



الجامعة الإسلامية العالمية ماليزيا
INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA
بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

CIVIL SOCIETY IN A WEAK STATE: THE CASE OF
BANGLADESH, 1971-2006

BY

KAZI SHAHDAT KABIR

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in
Human Sciences (Political Science)

Kulliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human
Sciences
International Islamic University
Malaysia

FEBRUARY 2009

ABSTRACT

The study examines the role of civil society in a weak state that is Bangladesh. Data has been collected from two main sources namely documents and interviews. This study assumes that firstly the type, nature and the distribution of power in the state determines the relationship between state and the civil society; secondly, civil society groups tend to take over the key functions of the state and emboldened by their success, the civil society groups, tend to deviate from their traditional activities and get involved in business and political activities; thirdly, that strong civil society groups in a weak state become intolerant towards their fellow groups, social values and the state and finally, challenged by increasing civil society activities, the state undertakes steps to regain control over the civil society. However, this research has examined the involvement of the Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs in Bangladesh. Larry Diamond and Edward Shills have agreed that the civil society organisations are distinct from other groups in the society at least in four basic respect which are: concern with public ends, voluntary and non-profit making, non-political and civil and tolerant. Two main NGOs in Bangladesh, Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) and *Proshika Manabik Unnyan Kendra* [*Proshika* Human Development Centre] are the focus of the study. The study has found that the NGOs claiming to be part of civil society organisations do not exhibit all the above four characteristics. Although NGOs work for public ends they go against the other indicators such as voluntary, non-profit making, non-political, civility and tolerance. Throughout the history of Bangladesh, the State has shown some reactions whenever the NGOs have gone beyond the traditional civil society concept.

" "()

" :

."()

APPROVAL PAGE

The thesis of Kazi Shahdat Kabir has been approved by the following:

Ishtiaq Hossain
Supervisor

Wahabuddin Ra'ees
Internal Examiner

Habibul Haque Khondker
External Examiner

Nasir Eldin Ibrahim Ahmed
Chairman

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degree at IIUM or other institutions.

Kazi Shahdat Kabir

Signature.....

Date.....

INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA

**DECLARATION OF COPYRIGHT AND
AFFIRMATION OF FAIR USE OF UNPUBLISHED
RESEARCH**

Copyright © 2009 by Kazi Shahdat Kabir. All rights reserved.

**CIVIL SOCIETY IN A WEAK STATE: THE CASE OF BANGLADESH,
1971-2006**

No part of this unpublished research may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without prior written permission of the copyright holder except as provided below.

1. Any material contained in or derived from this unpublished research may only be used by others in their writing with due acknowledgement.
2. IIUM or its library will have the right to make and transmit copies (print or electronic) for institutional and academic purposes.
3. The IIUM library will have the right to make, store in a retrieval system and supply copies of this unpublished research if requested by other universities and research libraries.

Affirmed by Kazi Shahdat Kabir.

.....
Signature

.....
Date

Dedicated to
my beloved parents late Prof. Kazi Md. Humayun Kabir,
Mrs. Marium Unnessa
and my late sister Nighat Yeasmeen Riza

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

All praises to be Allah (SWT), the Most Gracious and Most Merciful, for the completion of this work. I would like to express my utmost and profound gratitude to my learned supervisor Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ishtiaq Hossain for his guidance, valuable time, effort and encouragement that helped me in writing this dissertation. My heartfelt gratitude also goes to Prof. Dr. Syed Serajul Islam, Chair, Department of Political Science, Lakehead University, Canada, and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Garoot Sulieman Eissa for their sincere help, valuable suggestions and support. My sincere thanks are to Prof. Dr. Abdul Rashid Moten for his interest in my study and invaluable guidance despite his extremely busy schedules. I also gratefully acknowledge Dr. Wahabuddin Ra'ees, Head, Department of Political Science, for reading this thesis and his constant advice and support. I am very much thankful to Prof. Dr. El-fatih Abdullahi Abdel Salam, Dr. Md. Yousuf Ali and Dr. Mohd. Fuzi Omar for their assistance. My thanks are also due to Ms. Tazin and Mr. Latif, Ms. Al'a as well as Ms. Tahmina for editing this work.

