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**Civil Society as Idea and Civil Society as Process:
The Case of Ghana**

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*The idea of civil society contains a set of assumptions about the unity of civil society, the civility of civil society, the 'separateness' of civil society and the state, and the intrinsic relationship between civil society and democracy. All of these assumptions can be questioned by examining civil society in a specific country context. In the case of Ghana, processes in civil society have always entailed elements of participation, exclusion and manipulation of the idea of participation for the purposes of exclusion. The subsequent hegemonic deployment of the idea of civil society did not transform these earlier processes of participation/exclusion into something radically different. Nevertheless, the idea of civil society does have implications. It provides a new way of obfuscating reality and legitimizing exclusion, while concurrently genuinely empowering some sections of society. This thesis attempts to understand civil society in Africa by analytically separating 'civil society' into civil society as idea and civil society as process. It examines them as separate entities with their own logic and then looks at how they interact in the 1990s to produce a new set of circumstances in Ghanaian politics in particular, and African politics in general.*

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## List of Acronyms

| | |
|---|---|
| AFRC | Armed Forces Revolutionary Council |
| ARPB | Association of Recognized Professional Bodies |
| CEPA | Center for Policy Analysis |
| CDRs | Committees for the Defence of the Revolution |
| CivisoC | Civil Society Coordinating Council |
| CPP | Convention People's Party |
| DWM | 31$^{st}$ December Women's Movement |
| ERP | Economic Recovery Programme |
| FAWE | Forum for African Women Educationalists |
| FIDA | International Federation of Women Lawyers |
| GAPVOD | Ghana Association of Private Voluntary Organizations in Development |
| GBA | Ghana Bar Association |
| GNAT | Ghana National Association of Teachers |
| IEA | Institute for Economic Affairs |
| IMF | International Monetary Fund |
| JFM | June Fourth Movement |
| KNRG | Kwame Nkrumah Revolutionary Guards |
| MFJ | Movement for Freedom and Justice |
| NDC | National Democratic Congress |
| NDM | New Democratic Movement |
| NED | National Endowment for Democracy |
| NETRIGHT | Network for Women's Rights |
| NGOs | Non-governmental Organizations |
| NLC | National Liberation Council |
| NLM | National Liberation Movement |
| NPP | New Patriotic Party |
| NRC | National Redemption Council |
| NUGS | National Union of Ghanaian Students |
| PAMSCAD | Program of Action to Mitigate the Social Costs of Adjustment |
| PNDC | Provisional National Defence Council |
| PNP | People's National Party |
| PP | Progress Party |
| SAP | Structural Adjustment Program |
| SAPRI | Structural Adjustment Participatory Review Initiative |
| SAPRIN | Structural Adjustment Participatory Review Initiative Network |
| SMC | Supreme Military Council |
| TUC | Trade Union Congress |
| TWN | Third World Network-Africa |
| UGCC | United Gold Coast Convention |
| UGFC | United Ghana Farmers' Council |
| UP | United Party |
| USAID | United States Agency for International Development |
| WILDAF | Women in Law and Development in Africa |

# Chapter 1
Introduction

In contemporary African political studies, the concept of civil society appears everywhere.  From about 1990, debates surrounding African 'democratization' have often been stamped by a hegemonic idea of civil society.  In its original conceptualization in political philosophy, civil society was not a thing to be studied but a theoretical construct used to understand observed phenomena.  With its recent revival, civil society has become more the object of research and less an analytical category.  The need to add new elements to existing theories or devise an entire new theory to understand political changes in Africa was a driving force in raising the concept of civil society and the possibility of a civil society theory to its current heights.  This need brought with it the desire to realize civil society's potential as both a conceptual tool and as a key to constructive change on the ground in Africa (see Harbeson 1994).

As a result, the literature on civil society in Africa is subsumed in a debate over the theoretical, analytical and empirical usefulness of the concept (see for example the essays contained in Harbeson, Rothchild, and Chazan 1994).  Three related issues dominate the debate: (1) how to conceptualize civil society; (2) whether civil society helps us to understand the political and socioeconomic processes in African countries; and (3) to what extent it is possible to operationalize civil society for empirical analysis and research.  While a full explanation of the different levels of the debate and various strands of arguments would consume the whole introduction, the amount of academic disagreement revealed in these works over the viability of civil society as a concept in all its guises can be summed up as follows:
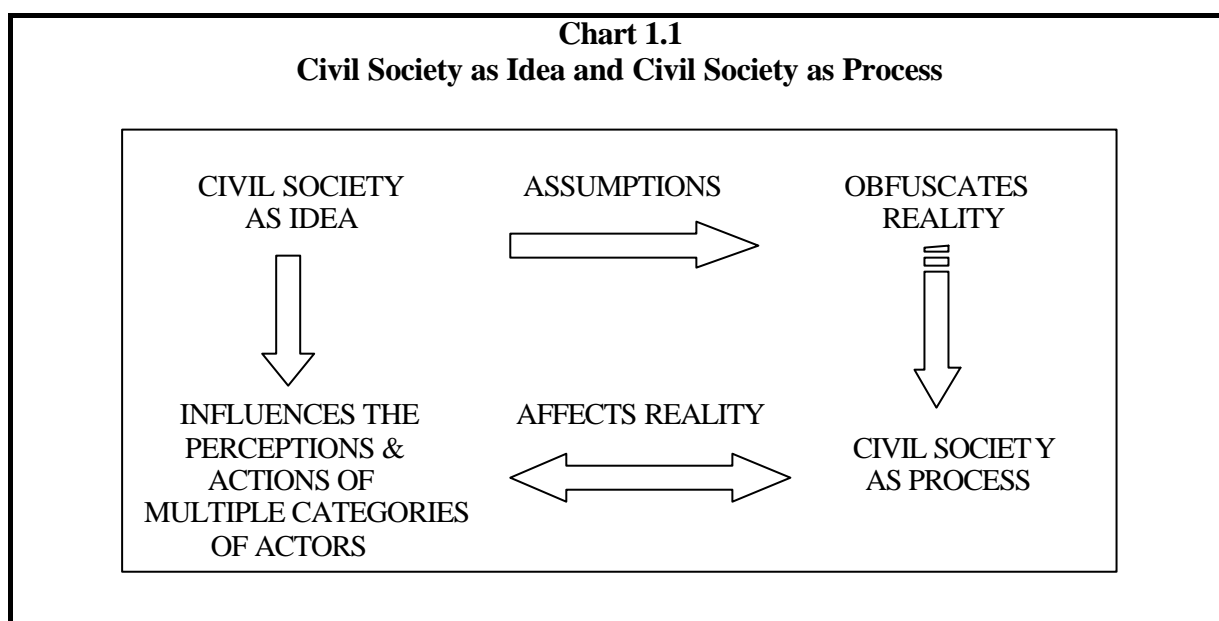
> Civil society is indeed an elusive concept and a more fugitive reality.  But the remarkable energies devoted to its definition and pursuit strike me as the most powerful force on the scene.  The quest for a civil society that can reinvent the state in its own admittedly idealized image is a drama of redemption whose potential nobility commands our admiration  (Young 1994: 48).

Furthermore, the ambiguous nature of the civil society concept facilitates the multiplication of its meaning to the extent that some scholars think the concept meaningless.  A vicious circle may exist where the more inchoate and polymorphous the definition of civil society, the more appealing the concept becomes, and the more appealing, the less attainable it is in any substantial form (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999).  Despite efforts of scholars to develop systematic theories of civil society, its ontological status remains unclear: Is it a social domain? A type of institution or practice? A normative condition?  A metaphor for the hope of a better world?  If the concept of civil society obscures more than it illuminates in African politics, should the concept be discarded?

This thesis attempts to transcend the debate by devising a new approach to studying civil society, while at the same time unraveling the complex of normative principles and observable actions that has become enmeshed in the concept of civil society.  This new approach is based on the argument that civil society is not a structured, unified entity, and thus cannot be the object of empirical research.  Instead of setting out to study 'civil society,' this research began with a focus on the following general questions.  First, what is it that social scientists are trying to capture with the concept of civil society that might be useful to understanding political processes and political change in Africa?  Second, how might this element be described and reformulated

in a more fruitful way? Ghana was chosen as a case country to provide a specific context within which to examine these questions, partly due to the large amount of existing secondary literature on the history, politics and 'civil society' of Ghana and partly due to my nascent interest in this country.

The conceptual framework presented below separates the non-entity 'civil society' into civil society as idea and civil society as process. Civil society as idea focuses on the use of 'civil society' in the literature, as well as how individuals, organizations, the government and international actors in Ghana conceive of civil society and perceive of themselves in relation to it. Civil society as process embodies a historical approach, placing the current dynamics of political activism and social organizations within the context of a longer view of changing state-society relations in Ghana. In contrast to previous approaches to studying civil society, the object of my research is both concept and reality, and the interaction between the two. A description of this conceptual framework is illustrated in Chart 1.1 and further elaborated below.

**Chart 1.1**
**Civil Society as Idea and Civil Society as Process**

| CIVIL SOCIETY AS IDEA | ASSUMPTIONS | OBFUSCATES REALITY |
| --- | --- | --- |
| INFLUENCES THE PERCEPTIONS & ACTIONS OF MULTIPLE CATEGORIES OF ACTORS | AFFECTS REALITY | CIVIL SOCIETY AS PROCESS |

The idea of civil society embodies a set of assumptions about the unity of civil society, the civility of civil society, the 'separateness' of civil society and the state, and the intrinsic relationship between civil society and democracy. These assumptions and the normative principles underlying them obfuscate reality. Presuppositions about 'civil society' can be deconstructed by examining what is actually happening, denoted in this thesis as *civil society as process*. Civil society as process takes on country specific characteristics resulting from the following determinants: (1) historically generated issues which affect particular groups in society or society as a whole; (2) structures and forms that organized social forces adopt to address these issues; (3) personal networks revealing who is involved in particular issues and why; (4) external influences and international linkages; and (5) material incentives underlying production politics and the distribution of state resources. Civil society as process is shaped by changes in these determinants and the historical memory within social groups regarding past mobilization and its effects.

However, the idea of civil society has strongly influenced the perceptions and actions of multiple sets of actors. Through these influences, the idea affects reality. These effects are most pronounced now, as the junction between civil society as process and civil society as idea occurs largely in the 1990s. This thesis uses the case of Ghana to explore civil society as process, to deconstruct presuppositions created by the idea of civil society, and to examine the ways in which the idea affects reality and the consequences of these effects.

The processes symbolized by the arrows in Chart 1.1 are elaborated in the following chapters. Chapter Two explains further the necessity for creating an analytical distinction between civil society as idea and civil society as process. It sketches a framework to help understand the complexity and range of issues surrounding these two concepts. Chapter Three looks in detail at the assumptions embodied in civil society as idea and how these assumptions make it difficult to understand actual processes in civil society. It also demonstrates how this idea influences the perceptions and actions of multiple categories of actors and begins to describe the effects of this influence on reality. Chapter Four covers civil society as process in Ghana from the Nationalist movement under British colonial rule until the inauguration of the Fourth Republic. This chapter helps to deconstruct civil society as idea by looking back at the period when this hegemonic idea was not the dominant prismatic lens through which to interpret Ghanaian politics. It also initiates the search for another way of understanding changes and continuities in state-society relations in Ghana.

Building on Chapters Three and Four, Chapter Five examines how civil society as idea connects with existing processes of civil society in Ghana that contain elements of participation, exclusion and manipulation of the idea of participation for the purposes of exclusion. It shows how the idea of civil society becomes another tool for various actors interacting in these processes. In some cases, the idea of civil society forms the complete idiom through which actors engage each other over issues of participation and exclusion. In concluding, Chapter Six summarizes the ways in which civil society as idea affects reality and suggests positive and negative implications of these effects. It also indicates the usefulness of civil society as process for understanding changes and continuities in Ghanaian politics in particular, and Africa in general. Finally, it looks at the relevance of 'civil society' as discussed in this thesis for notions of 'democracy'.

The major findings of this thesis can be grouped under three categories: civil society as idea, civil society as process and how the idea affects the process. Historically, the idea of civil society provided a medium for positing solutions to the social problems of the day. This legacy has carried over to the contemporary period, where the idea serves as a means for articulating visions of 'meaningful' democracy in Africa. As a metaphor for social change, the idea of civil society becomes a normative battleground for intellectuals, where ideological principles and empirical evidence intermingle in social theories attempting simultaneously to explain the world and change it.

Regarding civil society as process, this thesis finds that the characteristics of civil society and the struggles of organized social forces over the state, and against the state, reveal deep-rooted processes in Ghanaian politics. Since the Nationalist movement, social organizations have mobilized and formed alliances to change the nature of state-society relations and to participate in national decision-making. While their attempts often proved unsuccessful, one outcome is the politicization of social organizations that served as informal channels of political mobilization and representation. The parallel process of politicization of social groups but limited participation in governance, due to the inclusion of some groups to the exclusion of others, constitutes a driving force in Ghanaian politics. This process, combined with historical

memory and changes in access to material and organizational resources, offers great insight into Ghana's checkered history of military and civilian regimes and the significant changes occurring since political liberalization in the Fourth Republic. The relevance of civil society as process for any notion of 'democracy' lies in a shift towards new methods of participation for previously excluded groups.

The third major finding of this thesis concerns the way civil society as idea affects civil society as process. The idea increased its scope of influence through linkages between Western academics and African academics, between academics and donors agencies, and between academics and international NGOs. The agendas of both donors and international NGOs affect African governments and local social organizations. As a result of these linkages in Ghana, we see the construction of 'civil society' occurring through a process where multiple categories of social actors employ the idea to achieve their objectives. This leads to conflicting notions of what civil society is and what its role ought to be, and 'civil society' becomes the new terrain of struggle within existing processes. The hegemonic deployment of the idea of civil society also leads towards its institutionalization. Based on the argument that civil society is not static but a continuous and changing process, attempts to institutionalize 'civil society' may have more negative than positive implications. However, the idea of civil society, in combination with historically-generated issues and political initiatives, may allow organized social forces the necessary leverage to create new institutions of governance that have not yet been envisioned, but would be the synthesis of struggles at the national level over notions of representation and participation.

The research design incorporates primary and secondary sources of information. Secondary sources provide the historical context for analyzing civil society as process in Ghana, and they constitute the basis of the literature review on 'civil society' in Africa presented in Chapter Three. Web-based sources of information have been used to a limited degree, for acquiring information on the World Bank, SAPRIN and the global SAPRI process. Primary sources, obtained during a period of fieldwork in Accra, Ghana from July to September 2001, include semi-structured, open-ended interviews with leading members of social organizations, documents and literature of these organizations, books and pamphlets published in Ghana and limited participant observation. Fieldwork was a critical element of the research strategy, for gathering previously unavailable information as well as acquiring a firsthand understanding.

**Chapter 2**
Idea and Process: A Conceptual Framework

Civil society is not a thing, and trying to study it as a thing contributes to the persistence of an illusion. [1] Civil society may have a function, but one that evades description or explanation through an analysis of a structured entity called 'civil society'. As Chapter One pointed out, what does exist is *civil society as idea* and *civil society as process*. Civil society as idea is a unified symbol that conceals disunity, whereas civil society as process is a series of ephemeral unified postures in relation to transient issues with no sustained consistency of purpose. Civil society as idea conceals real history and power relations, while civil society as process reveals power relations between social forces. Nevertheless, civil society as idea has substantial political implications, as will become evident through this thesis, and thus is treated as a compelling object of analysis. Building on these differences between civil society as idea and as process, this chapter presents a conceptual framework for each concept. The purpose of these frameworks is to provide the analytical tools used in the remaining chapters.

## 2.1 Civil Society as Idea

A subject of interest to many political philosophers, 'civil society' has a long and complicated history. More significantly, the civil society concept reappeared in the late 1980s, propelled by events in Eastern Europe. Its reappearance led to the increasingly popular exercise of constructing the genesis and genealogy of this concept. The first component of the conceptual framework shows how and with what intentions scholars have created a genealogy of the civil society concept and how that informs their contemporary political analyses. Notably, many academics base their search for civil society in Africa on these works, or themselves take up similar approaches in understanding the history of this concept. The second component looks at how the idea travels from intellectual discourse to the everyday vocabulary of national newspapers and local social organizations, and the implications of this general characteristic of social theory for the specific study of civil society as idea.

A diverse body of literature tells a very similar story about the genesis and genealogy of the civil society concept, despite disagreements among authors over its interpretation and analytical value (see Cohen and Arato 1992; Keane 1988; Seligman 1992). This literature sketches the metamorphosis of civil society as idea that can start as far back as Cicero and Aristotle, travel through the writings of Kant, Hobbes, Rousseau, Locke, then on to Ferguson and Smith, Hegel and Marx, lingering longer on de Tocqueville and Gramsci, and ending with Habermas. Interestingly, the actual term 'civil society' does not even appear until the 18$^{th}$ century, but authors such as Seligman (1992) find its essence within the writings of the early political philosophers nonetheless.

It appears that many authors engage in this genealogy creation in order to propose their interpretation of civil society in a contemporary context, an interpretation laden with prescription. The instrumental use of 'civil society' to present normative ideals is not new, for the idea of civil society has long served as a model for conceiving the workings of society and positing new models of social order (Cox 1999). In its European origins, both Hegel and Smith

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[1] This paragraph is adapted from Abrams (1988) and his discussion on the difference between the idea of the state and the state-system.

attempted to reconcile the contradictions between the realm of individual particular interests and the realm of universality embodied in the state by drawing upon civil society to create the basis of common welfare out of the pursuit of particular interests. In 19th century America, de Tocqueville saw a proliferation of peoples' voluntary associations as a guarantee against a tyranny of the majority that might result from populist politics. In Italy of the 1930s, Gramsci prescribes the proper relation between the state and civil society as one where the state rests upon the support of an active, self-conscious and variegated civil society. Even Cox concludes his archaeology of the idea of civil society with his own prescription:

> Civil society has become the crucial battleground for recovering citizen control of public life. It seems that very little can be accomplished towards fundamental change through the state system as it now exists. That system might be reconstructed on the basis of a reinvigorated civil society which could only come about through a long term position of war (1999: 27-8).

Even those who criticize the normative theorizing that enters discussions on civil society cannot escape the temptation themselves. For example, Hawthorn points out the subjectivity in the arguments of Cohen and Arato (1992):

> In one of the most extensive discussions, Jean Cohen and Andrew Arato have argued that the idea of civil society can and should be deployed in favour of claims for the 'welfare state' against economic liberalism, for participation against representation, and for 'communitarianism against a rights-based state' (Hawthorn 2001: 276).

However, Hawthorn's argument contains its own subjective vision of democratic politics in the 'South', where the power of 'civil society' would consist in its associations and organizations being able to meet the interests of those for whom they exist rather than battling 'the state'.

Finally, some contemporaries reject both the analytical and normative utility of 'civil society'. For example, Kumar (1993: 390) suggests that the language and terms of concepts such as constitutionalism, citizenship and democracy cover concerns about the abuses of state power without invoking 'civil society', and Seligman (1992: 206) describes the inadequacy of the idea of civil society as a solution to contemporary impasses in Western democratic societies.

In addition to the baggage civil society as idea carries with it as a result of these past and present uses, the search for 'civil society' in Africa embodies its own obstacles and possibilities. It has been argued that the application of 'civil society' in the 'South' is necessarily problematic because it forms part of a universal language, emanating from the West, which tries to describe a universe that is inherently particular (Kaviraj 2001). When civil society as idea enters academic analyses of African politics it does contain the hegemonic influence of Western thought, but it also introduces a language in which the question of how to form the social basis for a new political authority can be formulated and debated. It is this quality of civil society as idea that explains why the debates about civil society in Africa remain inconclusive. Chapter Three examines how civil society as idea is used within the literature on Africa and illustrates how this idea is both a terrain for ideological struggles as well as a metaphor for social change.

Not only did 'civil society' in its various Western theoretical guises enter African political studies through academics, but it also entered the common parlance of social organizations and African citizens. How was this idea transferred from 'expert' knowledge to 'lay' knowledge? The permeability of these two spheres of knowledge is integral to the study of both civil society as idea and the interaction between idea and process, and thus this issue deserves further attention.

Pursuits in social science differ from those of natural science in fundamental ways that have consequences for claims of knowledge and truth and for the application of social theory for practical purposes. First, social science differs from natural science in that understanding social processes in order to intervene and manipulate them does not produce generalizable laws. Universal laws of social action cannot exist because social actors are constantly reflexively incorporating new knowledge into their practices, which may include knowledge of such laws (Giddens 1977). The unstable nature of social 'laws' makes universal descriptions based on the predictability of social conduct and its institutional forms almost impossible, thus challenging descriptions of what civil society is, what it does and what it can do.

