CREATING A NEW MULTILATERALISM: GENERAL

ASSEMBLY DISCOURSE, LEGITIMACY AND

GLOBAL CIVIL SOCIETY

By

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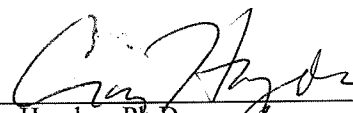
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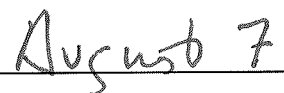Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

International organizations (IOs) have gained greater authority in global affairs while the private sector and civil society movements play an increasingly central role in shaping policy and steering global governance mechanisms (Weiss and Wilkinson, 2014). The United Nation's (UN) mandate in particular has expanded to historic lengths, but the institution also faces a crisis of executive multilateralism (Steffek and Ferretti, 2009) where it must incur processes of legitimation to reassert its authority (Zaum, 2013, Weiss, 2011). The structure of international mechanisms and organizations are increasingly at odds with democratic principles esteemed in national contexts. To address these concerns, the UN has sought to further include global civil society in its deliberations to bolster legitimacy and make global policies more effective. This work contends that the need for greater representation and inclusion in global affairs has led the UN to develop a narrative relying in part on global civil society (GCS) to legitimate the organization. In a discourse analysis, the study focuses on the role of discourse and the narratives shaping the identity of global civil society at the General Assembly between 2004 and 2014. While UN officials and member-state representatives use GCS for legitimation, the very concept of global civil society and its role in contemporary world politics are transformed, having far-reaching effects on issues of representation and inclusion in global politics.

PREFACE

In the past few decades, a diverse group of actors have become active players in international politics. Beyond the state, intergovernmental institutions have gained greater authority while the private sector and civil movements also play an increasingly central role in shaping policy and steering global governance mechanisms (Weiss and Wilkinson, 2014). Particularly noteworthy is the inclusion of global civil society. "Consent of the governed is increasingly required" (Barnett and Finnemore, 2004), and a demand by non-state actors for pluralistic, inclusive and democratic processes led to this change. In this context, international organizations (IOs) at the center of global politics face a crisis of executive multilateralism.[1]

Bodies such as the United Nations – whose mission is to maintain peace and security by addressing global threats – have failed to do so in myriad areas from climate change and terrorism to the recent global financial crisis. While the UN's mandate has expanded to historic lengths, infringing in states' domestic affairs, even transforming the once sacred boundaries of sovereignty with norms such as the responsibility to protect, it is now often criticized as undemocratic. In the global arena, legitimacy is increasingly harder to be achieved and is no longer automatic (Zaum, 2013, Weiss, 2011). International politics is being reimagined in the 21st century by these actors: at once to manage these efficacy concerns and bolster their legitimacy, IOs like the UN and its member-states have sought to further include global civil society in their deliberations.[2] Virtually no UN department today exists without some form of

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[1] Steffek, Jens and Ferretti, Maria Paola. "Accountability or 'Good Decisions'? The Competing Goals of Civil Society Participation in International Governance." *Global Society* 23 (2009), n. 1: 37-57. And Scholte, Jan Aart. "Civil Society and Democratically Accountable Global Governance." *Government and Opposition* 39 (2004): 211-233.

[2] Thakur, Ramesh and Weiss, Thomas G. "Framing global governance, five gaps." In *Thinking about Global Governance: Why People and Ideas Matter.* Routledge, 2011.

mechanism to engage with these groups, of which NGOs and international NGOs (INGOs) are the most prominent. In the last twenty years, Wapner (2009) notes, "accredited NGOs have left their signatures, as it were, on almost all significant UN policymaking."

This raises the question: "In what ways does the United Nations frame global civil society to further its legitimacy, and what consequences result from it?" Historically, the central unit of international relations was the state. Now, the narrative from states and IOs illustrates the emergence of a new multilateralism that includes global civil society (Coate, 2009). As an international organization, the United Nations works to facilitate state cooperation, but it is also a bureaucracy (Barnett and Finnemore, 2004), and as such it is perceived to be an impartial actor with technical expertise and authority to diffuse norms and ideas with a wide-ranging impact. Using information to carry out their work they assign hierarchies, providing meaning and definition to phenomena (Barnett and Finnemore, 2004).

The question presented above assumes two things: first, it refers to the implication that as an actor, the UN has the power to frame the identity and roles of other actors, as has been noted, but also that its legitimacy is derived from sources unlike that of states. International organizations such as the UN depend on the legitimacy of their mandates and their moral authority to be effective (Barnett and Finnemore, 2004). By their very nature, they wield authority and power by being perceived as impartial and depoliticized. Barnett and Finnemore (2004) note that as norm creators and diffusers, IOs are in the business of constructing meaning. IOs also work as "legitimation arenas" (Barnett and Finnemore, 2009) that influence the course of global politics and where certain perspectives and norms can be affirmed and naturalized through discourse. They can serve as "frameworks where states pursue legitimation and de-legitimation of different conceptions of the international order" (Zaum, 2013). This study focuses

on understanding how political reality can be constructed by narratives and imagery used in the discourse at the General Assembly. The Assembly is itself a symbolic arena where states and UN officials can champion particular values and ideas in an attempt to mainstream them.[3] There the organization can assert its role and the role of other actors, like global civil society, in international affairs.

The second part of the question above implies that, because of a variety of conditions, global civil society is able to lend legitimacy to the UN. This is a direct result of important transformations in international relations in recent decades ushered in by a revolution in communication. Digital media gave unparalleled information access to individuals and the possibility for them to communicate or work together in real time across different continents. Citizens are now able to easily organize politically in their countries and across the globe. This, coupled with the internationalization of world economies and the end of the Cold War, reconfigured international relations making political alignments less obvious (Weiss, 2009) while requiring increasing public input and consent. Conceptually, global civil society emerged a little over a decade ago to define this cluster of transnational groups and organizations that increased in number, aiming to make interventions in international politics and policy (Anheier, Glasius and Kaldor, 2001). The name has a direct connection to the on-going process of globalization, but much of its conceptual baggage dates back to ancient Rome, where the much older parent concept, civil society, was first used.[4] Global civil society (GCS) encompasses the grass roots movements, the NGOs, the epistemic communities, the religious groups – radical or

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[3] Abbott, Kenneth and Snidal, Duncan. "Why States Act Through Formal International Organizations." *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* (1998) 42, no. 1: 3-32.

[4] Ehrenberg, John. *Civil Society: The Critical History of an Idea.* New York: New York University Press, 1999.

not – and other non-state organizations, official or not, progressive or not, involved in the international policy debate.[5]

GCS, however, is a contested notion with varying definitions. One of the central issues that make global civil society such an important phenomenon for scholars is its democratizing potential in global governance institutions. This is by no means a clear-cut concept, and therefore its use by elected officials and government or intergovernmental institutions like the UN can be problematic. But GCS also embodies current discussions on the power of pluralism in politics, where the need democratize and legitimize institutions and processes in international affairs is ever more pertinent (Scholte, 2004). The phenomenon of IO legitimation processes, unlike that of states, is recent and partly a product of globalization (Zaum, 2013).

Global problems have expanded in scope and complexity, necessitating wide coordinated actions across the world not only with states but also with NGOs, which often have better access to target communities than governments or even IOs. The end of the Cold War allowed IOs to have greater responsibility and new areas of work, but they have not acted as effectively, and their place in global affairs and the values sustaining them have been put to question (Scholte, 2009, Dryzek, 2012). IOs' sources of power and legitimacy depend not on money or military might but upon the understanding that they are useful, effective and fair in treating their members as equals (Barnett and Finnemore, 2004). They also must now listen to and attempt to fulfill the needs of the most vulnerable; the state representatives at the UN no longer are legitimate in portraying these opinions, but global civil society often is. However, including non-state groups into processes that have been marked and defined by the primacy of the state in

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[5] Helmut Anheier, Marlies Glasius and Mary Kaldor. "Introducing Global Civil Society." In *Global Civil Society Yearbook 2001,* eds. Helmut Anheier, Marlies Glasius and Mary Kaldor, 3-22. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

international relations is a significant task. Political structures have not been able to catch up with the discourse that propagates a shift in values in an attempt to make global politics more participatory, which is disseminated by state and non-state actors.

Politicians and academics have claimed GCS has a democratizing potential in international affairs: giving it a greater role can make institutions more representative and responsive to the needs of the people in a model that is akin to national democracies (Dryzek, 2012). Claims and support for more pluralistic global politics are now routine, but the pursuit of more democratic global policy and decision-making continues to be constrained as states hold onto more traditional forms of power (McKeon, 2009).

Below, I explore in a discourse analysis the discursive practices employed by the United Nations to communicate and justify their legitimacy claims. I argue specifically that discourse in the UN General Assembly making use of the concept of global civil society employs self-legitimation. The mention of GCS helps sustain the United Nations' role in the international system while diminishing any outside criticism regarding questions on representation and democratic procedures within the organization.

UN officials and member-states attempt to depoliticize the concept of global civil society in order to preserve the current state-based foundation of international politics; meanwhile GCS groups are barred from most meaningful participation in policy discussions. The exploration of ten years of UN General Assembly sessions that refer to global civil society is a window into the role of discourse and the ideas shaping the identity – and thus, their ability to exist as political actors – of GCS, member-states and the UN in contemporary global politics.

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CHAPTER 1

GLOBAL GOVERNANCE CHALLENGES:

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

AND GLOBAL CIVIL SOCIETY

Introduction

It has been widely acknowledged that the international landscape has gone through significant changes over the course of the last few decades. New actors have gained influence and global politics is increasingly pluralistic,[6] with state primacy no longer absolute. The nature of problems that states face has transformed, and in order to solve some of the most pressing issues of the day they must coordinate with non-state actors. Some of those changes are also reflected in the way international organizations have expanded their mandates after the end of the Cold War. Around that time, the process of globalization deepened transnational ties in all areas of life. This was facilitated by technological revolutions in communication and information access, which initiated profound, structural transformations. These are just some of the broad changes that have affected the international system.

It is in the context of such geopolitical and technological developments that the present work proposes a closer look at how international organizations – in this case, the United Nations, one of the most prominent actors in global governance – evoke global civil society in their speeches for their political purposes. A lot of attention has been given to the study of these phenomena individually, resulting in an extensive and diversified body of work. In that sense, this brief review of the literature does not intend to, and could not, be exhaustive. It centers on a

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[6] Weiss, Thomas G. and Rorden Wilkinson. "What Matters and Why." In *International Organization and Global Governance*, eds. Thomas G. Weiss and and Rorden Wilkinson. Routledge, 2014.

few key areas and issues that ultimately inform the interpretive analysis of how debates within the UN, specifically the General Assembly, evoke global civil society and the implications of this to the larger study of international politics.

International organizations can be examined from a myriad of angles, but in many ways this exercise today cannot be carried without taking into account the forces of non-state actors in global governance. Here the processes surrounding global governance serve as the backdrop in which IOs are immersed and which, along with globalization, facilitated the emergence of global civil society. For this reason, this literature review first focuses on a constructivist analysis of international organizations as normative actors who, contrary to the realist tradition, are understood to have a certain degree of autonomy. How IOs wield power and shape power relations in global politics is also explored. IOs are deemed to have constitutive power;[7] as recognized authorities they are able to create, legitimize and delegitimize new actors, norms and issues. IOs make use of information and rely on their expert authority to influence the international system.[8]

But this system has been altered dramatically by globalization, the evolution of communication technologies and a shift in the nature of the world's most pressing problems, which have grown in complexity oftentimes requiring a concerted, global effort. The actors and processes that play a part in, effectively, running the globe, now include private authority, corporations, and global civil society. IOs are not only struggling to effectively address these new global problems, they are also viewed as undemocratic institutions that increasingly lack

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[7] Barnett, Michael and Duvall, Raymond. "International Organizations and the Diffusion of Power." In *International Organization and Global Governance*, eds. Thomas G. Weiss and Rorden Wilkinson. Routledge, 2014.

[8] Barnett, Michael and Finnemore, Martha. *Rules for the World: International Organizations in Global Politics*. Cornell University Press, 2004.

legitimacy and proper representation. This is how global governance emerges in the post-Cold War era, and how global civil society surfaces as an agent with the potential to help in a global democratization process.[9]

Global civil society (GCS) is a relatively new concept that has quickly become popular among scholars and policymakers. GCS, however, is a contested notion with varying definitions. Many aspects of the disagreements over what constitutes GCS are connected to civil society, the parent concept of global civil society that has influenced some of the discussion on GCS, as will be presented later on in this chapter. One of the central issues that make global civil society such an important phenomenon for scholars is its democratizing potential in global governance institutions. This has made IOs and member-states alike embrace the term, at times, in an attempt to sustain their own legitimacy in global governance. There are problems with how GCS is invoked by these actors, but there is also a lack of research on how this process takes place and its implications on various discourses on global civil society, global governance and thus international politics in general. It is precisely this gap that this study intends to contribute to.

Purpose and Power in International Organizations

International organizations today exist in a world very unlike the one in which they were created. Their membership ranks have changed dramatically with decolonization; there is no longer a war between two diametrically opposed superpowers but a shift towards multilateralism; economic internationalization has changed the face of most world economies; information is abundant and somewhat accessible in most places; and the state is no longer the sole actor in international relations. Amidst all this change, old and new actors turn to international

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[9] Weiss, Thomas G. "What Happened to the Idea of World Government?" *In Thinking About Global Governance, Why People and Ideas Matter*. Routledge, 2011.

organizations as a mechanism to shape and influence global politics. International organizations (IOs) are state-centered institutions, but they reserve some autonomy in guiding policy, sometimes moving away from state interests.[10] Work on international organizations represents a subset of research within IR which has dealt extensively with all aspects of IO behavior, including questions concerning their creation and purpose.

The question on why states create international organizations has been approached from various theoretical perspectives. The discussion here is limited to the three mainstream theoretical traditions in international relations: realism, institutionalism and constructivism. To some, it may seem unnatural to think that states, guarding their own self-interest, would build mechanisms to cooperate with each other, in the process sometimes giving away control over policy. In the realist tradition, it is precisely for that reason – to maintain their status quo and power – that great powers create IOs. These states then design organizations in ways that constrain IOs' ability to act independently, preserving substantial control and thus current political arrangements.[11] For realists, IOs are, therefore, instrumentalized by states and hold no real independent authority to go against their interests. And as far as power balances are concerned, international organizations preserve the status quo – and inequities – in the international system.[12]

The institutionalist view argues that IOs are needed to reduce transaction costs that arise

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[10] Barnett, Michael and Finnemore, Martha. *Rules for the World: International Organizations in Global Politics.* Cornell University Press, 2004.

[11] Barnett, Michael and Duvall, Raymond. "International Organizations and the Diffusion of Power." In *International Organization and Global Governance,* eds. Thomas G. Weiss and Rorden Wilkinson. Routledge, 2014.

[12] Barnett, Michael and Duvall, Raymond. "International Organizations and the Diffusion of Power." In *International Organization and Global Governance,* eds. Thomas G. Weiss and Rorden Wilkinson. Routledge, 2014. And Abbott, Kenneth and Snidal, Duncan. "Why States Act Through Formal International Organizations." *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* (1998) 42, no. 1: 3-32.

when states cooperate with each other; they are also needed to develop projects that further humanity's overall progress. Institutionalism assumes that states have an interest in cooperation. In the same way, however, such cooperation does not mean that all states will have equal gains. Institutionalists believe, as realists, that IOs "are largely sympathetic to (or captured by) the existing distribution of power." At the same time, IOs are put in place not only to preserve power for the dominant states, but also to "diffuse values that can constrain their ability to act" arbitrarily (Barnett and Duvall, 2014).

From a constructivist view, states use IOs to create, diffuse, legitimize and delegitimize norms and ideas. IOs can "potentially reshape the social relations that affect the ability of actors to control the conditions of their future."[13] However, for all the safeguards that states have designed to prevent international organizations from straying in their mandates, IOs can and have gone against the interests of dominant states. If they are indeed "accomplices of the powerful"[14] as realist and institutionalist theories maintain, how can that be so? The constructivist perspective explains this by understanding international organizations as embedded not in a monolithic environment; rather, they are in contact with different politico-ideological views on how the world should be established including liberal, rational and technocratic tendencies (Barnett and Duvall, 2014).

As they juggle these different perspectives, IOs can at times contribute to a redistribution of power. This is because in order to be able to function and be efficient, they must be seen as

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[13] Barnett, Michael and Duvall, Raymond. "International Organizations and the Diffusion of Power." In *International Organization and Global Governance*, eds. Thomas G. Weiss and Rorden Wilkinson. Routledge, 2014.

[14] Ibid.

legitimate so that the weaker states have an incentive to participate in them. [15] Only by having

legitimacy and authority from most if not all states can IOs be effective at advancing the goals of

the powerful states but in a way that is structurally embedded in the organization (Stone, 2009).

