society of old, will to an extent erect a "parallel society", though unlike East European conceptions of this term, it will not turn its back on "official" society but will confront it at every turn (14). Indeed, given the range of interactions and involvements of global civil society institutions with national and international governmental institutions envisaged by some theorists – including Keane, who labels the resulting *mélange* "cosmocracy" – it might be better to speak of partnership rather than parallel construction (15). But here we need to turn to the complex relationship between global civil society and globalization.

(13) This is even more apparent in another definition of global civil society given by Keane in the same work: it refers to "nonviolent, legally sanctioned power-sharing arrangements among many different and interconnected forms of socio-economic life that are distinct from government institutions" (2003, p. xi-xii).

(14) A similar conception of civil society – or the "civil sphere" – regulating, monitoring, and cajoling the "noncivil spheres" of the family, state, economy, religion, etc., is to be found in Alexander (2006). For Alexander as for Keane a key role is played in this by social movements, seen as the agents of the necessary process of "civil repair".

(15) "Global civil society", warns Keane, "should not be thought of as the natural enemy of political institutions. The vast mosaic of groups, organizations and initiatives that comprise global civil society are variously related to governmental structures at the local, national, regional and supranational levels" (2003, p. 108). As an example of "public-private partnerships between sectors of global society and governing institutions" he gives the for

Globalization and Global Civil Society

It is said that one form of globalization is compelling evidence for the emergence of global civil society: the globalization of the discourse of civil society itself.

> The globalisation of the concept of civil society is one aspect of the emergent global civil society, for it shows how civil society ideas and languages and institutions are spreading beyond their place of origin into new contexts [...] Not only is talk of civil society now heard world-wide within circles of journalists, lawyers and academics. NGOs, business people, professionals, diplomats and politicians of various persuasions also like to speak the same language [...] Tomorrow's historians may well conclude that the spreading talk of civil society was not just talk. They may highlight the fact that something new was born in the world – the unprecedented (if unevenly distributed) growth of the sense within NGOs and publics at large that civilians live in one world [...]''. (Keane 2003, pp. 35-36; see also Keane 1998, pp. 32-41)

This is undoubtedly a significant phenomenon: language matters. But it is unclear what it signifies. The language of democracy and human rights has also diffused world-wide, but local adaptations and interpretations have been so varied and, it appears, so haphazard that it would be a bold person who identified the word with the thing (see, e.g. Glasius 2007). What one can talk about with some confidence is a common socialization among certain groups of professionals, particularly those involved in NGOs, which has created a common language. There is certainly a global civil society discourse; whether that is the same thing as global civil society, or even a major contribution to it, remains a matter for investigation.

In any case there are many globalizations, many forms and concepts of global society, of which global civil society may be only one, and not necessarily the most powerful or persuasive (Mazlish 2005). Global civil society itself has many guises: Keane notes its "unusual promiscuousness'' (2003, p. xi), a quality of course that characterizes the parent idea of civil society itself. Neither in the one case nor the other does this quality disqualify the concept – what social science concept does not exhibit a like promiscuity? – but it does impose upon us the need to be clear what we are talking about.

mation of the United Nations, which involved extensive consultation with civic groups, who went on to have considerable influence in the drafting of some crucial articles, such as those dealing with human rights, in the UN Charter. On the close relations between some NGOs and their official, governmental, counterparts, see also SCHOLTE 2005, p. 219-229.

Mary Kaldor usefully provides us with five versions of the concept of global civil society, to each of which corresponds an understanding of contemporary globalization (2003, p. 6-12) (16). Two derive from classical or traditional versions of the civil society idea. "*Societas civilis*" is the oldest, and speaks to the concern for the formation of law-based states and societies which have abolished or reduced violence and arbitrary rule. In terms of contemporary concerns, such a Kantian concept views the task as the creation or completion of a cosmopolitan order or world state, strivings towards which are discerned in various developments such as the establishment of an international criminal court and the expansion of international peacekeeping. Proponents of schemes for "cosmopolitan democracy" (e.g. Archibugi and Held 1995), seeking to set an agenda for global constitution-making, would also seem to belong to this tradition. *Per contra*, the absence, so far, of a world state is seen as a sign that global civil society is incomplete or inoperative (Brown 2000).

