

The Inevitable Coexistence of Civil Society and Liberalism: The Case of Turkey

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Abstract. This article aims to draw attention to the coexistence of liberalism and civil society based upon the case of Turkey. Examined are three periods related to the history of Turkey: the last period of the Ottoman Empire, the non-liberal period of republican Turkey dating from 1923 to 1980, and the liberal post-1980 period. This article argues that there is a negative correlation between the domination of the state over society and economy and the development of a democratically functioning civil society. What the Turkish case indicates is that the development of civil society seems to become possible only in those societies where the influence of the state in economic and social life is limited, and it is liberalism that advocates that the state remain a value-neutral body among different parties and a body that leaves social and economic activities to be carried out by the private sector, which is the basis of civil society.

JEL Classification Codes: Z00, N45.

Key Words: Civil Society; Liberalism.

1. Introduction

Arguing that liberalism and an active civil society go hand in hand, this article mainly discusses the role of liberal economic policies in the development of civil society in post-1980 Turkey. The liberalism discussed in the article is that expressed by such concepts as the minimal state, individualism, social differentiation, the rule of law, and human rights and liberties. Indicated in the article is that a number positive outcomes have occurred given the implementation of liberal policies in post-1980 Turkey. In particular, different sub-culture groups have emerged again, associations defending human rights have been established, differing points of view expressed in the media have become the norm, private enterprise has developed, state run monopolies have been broken up and/or become privatized, and the work of intellectuals in support of Turkey becoming integrated into the democratic West have been bearing fruit. Focusing on the post-1980 period as well as on earlier periods, this article indicates that, in the case of Turkey, liberalism created the environment that enabled civil

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society to function again. I will first discuss the relationship between liberalism and civil society in general and then analyze what has occurred in Turkey.

2. Liberalism and Civil Society

What is the relationship between liberalism and civil society? Liberal thinkers, in general, do not include the term civil society within liberalism since they dislike the concept of civil society, which, according to them, refers to over-individual organizations. Civil society, to liberal thinkers, produces collective feelings and thus hinders the development of individual based initiatives.¹ There are two reasons why liberals react against the concept of civil society. The first one is that civil society has gained its traditional and original meaning from Hegel's theory where civil society was perceived of as a mediating historical moment serving to reach a metaphysical state (Knox, 1967, pp. 147-155). The second reason behind liberals' distrust of civil society is perhaps the fact that left leaning activists, particularly since the 1960s, have defended civil society in the West. The civil society movements that have developed since the 1960s have been those such as environmentalists, feminists, communal groups, and radical groups derived from traditional socialist groups that have produced collective values and have defended collective rights. As extensions of older socialism despite the range of issues, these groups commonly produce such discourses as those involved with brotherhood, solidarity, communal feelings, and communal rights. The discourses of these groups have caused liberal thinkers to reject any connection with the concept of civil society.

Nonetheless, despite this theoretical dispute, one can see that modern civil society groups survive only in those societies that have liberal political values and institutions. In other words, when we compare the experience of Western European societies with Eastern European societies, we see that civil society has developed in the former. From the twelfth century onwards, urbanization, the formation of de-centralized governments, the rise of a liberal political culture, and the development of autonomous economic groups have been the traditional factors stimulating the emergence of a civil domain outside the state in Western Europe. The development of

¹ Norman Barry is the most important liberal philosopher to strongly react against community-based or social organization-based civil society. For a detailed argument on the relationship between liberalism and civil society, see (Rosenblum, 1994, pp. 539-563).

capitalist economies and democratic political systems, the economic and political aspects of liberalism, has been possible given the traditions in Western European societies.² It is possible to claim that the capitalist world has been shaped by the political, sociological, and philosophical framework of liberal political thought. As stated, liberal concepts are those such as the minimal state, individualism, social differentiation, the rule of law, and human rights and liberties, and they are the ones that have constituted the sociological, philosophical and political environment that has enabled the formation of civil society. With the appearance of liberal values in the capitalist world, it was possible for civil society to develop on the basis of autonomous, differentiated, and organized social groups.