I would like to express my gratitude and appreciation to Assoc. Prof. Dr. Hazizan Md. Noon, Dean, Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences (KIRKHS) and academic and administrative staff of the Kulliyah and particularly all lecturers in the Department of Political Science, KIRKHS, International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) for support, guidance and advice during my coursework and research. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the authorities of the IIUM for allowing me to study in this University.

I also thank my beloved parents Late Prof. Kazi Md. Humanyun Kabir and Mrs. Marium Unnessa whose prayers, encouragement and support guided me to the right path. My appreciation is also due to my loving wife Farzana Mitu, whose patience love and motivation enabled me to complete this work. Finally, my great appreciation goes to my beloved eldest son Kazi Ifad Rassad for his sacrifices and pain during my study.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	ii
Abstract in Arabic	iii
Approval page	iv
Declaration Page	v
Copyright Page.....	vi
Dedication Page	vii
Acknowledgements	viii
List of Tables	xii
List of Abbreviations	xiii

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
Background of the Study	1
Statement of the Problem	4
Objectives of the Study.....	5
Justification of the Study	6
Literature Review	6
Theoretical Framework.....	14
Relationship between State and NGOs.....	18
Method of Research.....	18
Data Collection	18
Chapters	19

CHAPTER TWO: BANGLADESH: A WEAK STATE- FACTORS AND SERVICES.....	21
Introduction	21
Bangladesh's Weak Political Institutions: A Fragile Democracy	23
Rule of Law	29
<i>Hartal</i> (General Strike).....	31
Political and Administrative Corruption.....	33
Bribery	36
Quality of Life and Security of the People	38
Judiciary.....	40
Abuse of Women's Rights.....	41
Improvement of Poverty Level.....	41
Public Health Services	43
Power Crisis.....	44
Conclusion	49

CHAPTER THREE: BRAC AND PROSHIKA: ACTIVITIES FOR PUBLIC ENDS	52
Introduction	52
Debate on NGOs' Role	53
BRAC and <i>Proshika</i> Programmes	54
BRAC.....	54
<i>Proshika</i>	56
Poverty Eradication Programme	57
BRAC.....	57
<i>Proshika</i>	60
BRAC & <i>Proshika</i> 's Programme for Ultra Poor	61
Education Programme	64
BRAC.....	64
<i>Proshika</i>	65
Public Health Programme.....	67
BRAC.....	67
<i>Proshika</i>	69
Social Development Programme	71
BRAC.....	71
<i>Proshika</i>	72
NGOs Activities: An Evaluation	73
Conclusion	78

CHAPTER FOUR: VOLUNTARY, NON-PROFIT MAKING AND NON-POLITICAL NATURE OF NGOS	80
Introduction.....	80
Involvement of NGOs in Commercial Activities	80
BRAC.....	80
<i>Proshika</i>	84
Explanation of NGOs Officials on Commercial Activities	85
NGOs and Their Political Activities	99
Democracy Awareness (Advocacy) Programmes.....	90
NGOs and the <i>Jamaat-E-Islami</i> Bangladesh (JIB).....	93
NGOs Involvement in Partisan Politics	98
NGOs Political and Business Involvement: Response from the Business	104
Conclusion	109

CHAPTER FIVE: NGOS' CIVILITY AND TOLERANCE	111
Introduction.....	111
BRAC & <i>Proshika</i> 's Relationship with Other NGOs.....	111
Relationship with the Existing Rural Power Structure	117
Issue of <i>Fatwa</i> and Reported Attack on NGOs.....	120
Response of <i>Ulama</i> to <i>Fatwa</i>	130
<i>Purdah</i> : Religious or Cultural.....	132
Conclusion	136

CHAPTER SIX: NGO ACTIVITIES: THE STATE RESPONSE	141
Introduction	141
Regulations on NGOs: A Brief History of Government-NGO	141
NGO Affairs Bureau.....	151
Government-NGO Cooperation	152
Complementary Role of Government-NGO	158
Government-NGO Consultative Council (GNCC).....	160
Government-NGO Tension	161
NGOs and Tax Policy	167
Conclusion	169
CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION	171
BIBLIOGRAPHY	177

