

## **The concept of civil society in modern Indian political thought: appropriation and reconceptualisation of a Western liberal concept**

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### **CV:**

Mario López Areu is a Professor in the Department of International Relations at Universidad Pontificia de Comillas in Madrid. He has been a Visiting Fellow at the Centre for Comparative Politics and Political Theory at Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi and the Nepä School of Social Sciences and Humanities in Kathmandu.

Some of his relevant publications include: *El pensamiento politico indio moderno: un estudio conceptual* (forthcoming), “Historiographic reception and approaches to political thought in contemporary India” (2018) and “Legality and legitimacy in the construction of the Indian nation (2014).

### **Paper proposal:**

In modern Western political thought, the concept of civil society develops within the historical context of the European Absolutist State. Faced with the presence of an omnipresent sovereign, civil society aims to limit that state power and open up a space for individual liberty.

The historical context for the development of the concept of civil society in modern India was very different. Faced with the absence of stable state sovereignty, religion comes to be the guarantor of the social and economic order through the Hindu caste system.

Taking that differing historical reality as our starting point, this paper aims to examine the development of the concept of civil society in modern Indian political thought. To do so, we will examine the reception of the Western concept in India and its reconceptualisation on the basis of a localised understanding of how to harmonise the principles of civility and individual liberty. For this purpose we will examine the use of the concept in the writings of four key architects of Indian political modernity: Rabindranath Tagore, Mohandas K. Gandhi, Bhimrao R. Ambedkar and Jawaharlal Nehru.