This is important to keep in mind since a level of bargaining takes place within the structure of

many IOs. The United Nations provides a clear and unique example. The Security Council

reflects and sustains power imbalances; however, weaker countries yield a lot more control over

other agencies within the UN system.[16] This bargaining, however, generates serious

contradictions that hurt IOs' legitimacy as well as their ability to function:

> Influential states manipulate institutional rules, hold out for privileged
> treatment for their own interests, and exploit their agenda control, and these
> strategies undermine the ability of institutions to provide effective international
> governance. The results are that international institutions suffer from
> credibility problems, that progress in forging new cooperative projects is slow,
> and that cooperation in many areas is blocked by the entrenched interests of
> founding members.[17]

In an effort to explain IOs' autonomy as well as the sources of their authority, Barnett

and Finnemore (2004) view them as bureaucracies, and as such they not only serve states, but

wield authority on their own in a few different ways. First, they have *delegated authority* by

having been given the power to act on behalf of states themselves. Second, they have *moral*

authority by the nature of their mission, seen as morally good as it lies in the pursuit of the

international community's best interest. IOs are viewed as the representatives of this community.

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[15] Stone, Randall W. "Institutions, Power and Interdependence." In *Power, Interdependence, and Nonstate Actors in World Politics,* eds. Andrew Moravcsik and Helen V. Milner. 2009.

[16] Barnett, Michael and Duvall, Raymond. "International Organizations and the Diffusion of Power." In *International Organization and Global Governance*, eds. Thomas G. Weiss and Rorden Wilkinson. Routledge, 2014.

[17] Stone, Randall W. "Institutions, Power and Interdependence." In *Power, Interdependence, and Nonstate Actors in World Politics,* eds. Andrew Moravcsik and Helen V. Milner. 2009.

They are "intended to contrast their universal concerns with the self-serving concerns of states" (Barnett and Finnemore, 2004: 23). This makes them seem like impartial actors immune from the politics in the issues they deal with. Community representatives, they must be seen as technocrats working under the guise of neutrality, even if this may be, oftentimes, a difficult feat to accomplish.[18] This is where they yield *expert authority,* by their position as experts working in a neutral and 'objective' way. This particular kind of authority, however, generates tension between the values of democracy and technocracy.[19] By using their expert authority, they may sometimes move away from what is perceived to be the majority's interests or opinion, thus leading to unilateral decision-making. Not only is this problematic in terms of representation, but it also gives IOs a chance to conserve power for themselves (Barnett and Duvall, 2014).

Information Power and Global Civil Society

It has been established that this perceived impartiality and depoliticization give IOs not only authority, but also power. And they manage this not through coercive means or large militaries, but by using the power of information to carry out their work. Through information, political authorities can construct meaning; they add value and purpose to social life. "IOs do more than manipulate information, they analyze and interpret it," write Barnett and Finnemore (2004). These organizations provide norms, standards of good behavior and assign hierarchies. The authors view this as constitutive power, which enables IOs to create new tasks as well as

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[18] Barnett, Michael and Finnemore, Martha. *Rules for the World: International Organizations in Global Politics.* Cornell University Press, 2004.

[19] Barnett, Michael and Duvall, Raymond. "International Organizations and the Diffusion of Power." In *International Organization and Global Governance,* eds. Thomas G. Weiss and Rorden Wilkinson. Routledge, 2014.

actors that are legitimized to implement those tasks. "In this way they create new interlocutors and new constituencies both for themselves and other actors, notably states," they note. As bureaucracies, these governing bodies are able to both regulate and act in a social reality they help construct.

IOs have significant discursive power, as has been noted; even if they cannot act on it, their use of their pulpit to express values that are perceived to be universal or championed by most states sends a strong message to the international community. This is expressed in General Assembly resolutions or other documents that may not be enforceable, but nonetheless exert pressure on governments and provide guidance on what is 'proper' behavior.[20] As a key example of this Abbott and Snidal single out the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. As far as leveraging authority through information, they are also useful in 'laundering' ideas as independent interlocutors between states. They can promote certain norms that would be met negatively if otherwise presented by a state that does not command the same moral authority as an IO.[21]

This is also why states intend for IOs to enjoy some freedom in decision-making. Some missions, while supported by states, are either too great to be carried out by them or can be politically costly at home. Having a neutral third party to carry out these tasks as well as pass blame is only possible if they have some room to work.[22] The fact that international organizations can leverage information and ideational factors to wield authority is central to the discussion in this study, which seeks to understand exactly how IOs use this power to frame

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[20] Abbott, Kenneth and Snidal, Duncan. "Why States Act Through Formal International Organizations." *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* (1998) 42, no. 1: 3-32.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid.

actors and issues. As will be discussed in more depth later, IOs use their 'information power' to legitimize global civil society as an actor. This, in turn, strengthens IO mandates: by welcoming GCS participation they are perceived to be more representative and democratic in a context where problems now have a global scale.

As bureaucracies, international organizations have a tendency to expand their reach and mandates.[23] However, they have done so partly because the world they exist in now is starkly different than the one they were created in. For instance, more than half a century ago the founders of the major IOs today did not predict they would be involved in nation-building efforts, active conflict and that their work could directly influence member-states' domestic politics. Since this was originally not part of their mandates it can sometimes strain the resources and political capital of IOs. Non-state actors, including members of civil society such as NGOs and religious groups, have been active in implementing and partnering with international institutions to carry out some of this work.

Civil society actors have always been involved in the work of IOs,[24] but the growth of their role in international politics has prompted another shift in relations. The NGO sector and other global civil society actors are involved, as Weiss and Wilkinson (2014) describe, "in myriad activities ranging from familiar roles in disaster relief and poverty alleviation through the implementation of micro-credit and micro-finance programs, to shaping global policy frameworks in development and health." Epistemic communities are also influential in policy-making at the international level; companies have taken over some duties such as providing

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[23] Barnett, Michael and Finnemore, Martha. *Rules for the World: International Organizations in Global Politics.* Cornell University Press, 2004.

[24] Weiss, Thomas G. and Rorden Wilkinson. "What Matters and Why." In *International Organization and Global Governance*, eds. Thomas G. Weiss and and Rorden Wilkinson. Routledge, 2014.

military structure and manpower in conflict zones while also lobbying for market standards that will benefit them; NGOs play a key role in tending to humanitarian relief and so forth.[25] Overall, there are many more actors playing different roles in international affairs compared to a few decades, and some of their actions are coordinated by international organizations. However, this also increases questions of IO legitimacy and credibility. Those at the helm of IOs have not been democratically elected and "consent of the governed is increasingly required."[26] Further, their role in generating and disseminating what they deem to be universal values can often be an impossible and controversial task. In the past two decades, these institutions have continuously sought to partner with civil society representatives to add legitimacy and support to their political projects. There is a growing demand from citizens that global politics become a more democratic space, leading them to organize and demand involvement in matters of global governance in some concrete way. International institutions have become a highly visible pulpit for this global civil society to gain legitimacy and disseminate ideas or influence policy. And their presence simultaneously lends legitimacy back to IOs.

The degree of agency of these actors is widely debated and changes from one issue to another. Nonetheless, they have become a new piece of the puzzle in the conduct of global governance, with various implications on power distribution. And as IOs make use of their own information power creating actors and legitimizing them, they play a pivotal role in not only helping to define who represents global civil society but also what it actually means. This is why it becomes all the more relevant that the discourse taking place within the General Assembly be

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[25] Ibid.

[26] Barnett, Michael and Finnemore, Martha. *Rules for the World: International Organizations in Global Politics*. Cornell University Press, 2004.

examined more closely as a way to understand the kinds of views that construct the relationship between international organizations and global civil society in global governance.

IOs, Global Governance and Global Civil Society

The scope and depth of global problems and IO's inability to resolve them effectively has exposed their outdated structures. There is a near consensus on international organizations' inefficacy when handling complex global issues ranging from climate change to human security (Weiss, 2011). This is mainly due to their outdated systems. It has proven very difficult for IOs to gather political support to update their hard-fought original configurations to appropriately and effectively approach the issues of the 21st century. The United Nations for instance has had its basic structure mainly intact despite dramatic shifts both in the profile of its members as a result of decolonization, and political changes that include globalization and the emergence of non-state actors.[27]

This new reality also includes widespread civilian access to communication technologies, new political actors and greater global interdependence. Failing to adjust quickly, IOs suffer from a so-called crisis of executive multilateralism which has made scholars, politicians and civil society groups call for greater inclusiveness and accountability in the international system.[28] For

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[27] Weiss, Thomas G. "What Happened to the Idea of World Government?" *In Thinking About Global Governance, Why People and Ideas Matter*. Routledge, 2011.

[28] Steffek, Jens and Ferretti, Maria Paola. "Accountability or 'Good Decisions'? The Competing Goals of Civil Society Participation in International Governance." *Global Society* 23 (2009), n. 1: 37-57. And Scholte, Jan Aart. "Civil Society and Democratically Accountable Global Governance." *Government and Opposition* 39 (2004): 211-233.

international institutions, this democratic deficit exacerbated by globalization has impacted the legitimacy they need to carry out their functions.[29]

Shortly after the end of the Cold War, as the forces of globalization became more visible, the contemporary use of global governance emerged as a response to these circumstances. Murphy (2014) contends that, as a process, global governance has existed for more than a century, but this particular conceptual version arose as the need for transnational and global arrangements to resolve issues in equal scale became more pressing, and while non-state actors began to play even more active roles in addressing such problems.[30] Weiss (2011) defines global governance as "the sum of laws, norms, policies, and institutions that define, constitute, and mediate relations between citizens, societies, markets, and states in the international system – the wielders and objects of the exercise of international public power." It is clear from this definition that the concept of global governance is descriptive and not normative in nature. It aims to accurately depict the different actors and structures at work in international politics (Weiss, 2011). At the same time, it also implies the need for an investigation on the power relations between these actors and how they interact and combine forces to govern the world.[31] It highlights how informal and unofficial forms of authority and processes are "shaping, and, to varying degrees, steering aspects of global life."[32] Importantly as it relates to the focus of this

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[29] Tobias Bohmelt, Vally Koubi and Thomas Bernauer. "Civil society participation in global governance: insights from climate politics." *European Journal of Political Research* 55 (2014): 18-30.

[30] Weiss, Thomas G. "What Happened to the Idea of World Government?" *In Thinking About Global Governance, Why People and Ideas Matter*. Routledge, 2011.

[31] Weiss, Thomas G. and Wilkinson, Rorden. "Global Governance to the Rescue: Saving International Relations?" *Global Governance* 20 (2014): 19–36.

[32] Ibid.

study, it moves away from traditional power politics and treats actors such as global civil society not as peripheral but vital to world affairs.[33]

The concept of global governance, by focusing on the myriad processes involved in regulating, dictating and overseeing all matters of global regimes and structures also highlights the lack of an overarching political body or world government. This equates to "governance *minus* government, which means virtually no capacity to ensure compliance with collective decisions."[34] This is not a cohesive process, or one that has developed to the same extent in every issue area. As an example, in the scope of legislation and regimes related to the environment and, in contrast, in those that pertain to global financial markets.[35] IOs in this context have been unsuccessful at predicting or coordinating response to problems that require a concerted effort. To increase the challenge, while the nature of problems is global, the responses originate locally; paradoxically, the only actor with true policy authority is still the state, but many others now have a hand in setting the agenda and solving problems. Non-state actors and civil society groups in particular have a growing presence in various stages, influencing the policy agenda, helping in its deliberation or execution.

> Society has become too complex for citizens' demands to be satisfied solely by governments at national, regional and global levels. Instead, civil society organizations play increasingly active roles in shaping norms, laws, and policies. The growing influence and power of civil society actors means that they have effectively entered the realm of policy-making. They are participants in global governance as advocates, activists and policymakers which in turn

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[33] Willetts, Peter. *Non-governmental Organizations in World Politics: The Construction of Global Governance*. Routledge, 2010.

[34] Weiss, Thomas G. "What Happened to the Idea of World Government?" *In Thinking About Global Governance, Why People and Ideas Matter*. Routledge, 2011.

[35] Ibid.

poses challenges of representation, accountability and legitimacy both to governments and back to civil society actors. [36]

This enhanced public participation has come to be seen as a way to further direct relations between regular citizens and policymakers at a global level.[37] As Weiss suggests above, increasingly scholars and practitioners have tasked global civil society with the role of lending legitimacy to international institutions in an effort to democratize and make them more effective.[38] In fact, Dryzek (2012) contends that civil society actors have become the "locus of demands for legitimacy and accountability in global governance." While the changes needed in the international system require much more than greater inclusiveness, there is a perception that global civil society holds significant potential to bring fresh ideas to policy deliberations and hold IOs accountable while, in the process, legitimizing their actions.[39] Global civil society's potential to enhance global democracy are but one of many ways non-state actors can help this process. However, scholars in political theory believe GCS can wield significant contributions, and more than that, global civil society participation has been in some academic and political circles presented as the best way to enhance democracy in global governance.[40] This point is also sustained by the way in which IOs have rapidly sought to adjust and give GCS increasing access to formal global governance institutions. However, before global civil society's real potential and

[36] Thakur, Ramesh and Weiss, Thomas G. "Framing global governance, five gaps." In *Thinking about Global Governance: Why People and Ideas Matter*. Routledge, 2011.

[37] Steffek, Jens and Ferretti, Maria Paola. "Accountability or 'Good Decisions'? The Competing Goals of Civil Society Participation in International Governance." *Global Society* 23 (2009): 37-57.

[38] Scholte, Jan Aart. "Civil Society and Democratically Accountable Global Governance." *Government and Opposition* 39 (2004): 211-233. And Weiss, Thomas G. "What Happened to the Idea of World Government?" *In Thinking About Global Governance, Why People and Ideas Matter*. Routledge, 2011.

[39] Scholte, Jan Aart. "Civil Society and Democratically Accountable Global Governance." *Government and Opposition* 39 (2004): 211-233.

[40] Dryzek, John S. "Global Civil Society: The Progress of Post-Westphalian Politics." *Annual Review of Political Science* 15 (2012): 101-119.

limitations in changing the nature of global governance are discussed, it is important to understand its origins and meaning, which are examined in the following section.

Civil Society: Conceptual Origins and Traditions

Global civil society as a concept has only emerged in the last two decades both as a consequence and response to globalization.[41] Overall, I argue global civil society is a contested concept with varying meanings depending on the purposes of its uses and who may be using it. While it is embedded in the context of global governance and the rise of demands for a more pluralistic way of doing politics, GCS owes some of its current underpinnings to the concept of civil society, which began to be theorized in ancient Rome. Aristotle, Hegel, Antonio Gramsci and the various other thinkers involved in shaping this notion have each introduced different issues that reflected and were impacted by the politics of their time. Much has been written on the origins and evolution of the term (Ehrenberg 1999, Keane 1998, Kaldor 2003). Global civil society depends upon this foundation to an extent[42] and to understand it, one must take into account the influences and views it retained from its parent concept. The discussion on civil society here, then, is isolated to the most significant aspects that have helped construct and shed light on the far more recent idea of global civil society.

Among the various definitions attached to civil society over the years, it has most often been conceptualized based on its position towards the state. How it behaves in relation to it or as a part of it – whether questioning and limiting state power or working closely with it to ensure that policy is guided by public interest – has been the subject of many works. Plato and Aristotle

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[41] Kaldor, Mary. "The idea of a global civil society." *International Affairs*, 79, no. 3 (2003): 583-593.

[42] Krishan, Kumar. "Global Civil Society." *European Journal of Sociology*, 48, no. 3 (2007): 413-434. http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S0003975607000422

associated civil society with high moral values (Ehrenberg, 1999) where individuals worked toward the common good, but as an organized community it depended on state power to exist. Civil society could only exist in 'civilized' environments, and there was a marked distinction between 'savages,' subject to authoritarian governments who prevented the existence of such a politically organized community, as opposed to those whose leaders allowed open discussion.[43] There was an understanding that associated freedom with the existence of civil society, and state sovereignty was seen as a "one of the guarantees of an effective and thriving civil society" (Kumar, 2007).

Kant applied to the phenomenon a universal, cosmopolitan characteristic where the community remained in search of universal standards to guide them. He stressed, however, the regulating relationship between state and civil society in which "there can be no freedom without law, no civil society without the state, and no peace without coercion" (Ehrenberg, 1999). In Lockean tradition, civil society could not be dissociated from the state; rather it marked a society governed by laws where a social contract gave equal rights to all citizens (Kaldor, 2003). Modern conceptualizations see civil society as separate from the state. These originate from Hegel, who provoked a major shift in thought that led civil society to be approached as a domestic phenomenon. He did this by dividing social life into three spheres: the state, civil society and the family. The individual who participated in this civil society was largely interested in his personal economic gains, another departure from the Aristotelian and Kantian 'selfless man' (Ehrenberg, 2001). The market was central to the activities within civil society,[44] it was a space for public activity which involved trade and social interaction. In this self-interested

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[43] Kaldor, Mary. "The idea of a global civil society." *International Affairs*, 79, no. 3 (2003): 583-593.

