International Journal of Applied Social Science *REVIEW PAPER*
Volume 5 (1), January (2018) : 48-56 ISSN : 2394-1405 (Print)
Received : 18.12.2017; Revised : 28.12.2017; Accepted : 07.01.2018

Development of civil society in Tajikistan and Mongolia in the Post-Soviet period

PRAVESH KUMAR GUPTA* AND SANTOSH KUMAR JHA
Research Scholar
Centre for Inner Asian Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

Key Words : Civil society, Post-Soviet period, Globalization, Civil society

INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization, growth of transnational agreements and organizations have proliferated the civil society associations across the world[1] . A significant change in the structure of civil society has been witnessed over a period of time. Some of them, which have been prominent are community based organizations (limited to the local level), labour unions, and Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs). Therefore, it is difficult to define the civil society as it has certain configurations depending on the physical and social settings of the particular region to which it belong[2] .

The term 'Civil Society' is considered to be used in the late 20th century but its concept and significance can be traced back to the time of political thinkers such as Hobbs, Locke, Hegel and Gramsci[3] . According to modern political thought, civil society is defined as a connecting device between the private sector and state. It depicts the common struggle of the private citizens to articulate their interests, choices and ideas in the public sphere together with checking the authority of the state with the intention to make it answerable to the people. Therefore, it is primarily constituted by voluntarily association groups and movements that are the products of the free exchange of ideas in a democratic framework to assure the rights and privileges of the citizens. Theoretically, institutional forums of civil societies are different from those of the state, family and market, but practically, the boundaries between them are often complex, indistinct and negotiated. Civil Society generally holds a diversity of space, actors and institutional forums which differ in their degree of formality, independence and authority. In the latter developments, civil society acquired normative dimensions because it has become a state of affairs, enviable for the sake of democracy and freedom[4] . Most scholars agree that civil society is an arena of activity that is distinguished from the private realm of the family, the self interested behaviour of the economic sphere and the state. Larry diamond argues that "civil society is the realm of organised social life that is voluntary self generating, at least partially self supporting, autonomous from the state and bond by legal order or set of shared rules"[5] .

In the Central Asian context, concept of civil society is still highly debated due to transnational interests and struggle of the newly independent Republics. Doubtful assessments regarding the sustainability of Tajikistan as a state makes it complicated to define the role of civil society in peace

How to cite this Article: Gupta, Pravesh Kumar and Jha, Santosh Kumar (2018). Development of civil society in Tajikistan and Mongolia in the Post-Soviet period. *Internat. J. Appl. Soc. Sci.,* **5** (1) : 48-56.

building and development. Tajik civil war which came to an end after an eight years prolonged struggle for power with the signing of 'General Agreement on the Establishment of Peace and National Accord' between the Government and UTO (United Tajik Opposition) and after this Tajikistan moved forward towards development and stability. However, slow economic growth and many other problems related to it such as poverty, unemployment, and inequality are potential factors dangerous for the stability of the state. Moreover, issues related to Corruption, weak rule of law enforcement, incompetent role of public participation and meagre access to wide-ranging sources of information maintained an ever more centralized and autocratic presidential regime in Tajikistan. In this scenario, different forms of civil society to take hold and prosper in Tajikistan, in order to check the accountability of the government are mandatory[6] .

Over the past two decades, Mongolia has witnessed a transition in its politics, society and economy. It has been facing challenges in managing the outcomes due to steep changes in national development strategies, lower accountability of political leaders along with random and regular changes in public management policies such as organizational mechanism, legal and administrative processes etc. This disorganized mechanism can be held responsible for the creation of ambiguous and temporary assessments on the part of the private sector; as a result it restricts deliberate thinking and major domestic and international investments. Lack of performance in the public management system is mainly caused in the absence of any concrete performance measuring system. A low salaried official in the public sector reduces the possibility of corruption free and efficient handling of public policy management. In Mongolia, when an official gives his report regarding the progress of the projects initiated by the government, the primary measurement of the progress is always the amount of money spent on the particular project. This kind of evaluation shows faultiness in the use of the measurement standards for a centrally designed economy, while the primary indicator of performance should be the number of the goods and services produced by the government, rather than the monetary estimate. Regardless of these challenges, civil society in Mongolia have been actively participating in public management reforms and it also keep check on the smooth transition of the country by working as an intermediary between the citizens and government to achieve the prospective development goals[7] .