LIST OF TABLES

<u>Table No.</u>		<u>Page No.</u>
1.	The Scale of NGOs' Microfinance (Microcredit) Activity	59
2.	Percentage Distribution of Coverage of Extreme Poor Households by <i>Proshika</i>	63
3.	Health Spending by NGOs Compared to Other Sources	71
4.	ADAB, 1975-2005	113
5.	<i>Fatwas</i> against NGOs in Bangladesh	124
6.	Attacks on NGOs' Facilities in Bangladesh	125

ABBREVIATIONS

ADAB	Association of Development Agencies in Bangladesh
ASA	Association of Social Advancement
ASK	<i>Ain O Shalish Kendra</i> (Legal and Mediation Centre)
AL	Awami League
ADCs	Area Development Centres
ADC	Area Development Centres
AMWAB	Association of Muslim Welfare Agencies in Bangladesh
APPC	Asia Pacific Philanthropy Consortium
AVAB	Association of Voluntary Agencies in Bangladesh
BRAC	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee
BNP	Bangladesh Nationalist Party
BIDS	Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies
BAKSAL	Bangladesh <i>Krishok Sramik</i> (Peasants Workers) Awami League
BPDB	Bangladesh Power Development Board
BRDB	Bangladesh Rural Development Board
BIWTA	Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority
BNWLA	Bangladesh National Women's Lawyers Association
BPS	BRAC Primary Schools
BAPS	BRAC Adolescent Primary Schools
BGMEA	Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association
CIRDAP	Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific
CPS	Centre for Policy Studies
CCIFB	France- Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce & Industry
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CAS	Country Assistance Strategy
CrPC	Criminal Procedure Code
CFPR-TUP	Challenging the Frontiers Reduction- Targeting the Ultra Poor
CSO	Civil Society Organisations
DESA	Dhaka Electric Supply Authority
DFID	Department for International Development
DBH	Delta BRAC Housing Finance Corporation Ltd.
EPO	Emergency Power Ordinance
EC	Election Commissioner
EHC	Essential Health Care
EC	European Community
FNB	Nongovernmental Organisations in Bangladesh
FBCCI	Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industries
FEMA	Fair Election Monitoring Alliance
GNCC	Government (GO)-NGO Consultative Council
HEP	Health Education Programme
IFC	International Finance Corporation
IDPAA	Institute for Development Policy Analysis and Advocacy
IDL	Islamic Democratic League

IOJ	<i>Islami Okkoya Jote</i> (Islami United Alliance)
IMEC	Impact Monitoring and Evaluation Cell
IAVE	International Association for Volunteer Effort
JIB	<i>Jama'at-e-Islami</i> Bangladesh
JP	<i>Jatiya</i> (National) Party
LGRD	Local Government and Rural Development
NGOs	Non- governmental Organisations
NED	National Endowment for Democracy
NOVIB	Netherlands Organisation for International Development Corporation
NGOAB	NGO Affairs Bureau
NBR	National Board of Revenue
NFPE	Non-formal Primary Education
OTEP	Oral Therapy Extension Programme
ORT	Oral Dehydration Therapy
ODA	Official Development Agency
PVDO	Private Voluntary Development Organisation
PKSF	<i>Palli Karma Shahayak Foundation</i> [Rural Job Assistance Foundation]
PVO	Private voluntary organisations
PCD	Policy Communication Department
PPP	Purchasing Power parity
REB	Rural Electrification Board
RNGOs	Religious Non-Governmental Organisations
SEBA	Society for Economic and Basic Administration
STUP	Targeted Ultra-Poor
SWTP	Surface Water Treatment Plant
TI	Transparency International
TIB	Transparency International Bangladesh
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
UAC	United Actions Council
UHT	Ultra Heat Temperature
UEP	Universal Education Programme
VO	Village Organisations
VGD	Vulnerable Group Development
WFP	World Food Programme
WTO	World Trade Organisation

