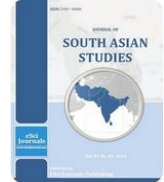




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THE ROLE OF NGOS IN THE SOCIO-POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT OF TAJIKISTAN AND KYRGYZSTAN: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The fall of USSR has brought tremendous changes both at global and regional level. We have seen the emergence of five Central Asian independent states. The shift from closed societies to open democratic process has initiated the democratization process invited different players besides state to play their role in the socio-political development of these countries. Under such environment the emergence of NGOs became possible; however, their pace of development within and across the region is different from one state to another state. While some states have achieved political success, others have done fairly well on the economic front. Except in Kyrgyzstan's case, the leaders of Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan have strongly resisted political change and instead they have adopted internal political mechanisms with varying style to stay in power. Kyrgyzstan to a large extent affirming the path of democratization and promotion of basic human rights as national development priorities provided a space for NGOs to emerge. The most recent events in this country have revealed an integral political aspect of the role NGOs play as mediators and active participants in the process, involving meetings and negotiations at the highest levels. Kyrgyz NGOs, regardless of the particular field of their respective activities, have realized that even local problems in society cannot be addressed in the absence of changes in the legal, social, economic and political environments. In this regard, the present study is an attempt to examine the role NGOs in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan and to access their contribution in terms of civil society promotion, human rights and election on comparative basis.

Keywords: Civil society, Communal civil society, Democratization, Development, Kyrgyzstan, NGOs, Tajikistan.

INTRODUCTION

By the end of cold war the paradigm shift that took place in world politics is often treated as the triumphant of western liberal democracy. The dominant discourse that stands witness to this phenomenon was observed in the scholarships of Denial Bell and Francis Fukuyama. Francis Fukuyama pronounced and linked it with the third wave of democracy swept across more than two dozen countries in the Eurasian continent simultaneously paved the way for the more or less democratic states (Huntington, 1991).¹ And for others it led to the end of ideological confrontation gave further impetus to the emergence of global civil society (Kalder, 2003). The shift was followed by the democratization process engulfed the whole Eastern Europe and Central Asia. What we have witnessed is not merely the death of

cold war; rather it was the universalization of western values epitomized in the form of liberal democracy and capitalism (Howell & Pearce, 2001). Civil Society, which forms its backbone gained prominence as a political force in the context of fundamental geopolitical and economic changes and in the wake of numerous transitions all over the world from authoritarian and Communist regimes to democracy. Thus it was recognized that civil society is an indispensable element of the development and consolidation of democracy. Most of the western scholars have credited Civil Society for having played a crucial role in the democratization process that ousted the Communist and authoritarianism regimes of Eastern Europe and Central Asia (Chulia, 2006). Since the time of independence, both Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan have experienced diverse civil society groups, opposition political parties and independent media institutions. Both the countries

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witnessed comparatively active civil society organizations strongly connected to transnational civic networks able to shape domestic policies (Ekiert & Foa, 2011; Ekiert & Martin, 2012). Over the period of time, NGOs have gained some maturity in their role performance, playing an important role in many fields such as human rights protection, promotion of democracy and social development. In recent years, their role is extending to police reforms, investigating crimes and lobbying the legislature for stricter punishment for kidnapping of women seems appreciable (BTI 2014: Kyrgyzstan Country Report, 2014). At the same time, though not at equal rate in both the countries it has witnessed, that NGOs are trying to make demands on the state improving its social organization and functional side by holding state officials accountable. Secondly, Specific dimensions of civil society for instance richness, organizational density, mobilizational capacity and diversity exhibit different levels of development and role may leave a considerable impact on the countries democratic process and accordingly improve the quality of democracies. The present paper will analyze and illustrate the role of NGOs in both the states taking their comparative advantages and disadvantage into account. The paper is based on one and half month field work plus primary and secondary sources.

WHY COMPARISON?

First is the presence in each country of a multitude of active NGOs all promoting democracy. Second, their geographical locations allow an investigation of the geopolitical aspect of the problem. Finally, both the countries have experienced major political upheavals since independence, Tajikistan in the form of civil war and Kyrgyzstan's Tulip revolution. Despite these commonalities, they differ at various points for instance; Tajikistan is considered settled society while Kyrgyzstan is nomadic. Both the countries offer varying levels of economic development and state of human rights. The weak economy of Kyrgyzstan, following independence compelled the Kyrgyz to engage in the global public relation campaign and to seek out cheap signals of commitment to human rights. In contrast, the tajiks enjoyed significant financial support from the Russians until 1998, which freed them from the need to seek out cheap signals of commitment to human rights until the latter decade (Smith-Cannoy, 2012). The researcher selected some important indicators from where it seems reasonable enough to assess the impact

of NGOs they left in the socio-political discourse of the society over a period of more than two decades. Comparison has been made in these indicators: (i) Changing role of traditional communal societies; (ii) Process of civil Society building in post-independent Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan; (iii) Civil Society and the Donor Community in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan; (iv) Leadership or personality factor; (v) Women empowerment; (vi) Diffusion of NGOs.

COMPARING THE STATUS OF COMMUNAL TRADITIONAL SOCIETY IN POST-INDEPENDENT TAJIKISTAN AND KYRGYZSTAN

By the end of the 2010 it was understood that the civil society had achieved a desirable progress in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Both the countries had achieved some progress in the public sphere, their composition and organization, its interaction with other institutional actors and actors of the polity leaving a measurable impact over states domestic governance. Currently, NGOs in Kyrgyzstan are operating more freely and the country's overall democracy ratings have improved since the violent overthrow of President Kurmanbek Bakiyev in 2010. On the other hand, Tajikistan has also witnessed some improvement as far as the lobbying capacities and organizational level of civil society groups are concerned. In Tajikistan, the Ministry of Justice (MoJ), reported that by the end of October 2012, the ministry has registered more than 2,600 public associations in the country, an increase of approximately one hundred since the end of 2011 (CSO Sustainability, 2012). However, in case of Tajikistan, in the aftermath of a large-scale military operation against the secessionist forces in the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Province last year, civil society and media has been kept under strict vigilance (Habdank-Kořaczkowski, 2013). Comparisons of the state of civil society in post-Communist Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, one can deduce and find both similarities and dissimilarities in the nature, composition and role of civil society. While comparing the emergence and functions of NGOs in both the countries one cannot brush aside the history and other social practices. As traditions, social practices and history itself were increasingly seen to determine the behaviour of individuals and organizations in the present (Buxton, 2009).

It has also been observed that the customs, social patterns and history of these two countries were increasingly considered to influence the conduct of

individuals and formations of the people running and operating NGOs sector (Buxton, 2009). Indeed the fact of the matter is that NGOs belong to the post-independence era and it can be argued that they are developing new grounds as far as their role in the economic or political growth in the region is concerned. Nevertheless, the character of traditional communal groups and networks had transformed to a great extent owing to the adoption of the constitution based on civic order in post-independent Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan (Giffen, Earle & Buxton, 2005). The need for calling for their historical legacies into account will facilitate us to explain and understand the contemporary events of NGOs. The roots of many conflicts and similarities between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan can be traced back in their history, traditions and social practices, a contrast between the settled and nomadic societies.

