Contemporary Trends and Prospects in NGO Sector Development in Kyrgyzstan

(Roundtable Materials)

The Soros Foundation - Kyrgyzstan
The Social Research Center of the
American University of Central Asia

Dear Reader,

We would like to present a collection of materials based on a number of roundtables conducted by the Social Research Center (SRC) of the American University of Central Asia and the Soros Foundation - Kyrgyzstan. The cross-cutting issues discussed extensively during the meetings were the contemporary dynamics of NGO sector development, the current state of the NGO sector, and the definition of methodologies and instruments for researching civil society in Kyrgyzstan. All the roundtables were held at the American University of Central Asia (ACUA) during 2007.

The issue of civil society, and of the non-government sector in particular, has been given enough attention by researchers. Nonetheless, a platform for regular discussions of trends and challenges in NGO sector development, and for the determination of appropriate academic approaches and tools for studying this issue in Kyrgyzstan, is missing.

The major goal of all the meetings was to initiate a dialog - and share viewpoints with regard to civil society development prospects - between representatives of think tanks and NGO activists in Kyrgyzstan. This was done to improve the understanding of issues in the NGO sector in particular, and in civil society in general, and to generate new approaches and topics for research in this area.

One of the tasks pursued during the discussions was to give careful consideration to different civil society models in other countries, and to try to understand what model is developing in Kyrgyzstan, as well as the roles of NGOs in it.

During this six-month joint project, as many as five roundtables were held

1. June 2007. Roundtable: "What Model of Civil Society is Possible in Kyrgyzstan and What is the Role of NGOs in It?"
2. August 2007. Roundtable: "Establishment of Representative Democracy in Kyrgyzstan: The Role of NGOs."
3. September 2007. Roundtable: "The Role of NGOs in Democratic Society."
4. October 2007. Roundtable: "Civil Society Development in Central Asia."
5. November 2007. Roundtable: "The NGO Sector and Political Developments in Kyrgyzstan: Theory and Practice."

This publication contains reviews of all five roundtables and individual articles by some of the participants. We are hopeful that this book will contribute to the discourse on civil society in our country and will become a useful source of information for researchers and experts on this issue.

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PART I.
ROUNDTABLE REVIEW

What Model of Civil Society is Possible in Kyrgyzstan and What is Role of NGOs in It?

Civil society development is a key development factor in any state. Social development, opportunities for transforming the public system, and the public system's capacity to be renewed and to move forward, are measured by the extent to which civil society is developed, as well as its efficient interaction with other parties. This issue is of paramount importance for our country, Kyrgyzstan, which is currently undergoing a transition period. Indeed, the establishment of a new national identity and a full-fledged civil society is largely determined by the successful functioning and interaction of these major entities of social and political life.

However, this issue, which is so significant and relevant to the development of the state and of Kyrgyz society, still has received relatively little attention from researchers. Over the last 16 years, attempts have been made to understand and study the role of civil society and its niche. For the most part, these efforts focused on international research and donor measurements, caused by the willingness to understand the structure and nature of Kyrgyz society. They were meant to identify the key avenues for introducing new democratic procedures and an agenda running counter to the precepts of the Soviet era.

Our country and society have already revealed their aspirations for self-comprehension. It became clear during the NGO forums in May of 2007, and it will be demonstrated at the upcoming National NGO Forum in July of 2007. The participants are expected to discuss the issue of the self-identification of the sector, its role in (and interaction with) the state, and intersectoral dialog.

In other words, our society has reached the point when NGOs try to understand their niche, and work out further steps in their own development. The state and donors face a similar task with regard to civil society. Another urgent issue that came up was developing and expanding social partnership as an important component for the successful development of the state, conducting reforms, and modernizing the country.

The issue of civil society, and of NGOs in particular, has been covered thoroughly by researchers; about a dozen dissertations on these subjects having been defended. Nonetheless, there is no platform for regular discussions of developing academic approaches and research tools in the country. Furthermore, a platform for such research, one that would integrate existing practices and theoretical knowledge in this area, is also missing.

One of the first methodological approaches of this kind was implemented in June 2007. As part of their NGO Support Program, the Soros Foundation-

Kyrgyzstan and the Social Research Center at the American University of Central Asia conducted a roundtable entitled "What Model of Civil Society Is Possible in Kyrgyzstan, and What Is the Role of NGOs in It?" This event was the first in a series of round-tables planned by both partners for the discussion of approaches and tools for researching the development of civil society in Kyrgyzstan.

It was a new discussion for Kyrgyzstan, and the goal of the first meeting was to elaborate possible methods of analysis of civil society development in the country. Emil Juraev, Vice-President of the OSCE Academy, said that "we need a civil society model, first of all as a tool for analysis and an element for connecting the trends and characteristics of our society, taking into account the interaction of all of its actors, including NGOs and the state." It is important to draw researchers' attention to this topic in order to develop a methodology for conducting systematic and qualitative research on civil society-related issues. Such studies may help civil society activists to better understand the dynamics of civil society development in our country, to formulate their strategies, and to set their priorities.

The participants did not try to answer all the questions, but rather attempted to treat the issue as a whole, and to identify criteria for evaluating and selecting approaches to the existing civil society models.

The substantive part of the discussion started with a report by Elmira Shishkaraeva, chief author of the monograph *Historical Review of NGO Establishment and Development in Kyrgyzstan,* and a report by Charles Buxton, regional representative of INTRAC, an international center for studying and researching NGOs.

The first report was not just a presentation of information about the NGO sector, but rather a paper summarizing the first comprehensive study of the subject in Kyrgyzstan, "an instrumental and conceptual attempt to study this realm.[1]" Two methods (a survey and an in-depth interview) were used to carry out this study. The results were published in Russian, Kyrgyz, and English.

Apart from general approaches, Ms. Shishkaraeva's paper revealed the challenges and restrictions encountered during the study "NGOs: A Young Sector." These obstacles resulted in a scarcity of information (mostly primary data) and a lack of insti-

tutional history among organizations representing the sector. Almost none of the surveyed NGOs had their own, recorded histories. NGOs which had had a succession of leaders were unable to tell how their organizations were established, what goals they had initially set, why they had chosen a particular direction for development, etc. Using oral testimony methods, the researchers described the chronological development of some organizations, including Interbilim, the Social Technology Agency, and others.

According to Mr. Buxton, even though the project was a long-term one, INTRAC faced similar problems. "Five years ago, when we had just started working, all notions, models, and existing structures were new," he said. "Local researchers employed their own approach which was different from ours. International organizations conducted a number of studies, and there were quite a few of them in the region. However, the results were not widely disseminated, and we were almost unknown. Also, when we presented the findings of our research, the reaction was mixed, and there were many protests." One year ago, the study described by Mr. Buxton served as a basis for a book, Civil Society Development in Central Asia, which is currently available only in English.

Mr. Buxton focused on some of the distinctive features of research approaches to civil society in Kyrgyzstan. In his opinion, the borderline period of civil society is under-explored. "In Kyrgyzstan's history, there was a chapter of pre-Soviet and post-Soviet periods," he said. "They have not been properly studied, and they are difficult for foreign researchers to understand. In Kyrgyzstan there is a common misconception that the history of civil society started in 1991. It is a gross mistake. Moreover, even in the 1990s the discourse on civil society development in the country was fairly doubtful."

The studies that were presented suggest that during the time when post-Soviet civil society was developing in Kyrgyzstan, there was no reflection on civil society development from the Soviet era, or its development patterns. In addition, their mental, organizational, and socio-cultural origins were not studied or taken into account. They are still affecting the formation of the sector, for example, the structure of collectivism, psychology of paternalism, etc.

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1. More details about the roundtable are available at www.src.auca.kg.

Mr. Buxton presented three classic models of civil society: the triadic, political, and arena models. The most well-known and widespread one, the triadic model, which reflects the establishment and consolidation of the sector, is functionally more of an academic and formalized model. It is more generalized and it is not dynamic; it equally represents all actors - the state, the commercial sector, and the non-commercial sector - and fails to account for the fact that these actors gradually move away from each other. The second model, the political model, reflects the existing political regime gaining legitimacy among citizens, demonstrating the dependence of these two actors (civil society and the regime) on the political system and the market relations within the country. The third model, the arena model, is broader and includes the realm of "informal relations" (the family). This system is more dynamic; it is not finished and is marked by a dotted line. In this model, there is a kind of a civil society arena. It reflects the different functions and forms of an organization, as well as driving power relations with an intermittent balance of power. This model emphasizes that civil society is more of an association, rather than a scattering of individual citizens. In this pattern, there is an attempt to demonstrate how different societal members set the rules of the game and draw boundaries between one another, as well as possible alliances and areas of partnership. This model helps reveal contextual elements, specific conditions in each country, and, for example, differences in the development of civil societies in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

In the course of the discussion, the participants pointed out that a conceptual basis of civil society should be developed in the NGO sector and the analytical community. "When we look at different civil society models, we should be using common terminology," said Janyl Abdyldabek kyzy, of the Gender Research Center. "In our society, many notions used by practitioners and scholars are ambiguous. There is some muddle in terms of perception, which makes the emerging studies even more confusing."

Yulia Chukhmatova, NGO Support Program Coordinator for the Soros Foundation-Kyrgyzstan, suggested using a series of discussions on this issue to facilitate development and to fix the terms and notions through a more specialized approach.

At the meeting, different approaches to studying civil society were presented. Cholpon Nogoibaeva, Programs Director of the Soros Foundation-Kyrgyzstan, proposed the following goal as a reference point: "To understand what civil society model should exist in Kyrgyzstan to prevent the country from rolling back to its former totalitarian system." Rashid Mashanlo, an independent expert, said he believed that when a certain civil society model is looked at, it is important to consider the relations between various actors and social values at a particular stage. Medet Tulegenov, of the Soros Foundation-Kyrgyzstan, posed an important question: "Who are the bearers of this or that model?"

The participants identified the criteria for establishing a possible model in Kyrgyzstan: interrelations systems; functions; and areas of influence.

Closing the discussion, moderator Marina Glushkova, of the Institute of Human Projecting, tried to sum up the grounds for establishing one or another of the civil society models presented at the roundtable:

— A model can serve as a descriptive tool;

— A model can be some sort of a formation, an existing entity, and something we'll have to implement in our country;

— A model can be an analytical tool;

— A model can suggest a governance method.

The participants pointed to the relevance of the issue and expressed their willingness to continue the discussion. As Mr. Buxton noted, "it is crucial to support not just specific organizations, but also the public space for such discussions and reflections."

At the present time, this approach is reflected in a new country strategy implemented by donors.

Establishment of Representative Democracy in Kyrgyzstan: The Role of NGOs

Nina Bagdasarova, Director of the School for Future Elites, made a presentation on the topic of the round-table, which was followed by a general discussion.

Moderator Alexander Pugachev, of the Social Research Center, introduced the main speaker, Nina Bagdasarova, Ph.D. in Psychology, and also Zainidin Kurmanov, UNDP's national consultant on demo-cratic development, who was the main reviewer of Ms. Bagdasarova's report.

As Ms. Bagdasarova noted, during the first round-table, interest was raised in the issues of civil soci-ety development and the role of NGOs in the wider context of global events. The urgency of those issues notwithstanding, today there is clearly a lack of a serious theoretical understanding of the role of NGOs in democratic development, as well as of dem-ocratic development as such.

The key source for Ms. Bagdasarova's analysis was a 2002 book by the Dutch philosopher Frank Ankersmit. She also relied on publications by Claus Leggewie, S. Lukashevskiy, B. Mezhuev and V.

Tishkov[1]. According to Ms. Bagdasarova, many of Ankersmit's ideas about representative democracy are very interesting and are critical for analyzing democratic development in Kyrgyzstan. She made a short presentation of the book.

Ankersmit writes that representative democracy emerged at a particular moment in history. Before that, there were examples of democracy (for instance, in ancient Greece) and of representation, when a monarch would gather representatives of various estates to lobby for their interests. It was at the beginning of the eighteenth century that these two political systems first merged.