[44] Krishan, Kumar. "Global Civil Society." *European Journal of Sociology*, 48, no. 3 (2007): 413-434. http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S0003975607000422

environment, however, the state was essential as a regulator to prevent chaos and inequality. Hegel viewed civil society as a mostly competitive, not democratic, sphere, but trusted the neutral bureaucratic apparatus of the state to help rein it in (Ehrenberg, 2001, Kaldor, 2003, Chandhoke, 2003). Unlike Hegel, Marx doubted the state's ability to regulate civil society,[45] but Anheier, Glasius and Kaldor (2001) argue it was Hegel's mistrust of the democratic potential of civil society that influenced Marx's ambivalence towards it: "Marx equated civil society, in its German translation 'Bürgerliche Gesellschaft', with bourgeois society, and narrowed it to only economic life in which everyone pursued his own selfish interests and became alienated from his own human potential and his fellow people."

Following the Russian Revolution, the need to keep stability caused the new Communist state to constrain civil society to keep control and drive out dissent. Meanwhile in the West, the notion almost disappeared,[46] only to be resurrected in the late 1980's and early 1990's. Ehrenberg (1999) contends "Marxism's commitment to fuse state and society stifled civil society." In the evolution and opening of the Soviet state that eventually led to its demise, this also helps to explain why Gramsci, one of the most influential thinkers in modern conceptions of civil society, argued that it could not be dissociated from the state, while also leaving out the Hegelian notion of economic activity. In the Gramscian civil society, civic associations, the church (a reflex of the Catholic church's influence in Italy)[47] and cultural institutions were included, providing it with a cultural and ideological element.

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[45] Ehrenberg, John. *Civil Society: The Critical History of an Idea*. New York: New York University Press, 1999.

[46] Helmut Anheier, Marlies Glasius and Mary Kaldor. "Introducing Global Civil Society." In *Global Civil Society Yearbook 2001*, eds. Helmut Anheier, Marlies Glasius and Mary Kaldor, 3-22. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

[47] Ehrenberg, John. *Civil Society: The Critical History of an Idea*. New York: New York University Press, 1999.

The modern notion that civil society is positioned between the state and the market stems from Gramsci, but Anheier, Glasius and Kaldor (2001) stress that to him this separation would be temporary, contributing to the "revolutionary struggle." Gramsci's work provoked a "great divide" in contemporary discussions of civil society between 'generalists,' which advocate for a more inclusive view of civil society with the presence of the market and other institutions, and 'minimalists'.[48] In either circle, however, civil society is defined by having some kind of articulation with the state.

> Gramsci is ambiguous about this civil society of his. On the one hand, it is through this cultural 'superstructure' that the bourgeois class imposes its hegemony, using it to keep the working class in its place. On the other hand, it is a kind of wedge between the state and the class-structured economy, which has the revolutionary potential of dislodging the bourgeoisie.[49]

The current notion of civil society, which has most closely influenced global civil society, began to take shape around the same time, in the 1970's and 1980's, in two different places marked by authoritarianism: amidst military dictatorships in Latin America, particularly in Brazil, and in Eastern Europe. Living in oppressive states, both groups saw in civil society the possibility of emancipation by affecting political change from below (Anheier, Glasius and Kaldor, 2001). Because of this, Eastern European and Brazilian anti-regime intellectuals and dissidents worked with a definition that separated it from the state, placing heavy importance on civil participation (Kaldor, 2003). Civil society was about reclaiming part of the individual autonomy and agency that had been lost. In order to achieve this, at the same time that there was

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[48] Krishan, Kumar. "Global Civil Society." *European Journal of Sociology,* 48, no. 3 (2007): 413-434. http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S0003975607000422

[49] Helmut Anheier, Marlies Glasius and Mary Kaldor. "Introducing Global Civil Society." In *Global Civil Society Yearbook 2001,* eds. Helmut Anheier, Marlies Glasius and Mary Kaldor, 3-22. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

a move away from the state, an emphasis was placed on networks, particularly international ones, as a strategy to apply pressure to the regimes. By communicating with and addressing international institutions, foreign activist groups and foreign governments, they sought to open up space for democratization back home, through a boomerang effect.[50]

One may wonder, however, why these groups actively decided to use a term with such extensive baggage in the first place to be at the center of political projects seeking renewal. In the case of Brazil, civil society was broad enough to give power to civic organizations like church groups, labor union movements and others who were pressuring the government to gradually democratize (Anheier, Glasius and Kaldor, 2001). It did not involve political parties or any sort of official political apparatus that was linked with or taken over by the state. The Eastern European perspective was somewhat different, and for them civil society was about reclaiming "autonomous spaces independent of the state." In both cases, while civil society may have been at the heart of a political project, the initial intent was not to overthrow regimes but take back civic spaces that had become enmeshed with the state.

> While state terrorism was more spectacular in Latin America, with military regimes 'disappearing' thousands of people in each country in a matter of months, civil society in the Gramscian sense was snuffed out more successfully by the longer rule and more totalitarian aspirations of communism in eastern Europe and the USSR. In a totalitarian state, where the distinction between the interests of the people and the interests of the state is categorically denied — hence 'people's republics' — central European dissidents began to believe that conceiving of 'civil society' as association between people away from the tentacles of the state was the way to begin resisting the state.[51]

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[50] For more on the boomerang effect and transnational activism see Keck, Margaret and Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders*.

[51] Helmut Anheier, Marlies Glasius and Mary Kaldor. "Introducing Global Civil Society." In *Global Civil Society Yearbook 2001*, eds. Helmut Anheier, Marlies Glasius and Mary Kaldor, 3-22. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Following the end of dictatorships in Latin America and after the fall of the Soviet bloc, the concept of civil society has become popular not only in countries experiencing repression but also in the developed world where citizens sought to reinvigorate democratic politics. As is the case with global civil society today, civil society has become associated with the mindset that individual and collective agency matters and has an emancipatory potential to change political reality. For this reason, embracing the term has become politically useful for states that wish to add legitimacy to their political projects, since including citizens in the process or the appearance of such can sanction actions and make them seem inevitable since they appear to represent the people's will.

An Emerging Global Civil Society

On an international level, the global policy apparatus also changed as result of the end of the Cold War and deepening globalization processes. Similarly to what happened in domestic contexts, there was an increasing call for more democratic global politics and citizen inclusion by way of a global civil society. Many factors contributed to the emergence of this global civil society. In general, scholars credit its rise to the significant advances in communication technology and previously mentioned shifts in international relations with globalization and the end of the Cold War. The former led to the multiplication of transnational networks, stimulated also by a crisis of representation in government. Dissatisfaction with the outcomes of state-led solutions to transnational and global issues provoked citizen pressure on governments to be more responsive and effective. States' reins on international matters were loosened, and demands for participatory processes in political life grew (Lipschutz 2007). Issues of "democracy like

participation, consultation, open debate, representativeness, transparency and accountability"[52] are at the core of GCS, where the notion of one single authority yielding all control over policymaking is often challenged. Globalization also created questions that needed resolving regarding global rule of law and regulation spanning human rights to the environment. It also allowed people to be more easily aware of the stark economic inequality worldwide. The new communication tools made the world 'smaller' in two ways relevant to the growth of global civil society: they allowed citizens to organize and communicate with their counterparts in other countries and helped instill a sense of global citizenry, where all became 'citizens of the world.'[53] In short, it was necessary that people began to imagine this global community in order for it to become politically relevant.

In this process, GCS has had a role in many important changes that occurred in global governance. In fact, GCS is credited with influencing the movement for pluralism in global politics and for promoting more socially conscious concepts such as fair trade, human security, sustainable development and global public goods which contributed to a change away from a neo-liberal globalization discourse post-Cold War.[54] Scholte (2014) notes a long list of contributions: the International Criminal Court's establishment owed much to a "major civil society campaign," as well as other efforts including the installation of the Human Rights Council in the UN and quote reallocations at the IMF.

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[52] Scholte, Jan Aart. "Global Civil Society." In *The Political Economy of Globalization*, ed. Ngaire Woods, 178-90. London: Macmillan, 2000.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Scholte, Jan Aart. "Civil Society and NGOs." In *International Organization and Global Governance*, eds. Thomas G. Weiss and Rorden Wilkinson. Routledge, 2014.

There is still debate, however, on the actual existence of a global civil society; some works argue we may in fact be dealing with a transnational civil society.[55] Transnational because this connection may be limited to some countries and not effectively include the entire world as 'global' implies. Transnational associations were vital to the Latin American and Eastern European projects, and an emerging global consciousness helped to popularize it. While global civil society began to be discussed only in the 90's,[56] transnational movements can be traced as far back as to the international anti-slavery movement. But not all countries possess strong and active civil societies who are able to engage globally. In other words, not all places in the world today are democracies or allow their citizens to engage publicly in advocating for certain issues. This embeds into the idea of global civil society a representation problem that can only be overcome if all countries are indeed included in this 'global'. Nonetheless, Anheier, Glasius and Kaldor (2001) argue that in light of the unprecedented scale and level of these connections, using the term transnational "understates" the expansiveness of the phenomenon. The 'global' has also a direct relation to globalization, making explicit the relation between GCS's emergence and globalizing processes, as both a result and reaction to it.[57]

Due to the rapid proliferation of international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), global civil society sometimes is used interchangeably with NGOs. Although they are not the only actors in GCS, INGOs are often the most visible and with the most resources. INGOs have

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[55] Helmut Anheier, Marlies Glasius and Mary Kaldor. "Introducing Global Civil Society." In *Global Civil Society Yearbook 2001*, eds. Helmut Anheier, Marlies Glasius and Mary Kaldor, 3-22. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

[56] Ibid.

[57] See Krishan, Kumar. "Global Civil Society." *European Journal of Sociology*, 48, no. 3 (2007): 413-434. http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S0003975607000422 and Helmut Anheier, Marlies Glasius and Mary Kaldor. "Introducing Global Civil Society." In *Global Civil Society Yearbook 2001*, eds. Helmut Anheier, Marlies Glasius and Mary Kaldor, 3-22. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

become close partners of governments and IOs as central players in international development and nation building. However, equating GCS with NGOs fails to truly represent the myriad actors that may be informally organized or part of grassroots movements that are just as important to global civil society and to global governance processes.[58] This can also contribute to a depolitizing effect, Scholte (2014) argues. This is because NGOs can oftentimes be involved in global governance as 'service providers', implementing policy in partnership with IOs or other bodies and not necessarily focusing on the political aspects of those policies. Scholte contends global civil society is concerned with influencing the norms and rules that make up political projects and the "dynamics of obtaining and exercising social power and processes of constructing and embedding norms and rules." Other scholars of global civil society (Chandhoke 2001, Krishan, 2007, Anheier, Glasius and Kaldor, 2001) worry that the rapid multiplication of international NGOs may be creating a "comospolitan consensus or of a move towards a domesticated, donor-led global civil society."[59] The effects of discourse on the depolitization and 'mainstreaming' of global civil society is what the present work will be addressing and investigating.

From the previous discussion it is clear that civil society can have various definitions. Like its parent concept, global civil society can also be many things to many people. While that can certainly be problematic, it can also be an asset. The fact that it is not a "politically loaded term" opens the possibility for discussions on civic engagement in diversified settings.[60]

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[58] Scholte, Jan Aart. "Civil Society and NGOs." In *International Organization and Global Governance*, eds. Thomas G. Weiss and Rorden Wilkinson. Routledge, 2014.

[59] Helmut Anheier, Marlies Glasius and Mary Kaldor. "Introducing Global Civil Society." In *Global Civil Society Yearbook 2001*, eds. Helmut Anheier, Marlies Glasius and Mary Kaldor, 3-22. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

[60] Keck, Margaret and Von Bülow, Marisa. "Commentary: What Can We Ask of Civil Society?" *Journal of Civil Society* 7, no. 3 (2011): 283-286. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17448689.2011.604996

However, as has been mentioned, it also runs the risk of becoming a discursive prop, particularly for governments and other institutions that seek to engender public support in pursuit of their own agendas. This highlights the tension between the normative and descriptive definitions of GCS (Kaldor, 2003, Krishan, 2007), and is also key as it helps sustain this work's claim that actors (in this case in particular, IOs) in international politics can use global civil society definitions haphazardly as they interact and attempt to preserve their roles in global governance.

The normative definition of GCS has fueled the perspective that global civil society is inherently concerned with the common good. The ethical dimension of civil society as the one interested in promoting high moral values, tied to the uses by Latin American and Eastern European intellectuals, is reflected also in global civil society, particularly as it relates to its normative aspects. This is why it must be made clear that global civil society here is not understood as an inherently progressive sphere;[61] but one that involves a variety of non-state groups working at the international level with different goals and perspectives, not all of them serving the public interest, including radical religious groups, terrorist associations and so on. Keck and Von Bulow (2011) reflect on this regarding civil society, and the same can be applied to the global conception: "having lost faith in the efficacy of functional and partisan representation, we make civil society's very lack of specificity into a condition of possibility not of any particular association but of association itself." It is necessary to keep in mind that this vagueness opens up space for the term to have various uses, some of which fulfill reactionary agendas. For this reason, scholars have created various categories to discuss and conceptualize global civil society.

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[61] Lipschutz, Ronnie D. "The Historical and Structural Origins of Global Civil Society." *Globalizations* 4, no. 2 (2007): 304-308. *Academic Search Premier*, EBSCO*host*.

The struggle to define the phenomenon of global civil society is in establishing one way to categorize its manifestations and relationships with other actors. Scholars have attempted to define it in relation to various things: issue-areas (democracy, the environment, the global economy) and how it behaves within global environmental or human rights movements, against the backdrop of the state, and in relation to globalization. It is also difficult to properly convey all the different perspectives of the actors *participating in* global civil society. In the definition used here, the categories presented are a combination of what has been presented by Anheier, Glasius and Kaldor (2001) as well as Kaldor (2003) because they represent the most commonly cited view by scholars investigating the phenomenon.

In this perspective, global civil society is not monolithic, but divided in a few categories. The first category consists of the "supporters" of globalization, also called the "neoliberal version": these include those who equate the rise of GCS with the expansion of Western liberal staples such as free trade, loose regulation, greater economic interconnectivity as well as a global government of some kind and see the value of private endeavors taking over tasks once carried out by the state. The "activists" hold onto more clearly to the tradition of civil society created in the late 80's and are critical of the consequences of globalization, and they focus on transnational advocacy networks taking place in a public sphere as defined by Habermas.[62] The "alternatives" are those who neither oppose or support the process and are not involved in discussions on either side, remaining independent. The 'post-modern' view recognizes the existence of many global civil societies, including activist networks on various issues. They have different goals, needs

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[62] Krishan, Kumar. "Global Civil Society." *European Journal of Sociology*, 48, no. 3 (2007): 413-434. http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S0003975607000422

and opinions on the major problems of globalization (and how to go about fixing them) but they all act within a global, or intensely transnational, frame. It should also be noted that many of the organizations or groups that make up GCS are also involved in national and domestic politics, embedded in multiple activist networks simultaneously.[63] The post-modern definition of global civil society is the one employed in this work, as it highlights GCS's inherently contested nature, where multiple voices use a "platform inhabited by activists (or post-Marxists), NGOs and neoliberals, as well as national and religious groups, where they argue about, campaign for (or against), negotiate about, or lobby for the arrangements that shape global developments."[64]

One thing that these definitions appear to leave out, however, is the role of the market. The idea of global civil society as a third sphere between the state, the market and the family has been criticized as it ignores the influence (and sometimes limits) that markets have on social relations at a basic level (Keane 2003, Chandhoke, 2003, Krishan, 2007, Lipschutz, 2007). Through the brief look at the history of the concept of civil society, one identifies several versions of the term that have rendered it entirely separate from the state and the economy. However, both civil society and global civil society do not exist in a bubble. GCS interacts with government institutions as well as with the market, and is impacted by and subjected to processes happening in both domains. As Lipschutz (2007) argues, "there is little in the public realm that is not, somehow, affected by private interests and practices, and there is little in the private realm that is not, somehow, shaped by public power, authority and regulation."

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[63] Keck, Margaret and Von Bülow, Marisa. "Commentary: What Can We Ask of Civil Society?" *Journal of Civil Society* 7, no. 3 (2011): 283-286. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17448689.2011.604996

[64] Kaldor, Mary. "The idea of a global civil society." *International Affairs*, 79, no. 3 (2003): 583-593.

Much in the same way, the influence of the state cannot be overlooked. While governance at the international level does allow for greater levels of non-state participation than before, the nation-state still yields considerable force; the process of globalization and the shifts in the structure of international affairs are far from over. In this stage, the state still holds power while coexisting with groups that increasingly demand more space.

> States constitute the limits of civil society, as well as enabling political initiatives in global civil society. In effect, the very states that global civil society supposedly opposes *enable* the latter in the sense that only they can provide the conditions within which the civil society agenda is realised.[65]

GCS exists within a space where, due to its unofficial capacity, in order to be effective it must be in contact with the state, since governments are the ones in charge of drafting and signing laws. At the same time, there is some concern that by partnering with states and international bodies GCS organizations can become depolitized or reach near-institutionalization, cancelling the potential for citizen representation.[66] As has been mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, international organizations depend on the legitimacy of their mandates and their moral authority to be effective. Analyzing the use and symbolic construction of the concept of global civil society in this context can give insight into how it reflects power struggles and imbalances in international affairs. This becomes more relevant since many international organizations and particularly the UN have developed official channels in which they claim to consult with global civil society. GCS also often *acts through* these institutions, and

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[65] Chandhoke, Neera. "The Limits of Global Civil Society." In *Global Civil Society Yearbook 2002*, eds. Helmut Anheier, Marlies Glasius and Mary Kaldor, 35-53. Oxford University Press, 2003.