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

For centuries, the principle of sovereignty has guaranteed the state monopoly of power. Today, however, more than ever, civil society is increasingly challenging the government's legitimacy to speak on behalf of the people, frequently acting as direct channels of development aid to the people by-passing government agencies.¹ This is considered by some international aid agencies as vital to the development of democracy.²

The members of civil society have been very active in Bangladesh even before its emergence as an independent state in 1971. For example, civil society groups organised resistance in the cultural sphere in the form of the 'language movement' in the 1950s, which asserted the Bengali language against Urdu which was imposed by the West Pakistani leadership. After that it took the form of 'nationalist civil society' rooted in the democratic struggle for autonomy and eventually won independence for

¹It has been claimed that NGOs deliver more official development assistance than the entire UN system. In many countries NGOs provide essential community services that faltering governments can no longer provide. For an excellent discussion on NGOs' role see Jessica Mathews, "Power Shift," *Foreign Affairs* (January/February, 1997): 50-56.

² It has been argued that a vibrant and robust civil society and a successful democracy go hand in hand. Therefore, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), the World Bank has made civil society assistance a programmatic priority. For details see the following: Alison Van Rooy (ed.), *Civil society and the aid industry* (London: Earthscan, 1998), Kevin Quigley, *For democracy's sake: Foundations and democratic assistance in central Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997); Thomas Carothers, *Aiding democracy abroad: The learning curve* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1999); and Thomas Carothers and Marina Ottoway, "The burgeoning World of civil society aid," in Carothers and Ottoway (eds.), *Funding virtue: Civil society and democracy aid* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2002). Ivelin Sardamov however, points out that the correlation between civil society and democracy may be spurious because both phenomena are shaped by deeper society processes related to modernisation as well as individuals. Sardamov argues that in the absence of such profound changes, the development or promotion of an active civil society will not necessarily result in democratisation and democratic consolidation. For details, see Ivelin Sardamov, "Civil society and the limits of democratic assistance," *Government and Opposition*, vol. 40, no. 3, (Summer, 2005): 379-402.

the country. Even when General Ayub Khan's martial law government in 1958 banned all political parties in former East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), informal political groups and their secondary leaders were active underground. Thus, M. Rashiduzzaman says, "there is always the 'other Bangladesh' behind the official regimes and bureaucracy."³

The role of civil society organisations changed overtime as a relatively diverse range of citizen groups and interests gradually became part of a narrower organised political movement under Awami League (AL) the leading political party in East Pakistan.⁴ After Bangladesh became independent in 1971, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was able to use AL, at least in part, to "establish state control over society." When he set up a one party state in 1975, the traditional civil society groups such as the trade unions, students and youth fronts, teachers' associations, lawyers' associations as well as many other professional groups were co-opted to become part of AL's official organisations.⁵ During the two military regimes [led by Lt. General Ziaur Rahman and Lt. General Hussain Muhammad Ershad] which followed the 1975 bloody coup, informal party activities were officially disallowed. But, the two military regimes did not face any problems getting enough civilian leaders as ministers or other civil positions in order to legitimise their rule. Therefore, other civil society movements

³ M. Rashiduzzaman, "The civil society and the NGOs in Bangladesh: need for a realistic paradigm?" *Holiday* (Bangladesh Weekly), 10 November 1998.

⁴ 'Awami' means people. The Awami League won majority seats in the Pakistan Parliamentary elections held in December 1970. Following the military crack down in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) in March 1971, AL led the independence movement.

⁵ For instance, Bangladesh *Muktijoddha Sangsad* (Bangladesh Freedom Fighters' Association), Bangladesh Awami *Ainjibi Parishad* (Bangladesh Awami Lawyers' Association), Bangladesh Medical Association etc. are known to be pro-Awami League organisations. Similarly, Bangladesh *Jatiyatabadi Muktijoddha Sangsad* (Bangladesh Nationalist Freedom Fighters' Association), Bangladesh *Jatiyatabadi Ainjibi Parishad* (Bangladesh Nationalists Lawyers' Association), Bangladesh *Jatiyatabadi* Medical Association (Bangladesh Nationalists Medical Association) etc. came to be identified as pro-Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) organisations. BNP was formed by General Zia in 1979, while he was in power followed by 1975 military coup. Currently the party is led by his wife (widow) Begum Khaleda Zia. These organisations serve their political mentors and help to legitimise the governments led by the AL and the BNP.

were marginalised during that period and NGOs emerged in the name of poverty alleviation, democratic awareness programme, civil rights and gender discrimination. As a result democracy thrived.