From the nomadic Turkmen to the sedimentary Tajikis perceptions of territorial, family/clan ties and ruler ship varied. This Communal understanding of civic society, which stresses the bridging, bonding and linkages of organizations and ties based on household and clan ties and friendship connections that enable the provisions of goods and services in the material as well as in the emotional backing. This diverse and complex nature of central Asian society makes it difficult, to do more than generalize about the political culture in the region prior to the Soviet era (Tismaneanu, 2012).

By and large it has observed that in traditionally nomadic communities, family-based bands are regulating relations with the external world providing a guarantee of physical protection. Likewise, in the pre-Soviet period these communal societies were based on the local, Mahalla and clan level serving societies at various terminals. Traditional social organizations have remained through the Soviet rule and are thought to be the foundation for whatever form of citizen collective action given the entanglement with daily animation. In Central Asian states religion has always the driving force used to act as a social bond in communal civil society and perhaps its revival in post-independent Kyrgyzstan will continue to play a fundamental role in the development of civil society. There has been a recent shift of international donor community channeling INGOs to make partnerships with these mahallas in central Asia (Anheier & Stefan, 2009). To regenerate the traditional communal societies, the Khujand Civil Society Support Center has formulated a three month program

on "Development of Volunteers movement in Soghd Region". Twenty-five volunteers were trained and received skills at Counterpart's International support center. Its purpose was to develop civic sense promotion among the people (Civil Society Program, 2001).

After independence in both the countries donors have engaged these traditional communal societies in the implementation of various projects particularly at rural level. For example, in Tajikistan the Avlod (clan) is a traditional community institution regulating relationships among community members who were united by kinship bonds. They were protecting the interests of its community members and thereby led to their welfare. It can be argued that communal civil society existed in Tajikistan for centuries, resisting full state capture during the Soviet epoch. These trust and solidarity networks are mainly built around kinship ties for mutual interests, providing mutual aid and moral support. A communal civil society founded on kinship has been traditionally strengthened by links based on proximity (Yusuff, Rustam & Natalya, 2007). Once the NGO community landed in Tajikistan they seek their service while facing inaccessible rural society of the state. In order to articulate the local needs of the people, they are being strengthened in their advocacy skills, training and capacity building. The United Nations (UN), World Bank, USAID and Aga Khan Foundation begun to look for novel ways to collaborate with Tajikistan's often isolated, miserable and desperately ignored rural societies through them. The two most widespread community- established organizations in Tajikistan are Village Organizations (VOs) at the village level and Jamoat Resource Centers (JRCs) at the Jamoat level, established by Aga Khan Foundation and UNDP respectively after 1997. Significantly the leaders of these arrangements are not only technical managers for MSDSP funded projects, they are also playing a broader role in the community development similar to that of traditional aksakals and mahalla leaders. Presidents of Village level Organization helping the country to maintain community cohesion and resolve local conflicts. The VO leadership was frequently called upon to mediate in family crises and disputes between neighbors. The UNDP's (United Nations Development program) Reconstruction, Rehabilitation and Development Program (RRDP) became actively involved in supporting the latter through jamoat Development Committees (JDC). Its determination is good

governance and participatory development at local level (Human Development in Tajikistan, 2007).

Kyrgyzstan has been having nomadic tinge often dictated by the seasons and the search for pastures for their horses and sheep. Keeping this in mind, one cannot ignore the historical imprints it left over the formation of civil society in the country. A similar kind of approach was adopted here in Kyrgyzstan by the donors in order to reach out to the rural communities of the country. While preparing community based programs in Kyrgyzstan, INTRAC engaged local community development advisors in Kyrgyzstan. There are also certain traditional patterns of association that have become really popular with donors. Donors are involving them in projects based around ideas of social partnership as representatives of the State, but also make reference to their tradition of reciprocal aid (Giffen, Earle & Buxton, 2005). As a result, a number of donors have begun to work with particular aspects of what they now view as 'traditional' civil society: most notably the aksakals, the mahalla, black cashiers or gaps and ashar. These are the most visible facets of traditional patterns of societal constitution and are useful for external donors, in that they have facilitated certain types of enterprises. Aksakals are also providing a kind of legitimacy to the donor community to work in a particular area. There was an understanding that if they will be involved, they (mahalla) have the potential to bring the tenets of participatory democracy to local level. Some other character of community group is Ashar, a culturally recognized form of voluntary intuitive that put up be utilized to mobilize communities for project implementation, and the black cash desks are similar to the ideas behind rotating micro-credit enterprises. These are the elements of pre-Soviet order that many donors have called up to become near to the local strata of the social club (NGO Sustainability Report, 2000). While these grassroots initiative groups have introduced a much-needed breath of fresh air into the rural societies, nevertheless, their lack of institutionalization thus meant that they have not been capable to scale up their endeavors in order to extend their impact.

Analysis: This kind of similar approach adapted by the INGOs in both the countries clearly makes us understand that the concept of imported civil as blamed by many scholars society is not wholly true. Rather, the development of civil society has drawn many of its

attributes from the centuries old social fabric. This also goes against the misconception that civil society had been started from a 'blank slate' was quite prevalent among donors during the 1990s. Even now, pre-Soviet traditions, institutions and practices are only classified as 'civil society' when they lend themselves to the aspirations and working practices of external donors. One more thinking developing around the contemporary discussions of civil society in Central Asia is the criticism of donor agencies that simply duplicate structures that already exist in rural communities, by creating 'initiative groups' that will implement projects. So given this version, both the states had seen the prevalence of social fabric which proved quite fruitful in the formation of civil society.

The view that NGOs are foreign agents seems unacceptable as local models of organizing and associating has assumed greater importance.

PROCESS OF CIVIL SOCIETY BUILDING IN POST-INDEPENDENT TAJIKISTAN AND KYRGYZSTAN

The fact of the matter is that in both the states liberal type of civil society had been nearly nonexistent prior to independence. But their emergence suddenly proliferated, defending human rights, supporting women empowerment programs, however, Kyrgyzstan speed up its process of liberalization than Tajikistan where civil war obstructed the nascent civil society (Collins, 2006). Tajikistan's authoritarian regime has also overshadowed the growth of NGOs (Howell & Pearce, 2002).

Tajikistan's initial years of independence have been marked by continuing political instability and regime fragility. While as Kyrgyzstan remained relatively peaceful and stable. Sticking with its new constitution in 1993, Askar Akaev was famous for his democratic reforms representing Alexis de Tocqueville and Thomas Jefferson values of majority rule (Collins, 2006). On the other hand the country has become the largest recipient of loans on a per capita basis among central Asian states. It was the foremost state in the Commonwealth of independent nations to agree to IMF standby arrangements. It has likewise become a home to a relatively great number of International donor agencies both governmental and nongovernmental.

The prospects for the development civil society in Tajikistan offered by the Gurbachav's initiatives of glasnost and perestroika have seen very short life span. Although openness era gave flip to the emergence of civil society in Tajikistan in the early phase of country's

independence. At this time, the prospects for freedom of expression has resulted the gradual emergence of many new civil society groups and political parties (Nourzhanov & Bleuer, 2013). A casual look at late 1980s facilitates one to know the different types of public associations who were emerged to show a resistance to the state's absolutist forces. From the mid-1980s these voluntary public foundations assumed the role of 'informal amateur associations (Yusuff, Rustam & Natalya, 2007). In Tajikistan for instance Rastokhez (Renaissance) formed in 1989 was a sort of NGO to protect the ecological, educational and cultural and language interests of the people (Glasius, Lewis & Seckinelgin, 2004). Similarly Birlek was also formed by the local educated intellectuals to pursue the public interests. These groups have mobilized the traditional communal groups formed around an identity issues to protect the diverse interests of the society. At this stage, civil society was composed of traditional communal informal groups who by the support of the donor community were emerged to build the trust, encourage reciprocity and self help (Glasius, Lewis & Seckinelgin, 2004). The adoption of new constitution on 6 November 1994 gave the process of civil society formation a powerful impulse and certain legal guarantees for its development. (Yusufbekov Yusuff et al., 2007c).

