

Civil Society Organizations in Global Governance: Reflections on CSOs in Bangladesh

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Abstract

Civil society has become one of the significant catchphrases in the global governance system. It has indeed become a key political, economic, and societal success where an individualistic perspective to look at civil society has been eroded. As with the progress of globalization, civil society's worth as a concept and practice has been revived in a holistic manner. State machineries and international development partners are playing significant roles to demonstrate this revival. Bangladesh is not an alternative to embrace this process. Here the current development paradigm in governance sector approaches to a new dimension of civil society's involvement in the process. To avoid a major discontent in the understanding of the paradigm, one should start by taking a closer look at the prospects of positive contribution of civil society organizations in strengthening global governance system.

Introduction

Although Bangladesh is a democracy with a parochial political culture and weak form of institutionalization, the country has become a vibrant field for the active participation of various stakeholders in different capacities. One of the most important achievements here is the contribution of the non-state actors in the state-arch along with state's government. The changing nature of the state, a global phenomenon that is influenced by globalization, is a must case where South Asian states could not even resist the obviousness of reforms in governance mechanism. As a matter of fact, civil society organizations (CSOs) explore their space within the public realm and they gradually turn themselves into a parallel force to help govern the society. This enormous development in the state affairs obviously has the international dimension, as the force of globalization has been mentioned, which complements the national dimension i.e. state's cautious optimism for democratic political culture. The history of democratization in

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Bangladesh reflects varied pictures of institutional progression from where CSOs have got their present image - from a sub-contractual level basic service provider to a technical constant and prime implementer of assignment. Well, it is difficult to confine the definition of the CSOs as far as the historical evolution of the concept 'Civil Society' and its existence in the different parts of the world (North American, Latin American, Europe, Asia, and Africa) are concerned. Replicating that in the functional aspect of modern civil society, it has become rarely possible to classify the CSOs, which is required to enrich their functioning further.

This paper critically aims at looking at the contemporary functional diversity of the civil society organizations, particularly the new terms of responsibilities explored by them in the governance related development projects in Bangladesh. It investigates precisely the role of the newly emerging policy-making and advocacy oriented CSOs those are actively influencing the governance mechanism in collaboration with the national government and the international development partners. The existing literature shows the deficiency to explain this dynamism that contemporary CSOs are exposing but it remains important because a modest guideline could be gathered by collecting the knowledge to conceptualize the development pattern. The paper is mostly based on the latest academic secondary literatures and organization performance reports and classic texts on the conceptual aspects. However, there has been a modest empirical approach to justify the validity of the claim that the paper is going to place on board. It mainly tries to find an answer - 'How one should define the contemporary civil society with its inclusive nature and influence by the forces of global governance?' The paper tries to apply new modes of thought which will definitely not stick to any traditional mode of investigation and the way how it defines civil society earlier.

Conceptualizing Civil Society – Construction of a Civil Space

The term civil society has become the part of the political discourse in sixteenth and seventeenth century. The institutionalization process of civil society has followed the wobbly path of evolution since then. Only in the recent times there has been serious effort to represent the civil society as the formal and informal groups of citizens that act collectively, in public, to express their interests and ideas, exchange information, achieve mutual goals, make demands on the state, and hold state officials accountable (Diamond, 1994). The intellectual contribution of Locke and Hegel has had a special contribution in the conceptual debate of civil society. This is because the recent discussion and in-depth works in this sector has separated their contribution in a unique manner. It elucidates the correlation between the political democracy and the social aspect of it. Here, upholding the individual freedom and inalienable rights of

human being, the necessity of the civil society has been constructed. The concept was evolved on its uniqueness to create a space within which is independent of state and market. Its evolution and contradiction with state-arch is diverse and experience in Europe and other parts of the world matches hardly. Nevertheless, basic notion was similar i.e. to cut-off the power of the police state.

Inspired by Hegelian politico-civil space and the existence of civil society, Charles Taylor has mentioned two generalized set of concepts. In the first set, the so-called 'L-stream' (anti-Hegelian) he elaborates a richer view of the society as an extra-political reality. This particular approach is noteworthy because of its relations with Adam Smith led neo-classical economy – where society is expressed as the composition of production, exchange and composition. Political affairs are seriously abandoned due to the way it separates different modes within the society. Thus it got an extra-political identity. On the contrary, the so-called 'M-stream' reflects the civil society as a composition of politics and society, and thus blooms as subsistence of political society. Quoting concepts from Hegel and later from Montesquieu, the role of political society takes up in a state and elevates the legitimacy of a civil society in a political space (Charles Taylor, 2003). A kind of fanaticism has been in force in the ancient sixteenth and seventeenth centuries' conceptual development of the idea civil society. But one important development that Hegel has mentioned very clearly is the necessity of the existence of institutional arrangements on the basis of a symbiotic relationship with the state. With the time passes away and the development of states' own institutions, the concept and functions of civil society has been seriously reconsidered, sometimes quite in a different mode from Hegel and Locke. On the other hand, Marx himself has become a strong critique of civil society because according to him, it carries the interest of the particular group rather human or individual freedom. Antonio Gramsci has amplified the effect within his great idea of domination, where the civil societies' role is to produce consent in favor of the elite class of the society to add value to their coercive mood, and thus jointly generates domination (Gurpreet Mahajan, 2003).