Importance of NGOs as part of civil society organisations are mainly due to three reasons: first, contemporary civil societies' involvement in party politics since the mid-1970s; second, the marginalised position of the other civil society organisations under the rule of the post-1975 military regimes; and finally, the recognition of NGOs as a development partner by the World Bank and other international aid donors during the 1980s. As a result donor countries and agencies diverted a significant amount of foreign aid through NGOs into Third World countries including Bangladesh.

However, it is necessary to look at the recent debates over the political role of civil society as well as civil and uncivil society in Bangladesh. In 2003, a debate started in Bangladesh over the question of whether civil society should replace the present political parties or not. The debate started when Dr. Badrudduza Chowdhury, a former President of the Republic raised the issue. During his address to a group of civil society members on November 13, 2003, he emphasized the need for a better government for the country. Secretaries Generals of the two main opposition parties, Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and AL opposed Dr. Badrudduza's view. They mentioned that 'civil society can not be alternative to political party.'⁶

Even a Bangladeshi citizen residing in the United States commented in a newspaper that the very name civil society has a negative connotation and is very derogatory. He questioned why were civil society members considered as the only civil, educated, intelligent, aristocrat brand and well-bred people of Bangladesh.

⁶ The *Daily Star* (Bangladesh Daily), December 7, 2003.

According to him, “this name is derogatory, denigrating and demeaning for the rest of the nation. So this type of name should be disbanded.”⁷ Habibul Haque Khondker has taken the argument saying that uncivil society is a force which is outside of the authority of the state which threatens civil society. The state apparatus of Bangladesh is at risk of being captured by the forces of uncivil society. He also said that a band of criminals are not just uncivil, they are anti-social. Civil society minimally requires an element of civility in its definition. According to Habib the main purpose of civil society is to fight for the rehabilitation of norms of decency and fairness and it is towards that goal people who value these norms must come and take part in public deliberations. The role of reasoned discussion and debate in democracy cannot be overestimated. In that sense, civil society becomes a prerequisite for democracy.⁸

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The purpose of this study is to examine the role of NGOs in a weak state that is Bangladesh. Among the civil society institutions and organisations in Bangladesh, NGOs are most visible and have been playing an important role in the society. The focus of this study would be *Proshika Manobik Unnayan Kendra (Proshika Centre for Human Development)*⁹ and Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC). These two NGOs are leading competing federations (associations) of NGOs in Bangladesh.¹⁰

⁷ *The Daily Star* (Bangladesh Daily), vol. 6, no. 2, January 19, 2007.

⁸ Habibul Haque Khondker, “Civil and uncivil society in Bangladesh,” *The Daily Star* (Bangladesh Daily), April 21, 2006.

⁹ *Proshika* is a combination of the initials of three Bengali words *Proshikhayan* (training), *Shikkha* (learning) and *Karma* (action). The Name of the NGO is *Proshika Manabik Unnayan Kendra* and that means *Proshika* Centre for Human Development. Hereafter, *Proshika* is used throughout the thesis.

¹⁰ It is necessary to mention that *Proshika* and BRAC are the two leading as well as the most influential NGOs in Bangladesh since they have been leading two federations of NGOs in Bangladesh, namely Association of Development Agencies in Bangladesh (ADAB) and Federation of NGOs in Bangladesh

Given the important role played by NGOs in Bangladesh, it is necessary to examine their performance in the weak state. This study, therefore, attempts to answer the following questions: One, do these NGOs base their activities upon voluntary participation? Two, are the NGOs involved in business or other profit making activities? Three, are the activities of the above NGOs concerned with public ends? Four, are the NGOs in Bangladesh involved in political activities? Five, do these NGOs display the civility and tolerance in their dealings with fellow NGOs, society and the state in general? Six, how has the government of Bangladesh responded to the activities of the NGOs?