Civil society in Tajikistan :

The development of the elements of Tajik civil society is an undermined and less discussed issue in the research arena since a long time, however, it developed just like the growth of other civil societies around the world and as all civil societies safeguarded their past experiences, civil society in Tajikistan is not an exception in this regard. Tajikistan adopted new constitution on 6th November 1994 which provided a valid foundation for the formation of the civil society and it further gave legal guarantee to some extent for their development. According to the constitution, the basic idea of civil society is to ensure the human right and freedom at any cost and its state's responsibility to safeguard them. Moreover, further development of the civil society in Tajikistan depended mainly on the concessions provided by government's extreme control over important characteristics of national life such as cutback of the bureaucracy, introduction of a multiparty system, increased production mechanism and the development of efficient social programmes for all strata of society. In this regard it is mandatory to define the relationship between the state and civil society organizations (CSOs) by formulating some basic legal rights for the CSOs and constitution must maintain that guaranteed legal framework come into force. Tajikistan has a long history of having traditions of 'public self-organization' since Soviet times and even before that and it still has

its certain forms remained in the national consciousness[8] .

Civil society is considered to be one of the most vigorously developing institutions in Tajikistan and they are mostly engaged in humanitarian and charitable work, ensuring rights and freedom of marginalized and weaker section of the society, and supporting the peace, stability and democratization process of the state. The efficiency of the civil society in Tajikistan is increasing day by day as they are growing steadily. The CSOs first registered as Non Commercial Organizations (NCOs) came into prominence during the 1980s and augmented in number gradually. After the end of the civil war in the country, a number of important steps in order to ensure legal space for these NCOs have introduced. In 1997, there were around 300 CSOs officially registered in Tajikistan which got augmented in 2006, with the registration of more than 2700 CSOs. However in 2007, government adopted a new 'Law on Public Associations' which made it mandatory for all the NCOs to re-register or else face termination which has resulted in the reduction of number of NCOs in Tajikistan. Tajik parliament adopted new amendments to the Laws on public gathering and assemblies in 2014 which restricted foreign citizen's participation in these meetings, at the same time new amendments to the 'Laws on State Fees' were also introduced which increased the registration fee for the NCOs resulting into the decrease in the number of their registration. In the same year, another important development that took place was that the Ministry of Justice in Tajikistan adopted new amendments to the 'Law on Public Associations' which required these associations to notify the aforesaid Ministry about grants and financial aid it received from the international donor organizations. Therefore, these restrictions over the civil society initiatives in Tajikistan highly underpinned the legal framework provided for its development by the constitution and it posed serious threats and challenges in its further development[9] .

Civil society in Tajikistan comprises a large number of organizations including communal and local councils which are less formal than officially registered associations working for the betterment of the society. In an estimate provided by the Ministry of Justice of Tajikistan, there were more than 2600 public associations' that got registered till October 2012 in which around 1000 of these associations working actively in the different parts of the country. Moreover, it is also estimated that, "there are also 1400 legally registered Village Associations (VOs), 105 Social Unions for the Development of VOs (SUDVOs), eleven Associations of SUDVOs (ASUDVOs), over seventy Water Users Associations (WUAs), and more than 2600 community based saving groups supported by the 'Agha Khan Foundation' (AKF)[10] .

