

## **Global Civil Society: Need For the Power to the People and Deliberative Democracy**

Tamanna Khosla

---

### **Global Civil Society: Defination in Present Context**

In the present postmodern times it is the times of upgradation of civil society. More than just civil society, focus now is on movements from civil society which is global in nature. Globalization in the 90's has promoted this phenomenon. The wave for democratization worldwide has given impetus to the global civil society movement. Why is it important to understand global civil society? One of the reasons is that it gives insight into what a democratic set up would look like in current political societies. Second reason is that there is equal amount of authoritarian governments in the world with clamor for democratization from the ground example being the Chinese democratic upsurge in Tiananmen square. Global civil society gives hope to worlds oppressed people that world can have a say in their matters. The ideological focus on deliberative democracy has given impetus to global civil society movement. Thus the article argues the need for giving power to civil society to bring about changes in political, economic, social and cultural sphere.

Here we need to understand what is global civil society movement. We will also understand how deliberative democracy assists in global civil society

movement.

## I

The words 'global' and 'civil society' have become commonplace during the last decade. Yet what they mean and how they come together are subject to widely differing interpretations. Albrow and Seckinelgin, paraphrasing Nancy Fraser, defined global civil society as a 'dynamic of claims and counterclaims for justice that extends far beyond the discursive frame of the conventional nation state'.<sup>1</sup>

This dynamic has been particularly pronounced in 2011, with virulent claims and counterclaims pertaining to international criminal justice as well as social justice.

Civil society has come to be considered as an essential component in contemporary global politics, taken either as a normative concept linked to the idea of democracy or as a descriptive concept referring to the activism of NGOs, social movements, and global advocacy networks.

Further, from the beginning global civil society is conceived as a 'fuzzy and contested concept' with both descriptive and normative content. For operational purposes, the global civil society year book adopted an empirical definition of global civil society as 'the sphere of ideas, values, institutions, organisations, networks, and individuals located *between* the family, the state, and the market and operating *beyond* the confines of national societies, polities, and economies.'<sup>2</sup> As the journey progressed, scholars became increasingly critical of the dominant associational notion of global civil society that is often equated with international NGOs. So subsequently, social scientists began to experiment with alternative, more normative versions of the concept: communicative power, for example, or the space where justice is deliberated, or a realm of civility and non-violence. In india foexample civil society movement was gives importance since time immemorial. But the prim promoter of the concept was MK Gandhi. He gave importance to people to move against violence and injustice and focus on non violence as a method for civil society movement against British. In post independent India he gave importance to villages the lowest tier to

organize itself.

Further, one way in which we chose to interpret civil society is as the medium through which individuals participate in public affairs, and through which they endorse or challenge the dominant discourse. It is a constantly shifting medium – sometimes characterised by consensus and sometimes by sharp polarisation and struggle, sometimes changing slowly and sometimes, in revolutionary moments, dramatically. Its concrete manifestations – as coffee houses or market places in the eighteenth century, town hall meetings and party conferences in the twentieth century, or Facebook and tent cities most recently – vary according to time and place.

Moreover the growth and expansion of global civil society as a phenomenon in the 1990s seemed closely associated with a major shift in cultural and social values that took hold in most developed market economies in the 1970s. This shift saw a change in emphasis from material security to concerns about democracy, participation and meaning, and involved, among others, a formation towards cosmopolitan values such as tolerance and respect for human rights<sup>3</sup>. These values facilitated the cross-national spread of social movements around common issues that escaped conventional party politics, particularly in Europe and Latin America, and led to a broad-based mobilisation in social movements, with the women's, peace, democracy and environmental movements the best examples of an increasingly international 'movement industry'<sup>4</sup>. Contemporary society is far more conscious of environmental and human rights and the importance of gender equality, and far more inclusive in terms of race, language, religion or sexual orientation than in 1950s and 1960s. Not only in the West, but also in growing parts of Asia and Latin America, Africa and the Middle East, today's generation are the children of the internet, the mobile phone and cheap air travel – the 'globalisation Generation. They know that the world is a singular fragile eco-system – and that while the national state does have a role to play, it is part of a broader global community. And above all, as has become so movingly obvious in Tahrir Square, on the streets of Syrian towns or even in the Yemen, most believe in non-violence as a fundamental guiding principle.<sup>5</sup>