"Bourgeois society (*Bürgerliche Gesellschaft*)" – a second tradition – is identified with the commercial vision of civil society elaborated by thinkers of the Scottish Enlightenment, such as Adam Smith and Adam Ferguson. Contemporary practitioners would include Ernest Gellner and John Keane. "Transposed to a global level, civil society could be more or less equated with 'globalization from below' – all those aspects of global developments below and beyond the state and international political institutions, including transnational corporations, foreign investment, migration, global culture, etc." (Kaldor 2003, p. 8). Keane's "turbo-capitalism", as the engine of global civil society, belongs here, together with his caveats about the need for restraining and regulating mechanisms.

The remaining three versions of global civil society relate to more contemporary developments, which inflect their meanings in newer ways. The "activist version" – with which Kaldor associates herself (Kaldor 2003, p. 11) – is the heir of the civil society concept as it influentially expressed itself in the dissident movement in East-Central Europe in the 1970s and 1980s. Such a version may or may not include market institutions, but it is generally somewhat critical of market relations, both nationally and globally. Transposed to the global level, its focus is on the Habermasian public sphere of "transnational advocacy networks", such as Greenpeace and Amnesty International, global social movements such as the protestors in Seattle, Prague and Genoa, and human rights and environmentalist activities and philosophies (see also Beck 2006, p. 105-107).

(16) A different but equally interesting mapping is provided by Scholte (2005, p. 13-48).

The "neoliberal version" might be seen as the heir of the "bourgeois society" version, updated to reflect the contemporary forms of capitalist globalization and markedly less critical of its impact on societies. It regards the extension of free trade and minimally regulated economic activities as the best way of promoting civil society, seen as the realm of largely voluntary and private initiatives and activities that in many cases substitute for traditional governmental functions, in such areas as health and welfare. "This definition", says Kaldor (2003, p. 9) "is perhaps the easiest to transpose to the global arena; it is viewed as the political or social counterpart of the process of globalization understood as economic globalization, liberalization, privatization, deregulation and the growing mobility of capital and goods". Such a vision is associated with "end of history" theorists such as Francis Fukuyama and others who see an emerging global civil society in the worldwide triumph of liberal capitalism. Not surprisingly it is targetted as reactionary by several proponents of the activist and other more radical versions of global civil society.

Finally there is "postmodern" global civil society. Consonant with postmodern perspectives it emphasizes plurality and, to a degree, incommensurability. Postmodern views, with their stress on the break-up of traditional attributes of modernity, might seem somewhat inhospitable towards any concept of global civil society. But for many postmodern theorists, such as Zygmunt Bauman (e.g. 1998), globalization is an accelerator of postmodern tendencies. The massive migration of peoples, the interpenetration of cultures, the de-stabilizing of nation-states and other fixtures of modernity by international capital, are all producing a world marked both by fissures and a common understanding and acceptance of difference. Though there is contestation, which can sometimes be fierce and fanatical, there is also a growing common culture promoted by international tourism and travel as well as by the vast increase in communication made possible by the Internet. In the postmodern view, suggests Kaldor (2003, p. 10), "one might talk about a plurality of global civil societies through different globally organized networks", such as global Islam, nationalist Diasporic networks, and human rights networks. Each has its own characteristic emphasis, and conflict and contestation are almost necessarily built into the model, but they are all visions of globality and global civil society.

One of the values of Kaldor's typology is that it helps us to see which versions of global civil society go with the dominant forces of globalization and which, as it were, have to bend those forces to realize their visions. Some versions, in other words, see themselves as flowing with

the tides of history, others see themselves as engaged in a dialogue or perhaps a dispute with contemporary trends, still others appear be standing, Canute-like, against the dominant forces in the interests of a radically different vision of the future world order. None, it appears, can be accused of rampant utopianism, since they all pick on what are evidently real tendencies in the contemporary world. But we can attempt some assessment of the realism of the different versions, and hence comment on the balance of description and prescription that they show.

As Kaldor herself suggests, if there is one version of global civil society that carries undoubted conviction it is the neo-liberal version. This, after all, is not very much more than a description of what is currently going on in the world. Deregulation and privatization are backed and promoted by some of the most powerful forces and agencies in the world, including the multinational corporations, the World Bank, the World Trade Organization, and global powers such as the United States. Such a future is also enthusiastically and influentially promoted by some powerful civil society think-tanks and advocacy groups, such as the American Enterprise Institute, the Cato Institute., and the Heritage Foundation. It generally finds strong expression at such summits of the great and powerful as the Davos World Economic Forum.