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of this study are:

- 1) To analyse and find out the relationship between a weak state and NGOs.
- 2) To analyse NGOs in the line of civil society concept.
- 3) To provide guidelines for better performance of NGOs in general.
- 4) To suggest potential areas for government-NGO collaboration considered necessary to strengthen the state in Bangladesh.¹¹

(FNB). ADAB was the only recognised body of NGOs until the formation of the FNB. The FNB was formed in 2001 following the general election that resulted in BNP-led coalition government to power.

¹¹ In Bangladesh the GO-NGO Consultative Council (GNCC) was formed in 1995 in order to provide a regular forum for open dialogue between the government and NGOs to increase mutual understanding and cooperation. GNCC has been formed with representatives from the government, NGOs and the other civil society groups. GNCC would work as an advisory council to the government towards resolving any issues arising out of government-NGO interaction and collaboration. See Mustafa K. Mujeri (and others), *Government-NGO cooperation for poverty alleviation: capacity building to alleviate poverty under economic advancement*, (Dhaka: Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific CIRDAP, 2000), 53.

JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

- 1) NGOs have been playing a significant role in the social, economic and political development of Bangladesh. This fact alone justifies the need to analyse and understand the role of NGOs in Bangladesh.
- 2) There are works focusing on the Grameen Bank, *Proshika*, BRAC and other NGOs in Bangladesh. But most of these works have dealt with impact analysis only. This study therefore examines the features of NGOs which are voluntarism, non-political, non-profit making, etc and their applicability to NGOs in Bangladesh.
- 3) This study examines in-depth two of the major NGOs in Bangladesh to understand their power-base.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The concept of civil society has been discussed extensively. Terms like “associationalism” and “associational democracy” have been used synonymously with civil society. The concept of civil society through associationalism has been popularised by a number of scholars like Hirst, Cohen and Rogers, Wright and Schmitter. They maintain that in addition to the state and the economy, a third sphere of associationalism is a vital aspect of democratic societies.¹² The World Bank has emphasised close cooperation between the government and NGOs in following way:

Recent research has convincingly demonstrated that a country’s level and dynamism of development are closely correlated with the quality and richness of its associational life. Pluralism is also important for social cohesion and can be encouraged by creating an environment where these civil society groupings (i.e. all those organizations that are

¹² See Joshua Cohen and J. Rogers, “Secondary associations and democratic governance,” in *Associations and democracy*, edited by Eric O. Wright (London: Verso, 1995); Paul Hirst, *Associative democracy: new forms of economic and social governance*, (Cambridge: Policy Press, 1994); Philippe Schmitter, “Neo-corporatism and the State,” in W. Grant ed. *The political economy of corporatism*, (London: Macmillan, 1985).

neither part of government, nor part of business) can be involved in pursuing the goals of national development.¹³

It is necessary to mention that not all types of associations are under the category of civil society, many associations are, in fact, part of interest groups, due to their different aims and objectives from civil society. The social, cultural, professional and religious associations in civil society are believed to provide a check on the power of the state.

Relations between the state and civil society have also been extensively discussed by scholars. According to Sarah C. White, NGOs working with the state offer an opportunity to expand the scope of their operations, broaden their influence and participate in the formulation of national development agenda. The state, on the other hand, may view collaborating with NGOs as a chance to gain some reflected moral glory, retrieve a hold on donor funds, neutralize potential opposition and achieve more efficient and cost effective implementation of policy.¹⁴ Therefore, Bishwapriya Sanyal opines that “to be effective, NGOs must abandon their autonomy fetish and begin to work closely with dominant institutions, such as the state, market institutions, political parties and so on.”¹⁵ A similar view is provided by Jude L. Fernando and Alan W. Heston who argue that NGOs defined in opposition to the state, and pro-profit organisation is not always correct. NGOs function within the boundaries set by the state and are subjected to various laws and regulations. Moreover, there is mention of increasing collaboration between governments and

¹³ World Bank, *Pursuing common goals: strengthening relations between government and NGOs in Bangladesh*, (Dhaka: University Press Ltd. 1996), cited in Sarah White, *Civil Society and the Aid Industry ...*, 309.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 309.