One remembers the twentieth century modern German philosopher Jürgen Habermus and his famous work in the concept of public sphere. He emphasizes the importance of multilevel communication in the process of integration to form such public/civil space. A proper integration has only become possible when deliberative exchange of reasoned arguments is promoted, not the forceful assertion of the inherited ideas, identity and the self interests. Redefining the public sphere, it has become significant to introduce reason-based solidarity, a pro-Habermus approach to work closely with the non-state actors even on

highly sensitive issues like governance. Multilevel communication is something that is achieved through maintaining a congenial environment where the stakeholders are in continuous communication with each other and generates a truly public sphere for the state. Well, there are opposite concerns expressed by the neo-left philosophers, who have found flaws in the understanding of the public sphere led by integrative mode. According to Marx, the concept of misapprehended association has strengthened the power of bourgeoisie and Gramsci has forwarded the idea that such associationalism promotes structural domination in modern societies. Regardless of this critique, associational aspect of civil society is renowned on its own to explain the extensity of an integrated job to perform. In the present time, due to extensive opportunities for connectivity, institutionalization in the civil society has been compact and the intensity of the association reaches at its echelon and thus starts contributing substantially.

In its continuing course of development in the twenty-first century, instrumentalism has led the development of civil society and guides the entire discourse to institutionalize its contribution in the polity. Quoting from Indrajit Roy, three factors are most crucial for the advancement of the civil society agenda - portfolios of donors (development partners) viz. bilateral, or multilateral; minimalist perspective of the state; and concern in the western societies. Examples can be derived from the approach taken by these donors to raise local social capital and to support activities that build engagement among people. In the enormous literature on the subject, civil society is presented as neutral rhetoric, whereas, thinking critically, it serves to promote the tenets of market liberalism, by restricting the size and scope of the state (Indrajit Roy, 2008). No doubt that a liberal theory perspective is more linear, where the civil society practices internal liberalism a kind of democratic governance. It involves the institutions in public arena discussion and policy making process. Criticizing the merges of that idea with civil society, Rosenblum argues that the problem of civil society, which is internally democratic, unduly priority to the political participation (Nancy L. Rosenblum, 2003). But she also emphasizes the necessity to spread pluralism. For that reason, civil society should be elective in nature that can permit activities on the serious need basis. This basic assumption has expanded the scope for modern deviation of CSOs' functions.

In many post-colonial critiques, civil society is as exclusive as the state. For example, Partha Chaterjee has argued that India's "civil society [is] bourgeois society... restricted to a small section of culturally equipped citizens." Chaterjee contends that India's inhabitants are, therefore, not in fact full citizens. "Most of the inhabitants of India are only tenuously, and even then ambiguously and contextually, rights-bearing citizens... They are not, therefore, proper members of civil society and are not regarded as

such by the institutions of the state.” (Partha Chaterjee, 2001). Instead, he argues, most social movements and community organization occur in *political* society where it is difficult to locate any existence of so called civil space that is truly devoid of the influence of politics. So the critique’s commentary states that in political society people come into contact with the state and undertake political negotiation but do not possess to the same degree as civil society rights of citizenship.

Role Evaluation of Civil Society

The twenty-first century has been enlightened with the ground breaking concepts like *new public management* and thus extends the involvement of various stakeholders which have not been considered earlier. In reinventing the role of the government, Osborne and Gaebler have articulated the principle of *new public management*, which proposes that governments would be more effective if they acted as ‘steersmen rather than as oarsmen’ (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992). The traditional management culture has got a big shock. Being steersmen, a state has to be inclusive and flexible in managing state affairs. Moreover, states can initiate a proper partnership between the public and private actors and thus promoting the disenfranchised sector to participate in state affairs. Non-governmental organizations and to a large extent, the civil society organizations fall in this dichotomy within the prescribed format of newly system of management.

Some civil society organizations are firmly entrenched in international policy-making. Here an integrative tendency is usually observed from the stakeholders’ engagement policy. The role of the civil society has been evaluated in different perspectives because the current level of engagement differs widely among the actors. In considering the evaluation of such organization, some contradictory characteristics should be counted which hinders their participation. As it has been discussed above the perceived legitimacy of the CSOs are the most important fact that the CSOs have to struggle with. The second important fact is their complex organizational forms of what they perceive. There are arguments in favor of the democratic institutional practices of the CSOs and also the counter arguments of it. Regardless of the normative judgment, these characteristics possess a structural force that can create or remove obstacles to the participation of civil society actors.

International advocacy role of civil society in a global connectivity are quite ostensibly appreciated. Because of their valued statements and contributions in the diversified areas of the society and polity, these actors have been seriously motivated to become international as well as advocates of policy matters. The role of the Transparency International is

noteworthy in this regard. This organization is playing the role of trans-national advocacy organization to eradicate the level of corruption from the society and maintain good governance. Regardless of the criticism of TI's corruption measurement policy and its Corruption Perception Index, it has been successfully running its advocacy campaign worldwide. The connectivity across the states is maintained with different modes and thus promotes participation of different actors from the civil society, from minority groups to media along with the government.

Fisher and Green have identified the dichotomy of legitimacy and organization form as the significant factors of resistance for their participation. They have also successfully identified these issues as an encounter force to greater resistance, and corresponding difficulties in participation (Fisher and Green, 2004). On the other hand, there are incentives inherent to the international process that tends to favor civil society actors with certain types of organizational forms. Generally, professionalized organizations are most likely to be granted access. However, the less formalized civil society actors have all the possibilities to face further challenges.

