Chapter-III

Democracy and Civil Society in Post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan
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DEMOCRACY AND CIVIL SOCIETY IN POST-SOVIET KYRGYZSTAN

Nature of Transition from Soviet Civil Society to Post- Soviet Civil Society and Democratization Process

Transitions share some common features that justify comparison across time and space. First, a ‘transition’, by definition, means that the antecedent political and economic socio-cultural system and its effects have not been completely eliminated or destroyed. Institutional and policy legacies from the past continue to have relevance in the present. So, there is the greater possibility that the previous leaders and dominant political organization will continue to have a substantial amount of influence during the transition. In many cases, this produces a situation in which the transition is being carried out by some leaders who held power in and benefited from the preceding political and economic system. Secondly, also inherent in transitions is the potential for the initial conditions set forth by the previous social, economic and political system to change, whether they are slightly altered, wholly transformed, or simply reinforced. However transitions create strategic openings by threatening the preceding status quo. Political, social and economic change, whether actual or expected, can create or impede opportunities for new actors to emerge as well as reduce or enhance the ability or established actors to reassert their influence. This, of course, “depends on how the relevant actors perceive the degree and direction of change and assess its impact on their relative ability to influence the transition, for which they must utilize indicators from this transition”.

In a political transition from authoritarian Soviet rule, for instance, these indicators might include the pace of liberalization, such as how quickly independent movements are allowed to organize and compete for power or controls over the media and access to information are loosened. Finally, transitions are generally characterized by a great deal of uncertainty and contingency as there is no complete and reliable information about the degree and direction in which it is moving.

An upheaval national independence never takes place without creating an enduring resonance in the lives of the people it affects. Great political events pass through people's lives like powerful storm winds. They arise suddenly and swiftly and sweep through the established order, leaving everyday life forever rearranged. "As the thunder of great events recedes into the past, individuals are left to pick up their lives to sort out the consequences on an individual level as best they can. The collapse of the U.S.S.R. and the coming of independence swept through the lives of Central Asia's citizens with such force. Whether these people were accustomed to privilege or to deprivation, injustice or the largesse of the old order, the new order brought changes that affected their lives in fundamental ways". For the journalist or social scientist, these changes could be described as 'economic' or 'political' or 'social'. "But for the people whose lives were transformed by these events, the important differences were mainly psychological." 

A whole civilization was swept aside. The Soviet regime was stagnant, brutal and corrupt in many ways. But it was also a system based on certain values, morals and mutual understandings that millions of people shared. Every system has certain merits of its own, and simultaneously it has some inherent demerits also. Likewise, the Soviet system also created its own beneficiaries, people who personally benefited from the established order. As the old order passed, these things too passed. Instead, it created a vacuum, by raising many questions, in the minds of everybody.

In the closing days of 1991 in a hurriedly arranged meeting in Alma-Ata, Kazakhstan, eleven communist party officials signed documents declaring that the U.S.S.R. shall henceforth cease to exist. No public referendum was held on the 'Alma-Ata Declaration.' No legislature was asked to ratify the agreement. No court was asked to rule on its constitutionality. No international forum was convened to discuss its global ramifications. According to Gleason, among the Soviet citizenry, the Alma-Ata Declaration gave rise to conflicting emotions. Surprise, resignation, and despair mixed with relief, elation and celebration.

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3 Ibid.
The document was almost immediately accepted as legitimate by the international community. With this swift international acceptance of the Alma-Ata Declaration, the first socialist experiment the seventy year-long effort to create a new kind of civilization came abruptly to a close. The world's largest country, a global superpower, dissolved into fifteen independent states. Among these independent states were five former Soviet Socialist Republics (SSRs) of Central Asia: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. Each of the new states of Central Asia was a founding member of the Commonwealth of Independent States, (C.I.S.) the loosely defined coordinating structure of the post-Soviet community created by the Alma-Ata Declaration. Like other C.I.S countries Kyrgyzstan sought and soon received diplomatic recognition as independent republic from major world powers. It joined the United Nations. It sought participation in leading international organizations such as the International Monetary Fund (I.M.F) and the International bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD). It took pledge to uphold international standards of civil and human rights as specified in the principles of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) (formerly the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, CSCE). It entered the international community as a sovereign state.

These were crucial steps toward political independence. According to Sheel K. Asopa "independence came as a shock causing a psychological and spiritual trauma that has necessitated redefining of identities and relations with the countries of the region and the world outside". But given the vast scale of political, economic and even psychological change resulting from the transition from the communist paradigm, it was soon clear that creating genuine and enduring political independence would require more than merely announcing intentions and issuing declarations. As the first president of independent Kyrgyzstan, Askar Akaev, rightly called attention to the scope of the challenge, "The Empire has collapsed, yet sovereign and independent states have not been established. We are dealing with a far more important phenomenon than it may appear. This is probably the greatest political and social, and economic re-organization of the 20th century:"


6 Askar, Akaev's interview with Ostankino television, on 24 may 1992, quoted in G.Gleason, op.cit., p.2.
The newly independent states have to face some challenges from within and outside their jurisdiction. Some sort of re-organization is made in this transition from the old to new states, to make them stable and balanced in political, economic, social and cultural sphere.

As the internal as well as external forces worked vigorously, Kyrgyzstan quickly broke with its socialist past. Though Kyrgyzstan had many common experiences along with other Central Asian countries under the Soviet Rules, but, it took a different path after independence so far as political, social and economic life of the people is concerned. The transitional period from the old to the new system, has been more strange to the people. The old order demanded conformity and regimentation. It specified what people could comfortably think and how they could safely behave. The new order demands new values, new ideas and new behaviors.

Independence did not come to Kyrgyzstan as a result of indigenous movement, but was imposed upon by Moscow, in the same manner as with the other Central Asian countries. Kyrgyzstan accepted it reluctantly. The path to national consolidation in Kyrgyzstan more closely resembles the cases of ‘New world’ nationalism. Language, religious creed, loyalty to the nation, patriotism to the state these were the attributes that bound people together into the ‘nations’ of the European world. In the new world of decolonization, the bases of national consolidation are different. The rationale of the strong state as an engine of development, the fear of social disorder, the danger of border and territory disputes, and the natural desire of the local elites to retain power constitute the rationale for creating national communities in the circumstances of independence. 7

Nationhood is a necessary condition of the liberal democratic welfare state. Nationhood generates collective power creates a ‘we’ (unity, legitimacy, permanence ), enables mobilization and representation and produces people who are ready to make the highest of sacrifices for a political community that is both modern and based upon some ethnocultural and historical factors. “The presumed existence of this nationhood is a pre-requisite for liberal democracy”. 8

7 Gregory, Gleason. op. cit., p. 15.
A modern liberal democratic state is also a welfare state. Social justice will be politically feasible only in a polity with a high degree of communal solidarity where a community of obligation is in place. Such a community of obligation requires mutual trust, a shard overarching national identity and common loyalties. According to David Miller "a shared national identity or nationality is a precondition to achieve certain political aims such as social justice and a deliberative democracy". Every society requires such values for it to constitute a cohesive polity. That value is the core of the nation.

There is a link between national identity and civil society. It has a great impact on the transition process. A weak national identity leading to a weak civil society will therefore negatively influence the democratic transition. Democratic consolidation will produce a robust civil society that will help to create a sense of national solidarity within the political unit while taming and marginalizing ethnic nationalism. The strength of civil society and national identity are therefore closely interlinked. Edward shills opines that "nationality provides the cohesion which would otherwise have been lacking in those civil societies". He further adds that without a nation there can be no civil society. The absence of national unity generated by the existence of a civil nation will therefore directly affect civil society. "Without a civic nation the state does not possess the necessary preconditions to create a civil society, an effective constitution, laws or citizenship because the core of civil society is the dominant nation." National unity and integrity therefore, play a central role in sustaining civil society and generating mobilization. Civil nation-building is central to the political and economic transition process, preferably, prior to democratization. The relationship between civil society and national identity lies at the heart of the transition process in post-communist states. Kyrgyzstan is not exception to it.

Like the other Central Asian leaders, the leaders of the newly independent Kyrgyzstan were soon laboring hard to bring to life the ‘nation’, with public sense of patriotism, loyalty to nation or devotion to the idea of a republic. So, now, after the achievement of independence the leaders of Kyrgyzstan began to create that loyalty, patriotism and devotion. Consequently, the leaders grasped the slogans of nationalism as their new doctrinal guides.

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11 Ibid., p. 94.
According to Gregory Gleason, “earlier during the period of Soviet control in Central Asia, public officials expressed only contempt and disdain for the instruments of market economies and the institutions of democratic representative government. Officials throughout the Soviet Union shared these views in their public pronouncements although their deeply held personal convictions may have been different”.  

In Kyrgyzstan head of the respected Kyrgyz Academy of Sciences was elected as president. He relied for advice and assistance upon high officials whose careers had been built on the Soviet ladder of advancement. Like Akaev, other leaders also relied upon the high officials and middle managers to manage the affairs of the bureaucracies. Virtually in all cases, non-indigenous high level managers replaced the native managers. As the new leaders are not well experienced to the new political environment, the affair’s of the state largely remains with the managerial bureaucracy. The role of the managers will be reduced when the political and administrative maturity of the leaders will be achieved.

The political and economic doctrines of the former USSR offered little chance in the redesign of public and private institutions. After independence, the new states had to redesign their institutions according to the new circumstances. The maintenance of public order and economic survival required that these new political and economic institutions had to be fashioned swiftly. Among the Central Asian countries Kyrgyzstan very quickly moved in this direction. President Akaev rhetorically embraced the idea of establishing market based economy and civil society modeled after those that exist in the developed world. Yet, when he consulted with the Western specialists he found that prevailing economic and administrative theories offered little guidance on how to grow capitalist markets and democracy from the soil of Soviet style socialism. The people of Kyrgyzstan would require much more time to accommodate the socio-political, economic and psychological changes which are occurring there in.

In the absence of general principles to guide the process of transition, politics took precedence over principles. The urgent and the necessary took precedence over the beneficial and the desired. Since the former communist leaders of Central Asia commanded

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12 Gregory, Gleason, op.cit., p.16.
the only institutions capable of guiding the process of “dissatisfaction” the dismantling of
the state run economies and communist party dominated political system these communist
leaders themselves assumed the responsibility for engineering the transition to post
communist rule. From common starting points within the old Soviet administrative
structure, the newly independent countries of Central Asia set out on very different paths.
Style of leadership, forms of administration, economic development strategies steps towards
liberalization and the roles of ethnic minorities evolved differently in the five countries. In
some cases the unique features of individual states made a crucial difference. Hence
different styles of leadership developed that rule the country accordingly. In case of
Kyrgyzstan under president Akaev, during the first three or four years of independence,
there was soft authoritarianism, again in the mid 1990’s it was electoral democracy and since
1998 it has developed again to soft authoritarianism.