[66] Krishan, Kumar. "Global Civil Society." *European Journal of Sociology*, 48, no. 3 (2007): 413-434. http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S0003975607000422

investigating their view on GCS can shed some light on what groups are legitimized or excluded within the realm of the international system. Specifically, some of the issues that will later be discussed attempt to address exactly how international organizations and their member states use GCS for their political purposes, as much of the literature mentioned here has described. What specific ideal-type of global civil society do they refer to, and in doing so, which groups do they legitimize? What norms, values and beliefs can be inferred from this? Is there indeed a trend towards a cosmopolitan consensus that serves to affirm the current state of international politics, thus ignoring other actors in global civil society that may share contesting views that move away from the mainstream?

While it may be difficult to neatly conceptualize it, GCS can produce palpable results and impact policy. Members of global civil society are now key players in global governance. This can be illustrated by the efforts from states and international organizations to make room for participatory modes of governance, including civil society in conferences and, at the very least, listening to their demands.[67] A few other GCS accomplishments include raising awareness to issues that the official global governance apparatus may not have addressed on its own, such as debt reduction and relief for poor countries, and issues as varied as "arms control, corruption, debt, democracy, disability, ecological degradation, gender, human rights, humanitarian intervention, indigenous peoples, labor standards, land grabs, poverty, and the use of non-Western scripts on the Internet."[68] GCS has also been largely responsible for mainstreaming

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[67] Krishan, Kumar. "Global Civil Society." *European Journal of Sociology*, 48, no. 3 (2007): 413-434. http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S0003975607000422

[68] Scholte, Jan Aart. "Civil Society and NGOs." In *International Organization and Global Governance*, eds. Thomas G. Weiss and Rorden Wilkinson. Routledge, 2014.

ideas from humanitarian intervention to environmental politics.[69] But much like other phenomena taking place in a rapidly changing international landscape, varied forces and movements impact it. This is why analyzing how global civil society is invoked within the world's premier international organization, as this study intends to do, becomes imperative to understand the discourse around non-state actors and the power of IOs as arenas for discourse to shape trends and power relations in international politics.

Democratizing Global Governance: The Role of Global Civil Society

The multilevel process of international decision-making that characterizes global governance has posed many challenges, particularly as it relates to questions of legitimacy and accountability. This has led some scholars to make analogies with the Westphalian state system, using standards of legitimacy usually connected to domestic politics for the international arena.[70] Some of the arguments for a more democratic and inclusive global governance apparatus stems directly from theory focused on the state. The solutions presented to this problem, particularly as it relates to global civil society's role in enhancing accountability and legitimacy are drawn from civil society relations within the state. This transposition of ideas to a system that is far more complex and diversified can be problematic. Thus, global civil society's democratizing act, while

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[69] Helmut Anheier, Marlies Glasius and Mary Kaldor. "Introducing Global Civil Society." In *Global Civil Society Yearbook 2001,* eds. Helmut Anheier, Marlies Glasius and Mary Kaldor, 3-22. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

[70] Brassett, James and Tsingou, Eleni. "The Politics of Legitimate Global Governance." *Review of International Political Economy* 18 (2011): 1-16.

noteworthy, runs into a number of issues. There is a normative view arguing that global civil society participation enhances democracy in global politics and helps legitimize it.[71]

This normative perception is also shared by states and IOs given the level of GCS participation they have welcomed in recent decades. Scholte (2004) notes three ways GCS can contribute to democracy and accountability in global governance: they can increase transparency; monitor and review policies already in place and lobby for the creation of mechanisms to enhance accountability. But while much hope is attached to global civil society as a democratizing actor in global governance, there are limitations related to the nature of GCS as an actor and to the IO environment they act in. GCS's role in international affairs has expanded significantly in a short span. It is certainly the case that GCS, and NGOs in particular, have far more space to participate in multilateral institutions.[72] Today one is hard-pressed to find a UN body completely closed to NGOs,[73] whose number in consultative status went in a span of sixty-five years from 41 to almost 4,000.[74] This trend is noticeable in other organizations as well. Only 21% of World Bank projects in 1990 included NGOs; in 2006 that figure was 76%. The World Trade Organization "invites NGOs as observers at ministerial meetings and grants private actors the right to submit legal briefs on trade disputes."[75] While there are more opportunities,

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[71] Scholte, Jan Aart. "Civil Society and Democratically Accountable Global Governance." *Government and Opposition* 39 (2004): 211-233.

[72] Tallberg, Jonas and Uhlin, Anders. "Civil Society and Global Democracy: An Assessment." *In Global Democracy: Normative and Empirical Perspectives,* eds. Daniele Archibugi, Mathias Koenig-Archibugi and Raffaele Marchetti. Cambridge University Press, 2011.

[73] Ibid.

[74] United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. "NGO Branch: Consultative status with ECOSOC and other accreditations."
http://esango.un.org/civilsociety/displayConsultativeStatusSearch.do?method=search&sessionCheck=false

[75] Tallberg, Jonas and Uhlin, Anders. "Civil Society and Global Democracy: An Assessment." *In Global Democracy: Normative and Empirical Perspectives,* eds. Daniele Archibugi, Mathias Koenig-Archibugi and Raffaele Marchetti. Cambridge University Press, 2011.

because of a series of factors GCS participation should not be equated with democratization and accountability of global governance as a whole.

On the one hand, participation is uneven both geographically and by issue-area. Geographically, well-funded NGOs which usually represent or have strong ties to developed countries are more likely to be more active and contribute more whenever they are given the space to do so. And in any case, populations under repressive regimes, as has been mentioned, do not have the 'luxury' of having legitimate global civil society groups emerge in a way that enables them to operate officially and exert influence in global governance.

And in order for global civil society to live up to this accountability claim, a significant amount of resources is needed for policy evaluation and monitoring of global governance processes and institutions, which is not always available. Even if they have the resources, NGO access can be uneven; they have a better chance of being granted more participation if they focus on environmental issues or human rights than in security or global finance.[76] In fact, the mechanisms and official procedures put in place throughout different IOs are still obstacles to more effective GCS action. A degree of consultation with global civil society is now common and expected within IOs, but they are still largely limited to playing roles in policymaking and implementation rather than decision-making.[77] Often, they are included only after key decisions

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[76] Ibid.

[77] Tallberg, Jonas and Uhlin, Anders. "Civil Society and Global Democracy: An Assessment." *In Global Democracy: Normative and Empirical Perspectives,* eds. Daniele Archibugi, Mathias Koenig-Archibugi and Raffaele Marchetti. Cambridge University Press, 2011. And Scholte, Jan Aart. "Civil Society." In International Organization and Global Governance.

have been made.[78] This is referred to as a "shallow form of participation," with scholars reflecting that IOs only "open up at the margins."[79]

This context also stresses a key point this work intends to demonstrate: that IOs and their members seek to use GCS participation as a way to leverage greater legitimacy even if as such it is limited and uneven. Coupled with this is the issue that those advocating GCS participation as a way to revitalize the current state of global affairs aren't clear in what it is they are supposed to achieve (Tallberg and Uhlin, 2011). This may not be by coincidence, as it helps prevent GCS from gaining more ground within international organizations. However, GCS limitations are not just related to mechanisms and procedures within IOs. As the previous discussion on GCS has demonstrated, there is much disagreement on whether some groups that claim to represent global civil society are legitimate. The answers to whom NGOs, in particular, are accountable to vary and are still debated. GCS can be portrayed as being made up of "self-appointed representatives," which lends it little legitimacy. Dryzek (2012) stresses, nonetheless, that this lack of representation must be analyzed in the context of global politics. If GCS is to be compared to what he terms "an ideal model of egalitarian democracy" then it may not pass the test, but compared to the current international system it is a significant contribution to furthering democracy. Global civil society is one actor in a long and complex democratizing process in global governance, and as such cannot be expected to work as the panacea to all its problems (Tallberg and Uhlin, 2011). Including GCS in global political deliberations is not a clear-cut process, but some progress has indeed been made. The presence of GCS can often help the

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[78] Scholte, Jan Aart. "Civil Society and NGOs." In *International Organization and Global Governance*, eds. Thomas G. Weiss and Rorden Wilkinson. Routledge, 2014.

[79] Tallberg, Jonas and Uhlin, Anders. "Civil Society and Global Democracy: An Assessment." *In Global Democracy: Normative and Empirical Perspectives,* eds. Daniele Archibugi, Mathias Koenig-Archibugi and Raffaele Marchetti. Cambridge University Press, 2011.

pursuit of progressive agendas in global governance and issues of social justice also gain greater exposure, increasing the chances for real action. However, much more could be done by GCS, despite all its difficulties in interacting in the international system.[80] Scholte (2014) notes GCS action in global governance has been timid at times and "the scale of these democratizing activities have remained quite modest." While the scorecard for GCS participation is mixed, one may argue that amidst the myriad interests of states, IOs and other non-state actors, global politics is better off with the presence of global civil society than without it.[81]

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[80] Scholte, Jan Aart. "Civil Society and NGOs." In *International Organization and Global Governance*, eds. Thomas G. Weiss and Rorden Wilkinson. Routledge, 2014.

[81] Dryzek, John S. "Global Civil Society: The Progress of Post-Westphalian Politics." *Annual Review of Political Science* 15 (2012): 101-119.

CHAPTER 2

UN AND GLOBAL CIVIL SOCIETY RELATIONS

The Third UN

While the discussion on global civil society and the increasing support for its role democratizing global governance is relatively new, civil society groups have been an important, often dissonant voice in UN affairs. In 1945, at the San Francisco Conference that culminated with the UN Charter, there was four times the number of NGOs as there were member-states. It was through intense lobbying from those groups that the Charter's opening phrase – "We the peoples of the United Nations" – was added, focusing on a shared humanity among those drafting it, instead of on the states that they represented.[82] Also as result of NGO pressure the Charter included a provision to formalize a mechanism for NGO participation. That NGOs had a hand in what became such a key document in international politics anticipated the influence civil society, and later, global civil society, would exert at the UN.

The previous chapter underscored the evolution of global civil society's role in global governance in recent decades. As noted, citizens and in particular, NGOs, have from the start been involved in UN affairs, influencing action and global policy. The present chapter broadly describes how UN-GCS interactions, including formal mechanisms of participation, have evolved since 1945. As will be demonstrated, UN-GCS relations have evolved parallel to the greater inclusion of non-state actors in global policy processes. This participation has intensified significantly, to the point where since the 1990's "accredited NGOs have left their signatures, as

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[82] Weiss, Thomas G; Carayannis, Tatiana; Jolly, Richard. "The 'Third' United Nations." *Global Governance* 2009; 15, 1; ProQuest Central pg. 123.

it were, on almost all significant UN policymaking."[83] Their study can further an understanding of interactions between different actors in global governance.

In order to accomplish this, it is necessary to have a better sense of the spheres of influence within the UN as well as the way in which different agencies interact. The UN system is made up of a sprawling number of programmes, departments, specialized agencies and independent bodies, where international civil servants and member-states representatives, experts, consultants and global civil society actors in general work and interact daily. In this sense, the UN family is not a monolithic unit. Within it coexist diverging views of how global governance should be pursued in broadest terms, and there are effectively "multiple multilateralisms"[84] at work. Within this web of networks and competing views, Inis Claude identified the existence of two distinct spheres within the UN, which he named the "two UNs."[85] The first and second UNs highlighted the two major perspectives and interests that guided those within the organization: the first UN was made up of member-states and their representatives, and the second UN was comprised of international civil servants. Country delegates act primarily in intergovernmental bodies such as the General Assembly, while international civil servants act in the secretariats and myriad agencies, departments and specialized bodies.

Drawing on Claude's idea of the two UNs and bearing in mind the increased role of experts, academics and NGOs, Weiss et al (2009) introduced another sphere, the third United Nations, essentially comprised of global civil society. This attempts to recognize the influence these actors now have within the organization and draw a more accurate picture of global policy-

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[83] Wapner, Paul. "Civil Society." In *The Oxford Handbook on the United Nations*, eds. Thomas G. Weiss and Sam Daws. Oxford University Press, 2009.

[84] Weiss, Thomas G; Carayannis, Tatiana; Jolly, Richard. "The 'Third' United Nations." In *Global Governance* 2009; 15, 1; ProQuest Central pg. 123.

[85] Ibid.

making processes. The notion of distinct spheres at work within the UN also helps to further an understanding of the relationships at work in global governance, regarding the UN as an arena and convener of different ideas and perspectives.[86]

Specifically, the third UN is "composed of actors that are closely associated with it but not formally part of it," excluding for-profit organizations and including "NGOs, academics, consultants, experts, independent commissions and other groups."[87] But this division of three different realms does not imply their total separation. If anything, it underscores the complex interaction that takes place between representatives of states, of global civil society and international civil servants, which are not so rigidly divided but remain in constant interaction. Weiss et al (2009) underscore that for individuals, these are revolving doors, as some who may have worked for their countries' governments at the UN can move to secretariats and then to the non-profit or academic sectors, gaining different perspectives and strengthening their networks on each sphere. They argue it is "common for leading policy figures to have significant exposure to all three UN's."[88] In theorizing the third UN, the authors stress that not enough research has been done on its impact and its relationship with the first two. In terms of the three UNs, it can be said that the present work aims to understand how the first UN – consisting of country representatives in intergovernmental bodies – addresses and creates a rhetorical construction that impacts both how the third UN is perceived by other actors and its relationship with the first and second UNs.

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[86] Weiss, Thomas G; Carayannis, Tatiana; Jolly, Richard. "The 'Third' United Nations." *Global Governance* 2009; 15, 1; ProQuest Central pg. 123.

[87] Ibid.

[88] Ibid.

In particular, the first UN still views participation by the third UN with hesitation[89] even as global civil society has been able to occupy more formal and informal spaces in the world organization. Some member-countries fear they may lose ground and means of influence to promote certain policies, which accounts for the fact that greater GCS inclusion has occurred oftentimes through unofficial means. Coate (2009) notes there's been a change in "function, not form" in how the UN relates to global civil society, and this is largely due to states' apprehensions with a change in the intergovernmental character of the UN. As the previous chapter argued, GCS can help revitalize and influence institutional arrangements that reform current global governance practices. Further, it also has the ability to lend the organization legitimacy at a time where there are questions on the democratic deficit of the system it has in place. The first UN has begun to recognize this in the last two decades, and while much improvement has yet to be made, the following pages will describe a remarkable evolution, in a short period of time, in global civil society inclusion.

Before we address that, a note on language and terminology is needed. Previously, the histories of the concepts of civil society and global civil society were analyzed as contested, varying phenomena, which as a result can take on many names and representatives. As we move deeper into understanding GCS's relationship with the UN, this theoretical reality is expressed in practice as well. Willetts (2006) writes that "throughout the UN system—in resolutions, in conference declarations, and in reports—there is a lack of consistency about what constitutes

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[89] Weiss, Thomas G; Carayannis, Tatiana; Jolly, Richard. "The 'Third' United Nations." *Global Governance* 2009; 15, 1; ProQuest Central pg. 123. Coate, Roger A. "The John W. Holmes Lecture: Growing the 'Third UN' for People-Centered Development – The United Nations, Civil Society, and Beyond." In *Global Governance (*2009); 15, n. 2; ProQuest Central pg. 153. Also see Hachez, Nicolas. "The Relations Between the United Nations and Civil Society: Past, Present, and Future." In *International Organizations Law Review* (2008), 5: 49-84.

civil society." Global civil society at the UN is sometimes synonymous to NGOs, or to civil society. The names are used interchangeably, leading to greater confusion and a sense that GCS is an abstract but homogenous proposition. In some cases, the private sector is also viewed as part of global civil society, and the UN Global Compact is example of that. The UN has stated that the compact seeks to use "civil society" to help implement certain policies, except that it is targeted specifically to pursue partnerships with major businesses and corporations. In the same vein, international business associations have been granted consultative status in ECOSOC.[90] This mischaracterizes the nature of GCS, since business' key goals in global governance focus on economic benefit through the institutionalization of standards and regulations that will help generate more profit. Rarely do they act in the international arena with the greater good in mind, which at least in theory is what global civil society is concerned with.

Another term, civil society organizations (CSOs), has emerged recently as an attempt to capture the multiplicity of organizations that may be different from NGOs but stem from civil society.[91] This has also been adopted at the UN, but only as an added term that serves to describe global civil society. As a result, in the legislation addressing global civil society participation NGOs are usually used as a term representative of the group. The previous chapter established who and what constitutes global civil society for the purposes of this work. However, because the focus of this study is on language and discourse – and how it impacts political realities vis-à-vis the theoretical understanding of GCS – as UN mechanisms for GCS inclusion are discussed,

[90] Wapner, Paul. "Civil Society." In *The Oxford Handbook on the United Nations,* eds. Thomas G. Weiss and Sam Daws. Oxford University Press, 2009.