Second, this subject-subject relationship that characterizes social science explains why civil society as idea does not remain located in the sphere of 'expert' knowledge, but can become part of 'lay' knowledge (Giddens 1977). The incorporation and usage of 'civil society' at the local, national and international levels of public discourse constitute a phenomenon witnessed in both Western and African societies. It is through this process of incorporating expert knowledge into lay knowledge that the rationalization of action becomes possible. Reflexivity on the part of social actors has significant consequences. For instance, the consciousness of 'civil society' in Ghana is a result of social actors employing the idea of civil society to legitimize their opinions and demands. These processes are illustrated in the case of Ghana in Chapters Three and Five.

If the purpose of theory is not to understand political processes in order to influence them, then what is its purpose? It is argued that the usefulness of political analysis lies in its concern with 'unacknowledged action': the formalization of the rules and resources used implicitly by actors; the identification of unconscious or repressed motivational elements of action; and the analysis of discrepancies between intended and unintended consequences (Giddens 1977: 11). This thesis attempts to illuminate the 'unacknowledged action' resulting from the extrapolation of Western notions of civil society to African societies, the application of this civil society theory for practical purposes by both donor agencies and international NGOs, and the response of local actors in Ghana to the importation of civil society as idea.

## 2.1    Civil Society as Process

The colonial project of 'knowledge as power' and the projects of the 1960s based on grand theories of social and economic development intentionally or unintentionally suppressed alternative truths and the possibility of multiple histories by imagining Western history as World history (Rudolph et al. 1995). The legacy of those projects has included the creation of a "culturally narcissistic mirror for the West," where historical processes that unfolded under concrete conditions, such as 19$^{th}$ century Europe, become the perspective from which to interpret subsequent social development (Rudolph et al. 1995: 28; see also Mamdani 1996: 12).

Given this legacy, it is not surprising that the idea of civil society would be adopted in African political studies to explain state-society relations. As previously mentioned, civil society as idea carries with it the assumptions of its past and present uses. In this case, the assumptions behind the idea obfuscate reality by viewing African politics and history through the prism of European categories and experiences:

> The so-called civil society perspective is not merely a way of understanding state-society relationships; by implication, civil society ought to exist because it is a superior way of organizing state-society relationships, given that it is the only viable or conceivable foundation for democracy…. Apparently, like democracy, one has to have civil society to belong to the modern world order (Hutchful 1995: 75-6).

Is this 'narcissistic mirror' a fundamental and incorrigible flaw of Africanists? Rudolph (1995) argues that only a disruption of such a perspective prepares the ground for scholars to operate as agents in the field of an open history. Looking at civil society as process is intended to disrupt the 'civil society perspective': to simultaneously strip down the idea to its bare assumptions and to search for a new way to articulate that which exists but the idea fails to capture.

The conceptual framework for understanding civil society as process contains several elements that help to articulate these existing processes. It combines an abstract notion of state and civil society in a dialectical relationship with theoretical discussions specific to post-colonial African countries including the nature of state and society in Africa, an analysis of power, and organizational aspects of collective action. This conceptual framework is not intended to be complete, coherent or unified, but rather it offers an example of what analytical tools one might employ to understand civil society as process.

The first element of the framework theorizes the relationship between 'the state' and 'society'. It is based on Migdal's "state-in-society" approach, which conceptualizes state-society relations as a process of social groupings interacting with one another and with those whose actual behavior they are vying to control or influence (Migdal 2001). Within this process, changes occur in the groupings themselves, their goals, and ultimately the rules they are promoting. The state is just like any other organization in that it is constructed and reconstructed through its interaction as a whole, and of its parts, with others. International forces feature into this approach, since changes at the national level must also be understood in terms of the impact on state and society of other states and the global economy.

This state-in-society approach provides the foundation for the theorization of a state-civil society dialectical relationship, in which strategies of the state and changes in those strategies shape civil society, and vice versa. As a result, who comprises civil society and the types of alliances formed among social groups change over time. The term 'dialectical' emphasizes that one shapes the other in a simultaneous and continuous process of constant action and reaction, even within the unequal power relations between the post-colonial state and society in Africa. The most important implication of this dialectical relationship is that the process of state and civil society formation and transformation cannot be grasped by isolating, observing and analyzing one component or the other, but requires the study of both. There is no linear evolution for state or civil society. Although their descriptions differ slightly, this state-civil society dialectical relationship resonates with elements in theories offered by other authors (for Ghana, see Hutchful 2002: 202-204; in general, see Markovitz 1998; Migdal 2001).

The historical processes which have shaped the particular nature of African states and societies comprise the second element of the framework. To grasp major shifts in the history of the relationship between civil society and the state, one needs to move away from the assumption of a single moment and identify different and even contradictory moments in this history. Mamdani (1996) offers a basic outline containing four historical moments in the development of civil society. The first moment consists of the colonial state as the protector of colonial settlers and their interests as well as the political and economic interests of the colonial power. A shift in the relation between the state and civil society is set in motion with the postwar colonial reforms, culminating in the nationalist struggle. This struggle, led by those who were not subjects of customary law but not equal rights-bearing citizens for entry into civil society, produced an indigenous civil society, signifying the second moment. The acquisition of control over the state by African leaders constitutes the third moment, at which time citizenship is granted theoretically to all members of society. The fourth moment involves the absorption of the indigenous civil society into political society:

> …a moment of the marriage between technicism and nationalism, of the proliferation of state nationalism in a context where the claims of the state—both developmentalist and equalizing—had a powerful resonance….It is the time when civil society-based social movements became demobilized and political movements statized (Mamdani 1996: 21).

This outline will be adapted and expanded in Chapters Four to reveal the details of such 'moments' in the case of Ghana.

Adding a state perspective to Mamdani's society-centered approach produces a more complete depiction of the nature of state and society in Africa. Nationalist struggles lent confidence about the important role that centralized mobilizing politics could play in these countries after independence (Migdal 2001: 41-9). The new political leaders of Africa came to believe in their states' potential to shape their societies: to move their economies from agriculture to industry, to create a skilled workforce, and to induce the population to abandon outmoded beliefs. The organization of the state became the focal point for state leaders to achieve a new unified social order. Major changes occurred in the distribution of social control as those running, or seeking to run, the state organization fought to provide the predominant, often exclusive, set of rules. However, this attempt has not been totally successful, as state leaders have faced tremendous obstacles in their efforts to assert social control and as leaders of other social organizations have been unwilling to relinquish their prerogatives without a struggle.

Politics is about power, and power is minimally about the balance between control and consent that governs the relation between the ruler and ruled (Chabal 1992). Examining politics requires knowledge of relations of power in their historical settings, and thus forms part of the conceptual framework for civil society as process. It is useful to look at the post-colonial nation-state as an imagined political community, and its creation in terms of ruptures and continuities with its antecedents (Chabal 1992: 39-45). Colonization introduced a new notion of political community that was superimposed over existing ones, devising the categories through which individuals and communities were to be defined.

The nationalists fashioned a view of the African community that was consonant with their opposition to colonial rule and with their desire for self-government:

> What was peculiar to post-colonial Africa was not that the nation-state was imagined by the nationalists. All nation-states have to be constructed through imaginative labour. What marked Africa from most European states is that the state preceded the nation. This had profound consequences for the genesis as well as for the new political community (Chabal 1992: 47).

Nationalists attempted to create a modern political community through a process of devising a national vision, creating a nationalist organization, and aggregating local support for the nationalist project. However, national unity was constructed on the weak foundations of colonial unity, allowing its legitimacy to be challenged (52). Meanings of political community are not static, and interpretations of political communities as they are reinvented may reveal much about continuities and changes in African politics.

The concept of political accountability is directly related to the concept of political community. Political accountability defines the political arena within which 'the rulers' seek to maintain, and 'the ruled' seek to combat, the relations of inequality and coercion which all power relations entail (Chabal 1992: 54-5). The analysis of political accountability is therefore an analysis of the constantly changing determinants of the theory and practice of political obligation between those who hold power and those who do not. Colonial governments were never accountable to those over whom they ruled. The political processes through which nationalist parties took over colonial states at independence signaled a fundamental change in political

accountability. Nationalists assumed that the forms of political accountability created during the nationalist campaign and formal decolonization would apply to the independent nation-state: nationalists were accountable to the people insofar as the people supported their struggle for independence (61). A new principle of accountability was needed, but it could only be invented in the practice of post-colonial politics.

The final element of the conceptual framework for understanding civil society as process combines an abstract theory of collective action with more explicit arguments concerning the implications of organizational capabilities of social groups. To reiterate previous arguments about political community and accountability, the hegemonic imperative underlying the ideology of national unity drives the state and the self-proclaimed dominant social groups to seek control and to shape civil society (Bayart 1986). Most regimes severely restricted access to the political system by preventing autonomous and pluralistic organization of social groups, and instead either attempted to integrate various social forces into single movements or set up intermediary and indirect means of control. Within this context, Bayart (1986) argues that civil society requires the 'organizational principle'.

Bayart's organizational principle, as interpreted here, indicates that organization requires consciousness, consciousness requires a common cultural frame of reference, and the common cultural frame of reference must not be identified with the state. Bayart (1986: 117) expresses uncertainty about the political possibility (and the demographic, economic or technological possibilities) of overcoming the discontinuities in cultural frames of reference. Ultimately, the success of civil society depends on its capacity to confront the state with appropriate conceptual weapons. Just as nationalism was the politics of the colonial society couched in terms of the colonial state, so the post-colonial society must conduct its politics in the language and actions of the post-colonial state if it is to contend for its ideal balance of shared power between the ruler and ruled.

For Bayart (1986), this conceptual challenge may only be accomplished through ideological and institutional 'mediations' that provide for the reconstruction of identity. Even then, he questions the intrinsic qualities of social movements: will they lead to more 'equal' relations between state and society? Challenges to the state's monopoly on power may contain within itself the elaboration of a new monopoly of social control by the new state leaders. Alternatively, if there is no monopoly over the counter-hegemonic project (or if it is eroded), the potential advance of civil society's conceptual challenge to the status quo may be checked or may lead to the implosion of the political system as a result of a scramble for power (Bayart 1986: 120). In all of these scenarios, one thing is clear: there is no teleological virtue in the notion of civil society.

Akwetey's analysis of the organizing potential of social groups complements Bayart's organizational principle and provides a more optimistic view of this potential. Alongside the process of 'statisation' that typically occurred under one-party and military regimes, individuals and groups from different socio-economic backgrounds forged links around issues of the economy and the nature of the polity, leading to the emergence of occupational identities and horizontal affinities (Akwetey 1994).[2] Such groups included trade unions, student organizations, women's groups devoted to gender issues, professional and occupational bodies, farmers' organizations, peasants' cooperatives, and employers' associations. The effects of

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[2] Statisation is defined as the incorporation of all major civic and interest organizations into the nationalist party or subsequent one-party states after independence.

economic crises produced varying responses from these social groups and acted as a backdrop against which power struggles between state and civil society occurred:

> The economic and socio-political conditions, upon which the post-colonial framework thrived, have changed and new challenges to the old ways of regulating the activities and demands of organized social groups have emerged (Akwetey 1994: 115).

Without a certain measure of organizational capability, individuals and social groups cannot participate in that counter-hegemonic project to challenge state power. Akwetey (1994) emphasizes the organizational capabilities of social groups whose support is vital to the implementation of government policies. When such groups enhance their organizational capabilities, they also acquire expectations challenging the existing institutional framework that regulates their relations to the state. Some social forces in Ghana have been able to enhance their organizational capabilities, and these developments have enabled them to seek changes in their relations with the post-colonial state. Political change thus involves a process of transforming the post-colonial political institutions by incorporating a new definition of the state-civil society relationship.

## 2.2    Summary

This chapter has argued that a single, structural entity called 'civil society' does not exist. Instead, the concept of 'civil society' can be separated into civil society as idea and civil society as process. Civil society as idea provides a means to an end. The idea has historically been a discursive tool employed to articulate visions of a better society. As Chapter Three will demonstrate, the usage of 'civil society' in the literature on Africa does not escape this tradition. Perhaps due to its instrumental use, the idea of civil society tends to present unity where disunity actually exists. In this way, the idea obscures reality through its collective misrepresentation of it. Importantly, this idea is not limited to intellectual discourse, as the language of academics can become the language of ordinary people. Insomuch that it does and people reflexively incorporate it into their actions, a single generalizable theory of civil society becomes impossible and the ability of the idea to affect reality becomes possible.

In contrast, civil society as process uncovers the disunity that the idea conceals, a disunity that makes civil society a field of struggle between social forces. Furthermore, civil society as process is historically grounded. These qualities of civil society are captured in the framework which combines the state-civil society dialectical relationship, the nature of African states and societies, an analysis of power based on notions of political community and accountability, and the theoretical implications of organizational capabilities within society. These frameworks for civil society as idea and as process form the basis of the analyses contained in the remaining chapters. In the next chapter, the discussion turns specifically to civil society as idea and its political implications in the case of Ghana.

## Chapter 3
Convergence on Civil Society as Idea

*The idea of civil society has an important presence in the world; increasing numbers of people presume the possibility of civil society; the very fact that they do and act accordingly gives it real force* (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999: 24).

This chapter focuses on the various ways that different types of social actors articulate civil society as idea and the means they employ in such an articulation.  Chapter Two demonstrated that the idea of civil society has always been the subject of normative theorizing.  As will be seen shortly, such theorizing becomes a normative battleground in contemporary African studies, as scholars from all backgrounds push forth their conceptions of civil society based on ideological positions and notions of rightness.  This chapter also shows how the ideas of scholars become the strategies of donors.  Finally, it examines how links between academics and the 'development profession' allow civil society as idea to enter Ghanaian society, and the reaction of local actors to this idea.

### 3.1  Civil Society as Idea in the Literature

In the late 1980s, the theme of a state-society struggle reverberated through Africanist circles in North America and became the new prismatic lens through which to gauge the significance of events in Africa (Mamdani 1996: 14).  Many Africanist accounts of civil society, as well as those of African scholars, seem to combine analysis with prescription, description with advocacy.  The perspectives found in the literature on civil society in Africa can broadly be divided into the 'conventional view', as the dominant discourse, and alternative perspectives, which include Democratic Socialist, Marxist and Emancipatory viewpoints as well as critiques of civil society as a 'liberal project'.   The following literature review discloses the assumptions embedded in these various perspectives.

### 3.1.1   *The Conventional View of Civil Society and Alternative Perspectives*

In an analysis of works on civil society by Chazan (1992), Diamond (1994), Schmitter (1997) and Hadenius and Uggla (1997), a common conception of civil society appears which Kasfir (1998a) calls the 'conventional view'.  The conventional view limits 'civil society' to specific kinds of non-state organizations in public life engaged in organizational activity according to particular criteria, and it perceives 'civil society' as an instrument to make states more democratic, more transparent and more accountable.  Chazan applies this view of civil society to the African context.  A full understanding of the meaning and implications of the conventional view requires an elaboration of this African context.

Because existing social formations have forced little change in authoritarian states, and in most cases either acquiesced in their rule or actively supported them, academic proponents of democratic change in Africa must look elsewhere to explain the surge towards democracy in the 1990s and how it could be sustained (Kasfir 1998a).  Organizations that seem worthy opponents of authoritarian states are declared the core of 'civil society'.  These organizations tend to be

independent from the state, sufficiently financed and expertly led, in order to overcome opposition to democracy and participate in its consolidation. Most, but not all, are new and frequently organized in opposition to specific practices of the existing regime.

Employed to accomplish the authors' objective of better governance in African countries, this narrow conception precariously separates organizations constituting 'civil society' from the social bases of the society whose government they purport to reform:

> If these organiza tions must meet multiple organisational and social criteria to qualify for membership in civil society, they are less likely to represent social interests that are deeply and widely shared by groups within the society (Kasfir 1998a: 6).

The conventional view claims that recent openings in political space for voluntary associations originate from a political and economic weakening of the African state and that this space allows for the creation and expansion of civil society. However, the continuing importance of patronage in maintaining African governments challenges this depiction of state-society relations, and the absence of a vigorous economy makes it unlikely that 'civil society' organizations can remain autonomous from the state unless they are funded by foreign donors (Kasfir 1998a: 9). Additionally, the quality of 'civility' attributed to civil society within the conventional view obscures the deep political and economic cleavages that must be resolved before members of a society are able to work with each other within a democratic system.

The conventional view does not consider empirical questions, but rather its proponents settle for a concept that presumes the feasibility of establishing the ideas they would wish on Africa (Kasfir 1998a: 10). Proponents seem to prefer solutions of 'good governance' to addressing more complex problems of working towards political settlements, and the idea of 'civil society' provides "an easy alternative to the partisan political battles that so many regard as incapable of resolving those problems" (Foley and Edwards quoted in Kasfir 1998a: 12). Such notions of governance and civil society attempt to remove politics from the equation, but what kind of democracy can a non-political civil society achieve?

Alternative perspectives to the conventional view flow from various sources. A summary of these perspectives follow, but note that it is based on a sample of texts and does not purport to be all-encompassing or to capture every nuance. First, the Social Democrat perspective of civil society envisions a democracy based on fundamental changes in the distribution of power. Defining socialism as a synonym for a 'greater democracy', Post (1991) argues that the building of socialism requires a single socialist party that institutionalizes pluralism and opposition within the party. He emphasizes the role of civil society in building this 'socialism': "the essential preconditions for democracy are established by the nature and level of organization in civil society and the ways in which these conditions impinge on the state" (36). Another Social Democrat, Sachikonye (1995) insists that political parties and state institutions cannot exclusively guarantee that sections of society are represented and have opportunities to improve their material well-being, and thus civil society institutions can play a key role in articulating the interests of under-represented sections of society.

Second, the Marxist perspective holds that the nature and structure of civil society necessarily arises from class relations in society (see Markovitz 1998; Nzimande and Sikhosana 1995; Wood 1990). Proponents of this perspective criticize the conventional view for its failure to acknowledge this class element:

> A compulsive concentration on civil society, improperly understood, will distract from those elements of coercion in capitalism that invariably affect most Africans. 'Exploitation' and 'domination' are old words, out of fashion. They are, however, still relevant (Markovitz 1998: 47).

The civil society framework is perceived to conceptualize away the problem of capitalism by "disaggregating society into fragments, with no over-arching power structure, no totalizing unity, no systematic coercions" (Wood 1990: 65). Furthermore, arguments for 'autonomous civil society' ignore the entire Marxist critique of liberal, 'bourgeois' democracy.

A third perspective comes from an Emancipatory viewpoint, authors who imagine a democracy without parties but conducted through political organizations (see Mohan 1998; Wamba-dia-Wamba 1994). These 'political organizations' are not seen as mass organizations, social movements or civil society, but as multiple sites to channel people's opinions within the context of a new progressive politics. The key is alliance building between these organizations at various local political sites such as factories and villages. In the short term, the state sets the rules in which this popular and progressive democracy can function:

> In the longer term, alliances may form which can lead to a 'reconstitution of state-civil society relations and not one but many, depending on concrete experiences and openings' (Mohan 1998: 19).

The final alternative perspective arises from a broader analysis of the 'civil society versus the state' paradigm. From one direction, the paradigm is criticized for its evolutionist theory of history conceived in the categorization of traditional versus modern (Mamdani 1995). The civil society-state paradigm implies a certain historical trajectory for African countries in which the traditional community becomes a modern civil society. From another direction, the civil society-state paradigm is criticized as part of the 'liberal project':

> The significant theses associated with the concept [of civil society] appear not to be derived from a body of empirical evidence and well-constructed theory but from a set of neo-liberal nostrums, incorporated into the argument as assumptions and then proudly presented as valid conclusions. As such, civil society forms part of the 'liberal project'… (Allen 1997: 336).

Western governments, their associated agencies, and international financial institutions need a 'civil society' that will marginalize groups whose modes of existence and values are not compatible with liberal democracy (Allen 1997; see also Beckman 1993; Mustapha 1998). These two strands of critique reveal the assumption embodied within the state-civil society paradigm, and the conventional view of civil society, of an evolutionist history in which all things 'traditional' must pass into modernity.