The civil society's convergence towards an organizational form can be explained by the persuasive power of ideas, sociological pressures toward acculturation and conformity, or motivations based on material interests (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Reforms are required to improve actors' engagement, their impacts on rules of procedure. Moreover, institutional coordination must be carefully considered in order to prevent perverse incentives or unintended outcomes. This is important because a positive correlation between civil society action and good governance outcomes is forcefully argued by a number of development theorists and practitioners. In many of these writings, civil society is said to comprise various dimensions-such as, social networks and resources, community institutions, civic associational engagement, decentralization, pluralization, and so on (Roy, 2008). So there are lesser chances for disenfranchisement and increasing opportunities for integration in globalization.

CSO Typologies and Global Governance

It is not at all the fact that the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) are more alike than they are different in critical respects. CSOs vary widely according to size, sector of activity, religious orientation, their function (service providers, social movements, networks, or apex organizations), their relationships to donors, their organizational sophistication, and other factors. Harry Blair has classified CSOs in two basic types (Blair, 1998). The first is concerned with systemic reform, that is, with changing the basic rules of the game. Organizations in this category focus on human

rights, legal systems, division of power between the national and local levels, and the like. The second type also focuses on changing rules, but only those rules that apply to the CSOs' particular interests, or the .operating rules of the game, which may also be called sectoral agendas. These CSOs deal with such areas as the environment, business, agriculture or women's issues.

Growing trans-nationalism has created space for several avenues through which inter-connectivity can facilitate access to these various types of information. A new regime has been promoted through interactions with scientists, academics or policy-makers, developing country delegates and civil society actors. There are examples of this type of transnational connectivity, such as the Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change or the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment. The membership of this kind of platform promotes a mixed representative, trans-national in nature, of developing country representatives and civil society actors may be able to obtain information related to a given regime including, *inter alia*, emerging regime-relevant research, new policy proposals and developments in related policy-making processes (Fisher and Green, 2004).

However, there is a different perspective to assess the reality. The membership is not the only way to judge effective participation. Quality of participation is largely dependent on the nature of globalism and the capacity from the receiver side to absorb it. Globalization has accentuated the communication process in a tremendous mode due to the technological advancement. As a result of that being up-to-date has become a less expensive job. This is the reason we observe an increasing numbers of CSOs in the current days in the global governance mechanism. Apart from communication we see another transformation apart from the technological advancement and that is the governance culture in the world. Civil societies are significantly considered as the parallel force to mimic the policy-makers in various capacities. Non-state actors have become core part of the policy-maker sect.

With all these ideas in mind, civil society should be considered as working within a political space where it is assigned to produce a civil space through its voluntary associationalism. In the contemporary world, it has become an important force to shape the rules – specific public policies, social norms and structures that govern one or the other aspect of social life. According to Scholte, it is not at all possible to deny the radical transformations of the prevailing order brought by the civil society in recent times. Civil society includes reformist elements that seek only modest revisions of existing governance arrangements and

conformist elements as well that seek to reinforce established rules. So with the influence of globalization, civil society initiatives show a mix of radical, reformist and conformist tendencies (Scholte, 2001). Moreover civil society promotes civil engagement, which Robert Putnam in his influential 1995 article, “Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital,” argued strongly that a weak civil society leads to a lack of “civic engagement” and social trust (Putnam, 1995). Regardless of the different views to it, one should be cautious about the proper civic engagement in the political affairs to expect better future for the state. Otherwise it may be used as boomerang to dilute the political democracy into devastating authoritarianism.

Reexamining Statehood, Power and National Interest - Empowering Civil Society

Major conversations and literature-centric developments in the civil society and reexamining the very concept to identify civil space within statehood and inter-state governmentality have been successfully taken place because with the course of time state's power has been deregulated in a considerable manner. A leading trend of consumerism led by neo-liberal democracy has created a sense of disenchantment for states and the growing numbers of modern institutions, mostly of non-state kinds, have seriously put state vis-a-vis civil society factor in the stage. In modern democracies, relations between civil societies and the state is no longer necessarily antagonistic. Today, the perspectives of co-operative relationship and of mutual recognition that the two spheres are complementary have become a challenging possibility to be considered by both CSOs and representatives of the state.

Power struggle and its connection with the politics have had serious connection with the state affairs. If one seriously encounters its presence in contemporary politics, it would be difficult to agree. But there is a certain level of degradation in statism to exert the power and continue exertion of traditional state-centered power politics. There are different elements in state affairs, which cannot be explained solely in terms of power struggle or, in the classic words of David Easton, as a process that leads to the authoritative allocation of values in society. Politics, when reviewed in the light of its relevance for the survival (or sustainability) of communities, there is a need of societal learning processes through which issues can be resolved. The organizations of societal dialogue and of societal cognition processes are at least as important as the maintenance of a certain balance of power, the prevention of conflicts between different groups or sectors of society (Breed, 1998). Stated differently, the concept of authoritative allocation must be replaced or at least supplemented, by some notion of interactive societal dialogue. It can no

longer be understood just in terms of a top-down concept where values are imposed from above and authority is based merely on a claim of acting in the generalized national interest. In fact, the allocation of values can be effective or legitimate only when local and individual values have been able to contribute to the formulation of these values.

