



GLOBAL JOURNAL OF ADVANCED RESEARCH
(Scholarly Peer Review Publishing System)

CIVIL SOCIETY, NONGOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS, AND PALESTINIAN CONTEXT: LITERATURE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Come up with clear and unified definition of NGOs is not easy in the occupied Palestinian territory; this because of the ambiguity of the concept, disagreement on the definition and disagreement on its requirements. Preparing this article depends on previous literature by grouping it into several related topics that has strong ties with organizations such as theoretical approaches to civil society, functional and legal definitions, roles of foreign aid, governance, strategic planning, democracy and public participation. Civil society is a 'mercurial concept' giving its relationship with the state. Therefore, the concept must be studied in the context of specific society in order to understand its congruence with socio-economic structure and political system of its concerned society. In the Palestinian case, the debate about the role of NGOs seems offline with the previous theories on civil society because the occupied Palestinian territory is still under occupation and no Palestinian state has materialized yet. In fact, perceiving the Palestinian Authority as a state has only one meaning that is promoting or legitimizing the continuation of occupation. Until a Palestinian state is born, the community organizations have characteristics and roles not seen before in other countries, especially in light of the staggering peace process. That also means that civil society will not be developed as such unless the occupied Palestinian territory is free from occupation.

Key words: civil society, NGOs, democracy, public participation, Palestinian territory, occupation, and foreign aid.

1. INTRODUCTION

This Article presents few theories on civil society, governance and accountability and discusses various definitions and roles assigned to the nongovernment organizations (NGO) sector, especially in relation to democratization, public participation, and strategic planning. The article takes the discussion further to focus more specifically on Palestinian NGOs and their relationship to the individual and collective rights. In the first two sections, the article provides an overview of theoretical approaches and definitions of NGOs either independently or as part of the third or civil society sector. The third section is dedicated to the role of foreign aid on NGOs governance and performance. In the fourth section, the theoretical and historical overviews will be linked to the issue of NGO autonomy, governance and accountability to stakeholders. The last two sections address the theoretical construct of NGO accountability in relation to decision-making-processes especially with regard to strategic planning.

The discussion will revolve around two main approaches: the 'systemic' approach to NGO governance and the 'good governance' approach that is widely promoted by donors and international organizations. These approaches are essential for understanding the issue of NGOs accountability in the occupied Palestinian territories (oPt) context for many reasons. First, the 'Systemic Governance' theory will be presented because it offers a system of checks and balances to NGO governance by dividing policy-making responsibilities between the governance bodies and its management (Carrington et al., 2008). Moreover, the systemic

approach will be applied to the NGOs in the oPt because it expands the discussion to tackle wider contextual issues as it factors in the analysis numerous contextual factors relevant to historical development of Palestinian NGOs since the early twentieth century. It is also important approach because it advocates for a decision-making process that necessarily caters for the best interests of the current and future generations. Thirdly, good governance theory brings into the contextual analysis three elements, namely power sharing, legality, and fairness (Carrington et al., 2008).

In addition, the third way/sector approach is included in this article so as to shed more light on the relationship between NGOs governance and the public authorities. Gramsci's theorization acknowledges the sphere of democracy and offers suggestions relying on civil society for advancing the interests of marginal groups and workers (Qassoum, 2004). The article starts with a theoretical discussion of NGOs, their classification, roles and expected accountabilities.

2. THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO CIVIL SOCIETY

The civil society discourse reiterates three distinct views on state-civil society relationship and the role NGOs play as part of the voluntary sector. The first role highlights the 'direct service delivery to the public' implying that civil society is complementary or auxiliary to the state. The second role is 'representational and intermediary' in nature so that civil society works 'with and/or against the state' to meet the society's wider political, humanitarian, social, and economic needs and interests. Lastly, the third role is wider in scope because NGOs are part of a global movement with inherently a good or a bad agenda, depending on the adopted perspective that it aims to deconstruct 'the nation state' or at least limit its power or streamline it with the trends of globalization (Edwards, Hulm, & Wallace, 1999).

Historically, NGOs emergence stresses the complementarities between the above roles necessitated by the major political developments in the aftermath of World Wars I and II and the Cold War (Bana, 2000). The phenomenon of NGO proliferation worldwide during the last quarter of the 20th century can be explained by two more views that will be presented later in this research. This trend continues strongly into the 21st century in developed and developing countries alike (Moshi, n.d.)¹. However, debate continues on the exact causes and factors behind the expansion of associational life worldwide or the objectives of the third sector vis-à-vis the citizenry. It is widely believed that civil society organizations (CSOs) expansion shows that society is taking initiative to compensate for states' failures (Al-Rjoub, 2010) when states cannot, or would not, perform their 'development' duties².

Another view makes a link between civil society on one hand and the globalization and the neoliberal agenda following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the imposition of CSOs on Eastern societies and elsewhere as a result of the political changes (Bernard cited in Arab Thought Forum, 2000, p. 135). Thus civil society, and NGOs in particular, are labeled the 'product of neo-liberal policies', and 'a new globalization tool' since their financial ties to neo-liberal funding sources makes them directly involved in competing with socio-political movements for the allegiance of local leaders and activist communities (Petras cited in Jad, 2007; Qassoum, 2004).

The globalization school of thought perceives NGOs as an essential part of the last stage of capitalist global domination and hegemony when the comprador rulers, academics, and intellectuals in the periphery declare 'loyalty' to imperialism (Samara, 2001). Petras and Hann refer to a number of studies that "emphasized the negative impact of NGOs on social movements and 'NGO-ization' on mobilization and social action" (Alvarez cited in Jad, 2007, p. 622). On the other hand, it is suggested that NGO proliferation in the Middle East is an evidence of its vibrant civil society (Norton cited in Jad, 2007, p. 622) due to "donors' funds and NGOs that only encourage private individualistic culture, while what is needed is a communal cooperative economic, social, and cultural activity" (Samara, 2001, p. 120). Foquha (2010) believes that NGOs play an important role to counter, or at least mitigate, the effect of globalization and Western monopoly on the economic and development arenas in developing countries. NGOs help improve the image of Western countries among the public and the poor in the developing countries by creating a community of NGOs beneficiaries to thwart any revolution against capitalism and capital interests. Even though NGOs are still referred to as major 'non-state actors' shaping state and global politics (Price cited in Murphy, 2007), it can be argued that in developing countries, NGOs neither have the capacity nor are allowed to play such a role by the political regimes. It is a role more attainable to NGOs in Northern countries because their systems and legislations have long institutionalized mechanisms for public participation.

¹In the 20th century, five generations of NGOs emerged consecutively, each with distinct functions and priorities: humanitarian and welfare (1940s-1950s), development (1960-1970s), social transformation and political pressure (1980-1990s), and promotion of neo-liberal ideals (1990s-to date) with a pronounced focus on advocacy and globalization (Challand, 2006). In the new millennium, NGOs are widely considered as catalysts and enabler of societies to undergo democratic transformation and socio-economic development (Sullivan, 1996).

² Source: summary of Al-Rjoub book on www.aljazeera.net.

Regardless of the factors behind this growth, civil society has potentials in changing states societies. Gramsci was the first to place civil society in the state superstructure destined to play by virtue of political, ideological, cultural values in dominating society and its infrastructure, i.e. economic and political relations. This is perhaps the most widely recognized theory of civil society in developing countries including the oPt (Qassoum, 2004). Civil society is also portrayed as an intermediate sphere between the state and the household, where groups and associations of individuals are organized in a voluntary and autonomous way with respect to the state to defending their interests, rights and identities (Domike, 2008; Ebrash, 2008; Murphy, 2007). It is necessary for any civil society to see itself as such and meet at least two conditions: they must be independent of the state and they must be active in the realm of politics (Nuscheler, 2003).

