Principles of governance are implemented through institutions. This chapter analyses evolution of governance institutions in Russia after the adoption of a new liberal democratic constitution in 1993. The chapter is divided into three sections. First section deals with the Russian parliament and role of political parties in government formation and law making. Second section discusses evolution of civil society institutions such as media, non-governmental organizations and so on. Third section deals with the role and nature of presidency in post-Soviet Russia. Fourth section discusses the Russian bureaucracy.

Introduction

After adoption of procedures of democratic polity the second step towards democratization is establishing institutions which support democratic practice. Institutions are associations or set of rules or norms. Institutions are also defined as: ‘constraints that shape behavior in various areas of human activity; stretching from social interaction to economic exchange to international cooperation’ (MacIntyre 2003: 3).

In governance approach it is analysed whether the principles of democratic governance (such as participation, accountability, transparency, efficiency and so on) are followed in various institutions. This affects the nature of state. In fact, the nature of any state largely depends on the structure and nature of its political institutions. If the institutions of state follow principles of democratic governance they result in a more efficient and strong state.

While evaluating the participation and decentralization aspect of institutions, MacIntyre in his study of four South-East Asian countries has shown how the great economic breakdown restructured their political institutions in order to revive their economies. He argues that the level of fragmentation of decision-making power, i.e. participation aspect of good governance, among various institutions affects the nature, speed and implementation of
the decisions taken. The more power is fragmented the greater are the problems in decision-making because it becomes a gradual process with less flexibility. On the other hand, a centralized institutional political structure do not have these draw backs but it suffers from the problems of imposition of decisions. He has (see chart 3.1) shown that higher polarization of power (on both ends- highly decentralized and centralized) affects the decision-making negatively. Countries having institutions with appropriate checks and balances and establishing a balance between the two poles have effective decision-making process.

![Figure 3.1](image-url)

**Figure 3.1**
The interrelationship between the concentrations of Decision-making power and effectiveness of institutions

Source: MacIntyre 2001: 6

Institutions which connect state with the society play very significant role in the transition polities. Institutions which are important in connecting the state and society through governance are: the government, political parties, civil society and bureaucracy. Government consists of legislature, executive and judiciary. Political parties are the mechanisms by which people convert their demands to the government. Civil society is the informal network between the state and society. Bureaucracy is responsible for
implementation of government policies. Success or failure of state policies largely depends on the efficiency of bureaucratic system.

In post-Soviet Russia, presidency has been assigned highly significant role in determining the governance principles of the country. The 1993 constitution gives primacy to the president over all other political institutions. As discussed in the previous chapter the Russian president played the most significant role in determining the constitutional framework of the country. Consequently development of other political institutions depends on their relationship with the presidency. Although political parties are allowed to function independently and a bicameral legislature has also been established, but the president has emerged as the supreme policy-maker. Similarly the evolution of civil society has been hampered by the concentration of powers in the hands of the presidency. Various civil society institutions such media, interest groups, or the non-governmental organizations are allowed to function only if their position is not adversarial to the Russian president. All these institutions have faced serious threat to their existence in case they have stood against the presidency.

In fact the Russian president has emerged as a strong national leader. Keeping in view all these developments this study hypothesizes that: a strong presidential regime dominates other political institutions (parliament and civil society) in Russia, leading to centralized governance, and finally a strong and centralized state.

For effective institutionalization, governance and state, an open political society is essential. Political society indicates the environment in which political activities among various political actors take place. A free political society ensures higher people's participation as it allows various players to participate without any fear or threat to life. From a state-society perspective the political society is expected to be a representative of the society. These processes should reflect the people's interests rather than being merely representative of a particular section. A popular political society helps in making these institutions more legitimate and effective.
the president and the parliament. However, despite these the first Duma in 1994 produced a considerable number of legislations; during the Second Duma (1996-99) 500 bills were passed and signed into law by the president.

In the law making field, president enjoys the power to veto the legislation passed by the Parliament whereas the Parliament (the State Duma and The Federation Council) can also override the Presidential veto. However, the powers of President depend on number of factors. Primarily his association with any party and the strength of that party in the Parliament (the State Duma) is the most significant factor. The confrontation between the legislature and executive was at its peak during the first five-six years after adoption of the new Constitution. It was so because during this period communists and the ultra-nationalist parties together were in a majority. The parties which were favoring Yeltsin were relatively weak. Consequently, parliament and president were in a conflict situation on many issues especially on the appointment of Prime Minister, passing the budget and removal of ministers. A study by Troxel shows that the decrees issued by the President were non-normative in nature. These decrees were not related to major policy areas. In her analysis she has explained how the normative decrees have been issued by President. Parliament also consulted on important policy issues. Another factor which has strengthened role of the parliament in the law making process is representation of political parties in the parliamentary committees. These committees are responsible for preparing the draft of law and for other financial matters.

To a great extent Parliamentary efficiency depends on the efficiency of parties in the political system. As argued before political parties in Russian federation are weak. Apart from existence of strong presidency their own organizational weaknesses have made them ineffective. Change of party by the State Duma deputies in the first two Duma tenures was one such example. Besides, parties have very less role to play in the selection of president, prime minister and his cabinet. Rather it is the president whose opinion dominates over others. In other words, existence of party depends on the party rather than the party affecting the president.
In order to study impact of presidency the study selects its relationship with the parliament, civil society and the Russian bureaucracy. This chapter is based on the assumption that in the institutional sphere basic principles of democratic governance have been ignored so that all other institutions depend on the presidency for performing their functions. An efficient and strong civil society could play the role of catalyst in the democratization process and make the state more decentralized and accountable to people only if it has some role to play in the decision-making process. Such a state will always have more legitimacy as compared to a state which rests upon the bureaucracy for its interaction with the society.