As political boundaries become more permeable, multiple social actors work on the national and international levels to negotiate regulations that affect many of the countries in the world. States come to the table to discuss what rules should be made and what policy outcomes are desirable. At the same time, a host of non-state actors vie to make their voices heard. Within this context, the different levels of influence among nation-states and others involved in the negotiations of international treaties and policies have become readily apparent (Fisher and Green, 2004). At the very basis of its political development, one can properly assume that the national interest is a hypothesis that a political community can speak with a common voice. Here there is no option for confusion in interpreting the phenomenon called political community. As politically conscious entities are inherent part of the society, the construction of the group interest is the only possible case by exposing various expressions of particular individual interests which comprise all complex societies. Importantly, it is required to blend all these separate pieces into a single act and thus it becomes binding on all members of the society. Although national governments claim to represent the general interest within the boundaries of a state, they do not pretend to do so in the international political arena. In that arena, they are the defenders of their own national interests, and they pursue international co-operation only as far as these interests holds an image of internationalism. This situation has led some in the past to express the need for a global government or state, to take the responsibility for harmonious world development and even world's integration. However, since nations are unwilling to give up their sovereign rights voluntarily and since even superpowers have never been able to go beyond a kind of (extended) regional hegemony, it is very unlikely that a global state will emerge organically from the present world-wide system of nation-states.

So national interest influenced by the idea of nationalism has become an inherent part of the globalization, not it is opposing the very essence of globalization. From the view point of constructivism, the national interest is constructed with the multidimensional elements within the state and their continued interaction with the international actors. Globalization manages the fuel to promote this. With the growing trend of interdependence and connectivity, sovereignty has experienced a renewed

dimension of it. Nationalism as an end point to internationalism has effectively reduced the distance between them. The extensivity of involvement for international actors in serious high political issues within the state has achieved a certain level in its track record. As a result of that the concept of sovereignty has been at the stage of re-modification.

No doubt that a stronger anti-globalization sentiment is found in the Asian, African and Latin American countries, where people feel that they are the losers of globalization. Here the politico-economic explanation of the developments is skeptical to the thoughts led by western modernization. Dependency and World System concepts influenced by Marx have been serious critique to the achievements of globalization and redistribution of their effects to the population. A 2008 opinion poll, conducted in 34 countries, found that while there was general support for globalization, there was unease about globalization and its pace. Of the 34,000 respondents, 50 percent considered economic globalization as moving too fast. This proportion was 57 percent in the Group-of-Seven (G-7) countries. Majority (64 percent) of those polled also believed that gains and losses from globalization were distributed unevenly. (Das, 2008)

Regardless of that a parallel force has also been active to keep pace with the consequences of globalization. Now national interest is not only the responsibility or reflection of the state actors' appraisal. It is a combined approach where the large numbers of actors are involved – state, non-state and autonomy semi-state institutions. Moreover due to severe interconnectivity, international actors are also to a great extent involved to determine the national interest of the state. It is empowering the non-state actors in many ways. Firstly, their activities acquire a sense of legitimacy because the scopes of their functions have been expanding seriously. Secondly, states have extended their cooperation through partnership as well as a parallel role has been provided to them on behalf of the state. Thirdly, their voices are internationally recognized. In sum, the renewed sense of sovereignty and its amplification on the national interest have created space for civil society to really perform civil responsibility in an empowered mood.

Civil Society Expansion and Global Governance –Legitimacy Issues of CSOs

The idea of global governance has developed in recent decades with the gradual precipitation of the state-centered governance ideas in the political culture. The prime importance has been given on the rising intergovernmental multilateralism in the very first developments of the globalism. In doing so, a few but important areas have been underestimated. One important overlooked case is the substantial

significance of trans-governmental networks and private global regulation. Though neo-classical economy and free market induced ideas have been in the peak of its existence, but privatization in civil affairs for public realm has been a rare case for long time. In addition, trans-localism and public-private partnerships have been emerging as important factors and show enough hopes to become major forms of global regulation in the years to come.

The former UN Secretary General Mr. Kofi Annan noted that the “UN and the world’s people have much to gain from opening the organization further to civil society,” which he described as “a vital source of energy and expertise”. In formulating his commitment he had convened a *UN Panel of Eminent Persons* to examine the relationship between the UN and civil society. Thus, the international community has acknowledged the beneficial role of civil society in multilateral policy-making, and is advocating for their increased involvement. It is quite clear that civil society provides a number of important functions in international governance (United Nations, 2000).

This increased role for civil society in global governance for sustainable development has paralleled other significant shifts within the global arena. For example, the Millennium Development Goals, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2000, has marked a renewed affirmation of the importance of equal participation in global governance in response to globalization. Millennium Development Goals, which will guide (sustainable) development policies through 2015, have underscored not only the importance of attending to the needs of the developing world, as evidenced by the substance of the goals, but also the central role that developing countries must play in creating and implementing global policies. This call for developing country participation, together with the plurality of state and non-state actors involved in global governance, demonstrates the need to consider both civil society and developing country actors together when theorizing disenfranchisement.

The United Nations has largely, in fact the pioneer, in seeking the contribution of emergence of the global civil society concept and an international governance mechanism. They contribute to the formulation and execution of global public policy through enhancing the participation of the civil society associations in drafting and finalizing the UN policies. The main activities of the civil society here are to provide information on issues of their concern, lobby governmental and UN representatives, and implement or monitor UN policies (Martens, 2008). Martens have also identified a supra-structural accountability of institutions like CSOs, which became possible because of the UN involvement in the regulatory

process. Here the noteworthy developments are the activities CSOs undertake at the UN to enhance the accountability of this global regime regarding institutionalized and non-institutionalized ways. Making this effervescent, the UN should maintain a strong liaison with the CSOs and organizational strength of the CSOs should be developed to continue the mutual relationship with any intergovernmental body like the UN. Along with this discussion it has become apparent that a global governance mechanism has been established centering the UN system, which is vibrant and ensuring the participation of the so called non-state actors in important policy decisions along with the state governments.

