Chapter-I

Introduction
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Democracy is the most valued and perhaps one of the most multi-faced political concepts in the modern world. It is likely that one may leave out one or the other aspect while giving it a proper meaning. In the present-day world democracy is a popular and fascinating slogan, the highest ideal, one of the most controversial concepts which has different meanings for different people, and a concept which has been a victim of many misinterpretations. From the time immemorial human beings have been fighting with each other for power or for supremacy. Democracy tries to substitute a more civilized manner of fighting or asserting the people’s right in decision making process. It is substitution of the methods of discussion and persuasion for methods of armed conflict, violence or revolution. The ballot substitutes the bullet. The people sit together, they talk, they discuss and they decide. They try to persuade each other and win other by force of their conviction, ideas and arguments. In a democracy the people are supposed to be their own masters. It means the sovereign power resides in the people, irrespective of religion, caste, class, creed, colour, sex, education etc. They have an inalienable right to rule over themselves, or to be ruled in the way they like and by the people they choose.

The democratic idea has a sweeping influence in recent times in Africa, Latin America and Central Asia where many countries were ruled by the authoritarian and totalitarian regimes. The Central Asian countries which were part of the Soviet Union before 1991 and now of the Common-wealth of Independent States, (C.I.S) are passing through a transition. A transition from communism to democracy, a transformation from communist political system to a liberal democratic system. In many cases this transformation has led to a reinvention of politics, in the sense of genuine public debate about the purpose of society and the state and has produced significant progress towards the establishment of a liberal democratic order. The political development of any post communist country is strongly influenced by the attitudes and strategies of elites and the character of the parties and other institutions through which they vie for power. Equally important to long-term post communist outcomes are the initial conditions and subsequent evolution of the country’s political culture and civil society. Democracy requires a supportive culture and civil society to function smoothly. Democratic institutions
both promote and are promoted by a democratic political culture and civil society. Democracy is seen by the peoples of C.I.S. countries as a means to assert their right in the governance of their countries and a means to provide liberty, equality and dignity and means to resolve various socio-economic and ethnic problems. Kyrgyzstan is one such country among the five independent Central Asian states of the former Soviet Union. After the disintegration of Soviet Union, Kyrgyzstan has become an independent republic having a democratic political set up.

Kyrgyzstan society is a multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic, multi-religious, multi-cultural society. The democratic political system it has adopted is mean to accommodate the diversified Kyrgyz Society. Hence, there is a need to explore to what extent the Kyrgyz history, political culture and its civil society may facilitate or obstruct to the strengthening of democratic politics and how countries build on historical and social legacies depends of course, on the tactics or vision of leaders. It is therefore, desirable to investigate within the confines of Kyrgyzstan’s heritage and resources, elite choices on questions of political architecture, social mobilization and the role of civil society in everyday policies of state that shaped the direction and pace of the country’s political development. In this context, the work undertaken will primarily focus on democracy and civil society in Kyrgyzstan and to examine how the existence of one strengthens the other.

India being the largest democratic country in the world may be a referential model to Kyrgyzstan. India like Kyrgyzstan is a multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic, multi-religious and multi-cultural country. Its democratic foundation lies in its pluralities and diversities. At the same time these are posing great problems to India when they rise in their extreme form. But despite of so many ups and downs India has maintained its status of being a sovereign, socialist, secular, democratic republic. It has a historical legacy of secularism, tolerance and it has a vibrant civil society to protect the freedom of groups, freedom of associations, freedom of individuals, freedom of press, freedom of media, rights of individuals, and rights of minorities etc. by balancing the power of the state and the desirable requirement of the society. Hence, in this context while the work undertaken will focus on democracy and civil society in Kyrgyzstan it will be desirable to take India as a referential model for Kyrgyzstan.
Conceptualizing Democracy

The word “Democracy” originally coined from two Greek Words Demos, meaning the people and Kratos, meaning rule. Its original meaning was “Government in which the ruling power resides in the people.” From the fifth century B.C. until the present days, people used the word “democracy” in this very sense. In England democratic institutions began to develop in the eleventh century when the autocratic rule began to be questioned. Levelers and John Milton were the fore-runners of this idea. Democratic tendencies are found in the writings of John Locke and Rousseau who pleaded it through the social contract theory. Paine advocated democratic ideas through his “Rights of men”. The declaration made by the freedom-fighters after the American War of Independence, and revolutionaries of the French Revolution also bear evidence of love for democracy. In the eighteenth century Spinoza, Hume and Montesquieu also supported the basic principles of democracy. The work of putting democracy on very sound footing was completed only in the twentieth century. It was also during this period that the Utilitarians too championed the cause of democracy and so did J.S.Mill, T.H.Green, Harold Laski, MacIver, John Dewey and many others. The introduction of the welfare state model, following the proletarian revolution, to a great extent filled up the vacuum of the idea that democracy has to be a government for the people.