So, in this backdrop to assess the degree and direction of transition, it is important to
examine the nature of political and economic transformation which have occurred in
Kyrgyzstan immediately after the achievement of its independent state-hood. The
transitional context in Kyrgyzstan, following it’s declaration of independence in August
1991 and leading up to the establishment of electoral rules in January 1994, was
characterized by widespread and fast-paced political and economic reform as well as the
direct involvement of international actors in the reform process. Speaking in the initial ears,
Akaev said, “A great deal has been done in the two years since independence. First of all we
have achieved the prestige of our state...in the world of community I think Kyrgyzstan is
today recognized by the entire world community as an independent sovereign state
advancing along the path of truly democratic transformation and market reform”. 14

Any form of transformation in any society is measured by comparing between the new and
old indicators of that society to estimate the degree and direction of change, the new
indicators have brought into the system. Kyrgyzstan is no exception to it. The political
transition in Kyrgyzstan shows the following indicators.

• Decentralization of political authority and decision-making.

• De facto breakdown of the local and regional Soviets.

13 Ibid., p. 13.
14 Askar, Akaev, President of Kyrgyzstan, Marking Kyrgyzstan’s second anniversary of Independence, in 1993,
Foreign Broadcast Information Service, (Sov.-93-168, 1 September, 1993).
• Decentralization of economic policy making.
• Rapid transition to market economy.
• Proliferation of independent organizations at the regional level.
• Relaxation of central control over individual and groups activities
• Direct access to foreign investment on international aid etc.

The overall process of political reform in Kyrgyzstan following independence amounted to a relaxation of central control over the country’s political affairs. This included the decentralization of authority to the regional level administration, the emergence of relatively open media with greater public access to information and the proliferation of independent organizations. These features provided regional leaders (akims) with additional social and political resources as well as increased autonomy with which to utilize the dispense them.\(^\text{15}\)

President Akaev supported amendments to the existing law on ‘Local Self Governance’ and ‘Local Administration’ in the republic of Kyrgyzstan in March 1992, which actually strengthened the role of the regional leaders in decision making and implementations of policies at the local level as well as in supervising leader’s activities. As a result, by 1993, some of Akaev’s closest advisors and initial supporters in the central government openly blamed Akaev for what they perceived “as an overall reduction in the power and prestige of their offices”.\(^\text{16}\) With the development of civil society, free and fair election based on universal adult suffrage, existence of multi party system, non interference in private life and private property, liberty of the press, freedom of speech, guarantees for human rights and secularism are maintained in Kyrgyzstan.

So far economic issues are concerned Kyrgyzstan has followed the path of rapid economic liberalization. Max Spoor underlines that “Although a substantial part of the economy is still in state hands, the programme of enterprise privitatisation has made some progress in

\(^{15}\) Pauline, Jones, Luong, op.cit., p. 108.

\(^{16}\) Ibid., pp. 108-109.
The role of many international actors has been increased. Hence, in this context it is important to examine the role of the emerging political elite and thereby how they affect the nature of institutional changes in the post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan.

Emerging Democratic Political Elite And Nature of Institutional Changes

The success of democracy depends largely upon the types of political elites, nature of population, education, standard of living of the people, cultural heritage, and social milieu, political system i.e. constitution, election, and political parties, voluntary association etc. The value and attitude of the political elite shapes a country's political and economic destiny which are much more crucial for study. They are in a unique position to influence institutional design and shape political and economic reform agenda in a country undergoing transition. This fact is equally applicable in case of Kyrgyzstan. The role of political elite in the transitional countries are very important as they are the main actors who are involved in drafting, discussing and ultimately adopting new electoral systems, constitution, formulating socio-economic policy and planning and redressing the ethnic conflict etc. In this process, the role both structural and contingent factors play in shaping elite perceptions of shifts in their relative power, particularly to the degree and direction in which they believe their power is changing due to the instability and uncertainty generated by the transition they face. In short, those who believe that their relative power is increasing with the transition will seek to alter or create institutions such that they receive additional goods or benefits, while those who believe that their relative power is decreasing with the transition will seek to retain as much of the distributional advantage accorded to them by previous institutions as possible. A perceived shift in relative power, therefore, motivates institutional innovation. However, the extent of institutional change versus continuity depends on the overall degree and direction of this perceived power shift.

In the process of transition both structural factors and human agency affect institutional design and regime change. As Luong suggests, “Individuals engaged in the process of designing new institutions utilize both the previous institutional setting (or the structural historical context) and present dynamic circumstances (or the immediate strategic context) in

order to assess the degree and direction in which their relative power is changing and then to
develop strategies of action based on what they expect their influence over the outcome to be
visa-a-vis other actors".18

A close and careful scrutiny of the institutional design process reveals that political identities
are the means through which the past is transmitted into the present. "The source of
institutional continuity, however, is the structural historical context that created and
reinforced the power asymmetries on which these identities are based. In the Central Asian
states, therefore, regional political identities served as the conduit through which their past
continued to influence their subsequent development, yet the generator behind this
continuity was the Soviet institutional legacy that all states shared. Conversely the source of
institutional change lies in the transitional context," underlines Luong.19

In a nutshell, the transition presents an exogenous shock to status quo State and societal
actors then interpret the extent of this shock’s impact on both the overall balance of power
and their relative power within it. The greater or more disruptive, they perceive this shock to
be, the more institutional change one can expect because, the established elites will find
less utility in clinging to their previous political identities. Kyrgyzstan has experienced a
relatively peaceful transition from Soviet rule since the latter’s collapse in 1991. Despite of
the large scale impact of Soviet rule on Kyrgyzstan, there has been an emergence of a
different types of regime in Kyrgyzstan after its independent statehood. According to most
observers Kyrgyzstan embarked on a rapid transition to democracy. As a result, during its
first five years of independence, Kyrgyzstan made more progress toward political
liberalization than any of its regional neighbors."20 After Independence Kyrgyzstan has
undergone many changes along with political and economic liberalization. This can be
analysed with the help of the following table basing on freedom house scores.

19 Ibid., p. 15.
20 Ibid.
### Table 1: Political Liberalization and Regime Type in Central Asia.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Kazakhstan</th>
<th>Kyrgyzstan</th>
<th>Tajikistan</th>
<th>Turkmenistan</th>
<th>Uzbekistan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rating</td>
<td>Regime Type</td>
<td>Rating</td>
<td>Regime Type</td>
<td>Rating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991-2</td>
<td>5.4 PF</td>
<td>Soft autocracy</td>
<td>5.4 PF</td>
<td>Soft autocracy</td>
<td>3.3 PF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Electoral democracy</td>
<td>6.5 PF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992-3</td>
<td>5.5 PF</td>
<td>Soft autocracy</td>
<td>4.2 PF</td>
<td>Electoral democracy</td>
<td>6.6 NF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hard autocracy</td>
<td>7.6 NF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993-4</td>
<td>6.4 PF</td>
<td>Soft autocracy</td>
<td>4.3 PF</td>
<td>Electoral democracy</td>
<td>7.7 NF</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hard autocracy</td>
<td>7.7 NF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994-5</td>
<td>6.5 NF</td>
<td>Soft autocracy</td>
<td>4.3 PF</td>
<td>Electoral democracy</td>
<td>7.7 NF</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hard autocracy</td>
<td>7.7 NF</td>
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<tr>
<td>1995-6</td>
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<td>4.4 PF</td>
<td>Electoral democracy</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hard autocracy</td>
<td>7.7 NF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996-7</td>
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<td>4.4 PF</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hard autocracy</td>
<td>7.7 NF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997-8</td>
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<td>4.4 PF</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hard autocracy</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998-9</td>
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<td>4.5 PF</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Hard autocracy</td>
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<tr>
<td>1999-2000</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hard autocracy</td>
<td>7.7 NF</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The characters representing scores for each year are, from left to right, political rights, civil liberties, and freedom status. Each of the first two is measured on a one-to-seven scale, with one representing the highest degree of freedom and seven the lowest. “F,” “PF,” and “NF,” respectively stand for “free,” “partly free,” and “not free.” Countries whose combined averages for political rights and civil liberties fall between 1.0 and 2.5 are designated “free” between 3.0 and 5.5 “partly free”; and between 5.5 and 7.0 “not free.” These scores are available online at [http://www.freedomhouse.org/ratings/index.htm](http://www.freedomhouse.org/ratings/index.htm). Regime types are classified as follows: liberal democracy = political freedoms 1-2, civil liberties 1-2; electoral democracy = political freedom 2-4, civil liberties 2-4; soft autocracy = political freedom 5-6, civil liberties 5; hard autocracy = political freedom 6-7, civil liberties 6-7.

(Source: Pauline, Jones, Luong, op. cit., p. 16).

Table 1 shows political liberalization and regime type in Central Asia. It is a table showing political liberalization and regime type in Central Asia basing on Freedom House Scores in which Kyrgyzstan has been compared with its other four Central Asia republics, i.e. Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. If we compare Kyrgyzstan with other...
other Central Asian republics we can find out some important differences among them so far political liberalization and regime type are concerned. Since their independence in 1991, these five Central Asian republics adopted different types of regime and accordingly their path to liberalization has been either facilitated or blocked. Immediately after independence Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan had adopted soft autocracy except Tajikistan which had electoral democracy. But when time rolled on, the above mentioned Central Asian countries except Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, all followed the path of hard autocracy regime type, while Kazakhstan followed soft autocracy, Kyrgyzstan followed electoral democracy type regime. As far as degree of freedom, political rights and civil liberties are concerned, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan have no freedom for their citizens. So these countries have been identified as ‘NF’ i.e. No Free Countries. While Kazakhstan had political freedom during the year 1991-1994, but later on since 1994, it has less freedom in connection with political rights and civil societies of citizens. But Kyrgyzstan has maintained its status as Partly Free (P.F.) since its very inception of independent statehood. Hence it is established from the above table, in comparison with the other four Central Asian countries, Kyrgyzstan has better political freedom and civil liberties. It has many political parties, associations, N.G.O.s, free media etc. to its credit. In this regard it may be said that the regime types in the Central Asian countries reflect the value and attitudes of the political elite who came to power after independence.

Political elite in post-socialist societies are made up of individuals and groups of various social and historical origins and ideological orientation, i.e. former dissidents more or less reformist members of the ex-communist nomenklatura, members of professional groups. According to some analysts, “transitional political elites display several common traits, in particular, exclusivity to the non-elite and a lack of professionalism. Consequently, societies at large regard them as unified players monopolizing politics and exercising control over the whole of social life”.