Ghalioun (2008) acknowledges CSOs intermediary role in balancing groups' interests with provision of public services because civil society is:

a system of interest representation in which the constituent units are organized into a limited number of singular, compulsory, non-competitive, hierarchically ordered and functionally differentiated categories, recognized or licensed (if not created) by the state and granted a deliberate representational monopoly within their respective categories in exchange for observing certain controls on their selection of leaders and articulation of demands and supports (Schmitter cited in Brown 2003, p. 2).

Nevertheless, CSOs differ from the above because they target individuals rather than the community as a whole. Civil society is seen as "the process through which individuals negotiate, argue, struggle against or agree with each other and with the centers of political and economic authority" (Kaldor, 2003, p. 585). According to El-Haiti (2009), CSOs help individuals express, discuss and fulfill their needs or developing their capacities.

Bishara (1996) is doubtful that civil society necessarily leads to democratization. Although many elite and political regimes promote the concept of civil society, not many allow democracy to emerge even though they have established organizations, provided fund, and promoted partnership with private sector, all within the current political systems and regimes rather than changing these systems into democratic ones (Bishara, 1996). Because of the absence of democracy, civil society is unable to represent the interests of the public or constituency groups. Similarly, McIntyre-Mills (2008) believes that neither political democracy nor political representation is sufficient to resolve people's problems and interests. Moreover, Kamat (2004) argues that Western funding to interest groups seek to affect public policy but without changing the current rules with regards to economic freedom and democratization. This means that interest groups must move within the capitalist economic system instead of being the results of internal social development and democratization in each country. Hilal (2008) argues that as a theoretical construct, civil society:

"It is not always clear in what sense (descriptive, normative, ideological) the notion of civil society is being used and for what purpose. As a descriptive concept, it lacks structural content and therefore is *unable to affect the power relations and structural inequality with a society*. As a normative concept, (civil society) needs engagement with democracy and developmental change, but it *does not provide any notion of socio-economic and political conditions for such transformation*. As an ideological construct, it is charged with values of liberal democracy, sometimes neo-liberal values" (Hilal, 2008, p. 34).

Regardless of the historical circumstances, NGOs are always seen or advocated as a tool to fulfill a need, especially of the poor and marginalized (Robinson & Wood cited in Kamat, 2004) to ensure their well-being and improve the quality of their lives (Rugendyke, 2002). In other words, NGOs need to focus on serving public's interest rather on the private interests and whims of their founders and members. Public interest here denotes a wide range of societal needs: from the promotion of environmental and social goals (Bendell cited in Gray et. al, 2006), to relief and assistance to the poor, promotion of development³, and public policy (JTW, <http://www.turkishweekly.net>) to bring citizens' concerns to governments, and promotion of public participation in local and national policy-making processes (Gray et. al, 2006). Others argue that NGOs should not be limited to the traditional service delivery and gap-filling role but should directly voice people's demands through participatory methods and continuous consultation with the public through their roles as need assessors and service providers (McIntyre-Mills, 2010; Nelson, 1995). To do that, NGOs themselves need to be democratic internally and in their relations with the public (Al-Tarah, 2002; Fisher, 1997).

3. FUNCTIONAL AND LEGAL DEFINITION(S) OF NGOS

³ Development is "a process of improving the condition and prospects of people and nations." or "a process by which members of a society increase their personal and institutional capacities to mobilize and manage resources to produce sustainability and justly distributed improvements in their quality of life consistent with their own aspirations (Korten cited in the Journal of Turkish Weekly 2007 pp: 5).

But what is exactly an NGO and according to which sources? The term NGOs has not been in circulation until the United Nations' Charter referred to international private associations. Only then it has passed into popular usage, particularly from the early 1970s onwards. The UN defines an NGO as:

“Any non-profit, voluntary citizens' group organized on a local, national or international level. Task-orientated and driven by people with a common interest, NGOs perform a variety of services and humanitarian functions, bring citizens' concerns to governments, monitor policies and encourage political participation at the community level” (cited in Gray et al., 2006, p. 324).

Although a universally accepted definition of NGOs⁴ does not exist, few fundamental features must be met in order for a voluntary group to be considered an NGO. It is understood that NGOs are basically voluntary, non-criminal, and non-violent groups that are independent from the direct control of government and do not seek profit or control of government. The term “NGOs” is often used interchangeably with ‘community organizations’, ‘citizens' organizations’, and ‘grassroots organization’ although each denotes different meaning and connotations in different circumstances. To be community organizations, NGOs have to show more distinctiveness than being non-governmental or not-profit seeking (Willets, 2006).

The UN definition is essentially functional and portrays NGOs as non-profit institutions by objective and non-governmental by affiliation. The definition implies that a) a not-for-profit firm can also be an NGO, and b) any voluntary group is an NGO regardless of the groups' diversity as long as the non-profit orientation and function for the greater good are maintained. This indeed is a very simplistic definition of either NGOs or voluntary groups given the myriad of differences in their organizational forms and functions.

Despite this consensus on the essential features, NGOs are treated as a particular breed, subsector or strata of a wider civil society. This ambiguity in NGO definition is due to: (a) the boundaries between state, civil society and market are often blurred and negotiated and (b) civil society is composed of a “diversity of spaces, actors and institutional forms, varying in their degree of formality, autonomy and power” (Hagen, 2011, p. 8), including, charities, youth clubs, women's organizations, advocacy groups, think tanks, trade unions, and professional and business associations (Hilal, 2008). These actors may not have many things in common except for their voluntary and public orientation.

On the other hand, NGOs are thought of as akin to the private sector, particularly private companies, because of certain features. For example, NGOs tend to take on formal hierarchal structures and gradually tends to depend on paid employment rather than volunteering and limit public membership or involvement in their activities (Fries cited in Gray et al., 2006; Jad, 2007; Uphoff, 1993).

Furthermore, the NGOs themselves take the definition further to bestow upon themselves legitimacy, sometime greater than government, based on their ability to be the voice of people and the state's failure to provide for their citizens. However, NGOs provision of public services or their monitoring of state's performance does not in itself support their claim for legitimacy. In fact it is the NGOs who depend on the state system, rather than vice versa, for legal personality, recognition and participation in democratic debate. In most cases, states, except authoritarian ones, can have greater representative legitimacy than any single NGO, even large national ones, which members remain comparatively insignificant in comparison to the number of voting citizens (Willets, 2006).

In addition NGOs and CSOs are two terms requiring legal definitions to be understood. In the oPt, the Palestinian law uses a different set of terminology to designate two types of CSOs: charitable societies and community organizations. The Palestinian law makes this distinction outright in its title of “Charitable Societies and Community Organizations Law No 1 of 2000” which defines both CSOs in Article 2 as:

[...] A society or an association is an independent legal body established by agreement by at least seven people, aiming to accomplish legitimate goals in serving the public without aiming to generate personal or collective benefits for its members (Article 2).⁵

The law does not explain or justify such distinction although it could be inferred that ‘a community organization’ must have other mandates than service delivery that is expected to be the domain of charitable organizations. The Law also defines ‘civic action’ as:

⁴ The Term “NGOs” also implies that government, not the public, is the key player and the center of society (Muhaneh et al, 2000 pp:4). The same applies to community sector (*El-qitaa' El-Ahli*) that gives the impression that the extended family/tribe is not the major core or address the wider social structure.