With all these years gradual development of CSOs in Tajikistan was a little jolted in 2012 due to challenging legal frameworks and complain of corrupt bureaucratic mechanism by these organizations during the time of registration. These CSOs are primarily dependent on the grants and aid provided by the international organizations, however, there source of funding is limited. These organizations have widened their scope of working initially from service delivery to now keeping a check on the public services and also promoting responsible and transparent system of governance mainly at the local level. Some of these organizations are large in size and scope of their work and they have superior advocacy and lobbying competence than the smaller and local level organizations which are lagging behind in the basic infrastructure, resources and possibilities of getting into lobbying for greater benefits. There is also a precipitous difference in perception of the urban and rural population regarding the CSOs as rural communities have blurred perception about the role played by the CSOs in society while urban public perceives it as donor driven and grant dependent organizations mainly because of the lack of the transparency and liability[11] .

Civil society in Mongolia :

Evolution of civil society organizations in Mongolia took place in the year between 1989 to 1990, when it started a twofold transformation to democratization and market economy, subsequent to be dependent on the former Soviet Union for almost seventy years. The process of practicing of parliamentary democracy in Mongolia was remarkably peaceful and effective. As a result, a new democratic constitution which guaranteed human rights and freedom was adopted and an operational government was formed by holding normal and fair elections. At the same time another developments which took place was the materialization of a multi-party system, emergence of NGO sector, independent media and religious organizations.

The concept of the civil society or 'citizen's society' in the context of Mongolia has been included in the constitution of 1992. According to the constitutional framework regarding the civil society, people's rights and interests are superior to the states and it is mandatory for the government to maintain a society based on these principles. Therefore, civil society as a term was included in the 1992 democratic Constitution of Mongolia and it is clearly stated in the preamble that the utmost aim of the Mongolian citizens is to "build a humane, civil and democratic society in the country"[12]. Today, civil society in Mongolia constitutes a number of organizations, such as Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs), trade unions, chambers of commerce, political parties, religious organizations, non-profit media and community groups. Though they are connected to each other in some manner but amongst them the most influential actors are NGOs.

Liberal political regime in Mongolia ensured exceptional freedom of speech, and freedom of conducting public assemblies, rallies and associations. From 1990 onwards, Mongolia has been experiencing a concurrent debate covering a broad range of political, economic and social issues affecting the society at large. Moreover, a number of Newspapers, run by both political parties and individuals, were freely published and being circulated in Mongolia. There has been an increase in formation of NGOs since 1990 which have associated a variety of peoples engaged in different fields of the society including teachers, lawyers, handicapped people, minority groups, Muslims and Buryats[13].

In the late 1990s, donor organizations began to actively use the term 'civil society' and it was translated into Mongolian language identical to the constitutional term of 'civil society' but some ambiguity still remained. This term did not make a distinction from "NGOs", and also has been widely considered the same; further making understanding of state and society relations uncertain. In Mongolia, the democratic constitution and law on Non Governmental Organizations provided the legitimate ground for the formation of NGOs in particular, after the law on NGOs (1997) the number of NGOs registered to the ministry of Justice and home affairs has boomed and reached over 5000[14]. These laws guaranteed the rights and freedom of Mongolian citizen to establish NGOs on the Bases of their interests and opinions without any other party's intervention[15].

Government and civil society relations in Tajikistan :

The 'neo-liberal' approach regarding the civil society asserted that these organizations should be independent from the state but in complex political and economic conditions as Tajikistan, this view can be considered a way too simple. It is not just that Central Asia's past experiences itself suggest that separation of civil society from the State is not practically possible however on the other it is also evident that with the collaboration between CSOs and states some exciting developments and improvements took place[16].