However, Eastern European societies have been shaped by socialism, and Marx, despite his dream of a stateless society, viewed the term civil society in a pejorative sense. To him, civil society meant the private sector where capitalism developed, and thus it had a negative meaning in his theory. The concept of civil society also had a negative meaning in the political writing of other Marxist writers, except Gramsci (Keane, 1988, pp. 63-64). Furthermore, the political practice of the socialist regimes that were established based on Marxist thinking produced political values that were fundamentally in conflict with those developed in capitalist societies. Unlike the political and economic values developed in capitalist societies, socialist regimes produced values such as centralization, collectivism, political monism, a strict control over the economy and property, single-party regimes, a strong and closed official ideology that rendered any differentiation impossible, and strong obedience to state authority (Rupnik, 1988, pp. 263-291). The upshot was the development of an enormous state besieging the society, prohibiting the advent of autonomous and organized social, economic, and political entities, and hindering human rights and freedom based political values.

The two different experiences of the European societies indicate that there is a strong positive correlation between liberalism and civil society. The rise of liberal values leads, in a positive way, to the rise of civil society. Therefore, liberalism should be viewed as the precursor to civil society. Although civil society organizations, since the 1960s in particular, have been set up based on political attitudes favoring hierarchical organizational structures and the “iron law of oligarchy” has generally prevailed, their

² Antony Black (1984, p. 237) claims that civil society has developed, given economic advancement in Western Europe, beginning from the twelfth century onwards.

existence is still the product of a liberal social setting. This has been a setting where the freedom to organize and to put forth alternative discourses has existed along with other characteristics of a liberal society such as the minimal state. It is these characteristics that are the prerequisites to civil society. Of these, the minimal state, the concept that is the backbone of liberal political thought, is the most necessary if civil society is to spring into life.

3. Liberalism and Civil Society in Turkey

The case of the Turkey in the last century, specifically in the last two decades, and its politics constitutes a striking example of the relationship between liberalism and civil society. In order to understand this relationship and the Turkish case itself, it is necessary to briefly review the last decades of the Ottoman Empire, which were dominated by liberal political and economic thought (Barke, 2000, pp. 87-106). During the first half of the nineteenth century the Ottomans began sending students to the West, particularly to France and England. When these students returned, they began supporting fundamental changes in order to modernize. These included legal, political, economic, and educational reforms. Different movements were organized by the Young Ottomans and, towards the end of the century, by the Young Turks. They attempted to reformulate basic Ottoman institutions on the basis of liberal thought. Their demands ranged from calling for constitutional government to asking for freedom and equality before the law. As for the economic policies of the Ottoman Empire, during the last decades they were based upon the principles of market economy and private enterprise.

Given the liberal environment arrived at in the last decades of the Ottoman Empire, a variety of civil society actors came upon the scene. The most remarkable were women groups comprising an indigenous feminist movement that defended the local problems of Turkish women. Once these women entered the public sphere, they set up many different associations. They held meetings, symposiums, and conferences stressing women's issues including the right to vote. Indeed, women groups were a central aspect of the last two decades of the Ottoman Empire from 1908 to 1923. They were so influential in Turkish politics that some students of Turkish politics have considered them to be the paramount element of civil society during that time (Çaha, 1995). Besides the civil society organizations formed by women, other groups formed ranging from intellectuals forming Islamic groups who defended religious traditional values to intellectuals advocating

Westernization who defended the adoption of Western oriented institutions and values. In other words, there were intellectuals arguing for alternative ways of saving the Ottoman state. They were also concerned about the role women would be playing in the alternative styles of life that they advocated. Both types of intellectuals drew attention to the significance of women taking part in public life.

Two other remarkable elements of civil society in the last decades of the Ottoman Empire were political movements involved in setting up political parties and organizations and new economic groups that constituted the Ottoman bourgeois class. The forming of political parties occurred in a rich intellectual environment, and a variety of political parties ranging from left to right and numbering around thirty formed focusing on such issues as free market economies, socialism, an Islamic state, and nationalism (Soysal, 1983). In addition to political parties, a variety of other types of organizations, particularly labor unions, were established during this time, and they created a democratic environment in Ottoman public life. The newly emerging economic groups were also important because they played a significant role in the Empire's transition from being an agricultural economy to an industrial economy. In addition, the non-Muslim minorities of the Ottoman Empire and foreign merchants functioned as links between Ottoman society and Western markets. In short, all the changes in civil society mentioned above contributed to widening the public sphere making it easier for still more political and social groups to become involved. In other words, the last two decades of the Ottoman Empire provide an example of the close connection between liberal politics and the appearance of civil society organizations.