[91] McKeon, Nora. *The United Nations and Civil Society: Legitimating Global Governance – Whose Voice?* Zed Books, 2009.

the terms used by the UN will be adopted here. This haphazard and unclear language that describes global civil society in itself helps to paint a broader picture of UN-GCS relations.

Legislating global civil society participation

Global civil society's participation in the UN is both widespread and varied. Widespread because there is almost no place in the UN where GCS has not been granted the right of participation or observation.[92] Varied because GCS inclusion changes significantly from body to department or agency. Kante (2008) notes some agencies or programmes have consultative arrangements for what are termed civil society organizations (CSOs), while others rely on more informal consultations that may intensify following a global summit or other major event. He cites UNICEF, UNFPA, WHO, ILO, FAO[93] and the World Bank with having "established an NGO advisory committee to deliberate agency policies and practices." He adds that "since 2000, UNDP has established a global civil society advisory committee." Other secretariat entities such as UNHCR, UNDESA-FFD, UNDESA-DAW, UNDESA-CSD, UNCTAD, UNEP and WFP[94] also have some mechanism for direct consultation with NGOs.[95] In many of these agencies NGOs work closely with UN staff, and a sizable chunk of UN budget has been allocated over the

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[92] Weiss, Thomas G. "What Happened to the Idea of World Government?" *In Thinking About Global Governance, Why People and Ideas Matter*. Routledge, 2011.

[93] UNICEF; United Nations Population Fund; World Health Organization; International Labor Organization and the Food and Agriculture Organization.

[94] Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; Financing for Development; Division for the Advancement of Women; Commission for Sustainable Development; United Nations Conference on Trade and Development; United Nations Environment Programme and World Food Programme.

[95] McKeon, Nora. *The United Nations and Civil Society: Legitimating Global Governance – Whose Voice?* Zed Books, 2009.

years to fund NGO projects, support NGO travel to UN conferences, various training and capacity building as well as material and administrative resources.[96]

There has been a marked evolution both informally and formally, through the pursuit of resolutions, which have deepened the inclusion of global civil society in UN affairs. Willetts (2011) argues informal interaction has often been far more valuable than the formal channels currently in place, but these official mechanisms still work as a point of entry for GCS to build relationships and maximize its influence.

> The significance of the Statute lies less in the specific text and more in the overall assertion that NGOs have participation rights. It legitimizes the presence of NGOs in UN buildings, their political presence in policy-making processes and any activities they undertake to influence delegates – within the limites of diplomatic decorum.[97]

One body has led the path for institutionalizing GCS representation in the UN: the Economic and Social Council, ECOSOC. One of the main UN organs, it reports to the General Assembly and is responsible for coordinating work on economic and social development across UN agencies. Originally, the UN charter vaguely deferred to the ECOSOC to establish a system for civil society participation. Article 71, which stated that the Council "may make suitable arrangements for consultation with non-governmental organizations," and for which NGOs lobbied heavily during the San Francisco conference, is what enabled the Council to pursue this, and underpins all the other advancements that have taken place with respect to GCS inclusion in global governance in the UN. As early as 1946, an internal committee on NGOs was established,

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[96] Reimann, Kim D. "A View from the Top: International Politics, Norms and the Worldwide Growth of NGOs." In *International Studies Quarterly,* (2006) 50: 45–67.

[97] Willetts, Peter. *Non-Governmental Organizations in World Politics: The Construction of Global Governance.* Routledge, 2011.

which led the Council to later put in place legislation that still guides much of GCS inclusion in UN affairs.[98] Consultation with NGOs, as Hachez (2008) argues, had two purposes: one of giving the ECOSOC vital expert information on particular issues, and the other of giving the Council access to "representatives of civil society, to express their views on certain topics." This is also what led the ECOSOC to divide organizations into three categories: general or special status and later the roster. The first was awarded to organizations focusing on most of the issues that pertained to ECOSOC with "substantive and sustained contributions to make" and which are granted the right to add items to the ECOSOC's provisional agenda.[99] While this may seem like a key asset to be leveraged by NGOs, it is rarely used as the organizations have moved to attempt to frame the agenda by investing in media strategies that exert pressure from the outside.[100]

Unlike general status, special status organizations usually focus on a more narrow set of issues than the scope of ECOSOC, whether this is defined by their regional focus or other variables. The roster was later added as a category for NGOs with very specific expertise that can make occasional contributions to the Council upon request. Although ECOSOC now has full control of who gets added to the roster list, the Secretariat was previously able to include organizations as they saw fit. In specific terms of participation, the three categories are allowed varying levels of inclusion: general and special status NGOs can provide written statements to the Council and subsidiary bodies, while organizations on the roster can do so only upon invitation. General status NGOs can participative in oral hearings in the Council while special

[98] Hachez, Nicolas. "The Relations Between the United Nations and Civil Society: Past, Present, and Future." In *International Organizations Law Review* (2008), 5: 49-84.

[99] Ibid.

[100] Willetts, Peter. *Non-Governmental Organizations in World Politics: The Construction of Global Governance*. Routledge, 2011.

status organizations can do so under specific circumstances, and those on the roster are never granted the right.[101]

While these definitions have been institutionalized, in practice, there is little regulation over many of the prerequisites for NGO inclusion. Willets (2011) maintains most organizations who apply are granted consultative status by default. This is cause for concern since in theory these NGOs or other groups should have solid reputations and meaningful impact in their given field of expertise in order to be granted inside access to UN staff and delegates. When that is not an issue, many organizations are granted the wrong status; many of those who are eligible for special status or the roster end up with general status. Changing their status once it has been approved is met with great resistance.[102]

In the late 1960's, the early procedure for NGO participation within the UN was revised to add a clause for exclusion, which did not exist until then. Formally, organizations would lose their status if it was proven governments were financing them or if they were deemed to be "engaging in unsubstantiated or politically motivated acts against State Members."[103] Growing concern over equal representation, particularly from civil society in developing countries led to a key change in the third and last formal updated resolution on the accreditation process. Seeing as many developing countries focused on national NGOs and did not budgets big enough for an international presence, in 1996 national NGOs were allowed to pursue consultative status as well, eligible for special status or the roster. This, however, exacerbated the problem of

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[101] Willetts, Peter. *Non-Governmental Organizations in World Politics: The Construction of Global Governance*. Routledge, 2011.

[102] Ibid.

[103] UN Resolution 1296 in Hachez, Nicolas. "The Relations Between the United Nations and Civil Society: Past, Present, and Future." In *International Organizations Law Review* (2008), 5: 49-84.

North/South divide as it allowed a flurry of American and European NGOs, which often surpass in size and resources that of NGOs in developing countries, to become accredited.[104]

Over the course of five decades, GCS participation mechanisms only went through these three major changes. As has been noted, in practice, the transformation is far greater. The number of policy issues that have been impacted by NGO action today has grown significantly, as well as the number of subsidiary bodies in which they act. As Willets (2011) noted, the fact that they are allowed in the building gives NGOs an entry point to leverage information and expertise to push for policy changes. It is up to them to devise creative ways to maximize the space they have been given. On the other hand, in a very real sense they are still barred from making meaningful contributions to issues in 'high politics', which usually include the area of security issues, and tend to concentrate their influence in 'low politics.' And while the participation provisions are in large part symbolic, the rules can still be used against them as political weapons if countries feel that their interests are threatened by a particular organization.[105] The fear that GCS may become unwieldy and state control within the UN may dissipate is still present, which explains, among other things, why NGOs have not been granted formal participation rights in the General Assembly, which is addressed in the following section.[106]

The first and third UNs: Global Civil Society Participation in Intergovernmental Bodies

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[104] Willetts, Peter. "The Cardoso Report on the UN and Civil Society: Functionalism, Global Corporatism, or Global Democracy?" In *Global Governance* 12 (2006): 305–324.

[105] Willetts, Peter. *Non-Governmental Organizations in World Politics: The Construction of Global Governance*. Routledge, 2011.

[106] Willetts, Peter. "The Cardoso Report on the UN and Civil Society: Functionalism, Global Corporatism, or Global Democracy?" In *Global Governance* 12 (2006): 305–324.

Almost half a century after the creation of the UN, for the first time in 1993 NGOs were allowed to address members of the General Assembly (UNGA). This procedure has not been formalized, as some countries feared a precedent could lead to a similar request in the Security Council. In 1993, "the proceedings were stayed, but the delegates remained in the hemicycle while the NGO representative was making its statement,"[107] which ensured that the address never entered official records. In an unprecedented move the following year, two NGOs, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Sovereign Order of Malta, were given observer status in the UNGA. Soon the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies received the same status, even though, Hachez (2009) notes, the organization did not have an official international character. Since then, the U.S. has blocked any other attempts to grant NGOs or CSOs observer status within the General Assembly, even as the question came up again in 1996, when the assembly was asked by ECOSOC to address the issue.

This was the case because the UNGA was divided in its ruling of whether NGO inclusion would be exclusive to work in the assembly or in all other areas of the UN, including the Security Council. The U.S. in particular was strongly against this possibility, and the question remains unresolved.[108]

GCS representatives have been successful, despite political resistance, in having a similar participation provision in the Security Council, known as the Arria formula, which in fact is a year older than the General Assembly arrangement. With the formula, named after the Venezualan ambassador who initiated it, NGOs can address members of the UNSC outside the chambers. More recently an NGO working group on the Security Council was formed,

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[107] Hachez, Nicolas. "The Relations Between the United Nations and Civil Society: Past, Present, and Future." In *International Organizations Law Review* (2008), 5: 49-84.

[108] Ibid.

comprised of thirty representatives of reputable and influential NGOs. They hold informal meeting with UNSC members; these off-the-record briefings occur "four times a month with one of the ambassadors on the Security Council."[109]

Among scholars there is a consensus that the less visible the body, the more NGOs have space to participate and exert influence, which explains the hesitation by states to include NGOs in such bodies like the General Assembly or the Security Council.[110] That is also why some subsidiary bodies of the UNGA have traditionally worked with NGOs for decades such as the Special Committees on Decolonization, Against Apartheid and on Palestinian Rights. This was due, in part, as a reaction to what developing countries saw as Western dominance in the ECOSOC, which led them to counter this by interacting directly with NGOs of all kinds, even those without consultative status, in subsidiary bodies of the General Assembly.[111]

More recently, some non-governmental organizations were allowed full participation in the committee that drafted the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities, though the resolution that granted this explicitly noted that this did not create a precedent for future legislation.[112] Two subsidiary bodies have permanent mechanisms of engagement with NGOs: the Conference on Disarmament and the Human Rights Council. The creation of a formal mechanism of participation in the General Assembly has become in the last decade one of the most pressing issues for global civil society engaging in UN

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[109] Hachez, Nicolas. "The Relations Between the United Nations and Civil Society: Past, Present, and Future." In *International Organizations Law Review* (2008), 5: 49-84.

[110] Hachez, Nicolas. "The Relations Between the United Nations and Civil Society: Past, Present, and Future." In *International Organizations Law Review* (2008), 5: 49-84. And McKeon, Nora. *The United Nations and Civil Society: Legitimating Global Governance – Whose Voice?* Zed Books, 2009.

[111] Hachez, Nicolas. "The Relations Between the United Nations and Civil Society: Past, Present, and Future." In *International Organizations Law Review* (2008), 5: 49-84.

[112] Willetts, Peter. *Non-Governmental Organizations in World Politics: The Construction of Global Governance*. Routledge, 2011.

matters.[113] As time went on, McKeon (2009) notes this varied and inconsistent system "showed signs of strain." Some persistent problems such as a North/South imbalance, the explosion in the number of NGOs, which concerned member-countries that increasingly had to make room for greater participation, the inconsistent accreditation process, and other issues made it imperative that some kind of reform or evaluation of the UN-GCS relationship was undertaken.[114]

This culminated with the Panel of Eminent Persons on UN-Civil Society Relations, created in 2002. The panel's creation was proposed in Kofi Annan's bold reform plan which began in 1997, and was partly designed to enhance GCS's voice in the General Assembly. The Panel became known for its Cardoso Report, named after its chairman Fernando Henrique Cardoso, former president of Brazil. While the panel's results did not match expectations, to say the least, it can be argued that, from the start, the mindset behind the reform of UN-GCS relations contained two problems that illustrate how the UN interacts with and regards the role of NGOs in general. First, it often combined the private sector with global civil society, and secondly, it intended to give greater emphasis to UN relations with national NGOs at the country level. McKeon (2009) sees this as an attempt by some member-countries to avoid "advocacy" NGOs which are often more critical of UN policy. National NGOs, on the other hand, are less political because they are often service NGOs whose goals tend to revolve around delivering services and implementing policy in partnership with UN actors, not criticizing them.

Overall, however, Willetts (2006) argues that behind the panel was an attempt to strengthen and expand GCS participation: "The general conservatism of UN delegates in New

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[113] Willetts, Peter. "The Cardoso Report on the UN and Civil Society: Functionalism, Global Corporatism, or Global Democracy?" In *Global Governance* 12 (2006): 305–324.

[114] McKeon, Nora. *The United Nations and Civil Society: Legitimating Global Governance – Whose Voice?* Zed Books, 2009.

York, the specific hostility of some of them to NGOs, and the procedure of revising existing texts had not been conducive to change. Establishing a panel was a clear attempt to break free from diplomatic negotiations in order to generate new ideas."[115] However, the general perception is that this was not achieved; many scholars, member-country delegates and NGO representatives found the suggestions in the panel's report to be misguided or naive.[116] Others called the report irrelevant and out of touch with the reality of the NGO accreditation process.[117] As a result, the panel did little to contribute to better UN-GCS relations.

Some of the language in the report made a strong case for GCS involvement in the UN, calling for an "enlarged multilateralism"[118] while noting that civil society had become an indispensable part of global governance.[119] It highlighted the need for the UN to engage with citizens in terms that were suitable to the needs of the 21st century. But reflecting a larger trend mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the report perpetuated the use of inconsistent definitions for global civil society or civil society as it was often referred, at times including the private sector, and characterizing GCS as a homogenous group.

> Civil society was frequently treated as a coherent collective entity, a single "constituency." The report did not mention, at any point, the divisions within civil society over issues such as the reconciliation of economic

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[115] Willetts, Peter. *Non-Governmental Organizations in World Politics: The Construction of Global Governance*. Routledge, 2011.

[116] Coate, Roger A. "The John W. Holmes Lecture: Growing the 'Third UN' for People-Centered Development – The United Nations, Civil Society, and Beyond." In *Global Governance (*2009); 15, n. 2; ProQuest Central pg. 153.

[117] Anheier, Helmut K. "The United Nations and Civil Society: A Symposium on the Cardoso Report." In *Journal of Civil Society* 2008, 4:2: 149-151. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17448680802335193

[118] Coate, Roger A. "The John W. Holmes Lecture: Growing the 'Third UN' for People-Centered Development – The United Nations, Civil Society, and Beyond." In *Global Governance (*2009); 15, n. 2; ProQuest Central pg. 153.

[119] Hachez, Nicolas. "The Relations Between the United Nations and Civil Society: Past, Present, and Future." In *International Organizations Law Review* (2008), 5: 49-84.

growth and environmental conservation; the role of corporations in development; abortion and reproductive health; or the role of women in society. Thus, the Panel failed to recognize the complexity, the diversity, and the divided nature of civil society.[120]

The report's suggestions for improvement in the relationship with GCS were at times very broad, calling for greater NGO participation in all intergovernmental bodies, a better accreditation procedure, enhanced relationships with national NGOs, a better dialogue between the Secretariat and NGOs.[121] Other suggestions were more specific, such as moving the process of NGO accreditation from the ECOSOC to the General Assembly, the establishment of a trust fund to help organizations from developing countries participate, enlargement of the UN Office of Partnerships, among others.[122] In 2004, the Secretary-General, equally hesitant to embrace some of the panel's suggestions, presented his own report to the General Assembly to advance some reforms in its mechanism for GCS participation.[123] Member-states "recommended a cautious approach be taken in reforming current UN practices so that the Organization retains its intergovernmental nature."[124] Overall, no significant changes were achieved. Perhaps the most

[120] Willetts, Peter. "The Cardoso Report on the UN and Civil Society: Functionalism, Global Corporatism, or Global Democracy?" In *Global Governance* 12 (2006): 305–324.

[121] Anheier, Helmut K. "The United Nations and Civil Society: A Symposium on the Cardoso Report." In *Journal of Civil Society* 2008, 4:2: 149-151. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17448680802335193

[122] Ibid.

[123] McKeon, Nora. *The United Nations and Civil Society: Legitimating Global Governance – Whose Voice?* Zed Books, 2009.