At the end of Tajik civil war, in May 1996, several organizations intensely lobbied the government

to endorse the 'Agreement on Social Accord'. At this time a number of CSOs collaborated to organize the 'Public Council' to develop confidence between the two conflicting segments in order to built peace agreement. The establishment of this council in Tajikistan became an extraordinary example of important role played by the civil societies in the conflict resolution and peace building. President of Tajikistan was appointed as the head of the public council and some other important figures were also included along with the leaders of civil societies. All these positive developments suggested to the government of Tajikistan that it is necessary to have a constructive partnership between the state and civil society organizations in order to achieve the sustainable development. Therefore, in 2002, in a meeting between the President of Tajikistan and NGOs leaders, importance of their partnership was thoroughly discussed[17] .

Civil society in Tajikistan has developed immensely since the end of the civil war and these CSOs are engaged in a variety of works ranging from distributing seeds to the farmers, micro-financing, education of women and children to providing educational and employment opportunities to the youths of Tajikistan. Social rights and justice is also an important agenda of theses CSOs. However, there are bundle of hindrances coming in their way in order to securing economic and social security of the people. A number of CSOs in Tajikistan have been actively engaging with some of the world class monetary funding agencies such as World Bank Asian development bank (ADB) etc. for providing better financial and economic infrastructure to the society. World Bank also sees high potential for working along with these organizations. Therefore it initiated a series of discussion in the capital city of Tajikistan and also in some other areas, in order to increase communication among state, civil society and World Bank itself. These discussions were basically aimed at strengthening and building competence for CSOs to work at the grass root level and also to check the productive development initiatives taken by government along with providing feedback to these services[18]

Developed relationship between the state and civil societies in Tajikistan made it trouble-free for various international organizations to work with them to ensure the social and economic benefits to the people of the country. End of civil war and Tajik Peace Process brought many international organizations together to support redevelopment of society and politics in Tajikistan. International Committee for Red Cross (ICRC) played an important part in ensuring the conformity on exchanges of captives of war and crimes. 'The Agha Khan Foundation' also has contributed a lot in reducing the socio-economic crisis in the eastern part of Tajikistan. Latest advancements have shown that civil society in Tajikistan is not only working in the direction of forwarding humanitarian assistance but also active participation in public policy management and law enforce.

NGOs are helping to a great deal in reducing the gap between government and its citizens. For the most part, government of Tajikistan has reacted optimistically toward this direction as in some of the Presidential Decrees, he emphasised on the cooperation building between the NGOs and state for the welfare of the Tajik society which have been facing severe socio-economic troubles since the independence in 1991. Government have also been devoting significant attention towards the civil society as considering them a crucial factor for the democratization of the Tajik society. However, Tajik government considered that poor legal system of the country holding back the development processes and it is also a serious setback for the communication between the government agents and NGOs but this could be reduced by a strong civil society and strong legal enforcement. NGOs in Tajikistan worked towards the improvements of social, political rights of women. They have also launched some important projects to promote women's participation in education and cultural activities along with spreading awareness about their rights and privileges. Moreover, they

have also highlighted the issues pertaining to the women's in the media. Therefore it can be said that "their efforts have been instrumental in leading the Tajik government to adopt international conventions for the protection of children, women, and other classes of society. Finally, NGOs have worked with the Tajik government to promote human rights"[19] .

Democratization and civil society in Mongolia :

The democratization of civil society in Mongolia that has been initiated has seen substantial achievements in the last twenty five years. The theory and practice of promoting democracy and civil society have today became important topic of discussion in the country ever since it embarked on its grand objective of constructing "a human, civil and democratic society" as declared in the 1992 constitution. The adaption of the democratic constitution in 1992 and the holding of the first free and fair parliamentary election in the same year provided future impetus for the emergence of a new type of citizen's organizations mainly on the western style issue oriented, office based, more professionalised advocacy and oversight non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that aimed at influencing public policy and to sustain the government accountable. Some of the most active pro-democracy and pro development NGOs is formed by the politically active women who were affiliated with political parties[20] .

