CHAPTER I

THEORETICAL APPROACHES & CONCEPTUAL MODELS OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION
The problem of involvement in politics is one of those aspects of theory and practice which have extremely diversified, and at times contradictory, interpretations and forms of realisation in different periods on different types of socio-political systems and political cultures. Moreover, even within the framework of one of these types one can easily observe changeability of the conceptual and real content of the phenomenon of political participation.

As it is not sufficient to only mention, without discussing the new realities, that the Marxist idea of the decisive role of the participation of the masses in the socialist society is being realised under existing Soviet political system, similarly new aspects of this problem have in the Western societies, necessitated definite changes also in the forms of political participation. These questions concerning political participation are reflected in the current Western literature.

The evaluation and understanding of the problem of political participation require the perspective of its own system and an indepth analysis that would also add to our knowledge of the complexities of politics in general.

The issue relating to the scope and nature of political participation in the USSR has to be taken up in the background of the "Marxist-Leninist approach". The assessment of the participating system should not be analysed within the framework of the non-Marxian value system. It will not only be inappropriate but illogical as well. The Soviet political institutions need to be studied within the value system of Soviet political order. The value system of Soviet society is contrary or even contradictory to the political value system of Western political order. It is only the Marxist-Leninist perception of the value system as the conceptual premise of political participation on the basis of which the latter can be properly assessed in the Soviet democracy.

With this understanding, our aim here is to examine the theory and practice of mass participation in the Soviet political system. It is also our purpose here to analyse the basic Soviet model of political participation as well as Soviet Constitutional perception of that.

**Western Views on Political Participation**

While observers of the Soviet Union have long recognized the high level of political activity engaged in by its citizens, most of them have denied that this constitutes genuine political participation. Their arguments generally rest on the insistence
that the concept of participation undermines particular and quantitative rather than general and qualitative characteristics. Analysis of participation in Western political system has focussed on the individual and his activity, rather than on the society as a whole.

In defining participation for their study of American politics, Verba and Nie restrict the scope of political participation, to "ceremonial" and "support" participation, excluding citizens' participation in the implementation of Government policy.² This is largely consistent with Robert Sharlet's definition "political participation relevant to the functional inputs of the policy making process".³ He argues that the essential characteristics of participation are threefold. First, it must arise out of a feeling of efficiency, which implies that the belief of an individual "that his political behaviour may have some effect on the "decisional outcomes of Government"..., secondly, it must be voluntary to the extent that citizens have a meaningful choice as to whether to participate or not; and thirdly, it must be effective in producing a significant and relevant responsiveness on the part of the


political system. 4

In examining this formulation we may ask if such a narrowing of the definition of political participation is either necessary or fruitful? It may be applicable with reference to the American polity, but excludes too many relevant political phenomena for the comparative study of political systems that differ greatly in their degree of development and mode of operation. The full cycle of political function consists of inputs and outputs. The Eastonian model makes a clear distinction between system inputs and system outputs and in terms of political process this is manifested in the differences between policy formulation and policy implementation. Almond and Verba relate the former to participant status in the political system and the latter to subject status. "Of course," they point out "there is no hard and fast line between the making of general rules and the application of them. General rules are usually made within the legislature, but administrative agencies often have discretion to formulate fairly general policy as well."5

In practice, the input-output distinction is far too simple to be of much use in analysing participation. The importance to citizens of policy implementation is particularly profound in the Soviet Union, where high level comprehensive planning is used extensively to implement national objectives.

4. Ibid., pp. 244-53.
The greater the insistence of political leaders on integrating the myriad activities of a complex social system, the more irrationalities will appear on lower levels, and the more it becomes important to try to effect the implementation of the plan. In fact, the frequency with which overall planning objectives are not met in the Soviet Union suggests that implementing decision may be more crucial in terms of policy consequences than general policy formulation. Thus Brezezinski and Huntington have argued that "the postdecision struggle over policy may be less visible than that which precedes decision, but it is no less real. In the long run, it is often more important." In support of this position, Juvil and Morton conclude that "implementation is often the heart of policy making process. Law and Party resolution are merely plans of action. They are theoretical solutions until proven in application, and are often unenforceable without administrative and popular support".

There is, therefore, no reason to think of "input participation" as necessarily more significant to the individual citizen than "output participation", even if such a distinction were a useful one to maintain. But the notion of "output

participation" is meaningless unless it refers to the citizens' involvement in the decisions and actions of officials in implementing laws and policies. And if it does, it is also an input to the political process. It is merely focussed on a different phase in the total process. Hence, the input-output distinction disappears.