But it is not the fact that the elite are united always for monopolizing powers. According to Frane Adam and Matevz Tomsic “there are many instances of opposition and conflict among various factions of elites, above all, there is competition for control of key resources by forging different social connections (search for alliances, various ‘coalitions’). This means

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that we are in fact not dealing with unified groups.\textsuperscript{22} Social conditions in the former communist countries are to a large extent characterized by the relationship between so called old and new elite, i.e. between elite derived from the ranks of the former regime and the relatively heterogeneous elite formed during the social transition. It can be said that it is often difficult to make a clear-cut division between old and new elites. Even the former nomenklatura has in fact experienced various transformations, and part of it (at least the part that retained its position on the political scene) has embraced democratic principles and norms. However, the thought and action patterns which are essentially a relic of the former undemocratic system are often present in recently founded political parties.

The abruptly overthrown of the former president Akaev, in March, 2005, on the charge of preventing opposition candidates in the election to new unicameral legislature held in late February and mid-march 2005. “With the government building in Bishkek under he control of the opposition the old bicameral legislature met in emergency session and named Kurman Bakiev as acting president and acting Prime Minister. On March 25, Bakiev unveiled his new interim government.”\textsuperscript{23} Askar Akaev formally tender his resignation as President on 4\textsuperscript{th} April 2005. “On April 11\textsuperscript{th} the Supreme Assembly finally accepted Akaev’s resignation with 38 legislature approving the motion.”\textsuperscript{24}

There are two important interpretations relating to the nature of political elite in a transitional political system. One school of thought says that elite remains in power despite emergence of a new regime. This leads to the growth of the concept of circulation of political elite. Others view that elite change with the change of regime. In the Kyrgyz case the former can be applicable.

If we compare the post-communist elites in the context of Central Asian countries, it will be clear that the configuration of national elites differs considerably from one post-socialist Central Asian country to another and the same is true for the balance between reproduction and circulation of elites. “It is precisely the balance and relations among recently emerged factions of post-socialist elites that decisively determine the character of political regimes


(primarily in terms of social order as a whole). Generally speaking one could maintain that the stronger the civil tradition and the greater self-organizational potential a society has, the stronger counter-elite it is capable of forming, and the greater chance it has of maintaining democratic stability. 25

The types of elites in the post-socialist societies, particularly in the former communist Central Asian republics, differ from one another in much the same way as do configurations of elites. The character of a political system in fact depends to a large extent on the type of relations among the various political elites. This is particularly true in the case of system transformation in which elites play a key role in institution builders.

It is evident that in all the countries of the former socialist bloc there have been changes in the character of political elites and they are no longer dealing with the ideocratic type of communist elite characterized by ideological and organizational uniformity. The configuration of political elites primarily in terms of levels of value consensus and structural integration on the one hand, and levels of social, ideological and interest differentiation on the other, varies from country to country.

A closer examination of the elite’s position in Kyrgyzstan since it’s independence till today it clearly indicates that there is neither pure reproduction nor pure circulation, but a greater inclination to one or other form at different point of time. In the initial stage i.e. from independence to the year 1994 there was an atmosphere of competition, bargaining, and accommodation in the Kyrgyzstan elite structure, but latter on, since the year 1994 onwards till the elections in 2000, there was an incremental authoritarian tendency, especially in the increase of the president’s power. It was clearly evident in the censorship of the media and newspaper, imprisonment of opposition leaders and banning of some important organizations which criticized the president’s authoritarian tendencies. 26

But inspite of the development of anti-democratic tendencies, Kyrgyzstan compared to other Central Asian republics, is much more open and democratic. The recent anti-democratic tendencies, nets i.e. the increase in the power of the president was seen by some scholars as

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25 Ibid., p. 438.
the requirement for the consolidation and stability of the nascent political system of Kyrgyzstan. Hence it is essential for the president to hold more power to push forward political and economic reforms and to curb corruptions, criminalization of politics and to fight against ethnic conflict and Islamic terrorist in Kyrgyzstan. Nevertheless with the emergence of democratic elites, some important positive institutional changes have been taken place in Kyrgyzstan, because of which it has been termed as the 'Central Asia's island of Democracy' by John Anderson. The post-independent period in Kyrgyzstan shows the emergence of many positive institutional changes like liberal constitution, periodical election, political parties, associations, press and media etc.

**Constitution**

A constitution may be said to be a collection of principles according to which the powers of the government, the rights of the governed, and the relations between the two are adjusted.\(^27\) But, a constitution in modern times is something more than it's political definition. With the emergence of the concept of welfare state, the nature and scope of the constitution of every democratic state has been widened. Along with government, it has covered wide range of economic and social issues of the citizens in conformity with international standards. Kyrgyzstan being a secular and democratic state is not an exception to all these. After independence in 1991, the most important ask before Kyrgyzstan was how to build an egalitarian pluralistic society by giving due representation to each and every section of the society. Mahavir Singh underlines that “the first task the government of Kyrgyzstan did was, it adopted a constitution, generally considered as the cardinal feature of a democratic country.”\(^28\)

The constitution of Kyrgyzstan was adopted on 5\(^{th}\) May 1993 at the 12\(^{th}\) convocation session of the Supreme Soviet of the Kyrgyz Republic. In the words of president Akaev, “On May 3 1993 Kyrgyzstan adopted it’s first free and sovereign constitution, which is basically individual-oriented. One of the main ideas of the constitution is that a person as an entity is superior to the state, as a subject is primary, with the state in relevance to him (her) being secondary, also that many


human rights, liberties are rooted in man's nature and granted to him from above. According to our constitution the state must acknowledge them, ensure their full implementation".29

The constitution of Kyrgyzstan contains a preamble, eight chapters and total of 97 Articles. The preamble is the manifestation of the central idea of Kyrgyzstan's constitution that is to provide a secular and democratic Kyrgyz Republic, guaranteeing economic, political, legal and social equality to all its citizens, irrespective of ethnicity, religion, language, creed etc. The preamble is read thus: “We, the people of Kyrgyz Republic, aspiring to secure the national revival of the Kyrgyz, the protection and development of interests of representatives of all nationalities, who together with the Kyrgyz form the people of Kyrgyzstan, following ancestor's precepts to live in unity, peace and concord; confirming our adherence to human rights and freedoms and the idea of national statehood; full determination to develop the economy, political and legal institutes and culture to insure appropriate living standards for everyone; proclaiming our adherence to national ethical traditions and to moral principles common to all mankind; desiring to establish ourselves among the peoples of the world as a free and democratic civil society; through our authorized representatives, hereby adopt this constitution.”30

Article 1 of the Kyrgyz constitution mentions that “the Kyrgyz Republic (Kyrgyzstan) is a sovereign, unitary, democratic republic constructed on the basis of a legal secular state”.31 

Chapter one of the Kyrgyz constitution deals with the general principles of the Kyrgyz republic upon which it ought to function. Chapter two deals with citizenship, rights and duties of the citizen. Thus, it is very important so far the citizens' rights are concerned. Chapter three is concerned with the president, his election, powers etc. Chapter four describes about the composition, power of the Jogorku Kenesh (Kyrgyzstan Parliament). Chapter five mentions about the executive power, i.e. the government and local state administration. Chapter six deals with the court and justice system. Chapter seven deals with


31 Ibid.
local self-administration while the last chapter deals with procedure of amendment of the constitution.

Chapter two is very important, as it contains a wide range of rights of the citizens – starting from Article 13 to Article 41. Article 14 of the Kyrgyz constitution states “every citizen of the Kyrgyz Republic by virtue of his/her citizenship shall enjoy rights and perform obligation.” Article 15, which also deals with citizenship rights gives adequate protection to minority cultural rights:

1. The dignity of an individual in the Kyrgyz Republic shall be absolute and inviolable.

   Every person shall enjoy the basic human rights and freedom since birth. These rights shall be recognized as absolute, inalienable, and protected from any person’s encroachments by law and the court.

2. All persons in the Kyrgyz Republic shall be equal before the law and the court. “No one may be exposed to any discrimination, infringement of rights and freedoms, on the motives of origin, sex, race, nationality, language, creed, political and religious convictions or by any other public or personal conditions or circumstances.”

Articles 16, 17, 18, 19 and 21 deal with human rights and various freedoms like freedom of life, security, personal development, worship, press and property. Right to equality has been enshrined in Article 22 of the constitution. Articles 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, and 31 deal with welfare measures to be taken by the state for the children, old-aged person, orphans, poor, labourers so far their material assistance, pension, wage and working conditions are concerned. Articles 32, 33 and 34 deal with education, housing and health respectively. Article 37, guarantees economic freedom of the citizens while article 38, 39 and 40 deal with legal protection. According to Article 39 (point 2), “the state shall guarantee everyone a protection from arbitrary and unlawful interference with one’s private and family life, infringement of one’s honor and dignity, breach of secrecy of correspondence and telephone conversations.”

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32 Ibid.
33 Ibid.
34 Ibid.
President Akaev said, "In the constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic, we, I am convinced managed to fully and accurately identify the wonderful ideas of democracy like priority of human rights and liberties over all the other values, firm guarantees of private life, national reconstruction of the Kyrgyz protection and development of all ethnic minorities constituting together with the Kyrgyz, the people of Kyrgyzstan. In the constitution we proclaimed our adherence to universal moral principles and values, national traditions and our inspiration to live among the peoples of the world as a free and democratic member of the community of nations." 35

Free and fair election and separation of power are other important features of the Kyrgyz constitution. Article 7 of the Kyrgyzstan constitution states that "The state power in the Kyrgyz Republic is based on the following principles:

- The supremacy of the power of the people, which is represented and ensured by the nationally elected head of the state - the president of the Kyrgyz Republic;
- Division of state power into legislative, executive, and judicial branches; and their coordinated functions and interaction;
- The responsibility of state organs to the people and execution by them of their authority on behalf of the people;
- Differentiation between functions of the state and local self government." 36

President Akaev maintains, "According to the constitution, state power is founded on the following principles; separation of powers, all-country presidential elections (President does not represent any branch, but embodies their integrity), state and local government powers are separate." 37

In June 1998 a draft legislation was introduced, proposing constitutional changes to the system of parliamentary elections, scheduled for 1999. In early September Akaev's announcement that there would be a referendum on the proposed amendments which promoted strong criticism from the members of the Zhogrku Kenesh, since the President had failed to consult them on the changes. However, the referendum took place on 17th October

35 Narendra, Kumar, op. cit., p. 143.
36 The Constitution of Kyrgyzstan, op. cit.
37 Narendra, Kumar, op. cit., p. 143.
1998 with participation of about 96% of the electorate, and an overwhelming majority of voters about 90% approved the following constitutional amendments proposed by Akaev: the number of deputed in the Legislative Assembly was "to increase to 60, while representation in the People’s Assembly was to be reduced to 45; the electoral system was to be reformed; restrictions on parliamentary immunity were to be introduced; private land ownership was to be legalized; ‘budgetary populism’ (the presentation of unbalanced or unattainable budgets) was to be banned; and the adoption of any legislation restricting freedom of speech or of the press was to be prohibited." 38

From a brief scrutiny of the Kyrgyz democratic state it appears that like any other modern democratic state’s constitution, it covers a wide range of social, political, economic and legal provisions to accommodate diverse problems and challenges to the Kyrgyz society.