While the Kyrgyz Republic rapidly adopted democratic and market reforms, its neighbor Tajikistan's transitional phase was very fragile in the thick of a bloody civil conflict (Nourzhanov & Bleuer, 2013). Whose violent repercussions and flare-ups into early 2004 were quite visible (Collins, 2006). The political turmoil led to the downfall of President Rakhmon Nabiev replaced by Imomali Rakhmon, who became the next president of the country in 1993, has remained in office ever since then (Murzaeva, 2011). Subsequently the president recreated an authoritarian regime with Russia's backing (Collins, 2006). Most of the civic organizations have faced the problems of limited organizational capacity and ability to reach out to the public for redressing their problems. Most of them are driven by dominant personalities with little or no membership base, and are wary of instituting democratic forms of administration. Their projects often reflect the priorities of the donor community more than a political passion or the needs of a specific community of citizens (USAID's Assistance Strategy for Central Asia, 2000). This led to the fragmentation of civil society,

corruption and clientelism in politics and Akiner believes these conditions are far from conducive to the emergence of civil society (Giffen, Earle & Buxton, 2005). The donor community also cuts down their contribution meant for civil society promotion due to unfavorable conditions prevalent during the civil war. One more feature of this time is that majority of NGOs remains engaged with humanitarian work as the civil war left thousands of people homeless and dead, millions of displaced render them homeless, massive damage to property (Goehring, 2007).

Nevertheless, during this time, NGOs and civil society actors found themselves struggling to set up new arrangements that would fight for democracy, sustainable growth and societal justice. Being the phase of conception usually counted till 1999 almost all small NGOs were created with the assistance of international arrangements. It was precisely international organizations that provided financing, consulting and technical assistance, by executing the role of engines for local NGOs. Once created with the utmost funding from donors, local NGOs started to figure out quite successfully. Thus, a significant inflow of active and well educated people went into the third sector came to mark the transition to the second phase (Yusuff, Rustam & Natalya, 2007). With the end of civil war in 1997, the geography of NGOs has begun to change. Gradually they began to move from the cities to regional centres and villages. The significant growth of the NGO in the countryside was especially noteworthy and from 2003 to 2006 more than 100 NGO were registered in the Kulyabrayons of Khatlon Oblast. Rural NGOs also accounts for half of all NGOs registered in 2003-2005. In terms of function, they are distributed as follows: 20.4 per cent are involved in education, science and culture; 16.5% in humanitarian and charitable activities; 10.6 per cent are organizations of professionals; 27.5% are women's organizations; 5.1% remedial (human rights); 9.4% are involved with children and young people, 2.2% with ecology and environment, and 8.3% others (Yusuff, Rustam & Natalya, 2007). In terms of registration, in 1997, 300 were registered, in March 2000, 625 and, by January 1, 2006 the score reached to 2750.

On the other hand, in Kyrgyzstan, more than half (53%) of participating NGOs are based in the capital of the state. Accordingly, three-quarters of NGOs operate in urban areas (USAID's Report 16th edition, 2013). The proportion of NGOs in other regions of Kyrgyzstan does

not surpass 10%. On the basis of their functional distribution, NGOs can be grouped into three categories. In the first group, we include NGOs involved in the educational development of the country, philanthropic, welfare work and human rights protection. Nearly 28% of NGOs are engaged in these activities. Category 2 includes the NGOs that are engaged in professional activities, science, culture, sports, research, tourism, health care, motherhood and childhood, legal education, public participation in the affairs of local government. The group constitutes more than 13% of NGOs. Group 3 includes activities such as water issues, farming and other allied services, women empowerment and environmental security, promotion of civic order (USAID's Report 16th edition, 2013). Again this also constitutes up to 10% of NGOs.

From this passage, one can easily draw inferences of similarities and differences in terms of their work distribution, rural-urban concentration and nature of work. It also lets out here that in both the countries almost equal numbers of NGOs are engaged in the humanistic sphere. However, Kyrgyzstan has maintained a spectacular momentum initiated some remarkable steps toward democratic reform, while as Tajikistan's authoritarian regime obstructed the smooth way of democratic consolidation. Despite this, the two countries share similar Soviet institutional legacies, corruption charges against leaders, underdevelopment of the economic sector (Mendelson & Glenn, 2002).

In case of Kyrgyzstan the formative phase has witnessed peaceful environment, seeing enthusiasm in the donor community and international NGOs in preparing the soil for civic order. Kyrgyzstan under the leadership of Asker Akaev adopted many liberal initiatives to advance the civic order. A multiple of international establishments, foreign institutions and NGOs mushroomed to shepherd the country's reforms based the belief that the issue of civil society would guarantee the country's democratization (Pétric, 2005). Kyrgyzstan witnessed hard-won gains towards democracy and the recognition of and respect for civil society actions. The country became successful to a large in guaranteeing the principle of legal philosophy, free elections and some basic rights (Sehring, 2009). Besides leadership of Asker Akaev like Tajikistan the emergence of NGOs can also be ascribed to the declining access to medical services, wellness and teaching. Today, there is not yet a single village in Kyrgyzstan that does not have heard the name

of NGOs. As believed that not even a single village head has not heard of the USAID, the World Bank or civil society (Pétric, 2005). Kangas concludes in the end only two states Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan are in the process of developing civil societies that attract and mobilize a broader mass of the citizenry. The other states of central Asia created new forms of pseudo democratic authoritarianism, masquerading as democracies but practicing methods of Stalinism (Tismaneanu, 2012).

The chief fields of activity of NGOs here in Kyrgyzstan are: (i) Charity, humanitarian aid; (ii) Social services to vulnerable groups of the population; (iii) Increasing the educational level of the population; (iv) Protection of human rights; (v) Protection of the environment; (vi) Protecting the health of citizens (personal communication, 2014).

The primary goals of NGOs are: (i) Keeping order in the nation; (ii) Making people more aware to influence government decisions; (iii) Protecting the freedom of voice of communication; and (iv) Combating inflation (USAID's Report 16th edition, 2013).

Taking clue from the following tables' (T.1 and T.2) one can easily compare the development of NGOs and their role in the socio-political affairs of these countries. The USAID NGO Sustainability Index uses a seven-stage scale, to facilitate comparisons to the Freedom House indices, with 7 indicating a low or inadequate level of development and 1 indicating a very advanced NGO sector ('USAID's Assistance Strategy for Central Asia, 2000). The scale represents three phases: Early Transition, Mid-Transition and Consolidation. The Early Transition stage corresponds to a mark of 5 to 7 points on the scale, the Mid-Transition stage corresponds to a score between 3 and 5 levels, and the most innovative stage, Consolidation, corresponds to a score between 1 and 3 degrees ('USAID's Assistance Strategy for Central Asia, 2000). Both the tables indicating the progress that these countries have made as far as the overall civil society development is concerned. However, Kyrgyzstan on account of many positive factors achieved somewhat better place among all the Central Asian states. Both the legal and organizational capacity of the Kyrgyzstan's NGO sector have shown positive trends suggesting changing mindset of the government towards the same. This is because besides Akaev's more liberal political regime, many other factors did played their role in facilitating the development of civil society for instance Country's pluralism and democratic culture. Foreign

assistance and political competition both fostered the process of reform and enabled civil society to strengthen their position in the country (Frederick, 2011). In case of Tajikistan, in the beginning, the country has faced unexpected political and economic situation become

very difficult for the country to come out. In Tajikistan, ex-communist leaders and newly emerged leaders have fought for their own interests which accelerated the politicization of civil society in the country (Frederick, 2011).