Legitimacy of non-state actors (civil societies) is an important factor at the global stage. This is one aspect where globalization and multidimensional involvement of the CSOs have enhanced the rationale more wide. Civil society engagement of global regulatory institutions has long impact to oust the question regarding the shortcomings in legitimacy crisis. In consequence to that civil society involvement could promote values and voice that speeding up the moral and democratic legitimacy of global governance. Furthermore, civil society initiatives could promote the formalization of those global governance activities that have operated with little or no legal frameworks as far as the state-centric ideas are concerned. But in recent times, changes are observed in the attitude from the state as well. State is also willing to participate in development activities in collaboration with civil society. A proper institutionalization could be placed if these non-state actors are given opportunity to operate in multilevel performances. The support could be extended to build up charismatic leadership, accountable and legitimate institutions to lead the enthusiasm for development activities regarding the reform in governance system.

Now the issue of legitimacy and its correlation with CSOs requires re-modeling. The inception of this complex relationship projects a one way approach keeping the CSOs at the receiving end. It is the non-state actors who require legitimacy of their functions from the state, or inter-governmental bodies in global arena. In twenty-first century, with increased interventions from civil society both in national and international stages, question of legitimacy becomes a two dimensional phenomenon. CSOs can often de-legitimate the activities of national government or even the global authorities by exposing immorality, illegality, incompetence and authoritarianism. Scholte thus characterizes the role of civil society as one of vigilant monitoring rather than uncritical endorsement of global governance (Scholte, 2007). Globally the roles of international and regional human rights organizations are noteworthy in relevance to the expansionary roles of the civil society.

Civil society has considerable positive potential to democratize the governance of global relations. In such democratization, effectiveness of the institutional discourse of CSOs has been the possible determinant because of the increasing cross-connectivity between state and civil society. No doubt, both the actors have contributed deliberate efforts and adequate resources in regard to promote global governance in this age of globalization. Still there are requirements of much greater efforts and resources from the state's side for civil society to sustain democratization process in global governance. To enhance the legitimacy of civil society as well as to get better result out of the synergy, opportunities might be created to foster democracy in global governance through public education and awareness activities. Now a day, civil societies are more involved in these activities through various capacities. Most importantly, perfectly vocal stakeholders and proper civic mobilization can only increase the public transparency of global governance.

The Rise of Civil Society in South Asia – The Bangladesh Case

Rise of civil society in South Asia has experienced tremendous growth along with the development of liberal democracy in its political culture. The extensity of political participation in the region has been transformed in many ways since mid-twentieth century. New social groups have entered the political arena and begun to use their political resources to shape the political process. Politics has become more inclusive because of their position at the grassroots of the society. Different social groups have been incorporated in the polity that transcending the traditional barriers of it. The spread of social movements and voluntary organizations have shown that despite the traditional understanding and existence of the state institutions and bureaucracy South Asian democratic tendency continues to thrive. In India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Nepal, growth of the non-state civil society actors have been remarkable and established themselves as service providers parallel to the state.

The diffusion that has been amplified by the pressures of the changes in the international political governance and positive attitudes of the political forces in most of the South Asian ruling elites have encouraged the public to mobilize through nongovernmental organizations and social movements. Indeed there have been tensions always with the development of civil society as the active force that face motion of less confidence in regard to the transformation of power of the state. Moreover the nature of their accountability has also been redefined with the existence of a new set of institutions. Regardless, political forces are benefitted by them because of the rising trend of political consciousness among the population. Responsibilities are also shared now and not only concentrated to the state. Following the changes in the post-Cold War era, politics has been fashioned in a new mood and state institutions have

accommodated the diverse views which we now finally get in the form of public-private partnership.

In considering the concept of empowerment of the polity, this ascending quantity of the civil society in South Asia critically conceptualizes the institutionalization of the good governance. If one considers the Foucauldian notions of analyses, the rise of non-state actors and their development discourses on empowerment reflect the *governmentality* of power elites. The consensual power cooperation between these two harmonizes the pattern of domination within the field of global power relations. In a very South Asian mood of critique, Gandhi's political writing possibly explores the representations of self-help civil practice grounded in early Vedic and Buddhist traditions. As a talented and tireless creator of his own version of civil society, he argued in favor of the civil society to be more effective agent of social action even than the state (Rudolph & Rudolph, 2003). The Indian *Sangha* practices in the history refer to such intervention of collaborative works through non-violence and self-reliance. Well, the free-market economy led growth of civil society has rarely reflected the interpretations of M. K. Gandhi rather an opposite view to it. In a standpoint to a cautious critique to even the South Asian discourse of the civil society, one can easily refer to the globalization and its discontents where different forces are engaged to develop the basic notion of a phenomenon. Reflecting recent public perception about the non-state actors in South Asia, the State of Democracy in South Asia Report has mentioned its cautious optimism about the participation of the voluntary sector. It reflects the elite-centrism of the civil society in South Asia, which impedes the democratization of the polity in a full swing (SDSA, 2008). Nevertheless, development of civil society in this region is not a different story altogether which has been enriched by colorful local contexts that uniquely interface with global enterprises.