From the discussion above, it is possible to draw out three tendencies in the usage of 'civil society': the hegemonic, the counter-hegemonic, and the tactical. The hegemonic tendency is illustrated not only by the conventional view, but also by the attention and importance that the concept has captured in Africanist circles. However, an equally strong counter-hegemonic tendency exists, as a result of either ideology or academic caution, which challenges the usefulness of this concept as a lens through which to interpret state-society relations or to envisage notions of democracy. The tactical tendency overlaps the hegemonic and the counter-hegemonic, in that it refers to the employment of civil society as idea to achieve an objective other than explaining social phenomenon. It is here, in the blurred boundaries between these three tendencies, where the normative malleability of civil society as idea is located. Before elaborating further on this theme, it is important to show how these tendencies play out in the usage of 'civil society' by Ghanaian academics.

The ways in which several Ghanaian academics employ 'civil society' to analyze Ghanaian politics demonstrate the hegemonic tendency. For example, Drah (1996) supports a Tocquevillian conception of civil society that emphasizes the significance of a variety of voluntary associations for the emergence and consolidation of democracy, because the free operation of these associations check the state's tendency towards despotism. Ninsin (1998a)

also explains Ghanaian politics in terms of civil society, but in contrast to Drah's thesis of civil society facilitating democratization, Ninsin warns against regarding civil societies as universal agents of democratization. As will be seen in Chapter Four, he depicts the struggle for democracy during 1989-92 as one between a 'prodemocracy civil society' and an 'alternative civil society. His juxtaposition of these two civil societies, which contradicts most theoretical discussions linking civil society and democracy, reveals the hegemony of the idea of civil society.

The work of Gyimah-Boadi illustrates both the hegemonic and tactical tendencies (see Gyimah-Boadi 1994, 1996, 1998; Gyimah-Boadi and Oquaye 2000). Adopting the conventional view of civil society, he argues that civil associations have existed and flourished in post-colonial Ghana, but their contribution to the construction of a viable civil society has been restricted because they have been dependent upon the capabilities and predilections of the state and various regimes. He consistently suggests that democracy in Ghana, and Africa in general, needs a more independent and autonomous civil society and that the 'construction' of such as civil society requires foreign support. In contrast, Hutchful (1995, 2002) exhibits a counter-hegemonic tendency in his theoretical expositions on the meaning and usage of 'civil society' and in his general analyses of Ghanaian and African politics:

> The use of the concept of civil society is thus an attempt to capture the fact that something significant has happened in African politics. But what? And are civil society and democracy accurate depictions of what has transpired? (Hutchful 1995: 58).

### 3.1.2   Resolving the Unresolvable

In addition to identifying these three tendencies encompassed in the various perspectives of civil society as idea, this literature review of civil society in Africa also evinces how authors' conceptions of civil society are linked to their understanding of democracy. This linkage reveals one explanation for the popularity of 'civil society'. Its frequent appearance in texts results from a convergence on civil society as idea from authors with intellectual dispositions to the Right and the Left. Those on the Left, the Social Democrats more than the Marxists, disenchanted with the state as a result of the defeat of Socialist projects after the fall of the Berlin wall, look towards 'civil society' to build a new 'Socialist' democracy. Those more on the Right, proponents of the conventional view, acknowledging the foundering of initial attempts at multiparty, constitutional democracy, seek 'civil society' as the missing element that liberal democracy in Africa requires.

Convergence appears through the common usage of 'civil society', but it may have deeper roots in notions of popular democratic participation and desires for 'meaningful' democracy. If this literature review is expanded to include general works on democracy in Africa, this argument about convergence still holds. For example, take a selection of works on democracy by the following well-known scholars: Ake (1993, 1994), Chazan (1999), Olukoshi (1998), Szeftel (1999), Diamond, Linz and Lipset (1988). All of these authors refer to the importance of 'civil society' in the process of democratization or consolidating democracy. Beckman (1993) also recognizes this pattern when he points out that 'radical democrats' and 'neo-liberals' have common interests in the 'liberation of civil society'. Notions of popular struggle, of creating democratic space, of reliance on society to change the state, and of struggle and organization within society appear throughout the literature on civil society and democracy in Africa. Perhaps this convergence on civil society as idea expresses the shared conception of democracy as emerging from the struggle of ordinary people.

Civil society as idea may be a common concept on which diverse ideological perspectives draw, but their goals still differ relative to their ideologies. In the intellectual pursuit of understanding political processes in Africa, their underlying objective is ultimately to influence those processes to achieve some goal. 'Civil society' is the current focus of this pursuit, as history has demonstrated the failure of other conceptual devices such as the state and the market. If one can understand how 'civil society' works to shape the rules of the political game which constitute the relations between state and society, then one can attempt to influence rule making. Liberal proponents of the conventional view intend to push for political and economic liberalization by supporting an entrepreneurial middle class. Social Democrats and the Emancipatory visionaries hope to create informal institutions for participation by the masses through constructing new, multiple sites of politics. Marxists do not need civil society to achieve their goal, so they can dismiss the concept altogether by criticizing its tendency to conceal class relations. Only the rare intellectual sees no use in talking about civil society.

In conclusion, what 'civil society' is often depends on what 'democracy' is. If the latter is an essentially contested idea, then the former must also be. However, in the process of contesting its meaning, reality becomes blurred as the idea of civil society becomes more a metaphor for social change and less useful to understand what is actually happening.

## 3.2    Scholars, Donors and Donor agendas

The idea of civil society has influenced donor discourses and the objectives of their aid to African countries. As will be seen shortly, donors adopting the conventional view of civil society support broad intervention to create a 'civil society' that will support political and economic liberalization. In the process of operationalizing this view, theory is altered to meet the necessities of practice and practice has political implications. The following discussion outlines this movement from theory to practice to politics.

### 3.2.1   *Operationalizing Theory*

Civil society as idea has embedded itself in the 'development profession'. The community of scholars, consultants and activists that influence the policy of national governments, donor agencies and international NGOs has constructed an elaborate discourse around 'civil society' and its 'role' in the process of social, economic and political change in 'developing' countries. Because this community influences foreign-aid priorities, it represents "a common locus for both the reception of the idea of civil society and its retransmission to aid-recipient countries" (Jenkins 2001: 250). Foreign aid agencies may constitute just another culture that has fashioned its version of civil society to suit its purposes, but with the crucial difference that they deploy considerable economic and political resources to bring about change (251). As we shall see in the case of Ghana, the resulting unequal power relations have important consequences.

During the latter part of the 1980s, multilateral and bilateral donors adopted the strategy that political reforms should accompany economic reforms.[3]  According to Farrington, this shift represents donors' acknowledgment that "the models of development they wished to foster would not be consolidated unless effective demand for them could be articulated by the relevant

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[3] Drawing heavily on the works contained in Hyden (1992), this shift in strategy became know in the 1989 World Bank report *Sub-Saharan Africa: from Crisis to Sustainable Growth*, which characterized the crisis in Africa as a crisis of governance.

sections of the society" (quoted in Gary 1996: 152). For example, the World Bank adopted the idea of 'civil society' in order to build constituencies for the economic and political reforms it supports:

> The Bank's promotion of civil society is linked to its promotion of accountability, legitimacy, transparency and participation as it is these factors which empower civil society and reduce the power of the state. Accountability is crucial to ensure congruence between public policy and actual implementation, and the efficient allocation and use of public resources (Williams and Young 1994: 87).

Following this reasoning, the World Bank supports a 'civil society' composed of contractual, non-community, non-affective groups that will accept, even demand, the Bank's reform programs (Williams and Young 1994). This requirement that civil society be compatible with modernization reflects elements in the conventional view.

Adopting similar logic, aid agencies of advanced capitalist countries have also identified 'civil society' as the key element in promoting 'democratic development' in Africa. Bilateral donors perceive 'civil society' simultaneously as autonomous centers of social and economic power, as an arena of public space, and as a set of private actors. Thus, foreign aid intends to support both individual organizations and the political environment in which they carry out their functions (Jenkins 2001: 253). For example, a 1996 report of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) states:[4]

> The art and craft of the democracy strategist, then, lies in building and supporting coalitions of associations that are proreform at a particular historical moment in the democratic path (quoted in Kasfir 1998b: 133).

Additionally, donors are attracted to the idea of supporting local non-partisan NGOs whose purposes are to promote public interests that are new to African polities and for which a domestic constituency does not exist (Kasfir 1998b).

It appears that donor agencies have created civil society in their own image (Jenkins 2001). Donor discourses often incorporate 'civil society' as a political ombudsman and 'governance' as a euphemism for 'politics', underplaying the contingencies which influence the formation of opposition movements, the entrenchment of political order and the exercise of power (Jenkins 2001: 268). Symbolizing the values of impartiality, fair play, and commitment to public welfare, 'civil society' is cast in a role similar to the one which donor agencies see themselves playing in relation to the countries to which they give aid. Their idea of civil society involves not only its depoliticization, but also its bureaucratization. The cogency of civil society as idea among donors and its consequent effect on their objectives and actions becomes clear in the case of Ghana. Donors use aid to embed political and economic liberalism in Ghanaian society through programs claiming to support 'civil society'.

As Chapter Four will show, Ghana's political history is checkered with military coups and authoritarian regimes. Ghana's most recent attempt at multiparty democracy began in 1992 with presidential and parliamentary elections. The international donor community went to great lengths to secure this transition to democracy (Boafo-Arthur 1998). However, opposition parties perceived the presidential outcome as rigged and boycotted the parliamentary elections. Against this background, donor 'democracy' assistance between 1993-96 concentrated on ensuring a 'free and fair' process in the 1996 elections. Only in 1997 did donor aid begin to include 'civil society' assistance (Hearn 1998).

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[4] Gary Hansen, 'Constituencies for Reform: Strategic Approaches for Donor-Supported Civic Advocacy Programs', Assessment Report No. 12, Center for Development Information and Evaluation, USAID, February 1996

Who and what is civil society in Ghana? In general, donor references to 'civil society' allude to a narrow section of society. Foreign assistance to 'civil society' aims to strengthen a new African elite committed to the promotion of a limited form of procedural democracy and structural-adjustment type economic policies in partnership with the West, as well as to the strategic position of civil society in relation to the state (Hearn 1999). To achieve these goals, donors support efforts to bring 'representatives of civil society' together with government officials in forums to discuss national economic policy (Hearn 1999: 6). Examples of two such forums include the USAID-sponsored National Economic Forum held in 1997 and the World Bank-sponsored Structural Adjustment Participatory Review Initiative (SAPRI).[5] Donors also support 'civil society' through funding programs that provide material and organizational resources to individual organizations, particularly for research, parliamentary lobbying, public education campaigns and entrepreneurial initiatives. The most popular recipients of 'democracy' assistance were formal, urban-based, professional NGOs (5).

Ghana is the World Bank's largest program in Africa. Between 1992 and 1995, the World Bank provided one third of the country's total aid (Hearn 1999: 12). Since Wolfensohn became president in 1995, the Bank has increased its involvement in the non-governmental sector. The Bank has promoted interaction with 'civil society' in three ways. First, its Country Assistance Strategy report developed collaboratively with the government recently elicited the opinions of local organizations. Second, the Bank employs NGO liaison officers (now called Social Development officers). Third, it participated in the SAPRI exercise. As will be seen in Chapter Five, SAPRI was a public initiative in which the Bank discussed issues relating to national economic policy with 'representatives of civil society'. These semi-institutionalized means of dealing with 'civil society' indicate the extent to which the World Bank has incorporated the term 'civil society' in its policies, programs and the discourse attached to them.

The United States and Germany provide the largest sources of assistance to 'civil society organizations' followed by the Nordic countries, the Netherlands and Canada (Hearn 1999). However, no other donor agency uses the civil society theoretical framework as a basis of its aid work to the extent that USAID does (Hearn 1999: 7). Germany provides substantial 'democracy' assistance through its political foundations. For example, the Friedrich Ebert Foundation works with educated, urban-based NGOs, such as the International Federation of Women Lawyers and the Ghana Journalists Associations, and the Friedrich Naumann Foundation supports institutions directly promoting a liberal economic agenda, such as the Institute for Economic Affairs and the Association of Ghana Industries. Britain explicitly promotes 'good government' through public sector reforms and Sweden emphasizes human rights. Denmark, the Netherlands and Canada also have significant aid programs but the focus of their aid is never explicitly 'civil society'.

The nature of USAID programs in Ghana may reflect the extent to which the US is home to the hegemonic tendency within the civil society literature on Africa, and the degree to which USAID has drawn on these scholars to guide its programs. Leading Africanists in the US have first theorized 'civil society' and then tried to influence it (Hearn 1999: footnote 9). For example, Harbeson was the regional democracy adviser for Eastern and Southern Africa in USAID during the mid-1990s.[6] Another example involves the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), established in 1983 to work in conjunction with USAID. Diamond, cited

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[5] Regarding the National Economic Forum, see Akwetey (1998) and Hearn (1998, 1999). Regarding SAPRI, see Chapter Five.
[6] For a sample of Harbeson's work on civil society, see Harbeson (1994a, 1994b).

above in the literature review, is co-director of NED's research center, the International Forum for Democratic Studies, and co-editor of NED's *Journal of Democracy*.

Having suggested some reasons why the US emphasizes 'civil society' in its foreign aid programs, the discussion turns to a closer analysis of its assistance strategy. After the 1992 and 1996 elections, Rawlings, who had overthrown the government in 1981, remained at the head of government and the National Democratic Congress, the former regime in a political party disguise, became the ruling party. Against this backdrop, USAID assistance attempted to facilitate the consolidation of democracy according to a civil society theory apparently adapted from academics such as Diamond and Harbeson. Hearn summarizes the theoretical framework underpinning USAID assistance as follows:

> A thriving civil society can widen democracy by promoting pluralism, and it can deepen democracy by embedding the values and institutions of liberal democracy within society at large, not simply at the state level (1999: 16).

Hearn's reading of USAID documents concludes that USAID parlance depicts 'civil society' as an arena of confrontation between organizations loyal to the government and 'democratic' organizations (often donor-funded), in which there will be winners and losers. At that time, USAID perceived 'civil society' to be dominated by government-sponsored organizations, and therefore concentrated its programs on assisting organizations corresponding to its theory of civil society in an effort to promote its vision of liberal democracy (Hearn 1999: 18).

Another US-based organization working in conjunction with USAID in Ghana was the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES).[7] In 1997, IFES initiated a five-year project, Enhancing Civil Society Effectiveness at the Local Level (ESCELL), focused on rural civil society and its integration with the local government structure. Ramm commented that this project was seeking local, spontaneous associations—"the real civil society" (interviewed 30/08/01). Hearn describes ESCELL as "one of the most carefully designed and ambitious of all donor civil society interventions in Africa"(1999: 10). [8]

Economic objectives are interspersed with the political objectives of USAID programs. Liberal economic reforms enter the discourse of 'civil society' when USAID labels private sector development programs as civil society strengthening projects, defines business associations as integral components of civil society, and supports think tanks and policy institutes that popularize economic liberalism (Hearn 1999: 23). For example, between 1992 and 1997, NED gave over US$500,000 to the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA) for projects promoting the role of private sector within Parliament and among the public.

IEA is one of two leading neo-liberal policy institutions in Ghana, the second being the Center for Policy Analysis (CEPA). Established by a World Bank-led consortium of donors, CEPA comprises one of over 15 think tanks across Africa intended to build up an "African cadre of neo-liberal economists" (Hearn 1999: 24). These two policy institutes receive some of the largest donor contributions to 'African civil society' and would cease operating without such external assistance (ibid).

It can be argued that the objectives embodied in donor assistance to 'civil society' described above, particularly those of USAID and the World Bank, are derived from the conventional view of civil society. The case of Ghana verifies the influence of theory, explicit attempts to put it into practice, and how attempts to operationalize theory become political as

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[7] IFES ceased its activities in Ghana sometime in 2000.
[8] The final report on the ESCELL project was not yet available to the public at the time of writing.

donors try to shape the landscape of civil society in Ghana. Notably, the types of organizations donors are funding in Ghana are among the key actors in each society:

> Such groups are at the center of shaping the most important questions facing each of these countries: the type of economic policy to be pursued, the meaning and content of democracy, the form and power of local government, and the position of women in society (Hearn 1999: 24).

This progression from theory to practice to politics supports the critique of civil society as a 'liberal project'.

### 3.2.2   *Implications of Donor-Funded 'Civil Society'*

Two major implications arise from donor-funded 'civil society'. First, rather than changing the foundations of African politics, the version of civil society that writers call for and that donors create may assist in stabilizing the status quo (Jenkins 2001: 134; Hearn 2000: 27). In the new model of development assistance, 'civil society organizations' are expected to work in 'partnership' with governments through consensus building around structural adjustment programs or monitoring the government's implementation of its World Bank approved Poverty Reduction Strategy. [9] The powerful influence of donor agencies on local organizations, combined with the application of civil society as idea to achieve their objectives of economic and political liberalization, may work towards stabilizing the existing social and political order.

In the emerging liberal democracies of Africa, a second implication concerns the inadequacy of the politics of structural adjustment employed by donor agencies in dealing with authoritarian regimes and the shift towards a new politics of structural adjustment. In Ghana, demonstrations in over the introduction of the Value-Added Tax, which ended in its withdrawal, convinced donors and the government that implementing difficult economic policy requires some consensus within society (Hearn 2000: 28). As part of this new politics, the World Bank and the United States intend to create a constituency for their preferred economic and political reforms under the rhetoric of 'facilitating consensus building through bringing civil society into the policy-making process.' 'Civil society' serves as a medium for the new politics of structural adjustment, through which multilateral and bilateral donors can lobby governments to adopt their preferred economic reforms.

This picture of the new politics of structural adjustment is not yet complete. Critics of donor agencies form another set of actors on this political scene. During much of the 1980s, parts of the NGO community opposed the World Bank's structural adjustment programs. As the NGO sector is not homogenous, this critical stance had multiple points of origin and contained diverse opinions. In general, this criticism emerged from concerns with poverty, with the validity of particular development models and with unparticipatory processes of policymaking. Significantly, the World Bank may have adopted the civil society discourse partly in response to these criticisms.

Despite their apparent opposition to each other, common elements exist in the agendas of the World Bank and its international NGO critics. First, international NGOs provide a conduit of micro-interference at the community level that parallels the macro-interference of the World Bank at the national level (Williams and Young 1994). Second, international NGOs often share with the Bank a tactical use of the idea of civil society by funding 'civil society' organizations

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[9] See *Annual Report on Development Effectiveness 1999* and *Annual Report on Development Effectiveness 2000.* World Bank Operations Evaluations Department. http://www.worldbank.org/html/oed/pro099.htm; in the case of Ghana, see USAID (1997) *Ghana Country Assistance Strategy*, Washington, DC: USAID, p.21-30.

and projects that further their respective objectives. In this way, civil society as idea becomes the terrain of a new politics of structural adjustment in which donors agencies and international NGOs struggle to influence governments and local actors.

For Hearn (2000), the solution to donor funded 'civil society' lies in 'autonomous social forces', but this may be an idealistic response. Are social forces ever truly autonomous? She neglects the possibility that some 'civil society organizations' may benefit from funding yet maintain a degree of autonomy, or that these social groups already existed in society and have been enhanced not created. What might be a more accurate understanding is that donors, and to a lesser extent international NGOs, privilege some sections in African societies over others by providing resources previously unattainable. Hutchful (2002) refers to this process as the 'hierarchy and differentiation of civil society'. Social organizations in Ghana enter this new politics of structural adjustment as another set of actors, as will become apparent in Chapter Five, because they perceive an opportunity to further their objectives through the idea of civil society.

## 3.3 Consciousness of 'Civil Society' in Ghana

As a result of the link between academics who theorize about the phenomenon of civil society and donors and international NGOs who have attempted to operationalize certain strands of civil society theory and incorporate it into their agenda, civil society as idea pervades the development profession. These links extend to multiple categories of social actors and allow this idea to permeate the agendas of most social organizations in Ghana and perhaps the national discourse.[10] The following discussion provides examples of ways in which different local actors and organizations define and employ 'civil society' and how this leads to a self-conscious 'civil society' in Ghana.

In 1996, some occupational organizations, in collaboration with the University of Ghana and financed by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, organized a conference on "Civil Society in Ghana." The Foundation's Resident Director states that "a dispassionate *reflection* on developments, challenges, problems and perspectives relating to civil society, can help in making the contribution of civil society to democratization and development even bigger and more sustainable" (Mayer 1996: xi, emphasis added). Notably, the presentation of papers at this conference came from both academics and leaders of organizations with a reputable history in Ghanaian politics (see Drah and Oquaye 1996). Drah presented a theoretical background of the civil society concept, while other papers concerned the role of different social groups or organizations in the ongoing process of democratization in Ghana, such as the Trade Union Congress, Ghana Bar Association, Ghana National Association of Teachers, youth and women.