In particular, Western support for dictators in the region has been

underpinned by orientalist assumptions about the incompatibility of Islamic societies with democracy and civil society. The protestors in Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, Yemen and elsewhere have disproved these theories. They have displayed extraordinary dignity and self-restraint. With the exception of Libya, the protestors have refused to be drawn into violence in spite of huge provocation. This determined stance in Syria, where at the time of writing, some 2,200 people have been killed, is truly inspirational. They have shown an exemplary degree of self-organisation, with people's committees springing up everywhere. They have refused to be framed as sectarian or Islamist; Muslims and Christians, Sunni and Shi'a, women in veils and women with their hair streaming behind them have stood together in Tahrir Square, Pearl Square and many other places. Like the crowds in Prague or Berlin in 1989, the protestors are showing that they can be the agents of history. However these events unfold, an active civil society has begun a movement for democracy across the region. Even Israelis have been affected by this mood of expressing indignation and taking charge of destiny: tent cities have sprung up all over Israel, inspired by Tahrir Square. The subtitle of the same yearbook suggests that global civil society can be defined as 'communicative power' as opposed to the power of force or money.<sup>6</sup>

Here we would look at the types of civil society which have started in 2000's.

## II

### **Types of global civil society movements**

Political Reforms: Emphasis on democratization worldwide against non democratic governments

Political movements world wide have been focusing on democratization worldwide by people. We need to see how these movements have expanded from one state to another. Popular focus on democratization has expanded.

From 2010 onwards there were several movements which spoke about the need for political reforms in world. The attempt was to bring more democratization in world.

The world oldest democracy US saw the need for more transparency in the democratic process. Wikileaks released confidential documents on the war in Afghanistan , Iraq and gutanamo base,to newspapers .

Similarly in 2010, in Tunisia, a vegetable salesman action sparks huge protests in Tunisia, and marks the start of the 'Arab Spring'. President Ben Ali sees the country as protest from civil society forced him to do so. In Syria there were protests against the regime of President Bashar al-Assad.<sup>7</sup>

In 2011,the people of southern Sudan vote in a referendum for independence. The Republic of South Sudan is declared an independent state.

In Libya following a Day of Rage in Benghazi against the regime of Colonel Qadhaû, protests spread across the country. Qadhaû refuses to step down and the country plunges into civil war, with citizens taking over the running of all public services in the Benghazi area.

In Egypt huge protests in Cairo and elsewhere against the regime of Husni Mubabarak. After a series of crackdowns and the subsequent occupation of Tahrir Square, the president resigns.Further in, Italy thousands of Italian women protest against the chauvinism of President Silvio Berlusconi, marching in more than 60 towns and cities across Italy, and as far away as Tokyo. In a referendum in 2011, Italians vote against immunity for cabinet ministers, in a move seen as an attack on Burlusconi's future..

In 2010, China arrested and imprisoned in 2008 for authoring the Charter 08 manifesto, which demanded democratic reform and an end to the one-party system. Liu Xiaobo was awarded the 2010 Nobel Prize. This caused a diplomatic row, and immediate censorship of the announcement by Chinese government which was however hailed worldwide.

In Swaziland, Pro-democracy rallies are held in Africa's last absolute monarchy.