Bangladesh is a country that is marked by the proliferation of CSOs (mostly NGOs) of various categories over the past three decades. Members of the educated middle class, concerned about the need for extensive community services, initially organized themselves into small groups and identified a few focused areas to work on, including research planning, social mobilization, awareness raising, harnessing the capacity of the poor, natural resources management, protection and conservation, advocacy, networking and completing government efforts, and challenging existing unacceptable practices and procedures.

In Bangladesh, the rise of the civil society is experienced by the enormous growth of the non-government service providing agencies i.e. NGOs who have been engaged in producing different social services. Here, we see the emergence of BRAC and its transformation to set itself as the largest NGO in the world in twenty-first century. The inception of

BRAC (Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee, now known as BRAC) is noteworthy after the birth of Bangladesh in 1971, which was involved in relief works in the war-torn nation. The effects of “massive proliferation” are perhaps nowhere more evident than Bangladesh, which has one of the largest and most sophisticated NGO sectors in the developing world. Over 90% of villages in the country had at least one NGO in 2000, and foreign assistance to the country channeled through NGOs has been above 10% since 1993 (Gauri & Galef, 2005). There are two large trends in the contemporary activities of the non-governmental organizations in Bangladesh. On the one hand, NGOs are more involved in advocacy and consciousness raising than service provision. In Bangladesh, the second option is most usual that NGOs are currently very involved in the direct provision of services. In respect of poverty alleviation, principal instruments of NGO programmes involve microcredit, skill development and employment generation. It is estimated that nearly 80 percent of the villages in Bangladesh are now covered under NGO activities. The maximum of the NGO service delivery incorporates microfinance as their major area of operation. An estimated 92% of NGOs overall counted credit provision as one of their services (Gauri & Galef, 2005). The few large NGOs are BRAC, PROSHIKA and ASA, who are contributing substantially in this sector. About 95 percent of microcredit loans disbursed by the NGOs are in the rural areas. Microcredit is provided to the poor for self-employment, income generating activities, afforestation and other poverty alleviating programmes.

The role of the NGOs in women empowerment is considered to be significant in the context of Bangladesh. Literatures suggest that NGOs have quite sincerely modelled their interventions to contribute substantially in women’s empowerment (Ullah, 2003). The focus of NGOs’ activities is empowering the powerless women and helping them to explore their hidden potentialities. In different capacities, NGOs in Bangladesh provide promotion of women’s rights for the grassroots women, ensure participation in democratic process, combating trafficking in women and children and other services based on the need of the stakeholders. The modes of service provision are mainly different advocacy tools like workshop, seminar and meeting, developing local capacity, awareness raising and campaign; building networks and alliances; investigation and legal consultancy, documentation and publication (Islam & Sultana, 2005). With such active role in service provision, NGOs intervene successfully to improve the living condition of women. It has been also evident that women are more conscious about their rights now than any time before.

In the environment and sustainable development, Bangladesh has also experienced significant proliferation of CSOs, which is influenced by the conceptual and practical development of the idea of sustainable development emanated from the Rio Summit and other global environmental governance. A number of environmental advocacy groups emerged, and some had significant scientific capability (Rahman, 2001). These are ADAB for development; CEN for the environment; WATSAN (Water and Sanitation Association of NGOs) for water supply and sanitation; BARRA (Bangladesh Association [of NGOs] on Regeneration of Rural Agriculture) for sustainable agriculture; the Biodiversity Network; BELA (Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association) for environmental legal action; FEJB (Federation of Environmental Journalists of Bangladesh) for environmental journalism; BCAS for scientific research on sustainable development; and Porosh (Bangladesh *Paribesh Andolon*, Bangla for Bangladesh Environmental Movement, etc. Most of them are involved in advocacy and awareness campaigns, facilitating participatory planning and interfaces between government and communities, and social mobilization and service provisions in the field of natural resources management and environmental awareness.

The Government of Bangladesh and BRAC jointly initiated a pilot programme to improve the standard of education at selected government and registered non-government primary schools (BRAC, 2008). The major objectives of this program are to develop a proper management structure in the aforementioned primary schools in Bangladesh and thus improve the quality of education through increasing attendance, reducing high dropout rates, raising course completion rates to over 80% and improve overall quality of teaching and learning at government and registered non-government primary schools in 20 sub-districts of 9 districts of Bangladesh.

Apart from these service providing NGOs, significant numbers of think-tanks have also been emerged in policy reform sectors. *SUJAN* (Citizens for Good Governance), a notable civil society body comprised of eminent activists for the governance reform, has been working tirelessly to establish people's right for vote with freedom. They have been organizing consultation meetings at grassroots to raise awareness among the people to select non-corrupt and eligible representatives for national and local legislative bodies. *SUJAN*, along with the Transparency International Bangladesh, has launched nationwide campaign to motivate the people for a wise political participation that hinders the entrance of money and muscle power in political governance. They have also successfully influenced the immediate past government to take immediate policy measures in reforming the Representation of People's Order and other legislations related to governance reform.