With the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923, the development of Turkish civil society changed direction. The state elites, leading the newly established regime, carried out reforms but in an authoritarian manner particularly after 1930. Hostile to liberalism and following the totalitarian politics of the Italian and German Fascist Parties, the state elite cast all traditional and modern social and political organizations out of public life. Along with the establishment of the Republic in 1923 a single party took control and the development of civil society in the public domain was blocked. After 1930, the state also took control of the economy and eventually control of all economic activities given its control over production. This further weakened the power of civil society, for the development of autonomous economic-based entities *vis à vis* the state came to a halt. State control over the economy also stopped the

growth of mediating institutions. Thus, a huge gap between the state and society was created. In this way the state came to be the only “organized power” influencing social life. In effect, a semi-socialist economy and politics came into being leaving a weakened civil society facing a strong semi-totalitarian state. This state of affairs continued until at least 1980 even though a transition to multi-party politics did occur in 1950 in Turkey. What happened was that despite the transition to a more democratic multi-party political system, no substantial change occurred in the economic life of the country.

In the post-1980 period, a revival of civil society has occurred developing with the resurgence of liberalism in Turkey. Coming to power as the leader of Motherland Party, soon after the military’s withdrawal from politics in the 1983, Prime Minister Turgut Özal opted for liberal politics. As an extension of Özal’s liberal stance, a free market economy formed in Turkey and became the most dominant economic paradigm. Legal obstacles to political liberty were also removed by abolishing Articles 141, 142, and 163 of the Constitution, articles that prohibited the free expression of thought. In addition, Prime Minister Özal strongly encouraged the integration of Turkey into the European Union and the full adoption of democratic values and institutions. He also stressed the importance of a free market economy as well as the development of civil society. The outcome of Özal’s politics during his time in office (1980-1993) was the emergence of social and political pluralism, which gained pace and generated various discourses. In short, in post-1980 Turkey, the political dynamics shifted from ideological confrontation to the pursuit of pluralism. In other words, political discourses were “liberated” from “system questioning” to a “policy questioning” stance.

The liberal environment in post-1980 Turkey led to almost all political parties declaring in their programs that they supported a liberal economy. While social democratic parties in the early 1980s reacted negatively to the liberalizing of the economy, nowadays all of them are in favor of it. Even the Virtue Party, the party that was established by former members of the banned Welfare Party and the party the most opposed to the official ideology of the government, to the West, and to the idea of a free market economy, has now revised its program in order to support liberal politics. The traditional defenders of political and economic liberalism in Turkey have been the central right parties, the Motherland Party and the True Path Party. In addition to the parties on the left and right now supporting liberal politics, a liberal party, the Liberal Democrat Party, has

formed, and it strongly defends the classic liberal values and politics. Besides this party, the Association for Liberal Thought has come into being with the aim of convincing Turkish intellectuals to support liberal values. Some would say that this association has fostered the most important intellectual circle in Turkey, a circle that is strongly influencing scholars, students, politicians, and journalists. In short, since 1980 this trend in Turkish politics has led to the emergence of a variety of autonomous social groups.

Another prominent part of civil society in post-1980 Turkey have been Islamic groups who have been active in a variety of areas ranging from the economy to education and from charitable activities to political activities. Unlike the Islamic groups in many Islamic countries Turkish Islamic groups are not opposed to such Western values as democracy, republicanism, a free market economy, human rights, and even secularism, aimed at separating the state from religion (Aras & Çaha, 2000). Going back to the last century of the Ottoman Empire, almost all Turkish groups, whether modern or traditional, favored the modern European economic and political values. As a part of this tradition Turkish Islamic groups, with some minor exceptions, are not reacting negatively to modern institutions and to values that have developed in Western societies. On the contrary, the efforts of the community based Islamic groups in particular resemble those of the Protestant movements of Europe during the sixteenth century. These groups have channeled the limited savings of many Anatolian men into huge capital intensive projects and have accepted such notions as democracy, human rights, political and religious liberty, cultural tolerance, and dialogue with non-Islamic groups including Christians and Jews. In short, these Islamic groups participating in modern economic and political activities should be viewed as agents of modernization and as supporters of Turkey's integration with the West in general and of Turkey's becoming a member of the European Union in particular.