Table 1. NGOs Sustainability Index, 1998

Country	Legal Environment	Organizational Capacity	Financial Viability	Advocacy	Public Image	Average Rating	civil society score
Kyrgyzstan	3.9	3.9	4.2	3.5	3.8	3.8	4.5
Tajikistan	6.5	6	7	6.5	7	6.6	5.3

Source: NGO Sustainability index 1998 (USAID's Report, 1998).

Table 2. NGOs Sustainability Index, 1998

Country	Legal Environment	Organizational capacity	Advocacy	Financial viability	Public image	Civil Society score
Kyrgyzstan	3.5	4.5	5.5	3.5	4.0	4.5
Tajikistan	6.0	6.0	7.0	6.0	6.0	5.3

Source: USAID NGO Sustainability Index 1998.

Early Transition (5-7): At this stage, there is an absence of legally accepted provisions, their often confusing and restrictive nature on non-governmental organizations (NGOs) makes it difficult to register and operate freely. Looking at table 1 Kyrgyzstan has achieved comparatively better legal and public image of the NGOs sector than Tajikistan which is still occupies around 6 to 6.5 position on the scale means that the country lacks in overall understanding of civil society sector (USAID's Assistance Strategy for Central Asia, 2000). Most of points that the table is indicating lie at the bottom level of the scale.

Mid-Transition (3-5): For NGOs registration becomes a little bit easier and do not suffer from state harassment. They are allowed to absorb in a wide scope of bodily functions, although taxation provisions, procurement procedures, etc. may inhibit NGOs operation and development. Kyrgyzstan's reached almost mid-level stage at various points of scale, be it her financial, public image and organizational capacity. While as Tajikistan left far behind facing tremendous problems.

Consolidation (1-3): At this stage, state implements and adopts legislative framework and makes some provisions for the NGOs, provides special advantages such as: tax deductions and sometimes significant tax exemptions on Civil Society Organizations.

Looking at the above given tables gives us a clear understanding of civil society development in both the countries of the region. Kyrgyzstan has moved ahead in terms of their financial and organizational strength. While as in Tajikistan the overall civil society score

remained stagnant. The countries legal environment and advocacy capacity does not show any improvement. Both the tables depicting Kyrgyzstan's final score of civil society development is witnessing a positive trend than the Tajikistan. The financial position and public image of NGOs in Tajikistan is still at early phase of its development. In comparison to this, Kyrgyz NGOs were operated under little bit free and simple registration process.

The 1991 law on public organizations which regulates the NGO sector, political parties and religious organizations has not maintained any distinctions in them. Due to this vagueness, NGOs had suffered a lot; created political impasse therefore hampered the newly emerged NGOs at this stage. Moving ahead, at this point of time people were developed very little awareness and understanding about the role NGO's in society. For instance, the role of NGOs in building a democratic environment, advocating public advocacy or providing social services were often perceived with doubt and suspension. A large section of population still does not have the knowledge of NGOs. Most often people perceiving NGOs as money grabbers creating attitude of incertitude (USAID's Report 2nd edition, 1998). In Tajikistan, the lack of security, minimum economic development, and vague policies and procedures about their financial and business operations all contributed to the incipient nature of the NGO sector. They were often and this still prevails among most of the NGOs that they are dominated one man and split apart on account of personality conflicts. (Interview with

InterbimInternational and Coalition for democracy and civil society in Kyrgyzstan) Even this has also been observed that Islam and identity politics has remain more influential in Tajikistan than Kyrgyzstan. The pan-Iranism proposed for the unification of Tajikistan Shiite population spread over the regions of Bukhara and Samarkand in Uzbekistan and a segment of Afghanistan up to the Iranian border itself. At the same time, conflict between the increasingly Islamic society and the secular state began to escalate the tension in Tajikistan. It led to the revival of traditionalist institutions of society (Fredrick, 2011).

In addition to this, the war torn economy has shattered and slow down the prospects for civil society in Tajikistan than in Kyrgyzstan which has seen peaceful days. However the commonality that both countries shares is that the public does not understand the concept of "non-governmental," "not-for-profit," or even" volunteerism for which both pre-Soviet and Soviet period was responsible. Patricia M. Carley notes the effective non-existence of civil society in terms of both institutional and individual understanding. This striking absence is indeed a major obstacle for the construction of an effective civic culture, a modern legal system and state of law (Tismaneanu, 2012). Even after independence, nobody and nothing could escape the grip of the Stalinist domination apparatus. Things started to change, however, during the Nikita Khrushchev's period of modernization and liberalization, when the buds of civil society surfaced, but they were again almost congealed during the of Leonid Brezhnev's neo-traditionalism (Tismaneanu, 2012).

Table 3. NGOs Sustainability Index, 2010

Country	Legal Environment	Organizational capacity	Advocacy	Financial viability	Public image	Civil Society score
Kyrgyzstan	4.0	4.3	5.3	3.3	4.1	4.1
Tajikistan	4.9	4.5	5.6	4.9	4.5	4.9.

Source: USAID NGO Sustainability Index Scores, 2010

Nearly a decade afterwards, while registration process has improved in Tajikistan, as registration of some types of NGOs such as public funds and cooperatives has witnessed a desirable record in 2010, but for a majority of NGOs those registered as public benefit organizations became more difficult (USAID's Report 13th edition, 2010). In Tajikistan partially due to the competition for funds leading to more specific and results oriented projects and initiatives. Financial viability also showed slight improvement in the

Things have begin to show positive change once Kyrgyzstan adopted new legislation approved in 1999(working group, 1999)ⁱⁱ led to the improvement in legal environment for NGOs, consolidating their legal base led to the establishment of various nonprofit organizations. The legislation has made a separate provision for and created a distinction between them and other commercial organizations or public foundation. The law has also abolished registration and geographical limitation put on their activities before. Changes that have allowed significant cost reduction for creation, registration and regulation of all NGO (USAID's Report 2nd edition, 1998). Accordingly the net result of this piece of legislation was the dramatic in increase in the number of NGOs reported by USAID grantee Counterpart Consortium's database as 1,327 NGOs have found very active s in Kyrgyzstan -- an increase of approximately 300 from 1998. A large number of NGOs have gone beyond living "grant to grant" demonstrated a capacity for strategic planning and mission development. At this time, a number of Kyrgyz NGOs are making efforts to advocate for free and fair implementation of elections (USAID's Report 2nd edition, 1998). Even in Tajikistan the first tangible signs of civil society consolidation begin to emerge. According to USAID grantee Counterpart Consortium's database, there are 516 NGOs active in Tajikistan at the beginning of 2000 (USAID's Report 2nd edition, 1998). A growing number of NGOs are more interested in dealing with conflict management issues.

country going down from almost 6.5% in 1998 to 4.9% in 2010 and same is case other attributes of civil society (USAID's Report 13th edition, 2010). The institutionalizing of NGO participation was also improved when the new president created supervisory councils in government establishments that included many NGO representatives as well. Also, NGOs set up a monitoring forum provided an input in the governmental efforts for humanitarian assistance in the aftermath of the conflict. They pioneered a number of

legislations including laws on, adult education, and the national strategy on social partnership showing a growing government willingness to use NGO expertise in policy making. Improvement and expansion of service delivery system and the country also witnessed a trend of NGOs monitoring the service delivery of the state in order to encourage accountability in service delivery system (USAID's Report 13th edition, 2010).