The significance of this conference lies in its value as an exercise in reflection and the identity of those doing the reflecting. It illustrates the politicization of organizations over the course of history as they have struggled at various points in time to change authoritarian regimes, as Chapter Four will illustrate. The expression of themselves collectively as 'civil society' is only a new method of describing a process with a much longer history. Most of the conference papers included a historical narrative of the organization within Ghanaian politics, demonstrating consciousness of their past, present and future role in politics, only now this future role is perceived through the idea of civil society.

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[10] For example, see *The Ghanaian Times*, 7 July 2001, p.10, "Democracy thrives on strong civil society"; the headline is taken from a quote by President Kuffuor.

Such a reflection on 'the role of civil society' not only increases expectations among the participant organizations, but also accelerates the institutionalization of 'civil society' and the association of 'civil society' with notions of representation. For example, editors of the published conference papers comment:

> [This book] contains mostly papers presented by representatives of active aspects of civil society in Ghana and may largely be considered a *valuable practical handbook on civil society in Ghana* (Drah and Oquaye 1996, emphasis added).

We return to this theme of institutionalizing 'civil society' at the close of the thesis, after exploring other ways in which this process of institutionalization may be occurring.

Examples of a self-conscious collective identity as 'civil society' and definitions of the role such a 'civil society' should play are not limited to this conference, or to a narrow group of individuals and organizations. Pulled from multiple sources, the following material attempts to show the various and sometimes contradicting ways that people in Ghanaian society define civil society and associate the idea with their own actions. To start with, take this statement by the president of Ghana Association of Women Entrepreneurs:

> The concept of civil society is to try and complement the effort of government in the area of offering social services, because the civil societies get far where government cannot go, and they are so much in touch with the people. I mean [NGOs] are the first contact with the people in the rural areas and same thing with churches (Quachey, interviewed 27/02/01).

Another example is the description of civil society given by the moderator at a workshop to discuss issues concerning the World Bank's Country Assistance Strategy for Ghana:

> Civil society, when effective in its work, facilitates the role of the state by helping establish public peace and security, create an environment for employment and growth, provide social services….civil society can be effective only when it is democratically organized and relates to the state and market structures (Gbedemah, "Proceedings of the Volta Region Workshop").

Compare those statements to the following comment from a staff member of The Gender Center in reference to internal discussions of the Network for Women's Rights:

> …some people don't want to have confrontation with the state and others say you have to be out there and very strong in criticism of the state, it's what civil society is about and have a right to occupy that space…(Cusack, interviewed 16/08/01).

These three examples show how civil society as idea can be associated with activities that support government efforts in national development or with activities that challenge the government's monopoly on development and exclusion of other elements in society. However, the latter is only a recent phenomenon, and the former remains the dominant impression. Additionally, several leaders of 'civil society organizations' expressed confusion over who or what civil society is. Despite this confusion, 'civil society' forms an essential component of the political vocabulary utilized by organizations, government and donors of all types, facilitating communication among and within these sets of actors (Ramm, interviewed 30/08/01).

A reoccurring theme within the diverse interpretations of 'civil society' involves the application of civil society as idea by individuals and organizations to understand their own actions within the national context. Social actors describe themselves as 'civil society', and by that definition their actions are legitimized, or at least argued as legitimate. The Structural Adjustment Participatory Review Initiative (SAPRI) provides an excellent example of self-conscious 'civil society'. Conceived at the global level among a group of international NGOs, SAPRI embodies the notion of 'civil society' as a conceptually unified entity, juxtaposed to the World Bank and government. For instance, the global SAPRI network coordinator announced at

its launch in 1997, "What is really significant about this initiative is that it is about participation, it is about civil society, but it is also about civil society participation on the issue of the day, economic policymaking".[11]  The extensive discussion of SAPRI in Chapter Five will show that this initiative facilitated the transmission of civil society as idea among a wide range of individuals and organizations in Ghana.  One participant stated, "The SAPRI process actually enabled us to know or even to concretize the idea of civil society as it is so called in this country" (Nyoagbe, interviewed 25/09/01).

Bringing the discussion full circle, it is interesting to close with an examination of another conference for 'civil society' addressing the theme "The Role of Civil Society in Assessing Public Sector Performance in Ghana" (see Mackay and Gariba 2000).  Conference participants included a mélange of NGOs, advocacy groups, parliamentarians and World Bank staff, and the objective of the conference involved brainstorming ways for 'civil society' to participate in assessing public sector performance.[12]  The significant points to draw from this conference concern how the World Bank perceives 'civil society' participation and how social actors identified as 'civil society' perceive their capacity for participation.  It is clear that the World Bank now recognizes 'civil society' as an important participant in 'development', but in a role largely limited to monitoring and measuring development outcomes.[13]  The conference proceedings reveal an emphasis by participants on questions of representation, lack of capacity to carry out policy analysis and the need for coordination among themselves.  Overall, an implicit consensus emerged that 'civil society' should participate in assessing public sector performance, but exactly who and how remained unresolved.

Through the expansion of civil society as idea and through its use to legitimize action, a consciousness of a collective identity as 'civil society' developed among various social organizations in Ghana.  But as the previous discussion illuminated, this identity is fluid and ever changing depending on the context and actors involved.  In fact, one could distinguish between several types of self-consciousness: (1) an awareness that past actions can be described under a new label, (2) the recognition of the advantages from using this label and want to benefit from the international and national momentum behind 'civil society', and (3) conscious efforts to repackage previous ideological beliefs, which produce a certain connotation in society according to historical moments, into the more acceptable idea of civil society because of its resonance with the contemporary dominant ideology of political and economic liberalism.

## 3.4  Conclusion

Two themes surface in this exploration of the idea of civil society as conceived by multiple categories of social actors from the international to the national to the local level and from academics to donors to citizens.  The first theme is widespread convergence on civil society as idea in three ways: (1) in the literature on civil society in Africa among intellectuals spanning from the Left to the Right; (2) in the discourses and objectives of donor agencies and

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[11] See the Structural Adjustment Participatory Review Network web page at http://www.saprin.org for the full texts of speeches given at the SAPRI global launch.

[12] Interestingly, parliamentarians and the Parliament as an institution are considered by the World Bank to be part of civil society.  See Wolfensohn (2000) and World Bank (2001).

[13] See also Wolfensohn's speech at the SAPRI global launch.

international NGOs; and (3) in the way different social organizations use the idea of civil society to achieve their objectives and to create a collective identity.

A second theme running through this chapter concerns the positive and negative implications of civil society as idea:

> Insofar as it must, by its very nature, establish limits, it will always negate, exclude, silence, erase, rule out. On the other hand, its positive dimension lies in its capacity to open up spaces of democratizing aspiration…to mandate practical experimentation in the building of new publics, new modes of association, new media expression, new sorts of moral community, new politics (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999: 33).

The capacity to exclude and silence emanate mostly from the unequal power relations that are at work when donor agencies, the government and social organizations engage each other through the common discourse of civil society and when resources are selectively distributed through the funding of certain organizations.  However, civil society as idea also provides those on the unequal side of the power balance with more leverage and tools with which to engage in the struggle over the power balance itself.  As we shall see again in Chapter Five, civil society as idea legitimizes actions, and such actions may produce political openings for 'civil society' to further participate in national decision-making.

To conclude, civil society as idea is polymorphous.  It can assume the role assigned to it by intellectuals, donor agencies, and Ghanaian social organizations.  While embodying diverse meanings and employed in the pursuit of various objectives, the consistent feature of civil society as idea has been its ability to express visions of social change and legitimize actions taken in the name of social change.  By the 1990s civil society as idea is the idiom through which to articulate and understand political processes in Ghana that have previously been described in terms of class or ideological cleavages.  The next chapter furthers this attempt to deconstruct civil society as idea by examining Ghanaian history before the idea of civil society became the dominant prismatic lens through which to interpret state-society relations.

**Chapter 4**
Civil Society as Process in Ghana

In the previous chapter, we saw how multiple categories of social actors conceive civil society as idea and how these conceptions influence their perceptions of reality and affect their actions. This chapter describes the processes in civil society during the era in Ghanaian history when such an idea was not present and thus challenges the assumptions about reality encompassed in various conceptions of the idea. Exposing the collective misrepresentation of civil society as idea, processes in civil society appear as a string of impermanent unified postures in relation to transitory issues. The historical narrative of politics in Ghana from the Nationalist movement to the Fourth Republic presented in this chapter highlights how the state and civil society shape each other in a dialectical process, contrary to assumptions of the state and civil society being separate entities. Through the rise and fall of a series of regimes since independence, we see that civil society as process is characterized by the actions and reactions of politically mobilized social groups seeking to challenge or support the status quo distribution of power.

**4.1  The Politics of Nationalism and the CPP State**

It is argued that nationalism is a form of politics, politics is about power, and in the modern world power is primarily about control of the state (Breuilly 1982). The focus of nationalist movements in colonial Africa being to takeover the state, they had to develop the capacity for coordination and mobilization. Both of these functions were closely related to the structure of the colonial state and the changes it underwent, as the colonial state responds to pressures from indigenous society and vice versa. This conceptualization of nationalism as politics provides the framework for examining the anti-colonial struggle in the Gold Coast and for understanding the unique characteristics of state and society in independent Ghana.

Constitutional reforms in the 1940s in the direction of self-government initiated by the British Colonial Governor provided an opportunity for the 'intelligentsia'[14] to obtain a share of political authority. With the restructuring of the colonial state towards a more liberal representative government, a group of intelligentsia created the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC) in 1947. However, the UGCC lacked legitimacy as a nation-wide movement and sought to take on board the grievances of other groups in society through forming a coalition with the 'young men' and cocoa farmers.

Since colonial rule, commoners had acquired a greater sense of independence brought about by the curtailment of chiefly powers and income generated from an expanding market. The rise of 'elementary-school-leavers' and the creation of new forms of organization by commoners in the towns and villages resulted in the emergence of a new social force, known as the 'young men', with the general grievance that the structure of native-authority rule held no opportunities for them.[15] Nkrumah led the mobilization of the 'young men' and their alliance with the UGCC.

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[14] The 'intelligentsia' refers to professionals (often lawyers), academics and businessmen, who perceived themselves as representatives of a growing urban population (Austin 1964: 7).

[15] The Gold Coast had an extremely broad primary education programs, but limited opportunities for further education and employment. Austin (1964: 13) notes that by the end of World War II, elementary-school-leavers had

As for the cocoa farmers, they objected to cocoa price policies, the surplus extracted by the cocoa marketing board, and the policy of compulsory cutting-out of cocoa trees infected with swollen shoot disease. Cocoa farmers' opposition to compulsory cutting out contributed significantly to the strength of the anti-colonial movement. Nationalist leaders supported the demands of farmers and attempts were made to bring the various existing farmers' organizations together into an anti-colonial front. The 1937/38 cocoa hold-up demonstrated the organizing potential of the cocoa farmers and their ability to threaten colonial interests (Beckman 1976: 52).

Riots in 1948 caused a shifting of alliances in the indigenous society as a result of differences between the intelligentsia and the 'young men' over strategy and tactics of the nationalist movement. Having been extended the opportunity by the colonial government to participate in the constitutional reform process, the intelligentsia embraced a reformist stance. The nationalist movement split. Nkrumah formed the Convention People's Party (CPP), taking most of the coalition support with him under the slogan 'Self-government Now', and the intelligentsia realigned with the chiefs against the CPP and Nkrumah.

The 1951 elections for the first self-government institutions created an opportunity to acquire power, while at the same time extending the franchise and turning the nationalist movement into popular politics. A twofold process took place where the CPP expanded through the country while the administration constructed an electoral framework for use by the competing parties (Austin 1964: 141). The objective of the CPP was clearly to take over the colonial state, but others held the same objective evidenced by sub-nationalist movements that formed parties to contend the elections. The CPP won a majority of elected seats to the Legislative Assembly, but it continued to be opposed from different directions in subsequent elections.

The colonial government introduced a new constitution, which provided for the progressive reduction and transfer of the Governor's powers to a full, internal self-government before independence. In the campaign for the second general election in 1954, the CPP faced opposition from rebel candidates, as well as an opposition alliance of the Ghana Congress Party (UGCC reconstituted), the Northern People's Party, the Moslem Association Party and the Togoland Congress.[16] Even with these internal divisions and challenges from outside the party, the CPP had three and a half years in office and was the only political movement capable of forming a government, so not surprisingly the CPP won the second round of elections (Austin 1964: 194).

Between 1954-56, a new struggle for power emerged between the CPP and the National Liberation Movement (NLM). The NLM originated from the cocoa farmers' protest over the CPP government's attempt to set the price of cocoa below the market rate, but grew to embody the Asante Youth Association and its appeal to the Asante nation, the chiefs' dislike for Nkrumah and the CPP, intellectuals formerly under the Ghana Congress Party and CPP dissidents (Austin 1964: 281). The NLM repackaged these grievances into the demand for a federal constitution giving the regions more autonomy. In response to the increasing confrontation between the NLM and CPP, the colonial government proposed a third general election in 1965. Victorious again, the CPP formed the first government of independent Ghana.

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begun to cohere as a distinct social group. See also Hodgkin (1956) for a discussion on the types of organizations developing in towns and villages.

[16] Rebel candidates refer to candidates sponsored in defiance of the CPP central committee at the constituency executive level by local territorial groups defined by regions, chiefdoms, or villages (Austin 1964: 193).

As a result of economic and social development under colonialism, many classes were thrown up, some of which were organic, such as the early school-leavers, and others which emerged from conflict between social groups and the state, such as the cocoa farmers. These classes began to develop political consciousness and to articulate their interests. This process of nascent class formation fed into the nationalist movement, creating cleavages and producing factions within it. The nationalist movement was a coalition of specific social forces with different interests in the anti-colonial struggle, and the composition of this coalition changed over time such that shifting alliances in a domestic struggle over power occurred within the broader opposition to colonial rule. As a result, a precarious balance between national consciousness opposed to colonialism and a political consciousness based on local, particular demands existed. Nkrumah effectively mobilized social groups behind him and his party to achieve independence and form the new government.

After independence, the CPP identified itself with the 'general will of the nation' and the total power of the state, refusing to accept the legitimacy of any organized challenge and suppressing all opposition (Austin 1964). In 1960, constitutional amendments turned Ghana into a Republic, leading to new presidential elections. Nkrumah interpreted his victory in this election as a mandate for him and his party to carry out their vision of building a "socialist society" (Drake and Lacy 1966: 72). These factors may explain the rise of the one-party state in 1965, as well as the nature of state-society relations during CPP rule.

Nkrumah perceived the CPP as the vehicle for the realization of socialism in Ghana. Every individual was expected to join the party, giving *de facto* allegiance to national socialist goals. However, after 1960 the CPP constituency and branch organizations declined in significance within the party, and auxiliary organizations of the party became more important (Apter 1966). These auxiliary organizations included existing organizations of social groups co-opted by the party and new organizations created by the party to monopolize the mobilization of specific groups. The two most important auxiliary organizations included the Trade Union Congress (TUC) and the cooperatives.[17] All women's organizations were abolished except for the National Council of Ghana Women, and the youth were organized into the Young Pioneers. The CPP effectively smashed all independent organizations, increasing the state's control over society.

One case of the state creating an organization to acquire control over a specific social group involves the cocoa farmers.[18] Because the state's financial basis and plans for national development rested on the cocoa trade surplus, cocoa trading was targeted as a vehicle for political mobilization and control (Beckman 1976). In 1953, the CPP created the United Ghana Farmers' Council (UGFC). State control of the Cocoa Marketing Board fund allowed the CPP to monopolize the financial resources available to cocoa farmers and to eliminate cocoa trading as a platform for organized opposition. The UGFC ascended in importance after 1961 with the structural changes within the party (Apter 1966).

In contrast, The TUC demonstrates a case where the CPP was able to co-opt the existing organization (Apter 1966: 284). However, many existing unions resisted incorporation into the framework of the party. Both the extent of state control over the TUC leadership and the resistance of some unions to state and party policy can be illustrated by the general strike in Sekondi-Takoradi in September 1961. The strike was provoked by a mandatory savings scheme

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[17] Other urban-based groups taken under control of the party included the Ghana Legion and the Workers' Brigades.
[18] Even before independence, the CPP attempted to tie existing organizations of cocoa farmers into its party organization, but this strategy met resistance from the farmer-traders who controlled the local cocoa trade.

and new taxes introduced in the 1961 'austerity budget'. While the 1961 budget was the spark that ignited the strike, disenchantment with the TUC amongst the rank-and-file had been smoldering since passage of the Industrial Relations Act of 1958. This act placed the entire trade union movement under control of the TUC and required the most influential posts to be filled by individuals with CPP approval. It also made strikes virtually illegal. Many union leaders questioned these changes, feeling that their leadership was being challenged and the autonomy of the unions threatened. The most articulate and intransigent opposition came from within the ranks of the Sekondi-Takoradi Railway and Harbor Workers Union (Drake and Lacy 1966; see also Jeffries 1978).[19]

Steps taken after this strike exposed the increasingly authoritarian tendencies of the CPP government. By 1962, the United Ghana Farmers' Council, the National Cooperative Council, the Council of Ghana Women and the Ghana Trade Union Congress were 'integral wings' of the party, with CPP leaders in control of key posts (Drake and Lacy 1966: 72). The CPP targeted these organizations for transformation into organs of the party and the state for two reasons (Apter 1966). First, voluntary associations or occupational groupings under party supervision *indirectly* linked the individual to the party and the state. Second, such organizations cut across geographical boundaries and other affinial bases of association, reducing the significance of ethnic and religious groups.

With wings of the CPP covering farmers, trade unions, women, students and youth, and with the government controlling the appointment and dismissal of chiefs, the ability of sections of society to articulate public opinion or to influence the government appeared extremely limited (Pinkeny 1972: 18). For instance, organizational leaders became isolated from the rank and file membership through party patronage; challenges to party control, such as the Sekondi-Takoradi strike, were crushed; and organized social forces not affiliated to the party, such as churches, the chieftaincy and businesses, found it increasingly difficult to have their voices heard. Despite its spontaneous mass following, the CPP itself cohered as a loose network of personal alliances and contacts (Beckman 1976: 27-8). In February 1966, a military coup ousted Nkrumah and his CPP government, establishing the National Liberation Council (NLC) as a caretaker government. The coup initiated a new period in Ghanaian post-colonial politics in which some social groups that had been demobilized under Nkrumah would play a critical role.

## 4.2 Social Organizations as Channels of Mobilization

As occupational structures became more autonomous, salient and active during the 1970s, social groups in general became the means of political representation and mobilization. This process can be explained by several factors (Chazan 1983: 30). First, their concretization as a channel for mobilization may be a reaction to the Nkrumahist attempt to curb the activities of these groups. After the 1966 coup, many groups that had long kept their demands bottled up began lobbying the NLC, and new groups came into being. Second, alternative structures for action, such as political parties, were either not offered or had not proven efficacious during this

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[19] The Sekondi-Takoradi strike resulted in the mobilization of the entire community. Workers may ignite social unrest because their grievances often resonate with other groups in society and because the labor movement possesses the organizational and ideological tools necessary for political mobilization. The marketwomen and unemployed who joined the protests were motivated not only be their financial dependence on the railwaymen but also by the desire to add their grievances against Nkrumah's government Jeffries, R. 1975. The Labour Aristocracy? Ghana Case Study. *Review of African Political Economy* 3:??-??.

time.  Third, these groups constituted an effective means of gaining access to available resources. The following narrative of Ghanaian politics from 1966-1981 focuses on social organizations as channels of mobilization and political representation.

By the beginning of 1966, the CPP government's handling of the economy had generated grievances in most sections of society: cocoa farmers, businessmen, workers, young persons unable to find employment, and consumers unable to obtain common items.  The 1966 coup drew its support from such grievances (Esseks 1975).  The coup provided one solution to the existing economic and social problems, but it created its own problems.

The NLC tried to ally itself with those groups who between 1947 and 1957 identified themselves as the rightful inheritors of political power, as both groupings held a common interest in excluding the possibility of a new Nkrumah-type party coming to power again.  The NLC destroyed most of the nominally democratic machinery by suspending the Republican constitution.  Instead of mobilizing the 'masses', it preferred governing through consultation with various selected groups. The most important bodies allied with the NLC regime appear to have been traditional authorities and private enterprises: the former were needed to ensure support for and cooperation with the government at the local level and the latter to implement economic policy that relied heavily on the private sector (Chazan 1983: 21).  In effect, the NLC attempted to ban 'politics' in Ghana, seeking to replace politicians with civil servants (Dowse 1975).