¹⁵ Bishwapriya Sanyal, “NGOs’ self-defeating quest for autonomy,” *The annals of the American academy of political and social science*, vol. 554 (1997): 31.

NGOs. In some cases, NGOs have openly supported political parties and have even attempted to organise their own political parties and enter competitive politics.¹⁶

Non-governmental organisations are now considered heavyweight actors in the global political arena.¹⁷ For liberals, plurality of associations is both a means of reconciling private and public interests, as well as a guarantee against unmitigated exercise of power by the state.¹⁸ In addition to the above-mentioned scholars (Roger Charton and Roy May, Ann Marie Clark as well as Craig Warstein), political involvement of NGOs has also been acknowledged by Shelley Feldman, Thomas Carothers and others. An active and diverse civil society often does play a valuable role in helping advance democracy.¹⁹ In the case of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Roberto Belloni opines, “NGOs as key agents of political and economic changes, are capable of mobilising pressure on government public policy, disseminating democratic values, and efficiently providing much-needed public services.”²⁰ Similarly, Feldman states that NGOs have also played a key role in the struggle for democracy by providing a venue for discussion and debate around issues of poverty, equality, literacy, access to credit and more representative government.²¹ For example, in the 1996 Bangladesh election, the Association of Development Agencies in Bangladesh (ADAB) coordinated a Democracy Awareness Education Programme through which 15,000

¹⁶ Jude L. Fernando and Alan W. Heston, “NGOs between States, markets and civil society,” *The annals of the American academy of political and social science*, vol. 554, (1997): 11.

¹⁷ Roger Charton and Roy May, “NGOs, politics, projects and probity: a policy implementation perspective,” *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 16, no. 2, (1995): 237-255; Ann Marie Clark, “Non-governmental organisations and their influence on international society,” *Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 48, no. 2 (Winter 1995): 507-522; Craig Warstein, *Reshaping World politics: NGOs, the internet and global civil society* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2001).

¹⁸ Neera Chandhoke, *State and civil society: exploration in political theory* (New Delhi: Sage Publication, 1999), 39.

¹⁹ Thomas Carothers, “Civil society” *Foreign Policy*, vol. 18, (winter 1991).

²⁰ Roberto Belloni, “Civil society and peace building in Bosnia and Herzegovina,” *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 38, no. 2, (2001): 164.

²¹ Shelley Feldman, 47.

trainers administered awareness raising workshops across the whole country, contributing to an impressive voter turnout of 74 percent.²²

In some cases, NGOs seem to have come into direct conflict with the state, particularly in Indonesia, Mexico, post-communist states like Ukraine, Lithuania, Latvia and some African countries such as Sudan and Kenya.²³ In Sudan NGOs are accused by the Interior Minister of Sudan, Abdel Rahim Hussein, and Humanitarian Affairs Minister Ibrahim Mahmoud Hamid of helping the rebels in Darfur. He told a press conference that some NGOs operating in the Darfur region “used humanitarian operations as a cover for carrying out a hidden agenda and proved to have supported the rebellion in the past period.”²⁴ In order to restrict the activities of various NGOs working in Darfur ‘The Organisation of Humanitarian and Voluntary Work Bill 2006’ was passed by the National Assembly of Sudan on 20 February. The law imposes restrictions on the work of NGOs operating in Sudan, and grants discretionary regulatory power to the government over the operations of NGOs. International Centre for Not-for-Profit reports:

Following the enactment of the law, the Humanitarian Aid Commission, the Government agency which oversees all humanitarian organisations in Sudan, reportedly issued a formal notice to the directors of the Sudan Social Development Organisation ordering the suspension of all its activities within west Darfur province.²⁵

²² Darcy Ashman, “The democracy awareness education program of the Association of Development Agencies in Bangladesh (ADAB),” *Discourse: A Journal of Policy Studies*, Dhaka: Institute for Development Policy Analysis and Advocacy (IDPAA), *Proshika*. (1997).