⁵ The Palestinian Associations Law is available on <http://muqtafi.birzeit.edu/pg/getleg.asp?id=13431>

Any service or action that is social, economic, cultural, developmental, and associational in nature and electively or voluntarily offered and would improve the social, health, occupational, physical, spiritual, artistic, athletic, cultural or educational status of citizens in the community (Article 2).

It is noticeable that the law uses the term '*Moa'assa Ahlyya*⁶' instead of NGOs or CSOs in the definition. While making no reference to CSOs, the Associations Law uses 'non-governmental body' only in reference to foreign organizations stating that:

Any foreign charity or non-governmental body that has its headquarter or centers or activities outside the Palestinian territories, or has the majority of whose members are foreigners (Article 2).

It is unclear why the Palestinian legislature designates the same article to local and international organizations unless seen in light of Palestinian Authority (PA's) extension of the same official requirements, i.e. registration, to all CSOs active in the oPt. As a result, all foreign not-for profit firms and organizations are registered at the MoI and therefore included in the official civil society statistics. It is also noted that civic institution as an umbrella term for CSOs is vague, mysterious and mercurial (Abu Zaher, 2008) and least helpful in clarifying the nature of Palestinian NGOs (Muhaneh et al., 2000).

In addition, it seems that the Palestinian legislators and society find it difficult to conceptualize 'a private, non-profit firm' despite being a standard conceptualization in developed economies. The legislators and NGOs show a strong preference towards adopting community orientation and voluntarism as the main basis of NGO identity.

In this research, the term 'NGOs' will be used in line with the legal definition provided by the Associations' Law which means that "Palestinian NGOs" are those that:

- a) Have legal status: registered in accordance with the Palestinian legal provisions, including having an address (i.e. offices).
- b) Are voluntary; created upon initiatives of individuals, has voluntary membership.
- c) Are public-oriented and aim to serve the public voluntarily without seeking (in)direct economic benefit

A quick reading of the Associations Law reveals an over-emphasis on NGO's legal personality and by doing so the law masks the differences between the various types and levels of NGOs. The law does not differentiate between local grassroots, service NGOs, think tanks, and NGOs networks and forums in registration, reporting and auditing requirements. Even branches of the same CSO can be registered independently if they so choose to. While some networks are registered, few prefer to function informally. Moreover, a sport club⁷ can be registered provided that the word 'society' is added to the club's official name. By default, any Palestinian CSO is automatically legitimized if it is not sanctioned by the state, regardless of its objectives, membership-base or actual contribution to the public's wellbeing. It is worth noting that while the Palestinian Law tackles the issues of membership, elections, and GA mandate in dissolution or disposal of resources, the majority of Palestinian NGOs lack functioning GAs and restrict their membership to their founding members and/or BoDs (Al-Moaqat, 2007).

The Law's heavy hand is felt during the registration process in particular through registration denial, procrastination or disrespect of process by the authorities. In reality, NGOs are mostly attacked because of their perceived failure to remain loyal to the third criterion, i.e. public orientation, and for manipulation the membership to serve specific interests, be it financial, political or other. What an organization does and how it does it, define its identity and legitimacy more than its possession of registration documents (Mohammad, 2007).

Alternatively, the term 'collective action' is suggested instead of 'third sector' in line with Uphoff's preference for excluding any form of private organizations, profit or non-profit making, from the third sector (Uphoff's, 1993, p. 610). The term 'collective action' down plays non-profit status and brings into focus the issues of membership or community-orientation to expand the definition to cover membership CSOs and cooperatives that the NGO definition is not necessarily cover. Since the overwhelming majority of NGOs has limited membership base and rarely come into contact with the average citizen, they are not acknowledged as part of the

⁶Article (2) of the Law uses the generic term '*Moa'assaa Ahlyya*' i.e. Arabic for civic institution, to refer to all types of organisations except charities. The law avoids using "munathama" (Arabic for Organisation) apparently because the word has lots of political connotation in the Palestinian context signalling often underground resistance activities. *Munazamaat Ghair Hokumyya* is the precise translation of the term NGOs. In addition, other terms are used interchangeable with NGOs such as *Mu'assaat El-Ahlyya* or *Munzzamat El-Ahlyya*, indictaing civic institutions or civic organisations respectively. The non-profit sector (i.e. the third Sector) is referred to as *El-Ahly Sector*, or the *Munazzamat Mujtama' Madani* i.e. civil society organisations.

⁷ Registration of sports clubs is the responsibility of the Ministry of Youth and Sports (relegated to a commission status in 2011). A number of sports club still feature on the official NGO list.

self-less collective action sector. As Uphoff concludes, there is little difference between being a client or beneficiary of a service delivery organization and being a customer or employee of the private sector (Uphoff, 1993, p. 620).

The term “collective action” also has limited potential to resolve questions of roles, motives, autonomy and performance of civil society, NGOs included, although it brings cooperatives⁸ back to the civil society arena, which interestingly remain more acceptable to the PA and the public among all types of organizations.

In the oPt, NGOs are accused of being new elites’ posing as caretakers of people’s interests (Hanafi & Tabar, 2005) through working under various pretexts although they actually seek to generate private profit for their leaders (Nakhleh, 2011). Moreover, some NGOs adopt political agendas and affiliations and their leaders are temporarily engaged with civil society in order to harness public influence, relationships, and followings sufficient for them to rise to political leadership (Hamammi, 2000). In the extreme analysis, some even deprived NGOs from the ‘national institutions’ status they enjoyed prior to the creation of PA (Muhsen, 2010) in preference for the derogatorily ‘*Dakakeen*’ i.e. private shops seeking the interests of their founders (Aweidah, 2010; Challand, 2006). If this is indeed the case, it is no wonder that Palestinian NGOs are often met with scepticism, unacceptability, and accusation of furthering Western agendas rather than being perceived as legitimate organic institutions with a purely Palestinian agenda. This is a point of view frequently expressed by Palestinian writers such as Rafidi (2009) and Samara (2001) who perceive NGOs as a Western invention and a tool for economic and cultural re-occupation and dominance of Palestine specifically and the developing countries generally. To them, NGOs are entities created by foreigners and/or locals that are dependent on foreign funds, lack open membership and grassroots connections. Those organizations have offices and paid staff, and claim that their aim is to assist in development but fail to follow these objectives to fruition. This means that foreign aid has strong effects on both NGOs role and their governance.

4 ROLE AND EFFECTS OF FOREIGN AID ON NGO GOVERNANCE

The neo-liberal agenda has been forced on the Arab world since the 1970s (Qassoum, 2004) through the so-called economic restructuring, market liberalization from state control, and privatization of state productive economic assets, using the two tools of promoting democracy and foreign aids (Samara, 2001; Qassoum, 2004; Hamadan, 2010; Reyahi, 2010). At the same time, and thanks to the Arab funding, the PLO grew into a huge bureaucratic organization representing Palestinians in international arenas through public relations rather than actual struggle for liberation (Palestinian Communist Party, 2008; Hilal, 2011). Thus, Oslo Accords are brought about by the accumulative failures of PLO leadership (Qawasmi, 2011; Socialism Today, 1999) and the expanding interests of the capitalist Comprador (Samara, 2001).

Foreign aid to Palestinian NGOs is said to have started after the 1979 Camp David peace accord between Israel and Egypt and when the Palestinian politicians in the oPt had for the first time took it upon themselves not to wait for PLO assistance (Bargouthi, 2000). Prior to Camp David, charitable organizations in the oPt received funds from the PLO, and local *Zakat* money. After 1978, foreign aid encouraged Palestinians to forsake the PLO and struggle for liberation by virtue of tasting the benefits of foreign aid and economic ‘development’ (Nakhleh, 1989/ 2011). The Palestinian Communist Party⁹ and Moslem Brotherhood benefited the most from Israel’s permission for organizations to function publicly and receive foreign funding so that the first further promotes co-existence instead of armed struggle while the second competes with and undermines PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people (Abu Omru, 1995).