There are two versions of representative democ-racy — Continental and Anglo-Saxon. These two models are structured differently, since they emerged under different conditions and were meant to address divergent historical needs. These differ-ences notwithstanding, both schemes of represen-tative democracy were aimed at limiting the power of monarchs, which in those days was claimed to be absolute. While in England the establishment of

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1. Ankersmit, Frank (2002). Political Representation. Stanford University Press. Also see, Ankersmit, Frank (2004). "Representative Democracy: Esthetic Approach to Conflict and Compromise," Logos 2 (42). Discussion: Leggewie, Claus. "Transnational Movements and Democracy." Lukashevskiy, S. "Comments to Claus Leggewie's Article." Mezhuev, B. "Deadlocks of Transnationalization." Tishkov, V. "Anthropology of NGOs," Reserve Stock 1, 2005.

representative democracy took place without conflict, in the rest of Europe it was accompanied by acute social conflicts and the menace of war. After the fall of Bonapartism, a new model of parliamentarism emerged, which was based on the "golden mean," with the interests of all social groups represented in a representative body. The innovation of parliamentary democracy was that, in parliamentary discussions, there was a shift in focus from ideological differences to behavior, and compromise was the main decision-making tool.

Ms. Bagdasarova noted that, according to Ankersmit, the situation that gave rise to both versions of representative democracy changed, and currently it is difficult to observe competing ideologies or rival social groups engaged in real political struggle. Nowadays, social problems, as a rule, concern everyone equally. If there are traffic jams on the roads, they affect both those driving Rolls Royces and those using public transportation. In this sense, the type of problems faced by authorities today are dramatically different from those faced by authorities in the past.

"To meet the needs of the times, another system of decision-making and governance emerged," Ms. Bagdasarova added. "Currently, in both developed and developing countries it is bureaucracy and the state that, using different means, identify and solve problems. By working with various expert networks, it tries to solve problems. And if we talk about issues that cause a clash of opinions or ideologies, the decision is beyond any political discussion. In other words, decision-making boils down to a technical means of solving problems.

There is nothing wrong with the system changing to meet historical needs. As Ms. Bagdasarova reported, in addressing this issue, Ankersmit focused on a few important points. Firstly, under a new system, experts represent the truth, rather than some social group. In this context, there is no other mediator between the state and the public except expert consultants. For experts not to lose their status as experts, they must remain neutral. They provide consultations, give recommendations, make statements, analyze problems from different angles, and suggest various solutions; authorities choose the solution. Expert analysis should be logical and detached from values and benchmarks.

When the expert community is the only intermediary between the state and the public, there is an illusion of the establishment of a common political space. Since this scheme does not include a figure representing the public (or its various layers), there is no public as such in the political arena.

Ms. Bagdasarova then focused on a few other issues she thought were crucial for supporting Ankersmit's arguments.

"Our knowledge about different historic events — for example, about the French Revolution — is made possible because people created representations of them," she said. "In other words, people described these events in books. Various authors provided different descriptions and we have the right to choose which to believe. In this context, Ankersmit opposes any direct democracy, which is widely espoused in the contemporary world. He argues that it is impossible to solve many issues though direct democracy. Even if it were possible to gather all of a country's population in one square, as in the ancient Greek poleis, representative democracy would still preferable, he argues. Only by having a representative figure shaping the opinions of certain groups into a whole and presenting them for discussion, is it possible to effectively represent the interests of different social groups.

As Ms. Bagdasarova explained, another argument is that common political space lacking political opponents is marked by "perspectivism." In this situation, we don't have a "mirror agent," an opponent who can help us learn about ourselves. There is a split and separated political space that can prevent the spread of the "absolute truth" as an unquestionable basis for political life, and therefore, ward off the threat of any totalitarianism, activating the automatic protection of liberal democratic values.

"It is essential to have opponents so that we can perceive ourselves appropriately," Ms. Bagdasarova said. "It is essential because the values that we think are important for democracy — freedom, equality, and justice — are, in fact, incommensurable, and oftentimes mutually exclusive. For example, if we opt for equality, we have to restrict freedom to some extent in order to make people equal. Under normal political conditions, people representing different positions have a chance to reach agreement. In a split political space, there are opportunities for compromise. In our situation today, everyone is trying to reach consensus, which, in fact, conceals the problem, rather than helping to solve it."

In her report, Ms. Bagdasarova talked about the dangers that, according to Ankersmit, may befall

contemporary society. From his point of view, "there are three temptations that are most dangerous for us today: establishing direct democracy; shifting responsibility for decision-making onto experts (specialists delegated from corporations or bureaucracies); and chasing consensus."

Having told the participants about the main arguments from Ankersmit's book about representative democracy, Ms. Bagdasarova posed the following question: "Are there any actors today that are able to revitalize political life and pull it out of the mire of ideological neutrality?"

"If we look at the Kyrgyz experience, NGOs can, without a doubt, be viewed as a force claiming the role of a political structure," she said. "They try to represent public interests and rights, and in this sense, they claim the role of representative structures. Kyrgyzstan is a sort of natural laboratory with a multitude of proactive local and international NGOs that collectively view themselves as a political force."

Ms. Bagdasarova emphasized that, from a theoretical point of view, there is a conflict. On the one hand, NGOs should not engaged in political struggle, but in reality, they quite often do.

As Ms. Bagdasarova pointed out, compared to political parties, NGOs have some advantages. They:
— are more proactive;
— are often more closely connected to the public and to local communities;
— often have a higher organizational capacity;
— are better supplied in terms of equipment and Internet access;
— generally have international partners.

However, along with these advantages, NGOs face a number of challenges, including the following. They:
— are excluded from the struggle for power;
— are illegitimate as representative structures (no one elected them, and it is not clear who gave them authority, for example, to protect the rights of certain groups);
— often fulfill the mandates of supranational structures and act as agents of non-national interests;
— lack the trust of the public, since they are often perceived as "grant hunters."

At the end of her presentation, Ms. Bagdasarova

noted that NGOs in Kyrgyzstan have the capacity to become actively involved in the country's political life. On the one hand, there is certain fear of them entering this realm. On the other hand, NGOs could organize a broad political discussion. Some NGOs can represent certain social strata, especially NGOs with a significant degree of legitimacy in representing their target groups (for example, associations of businessmen). Since most expert networks in Kyrgyzstan are part of the NGO sector, this sector could help to analyze interactions between bureaucracies and experts, and to establish control mechanisms over the expert-and-bureaucracy union to produce political decisions.

After the presentation, the participants asked a number of clarifying questions and expressed their views on the issues raised[1]. Then Mr. Kurmanov presented his comments.

"We live under totally different conditions," he said. "We are under the conditions of forming the state, the conditions of transition. Many changes are still in process, and therefore, critical conclusions would be premature. Today, we are experiencing a kind of chaos, and the authorities don't know what they need to do. Everyone knows how to fill his or her pockets, but no one knows how to serve the people. In many aspects, Ankersmit is right. Most probably, he was using the treatises of Plato, Socrates, and the great French thinkers. He is right in saying that the original and most representative type of democracy was direct democracy. However, it gave way to another type when governance became too complex."

Mr. Kurmanov pointed out that today we also talk about a crisis of democracy. In his time, Plato said that the rule of the aristocracy, the power of the wise, was the best type of governance. Under current conditions, the issue of governance is too complex and specialized, and one is inclined to think that those who are the most competent should govern. Therefore, we often talk, these days, about the power of the competent.

According to Mr. Kurmanov, many types of democracy exist, and despite all of its advantages, direct democracy had a number of flaws. For example, in ancient Athens, women were not enfranchised. Democracy can be liberal, sovereign, or governed. According to Mr. Kurmanov, in Kyrgyzstan,

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1. The list of questions and comments is available at the end of this review

there is imitation democracy. He suggested analyzing the history and the ontological roots of this version of democracy.

"After the fall of the Soviet Union, former party leaders stayed in power in neighboring countries," Mr. Kurmanov said. "In Kyrgyzstan, we had two centers of power, the presidency and the Central Committee of the Communist Party. Many processes were sporadic, and the president had to find an alternative to Communist rule. It was not because our society was disenchanted with the Communist regime that we went adrift. In a way, it was not convenient for our first president, and therefore, he was looking for an alternative to Communist rule. Whether we were aware of it or not, we were moving toward liberal democracy, and we did it wrong. We ended up having a bureaucratic state, in which bureaucrats act as a ruling class. In our country, everyone wants to be a public official — be it a tax inspector, a customs officer, a hospital attendant, a firefighter, or a policeman — in order to oversee and control. This is the nature of a bureaucratic state. An oligarchy has started to emerge. If we make a qualitative analysis of today's Parliament, the majority of its members are opulent people. Oligarchy doesn't have anything in common with the interests of the people either."

"Why is Kyrgyzstan's democracy an imitation one?" Mr. Kurmanov went on. "Because we have the forms, mechanisms, and procedures, but we don't have the substance. We do everything they do in the West, but it doesn't change the outcome, which is that that the people's interests are the last issue to be addressed. The British Parliament came into being in the thirteenth century, and it was the first body to restrain the king. It was founded by lords who became the first parliament members. Naturally, they represented themselves, not the people. Later, when the lower social classes realized they could participate in the political process, the second chamber, the House of Commons, emerged. It was comprised of common townspeople, not of noble origin."

Mr. Kurmanov pointed out that, in contemporary Kyrgyzstan, representative democracy is absent. It is too early to talk about it in our country, and the conditions for its development have yet to be created, he said.

Talking about history, Mr. Kurmanov emphasized that, in the USSR, deputy soviets could be thought of as representative bodies, since they were comprised of workers, farmers, and intelligentsia. However, it was a purely formal approach, and unfortunately, left no mark on the Kyrgyz people. For instance, the idea of gender equality has been poorly realized under the new conditions of the transition period.

Talking about the Jogorku Kenesh, the highest representative body in Kyrgyzstan, Mr. Kurmanov said the following: "Our Parliament seems to be a representative body. However, its members represent their own interests. There are no 'people.' There is a one-time electorate, which is bought 'wholesale and retail for a slice of sausage and a bottle of vodka.' We need to make a strenuous effort to educate people, so that they will participate in the political process."

Regarding the role of NGOs in democratic development, NGOs are indeed becoming a strong entity in the country's political process today, Mr. Kurmanov said. If they were more active and united, they could participate in the election process, as in the People's Assembly in Kazakhstan, delegating representatives to the Kazakh Parliament.

"In our kingdom of crooked mirrors, everyone participates in political events, including pre-school children and school students," Mr. Kurmanov went on. "Naturally, NGOs also participate in politics. Since communication between the authorities and the people is dysfunctional in our country, and social needs are not addressed, NGOs act as a sort of a connecting link. Willy-nilly, NGOs become politicized. At some point, when environmental problems were not addressed in Europe, many environmental NGOs turned into Green parties. It may well happen that if social issues in our country don't get enough attention, NGOs will become more politicized, and in the long run, powerful political movements will spring up."

Mr. Kurmanov also shared his vision of the role that can be played by experts and policy-makers in decision-making: "Our problem is that our policy makers try to compete with the experts. Over the last three years, the Constitution has been changed three times in our country. This happened because our policy makers thought they were experts. It is important to understand that experts, most of whom are in the non-governmental sector, are consultants who suggest one or another set of decisions. And it is the task of policy makers to choose the best decision without meddling with the work done by experts."

Questions to Nina Bagdasarova

Question: What is a struggle for power, to you? In your report you talked about actors. Can you please clarify whom you meant?

Answer: There are traditional political actors, such as political parties and the state. However, in our situation NGOs, obviously, are active in the political arena, although a spade is not always called a spade. The issue of the legitimacy of NGOs as representative structures is also important. For example, whom do environmental NGOs represent?

Question: Judging by your words, there is no such a thing as representativeness whatsoever. Aren't we depriving the issues discussed of their true significance and formalizing them too much?

Answer: On the contrary, I speak in favor of representativeness. Those who represent a certain fragment of reality are actors who, in fact, shape our understanding of this reality. They describe it from the point of view of values, develop some ideology, and bring it up for broad discussion.

Question: You say that any decent NGO should stay away from the struggle for power. Along with that, you take off your hat to the expert community active in the political arena. How justified is that?

Answer: Quite the reverse, I am a believer that experts should remain neutral and stay away from politics.

Comment: I think the word "representativeness" means representing someone's interests. I am talking about NGO legitimacy right now. The real question is, are NGOs able to voice these interests? It is the creative minority that makes history, and it should not necessarily be involved in the division of power. It just expresses ideas in words and represents someone's interests in the outside world. Therefore, we need to be more careful with terms.