In Kyrgyzstan, despite the variety of political developments, overall sustainability of the NGO sector in 2010 remained the same as in 2009. The table no. 3 depicts the progress the country has achieved over these years, however not maintained the same pace as was witnessed during its early years of independence. This is all because of many issues engulfed the country for instance Akayev's move towards authoritarianism triggered political crisis led to the Pro- and anti-government parties contended against each other. Kyrgyzstan's Tulip Revolution of March 2005 gave rise to the some sort of negative reaction against NGOs. Even some view then as foreign agents gridding their own interests. But in Ferghana valley NGOs have shown praiseworthy character diminishing the ethnic clashes. This type of mess and manipulated public opinion followed by regionalism did very little for democracy rather proved very unfertile for free political life. Simultaneously the ethnic conflict between Kyrgyz and Uzbek people in the Osh region escalated the tension and disturbed fragile democratic fabric of the country. Despite all of this NGOs remain very active deescalated the ethnic tension in the region calling the citizens to resolve their disputes through peaceful negotiations. Here NGOs engaged in humanistic actions and participation in public security building and reconciliation, as easily as monitoring of governmental reconstruction activities has shown a positive disposition. A majority of NGOs and other national commercial enterprises delivered humanitarian aid in inter-ethnic conflict zone in Osh and *Jalal-Abad* provinces directly and without any threat from government authorities. A number of USAID-funded NGOs are also working at the community level, and are especially concerned with conflict prevention in areas with a history of ethnic tension (Earle, n.d.). By contrast, the number and activity of foreign-sponsored NGOs in the Tajik sector of the Ferghana Valley is less than in Kyrgyzstan (Frederick, 2011). Overall, public opinion of NGOs is mixed. According to a public opinion poll

conducted in May of 2010, NGOs were ranked fifth among trusted public institutions (after the media, religious institutions, the educational system, and the army (USAID's Report 13th edition, 2010).

CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE DONOR COMMUNITY IN TAJIKISTAN AND KYRGYZSTAN

The strategy of donor community in Tajikistan remains same as elsewhere in Central Asia. While the promotion of democracy has been a central plank of U.S. foreign policy since the end of the cold war, it has frequently been nongovernmental organizations (occasionally funded by USAID) that have implemented this policy in the formerly communist countries (Mendelson & Glenn, 2002). The donor community provided massive support for the creation of local NGOs in the region. They remained heavily busy with the task of the civil society promotion or strengthening of the human rights situation and democratization of the society. The growth of independent NGOs sector in the post-communist countries during the 1990's remained the top priority of the donor community. Most international actors viewed the promotion of independent civil society, not as an end in itself, but as an intermediate goal within a bigger effort to support sustainable democracy (Mendelson & Glenn, 2002).

The major directions of the donor funding throughout 1990s, was largely focused on creating western-style civil society, with NGOs being considered as one of its main channels to forward the same. Western donors tried to advance the civil society sector with the hope that it would bring about democratization, will protect human rights violation and free elections (Zharkevich, 2010). For liberals civil society is often symbolized as triumph of democracy over totalitarianism and authoritarianism. So what donor thought is that by channeling funds to them will automatically lay the roots for strong democracy and healthy market values. The aid was provided to promote the sound legal and social framework favoring the creation of local NGOs. Creation of local NGOs is often perceived as a guarantee of good governance both by the multilateral (the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and bilateral organizations (e.g., USAID). However, under the guise of good governance the purpose of exported democracy has also been served (Atlani-Duault, 2005).

Comparing the Tajik and Kyrgyz republics permitted an examination of how the same strategies work in different, more or less hospitable political environments

and how international assistance organizations subsequently adapted to increasingly divergent political conditions. These two nations share a common background as constituent republics of the former USSR. They started out the post-communist transition at the same time with different sound and political environments and may be with a different political culture. In both countries, international democracy assistance, including projects designed to support the development of independent civil society, began at roughly the same time and with similar strategies. There is a general consensus that the nomadic societies of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan were less affected by religious sentiments or movements than the sedentary ones. This was not the case of Tajikistan faced re-Islamisation, which immersed the whole nation, split it into rival groups (Buxton, 2011). It is for these reasons that in Tajikistan during the early years of its independence donor community remain committed to mainly humanitarian assistance. It is worth noting that two-thirds of the aid given by USAID in the 1990s was directed to dealing with the consequences of the humanitarian crisis that resulted from the civil war of 1992–97. It was just recently that donors have changed their policy and started to support center and long-term development projects. Proper development assistance in Tajikistan started later than in Kyrgyzstan, even after civil war era, donors had to address the severe social problems of the post-war country (Sehring, 2009). Proper development assistance in Tajikistan started later than in Kyrgyzstan (Sehring, 2009). While donor interest in Kyrgyzstan reflected the initial interest to further democracy and civil society in the country. A lot of the exertion and money were invested to establish NGOs according to western models. The reason was beside the donor priorities, the political climate in Kyrgyzstan which made it possible for them to advance the democratic values (Sehring, 2009). To accomplish their goals, civil society institutions had interacted with the government on a veritable base. There are two alternative schemes for such interaction: cooperation and confrontation. Cooperation mainly involves partnerships, joint treatment and solution of public events, and a proactive civil dialogue. Nevertheless, “watchdog” organizations are often actively opposed to the government and sometimes in engagement with governmental institutions (National Human Development Report 2005). The NGO sector is

developing comparatively at good pace. However, its overall impact, however, is not sufficient to provide complementary balance to the weight of state socio-political governance structures (National Human Development Report, 2005).

Donors’ policy regarding Kyrgyz NGOs: These policies could be divided into two stages: *Phase first*; 1992-96: USA has a potent influence on NGOs in Kyrgyzstan. American funds channeled through the NGO Counterpart Consortium, Eurasia Foundation, ISAR, American Legal Consortium and Peace Corps, have oriented local NGOs to problems in the following spheres: environment, human rights and the rule of law, while paying little attention to poverty eradication and to development. *Phase second*; 1996 onwards: During this stage various European and multilateral donors have reoriented the focus of NGOs’ activity to approaches to eliminate poverty and to public involvement. They are UNDP, UNHCR, World Bank, TACIS, NOVIB, Aga Khan Foundation, DIA and some embassies (Simon et al., 2000).

Referable to the different context in both states, donor involvement varies considerably. Kyrgyzstan in comparison to Tajikistan performed better in Central Asia in adopting most liberal reform agenda both in political and economic aspects of the society. It is an explanation of these changes that the country earned the public figure in the eyes of world leaders as the ‘Switzerland of Central Asia’. This turned out to be the essence for the attraction of Western engagements otherwise Kyrgyzstan is of no Geo-strategic importance (Sehring, 2009). Among Central Asian states it was the first nation to welcome financial assistance from the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The donor’s initial interest was to foster democracy, to establish NGOs according to Western models. Besides donor priorities the political climate in Kyrgyzstan was fairly good for the promotion of democratic values.