The history of foreign assistance to the oPt reveals that aid has undoubtedly played a major role in the Israeli-Arab conflict. Prior to Oslo, aid was diverted through local Palestinian or international organizations because of the lack of a Palestinian state entity-partner. In the language of Oslo enthusiasts, foreign aid After Oslo aimed to ‘fuel Palestinian economic growth and to build public support for negotiations with Israel’ (United State Institute of Peace, 2011). In the language of Oslo opponents ‘foreign aid works in tandem with political plans and strategies to relax Palestinian positions and steer their demand away from national rights and freedom’.

⁸ Cooperatives are not covered the Palestinian Associations Law but registered and regulated by the Ministry of Labor in accordance with a special law because they seek economic profits for their members. However, many commonalities exist between cooperatives and CSOs because cooperative can fulfill development roles at the sectoral level (e.g. women or farmers cooperatives, etc). Most of these cooperatives are microenterprises do not generate large profit margins but are considered supplementary income generating activities for poor households or farmers in need of common resources such as olive pressures or irrigation schemes.

⁹ The Communist party was formed in 1923 and was the only party that accepted the UN partition plan and pioneered the call for peaceful resistance. The party had not joint the PLO until the 1987 after it severed ties with the Jordanian Communist Party.

The inflow of funds meant to prevent the collapse of the Palestinian economy, to promote the so-called economic peace (Nakhleh, 2011) and to bribe Palestinians to forget their suffering (Samara, 2001). Having such aims in mind explains why foreign aid is frequently used to further certain political agendas even when it goes against the Palestinian interests¹⁰ (Zagha & Suleiman, 2006).

The donors' political and security aims are explicit in their official publications. For example, the European Union, the largest financial supporter of the PA, provides support to states and non-state actors in the Southern Mediterranean region, the oPt and Israel included, through bilateral support and regional programs. About 30% -40% of EU aid is disbursed through NGOs (Steinberg, 2008). This aid occurs partially under initiatives such as 'People to People', 'Partnership for Peace' and the 'Instruments for Democracy and Human Rights' (EU Delegation Website, 2011) that seek to enhance human rights and fundamental freedoms, prevent conflict, and promote communication and understanding by demonstrating the advantages of working together for mutual benefits. The EU declares support of the 'peace' process as the main objective of its programs, namely

“[A] two-state solution leading to a final and comprehensive settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict based on implementation of the Road Map, with Israel and a democratic, viable, peaceful and sovereign Palestinian state living side-by-side within secure and recognized borders enjoying normal relations with their neighbors in accordance with UN Security Council Resolutions 242, 338, 1397, 1402, and 1515 and on the principles of the Madrid Conference” (EU Delegation Website, 2011)

In contrast, the US aid to the Palestinians has aimed to support at least three major U.S. policy priorities of interest to Congress, namely¹¹:

- To combat, neutralize, and prevent terrorism against Israel from the Islamist group *Hamas* and other militant organizations.
- To create a virtuous cycle of stability and prosperity in the West Bank that inclines Palestinians, including those in the *Hamas*-controlled Gaza Strip, toward peaceful coexistence with Israel and prepares them for self-governance.
- To meet humanitarian needs and prevent further destabilization, particularly in the Gaza Strip (Zanotti, 2011, p. 2).

Through USAID, USA allocated funds to the West Bank through “projects in sectors such as humanitarian assistance, economic development, democratic reform, improving water access and other infrastructure, health care, education, and vocational training.” (Zanotti, 2010, p. 4-5). Almost all US funds to the Gaza Strip is “dedicated to humanitarian assistance and economic recovery needs.” (Zanotti, 2011, p. 7). Despite such clear allocation and areas of functions, some views (e.g. Samara, 2001) make no distinction between EU and US governments or between governmental and non-governmental funding. In contrast, Palestinian NGOs have different perspectives to foreign aid and NGO governance.

After 1970s¹², critical Palestinian voices grew louder of the foreign aid inflow and the accelerated NGO-ization of mass movement (Nakhleh, 1989; Samara, 1989). Previously, US funds since the 1967 were channeled first through international organizations then through the USAID and private voluntary organizations after 1994. For example, UNRWA and other American organizations¹³ commenced their program in the late 1940s and early 1950s. But after the PLO acceptance of Israel and peace

¹⁰ For example, donors supported the unilateral “Disengagement” Plan proposed by Sharon so as to push negotiation forward between 2004-2006, despite Palestinian reservations, and marketed the plan as an opportunity for Palestinian development.

¹¹ Jim Zanotti. US Foreign Assistance to the Palestinians. A report presented to the US Congress. Congressional Research Services. October 7, 2011. The report estimated that from FY2008 to FY2011, annual U.S. bilateral assistance to the West Bank and Gaza Strip has averaged over \$600 million, including annual averages of over \$200 million in direct budgetary assistance and over \$100 million in non-lethal security assistance for the PA in the West Bank. The USA is the largest single-state donor to UNRWA. Source: <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RS22967.pdf> accessed on Nov 29, 2011.

¹² In 1974 the Palestinian national committee declared a national authority proposal (Nakhleh, 1989).

¹³ For example, the following American organizations has been working in the oPt: the Catholic Relief Services since 1949; Save the Children in 1949, the American Near East Refugee Aid ANERA in 1968; CARE in 1989; CHF in 1994, and OXFAM in 1998. The oldest American organization working in Palestine since 1901 is the missionary American Friends Services – Quakers.

negotiations during the first *Intifada*, huge amount of foreign aid delivered to local NGOs mainly from Western Consulates in Jerusalem and INGOs (Qassoum, 2004; Nakhleh, 2011). Foreign aid has had an effect that direct military force could not achieve: it infiltrated the local community and terminated political action and grassroots extension of political parties. How the donors became interested in the oPt has lots to do with their political interests in the region. For example,

Prior to 1990s, the US Consulate General in Jerusalem was not able to openly build any contacts with individual Palestinians, with the exception of some secret or indirect contacts with the westernized elite. Since 1990s, however, it started recommending Palestinian employees of US financed NGOs to visit to Palestinian villages using official Consulate vehicles. The first point on the weekly agenda meeting of the American NGO Cooperation Development Project (CDP) that is always chaired by an American manager was: 'To what extent have we infiltrated the Palestinian grassroots organizations?' (Samara, 2001, p. 124).

Hamdan (2010) believes that NGOs are best fit for such de-politicization because of their governmental status and non-sue of physical forces unlike the state's security agencies or occupation forces. This 'soft power' is exercised directly in local communities through staff, volunteers and thousands of community base organizations CBOs present in each community across the West Bank. Qassoum (2004) also believes that NGOs funding was critical to pacify the grassroots movement, especially during the first years of the *Intifada*' life between 1987 and 1990, so does Samara who also gives another anecdote of foreign aid timing:

Two days following the ceasefire of the imperialist aggression against Iraq, (January 17, 1991), the Spanish Consulate General in Jerusalem 'distributed' about \$1.6 million dollars to Palestinian NGOs that rushed, without hesitation, to receive the money when the blood of the Iraqi people had not dried yet. It is well known that Spain had the 4th largest army that participated in the aggression against the Iraqi Arab people. The question here is why did they distribute money on that particular day? Is it anything more than a deliberate decision to 're-educate' the people to abandon national Arab commitment for the sake of receiving money? (Samara, 2001, p. 125).