**Elections**

Election is a method of choosing the representatives of people. The regular election of the public officials in an open and competitive process constitutes the chief instrument of popular control in a representative democracy. Election demonstrate that political power derives from the people and is held in trust for them; and that it is to the people that politicians must account for their actions. Kyrgyzstan’s constitution ensures a free and fair election to the office of the President, to the Parliament and to the bodies of self government. Point 6 of Article I says that “Election shall be free and shall be held on the basis of universal equal and direct suffrage by secret ballot, Citizens who have attained the age of 18 may participated in elections”. 39

There is a Central Election Commission (CEC) in Kyrgyzstan which is formed by parliament, composed of nonpartisan individuals and in charge of supervising the entire electoral process-including the formation of electoral districts and District Electoral Commission (DEC), the allocation of state funds for campaign, financing, and the registration of the elected deputies to the parliament. Articles thirteen through sixteen of the

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electoral Law outline the selection and jurisdiction of the CEC and DEC. Presently the CEC retains its role in monitoring the overall electoral process, including hearing complaints from citizens and candidates regarding the District Electoral Commission (D.E.C.), while the D.E.C. has greater responsibility for registering candidates as well as counting votes and reporting the final election results.

Prior to the new constitution of Kyrgyzstan the President's tenure was 5 years. Askar Akaev was President at that time, in a referendum on 30th January, 1994, 96% of votes cast favoured Akaev, serving out the rest of his term of office. The turn out was 95%. Divisions within the legislature evolved into a parliamentary crisis in September 1994, when more than 180 pro-reform deputies announced their intention to boycott the next session of the Zhogorku Kenesh in protest at the continuing obstruction by former communists of the economic reforms process. They also demanded the dissolution of the Kenesh and the holding of fresh elections. The entire Government tendered its resignation, and Akaev announced that parliamentary election would be held forthwith. In a referendum on 22-23 October 1994, of the 87% of the electorate that participated in that referendum, more than 70% endorsed a 70 member Peoples' Assembly (upper chamber) to represent regional interests at bi-annual sessions, and a permanent 35-member Legislative Assembly (lower chamber) representing the population as a whole. The existing legislature was thus automatically dissolved.

The first real election to the Kyrgyz parliament was held on 5th February 1995. Many political parties took part in this election. More than 1,000 candidates, representing 15 ethnic groups, contested the election to the two chambers of the new Zhogorku Kenesh, with the participation of some 62% of the electorate. Many writers see the election as a turning point in the democratization process in Kyrgyzstan. Mahavir Singh says that “the parliamentary election of 1995 marks a watershed in the political development of the country.”

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40 Pauline, Jones Luong, op.cit., p. 171.
41 Ibid., p. 173; See also Ugen Huskey, in Sally, N. Cummings, ed., op.cit., p. 89.
43 Mahavir, Singh, op. cit., p.34.
However only 16 seats were filled up, since in many constituencies the large number of candidates prevented any individual form receiving the requisite minimum share of the votes. Hence, a second round was held on 19th February again with 62% turnout. Only 73 of the remaining 89 seats were filled up. The inaugural session of the parliament's two chambers was held on 28th March. Mukar Cholponbayev was elected as speaker of the Legislative Assembly while Almambet Matubraimov, a former First Deputy Prime Minister was elected as speaker of the People's Assembly. In April Jumagulov was reappointed as Prime Minister.

A direct Presidential election was held on 24th December 1995. Akaev emerged as the victor, receiving a reported 71.6% of the votes cast; Masaliyev (who had recently been reinstated as the leader of the Communist Party,KCP) won 24.4% of the votes. Some 82% of the registered electorate were reported to have voted. Akaev was formally inaugurated for a further presidential term on 30th December 1995. One of his first acts was to decree that a referendum be held on increasing the powers of the president's office while limiting those of the legislature. As reported, 96.6% of the electorate participated in the referendum on 10th February 1996, of whom 94.3% endorsed the proposed amendments to the constitution. The government resigned later in that month; Jumagulov was reinstated as Prime Minister in March, and a new government was appointed by Akaev shortly afterwards.

In 1996 the first Deputy Prime Minister was relieved of his duties on the ground that he had been implicated in corruption scandal. In the following year Cholponbayev was dismissed as speaker of the legislative Assembly after the constitutional court declared his election as invalid. Government changes in 1997 included in April the appointment of Kulov, the former vice-president, as minister of National Security and the dismissal of Deputy Prime Minister Bekbolot Talgarbekov. Karimsher Abdynomunov was appointed in his place. In July, the minister of foreign affairs, Roza Otunbayeva was replaced by Muratbek Imanaliyev.

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44 Ibid.
In March 1998, Jumagulov announced his retirement. The Zhogorku Kenesh endorsed the appointment of Kuvachebek Jumaliyev as the new Prime Minister and a Cabinet reorganisation was effected. An extensive cabinet reshuffle was undertaken in early April to accelerate economic and political reform which included a reduction in number of ministries among the abolition two of the three posts of Deputy Prime Ministers. Reform of the parliamentary electoral system and issue of president Akaev’s eligibility for a third term in office dominated political debate in mid 1998. In July the constitutional court ruled in favour of allowing Akaev to seek a third term in the presidential election due to be held in 2000, following an appeal by group of Zhogorku Kenesh deputies who claimed that although the 1993 Constitution allowed a President to serve a maximum of two terms, Akaev’s election in 1991 had taken place under the previous Soviet Constitution. At the end of May 1999 a new electoral law was introduced, whereby, henceforth 15 of the seats in the legislative Assembly were to be allocated on a proportional basis for those parties that secure a minimum of the 5% of the votes.46

The legislation, which had been approved by Zhogorku Kenesh earlier in the month, also banned the use of foreign and private funds in parliamentary and presidential electoral campaigns. Meanwhile the new legislation regarding political parties came into effect in mid-June; the law banned political organizations considered as threat to Kyrgyzstan’s stability and ethnic harmony.47 Several governmental changes were effected by President Akaev during November 1999. That month he announced that a parliamentary election was to be held on 20th February 2000. At the election to both chambers of Zhogorku Kenesh, held on 20th February 2000, a total of six parties passed the 5% threshold required for securing party-list seats in the legislative Assembly. The election was first to take place since constitutional amendments had been approved by the referendum of October 1998. Although the Central Election Commission declared the election to have been ‘free and fair’ a number of electoral violence were reported by the organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), which expressed particular concern regarding the infringement to the freedom of the judiciary, the media and the election administration, as well as the alleged intimidation of opposition leaders. As a result, a second round of voting on 12 March 2000 was held.

46 Ibid; Devendra, Kaushik, op. cit., Eurasian Studies.
47 Ibid.
The following table explains the party position in terms of seats in the parliament, at the general election to both chambers of the restructured Zhogorku Kenesh held on 20th February and 12th March 2002.

**Table 2: General Election, 20 February and 12 March 2000*.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parties and blocs</th>
<th>Party-list seats</th>
<th>Single mandate constituency seats</th>
<th>Total seats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Union of Democratic forces</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party of Communists of Kyrgyzstan</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My Country party of Action</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ata-Meken Socialist Party</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic Women’s Party of Kyrgyzstan</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party of Veterans of War in Afghanistan</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor and the Unprotected Peoples’ Party</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agrarian Labour party of Kyrgyzstan</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erkin Kyrgyzstan Progressive and Democratic Party</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Election results indulge both the People’s Assembly (the 45 member upper chamber) and the Legislative Assembly (the 60 member lower chamber)

N.B.- In August 2000 it was reported that the two seats gained by representatives of the Democratic Women’s Party of Kyrgyzstan had been withdrawn, owing to the violation of regulations during the nomination process.


The above table indicates the party position in terms of seats occupied in the parliamentary election held in 2000. In terms of seats the Union Democratic Forces achieved the greatest representation of any party or bloc in the combined Zohogorku Kenesh, once single mandate constituency seats had been included, securing 12 seats, compared with the Party of Communists of Kyrgyzstan’s 6. My Country Party of Action got total seats of 4, while the other party like Ata-Meken Socialist party, Democratic Women’s Party of Kyrgyzstan, Party
of Veterans of the War in Afghanistan, Poor and Unprotected People’s party obtained 2 seats each in the parliament. While Agrarian Labour Party of Kyrgyzstan and Erkin Kyrgyzstan Progressive and Democratic Party got one seat each. The electoral achievement of the independent candidates are remarkable as they secured 73 of the total 105 seats in the two-chambers parliament. In terms of percentage in the election, the KCP gained 27.7% of the total vote cast, the Union of the Democratic Forces 18.6%, the Democratic Women’s Party of Kyrgyzstan 12.7%, the party of Veterans of the war in Afghanistan and of participation in other Local Conflicts 8.0 %, the Ata-Meken (Fatherland) Socialist Party 6.5 % and the My Country Party of Action 5.0%. Just after 6 months of parliamentary elections the election to the office of the president was conducted on 29th October, 2000. There were six potential candidates running for the post of president including the incumbent president Akaev.

The following table narrates the percentage of votes secured by the respective candidates in this presidential election.

Table 3: Presidential Election, 29 October 2000.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidates</th>
<th>% of Votes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Askar Akaev</td>
<td>74.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omurbek Tekebayev</td>
<td>13.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Almazbek Atambayev</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melis Eshimkanov</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bakir Ulu Tursunbay</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tursunbek Akunov</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blank Or Spoiled</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The incoming president convincingly defeated his opponents securing 74.5% of the total vote cast. Tekebayev gained 13.9% of the votes. Almazbek Atambayev 6.0% and Melis Eshimkanov secured 1.1%. Two other candidates’ namely Bakir Ulu Tursunbay and

48 Ibid., p. 2545; Mahavir, Singh, op. cit., p. 35.
Tursunbek Akunov each received not more than 1.0% of the vote cast. According to the central Election commission, an estimated 74% of the electorate participated in the election.49

Political Parties

A political party is an organized group of persons, who share certain common principles, motivated to capture political power by constitutional means and should have a view of national interest or common welfare. It can articulate and aggregate demands and interests, recruit and remove leaders, make or unmake government policy, carry out or obstruct the implementation of a policy decision, effect adjustment on protraction of disputes, and even go to the extent of educating the people.