Similarly a strong parliament keeps checks on the executive’s actions. The parliament is the supreme legislation making body. It drafts, discusses, and adopts laws. It represents

### Table 3.1

**Governance, political society and development (Correlation)**

*Source: Hyden, Court and Mease (2005)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>World Governance Survey</th>
<th>Political society score</th>
<th>Civil society score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>3.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chile</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td>3.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>3.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>97.5</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>3.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>2.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mongolia</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td>3.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>3.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>2.69</td>
<td>2.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>2.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peru</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>3.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>3.02</td>
<td>3.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyrgyzstan</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>2.49</td>
<td>2.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>3.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>2.36</td>
<td>2.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>1.65</td>
<td>2.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Togo</td>
<td>62.5</td>
<td>1.84</td>
<td>2.53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Political society aggregate score: 2.65
Civil society aggregate score: 3.04
people’s voice. It also provides political parties scope to influence decision-making. In the post-Soviet Russia the presidency and not the parliament determines basic guidelines of the policy-formation. The new constitution categorically assigns these responsibilities to the president. President has been vested with extraordinary powers to ensure stability of the political system. Parliament is considered as a source of instability and therefore causing weak state.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent variables</th>
<th>Constitutional powers/position/recognition</th>
<th>Role in government formation</th>
<th>Role in policy-formation</th>
<th>Level of trust among people</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Institutions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presidency</td>
<td>Dominant</td>
<td>Dominant</td>
<td>Dominant</td>
<td>Maximum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliament: State Duma and Federation Council</td>
<td>Less as compared to the president</td>
<td>Less as compared to the president</td>
<td>Depends on the cooperation with the president</td>
<td>Less as compared to the president</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil society</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>Very less</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political parties</td>
<td>Right to function independently</td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>Less</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, various comparative studies have shown how a strong parliament and not the presidency or executive system makes the system less corrupt. A strong presidency leads to patronage politics and concentrates power in the hands of few. In order to achieve good governance and an effective state — corruption, patronage politics and centralization of power— need to be checked. A presidential system with weak political parties and not having any history of democratic movements stimulates and not controls these evils. The following discussion tries to show the link between emergence of strong presidency, corruption and weakening of other institutions, and emergence of a weak state as their collective effect.
THE RUSSIAN PARLIAMENT

Various democratization and governance studies have shown that a strong parliament helps in achieving good governance. Major steps towards establishing a democratic polity in new Russia were establishing multi-party system and a Parliament where parties can influence the process of decision-making. The Russian Constitution provides for a bicameral legislature. The lower house is called the State Duma whereas the upper house is known as the Federation Council. The State Duma is the main decision-making body as the Constitution states that the council only functions on a part-time basis. This does not mean that the Council of Federation is power-less, but only that its power in the decision-making is much more limited than the Duma’s by the infrequency of sessions and in the policy areas of laws it can approve.

Steven Fish et al (2003) have developed a Parliamentary Power Index (PPI) to measure the strength of a parliament in any country. The PPI is based on various powers of the parliament enshrined by the constitution as well as in real polity. The Parliamentary Power Index shows that greater parliamentary powers lead to an open polity and less corruption.

However, in a cross-country analysis of post-Soviet states Fish argues that “what matters for democracy is the strength of the legislature, rather than whether the constitutional system is formally presidential, parliamentary or semi-presidential. Countries with more potent parliaments have done better than those with weaker parliaments”. (Fish 2005: 209). It is based on around eighty independent variables which determine the degree of powers of the parliament. The PPI focuses more on the constitutional powers given to the parliament.

However, the governance analysis, apart from constitutional provisions for the parliament, also includes extra-constitutional variables. It also takes into account a parliament’s efficiency, accountability, level of transparency and its ability to keep an eye on other institutions. A comparative analysis of both the methods (see table 3.3) explains that a political system –with a strong parliament along with accountability and responsiveness to
the voters’ demands, provides better governance as compared to the countries with strong presidential regimes and weak parliaments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>PPI</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>PPI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Albania</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>Lithuania</td>
<td>.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armenia</td>
<td>.53</td>
<td>Macedonia</td>
<td>.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Azerbaijan</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>Moldova</td>
<td>.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belarus</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>Mongolia</td>
<td>.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croatia</td>
<td>.72</td>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estonia</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>Slovakia</td>
<td>.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td>Slovenia</td>
<td>.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>.69</td>
<td>Tajikistan</td>
<td>.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kazakhstan</td>
<td>.31</td>
<td>Ukraine</td>
<td>.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyrgyzstan</td>
<td>.41</td>
<td>Uzbekistan</td>
<td>.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latvia</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A comparison between the Parliamentary Power Index and World Governance Survey shows the relationship between the powers and effectiveness of parliament and condition of governance in a country. Mongolia with maximum score in the list of compared countries scores also provides highest score in the governance index. Similarly Bulgaria with second rank in terms of parliamentary power scored second in the World Governance Survey.
Table 3.4
Comparison of PPI and WGS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries</th>
<th>PPI</th>
<th>WGS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyrgyzstan</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mongolia</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Various studies argue that countries undergoing transition with strong Parliaments have moved faster on the path of democratization rather than countries with strong Presidential systems. The strength of Parliament also depends on its organization. David Olson and Philip Norton maintain that:

‘the extent to which a legislature is well organized and well equipped can affect its ability to participate in the policy process…If it has some latitude for independent thought and action, its ability to take advantage of those opportunities is affected by the extent to which it is internally organized. The main means by which legislatures are internally organized are political parties and committees. Parties in democratic legislatures are usually few in number, large in size, and relatively ‘strong’ while committees tend to be more numerous smaller in size and “weak” ’ (Olson and Norton 1996: 9).