Further in particular, Western support for dictators in the west asia region has been underpinned by orientalist assumptions about the incompatibility of Islamic societies with democracy and civil society. But this has been resisted by people and organized civil society.The protestors

in Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, Yemen and elsewhere have disproved these theories by westerners. They have displayed extraordinary dignity and self-restraint. With the exception of Libya, the protestors have refused to be drawn into violence in spite of huge provocation. They have shown an exemplary degree of self-organisation, with people's committees springing up everywhere. They have refused to be framed as sectarian or Islamist, Muslims and Christians, Sunni and Shi'a. women in veils and women with their hair streaming behind them have stood together in Tahrir Square, Pearl Square and many other places. Like the crowds in Prague or Berlin in 1989, the protestors are showing that they can be the agents of history.<sup>8</sup>

However these events unfold, an active civil society has begun a movement for democracy across the region. Even Israelis have been affected by this mood of expressing indignation and taking charge of destiny: tent cities have sprung up all over Israel, inspired by Tahrir Square. Although focused primarily on social demands, these tent city protests could have implications for the peace process as the demonstrators, who include both Jewish and Arab Israelis, make the point of contrasting the huge settlement programme in the Palestinian territories with inadequate social housing inside Israel. In an era of globalisation, where it is almost impossible to sustain closed societies, authoritarian states depend on consent. When that consent is withdrawn they cannot survive. They can, however, try to reproduce consent through the mobilisation of fear, and this leads not to stability but to anarchy, lawlessness and violence.

In analyses of the Arab Spring, there has been much attention to the extent to which the use of Facebook, Twitter and social media allowed immediate diffusion of information about mobilisation and repression. This was profoundly important. But equally important was the role of satellite television channels in Arabic, particularly al-Jazeera, which disseminated information picked up from social networking sites. These transnational Arabic channels have already contributed to an emerging pan-Arabic civil society and, by the same token, their role in the revolutions has enormously enhanced their status and popularity. The communications aspect of the Arab revolts could also be understood as part of a wider global civil society trend of simultaneously utilising and demanding transparency against

secretive or corrupt organisations, not just in authoritarian settings and not just at the state level. Wikileaks is a prime example in this context: while it has existed and posted classified information since 2006, Wikileaks shot to fame in April 2010, when it showed a video of a 2007 US airstrike on Baghdad in which journalists were mistakenly fired at.<sup>9</sup>

Further global civil society is also defined as 'the medium through which the consciousness and perceptions of risk are shaped and new methods of protection are promoted'<sup>10</sup>. This aspect of global civil society was clearly demonstrated in the rapid change of views on nuclear power after the radioactive leakage from the Fukushima plant caused by the Tohoku earthquake in Japan in March 2011. In Italy, the return to nuclear power was overwhelmingly rejected in a referendum, and in Germany and Switzerland nuclear power is being phased out<sup>11</sup> what these path-breaking decisions showed was that, over the long-term, social movements like the anti-nuclear movement can bring about fundamental changes in attitudes, and ultimately, policy. For example the protests that brought hundreds of thousands of people to the street in Spain, Greece, Portugal, Israel and Ireland are also about social justice: they protest against unemployment, wage cuts and other austerity measures, but beyond that also about having been lied to by politicians and being disproportionately targeted by austerity cuts while bankers were bailed out.<sup>12</sup>

### **Environmental Movements: Non-Violence Against Nature**

Environmental movements in the last decade have got an impetus from political movements for democracy. Politicians and an oligarchy of industrialists have vested interests in exploitation of environment. Here comes the civil society which has harped on the need for protection of people against these irresponsible behavior of the nexus between politicians and industrialists.

In 2010, United States, an explosion at the BP drilling rig Deep Water Horizon results in the largest offshore oil spill in US history. International outrage ensued. 39 civil society groups post a letter to the US Senate urging them to reconsider off-shore drilling and over 800,000 people join the Facebook group 'Boycott BP', which, along with other mobilizations,

culminates in an international day of protest. Even now, cleanup and litigation expected to take many years.

Also in 2010, Hungary, toxic mud is leaked from the Ajka alumina plant in the worst chemical spill in the country's history, leading to an outcry by environmental NGOs.