In Kyrgyzstan there are many political parties to articulate and aggregate the demands of various sections of Kyrgyz society. The constitution of Kyrgyzstan approves the existence of multi-party system. Article 8 of the constitution states that “political parties, trade unions and other public associations may be organized in the Kyrgyz republic on the bases of free will and unity of interest. The state shall guarantee the rights and lawful interests of public associations.”50

Following are important political parties of Kyrgyzstan:-

1. Party of Communists of Kyrgyzstan (Partiya Communistov Kyrgyzstan – P.K.K.). The P.K.K. was lunched in June 1992 as the successor to the former ruling Kyrgyz communist party, which had been disbanded in August 1991. Registered in September 1992, the party attracted significant support and won representation in February 1995 legislative elections. It was the strongest political party in terms of organizational capacity. It became an increasingly vocal critic of economic reform, which it saw as leading the country to bankruptcy and resulting in the necessary sale of national assets to appease foreign economic interests. In March 1993, Jungalbek Amanbaev was elected leader of the party, but after he was co-opted as a deputy Prime Minister by Akaev at

49 Ibid., p.2545; SWB/ SU, 3986/ G/ 1 / and G/ 2 /, 1 November 2000.

50 The constitution of Kyrgyzstan, op. cit.
the beginning of 1994, the party elected S. Sydykov as leader and then in late summer 1995 returned former secretary Absamat Masaliev to the helm. From this base he launched his candidature for the presidency in December 1995 and in the event he proved the main challenger to Akaev in latter's bid for re-election. The communists also had the greatest numerical strength claiming some 25,000 members and active party organizations through most of the country. "Yet their numbers, according to Anderson, disguised considerable weakness stemming from an aging membership often out of touch with the aspiration of younger, more nationally inclined Kyrgyz".  

2. Social Democratic Party of Kyrgyzstan (Partiya Sotsial-Demokraticheskaysa Kyrgyzstan-S.D.P.K). The S.D.P.K. was formed in July 1993 with the political endorsement of President Akaev, supporting the government reformists, pro-market line. It adopted a fairly general program committing the party to the defence of Kyrgyz sovereignty, different forms of property, close ties with the former Soviet states, and social defence of the population. Later, it also expressed concern at the migration of Russian speakers and suggested the reinstatement of Russian as the language of inter-ethnic communication in the constitution and a greater degree of ethnic proportionality in the selection of cadres. At first the S.D.P.K. looked like another well-intentioned attempt to create a broad coalition that would founder in the same way as other, but during the parliamentary election of February 1995 the party was the most successful of all the parties, gaining 14 of the 105 seats. Only around 30 deputies had any formal party affiliation. By 1996 many were speaking of the SDPK as the party of power, pointing to a membership dominated by regional administrators, leading businessmen, and representatives of the political establishment. Yet in practice the party failed to develop a meaningful organization through out the country and remains a party of notables.  

3. Democratic Movement of Kyrgyzstan. (Demokraticheskaysa Dvizhenie Kyrgyzstan. – D.D.K). Founded in May 1990, it served as an umbrella for a number of pro-democracy and pro-independence groups, including the Mutual Help movement (Ashar), led by Zhumagazy, the Osh Region (Osh Aymaghi) and truth (Aqiqat). After independence

51 John, Anderson, op. cit., p.34.
52 Ibid., p. 37.
several components broke away to lunch independent formations, leaving the rump DDK with more nationalist identity. The DDK backed the election of Askar Akaev to the presidency in October 1990, but later withdrew its support because it opposed his policies of equal rights for all ethnic groups. It formally constituted itself as a political party in June 1993.

Asaba. This is the most radical political party in Kyrgyzstan. The redial positions were expressed by Asaba whose chairman, when asked his views on their rights of the other nationalities in June 1997, was to reply that his party's chief aim was to “defend the rights and interests of the Kyrgyz people and that therefore it had no interest in other nationalities”\(^5\) Since then Asaba has taken a consistently nationalist line, attacking Akaev when he sought to modify the status of the Russian language and following hints that Kyrgyzstan might be willing to allow dual citizenship to ethnic Russians. “At the same time Asaba has engaged in a series of disputes with Cossack organizations which led one of them in early 1997 to call for the removal of the party’s registration for stirring up ethnic hatred against the Russian population”\(^5\)

4. National Unity Democratic Movement (Democraticheskaya Dvizhenie Narodnoye Edinstvo – DDNE). The D.D.N.E. was launched in October 1991, in the wake of Kyrgyz-Uzbek inter-ethnic clashes on the initiative of the then Vice President German Kuznetsov, who returned to his native Russia in July 1993. Advocating co-operation between ethnic groups and mixed economy, the party won representation in the February 1995 election.

5. Democratic Party of Free Kyrgyzstan. (Demokratichesksaya Partiya Erkin Kyrgyzstan-ERK). The ERK (an acronym meaning 'will') was founded in 1991 as a splinter group of the DDK as a platform of moderate nationalism and for a liberal market economy. It was weakened by 1992 with secession of more nationalist elements who formed the fatherland party. It's subsequent attempts to build a pro-democracy bloc made little progress.

\(^5\) Ibid., p. 35.
\(^5\) Ibid., p. 36.
6. **Father Land (Ata-Meken).** It was founded in 1992 by a Kyrgyz nationalist of the ERK. Other grouping includes the ethnic Russians group *Accord*, a Slavic Association, which was founded in June 1995 under the leadership of Usun Sadykov to represent agro-industrial workers. Agrarian party of Kyrgyzstan, launched under E.Aliyev in 1993 was generally supportive of land privatization, although opposing the government’s land reform programme as 'unviable'. There have been many smaller parties like the Banner of National Revival Party, Ecological Movement of Kyrgyzstan, Peoples Assembly of Kyrgyzstan, Republican Popular party of Kyrgyzstan, Unity Party of Kyrgyzstan and Uzbek Justice Party based in the Uzbek populated Osh region.55

In July 1999 two new opposition parties were established; the Ar-Namys (Dignity) party, which was to be led by the former Vice-President and Mayor of Bishkek, Felix Kulov; and the Adilet tuuluk (Justice) Party. A minor cabinet reshuffle was effected at the end of the month. In mid-August a group of communists, under the leadership of Klara Ajibekova, broke away from the KCP to form a new organization, the Communist Party of Kyrgyzstan (C.P.K.). In mid-October another opposition party, the Republican Party of Kyrgyzstan (RPK), was established and officially registered with the Ministry of Justice.

Several electoral alliances were forged prior to the legislative election scheduled for February 2000. At the end of December 1999 three pro-presidential parties, the Social Democratic Party, The Birimdik Party and the Economic Revival Party, announced the establishment of joint party list. A coalition of opposition parties and movements was formed in January, and included the Ar-Namys Party, the Democratic Movements of Kyrgyzstan and the Republican Party of Kyrgyzstan (although the Democratic Movement subsequently withdrew from the ballot).56

Moreover there are many others diversified political groupings which have emerged out of the different needs of the Kyrgyz people like Democratic party of Economic Unity, Economic Revival Party, El (Beibecharalai) Partiyasy, Emgekchil el Partiyasy, Erkindik, Kok-Zhar Sociopolitical Organization, Kyrgyz Committee for Human Rights, Manas, Manas El (People of Manas) Party, My Country Party of Action, Party for the Protection of the

interest of the Industrial workers, farmers, and poor families, Party of Veteran of the War in Afghanistan and of Participants in other Local conflicts, Patriotic party of Kyrgyzstan, People’s Mother, People’s Patriotic Bloc, Poor and Unprotected People’s Party, Republican Movement for the Union and Brother of Nations, Republican Popular Party, Union of Democratic Forces and Women’s Democratic Party of Kyrgyzstan etc.

The presence of the above-mentioned parties is strong evidence of multi-party system in Kyrgyzstan. All the political parties are contributing to the development and preservation of a healthy democratic political system in the state. President Akaev once maintained that, “We considered political pluralism as one of the fundamental features of modern democracy; we promoted the formation in Kyrgyzstan, of numerous political parties which do exist and pursue the aim of overt sharing of power”.57

The democratic nature of Akaev’s broader political reform agenda contributed further decentralization of power. His administration allowed independent political parties and social movements to emerge and develop essentially unrestrained. In fact, in contrast to Uzbekistan and other parts of the former Soviet Union, Kyrgyzstan’s central government did not interfere directly with the formation of new parties nor did it attempt to co-opt the institutional and popular support base of the communist party in order to utilize it as a vehicle of state influences and power. Akaev’s approach was also unique in that he made deliberate attempts to incorporate representatives of the various political parties and social organization in his government and often solicited their policy-making advice.58

Organizations

As individual is not self sufficient in all respect, he needs an organized efforts for the realization of his specific aims. Therefore, different individuals having common desire are united to achieve their common end. Then, there emerges the organization for that purpose.

An association or organization can be defined as a group of persons organized for the pursuit of an interest or a set of interests. These are based on rational agreement of interests as

57 Narendra, Kumar, op.cit., p. 126.
58 Pauline, Jones Luong, pp. 110-111.
understood and defined by the members. They become members of association by choice. Organization provides the individual a better-organized platform for bargaining, accommodation and co-operation. It helps for the development and upliftment of the individuals, thereby developing the society as a whole. The existence of various organizations depends upon the types of county’s political environment. In a totalitarian and authoritarian political regime they are suppressed. But in a democratic political system they flourish according to the demand and requirement of the civil society. Kyrgyzstan being a democratic secular republic has provided enough space for the development of many independent organizations.

The first half of 1990’s witnessed an explosion in the number of social organizations and political movements in Kyrgyzstan. In February 1991 Akaev signed the law on social organizations which created a framework for the activities of associations, interest groups and political parties. Defined as voluntarily formed, created on the basis of common interests, aims and principles; social organization were required to register with the Ministry of Justice if they were to acquire legal status. Article 8 of the Kyrgyz constitution states that the state shall guarantee the rights and lawful interests of public associations. Only those bodies which “promoted ethnic or religious hatred or which posed a threat to the sovereignty of the republic were to be banned, and the law carefully set out the conditions under which registration could be refused and offered an appeals procedure for those denied a legal existence”. In the event that the law clashed with any international agreements adhered to by Kyrgyzstan it was stated that the latter would prevail. In practice the law was interpreted in a relatively liberal fashion during the early 1990’s and there emerged a wide variety of legally recognized organizations. By February 1993 the Justice Ministry had registered 258 social organizations, including 15 political movements or parties, 31 professional bodies, 21 national cultural center or organizations, 41 sporting bodies, 11 children’s and young people’s and 5 women’s organizations.