Answer: Traditionally, it is the politician who verbalizes or articulates interests. Nowadays, however, we see a low level of trust in political parties. NGO activists have gained more authority.

Question: You used the term "political space" quite profusely. Would you please explain what you mean by this term? As some of the participants here pointed out, in one way or another, NGOs are actors in the political arena — for example, when they get involved in policy-making. In this sense, what did you mean by saying that NGOs should stay way from the political struggle?

Answer: By political space I mean an arena where a struggle for power takes place, a decision-making arena, if you will. In a traditional political science scheme, NGOs stay remote from political power, but in actuality, NGOs are often rather proactive. Like Ankersmit, I suppose that the political space today is being narrowed down to a space for identifying and solving petty technical problems. A broader discussion related to values does not exist.

Comment: In my country, Great Britain, everyone understands that political parties represent the interests of different social layers. They may not be class interests, but they are the interests of poor and wealthy people, or of various regions. Thus, political parties play an important role, and they are representative structures. From the point of view of pluralism, it is difficult to have one opinion about some issue. Say, we talk about economic policy reforms, or about war and peace, and so on. Political parties express their take on the issue. It is human nature to look for opponents and adversaries. If someone doesn't want to be involved in politics too much, it is his right. For NGOs there is a wide area for activities, social ones, and I would disagree that in the contemporary world there are no social conflicts. In the UK, healthcare reform caused hot social debates, with a great number of people speaking against privatization. In France, such issues as race relations, unemployment, and others, are urgent. If we talk about Kyrgyzstan, political parties are weak here, while NGOs are quite influential. Presumably, this is one of the features of the transition period.

Answer: For 20 years, Great Britain implemented a policy meant to expand access to higher education. As a result, you can see people with university degrees in every shopping mall. However, higher education failed to serve its purpose as a tool to move up the ladder of social mobility. The point here is that there is no comprehensive approach when policies are developed, and such questions as "why," "where from," and "how" stay outside public discussion. Only technical matters are discussed. Ankersmit is right in saying that the better off the country, the fewer political structures able to repre-

sent absolutely different interest groups remain. The issues are too general.

Question: You said that Ankersmit focused on a transition from a value-based approach to the technologization of governance decisions in politics. What would you say about the future of representative democracy?

Answer: In fact, Ankersmit opposed the technologization of political decisions. However, he emphasized that representative democracy in its classical form no longer exists. Mechanisms of representation don't work. The political space is receiving a totally different coat of paint, and it looks like there is some discussion. Previous representative structures can no longer perform their functions, and they can't articulate ideological positions and interests. What if we discuss whether NGOs can play some role in changing this situation?

Question: Do you think that environmental NGOs should not exist since they don't represent people, anyway?

Answer: They should exist, because they represent the unspoken reality. However, if they exist officially and work only with the Ministry of Environmental Protection, we all become their hostages, since we don't know what they are discussing and why. Therefore, I think environmental NGOs should be present in the political arena, rather than stay only in the technological area.

General Comments

Comment: The problem of our society is that we don't have a national agenda that can be discussed by all the actors in the political process, agreeing or disagreeing with each other. Without such an agenda, a core issue, it is difficult to talk about political culture and the structure of the political space. Western societies are more technologically advanced, and that is why they have this dispute running. We have not reached this level yet. It would be premature to talk about a technological approach without passing through the stage of adopting a value-based approach to political life.

Comment: In my view, democracy works only when the members of the public feel that their interests are considered and their voices are heard. In such a poor, weak state as Kyrgyzstan, the public cannot see the concrete outputs of the work done by the government. At the national level, NGOs have fewer opportunities to participate in democratization because the state is weak, whereas, at the local level, they have more opportunities to work. Kyrgyz NGOs enjoy a privileged status in terms of resources (human, financial, etc.). However, NGOs should be paying more attention to developing close ties with their social base, thereby increasing their legitimacy as representative structures.

The Role of
the NGO Sector in
Democratic Society

Aleksandr Viktorovich Tretyakov of the Institute of Human Projecting delivered a report on the topic of the roundtable. Afterwards, a discussion on the issues raised in his report ensued.

According to the analytical scheme of the role of the NGO sector in democratic society, the major characteristics defining the position occupied by the NGO sector include "scope of influence" (set of functions) of the civil society and its subjects, and "power" (the ability to exercise these functions). The ratio between these characteristics and similar characteristics of the state determines the nature of the interaction between the state and civil society in any country in the world. This scheme has been sufficiently substantiated by scholars and is reasonable to implement to gauge the role of the NGO sector in Kyrgyzstan.

Speaking of the NGO sector's "power," (its ability to exercise the functions it is vested with) today it is not clear what the NGO sector's real power is, and subsequently, what its role in the society is. Undoubtedly, the NGO sector's ability to impact important political and other state-related decision making is not the main criterion for determination of the NGO sector's power and role in the society, although that is rather important too. It is critical

that the sector's ability and effectiveness in rendering services to population be assessed as well, including raising the public's awareness about democracy.

If one is to break down the "power" element, one will find the following components:
— NGOs' human capacities;
— their financial capacities;
— their organizational capacities and professionalism;
— the population's support.

With respect to human capacity, one can say that, to date, many NGOs have attracted enough strong personalities, capable of meeting the objectives set for them with a reasonable degree of success, which means NGOs have superior abilities to exercise their functions.

At the same time, there are serious problems:
— the presence of NGOs created only to make money; the leaders of such NGOs are not interested in strengthening the NGO sector and are not willing to stand up for the interests of those they represent;
— the presence of unfair competition among NGOs for funds and finances of donors along with jealousy and struggles for leadership and influence within this sector.

With respect to the financial capacity of NGOs, it is clear that, with the almost total dependency of the nation's NGOs on funding from foreign donors, and a lack of clear future prospects for funding nonprofit organizations, there is a real threat that the "power" of the NGO sector might be diminished. Only an insignificant number of NGOs, if the national legislation allows (engaging in commercial and manufacturing activities), are capable of independently functioning and funding their operations.

The organizational capacity of many NGOs is also rather low. This is evidenced by various activities conducted to facilitate the development of NGOs and the NGO sector. In the context of these activities, even representatives of NGOs mention organizational sustainability, or a shortage thereof, among their major problems. The research conducted by the Association of Centers for Support of Civil Society indicates that today, of more than 8,000 registered NGOs in Kyrgyzstan, only 500 (1 NGO per 10,000 people) are more or less operating and viable. This is a result of, among other things, low organizational capacity, which undoubtedly negatively impacts the abilities of NGOs to exercise their functions.

A whole separate issue is the professionalism of NGOs. Overall, representatives of the more active and viable NGOs are good specialists in their fields of expertise. However, there are cases where certain NGOs (or their leaders) engage in activities that are beyond the scope of their work or in which they are simply incompetent. This definitely damages the society and the state, as well as the NGO sector and its image.

Speaking of the NGO sector's image — that is, of the population's support for third-sector organizations — it is rather difficult to give an unqualified opinion, since various studies on the NGO sector's development have provided a range of findings from a rather high level of support for NGOs by citizens to the almost total absence of support for NGOs.

Mr. Tretyakov stated that he was inclined to agree with the opinions expressed by several roundtable participants that, in Kyrgyzstan, there were almost no NGOs whose operations were supported by a large number of citizens. This is mainly because of the NGO sector's weak or nonexistent level of interaction with the public.

Thus, most components of the NGO sector's "power" show that NGOs' abilities to meet their objectives — and hence, to exercise their functions — are not strong enough and sometimes could even be described as weak. This, consequently, means that the role of the NGO sector in society is not strong enough, either. Still, the sector has a core of truly "strong" and viable NGOs that can serve as examples for other NGOs and that probably should take on responsibility for the sector's future.

The main conclusions of the analysis of the place and role of the NGO sector in Kyrgyzstan can be summarized as follows: the NGO sector in Kyrgyzstan occupies a less important position than it could, given the opportunities it has under existing laws. At the same time, it fails to play a sufficiently important role in society.

After Mr. Tretyakov's report, Elena Voronina, of the Interbilim International Center, offered her comments.

Ms. Voronina said she would be commenting on the report as a practitioner, rather than a theoretician. In her opinion, the analysis and the models presented in the report were legitimate. She noted, however, that back when the first NGOs were being created in Kyrgyzstan, nobody gave enough a thought to what model to build the NGO sector on or how the sector should develop in the long run. Those who created the first NGOs back in 1993-1994 were operating under the assumption that these organizations would grow based on the needs of the people whose problems they were called to resolve. They believed that the primary mission of the NGO sector was to develop a democratic society.

In the first years of Kyrgyzstan's independence, NGOs focused primarily on humanitarian issues, disseminating humanitarian services, and rendering social assistance. They did not implement the main mission of NGOs, which is to develop society and influence decision makers. It was only closer to the year 2000 that NGOs realized that influencing the state and society should be their main function.

Ms. Voronina said she believed that Mr. Tretyakov's report clearly outlined the problems that the NGO sector faces today. The first among them is the interaction between the NGO sector and the state. The commentator agreed with the speaker that Kyrgyzstan has a weak state and a strong civil society. Its civil society, in turn, is strong because it boasts a strong NGO sector and strong NGO leaders. NGOs have become professional; their representatives today can serve as consultants for political experts and as pundits for the latter's needs.

The second problem, in the commentator's opinion, is that the nation's authorities are now pulling back from the democratic achievements attained — and from the democratic values assumed — in previous years.

The third problem concerns self-determination and self-identification. At the latest National NGO Forum, which was held in June 2007, representatives of most NGOs admitted that they were facing such acute questions as: Who are we? Where are we heading? Who will we cooperate with? What can we do? And, what can we offer?

The commentator then focused on the fact that the NGO sector includes a plurality of opinions and a rich range of NGOs. This is indicative of the society's development and shows that the NGO sector makes mistakes, but realizes them and is capable of correcting them.

Therefore, Ms. Voronina said, talking about the role of the NGO sector in Kyrgyz democratic society should be done in such a manner as to make it possible for the NGOs to assess themselves in an unbiased way and understand whether or not they are doing what is needed by the country and its citizens today.

"When conducting research to determine the level of the NGO sector's development in Kyrgyzstan," said Ms. Voronina, "it becomes clear that there are many unresolved problems. This situation is further exacerbated by the fact that there is still a lack of professionalism in their operations, too many "paper" NGOs — pseudo-NGOs that lack an understanding of the NGO sector's essence and mission."

In conclusion, Ms. Voronina summarized two main corollaries. The first was that the place and role of the NGO sector in a society reflects the level of democracy in that country. The second idea was that the NGO sector contributes to economic development, and particularly, to the resolving unemployment and social problems. Thus, NGOs' contributions to the social infrastructure, education, culture, and economic policy of Kyrgyzstan are enormous.

Expressing his vision of the role and place of NGOs in society, Bakyt Beshimov, of AUCA, stated, "NGOs played, and continue to play, a mostly stabilizing role and their functions must widen. It is strange to hear that NGOs mostly position themselves depending on how the government views them. Why should that bother NGOs? I don't think that they need to fight with the government and the state with respect to the latter viewing the former in the wrong way or wanting to model NGOs in a different manner. Create your civic society. Narrow the state's functions. Don't let the government intervene into areas it should not interfere with in the first place, where it is simply not competent, which only breeds more problems than successes."

Several problematic issues in the NGO sector, and in the nation overall, were later touched on by Cholpon Nogoibaeva, Programs Director for the Soros Foundation-Kyrgyzstan. Over the past few years, she believes, an imbalance has emerged in the NGO sector. Influencing decision making became an important activity for NGOs. This, in her opinion, has disrupted the balance in the NGO sector and those NGOs that deal with other functions, social issues and services to the population, firstly, became invisible in the sector; secondly, diminished in number; and thirdly, ceased to be an integral component of the sector and became a separate segment. This is a troubling trend.

Ms. Nogoibaeva said, "The President's latest message, which said that a referendum would be held on October 21 and that, as part of it, the new Constitution the Law 'On Elections" would be discussed, is illustrative of the degree to which we NGOs do not affect the processes underway in the nation. Only a very narrow circle of NGOs is capable of effectively doing that while the rest must deal with a variety of other functions, otherwise the sector becomes unsustainable."