In Russia the presidential powers have encroached on the parliamentary powers. The new Constitution gives power to issue decree to the President in case of emergency. So far this power had been misused by the President to by pass the parliament. Other studies of institutions in the Russia, however, do not concur with this notion. With the help of various empirical explanations these studies have shown that in spite of weak and fragmented party system Russian Parliament has influenced the process of policy formation. Though its effectiveness is less as compared to many Parliaments in the developed world yet it is not a completely marginalized institution (Remington 2001).

During initial Yeltsin period Parliament influenced the process of policy formulation and law making. The politics in Russia during this period was marked by confrontation between
the president and the parliament. However, despite these the first Duma in 1994 produced a considerable number of legislations; during the Second Duma (1996-99) 500 bills were passed and signed into law by the president.

In the law making field, president enjoys the power to veto the legislation passed by the Parliament whereas the Parliament (the State Duma and The Federation Council) can also override the Presidential veto. However, the powers of President depend on number of factors. Primarily his association with any party and the strength of that party in the Parliament (the State Duma) is the most significant factor. The confrontation between the legislature and executive was at its peak during the first five-six years after adoption of the new Constitution. It was so because during this period communists and the ultra-nationalist parties together were in a majority. The parties which were favoring Yeltsin were relatively weak. Consequently, parliament and president were in a conflict situation on many issues especially on the appointment of Prime Minister, passing the budget and removal of ministers. A study by Troxel shows that the decrees issued by the President were non-normative in nature. These decrees were not related to major policy areas. In her analysis she has explained how the normative decrees have been issued by President. Parliament also consulted on important policy issues. Another factor which has strengthened role of the parliament in the law making process is representation of political parties in the parliamentary committees. These committees are responsible for preparing the draft of law and for other financial matters.

To a great extent Parliamentary efficiency depends on the efficiency of parties in the political system. As argued before political parties in Russian federation are weak. Apart from existence of strong presidency their own organizational weaknesses have made them ineffective. Change of party by the State Duma deputies in the first two Duma tenures was one such example. Besides, parties have very less role to play in the selection of president, prime minister and his cabinet. Rather it is the president whose opinion dominates over others. In other words, existence of party depends on the party rather than the party affecting the president.
These trends have more or less continued even during Putin's presidency. However, the confrontational politics came to an end. He has successfully managed a 'cooperative parliament' which was being dominated by the members of his party of favor— the United Russia. The opposition was rather divided and more or less supportive of the president.

*Political parties and party system*

Parties are the mechanisms through which people communicate their demands to the government. In the modern era of democratization, they are considered most important component for the effective functioning of democracy. They provide representation, form and recruit elites, determine goals of the political system, articulate the interests of citizens, and ensures political socialization.

Besides, in understanding governance and nature of any political system what are important are the way—political parties function and their effectiveness in the polity. Effectiveness here means the role parties play government formation and decision-making process. Their significance in these procedures makes them relevant in any political system (Sartori 1966: 75). According to Richard Rose and Neil Munro (2002: 101) parties can provide democratic government only if their outcome decides collective control of decision-making in government. They identify four requirements in order to make a collective decision making by parties. Firstly, political elites organize parties to fight elections rather than appeal for votes as personalities independent of parties. Secondly, parties must nominate candidates nationwide. Third, national party candidate rather than independent candidates, local parties or separatist regional parties should win the great majority of votes and seats. A fourth requirement is that parties nominate candidates for all elected national offices — is most readily met in a British style parliamentary government, where a single ballot decides which party has a majority and therefore names the prime minister. Fifth and finally, for a majority of voters to hold governors accountable for their behaviour in office, parties should persist from one election to another. If a party system fulfills these requirements than there
are higher possibilities of keeping a government accountable which further ensures good governance.

Richard Sakwa (1995: 91) identifies four features of the political parties in new Russia: emphasis on personalities; amorphous and poorly drafted programmes, the deinstitutionalizing influence of regional politics; the constant splitting and sub-dividing of parties and factions; and the absence of party discipline. These features are quite opposite to the requirements identified by Neil Munro and Richard Rose.

The Russian party system is characterized by differences resulting in variety of functional behaviour of parties. Rose and Munro describe Russian party system as “four systems (italics in original) of parties” rather than a multi-party system or a four party system. In other words parties behave in different ways.

The independent candidates far outnumber party standard-bearers. They have been winning most votes and seats and not the parties. Besides, there is a big disjunction between the electoral parties and Duma parties. Parties do not persist in the subsequent elections. Most Russian parties are ‘ephemeral’. Finally, explaining the social base of political parties Sakwa further asserts that the absence of a recognizable social base to the new political parties was perhaps the single most important factor inhibiting the development of party politics (Sakwa 1996: 95).

If a country does not have independent, free and fair election process parties will not be effective. In case of Russia, as explained earlier, elections are not free and fair (Fish 2005). There are examples of manipulation and fraud in elections. Among such circumstances it is not easy for the parties to be an effective player in the political system. There are number of factors which have resulted in such developments in Russia.