In the 1990s, primarily NGOs were financially and technically supported by a number of foreign and international donor organizations, such as the Asia foundation (USA), Konard Adeneaur Foundation (Germany), USAID (United States Agency for International Development), UNDP (United Nations Development Programme), NED (National Endowment for Democracy), AUSAID (Australian Agency for International development), and the Global Fund for Women. This support was essential for the adoption of the NGO law in 1997, which in future facilitates the formation of the new NGOs in accordance with the law. However, towards the late nineties, donors support became less focus on political aspects of democratization but it still played supporting role in socio-economic aspects of the emerging nongovernmental sector, "emphasizing service deliver functions of NGOs over their advocacy and monetary role"[21] . Simultaneously, other groups and organizations which have been acting since socialist period understood the need to reorganize their infrastructure along with redefining their aims and objectives and relationship with the former Communist Party, Mongolia Peoples Republic Party (MPRP) and with the Mongolian state as well. Significantly, having a large network across the nation, these organizations maintained close relations with the government especially because of their long term ties with MPRP who formed government in Mongolia for two terms, firstly during 1992-96 and secondly in 2000-04 and in both these term it almost captured 72 seats out of 76. These organizations worked collectively with the women, children, youths of the society and also some taking along some other small organizations like pensioner's association, chamber of commerce, trade unions and Mongolian Red Cross Association etc. Independent women organizations in Mongolia have also became prominent and they somehow undermined the monopoly of Mongolian women's Federation because of getting enormous economic and infrastructural support from the international donors[22] .

Some of the independent trade unions like Mongolian Federation of Trade union became less important as the Mongolian pensioners association has now monopolised the privileges of representation. In 2005, free pensioners association was established and in less time it became relatively popular among the masses due to its constant struggle for an equal pension regime. However, its active participation was in demonstrations demanding the anti corruption and democratization of Mongolia. In Mongolia, self organized local level, community groups were almost

invisible during the socialist regime because of state and its allied organizations held almost all the citizens organizations but this scenario changed in the post socialist period when some small community based organization came into prominence by holding protests and agitations against the infringement of their living surroundings by the construction and extractive companies. Moreover, some of the herders' groups also emerged due to these environment related demonstrations and they were supported by the international environment protection organizations engaged in generating possible alternatives to the daily income of these people and developing democracy at the local level[23] .

Social movements that have played a very important role in bringing about the democratic changes in the country have once again become prominent after year 2000. Some of the fundamental problems related to the lives of people of Mongolia spread social agitation. Poverty, increased crime and corruption among public officials have been challenged by a number of mass movements, which have summoned many public protests and demonstrations demanding the restoration of justice, government accountability and immediate measures regarding corruption. These movements became stronger after the parliamentary election of 2004, when domination of MPRP in the politics of Mongolia ended by equally distributing the possessions between MPRP and other democratic parties. This considerably facilitated expansion of the political space for independent citizen's action, equilibrium and timely reporting of current events by the independent media[24] . Major challenges that Mongolian civil society organizations face today are lack of adequate support or required cooperation with the government, lack of an effective legislation over tax policy that would support the CSOs and their activities, weak civil society infrastructure, construction of most CSOs activities in the capital city of the Ulaanbaatar and some other cities as well as lack of experience and financial resources, also there is a weak understanding of the importance and support of civil society within the society at large. Hence there is a need to strengthen civil society by consolidating it as an important part of the Mongolian democratic society and promoting it through CSOs-government and CSO-privet sector cooperation.

The Mongolian people have actively embraced democratic transition and reforms in political and economic fields. In the last 25 years, the country has made impressive progress, especially by adapting a democratic constitution and hundreds of laws based on it and setting up of the required democratic institutions ensuring civil rights and freedom. Since the democratic reforms require a vigorous civil society, the rule of law and the effective freedom of the press; Mongolia have done a lot to achieve that. In particular the civil society has come a long way since its emergence in early nineties. While the field if civil society is broad and defeats generalization. Human rights, women's rights and pro democracy advocacy NGOs have matured substantially. They have clearly articulated their value and principles by maintaining ethical practice, effectively building new forms of democratic structure and organizations fostering solidarity and movement building for progressive social change.