The second troubling trend, in Ms. Nogoibaeva's opinion, is beyond the borders of the NGO sector, but is still within the boundaries of civil society. The models that the opening speaker suggested, Ms. Nogoibaeva believes, do not involve NGOs, but rather civil society, which is wider and bigger than just the NGO sector. She believes that NGOs are the only representatives of civil society in Kyrgyzstan. This is bad for a couple of reasons. First of all, it is monopolization. Even if NGOs are not aiming to, they are monopolizing civil society. Secondly, NGOs lack strategic allies that share core interests. Prospective allies are somewhere near but not with NGOs. For instance, local self-governments, for some reason, are within the system of state governance, although they should be core allies, parts of the civil society, rather than of the system of state governance.

"Obviously, this needs to be thought out and special measures are needed. One just cannot shift the entire burden onto NGOs alone. This is too burdensome a load for this sector," Ms. Nogoibaeva said.

Cholpon Jakupova, of the Adilet Legal Clinic, opined that the role, place, and functions of NGOs should not be reviewed from the academic or historical perspectives. She said she believed that NGOs should be reviewed in the context of a system — as part of all interrelations and all links — in order to seriously talk about their functions. In addition, the following question emerges: how and to what extent does all that was discussed during the roundtable match local reality? In her opinion, the suggested schemes fail to take into account local circumstances.

Ms. Jakupova is convinced that "one cannot definitely say that the mission of NGOs is to affect the decision making process. NGOs must be different. And ambitions of NGO representatives, who view themselves as the only professional experts, and their ambitions of being capable of impacting the decision making process, are unjustifiable. This should be raising red flags."

According to Ms. Jakupova, NGO representatives should also be bothered by the absolute lack of ethical standards in the NGO sector. "We keep saying that NGOs are the only institution the population trusts. However, this is not true. Today the most important thing is not NGOs' self-identification with respect to external actors, but the need to determine and develop standards of conduct within the sector," she said.

Elmira Nogoibaeva, of the International Institute for Strategic Studies, noted that it was impossible to analyze and try to understand what NGOs were as political institutions merely based on the current situation, without the context of the past. NGOs represent a public contract and the analytical scheme suggested by the opening speaker only proves that. During a certain time, it was the public contract that became a precondition that spearheaded civil society. Therefore, the speaker said, without turning to history for advice, it is impossible to understand contemporary society and the direction of the NGO sector's future development.

Another roundtable participant, K. Abraliev, of INTRAC, said he believed that today there is a noticeable lack of consolidation within the NGO sector, since leaders of NGOs cannot reach agreements with each other, which triggers difficulties in the interactions with other actors and sectors. At the same time, the speaker agreed that it is necessary to develop certain standards, norms, and principles within the sector so they can be used as indicators for others and an example of how to build cooperation in society.

A. Kurbanova, of the Association of Centers for Support of Civic Society, stressed in her speech that recent regional and national NGO forums uncovered a wide range of issues on which the opening speaker and the commentators had reflected. She agreed that it was difficult to consolidate the rather diverse NGO sector, which displays a wide range of actors and opinions and a limited amount of resources. The result of this is, if not a subtle confrontation within the NGO sector, then a certain dissent.

N. Janaeva, of the Forum of Women's NGOs, expressed her opinion on the role and place of NGOs in Kyrgyzstan. She said she believed that all activities in which the issues of NGO sector development are discussed — including the National Forum — provide evidence that NGOs actually mature. "It would be more hazardous for the entire sector if questions such as those raised during this roundtable and similar events were not discussed. This is another strength of NGOs," Ms. Janaeva said. With regards to the NGO sector needing some kind of overall ethical norms, she said that such norms could not and will not be created artificially. "Nobody will comply with artificially created standards, nor can consolidation be achieved artificially. If the need for such norms becomes acute enough, the NGO sector will realize it and evolve to it on its own," she said.

The next commentator, Tatyana Zorina, of the National Democratic Institute, said that in Kyrgyzstan there are very few NGOs that are really backed up by thousands of people who genuinely support them. This is the reason for their lack of influence on the decision making process. In addition, Kyrgyz NGOs fail to collaborate with the population — they seem to be detached from the general populace — and therefore do not exercise the functions they are called to exercise. At the same time, Kyrgyz NGOs are inert in their activities, employing the same techniques over and over.

Rashid Mashanlo, of the Regional Center for Political Studies, said he believed that the role of the NGO sector is, firstly, to reflect and protect citizens' interests. NGOs also provide social services and improve the population's awareness of democracy. In addition, lately, the NGO sector often acts as a counterbalance in political processes. This, to an extent, facilitates the state becoming more account-

able to citizens. Therefore, Mr. Mashanlo said, the opening speaker was correct with respect to the functions and power of the state and society and the ratio between them. The scheme presented by the opening speaker in this context allows one to analyze where Kyrgyz NGOs are in our society and just how strongly they exercise their role and functions. "I believe that this scheme is not ideal but is a good basis for analysis," he concluded.

Elmira Nogoibaeva posed a rhetorical question to the discussion participants. "We are saying that NGOs must work with population. But aren't NGOs themselves a part of the population?" She also argued that democracy exists in Kyrgyzstan. "We all know how difficult it is for NGOs to operate in Russia and Kazakhstan and what kind of pressure they are routinely subjected to by the state. In Kyrgyzstan, though, NGOs still have opportunities to prove themselves, to show themselves, and to consolidate."

Another participant in the discussion, Aida Alymbaeva, of AUCA's Social Research Center, drew the roundtable participants' attention to the fact that those NGOs that were created through citizens' initiatives remained active to this day. In contrast, those NGOS created with donor grants exist formally, but are still trying to figure out with whom and where to work; donor support is declining and such NGOs are only now starting to identify their beneficiaries. In this sense, a problem exists between these two types of NGOs: those that were truly created in the best interests of citizens; and those that were created formally to obtain grants and were merely interested in spending their grant funds.

With respect to the need for development of ethical norms, S. Juraev, of AUCA, noted, "Perhaps, this is not a problem of NGOs per se, but a problem of society as a whole. We lack ethical norms everywhere — from the authorities to wherever else."

Summarizing the results of the discussion, Ms. Voronina noted that it had highlighted many problematic areas that need to be discussed jointly and covered by the media. She specifically stressed that different parties interpret the nature, essence, and philosophy of the NGO sector in their own ways, which often results in the distortion of the real situation. Therefore, Ms. Voronina said she believed it was necessary to invite journalists interested in covering NGOs — and objectively reflecting the NGO sector's work, successes, and difficulties — to such discussion forums.

In addition, the moderator pointed out that the National Forum of NGOs had identified another serious problem: the division of NGOs into higher and lower "castes." "Within the sector, there already are superiors and subordinates. This means we lack a common beginning. However, if we lack consolidation, if we lack a common beginning, then we cannot do anything significant. Therefore, it is crucial that we understand that we must not engage in standoffs and confrontations with each other," she said.

With regards to the professionalism of the third sector, Ms. Voronina said she did not agree that NGOs were unprofessional. Of course, representatives of NGOs are competent people in their areas of expertise, raising problematic issues for society. However, the NGO sector's strengths are that it is mobile, prompt, energetic, and active.

The commentator also stressed that Kyrgyz NGOs — unlike their counterparts in Kazakhstan, or Russia, or other neighboring nations — have many opportunities for development. Kyrgyzstan's NGOs can offer a lot: they can lobby to protect the interests of civil society and also provide services.

In conclusion, Ms. Voronina expressed her gratitude to AUCA's Social Research Center and the Soros Foundation-Kyrgyzstan for initiating a roundtable and the discussion at such an academic level, where both practitioners and theoreticians were gathered at one table to discuss the sector's problems.

"The most important thing is for these discussions to go beyond the walls of this hall and actually boost further action, so that after we walk out of here, we can change our work for the better," she concluded.

Civil Society Development in Central Asia

As a follow-up to the discussion of civil society's role in transition countries today, AUCA's Social Research Center, the NGO Support Program financed by the Soros Foundation-Kyrgyzstan, and the regional resource center Bilim-Central Asia (from Kazakhstan), initiated a roundtable on "Civil Society Development in Central Asia." Attended by researchers and professors from the entire region, this meeting was part of the workshop "Current Civil Society Development Scenarios in Central Asia," which was held in Bishkek. Thus, this event was a regional platform for discussion among specialists with expertise in sociology and the humanities.

The discussion was preceded by a speech from Charles Buxton, an INTRAC representative in Kyrgyzstan. Mr. Buxton focused on the theoretical aspects of common approaches to civil society. He explained the three most popular civil society models: the triadic, political, and arena models.

According to Mr. Buxton, there are two contexts for civil society development: mainstream and alternative. The first is characterized by a liberal approach, with an emphasis on the connection between civil society and the market. The second presents civil society as an area of oppositional politics and grass-roots social movements. This approach reveals alternative paths of development, with a broadened vision, including things other than just NGOs.

Mr. Buxton spoke about how non-governmental institutions are perceived in post-Soviet countries. There are two levels of perception, he said. On one hand, civil society is viewed as an element of some alien democracy; on the other hand, it is sometimes perceived as part of the mission of establishing liberal values. In this context, research should be aimed at answering the following questions: "How is national civil society connected with the global civil society?" "What interaction networks are in place?" and "How are these local networks incorporated in the global civil society network?"

Mr. Buxton also pointed out that the region seemed to be somewhat isolated. "Our main research interest, which we try to develop using these models, is how to strengthen local civil society, particularly in terms of international cooperation," he said. "In addition, we are particularly interested in regional NGO networks and their composition. It is a significant area of research for the academic community, both international and domestic."

Mr. Buxton's report was followed by a discussion. Galina Bityukova, of Bilim-Central Asia, was given the floor. She said it was important to distinguish between the theoretical and practical levels of civil society perception. In this regard, what counts most is the classification of civil society as an area for activities that are mostly performed on a volunteer basis.

This opinion created some debate. The question was, "If people are paid for what they do, can we view their activities as civil society work?" Indeed, one of the distinctive features of civil society is that its activities are implemented on a gratuitous basis. The participants discussed civil society's affiliation with international donors and its ability to function independently.

According to the Kazakh participants, unless supported by the state, NGOs will have to be dependent on international donors. As a result, their approach to the country, its values, and its goals, will be different. A participant from Almaty, however, said that civil society should be independent from the state. He said there was no civil society in Kazakhstan, despite existing declarations, a recent national civil forum attended by Kazakh ministry officials, and what looks like progressive legislation (Kazakh laws on political parties, social order, etc). All of them are simply official declarations. This led to a discussion on whether there was such a thing as developed civil society in Central Asia, and if so, what it looks like and how it functions.

As viewed by the participants, when doing a study on civil society, it is important to look at it from a broader perspective, taking into consideration the way it emerged, as well as its historical background, mentality, and traditions. A participant from Tajikistan pointed out that there were two perspectives on civil society, European and Eastern. According to him, the contemporary conceptual models proposed were largely European. However, the Eastern perception of civil society, its organization, and functions are reflected in the classical works of Oriental scholars. For instance, the Qur'an talks about — and, in a way, regulates — civil society quite well.

Emir Kulov, an AUCA professor of political studies, said that civil society is a platform between the rules of private life and the state. Marked by the absence of political goals, it includes both formal and informal organizations. "Self-organization and self-management are presumably the main features

of civil society," he said. "However, classical Western approaches and existing classifications are hardly acceptable in our country."

The discussion was also focused on historical preconditions in Central Asia, like mahalya (neighborhood, community) in Uzbekistan. On the one hand, this ancient socialization instrument of traditional society remains relevant today, regulating water relations and providing financial support to indigent families. According to the participants from Uzbekistan, mahalya plays a regulatory role in those areas in which "the state fails to intervene." However, they think this institution should not have the authority of the state, since it is a completely different level of competence.

During the roundtable, the participants also discussed the role of civil society and NGOs in the country's political life. Some supported the idea of neutral, non-political NGOs. According to others, if civil society is not proactively involved in state-related issues, including its political life, this may be viewed as an infringement of civil rights.

Yulia Chukhmatova, Coordinator of the Soros Foundation-Kyrgyzstan's NGO Support Program, gave an example from European history. She told the audience how the German Green Party and Poland's Solidarity movement both entered the political arena through the NGO sector and civil participation. Replicating this experience in countries building their democracy and statehood may result in the NGO sector becoming politicized and NGO activists joining policy-makers.

According to Ms. Chukhmatova, there is no academic discourse regarding the NGO sector and civil society in general in the region. She emphasized that there is a paucity of academic studies in this area, and such meetings are conducive to further research.