Immediately after Oslo Accords were signed, foreign aid intensified. The World Bank was quick to launch a program to control NGOs fund and to determine policies for NGOs and donors interaction (Sbieh, 2011). The first wave of donor funds was directed to relief through several American and INGOs and chapters (Nakhleh, 1989) to reduce the damage of occupation. It was followed by a second wave of university scholarships in order to create a group of co-opted educated individuals for the promotion of peacefulness and non-violent struggle strategies (Qassoum, 2004). Sbieh also noted that "the dominant neoliberal model of funding in the oPt attempted to contain the *Zakat* committees and place funding from Islamic banks under the auspices of the World Bank" (Sbieh, 2011, p. 16). Foreign aid is very political and favors NGOs because of their perceived closeness to the grassroots so their funding is channeled in a way to favor liberal agenda. These theoretical perceptions are not the subject of in this article, although the amount, directions and impact of foreign aid are addressed to investigate if foreign aid has played a role in NGO governance.

5. NGOS GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

5.1 Definition of Governance

Governance for most is a process for granting a person or an organization the authority to set rules and enforce it on others, public. (World Bank Website, www.worldbank.org). This view focuses on exercising power, as the World Bank illustrates on governance:

"The exercise of economic, political, and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels. It comprises mechanisms, processes, and institutions, through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations, and mediate their differences" (The World Bank Website, www.worldbank.org).

However, the World Bank governance focuses on economic aspect i.e. laws and policies for promotion of transparency in economic administration (Lopes, 2011, p. 15). Another view that focuses people defines governance as "all the ways in which people collectively make choices" (Florini cited in McIntyre-Mills, 2008, p. 19). Groups come together and define what's in their best interests on the basis of equality, one vote per person, and access to information rather than via domination. Governance is also about relationship to stakeholders, whether being part of the group or external to it, but it does not entail dependency on any of the stakeholders.

Governance is not only a mechanism or a legal obligation for organizations to focus upon (Choudhury & Ahmed cited in Kim, 2003). To understand the concept, and to measure governance in civil society, including NGOs, few indicators have been developed to explain the notion. These are:

- Participation: freedom of association;
- Fairness: society free from discrimination;
- Decency: freedom of expression;
- Accountability: respect for governing rules (board, public, governments, donors, national goals);
- Transparency: freedom of media; access to information.
- Efficiency: input in policy making (Hyden, Court, & Mease, 2004, p. 14).

Taking all of the above six facets into consideration, governance reforms are usually designed to enhance transparency, protect stakeholders' interests and protect the group from the dominance of one person or group over the grassroots. Nevertheless, many parties are involved in governance, internally and or external to the organization, but their involvement does not overlap in actual decision making (Stoker cited in Ewalt, 2001). Governance seems to blur the boundaries between the economic and social issues particularly in terms of assessing the actual impact of the NGOs over public and society (Ewalt, 2001).

Accountability is understood differently: Edwards and Hulme (2009) explain the reporting financial accountability and mechanisms to public authorities, a stance also adopted by the Palestinian law that emphasizes NGOs accountability towards the PA (Al-Moaqat, 2007). On other hand, others focus on transparency and the public's rights of access information (Fox & Brown cited in Ebrahim, 2003). Moreover, Gray et al. (2006) see accountability as a 'moral principle' necessary to improve NGOs performance and deepen democracy in society. All three views show disagreement on the nature and scope of NGOs accountability except regarding the financial domain which ultimately means how money is spent (Tandon, 2010).

Ebrahim elaborates on the mechanisms of NGO accountability that involve:

Five broad mechanisms are reviewed: *reports and disclosure statements, performance assessments and evaluations, participation, self-regulation, and social audit*. Each mechanism, distinguished as either a 'tool' or a 'process,' is analyzed along three dimensions of accountability: upward-downward, internal-external, and functional-strategic. Accountability in practice has emphasized 'upward' and 'external' accountability to donors while 'downward' and 'internal' mechanisms are comparatively underdeveloped. Moreover, NGOs and funders have focused primarily on short-term 'functional' accountability responses at the expense of longer-term 'strategic' processes necessary for lasting social and political change. Key policy implications for NGOs and donors are discussed (Ebrahim 2003, p. 1).

Thus, accountability is an important element of governance: i.e. the relations between the organization stakeholders and how decisions are taken and who benefit from it. Thus, it is important first to identify who the stakeholders are then explore NGOs legitimacy and accountability from the perspective of each stakeholder. To do this, NGOs stakeholders must be defined and then grouped, prioritized (Gray et al., 2006). So, who are the stakeholders of the Palestinian NGOs and what are their relationships to the NGOs?

5.2 NGO Autonomy and Independence

NGOs autonomy or independence is an important feature of the voluntary sector (JTW, <http://www.turkishweekly.net>) to set them aside from the state or any other stakeholder such as donors. However, this exists only on paper as the NGOs seem very close either to government, donors or both (Samara, 2001) and often blamed for being a disguised colonial tool since NGOs willingly take part in a softer display of power called development aid (Hamdan, 2010). This is supported by the continuous outpouring of NGO funding from UN agencies, the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, governmental agencies and international nongovernmental organizations despite little evidence of the NGOs superior performance to the state. Donors and NGOs often claim that their collaboration is a mutual choice and that they are partners working on issues of mutual interest such as fighting poverty or employment generation (Nelson, 1995) because NGOs are thought of as more (cost) effective than governments in service delivery and outreach to the poor (Edwards & Hulme cited in Ebrahim, 2003).

In effect, donor funding and intervention have distorted many relations in developing countries: NGO-state, NGO-NGO and NGO -Public relations (Townsend cited in Sorj, 2005) instead of leading to the strengthening of NGOs 'cooperation' with states, private sector and the third sector itself. In the oPt case for example, NGOs have practically invaded every walk of life such public sector reform, policy making, social services, and community development (Reyahi, 2010; Hamdan, 2010; Hanafi & Tabar 2005). The proliferation of both organizations and funding, the PA-NGOs relationship is strained with friction due to mutual distrust trust and competition over resources and donors programs (Qazzaz, 2011). On another level, it has been widely reported that NGOs stripped local institutions of their qualified staff and inflated their salaries in addition to their tendency to impose projects not necessarily a

local priority (Sorj, 2005). The status quo of state-NGOs relations is characterized by tightened state control through various public agencies which sometimes amounts to outright animosity (Hamami, 2000)¹⁴ and the lack of mutual agreement between the NGOs and PA to define their relationship and respective roles (PNGO Website, 2011).

Teegan argues that NGOs independence is a myth because to be functional NGOs have to maintain relations with states, political parties, markets, local authorities, and other internal and external stakeholders (cited in Gray et al., 2006). On one hand, NGOs cooperate with states and local authorities for service delivery; on the other, NGOs partner with and team up with companies to undertake responsibilities states fail to meet. The rise of NGOs is alarming because it detracts from the states' obligations to their citizens, weakens the role of political parties in representation, and destroys social safety networks society use as an internal coping mechanism simply because external parties are taking such rules. Critics blame decline of social fabric on state substitution policies advanced by the structural adjustment policies that the World Bank and the IMF imposed on most developing countries under the pressure for reform (Edwards et al., 1999).