Parties are not free from the influence of Russian oligarchs. They are funded by some corporate group. Consequently the parties’ agenda is nothing but the agenda of the company which supports it. Companies have been sponsoring presidential candidates as well. This trend became stronger after 1995, but following the 1998 crisis funding has reduced drastically. Gazprom, the oil giant was the main sponsor of Our Home is Russia, and later on
provided generous support to Unity and still later to the United Russia, a group that was also funded by Lukoil, Sibneft and Russian Aluminium. Fatherland had been financed by Moscow financial groups beholden to Luzhkov, while All Russia and the Russia’s Regions group of deputies were supported by Lukoil, Interos, and the regional oil companies Tatneft and Bashneft. The opposition liberal party Yabloko had been supported by Gusinsky’s Most group from its earliest days in 1993, not only with funds but with favorable coverage and access to NTV. Later Yabloko’s main sponsor became Yukos, headed by Khodorkovsky (which also supported SPS and CPRF).

The other main liberal grouping, the Union of Right Forces (SPS) was financed by Yukos. Alfa-TNK and Chubais UES, and in general the party was tainted by its perhaps excessively close oligarchical connections. On the left the CPRF and the Agrarian Party have been funded by various branches of the military –industrial complex and the engineering industry, in particular Rosagropromstroi headed by the ‘red-director’ Victor Vidamov, who since 1998 has had a seat on the CPRF’s presidium.

Apart from funding parties, some of the giant state monopolies such as Gazprom, UES and the railway ministry have been very active in supporting candidates in single-mandate constituencies. In the 1999 elections Gazprom supported some 130 candidates and provided them with specialist electoral advice from one of the leading political consultancy firms, Niccolo-M.46

Discussing the reasons behind such a relationship between the party and business groups Richard Sakwa argues that these are attempts to “advance the Kremlin’s ‘parties of power’ and the election of presidents, and this in turn was seen as a way of protecting their gains and interests. As a result of this nexus parties are not the mouthpiece of people but spokesperson of oligarchs. Putin made attempts to evolve an alternative national based party. To some extent these attempts have been successful but have failed to fully control the role of oligarchs in the party politics.

46 During the filed work I interviewed many experts and students of political science in the Moscow State University. Most of them agreed that the agenda of any political party is determined by the company which funds that party. For more details on this also see Sakwa 2004: 200.
In addition to the business-party nexus what has affected the development of an effective party system is the institutional structure (MacFaul 2001). Legislatures are the platform where parties, either as a ruling party or as an opposition, put people's demands before the government. The Russian Parliament is not as strong institution as it is in other democratic countries. Though parties are allowed to perform many important functions in the law making process but due to the emerging nature of polity the parties are not independent and significant players.

Besides, parties are organizationally weak institutions and their presence is limited to the urban areas. Only Communist Party has a nationwide presence due to its strong organizational infrastructure which was built during the Soviet period. Existence of all other parties is dependent on their leader and not on their performance in elections.

In addition to these weaknesses, the performance of parties has not been very impressive. The manifesto on which they fought the elections gets diluted after the elections. This has reduced their credibility among the Russians. Their changing stance on various national issues has negatively affected their image. Parties have been unable to provide any effective program to the voters. Consequently their role has been weak and the President's role continues to grow.

Deputies have been changing their parties so frequently that there is no accountability and commitment for a party-ideology. In a study Stephen White has shown that these change in commitments leave voter confused about the agenda for which they elected the candidate. This has further reduced the faith of voters in the parties.

Besides, except the Communist Party of Russian Federation (CPRF) no other party has a nationwide presence. In fact parties are more interested in the middle-class urban voters rather than appealing to rural voters. Communist party has an organizational structure since the Soviet days which provides it an advantage over other parties. This limited presence is also reflected from the number of candidates which parties nominate from various areas. Apart from the Communist Party no other party had given tickets to candidates from all over the country.
There are examples which show that executive-legislature relations are shifting from ‘confrontation to cooperation’ (Troxel 2003: 3). There have been examples where the Parliament influenced the policy agenda of the government. This has been due to number of reasons. After experience of a decade now the Parliament and well as the President seems to realize the importance of negotiation among the key government institutions. It was evident during Yeltsin’s period that a hostile Duma would be a danger for the stability of the nation. Even the Parliament realizes that confrontation with the President harms their image among the people.

Although political parties remain week but Putin after taking over as the President cleverly ensured a Parliament of his own supporters. Instead of marginalizing Parliament Putin himself has joined a political party called United Russia. During last two elections the United Russia got absolute majority in the lower house of the Parliament. This was due to Putin’s popularity and his association with the party.

II

CIVIL SOCIETY, GOVERNANCE, AND THE STATE

Etymologically, the word civil society (societas civilis) is ‘derived by pre-modern Europeans from Cicero’s definition of the state (civitas) as a partnership in law (societies) with equality of legal status, but not of money and talent, among its members’ (Black 2002: 33). Later on, it became a generic term for a secular legal and political order as distinct from a primitive society.

Civil society has at least three key roles to perform. Firstly, it socializes the masses, makes them aware of their political rights and obligations and promotes them as active players in the political life of the country. Secondly, it fosters associational growth. It brings more organized forms of collective life where people can sit together and discuss issues of social significance. Finally, it creates an enabling environment for policy inputs. It is this factor which makes the study of civil society significant for the process of democratization in
the post-Soviet countries. The more civil society networks are involved in the decision-making process, the more the possibilities of better implementation of various governmental policies.

This study includes modern institutions of civil society such as the media (print and electronic), and various non-governmental organizations which fight for individual rights against state coercion but also foster feeling of brotherhood among its members.