"When we talk about what instruments should be used to stimulate the development of civil society, we need to study and apply international law," said Nookat Idrisov, a representative of the International Center for Not-for-profit Law. "When they say that, 'civil society in the region did not succeed,' we should understand that this assessment refers to some NGOs working in the area of democratic development. It is not true of those NGOs that work in other areas. They are developing," he said.

The discussion at the roundtable was closely connected with the establishment of civil society in general. Despite different types of civil society in

Central Asia, researchers treat it in the context of the state, political regime, and political culture of the different communities. In this regard, there is an arena for debates amongst various scholars with different theoretical approaches in the region. As mentioned above, civil society may become stronger or weaker, depending on political and economic systems, and the level of civil and legal culture. These are differently reflected throughout Central Asia.

To build a state, the authorities of Central Asian countries have to solve a number of issues. One of them is their ability to establish a constructive dialog with civil society. After the Central Asian countries gained independence, they developed different ways of understanding the role, functions, and significance of civil society in the region. These relations form a conceptual framework, which is reflected in legislation, everyday practices, and the way civil society is positioned in the arena of institutional interaction.

Despite the relevance of developments taking place in the region, as well as their importance in understanding future trends and the condition of civil society, this area is underexplored by scholars and experts. All the participants came to agree with this conclusion.

The meeting, attended by researchers from all over the region (except for Turkmenistan), demonstrated the importance of such discussions, from the intercultural and regional perspective.

"Even though we are neighbors with common histories and roots, we know little of each other," said one of the participants. "We know little of what is happening in each others' countries, about existing trends, and about experiences that we could share."

Such meetings are of paramount importance. Firstly, different countries of the region have a chance to get together. Secondly, they are conducted at a professional level, by researchers and university professors studying sociology and the humanities. They will, upon returning to their home countries, maintain this discussion with further exchanges of opinions. They will also promote the emergence of academic and research networks in this area.

The NGO Sector and Political Developments in Kyrgyzstan: Theory and Practice

This roundtable was the last event in a series of meetings on NGO development in Kyrgyzstan. To begin with, Elmira Nogoibaeva, of the International Institute of Strategic Research, presented her report. She focused on the following issues:

1. Mechanisms through which civil society can impact political life;
2. The NGO sector and its involvement in politics: chronology and retrospective;
3. The NGO sector and the current political situation.

Covering the first issue, the speaker described various mechanisms through which civil society can impact political changes. One such mechanism is the representative function implemented, first of all, by articulating social interests in general, and interests of certain social layers or groups. In a democratic society, this function should be, for the most part, performed by political parties. However, given the low level of trust in policy makers, political parties, and public officials of all levels in Kyrgyzstan, NGOs are much more influential. Often, hot political debates in Kyrgyzstan are sparked by NGO activists. An example of this was the public discussion of Kyrgyzstan's plan to join the HIPC initiative.

Ms. Nogoibaeva emphasized that public policy development mechanisms represent a step-by-step coordination of the interests of the whole society and the government through the intermediary of various core analytical structures. Only when the two main actors, the government and civil society, start interacting in certain areas can different joint projects be implemented. According to Ms. Nogoibaeva, this is also true of national projects aimed at overcoming crises and modernization, and preventing conflict. The instruments of public policy can be implemented only through partnership.

Then the speaker talked about another mechanism through which NGOs can impact political developments - a "public expert analysis." It is not just an expert assessment of the state by NGOs. There should be a wider understanding of this mechanism, as an exercise in self-realization, a comprehensive review of directions and capacities, a method for gaining an understanding of the horizons of implemented activities and the limits of competence of NGO representatives.

The next mechanism that can be used by NGOs to impact political developments is related to the role of NGOs in shaping national identity. Ms. Nogoibaeva said she believed this particular mechanism is the least discussed; however, it is of para-

mount importance. Shaping national identity is a strategic issue in the development of any state. The role of civil society, and of NGOs in particular, in forming and consolidating identity is truly decisive. According to Ms. Nogoibaeva, modernization of a country's identity is meaningful for the development of any society.

Ms. Nogoibaeva also talked about the consolidating factor. At regular stages of its development, civil society is about the existence of peaceful (or not necessarily peaceful) activities and aspirations, varying in terms of their norms and Weltanschauung[1]. They are group, community, corporate and other interests represented by different institutions, non-governmental, and non-profit organizations. In other words, it is a pluralistic civil society with multifarious social interests and opinions. During transition periods, at the bifurcation points of historic choices, pluralities become consolidated around common national ideas of a state development. Some sort of "collective consciousness" (as Emile Durkheim called it) is formed, which molds a national spirit able to accumulate society's energies and capacities and channel them into one effective movement.

Ms. Nogoibaeva also focused on self-identification of civil society in Kyrgyzstan, mentioning three of its parameters, "locality," "Orientality" (Asianness), and "transience." These parameters reinforce the multi-layered nature of existing identities. For example, traditional criteria of self-perception and creation of individual realities are often observed in organizational activities of various civil society institutions. It is well known that many NGOs, particularly local ones, are based on community and family relations, often including from one to three families.

"This means that, in Oriental societies, trust as a basis of mutual relations and common business is developed based on informal networks," the analyst said. "An example of this would be clan and corporate communications that still exist today. They are mahalya and ashar, which are traditional mechanisms for solving issues addressed by NGOs."

As mentioned in the report, during the time when post-Soviet civil society was developing in Kyrgyzstan, there was no reflection regarding the succession of Soviet experience, and transition of socio-cultural and psychological origins was not considered. According to the speaker, the psychology of paternalism, which is the most conspicuous feature of the Soviet past, still exists. It is demonstrated through constant and sometimes unjustified appeals to, and excessive expectations of, the state, as well as in the dearth of proposals outside of donor projects. Along with that, the idea of civil society as an opponent to the state, brought from outside, sets up a clash of two identification bases: one is paternalistic and Soviet; and the other one taken from the external classical paradigm of the democratic state.

Covering the second point of her presentation ("The NGO Sector and Its Involvement in Politics: Chronology and Retrospective"), Ms. Nogoibaeva pointed out that civil society's involvement in our country's political life has been constant, and that it started before Kyrgyzstan gained independence.

The first period of political activities by civil society (NGOs) was in the late 1990s. It was the time when the first NGOs were established and Kyrgyzstan was taking its first steps toward democracy. Three parties, ErK, Asaba, and DDK, sprang up. Back then, no one was invested in the civil movement, and it was independent, intuitive, and scattershot.

From 1995 through 2005, the sector was developed and institutionalized; it was structured, and resources were mobilized. Also, it was the climax of political maturity, proactiveness, and initiative on the parts of NGO activists and leaders. Such organizations as Coalition for Democracy, Interbilim Center, and the human rights movement Citizens Against Corruption, played significant roles in promoting democratization during this period. NGO leaders were the first staunch proponents of democratic values and aspirations in our country. Advocating democratic development, NGOs implemented their activities in compliance with their ideological substance and political proactiveness, which was closer to political parties than to NGOs.

No doubt, this period was crucial for the development of the NGO sector in the history of civil society in Kyrgyzstan. During this time, the greatest number of capacity-building study programs for the sector were conducted. Also, donor support - financial, organizational, and educational - at this time was enormous.

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1. Weltanschauung (German): world view, ideology.

As a result, by 2005 the NGO sector had become a powerful, self-sustained, and independent network of non-governmental organizations covering the entire country. In 2005, the sector went through a mobilization.

In 2006, the sector's impact on national-level decisions increased. In an unprecedented case of consolidation, various NGOs joined hands to oppose the country's decision about debt obligation (the HIPC initiative). According to the speaker, it was a revealing moment, showing how civil society institutions in Kyrgyzstan could find common ground.

The year 2007 was a time of self-identification and incipient professionalization of the sector, when NGOs started to divide based on professional, representative, and positional forms (their positions vis-?-vis the government and the opposition, and inside the sector).

The third issue raised by Ms. Nogoibaeva in her report was the state of NGO sector development under current political conditions:

"Communication between the authorities and the public in our country is broken, and those in power live in isolation from the people, having turned deaf ears to social needs. Therefore, NGOs and their leaders play connecting roles and, whether they like it or not, turn into politicians. This is typical of countries in transition. At some point, when environmental problems were not addressed in Europe, many environmental NGOs turned into Green parties. There have been many examples of how the non-governmental sector becomes involved in politics through civil participation, such as the German Green Party and Poland's Solidarity movement, led by Lech Walesa. In those countries, where the main legitimate political institution, a political party, was dysfunctional in terms of representation, this niche was occupied by civil activists from the non-governmental sector.

According to Ms. Nogoibaeva, it may well happen that if social issues in our country don't get enough attention, NGOs will become even more politicized, and in the long run, powerful political movements will spring up. "Today political parties are re-gaining their traditional function. However, we may see NGO activists moving from civil positions to political ones," she said.

Unlike political parties, NGOs, by default, don't strive to take part in the struggle for power, nor do they have any projects on reproducing and advocating the channels of direct political participation in Parliament. NGO activities should, by and large, be altruistic, and therefore they are too emotional sometimes. However, Ms. Nogoibaeva pointed out, today the situation is changing, and there is a civil-to-political reformatting taking place in the sector.

"Today, the associations established previously and meant to address different issues (migration, ethnic policy, etc) have a large effect, either directly or indirectly, on the country's politics," Ms. Nogoibaeva said. "They are such parties as Zamandash and Rodina, non-governmental organizations like Interbilim, Foundation for Tolerance International, and ACSSC, or NGO leaders such as Asiya Sasykbaeva, Edil Baisalov, Natalia Ablova, and Cholpon Jakupova."

In her speech, Ms. Nogoibaeva focused especially on one of the most important civil society segments in Kyrgyzstan - the media. The media are the most significant suppliers of political leadership in the country. A number of well known politicians from the so-called new non-bureaucratic establishments came from the media. They were Tekebaev, Madumarov, Tursunbek Akun, Tursunbai Bakir uulu, Eshimkanov. Some of today's diplomats, such as Kuban Mambetaliev, Zamira Sydykova, and Rina Prizhivoit, were journalists. Now it has become a political tradition. This is practiced in many countries, but in Kyrgyzstan it is particularly popular.

In conclusion, Ms. Nogoibaeva said that one of the most important features of the NGO sector today is its professionalization and political participation. These take place not through expressing emotional attitudes or civil positions, but rather through realizing professional and functional abilities. In particular, the speaker mentioned Cholpon Jakupova and her organization, Adilet Legal Clinic, as an example. "Today it is a professional, socially oriented legal organization protecting the interests of vulnerable groups and providing professional legal support to the oppositional politics," she said.

At the end of the report, the floor was given to analyst Nur Omarov, Doctor of History, a professor at the Kyrgyz-Russian Slavic University.

In his comments, Mr. Omarov pointed out that as many as 8,000 different associations implementing a vast array of activities are registered in Kyrgyzstan today. "Such a great number of NGOs prompted the first president, Askar Akaev, to call Kyrgyzstan 'the country of NGOs,'" he said.

However, during Kyrgyzstan's transition period, NGOs took on the functions of political parties, Mr.

Omarov said. In a political sense, NGO professionalization has started only recently. Before then, NGOs were emerging as responses to the needs to solve environmental, gender, and social problems.

From Mr. Omarov's perspective, when dealing with the NGO sector and its political involvement, three sets of issues can be examined:

1. Relations between NGOs and the government
2. NGOs and political parties
3. Relations between NGOs and the public

Talking about the first item, Mr. Omarov said that the government had always been cautious with regard to NGOs because of their political proactiveness. In light of the financial dependence of NGOs on foreign organizations, the authorities viewed NGOs as channels through which one or another state could impact the Kyrgyz public, or as foreign policy carried out by special means. According to Mr. Omarov, the government should drop any misgivings with regard to NGOs and stop treating them as something negative; and NGOs should change their strategies.

"We should clearly define what an NGO is, because sometimes the public doesn't understand what purpose NGOs serve and what they should be doing," Mr. Omarov said. "Any non-governmental organization should properly position itself as a volunteer-based association. The government should also change its strategy for interacting with the NGO sector. For example, in an attempt to exert pressure on NGOs, the government of Kazakhstan took some hard knocks. As a result, it opted for social cooperation and introduced the idea of social order. This is a positive example."