[124] Hachez, Nicolas. "The Relations Between the United Nations and Civil Society: Past, Present, and Future." In *International Organizations Law Review* (2008), 5: 49-84.

relevant was the creation of informal interactive hearings between NGO representatives and the UNGA, which has expanded to other hearings and roundtables.[125]

Conclusion

The process of global civil society inclusion at the UN thus continues to be an arduous one, where GCS actors attempt to gain ground despite the political resistance of a significant minority of member-countries.[126] As far the UN is concerned, too many structures have been put in place in an attempt to engage with GCS, leading one to conclude that global civil society's role in global governance may be permanent. It should be noted that, as the previous chapter described, GCS is for many activists and scholars a key component in the process of global democratization. To bolster its failing reputation amidst a crisis of legitimacy, the UN therefore needs to support any effort to that end. By now the role that GCS can play in strengthening UN legitimacy has been widely accepted and embraced in theory. However, there is still a clear struggle between those who are willing to open the doors for effective participation and an attempt by certain groups of dominant countries to instrumentalize GCS actors, conferring an apolitical quality to global civil society participation. In many ways, as has been discussed, they have been successful in keeping the flurry of GCS representatives 'manageable' to pursue their own agendas.

As an actor with constitutive power, the UN has managed to legitimize GCS groups as partners on the ground to implement policy. It has not done the same for GCS participation at the high-levels of policy-making. The multiple realities of access and the "continued

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[125] Willetts, Peter. *Non-Governmental Organizations in World Politics: The Construction of Global Governance*. Routledge, 2011.

[126] Ibid.

impermeability"[127] to high levels of decision-making, since often NGOs are only allowed access once most major decisions have been made,[128] demonstrates the persistence of such problems. These challenges do not speak only to the structure of the UN as an organization but to the possibilities for change in global governance. Claims and support for more pluralistic global politics have become sine qua non, but the pursuit of more democratic global policy and decision-making continue to be constrained as states hold onto traditional forms of power. While creating the appearance that substantial progress is being made and other actors are brought to the table, this tension serves to preserve outdated international structures unsuitable for an age where pluralism is increasingly celebrated in words but not with actions.

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[127] McKeon, Nora. *The United Nations and Civil Society: Legitimating Global Governance – Whose Voice?* Zed Books, 2009.

[128] Tallberg, Jonas and Uhlin, Anders. "Civil Society and Global Democracy: An Assessment." *In Global Democracy: Normative and Empirical Perspectives,* eds. Daniele Archibugi, Mathias Koenig-Archibugi and Raffaele Marchetti. Cambridge University Press, 2011.

CHAPTER 3

A DECADE OF NEW MULTILATERALISM:

DISCOURSE, GLOBAL CIVIL SOCIETY

AND THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Discourse and international politics

The increasingly connected, pluralistic and diverse international landscape described in the last chapter has made building consensus a core piece of the policy-making process.[129] If at the domestic level policy is achieved through compromises among competing worldviews, ideologies, traditions and interests, at the global level that contested nature is only exacerbated. In order to build consensus among these varying perspectives, "the construction and dissemination of meaning" becomes a "form of political action" (Finlayson, 2007).

This is because concepts and ideas in the political realm have meanings and definitions contingent upon the "shifting historical and social contexts in which they are employed" as they are not established "independently of contestation" (Finlayson, 2007). Therein lies the role of discourse, and of rhetorical constructions, in changing the course of political processes based on the intentions of different actors serving varying and often competing interests. Political actors create narratives to explain the world to themselves and to others[130] and the very identities of those actors and issues in politics are crafted through discourse.[131] The foundation for such

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[129] Finlayson, Alan. "From Beliefs to Arguments: Interpretive Methodology and Rhetorical Political Analysis." In *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* (2007) 9: 545-563. See also Goodnight, Thomas. "Public Argument and the Study of Foreign Policy." In *American Diplomacy,* 1998.

[130] Finlayson, Alan. "From Beliefs to Arguments: Interpretive Methodology and Rhetorical Political Analysis." In *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* (2007) 9: 545-563.

[131] Finlayson, Alan. "Rhetoric and the Political Theory of Ideologies." In *Political Studies* (2012) 60: 751–767.

narratives rests on an individuals' particular way of understanding reality, which includes the intellectual and political traditions that shape their thoughts as well as their cultural biases; in essence, all the factors playing a role in the construction of their experiences (Finlayson, 2007).

Throughout the process of policy-making and in politics as a whole, there is a "constant discursive struggle over the definitions of problems, the boundaries of categories used to describe them, the criteria for their classification and assessment, and the meanings of ideals that guide particular actions."[132] Discourse is an inherently political phenomena,[133] and discursive constructions naturally limit the types of discussions around an issue, what is deemed plausible or implausible; what is perceived to be a problem; what possibilities can be explored as pertaining to that topic, such as what is acceptable to be discussed and what is off-limits; what is deemed radical or illegimate as well as which actors can speak on that issue. As such, rhetorical argument helps to create, maintain and naturalize concepts and philosophies. More concretely, in the political realm it can create policy issues, build or undermine legitimacy and support or craft solutions.[134] Political outcomes depend on the influence of rhetorical constructions. Discourse "constructs social realities" as it negotiates and formulates meaning in social life (Milliken, 1999). And the power of nomination is one of the most significant in the political environment. By nomination I mean the ability to assign meaning and definitions to problems while organizing the parameters of a debate around certain ideas while simultaneously excluding others.[135]

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[132] Frank Fischer, *"Reframing Public Policy,"* (2003): 60, quoted in Robert Asen, "Reflections on the Role of Rhetoric in Public Policy." In *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* (2010), 126.

[133] Methmann, Chris Paul. "'Climate Protection' as Empty Signifier: A Discourse Theoretical Perspective on Climate Mainstreaming in World Politics." In *Millenium - Journal of International Studies* (2010) 39: 345-372.

[134] Asen, Robert. "Reflections on the Role of Rhetoric in Public Policy." In *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* (2010), 13: 121-143. See also Finlayson, Alan. "From Beliefs to Arguments: Interpretive Methodology and Rhetorical Political Analysis." In *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* (2007) 9: 545-563.

[135] Finlayson, Alan. "Rhetoric and the Political Theory of Ideologies." In *Political Studies* (2012) 60: 751–767.

Not surprisingly, discursive constructions central to a particular political project are always contested and immersed in struggles among competing political views and interests. When the discourse surrounding a particular issue or political process no longer matches reality as a result of events that lead to a shift in values or threaten a system's legitimacy and coherence, both the political structure and the discourse sustaining it are questioned. When the existing dominant discourse is no longer enough to explain reality, it is confronted with discourse outside the political realm that attempts to disturb the current stability of social structures. Followed by some struggle between outside and dominant discourses, these external narratives and ideas are either integrated or contribute to effective political change.[136] Effective political change does not often materialize, but if a political system wants to maintain its stability it must address these outside demands. That is often accomplished with the integration of external narratives or concepts into predominant discourse while simultaneously stripping them of their original meaning. This greatly reduces their potential for change in the system in place. Because they exist to appease outside demands for change without effectively addressing the real concerns, these rhetorical constructions are understood to be empty signifiers.[137] The presence of empty signifiers establishes a condition for hegemony and, thus, largely unchanged political processes.[138]

Empty signifiers are "discursive elements that have been emptied of their actual content and provide for the unity of the discourse" (Methmann, 2010). So a concept such as global civil society can be integrated into the established international political order through discourse

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[136] Methmann, Chris Paul. "'Climate Protection' as Empty Signifier: A Discourse Theoretical Perspective on Climate Mainstreaming in World Politics." In *Millenium – Journal of International Studies* (2010) 39: 345-372.

[137] Laclau, Ernesto. "Why do Empty Signifiers Matter to Politics?" In *Emancipation(s)*. Verso, 1996.

[138] Ibid.

without changing that order's basic structure.[139] "Power is inherent to all discursive formations" (Methmann, 2010) and as such, actors attempt through discourse to maintain the current social structures and subsume new discussions into the mainstream logic. Thus, concepts are emptied of their core significance so as not to threaten the current status quo. Global civil society, for instance, can be devoid of its political meaning so that it is integrated into the dominant discourse of international politics, but in the way it is presented cannot pose any real threat to the global policy process. Drawing on Methmann's analysis of climate mainstreaming, this is referred to here as the mainstreaming of global civil society.

Claiming Legitimacy: Mainstreaming Global Civil Society for Legitimation

The subversion of a concept's original content for political purposes, which produces empty signifiers, is used to maintain current political arrangements. This can be supported by discursive constructions in different ways, and of interest here are the purposes of claiming and sustaining legitimacy by political actors – international organizations in particular. Legitimation, or the social practice of seeking and claiming legitimacy, is common among national governments, but until a few decades ago was not of major concern for international organizations either in practice or as a focus of scholarly studies.[140] And until the 1990's, international organizations themselves were not a target of legitimacy concerns (Zaum, 2013). As previously discussed, the very nature and scope of these organizations has expanded from their original mandates. That, coupled with political change following the Cold War, and cultural

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[139] Methmann, Chris Paul. "'Climate Protection' as Empty Signifier: A Discourse Theoretical Perspective on Climate Mainstreaming in World Politics." In *Millenium – Journal of International Studies* (2010) 39: 345-372.

[140] Zaum, Dominik. "International Organizations, Legitimacy, Legitimation." In *Legitimating International Organizations.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.

shifts resulting from globalization has put into question the values and the structures sustaining the international system and the international organizations within it.

IOs' sources of power and legitimacy depend not on money or military might but upon the understanding that they are useful, effective and fair in treating their members as equals. In the first chapter of this study, I presented some of the ways in which IOs yield authority and, thus, legitimacy: first, by having been given the authority and right to function from nation-states; by appearing to be guided not by politics but by impartial, technical rulings and having the international community's best interest in mind (Barnett and Finnemore, 2004). IOs are also seen for this reason as collective legitimizers of norms and actors, but now must engage in self-legitimation "to justify their roles and practices" and indeed "achieve compliance" (Zaum, 2013). The old modus operandi of international organizations is no longer sufficient to sustain their legitimacy – that is, their right to authority based on their underlying values and practices – because so much has changed in the international landscape. Zaum notes that "an institution is legitimate if its power is justified in terms of moral and other socially embedded beliefs, and if those subject to its rule recognize that it should be obeyed." Questions on legitimacy concerning the UN, then, are about the "underlying philosophy" guiding the organization and are bound to take center stage more frequently as a result of the changed and contested political landscape.

Legitimation for international organizations can occur sideways, from above, or below.[141] From below, IOs sustain their legitimacy through member-state consent to the rules of the institution. Consent is also reproduced in state's daily interaction with and immersion in IO established procedures and activities. Outside groups such as NGOs can also legitimate international organizations as they support and publicize their agreement with an institution's

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[141] Zaum, Dominik. "International Organizations, Legitimacy, Legitimation." In *Legitimating International Organizations.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.

policies. Finally, the practice this analysis will be focusing on is the act of legitimation from above, where the actor itself claims legitimacy: a process of self-legitimation. This is done through "a series of actions – speech, writing, ritual, display – whereby people justify themselves to others" (Zaum 2013). Legitimation, then, depends on argumentation and persuasion, and this crisis of legitimacy, fueled in part by concerns over the representation and democratic deficit at the UN, leads the institution to use communicative practice to justify its claims to authority. Just what kind of a narrative it weaves to sustain itself will be the focus of the forthcoming analysis.

International organizations depend on what is called the normative dimension of sources of legitimacy – the right to rule – as well as the sociological dimension, which is a widely held belief in the right to rule.[142] These two aspects are intimately related. An intersubjective belief system aligned to an institution's values must exist for it to sustain itself, and so it will attempt to create one with communicative resources, by crafting images and narratives to gather support for its mission and role. The construction of meaning in discourse and the practice of legitimation, thus, are both based on the premise that the international order is contingent and this order needs to be constantly reiterated and reproduced if it is to endure.[143]

Zaum (2013) stresses, however, that due to the UN's nature as both a forum for debate and an actor, member-states within it also attempt to legitimize their own views and values on which the international order should be based. These two phenomena happen simultaneously in the legitimation practice within the UN. It is within this practice of self-legitimation that I frame the subsequent analysis of General Assembly debates. The practice of legitimation addresses many issues: the values in which an IO is deemed to rest upon, the fairness of its procedures, the

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[142] Ibid.

[143] Milliken, Jennifer. "The Study of Discourse in International Relations: A Critique of Research and Methods." In *European Journal of International Relations* (1999), 5: 225-254.

'impartiality' of its judgments. But the focus here is how legitimation is achieved by evoking pluralism and specifically the inclusion of global civil society in global policy processes. But as the discussion in the previous chapter brought to light, the United Nations must communicate its coherence with and steadfast support of the values embedded in global civil society while struggling with an international reality still very much ruled by the nation-state. As Frost (2013) argues, "their legitimacy will suffer if they are seen to be favouring states' rights at the expense of the rights of individual men and women. Similarly, their legitimacy will weaken if they do the converse." I argue that this tension between global civil society and what the author calls the society of sovereign states leads to a problematic conceptualization and usage of what constitutes GCS and subsequently its role in global policy-making in the UN. Thus, as an empty signifier global civil society sustains the United Nations' role in the international system while diminishing any outside criticism regarding issues of representation and democratic procedures within the organization.

Rhetorical Political Analysis (RPA)

Based on the previous inquiry into the conceptualization of global civil society in international politics and at the United Nations, rhetorical political analysis (RPA) is the method used to analyze the discursive constructions of global civil society in General Assembly debates, drawn from Finlayson (2007).

RPA focuses on identifying "the typical ways in which political actors present a case, the fixed appeals they tend to make" as well as their use.[144] RPA seeks to understand how an argument is formed, what kinds of resources and tactics are used in this process, how a thing

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[144] Finlayson, Alan. "From Beliefs to Arguments: Interpretive Methodology and Rhetorical Political Analysis." In *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* (2007) 9: 545-563.

should be defined, how it should be perceived – as positive or negative –, whether it is even relevant to the discussions at hand. How in this process "attention is directed to certain objects or phenomena and deflected from others," or how certain aspects are emphasized or de-emphasized.[145] In essence, how an argument is framed, but also, the purpose of an argument: whether it is taking place simply for ritualistic purposes, for praise or condemnation, to highlight advantages or possible perils of a particular course of action (Finlayson, 2007).

This method also focuses on the structure of discourse: whether certain arguments are built in ways that make certain conclusions appear inevitable or natural, simplifying issues and obscuring key points to their benefit. The types of metaphors it draws upon, whether to unify or separate political organizations or perspectives and so forth. Finlayson (2007) stresses that while the analysis of narratives and metaphors are not new, RPA focuses on the premise that they are argumentative in nature, and are part of the process of constructing the logic of arguments in which political processes lie; how concepts and ideas are promoted, supported and universalized in politics and social life or at once invalidated or dismissed.

> Discourses are understood to work to define and to enable, and also to silence and to exclude, for example, by limiting and restricting authorities and experts to some groups, but not others, endorsing a certain common sense, but making other modes of categorizing and judging meaningless, impractical, inadequate or otherwise disqualified.[146]

As it pertains to the UN's legitimation in global politics, I have made the argument that global civil society is used for the purposes of justifying the organization and member-states' claims to legitimacy. We understand how this situation exists, but exactly how does it function

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[145] Ibid.

[146] Milliken, Jennifer. "The Study of Discourse in International Relations: A Critique of Research and Methods." In *European Journal of International Relations* (1999), 5: 225-254.

and how is it perpetuated? That is the focus of this analysis. Further, how is the concept of GCS negotiated and how does it emerge in the discussions taking place in the General Assembly, based on the questions rhetorical political analysis seeks to investigate? It has been established that the political process is mired in discursive struggles around the "production and organization of meaning."[147] It is important to understand how this concept is negotiated and how it emerges in the discussions taking place. Particularly, how this serves the practice of legitimation for the United Nations as an actor, as well as for member-states using the institution as an arena to steer international politics in the direction they find most suitable. With the multiplication of actors and interests in the international realm, with more "ambiguous and fragmentary" political arrangements, building and sustaining legitimacy amidst so many competing perspectives is substantially more challenging.[148] Understanding international organizations as discursive agents with the power to frame the discussion regarding the insertion of other, non-state actors in international affairs, and to promote pluralism in global politics, the narrative being established about global civil society lies at the center of these discussions.

A Global Civil Society Narrative: UN General Assembly Debates 2004-2014

After the Security Council, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) is the organization's most high-profile body. Year after year, the UNGA opening ceremony draws attention from top government officials and international media outlets, attracting heads of state from various countries to speak at its inaugural meetings. Resolutions passed in the UNGA, because they often represent most if not all of the world's countries, often exert great moral

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[147] Finlayson. "Rhetoric and Political Theory of Ideologies."

[148] Goodnight, Thomas. "Public Argument and the Study of Foreign Policy." In *American Diplomacy*, 1998.

authority, even if they may not be enforceable.[149] The General Assembly also serves to enforce the UN's legitimacy as an organization and acts as a "legitimation forum" (Barnett and Finnemore, 2009). With it also comes great symbolism; nothing embodies the 'society of states' that the UN should represent as the Assembly.

That is precisely the reason why the discourse that is crafted in its debates takes on greater significance within an organization whose challenge is reasserting itself in an international order with shifting values and priorities. Countries and UN officials direct their speech in the UNGA to their peers, other international organizations and global civil society. Perhaps more so than in other contexts, here communicative practice is intrinsic to framing political action. The Assembly stands as the locus of discursive and definitional struggles in most issues in international politics save for security, for which the Security Council accurately fits that description. What narratives emerge from these debates can illustrate the process of contestation in international politics for the primacy of certain values over others and for the framing and naturalization of certain policies and political approaches. Here in particular, this analysis is interested in understanding how UNGA speeches frame discursive construction of global civil society's role in global politics and its consequences to the legitimacy of the UN and member-states. In essence, what types of frames define GCS and its portrayal?