A popular perception is that the Russian state has been a stumbling block in the evolution of a free civil society, as it has been authoritarian in nature throughout the history. During the Soviet period, especially during Stalin’s period no civil society was allowed to flourish outside of party defined limits. This feature led to characterization of Soviet state as a totalitarian state.

However, various studies argue that a tentative civil society was visible in imperial Russia at least from the late eighteenth century though it really expanded in the second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Conroy’s study is full of evidences on how civil society institutions flourished during the imperial Russia.

A combination of government policies and private initiatives helped in increasing the level of education and created an environment conducive for the high public participation in policy making. These efforts were not merely government initiatives. Private organizations played a key role in developing social networks.

However, such developments got discontinued during the Soviet era. There are various streams of thought about civil society evolution in Soviet Russia. Some scholars believe that Soviet state’s mechanisms were so pervasive that there were no independent social organizations (MacFaul 2001). This school also believes that Soviet citizens were completely subjugated to direction by the political regime.

Another school believes that by the late 1980s, an embryonic civil society had taken shape in the Soviet Union (White 2000). Many scholars argue that the main ideology of Soviet state was to accomplish economic development and social security. Perhaps it was
assumed that modernization will automatically lead to independent evolution of civil society (Evans 2006: 28-54). During this period only those organizations which were functioning within the limits of Communist party were allowed.

There are some studies which do not agree with the notion that autonomy was fully absent from Soviet society. Studies by Millar (1987a) and Zimmerman (1987) are among them. They believe that there is strong empirical basis to believe that the informal connections and tradeoffs that were used by Soviet citizens to make the system work for them became more important from one generation to another in the post-Stalin period. This school of thought argues that the Soviet society was not entirely passive in its reaction to initiatives undertaken by the political regime, even after the full consolidation of Stalinism. People in the USSR were not independent who obediently followed all directions from the state and internalized all the party's values and goals as their own.

The civil society in post-Soviet Russia has also been facing challenges from the state. Although when a new Constitution came in place, it guaranteed the freedom of media and freedom of expression, the trends since 1991 have however not always been supportive for the evolution of a vibrant civil society.

The following discussion discusses various aspects of civil society development in Russia:
Media

Table 3.5
National Television Channels in Russia
Source is Oates 2006: 65

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Channel</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Ownership</th>
<th>Daily reach(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Russian Public television (ORT)</td>
<td>51 percent owned by the state, the rest by a mix of public and private corporations</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Russian Television and Radio (RTR)</td>
<td>100 percent state-owned</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>TV-Centre NTV</td>
<td>Funded primarily by the city of Moscow</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>Commercial but now controlled by state interests</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Sports channel TVS (Formerly TV-6)</td>
<td>State-owned; cultural channel created by Presidential decree in 1997. Only television channel not to carry paid advertising</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Despite a brief period of autonomy at the end of the Soviet regime, the Russian media remained polarized between various political views. Rather than becoming an arena for free expression and discussion, it had become a tool in the hands of ruling regime. During the transition, as the Presidential administration and the business elite consolidated their power, the media has become less open and much less free. Particularly on the state-run television, the most popular medium in the country, there is little unbiased political information for viewers.

Russia has all the technical infrastructure necessary for the development of a modern civil society. There are prominent state run media, including the flagship Russian Public Television (Obshchestvennoe rossiiskoe televidenie or ORT). There is a wide range of state-run and commercial television stations across the vast country. There are several major newspapers and wealth of specialty publications. There are both state and commercial radio
stations. The Internet, albeit currently with low usage, is growing rapidly and features many news, politics, and entertainment sites.

However, presence of these mediums of communication does not make the evolution of civil society an easy going affair. While the new Russian Constitution of 1993 contains guarantees regarding freedom of information and the banning of censorship, the period from 1991 to 1993 can best be described as a time of benign neglect of the mass media.

The initial years of post-Communist Russia were years of relatively more openness for media. Although President Yeltsin objected to many of the reports on him in the mass media on the whole he did not broadly impose controls or pressure the mass media with dubious legal maneuvers (aside from briefly banning the media that supported the reactionary Parliament).

However, government and establishment friendly behavior of Russian media was exposed during and after the 1993 Parliamentary elections. Russia passed a liberal campaign law, allowing parties and candidates free and equal access to state-run television and newspapers. Most of the campaigning focused on the race for the lower house of the Russian Parliament, the 450-seat Duma. The campaign rules included an hour of free broadcast time for all thirteen parties in the election, as well as free space in major newspapers to campaign. In addition, parties and candidates were allowed to buy paid advertising, even on the television. Technically constrained by campaign spending limits, the financial rules were largely ignored. Several parties, including the pro-government Russia's Choice and nationalist Liberal-Democrats, bought paid advertising space on a large scale.

Although the campaign law called for fair and equal coverage of political parties, Russia's Choice received an excessive amount of coverage on Vermya while the Communist Party of the Russian Federation received no coverage (Oates 1998). During the 1993 campaign, journalists generally ignored the flamboyant nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovsky, who made several xenophobic and racist comments during his free time speeches and paid advertising.
These instances between the party-of-power and the other non-ruling parties have continued even in the subsequent election campaigns for the Parliament (1995, 1999 and 2003). It was described broadly as unfair in three ways. First, pro-government parties and candidates—even those with little voter appeal—continued to receive an inordinate amount of coverage. Second, the Communists and others, seen as a challenge to the Russian government, received substantially less coverage, and often it was less than positive. For example, an analysis of news content on ORT and NTV in the 1999 campaign found that the Communists received just 5 percent of the election news coverage on ORT, and just 3 percent of the election news coverage on NTV—despite winning the large number of votes in the Duma party-list contest. In addition, by 1999 journalist were practicing the dubious tactics of ‘black propaganda’, smearing candidates with scandal-laden stories with little journalistic integrity, and not allowing for a proper reply from the victims.