One might also mention in this context what one might call the "inflation'' of a supportive civil society by the invention and funding of civil society organizations whose secret agenda is to promote the neo-liberal version of global civil society. So what might appear as splendid examples of a thriving civil society might be no more than "front'' organizations for the promotion of concealed interests whose aims are anything but civil. Thus oil giants such as Exxon, who naturally feel threatened by the agitation about global warming, are warm supporters of such conservative think-tanks as the Cato Institute and the Heritage Foundation. More directly, to counter the thesis of global warming, they have set up such apparently scientific bodies as the "Center for the Study of Carbon Dioxide and Global Change''. They are also major funders of the "Science and Environmental Policy Project'' headed by Frederick Seitz, whose pronouncements are regularly quoted by critics of the global warming thesis (Monbiot 2006a).

More surprisingly is the revelation that the tobacco giant Philip Morris has played a central role in the campaign to discredit the global warming thesis. Unlike the case with oil, tobacco interests might not seem evidently linked to the concern for global warming. But Philip Morris was playing a subtler game. It set up an apparently grassroots citizens' group with the name "The Advancement of Sound Science

Coalition'', and engaged prominent scientists to promote "sound science'' as against "junk science''. Such an outfit was useful not just in attempting to cast doubt on the research linking smoking and cancer but all forms of research – including that which suggested that global warming was occurring and needed urgently to be addressed – that seemed to strike at the interests of the big business corporations (Monbiot 2006b). Civil society organizations, in other words, are not always what they seem to be. They do not necessarily express the beneficial public discussions of an active and disinterested citizenry. As both capitalist and communist – not to mention fascist – states have shown, there are many ways of promoting specific ideologies and interests without attaching clear labels to them. The CIA's covert funding of the intellectual magazine *Encounter* is as good an example as the communists' funding of many "peace movements'' and student organizations throughout the world.

Clearly there are some civil society practices, and the claims that go with them, that we need to go behind. There is, in other words, "good'' civil society and "bad'' civil society, good NGOs and bad NGOs. There are groups and associations that promote the goals of "civility'', of democracy, equality and fair-minded debate, and there are groups and associations that promote almost the opposite, hatred, bigotry and ignorance (Chambers and Kopstein 2001). As Amy Gutmann has put it, "among its members, the Ku Klux Klan may cultivate solidarity and trust, reduce the incentives for opportunism, and develop some 'I's' into a 'we' [...] [but] [...] the associational premises of these solidaristic ties are hatred, degradation, and denigration of fellow citizens and fellow human being'' (Gutmann 1998, p. 6; see also Cohen 1999). *Pace* Robert Putnam and other neo-Tocquevillians, association by itself is not necessarily a good thing (17). Of course this involves taking a stand on

(17) See the illuminating account by Sheri Berman of how "too much civil society'', too active and extensive a degree of "associationism'' in Germany in the 1920s, was partly responsible for the weakness of the Weimar Republic and the success of the Nazis. The failure of German political parties and other political institutions to unify the nation, both before and after 1918, she argues, led many people into private associational activities, which were generally organized within rather than across group boundaries. "The vigor of civil society activities then continued to draw public interest and involvement away from parties and politics, further sapping their strength and significance. Eventually the Nazis seized the opportunities offered by such a situation, offering a unifying appeal and bold solutions to a nation in crisis. The NSDAP drew its critical cadres precisely from among bourgeois civil society activists with few ties to mainstream politics, and it was from the base of bourgeois civil society that the party launched its swift *Machtergreifung*. In short, one cannot understand the rise of the Nazis without an appreciation of the role played by German civil society...'' (Berman 1997, p. 425). See also, for two other historical critiques of the presumed relation between associational life and a healthy democracy, Kaufman (2002) and Hoffmann (2006); a related critique is Li (1999).

values, but it is hard to think of any civil society concept that does not. Put another way, civil society contains both good and bad, and the problem is to distinguish the two in order to promote the good and suppress the bad.