In addressing the second item, Mr. Omarov pointed out that, in most CIS countries, NGOs play a certain political role, which is particularly obvious in Kyrgyzstan. According to the reviewer, this situation developed because political parties, from the very start, were dysfunctional. There was no mechanism for developing parties and realizing their ideas and agendas through political involvement in public institutions.

As a matter of fact, politics and political developments as public phenomena started in Kyrgyzstan in 2005. Before then, behind-the-scenes agreements were made. There was one power center represented by the president, and all decisions were made there.

"Today we are witnessing the establishment of politics and its entry into the public arena," Mr. Omarov added. "Political parties were the ones to suffer, because, by law, they cannot be financed from outside. Businessmen didn't support political parties for fear of persecution."

As far as the third item is concerned (relations between NGOs and the public), Mr. Omarov said the following: Recently, a focus has been made on the local level, on community organizations. They inform the government of the people's actual needs and address them at the local level. "The grant-eater philosophy is fading away, and we are becoming aware of the fact that we should be solving our problems ourselves," he added.

At the end of his speech, Mr. Omarov emphasized that the issue of interaction between NGOs and political parties was quite complex. To separate their functions, the law "On Political Associations" should be amended.

The report was followed by questions and answers[1], the discussion was started by Marat Suyunbaev from the MFA Diplomatic Academy in Kyrgyzstan. He said it was not clear to him why NGOs had to deal with political issues if there were so many parties in the country. In this case, an NGO should call itself a party and deal with politics. "In my view, NGOs should be professional associations," he said.

Mr. Suyunbaev also said it was important to regulate NGO activities. For example, to start doing banking a certain amount of authorized capital is required. Maybe some criteria should be applied with regard to NGOs, as well.

According to Mr. Suyunbaev, there is confusion in the NGO sector, and it is not clear what one or another NGO is doing. Notably, there are many things in the country, which can be done by NGOs.

Cholpon Nogoibaeva, Programs Director of the Soros Foundation-Kyrgyzstan, said that such comments are caused by the exaggerated role played by NGOs. They have taken up the functions of all civil society institutions. Furthermore, there is a misconception of the functions of NGOs because the definition of the sector has a legal basis. Therefore, any public association of people is associated with NGOs. Quite often, they are not NGOs at all. NGOs should be classified according to their functions and formal features, that is, according to what they are about in general.

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1. The list of questions and comments is available at the end of this review

"The fact that our NGOs emerged and developed according to Western patterns is not an accusation," Ms. Nogoibaeva said. "It just happened that the first impetus was given and the first format was proposed. Unfortunately, this format did not root itself in the local ground. When this finally happens, and other civil society institutions sprout up, NGOs will occupy their modest niche in civil society and stop performing inappropriate functions. What institutions are they? First of all, they are local self-governance institutions, which are currently under threat. They should be a part of civil society, rather than the lowest level of public administration. If some functions of local self-governance bodies were delegated, by the municipal order, to NGOs, both parties would benefit.

Ms. Nogoibaeva emphasized that NGOs have important functions, which they don't perform yet. These are services that neither the government (and local self-governance bodies), nor businessmen are able to address.

"Unfortunately, the list of services is not clearly defined in our country," Ms. Nogoibaeva said. "It looks like the entire market is filled and there is nothing left for NGOs. In fact, diversification of services will enable NGOs to find their own niches." In a doubtful tone, she spoke about regulating the NGO sector, "It is a self-regulated system. The proportional system we have today does not strengthen parties, either. Otherwise, the term wouldn't be so crazy. It is simply an attempt to somehow organize the election process."

Yulia Chukhmatova, the NGO Support Program Coordinator for the Soros Foundation-Kyrgyzstan, suggested analyzing the NGO sector based on the state-structure model. "NGOs are part of a whole, part of our country. And if today we have no idea where the country is going, it will be even more confusing to imagine how one of its parts is developing. Given that NGOs are a part of society that was imported from outside, or in other words, it is a model brought in from the West, with so many efforts and resources put in for its development, it is not easy to understand the responsibilities that civil society and its segments bear today," she said.

According to Ms. Chukhmatova, the function of NGOs is to provide services, but services are regulated by the state, and there is no clear interaction here yet. Communication between the government and NGOs, on the one hand, and between NGOs and political parties, on the other hand, are not established.

At the end of her speech, Ms. Chukhmatova spoke about those NGOs that discredit democratic ideals and the mission of civil society. In her view, this, in a way, demonstrates that NGO professionalization has not yet taken place. For example, such notions as gender and democracy are nominative, and many NGOs dealing with these issues do not always understand clearly what it means to promote gender equality or democracy. Many NGOs use "Western language," which is alien to most of the public, she said.

Daniyar Narynbaev continued the discussion, noting that NGOs and political processes in Kyrgyzstan are very closely connected. "These are peculiarities of the national hunt for power," he said. NGOs take an active part in politics and in some ways they are more successful than political parties. With the establishment of a new electoral system, the role of the parties should increase incredibly. But until the political parties play catch-up, NGOs will have to perform political functions."

Another participant in the discussion, Maxim Ryabkov, of AUCA, said he thought that it would be incorrect to say that a foreign model of civil society had been introduced into Kyrgyzstan. In European countries, for example, civil society was created by uniting people who helped each other. They often did not do any favors to strangers and cooperated only to achieve their common goals.

"Such a model is not the one that has been introduced here," Mr. Ryabkov said. "Most likely, financial conditions here have created a suitable situation for the accelerated formation of this model. In my opinion, Kyrgyzstan's civil society is structured in a different way. Its structure has a more vertical character and is connected with a clientele relationship, although in the West such a model also existed. In trying to determine the degree of civil society development, it would be more correct to take into account membership of people in different organizations and structures rather than the quantity of NGOs and the quality of services they provide. In this sense, I do not understand the role of parties in Kyrgyzstan. The population is poorly informed about parties, and there is a gap between the parties and the population."

Muratbeck Imanaliev, of the Institute for Public Policy, drew the attention of those present to the fact that the NGO sector should perform a very important function - the socialization of the population - which NGOs in Kyrgyzstan do not perform. He also noted another important point: "NGOs don't

struggle for power. They perform the very important function of monitoring, instead. NGOs now are incorporated into the political process through participation in electoral lists."

"When we talk about introduced models," Mr. Imanaliev said, "we first of all mean Western NGOs. However, jamoats (communal organizations) mushroom, NGOs from Islamic countries act in Kyrgyzstan. Why don't we talk about Chinese NGOs? The six largest business associations from China carry out activities in our country. Criminal groups also take part in social and political life and, unfortunately, they form a substantial segment of social life."

Concluding his speech, Mr. Imanaliev stressed that, when thinking about the participation of NGOs in the political process, one should clearly understand that an NGO is an essential participant in the political process. And the function of monitoring the authorities' actions, performed by our NGOs, is an important political function.

Anar Musabaeva, of the OSCE Academy, shared her view on the issues under discussion. She thinks that ignorance of the role of NGOs is often caused by thinking based on stereotypes.

"As one of the earlier speakers correctly noted," she said, "the role of NGOs is hypertrophied. But it is necessary to understand that, in reality, civil society is not homogenous and has a much more complex structure. Ignorance of its complexity leads to excessively high requirements for NGOs and expectations of their activities are not always well-founded. And unfounded expectations lead to disappointments and even to accusations that NGOs, so to speak, didn't perform their democratizing role. In my opinion, civil society, under certain conditions, can contribute to democracy. But this fact is not indisputable. Basically, the democratic potential of our NGOs is influenced by the uniqueness of the parallel construction of statehood and civil society, while the political institutions and economics are still underdeveloped."

According to Ms. Musabaeva, the fact is that Kyrgyzstan's NGOs, which emerged after the dissolution of the USSR, in many respects came into being through foreign assistance, the ideological and philosophical bases of which were the principles of liberal democracy, and this has led to a stereotype that NGOs and democracy are inseparable. However, this postulate itself, according to which NGOs have an "inborn," inherent democratism, can be questioned. On the other hand, those horizontal associa-

tive connections among ordinary citizens, about which Mr. Ryabkov spoke, are one of the forms of civil society development. This form is communitarian or communal and this communal form of civil society is an element of what Robert Putnam has called "social capital."

At the same time, the speaker disagreed with the idea that it was possible to judge the development of civil society by the level of participation in society, that is, the level of citizen membership in various types of organizations. She thinks that the democratic role of these horizontal associations should not be idealized. As an example, Ms. Musabaeva mentioned the history of Weimar Germany where, while fascism was rising many people were participating in voluntary associations.

"So," Ms. Musabaeva declared, "whether a society organized based on the horizontal scheme will play a positive and developing role, or a negative and destructive one, depends on the quality of 'social capital'; on people's desire to cooperate; on the level of trust between people; on the interactions of cultural, historical, and religious factors; and finally on effectiveness of work by state and political institutions."

Aida Alymbaeva, of AUCA's Social Research Center, noted that when analyzing the development of NGOs in Kyrgyzstan, it should be admitted that, to some degree, perhaps it is despair that makes NGOs more "radical," compared to political parties. Despite their significant activities, many reforms have not been made, which has prompted NGOs to join the parties in the hope that they will find a more effective way to influence the government.

Talking about participation of NGOs in political processes Ms. Alymbaeva drew the attention of those present to the fact that NGOs, according to the functions they performed, should be divided into two groups: 1) civilian activists; and 2) NGOs that provide social services. NGOs in the first group participate directly in political processes at the regional, national, and international levels. Such NGOs are involved in setting the political agenda, lobbying for issues, participating in political negotiations, and exercising control over the activities of state structures. The ecological movement Greenpeace, which is well-known in the world, and the human rights protection organization Transparency International, are both parts of this group. NGOs that are part of the second group are passive players in the political space. They are

mostly preoccupied with providing services to socially vulnerable groups. The services they provide include rehabilitation, teaching, consulting, and legal aid.

Questions on the report:

Question: *Should NGOs participate in politics? In fact, politics is about public affairs. So, the question is, should a non-governmental organization interfere with government affairs? How are political parties different from NGOs?*

Answer: Why shouldn't NGOs interfere with state affairs? NGOs are a part of civil society, and the latter can express its opinion. We have a few myths about NGOs. One is that, in CIS countries, NGOs are heavily politicized and they don't have the right to be this way. The other is that NGOs are "grant-eaters." At the same time, we don't consider other aspects. For example, NGOs bring significant inflow of money into the country, and they represent significant resources, including human resources. Also, they are about education.

Question: *Would you please clarify what you meant by "NGO professionalization"?*

Answer: NGOs should have professional niches. Someone should be dealing with the environment, and someone else, with social issues. By professionalization I meant something different. For instance, in my mind Cholpon Jakupova is associated with legal support of the sector, and Raya Kadyrova, with professional conflictological support. Recent elections demonstrate that many NGO representatives have extensive experience monitoring elections, being directly interested in the election results.

Question: *Is there any difference between such phrases as "struggle for power" and "struggle against power"?*

Answer: There is one meaning here - struggle for power. Methods may vary.

Question: *If we look at the civil movement from the point of view of democracy, why did it happen that many NGOs, and particularly environmental and human rights NGOs, not only failed to perform their functions, but, in a sense, discredited themselves?*

Answer: I think we are talking about representativeness here. NGOs should represent a certain group of people or someone's interests, and deal with a certain type of activities. If they speak on behalf of the whole nation, or, in other words, act impersonally, their activities look more like common populism.

At the end of the roundtable, some participants approached the organizers with a request to continue discussing the issue of civil society, and NGOs in particular, in the future. The discussion revealed a number of open issues and many aspects that need to be understood and realized.

SECTION II
ARTICLES OF ROUNDTABLE
PARTICIPANTS

Role, Mechanisms and Types of Civil Society Participation in Policy-making and Public Administration

Atyrkul Alisheva, *Regional Studies Institute*

Formation of Individual and Political Figures

Historical concepts and practical models of civil society originate in various ideas and experiences. Historically, civil society development also refers to emergence of various associations, such as religious ones, professional ones, and merchant guilds (associations of craftsmen and tradesmen in medieval Europe), for example. Those were the first associations that protected the interests of their members and influenced governance. Further development led to formation of cooperatives, trade unions, and political parties that protect group and individual interests, rights and freedoms of individuals.