Democracy Defined

Democracy is a very complex word. So, it does not have any precise meaning perhaps a more helpful starting point is Abraham Lincon’s famous Gettysburg address (1864), which extolled the virtues of what he called democracy “is a government of the people, by the people, and for the people”. This highlights the importance of three core features of democracy. First the stress upon ‘the people’ implies political equality, an equal distribution of political power and influence. Second, Government ‘by’ the people emphasizes the importance of popular
participation. Third, government 'for' the people highlights the fact that democracy suggests rule in the public interest."

In a narrow sense democracy can be defined as a political system. As Seeley defines it is a "form of government in which everyone has a share". According to S. M. Lipset democracy is a "political system which supplies regular constitutional opportunities for changing the governing officials and a social mechanism which permits the largest possible part of the population to influence major decisions by choosing among contenders for political office." Joseph Schumpeter defined democracy as a system "for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people’s vote". Samuel P. Huntington, among others, explicitly embraces Schumpeter and emphasizes on competitive elections for effective power as the essence of democracy. According to C.B. Macpherson "democracy is merely a mechanism for choosing and authorizing governments or in some other way getting laws and political decisions made." Ricado Blaug says democracy "is an ongoing struggle between incremental advances in the institutionalization of accountable elite rule, and extraordinary moments of revolutionary mobilization, which raise popular consciousness and force elites to grant reforms".

The broader meaning of democracy is normative and in this sense, democracy is an ideal; an end in itself, it is all encompassing, rather than a means to an end. R.H.Tawney, writes in his

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3 Ibid.


book ‘Equality’ that “democracy is unstable as a political system and nothing more, instead of being, as it should be, not only a form of government, but a type of society, and a manner of life which is in harmony with that type”. 7 In addition to being a form of government and a type of state, says E. Asirvatham “democracy is an order of society. A democratized society is one in which the spirit of equality and fraternity prevails.” 8

Democracy also implies self determination, independence from control by any extraneous authority. It necessitates a democratic temper, a spirit of freedom of accommodation, secularism and full freedom of expression and of the press. It is the surest guarantee against arbitrary rule, despotism and unbridled autocratic power. It is the most dependable assurance of justice and individual freedoms. “Democracy is both ends and means in itself. The ends are ideas, goals and means are institutions. As regards ends, democracy stand for government for the people, respect of human dignity, development of each to the best of his abilities, general welfare, liability, equity and justice etc. And as regards means, it is government by the people, universal adult suffrage, periodic election of legislature and the chief executive or cabinet, independent court, civil liberties (freedom of speech, press, assembly, association, religion, etc.) and so on.” 9 Soli Sorabjee, the former Attorney General of India said “in a genuine democracy all sections of society, regardless of race, religion, sex, color, culture, creed or caste must feel that they have not been excluded from the decision making process and have had their say.” 10

From the analysis of the above mentioned definition of democracy, it may be said that in a narrow sense it appears as a decision making method, but in a broader sense democracy is a civic virtue, as a way of life, as a mode of interpersonal conduct oriented to what is good for all, in other words, as an ethical ideal. As compared to the other forms of non-democratic system, democracy is more educative, more responsive, caring more for the people and less prone to revolution and violence. Its essence lies in liberty, equality, dignity and welfares of the people.

Ingredients of Democracy

There are many types or models of democracy. It may be radical democracy, guided democracy, socialist democracy, liberal democracy etc. But in spite of this division one can find the basic components of democracy. These are mentioned below.

i) Control of the state and it’s key decision and allocation lies, in fact as well as in constitutional theory, with elected and official (and not democratically unaccountable actor or foreign powers); in particular, the military is subordinate to the authority of the elected civilian officials.

ii) Executive power is constrained, constitutionally and in fact, by the autonomous power of other government institutions (such as an independent judiciary, parliament and other mechanism of horizontal accountability).

iii) in government, but no group that adhere to constitutional principles is denied the right to form a party and contest elections (even if electoral thresholds and other rules exclude small parties form winning representation in parliament )

iv) Cultural, ethnic, religious and other minority groups as well as historically disadvantaged majorities are not prohibited legally or in practice from expressing their interest in the political process or from speaking their language or practicing their culture

v) Beyond parties and elections, citizens have multiple, ongoing channels for expression and representation of their interests and iii) Not only are electoral outcomes uncertain, with a significant opposition vote and the presumption of party alternation values, including diverse, independent associations and movements, which they have the freedom to form and join.