NGOs are short-sighted because they tend to single donors out as the most important stakeholder. Deprived of their financial support, organizations simply cannot survive. Long term sustainability, however, entails that NGOs should know better to prioritize the public because their countries and peoples are constantly changing and demand that NGOs remain continuously sensitive to their needs and demands or wither away as irrelevant. NGOs in the oPt and elsewhere are obviously not autonomous but their strategic interests should direct them to strengthening the accountabilities local community rather than mimic exiting power relations of certain stakeholders vis-à-vis NGOs (Gray et al., 2006).

Today, the West Bank is a 'play yard' for many external actors with influence over Palestinian society such as donors, foreign governments especially the US, and Israel that have constantly attempted to reshape the Palestinian society by military force (Reyahi, 2010) or by 'soft' forms of power such as foreign aid (Hamdan, 2010). For example, Western pressures were behind many PA reforms, restructuring of PA security forces, change of PA school curricula and the creation of the prime minister position within the PA. External pressure had sometimes ended in the closure of several NGOs and detention of Palestinians activists (Reyahi, 2010).

Prior to Israeli occupation, Palestinian NGOs were of the traditional voluntary charitable type with localized agendas and had two main external stakeholders the government(s) and the Palestinian public but also had strong ties to wealthy or influential families (Brown, 2003). However, no details are known on the forms and processes of public engagement that the leaders employed in decision-making (Costantini et al., 2011).

After 1967, NGOs maintained good relations with a new set of external stakeholders such as the PLO and the Jordanian Government because the joint PLO-Jordanian Committee was responsible for secure Arab funding to the oPt (Brown, 2003). NGOs then consulted the local public for needs identification and decision-making related to service delivery because they served as backup to the PLO political factions (Bargouthi, 2000; Hamami, 2000). The factions were also the most important stakeholder during the politically affiliated mass organizations movement in the 1980s. With a focus on the national goals, their governance stayed within the umbrella of their affiliated political parties.

However, this era also saw the introduction of non-Arab donors as a new stakeholder. The mass organizations had grown more autonomous and professionally structures some say in an attempt to track down Western funds made available for the first time (Hilal, 2008, p. 11). Heavily reliant on technical experts and professionals, local CSOs, mainly human rights NGOs, could interact with donors thanks to the involvement of well-educated middle class personnel running urban-based, development-oriented CSOs in priority sectors such as health, education, human rights and agriculture (Jad, 2007).

At the same time, CSOs took few years to transition from mass organizations to NGOs. This 'NGO-ization' ushered in the soon to be typical disconnection between the donor-dependent organization and the public (Jad, 2003; Hanafi & Tabar, 2005). CSOs became less accountable to local communities and engaged in donors' projects during the 'peace' negotiation process. As this distance grew, NGOs became more professionalized and specialized while donors replaced the political parties in importance and guidance as the latter no longer constituted the important stakeholder for the majority of organizations, particularly urban-based NGOs (Hamami, 2000).

Currently, no direct public participation in NGOs' decision-making, and voluntarism dropped to its minimum levels. Decisions are taken by NGOs and/or donors while the senior managements and BoDs without listening to or talking to the public (Qazzaz, 2010). The NGO-ization of grassroots played a major role is the public discrediting of their claim to public representation and voicing local needs. The public's role is restricted to that of beneficiary and users of service delivered freely or in return for a nominal

¹⁴ For example, the Ministry of Finance and Prime Minister Office provide financial support to certain NGOs (Unpublished Report, Ministry of Finance, 2011).

charge. The NGO-public relationship is close in any aspect to business – client relationship (Hanafi & Tabar, 2005; Jad, 2007) in which the powerless client has no choice but to accept or reject the service without the threat of profit loss dreaded in private businesses.

In contrast to urban NGOs, some charitable NGOs also made the transition to NGO status in terms of structure, procedures and written systems. These were more successful in retaining volunteers even at the senior management level. This is not seen in any development NGOs (Brown, 2003). It could be one of the factors, beside having no political –religious overtones, that enabled large charitable organisations, such as *In'ash al-Ustra*, to cooperate with the PA and maintain their independence (Brown, 2003). The interesting thing in this regard is that traditional and Islamic charitable societies are largely perceived as more considerate of their local community needs compared to their secular counterparts. They are viewed by public more accountable and successful in the delivery of better quality services (AMAN, 2009).

6. DEMOCRACY AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

A theoretical debate on the peculiarity of the Palestinian civil society emerging in the absence of Palestinian state (Salem, 2012). This debate seems to have put to rest the notion that Palestinian civil society is a product of Oslo Accords basically because the organizations themselves existed decades before and today they define their self as civil society actors. The debate turned more to the relationship between civil society and democracy. Jerbawi (1995) clearly believes that a democratic state encourages political participation and civil engagement. These two are pre-conditions for civil society to exist. In other words, the absence of democratic state necessarily entails the absence of civil society. In the words of De Tocqueville “a pluralist and self-organizing civil society independent from the state is a crucial condition of democracy” (De Tocqueville cited in Ncube, 2009, p. 3).

Hilal (2006) investigates a counter argument where civil society leads to democratic states. Democracy requires the state to systematically involve people in decision making and setting agenda because

“Democratic governance is participatory, consultative, transparent and publicly accountable. Through one mechanism or another, democratic governance rests on the consent of the governed” (Scholte, 2001, p. 7).

Democratic governance is also associated with a wide public participation, institutional responsiveness and sensitivity to the interest of future generations in the short and long terms (McIntyre-Mills 2010, p. 4). At the organizational level, governance has three dimensions: the first one indicates what the right thing to do, the second is about how to do it, and the third ensures real public participation (Nefissa, 2001).

Hilal (2008) concluded that there is no evidence to support the claim that NGOs, political parties, universities, media, community organization are striving for democracy or that their real interests lie in building a democracy. Evidence is also lacking on whether such participation actually force or make state more democratic or that the civil society has inherent ability to do so. Similarly, the promotion of civil society by donors or local NGO does not mean they promote democracy per se (Bishara, 1996). On the other hand, the outcome of democratic processes can be unpredictable if left to the society's normal forces and without external intervention. Some local actors and international community had in many cases reject the results of democratic elections if these results do not fit their interests, e.g. Algeria in early 1990s, and in the oPt after *Hamas* landslide victory in the 2006 national elections even though the West and Israel called for elections and accepted the idea of *Hamas*' participation. This means that Western countries need a tailor-made democracy that suits their interests rather than accept the free will of the people and their rights to choose their rulers. In these societies, election results are not rejected because their systems function in a way to guarantee the results in advance despite the denial of the intimate relationship between big corporations and politicians (Triebwasser, 1998).

In addition, the political systems in the Arab World; oPt included, are totalitarian where reforms and adjustments have always revolved around economic liberalization rather than democratization. The first has met with more welcome than democratization by Arab states and US¹⁵ governments alike (Ziadeh, 2008, p. 4). Long before US democratization programs, the oPt had democratic practices of its own making to suit its needs under occupation. Local leaders were eager to hold local elections in 1976 when the PLO-backed candidates actually won the first ever Palestinian local elections before Israel cancelled these elections and attempted to take the lives of its winners (Ashrawi, 2009). Furthermore, in late 1980s, popular committees were created to lead the Intifada and cater to public needs through grassroots committees in each locality with a specific mandate in education, neighborhood, health, etc. Members were chosen from the community itself. For Ashrawi, the grassroots created embryonic democratic forms that

¹⁵ US democracy vision for the region is reflected in many initiatives such as “The Middle East Free Trade Area”, “the Initiative for the Greater Middle East and North Africa”, the “Democracy Assistance Program for the Middle East”, and “the Middle East Partnership Initiative-MEPI”) all of which promote neo-liberalism agenda in the economic and political arenas (Ziadeh, 2008: 4)

first dedicated their efforts to national struggle then took on developmental rule and formal institutional structures. For example, women committees were formed of “Women who had been at the forefront of the intifada and struggled for freedom who later turned their attention to issues of social justice and good governance” (Ashrawi, 2009, p. 19).