Some political scientists have argued that a basic difference exists between "participation and mobilization", and that the Soviet Union has mobilized its population to fulfill the objectives of the party elite rather than permitting it to participate in defining and implementing those objectives.\(^8\) According to a Soviet source, the essence of the Soviet concept of mass participation is the mobilization of all citizens into support for the institutions of public administration, particularly the local Soviets as elected bodies allegedly representing the whole of Soviet society, through participation in trade unions, factory groups, and other public bodies.\(^9\)

There are both broad and narrow concepts of 'mobilization'. The latter category focusses on the generation of public support for particular decisions.\(^10\) In its broader and more commonly

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accepted meaning 'mobilization' refers to long-range and general processes of adaption to social and political change. In Karl Deutsch's definition, social mobilization is "the process in which major clusters of old social, economic and psychological commitments are eroded or broken and people become available for patterns of socialization and behaviour". It means in Huntington's words, "a change in the attitudes, values and expectations of people from those associated with the traditional world to those common to the modern world. It is consequence of literacy, education, increased communication, mass media exposure, and urbanization".12

As regards mass political participation, more specific mobilizational processes in the Soviet Union has produced evidence that the involvement of citizens in organisations which are in any way concerned with public affairs is the most significant source of participation in political activities.Nie and others also report that "those who are organizationally involved participate in politics at rates for greater than citizens who are not involved".13 In fact they concluded that "in every nation organizational involvement is the strongest predictor of participation".14

Therefore, it can be stated that in Soviet political system, much of the impetus for political participation arises not out of the private motives of concerned citizens, but as a result of mobilization by a variety of institutional and social agencies. Mobilization in the Soviet Union is overt, intense, and heavily promoted by governmental and party agencies. Mobilization is more subtle and decentralized and occurs principally through organizational and social influences.

Another question has generally been taken up by scholars in the study of political participation is the emphasis on the citizens' role as a voter, as elected representative or as active participant in electoral politics. McClosky defines political participation as "those voluntary activities by which members of a society share in the selection of the rulers and directly or indirectly in the formation of public policy". This focus helps bring the study of political participation closer to what appear to be the most fruitful areas for inquiry with relation to practices in the Soviet Union.

In the Soviet Union, people have been granted right to participate in the elections. But voting in the Soviet Union is not legally compulsory as it has been at one time or another.


in Austria, Switzerland. But the pressures of political responsibility on Soviet citizens to vote are sufficient to ensure that over 99% of the people vote in every election, national, regional and local. 18

Soviet national election campaigning is extremely intensive. The Party leadership mobilizes millions of citizens to publicize the election, explain the issues and programmes which party considers important and ensure that the entire population goes to the polls. The elections witness the formation of countless study circles, discussion groups, campaign meetings, door to door canvassing, rallies, demonstration and speeches. 19

The fact that Soviet elections are not competitive in the same manner as in the West, does not diminish the importance of the campaign to the Soviet leadership. For, beyond the recruitment function which elections perform in Western countries, they also perform in all political systems, important educational, socializing and mobilizing functions.

In the Soviet Union, contacting is also prominent form of political participation. Citizens are encouraged to write letters to newspapers and to Government offices to voice complaints or make suggestions matters of policy, and concerned organizations


are obliged to follow up matters raised in such letters. Contact with officials is also encouraged to know the requirement of the constituents and for exploring individual concerns.

Other theoreticians of pluralist democracy believe they have found the solution to the problem of political participation by showing to each man the individuality of his political role and interests. Polyarchy, according to Dahl is a function of the political activity of members of a society.20 That there can be no concentration of power in one homogeneous group but that it is shared by different groups and these groups representing different interests "practise the arts of conciliation and coalition formation and prevent any single unified group from even approaching a monopoly of political resources".21 Kornhauser also makes a rather similar observation "modern democracy diminishes the legitimacy of the elites but it also encourages a multiplicity of competing elites".22

The pluralists maintain that power is an attribute of individuals in their relations with other individuals in the process of decision-making, there is no stable difference between the elite and the masses, and the individual is free to move from one political group to another according to his

own interests. Everyone may express his opinion and be an active member of several groups at once. Political activity is that which is practised by the individual within the group, which makes decisions at his own level and according to the common interests of its members.23

It is this pluralist model that is also being applied to Soviet society to examine how due to the operation of plural interests, the party interests, the state interests, etc., the Socialist State would gradually erode and resolve itself into a good polyarchical state. In a class society it is quite natural that different groups will press their demands. But even there is the system's equilibrium is sought to be maintained while these different interests strive to achieve maximum pay off for themselves. However, this is different from the ideological unity of all groups in a socialist society where the interests of each group is not only antagonistic to the other but also are mutually complementary to each other in their aim of achieving the social goal. This corresponds with the interests of the majority of the people—the working class.

There are elitist theories of democracy, ideologically ranging from the conservative to the liberal, but one thing

that is common is the division of society into those who have power and those who are subject to it. According to Mosca, all societies have two classes - the ruler and the ruled. "The first class, always the less numerous, performs all political functions, monopolizes power and enjoys the advantage that power brings, whereas the second, the more numerous class, is directed and controlled by the first, in a manner that is now more or less legal, now more or less arbitrary and violent..." 

The elite, claims Mosca, are better organized and have intellectual and moral superiority over the masses.

A common feature of elitist model of democracy is its sceptical attitude to the man-in-the-streets' ability to take part in politics. Many political scientists claim they would welcome broad democracy substantiating the inclusion of every citizen in the political system, but such a democracy is unfeasible, they say, because the masses are politically inert, apathetic, and often completely alienated from politics. These theorists try to draw a veil over the class nature of power relations in class society, or for that matter in capitalist society. But they nevertheless recognize the obvious fact that political power in society is closely linked with economic power and that the man who possesses property and wealth is by virtue of

this as a man of power. Many of them, moreover, recognized that a basic condition for membership of an elite group is high economic status and income superiority.