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60 Constitution of Kyrgyzstan, op.cit.
61 John Anderson, op. cit., p. 31.
62 Ibid., p. 31.
A part from political parties one can notice the emergence of numerous civil society groups in this tiny republic. These groups play very important role in promoting democratization process. These are Aalam Nury, Advisory Center for Refugees, Bishkek Migration Management Center, Center for Social Research of the National Academy of Sciences of Kyrgyzstan, Independent Journalists Association, Association of Independent Scientists-Lawyers of the Kyrgyz Republic, UMYUT Center for Non-Governmental and Non-Commercial Organizations, Women's League of Creative Initiative of Kyrgyzstan, Women's Support Center, Forum of Women's NGOs of Kyrgyzstan, Association for Support of Women Artists and Art Critics of Kyrgyzstan, Kyrgyz Republic Women's Congress, Center on Socio-Political Problems and Connections with NGOs, Children's Fund of Kyrgyzstan, Voronovka Children's Fund, Inc., New Generation, Bishkek Lyceum of Youth Policy, Center of Young Researchers of Kyrgyzstan, Coalition of NGOs “For Democracy and Civil Society”, Human Rights Movement, Kyrgyz-American Bureau on Human Rights and Rule of Law, Kyrgyz Committee for Human Rights, Foundation for Humanitarian Initiatives, Erkin Kyrgyzstan Democratic Party, Foundation for Information Assistance to Social and Economic Development of Kyrgyzstan, InterBilim, Lingua Center, UNESCO Media Resource Centre, Mercy Corps International, Peace Research Center of Kyrgyzstan, Red Crescent Society in Kyrgyzstan etc. According to Nick Megoran[63] these organizations are created to contribute to the development of viable and tolerant civil societies in Kyrgyzstan.

Besides these organization there are certain projects working in Kyrgyzstan. Ferghana Project is one of them. It was established in the year 1998 in Bishkek. The Ferghana valley is a single territorial unit which is now spread over three states: Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan. The Ferghana Project is a pilot project addressing a number of urgent issues in need of attention within Kyrgyzstan’s southern oblasts. Given the fact that about 48 percent of the entire population of Kyrgyzstan lives in the southern oblasts of county, the situation in the southern region presents not just a local threat-instability there poses a threat to the entire country and to the stability of Central Asia as a whole. Based on results of this pilot project, further activity both within Kyrgyzstan and regionally is contemplated. Cooperation with other non-governmental organization, international organizations, and the government is essential to the long-term viability of the project. The Ferghana Project is intended to

promote cooperation, understanding and stability in the Ferghana Valley between the state and society, differing regions and ethnic groups. It strives to facilitate cooperation and determines which areas of civil leadership most need financial assistance and will help develop contacts between the local administration and representatives of community leadership. The Project pursues these goals through a four-program block focusing on public administration, NGOs, medicine, and education. The project outcomes will be improvements in the basic area of water supply, heating development and medical services, in addition to providing support for the development of NGOs, independent media, civil society, local business initiatives, cultural initiatives and educational reforms in the southern region.

Form a brief examination of the existing organisations it evident that Kyrgyzstan has given ample scope and opportunities for the various organisations to flourish on its soil. That is why it has been named by some Western scholar as the ‘Switzerland of Central Asia’.

Media and Press

In a democratic country press is considered the fourth pillar. It stands as the custodian of all civil, political and religious rights. It also keeps people informed about the programmes and policies of the government and also keeps the government informed about the wishes and responses of the people. Freedom of the press found sustenance in Kyrgyzstan as the country progressed along the path of democratic development. The law on Mass Media, adopted in 1992, is one of the most democratic laws in any former Soviet republic. This law creates a legal framework for all activities of the press in Kyrgyzstan. The new constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic provided the press with wide and safe legal guarantees. It declares that in Kyrgyzstan everyone enjoys freedom to openly express and disseminate ideas through liberty of the press, freedom of print, transfer and distribution of information. This right refers to the basic rights and liberties of man which according to the Kyrgyz Constitution are inherent, absolute, natural rights protect by law and courts from any encroachment. In 1996 there were 146 non-daily newspapers published in Kyrgyzstan and the average circulation per issue was 896,000 copies. There were three daily newspapers published in that year, with an average circulation of 67,000 copies.64 According to Narendra Kumar “out of the total newspaper the half is issued in Kyrgyz, 20 both in Kyrgyz and Russian, 10 in Russian, 4 in

Uzbek, 5 in German, 1 in Dungan. Ensuring rights and liberties of the ethnic minorities also in the mass media sphere is a constituent part of the democratic orientation in Kyrgyzstan. The Justice Ministry has registered over 150 mass media organizations, 100 of them newspapers and magazines. Ronald Z. Sagdeev underlined that “according to experts at the U.S. Organisation, ‘Freedom House’, Kyrgyzstan is the leader among all CIS countries in the realm of free speech.” However due to the lack of finances, major newspapers and magazines are in the hands of the government. The majority of the television stations are also state-owned like National Television and Radio Broadcasting Co., Kyrgyz Radio, Dom Radio etc. There are other private Radio Stations operating in Kyrgyzstan like Radio Pyramid, now transmitting BBC News Programme. Sodruzhestvo is established by ethnic Russian groups to broadcast news to Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. There are a few independent T.V. Stations in Kyrgyzstan, the most popular one is Bishkek Pyramid.

The state-owned newspapers in Kyrgyzstan include the Word of Kyrgyzstan. The official Russian-language government newspaper, with a circulation of about 20,000 (in 2003). The state news Erkin Too (Free Mountains), is published in Kyrgyz and Russian and the government newspaper Kyrgyz Tuusy, is published in the Kyrgyz language. The newspaper with the largest circulation is Evening Bishkek circulation 50,000 (in 2003) which is self-financed, mainly due to the large number of advertisements. Case Number is another commercial newspaper specializing in reporting on criminal cases. Republic is a weekly with the circulation of 5,000 copies (in 2001) Asaba is a popular independent weekly newspaper in Kyrgyz language. Kyrgyz Rukey is an independent newspaper in Kyrgyz that expresses the interests of the southerners.

Some other important newspapers running in Kyrgyzstan are Bishkek Observer, Central Asian Post, Char Taraph (Echo of Events), Chu Baayni, Chuskey Izvestiya (Chu news), Kyrgyz Madaniyaty, Krygyzstan chronicle, Slovo Krygyzstan, Zaman Krygyzstan (Krygyzstan Herald). Besides these, there are other newspaper of the trade Unions (El Jarehysy, Tribuna Naroda), political parties (Erk the newspaper of the democratic party and Erkin Krygyzstan), of business groups (Business man, Panorama) etc. Some principal

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65 Narendra, Kumar, op. cit., p. 34.
periodicals in Kyrgyzstan are *Ala Too* (Ala Too Mountains), *Chalkan* (Stinging Nettle), *Kyrgyzstan Ayaldary* (Women of Kyrgyzstan), *Zdravookhraneniye Kyrgyzstan* (Public Health System of Kyrgyzstan) etc. Besides, the existing news agencies in Kyrgyzstan are *Belyi Parokhod* and Kabar etc.

President Akaev maintained, "Our notion of democracy is based on realizing that liberty of the press is behind it and is it's categorical imperative so to speaks. Liberty of the press for us in Man's common sense, incentive of free thinking, the right to doubt and criticize the established order, liberty of the press is an indisputable absolute that goes together with individual dignity. No one institution, even the Government and Parliament, courts and president can monopolize the truth." 67

In this context Luong hold the view maintains that from independence till the beginning of 1994, Kyrgyzstan had 'media' arguably among the 'most free and open' in the former Soviet Union. Journalists in the Kyrgyz and Russian language press readily acknowledged that the press has generally become more democratic and more or less free of state intervention and control since Akaev was popularly elected in October 1991. 68

**Rights of Ethnic Minorities**

An ethnic group is a national, racial or tribal group that has common cultural tradition. A common language, a common customs, ceremonies, rights etc. are attributes of ethnicity. An ethnic group can be defined as a “historically formed aggregate of people having a real or imaginary association with a specified territory, a share cluster of beliefs and values connoting it’s distinctiveness in relation to similar groups and recognized as such by others. The members of such a group feel themselves, or are thought to be, bound together by common ties or race or nationality or culture”. 69

Kyrgyzstan being a plural society gives shelters to many ethnic groups within its territorial boundaries. The multi-ethnicity enhances its diversity and multiply difficulties at the time of

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67 Narendra, Kumar, op.cit., p. 140.
68 Pauline, Jones Luong, op.cit., p. 110.
misunderstanding and hatredness. Therefore, the strength of Kyrgyzstan lies in the unity and harmony among the various ethnic groups and their conflicts creates division and fragmentation of the Kyrgyz social, economic, political and cultural life. In this context, it is important to examine the relative position of various ethnic groups in Kyrgyzstan and to know to what extent they are secure in Kyrgyzstan. Table 4 explains the principal ethnic composition of Kyrgyzstan reported on the basis of 1999 census.

Table 4: Principal Ethnic Groups (Permanent inhabitants, 1999 census)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Group</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kyrgyz</td>
<td>3,128,147</td>
<td>64.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uzbek</td>
<td>664,950</td>
<td>13.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>603,201</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dungan</td>
<td>51,766</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukrainian</td>
<td>50,442</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uigur</td>
<td>46,994</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tatar</td>
<td>45,438</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kazakh</td>
<td>42,657</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tajik</td>
<td>42,636</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkish</td>
<td>33,327</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>21,471</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>19,784</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>72,175</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4,822,938</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The above table indicates that Kyrgyz Society is a patch work of many nationalities. The 1999 census shows that Kyrgyz constituted 64.9% of the total population. The Uzbek occupied second position being 13.8% of the population. The Russian were the third largest ethnic minority living in Kyrgyzstan having 12.5% of the total of Kyrgyz population. Dungan constituted 1.1%, while Ukrainian and Uigur constituted 1.0% each. The other small ethnic groups like Tatar, Kazakh, Tajik, Turkish, German, Korean etc. constituted less than 1% of the total population of Kyrgyzstan. Still there were many others smaller ethnic groups who constituted 1.5% of the total population. If one compares the ethnic compositions of 1999 census with the population census of 1989 of Kyrgyzstan, one can get the real picture of Kyrgyzstan’s ethnic position and their relative role in Kyrgyzstan so far political, socio, economic, plans and policies are concerned.
Table 5: Principal Ethnic Groups (permanent inhabitants, 1989 census).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Group</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kyrgyz</td>
<td>2,229,663</td>
<td>52.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>916,558</td>
<td>21.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uzbek</td>
<td>550,096</td>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukrainian</td>
<td>108,027</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>101,309</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tatar</td>
<td>70,068</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kazakh</td>
<td>37,318</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dungan</td>
<td>36,928</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uigur</td>
<td>36,779</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tajik</td>
<td>33,518</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>137,491</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4,257,755</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The above table shows the principal ethnic groups as per 1998 census. It indicates that Kyrgyz population constituted 52.4%, Russian 21.5%, Uzbek 12.9%, Ukrainian 2.5%, German 2.4%, Tatar 1.6%, Kazakh 0.9%, Dungan 0.9%, Uigur 0.9%, Tajik 0.8% and others 3.2% in Kyrgyzstan.