The bureaucratic features of the NLC combined with its informal and ad hoc channels of communication with society produced a government structure that remained largely intact, as we shall see in section 4.3, until Rawlings attempted an institutional and social revolution to reconfigure the political terrain (Hutchful 2002).  Another effect of both the 1966 coup and NLC rule involved the politicization of the military and its emergence as a distinct, but heterogeneous social group in the political sphere (Chazan 1983: 102).

In May 1969, the NLC lifted the ban on political parties, but prohibited political activity under the aegis of the former CPP.  Busia created the Progress Party (PP), heralded as successor of all political parties that had previously opposed the CPP.  The victory of the PP is not surprising given Busia's close relationship with the NLC and the lack of any substantial opposition in the context of a discredited and illegal CPP (Chazan 1983: 223).

Under the Busia government, the perception of an ethnic bias in access to state power and the dominance of the urban professional elite in government created tensions and posed potential obstacles to the political mobility of other groups.  In a context where parliamentary parties served less as channels for communication and political action and more as a medium of control by the state, dissent to the Busia government was rooted in functional organizations (Chazan 1983: 221-5).  Politicization of the National Union of Ghanaian Students (NUGS), TUC, the civil service and the military occurred in response to policy measures as well as their perception of being excluded from the PP ruling coalition.  The government reacted to criticism of its policies and the political action of opposition groups by breaking up student demonstrations, quelling workers' strikes, regulating the press, and using armed forces to detain opponents of the regime.  These repressive reactions contradicted its liberal democratic image and constitutional commitment (228).  The poor performance of Busia's government eventually led to the disaffection of segments of those social forces that had supported its rise to power.

In 1972, a coup headed by Colonel Acheampong took over the state and established the National Redemption Council (NRC).  Again, the coup was only a temporary solution to a structural crisis leaving deeper political and economic problems intact.  Acheampong faced the

recurring problem of how to contain political dissent and mobilized social groups while effectively linking up with key sections of society to provide a stable political base. His answer, similar to that of the NLC, focused on the purposeful destruction of participatory organs and the construction of a corporatist model of politics. Forming alliances among soldiers, the police, senior bureaucrats and selected politicians, the NRC also tried to eradicate partisan politics (Gyimah-Boadi 1994: 127).

After four highly publicized coup attempts, Acheampong recast the NRC in 1975 as the Supreme Military Council (SMC). The executive structure of the SMC was defined by its strict military composition, its subjection to the whims of Acheampong and its heightened autonomy from society (Chazan 1983: 240). Whatever the reasons for these changes, the effect was to discard the initial functional corporatism for a highly centralized, enclosed, repressive regime.

Between 1975 and 1979, the combination of civilian exclusion and a waning economy led to increasing demands for policy changes. The purveyors of these demands consisted mainly of urban elites, even though communal and mass bases for opposition did exist (Chazan 1983). The SMC reacted to the growing popular unrest in October 1976 by announcing the Union government proposal (Unigov)—an arrangement in which major social groups, the police and the military would share power on a non-partisan basis. Support for Unigov became an indicator for determining which individuals and social groups would be included in the network of state and regime (Gyimah-Boadi 1994: 127). Institutions such as the army, the police and a wide range of associations were mobilized in support of Unigov. [20] For these associations and their leadership, affiliation with the state and regime brought greater opportunities to be officially consulted or participate on some level in national decision-making. As under previous regimes, affiliation was the only way social groups could have access to policymaking.

Opposition to Unigov and the SMC coalesced into three main organizations: the People's Movement for Freedom and Justice, the Prevention of Dictatorship, and the Third Force. Notwithstanding their differences, these organizations shared key common characteristics (Chazan 1983). First, they all included a large number of major politicians from previous regimes. Second, their leaders had roots in the professional associations, particularly the Ghana Bar Association (GBA) and the Association of Recognized Professional Bodies (ARPB). [21] Third, intra-elite conflicts kept them from uniting in a single anti-government front. In conditions of general economic hardship, especially during the Acheampong period, autonomy-seeking social organizations had to do without material support from the government and had only their own resources and skills. Therefore, the class cleavage between pro-Unigov and anti-Unigov groups is not surprising. After the defeat of the referendum, Acheampong abandoned the pretense of co-opting the support of social groups and banned all opposition organizations.

In July 1978, Acheampong and his SMC were replaced through an internal coup by Akuffo and the SMC II. Akuffo stated from the outset that power would be turned over to a temporary representative civilian government that would oversee the drafting of a constitution. However, consensus within society on the ineptness of the SMC should not be confused with solidarity of purpose (Chazan 1983: 270). Through the mobilization of social groups, cleavages in society had become more pronounced. Additionally, struggles at the center had represented

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[20] These associations included, among others, the Kumasi Youngsters Club, Ghana Peace and Solidarity Council, Organizers Council, Muslim Representative Council, Ghana Cooperative Council, and the Ghana Bakers' Association (Gyimah-Boadi 1994: 127).

[21] The GBA teamed up with other middle class professionals to form the ARPB in 1977 to press for multiparty, constitutional rule as an alternative to Unigov (Gyimah-Boadi 1994: 130).

little more than political manoeuvres within an urban 'middle class' producing few significant structural changes in Ghana (Rathbone 1978).

In 1979, another coup ousted Akuffo and his SMC II and established the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) under the leadership of Flt. Lt. J.J. Rawlings. Rawlings' coup added a new dimension to the political landscape. Power conflicts were previously determined by swings in position between certain organized social forces within the state orbit and those temporarily excluded from it. Rawlings opened up the possibility of political conflict between the power 'haves' in the ir entirety and the 'have-nots' (Chazan 1983: 279). Within the same year, Rawlings returned the government to civilian rule through national elections.[22]

The 1979 election brought to power a PNP government under Dr. Limann. However, the Limann government proved in several ways to be little more than a reenactment of an old script with similar actors (Chazan 1983: 279). For example, nonformal participation continued, as Limann granted leaders of major associations representation in state organs. However, representation of the military, police, students and workers remained absent from such state organs, revealing the class bias of the new regime. As another example, President Limann inherited a highly centralized state apparatus controlled by the executive. His propensity towards personalized authority and the government's inability to improve the declining state of the economy provoked immediate responses from society. Students, intellectuals, workers and those linked to the AFRC formed the foci of agitation. This opposition mirrored the constellation of forces backing Rawlings' first coup, with the notable exception of those in the professional bodies who had successfully captured state power. As will be seen shortly, discontent with Limann's government largely carried over from anti-establishment propensities before the 1979 elections (Chazan 1983: 312).

### 4.3 Reconfiguring the Political Terrain

Under the AFRC, a new radical movement had emerged with the objective of promoting political education and organizational programs among the urban poor, students, and in the rural areas. The actions of progressive organizations such as the June Fourth Movement (JFM), New Democratic Movement (NDM) and Kwame Nkrumah Revolutionary Guards (KNRG) transformed the political arena. By 1980, political opposition and activism was no longer dominated by the professional associations, trade unions, and political parties, as the militant style of political agitation employed by the progressive organizations challenged these functional groups and the agencies of state power (Akwetey 1994: 82).

The coup that toppled the Limann government on December 31, 1981 occurred against the background of a severe political and economic crisis (Hansen 1987). On the political front, parties were unable to articulate the interests of the broad masses of the people. On the economic front, the balance of payments current account deficit was almost $500 million; production of raw materials for export was down to about one-third the levels of the 1960s; inflation was in three-figure digits; and public health, education, transport and roads were in terrible condition. Therefore, when Rawlings announced that the 1981 coup was not a changing

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[22] Three major parties formed to contest the 1979 elections: the People's National Party (PNP), constructed from the old CPP organization and backed by wealthy patrons, students, trade union leaders, farmers, clerks and the urban dispossessed; the Popular Front Party (PFP), self-proclaimed successor of Busia's Progress Party and comprised partly of anti-Unigov organizations; and the United National Convention, a mirror of the PFP in terms of its social composition but diverging in ethnic composition.

of the palace guard but a revolution to transform the social and economic order, people were prepared to listen and give their support (Hansen 1987: 171).

Rawlings defended the 1981 coup as necessary to create the conditions for a social and economic transformation. However, diverse elements effected the coup, and each group had its own private conception of what to get from the coup and what society should look like after it (Hansen 1987). As will be seen shortly, these diverse elements in leadership positions made it difficult for a coherent policy to emerge, and an intense struggle occurred for hegemony between the Right and the Left and among those constituting the Left.[23]

The Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) was set up as the highest policy making body, combining executive and legislative functions, but in practice laws came from Chairman Rawlings through decrees more than through a consensus of the Council. Making no changes within the existing structure of the state apparatus to accommodate the transformation process, Rawlings created new structures outside the state—organs of 'popular power' (Hansen 1987: 178-9). These organs were intended to construct a counterpoise to the established structures of power. In effect, many of these organs such as the defense committees asserted a position independent from the political leadership and did not readily subordinate their interests to that of the state. The progressive organizations provided varying degrees of support for the PNDC regime and formed the organizational basis of the transformation, the most influential of these being the JFM, NDM and KNRG (Hansen 1987: 188). A National Defence Committee was created from representatives of these progressive organizations to organize and manage the political movement and the defence committees.

In the period between June 1982 and December 1983, conflicts arose between the contradictory elements in Rawlings' coalition regime, as a result of the ambiguous ideological stance of the PNDC. The parameters of the struggle formed around economic strategy and the ability to attract financial assistance. The Left failed to obtain external funding for its economic proposal and could not compete with the theory of neoclassical economics and the financial backing provided by the World Bank and IMF (Herbst 1993: 33). The PNDC embraced a technocratic approach to economic liberalism in the form of its Economic Recovery Programme (ERP) supported by these international financial institutions (Akwetey 1994: 83, Hansen 1987: 197-8).

The World Bank and IMF provided the administrative and analytical resources necessary to make the ERP work, especially given that the state had all but collapsed (Herbst 1993: 36). However, there was a political price for this economic assistance. By 1984, Rawlings had dissolved the National Defence Committee and delegitimized the Leftist elements originally in his regime. Policy-making centered on a small macroeconomic team of government officials and foreign advisers, characterized by minimal information disclosure, no broad consultation and an absence of public accountability (Hutchful 2002).

The PNDC drastically reordered the relative positions of social groups to resources and the terms of access to resources of the state. In the process, it dispersed opposition from both the Left and the Right, destroying the possibility of opposition movements emerging from either direction. By the late 1980s, Rawlings' regime had combined its focus on economic reform with depoliticization of the popular organs, termination of autonomous organization, and general repression.

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[23] See Hansen (1987: 174-75) for a detailed description of the substance, composition and organization of the Left and the Right in Ghana.

The exact sequence of events leading to political reforms initiated by the PNDC regime in the late 1980s and the extent to which internal and external pressures caused these reforms are complex and controversial (see Ayee 1999; Bluwey 1998; Ninsin 1998). The following discussion briefly outlines events leading to the 'democratic transition' from PNDC rule to the Fourth Republic and then focuses on the role of organized social forces during this period.

In 1987, the PNDC announced its plans to establish District Assemblies under a policy of graduated development of representative institutions from local through regional to the national level (Ayee 1999: 122). By 1989, 110 District Assemblies had been elected on a non-party basis. In July 1990, Rawlings initiated national 'consultations' on the future political system, but these forums became dominated by Rawlings' supporters advocating his version of no-party democracy (Ninsin 1996). In March 1991, a summary report of these consultations produced by a body in the PNDC recommended a return to multiparty politics and the exclusion of the military from partisan politics. The formal pronouncement of return to constitutional rule came in May 1991. From that point, the schedule of the transition was set by the PNDC, but the opposition movement played a significant part in challenging it at every step.

Opposition to Rawlings' regime, the 'pro-democracy movement', was a fusion of several distinct groups and political agendas. The resurgence of protest after 1985 has been attributed to a realignment of political forces in favor of the pro-democracy groups. [24] In August 1990, "a loose alliance of all the former political groupings of the first, second and third Republics" formed the Movement for Freedom and Justice (MFJ) (Ayee 1999: 321). The MFJ found a common platform among functional organizations such as GBA, NUGS, TUC, Catholic Bishop Conference and Christian Council. Together, they demanded democratic reforms from Rawlings and the PNDC. Hutchful observes, "To an extent this could be seen as a regroupment of the broad-based civil opposition which had opposed the Acheampong regime, but disintegrated into rival ideological camps with the coming of the PNDC regime"(2002: 211). The pro-democracy movement largely served to question and dispute the direction of political reforms initiated by Rawlings (see Ninsin 1996).

Ninsin (1998) describes the 'transition to democracy' as a struggle between 'pro-democracy civil society' and 'alternative civil society', where the pro-democracy group struggled for the liberalization of power and the alternative forces mobilized for the consolidation of the existing power structure. The composition of the pro-democracy groups have been discussed above, so let us briefly explain what Ninisn calls the 'alternative forces'. The economic reforms implemented since 1984 contributed to a rise in informal sector employment and increased the number of impoverished people, changing the country's social structure at both the lower and middle class levels (see Ninsin 1991). Ironically, Rawlings mobilized precisely those economically and politically weak social forces, which were easily dependent on the state, to carry him through the elections. Rawlings built a support base in the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution, the District Assemblies, the 31st December Women's Movement, the Ghana Private Road Transport Union, the June 4th Movement, the chiefs and the Mobisquads.

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[24] Ninsin (1998) argues that when the workers and other radical groups realized that Rawlings' regime no longer represented their interests, or aspired to, they abandoned their earlier political position in support of the 'revolution' and turned in opposition to Rawlings. However, this view may be idealized, as Herbst (1993) argues that the mobilization of workers outside normal union channels and the appointment of new labor leaders effectively split the labor movement. The willingness of the PNDC to use violence against opponents of the regime was another factor. Therefore, the reemergence of political process was a complex process beyond the realm of this thesis.

Ninsin (1998) perceives transition politics as a continuation of the struggles for political reforms instigated by the 1981 coup. From 1982-84, the struggle for constitutional rule took the form of a struggle for power to overthrow the military regime, and then it shifted to a movement for democratic reforms between 1987-92. The failure of the pro-democracy movement to undermine the PNDC's legitimacy in the first period stemmed mainly from the elite character of the organizations engaged in the movement, such as the ARPB, GBA and the established church councils, and the level of popular and student support for Rawlings. In the second period, the alternative forces challenged the hegemony and monopoly of these pro-democracy groups in various sub-sectors of the economy, administration and politics (see Hansen 1991). Ninsin shows that various social classes were engaged in the transition process, pursuing a democratic project with varying meanings. The confrontational nature of the 'pro-Rawlings' and 'anti-Rawlings' cleavage characterizing the democratic transition polarized society and politicized the organized social forces on each side, a rift that would take well into the next decade to heal.

After the ban on political parties was lifted, the pro-democracy and alternative movements faded from the political scene (Ninsin 1998: 74). Between the referendum on the new constitution in April 1992 and the national elections of November-December 1992, the struggle for power became the primary preoccupation of leading politicians and organized social forces. Rawlings converted his PNDC into the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and won the presidential election. The NDC government remained in power from 1993 to 2000. Changes and continuities in this period of Ghanaian politics, particularly in the landscape of active social organizations and salient issues are considered in Chapter Five. Chart 4.1 contains a summary of the governments of Ghana from independence to the present.

| Chart 4.1 Governments of Ghana (1957-2002) | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Date** | **Government** | **Head of Government** | **Type** |
| 1957-<br>1965-6 | CPP | K. Nkrumah | Civilian multiparty,<br>Civilian one-party |
| 1966-69 | NLC | E. Kotoka/ A.A. Afrifa | Military |
| 1969-72 | PP | K.A. Busia | Civilian multiparty |
| 1972-<br>1975- | NRC<br>SMC | I.K. Acheampong | Military |
| 1978-9 | SMC II | F.W.K Akuffo | |
| 1979<br>(June-Sept) | PNP | H. Limann | Civilian multiparty |
| 1982-93 | PNDC | J.J. Rawlings | Military |
| 1993-2000 | NDC | J.J. Rawlings | Civilian multiparty |
| 2001-present | NPP | J. Kufour | Civilian multiparty |

## 4.3 Conclusion

Actual processes of civil society within a specific country context demonstrate that the notion of a unified entity called 'civil society' does not exist, that civil society as idea envisions a

permanent unity where there is only fleeting unity, and that civil society as process is characterized by power struggles. Specifically, we see that alliances between organized social forces shift according to the changing political and economic context. Not only does the composition of social forces within civil societychange, but they are not always mobilizing 'against the state' and may be mobilizing to achieve contradictory objectives. The history of Ghanaian politics shows that social groups mobilizing to influence or change the regime in power (such as the nationalist movement, opposition to Unigov and the SMC, and opposition to Rawlings and the PNDC) often encountered organized groups with access to state resources supporting the status quo (such as the auxiliary organizations of the CPP, the associations supporting Unigov, and both the popular organs and the 'alternative civil society' created by Rawlings). Therefore, there are no intrinsic qualities in civil society determining its objectives. Instead, civil society should be visualized as a field of struggle between organized social forces in which changes in the determinants of the struggle and in the economic and political context affect the outcome. Such determinants, as outlined in Chapter One, include the salient issues which affect particular groups in society or society as a whole, the forms that organized social forces adopt to address these issues, personal networks revealing who is involved in particular issues and why, external influences and international linkages, and material incentives and the distribution of state resources.

The case of Ghana exposes the fallacy in descriptions of civil society as static, as something a country does or does not have, and as 'weak' or 'strong'. Such descriptions only make sense in relation to some idea of civil society against which reality is compared. But it is exactly these theories of civil society, which combine observable actions with ideological predispositions and moral principles, that obscure what is actually happening in civil society.

Within the processes of civil society in Ghana, specific trends can be identified that may help to understand changes and continuities in Ghanaian politics. The CPP mobilized particular groups in society to galvanize enough support to win three elections before independence. After 1957, Nkrumah demobilized social groups by bringing them under the party's control or by creating new organizations that monopolized the right to represent certain social groups such as cocoa farmers or workers. However, these groups did not remain demobilized forever. After the 1966 coup, existing organizations and new organic ones became channels for mobilization, usually in opposition to military rule. Even during the short periods of civilian multiparty government, social organizations provided the vehicle for individuals to engage in politics, as political parties and Parliament were not seen to represent people's interests. Several regimes tried to build corporatist models incorporating social organizations, the civil service and the military in an attempt to order the chaos thrown up from economic and political crises and to forge structural links with society. In some African countries, ethnic and religious associations have stepped into politics and provided a means of political mobilization, but in Ghana these social cleavages were not a strong enough basis for representation. Instead, functional organizations, such as NUGS, TUC and GBA, became conduits for political mobilization and representation. However, different objectives compel collective political action among these social groups and their organizations.

This mobilization of social organizations has led to their politicization. Gradually, social groups develop an improved capacity for collective action and concomitant expectations to participate in national decision-making. Such improvements in organizational capabilities can change the political landscape and the power balance between state and societal groups. However, this chapter illustrates that contradictions arise at junctures between mobilization for protest and mobilization for control, when politicized groups are thwarted in their efforts to shift from support networks to participating and influencing national policy. The legacy of Nkrumah

has been to keep national decision-making within a small group of people, creating a juxtaposition of politicization with departicipation by the end of the 1980s.

Based on the above discussion, it is argued that processes in civil society contain elements of participation, exclusion and manipulation of the idea of participation for the purposes of exclusion. This theme and the historical background provided in this chapter are essential to discerning the continuities and changes between this era in Ghanaian politics and the contemporary period where civil society as idea is the hegemonic perspective through which state-society relations are understood. We now turn to the contemporary period, as Chapter Five looks at how civil society as process adapts to the political opening and the saturation of civil society as idea in the political sphere.

**Chapter 5**
The Dialectics of Idea and Process:
Civil Society in Ghana


The historical narrative of Chapter Four concluded with the return to multiparty, constitutional rule in 1993. Akwetey (1998) argues that the decentralization reforms initiated by the PNDC signal the beginning of a shift from violent to deliberative politics, for they created limited space for domestic political groups to engage the PNDC on ideas to democratize politics at the level of the central state. After the 1995 demonstrations over the Value-Added Tax, further openings for dialogue emerged in the form of national forums on governance and the economy. These openings for dialogue and limited participation were trailed by the emergence of multiple social groups interacting with the state and government on different levels (Akwetey 1998). About the same time as this reorganization in society and in relations between the state and society, we see the emergence of the idea of civil society in the political discourse.

This chapter demonstrates how the influence of civil society as idea on perceptions and actions of multiple categories of actors link up with existing processes in civil society in Ghana. As will become evident, usage of the idea does not substantially alter these earlier processes, but nonetheless has concrete effects. The following discussion outlines some of these effects. It begins with a brief background on NGO-state relations under Rawlings, from PNDC rule to the NDC government. Against this background, the features of what is called 'civil society' in Ghana today are explored, drawing on information from a survey of urban-based organizations and two case studies.