It may be argued that mass participation has had little impact upon the Soviet policy making process. Western writers often had contended that "popular participation in Soviet Union is vastly different than in democratic countries and indeed in many respect a total inversion". They maintain that "the democratic state offers the ordinary citizen the opportunity to take part in the political decision making process as an influential citizen; whereas the totalitarian state offers him the role of the participant subject". They sometimes have insisted that the Soviet system increasingly uses political participation to control its people and the controls produced by political participation "flow below in one direction alone".

Another approach to understanding the importance of the Soviet political participation undertaken by Jerry Hough, for whom "the most important questions about Soviet political participation are qualitative in nature and they involve comparisons among political systems more than comparisons

27. Brezinski, Z. and Huntington, S.P., no. 6, p. 93.
over time within one political system." In addition to the quantitative and qualitative aspect of Soviet political participation, it is important that we understand the structural and operational features developed to facilitate the mechanisms and processes of political participation in Soviet society.

To summarize, the analyses of political participation in the Soviet system made by Western political scientists have largely depended on their ideological orientation and models. While totalitarian model does not ignore mass participation entirely, in such a model mass participation tends to be evaluated simply as a mobilization exercise. Some Western scholars explain mass participation in terms of the theory and practice of socialism. Thus Hazard points out that "the Soviet state apparatus provides the means through which democratic aspirations are balanced with desire to retain strong leadership." He maintained that the Soviet view of democracy involves the leadership controlling the vital points of the process.

29. J.N. Hazard, no. 8, p. 49.
30. Ibid., p. 49.
Some Western scholars have been using 'bureaucratic' models to analyze the Soviet system. But David Lane is aware of the weaknesses of the various models propagated from time to time in the West to characterise the Soviet political system. He writes: "The bureaucratic, class, and elitist models ... provide little empirical evidence to justify their assertions. Neither Aron, nor Djilas relate their a priori interpretation to the stratification system; rather they assume that the socio-political relationships are they describe one self evident".31

On the basis of the above arguments it is suggested that the mass political participation may be defined as the involvement of individual citizens in collective political activities, related to the function performed by the formal institution of the political system. In terms of this definition, Soviet political system is a participatory system, that is the Soviet people as a whole are involved more frequently and in greater number of collective, politically related activities, than their counterparts in Western countries.

A Soviet Model of Political Participation

The Soviet political system was built on an ideological basis, and the theoretical formulations made by Marx, Engels and Lenin. Soviet leaders have described their political system as "democratic." This claim has been made by Lenin, Stalin, and by all the subsequent leaders. The origins of the theory of Soviet democracy are to be found in Marxism. Marxism does not accept the view that democracy is a supra-class concept. Democracy, like the state, should be understood within the overall context of the economic substructure, or mode of production of a given society. Democracy is a kind of state. If it is understood as a rule of the people then its meaning depends on the meaning of "the people". Engels writes "That concept (democracy) changes every time the Demos changes and so does not get us one step further. In my opinion what should have been said is the following: the proletariat too needs democratic forms for the seizure of political power but to it they are, like all political forms, mere means... the democratic republic is the logical form of bourgeois rule." 32

Marxism rejects the concept of 'pure democracy'.

In criticising the theory of pure democracy, extra-historical

democracy, abstracted from the relations of ownership and the class struggle, Lenin emphasized that every democracy is a class democracy. He wrote: "It is natural for a liberal to speak of 'democracy' in general; but a Marxist will never forget to ask: for what class?" Since democracy is nothing but a form of the state, which is essentially a class organisation. The proletarian democracy is also a class democracy, it is meant to serve the interest of the proletariat. In the Communist stage of social development when there will be no classes, no state, there will likewise, be no democracy. Though in a communist society democracy, as a form of political system, will be absent; democratic values like equality, liberty, fraternity will remain. But even in a communist society, there can be nothing like 'pure democracy'. As Lenin pointed out "it is obvious that we cannot speak of 'pure democracy' as long as different classes exist, we can only speak of class democracy... since in communist society democracy will with away in the process of changing and becoming a habit, but will never be pure democracy." 33

Apart from envisaging it a type of political system, Marxism understands democracy also as a form of society with

its own system of values. Among democratic values it gives importance to economic equality, social justice, socio-economic liberty, people's participation in the overall affairs of the society, and maintains that where there is economic exploitation democratic values cannot flourish. Democratic values can only be established through social ownership of means of production. Because democratic values "depend first and foremost on the existing mode of production and on what classes own the instruments and means of production." Hence, democratic values can be realised in a society where there is no exploited class. Marxism maintains that in a communist society democracy will wither away as a political system, but democratic values and democratic processes will flourish.

Marxism accepted democracy as a process, Lefebvre writes that Marx sees democracy" not as a system but as a process which comes down essentially to a struggle for democracy. The latter is never completed because democracy can always be carried forward or forced back. The purpose of struggle is to go beyond democracy and beyond the democratic state, to build a society without state power".  