Comparison between the ethnic composition in 1998 census and 1999 census reveals that the there was rapid increase in the indigenous Kyrgyz population from 52.4% in 1989 to 64.9% in 1999. Except the Uzbek which increased it's population from 12.9% in 1989 to 13.8% in 1999, the percentage of other important groups likes Russian, German, Ukrainian, Tatar etc. declined considerably. This was largely because of inter-ethnic conflict which had created an unsecured and fear psychosis in the mind of the non Kyrgyz people. Devendra Kaushik says that “the declarations of local languages as official language also created an uncongenial psychological atmosphere for Russian-speaking people in the educational and cultural spheres”.

Due to economic decline many industrial plants and factories were closed down in Kyrgyzstan. This along with the consequent unemployment also induced an outward migration. Kyrgyzstan has taken some formal measures to prevent the discrimination against

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the Russians and Russian speaking population through amendment to the laws on language and citizenship.\footnote{Ibid., p.14.}

The Russian, German and other Slavic population were the more important skilled professionals in Kyrgyzstan. Hence their emigration has created a large vacuum in the economic growth in Kyrgyzstan. If this trend continues, the Kyrgyz economy will suffer a lot, thereby creating other social, economic, political and religious problems. Hence the constitution of Kyrgyzstan protects the ethnic harmony in the midst of ethnic diversity. Since the achievement of independence a major concern of, former President Akaev had been “the preservation of civil harmony and ethnic peace, an objective that has not always sat easily with the nation building process”.\footnote{John Anderson, op.cit, p. 42.} Most of the Slav resides in the northern regions and in the capital, and dominate skilled jobs in industry. The Uzbeks are heavily concentrated in the south and are primarily occupied with settled agriculture and handicrafts. As the republic became independent the political elite could not forget how easily bloody inter-communal conflict had developed in the Osh region during 1990, nor be, blind to the gradual increase in Russian emigration from the late 1980s onwards. Leaving aside the ethnic question, such developments had practical implications, because the Slavs and Germans still provided many of the skilled professionals essential for Kyrgyzstan’s successful short-term transition.\footnote{Ibid., see also, Alexander, O. Filonyk, “Kyrgyzstan” in Mohiaddin Mesbahi, ed., Central Asia and the Caucasus after the Soviet Union, (Florida: 1994), pp. 157-158.} For that reason it was not surprising to find Akaev repeatedly stressing his commitment to the creation of a multi-ethnic state to which members of all national groups could feel they belonged. For this reason he vetoed a draft law that appeared to reserve land ownership for ethnic Kyrgyz and offered citizenship to all those legally resident in Kyrgyzstan at the time of independence. From the beginning of his tenure, President Akaev pursued a multiethnic and secular definition of statehood and advocated a civic definition of citizenship. According to Luong, “Perhaps the earliest and most salient example of his commitment to fostering a multi ethnic state was his veto of the “Law on Land” passed by parliament in May 1991, which explicitly reserved the exclusively right of land use and ownership as well as exploitation of Kyrgyzstan’s natural resources to
the ethnic Kyrgyz.\textsuperscript{74} This was an especially bold step because this piece of legislation had broad support among nationalist organizations in the republic. In addition, he made a great effort to include the republic's ethnic minorities in political and economic decision-making. This gave most to the nationalist of Kyrgyzstan adequate representation in the central leadership, at the same time, there were also on going meetings with leaders of the national cultural centers, societies and associations in which representative of all nationalities actively participated.\textsuperscript{75} Speech after speech, Akaev spoke of good relations between ethnic groups as one of his major concerns, and in the early 1990s held a series of meetings with various national cultural centers which in turn committed themselves to work together to preserve civic concord. Kyrgyzstan's central leadership also generally adopted very favorable policies towards ethnic minorities since independence.

Akaev frequently boasted of his commendable record on the treatment of the non-Kyrgyz population. For instance, he emphasized the establishment of the Slavic University in order to retain the presence of the Russian language in Kyrgyzstan as well as the fact that Kyrgyzstan was “the first to give ethnic and cultural autonomy to German’s in areas they inhabit as communities”.\textsuperscript{76}

**Economic Transitions**

Economy is back bone of every state without which a country can not performs it's essential obligations towards its citizens. So a healthy economy can provide a conducive atmosphere for the political system and civil society of the country. A weak economy will bring every sort of problem like property, criminalization, social chaos, political instabilities and religious extremism etc. Hence, economic growth is also one of the many requisites for the successful functioning of democracy and civil society in any country. Economic growth is seen in terms of expansion of opportunities that individuals in the society enjoy. According to Jean Dre'ze and Amartya Sen., “economic development can, in fact, be seen in terms of

\begin{itemize}
  \item Pauline, Jones. Luong. op.cit., p. 119.
  \item Ibid.
  \item Pauline Jones Luong, op.cit., p. 120.
\end{itemize}
expansion of opportunities that the individuals in the society enjoy". Therefore, this approach appears more relevant for the strategy of economic development in any society.

The nature of the economic transition in Kyrgyzstan can be characterized, in sum, as a fairly rapid and loosely managed move toward marketization of the economy. Kyrgyzstan pursued a "fairly radical program of economic reform as compared to the other former Soviet republics particularly the Central Asian republics following independence". Immediately after his appointment as the president of Kyrgyzstan, Akaev declared that the republic would turn toward a market economy. So, the government has enacted laws on privatization, joint ventures in foreign trade and investment. With the support from the Central Asian countries to introduced its own currency, the Som, in May 1993. By the beginning of 1994, more than 4,000 enterprises from various industries had been privatized. In February 1994, the government announced an ambitious plan to privatize most of the remaining state enterprises. The state property fund was ordered to convert all state enterprises into joint-stock companies with freely tradable shares. As an indication of the regimes prioritization of economic reform, it is interesting to note that "the adoption of this economic program actually took precedence over parliamentary discussions regarding the Constitution and other vital drafts of social and political legislation. Even when support for economic reform wavered in the Supreme Soviet, particularly privatization, Akaev remained committed."

Akaev was also convinced that significant degree of influence over the economy must be decentralized in order for the transition to the market to succeed. He was hesitant to design an economic reform agenda from the center without careful consideration of local conditions, which he believed regional leaders were in the best position to determine. Thus, he advocated greater autonomy to regional and local leaders to develop strategies that would move the economy forward. This included privatizing industry in urban area while dismantling kolkhozes and sovkhozes in the country side. Akims (regional heads) thus exercised a great deal of liberty with regard to economic reform. In 1995, when some

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79 Ibid., p. 115.

80 Ibid.
opposition said Akaev is “selling off” the country he replied that “the country is being exported and sold off by criminals and corrupt functionaries. In contrast, the investments and credits are helping us to only consolidate Kyrgyzstan’s economic potential. Without them we will be unable to uplift our cities and get our industry and countryside up on their feet”.

Kyrgyzstan occupied the fourth position (in 1993) among all the countries of the CIS in minimum wages, despite the fact that the small republic does not possess it’s own strategic raw materials (oil, natural gas, etc.). the minimum pension in Kyrgyzstan is 120 soms ($12) that puts it on the second place next to Russia ($16).

In Kyrgyzstan, 60 percent of the population worked in the agricultural sector in the year 1994. All state and collective farms have been liquidated and replaced by primate farms. According to IMF experts, Kyrgyzstan ranked fourth highest Republics. In 1996, the service sector contributed an estimated 31.6% of GDP, and provided 38.3% of employment. Restructuring the banking system led to growth in the banking sector by 4% in 1996. Kyrgyzstan’s privatization and liberalization policy in attracting a lot of financial aid and foreign investments from the USA, Japan, Germany, the Netherlands, Denmark, Switzerland, France and other development countries. Kyrgyzstan has good economic ties with IMF, World Bank, Asian Development Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and Islamic Development Bank etc.

The President asked the state’s crime branch to take stringent action against ‘economic criminal’, i.e., those who we are involved in corruption, drug trafficking, tax evasion etc. “The new economic polity”, said Akaev, “is being implemented on a strong legal basis. We have adopted legislative acts for the regulation of the denationalization and privatization process and business activities, formation of a new banking system and land problems and land reforms. The law on foreign investments in the Republic of Kyrgyzstan is, I think, the most favorable of all such existing laws in the world.”

Various reforms like privatization, introduction of Som, implementation of tax and land reforms, law against corruption and economic criminal’s etc., contributed much to the

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83 Ibid.
84 Narendra, Kumar, op. cit., p.149.
stabilization of Kyrgyz economy. The rate of inflation decreased substantially between 1992 and 1997. The budget deficit as proportion of GDP was declining. The exchange rate of Som was stable against the U.S dollar and the level of foreign exchange reserves had increases. However, In spite of growth in all sector of the economy in the first half of 1990’s, unemployment and incidence of poverty remained high. Devendra Kaushik says that “despite some initial booms, the economy subsequently declined. Its per capita income only about $ 300 a year. Similarly the decline of G.D.P and G.N.P. between 1990-1997 was 9.7% and 7.3%, respectively”. In 1996, some 50% of the households, mainly in rural areas, were officially classified as ‘poor’. In March 1998 president Akaev emphasized reforms of the social welfare system as a priority for the government.