In addition, donor strategy has also modified during the late 1990s, the concept of community development re-entered the development discourse of donors and led to a focus on participatory practices at the grassroots level. The objective was to interact and to support community-established organizations (CBOs), consisting of volunteers primarily interested in improving their communities’ living conditions through small projects. Here at this stage the multi and bi-lateral donor

community made *mahalla* committees, *aksakal*, or *hashar* their focus often referred to as communal or traditional civil society. During the initiative phase in the Kyrgyzstan civil society promotion and democracy building was the primary motive of donors, a change toward more participatory and community-based projects in order to implement poverty reduction plans. In Tajikistan, this inaugural phase of extensive support for the growth of civil society structures is more or less absent. From the beginning on, development cooperation focused on social development and CBOs. Hence, the initial donor input in Kyrgyzstan was dominated by the idea of democracy building and formal rules (NGOs). In contrast, in Tajikistan, donors focused on poverty reduction and the establishment of bottom-up informal mechanisms (CBOs) (Sehring, 2009). Until now, all elections have failed to meet OSCE standards. Despite the fact that the conflicts have been settled, Tajikistan remains a fragile and fragmented state with only limited assertiveness of state structures (Sehring, 2009).

There were also more radical accusations that NGOs are lobbyists for international arrangements and foreign governments. Donor organizations have also begun to doubt the effectiveness of NGOs as development workers, and started shifting funds to government channels. This was a worldwide trend, reflected in the Paris Declaration of 2005 to improve the effectiveness of official development assistance. (Koch, 2008) The Paris Declaration has shifted emphasis from donor engagement with civil society towards greater cooperation with governments of developing countries. The subsequent Accra Agenda (Paris Declaration)ⁱⁱⁱ for Action, adopted in 2008, which was attended by representatives of civil society from many countries, has not significantly modified donor support for development.

Gradually and with the increasing capacity of systems and their staff, inquiries relating to accountability, responsibility and legitimacy came to be talked about. Many organizations realized that they sustain to reckon not just close to the pragmatic implementation of individual projects, but also roughly how to link individual projects with their long-term mission, how to build an integrated programme approach to activities, how to conduct strategic planning, and how to consider the opinion of target groups and stakeholders. Many NGOs have undertaken important work to improve their management structure, and have begun to get long-term

and strategic preparation. It is obvious that it is the prevailing political developments that shape the nature of civil and define its autonomy and capability to pursue its ends.

Leadership or personality factor: Leadership of any country is by and large an important factor in determining the path of civil society development. The leadership in these respective nations has played an important role in shaping the direction of their nation state. In case of Central Asian states, all the presidents except that of Kyrgyzstan are all former first secretaries of their republics' Communist Parties (Sally, 2003) However, both the states have developed authoritarian tendencies (Tajikistan more so than Kyrgyzstan)^{iv} (Ortmann, 2010). The presidential systems of governments in both the countries soon showed autocratic and personalistic regime characteristics, In Kyrgyzstan, which accepted a more parliamentary system in the Showtime, later on the president initiated several referenda in 1996, 1998, 1999, and 2003 with which parliamentary powers were gradually thinned and those of the president were enhanced. Akayev's ousting in 2005 had failed to meet public expectations, new leaders quickly succumbed to political corruption and increasingly resorting to authoritarian means using political forces for suppression. President Bakiyev continued to sideline political opponents and silenced critical media issues. It resulted in the worsening situation for NGOs; they become unable to engage in policy debates, Kyrgyzstan's civil society rating worsens from 4.75 to 5.00 and subsequently led to the deficiencies in the basic democratic principles such as rights, free elections and separation of powers (Mootz, 2010).

Likewise, in Tajikistan two referenda in 1999 and in 2003 secured the presidential stay in power both presidents and therefore, *Akaev* in Kyrgyzstan and *Emomali Rakhmon* in Tajikistan prevented a change of power through elections changed the law in order to prolong their term in office (Sehring, 2009). Yet, comparatively Kyrgyzstan secured a respectable spot in central Asia with respect to civil society promotion in the process of democratization. Unlike his Central Asian counterparts, Akayev was not a Party-elite, and after supported Gorbachev more vigorously during the August 1991 coup attempt than anyone save Yeltsin, got elected to the presidency of independent Kyrgyzstan (Connery, 2000). The emergence of Kyrgyz

civil society is frequently brought up to as one of the major democratic achievements in Kyrgyzstan. The personality factor of the first president of the country has taken on an important role in the democratization process of the country. Martha Olcott holds a similar position, indicating that 'Akaev's reputation and personality were the primary reasons for the Western development economists and financiers became genuinely eager to attend this little country (Juraev, 2008). In fact, that is one of the reasons why it gets so much aid from the United States and other Western nations.

According to various estimates, the number of registered NGOs in Kyrgyzstan ranges from 8,000 to 12,000 and the majority of them emerged during the time of Akaev's presidency, and particularly during the final years of President (Musabaeva, 2013). Despite this, the general development of NGOs during the 1990s was spontaneous and chaotic. The NGO sector became a fresh subject of activity, where many people, having dropped out of the professional fields and forced to find new strategies for survival, found employment.

In Tajikistan, the civil war slowed down the rate of donor community's involvement in Tajikistan led to the cause of democratic stagnation. Contrary to Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan's President Askar Akaev's popularity and his dedication to democratic reforms, yet before the disintegration of the Soviet land, were seen as facilitating factors for establishing a legitimate and democratic regime in the country. Kyrgyzstan was one of the first democracies in Central Asia to adopt a democratic establishment and had progressed to substantial advances in establishing the bases of democracy by the mid-1990s. The vibrant civil society that emerged earned the country the tag of Central Asia's 'island of democracy'. The country was also able to fix a multi-party organization and political parties rose in numbers as well (Murzaeva, 2011). Leadership role in opening the smart set and promoting liberal reforms has

had a permanent impact (Spector, 2004).

From 1991 until the mid-1990s, Kyrgyzstan stood out among former Soviet countries as a country more open to liberalization both politically and economically. Nevertheless, as the government of President Askar Akayev sought to consolidate its position, it grew increasingly authoritarian until being kicked out in the March 24, 2005, "Tulip Revolution." President Akaev reverted to authoritarian rule incomplete civil societies became unable to protect public space. The associational life became dominated by state sponsored and controlled associations and independent civil society actors face many restrictions, constraints, threats and repressions often akin to those they had faced in incomplete civil societies of late communism (Ekiert & Foa, 2011).

Nevertheless, under Bakiyev's rule, the political atmosphere for NGOs has changed dramatically. NGOs have come under intense criticism by the state, being accused of not standing for those groups on whose behalf they are allegedly working, but rather certain groups of interests – in fact, they have been saddled with this kind of job.

Looking at the following table no. 4 it clearly indicates the level of political and civil rights available and enjoying by the citizens of both the countries. A simple look at the table gives us the impression that Kyrgyz people are partly free taking benefits of civil rights while as tajik's remain at the bottom level of the scale. Kyrgyzstan in some areas achieved a visible progress be it freedom of press, media, elections and human rights. Even though both countries cannot claim fully democratic as they are below the threshold to democracy and have not consolidated the gains of transition fully. Nevertheless, to value their difference in conditions of organization levels in both the countries freedom houses indices can be utilized to illustrate levels of the political evolution.