34. B. Bayanov (ed.), Moscow, 1968, no. 18, p. 9
Thus, Marxism sets the goal at the establishment of a democratic society and not only a democratic political system. Explaining this, Marx has written, "In place of the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonism, we shall have an association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all."\(^{36}\) Lefebvre writes that struggle for democracy will never end. In his word "democracy lives only by struggling to preserve itself, and by going beyond itself towards a society freed from the state and from political alienation."\(^{37}\)

Marxism analyses democracy scientifically on the basis of the class structure of the society. This analysis gives birth to the concept of working class democracy. The working class democracy is known as socialist democracy or the dictatorship of the proletariat. The dictatorship of proletariat means a political system or a state in which the proletariat is organised as a ruling class. It is the rule of the working class over capital powers. Defining it Lenin said that it is "a state which recognises


the subordination of the minority to the majority..."\textsuperscript{38} The Communist Party of the Soviet Union defined the dictatorship of the proletariat in its programme in 1961 as "a dictatorship of the overwhelming majority over the minority, it is directed against the exploiters, against the oppression of the peoples and nations, and is aimed at abolishing all exploitation of man by man. The dictatorship of the proletariat expresses not only the interests of the working class, but also those of all working people its chief content is not violence but creation of the building of a new socialist society."\textsuperscript{39} Thus, it is a new type of democracy. Its basis is the proletariat class which is the majority class.

The functioning of proletarian democracy is altogether different from that of liberal democracy. In proletarian democracy the working class is given maximum possible share in the socio-economic and cultural spheres. Under socialism "... the mass of population will rise to take an independent part, not only in voting and election, but also in the every day administration of the state. Under socialism all will govern in turn and will soon become accustomed to no one

\textsuperscript{39} The Programme of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Moscow, 1961), p. 49.
governing." Through the process of economic equalization and education, the working class is made sufficiently capable of participating in the social affairs.

The first important feature of Soviet political system is the mapping out of the general political line and of specific guidelines in keeping with which the Soviet state carries on its activities. This function is carried out by the Communist Party whose Central Committee as the political headquarters directs. The Soviet state machine, Lenin wrote in this regard, "No important political or organizational question is decided by any state institution in our republic without the guidance of the Party's Central Committee."

The second is the selection and placing of executive personnel in the Soviet state machine. Lenin stressed that this was the indisputable right and a clear duty of the ruling Communist Party.

The third is the verification of the execution of institutions and of how will the Party's institutions are being carried out by all government bodies and officials.

Lenin wrote, "To test men and verify what has actually been done this, this again and this alone is now the main feature of all our activities of our whole policy." 42

The political institutions of socialist democracy is built upon the Soviet system. The Soviets constitute a system of representative bodies of the people. Lenin described the Soviets as such organs of power in which, "the entire population is learning the art of administration." 43 All the powers are vested in the Soviets. Stalin wrote, "The Soviets are the most all embracing mass organisation of the proletariat for they and they alone embrace all workers without exception." 44 The Soviets are the most powerful revolutionary organisation of the working class, and they provide leadership in all the spheres of social life.

This question of democracy has always been one of the main themes in the theory and practice of Soviet politics. Since democracy of any sort require some degree of mass participation. Lenin's writings in 1917-18 set

42. Ibid., vol. 33, p. 226
43. Ibid., vol. 27, p. 272
the basis for further Soviet theorizations about mass participation in socialist system. While the leading role of the party is undesirable, yet the party could not realize its goals without participating in and ensuring the leadership of the mass organisations of the workers like the Soviets, the trade unions, etc. Mass involvement in the Soviets was seen as necessary for the realization of socialist democracy.

The Soviet views on direct democracy are reflected in the programme of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) adopted at the 8th Party Congress in March 1919:

"The Soviet Government, guaranteeing to the working masses incomparably more opportunities to vote and to recall their delegates in the most easy and sensible manner, than they possessed under bourgeois democracy and parliamentarism, at the same time abolishes all the negative features of parliamentarism, especially the separation of legislative and executive power, the isolation of the representative institutions from the masses, etc."

In the Soviet state not a territorial district, but a productive unit (factory, mill) forms the electoral unit of the state. The state apparatus is thus near to the masses.
The aim of the Party consists in endeavouring to bring the Government apparatus into still closer contact with the masses, for the purpose of realizing democracy more fully and strictly in practice, by making Government officials responsible to, and placing them under the control of the masses."\(^{45}\)

Since Lenin, the basic theory of democracy has remained unchanged. Thus in 1925 Stalin declared that - "The Soviet state structure does not consist only of Soviets. The Soviet state structure, in the deepest meaning of these words, consists of the Soviets plus millions in organizations, uniting in each and all non-party and party people, binding the Soviets with the deepest 'roots', merging the Government apparatus with the masses, and destroying step by step every barrier between Government apparatus and population."\(^{46}\)

The development of new positions about 'mature socialism' and 'the state of the whole people' in the months leading up to the 22nd Party Congress in 1961 led to a renewed emphasis on the Soviet and the involvement of the masses in the Soviets and of social organisations in

\(^{45}\) Programme of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks), Moscow, 1937, p.15.

\(^{46}\) J.V. Stalin, Works, vol. 7, p. 162.
socialist democracy. According to the 1961 formulation, the Soviet Union was passing out of the dictatorship of the proletariat into the state of the whole people when the state would become the instrument of the entire society mobilized to achieve the transition to communism. The bearing of this theoretical position on the understanding of Soviet democracy is made clear in the following extracts from the 1961 programme of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

"The socialist state entered a new period of development. The state began to grow over into a nation-wide organization of the working people of socialist society. Proletarian democracy was growing more and more into a socialist democracy of the people as a whole.