After Oslo, the pace of social and organizational fragmentation in the oPt accelerated and affected NGOs and factions alike. As Palestinian factions have a tendency to create associations, they too have a tendency for division (Daifallah, 2006). Many members of NGOs and political parties dissented to create and lead new organizations as a short cut to leadership and prominence. Organizational membership seems to be weak nowadays as a direct result of being based on immediate benefits for that individual rather than on voluntary spirits, collective action or shared values and objectives with the other members that are considered the very building blocks of civil society (Daifallah, 2006).

In addition to fragmentation, it is postulated that personal motives in creating and joining associations has a far reaching impact on public participation in NGOs and the public’s conviction that their participation via NGOs can actually influence public policy (Songco et al., 2006), particularly when these organizations constantly change their missions and functions in the direction of the funding tide. The further the physical distance between the organizations and the communities they serve, the more sceptical the public gets given the tendency of organizations to limit themselves to urban regions and central districts of Ramallah, Jerusalem and Bethlehem, far from the majority of the population and the groups in need.

7. NGO GOVERNANCE AND STRATEGIC PLANNING

Planning and governance have one thing in common: decision-making. As planning is “the process of making decisions. To plan, therefore, is to govern” (Wildavsky, 1973, p. 128-129). For Vu, governance is “making a decision about what needs to be done, when it needs to be done, and how it needs to be done through the implementation of collective intentions” (Vu, 2008, p. 4). Planning also aims at helping organisations define their future direction, a matter that cannot be done without knowing the key players and participants in the decision-making process. The direction is usually determined in strategic planning can be defined as “a continuing process that involves governance, management and participation” (Vu, 2008, p. 4). This means that the degree of public participation and way of dealing with stakeholders is significant for having better strategic plans.

Vu (2008) and Abdulhadi (2004) contrast two distinct approaches to strategic planning: The first is a top-down approach of bureaucratic central planning model and the second is the bottom-up approach usually used by community organizations and depends on public participation in decision-making, needs prioritization and agenda setting. McIntyre-Mills (2007) advises all organizations, be it public, private or civil society, to view strategic planning as it should be: a systemic, non-linear approach, sustainability oriented and a democratic process able to meet challenges of uncertainty and changeable environment incrementally.

Thus, goal-based planning is probably the most common planning approach. As the point of departure, the approach adopts the organization’s mission and goals and applies tools such SWOT and /or stakeholders’ analysis. Program or project planning is done through two approaches: either through the Logical Framework that emphasizes effectiveness and impact of programs and their interventions. The second is the participatory approach that relies on the contribution of potential beneficiaries to the identification of needs and priorities for the said program to fulfill (McNamara, 2000).

Nowadays, participation is seen as a cross cutting or overarching theme of development planning and implementation interventions, in order to enhance planning, ongoing learning, collaboration, resource sharing, and ensuring the support of stakeholders and beneficiaries. Even though participation is highlighted as a principle, the practices of many NGOs and donors turn participatory planning into a technical and a managerial exercise that lost the public participation dimension (Jad, 2007; Sbieh, 2011). McIntyre-Mills (2003) insists on ‘participatory design’ to involve stakeholders actively in decision-making processes. A bottom-up, participatory planning approach is the called for model to enable grassroots involvement in planning, provided that four essential pre-requisites factors are met:

- (1) The legal right and opportunity to participate;
- (2) Access to information;
- (3) Resource provision; and
- (4) Representativeness of participants.

Smith (1981) argues that strategic plans are needed to be prepared and adhered to even in unstable environments. Most Palestinian NGOs forsake strategic plans in preference for an instantaneous focus on relief and humanitarian response, the very signs of chronic instability in the oPt (Abdulhadi, 2004) despite NGOs’ tendency to deal with the Palestinian areas as a post conflict zone (Hamdan, 2010; Hanafi and Taber, 2005). Since donors financially support most strategic planning endeavors, strategic plans tend to

be drafted by donor-contracted or expatriate experts who put more effort in linking these plans to donors' goals and political guidelines than to actual public needs and priorities (Sbeh, 2011; Abdulhadi, 2004; Hamdan, 2010). Strategic planning experts often lament NGOs' politicization, lack of strategic visioning, and total dependence on foreign aid (Songco et al., 2006). The first step to bridging the gap can be achieved by a substantive improvement of strategic thinking and organizational learning, informal learning and the adoption of new perspectives, opinions and solutions (Mintzberg, 1993). Most importantly, this needs committed NGO management and the involvement of many stakeholders.

8. THE THIRD WAY: A LOCAL MODEL OF NGOS GOVERNANCE

The 'third way' seems self-explanatory: it is an alternative to political thinking restricted for so long to a left versus a right model. Instead of suggesting a new ideology, the third way (a.k.a social liberals), calls for a new set of moral principles and a new way of visualizing political problems and how to render them thinkable and manageable by legitimate solutions (Rose, 2000, p. 1395). In the political arena, both individualism and collectivism led governments have failed to satisfy public needs because the first was concerned with economic liberalization and benefiting a rich minority, and the second focused on centralization and benefiting few officials and political elites. The solution lies in civil society assuming more roles and responsibilities and in the introduction of a mixture of economic and political reforms to improve the performance of public and private sectors.

Evoked by the victory of capitalism, the third way believes there is no other economic and political model so political parties and NGOs work within the capital system yet with adjustment of the state's role in social welfare (Giddens, 2010). A positive attitude to globalization is warranted here because of its contribution to the expansion of world's financial markets, trade transactions, and information and communication technology to all corners (Giddens, 2010). This point of view does not deny that developing countries have not benefited from such a globalization nor freed their resources and markets from the capitalists' hands (Samara, 2001).

As globalization seeks domination over the world's resources and promotes a comprehensive, streamlined model of life, consumption habits, education, and culture (Samara, 2001), the third way seems interested in reducing the impact of such domination using 'soft power', foreign aid through NGOs. This is exactly what neoliberalism has been doing for decades of NGO funding. In fact Capitalist countries seek a greater control of world's resource, including those in developing countries whose independence and ownership of resources go against the interest of capitalists (Samara, 2001). While the problems of developing countries are often portrayed as a result of bad internal governance and corruption, in reality, the plight of the third world lies in the structure of the global economy (Reyahi, 2010). So the promotion of the so-called good governance and democracy in the public sectors in developing countries has no impact on the restructuring of global economy. On the contrary, democratisation may intend to enforce rather than challenge the status quo. For example, Western interventions for the democratisation of the public sector in the oPt have hardly impacted the occupation but concern themselves with guaranteeing Israel's security and dominance in all sectors (Samara, 2001; Nakhleh, 2011).

Similarly, the promotion of social movements and social welfare does not solve the inequity of wealth distribution and access to resources (The Economist, 16 June 2006)¹⁶. The concentration of wealth in few hands distorts the distribution of wealth and power, which is precisely what the Marxists¹⁷ warned of in the rejection of individual ownership and private property or production.