**5.1 NGO-State Relations under Rawlings**

Under PNDC rule, NGOs and other social organizations operated in a generally repressive political climate which left them little room to organize and act on their own initiative. Even in the early stages of the 'revolution', Rawlings viewed NGOs and other independent bodies like the churches and trade unions as a potential threat to a regime struggling to secure power (Hutchful 2002: 185). This initial hostility receded as the social costs of the Economic Recovery Programme (ERP) became more visible and the protests against Rawlings' regime more vocal.

As part of a strategy to quell growing opposition to the ERP, Rawlings' regime encouraged NGOs to fill the service delivery gap created as a result of cuts in government expenditure. However, the real impetus behind creating a greater role for NGOs in 'development' came not from the PNDC, but from donors (Hutchful 2002). At a donors' conference in 1987, the Program of Action to Mitigate the Social Costs of Adjustment (PAMSCAD) was approved and attached to Ghana's Structural Adjustment Program (Brydon and Legge 1996). The World Bank, United Nations and bilateral donors contributed over US$80 million for poverty alleviation programs, but they requested that NGOs assist in service-delivery because the "Government of Ghana" did not have the "institutional capacity" to implement such a large program (Gary 1996: 157).

This increased interest in NGOs as participants in 'development', with its attendant increase in available international aid, affected the nature of NGO-state relations. For example, the PNDC government and the United Nations Development Programme decided to use the Ghana Association of Private Voluntary Organizations in Development (GAPVOD), an

organization founded in 1980 as a forum for information sharing, as the vehicle for enlisting NGOs in PAMSCAD. GAPVOD had only seventeen members in 1987, but through PAMSCAD it received over US$600,000 from 1990-92 and membership in GAPVOD became a *de facto* criteria for local NGOs to receive external funding. As a result, GAPVOD no longer existed as a collective voice for NGO members, but as a tool of control by government and donors (Gary 1996).

As mentioned in Chapter Four, the PNDC became the NDC in the run up to the 1992 elections, and the NDC secured popular support by creating new organizations financed by and loyal to the ruling regime. This popular base was sustained under the NDC government and has been identified as a significant factor in Rawlings victory in the 1996 elections (see Sandbrook and Oelbaum 1999). In addition to the creation of 'governmental non-governmental organizations' through establishing new organizations to capture a constituency or transforming organs of the revolution into NGOs, the NDC employed various means of co-opting existing organizations with the result that few organizations have remained entirely outside Rawlings' influence (see Smith 1998).

In early 1995, the NDC government circulated a draft 'NGO Bill'. Within a context of increased competition among the state and NGOs for declining levels of external aid, this bill embodied the continued hegemonic ambitions of the state to control NGO activity (Gary 1996: 162). An earlier version of this bill had been shelved because of strong pressure from foreign NGOs (Oquaye 1996: 23). The 1995 bill also encountered intense resistance on the grounds that it was a direct attack on the autonomy of NGOs. The Integrated Social Development Centre, which led this resistance, perceived it as "a mechanism designed to get them to fit in with government's designs" (ISODEC quoted in Gary 1996: 162). The government withdrew the bill, and the successful campaign appeared to reflect an increasing confidence of many NGOs to assert their autonomy from the government.

## 5.2 'Civil Society' in the 1990s[25]

The previous discussion depicts the nature of relations between the P/NDC governments and social organizations as well as the influence of international actors. It becomes evident that processes in civil society continue to be characterized by participation, exclusion and manipulation of the idea of participation for the purposes of exclusion. The junction between civil society as idea and the ever-changing landscape of civil society as process that occurs in the 1990s does not considerably alter theses process, but rather various actors use the idea of civil society as another means to engage each other. The importance of analyzing the interaction between the idea and existing processes becomes clear if one emphasizes that occupational and functional organizations, such as the TUC or NUGS, that have existed in Ghana since independence are now called 'civil society organizations' and that universities, the mass media and churches have become 'civil society institutions'.

Deconstructing what is commonly referred to as 'civil society' in Ghana discloses the continuities with past processes in civil society and removes the romanticism and mystification created by the idea of civil society. It also reveals some of the changes taking place within civil society as a result of the changing political context. This deconstruction is undertaken in two ways. First, information collected from a survey of urban-based 'civil society organizations' is

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[25] The information in this section is based on fieldwork carried out between July and September 2001. Works consulted but not cited in this chapter are listed in the bibliography.

used to make generalizations about the composition of 'civil society' in terms of actors, objectives and expected outcomes (or who is doing what, why and how).[26] Second, two case studies of coalition organizations provide a means of examining in detail these generalizations. Both of these methods reveal how the idea of civil society merges with existing motives and processes to produce new circumstances, both expanding and limiting opportunities for participation.

### 5.2.1 *Actors, Objectives and Expected Outcomes*

The question of who are the actors in Ghanaian 'civil society' produces two responses: one at the organizational level and another at the individual level. At the level of organization, several salient features appear. A majority of the currently active 'civil society organizations' were established in the post-democratic transition period. This proliferation of organizations after 1992 probably occurred as a result of changes in the rules of governance and the previous legally and physically repressive political environment. The correlation between this political opening and the proliferation of organizations is supported by the case of the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA). Registered in 1989, IEA only functioned part-time due to political repression and physical attacks on the leadership, until 1991 when the PNDC government became more amenable (C. Mensa, interviewed 31/07/01). The post-1992 period also witnessed the emergence of a new type of organization: 'think tanks', policy centers and research institutes.

Another feature at the organizational level involves international linkages. Local affiliates of international organizations or networks are prevalent, with nine out of twenty organizations in the survey originating from some type of international link. In general, these links result from foreign organizations establishing branch organizations, such as the Save the Children Fund-Ghana and Third World Network-Africa, or from continent-wide organizations establishing a local chapter in Ghana, such as the Forum of African Women Educationalist and Women in Law and Development in Africa. The degree of organizational and financial autonomy beyond the initial stage differs among the organizations. Two cases are unique and require further elaboration. First, as indicated in Chapter Three, the Center for Policy Analysis was a World Bank project and is maintained by financial support from donors. Second, the establishment of IEA stemmed from the founder's personal contacts with the Atlas Foundation and the CATO institute in the United States, which contributed the initial funding (J. Mensa, interviewed 25/07/01).

A final feature at the organizational level concerns the importance of external funding. With the exception of the three occupation-based mass organizations that finance themselves largely from member dues, all other organizations included in the survey rely predominantly on external sources of finance. Issue-oriented organizations rely largely on funding from donor agencies and international NGOs. Some organizations depend heavily on one constant source of funding, while others apply to multiple donor agencies on a project-by-project basis. The 'think tanks', policy centers and research institutes depend on donor assistance, but they also earn finances through consultancy work. As Chapter Three indicated, the American, Danish, Dutch and Canadian government agencies constitute the most active bilateral donors in Ghana, in addition to the World Bank and United Nations Development Programme. One possible exception to this trend of dependency on external financing involves ISODEC, which raises 40 percent of its funding domestically.

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[26] Appendix A contains a list of the twenty organizations constituting the sample group from which the following generalizations are drawn.

At the individual level, the composition of an organization's leadership indicates some reasons for the existing landscape of organizations in Ghana and provides a background for understanding how and why certain organizations form coalitions. Individuals with international connections constitute an important element, as in the case of IEA. Another important element is prior activism. Of notable interest are the biographies of Graham and Abugre. Graham played an active part in the early stages of the Rawlings' revolution as an intellectual leader of the National Democratic Movement.[27] Abugre, also a leader in a progressive organization, became a political leader in northern Ghana after the coup in 1981. As discussed in Chapter Four, a split occurred between Rawlings and the Left in 1983. After this split, Aburgre moved to working in low-income communities (Abugre, interviewed 31/08/01). He helped to establish ISODEC, an organization working in rural water and sanitation. Abugre left Ghana in 1987, and during his time abroad he formed relationships with individuals in international NGOs mobilizing against structural adjustment. As will be seen shortly, these relationships played a crucial part in bringing SAPRI to Ghana. Abugre returned to Ghana in 1994 largely to set up Third World Network-Africa, an organization focusing on research for policy advocacy, which ISODEC hosted from 1994 to 1999. Graham also started working for Third World Network-Africa in 1994. When TWN and ISODEC separated administratively and financially in 2000, Graham became the Director of TWN and Abugre took over ISODEC, which had expanded its activities to incorporate policy advocacy on multiple issues.

Social networks, a second feature at the individual level, are somewhat related to prior activism. Social networks arise from contacts between individuals leading to contacts between organizations, or from overlapping membership, or even leadership, in several organizations. A good example of social networks involves the International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA), Women in Law and Development in Africa (WILDAF) and the Gender Studies and Human Rights Documentation Center (Gender Center). Dorcas Coker Appiah worked with FIDA on its legal literacy program. In 1990, she and other Ghanaian women attended a conference, at which time the idea of establishing an African branch of WILDAF with the goal of extending legal literacy programs was discussed. Appiah became the project coordinator of WILDAF and created a Ghana chapter based on the programs she used at FIDA. Appiah was also one of four women who set up the Gender Center in 1995. All three organizations are involved in the Network for Women's Rights, one of the case studies to be discussed below.

From the survey of 'civil society organizations', three patterns in their objectives appear. The first pattern concerns information dissemination and mobilization. Information dissemination can be targeted at a specific group, but often the target is the general public. The importance of information dissemination arises from the lack of available information on a specific topic, such as violence against women, or an unawareness that such information exists, such as laws and constitutional rights. Information dissemination is linked to mobilization because information is instrumental in building 'awareness' and 'raising the consciousness of the people', necessary prerequisites for mobilizing people around an issue.

Related to this first pattern, many organizations are engaged in research and advocacy, in which the objective is not to build public awareness but to influence policy. Two new patterns in civil society as process can be identified within this objective. First, a shift from the project-based objectives of service-delivery NGOs to a new type of organization which either continues to carry out projects but adds advocacy, or which carries out projects specifically for advocacy. Second, the quantity of local research has increased. In addition to research institutes, policy

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[27] Graham worked on an economic strategy for the PNDC that was tabled in favor of the ERP and published academically on the politics of crisis and class struggles between 1982-4 (Hansen 1987: 197; see Graham 1985).

centers and think tanks, small issue-based organizations are also conducting their own research in order to produce reliable information that can both educate the public and support their stance on policy issues.

While this emphasis on information dissemination, mobilization, research and advocacy merits attention because of its novelty, two caveats need mentioning so as not to be misleading. One, the traditional service-delivery NGOs still comprise the majority of 'civil society organizations', a feature not captured in my survey because of the urban bias and small sample size. Two, organizations have in the past been engaged in education and information dissemination, such as during opposition movements, radical movements or general membership education.

Perhaps the significance of these objectives appears in connection with their expected outcomes, as most organizations share common expectations regarding the outcomes of their activities and programs. Most of the organizations mentioned capacity building as a desired outcome of their operations. 'Capacity building'—a new fad term in development discourse— means different things to different people, but it is possible to distinguish some overlapping elements. Generally, it refers to improving organizational skills and members' knowledge of the issues in which the organization involves itself. Reference to the need for 'capacity building' captures the obstacles organizations face when they try to expand or shift their objectives towards more advocacy-oriented activities:

> Until recently, NGOs did not attempt to intervene in policy debates and discussions, that was seen as political. NGOs usually operate under laws that strictly say that they ought not to be political, so many of them have had a history of service delivery and involving themselves in policy advocacy is new, and thus NGOs don't have the experience and knowledge for advocacy work (Tsikcata, interviewed 22/08/01).

A second broadly defined expected outcome involves the demand for more political space and participation. The following quote from the President of IEA regarding his experience between 1989-91 illustrates one definition of the term 'space':

> These were all struggles for space; government didn't feel like letting go and we also felt like government had to let go, because space was required for good policymaking—needed debate, can't run a country without debate (C. Mensa, interviewed 31/07/01).

In another example, a member of ABANTU for Development repeatedly used this term to describe the problem his organization sought to address:

> Looking back at where they came from, [the African women who founded the organization in London] could see the inequalities, discrimination, lack of space for women to participate in political processes, lack of space for women to be involved in decision-making at the local up to the national level, where decisions are taken that affect women, and yet women are not given enough space to influence such decisions, policies and programs that are formulated (Antwi-Boasiako interviewed 01/08/01).

In general, usage of the term 'space' may denote the assertion of the right of citizens to participate in political processes. These themes of space and participation occupy center stage in the case studies discussed next.

### 5.2.2   *Case Study 1: Civil Society Coordinating Council and Its Role in SAPRI*

The Structural Adjustment Participatory Review Initiative (SAPRI) in Ghana emerged from negotiations between a group of international NGOs and the World Bank, an initiative with its own history of relations between international social actors and international financial institutions. Briefly, President Wolfensohn sought to improve the Bank's public relations with

its critics in the NGO community.  From 1995-96, Wolfensohn set up a World Bank-NGO working group composed on NGOs from around the world.  He also met with local NGOs in many client countries, including Ghana, to discuss structural adjustment programs.  In 1997, SAPRI was launched in thirteen countries as a tripartite process between the Bank, governments and 'civil society' to review structural adjustment programs.

Parallel to these negotiations with the World Bank leading to SAPRI, a group of international NGOs established the Structural Adjustment Participatory Review Initiative Network (SAPRIN).   As a global network, SAPRIN aims "to expand and legitimize the role of civil society in economic policymaking" and "to strengthen the organized challenge to structural adjustment programs by citizens around the globe."[28]  As secretariat of SAPRIN, Doug Hellinger of the Development Group for Alternative Policies explained why his "Northern group" assumed leadership of this initiative:

> It is our governments that are pushing these policies through international institutions on the countries of the South and it is our job to *create space* for our colleagues" (www.saprin.org/overview, emphasis added).

The SAPRIN secretariat contacted an organization in each candidate country to initiate the SAPRI process.  As alluded to above, Abugre met Hellinger while participating in the World Bank-NGO working group as a representative of Third World Network (TWN).  When he returned to Ghana, Abugre continued this work as a representative of TWN-Africa and ISODEC. When SAPRI was designed, Abugre, and later Graham, became SAPRIN steering committee members.  In this way, Ghana became a candidate country for the SAPRI exercise, and TWN/ISODEC became the lead organization to convene SAPRI in Ghana.[29]

The domestic environment into which SAPRI entered merits attention because it provides a framework for understanding SAPRI as a Ghanaian exercise.  Since 1983, the economic reforms proposed by the World Bank and the IMF have defined Ghana's strategy for economic growth and poverty reduction.[30]  Initial official reports argued that a decade of SAP, characterized by a 5% average growth rate, had led to a reduction in poverty.  This view was challenged by 1992 poverty figures that disaggregated the total number of people living in poverty to show a decrease in poverty in rural areas but an increase in the urban areas.  The population of the city's capital, Accra, living in poverty increased from 8.5 percent in 1988 to 23 percent in 1992, which may reflect migration from the countryside into a stagnant labor market (Hormeku 2000).  Beneath these figures lie the facts that formal sector employment in 1991 was 45% less than in 1980, representing an average annual decrease of 3.7% compared with an average annual growth rate in the labor force of 3.2% (Boateng 2001: 18).  Additionally, the reduction in government expenditure has been most pronounced in health and education (see Jackson 2001).

Despite political liberalization in 1992, national economic policy has not been open for public discussion.  Public demonstrations in response to the Value Added Tax occurred as a result of opposition parties operating outside Parliament, the NDC government's refusal to discuss economic policy questions with the opposition, and the technocratic approach to economic policy-making maintained since 1983 (Akwetey 1998: 17).  As indicated at the start of this chapter, the 1995 riots sparked a process of political opening, evidenced in one way by the government's decision to hold two National Economic Forums between 1996-7.  With the

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[28] See http://www.saprin.org/overview.
[29] Note that this is a one-sided version of how Ghana became a SAPRI country, as the willingness of the NDC government to accept the initiative and agree to participate was a crucial factor.
[30] The ERP was succeeded by ERP II, also know as the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP).

opening of dialogue on national economic policy, leading critics of SAPs voiced concerns that discussing future economic policy must commence with an understanding and acknowledgment of problems with previous policies, in order to avoid repeating past mistakes and ignoring current problems.

Support for the idea of SAPRI in Ghana emerged from diverse sources, particularly organizations and individuals with a history of opposition to some element of structural adjustment and its effects on Ghanaians. ISODEC presented the idea of SAPRI to leaders of other organizations, who then formed the Provisional Working Group with the task of bringing additional groups into the SAPRI exercise.[31] This first outreach effort culminated in a "National Conference on Civil Society" that brought together representatives of organizations from around the country. At this conference, participants established the Civil Society Coordinating Council (CivisoC) for the purpose of representing 'civil society' in the SAPRI exercise *vis-a-vis* the World Bank and NDC government. The membership of CivisoC was structured along the lines of geographical boundaries, organizational typology, and the notion of representation.[32]

The network headed by CivisoC evinces four new qualities in the history of mobilization among organized social forces (Graham 1999). One, it involved an unprecedented cooperation among organizations with virtually no history of collaboration. Two, this network is the first broad structure for institutionalized policy dialogue with government. Three, its geographical breadth of participation is novel, especially in its inclusion of the three northern regions that have tended to be marginalized in most national processes. Four, CivisoC provided a holistic challenge to SAPs as a development strategy, in contrast to past sectoral approaches such as criticism of wage freezes or effects on health services.

While SAPRI originated from an urban, educated group of organizations, genuine efforts were made to extend participation in this exercise to a broader cross-section of society. However, in the second round of outreach efforts, CivisoC encountered several obstacles. In moving from the framework and rules established at the global level to the local context, weaknesses appeared in Ghana's ability to participate in such an exercise, due to the general lack of knowledge and understanding of SAPs in society. CivisoC employed various programs at regional and community levels to simultaneously educate and mobilize citizens around macroeconomic policy, SAPs and the World Bank. The necessity of this process of 'economic literacy' indicates the engagement of sections of society previously oriented to the government and development issues in more passive ways.

The SAPRI project in Ghana faced many obstacles and probably achieved few of the globally stated objectives. Technically, SAPRI was originally conceived to take 18 months. It actually took 4 years to complete, which caused financial and motivational problems. Organizationally, several members of the SAPRI secretariat emphasized that building a 'civil society' coalition and working in a coalition structure took time. Some of the obstacles encountered included the project-based background of organizations, their different experiences under structural adjustment, their different expectations of what a coalition meant, and difficulties mobilizing to discuss policy without material benefit or compensation. Politically, the NDC government maintained minimal participation and exhibited a political indifference that limited the ability to mobilize people: "Government is still the most important agent in society,

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[31]The SAPRI exercise contained four components: (1) a preparatory phase in which 'civil society' organizes itself and puts forth its choice of issues to be researched; (2) an opening national forum to discuss theses issues among 'civil society', government and World Bank representatives; (3) research on issues agreed upon and carried out by the three parties; and (4) a second national forum to present the research findings for discussion.

[32] Appendix B contains a list of CivisoC members and further explanation of its membership structure.

and without its active support, SAPRI lost part of its legitimacy" (Hormeku, interviewed 18/08/01). Akilagpa Sawyerr, Chairman of the Tripartite National Steering Committee commented that the government's absence at the First National Forum placed the World Bank, rather than government, in the position of interlocutor between 'civil society' and the SAPRI exercise[33]:

> The Bank's central role in policy-making in all our countries is the result only part of the Bank's own pushing but mostly by our own people. It is the failure of our governments and our leaders to take full control and responsibility for policy-making in our country… (SAPRI National Forum Proceedings, p.58).

In contrast to SAPRI as a global project, the SAPRI exercise in Ghana was used to achieve local objectives and thus produced several benefits. The national actors with links to SAPRIN—Graham, Abugre and Hormeku—maintain that the objectives of SAPRI in Ghana focused on building broad awareness about the World Bank and its policies and on mobilizing a domestic constituency for continuous engagement. The discussions on SAPs held across the country leading to the topics chosen for research and the participatory field investigations conducted as part of the research process constituted new ways of mobilizing sections of society. SAPRI and CivisoC together provided a framework for communicating on macroeconomic issues, for information dissemination and for general mobilization. In some ways, the SAPRI exercise even legitimated ordinary people's opinions and perceptions.