"As socialist statehood develops, it will gradually become communist self Government of the people which will embrace the Soviets, trade union, co-operatives, and other mass organisations of the people. This process will represent a still greater development of democracy, ensuring the active participation of all members of society in the management of public affairs. Public functions similar to those performed by the state today in the sphere of economic and culture management will be preserved under
communism and will be modified and perfected as society
devlops. But the character of the functions and the ways
in which they will be carried out will be different from
those under socialism. 47

In this context, the new programme called for the
extension of the powers at all levels of the society, an
extension of the system of standing commissions in the
USSR Supreme Soviet, extension of the principle of election
and accountability of all leading bodies to the electorate
and the gradual reduction of paid officials in public
administration. As the Party Programme pointed out "All
round extension and perfection of socialist democracy, active
participation of all citizens in the administration of the
state. In the management of economic and culture develop-
ment, improvement of the Government apparatus, and increased
control over its activity by the people." 48 The measures
envisaged by the Programme for increasing the role of the
Soviets and improving the whole system of the state and
public organisations would help to broaden and strengthen
socialist democracy and promote the growth of the political
activities of the masses.

47. See, N., 39, p. 91 and 99.
48. Ibid., p. 92.
Since the main emphasis in this analysis will be on the practice of the mass participation in the USSR. People can participate through social organisation and Party is the highest form of organisation and activity and a model for all other workers' organisation and associations. The basic principle of relations between Party and State was elaborated by the Party under Lenin's leadership. The resolution on organisational matters adopted by the Eighth Party Congress states, "The function of Party bodies and the state bodies, the Soviets, should by no means be confused... The Party must put its decisions through the Soviet bodies within the framework of the Soviet Constitution. The Party seeks to guide the activities of the Soviets, not replace them."49 In this connection it may be mentioned that Article 6 of the 1977 Constitution reproduced the phrase "within the framework of the Constitution of the USSR",50 in defining the scope of the activities of the Party organs.

Subsequently, this principle was developed and specified. The resolution of the Tenth Party Congress on Party development thus noted "The forms and methods of work used by the Party organization at some period of time must not be

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49. The CPSU in Resolution and Decision of Congress, Conference and Central Committee Plenums, vol. 2, Moscow, 1970, p. 77

50. Constitution (Fundamental Law) of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, Article 6 (Moscow, 1977).
mechanically shifted to other organisations, e.g., Soviets or administrative and economic bodies."\textsuperscript{51}

The principle of leading role of the Communist Party in building the new society has been confirmed both historically as also theoretically. An important role in the political system of Soviet society is also played by mass organisations of the people. The CPSU Programme declares: The role of social organisations increase in the period of the full scale construction of Communism... The Party regards it as a major task of the social organisation to promote labour emulation in every possible way and to encourage communist forms of labours, to stimulate the activity of working people in building a communist society.\textsuperscript{52}

Consequently, subsequent Party Congresses paid much attention to the strengthening of all institutions of the Soviet political system and to increasing roles of social organisations. The 23rd Party Congress stressed, "The importance of further strengthening the Soviet state, of developing socialist democracy to the utmost. Special attention is attached to enhancing the role of the Soviets

\textsuperscript{51} See N. 49, p. 207.

\textsuperscript{52} Road to Communism, Document of the 22nd Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Moscow 1961, pp. 553-4.
of working People's Deputies to enable them fully to exercise their powers regarding economic and cultural development and seeing that decisions are carried out to enable them to show more initiative in settling questions pertaining to planning, finances and land, in directing local industries and service and culture facilities for the population.**53**

The decisions of the 24th Congress of the CPSU stressed once again the goal of strengthening the Soviet state and developing socialist democracy by enhancing the role of the Soviets of Deputies, by perfecting Soviet legislation and the administrative apparatus, by further strengthening the role of the organs of people's control, trade union, the Komsomol and work-collective in the total system of socialist democracy. The actual content of socialist democracy lies "in the increasingly broader participation of the masses in the administration of state and social affairs."**54** Further, as 25th Party Congress emphasised, socialist democracy "is the all round development of the political system of Soviet society. This means improvement of the socialist state system, further development of socialist democracy, consolidation of the legal basis of the life of the state and society, and invigoration of the activity of social organisations."**55**

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53. 23rd Congress of the CPSU: Documents and Resolutions, Moscow, 1966, p. 302.
54. 24th Congress of the CPSU: Documents and Resolutions, Moscow, 1971, p. 91.
55. 25th Congress of the CPSU: Documents and Resolutions, Moscow, 1976, p. 96.
As we have seen, the decisions of the 23rd to 25th Congresses of the CPSU assign great significance to the development of socialist democracy. At the same time, the decisions are closely linked with the tasks of economic development, socio-political development and ideological work. It can be noted that the growing role of the mass organisations of the people is also expressed in their being increasingly drawn in performing state functions together with government bodies. This form has now become widespread and is practised in most varied spheres of Soviet political life.

The CPSU thesis about the Soviet state being a state of the whole people in the conditions of mature socialism is endorsed and expressed in the Constitution of the USSR. The state is visualised to have actually become a representative of the whole of society.