The neoliberal concept of global civil society fails to distinguish at all carefully between neoliberal developments themselves and those attributes of these developments that might further the purposes of civil society. This is a business-as-usual kind of scenario, in which neoliberal capitalism will more or less deliver global civil society, though there will be some rough passages and some frayed edges, where there may have to be some tending and repair. There is something of the same kind in the commercial or "bourgeois society" version of global society. Here the stress on NGOS, on the need to keep one's distance from the state, both link it to and separate this version from the neoliberal one. As in the neoliberal version, the state is seen as problematic. But while the neoliberals are quite happy to use the state to promote privatization and deregulation, and in general in most contemporary societies feel that the state is with them rather than against them, the advocates of "globalization from below", such as Keane, remain highly conscious of the need to keep civil society in the hands of citizens and ordinary people. There will and has to be a degree of partnership with official regulatory and other state agencies, national and international, but it is vital that this encounter does not become too cosy and so end up in the virtual incorporation of NGOs into the official apparatus of governance. Keane's "cosmocracy" treads a fine line here, but at least in principle he is clear on where it must be drawn (18).

Nevertheless the (qualified) endorsement of "turbo-capitalism" as providing much of the substance and sustenance of "globalization from below" does make one wonder how far this version has managed to resist the embrace of actually existing global capitalism. The resolute deter-

(18) See also Hardt and Negri (2001, p. 313), who accept that the anti-state stance of NGOs can sometimes seem to line them up with global capital, in that "while global capital attacks the power of the nation state from above, [...] the NGOs function as a 'parallel strategy from below' and present the 'community face' of neoliberalism." But they argue that this is not the whole story of their function. "It may indeed be true that the activities of many NGOs serve the neoliberal project of global capital, but we should be careful to point out that this cannot adequately define the activities of NGOs categorically. The fact of being non-governmental or even opposed to the powers of the nation-state does not in itself line these organizations up with the interests of capital. There are many ways to be outside and opposed to the state of which the neoliberal project is only one". In particular they praise the work of humanitarian organizations such as Amnesty International and Médcins sans Frontières. These "represent directly global and universal human interests". For a more critical view, which sees much NGO activity as being complicit with an "expanding global neo-liberal regime of governmentality", see Lipschutz 2005.

mination to include the market in its conception, realistic as it is one sense, clearly runs the risk that the power of the market – greater and more global than at any time in its history – will overwhelm any of the checks and balances that non-market (and non-state) organizations can offer. When Adam Smith and Adam Ferguson hailed the civilizing force of commerce, they contemplated a world in which the wars of kings and the selfishness of the landed aristocracy threatened devastation and poverty on an alarming scale. War still remains as destructive a threat as ever, and the interdependencies of the global market undoubtedly act as some sort of check on too reckless an attitude on the part of states. But in other respects the market has succeeded only too well, and the problem for global civil society now is how to rein it in and restrain its depredations.

It is not so much its uncertainties with regard to the place of the market that make what Kaldor calls the "activist" version of global civil society also problematic. It is certainly possible to attempt to discriminate between market operations that seem to favour civil society as against those that do not. The market can indeed, as Keane claims, have "certain socializing or 'civilizing' effects", promoting non-violence, responsibility, trust and co-operation (Keane 2005, p. 28). It can also ride roughshod over claims of compassion and community, threatening to annihilate, as Karl Polanyi warned, "the human and natural substance of society" (Polanyi 1957, p. 3). The difficulty comes in seeking to separate the good from the bad, in trying to harness the forces of the market on behalf of the stated values of civil society.

How to tame a tiger? This is surely the dilemma of the activists. By rejecting the market they run the risk of condemning themselves to powerlessness. By accepting it in part, or only on certain conditions, they risk being overwhelmed by its enormous force. That may be to put the matter too starkly. NGOs and social movements can clearly make a difference, as shown in the opposition movement in Central and Eastern Europe during the 1970s and 1980s. But then how far would those movements have succeeded without the support, explicit in many cases, of a reformer at the head of the Soviet Union? Markets are one form of power, states are another. To attempt to work outside both is a heroic enterprise where the cards are heavily stacked against success.

If that is all there is to say, there would be poor prospects indeed for the activist style of global civil society. As compared with the neoliberal and "commercial society" versions, their aims put them at some variance with the dominant forces in the world today. They are forced, to a degree, to adopt an oppositional stance. If Bruce Mazlish is right, one of

the things that stands in their way is "Global America", and the alternative vision of the world order that it currently champions (Mazlish 2005, p. 16). Given the history of relative indifference if not contempt shown by the US government for the institutions of global civil society, America presents a formidable obstacle to their development. "Global Islam", another of Mazlish's alternative globalities, is by comparison less of a threat, though here the questions may have to do with how far Islam is capable of incorporating the culture of civil society (19).