Kyrgyzstan participates in the economic bodies of the commonwealth of Independent States and has also joined the European bank for Reconstruction and Development, as a Country of Operation and Economic Co-operation Organization. Kyrgyzstan is also a member of the Asian Development Bank. In 1994 it joined Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan in a trilateral economic area. In May 1998 following the admission of Tajikistan in March, the organization was constituted as the Central Asian Economic Union, which was renamed the Central Asian Economic Community in July. In February 1995 Kyrgyzstan signed a ten year partnership and co-operation with the European Union. In October 1998 it became the first CIS Country to join the World Trade Organization. In October 2000 a new economic body, the Eurasian Economic Community (EAEC), was established to supersede a customs union established in the 1990s between Kyrgyzstan and Belarus, Kazakhstan, Russia and Tajikistan. The EAEC aims to develop common policies on currencies, custom tariffs, employment and taxation.

In a nutshell, it can be said that following independence in 1991, the Kyrgyz government embarked on an ambitious programme of economic reforms to establish a market-based economy and achieve macroeconomic stabilization. A liberal trade regime was introduced, most capital controls were eliminated, the banking and tax systems were reformed and small-scale enterprises and housings were privatized. After significant growth in 1996 and 1997, the economy slowed considerably from mid-1998, owing to reduced growth in gold

and agricultural production and the financial crisis in Russia. The crisis precipitated a 35% depreciation of the nation currency, the Som, which led to rapid increase in the depletion of foreign reserves through large-scale intervention in the foreign exchange market. Moreover, the collapsed of traditional export market in the CIS contributed in 1998 to a large increase in deficit of trade and on the current account of the balance of payments. The privatization programme was relunched in that year, following its suspension in mid-1997 to allow for investigation of allegations that certain enterprises had been sold at prices substantially below their market value. In November 2000 the government approved a further two-year privatization programme to facilitate the sale of strategic industrial and non-industrial enterprises, including Kyrgyz Telecom and Kyrgyz national Airline.88

An additional economic reform programme was introduced in 1998 supported by a second three year enhanced structural adjustment facilities (ESAF), equivalent to US $80m., from the IMF. It was primarily at stabilizing the currency and attracting foreign investment through the implementation of strict currency controls and amendments to the tax code. In February 2000 the IMF approved a second year funding under the Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (the successor to the ESAF) in continuing support of the government economic reforms.89

In 2002, according to estimates by the World Bank, Kyrgyzstan’s gross national product (GNP), measured at average 2000-02 prices was US $1,454m., equivalent to $290 per head (or $1,520 per head on an international purchasing-power parity basis). During 1990-98, it was estimated, the population increased by an annual average of 1.0%, while gross domestic product (GDP) per head declined, in real terms, at an estimated average annual rate of 2.9% in 1990-2002. Real GDP increased by 5.3% in 2001, but decreased by 0.5% in 2002.90 By 2000 the government had increased GDP, reduced inflation to its lowest level since independence and increased export levels. High external debt and low revenue, however, continued to present significant problems, and poverty remained prevalent. In an effort to address these issues, the government’s declared economic priorities for 2001 were to attract greater foreign investment, to improve tax-collection methods and to impose stricter currency controls. In 2003, according to preliminary official figures, the

88 Ibid.
89 Ibid.
90 Ibid.

services sector contributed as estimated 38.4% of GDP. Services provided 36.1% of employment in 1999. However in 1990-2002 the GDP of the sector declined, in real terms, by an average of 2.9% per year; though services GDP increased towards the end by 3.3% in 2001 and by 4.2% in 2002. The privatization programme was re-launched in 1998, and in 2000 the Government approved a further two-year privatization programme to facilitate the sale of strategic enterprises; by the end of 2003 official figures revealed that 7,060 state enterprises had been privatized since 1991. There was rapid growth in GDP in 2000-01, and in 2001 an annual rate of inflation of less than 10% was recorded for the first time since independence.

Social Welfare

Modern democratic state is a welfare state because it provides various services to the citizens all through their lives. It tries to develop the all-round personality of the individuals, especially the weak and the disadvantaged groups of the society, i.e. the children, women and aged persons. Kyrgyzstan being a democratic republic took various steps for the welfare of its citizens. In the early '90s in an attempt to offset the decline in living standards that was anticipated following the implementation of economic reforms, the government strengthened Kyrgyzstan's social security and welfare system, introducing subsidies on many basic consumer goods, services, 'freezing' housing rents and maintenance charges. As already stated, the constitution of Kyrgyzstan provides a wide range of social opportunities to its citizens. Articles 26,27,28,29,30 and 31 of Kyrgyz constitution deal with many welfare measures to be taken by the state for the all round development of individual and society. These Articles basically deal with orphans, old aged persons, poor, laborers, so far their material assistance, pension, wage and working conditions are concerned. Article 32,33 and 34 deal with education, housing, health respectively. Article 37 ensures economic freedom and Article 38, 39 and 40 deals with legal protection of the citizens. All these steps have been taken by the constitution of Kyrgyzstan to provide a person his basic minimum, so that he can live in the state with a human dignity.

In the year 1994 most controls of the prices were removed. In the same year the three extra-budgetary funds were created to administer the system (the Pension Fund, the Employment

\[91\] ibid.
Fund and the Social Insurance Fund) of old-age and social fund. A Medical Insurance Fund, established in 1997 was also incorporated into the Social Fund. The Social Fund provides old-age and survivor pension, health-related benefits, unemployment benefit, disability pensions and family allowances. In early part of the year 1998, approximately 778,010 people were the beneficiaries from the Social Fund. The government undertook comprehensive reform of the public pension system in 1998-2000 with assistance from World Bank. The normal retirement age in Kyrgyzstan is 60 years for men and 55 years for women. However, the retirement age for both sexes is to increase by three years from 2007.

In January 1994 it was officially reported that in the previous year the birth rate had fallen by 10.6%, while an increase of 6% was recorded in the rate of infant mortality. These figures are directly linked with the general declined in the standard of living in the republic. By 1999 the birth rate had further declined; children up to the age of 4 year accounted for 11.4% of the population that year (compared with 14.5% in 1989). However, a reduction in the rate of infant mortality per 1,000 live births, from 32.9 in 1993 to 26.0 in 1998 was recorded.\textsuperscript{92}

Out of the total budgetary expenditure in 1999, 1,125.3m. soms (12.1%) was for health, and 1,198.1m soms (12.9%) was for social insurance and security. In 1998 there was one physician per 301 person, and there was one hospital bed per 114 persons in 1997. people per physician, and there were 114 people per hospital bed in 1997.\textsuperscript{93}

Education is very important for the development of human resources, and literacy is also essential for the smooth functioning of democracy. Kyrgyzstan is trying to make all people literate for the realization of this end. Education is officially compulsory for nine years, comprising four years of primary school (between the ages of seven and ten), followed by five years of lower secondary school (ages 11 to 15). Pupils may then continue their studies in upper secondary schools (two years duration), specialized secondary schools (two to four years) or technical and vocational schools (from 15 years of age upwards). In 1997 total enrolment at primary schools was equivalent to 99.5% of the relevant age groups, enrolment at secondary school level was equivalent to 77.8%. Higher education, lasting between four and six years, is provided in 40 establishments in Kyrgyzstan. These include the Kyrgyz State University, which has 12 faculties, the Kyrgyz Technical University and the Kyrgyz Russian Slavonic University, which opened in Bishek in 1993. In 1995 enrolment at


\textsuperscript{93}Ibid.
tertiary level was equivalent to 12.2% of those in the relevant age-group (males- 11.6%, females-12.8%). Between 1993 to 1994, out of the total pupils 63.6% of pupils, in primary and secondary schools were taught in Kyrgyz, 23.4% were taught in Russian, 12.7% in Uzbek and 0.3% in Tajik. However, Russian was the principal language of instruction in higher educational establishments. In 1995-1996, out of the total students 64.6% of students Russian, 34.7% in Kyrgyz and 0.7% in Uzbek medium. According to census results the overall rate of adult illiteracy in Kyrgyzstan was just 1.3%, compared with 3.0% in 1998 (male-1.4%, female-4.5%). Government budgetary expenditure on education in 2002 was amounted to 3,350.4m Soms (22.1% of total spending).

A detailed scrutiny of the welfare institutions of Kyrgyzstan, makes it clear that these are not sufficient for the development of all and for the proper care of all. Adequate special provision should be made so far the shelter, food, medical facilities etc are concerned, so that the meaning of true democracy can be realized by every body in Kyrgyz society. However, it can be said that Kyrgyzstan is in a much better position in these respects in comparison with the other Central Asian countries.

Emerging Role of International Communities

The political system of the Soviet Regime was regarded as a closed system as there was no scope for the international communities to know about the internal administration of the Soviet Union. Foreign organizations, mass media’s etc. were not permitted to take information about the Soviet Administration. The foreign countries took interest to get information about the Soviet Union when Michael Gorbachev introduced the policies of “Perestroika” and “Glasnost”. The unexpected collapse of Soviet Union in 1991 provided opportunities to the foreign countries especially Western countries like U.S.A., U.K. German and other countries like Japan, France, and Korea to invest capital in the economic reform process of Kyrgyzstan. Thereby they could influence the socio-economic and political policy of Kyrgyzstan. According to Sheel K. Asopa, “America’s primary interest is to ensure that no single power comes to control the geo-political space vacated by Russia and that the

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94 Ibid.
95 Ibid.
global community secures unhindered financial and economic access to the region". The Akaev's reputation as a committed democrat and the image of Kyrgyzstan he promoted as the "Switzerland of Central Asia," attracted a great deal of international interest and involvement in the country's political and economic development, immediately following independence. He, thus, welcomed the international community with the expectation that its presence would strengthen the new state's capacity to democratically govern.

Politically, Kyrgyzstan's central government consistently allowed a number of internationally based non-government organizations (NGOs) to exercise considerable influence on the development of independent political organizations. In particular, they encouraged the proliferation of small and local independent organizations in Kyrgyzstan through the offer of generous financial support and leadership training.

Economically, the Kyrgyz leadership welcomed foreign aid and investment with open arms and exercised little, if any, regulation of the widespread activities of international organizations and foreign companies. This had two primary effects on perceptions about shifts in the balance of power. First, it promoted the belief among central and regional leaders alike that the central government was merely an extension of the international lending organizations. Economic advisers to the president, for example, criticized Akaev for allowing the country to become so dependent on the IMF and World Bank. Some complained that "[Kyrgyzstan] left one dictator [in Moscow] only to find another". Regional leaders interpreted the dominant role of these international institutions as confirmation that the central government essentially had no economic policy. The infamous "Gold Scandal" in particular created the impression among both central and regional leaders that the central government could not be trusted to handle foreign investment.

The increasing presence of international development agencies such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the European Community's Technical Assistance to the Common-wealth of Independent State (TACIS) created yet another arena for suspicion in the mind of the opposition in Kyrgyzstan.

Ibid., p.118.