The concept of the "state of the whole people" is elaborated and given legal validity in the body of Constitution. Thus Article 1 of the New Soviet Constitution states that "the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics is a socialist state of the whole people, expressing the will and interests of the workers, peasants and intelligentsia, the working people of all the nations and nationalities of the country."56

56. See N. 50, Article 1.
The progress and consolidation of the Soviet state of the whole people, its ties with the popular masses, numerous voluntary association of the working people are now the main aspect of improving Soviet political system. Moreover, it is the further strengthening and all round development of the Soviet state of the whole people along the lines pointed out by the Party and formalised in the Constitution of the USSR, that provide the foundation for the further advancement towards Communist self-Government.

In order to understand the constitutional prospect on political participation it would be appropriate to discuss it here separately.

**Soviet Constitutional Perspective on Political Participation**

The Soviet approach to constitutionalism is based upon the proposition that it is the society which creates and moulds the Constitution. Constitution is not regarded as an end in itself but as an integral part of the means to build up a class-less society. The Constitution therefore is an action programme or instrument enjoining the actual power holders to pursue socialist course and to implement socialist premises.57

Soviet approach to Constitution derives inspiration from Marxian legacy. Though Marx did not deal with constitutionalism systematically, he however, pointed out that Law and Constitution constitute the indivisible part of the structure which a social system may possess at a particular time. Marxian approach to constitutionalism is basically different from that of the West. That is why the doctrines of separation of power, independence of judiciary and theory of checks and balances do not attract Soviet constitutionalism. Marxian approach thus views Constitution in an essentially different perspective as opposed to the Western perspective.

Soviet Constitutions, wrote Vyshinsky, represents the sum total of the historic path along which the Soviet state has travelled. The Soviet view of constitutionalism emphasizes the point that a Constitution not only outlines the future programme of action, but it also bears the marks of various achievements made in socio-economic fields. The Soviet view of Constitution thus presupposes the dynamic nature of constitutionalism and therefore we find the drafting of one Constitution after another is in the case of Soviet Union. A Constitution from this perspective is not something

sacred which cannot be amended but in reality it is a mirror of socio-economic realities. Lenin precisely had this understanding when he said "when the legislation and actuality part, a Constitution is a fiction, when they meet it is not." 59

Soviet practice of mass participation should be seen in terms of constitutional arrangements and other instruments evolved to ensure high level of political involvement of people in the administration. The Constitution of 1918, first of all, can be viewed from the above perspective. The first article of 1918 Constitution declared Russia to be a republic of the Soviets of workers, soldiers and peasants. 60 These Soviets were supposed to posses all the local and Central power. The all Russian Congress of Soviets was regarded the supreme power of Socialist Federal Soviet Republic. 61 The organisation of local Soviets was specifically outlined in the Constitution. 62 Article four is particularly important in the 1918 Constitution because it includes the right to vote, election and the checking and cancellation of election and recall of the deputies. The

59. Lenin cited in ibid.
61. Ibid., article 3 of 1918 Constitution.
62. See Chapter IX, Section B (Art. 53 to 56), ibid.
right to vote was given to all citizens irrespective of religion, nationality and domicile, to those who had completed their eighteenth years. It is to be noted that the capitalist class was denied the right to vote because of the ideological considerations. The Constitution also specified the mode of elections and further empowered the people to recall their deputies if they find to perform their duties in a satisfactory manner.63

The Constitution of 1924 also retained in some respects the same participation mechanism as was in 1918 but right to vote, right to recall, etc., could not be given separate treatment. Article three did not mention the right to recall the representative of the Congress. Thus it is clear that 1924 Constitution did not expand the area of mass participation and reasons for that were obvious. The task of industrializing the country and collectivizing agriculture was the foremost task of the time and the country was faced with the problems of survival.

The Constitution of 1936 greatly broadened the range of basic rights and freedoms enjoyed by Soviet citizens. The abolition of unemployment resulted in the introduction

63. See Chapter thirteen, fourteen and fifteen in particular in order to have a picture of constitutional arrangement regarding political participation. Ibid.
of right to work in the Constitution for the first time. The Constitution, like other two previous constitutions, stipulated that the Soviets of working people's deputies is the political foundation of the USSR. The sovereign rule of working class was proclaimed by the Constitution. The Constitution defined Soviet Union as a socialist state of workers and peasants. The Constitution also repeated the franchise restrictions with respect to class and introduced universal, equal and direct suffrage.

The 1936 Constitution also highlighted the leading role of the Communist Party in Article 126, which accorded the right to citizens to unite in mass organisations.

