Mary Kaldor

GLOBAL CIVIL SOCIETY
An Answer to War

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polity

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Preface

In a lecture at the London School of Economics in October 1999, Adam Michnik pointed out that everyone claims responsibility for the end of the Cold War:

> Whenever I happen to consider that topic – why Communism failed – I know that in Washington, everybody is sure that Communism failed as a result of the American policy – how else?... Whenever I am in the Vatican, it seems perfectly clear that Communism fell as a result of the activities of the Apostolic See and John Paul II, our pope___Whenever I am in Asia, I have no doubts that Communism was lost in Afghanistan. That it was just there where the Soviet Union broke its teeth. And whenever I am in Moscow, it is absolutely obvious to me that Communism was toppled by Russians, the only thing that remains unclear being whether it was by Gorbachev or Yeltsin. And finally, we Poles know and are convinced that it was we who toppled Communism and that the world received freedom from Communism from us, as a gift.

This book has its starting point in the debates and dialogue between the West European peace movement and the East European opposition in the 1980s, in which I was deeply engaged and which has left a lasting imprint on my political understanding. While we in the peace movement did not think that we were responsible for the fall of communism we did feel that we had played a part and that, in the subsequent triumph of neoliberal-

ism, our part was written out of history. The ideas that we developed at that time and the efforts we made to influence the behaviour of governments and international institutions were *both* about democratization and human rights *and* about peace and international security. Indeed, we believed that these issues were deeply interconnected since the organization of states for war constituted a profound limitation on democracy. The idea of a 'transcontinental movement of citizens', in the words of E. P. Thompson, was the genesis of the notion of global civil society.

Subsequently, I and others tried to put these ideas into practice in the Helsinki Citizens Assembly – a network of groups and individuals, whose aim was to create a pan-European civil society. We found ourselves confronting a very different world. If the Cold War of 1945–89 was actually experienced as a kind of peace, albeit an oppressive peace, then the Orwellian post-Cold War peace is actually experienced as war, not only in the Balkans or Africa but in the urban ghettos of the new global cities. We found that global civil society did not only include human rights and peace groups like us but also new nationalist and fundamentalist groups and, as the 1990s drew to a close, a new radical anti-capitalist movement as well.

Since 1999, 1 have been able to spend time reading and thinking about these issues and discussing ideas with my colleagues in the Global Civil Society programme. Thus this book is the product both of activism and analysis and I should like to thank all those, who are too numerous to mention, who were involved in the dialogue of the 1980s, the Helsinki Citizens Assembly in the 1990s as well as my colleagues both at Sussex and LSE, from whom I have learned such a lot.

I am especially grateful to David Held, who proposed and promoted the project, to Meghnad Desai, who read the manuscript twice and was always ready to stop everything to help think an argument through, and to Jo Hay for moral and administrative support. I am also grateful to all those who read and commented on all or parts of the manuscript and who discussed the ideas with me, including Nancy Cartwright, Mient Jan Faber, Marlies Glasius, Julian Robinson and Yahia Said. Finally, I want to thank everyone at Polity, including the anonymous readers, who were all unfailingly helpful.

Chapter 3 is based on a lecture I gave at the London School of Economics in October 1999 in a series called The Ideas of 1989\

Abbreviations

ATT AC	Action pour une Taxe Tobin d'Aide aux Citoyens
BJP	Bharatiya Janata Party
CARE	Cooperative for American Relief Everywhere
CBO	community building organization
CSCE	Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
END	European Nuclear Disarmament
FIDESZ	Young Democrats, now Hungarian Civic Party
GRO	grass roots organization
ICC	International Criminal Court
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
ICT	information and communications technology
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INF	intermediate nuclear weapons
INGO	international non-governmental organization
KLA	Kosovo Liberation Army
MSF	Médecins sans Frontiéres
Nato	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	non-governmental organization
NMD	national missile defense
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

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Five Meanings of Global Civil Society

The terms 'global' and 'civil society' became the new buzzwords of the 1990s. In this book, I want to suggest that the two terms are interconnected and reflect a new reality, however imperfectly understood. The reinvention of 'civil society' in the 1970s and 1980s, simultaneously in Latin America and Eastern Europe, had something to do with the global context – the social, political and economic transformations that were taking place in different parts of the world and that came to the surface after 1989. Indeed, although the term 'civil society' has a long history and its contemporary meanings draw on that history, the various ways in which it is used, I shall argue, are quite different from in the past.