There is a close connection between civil society's beginnings and the emergence of the citizen: a self-reliant, independent, individual member of society, who has rights and freedoms, and bears responsibility before society for his or her actions. Therefore, the main condition for the existence and development of civil society is an individual having freedoms and rights to personal fulfillment. This is an individual capable of self-fulfillment who plays the role of an active citizen in the country. In the modern world, it is impossible to overcome the vices of the authoritarian system, if independence of an individual is not acknowledged and human rights are not guaranteed. Civil society secures human rights, and that contributes to the free development of the individual.

Making progress in its development, civil society increasingly involves larger strata of the population. It continuously protects the interests, rights, and freedoms of the individual. First of all, civil society is a set of interpersonal, domestic, social, economical, cultural, and religious attitudes and structures that develop outside the influence of the state, providing the conditions for the self-fulfillment of the individual.

Civil society institutions are a means for political socialization of citizens. Institutions of political socialization spread ideas of democracy and strengthen humanistic values in the political culture of a society. Educational programs and examples of their active involvement are the tools that civil society institutions use for influencing the formation of people's worldviews, thus developing the political culture of the society. If the political culture in a society is very low, it is hardly reasonable to think about the eradication of corruption.

Public activities mold public and political leaders. Many prominent politicians are nominated by

political parties that struggle for political power, form the power elite and the government, and act as constructive opposition movements.

Powerful public figures, competent experts, are molded in non-governmental organizations. Eager activity in the public field is a good school of leadership for them.

Where Does Involvement in Politics Start?

The main motive for political involvement by citizens is not the aspiration to control the political process, but the desire to change the existing situation. The feeling of being capable of doing something useful for the society, witnessing the achievement of an outcome, and acquiring skills, are the motives that cause citizens to take part in civil projects and get involved with politics. Here, the purpose of civil society is to initiate the development of an active position by citizens, so that they feel confident in the success of their efforts.

Social dialogue in this sense is an important context for democratic policy. This is the dialogue that draws people into politics. Social dialogue helps civil society identify collective needs and enables it to establish a platform for action. Taking part in discussions, citizens form knowledge and acquire skills necessary for having debates with politicians.

The Partnership of The Civil Society and The State in a Social Domain

Civil Society   State
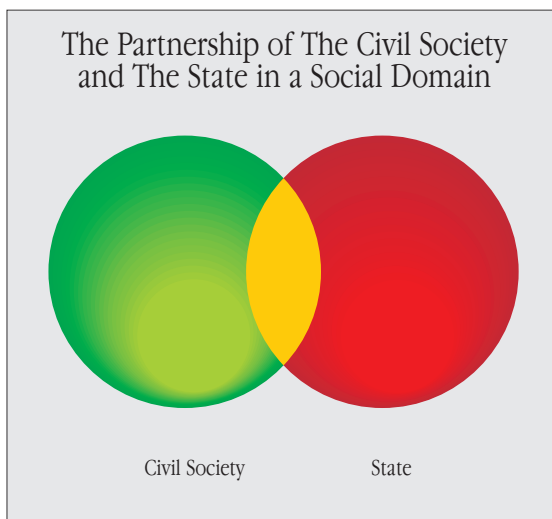
Knowledge and skills help to overcome the feeling of helplessness and create confidence, and that attracts people to civil projects. Discussions should be open for all who want to take part in them, especially for the mass media (TV and radio). A serious social dialogue reveals the public opinion that should be voiced by journalists on behalf of society. Discussions and civil forums manifest the public mood, which the government cannot ignore.

Civil Society: Involvement in Decision-making or a Mere Influence on Choice and Process?

Citizens are sources of legitimacy, bearers of public interests. In political science, participation in politics is very often viewed as a way to influence public agencies by influencing the choice of the government members or the decisions they make. This formula suggests recommendations, lobbying, protests, statements, appeals, etc. Thus, according to this formula, citizens are not viewed as a source of legitimacy and bearers of public interests. They act just as petitioners trying to influence the government or as recruits who can be quickly mobilized to exerting pressure, or as consumers of the opinions already formed by others. For example, the KR Constitution of 2007 was adopted after discussions in political circles, which did not involve citizens. Another example is the civil society's pressure on the government to reject Kyrgyzstan's entry into the HIPC program. Kyrgyzstan rejected HIPC only because of protest meetings organized by NGOs and students.

Civil society fills in the vacuum existing between citizens and government. Meanwhile, a very important aspect is how the state treats the initiatives of civil society, whether or not it is capable of being a partner. While settling many social issues, civil society at the same time ensures monitoring and evaluation of the public agencies' projects. Absence of monitoring and evaluation by civil society causes isolation of the government and growth of corruption. Projects of public and local government, policies, budget expenditures, and investments are always in a fishbowl. Mechanisms of monitoring and evaluation vary: these are public

hearings, budgetary hearings of public agencies and self-government institutions, monitoring of the quality of the services provided by the state, evaluation, analysis, etc.

Civil society performs functions of self-government (self-government institutions), and regulates interactions among the elements of civil society. Civil society is a huge intellectual human resource. Social projects implemented by civil society greatly contribute to the solution of many problems in the society and assist in society's development. The effectiveness of social projects depends not only on those who implement them (NGOs, in particular), but on public policy as well, and on how the state treats the activities of NGOs. If the state shows transparency and readiness to partner with civil society, and provides support to the social projects of civil society, the achievements and results of such activity can be very important in both the social and political fields.

What Model of Civil Society is Needed in Central Asia Today?[1]

Charles Buxton, *International NGO Training and Research Center (INTRAC)*

The complex political events of recent years, especially those that followed Kyrgyzstan's March 2005 revolution, have caused many to doubt whether the path chosen in the 1990s for developing civil society was the correct one. It is important to note the general discontent with results of the programs being implemented, including somewhat the negative reaction from the local population. This reflects the discontent with ongoing economic reforms and the progress made (or not made) in the democratization of society. Observers and experts have been asking themselves: "Was the correct strategy chosen for conveying Western liberal ideas about civil society? Did the region have the conditions necessary for effective implementation of that strategy?" These questions arise because the results have been unexpected in some cases: those in power attained a rather authoritarian nature and the least progressive elements of national culture have come to the forefront.

Meanwhile, INTRAC continues to pay close attention to civil society and its role in the development of each country. Moreover, this organization has criticized the donors' new policy - reflected in the Paris Declaration - which suggests that more work should be done through government bodies[2]. From INTRAC's point of view, civil society organizations are the most important element of society that functions independently from the state and the market. At the same time, one can claim that some difficulties in the political and economic development of the Central Asian region have been caused by events on the international level.

Three Models of Civil Society

During the forum, discussions attempted to show the distinctive features of the approaches that had been employed, using three schemes.

The third model is absolutely different from the first two: here we have differentiation between the current regime and the more stable governmental institutions. There is also a new sector: family with its all variety of informal ties. "In terms of scopes of activity, civil society can be viewed as an unclearly marked sphere (that is why it is dotted in the figure) with multiple functions, various operations and changeable relations of

1. The article was written in November 2007 for the Civil Society Forum in Kyrgyzstan.
2. Explanation and comments on that subject can be found in the ONTRAC Bulletin No. 34 available both in English and Russian. Please, send your request to icap@intrac.kg or visit the INTRAC's web-site at www.intrac.org.

CIVIL SOCIETY MODELS:
Triadic (or Ternary); Political; and Activity-based (Arena)
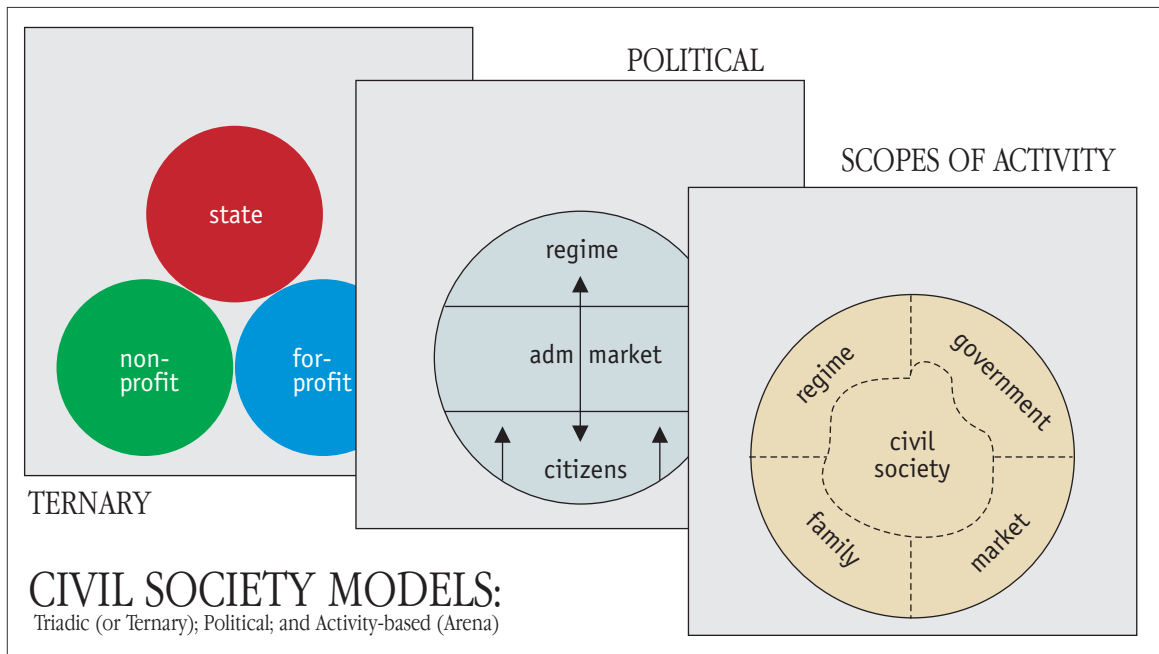
power. The borders of this sphere depend on the country and its history and never stop changing under internal and external forces." [1]

In each of the four sectors that form parts of civil society's sphere or influence, we can identify main actors: 1) the governmental sector, including research and educational institutions, legal offices, civil service agencies, government-financed organizations, law enforcement bodies and armed forces; 2) the market sector, including trade unions, self-help groups, cooperatives, local companies, national and transnational corporations; 3) the regime, including political activists, lobbying groups, beneficiaries of public services, political parties, legislative branch; and 4) the family sector, including traditional systems of mutual assistance, and formal and informal systems of support.

Mainstream and Alternative Approaches

According to the prevailing (liberal) concept of civil society that has been used in the CIS since the mid-1990s, a special emphasis should be made on the ties between the market and civil society. Great importance is attributed to individualism, i.e., the shift from a collectivist, communal society to relations built on individual choice; the rule of law is very important as well. According to this conception, capitalist relations do not necessarily lead to unfairness and feelings of alienation; they can help establish a new moral order and a trajectory of development of the social space in which different opinions and interests can be expressed, and agreements can be reached. Here, the most important thing is social capital, i.e., the building of trust and the development of cooperation among various groups through the relations that civil society organizations establish freely with actors both within and beyond the civil society sector.

An alternative view of civil society includes a number of elements from the political model and the model based on scopes of activity. Thus, clan and family ties are not excluded from civil society. Moreover, the latter is viewed as a space where clashes among various opposing interests (for instance, class or gender interests) can take place. Oppositional policy and social movements will inevitably try to change the status quo. Civil socie-

1. Fowler, Alan. 2003. "Civil Society and Development: Towards a Complex Systems Perspective," in Changing Expectations? The Concept and Practice of Civil Society in International Development. INTRAC. Pgs. 183-199.   Quoted in translation from Russian. - Translator's note.

CONTEMPORARY TRENDS AND PROSPECTS IN NGO SECTOR DEVELOPMENT IN KYRGYZSTAN

ty organizations should not only be independent from the authorities, but should have the opportunities and resources to propose new and alternative political decisions to the citizens.[1]

Recently, a number of USAID staff members have criticized the instrumental approaches[2] to civil society that are used by some of USAID's programs. They claim that such approaches do not allow for the establishment of open competition and the consolidation of democracy. The annual funding that USAID provides to certain organizations fails to comply with the declared policy of assisting open competition; on the contrary, it can attract people pursuing other goals. Having come to power, the groups that opposed the authoritarian regime do not necessarily start striving for democracy. In USAID's opinion, there is a close connection between democracy and the establishment of market relations; however, in some cases, such relations have caused an increase in social inequality. Meanwhile, there are lots of civil society organizations that openly oppose the free market (for example, environmental groups).[3]

Global Liaison and Local Coalitions

In 2006, INTRAC conducted a regional study of interactions between Central Asian NGOs and global networks of exchange in civil society. The objective was two-fold: 1) identify the main reasons for Central Asia's isolation from the main global networks of exchange; and 2) identify possibilities for improving the role of Central Asia at the international level, through local and international organizations of civil society.