²³ See Margot Cohen, “New zeal: NGOs rally around opposition leader Megawati,” *Far Eastern Economic Review*, vol. 159, no. 28, 1996, 19-20; Stepha N. Ndegwa, “Civil society and political change in Africa: The case of Non-Governmental Organisations in Kenya,” *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*, vol. 35, no. 1-2, (1994): 19-36. Allert P. Van Den Ham, “Development cooperation and human rights: Indonesian-Dutch aid controversy,” *Asian Survey*, vol. 33, no. 5, (1993): 531-39.

²⁴ < http://www.news24.com/News24/Africa/News/0..2-11-1447_1528112.00.html > (accessed 9 July, 2006).

²⁵ < <http://www.icnl.org/knowledge/news/2006/03-14.htm> > (accessed 1 August, 2006).

This points to a debate that revolves around the question of regulation and supervision of NGOs by the state. Some maintain that the state ought to regulate NGO activities in order to prevent corruption. There is also an acknowledgement of the fact that the state should maintain optimal relationship with NGOs.²⁶

Schisms between religious forces (in some cases Islamic political parties) and NGOs in Bangladesh have been highlighted by Shelley Feldman,²⁷ Tania Amir, Meghna Guhathakurta, M. Rashiduzzaman, Mazurul Mannan, Elora Shehabuddin, Marie-Aimee Lucas and Harsh Kapoor. Feldman describes the transformation of NGOs in Bangladesh as a struggle between NGOs and the conservative religious parties. Tania Amir sees the activities of NGOs as the process of empowerment of women, thereby challenging the power-base of the *ulama* (religious scholars) and *mahajan* (loan-shark) classes in the rural areas in Bangladesh. She points out that the clergy and the *mahajan* class fought back with systematic violence against women, subjecting them to inhuman, cruel and degrading treatment in the name of Islam by way of '*shalish*.'²⁸ Feldman calls for unity among the enlightened force- national and International- to combat the 'dark forces' of political religious fundamentalists.

²⁶ Eve Sandberg, *The changing politics of Non-Governmental Organizations and African States*, (Westport, CT and London: Praeger, 1996). For details see Sarah White.

²⁷ Shelley Feldman, "NGOs and civil society: (Un)stated contradiction," ANNALS, AAPSS, Vol. 554, November 1997; Tania Amir, "Violence against women and children as tools of systematic political persecution," <www.albd.org/convention/cnt/paper.htm> (accessed 20 May, 2004). Meghna Guhathakurta, "Religion, Politics and Women: The Bangladesh Scenario," <<http://www.meghbarta.org/2002/august/gender.html>> (accessed 13 April 2004); M. Rashiduzzaman, "The dichotomy of Islam and development: NGOs, women's development and *fatawa* in Bangladesh," *Contemporary South Asia*, vol. 6. no. 1, (1997); also see M. Rashiduzzaman, "The liberals and the religious right in Bangladesh," *Asian Survey*, vol. 34, no. 11, (November 1994). Manzurul Mannan, "Islam, gender and conflict models: NGOs and the discursive process," <<http://www.bath.ac.uk/cds/ends-papers-pdfs/mannan.pdf>> accessed 6 January 2004; Elora Shehabuddin, "Beware the bed of fire: gender, democracy and the Jama'at-e-Islami in Bangladesh," *Journal of Women's History*, vol. 10 no. 4 (winter, 1999); Also see her article "Gender and the politics of *fatwas* in Bangladesh," in *Eye to Eye: Women Practicing Development Across Cultures*, edited by Susan Perry & Celeste Schenck (UK London: Zed Books Ltd., 2001); Marie-Aimee Helie Lucas and Harsh Kapoor, *Fatwas against women in Bangladesh*, (Pakistan: Women Living Under Muslim Laws, 1996).

²⁸ Traditional village arbitration 'court' conducted by village leaders in some rural areas in Bangladesh.