Against all this, the activist version, together with many other similar varieties of civil society discourse that wish to hold both state and market at arm's length, can point to some striking successes. There is the remarkable growth of NGOS and INGOS in the recent period, which partly explains why it was only in the 1990s that the concept of global civil society gained general currency (Lipschutz 1992; Boli and Thomas 1999; Iriye 2004). A crucial threshold seems to have been reached and crossed in the sheer number of organizations that can reasonably claim to be fulfilling the aims of global civil society. There is also the wide, global diffusion of the discourse of humanitarianism and human rights, with global organizations to match (20). There have been the international interventions in Bosnia and Kosovo, and the trials of Milosevic and other leaders in specially constituted tribunals for war crimes. The founding of the International Criminal Court is one significant outcome of these moves.

Moreover the public glare turned on the deliberations of the World Trade Organization by the protestors in Seattle, Washington, and elsewhere, has created an enduring global forum of debate and a persistent tradition of activism. This is an example of the "new social movements", a distinguishing feature of which is their global perspective and the support of international NGOs, as shown in the importance of the European peace movement to the dissidents in Central and Eastern Europe in the 1970s and 1980s (Kaldor 2003, p. 50-77; Lipschutz 2006). Social movements which normally would have little hope of survival, let alone success, such as the Zapatista movement for the rights of the indigenous people in Chiapas in southern Mexico, have shown the importance of the support of INGOs and the international

(19) This is a controversial subject. For some helpful discussions, see KAMALI 2001 and ZUBAIDA 2001.

(20) On this I have learned much from YATES (2006). See also TWISS 2004; GLASIUS 2007. For the more general picture of NGOs, see COLAS 2002, pp. 140-157; KALDOR 2003, pp. 78-108. Specifically on Europe see TARROW (1995), though Tarrow emphasizes the extent to which social movement activists continue to operate through their national states as a means of putting pressure on EU institutions, rather than creating cross-national movements in the strict sense.

community generally (21). In the case of the Zapatistas the importance of the Internet, as a means of communication and for rallying support and creating international attention, has been manifest. So it was too in the coordination of the worldwide movements of protest against the American intervention in Iraq in 2003. Writing of these, and countering the Eurocentric claims of Habermas and others that these were expression of a distinctively "European public sphere", Iris Marion Young commented that "according to the people to whom I have spoken, the worldwide coordination of these demonstrations was planned at the third meeting of the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre in January 2003. The worldwide coordination of these demonstrations may thus signal the emergence of a *global* public sphere, of which European publics are wings, but whose heart may lie in the Southern Hemisphere" (Young 2005, p. 154).

Not all of these developments point in exactly the same direction. Some major countries, such as the United States, have so far refused to sign on to the International Criminal Court. Intervention on humanitarian grounds remains a hotly debated issue, and the shocking failures in Srebrenica, Rwanda and Somalia have provoked more questions than answers (see Kaldor 2003, p. 128-36). The unilateral thinking and acting of the United States remains a serious obstacle to the realization of much of the potential of global civil society. The language of human rights, and some of its presuppositions, continue to create suspicions among some non-Western cultures of a new form of cultural imperialism. The democratic credentials of many NGOs and INGOs have been called into question (22). But the record for all that is impressive. Global civil society undoubtedly has a fairly substantial reality.

(21) See Baker (2002, p. 130-44); Collier and Collier (2003); Johnston (2003). The Zapatista movment, which began in 1994 as a protest against the North American Free Trade Agreement, has proved astonishingly resilient, despite its relatively small size and its ill-equipped fighters. All observers agree on the importance of international public opinion in restraining the Mexican government – a "global public sphere" that the movement's leader, "Subcomandante Marcos", has proved highly skilful in addressing, especially through the use of the Internet. For some interesting reflections on the new "internetworked social movements", see Langman 2005.

(22) See, e. g. Baker 2002, pp. 116-121; Colas 2002, p. 151-166. The same criticism has been applied to anti-globalization movements, on the grounds of their unrepresentativeness: see Ayres 2003. For a defence of the legitimacy of international organizations, focusing especially on the European Union, see Moravcsik 2004. Moravcsik argues that it is wrong to judge international organizations by the standards of "ideal democratic systems".