vi) There are alternative sources of information including independent media to which citizens have politically unfettered access. Individuals also have substantial freedom of belief, opinion, discussions, speech, publication, assembly, demonstration, and petition. Citizens are politically equal under the law even though they are invariably unequal in their political resources.
vii) Individual and group liberties are effectively protected by an independent, non-discriminatory judiciary, whose decisions are enforced and respected by other centers of power. The rule of law protects citizens from unjustified detention, exile, terror, torture, and undue interference in their personal lives not only by the state but also by organized non-state or anti state forces.

viii) A constitution is regarded as supreme in a democratic country. If political authority is to be checked and balanced, individual and minority rights to be protected, and a rule of law to be assured, democracy requires a constitution. A constitutional state is a state of justice, in which the state acts predictably, in accordance with the laws, and the courts enforce restrictions of popularly elected governments when they violate the laws or the constitutional rules. This in turn requires a legal end judicial system and more broadly a state with some capacity. Thus, Linz’s dictum; “no state, no Rechtsstaat, no democracy”.

In a nutshell, political freedom, economic equality, social equality, educated and enlightened citizens, high moral character, good leadership, institution of local self-government, independence of judiciary, rule of law, decentralization of powers, sound party systems, existence of opposition, existence of vibrant civil society, protection of the rights of the minorities, freedoms of media and civil liberty and supremacy of the constitutions etc are the basic components of democracy. But before accepting any universalistic stands of democracy, it is desirable to know that certain kinds of differentiation exist between the western and non-western democratic process, within the preview of their own distinct historical legacy, economy, culture and society etc.

**Comparison between Western and Non-Western Democratic Process**

Before the Second World-War many western scholars have applied western concepts and categories to measure democracy in the non-western countries. But it was erroneous to do so as they have distinctly different political systems and societies. “The erstwhile western conceptual

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categories like parliamentary government, federalism, party system, pressure groups, political socialization and political communication etc. which came to dominate the study of the politics of these societies, have failed to understand the reality of the society, economy and polity of these countries”. The extension of these models to the non-western countries proved to be counter-productive as each country has its own unique political and historical experiences. It's own cultural traditions, its own economic potential and social structure.

In the post-Second World War period, attempts were made to study the dominant and distinctive characteristics of the non-Western political process. Lucian W. Pye has given seventeen distinct characteristics of the non-Western political process which are summed up below:-

1. In non-Western societies, the political sphere is not sharply differentiated from the social and personal spheres, but follows from the latter. Power, prestige, and influence and based largely on social status. “the fundamental framework of non-Western politics is a communal one, and all political behavior is wrongly colored by considerations of communal identification.”

2. Political parties or groups are not oriented to distinct political arena or particular political principles, but tend to take on a world view and present a way of life. Successful parties tend to become social movements so to say.

3. The political process is characterized by a prevalence of cliques since the social structure is characterized by functionally diffuse relationships, decision-making is largely influenced by judgments about personality and the particular relations of the various actors to each other. The pattern of political relationships is largely determined by decisions made at the personal level.

4. Political loyalty is governed more by a sense of identification with the concrete group than by identification with the professed policy goals of the groups, and leadership has a high degree of freedom in determining matters of strategy and tactics.


Since the leadership and the ruling party are committed to a total change in society or fundamental questions about its destiny or the interest of the whole nation, the role of opposition parties is dubbed as obstructive of progress and hence is considered to be revolutionary seeking to disrupt the progress of the nation.

The political process is fragmented and characterized by a lack of integration among the participants on account of the absence of a communications system in society. This limits the types of political issue that can arise in such societies. For example, the values and concepts of the rural element are not effectively represented in the national political process.

The political process is characterized by a high rate of recruitment of new elements into political roles. There is a constant increase in the number of participants and types of organizations, involved in the political process. Also the existence of multiple channels of contact with the national government tends to increase the number of people anxious to participate in national decision-making.

The political process is characterized by sharp differences in the political orientation of the generations. The younger generation, who are the aspiring elite, put pressure on the current leaders who took part in the revolutionary movement, for inclusion in the circle of national politics, but are thwarted by them. This results in a clash of views and consequent tensions.

There is little consensus regarding the legitimate ends and means of political action. Since the urban elite and the village peasant live in different worlds and have different attitudes, outlook and orientations, they can rarely exhibit a common approach towards political activity.

There is a wide divergence between the level of information and knowledge through discussion of the masses, and their actual participation in political decision making. They keep themselves informed of the political developments without trying to influence such developments.

There is a high degree of interchangeability of roles which are not clearly differentiated, but are functionally diffuse. There are no sharply defined divisions of labour in any sphere of life.
12. There are relatively few organized interest groups with functionally specific roles. Trade unions and peasant associations, for instance, are merely agents of the government or of a dominant party or movement. Although the process of social change is creating the basis for new interests, the formation of the explicit interest groups rarely moves at the same space. Many interests are not explicitly organized and when organized, they act more as protective associations than as pressure groups.