Conclusion:

Tajikistan faced severe socio-political hindrances to its transition as an independent Republic but it has managed to sustain its integrity and sovereignty by articulating the desires and demands of masses. Civil societies coordinating with the current form of the government is one of the special attribute to the development process in the country, however, there is still a need for the democratic space and independent media along with increasing role of civil society organizations. Today the Mongolian civil, society play a crucial role to empower citizens and communities to rise against corruption and human rights violation, to hold government and private sector accountable and plan

more reasonable path of development. But, the Mongolian NGOs sector is still in its early stages. The sector faces numerous challenges ranging from their internal issues to their broader influences to society to empower the democratization process.

REFERENCES

1. Smith J. (2006), "The Uneven Geography of Global Civil Society: National and Global Influences on Transnational Association", in *Social Forces,* 84(2): 621-52.
2. VanDyck K. C. (2017), "Concept and Definition of Civil Society Sustainability" Human Rights Initiatives, Centre for Strategic and International Studies, Washington D.C.
3. D. Roberstson (2006), the penguin dictionary of politics, London, penguin pages 223.
4. Santosh Kumar Jha (2016), "Civil Society in Contemporary Mongolia", Sharad k.Soni (eds), Mongolia Today, Pentagon Press, p. 97.
5. Louis, Dumont (1986), Essays on Individualism: Modern Ideology in Anthropological Perspective, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, p. 221.
6. Freizer S. (2005), "Neo-liberal and communal civil society in Tajikistan: merging or dividing in the post war period?", in *Central Asian Survey*, 24(3): 225-243
7. "Mongolia: The Role of Civil Society in MfDR" available online at www.mfdr.org/sourcebook/2ndEdition/5-1MongoliaCivilSociety.pdf) (accessed on 8th January 2018)
8. Yusufbekov Y. and Babajanov R. Et al. (2007), "Civil Society Development in Tajikistan", Aga Khan Development Network, Dushanbe, pg 17.
9. Civic Freedom Monitor: Tajikistan, 10th August 2017 available online at: http://www.icnl.org/research/monitor/tajikistan.html.
10. USAID (2012), "The 2012 CSOs Sustainability Index for Central And Eastern Europe And Eurasia, Tajikistan, available online at: https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1863/2012CSOSI_0.pdf)
11. *Ibid*
12. Mongolian Constitution 1992: available at http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/—ed_protect/—protrav/—-ilo_aids/documents/legaldocument/wcms_117392.pdf,
13. "State of Civil Society in Mongolia" (2004-2005)
14. Open Society Forum (2005), "NGOs in Mongolia", Report, at http://forum.mn/res_mat/NGOS_Survey20060314_en.pdf, (accessed on 4 January 2018).
15. The State Great Khural of Mongolia (1997), at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/State_Great_Khural (accessed on 6 January 2018).
16. Giffen J. and Earle L. et al. (2005), "The development of civil society in Central Asia", Oxford: INTRAC.
17. Asian Development Bank, civil society briefs, Tajikistan, available online at: https://www.adb.org/publications/civil-society-briefs-tajikistan.
18. World Bank (2014) "Strengthening Ties with Civil Society in Tajikistan", available online at: http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2014/03/04/strengthening-ties-with-civil-society-in-tajikistan.
19. Firdous Dar (2013), **"**The Role of NGOs in Independent Tajikistan", in the international Journal of Not-for-Profit-law, 15(1)

20. "State of Civil Society in Mongolia", (2004-2005), CIVICUS, Civil Society Index Report for Mongolia, online available at http://www.civicus.org/media/CSI_Mongolia_Executive_Summary.pdf,(accessed on 4 January 2018).

21. *Ibid*

22. Open Society Forum (2005)

23. Santosh Kumar Jha (2016), "Civil Society in Contemporary Mongolia"

24. *Ibid*

****