Table 4. Freedom House Ratings for Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan from 1992-2005.

Indicator	State	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Political rights	KG	4	5	4	4	4	4	5	5	6	6	6	6	6	5
	TJ	6	7	7	7	7	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
Civil Rights	KG	2	3	3	4	4	4	5	5	6	6	5	5	5	5
	TJ	6	7	7	7	7	6	6	6	5	5	5	5	5	4

1.9-2.5: free, 3.00-5.00 partly free, 5.50-7.00: not free

Source: <http://www.freedomhouse.org/uploads/frw/FIWAAllScores.xls>

The comparability of these two countries shows that in both the countries the quality of public space, as quantified by the Freedom House index in terms of their civil rights and political liberties is different today. While the advancement gained by civil society Kyrgyzstan is one of the considerable importance improving the tone of public space during the last decade or so. Therefore, in this dimension so important for civil society condition and development the differences between them are tremendous. It is clear here that regime type is important for creating constraints and opportunities for public actors, the state policies vis-a-vis civil society generates another order of diversity. While civil Society in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan inherited relatively dense organizational structures and resources, they have been beyond any

doubt late developing civil societies. At the same time, however, the professional NGO sector experienced a dramatic increase, expanding the number of civil society organizations, redefining intra-organizational networks and building transnational links in Kyrgyzstan than in Tajikistan. Organizational capacity, the size of their assets and the public image of NGOs have improved in Kyrgyzstan than Tajikistan. More and more NGOs have the know-how to provide services and to tap into local resources.

In Kyrgyzstan there are jokes that each community will soon have its own NGO. There are grave concerns about their sustainability. Legal frameworks generally allow NGOs to receive government funding and, to a somewhat lesser extent, to participate in public procurement procedures.

Table 5. Kyrgyzstan NGO Sustainability Index

Country	Legal Environment	Capacity of Organization	Financial Viability	Advocacy	Service Provision	Infra-structure	Public Image	Overall Score
Kyrgyzstan	3.9	4.3	5.1	3.6	4.0	3.6	4.2	4.1
Tajikistan	5.0	4.7	5.6	5.2	4.6	4.6	4.5	4.9
Kyrgyzstan	4.0	4.3	5.3	3.3	4.0	3.7	4.1	4.1
Tajikistan	4.9	4.5	5.6	4.9	4.4	4.5	4.5	4.8
Kyrgyzstan	3.8	4.3	5.3	3.1	4.0	3.7	4.0	4.0
Tajikistan	5.0	4.5	5.6	4.8	4.4	4.6	4.5	4.8

Source: 2008 and 2012 NGO Sustainability Index Scores.

The above table indicates that in 2008 the legal environment in Kyrgyzstan was better than in Tajikistan. As per the new Tax Code adopted in late 2008, for their bids in state contracts, Kyrgyz NGOs no longer have to pay the security deposit. VAT is not charged on funds received from the state for services related to social welfare, protection of children, the elderly, veterans, and the disabled, as well as state-licensed educational and medical services (USAID's Report 12th edition, 2009). In Tajikistan, 2008 implemented a legislation requiring all NGOs to re-register by the end of the year. Tajik NGOs have been discouraged by failed attempts, to influence policy making. In Whole Central Asia, the overall position of Kyrgyzstan reported to have improved while the situation in Tajikistan worsened. In Kyrgyzstan, the new Law on Peaceful Assembly provides civic organizations with greater political rights to form and participate in peaceful demonstrations. The advocacy and public image of civil society organizations continue to ameliorate (USAID's Report 16th edition, 2013). In Tajikistan, on the other hand, inspections against active CSOs, primarily those working on human rights or media

publications, increased in frequency, and infrastructure continued to deteriorate due to a lack of donor funding. In Kyrgyzstan, after years of turmoil, increased political stability has allowed CSOs to operate more freely. CSOs in Tajikistan experienced regression in their legal environment scores in 2012. Here the Ministry of Education published new instructions barring students from attending events organized or funded by international CSOs (USAID's Report 16th edition, 2013).

The various indicators used by the freedom house in order to measure the political and civil liberties guaranteed in both the countries. Civil society has grown considerably and both the countries have recognized the role and contribution in democratic transformation and socio-economic development. In Kyrgyzstan NGOs have reached to the genuine beneficiaries, working closely with their target groups, assess their needs and flexibly respond to them. NGOs provide moral support and unite people with similar problems, build their self-confidence and engage them in self-help activities. Local NGOs have helped citizens to become more active and better

informed about civil rights and opportunities. Civil society organizations are playing a key role in mobilizing local communities around such issues as social service provision and environmental protection. The numbers of newly created CSOs is continuously increasing. Activities being undertaken by local and international organizations are bolstering the financial and technical capacity of civil society actors, particularly emerging CSOs. Interviews with a wide range of civil society actors indicated a felt need to improve the quality, strength and sustainability of CSOs. They must be helped to develop effective management systems and plan improvements in the performance and quality of services. In addition, more attention needs to be paid to developing the capacity to build external relations with project stakeholders and also with wider constituencies. Organizations providing capacity building services have a vital role to play in encouraging networking and advocacy for a more effective civil society voice (Personal communication, 2014).

Donor priorities and policies continue to sustain a direct impact on organizational capacity of NGOs in Tajikistan. Only Kyrgyzstan improved its overall score in 2012, while Tajikistan's overall sustainability declined. Registration remains problematic in Tajikistan, where CSOs cannot openly engage in criticism of the government policies, government pressure on CSOs is still a problem throughout the country (USAID's Report 16th edition, 2013). Nevertheless, the foundation of the Alliance for Women's Legislative Initiatives is considered an important step in advocacy. Established in May 2008, AWLI initially consisted of nine founding members. Now, AWLI consists of 122 members, including individuals and legal entities. Today the AWLI is one of the most powerful organizations promoting gender policy in Tajikistan (USAID's Report 12th edition, 2009). In Tajikistan, for example, the Coalition of Women CSOs successfully pushed the home government to settle and adopt the law on domestic violence prevention in December 2012. Infrastructure in Tajikistan declined this year, mostly as a consequence of the loss of donor support which has resulted in weakened capacity of resource centers, lower quality training, and a diminishing number of granting organizations. During the last half of 2012, inspections against active CSOs, primarily those working on human rights or media issues, increased in frequency. For instance, the

Association of Scientific and Technical Intelligentsia (ASTI) was queried about its participation in regional public discussions with the Islamic Revival Party. According to a study of 165 organizations conducted by TNGOA in late 2012, 75% of funding comes from international donors, 18 percent from the government, and 7% from commercial enterprise and charity contributions. Just a few CSOs, like Fidokor, Zerkalo, Eurasia Foundation, Panorama, and RushdiDehot, employ effective fundraising strategies to insure long-term support (USAID's Report 16th edition, 2013). During the last few years, NGOs have demonstrated their potential for social-political mobilization of the population and have acted as relatively strong groups impacting on the state. Currently Tajik civil society witnessing slightly improved environment.