2010 also saw in Mexico, a coalition of civil society organisations call for a 'democratic, transparent and participatory process at the UN climate talks' at the COP16 in Cancun, but the deals that come out of the talks are critiqued as rescuing UN credibility rather than the environment.

In 2011, East Africa saw a regional food security alert from the Famine Early Warning Systems Network which joined the rising clamour of voices from NGOs and UN agencies predicting famine in East Africa. Although 'the worst drought in 60 years' was blamed, with climate change ũngered as the culprit, observers also point to rising food prices, continued regional conflict, systemic poverty and the failure of states to honour aid promises. The reluctance of the UN to deũne a critical situation as a famine has also been criticised. The food crisis affected more than 12 million people in Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia and Southern Sudan, with famine ofũcially declared by the UN in areas of Somalia in July.

2011 saw in Germany Following the March 11 tsunami in Japan and subsequent leaks at the Fukushima nuclear plant, large protests against nuclear energy sweep across Germany and France. As a result of popular pressure, Chancellor Merkel announces that Germany will be free of nuclear energy by 2022. Subsequently, Italians vote against the resumption of their country's nuclear power programme, in a referendum held on 14 June 2010.

In 2010, Pakistan Two months of abnormally heavy rains cause repeated ũooding in the Indus basin. 2,000,000 people are affected – civil society rallies to organise help for the victims. 2010, also sees movement in against toxic mud leaked from the Ajka alumina plant in the worst chemical spill in the country's history, leading to an outcry by environmental NGOs.

### **Economic Movements: In Favor of Welfarism**

Economic movements have gained from the socialist revolution and



the need to ensure welfarism for the citizenry.

In United Kingdom for example, major protests take place in London against education cuts, the rise in university tuition fees, along with numerous smaller protests and lengthy university sit-ins that occur around the UK.

2010 saw protests in Dublin, against EU bailout and austerity measures. An estimated 100,000 take to the streets of Dublin to protest against austerity measures called for by the IMF and EU.

### III

#### **Global Civil Society: A Trail From 1970s to 2012**

Here we will also look at the changes which have come about globally in civil society movements and the medium of these changes. It shows how the present decade focuses on democratization.

<b>Fields</b>	<b>Value Changes</b>
1970s : Economic, research and science;	Humanitarian membership-based INGOs(international non governmental organization)
1980s Value-based ;	INGOs linked to International Social Movement Cosmopolitan values
1990s:Value-based; serviceprovision	Corporate and public management NGOs
2000s: Anti-capitalism; opposition to war	Social Forums
2010s Democracy, social Justice,	Web-based activism; Tweets

### IV

#### **Conclusion: Need For Deliberative Democracy**

How this struggle plays out depends to a large extent to whether the

newly emerging emancipatory social movements can transform themselves into a political movement. Can they develop a political agenda capable of constructing new sources of political authority with the capacity to address the big issues of our time?

The workers' movements and the anti-colonial movements of the early twentieth century provided the political basis for the strengthening of the state in the late twentieth century. The post-'68 movements had a far-reaching cultural impact and also contributed to democratisation, as well as to the consolidation of humanitarian, human rights and peacekeeping institutions at an international level. The protests of 2011 have the potential to re-instil public morality and to help build institutions at regional and global levels that can tackle such issues as global inequality (be it of wealth or concerns gender disparity) and or environmental necessity, although at present they seem largely focused on national and local levels. Already there are some largely unnoticed but significant innovations at a non-national institutional level. The German and French leaders agreed in August 2011, for example, on a European tax on financial transactions – something long demanded by Social Forum activists. The International Monetary Fund has uncharacteristically reacted to the Arab Spring and the European sovereign debt crisis with political concerns about how to sustain social cohesion. In other words, there is what sociologists call a political opportunity structure. The next decade will be a dramatic learning process for the new global generation. Can they articulate a shared political agenda that has the potential to save their successors from the dire consequences of deprivation, climate change and war?