Legacy of Parallel Service Providers

In the execution of development plans, the relationship of the CSOs with the government and beneficiaries are very important, which is widely considered as the accountability mechanism of these organizations. There is a popular opinion, mostly from the government's side, that NGOs must be accountable to the government, although the reason they provided was used to be different from other perspectives. On the other hand, NGOs should be accountable to the people, to whom they are providing services directly or indirectly. Well there is a debate about the performance of the non government organizations in Bangladesh. The critique's perception is very sensitive, which opines that 5-10 large and successful NGOs are mainly contributing to the basic development process of the country. They also claim that a quantitative development has occurred in the increasing of number of NGOs, which hardly reflects the qualitative change in social services. The complaint is mostly about the most NGOs who were simply copying, often haphazardly, the ideas of the successful NGOs (Sanayal, 1991). In response to the critique, NGOs have different viewpoints to identify their functional framework. They are discovering innovative ways of helping the rural poor with their collaborative projects with the help of the international donors. NGOs are reluctant to be under strict monitoring of the government. International donors also have a big role in this nexus. They have always created an indirect pressure on the government to provide relative autonomy to the non-governmental organizations. The most interesting legacy is that there is a traditional 'us versus them' situation emerged between the government and the non-government sector focusing the functional attitude of them. Government is highly accused of its bureaucratic, lethargic, corrupt, and serving only the interests of the rural elite. On the other hand, NGOs have perceived themselves as possessing all the opposite qualities. This traditional understanding has created an adverse condition amongst the relationship of Government, NGOs and the international donors. Considering the resources it possesses, Government of Bangladesh, are not at all sufficient to take the responsibility of service provision alone. That is why cooperation with the non-government civil society is a must.

The mentioned paradigm is only a single approach of looking at the contemporary legacy in the state vs. non-state relations. On the other side states are also approaching promotional friendly relations with the non-state actors like NGOs. There are examples as well in Bangladesh where state is willingly creating space for cooperation from the NGOs. It is quite the fact in the poverty reduction and the promotion of the primary education in the rural area. Government has channeled significant amount of resource to the NGOs in the microfinance sector for poverty reduction to achieve the millennium development goals. Moreover, state has also

asked for cooperation from the nongovernment agencies to endure the governance mechanism in the primary education sector. The collaborative endeavor has quite significantly developed in these sectors in Bangladesh.

Civil Society as the Technical Service Providers: Enlargement in Functioning

In the contemporary world, civil society's involvement in global regimes tends to operate through networks of interest groups (especially NGOs), rather than through formal representative structures. This raises important questions about civic groups and their future role, especially issues of structure, governance and accountability that may erode their legitimacy as social actors in the emerging global order. The role of civil society is certain to grow as global governance becomes more pluralistic and less confined to state-based systems defined according to territorial sovereignty (Edwards, 2004).

In the state-civil society relations, the current developments have been characterized with a new dimension of collaboration. The rising role of the civil society is transformed from the direct service provision to the technical assistance providers. This is exclusive to certain categories of functions. Obviously if one considers the fate of the relief work at the post-natural disaster, one would locate the position of the civil society as a direct service provider along with the government. Apart from these kinds of platforms, civil societies are also emerging as the technical service providers to the government and thus become inherent part of the development process in collaboration with the government and international development partners.

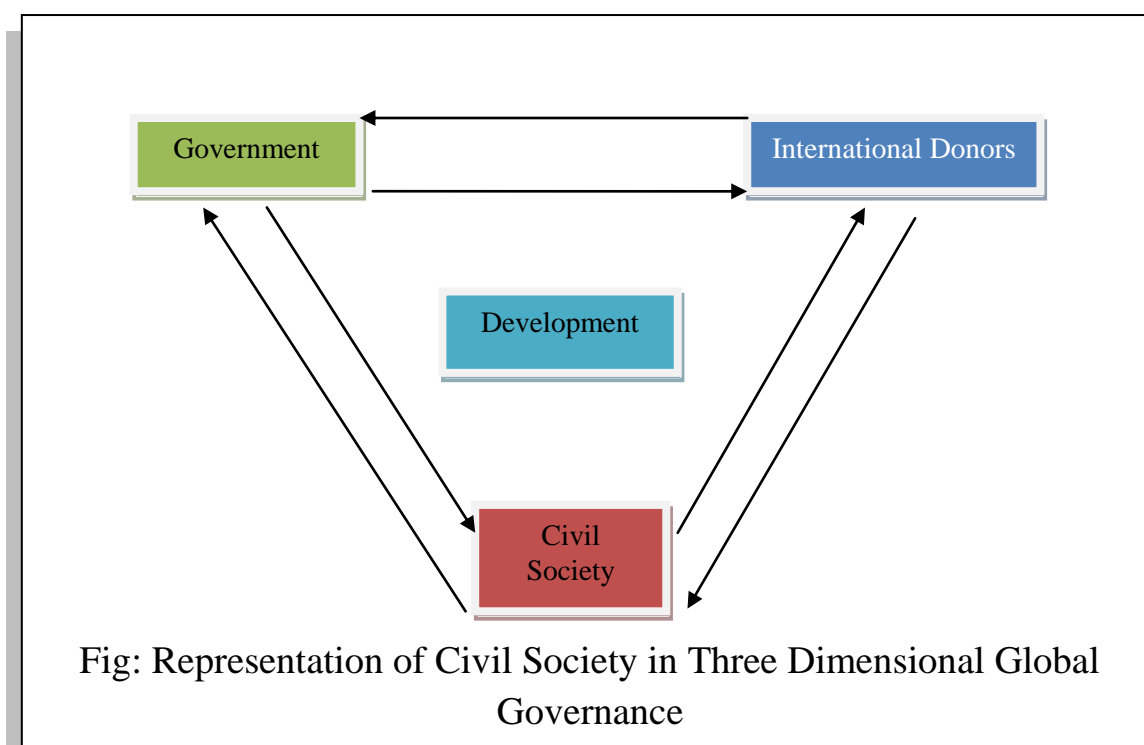


Fig: Representation of Civil Society in Three Dimensional Global Governance

State-civil society partnerships can be defined as interactions designed to achieve convergent objectives through the combined efforts of both sets of actors, but where the roles and responsibilities of each remain distinct. The objective of these partnerships is to produce better results than if the partners operated independently; in short, to create synergistic effort. In a new dimension of activities, it is still difficult to measure whether the civil societies have gained the momentum to work with autonomy in policy decision making and in its implementation. It is true that both the parties are working to keep the main objective intact i.e. produce better results. There is skepticism as well to what extent both the parties are successful to own the work. No doubt, the role of the international donors has added significant value to it.