A second benefit produced through SAPRI involved changes in state-society relations. The SAPRI exercise can be seen as initiating a 'new way of doing things'. CivisoC embodied an attempt to present a collective voice to engage the government and World Bank in policymaking, as opposed to individual group pressure or collective action through demonstrations. SAPRI also facilitated existing efforts by some participant organizations to increase people's knowledge of their right to participate in governance:

> Under the 1992 constitution, people are supposed to participate in policymaking at all levels, but are they? It's a rights question…Getting people to understand that government is not an agent that they give all rights to when it is elected, that people still have a right to engage in decision-making, have the right to be consulted on major national policy, the right to information, right to question, right to know what's going on (Kuyole, interviewed 10/08/01).

In Ghana, where a few people in a few ministries produce national policies, SAPRI constitutes only a first step at attempting to alter this norm (*ibid*).

A third benefit from the SAPRI exercise could be seen in its ability to *start* building trust between the government and politicized social groups. Many of the leading members involved in the SAPRI exercise had a history of confrontation with each other, especially Rawlings and his technocratic circle versus Graham and Abugre and their new version of 'progressive organizations'. The World Bank's record of financially supporting the PNDC regime produced negative perceptions on the part of some 'civil society' representatives towards the World Bank and its involvement in national affairs. However, "participation is pedagogical," and in the case of Ghana, participation may build trust between previously antagonistic sections in society (Akwetey, interviewed 13/08/01).[34]

In addition to the SAPRI exercise, CivisoC has been used to facilitate countrywide consultations for the World Bank on its Country Assistance Strategy (CAS) and to brief the

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[33] The Tripartite National Steering Committee is composed of representatives from CivisoC, the government and the World Bank. It is at the apex of the SAPRI structure in Ghana. Professor Sawyerr was chosen to lead the Tripartite Committee as a neutral member and not a representative of 'civil society'.

[34] Note that before SAPRI ended, President Kufuor and the NPP government were elected into office.

transition team of the new NPP government on the views and opinions of 'civil society'. Such examples of its utility led to discussions among its members on maintaining CivisoC after the completion of SAPRI. However, Graham remarks that the optimum future scenario for the World Bank out of the SAPRI engagement would be to build a new type of link with civil society at the national level that would provide a stable institutionalized framework for participation and consultation.[35] Ramm noted that the organizational representatives on CivisoC had not rotated, and thus it had become an *institution* (interviewed 30/08/01). Other CivisoC members expressed positive aspects about continuing to use CivisoC as an organizational means of engaging in policy discussions with the Bank and government.

### 5.2.3    *Case Study 2: Network for Women's Rights*

Understanding the emergence of the Network for Women's Rights (NETRIGHT), what it is and what it aspires to do, requires knowledge of the 31st December Women's Movement. Emerging in 1982 immediately after the coup, the Movement constitutes one instrument the P/NDC used to mobilize support. While who founded the Movement may be contested, it undisputedly came under the leadership of Mrs. Rawlings and effectively served as the women's wing of the NDC party. The Movement mobilized women through its projects, which received state resources as well as donor assistance channeled through the state (Gyimah-Boadi 1994: 136). After the democratic transition, the Movement transformed its image into an 'apolitical' NGO. Nonetheless, in both guises the Movement overshadowed the national machinery for women: the National Council for Women and Development (NCWD) (Manuh 1993). The Movement, with the NCWD under its control, attempted to manipulate other women's organizations through its control over funds and its monopoly on information. The Movement's political power, emanating from its close relationship to the ruling party, allowed it to fulfill its hegemonic ambition to be the only legitimate voice of Ghanaian women (Smith 1998). NETRIGHT can be seen as the end product of an ongoing dialogue among a group of women on the need for an organization independent of the Movement.

The story of NETRIGHT's creation has no distinct beginning or end, because NETRIGHT is not another organization, but an attempt to mobilize women within a changing political context. Third World Network-Africa initiated a research study on national machinery for women in eight African countries. In September 1999, the research findings on Ghana's National Machinery for Women were disseminated at a meeting of organizations involved or interested in gender issues. At this meeting, attendants agreed on the need to form a coalition and act on these research findings. The TWN research essentially created an opportunity for women who wanted to push forward women's rights in Ghana to mobilize around a particular issue. Attendants also decided to write an 'alternative report' to the NCWD report on the status of women in Ghana for the Beijing+5 International Conference on Women. The launch of this report marked another chance for activists to discuss forming a network. While discussions were still taking place among organizations over the nature of the network, they became involved in advocacy over serial killings of women. Through the course of a year the structure of the network coalesced, and NETRIGHT was nominally established in March 2000.[36]

According to its leaders, the need for NETRIGHT originates from the apparent organizational weaknesses of NGOs, especially their inability to come together on common issues and make collective demands. Women's organizations have been most active in the

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[35] "Principles for wider SAPRIN engagement with the World Bank," *mimeo*
[36] Appendix C contains a list of NETRIGHT steering committee members.

provision of welfare services for women, but a few organizations have promoted legal literacy, gender awareness and leadership training for women. Since the 1990s, some existing organizations and other newly established NGOs have become more interested in advocacy around gender issues, women's participation in politics, media representation of women, and gender-based violence. However, these efforts have lacked continuity and were undermined by a perception that NGO agendas are donor-driven and not grounded in local priorities. NETRIGHT was intended to address these organizational weaknesses:

> We are knowledgeable, we have positions on things, but we are not able to articulate them within the space in a way which is effective; NETRIGHT is an attempt to become more effective (Tsikcata, interviewed 22/08/01).

Although NETRIGHT recently emerged, its activism around the serial killings of women in 2000 heightened its publicity and led to its involvement in other issues. For example, the NPP government's intention to create a women's ministry captured NETRIGHT's attention. In January 2001, NETRIGHT issued a press statement to President Kufour voicing its desire to work with the new government to promote the rights, needs and concerns of Ghanaian women and to explore ways in which NETRIGHT can be involved in discussions on the proposed Ministry of Women's Affairs. The government invited all 'stakeholders', including NETRIGHT, to a consultation on the proposed ministry. NETRIGHT called the proposed consultation a "welcomed departure from practices of the past two decades which were characterized by undemocratic decision-making about issues which concern women" ("Statement by NETRIGHT…", 14/05/01). After the consultation, some members expressed concern over the pre-prepared consultant documents and the large presence of UN staff and foreign experts, which undermined any local ownership of whatever policy and strategy documents were produced. Significantly, NETRIGHT put forth the only organized response to the government's announcement of the women's ministry.

A second issue in which NETRIGHT has begun to participate involves the Lands Administration Project. This project, funded by the World Bank, has commissioned a Social Assessment Study to "enable all the major stakeholders in land administration to be consulted on the likely social impacts of the Project" (Letter to NETRIGHT, 02/08/01). A team of World Bank and government staff met with NETRIGHT members to explain the Project. By the time my fieldwork ended, further meetings had not taken place. However, some NETRIGHT members voiced a general skepticism concerning the potential of such consultations, perceiving the government and World Bank's notion of 'consultations' as polite requests for approval and support. NETRIGHT has registered a certain presence in national life, but its membership is still small and fluctuating.

## 5.3  The New Landscape of Civil Society

The changing political context of the Fourth Republic and its concomitant changes in actors and their objectives comprise the new landscape of civil society. The continued presence of active organizations such as the TUC and NUGS on the political scene evinces the substantial effects of past politicization outlined in Chapter Four. The exit of other organizations from the political scene such as the GBA and ARPB may be linked to the middle-class base of these organizations and their previous advocacy for liberal political rights. The arrival of new organizations such as ISODEC and TWN disclose the contours of current struggles in Ghanaian society sketched in this chapter. Advocacy around social and economic rights and the 'civil society' discourse have replaced movements for multiparty, constitutional rule and the

'democracy' discourse. A significant factor in this shift is the 1992 constitution, which provides both the substance and legitimacy for advocacy in general, and rights-based activism in particular.[37]

The new landscape of civil society exhibits both continuities and changes with past collective action. Indicative more of the changes occurring in civil society, the most commonly expressed objectives and expected outcomes include educating society and/or members, the production of local research and capacity building. In response to past information monopolies and distortions, organizations are seeking to educate themselves and others based on reliable information. Additionally, increased advocacy activity by new and old organizations has accompanied the transition to constitutional, multiparty politics. This feature fits nicely with the civil society theory of donor agencies, and thus they tend to provide funding for these activities.

Second, alliances between organizations to achieve common objectives remain a permanent feature of the civil society, only the precise objectives have changed. In the Fourth Republic, organizations seem to form coalitions to increase the efficacy of their lobbying efforts. When asked why they joined CivisoC, members typically referred to the notion of 'strength in numbers'. Strength derives from the perception of government. Therefore, CivisoC and NETRIGHT attempt to present themselves as organized, unified and numerical large with a common response on a specific issue, in order to increase the probability that government will not only acknowledge but also respond to their opinions. Notably, the coalitions in this study have tried to link established, reputable organizations with newer ones, so as to lend legitimacy to advocacy activities within an environment where the general attitude towards advocacy remains ambiguous. It is exactly this ambiguity that causes social organizations to call upon the idea of civil society.

Third, social groups continue to be concerned with exclusion from decision-making. CivisoC members emphasized becoming an equal party in national economic policy, where the World Bank and P/NDC government have for so long had a monopoly. The effects of long-term exclusion led to the need for economic literacy and for more intellectuals willing to undertake research on alternative economic policy. Individuals involved in SAPRI also noted that government leaders did not seriously consider participation in policy outside the confines of technocrats and foreign advisors in the ministries. NETRIGHT members emphasized past exclusion resulting from the 31st December Women's Movement's control over resources and information, and they drew attention to current manifestations of exclusion resulting from the government's preference for consultants to formulate policies.[38] In both case studies, identifying exclusion as part of the problem gives rise to solutions demanding inclusion, solutions that come packaged in the discourse of participation and ownership and legitimized by the idea of civil society.

As we saw in Chapter Three, agencies like the World Bank and USAID employ a selective approach to funding 'civil society organizations' according to their own civil society theory or their objective of building a constituency for economic reforms. Parts of civil society do to some extent reflect how the agendas of donor agencies manifest themselves in the contours of Ghanaian society. Most organizations lack material and organizational resources, such that any substantial increase in access to resources can shift or expand an organization's objectives

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[37] The 1992 constitution contains 'Directive Principles of State Policy' which commands the state to adhere to specific political, economic, social and cultural objectives, although these principles are not justiciable (Afari-Gyan 1993). ISODEC specifically refers to these Directive Principles in its literature on rights-based development.
[38] Referencing their frequent interaction with citizens as part of their jobs, some members felt more knowledgeable than consultants on the important gender issues in Ghana.

and its effectiveness in achieving those objectives.  Changes within an organization also affect its position in society as a whole and in relation to other organizations.  These changes may be most pronounced in advocacy work, where the loudest voice gets heard first.

While external funding factors into the new landscape of civil society in Ghana, its impact should not overshadow the agency of social organizations to maintain their objectives and to use the resources of international actors, which could not be acquired at the domestic level, as additional leverage.  While civil society as idea is a new terrain of struggle over economic and political reforms, the relationship between donors and local organizations is a dynamic one.  For example, SAPRI occurred in Ghana because local NGOs joined a global coalition that had effectively put pressure on Western governments and the World Bank, leading the Bank to then approach the Ghana government.  International pressure was able to get the NDC government to do something that local pressure from organized social forces could not.  However, SAPRI in Ghana took on a life of its own.  While it may not have achieved the goals defined by international NGOs, the SAPRI exercise became an instrument for local actors to accomplish their own objectives.

The metaphor of space surfaces frequently in conversation with members of social organizations.  They often point out the need for government to 'make space' or 'create space' for other voices, other ideas and other interests.  The demand for 'space' rejects the government's model of 'civil society' in which they should support government policy rather than challenge, criticize or propose alternatives to it.  The term 'space' was encountered most frequently in the case of SAPRI:

> SAPRI is a process whereby civil society wanted *space*….we wanted an opportunity to interact with government and the World Bank, so that those issues, matters of concern to us, would be articulated at the forum (Nyoagbe, interviewed 25/09/01).

> I never saw SAPRI as offering the basis of any sustained relations with the World Bank.  I saw it as an opportunity to legitimize *space* for advocacy around certain issues (Graham, interviewed 29/08/01).

The metaphor of space appears to capture the notion of the government releasing control and sharing power over decision-making, as well as the desire to reduce the influence of the World Bank in national policy formulation.  Significantly, the opening of space has led to the demand for more space: when people are allowed to speak, they want what they say to be taken seriously.

While substantial changes have taken place in the political system, the metaphor of space maintains salience because the political sphere is not as open as it appears:

> It is not as something terrible will happen to you, should you speak, because we have a more open political atmosphere, but inside that openness is what I see as a growing intolerance.  It's like some kind of forced consensus (Tsikcata, interviewed 22/08/01).

The first democratic change of government in Ghanaian history after the 2000 elections did not necessarily result in increased political participation: participation remains an object of struggle.  Evidence to support this interpretation draws on the currently contentious issue of water privatization, where many organizations have allied to challenge the government's policy.  In September 2001, the government ran an advert advising Ghanaians to ignore ISODEC's criticism of government policy to privatize the urban water sector.[39]  The government's actions attacking the credibility of one organization warns against exaggerating recent changes in state-

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[39] See *The Ghanaian Chronicle* 26/09/01.

society relations. The metaphor of space can be seen as discursive evidence of a power struggle between government and organized social forces over the definition of their roles in society.


## 5.4 Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to demystify what is referred to as 'civil society' in Ghana by deconstructing it and showing how its parts link up to past processes of mobilization and past objectives of social groups, while also showing how its parts take on new forms, objectives and actors within the changing political context in the Fourth Republic. Social groups and their organizations partly adapt to the changing political context initiated by political elites, but partly drive those changes by their actions within the room they have to maneouvre at any given time.[40] The experiences and historical memory of the social organizations remaining politically active under constitutional rule and the orientation of new organizations towards influencing and participating in national policymaking play a crucial part in this later aspect of political change. For instance, local research and advocacy efforts intended to substantiate policy demands and build public awareness demonstrate changes in the organizational capabilities of social organizations as well as the way these improvements can alter the state-civil society relationship. As another example, the presentation of a draft policy on NGO-state relations to the NDC executive in 2000 after a process of countrywide consultations contrasts with previous dictatorial legislation the NDC government tried to enact in 1995.[41]

Labeling these processes as 'civil society' or these organizations as 'civil society organizations' does not radically change them: it is the label that is new. At the same time, the idea of civil society has influenced the perceptions of actors about these processes and the ways in which they engage in them. Therefore, a critical new feature of civil society as process in the 1990s is the affect of civil society as idea on this process. We see that the idea tends to be linked with advocacy activities and lobbying efforts as well as with notions of participation and representation, in order to legitimize the demands of and actions by various social organizations. For example, the idea of civil society embodied in SAPRI facilitated the efforts of local organizations to alter the balance of power of the terrain on which they must engage the government or the World Bank; it legitimized their right to be there 'at the table' to discuss macroeconomic policy. Additionally, the acceptance of civil society as idea by all actors and the financial resources to which the idea can provide access together produce real effects in the political sphere.

As a new tool in the struggle over participation and exclusion, civil society as idea has become part of the terrain of struggle outside of any one actor. It is more an idiom—an expression that has become established in language and has a meaning that cannot be derived from its individual elements. 'Civil society' can only be given a meaning by those using it to realize their objectives and within the context it is being used. The following quote from a paper given at a SAPRI forum illustrates this point:

> The time has now come for Civil Society organizations through SAPRI, to ensure that they seize control of the Good Governance Agenda and imbue it with a content compatible with the interest of African peoples.

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[40] Akwetey (1998) argues that the rejection of violence by the domestic political elite has been crucial to the progress of democratization. Therefore, political will must be seen as a major factor contributing to the changing political context.

[41] Between November 1999 and October 2000, a National Consultative Group constituted of government representatives and NGOs developed proposals for a draft policy that were then circulated for discussion among 'stakeholders' at the local level, and then a final draft was endorsed at a national conference. This process was carried out with the assistance of a local consulting team at the Institute for Democratic Governance. See "Draft Policy for Strategic Partnership with NGOs." 2000. Ministry of Employment and Social Welfare, Accra.

Civil society has a right to demand that both donors and recipients of aid be accountable and transparent in their dealings with the people (Jonah, "From Sappery to SAPRI").

The next chapter summarizes how civil society as idea affects civil society as process and the positive and negative implications arising from this interaction.

# Chapter 6
## Understanding Civil Society in Africa

Civil society as idea has recently been retrieved from history, and the construction of its genesis and genealogy has become the task of many scholars. The contemporary popularity of 'civil society' among academics as a concept to explain political processes in Africa is not new but rather the latest reinvention of a concept which has always been evoked in times of social disillusion. Chapter Three showed how the predominance of civil society as idea among Western and African academics emerges from its ability to provide a common language for theorizing about a new democracy based on the struggle of the ordinary people. However, these visions of 'meaningful' democracy vary, and thus civil society as idea becomes a normative battleground for ideologies and notions of rightness. When such theories take on an analytical guise, the effect is to obfuscate rather than illuminate what is actually going on.

What is new in this history of civil society as idea concerns its widespread use outside the realm of academia and intellectual discourse, in other words, its permeation into 'lay knowledge'. Civil society as idea is no longer divorced from the agency of the groups it purports to describe. There is a connection between civil society as idea and civil society as process in Ghana. In one way, civil society as idea affects reality in that it influences the perceptions and actions of multiple categories of actors who are incorporated in existing processes in civil society. In another way, civil society as idea obscures these dynamic processes that have a history dating back to the mobilization of social groups during the nationalist movement. This chapter elaborates on these conclusions, displayed in Chart 6.1. It also explores their broader implications for understanding civil society in Africa and their relevance for notions of 'democracy'.



**Chart 6.1**
**Understanding Civil Society in Ghana**
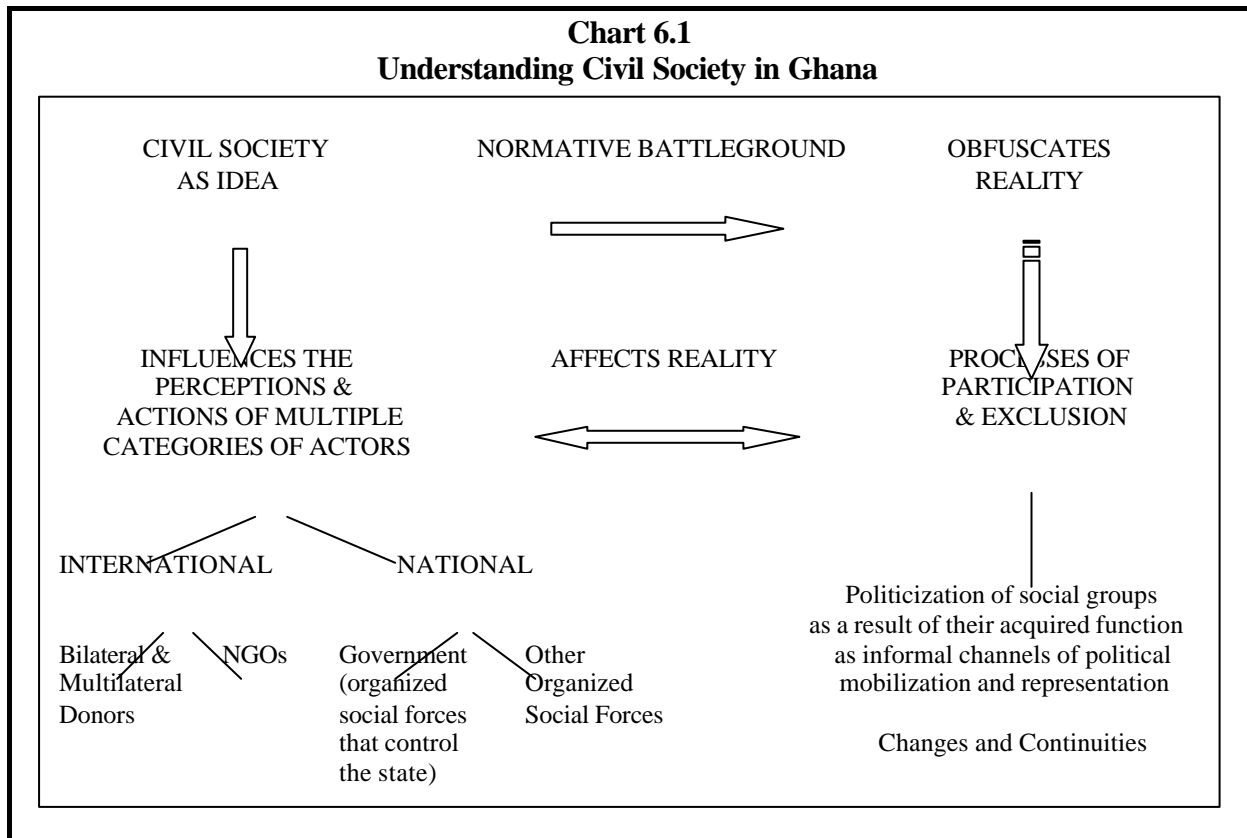
**6.1 The Construction of 'Civil Society'**

One manifestation of the influence of civil society as idea on reality is the construction of 'civil society' in Ghana. This construction is the outcome of a process in which donor agencies, international NGOs, the government and social organizations all actively engage in the discourse of civil society and use the idea to legitimize their actions. It is a civil society both informed by theory and by its own logic based on historical processes. From the case of Ghana we can generalize its implications for other African countries.