It is important to mention that the entire media in Russia is not run by the state. There is a sizeable private media industry, although the last national commercial television station that openly opposed the Putin regime was taken off the air in 2003. Although private media has worked against a government monopoly on information, the structure of the media environment in Russia has militated against those efforts. Many experts on media believe that the commercial media are critical to maintaining a balance of information. In this way, commercial media has a particular advantage over the state-run media, a critical ability to criticize without the fear of retaliation from political patrons.

Putin was determined to strengthen the Russian state and enhance Russia’s status as a respected power, and that he regarded economic growth and internal order as necessary means to those ends. Putin’s style to implement his plans cautiously and gradually, often using indirect methods of discouraging independent criticism, while ostensibly endorsing

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47 For more detail on this issue see a report on Internews at www.internews.ru/en/rumedia/2003
democracy and the rule of law, are nevertheless not favorable for development of independent media.\(^49\)

There has been intense debate over the nature of Russian state after Vladimir Putin became the President of Russia. In the words of Michael McFaul (2004), “Putin has undermined every independent source of political power in Russia during the past few years.”

Initially, some analysts invented terms such as “managed democracy” or “virtual democracy” to explain the complexity of Putin’s design. Gordon Hahn’s (2004) description of Putin’s ‘stealth authoritarianism’ or Aleksei Zudin’s (2003) concept of Putin’s ‘monocentrism’ seems to be more accurate portrayals. The real question is no longer whether Putin wants to decrease the degree of pluralism in the Russian polity, or whether he can successfully manipulate political forces to make that possible\(^50\), since the answers to both these questions are obviously affirmative; the real challenge for researchers is to discern the contours of the structures that Putin sought to construct.

Russia’s small group of financial houses and oil and gas companies gobbled up many of Russia’s national newspapers. Opposition publications such as Zavtra, Sovetskaya Rossiya, and the dozens of publications put out by the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia have survived the transition to the market economy, but their circulations are small. Regional newspapers still remain independent from Moscow’s oligarchs, but they are tied closely to local governors.

The nature of Russia’s transition from communist rule allowed for an explosion of new sources of information and a vibrant independent media. On the whole, the Russian print media or press still remain free of state control and provides a wide spectrum of views. At the same time, the continued role of the state in owning and managing media resources, particularly the national television networks, has weakened this important democratic


\(^{50}\) “Putin Proposes Major Revamping of Senate- Vladimir Putin-Government Has to Work!”, Rossiiskaya Gazeta, May 19, 2000, p.3, CD/SP, Vol. 52, No. 20, June 14, 2000, p.4.
institution in the last one decade. A more successful market reform might have produced a more independent media.

**Non-governmental organizations**

Non-governmental organizations are those organizations which work for various public issues but they do not come under the government's jurisdiction as a formal governmental agency. Their nature of work and area differ widely. Here the status of trade union and human rights groups is discussed.

In the post-Soviet Russia west sponsored NGOs have been mushrooming. They are active in poverty reduction programmes, human right awareness, in the field of education and fight against corruption. However, after the colored revolutions in the neighboring countries, Russian government decided to keep a check on the NGO activities and their funding sources. In order to do so a new NGO law was passed. This law was criticized by many western scholars as an attack on the civil society development in Russia.

In order to gain some popularity and to bring NGOs with the government the Kremlin organized a meet of NGOs which are working across the country. Macfaul criticizes such attempts. He argues that the meet was organized just to send an impression that there is a significant involvement of the civil society in the ongoing democratization process. Since it was a huge gathering no substantial discussion could take place. Similarly, the president came for few hours to speak and left. Along with him most of the senior administrators also left. The meet was attended by the NGO participant. The government machinery participation was for the name sake.

Moreover, the NGOs are neither transparent nor accountable in their functioning. Many of them are considered corrupt. Most of the NGOs exist only on papers. Consequently, people do not have faith in the activities which are being carried out by these institutions. Therefore they have very less influence on the opinion of the masses. This has also prevented them from being an active partner in the ongoing democratization.
Trade Unions in Russia have substantial number of memberships. However, in the age of privatization and a market economy these numbers are going down nowadays. Yet membership is neither voluntary nor meaningful. In general, trade unions are quite weak in Russia. However, they remain an important focus for study because they possess significant level of potential power. Massive strikes could disrupt the economy or destabilize politics.\textsuperscript{51} It happened over the issue of pensions and some other demands related to social security payments for the old age people. Even during the winters thousands of people gathered on the roads in Russia, while protesting against the government’s policies of reduction in the expenditures on various social services.

Most Russians firmly seem to believe that all trade unions are “sham organizations created solely to make the leadership rich and the average person poor” (Davis 2006: 207). In addition, many Russian trade unions have serious legitimacy problems with their own memberships; over 55 percent of Russians interviewed in one study stated that trade unions could not be trusted at all. They are neither the “transmission belts” for the Communist party nor staunch defendants of the embattled worker. Over 66 percent of Russians interviewed in Gordon’s study stated, that unions do not defend the interests of ordinary people (Davis 2006: 207). Even those few unions that do try to defend workers are often blamed when they fail to make workers’ lives better or easier.