In addition to the Islamic groups, other groups and movements have formed. There are women's groups in Turkey, ethnic movements, an environmental movement, and economic groups. With the 1973 Stockholm Conference, environmental problems started to become a focus of interest in Turkey. However, social groups turning the environment into a political issue began in the post-1980 liberal period. A political party, the Green Party, formed but was later closed by the Turkish Constitutional Court. In addition, many local and national political activist groups formed and became a part of public life. The issues they have raised have led to some

changes being made. The influence of environmental groups led to the decision by the Turkish government to establish the Ministry of the Environment and to add courses related to environmental issues to the primary and high school curriculums set by the Ministry of Education. Environmental issues have also become a part of the political programs of the parties in Turkey.

As for the women's movements, during the period of the military intervention from 1980 to 1983 some women left the leftist groups they belonged to and formed their own intellectual circles. They then worked to make their voices heard in the mass media. They reacted negatively to the law forbidding abortion, to traditional values related to women, and to the legal and economic inequalities women faced. They also took to the streets to make their views known. These were the first activist activities by women since 1935 when the state forced feminist women to abolish their political association. These women drew the attention of political parties and other intellectual circles as well. Thus, the "women's issue" came to be a central element of the 1980s. Books about women's issues became best-sellers. There were movies about these issues. The most important dynamism in political parties was related to the women's groups. In addition, the activities of the modern feminist groups spurred the formation of traditional women's groups who worked to make their points of view known in public life. These women found themselves opposing the traditional roles imposed upon them, especially the traditional restriction on the spheres of life that men and women are to function in—the public sphere for men and the home or the private sphere for women. Women and girls in these traditional groups wanted, for example, to attend school or find work. Unfortunately, they also wanted to keep their hair covered with a headscarf in the traditional way, which is not permitted in state-run offices and institutions and in Turkey's schools. In this way, they ended up in a struggle to have the ban on headscarves lifted. This struggle, beginning in the 1980s, is still going on, and for women and girls who refuse to take off their scarves the result is that they are unable to attend school or work in public sector jobs.

Regarding civil society economic groups and new private sector businesses, they are increasing in number and in importance. While in the period up to 1980 there were only two employers' associations in Turkey, TÜSİAD (the Turkish Association of Industrialists and Businessmen) and TİSK (the Turkish Employers' and Industrialists' Confederation), since then many different businessmen's associations have emerged. Some of the most

prominent of these are: MÜSİAD (the Association of Independent Businessmen), AĞİAD (the Association of Young Anatolian Businessmen), GESİAD (the Association of Young Industrialists and Businessmen), and ASKON (the Lions' Association of Anatolian Businessmen). The post-1980 period has also seen the rise of new companies whose start up depended on the limited savings of many partners and /or shareholders. Many of the entrepreneurs starting these companies have come from the Anatolian part of Turkey, an area of Turkey that was faced with slow development. YİMPAŞ and KOMBASSAN are two companies of note. They have both become very successful businesses. Moreover, the Anatolian businessmen have not limited their activities to Turkey. They are also trying to expand their businesses into Europe, America, and Asia. Not only are they providing capital for investment, but they are also selling goods and services. There is no doubt that these associations and businesses are contributing to the Turkey's economic modernization and to the spread of free-market economies.

In short, different social groups have formed in the liberal political environment of post-1980 Turkey creating a multi-public sphere and public sphere along with a true democratic process and actors (Fraser, 1992, pp. 109-143). These developments have not occurred without opposition. The Turkish state elites composed of the military and civil bureaucrats has traditionally been against the widening and differentiating of the public sphere and the increased level of activity by the ethnic and traditional religious groups in Turkey (Yavuz, 2000, pp. 21-44). Therefore, this elite group reacted negatively to the liberal based politics of the post-1980 period that led to the religious Welfare Party coming to power after the 1995 elections, and in February 28, 1997 they intervened. Given the military's indirect intrusion³ into the democratic process, the coalition government of the religious Welfare Party and the central right True Path Party resigned, and a left leaning coalition government came to power. At the time the military carried out its plan to bring down the government, the prominent military chiefs and generals declared that they had two common enemies:

³ The military moved against the coalition government of the Welfare Part and the True Path Party by means of the decisions made at the meeting of the National Security Council, which is dominated by military members. These decisions were fundamentally contrary to the political values traditionally held by these parties. A short time after the meeting, the coalition government resigned, and a new government made up of the center left Democratic Left Party and the center right Motherland Party formed. This maneuver of the military has been interpreted by most of students of Turkish politics as an indirect intervention.

religious groups and liberals. They went further claiming that the coalition partners were aiming to break down the political system. Since then, Turkish politics has, indeed, been under the influence of the military, and this influence is still seen in all aspects of public life. Regrettably, the military's influence over politics has led to abuses of power, the violation of human rights, and political corruption. The military based politics in Turkey since 1997 has also smothered the development of civil society and stifled the public sphere.