In Kyrgyzstan, on the other hand, CSOs took advantage of the growing openness in the policy process to push their agendas forward. Public image improved slightly in Kyrgyzstan, as the public is starting to appreciate CSO efforts in overseeing the government, monitoring public spending, observing elections, protecting human rights, and reforming government institutions (USAID's Report 16th edition, 2013). In order to increase the organizational sustainability, many NGOs created alliances and coalitions. In 2008, three coalitions were established: a coalition of harm reduction (HIV/AIDS) NGOs, a coalition of NGOs representing disabled people, and the Union of Civic Organizations. For example, the Union of Civic Organizations, consisting of more than forty NGOs, was established to monitor the 2008 local elections. Many associations have managed to increase their membership bases and partnerships with colleagues from abroad. Improvements were noted in legal environment, advocacy, and public image; while organizational capacity, financial viability, service provision, and infrastructure all remained fairly stable (USAID's Report 16th edition, 2013).

The indicators selected by the World Bank for assessing the operationability of governance mechanism in the both states can take us a long way in analysing the functional democracy operative at ground level. The indicators selected for the same presenting a shabby if not bad record of governance performance. Nevertheless, Kyrgyzstan has to some extent ameliorated its position in some core areas of governance. The country's political stability, government effectiveness and rule of law leaving a good impression

for civil society groups to work in but there are problems which the country faces at this juncture. Many observers considered the 2011 presidential election fair and transparent despite some irregularities. In the rest of establishment the country continues to be under poor governance record. Corruption remained endemic at all Table 6. World Bank Governance indicator.

Indicator	State	1996	1998	2000	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Voice and accountability	KG	-0.71	-0.71	-1.18	-1	-1.08	-0.96	-0.8	-0.7
	TJ	-1.63	-1.66	-1.38	-1.32	-1.28	-1.3	-1.17	-1.27
Political stability	KG	.57	-0.01	-0.48	-1.18	-1.25	-1.16	-1.14	-1.2
	TJ	-2.59	-2.26	-1.86	-1.42	-1.41	-1.41	-1.33	-1.3
Government effectiveness	KG	-0.49	-0.28	-0.49	-1.64	-0.65	-0.72	-0.89	-0.86
	TJ	-1.61	-1.49	-1.24	-1.13	-1.11	-1.12	-1.1	-0.6
Regulatory quality	KG	-0.46	-0.49	-0.33	-0.19	-0.25	-1.16	-0.66	-0.57
	TJ	-2.26	-1.99	-1.28	-1.29	-1.12	-1.06	-1.02	-0.98
Rule of Law	KJ	-0.64	-0.72	-0.88	-0.77	-0.82	-0.82	-1.07	-1.18
	TJ	-1.55	-1.74	-1.52	-1.3	-1.09	-1.14	-1	-1.04
Control of corruption	KG	-0.84	-0.7	-0.89	-0.85	-0.85	-0.98	-1.06	-1.09
	TJ	-1.74	-1.33	-1.2	-1.03	-1.02	-1.16	-1.07	-0.91

Ratings: -2.50(very poor Governance Record) +2.50(very good Governance Record)

Source: World Bank

The indicators selected by the World Bank for assessing the operationability of governance mechanism in the both states can take us a long way in analysing the functional democracy operative at ground level. The indicator s selected for the same presenting a shabby if not bad record of governance performance. Nevertheless, Kyrgyzstan has to some extent ameliorated its position in some core areas of governance. The country’s political stability, government effectiveness and rule of law leaving a good impression for civil society groups to work in but there are problems which the country faces at this juncture. Many observers considered the 2011 presidential election fair and transparent despite some irregularities. In the rest of establishments the country continues to be under poor governance record. Corruption remained endemic at all levels of society and there is no protection available for Whistleblowers in the country. Poor record of human rights, harassment of press persons and civil society activities is still routine activity of government officials in the both the countries (Human Rights Report, 2013).

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT THROUGH NGOS LAUNCHED PROGRAMS

The post-independent transition period in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan has had a harsh impact on women. It led to the withdrawal of all Soviet services available to the women during the Soviet era. There is ample evidence

levels of society and there is no protection available for Whistleblowers in the country. Poor record of human rights, harassments of press persons and civil society activities is still routine activity of government official in both countries (Human Rights Reports, 2013).

that transition and the fragile states of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan made women to suffer in post-communist days. Both the qualitative and quantitative changes with respect to her economic opportunities, low level of political participation, decision making process, revival of the traditional gender stereotypes and traditions, polygyny, employment avenues etc were witnessed. Stranded within the poor economy and fragile state, women found NGOs an alternative and in this respect a large number of the NGOs in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan are geared towards promoting gender equality. Women NGOs tend to focus on areas such as employment, education, small business training, legal advice, human rights, and education on micro-credit (Nazarova & Bleuer, 2013). One observable trend concerning NGOs is that a high percentage of them are staffed by women and focus on women’s issues. Participation in them has to a large extent allows women to balance the resurgence of traditionalism. NGOs provide women with a voice as they work to resolve many of the fundamental issues affecting women’s role in society including poverty, democratic reforms, and other social problems.

DIFFUSION OF NGOS

There are many differences as for as the operation of NGOs in both the countries are concerned. In Kyrgyzstan a disproportionately large number of major NGOs are based in the capital, Bishkek, while in

Tajikistan the first stage NGOs emerged in GABO and other developed administrative centers. Though still overwhelmingly concentrated in cities and towns the NGO community is gradually extending into rural regions. Their climb was especially rapid in Kyrgyzstan as a result of donor targeting of funding to strengthen citizen groups in little towns and small towns. NGOs have so become active in creating rural CBOs and encouraging their interest in local development and service deliverance.

CONCLUSION

Since the demise USSR, Kyrgyzstan has achieved lot of progress as far as her transition from authoritarian regime to a more hopeful for successful democratic and market-oriented transformation. The country has set the most clear-cut example for post-socialist reforms geared to democracy and market economy. Viewed in political terms, following independence Kyrgyzstan initially experienced the development of a landscape of civil society actors that was pluralist and more comprehensive than in other Central Asian countries. Tajikistan has been hard hit by the aftermath of the 1992-1997 civil. Nevertheless, there is only a limited measure of genuine pluralism and democracy. However, all NGOs engaged in the democratization of society have serious shortcomings. They include weak organizational and financial management; an inability to interact with government, business, media, and other NGOs; negligible influence on decision-making processes and the formation of political culture; an underestimation of the importance of fundraising; and underdeveloped or no contacts with international NGOs.

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ⁱ Samuel Huntington is summarizing the mix of the primary causes for the 'third wave' of democratization that began in 1974, listed a new but not decisive factor that had been lacking in the preceding two waves: "Changes in the policies of external actors... a major break in US policies toward the advancement of human rights and democracy in other countries..." American international NGOs (INGOs) were prominent mechanisms through which this causal link between superpower foreign policy interests and regime change worked out in many transitions from authoritarian rule in the twenty-one-year-long 'third wave'.

ⁱⁱ A working group of NGOs and parliamentarians have drafted a greatly improved law on NGOs that was signed into law by President Akaev in October 1999.

ⁱⁱⁱ The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the Accra Agenda for Action seek to reform the way development aid is delivered and managed in order to strengthen its impact and effectiveness.

^{iv} With the passage of time Akaev reasserted control through his changes to the constitution followed by quick referendum in 2003 that left bad impression in the opposition and NGOs in disarray. However, by late 2004 was under tremendous pressure to devise an acceptable succession strategy that would re-engage with dis-satisfied elite and restore confidence (Sally, 2010: 46).