The 1977 Constitution opened new floodgates of mass participation by consolidating existing mechanisms and opening new ones. In the new Constitution of the USSR, i.e., the 1977 Constitution, though the structure of the Soviets remain unaltered, the principal direction in the development of the political system of Soviet society is "the extension of socialist democracy, namely, ever broader participation of citizens in managing the affairs of society and state lightening

64. Constitution (Fundamental Law) of the Union of Socialist Republics, Article 2, Moscow 1945.

65. Ibid., article 118 to 129.
the activity of public organisations; strengthening of the system of people's control, consolidation of the legal foundation of the function of the state and of public life, greater openness and publicity and constant responsiveness of public opinion.\textsuperscript{66}

Lenin once aptly pointed out that the most significant thing in politics is organisation of power. He wrote "Politics is participation in state affairs, directing the State, and determination of forms, tasks and content of State activities...\textsuperscript{67} In the new Constitution the people as a whole have been made sovereign and the constitution says that "All power in the USSR belong to the people\textsuperscript{68}, and major matters of State shall be submitted to nationwide discussion and put to a popular vote (referendum).\textsuperscript{69} Thus the above mentioned constitutional arrangement endeavours to establish direct democracy by providing for direct participation in the legislature activities. The nationwide discussion on the draft constitution is an evidence that confirms the practicability of mass participation as envisaged by the constitution. The constitution of 1977 was

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{66} Article 9 of the 1977 Constitution.
\item \textsuperscript{67} Lenin, V.I., \textit{Collected Works}, vol. 33, p. 340.
\item \textsuperscript{68} Article 2 of the 1977 Constitution.
\item \textsuperscript{69} Article 5 of the 1977 Constitution.
\end{itemize}
a big step forward in the direction of mass participation. Over 80 per cent of the country's adult population, about 140 million people, took part in discussing the draft. 118 out of 173 articles of the draft were amended in difference to suggestions made in these popular discussions and a new article was added. The emphasis of the nationwide debate also centred round the "comprehensive constitutional guarantees" to ensure "meaningful participation of the people in improving the democratic functioning of the system and the elimination of whatever possibility there was of unlawful "persecution" of Soviet citizens." 70

The debate was also centred around the problem of transferring of "function of state agencies to public organisations" to enhance the mass participation of the people in the exercise of the state power and its administration. Thus the final version of the new Constitution seeks to establish the firm legal "basis for the formation and activity of socio-political mass organisations." 71

Article 7 of the new constitution accordingly enhances participation functions of the trade unions, all union Young League, Co-operative and other public organisations to "

71. Ibid., p. 212.
"manage state and public affairs and to decide various political, economic and socio-cultural matters of importance. As Chkhikvadze observes it "This reflects the true humanism and democratic spirit of a developed socialist society." 72

The role of the CPSU is of unique nature in Soviet polity because the various party organisations work as the major vehicles of political participation. In a one Party State the activities of CPSU are obviously very important as it is instrumental in mobilizing the masses, encouraging creative initiative and attitudes. Article 6 of the new constitution describes the "Communist Party as the leading and guiding force of Soviet society and the nucleus of its political system." There is nothing unusual about the close links of the state and public bodies with the political party of the ruling class, as in all political systems the party in power seeks to consolidate its authority not only through governmental agencies under its direct control but through influences over leading public organisations as well.

All the public organisations represented by All Union bodies have been granted the right of legislative

72. Cited in ibid, p. 213.
initiative. The chapter dealing with political system reflects how the enhanced level of mass participation in policy-making and its implementation is proposed to be firmly institutionalized. "Perhaps the most characteristic feature of the new constitution is the enlargement of a remarkable variety of participatory rights." The citizens have the right "to take part in the management and administration of State and public affairs." This right has been ensured by the opportunity to elect and to be elected to the Soviets of People's deputies, to take part in nationwide discussion and referendums, in people's control in the work of state bodies and public organisations in control over their activity, in the management of production and affairs of work collectives and in meetings at their place of residence. Under the new constitution the franchise has been extended to the citizens who have reached the age of 18 years, bringing more younger generation in the mainstream of the political system.

An important component in the political structure of Soviet society is "Soviets of People's Deputies" which constitute the political foundation of the USSR. "The people exercise state power through Soviets of People's

73. Ibid., p. 217.
74. Article 8 of the 1977 Constitution.
Deputies" and "All other state bodies are under the control of, and accountable to the Soviets of People's Deputies", says Article 2 of the new constitution. These are organs of popular power, and, as such, the real embodiment of the democratic character of the Soviet state.

All Soviets in Russia are simultaneously empowered to legislate and administer laws. There is a universal participation of Soviet citizens in election to local republican and all-union Soviets. While retaining the federal structure of the state system the new constitution has enhanced the role of the Soviets at the centre and the Union Republic levels. The Constitution empowers the Union Republics to determine the composition and scope of power of their supreme Soviets and their Presidents.75 The expansion of the rights of the Union Republics is further ensured through their participation in decision-making in the Supreme Soviet of the USSR and other national bodies in matters that come within the jurisdiction of the USSR.76 The chapters 9, 10 and 11 of the new constitution affirm the development of "initiative" and "broadening" of the competence of the Union and Autonomous republics and

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75. Article 138
76. Article 77.
other national state formulations like the Autonomous Regions and the Autonomous Areas.

The utilization of the Soviets as an instrument of governance has its own supporting realization. In the words of Stalin, the Soviets are "transmission belts" linking the party with the masses. 77 Because of the wider suffrage and the participatory nature of the right under the new constitution, the role of Soviets has assumed greater significance in the structural framework of the Soviet federation.