What is new about the concept of civil society since 1989 is globalization. Civil society is no longer confined to the borders of the territorial state. There was always a common core of meaning in the civil society literature, which still has relevance. Civil society was associated with a rule-governed society based largely on the consent of individual citizens rather than coercion. Different definitions of civil society have reflected the different ways in which consent was generated, manufactured, nurtured or purchased, the different rights and obligations that formed the basis of consent, and the different interpretations of this process. However, the fact that civil society was territorially bound meant that it was always contrasted with coercive rule-governed societies and with societies that lacked rules. In particular, as I shall argue, civil

society within the territorial boundaries of the state was circumscribed by war.

This is what has changed. The end of the Cold War and growing global interconnectedness have undermined the territorial distinction between 'civil' and 'uncivil' societies, between the 'democratic' West and the 'non-democratic' East and South, and have called into question the traditional centralized warmaking state. And these developments, in turn, have opened up new possibilities for political emancipation as well as new risks and greater insecurity. Whether we are talking about isolated dissidents in repressive regimes, landless labourers in Central America or Asia, global campaigns against land mines or third world debt, or even religious fundamentalists and fanatic nationalists, what has changed are the opportunities for linking up with other like-minded groups in different parts of the world, and for addressing demands not just to the state but to global institutions and other states. On the one hand, global civil society is in the process of helping to constitute and being constituted by a global system of rules, underpinned by overlapping inter-governmental, governmental and global authorities. In other words, a new form of politics, which we call civil society, is both an outcome and an agent of global interconnectedness. And on the other hand, new forms of violence, which restrict, suppress and assault civil society, also spill over borders so that it is no longer possible to contain war or lawlessness territorially.

In the aftermath of the revolutions of 1989, the term 'civil society' was taken up in widely different circles and circumstances. Yet there is no agreed definition of the term. Indeed, its ambiguity is one of its attractions. The fact that neoliberals, Islamicists, or post-Marxists use the same language provides a common platform through which ideas, projects and policy proposals can be worked out. The debate about its meaning is part of what it is about. As John Keane suggests, the global spread of the term and the discussion about what it betokens is, in itself, a signal of an emerging global civil society.

This global discussion has involved the resurrection of a body of civil society literature. The search for classic texts has provided what might be called a legitimizing narrative, which has had the advantage of conferring respectability on the term but has also often weakened our understanding of the novel aspects of the

rediscovery of the term. By clothing the concept in historical garb, it is possible that the past has imposed a kind of straitjacket which obscures or even confines the more radical contemporary implications. Comaroff and Comaroff talk about the 'archaeology' of civil society 'usually told, layer upon layer, as a chronological epic of ideas and authors' starting with an 'origin story' in the late 1700s. They argue that the term has become a 'neo-modern myth: consider the extent to which a diverse body of works – some of them analytic, some pragmatic and prescriptive, some purely philosophical – have begun to tell about the genesis and genealogy of the concept, even as they argue over its interpretation, its telos, its theoretical and socio-moral virtues'.[2]

The 'neo-modern myth' does obscure the implications of the break with territorially bound civil society. On the other hand, agreement about the history of the concept is part of what provides a common basis for a global conversation. The civil society literature is so diverse that it allows for selectivity; the choice of texts to be studied can be used to justify one interpretation rather than another. While the debate about earlier literature can reify particular meanings that are no longer applicable, it can also serve as a way of investigating the idea, exploring the answers to questions which were faced in earlier periods as well as today, finding out what questions were different and how they were distinguished from the present situation.

This is a book then about a political idea. It is an idea that expresses a real phenomenon, even if the boundaries of the phenomenon vary according to different definitions, and even if the shape and direction of the phenomenon are constantly changing. The investigation of these different definitions, the study of past debates as well as the actions and arguments of the present, are a way of directly influencing the phenomenon, of contributing to a changing reality, if possible for the better.