13. The national leadership has to appeal to an undifferentiated public, and have no means for calculating the relative distribution of values and attitudes throughout society. They have few guides to how the public opinion is divided over particular issues.

14. The unstructured character of the non-Western political process encourages leaders to adopt more clearly defined positions in international issues than on domestic issues. They seek a role in the world politics that is out of proportion to their nation's power.

15. The affective or expressive aspect of politics tends to override its problem-solving or public-policy aspect.

16. Charismatic leaders tend to prevail in non-Western politics because societies experiencing cultural change are characterized by confusion over values providing an ideal setting for such leaders. The problems of political communications further reinforce the position of the charismatic leader.

17. The non-Western political process operates largely without benefits of political 'broker'. The articulation function and the bargaining operation in the West as performed by the influential members of the competing political parties or constitutional government have, with a few exceptions found instability to be the dominate feature of politics.

A close examination of Lucian W. Pye's above mentioned famous "syndrome of seventeen features that jointly characterize the non-Western political process"\textsuperscript{14} reveals that as the non-Western countries have their own unique socio-economic, political and cultural traditions they also have inherent problems of unique nature i.e., anti-apathy to government, oppositionism, inefficient and corrupt bureaucracy, limited experiment with democracy, habit of violence, a

small middle class, poverty, illiteracy, absence of an efficient and popular mass property, social heterogeneity, lack of tolerance and lack of national unity etc.

The problems of the non-Western democratic countries are some ways different from the western democratic countries. Hence, democracy in these countries needs to be consolidated from the point of view of the problems they are facing for the smooth functioning of their democratic system. “And if democracy is to be consolidated, that is, if all political forces are to learn to channel their demands and organise their conflicts within the framework of democratic institutions, these institutions must play a real role in shaping and implementing policies that influence living conditions”.¹⁵ Faithfulness to the spirit of the democratic process, consolidating economic reforms, increasing literacy rate and living standard of the people, giving meaningful space to the oppositions and granting freedom to media, press and NGOs, protection of the right of individuals, minorities and giving a rightful place to civil society are the appropriate steps towards consolidation of democracy in the non-Western countries. As it has been noted earlier that democracy requires supportive culture and civil society because the meaningful existence of one strengthens the other. As democracy requires a public that is organized for democracy, socialized to its norms and values, and committed not just to its myriad narrow interests but to larger, common, civic ends. Such a civic public is only possible with a vibrant “Civil society”.

There exists a reciprocal relationship between them. Hence, it is important to know not only democracy and its basic components that constitute democracy but also to know about civil society and the necessary constituents of civil society and to examine how it is working for the survival and strengthening of democratic institutions in a country.

Conceptualizing Civil Society

The emergence of civil society has heralded a new era in the governance of world today. It has been an organized voice of the majority against the feudal, aristocratic and autocratic rules before the appearance of modern era in the world. In the modern time civil society has become a common platform for the diversified groups to channelise their genuine voice against the non-responsive state for the realization of common good. Civil society is identified as a realm of choice, personal freedom and individual responsibility. Neera Chandhoke says “civil society is essentially a concept which belongs to the tradition of political modernity founded on “individualism and defence of human rights”. 16 John Locke had used the term ‘civil society’ to denote a state that endorsed the rights of individuals. To Hegel, civil society is a sphere of “universal egoism” in which individuals place their own interests before those of others, whereas the state and the family are characterized by ‘universal altruism’ and ‘particular altruism’ respectively. He said civil society is an intermediary stage between the unreflective emotions of the family and the universal logic of the state. It is a state in the formation of the state. Antonio Gramsci writes in his ‘Prison Notebooks’ that between the economic structure and the state with its legislation and its coercion stands civil society. And because civil society lays between the economy and the state, it is constituted by both. “Gramsci showed us how the state seeks the conditions of it’s reproduction by hegemonizing civil society”17. The state invariably seeks to control and limit the political practices of society by constructing the boundaries of the political. The state attempts to constitute the political discourse. But in practices there occurs the transgressions of these boundaries and about the reconstitution of the political. “The site at which these mediations and contestations take place; the site at which society enters into a relationship with the state can be defined as civil society”. 18 For Keith Tester civil society is based on “the condition of reflexivity by which human subjects are able to separate the social and natural worlds and act as authors of their own lives, free from the

17 Ibid., p.35.
18 Ibid., p.9.
dead weight of tradition and authority”. Dipankar Gupta defines that civil society “is not a thing, but a set of conditions within which individuals interact collectively with the state.”