If the West-led globalization brings destruction (Samara, 2001; Qassem, 2008), the third way tries to bring the best of the two worlds. In Qassem's opinion, Marxists' concern for liberating human beings from exploitation is valid so is the capitalists' characterization of human motivation towards work (Qassem, 2008). Therefore, there might be a chance for self-governance and people-led approach to development. In the case of oPt, For example, two approaches were suggested termed 'public-based comprehensive development' (Nakhleh, 2011) and 'development by popular protection' (Samara, 2005), both of which have the advantage of allowing struggle for freedom while pursuing development. This could help take the left parties out of their rut and replace *Fateh* Movement¹⁸ and the Palestinian capitalists because their alliance has failed in realizing any of the Palestinian national goals (Samara, 2001; Nakhleh, 2011). So far, the parties in power have brought nothing but a fragmented public and a divided semi-

¹⁶ Worldwide, the gap between the rich and the poor is widening. In the USA the gap is bigger than in any other developed country but most people are unconcerned. However, satisfaction relatively differs from country to another. In western countries, at least people enjoy many kinds of economic, social welfare including housing and education, in many developing countries they live on one dollar daily income.
http://www.worldbank.org/progress/reducing_poverty.html and <http://www.economist.com/node/7055911>.

¹⁷ Source: Manifesto of the Communist Party, Last viewed on 23 August 2011, from the website <http://www.anu.edu.au/polsci/marx/classics/manifesto.html>.

¹⁸ Sometime *Fateh* movement presents itself as being a third way itself (as an alternative to the Islamists or leftists). The current PA Prime Minister, Salam Fayyad, headed a new party called "Third Way" which participated in the 2006 elections for the first time.

state structure instead of focusing of generating public support behind various ways towards the realization of national goals. Thus a third way priority would be to mobilise mass support to unified programs and agreements that are national in scope (Muhsin, 2006) in which NGOs can move within.

This possible version of the third way in oPt relies on public, within the context of popular national committee ensuring the best governance practice is in the community and society, popular rule of law instead of the PA rule of law. Two assumptions are important” (1) people want to be liberation and willing to pay for this freedom on the long run (2) all parties are protecting human rights.

This third way relies on community organizations due to its dissatisfaction with the outcomes of procedural democracy. Due to the fact that democratic representation processes are ineffective and often monopolized by the elites, other techniques of legitimating are sought such as:

“Focus groups, citizens’ juries, boards of directors are chosen to represent different sectors and interests, partnerships of all sorts between the public services and those wanting to make profits, between public, profit-making and not-for-profit organizations, between professionals and lay persons, between political institutions and voluntary organizations, and much more. These new hybrid mechanisms, more flexible and closer to local needs than the bureaucratized organs of the central or local state, will ensure accountability, reconcile competing interests, and transcend the harmful split between state and society (Hargreaves & Christie cited in Rose, 2000, p. 1405).

To escape the argument of civil society prerequisites, i.e. a democratic state, the third way invokes a state respectful of the rule of law that allows civil society to serve the poor in light of the decreased role of state. As such, the third way is nothing but a polish of the current system of capitalism (Samara, 2001). In fact, this third model lacks legitimacy and accountability too and the elite representing the third way in are in questioned as well. Short rhetorical question makes a point “who is better placed to speak on behalf of the poor, middle-class white people in the north or the elected representatives of the poor of Africa themselves?” (Short cited in Slim, 2002, p. 5). What gives the third way this right to represent poor people is an issue relevant democracy, legitimacy and accountability but it is also relevant to the entire NGOs and their relationship to globalization.

No doubt that the aforementioned proposition is a step forward in having individuals and the society rally around a common goal. Nevertheless, it is more suitable for small communities rather than large ones or societies that recourse to representation mechanisms in order to reach an agreement on their needs and goals. Moreover, the proposition avoids challenging the unequal power structure among different stakeholders in decision-making processes and does not address motivation behind private firms accepting to share their powers with individuals or the society at large. Also there is little common standard or agreeable ethics and values among the many social groups and political parties to make this happen. The assumption that “the third way would suture community and citizenship, collective belonging, and individual responsibility” (Rose, 2000, p. 1395), appears to be based on wishful thinking rather than on the understanding of complexities of societies or even dynamics within a given community.

The lesson Palestinians learned from the last century is that the self-serving comprador capitalists cannot be trusted to remember, let alone achieve, national rights (Qassoum, 2004; Hamdan, 2010; Nakhleh, 2011) Thus, they should be relieved from leadership roles and denied space to manipulate the public with national resources. However, this is unlikely to occur in the current situation because of the comprador’s strong alliance with the PA and some NGOs in return for personal interests and financial rewards for NGOs leadership (Hamdan, 2010). The three allies: PA/PLO, businesses, and some NGOs are taking advantage of the PA and all for profiteering (Nakhleh, 2011).

9. CONCLUSION

Civil society is a ‘mercurial concept’ giving its relationship with the state. Therefore, the concept must be studied in the context of specific society in order to understand its congruence with socio-economic structure and political system of its concerned society. In the era of globalization, developing nations cannot cheer for its effects (Giddens, 2010) because these countries are entrapped in the inherently inequitable follower-followed relationship with the capitalist countries (Samara, 2001; Hamdan, 2010). There is only one way for developing countries, which is the third way that seeks to gain and maintain freedom through self-governance, the re-capturing of power from the elites and advancing public participation in policy process, agenda-setting and decision-making. This applies to governments and NGOs alike but because of NGOs’ lack of internal democracy and self-serving behavior of their elite leaderships; they are obviously unable to speak truly or act on behalf of public. To empower people, society and institutions should mobilize around a clear vision, consensus-based plan and accountable governance.

In the Palestinian case, the debate about the role of NGOs seems offline with the previous theories on civil society because the oPt is still under occupation and no Palestinian state has materialized yet. In fact, perceiving the Palestinian Authority as a *state* has only one meaning which is promoting or legitimizing the continuation of occupation (Nakhleh, 2011; Hamdan, 2010). Until a Palestinian state is born, the community organizations have characteristics and roles not seen before in other countries, especially in light of the staggering peace process. That also means that civil society will not be developed as such unless the oPt is free from occupation.

It also means that the wider political and socio-economic environment locally and regionally has to factor in any analysis of Palestinian CSOs and it entails that the research shall adopt complementary analytical approaches factoring in theories such as systemic and good governance, globalization and the third way to add new depth to the concept of civil society. Even the Palestinian legislature seems partially aware of the problem of theoretical constructs such as civil society so the law adopts a legalistic rather than a functional definition of CSOs while highlighting their philanthropic agendas in service delivery. The law gives due emphasis to community orientation over the non-profit identity in order to control NGOs and limit their involvement in politics. Whatever term we decide to use in reference to civil society in the oPt, neither community organizations or NGOs can escape helping Palestinians in their struggle to achieve liberation, and independent statehood. Thus, Palestinians have to be aware of the hidden agendas behind foreign aid aims to restructure the Palestinian society to accept the current situation and be satisfied by the PA and a limited self-rule on account of major Palestinian national goals. To ensure protection of people's interests in the short and long run, there is a need for more public participation in community institutions including NGOs. This will enhance NGOs internal structure and make it more valid to speak on behalf of people and their interests and advance their collective rights. NGOs governance requires public participation in many processes most importantly in planning and decision-making to ensure that grassroots individual and collective rights are protected and their immediate and future needs are fulfilled.

The variety of concepts, approaches and historical review discussed here show that NGO governance in the oPt specifically is indeed a complex issue. This means that the literature indeed has a problem in the way governance and accountability are conceptualized when it comes to non-profit organizations. Both are complex issues due partially to the fact that both governmental and nongovernmental sectors are intimately linked, positively or negatively, to democracy and public participation in politics and public policy. However, without public participation, there is no democracy at the political or social levels, and NGOs would lag behind their responsibilities as representatives of their constituencies whether these are individual communities or the Palestinian societies at large.

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