For African governments, 'civil society' is a response to increasingly articulate demands from sections of society for greater representation and participation in decision-making and policy formulation. In Ghana, government officials appear to believe that 'consulting civil society' will lead to less opposition to government policies. Civil society may be proclaimed as necessary for democracy, but it remains in the last instance subordinate to the government.

For donor agencies, 'civil society' is both a means and an end. It is a means of influencing African governments to adopt reforms aimed towards economic liberalization without falling prey to past criticisms. Instead of directly interfering in national policymaking through strict conditionalities, the new politics of adjustment perceives civil society as a terrain on which it can build a constituency able to sway the government through policy analysis or lobbying efforts. Against a theoretical backdrop in which both the state and the market have failed to provide a cure for Africa's problems, civil society is an end in itself. Civil society is the new solution for democratic governance and a vibrant economy.

For international NGOs, 'civil society' links citizens around the world in a common struggle against the evil of the day, whether it be the overbearing state or poverty inducing economic policies. For the most outspoken organizations, civil society is a third player on the international scene and a force to be reckoned with; if governments and international financial institutions do not improve their records, civil society will challenge them.[42] For less ambitious organizations, civil society is a way to reach the people and help them help themselves.

For social organizations, 'civil society' is a tool for mobilization and legitimation. Advocacy organizations need the capacity to mobilize, for politics is about strength and influence. Civil society as idea can be employed as a common front containing an element of unity and facilitating the production of more concrete collective issues. The idea is used to define a group of organizations and individuals in terms of who they are not. In this case, they are not government officials or consultants of international institutions, but yet they feel as though they have just as much right and ability to participate in decision-making processes that these institutions monopolize. The acceptance of the idea of civil society by these institutions provides social organizations with room for manoeuvre; social organizations can demand to participate on the grounds that they are part of 'civil society'. In general, civil society as idea provides a collective identity for diverse social organizations, and through their self-consciousness as part of civil society, they create a common cultural frame of reference independent of the state around which they can coalesce.

With the construction of civil society follows a tendency towards its institutionalization. African governments and donor agencies willing to involve 'civil society' in their policymaking

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[42] See "Stripping Adjustment Policies of Their Poverty-Reduction Clothing: A New Convergence in the Challenge to Current Global Economic Management," by Doug Hellinger with Karen Hansen-Kuhn and April Fehling. Prepared June 2001 by the United Nations University, based on testimony presented at the United Nations Civil Society Hearings on Financing for Development. See http://www.developmentgap.org.

processes require a stable and systematic way to do so. They need structures to tell them where to go and who to talk to, and the fewer the structures the better. The desire of social organizations to participate directly or gain representation in national decision-making can intentionally or unintentionally encourage this process of institutionalization.

The institutionalization of 'civil society' may have more negative than positive implications. Organizations join coalitions or networks to strengthen their position in unequal power relations with government and donor agencies, to create a more unified position on issues and to gain more influence in national decision-making. Government and donors may then use this structure according to their objectives, which might contradict those expressed by the coalition or subordinate the coalition's intentions to those of the more powerful partner. The result can bring the coalition back to square one.

Another implication concerns processes of representation and participation. Notably, organizations are the center of attention within the discourse of civil society. For example, organizations are consulted when policy formulation requires input from 'stakeholders' and organizations were invited to participate in discussions on the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy. This has led some individuals to question the paradigm of participation held by the government and donor agencies:

> There is a grey area about the exact standing which defines who sits at the table to participate. Is it because you happen to be organized in some organization that defines your participation, or is it because you are a citizen…(Graham, interviewed 29/08/01).

The phrase 'representatives of civil society' appears frequently in the discourse of the government, donors and social organizations, which implies that 'civil society organizations' represent some constituency. Government officials and donor agency staff appear to assume that when they are consulting members of social organizations, they are consulting them as representatives of a larger constituency. The claims of some social organizations to represent large sections of society at the national level validate this assumption and lend legitimacy to the government's actions.

Civil society as idea contains the potential for both emancipation and domination. The domination potential arises from the power relations behind the construction of 'civil society' and the codification of particular strains of social theory into policy and political practices by those academics and 'development professionals' that seek the realization of their own vision of a 'better' Africa. Civil society as idea can also be emancipatory in the way that it allows social actors to challenge existing power structures through the rationalization of action and thus gradually bring about political change. In this way, civil society as idea and civil society as process intersect, producing a discourse that resonates with the objectives of the government, donor agencies, international NGOs and social organizations.

## 6.2 Civil society as Process and Political Change

This thesis presents the concept of civil society as an ongoing process of relations among organized social forces, the state and specific governments, as a whole and amidst their constituent parts. Any fixed definition of the content of civil society would just freeze a particular moment in history and privilege the relations of social forces then prevailing (Cox 1999: 4). In general, to understand the current dynamics of civil society in African countries, one must understand the historical background of its particular social groupings, the salient issues and past state-society relations. In Ghana, contemporary civil society, even in its

constructed forms, must be understood as part of longer processes marked by participation, exclusion and manipulation of the idea of participation for the purposes of exclusion. The appearance of the idea of civil society did not cha nge these processes, but rather became another element in it by creating a new set of circumstances characterizing participation and exclusion.

Chapters Four and Five indicate several ways that civil society as process can help to understand political change in Ghana. First, civil society contributes to political change through a process whereby organized groups collectively act to redefine their relationship to the state in a way that allows for greater organizational autonomy or participation in national decision- making. Second, civil society in combination with political will, elucidates recent changes in the notion of political community and the parallel construction of a new principle of political accountability in the Fourth Republic. The rejection of violence by the domestic political elite as the dominant means of politics and the concomitant shift towards dialogue requires the release of control by the state and a redefining of the balance of power between the state and organized social forces (Akwetey 1998). This process of relinquishing total control, sharing the power of decision- making, and opening up space to other actors through formal and informal institutions is still occurring in Ghana as the government and social organizations struggle over notions of representation and participation. Contemporary contestations in African countries over notions of political community and accountability may generally appear over how to define participation and the roles that the government, donor agencies and social organizations should play.

Civil society as process in Africa can be conceptualized as a counter-hegemonic project: a challenging of the power held by the state, and those who control it, by organized social forces seeking to re-appropriate some of that power. The politics of the counter-hegemonic project are now expressed through the idiom of civil society. The implications of this idiom may be that challenges to the existing balance of power and demands for power sharing, i.e. participation, must initially come from the urban-based, educated social organizations, as much as this negates emancipatory visions of grassroots-led social change. Mustapha suggests that in much of rural Africa peasants continue to be subjugated to non-peasant forces, impeding the articulation of rural interests: "The central problem, therefore, is not the liberation or protection of civil society, but its very creation" (1998: 231). However, this does not mean that rural social groups such as cocoa farmers and peasant producers can have no involvement, but rather that there must be a conscious effort to mobilize them, to link urban and rural reform movements.

Other works suggest that mobilization is occurring in the rural areas through processes similar to those in the urban areas (Larbi Jones 2001). For instance, in Southern Ghana the idea of 'fair trade' has combined with a history of organization by cocoa farmers to produce a platform for challenging traditional authority and improving their relative bargaining position in the cocoa trade. It is noteworthy that the 1990s Fair Trade Movement coming from Western NGOs and donor agencies resonates within cocoa farming communities, but that its theories do not capture the dynamics of cocoa production and trade on the ground. As a result, and as we have seen in this study of civil society as idea and process, the interaction of the idea of 'fair trade' and existing methods of farmer organization produces unintended consequences with both positive and negative implications for existing processes of participation and exclusion.

## 6.3 Relevance for 'Democracy'

Chapter Three revealed the link in the literature between civil society as idea and conceptions of democracy. Civil society is either conflated with democracy or serves as a precondition for the appearance of a 'meaningful' democracy. In refuting such theoretical

propositions, it is argued that 'civil society' and 'democracy' are both essentially contested ideas. In concluding, let us look at the implications of civil society as idea and civil society as process for 'democracy'.

It has been argued that the move towards 'liberal democracy' in Africa has more to do with its usefulness as a political weapon against regimes with little political accountability than with its suddenly revealed superiority (Chabal 1992: 31; Hutchful 1995: 75). This observation holds true for Ghanaian political history, as the demand for a return to multiparty elections had become a standard weapon of opposition movements. In Ghana, the search behind politics has not been for 'democracy' but for representation (Dunn quoted in Austin 1975: 12). This representation has typically been sought through politicized social groups when formal institutions failed to provide adequate channels for articulating interests, or when formal institutions were dissolved and corporatist models erected for the purpose of quelling dissent among various sections of society. These methods of representation have had the consequence of including some groups and excluding others.

In the Fourth Republic, civil society as idea is used as an informal means to involve mobilized social groups in national decision-making, but this method also includes some groups to the exclusion of others: 'what civil society was consulted?' has become a frequently asked question. Given the malleability of civil society as idea, neither the government nor donor agencies could possibly consult all of the self-declared 'civil society', thus providing the impetus to create a single structure to represent civil society. However, democratic governance headed in this direction quickly reaches limits in terms of broad-based participation, hence the recurrent calls for increased participation by civil society.

With the shift from violence as a means of conducting politics to more deliberative forms, the discussion has not only focused on electoral and constitutional questions, but also on social and economic ones. More importantly, an old debate has been revived regarding the multiple and contested meanings of 'democracy', particularly the limitations of a liberal democracy (Hutchful 1995). Tsikcata, a Ghanaian academic, articulates some of the issues in this debate:

> People think that once parties are set up, then we have a democracy, when in fact there's not much to choose from with all these parties. They all exclude women; they all exclude poor people from rural areas….There has to be something more than political parties. There has to be mechanisms by which ordinary people get their views across (interviewed 22/08/01).

Consultations with 'civil society organizations' and periodic national public forums currently serve as such mechanisms of mediation between 'ordinary people' and the government. While these methods appear to facilitate the development of deliberative politics, they are subject to manipulation and control based on the government's decisions on when, how and who should participate. It remains to be seen what direction these mediations will take.

The metaphor of space, the rhetoric of participation and the idea of civil society could lead to the creation of effective institutions of participation. For example, the TUC's conception of democratic workers' participation in economic and social development in Ghana demonstrates how all three of these elements (space, participation and civil society) culminate in the claim to participate in decisions at the enterprise level and at the national level (Gumah and Agbesinyale 2000). The TUC has taken on a number of initiatives towards strengthening the democratic process in Ghana. However, the creation of institutions for participation in national decision-making which are not subjected to control by the government are not likely to come about without a struggle.

These conclusions from the case of Ghana, regarding the development of new institutions for participation to supplement its procedural and electoral democracy and the struggles they entail, enforce the notion that the construction of democratic institutions in Africa need not follow Western precedents.  No single conception of democracy can fix the boundaries of democratic politics nor capture the complexities of its different elements: procedure, institutions, public deliberation and participation (Williams 2000).

Ideas such as civil society and democracy are not rejected for use in political analyses of African societies on the theoretical grounds that universal ideas do not exist.  These ideas are universal in the sense that they contain within them the dream of a better world.  They are rejected when political analyses insist on interpreting these essentially contested ideas through the lens of Western history and experience, and on impressing these conceptions onto African society through the powerful influence that Western countries and international financial institutions wield in the national affairs of African countries.  As we have seen, ideas contain the potential for emancipation as well as for domination.

**Appendix A:**
Social Organizations Surveyed[43]


1.  ABANTU for development  (1997/1999)
2.  Advocates for Gender Equity—AGE   (1997)
3.  Center for Policy Analysis—CEPA   (1993)
4.  Forum for African Women Educationalists—FAWE (1993)
5.  Gender Development Institute—GDI  (1998/2000)
6.  Gender Studies and Human Rights Documentation Center--Gender Center  (1995)
7.  Ghana Association of Women Entrepreneurs—GAWE (1991/1993)
8.  Ghana Association of Voluntary Organisations in Development —GAPVOD  (1980)
9.  Ghana National Education Campaign Coalition—GNECC (1999)
10. Ghana National Association of Teachers—GNAT (1951)
11. Integrated Social Development Centre—ISODEC (1987)
12. International Federation of Women Lawyers—FIDA  (1973)
13. Institute of Economic Affairs—IEA  (1989/1991)
14. Institute for Democratic Governance—IDEG  (1998/2000)
15. National Union of Ghanaian Students—NUGS  (1964)
16. Save the Children Fund-Ghana
17. Third World Network-Africa (1994)
18. The Professional Network—ProNet  (1994)
19. Trade Union Congress—TUC  (  1958)
20. Women in Law and Development in Africa—WILDAF  (1990)

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[43] The years inside parentheses denote the year established and, where applicable, the year it began effectively operating.

**Appendix B:**
Structure of the Civil Society Coordinating Council (CivisoC)[44]

The ten administrative regions of Ghana were divided into 6 zones, each having one seat, except for the northern zone which has two.  Existing regional NGO networks and the mass organizations with nationwide membership, the Trade Union Congress and Ghana National Association of Teachers, occupied these seats and composed the geographical representation of civil society.  One sea t was allocated to the lead organization, ISODEC, and the remaining seats were allocated according to the following organization categories:

- 7 seats—labor movement
- 2 seats—business sector
- 2 seats—farmers and fisherfolk
- 2 seats—women's organizations
- 3 seats—non-governmental organizations, further divided into international, development, and environmental NGOs
- 2 seats—religious development associations, one seat each for Christian and Muslim organizations

The specific members of CivisoC included the following organizations:[45]

- Assemblies of God, Development and Relief Services-Ghana
- Association of Ghana Industries
- Association of Small Scale Industries
- Centre for the Development of People
- Civil Service Associa tion
- Gender Unit/WILDAF*
- Ghana Association of Private and Voluntary Organizations in Development*
- Ghana National Association of Farmers and Fishermen
- Ghana National Association of Teachers*
- Ghana Registered Nurses Association
- Green Earth Organization  (Environmental NGO)
- Integrated Social Development Centre  (Lead organization)*
- Islamic Council for Development and Humanitarian Services
- National Union of Ghana Students*
- Northern Ghana Network for Development
- Professional Network
- Save the Children  (International NGO)*
- Third World Network-Africa*
- Trades Union Congress*
- University Teachers Association
- Volta Region Association of Non-Governmental Organizations

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[44] CivisoC had three committees: a financial committee, a technical committee, and a media committee.  There was also a Tripartite National Steering Committee, which consisted of civil society representatives chosen from CivisoC, government representative and World Bank representatives.  Members of the CivisoC technical committee were crucial in the research stage of the SAPRI exercise and also served on the Tripartite technical committee.  Finally, there was a SAPRI secretariat that handled the administrative business of the SAPRI exercise.

[45] Note that over the four years of the SAPRI exercise, organizations may have changed and the individual members occupying CivisoC seats definitely changed.  The asterisk denotes organizations that I interviewed.

**Appendix C:**
Steering Committee Members of NETRIGHT[46]


- Takyiwaa Manuh*: Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana

- Dorcas Coker-Apiah*: Gender Center, WILDAF

- Kathy Cusack*: Gender Center

- Elizabeth Apkalu*: Advocates for Gender Equity

- Naa Aku Acquaye-Baddoo: METACEPT (development organization consulting firm)

- Dzodzi Tsikcata*: Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research (at the University of Ghana), Third World Network-Africa

- Efua Hesse: MAWHN (Multidisciplinary Action Women's Health Network)

- Veronica Kofie*: Trades Union Congress

- Rose Mensah-Kutin*: ABANTU for Development

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[46] The asterisk denotes members that I interviewed.

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| Date | Name | Organization | Coalition |
|------|------|--------------|-----------|
| 10/07/01 | Nii Noi Dowuona | CPP,<br>General Secretary | |
| 18/07/01 | Kofi Ohene-Konadu | University of Ghana, Legon<br>Sociology Department | |
| 25/07/01 | Jean Mensa | IEA,<br>Program Coordinator | |
| 26/07/01<br>27/07/01 | Yao Dogbe | GAPVOD,<br>Administrative Assistant | |
| 26/07/01 | Frank Boakye Dankwa | GAPVOD,<br>Business Manager | |
| 26/07/01,<br>24/08/01 | Kwesi Amponsah-Tawiah | NUGS,<br>Administrative Coordinator | CivisoC |
| 26/07/01 | Bishop Akolgo | ISODEC,<br>Deputy Executive Director | |
| 27/07/01 | Lucia Quachey | GAWE,<br>President | |
| 30/07/01 | Edem Acquah | FAWE,<br>Documentation Center Assistant | |
| 30/07/01 | Charlotte Wrigley &<br>Kathleen Boohene | GDI, Coordinator &<br>Programme Officer | |
| 31/07/01 | Charles Mensa | IEA,<br>President | |
| 31/07/01 | B.J. da Rocha | IEA,<br>Honorary patron | |
| 01/08/01 | Kwaku Antwi-Boasiako | ABANTU,<br>Program Officer/Administrator | |
| 01/08/01 | Gloria Ofori-Boadu | FIDA,<br>President | |

| 02/08/01 | Lizabeth Andzi-Quainoo | NETRIGHT, Administrative Officer | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 02/08/01 | Ben Arthur | ProNet, Executive Director | |
| 03/08/01 | Alfred Kofi Appiah | GNECC, Program Manager | |
| 09/08/01 | Elizabeth Akpalu | AGE, Executive Director | NETRIGHT |
| 10/08/01 | Emmanuel Kuyole | ISODEC | SAPRI, Lead Organization |
| 13/08/01, 01/10/01 | Emmanuel Akwetey | IDEG, Executive Director | SAPRI Secretariat Coordinator |
| 14/08/01 | Kofi Adu | GAPVOD, Executive Director | CivisoC |
| 15/08/01 | Veronica Ayikwei-Kofie | TUC, Head of International Affairs Dept | NETRIGHT |
| 16/08/01, 01/10/01 | Kathy Cusack | Gender Center, Project Coordinator | NETRIGHT, Host/Convenor |
| 17/08/01, 18/08/01 | Tetteh Hormeku | TWN-Africa, Coordinator for Africa Trade Network | SAPRI, Regional Secretariat |
| 20/08/01 | Kofi Adu-Amankwah | TUC, General Secretary | CivisoC Chair |
| 20/08/01 | Rose Mensah-Kutin | ABANTU, Regional Director | NETRIGHT |
| 21/08/01 | Dorcas Coker-Appiah | Gender Center, Executive Director & WILDAF, Regional board member | NETRIGHT & CivisoC |
| 22/08/01 | Kwesi Jonah | University of Ghana, Legon Political Science Dept | SAPRI Technical Committee |
| 22/08/01 | Dzodzi Tsikcata | TWN, Gender Unit & University of Ghana, Legon Institute for Statistical, Social and Economic Research | NETRIGHT & SAPRI Resource personnel |

| 28/08/01 | Takyiwaa Manuh | University of Ghana, Legon Institute of African Studies | NETRIGHT & SAPRI Resource personnel |
|---|---|---|---|
| 28/08/01 | Esther Offei-Aboagye | Institute for Local Government Studies, Deputy Director | SAPRI Technical Committee |
| 29/08/01 | Yao Graham | TWN-Africa, Executive Director | SAPRI |
| 30/08/01 | Gregg Ramm | SCF, Country Director | CivisoC |
| 30/08/01 | Akilagpa Sawyerr | Association of African Universities, Director of Research | SAPRI, TNSC Chair |
| 31/08/01 | Charles Abugre | ISODEC, Executive Director | SAPRI, Lead Organization |
| 25/09/01 | John Nyoagbe | GNAT, Director of Research | CivisoC |
| 27/09/01 | Kofi Marrah | World Bank, Social Development Specialist (formerly NGO Liason Officer) | SAPRI TNSC representative |
| 27/09/01 | B.A.W. Trevallion | National Development Planning Commission, Lead Consultant on Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy | |

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