Rajni Kothari sees civil society as a way of empowering the common man and the ‘take-off point for human governance. It includes, within it’s ambit a variety of contemporary social movements, such as human rights movements, ecology movements, women’s movement and the peace movement which seek to restore the principles of good life in the conduct of human affairs. At the same time, the civil society also incorporates a ‘network of voluntary, self-governing institutions in all walks of life. A civil society exists for the sake of securing the rights of men, and within it the actions of the sovereign are supposed to create conditions by which individuals can enjoy their rights and liberty fully. Gurpreet Mahajan underlines that “civil society signifies a collective body that cherishes individual rights and legally protects the freedom of it’s members, it symbolises a condition that is necessary for the existence of a democratic state”. Civil society writes, Larry Diamond, is the “realm of organised social life that is open, voluntary, self-generating, at least partially self-supporting, and autonomous from the state, and bound by a legal order or, set of shared rules”.

Civil Society, State and Other Groups: A Difference

Civil society is distinct from “society” in general in that it involves citizens acting collectively in a public sphere to express their interests, passions, preferences, and ideas, to exchange information, to achieve collective goals, to make demands on the state, to improve the structure and functioning of the state, and to hold state officials accountable. “Society consists


of the entirety of social practices both public and private which mark a collectivity. Civil society is the public sphere of society. Secondly, civil society is the mediation level between the private and the public, or between individual experiences and public articulation. Thus, it excludes parochial society: Individual and family life and inward-looking group activity such as recreation, entertainment, religious worship, spirituality etc. and it excludes economic society i.e., the profit making enterprise of individual business firms. Parochial society and economic society do not concern themselves with civic life and the public realm, and yet they may help to generate cultural norms and patterns of engagement that spill over into the civil realm.

Civil society is distinct from political society, which encompasses all those organised actors (in a democracy primarily political parties and campaign organisations) whose primary goal is to win control of the state or to hold some position for themselves within it. Organisations and networks in civil society may form alliances with parties, but if they become captured by parties, or hegemonic within them, they move their primary locus of activity to political society and lose much of their ability to perform certain unique mediating and democracy-building functions.

In the present day world actors in civil society recognize the principles of state authority and the rule of law and need protection of an institutionalized legal order to prosper and be secured. “Thus, civil society not only restricts state power but legitimates state authority when that authority is based on the rule of law. However, when the state itself is lawless and contemptuous of individual and group autonomy, civil society may still exist (albeit in tentative or battered form) if its constituent elements operate by some set of shared rules (which for example, eschew violence and respect pluralism. This is the irreducible condition of its “civil dimension” Conceptually one can see the state and civil society as interacting and overlapping circles. A glimpse into the relationship between the state and civil society institutions shows that, “While the state represents the structure of governance, civil society

24 Larry Diamond, op.cit., p.221.
creates the values and normative framework for governance." The success of a country’s good governance depends upon how harmonious relationship exists between the state and civil society. In this context, V.R.Krishna Iyer observes that “the holistic success of a country’s good governance depends on the due appreciation of the dynamic dichotomy and unitive sensitivity of the dual entities viz., civil society and political state. The viable evolution of a modus vivendi between these two is a must for social order and a progressive polity. If the state operates as the sole voice and totalitarian authority dressed in democratic grab, the cabinet will become a cable, the Prime Minister a fuehrer with fascist trends and Parliament a rubber stamp forging the will of the people.” Where as the state operates through compulsory and coercive authority, civil society allows individuals to shape their own destinies. The role of civil society changes according to the nature of state and political system and the attitudes of the ruling class in the governance of a country. It can be safely said that the civil society should compliment the state if desirable. collaborate if possible, and confront it if necessary.

It is misleading to conceptualise civil society as simply “organizations independent of the state.” Beyond being voluntary, self-generating, autonomous, and rule abiding, civil society organizations are distinct from other groups in society in many respects. Firstly, civil society is concerned with public ends rather than private ends. It is distinct from parochial society. Secondly, civil society relates to the state in some way but does not seek to win over or position within the state, it does not seek to govern the polity as a whole. Rather, civil society actors pursue from the state concessions, benefits, policy changes, institutional reforms, relief, redress, justice and accountability to their security. Thirdly, civil society encompasses pluralism and diversity. Finally, civil society does not seek to represent the complete set of interests of a person or a community; rather different groups represent or encompass different aspects of interest.

Now after examining various definition of civil society given by different writers and its relation with society, state and other organizations, it will be desirable to know about the kinds


of diversified organizations, formal or informal which constitute the civil society. These are given below:

- Economic productive and commercial associations and networks.
- Cultural, religious, ethnic, communal, and other institutions and associations that defend collective rights, values, faiths, beliefs, and symbols.
- Informational and educational organizations devoted to production and dissemination (whether for profit or not) of public knowledge, ideas, news and information.
- Interest groups, that "seek to advance or defend the common functional or material interests of their members (e.g., trade-unions; associations of veterans and pensioners and professional groups)"\(^{27}\)
- Developmental organizations that pool individual resources and talents to improve the infrastructure, institutions and quality of life of the community.
- Issue-oriented movements for environmental protection, land reforms, consumer protection, and the rights of women, ethnic minorities, indigenous peoples, the disabled, and other kinds of discrimination and abuse.
- Civic groups that "seek (in non-partisan fashion) to improve the political system and make it more democratic (e.g., working for human rights, voter education and mobilization, election monitoring, and exposure and reform of corrupt practices)"\(^ {28}\).