Thus in the current scenario the global civil society seems fixated with the idea of need of democracy and more deliberative democracy to the people. No deliberation procedure can succeed till a certain level of trust and mutual respect is established between groups, within groups and between the state and groups. A society needs to fulfil the conditions of 'minimal decency'. No group should be in a more advantageous position. A balance of power should exist between the deliberating parties. Deliberation for groups is not possible from a position of inequality.

Power needs to be transferred to the people. Good governance with

focus on participation and transparency need to be practiced. Responsiveness by the states worldwide needs to be spread. Equity between people, between minorities, gender and other social, political groups need to be focus of governments. De bureaucratization is a must for democracy to function to the fullest.

Thus dialogue between governments and citizenry is a must. Further contemporary problems like terrorism can also be handled better if people and global civil society are involved. Thus strengthening of civil society in the present cosmopolitan setup is a must which would lead to addressing several contemporary problems.

### End Notes

- 1 Albrow, Martin and Glasius, Marlies (2007) 'Democracy and the Possibility of a Global Public Sphere', in Martin Albrow et al. (eds), *Global Civil Society 2007/8*. London: Sage Publications. P;1
- 2 Anheier, Helmut, Marlies Glasius and Mary Kaldor (eds.) (2001) *Global Civil Society*, Oxford University Press, 2001. P;17
- 3 Inglehart, R. (1990). *Cultural Shift in Advanced Industrial Society*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- 4 Diani, M. and McAdam, D. (eds) (2003) *Social Movements and Networks: Relational Approaches to Collective Action*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; McAdam, D., Tarrow, S. and Tilly, C. (2001) *Dynamics of Contention*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- 5 Anheier, Helmut; c.it Another example that can be set forth is that in May 2011, in his speech announcing the death of Osama bin Laden, President Obama referred to the operation to shoot him and throw his body into the sea as 'an operation to get Osama bin Laden and bring him to justice' ('Osama bin Laden Killed' 2011). In New York bin Laden, President Obama referred to the operation to shoot him and throw his body into the sea as 'an operation to get Osama bin Laden and bring him to justice' ('Osama bin Laden Killed' 2011). In New York and Washington DC thousands took to the streets to celebrate this 'justice'. In other places, including Berlin, Cairo, Istanbul, Java, Kashmir, London and different cities of Pakistan, protest demonstrations were held ('Reaction to the Death of Osama' 2011). Secondly, The trial of former

Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak, and more specifically the controversial decision by the judges to stop televising the proceedings, has led to clashes between Mubarak supporters and opponents (Kirkpatrick 2011). The trial contains elements of social justice as well as criminal justice, as Mubarak and his sons stand accused not only of responsibility for the death of demonstrators but also for corruption and illegal business deals (Shenker 2011)

2 Ibid;p 2

3 Ibid;p 3

4 Ibid;p 5

5 Ibid;p 8

6 Ibid;p 1

### References

- Albrow, Martin and Glasius, Marlies (2007) 'Democracy and the Possibility of a Global Public Sphere', in Martin Albrow et al. (eds), *Global Civil Society 2007/8*. London: Sage Publications.
- Anheier, Helmut, Marlies Glasius and Mary Kaldor (eds.)(2001) *Global Civil Society*,Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Inglehart, R. (1990). *Cultural Shift in Advanced Industrial Society*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Diani, M. and McAdam, D. (eds) (2003) *Social Movements and Networks: Relational Approaches to Collective Action*.Oxford: Oxford University Press
- McAdam, D., Tarrow, S. and Tilly, C. (2001) *Dynamics of Contention*. New York: Cambridge University Press
- Helmut Anheier, Mary Kaldor and Marlies Glasius, *The Global Civil Society Year Book: Lessons and Insights 2001–2011*.
- Mary Kaldor,Henritta L Moore, Sabine Selchow, *Global Civil Society 2012,Ten Years of Critical Reflection*,Palgrave Macmillan,2012.