4. Liberalism as a Prelude of Civil Society

The Turkish case clearly indicates that liberty based on the competitive existence of differing individuals within society at large is necessary for the advancement of civil society. Similar to having competition in a free market among different economic enterprises, the development of civil society requires full freedom for citizens to think and act as they wish. As state monopolization of the market breaks down competition and as a result the fairness of economic life, so the monopolization of social life under the influence of an official ideology hinders the development of civil society. Since a state partiality destroys the equilibrium among different social groups and, accordingly, the notion of equity and justice, it follows, that the state should not discriminate among social groups. Rather it should be protective, as expressed by Hegel, by resolving conflicts and preventing abuses, injustices, and infringements.⁴

The Turkish case also indicates that the advancement of civil society is closely related to the function of and the role of the state. The governance of the state in accordance with the rule of law and its neutrality (its absence of an ideology or its functioning in a value-free way) is necessary for the advancement of a competitive social environment where social groups can freely compete. The state's direct role in economic life, i.e., in the production and allocation of resources brings about a monopolization of the market that renders it impossible for weak social groups to develop. It is clear that the withdrawal of the state from economic life, generally speaking, leads not only to a more productive and competitive society but also to the widening of property rights and to capital flowing to different sections of society.

⁴ It was Hegel who first drew attention to the protective role of the state in civil society. Hegel went further, accepting the state as a transandental authority that surrounds civil society and thus makes it invisible.

The examples of various nations, in particular developing nations like Turkey, indicate that whenever the state is heavily involved in economic production, an accumulation of huge profits and a heated struggle to acquire those profits ensues among the different rent-seeking groups. Social groups taking an active part in the struggle over resources accumulated by the state do not produce real economic value; rather they bring about grave economic, social, and ethical costs to the disfavor of others (Tullock, 1988). Consequently, these groups cannot genuinely be identified as civil society elements. Rather they become social parasites of state revenue. What the different social groups take produce large costs. The examples of ex-socialist countries that had a state apparatus dominating the entire political and economic arena also indicate the existence of similar consequences (Vorontsova & Filatov, 1997). In those cases, the aftermath was non-competition, non-efficiency, and a lack of production. In ex-socialist countries, strictly speaking, there existed a loosely definable society but nothing that could be called civil society. Civil society has been a product of capitalist democratic countries, thanks largely to their vibrant economic dynamics and social differentiation (Çaha, 2000).

The Turkish case, moreover, indicates that the advancement of civil society entails social preconditions such as differentiation and organization based on that. Societies that are structurally the platform for ethnic, religious, occupational, political, cultural, and economic differentiation are more conducive to producing social pluralism. However, in societies under the domination of only one doctrine based on religion or some ideology, no social elements can make progress under the aegis of civil society. Social differentiation not only produces a free social environment for social organizations, but it also paves the way for the enrichment of democratic values and institutions. In a centrally controlled society, in contrast, it becomes impossible for different political groups, parties, demands, and programs to gain any notice. As a sociological rule, social differentiation produces a more dynamic and heterogeneous society, which is necessary for the proliferation of civil society.⁵

Needed for the growth of civil society is freedom for social groups to develop autonomous organizations. In other words, all social groups

⁵ One of the backbones of Durkheimian sociology is the concept of organic solidarity indicating the interdependence of different elements on each other reciprocally in a self-dynamic procedure following the differentiation of social units.

should have the right to freely organize outside of the domain of the state. In fact, the definition of civil society by some scholars of political thought view it as comprised of social organizations such as those that have developed freely since the 1960s (Melucci, 1988). Based on this view we can say that organizations such as labor unions, associations, foundations, political parties, the media, and social groups that have sprung up are all different parts of an organized civil society. In a democratic society social groups undertake such functions as the politicization of the future generations, awakening social consciousness, diffusing the group culture, and putting pressure on the governing groups (Minkoff, 1997).