In addition, civil society encompasses what Thomas Metzer calls "the ideological market place", the flow of information and ideas, including those which evaluate and critique the state. This "includes not only independent mass media but the broader field of autonomous cultural and intellectual activity: universities, think tanks, publishing houses, theatres, film makers and artistic performances and net work"\(^ {29}\).

\(^{27}\) Larry Diamond, op.cit., p.222.
\(^{28}\) Ibid.
\(^{29}\) Ibid.
Features of a Civil Society

There are certain important features of a democratic civil society. These are as follows:

First and the foremost feature of a civil society is self-government i.e. how an organization formally governs its own internal affairs and to the extent it practices democratic principles of constitutionalism, transparency, accountability, participation, deliberation, representation and rotation of leaders in the way it makes decisions and allocates its own power and resources. If civil society organizations are to “function as “large free schools” for democracy (in Tocqueville’s term), they must function democratically in their internal process of decision making and leadership selection. They should encourage and institutionalize multiple avenues for active participation among the members.”

A second feature of the civil society is the goal and methods of the groups working within it. Their goal should be for the collective goods and the means or methods to achieve this are to be a non-violent and democratic one. The third feature of civil society is its level or organizational institutionalization. As with political parties, institutionalized interest groups contribute to the stability, predictability, and govern-ability of a democratic regime.

A fourth feature of civil society is pluralism. There should not be any extreme pluralism or corporatism within the civil society. In this sense, some degree of competition between organizations may be healthy and conducive to compete within organization as well. The fifth & final feature is density of civil society. Civil society serves democracy best when it is dense in the sheer number of associations. The greater the density of associational life, the more membership the average citizen is likely to have, and the wider the range of societal interests and activities that will find organizational expression. The density of voluntary associational life has “three important and spillover effects. First, the more there are the more likely that people will develop the trust, confidence, and skill to co-operate to form new associations, when new needs arise. For this reason, Putnam treats the density of associational life as a key indicator of a civic community and the formation of social capital. This leads to be the second spillover: the denser a community’s associational life, the more democratic the political culture is likely to

\(^{30}\) Ibid., p. 228.
be in generating political knowledge, interest, efficacy, trust, and tolerance. Third, one reason why tolerance is greater in densely populated civil societies is because multiple membership reflect and reinforce cross-cutting patterns of cleavage that expose citizens a wider array of interests, backgrounds and perspectives.”

Role of Civil Society in Democratic Transitions

The role of civil society in a transitional society is very important as there is a crisis in political system of a society under transformations which were under authoritarian rule for many decades and beginning to transform towards a democratic political set-up. Here civil society guides and creates conducive atmosphere for the in-experienced general people, simultaneously legitimizing the democratic governance of a country. According to Larry Diamond, civil society “advances democracy in two ways: by helping to generate a transition from authoritarian rule to (at least) electoral democracy and by deepening and consolidating democracy once it is established”.

In many cases, civil society has played a crucial role, in producing a transition to democracy. “It was only the courageous mobilization of hundreds thousand of citizens surging into the streets to reclaim their stolen election that enabled the rebellion of military reformers to survive in the Philippines and Ferdinand Marcos from power, in what came to be known as the miracle of Edsa”. The same role was played by the civil society in South Korea in 1987 to overthrow the authoritarian regime. In Chile, the stunning defeat of the Pinochet dictatorship in October, 1988 was due to the active role of many broad range of independent organizations that united in the crusade for citizen participation. The catalyzing role of civil society mobilization against dictatorship has been most striking in Africa and Latin America. The crumbling of the communist regimes in the Eastern Europe had far-reaching repercussions on other communist countries. “When the walls finally came crashing down around all the Eastern European communist regimes in 1989, many credited Soviet leader Michail Gorbachev for refusing to

31 Ibid., p. 233.
32 Ibid.
33 Ibid., p.235.
intervene, but the revolutionary ground had been tilled and regime legitimacy undermined by
courageous network of dissidents, autonomous groups, and underground publications that
represented the reemergence of civil society." 34

In a country where democracy has recently been implanted, the civil society has the potential to
make a positive contribution. Religious, human rights, women’s groups, student groups, trade
unions and other civic organizations for peace and reconciliation can play crucial role in helping
to administer the process of social and political reconstruction. Hence, the work of civil society
organizations is vital to this transformation.