This book is subtitled an 'answer to war'. This is because the concept of civil society has always been linked to the notion of minimizing violence in social relations, to the public use of reason as a way of managing human affairs in place of submission based on fear and insecurity, or ideology and superstition. The word 'answer' does not imply that global civil society is some sort of magic formula – a solution or alternative to war. Rather it is a way of addressing the problem of war, of debating, arguing about, discussing and pressing for possible solutions or alternatives.

I will start by briefly recapitulating the context in which the term was 'reinvented'. I will then set out five different meanings of global civil society, two historical and three contemporary. And in the last section, I will outline my plan for the book, how I will investigate these different meanings and their implications for our understanding of the changing political world.

Context

Developments variously known as globalization, post-industrialism and information society came to the surface in the aftermath of the end of the Cold War. Two aspects of these developments are of particular significance in providing a context for the evolution of the concept of global civil society.

First of all, concern about personal autonomy, self-organization, private space became salient not only in Eastern Europe as a way of getting around the totalitarian militaristic state but also in other parts of the world where the paternalism and rigidity of the state in the post-war period was called into question. In the United States and Western Europe, these concerns had already surfaced in the 1960s and 1970s, with the emergence of movements concerned about civil rights, feminism or the environment. Giddens and Beck emphasize the growing importance of these concerns in societies which are increasingly complex, vulnerable to manufactured risk, and where expert systems no longer hold unquestioned sway. The rediscovery of the term 'civil society' in Eastern Europe in the 1980s, therefore, had a resonance in other parts of the world. The term 'civil society' and related terms such as 'anti-politics' or 'power of the powerless' seemed to offer a discourse within which to frame parallel concerns about the ability to control the circumstances in which individuals live, about substantive empowerment of citizens. Indeed, East European thinkers like Václav Havel believed their ideas were not only applicable to Eastern Europe; they were a response to what Havel called the 'global technological civilization'.[4] While Western elites seized upon the language as evidence for the victory of actually existing democracies, the inheritors of the so-called new social movements began to use the term to express a demand for a radical extension of democracy for political as well as economic emancipation.[5]

Even though these ideas had echoes of the eighteenth-century preoccupation with restraints on state power, it seems to me that they were responses to an entirely novel situation. It was a situation characterized by the actual experience of an overbearing state, which reached into everyday life far more widely than ever before. In the case of Eastern Europe, it was experience of arbitrary power and the extension of state activity into every sphere of social life, even, at least during the Stalinist period, private life. Elsewhere, it was both the extension of state power and the rigidity and lack of responsiveness to social, economic and cultural change. As I shall argue, the character of the state has to be understood in terms of the heritage of war and Cold War. It was also a time of social, economic, technological and cultural transformations in life styles, ranging from work (greater insecurity, greater flexibility and greater inequality) to gender and family relations, which called into question institutional loyalties and assumptions about collective or traditional behaviour.

Secondly, growing interconnectedness and the end of the last great global inter-state conflict have eroded the boundaries of civil society. It was growing interconnectedness that allowed the emergence of 'islands of civic engagement' in Eastern Europe and in those Latin American countries suffering from military dictatorships. The activists of that period were able to seek international allies both at governmental and non-governmental levels and pierce through the closed societies in which they lived, even before the great advances in information and communications technology. On the one hand, the extension of transnational legal arrangements from above, for example the Helsinki Agreement of 1975, provided an instrument for opening up autonomous spaces in Eastern Europe and elsewhere. On the other hand, the inheritors of the 'new' social movements, the European peace movements and the North American human rights movements were able to link up with groups and individuals in Eastern Europe and Latin America to provide some kind of support and protection. Keck and Sikkink use the term the 'boomerang effect' to describe the way civil society groups bypassed the state and appealed to transnational networks and institutions as well as foreign governments, so that their demands bounced back, as it were, on their own situation.[6] In effect, these movements and their successors made use of and contributed to

global political and legal arrangements; they were an essential part of the process of constructing a framework for global governance.