The trade unions in Russia are not united. They fight one another in numerous ways and in numerous venues, from the State Duma and the Tripartite Commission to the International Labor Organization (ILO) and the AFL/CIO. This is fallout of the post-Soviet politics on the trade unions.

Further, the trade unions remain authoritarian in decision making structure, still allow management and regular workers’ to belong to the same union, and continue to receive substantial state preference in the Russian system. The Federation of Independent Trade Unions, with its constituent branch unions, remains the single dominant union organization in

\textsuperscript{51} It happened over the issue of pensions and some other demands related to social security payments for the old age people. Even during the winters thousands of people gathered on the roads in Russia, while protesting against the government’s policies of reduction in the expenditures on various social services.
Russia, though regional affiliates have shown autonomy, and even ignored the federal organizations at times.

During the Putin era, restrictions on associations grew more acute. In the 1990s, surveillance of private citizens' communication and lives-a hallmark of the Soviet regime-decreased dramatically. But since 2000, the monitoring of those whom officials consider opponents-be they Committee of Soldiers' Mothers-is common place. The nationwide network that fights official mendacity on casualty counts in Chechnya, or opponents of incumbents in regional elections—has returned with a vengeance. Proving such activity is always difficult, but the behaviour of political actors themselves is instructive. As the *Nations in Transit* (2003: 51) report for 2003 notes "Many environmental and political activists....now eschew e-mail for sensitive communications, associational life is cramped at best." Under such circumstances associational life is cramped at best.

III

**PRESIDENCY IN RUSSIA**

In societies undergoing transition, a more prominent and dominating role for the president has been favored. It has been argued that strong presidentialism leads to a strong, and therefore efficient state. Legislatures are battle fields of politicians and create delays and politicize unnecessary issues. Strong presidency, on the other hand, leads to fast decision-making process.

The 1993 constitution of Russia was the choice of Russian president and was drafted by the team appointed by him. Consequently it came up with a draft favoring a strong presidential system. It is not just the constitution but also the polity which has resulted into emergence of a strong presidential system.

The new constitution provides extraordinary powers in the hands of the Russian president. It declares: "The President of the Russian Federation shall be the guarantor of the Constitution of the Russian Federation and of human and civil rights and freedoms. In accordance with the procedure established by the Constitution of the Russian Federation, he
(she) shall adopt measures to protect the sovereignty of the Russian Federation, its independence and State integrity, and shall ensure the coordinated functioning and interaction of State government bodies (Article 80)\textsuperscript{52}.

The President is given the powers to decide the basic policy guidelines of the country’s governance. He is the chief commander of all forces of the Russia federation. Russian president has the power to issue decrees by which it can bypass the parliament’s law making powers. It can declare emergency whenever he feels the need. Moreover, the Russian president controls the administrative machinery. He also appoints the regional heads in the federal units. As a result presidency is the most influential institution in the Russian political system.

On the basis of these tendencies the Russian political system is defined as ‘super-presidential’. However, there is a clear mismatch between the popularity of various institutions and level of trust amongst the people. This can be seen in context of other institutions as well.

Political parties which are the backbone of any political system enjoy very less trust of the voters. Different studies have investigated the reasons behind the failures of political parties in providing an alternative to the nominee of the president. But after almost two decades Russian political parties have failed in doing so. People rely more on president than on their own Duma representative or on any political party. In the initial years of the functioning of new parliament it was a battle field between the president and the parliament. The parliament – which is the representative institution failed in building any positive image of a well functioning institution which is concerned with popular needs. But Remington’s extensive study, the first in-depth analysis of post-Soviet Russian parliament, has shown that in spite of continuous confrontation between the two key institutions of political system the Russian parliament did a commendable job.

A major weakness of presidential systems is that they concentrate power in the hands of one person. In the countries under the process of democratization the role of presidency also affect the future of democracy. Popular perception of democracy in these countries is linked

\textsuperscript{52} See the Text of Constitution of the Russian Federation available at http://www.kremlin.ru/.
to the popularity of President. His popularity is considered as flourishing of democracy whereas decline in his popularity is interpreted as decline of democracy. This has a strong case in Russian democracy as well. A strong presidency has lead to weakening of other governance institutions. As Fish argues, ‘Superpresidentialism enervates state agencies mainly by means of the personalistic, anti-institutional impulse that it builds into political life. If a single actor enjoys, or potentially enjoys mastery, he or she has an incentive to block the formation of foci of organization and influence that can challenge him or her. The ruler may say- and even sincerely believes- that he or she desires stable agencies that operate according to well-established rules. And yet, such entities are in reality a threat to the ruler’s supremacy and freedom of action.’ (Fish 2005: 237).

Whenever there was a conflict situation between the parliament and president it was always considered as a challenge to the democratization process. Presidents of Russia have preferred to stay away from active party politics. Election of President has been dependent on his own personality and not on his association with any political party. In fact existence of parties depends on their closeness and relations with the President. Since President enjoys the decision-making power, appointment and removal of prime minister and the cabinet, his office is the real policy maker. This has reduced influence of the parties on the policy making. Furthermore a strong presidency has promoted corruption and misuse of state machinery by those whom the President supports. The chart below categorizes the powers of the Russian President. In various cross-country analysis scholars in their studies have shown how the Russian President is stronger compared to other Presidential systems in the post-Communist states. Due to these extra-ordinary powers the Russian political system has been defined as ‘super-Presidential’. However those who believe that the Russian President has been much more liberal as compared to other post-Communist states prefer to call it a ‘semi-Presidential system’.