The role of civil society in the Western and non-Western countries are not identical. Civil
society in the Western countries are based upon individualistic and rational bureaucratic
structure, whereas, in the non-Western developing countries like Africa and Latin America and
Asian countries, i.e. India, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan etc, is influenced by group
collectivity and primordial identities such as ethnic, religious and socio-cultural affinities.
Hence, in the latter case the civil society is very often manipulated and fragmented before the
common good is realized. On the other hand, there is a fully developed and well matured civil
society in Western democratic world where the primordial identities are not capable of creating
any obstacle for the achievement of common good. Gurupreet Mahajan writes that “in Western
democracies community identities and institutional structures have either disappeared or been
compelled to function in accordance with the minimum framework of democratic equality
prescribed by the state. Consequently, social institutions and religious bodies like the church
have been transformed into voluntary associations” 35. There are relatively fewer problems in
Western society because of the changes that have already been introduced in social and public
arena. However, in countries like India, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, etc. where ascriptive
community’s identities and institutions are politically recognized and religion plays an
important role in the life of the communities, it yields more disturbing result. It may be said
that a well vibrant civil society is yet to develop in the developing countries or in the countries

34 Ibid., p. 236.
35 Gurpreet Mahajan ,op. cit., p.1194.
under democratic transitions. Hence, it is the foremost task of state to provide enough space and mobilize resources for the emergence of a full-fledged civil society.

Civil Society and Promotion of Democratic Development and Consolidation

A vibrant civil society serves the development, deepening and consolidation of democracy in many ways, underlines Larry Diamond.36 Firstly, this involves checking, monitoring and restraining the exercise of power by formally democratic states and holding them accountable to the law and public expectations of responsible government. New democracies, following long periods of arbitrary and statist authoritarian rule, lack the legal and bureaucratic institutions to contain corruption at the outset. Without a vigorously free, independent and investigative press, and civic groups pressing for institutional reform, corruption is likely to flourish.

Second, democracy building function of civil society is to supplement the role of political parties in stimulating political participation, increasing the political efficacy and skill of democratic citizens, and promoting an appreciation of the obligations as well as right of democratic citizenship. It also inculcates the deeper value of a democratic political culture, such as tolerance, moderation, willingness to compromise, and a respect for opposing viewpoint.

Third function of civil society is to give education about democracy to the citizens. To give education about various techniques, strategies and curricular for democratic civic education and to socialize young and adults to stimulate their active participation in community affairs.

A fourth way in which civil society may serve democracy is by structuring multiple channels, beyond the political party, for articulating, aggregating and representing interests. This function is particularly important for providing traditionally excluded groups, such as women and racial or ethnic minorities, the disadvantaged groups in the society; access to power that has been denied them in upper institutional echelons of formal politics.

36 Larry Diamond, op.cit., p. 240.
Fifth, civil society helps in the devaluation of power from centre to the local level i.e. from central authority to general people at grass root level.

Sixth, a rich and pluralistic civil society encourages tolerance for difference and a greater readiness to compromise.

A seventh function of a democratic civil society is recruiting and training new political leaders.

Eighth, civil society organizations mobilize the broad public support and pressure that is vital to win the adoption of institutional reforms that may not be appealing to politicians as a group. Organizations in civil society like human rights organizations also play a crucial role in democratic reform and its deepening, even after the transition to formal democracy, through lobbying for greater judicial efficiency and impartiality, improved prison conditions, justice for particular individuals, increased public awareness of human rights and greater institutionalized respect for individual liberties and minority rights.

Ninth, a vigorous civil society widely disseminates information and so empowers citizens in the collective pursuit and defense of their interests and values.

The tenth function of the civil society is the mobilization of new information and understanding which are essential to the achievement of economic reform in a democracy.

Eleventh, a growing number of civil society organisations (especially the religious and human rights communities) are developing techniques for conflict mediation and resolution and offering these services. Their efforts include formal programmes and training of trainers to relieve political and ethnic conflict and teach groups to solve their disputes through bargaining and accommodation.

Twelfth, civil society can strengthen the social foundation of democracy through effective grassroots development efforts which may relieve the burden of expectations fixed on the state and so,
relieve the intensity of politics. At the same time, they build social capital by bringing citizens together.

Finally, civil society nurtures the path for the state to govern and command voluntary obedience from its citizens. In addition, "by bringing the people together in endless combinations for a great diversity of purposes, a rich associational life may not only multiply demands on the state, it may also multiply the capacities of groups to improve their own welfare, independently of the state, especially at the local level".37

After carefully examining the role of civil society in democratic transitions and for the promotion of democratic development and consolidation, a question may be asked whether civil society is a sufficient precondition for democracy. The answer to this question may be 'no'. The existence of civil society may be an essential but not a sufficient precondition for the existence of democracy. Neera Chandhoke, is of the opinion that "The presence of civil society is a crucial, but not an adequate precondition for ensuring state accountability. Whether the state can be made accountable depends upon the self-consciousness, the vibrancy, and the political visions of civil society. An inactive civil society leads to unresponsive states; a politically self-conscious civil society imposes limits upon state power. And, if the political practices of a self-conscious civil society transgress and transcend the boundaries of the state-sponsored political discourse, a crisis of legitimacy for the state results."38 Hence, it is pertinent to state here that, though the existence of civil society may be essential but is not sufficient precondition for the existence and growth of a vibrant democracy. What is needed in this context is an active self-conscious civil society to impose limitations upon the state power if the latter transgress it's jurisdiction. It also legitimizes the justified actions of the state which are undertaken for the maintenance and upliftment of the individuals and society in a harmonious way.