In the next sections of this chapter I first detail the method for gathering the data used – UNGA meeting records – and the rationale behind it. This is followed by the questions that guided the textual analysis, which are based on the previous method section and directly connect to the study's overall analytical objectives. After this necessary explanation I move on to the

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[149] Abbott, Kenneth and Snidal, Duncan. "Why States Act Through Formal International Organizations." *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* (1998) 42, no. 1: 3-32.

analysis of UNGA sessions and in them the discursive role of the notion of global civil society, followed by a conclusion summarizing the research's main findings.

Data gathering and guiding questions

The United Nations strives to document everything pertaining to its activities, most of which is available online through the Dag Hammarskjöld Library,[150] that also provides research guides[151] on how to find particular documents. Using the UBISnet-Index to Speeches as well as the Official Document System of the United Nations, which housed all the UNGA meeting records, a search was conducted for the term civil society restricted to General Assembly sessions, not including any of the Assembly committees. This search was repeated for each of the General Assembly sessions of interest – since a decade was the desired timespan to provide a significant snapshot of the discursive use of the notion of global civil society, this was done for sessions 59th to 68th, from 2004 to 2014. Each document in the search results was then individually verified for its inclusion of the term "civil society." On average, a General Assembly session – which begins each September and ends a year later, a day before the next one – produces roughly 100 verbatim meeting records. At the end of this process, I gathered between 29 and 58 documents for each session, totaling 440 files.

The reason civil society was the keyword in the search instead of global civil society was simple: the addition of "global" might have led to a greater number of imprecise results. To avoid this, the query was limited to civil society. Each of those 440 files was then analyzed with the finder tool, where I looked for mentions of "civil society," "NGOs" or "non-governmental

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[150] United Nations Dag Hammarskjöld Library. Available at: http://www.un.org/depts/dhl/

[151] United Nations Research Guides, Dag Hammarskjöld Library. Available at:
http://research.un.org/en/docs/find/meetings

organizations" (again, the global was left out because it would have led to a narrow or imprecise pool of results, but in the next phase of individual verification, "global" was not excluded if it was next to "civil society"). As has been noted, the accreditation process for participation of non-state actors in UN activities and meetings is confined to non-governmental organizations or NGOs, which often constrains the very notion of a global civil society. Since the premise of this work lies in understanding the meanings and definitions member-countries and the UN attach to global civil society, sometimes taking it to mean simply non-governmental organizations and not all the other groups that can comprise it, such as academia, civil movements and so on, it was important to take note and understand the connotation of NGOs, and whether it was more frequently used than the other two terms. Because of the scope of this study and due to time constraints it was not possible to read all records from all sessions between 2004-2014 in their entirety. As such, it is possible that other terms related to civil society or NGOs may have been used in their place with other connotations and to produce meaning beyond the one presented in this work, which could also open up further discussions and research possibilities, but was not captured here.

The pre-set structure of General Assembly sessions shapes some of the characteristics of speech: the presence of a pre-arranged agenda and the president who steers it are not unusual to this kind of discourse in governmental or intergovernmental proceedings. It is worth mentioning that, naturally, within 440 meeting records spanning a decade, many narratives exist in these documents and many readings could then be undertaken focusing on a multitude of issues, actors and so forth. Nonetheless, the focus of this exercise is to understand the role of the UN and member-countries in structuring the idea of a global civil society in global politics and how this construction works to legitimate these very actors.

Drawing from the previous discussion on discursive as well rhetorical political analysis (Finlayson, 2007; Zaum, 2013), and taking as guide the questions included in McCarthy's (2011) textual analysis, the following are the questions that guided the forthcoming examination of UNGA sessions:

- What are the recurrent and fixed appeals that are made in relation to GCS as an actor? And how are they routinely employed in political actors' discourse?
- When global civil society is employed, what kind of "chain of reasoning" is implied; are they invoked because they attach legitimacy to these actors, or because they invoke inclusion, for instance?
- What representations of global civil society are gleaned from this? What qualities are highlighted and which are obscured?
- Is GCS regarded as a positive, negative or neutral actor?
- Is global civil society even seen as an actor?
- What unquestioned assumptions exist about GCS?
- What's the discursive relation between global civil society and the state as well as the UN?
- How are the narrative and the facts presented?
- Are specific political events changing the frame on global civil society?
- Are there any issues global civil society is evoked more than in others?
- Is GCS employed for legitimation purposes? If so, what are the types and strategies of legitimation used (e.g. self-legitimation, legitimation from above or below)?

These questions, which were informed by the issues in conceptualization of GCS highlighted in the review of literature, served as a point of entry to this inquiry. This analysis sought to answer these questions, but due to the sheer volume of the data and the timespan covered (2004-2014), I also anticipated identifying unforeseen discursive articulations that contribute to the larger question at hand, which aims to understand how GCS is portrayed in the UNGA, and which may not have been contemplated by the questions above. This was indeed the case. The findings are divided by themes chosen because of their recurrence in the data and their relevance to the broader question of this study.

Global Civil Society vs. Civil Society

Global civil society has been at the center of this work due to its significance in representing the shifts both in globalization and a growing need for international affairs to become more representative and inclusive. However, throughout the speeches given at the General Assembly, a *global* civil society was not a commonly used term. In fact, the vast majority of speeches mentioned civil society, followed by NGOs or non-governmental organizations. This may be the case because global civil society provides an important conceptual framework to explain the transformation of the role citizen movements, non-profit organizations, academia and others, organized at a global or transnational level, in global politics. But, as has been argued, if it conceptually differs in fundamental ways from civil society, in practice, the difference in proper meaning becomes irrelevant in these debates, as member-states move between invoking civil society in relation to their domestic politics and then refer to its role in enhancing and influencing the direction of international policies within the UN.

Throughout the rest of this analysis expect to find references to both: civil society as it appeared and was used in the documents collected, and global civil society to articulate the connections between the conceptual framework established early in this study and the analytical findings that follow.

Civil Society: a democratic and progressive sphere

The discursive articulations that member-states and UN officials use to construct the identity of civil society in General Assembly debates often depict it as a progressive, active,

representative and democratic sphere. Progressive because, as they constantly note, it is often ahead of governments and international actors, taking action in issues from HIV/AIDS to human rights violations with far greater speed. This is not only about their systematic involvement in raising awareness but also their ability to be ahead of curve years or decades from state actors. Further, they are seen as inherently concerned with promoting high moral values and the common good (Anheier, Glasius and Kaldor, 2001). Civil society, then, has ethical assumptions and implications attached to its use in the UN General Assembly as an idealized sphere. It is portrayed as involved in every facet of global and domestic issues around the globe; the high number of GCS participation in UN events, often in the hundreds, is highlighted as an example of this.

If there is a need for the Assembly to address and "respond to others' concerns" as a UK delegate stated (60th session, 48th plenary, 2005), civil society's participation may be the answer to that. It is depicted as widely representative of all interested societal groups, and this discursive construction allows states and the UNGA to fulfill their need for accountability to the wider public via civil society. Representation has close connections to democracy: one cannot quite separate the two in this instance, and it is unclear whether GCS is seen as democratic because it is representative or the other way around. The democratic aspect lends it even greater significance as an actor. And it makes civil society even more important to fulfill accountability and representational needs of the Assembly (and the UN to a large extent), whose members can no longer fulfill on their own.

In the policy domain, both national and global, the narrative that is produced reinforces the idea that no plan is perceived to be fair and proper without global civil society. GCS is deemed to generate the right political conditions for successful projects – without it they will

most likely fail, in part because citizen groups provide insight that governments lack. At a global level, from Internet regulation to the post-Millennium Development Goals framework, civil society involvement and advocacy is noted time and again as paramount to effective policies, because it implies that citizen concerns have been acknowledged and addressed. By involving it in policymaking, governments and international organizations alike can be made accountable. If civil society is involved, then said policies must be inclusive, must be in tune with society's wishes and needs and not seen as a tone-deaf, top-down plan based on a political agenda of the powerful.

These repeated acknowledgements by member-states and UN officials of the positive contribution of GCS gain a ritualistic character. They are recognized for their efforts, urged to participate or support policies on the ground, but this appears to be done as a necessity, as if it were part of a protocol or unspoken rule that is followed widely by delegations.

The State, the General Assembly and the Maintenance of Civil Society

In this reading of the Assembly documents it was previously noted that civil society is portrayed as a democratic sphere; however, civil society's very existence is tied to democratic ideals as well, and to the identity of the state and of the United Nations as an actor in international politics.

Referring to domestic politics, states invoke civil society to legitimate themselves and the policies they are championing. Overwhelmingly, they conjure civil society, NGOs or non-governmental organizations to highlight their domestic achievements to their peers and the UN. This happens because state action can largely define the existence or emergence of civil society by oppressing or encouraging its expansion; in that sense, it holds great control over that sphere.

Invoking civil society becomes in itself an indicator of democracy and inclusiveness, one which states are quick to point out in an arena as prominent as the General Assembly. Because of civil society's lasting ties to the state – it can only exist where the state allows it to (Kumar, 2007) – then the rationale for touting "civil society participation" in policies and projects is that it equates to a thriving, democratic state. No functioning, democratic, free nation exists without civil society. Autocratic societies have very little if any room for civil movements and groups to thrive without the intrusion and control of the state. The identity of the state and its legitimacy in front of its peers and the international community winds up tied to civil society because that sphere is, discursively, perceived in such a positive light. A representative from the Maldives (64th session, 41st plenary, 2009) illustrated this idea when he noted "an active legislature, a free judiciary, free and fair elections and a vibrant civil society are the bulwarks of democracy." Throughout the decade in question here, delegations from every continent repeated those sentiments.

The mention of civil society also highlights that states' constituencies are compliant and supportive of whatever actions they are undertaking; it also works as recognition of their political power (Zaum, 2013). This goes back to the notions championed by Plato and Aristotle (Ehrenberg, 2001) and which here have maintained their grip on newer versions of the concept, whereby 'civilized' nations were able to accommodate a civil society. Time and again, strengthening civil society is declared by myriad countries to be part of their governments' plans or achievements.

On the level of global politics, a similar phenomenon takes place; the UNGA as an international forum representing UN politics must understand citizen concerns; its initiatives, to gain legitimacy, should include civil society. Delegations and UN officials echo this consistently. There is a belief that "national ownership" is required for UN policies to be successful and long

lasting, which is where GCS fits in. In peacebuilding missions, humanitarian or disaster relief and even global terrorism frameworks, they stress civil society has an asset the UN does not: local groups have often played a leading part in these target communities long before the UN, and this embeddednesss is an asset for implementing UN policies.

> "In order to implement fully all four pillars of the Strategy, we must find new ways to work more innovatively with a range of new partners on counter-terrorism. We must strengthen our global outreach with civil society groups, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and the media. We need actively to build networks at the local, national and regional levels to help us deliver counter-terrorism effects. To help us build those new networks, we need to articulate better the work of the United Nations. That will go a long way towards reassuring others that the work of the United Nations on counter-terrorism goes beyond hard law enforcement efforts, and also works to help address the roots of terrorism. In addition, we should consider how we can incorporate civil society input into country assessments and formalize our relationships." – United Kingdom representative, 64th session, 117th plenary, on the UN's global counter-terrorism framework, 2010.

But the identity of the state and of the UN are also under construction and discussion here, because it is due to their limitations as actors solving global issues that there is the need for GCS participation in the first place. Spatially, civil society is often referred to in conjunction with the state, as their "partner" in a "new multilateralism," highlighting this limitation where governments now need to rely on other actors to fulfill international mandates. There is a strong emphasis on a multistakeholder approach to global politics, and civil society is deemed to reinvigorate this process. Apart from member-states, the Secretary-General[152] in the times that he or his representatives addressed the Assembly stressed the limitations faced by the state and

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[152] Kofi Annan, who championed the notion of the "enlarged multilateralism," remained Secretary-General until 2006, but the present analysis found no first-person statement from Mr. Annan between 2004 and 2006 related to global civil society. Unless otherwise noted, in the analysis the Secretary-General refers to Ban Ki-moon, UNSG since 2006.

international organizations to address so many of the global issues threatening political, social or economic stability across the world. The efforts of governments must be paired with those of civil society in order to be effective because the UN "cannot do it alone," he often noted, with states sharing the same opinion.

> "This hearing is based on a simple truth — tackling global challenges takes a global effort. Member States cannot do it alone. More than ever, we need the full engagement of civil society, non-governmental organizations, local authorities and the private sector. We need all participants in this meeting to help us tackle climate change, to secure peace, to fight poverty and uphold human rights and human dignity." – Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General, 64th session, 95th plenary, 2010.

Beyond that, there is a need for the system the UN manages to be seen as legitimate, and without civil society, mechanisms such as the Kimberly Process may be dysfunctional. A much greater significance is given to the role of non-governmental voices in the Assembly. Pluralism ideals underline this; this is part of an effort by UN officials and states to have greater inclusion. Repeatedly, the Secretary-General or member-countries stress that the organization can no longer stand alone, and states and civil society must work together, that multistakeholderism is central to effective policymaking.

Throughout different debates, states and UN officials note that this is a result of three things in particular: the first is the state of governmental and UN budgets following the aftermath of the worst financial crisis in decades, which has strained resources. The second and third are closely connected: The power and effectiveness of some global civil society groups, which elude governments, and the local-global character of so many issues. Efforts to prevent and manage HIV/AIDS cannot be effective if they not tap into local networks which often have extensive experience and knowledge, beyond official governmental health professionals, as was noted in

the debates. They also underscore that the same can be said of other health crises such as obesity and malnutrition, and other problems from human trafficking or global terrorism. Addressing transnational migration matters cannot be done if global civil society does not have a role or voice in the process. States and UN officials often claim it is unfeasible to resolve many of these transnational challenges with a top-down approach.

Civil society: a political pawn

If civil society is viewed as a consequence of a democratic society, at first one may think that a large portion of members from less-than-free states would steer clear from using the term, but that is not the case. What emerges from this analysis is a long, diverse list of countries that invoke it to claim legitimacy in front of their peers and the international community, going from Barbados to Germany, Saudi Arabia, Rwanda and many others. They do not disassociate themselves from that positive element that civil society represents. They do not avoid it in discussions, and actually "preserve the unity of discourse" (Methmann, 2010) as they strip the term of its actual significance and use it to strengthen their discursive imagery. They adapt it to fit their discourse without acting upon it many times, transforming it into an empty signifier.

> "Our media is in the forefront as one of the freest and most vibrant media in South Asia and the world. A growing number of private and independent channels are operating in the country and there has been a perceptible increase in the number and influence of civil society in providing alternate views and safeguarding human rights with one voice. The media and civil society are now playing a crucial role in fostering a culture of accountability and transparency. The independent judiciary in Pakistan has taken wide-ranging steps to guarantee protection of constitutional rights for all citizens." Rep. Pakistan, 64th session, 61st plenary, 2009.

But this feeble discursive construction falls apart in a few occasions where these countries sense their interests are being threatened or that their repressive policies will become

targets of criticism by civil society representatives. I addressed before how GCS is portrayed as a positive sphere with relevant contributions to the UNGA. And that is the case in the vast majority of sessions, but there were a few occasions where this was not so. This criticism came in its entirety from countries considered weak democracies or altogether repressive states. In these cases, civil society goes from being representative and democratic to becoming a "political pawn," biased and serving secret political agendas. This sustained attempt to circumscribe civil society is also directly related to policy, most clearly in multistakeholder mechanisms such as the Kimberly Process, where GCS participation was widely recognized as of key importance to its effectiveness, and within the Human Rights Council.

> "A unique feature and advantage of the Kimberley Process is its tripartite nature. Russia advocates the pooling of the efforts of States, the diamond industry and civil society in full compliance with the fundamental principles of international law, including respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States and non-interference in their internal affairs. The need for compliance with the national legislation of participating States, including by representatives of civil society, is not under discussion, and we see no reason to empower non-governmental organizations with exclusive rights or privileges within the framework of the Kimberley Process." – Russia representative, 67th session, 59th plenary, 2012.

In these instances, as described above, civil society may be portrayed as interfering in countries' domestic politics. Since many civil society organizations have headquarters in developed Western countries but act all over the world, this is depicted as foreign intervention, hurting state sovereignty, and seen as "dangerous" by these countries.

Who is part of Civil Society?

States agree that having GCS in the background of policy discussions at the UN is a way to fix a perception problem regarding the organization's effectiveness. This recurrent mention is rarely expanded upon, however, either with specific actions that will assure this inclusion formally or with descriptions of who belongs to this civil society. Sometimes it will include "women and youth" or "philanthropic organizations" and "the private sector." While there are a portion of sessions that couple civil society and the private sector as being one and the same, for the most part they are understood to be different actors. Civil society and academia are often seen as entirely separate entities, usually mentioned separately, one after the other. The media is often mentioned in conjunction with it as well.

NGOs can be taken to mean all of civil society, but in other cases it represents the institutions, such as non-profit organizations, that are service providers in country. U.S. president Barack Obama's statement (65th session, 9th plenary, 2010) illustrates this as he mentions the cooperation with "non-governmental organizations (NGOs), civil society, the private sector, philanthropy" et al his government pursued. There is utter confusion as to what represents civil society. Oftentimes the global dimension of civil society, which has been explored here at length in leading up to this chapter, is not mentioned or explored. Other times civil society is mentioned as a monolithic unit, homogenous and representing popular opinion or beliefs, a voice from outside government halls. Sometimes it even alludes to the existence of well-functioning state institutions such as sound justice systems. Member-states repeatedly note that without it, their national policies as well as UN initiatives would fail, and yet they have a hard time understanding the boundaries that define civil society and what entities are part of it.

Consultation procedures and discursive boundaries to civil society

For those in global civil society able to participate in UN activities through its consultation process, much of the discourse found in the General Assembly limits their roles to that of service providers, implementing policy and helping to disseminate norms but not directly involved in deciding them. There are mechanisms in place in the General Assembly and within committees where GCS can speak and make suggestions. Countries often receive information from those organizations, which in turn, they recognize, inform their own opinions and guide policies being discussed. Nonetheless, civil society is most often associated with helping to implement and monitor, ensuring the success of projects on the ground. In the context of the UN consultation process, the discourse limits civil society: attention is deflected from their more active role in political discussions; they are depoliticized and instead portrayed as technocrats. As the president of the Assembly noted (62 session, 117th plenary, 2008) it is meant to ensure the "sustainability of" governments' "efforts on the ground." While civil society is constantly complimented due to its work in an issue, the discursive boundaries that are established and reinforced with each new mention simultaneously prevent a discussion from taking place that expands such role.

> "Civil society plays an important role in advancing the rule of law. It is the bearer of ideas, the provider of assistance, technical expertise and information, and the facilitator of dialogue. We should make sure that the follow-up to this process continues in close cooperation with civil society." – Rep. Finland, 67th session, 3rd plenary, 2012.

Talk of expansion or even the establishment of participation procedures that hold precedent for future events is often opposed by countries who fear becoming a target of criticism for certain civil society representatives. This resistance was mentioned earlier when they portray

civil society as a political pawn, but these countries have tried to directly thwart participation as well. Many developed countries throughout the decade have called out attempts by unnamed delegations to prevent civil society from joining discussions on certain issues. They noted that this is in part a consequence of the lack of procedure for including GCS in international conferences and other high level meetings. The absence of a protocol makes civil society participation vulnerable to member-states' political agendas. Often precedents in other conferences or high-level meetings are not recognized, and GCS inclusion must be negotiated for each new roundtable, panel, special session or meeting. In order for an accredited organization to be allowed into these events, there is sometimes a process of non-objection, whereby even one country can prevent the participation of an organization. Starting as early as 2004, there have been increased calls by some member-states for the establishment of an official procedure, but a decade later this is still being discussed in the UNGA without much progress.

In these discussions, the once apolitical civil society becomes highly politicized in the discourse of certain countries. Against the establishment of precedents for participation in special events, some delegations highlight the "biased" nature of civil society organizations and the need for them to remain apolitical. While member-countries are obviously not void of political agendas, if civil society is to preserve its reputation as a partner of the General Assembly they must not be involved in any political discussions, but rather preserve their technical, expert nature.

> "States must help civil society to better organize itself in order to play its full role and to become a type of citizens' watch that can truly contribute to the evolution of human societies. However, in return, those organizations must demonstrate their probity and lack of bias. They must also refrain from aligning themselves with belligerent factions or fighting for the cause of the protagonists in political battles. Civil society must not be a Trojan horse for

political groups." – Togo Minister of Foreign Affairs, 67th session, 19th plenary, 2012.

This is again where, for countries in authoritarian regimes, maintaining the discourse supporting GCS in the UN may be politically costly if they anticipate becoming targets of criticism. Developed countries often expose their tactics to prevent civil society participation.

> "The process of admission for civil society organizations, including non-governmental organizations, to participate in the special session must be completely transparent. Any concerns with an NGO's potential participation in the special session need to be addressed openly and transparently, not behind closed doors. Non-governmental organizations must not be denied access to United Nations forums for political reasons." ¯ Rep. U.S. 67th session, 65th plenary, 2013.

> "We were deeply concerned that the participation of civil society and other important stakeholders would be considered on a non-objection basis, contravening basic principles of due process, fairness, transparency and accountability. As we emphasized throughout the negotiation process, the final decision on civil society participation rests with the General Assembly as a whole and not with any one State. Blocking NGOs without giving any justification and without allowing the Assembly to make that decision, as has been done several times, is simply not acceptable." – Rep. Israel, 67th session, 75th plenary, 2013.

> "We deeply regret that it was not possible to build on a procedure adopted by the General Assembly earlier this year that would have allowed for greater transparency and due process." - Rep. Switzerland, 67th session, 75th plenary, 2013.

> "We are concerned that the guiding principles for granting consultative status in the Council are gradually being undermined. Civil society actors should be allowed to support and enrich the work of the United Nations by providing perspectives that complement, and sometimes differ from, those of the Member States. The EU urges the members of the Committee to work together to defend and uphold the guiding principles agreed by the Member States in Council resolution 1996/31." – Rep. European Union, 64th session, 26th plenary, 2009.

In the span of a decade, GCS's official role in the UN General Assembly was discussed at length on two different occasions: after the publication of the report from the Panel of Eminent Persons on UN-Civil Society Relations in 2004, and in reference to Kofi Annan's final report on the organization's activities in 2006, in which civil society was touted as central to the UN's mission (63rd Session, N0665719). This is partly a reflection of Annan's United Nations reform efforts, particularly as it related to global civil society inclusion, which has not received as great an emphasis by his successor, Ban Ki-moon.

The most contentious issue raised by the report from the UN-Civil Society Relations panel touched upon GCS participation in the General Assembly. In these discussions, many countries emphasized civil society's limited role as the service provider, deflecting any possibility of opening the Assembly to formal GCS participation. In fact, many like India and Bangladesh did not even entertain some of the suggestions in the report from the panel, referring back to the UN charter that established the "intergovernmental character" of the organization. Pakistan stressed the sovereign rights of states, arguing that any civil society expansion in the UN must respect states' wishes of allowing GCS to work in their countries. Many others believed the current consultation arrangements are appropriate to GCS's role. While most disagreements emanated from developing countries with weak democracies, the United States stood out in agreement with that group. Australia and delegates from the European Union welcomed greater participation of civil society to an extent as a way to strengthen the organization.

> "NGOs are advocates and programme implementers at all levels of society. They bring a grassroots perspective, which enhances the work of the United Nations in the social, economic and humanitarian spheres. However, a compelling case has not been made that this relationship must be broadened

from the Economic and Social Council to the General Assembly. Consistent with the United Nations Charter, the Economic and Social Council and its subsidiary bodies have been — and continue to be — the appropriate venues for the kind of meaningful NGO participation that the report rightly extols. We believe that NGOs have ample opportunities to participate in the functional commissions of the Council, as well as in United Nations conferences under existing arrangements." – Rep. US, 59th session, 18th plenary, 2004.

A similar discourse emerged during a later discussion of the organization's yearly report in 2006. Malaysia, Indonesia, Egypt, Tunisia and others voiced concern with tampering with the UN's intergovernmental character:

"Concerning the issue of the General Assembly's relations with civil society, my delegation welcomes the contributions of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other non-State actors in strengthening the role of the Assembly. While we support the efforts to further involve NGOs in the Organization's activities, my delegation also believes that that must be in accordance with the existing rules." – Rep. Tunisia, 61st session, 77th plenary, 2006.

Furthermore, the unequal relationship between states and civil society, coupled with the lack of precedents for participation in major events leaves GCS participation at the mercy of member-countries, as the defenders of civil society noted. That resulted in little formal progress in GCS's status within the organization in the past decade. In the same way, GCS participation in the UN Security Council was mentioned once, in 2006, and focused on the Arria formula and its ability to allow non-state actors to voice their concerns. While the formula was criticized for its lack of transparency, countries like France and the United Kingdom pledged improvement in this area, which was never again examined in the remaining sessions. Even in these two occasions only one or two smaller countries directly supported a permanent, official role for civil society in the UNGA.

Conclusion

In June 2005, the General Assembly held its first-ever hearings with representatives of non-governmental organizations.[153] Since then, a growing sense of urgency to include global civil society in the work of the UN has been registered in General Assembly debates in an almost ritual manner. The UN finds itself under greater pressure to preserve its legitimacy, as do member-states with their domestic constituencies. Ten years later, delegations still highlight the changing reality of international relations and the need for greater insertion of other actors in global policymaking. This narrative serves the purpose of invoking global civil society without attaching it to specific actions or commitments. From this exercise, some key points are highlighted below.

As a concept, global civil society's flexibility and lack of specificity makes it easily adaptable to virtually any UN or member-state agenda. In the first chapter, it was argued that specifying who belongs or what groups are part of global civil society has positive and negative consequences. On the one hand, it allows different actors to claim it and perhaps include it in their agendas; overall, this may lead to greater civil participation in the process of policymaking. But this could be bad if political actors use this lack of specificity to bolster themselves while not committing to any real action that would enhance inclusion. This is what has been noted in this analysis; any agenda, any policy can count on civil society, but it is not possible to verify in what ways, through what channels and with which groups. Are all GCS groups relevant to an issue being heard, or just one, or a few? It is hard to know, perhaps impossible. And so GCS is used in varied contexts but with very little specificity to its role, more to fulfill an unspoken rule that requires it to be invoked.

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[153] United Nations General Assembly. Official Records, President of the UN General Assembly, 59th session, 118th plenary, 2005.

Legitimation occurs when civil society is invoked. In analyzing the hundreds of meeting records in a decade of General Assembly debates, I found United Nations representatives such as the UN Secretary General, members of the UN Secretariat and member-countries built narratives of global civil society participation in UN affairs to legitimate their role in international politics. This communicative practice was pervasive throughout the sessions. It was used as the organization aimed to align its values to new socially accepted beliefs requiring representative, transparent and democratic political processes at the global level. Member-countries employed the same practices to claim their own legitimacy within their national contexts by noting citizen participation in their governments.

Legitimation as an attempt at justifying one's roles and practices (Zaum, 2013) for legitimacy purposes, invoking global civil society, was observed in three different manners. On a policy level, states and UN officials legitimate policies by employing GCS; the first on a domestic and international level, and the latter focusing only on the UN. At the same time, both actors try to justify their own actions and political power through self-legitimation (Zaum, 2013). States employed this frequently, more so than to support international policies. This makes sense if one views the General Assembly as a major arena providing countries with the unique opportunity to at once increase their political leverage with other nations, the world's largest international organization and global civil society.

In part, the basis of legitimate action lies with global civil society participation. If actors in the UN can claim legitimacy by having civil society on their side, and policies also require the perceived consent of that group, actions by the General Assembly are legitimate partly because they count on civil society support. This is significant because it means that state action even if it is on a concerted, global level should appear to or indeed pursue support from their non-state

counterparts. States are still central to global politics, but they tend to demonstrate that they are defenders of a "new multilateralism." But while this is beyond the scope, this study also recognizes that there are other sources of legitimacy, some of which are found in member-states for international action.

There is a persistent divide in narratives of global civil society. An unforeseen discursive phenomenon takes place in these debates, and that is the tension between democratic nations and weak democracies in dealing with GCS. The former attempt to further some kind of enhanced civil society participation in the UNGA, even if this just includes high-level events and summits. The latter at times praise GCS in an attempt to self-legitimate, but often try to thwart any further participation of civil society that may expose or embarrass them. Nonetheless, this divide is important to understand how civil society is evoked and also gives insight into the political struggles inside the Assembly.

By depoliticizing global civil society, countries disqualify any criticism as partisan and are also able to deflect discussions of GCS participation. In general, member-states do not wish to strengthen GCS's presence in the UNGA through formal channels. Some advocate that this be done for occasional events, but civil society's role finds limits in the discourse that portrays it. As countries depoliticize GCS, they deflect attention from discussions of greater inclusion. And they can also stop civil society from gaining a greater role if they construct its identity as one of providing support and services and not choosing political sides. This is done in two ways: strong democracies, supportive of GCS participation to an extent, simply ignore this aspect; weaker ones attack them and disqualify them because civil society should preserve its access to the UNGA by not choosing sides and potentially exposing failed policies.

Does the discourse on global civil society in the General Assembly serve member-state and UN political objectives? The short answer is, yes. But as was explained, this is far from being a simple construction. It is mired in contradiction and political ritual, but it also belies the discursive importance of global civil society in the UN arena. In each year of the last decade, roughly between a third and a half of all General Assembly sessions made mention of civil society. This has great impact on the kinds of values being infused in global politics, and what kinds of approaches to politics are being explored, deemed possible and legitimate. Just a few decades ago some of these ideas were inadmissible or impossible. Now, if they have not entirely become the norm for state and UN action, they have seeped into their official language.

CONCLUSION

This work's central aim was to understand the framing of global civil society for the purposes of legitimation by the UN, investigating also the consequences of that phenomenon. The previous three chapters engaged the concepts of international organizations as bureaucracies, norm diffusers and actors in constructing political hierarchies, the source of the legitimacy and authority of IOs, the emergence of global governance and of global civil society, the theoretical implications attached to the concept of GCS and the current UN-GCS relationship. In the last chapter, the discursive process that legitimates the UN through the use of global civil society was analyzed. These concluding remarks connect the main theoretical discussion presented in chapters 1 and 2 with the analytical implications of the discourse analysis in chapter 3.

The narratives that emerged in the last chapter portray a disjuncture between speech and the reality of GCS participation at the United Nations. While member-states and UN officials stress GCS's role in keeping them accountable and their policies in accordance to the desire of the wider population, this becomes part of a ritual where political ideas do not match the reality of political structures and policymaking processes. There is a clear emphasis on GCS's democratizing potential (Scholte, 2004, Dryzek, 2012, Thakur and Weiss, 2011), but very few mentions of the limited and often ineffective current consultation process (Steffek and Ferretti, 2009). While GCS is invoked constantly, a discussion on what they are supposed to achieve specifically in their support for UN actions is also absent. There is a strong narrative of inclusion that permeates the discourse related to GCS, and there is indeed a sense that global politics and global solutions to problems can no longer be achieved without the participation of civil society. Countries recognize the pressure to publicly recognize this, although there is no thoughtful

debate on the ways in which GCS can participate or on the future of their role in the UN.

Coupled with this is a narrative that the mere interaction with GCS will make policies more relevant and responsive. There is no way to gauge what actual "inclusion" means. It is remarkable that in such a visible UN body, defined by its intergovernmental nature, a strong narrative of support for the inclusion of civil society is so prevalent. But what may be more interesting is the fact that this speech has not evolved. In the last decade it has intensified and grown in recurrence, but it has continued to touch on the same major topics explored in the previous chapter. And as the review of literature has shown, there has been little progress in the role of GCS in the UN, with a great emphasis being put on informal channels (Willetts, 2011).

The most significant consequence of the discourse observed in the General Assembly to the future of global civil society in international politics has to do with its depoliticization. As Scholte (2014) argued, GCS is concerned with influencing norms and policies, not simply implementing them. The 'service provider' role, however, is far easier to be played in an international arena still defined by intergovernmental mechanisms. The construction of this "new multilateralism" championed by the UN depicts global civil society in limited terms as it relegates it to implementing policies, but it also, problematically, presents it as a uniform sphere.

The tensions between the normative and descriptive definitions addressed in the first chapter (Kaldor, 2003; Krishan, 2007) were identified here. GCS is mostly idealized as an inherently progressive actor, whose presence enhances UN mechanisms and is central to legitimating it (Dryzek, 2012). In an effort to legitimate their own agendas and themselves, member-states and UN officials do not entertain discussions on the wide range of perspectives and ideologies that groups making up GCS hold.

The ability of discourse to shape identities and cement perspectives, coupled with the moral authority and discursive power of the UN made this incursion into the General Assembly sessions important to understand the struggles and the arguments surrounding pluralism in international politics. Global civil society as a concept and an actor is especially impacted because, as Asen (2010) noted of the concept of nationalism, GCS "largely derives from the discourse that constitutes it." Because there are so many different groups and movements within it, often with opposing views and objectives, GCS many times becomes an imagined concept, making the role of discourse even more significant in defining the limits and the possibilities of its role.

The UN made significant improvements for GCS participation in a short period of time since the end of the Cold War, even allowing representatives to address the General Assembly at times. This evolution seems to have stalled in the last decade in the UNGA. Likewise, the image depicting global civil society in the disseminated discourse has been roughly the same. The next major step in this process would be to allow GCS a more permanent role at the Assembly, but that is a conversation most members strongly resist, even those welcoming a greater rapport with global civil society. The Assembly and its member-states are still learning how to negotiate the identity of the UN and the narrative of the new multilateralism they are propagating. For now, addressing global civil society as a "partner" – without which, paradoxically, states would be significantly weakened – is as much as they are willing to say.

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