However the scenario has not changed much. The conflict between the Parliament and presidency or between the executive and legislature is not over yet. These conflicts have negatively affected the governance leading to a weak state. As the chart shows the 1993 Constitution gives extra ordinary powers to the President. He may issue a decree in case of need. This power has been used by the Russian President to clearly bypass the legislative law
making process. This had also resulted in great political instability many times. Especially during the Yeltsin period clashes were quite common between the legislature and the executive. There were attempts by Parliament to pressurize President on various issues.

A major feature of presidentialism in Russia is the frequent use of president's power to issues decrees. Many studies have tried to show that after Putin’s take over use of decrees has gone down. The parliament has been allowed to play its role in the law making process. The decrees were issued only for minor appointments or for other ceremonial functions. Major issues were discussed in the parliament and decisions were taken with the help of the parliamentary consent (Troxel 2003).

However, another study by Oleh Protsyk (2004) shows that in reality major policy issues and decision making takes place with the help of the decree. Besides, he has also shown that a large number of decrees are not published in the newspapers. This is an indication of non-transparency and non-accountability as it does not go through the people nor through the parliament.

IV

THE RUSSIAN BUREAUCRACY

Max Weber in his definition of state highlighted bureaucracy as a major organ of the state. Strength and weakness of a state depends on the efficacy of the bureaucratic system. It is so because it carries the responsibility of implementation of government policies and laws. Without appropriate implementation laws are nothing but words on papers. Study of governance remains incomplete without looking into the role which bureaucracy plays in it. In many developing countries bureaucratic structure has a significant role to play in the governance formation and reforms. Though governance reforms itself demands reforms within the bureaucracy but again its implementation depends on the willing cooperation of the bureaucracy.

In the Soviet era bureaucracy was taking care of a number of responsibilities. It was not only an implementation agency but also agency for change and development. However what
made it different was its affiliation with the Communist Party of Soviet Union. This resulted in politicization of bureaucracy. Bureaucratic apparatus was also a part of the political system. Gradually this led to emergence of an inefficient bureaucracy which started working for its personal political and other benefits rather than the welfare of the society.

Yeltsin banned any relationship between political parties and the bureaucracy in new Russia in 1991. However, during the market reforms bureaucracy was a major player in implementation of these programs. It tried to derive benefit out of prevailing chaotic situation of the country. Since the senior bureaucrats have all important information about various industries, they made huge money out of the privatization programs. During Yeltsin’s period there were no major steps to reform the bureaucracy. However, in order to reduce its powers privatization programs were implemented. The government sector was discouraged, and it was assumed that this will reduce the powers of bureaucracy.

Even after a decade the bureaucratic structure of Russia remains intact. In fact, in terms of numbers it has expanded. If in 1990 the whole Soviet administrative apparatus, including central, regional and local government and the ministries, numbered 662,700, by 2000, the bureaucracy in Russia numbered around one million. This vast bureaucratic structure has been the core of Putin’s social base of support but it has also posed a political challenge.

Recognizing this problem, President Putin lambasted Russian bureaucracy that had ‘proved ill-prepared for working out and implementing the decisions appropriate to the country’s present needs’. He said: ‘The powers of our bureaucracy are still vast. But the number of powers it possesses do not match the quality of government. I have to stress that the source of this is nothing other than the superfluous functions of state government bodies. And yet, despite the huge numbers of functionaries, the country has a severe dearth of personnel at every level in all government structures. There is a dearth of modern managers, of efficient people.’

Plans for administrative reforms moved forward very slowly. Reforms were designed to achieve the functional restructuring of state service by reducing the number of state agencies

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53 BBC Monitoring, 16 May 2003; in JRL 7186/1.
and the size of the bureaucracy. One plan in early 2003 talked of reducing the number of ministries from 24 to 15-17, while the economic development ministry divided the 5,000 functions performed by the state into three categories: setting regulations, applying regulations, and providing state services, and examined those that could be abolished (Sakwa 2004: 95).

Various surveys also show lack of people’s faith in various institutions accept the presidency. This has further strengthened the president’s position in the politics. Putin’s popularity ratings were quite high during his tenure as president.

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**Figure 3.2**

Institutions: Influence Without Trust

Source: Rose and Munro 2003: 226

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54 The data is taken from the New Russia Barometer X. Nationwide Survey, 17 June-3 July 2001. Number of respondents 2000. Trust and influence figures represent those giving a five to seven on a seven-point scale.
However, popularity has been misused by the presidential candidates. During Yeltsin’s period the parliament was sidelined on most of the important policy matters. Civil society faced regular crackdowns from the authorities especially the media persons. Another survey of Russian governance in a comparative study has also shown its poor political society score. The political society includes the environment in which various governmental agencies and civil society institutions function. According to the survey Russia scores quite low.

![Political society score chart]

**Conclusion**

It is clear from the above discussion that the Russian president dominates all other political institutions, so much so that Klyamkin and Shevtsova have called him an ‘elected monarch’. Though this has provided political and economic stability to Russia but is hampering democratization. A free and democratic polity is yet to evolve. Principles of democratic governance have not received much attention from the policy makers. Institutions like political parties, media, pressure groups and other civil society groups are in a nascent phase. Therefore people do not have channels to express and convey their demands. In fact
the entire focus is on economic growth and not on democratic development. Consequently, only a section is snatching away the benefits of growth and a large section remains neglected. This marginalization has further resulted in a weak and ineffective state. Next chapter deals with impacts of reforms in more details.