37 Ibid., p. 249-250.
38 Neera Chandhoke, op. cit., p. 10.
The Implications of Civil Society in Kyrgyzstan

The Kyrgyz society has seen many ups and down through its evolution from a mobile nomadic tribal life to a modern settled citizenship. It has been ruled by Turks, Mongols, Chinese, Tsars and finally by the Soviet Union. If one will peep into the past legacy of the Kyrgyz people before it's incorporation into the Soviet system one will find a long socio-cultural history of Kyrgyz people.

According to Rakhat Achylova “the political culture of Kyrgyzstan derives from deep geographical and historical foundations. The nomadic way of life for the Kyrgyz has always required a careful and cautious attitude toward nature and strict respect for it. Any ecological imbalance could cost them their livelihood if not their lives. Kyrgyz tradition in fact values nature, mobility and simplicity. And as with all Asian societies, the Kyrgyz believe in the unity of self and community; the individual consciousness dissolves in the collective self-consciousness of family, clan and tribe, and the collectivity prevails”. The roots of democratic principles can be found in the cultural heritage of Kyrgyzstan. The culture of Kyrgyzstan is manifested in tribalism. Achylova claims that “tribalism is a fundamental aspect of the modern Kyrgyz national consciousness and though it represents another basis for division, it is largely responsible for the survival of Kyrgyz civil society through various period of subjugation”. However, some Western writers have opined that Kyrgyzstan lacked a national as well as civil consciousness before the Soviet period. Hence, some degree of truth lies in both points of analysis. One can say that the primordial loyalty based on the tribal identity had some degree of democratic features but it lacked the modern sense of civil life at the time of independence. To a great extent the tribal, ethnic, linguistic and the religious identities of the Kyrgyz people were erased and Russified under the Soviet rule, especially during the period of Stalin. After independence, Kyrgyzstan has adopted a democratic political system in which it has given supremacy to its constitution, role of opposition has been recognised, there is enough space for free and independent media, newspapers, and various organisation and associations, the rights of the ethnic minorities have been guaranteed. Hence, in the modern sense enough space has


40 Ibid., p. 326.
been provided for the development of a vibrant civil society in Kyrgyzstan. According to most observers “Kyrgyzstan embarked on a rapid transition to democracy immediately after independence. As a result, during its five years of independent statehood Kyrgyzstan made more progress towards political liberalization than any of its regional neighbours, with Kazakhstan a close second and Uzbekistan far behind in third place just ahead of unreformed and unrepentant Turkmenistan”.  

However, if we look at the political development of Kyrgyzstan since mid-1990’s the position of civil society has been something ambiguous. The political commitment to create a civil society on the part of the then president Askar Akaev, and some those around him are yet to be realized. The rise of some anti-democratic tendencies since the mid-1990’s and the parliamentary and the presidential elections held in 2000 suggested that president Akaev was willing to sacrifice the liberal democratic commitments in order to preserve his own position. “Equally it had become clear by the mid 1990’s that much of the political elites were only happy with a flourishing realm of social organization to the extent that it did not challenge their dominance. Hence, the growing number of attacks on the independent media and on social organizations”.  

In spite of its various constrains, the civil society in Kyrgyzstan marched ahead because of the constitution, which envisages all the credentials of a democratic polity and a vibrant civil society. According to John Anderson “Nonetheless, in the context of Central Asia, Kyrgyzstan has come a long way. Some degree of civil freedom has been maintained, grosser human rights abuses have been avoided and relations between organizations are often-though not always civil in nature”.  

There is some degree of economic freedom that may in time create economic differentiation and the need for the representation of specific interests within civil and political society. And this is

43 Ibid.
important since “a strong, viable non-government sector helps to establish pluralism, to develop freedom of word and association, creates social stability, public trust, and in the final analysis is essential for the success of democracy in the country”.\textsuperscript{44} The constitutional provisions, existence of multiple political parties originating from the aims and aspirations of the diversified ethnic groups of Kyrgyzstan, functioning of multitudes of organizations and associations and independence of media and press etc, are paving way for making a vibrant civil society to strengthen its democratic process in the twenty-first century.

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid.