

Civil society in China: Concepts, classifications and institutional environments

Yu Keping

This paper aims to compare and discern notions such as civil society, the Third Sector, institutional environments, civil society organisations (CSOs), non-governmental organisations, non-profit organisations, intermediary agencies, mass organisations, social groups and people's organisations and so on. It brings forward suggestions on the categorisations of China's civil society organisations viewed from two distinct angles: that of the academic and the administrative. In particular, it analyses the main characteristics of existing institutional environments in China's civil society. These are essentially embodied in state support in macro-environments and constraints imposed on micro-environments, as well as in registrations under state or provincial supervision¹ and government-Party co-administration, co-administration and plural command², government legislation and Party policies, institutional redundancy and inadequacy, and finally, in the coexistence of actual space and institutional space.

Keywords: China's civil society, civil society organisation, institutional environment

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¹ According to the article, CSOs are registered under different administrative organs according to their size. For instance, a national CSO would be under state supervision while a regional CSO could be under a provincial supervision. (source: http://www.usc.cuhk.edu.hk/wk_wzdetails.asp?id=5250)

² As a result of co-administration, CSOs are under the control of different administrative organs or departments.

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