In the late 1980s and 90s the academic research in Comparative Politics has seen remarkable changes due to increasing role of non-state actors in the politics of any country. Entry of non-state actors has given new dimensions to policy making, implementation and institution-building process. These actors have also influenced nature of state and government itself. Emergence of idea of ‘good governance’ and later on ‘democratic governance’—where state as well as other non-state actors are considered equally significant—is a reflection of these changes.

Another factor that has serious impact on the comparative politics research is the rise and fall of great powers. One such significant case is the collapse of Soviet Union and emergence of a new Russia. Emergence of Russia has posed many new questions before the comparative political scientists. In fact, it has given entirely new dimensions to the studies of democratization, globalization, and economic liberalization.

The answer of the question whether Russia will revive as a super power will largely depend on the emergence of an effective Russian state. This study has made an attempt to understand the process of democratization, nature of emerging new political society and state institutions with the help of governance approach. Focus is on the procedures of governance and democratization, the institution building and their impact on democratization. The study has also tried to assess the performance of state, nature of governance and their implications for democratization.

In the theoretical section it is argued that success of democratization process not only demands rule of law, constitutional government and free and fair election but also changes in the structure of the society. How far democratization helps in the development and empowerment of disadvantaged section of any country is the real test of its success. This can be understood by analyzing nature of state i.e. who controls the state, government and its machinery.

The governance approach helps in understanding some crucial aspects of democratization. It goes beyond the superficial aspects of policy making which emphasizes on the people’s participation. Apart from participation of various social
sections in policy making, governance approach also focuses on the effectiveness, accountability and transparency in these processes so that everyone gets the information about what is happening inside. This helps in identifying who are the significant players in the policy making and implementation. In addition to the procedures, the governance approach also looks into the popular perceptions about various state institutions. The public image influences democratization. Peoples’ faith results in higher participation.

A state supported by effective participation, accountable and transparent policy practices, will be more democratic, and effective in nature. Similarly, a state which enjoys more trust of the people will be more legitimate. A legitimate state is always more efficient than an unpopular and illegitimate state. On the other hand, in the absence of these practices the state will be a tool in the hands of few economically well off sections. The weaker sections will remain a means to get votes without having any substantial improvements in their life style.

The main findings of this study about Russian state and governance are as follows:

1) The Russian state that emerged after 1991 is being governed by a small section of society which includes former party leaders and bureaucrats.

2) The present institutions and procedures were constructed by this section to ensure their own political and economic dominance in the emerging Russian society. This is very much evident in the constitution making process. Later on the electoral procedures continued the same trend.

3) The governance institutions especially the parliament, media and bureaucracy are also being controlled by this section. President is the leading figure in these control mechanisms. A clear nexus is visible between the president, bureaucrats, capitalists and the political leaders.

4) This control has resulted in further centralization of political and economic power despite introduction of a multi party system and relatively free civil society. This has also been a serious obstacle in establishing constitutionalism and rule of law in new Russia.

5) The constitutional provisions are being violated by various federal units. These problems are more serious in the southern regions of Chechnya, Dagestan and so on.
6) The spill over effect of these centralization processes is on the legitimacy of various state practices and institutions. Except the presidency no other institution enjoys faith of people.

7) The new economy and polity has benefitted a small section of the society living in certain regions. A large section remains unaffected by these developments.

8) The overall impact of these processes is emergence of a weak Russian state.

9) This has weakened the ongoing process of democratization in the country resulting in higher crimes, murders, poverty, inequality and rampant corruption.

Based on these conclusions about the Russian case some tentative conclusion can be drawn about the interrelationship between governance, nature of state and democratization. Firstly, it can be argued that if principles of democratic governance are followed in the formation of governance principles (formal and informal laws), it is likely to evolve a more efficient and strong state. Such a state will be more suitable and favorable for a democratization process. In other words principles of good governance are significant for state and democratization processes. This aspect was ignored during the constitution making process in Russia between 1991 and 1993.

Scholars have been arguing that it is the functioning and practices of institutions and not the history of institution-building that matters. Here it is argued that history does matter. Though, mistakes committed in the history can be corrected in the due course but a democratic procedures followed during the institution building ensures faster and smooth democratization.

The study clearly shows that ignoring principles of democratic governance has been a prominent draw back of the new Russian polity. This has resulted in emergence of a weak state which has further hampered democratization. Its authority and legitimacy has been challenged at various levels of governance. This has also resulted into the decline of federal revenues further leading to corrupt bureaucracy. Corruption in the state machinery has affected various development programmes initiated by the Russian government or the international agencies. Therefore it can be argued that that a strong and efficient state is a pre-requisite for smooth democratization.
The study has also shown that a strong economy, bureaucratic set up and police and army might not be helpful in achieving good governance. Implementation of the principles of good governance in all these institutions is essential for achieving good governance and efficient state. This requires a strong political will.

It also refutes the arguments which were prominent during the initial phase of reforms that a strong economic system will gradually pave the way for democratization, good governance and a strong state. Neo-liberal scholars argued during the 1990s that a strong economy gradually leads to evolution of a strong state. A developed economy eventually results into emergence of demands for or strengthening of democratization process.

The Russian experience exposes the fallacy of such arguments. It shows how denial of participation, absence of transparency and accountability has resulted into the concentration of political and economic power in the hands of few. This centralization has proved to be a weakness and not strength of the Russian state. It has also affected the legitimacy, efficiency and strength of the state. Further it has hampered the process of democracy building. Therefore the present Russian state in spite of economic revival continues to face challenges at the political level and there are possibilities of continuance of this phenomenon unless the principles of democratic governance are implemented at various levels of governance.