Concepts and their fate

Conceptually of course "global civil society" depends on "civil society". The difficulties and ambiguities surrounding the parent concept must continue to haunt its child as well. But, somewhat surprisingly, one might wish to say that global civil society has more conceptual clarity and greater institutional expression than many claimed instances of flourishing civil society. Perhaps what has taken place here is a valuable learning experience, in which some of the problems with the original civil society idea have been encountered and, if not resolved, at least reduced. At the same time there has been a much more self-conscious construction of global than of national civil society institutions. Many of the latter were so blessed and labelled *après la lettre*, and are sometimes dubious carriers of the honour. Global civil society organizations – NGOs and INGOs – on the other hand have been the work of people who in many cases are schooled in the civil society literature and highly conscious of what they must do to avoid both the "purism" and the over-generous embrace of some civil society conceptions.

That self-consciousness in itself however carries its own dangers. Just as statesmen and spokespeople for all sorts of causes earlier seized on the language of "civil society", as if the mere invocation of the term was enough to justify their claims, so "global civil society", riding the same tide, runs the risk of becoming a slogan employed by the skilful and media-savvy entrepreneurs of the global non-governmental organizations. There is not much that academics can teach the leaders of *Médecins Sans Frontières* or *Amnesty International* about global civil society, certainly not at the practical nor even perhaps the theoretical level. They are almost too well versed in the language and concepts of global civil society. Activist such as Walden Bello, of the World Social Forum and the Bangkok-based advocacy centre, Focus on the Global South, write books and are regular lecturers at major academic conferences (23). Their globe-trotting is part of what we mean by global civil society. Similarly academics such as Mary Kaldor have never made any pretence of the fact that their academic work is an accompaniment to their advocacy and active engagement in global civil society.

(23) See e. g. Bello 2004. Bello was a plenary speaker at the annual conference of the American Sociological Association in August 2007 in New York.

What this can amount to, as with the older concept of civil society, is that the undoubted spread and popularity of the concept of global civil society can create something of an illusion. Not that there are not, as we have noted, some genuine achievements pointing to the reality of global civil society. The question has more to do with the scope and power of its reach, its ability to go beyond its own rhetoric in showing that it is a real force on the global stage, alongside the undoubted power of national states and multinational business corporations. For instance, research on migration policies within the European Union – "the most developed example of political denationalization'' currently in existence (Koopmans *et al*. 2005, p. 248) – shows the inability of transnational organizations, such as the European Migrants' Forum, to make much impact on national policies. Indeed many of the transnational organizations within the European Union are dependent on subventions from the European Commission, and would not survive without them. It is as if the substance – the membership and the commitment – to make them genuine transnational organizations is lacking. One might also add that, if national interests *within* the EU remain potent, we should also remember that "fortress Europe'' itself turns its implacable face towards the rest of the world, on many questions such as labour migration and political asylum. With respect to these matters, "the European Union behaves collectively in the same way as a restrictive nation-state'' (Koopmans *et al*. 2005, p. 249). A basic postulate of global civil society is, if not the elimination, a substantial suppression of purely national interests in pursuit of supranational goals of justice, civility and cooperation. If, in one of the most radical experiments to date in transnational cooperation, such suppression is still attended with such difficulties, it must make one wonder about the possibilities in a world in which such exercises are still in most cases highly primitive.

Concepts, like books, have their own fate. The revival of the concept of civil society in the 1970s and 1980s, after virtually a century of dormancy, was a striking and to some extent highly unexpected development. Judging by the flood of books and articles on the subject still appearing, the concept seems set to have a secure future, despite the many criticisms that have been launched against it use and abuse. It has, that is, virtually taken on a life of its own – or rather, it has been fuelled by sources extraneous to its scholarly examination and assessment. That too is normal for concepts – think of the career of the concept of revolution, for instance, or that of alienation. Global civil society, as a concept, is perhaps in that delicate state where it is not yet robust enough to throw off mere academic analysis. Though it has certainly produced a

powerful discourse which is itself contributing to its growth and resilience, it is not yet so secure that it has made itself immune to critical discussion. That is perhaps why this is a good moment to reflect on it, to seek to uncover its difficulties and possible contradictions. This should not be done in a negative or carping spirit; rather it is the necessary prelude to strengthening and promoting both the idea and the reality of global civil society.

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