The real functioning of democracy in the USSR cannot be understood unless and until the significance of the local Soviets is taken into consideration. Local Soviets are those "organs of power" which exist at the various administrative levels below that of Republic, autonomous, national, city, rural locality and settlement etc. The enhanced participatory role of the local Soviets and other organisations of state authority has been mentioned in chapters 14 and 19 of the new constitution. The local Soviets of People's Deputies deal with "all matters of local significance" and "direct state, economic, social and cultural development." 78 The deputies organise "implementation of

78. Article 146.
the decisions" of the Soviets and exercise "control" over the state bodies at the local level.

The wider scope of the participatory rights of the deputies of the Soviets has been legally constituted. They can initiate "inquiries to the appropriate state bodies and officials." They have the right to approach any state or public body, enterprise, institution or organisation on matters arising from their work as deputies and to 'take part' in considering the questions raised by them. Local Soviets of People's Deputies can decide matters within the powers accorded them by the legislation of the USSR and of the appropriate union Republic and autonomous republic. The local Soviets are in a real sense of the term the institutions of self-government involving the masses. They are the basis of the socialist democracy. Local Soviets are in fact the institutions of self-government which not only import the political knowledge of governing the state apparatus but also make the representative the disciplined soldiers of Soviet democracy.

The Soviet political system as envisaged by the Constitution is also unique because of the participatory

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79. Article 105
80. Article 148.
role of the citizens in the judicial system of state structure. All the courts in the USSR are formed on the principle of the electiveness of judges and peoples' assessors. Judges and the peoples' assessors are 'responsible' and 'accountable' to their electors. The Constitution highlights the control of electors over the judicial system and thus enhances the participatory role of the citizens. In Russian court cases are heard with the participation of people's assessors. In addition the Constitution further provides "representatives" of public organisations and of "work collective" to take part in civil and criminal proceedings.

The elective nature of the judiciary and the participatory role of the citizens have made the judiciary completely responsive to the needs of the changing society.

The Constitution has strengthened socialist legality through articles 49, 57 and 58. Article 49, confirming the right of Soviet citizen to criticise deficiencies in the work of state organs and public organisations and submission of proposals for improvements. The concerned authorities are

81. Article 152.
82. Article 154.
83. Article 162.
duty bound to examine and answer the petitions and proposals made by the citizens. Persecution for making criticism has been made a punishable offence. Article 57 provides the Soviet citizens the right to legal protection, i.e., protection by the courts against any encroachments upon life and health, property, personal freedom, honour and dignity. Article 58 makes provision for the right to appeal in a court of law against unlawful action by officials of the Government or public organisations and also to indemnification for damages incurred by such unlawful actions.

The exercise of rights and freedoms is inseparably linked with respect for the interests of society and other citizens' rights. There is an essential interconnection between rights and freedoms and citizens' duties. Hence Article 39 stipulates that "enjoyment by citizens of their rights and freedoms must not be to the detriment of the interests of society or the state, or infringe on the rights of other citizens."

A brief assessment of the political participation and mass involvement as envisaged by the 1977 Constitution thus leads us to conclude that the new Constitution represents an advance in comparison to the 1936 Constitution. In the 1936 Constitution citizens were granted the right to unite in public organisations in conformity with the
interests of working people... The 1977 Constitution has taken one step further in the same direction by directing the state organs to be responsive to public opinion. The point of difference is very obvious. The new Constitution not only grants right of political participation like 1936 Constitution but it also determines the duty of State organs, i.e., to be responsive to public opinion.

Another striking difference to be emphasized is concerned with the characterization of Soviet State by the Constitution of 1936 and 1977. The 1936 Constitution vested all power in the USSR with the working people of town and country as represented by the Soviets of the working people. The 1977 Constitution goes beyond the limits set by the previous Constitution and declares that "all power in the USSR belongs to the people and people exercise State power through Soviets of People's Deputies..." Now it should be admitted without hesitation that the term 'the people' symbolizes a broader social category that incorporates all classes than the earlier term 'the working people', even if the collective farm workers were included in the latter category. The Communist Party of the Soviet Union

84. Article 126 of 1936 Constitution.
85. Article 3 of 1936 Constitution.
86. Article 2 of the 1977 Constitution.
is not only given the leading and guiding role but it also is now declared to exist for the entire people and serves the entire people.87

Thus from the above, it is very clear that the 1977 Constitution opened new avenues of mass participation and broadened the existing ones under 1936 Constitution. The above assumption can be easily substantiated by having a cursory look over both the constitutions. As a matter of fact the difference between the two becomes very apparent when the new constitution vests all the state powers in the people rather than in the working people only. The real increase of political participation is not just the best wishes of constitution makers but it has been primarily made possible by the constitutional experiences gathered by Soviet society during sixty years of its existence, as well as the evolution of the Soviet society from early socialism to developed socialism.

It is clear from the preceding discussion that the Western models of political participation cannot be applied mechanically in case of the Soviet Union simply because Soviet model of political participation primarily emphasized citizens' participation in collective activities.

87. Article 6 of 1977 Constitution.
through various social organisations. It is also important to note that these social organisations run parallel to the State organizations. The interaction between these two provides ample opportunities for mass political participation. As a matter of fact, the Soviet model of political participation is built upon the theory of socialist democracy which first of all aims at the increasing broader participation of the masses in the administration and social affairs. As we have noted the constitutional development also reflect an advancement in this regard. It can be safely concluded after having a glance over the four constitutions of the USSR that political participation in term of its avenues and modes is growing with the passage of time.