The above figure represents the position of the civil society in global governance where it becomes a parallel assistance provider to the development process as well as the national government. Moreover, it is also a significant receiver of the funds and advises from the international development partners (donors) in many aspects. In the figure we see two way arrowheads are drawn which indicates that these three actors engaged in both receiving and giving end of the business. In the present structure, the government is usually identified as the key proponent of any idea concerning development of the national governance system. Firstly, government is an important receiver of the funds from the international development partners. Not only that, government also appreciates consultancies and advises in different capacities from the donors. In reply, government helps to create congenial governance structure for the donors to perform better in the development process. In doing so, government create legislations, establish institutions and promote sufficient pluralism in the understanding of the so-called state affairs, which ultimately opens the gate for different other actors to become active. Secondly, the relations of the civil society (policy reform related think-tanks) with the state can also be characterized with two-dimensional aspects. Apart from direct service provision to the people of the state, certain civil societies are currently assisting the government directly in the development process. So government becomes the direct beneficiary of the process and the people become indirect one through reformation in the governance system. In response to that, government, as usual, holds the governance in itself so that the other actors perform smoothly and create better future for the state. Finally the contemporary practices explicate that the donor-civil society nexus has achieved a new dimension because of reformed relationship among them. Civil society, as well as the government, is a significant receiver of the foreign funds for the development process. It also receives consultancy support in

capacity development and execution of the assignment. On the other hand, civil societies provide a local version of their concept and thus help them to localize their ideas which are more convenient to sell to the state. In this way, through a three-dimensional platform the contemporary development activities are staged and executed, where the role of the civil society has become significant and notable in assisting the government as well as the foreign development partners in implementing their respective agendas.

In Bangladesh, there exist certain examples of such collaboration in development activities related to the governance policy reform of the state. The formulation of the *Right to Information (RTI) Ordinance*, an important tool for the governance mechanism, has been a result of such collaboration among the Government of Bangladesh, non-state civil societies and international development partners. Concerned ministry of the Government, during the stage of drafting this legislation, asked assistance from the local think-tank for conducting nationwide consultation. The organization, which was an expert in the particular area, conducted hundreds of consultation meetings throughout the country to ensure participation from all stages. International development partners also cooperated with the local think tank by providing technical and financial assistance that make sure the whole process run smooth.

Concluding Remarks

The paper carefully exposes the development of civil society in Bangladesh within the framework of contemporary global governance and with its reference to the historical evolution. The necessity of a civil space which generates the need for civic engagement in development paradigm is apparently the outcome where states and non-state civil bodies come to each other with sheer hopes of cooperation. In the current state of global governance, the significance of creating a level playing field for civic involvement has been severely felt, which encourage participation by the broadest possible range of organizations, from the different corners of the world. As well as the global standard, this organizational diversity has become a part of the political culture even within the state. May be this is bit early to claim that the abovementioned three-dimensional collaboration is something that represents a different kind of development schema, where a new type of civil society is the significant part of the process. But it is quite apparent that a greater degree of restructuration and reforming “rules of the game” are necessary that govern civic involvement in global debates, without imposing bureaucratic rules from the top down, since that would damage the creativity and spontaneity of the success of this three dimensional development structure.

Considering the changes in the contemporary world, it is the high time to address the diversity in the role playing of the civil society. To make the participation of the non-state actors more vibrant, re-institutionalization becomes a required field which could ensure democratic participation of civil society in global responsibilities. As civil society is exercising an increasingly important role in supporting innovative people-centered policy changes in global affairs, state should also vacate space for them to be performed well. Globalization helps to diffuse terms of responsibilities for state, non-state and foreign actors, provided that none of them forcefully overrides any of them. The space allotted for the civil society in this structure is significant which redefines its nature of activities. These initiatives should be identified and researched properly.

It is to be suggested that in strengthening the capacity of civil society in global governance *inter alia* identifying the role of the newly responsible global governance a few conditions must be created and supported:

1. For civil society flow of information is must. The national and global governance should ensure it. Civil societies should also build proper capacity to communicate, to associate and to obtain relevant information;
2. The total accountability mechanism may be revisited. In a collaborative work, where all the actors enjoy similar stakes of a development work, traditional modes of accountability may fail to ensure prospects of success little lesser. A reliable mechanisms should be employed which hold governmental bodies, foreign actors and the civil society more accountable to each other; and
3. Greater financial self-reliance for civil society is significant (Robert Cassani, 1995). But in the contemporary world it is not the end point. Capacity is also important and the civil society should decrease their reliance on foreign technical capacities.

In a democracy it is not the most important thing to observe whether participation is taking place. Rather one should consider the context of participation which represents the structure and shows the prospects of sustainability. Locating the position of the civil society in the global governance requires the need of understanding national and global context of working environment for civil society. Perhaps the present realities give a new dimension of looking at the functional concept of the non-state actors. The civil society story may open a new gate for research as much as the state has its relevance in the realist world of thought.

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