One should bear in mind, at this point, that some social organizations are not true elements of civil society. For a social group to be a true component of civil society, it must be established with the deliberate participation and will of its members. There are some organizations, such as tribal or ethnic groups, that cannot be identified as civil society elements since the members of these groups have by and large no freedom to participate in the decision-making process or leave these groups of their own free will. These kinds of groups are in fact hierarchical organizations and are not open to individualist initiative. A true civil society organization should be formed with the clear consent of its members. It is also the participation based on the free will of the members rather than the number of participants in the group that is the critical criterion that should be used in determining whether or not a group is a genuine element of civil society. In other words, if any social group forms as the direct outcome of compromise among a certain number of individuals who have come together of their own free will and who are flexible enough to participate in decision-making, this group can be considered a true element of civil society, regardless of whether it is modern or traditional in its outlook.⁶

Finally, for a social group to be a true component of civil society, it must be involved in putting pressure on the state. The ways by which social groups can influence the state include voting, lobbying, visiting leaders, petitioning government bodies, and carrying out protests, meetings, or strikes. Civil society groups should also be able to influence the prominent elites in order to defend the interests of their own members as well as to

⁶ Moving on from this point John Michael (1994) underlines the importance of “communities” as the source of “social identity.”

some extent the “common interest” or the common good.⁷ Civil society in this sense should be able to challenge all of the powers that create monopolies in social, political and economic life. In this way it serves to create social, economic and political differentiation and decentralization. Such a civil society would be possible only under the structure of a democratic state that is safely open to the impulses coming from its people.

Important to note is that there is almost a direct relationship between civil society and democracy. In other words, without a dynamic, differentiated, and participatory civil society, there is no democracy, and vice versa. To further clarify this point, I want to refer to a recent conceptualization of the aspects of modern democracy by Paul Q. Hirst (1996). He explains that modern democracies have a “democratic” aspect and a “demotic” aspect. The demotic involves the physical aspects of democracy while the democratic involves the social dynamics, in particular, those coming into existence through active social participation (Hirst, 1996, p. 102). It is clear that the democratic aspect of democratic governments can survive only by means of an active civil society.

Finally, in its relationship to the state, civil society helps put a stop to the misperception of the state as a transcendental and metaphysical entity. Along with the advancement of civil society, primarily in the West, the state has begun to be questioned, criticized, and even protested against. However, in those societies that have no strong civil society, the state might easily be perceived of as more than a physical and technical apparatus. In short, the state in a society with a strong civil society is likely to be considered an intermediary and instrumental institution, and this notion helps to guarantee the liberty and basic rights of individuals. One should remember at this point that human rights can be defended only in those societies that perceive of the state as an instrument for peace, security, and order. Those that perceive of the state as an abstract and metaphysical entity would not question or protest against the state in their demands for human rights.⁸

⁷ Since in reality there is no interest generalizable to each individual or group, except those such as security, peace, and order, “common interest” extending into these areas becomes problematic. The others are in fact, particular, rather than common (Barry, 1991).

⁸ For instance, John Locke (1970, pp. 154-182) accepts that individuals gain the right to resist when their state goes beyond basic functions such as protecting their lives, liberty, and property.

In conclusion, beyond the experiences of the Eastern and Western European societies, the Turkish experience, beginning from the last decades of the Ottoman Empire to the present, indicates that liberalism is the most important factor creating the social and political environment that supports the growth of civil society (Bernhard, 1993). Authoritarian politics and state controlled economic programs smother the development of social groups and hence of civil society. Also, considering the strong link between civil society and democracy, it makes sense to say that without a strong civil society, a democratic regime is unlikely to develop (Hirst, 1996). In the former socialist countries of Eastern Europe not only democracy was lacking, but so was civil society. The absence of civil society in those societies meant that the social base necessary to democracy was absent leading to a non-democratic society. It should be recalled that the revival of civil society in Eastern Europe brought about democratic regimes after the 1980s. Civil society as such helps to create a democratic public sphere and serves to bring about the autonomy, differentiation, and organization of social groups.

During the nineteenth century, Hegel and Marx viewed the role of civil society negatively seeing civil society as part of an environment of social insecurity and as a temporary institution. In other words, both saw civil society as a mediating institution needed in order to reach other ends than democracy. The end for Hegel was a transcendental and metaphysical state. For Marx the end was a stateless and classless communist society. Seeing civil society as the economic base of a capitalist mode of production was not suited to the ideas they held. However, the rich experience of humanity since these philosophers put forth their ideas has not justified their view of civil society. In fact, their view of it has gone out of fashion while the view that civil society is a precursor to or a strengthener of democracy that has gained greater respect and credibility.

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