The end of the Cold War has contributed to the breakdown of the sharp distinction between internal and external; what is often called in the International Relations literature the Great Divide.[7] Some argue that something like a global civil society (however this is defined) exists in the North Atlantic region but not elsewhere. Hence the boundaries of civil society have merely moved outwards. This could perhaps have been said to be true during the Cold War where the boundaries of the West were pushed outwards to protect a North Atlantic group of nations. But, in the aftermath of the Cold War, I would suggest that something different is happening. It is no longer possible to insulate territory from anarchy and disorder. In place of vertical territorial-based forms of civil society, we are witnessing the emergence of horizontal transnational global networks, both civil and uncivil. What one might call zones of civility and zones of incivility exist side by side in the same territorial space; North Atlantic space may have more extensive zones of civility than other parts of the world but such sharp geographic distinctions can no longer be drawn. The events of September 11 were a traumatic expression of the fact that territorial borders no longer define the zones of civility. In other words, the territorial restructuring of social, economic and political relations has profound implications for how we think about civil society.

To sum up, I want to suggest that the discussion about global civil society has to be understood in terms of what one might call deepening and widening, a move away from state-centred approaches, combining more concern with individual empowerment and person autonomy, as well as a territorial restructuring of social and political relations in different realms.

Definitions of global civil society

I propose to set out five different versions of the concept of civil society in common usage and to say something about what they imply in a global context. This is a non-exhaustive and abbreviated [but not altogether arbitrary] list. As I try to show in chapter 2, the civil society literature is much richer and more complex than

this summary would suggest; the aim is to set up some parameters for the rest of the book.

The first two versions are drawn from past versions of the concept; the last three are contemporary versions, with echoes of historical usage. It is not straightforward to transpose the concept of civil society into the concept of global civil society, since, as I have argued, the key to understanding what is new about contemporary meanings is precisely their global character. Yet the exercise may be illuminating since I do believe that there is a common core of meaning and we can investigate the nature of the contemporary phenomenon by trying to understand the relevance of past meanings.

Societas civilis

Here I am referring to what could be described as the original version of the term – civil society as a rule of law and a political community, a peaceful order based on implicit or explicit consent of individuals, a zone of 'civility'. Civility is defined not just as 'good manners' or 'polite society' but as a state of affairs where violence has been minimized as a way of organizing social relations. It is public security that creates the basis for more 'civil' procedures for settling conflicts – legal arrangements, for example, or public deliberation. Most later definitions of civil society are predicated on the assumption of a rule of law and the relative absence of coercion in human affairs at least within the boundaries of the state. Thus, it is assumed that such a *societas civilis* requires a state, with a public monopoly of legitimate violence. According to this definition, the meaning of civil society cannot be separated from the existence of a state. Civil society is distinguished not from the state but from non-civil societies – the state of nature or absolutist empires – and from war.

One of the main objections to the notion of global civil society is the absence of a world state.[10] However, it can be argued that the coming together of humanitarian and human rights law, the establishment of an international criminal court, the expansion of international peacekeeping, betoken an emerging framework of global governance, what Immanuel Kant described as a universal civil society, in the sense of a cosmopolitan rule of law, guaranteed by a combination of international treaties and institutions.

Bourgeois society (*BiXrgerliche Gesellschaft*)

For Hegel and Marx, civil society was that arena of ethical life in between the state and the family. It was a historically produced phenomenon linked to the emergence of capitalism. They drew on the insights of the Scottish enlightenment, especially Adam Smith and Adam Ferguson, who argued that the advent of commercial society created the individuals who were the necessary condition for civil society. Markets, social classes, civil law and welfare organizations were all part of civil society. Civil society was, for the first time, contrasted with the state. For Hegel, civil society was the 'achievement of the modern age'. And for Marx, civil society was the 'theatre of history'.[11]

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.

The activist version

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 described as the post-Marxist or Utopian version of the concept. It is a definition that presupposes a state or rule of law, but insists not only on restraints on state power but on a redistribution of power. It is a radicalization of democracy and an extension of participation and autonomy. On this definition, civil society refers to active citizenship, to growing self-organization outside formal political circles, and expanded space in which individual citizens can influence the conditions in which they live both directly through self-organization and through political pressure.

What is important, according to this definition, at a transnational level is the existence of a global public sphere – a global space where non-instrumental communication can take place, inhabited by transnational advocacy networks like Greenpeace or Amnesty International, global social movements like the protestors in Seattle, Prague and Genoa, international media through which their campaigns can be brought to global attention, new global 'civic religions' like human rights or environmentalism.