The study found a great variety of NGO networks in Central Asia; many of them had tried to establish contacts at the regional and international levels. Analysis of network activity during the post-Soviet period helped to identify several main lines of work,

which included environmental protection, issues related to women and gender, as well as human rights. The international community's attention is usually drawn to Central Asia's problems by the various agencies and programs of the United Nations. Thus, NGOs have been actively applying the UN's policy of sustainable development, and women's organizations, the Beijing Platform for Action. The exchange takes place not only at international conferences, but also through the development of national action plans and the preparation of reports for UN agencies.

In some cases, the NGO contribution is of an "official" nature (complying with the priorities of the UN and national authorities). In other cases, it can be called "alternative" (reflecting a distinctive or oppositional point of view). The term "alternative" can be used for the work that civil society organizations have done monitoring the policies of international financial institutions, for example that of the ADB. This activity takes place thanks to cooperation with international NGOs that deal with these issues (Oxfam International, Jubilee 2000's campaign on canceling debts, etc.). Such alternative trends were especially visible in the campaign that civil society collectively carried out in Kyrgyzstan to oppose the HIPC program of the World Bank and the IMF program.[4]

At the same time, one can list numerous areas where the network of exchange makes room for improvement. At the national level, the so-called social block is extremely weak. For example, why is there no alliance between NGOs and the state-sector employees who represent the society's poorest and most vulnerable strata (teachers, medical workers, etc.)? Such an alliance would secure government employees against the consequences of budget reductions and the shift to a market system. At the regional level, NGOs have proved incapable of protecting Uzbek NGOs and supporting the positive aspects of Kyrgyzstan's March 2005 revolution, which reflected the openness and relative freedom of the mass media, as well as freedom of assembly.

1. Howell, Jude and Jenny Pearce. 2001. Civil Society and Development: A Critical Exploration. Boulder.
2. The word "instrumental" refers to programs designed to support civil society that use civil society for other objectives. The objectives themselves can be quite positive (for example, assistance to political pluralism or poverty reduction), but the means of their attainment can cause distortions in civil society development. See also Giffen, et al. 2005. The Development of Civil Society in Central Asia. INTRAC.
3. Jenkins, Rob. The statement is based on a quote from the presentation "Democracy and Civil Society in Post-colonial Contexts" by Olga Zubovskaya, Soros Foundation-Kyrgyzstan materials, Summer School, 2006.
4. HIPC is a program for the poorest countries with heavy debt burdens. The campaign stimulated the government of Kyrgyzstan's decision in early 2007 to reject entry to HIPC.

What Model of Civil Society is Needed in Central Asia Today?

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Contemporary Issues in the NGO Sector: What to Do and Where to Go?

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Since the 1990s, all post-Soviet countries have witnessed the active development of civil society organizations or, as we call them, non-profit, non-governmental organizations (NGOs). From year to year, the number of NGOs grew as relevant specialists were trained, conferences and workshops were organized, etc. In various countries, the attitudes of social groups and the authorities toward NGOs vary from strong disapproval to idealization. Nevertheless, it is an undeniable fact that NGOs do exist, and that many of them operate successfully.

The emergence and evolution of NGOs depends on the specifics of social and political development and the distinctive features of its particular evolutionary stages in a given country. It is important to note that NGOs, as well as other state institutions, emerge only when there is a functional need for their existence. Such functional needs for NGOs came into existence after Kyrgyzstan declared its independence in 1991.[1]

Organizationally, NGOs in Kyrgyzstan (as in many other countries) have been formed with support from various institutions from the USA and Western Europe.

Such support refers to the existing factors of state democratization. One such factor is the formation of civil society through interactions between the state and independent social groups and associations.

NGOs have become a permanent part of this country. There are more than 5,000 social organizations registered in Kyrgyzstan. Wide experience has been accumulated in various aspects of NGO operations. At the same time, today there are a number of problems. This article analyzes the current institutional and organizational problems in the NGO sector. Solving these problems is vital to increasing NGO effectiveness and, consequently, improving the role of NGOs in developing the country.

Institutional Problems in the NGO Sector

In this country, after the events of March 24, 2005 - and especially of April-November 2006, and April 2007 - the operational effectiveness of civil society organizations has been a vital issue. There are two

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1. For further details, Baktygulov, Sh. (April 2007). "How to Bring NGOs to a New Level," www.open.kg.

perspectives on Kyrgyzstan's NGO sector. According to the first, increased activity of civil society organizations has caused a partial reduction of democracy in the country and has weakened the positions of civil society institutions. According to the second, civil society development in Kyrgyzstan has proved one of the myths of former president Akaev's regime.

In addition, there are different interpretations of the term "civil society," not only among representatives of power and business, but also among representatives of civil society itself. Despite numerous studies carried out and articles published, it is still not clear to what extent civil society is restricted in Kyrgyzstan in particular, and in Central Asia, in general.

The following views of civil society are the most popular in Kyrgyzstan:

1. Civil society is everything that does not constitute the state: social organizations, the business sector, political parties, criminal organizations, etc. Hence, there is a conclusion that all these institutions are eternal opponents of each other and condemned to be inextricably linked.

2. Civil society includes three sectors: the state, the for-profit sector, and the non-profit sector.

3. Civil society constitutes social and, to be more exact, non-governmental, non-profit organizations (NGOs), and political parties.

4. Civil society is a fictional creation of those who want to earn money from it. In fact, there are only social groups with their group mentalities and folk traditions.

All these standpoints have a right to exist. Nevertheless, with no agreement on the definition of civil society, moving forward is impossible - not only for the NGO sector but for the country, as well. Moreover, the absence of a single view of civil society not only hinders interactions among various sectors, but also hampers the development of its very institutions.

Here, the isolation of various sectors of society from each other becomes obvious; each sector stews in its own juice. Neither those in power, nor business, nor NGOs consider each other important for their own development and the development of communities, though aspirations towards interaction have been regular parts of the rhetoric of all three groups. Meanwhile, representatives of the various structures of society and the state meet occasionally, but these interactions have so far laid no foundations for intersectoral programs. For a while, this situation did not disturb anybody. But now the country's further development requires coordination and, in some cases, cooperative efforts by the authorities and all the institutions of civil society.

In addition, NGOs have recently been increasingly accused of becoming more and more political. Today, the overwhelming majority of the country's NGOs are undergoing re-socialization (the adoption of new democratic norms and values). This causes people's aspirations to follow these norms and, hence, contributes to the broad dissemination of new values to society. Bearers of a new behavioral type are emerging, whose opinion has to be taken into account by the traditional groups in power, which have established themselves quite well after the fall of the Soviet state.

This stage is the one in which the problem of politics arises. In democratic transitions, re-socialization of NGOs brings about such epithets as "politically loaded." The re-socialization process itself starts being viewed as a process of getting politically aligned. As a result, misguided ideas cause erroneous conclusions and lead to unproductive programs of cooperation between the state machinery and social groups and associations. The highly professional assets of certain NGOs are not used to analyze and prepare options for solving the society's problems. Inside the NGO sector, some organizations cluster around those in power, while others cluster around those in opposition, and a third group dissociates itself from both.

Organizational Problems of the NGO Sector

Owing to the efforts of various international organizations, hundreds of NGOs have appeared in Kyrgyzstan. Many of them belong to networks. One would think that involvement in networks would bring more success. The advantage of a network-based liaison becomes visible during implementation of programs/projects that cover several centers of population in the country. However, the fact that the NGOs that belong to networks lack rich content prevents them from being involved in the real processes of development and cross-subject communication.

The majority of problems are related to the use of the term NGO. Unscrupulous functionaries often use the term to serve their own goals, claiming that the

opinion of their NGO is the opinion of all of civil society. In any work group, on any issue, there will always be two or three representatives of NGOs. However, the absence of real procedures for ensuring responsiveness to the opinions voiced during the decision making process means this approach is simply an opportunity for functionaries to use the populist explanation: "Civil society was involved in discussions."

The other side of the coin is those resounding speeches NGO leaders make on behalf of their organizations in a manner that is irresponsive to the opinions of their cofounders and colleagues. Some of them go even further and are not ashamed to make such statements on behalf of the whole NGO sector or all of civil society. This is the situation that we can observe at passionate meetings in recent years.

The reason for such abuse of the term "NGO" is the absence of a clear position among NGO representatives, their violation of the limits of democracy, which constitutes a procedure to be followed by everybody rather than an end in itself.

This brings up another sore point that can split the NGO sector. The authorities (especially during the previous regime) and even some NGOs have made regular attempts to build a hierarchy for NGOs under the pretext of various programs and strategies. No matter what the name is - a forum, council, etc. - the gist is the same. It is always about establishing a politburo or central committee for the NGO sector that would rule the majority of NGOs in the country, if not all of them. The objective of such projects is to establish control over the NGO sector and the resources of donor organizations.

In addition, the effectiveness of NGOs' operations gets weakened because of the mechanical implantation of various social technologies in local communities without consideration of their specifics. Such an approach fails to produce substantial outcomes, which makes it possible to accuse NGOs of amateurishness and pursuit of their own selfish ends. At the same time, the country lacks a clear and understandable system of self-evaluation and evaluation of project activities and their consequences.

A number of other problems typical of the NGO sector can be identified, the solutions to which would allow NGOs to move up to a new, better level:

1. NGOs, first of all at the local level, are hardly ready to communicate with regard to making managerial decisions, and the citizens' involvement in management is of a ceremonial nature.

2. Local communities are lagging far behind the transformation processes identified by the government and international organizations, and that stimulates paternalistic expectations and passivity in social groups.
3. There are certain limitations in the interaction/communication technologies installed during recent years.
4. Development resources have been used inefficiently because of differently directed vectors of authorities, NGOs, and other stakeholders' actions.

Recommendations

The following are recommendations for solving the main problems of the NGO sector. Their successful implementation depends on the involvement of all interested NGOs and stakeholders. The point is not only about the development of the NGO sector. The issue is far broader - it is about the development of the country and society - since the NGO sector is an important link between the machinery of the state and independent social groups.

Institutional:
1. Clarify the role and mission of NGOs in the country's development with due regard for the roles and missions of other actors.
2. Develop a theory/concept of the NGO sector and its development.
3. Institutionalize interactions among the NGO sector, authorities, and other development actors to ensure the sustainability and strength of democratic procedures for making decisions at various levels of public and local government.
4. Strengthen NGO involvement in the monitoring and evaluation of social groups, local communities and the development of the whole society in such areas as public services, civil initiatives, development of local communities, and formation of the country's future.
5. Develop procedures for NGOs to be involved in managing development at various levels.

Organizational
1. Develop and introduce a simple and clear system of NGO self-evaluation and evaluation of NGOs' projects and their consequences.
2. Elaborate on the system of interaction among

various actors and enhance it with due regard for local circumstances.

3. Develop programs for the professional development of NGO staff.
4. Develop and implement a corporate campaign to clarify the role, mission, and concept of NGOs.
5. Prepare strategies (for each NGO) regarding:
   — the development of the organization;
   — activities in its field;
   — and involvement in the work of the whole NGO sector.

A gradually developed strategy should, inter alia, lead to a comprehensive model of reality. Development of the strategy and formulation of its main provisions will bring about a clear picture of the current situation and also reveal internal contradictions, collisions of interests, conflicts, and struggles of the parties therein. Such an approach lays the foundation for decision making, evaluation, conflict resolution, and opponent group behavioral modeling, and will allow the NGO sector to become more successful in its development compared to other social organizations.

Conclusions

At the end of the day, civil society is a set of institutions that are not involved in the political process directly.[1] They influence it indirectly. At the same time, in Kyrgyzstan, as in many other post-Soviet countries (and to a smaller extent, Europe), we traditionally think that civil society opposes the state. Hence, we have seen a certain sanctification of civil society recently. When somebody wants to say: "We need something marvelous that will help all of us," he or she says: "Civil society will help us."

There is a different approach in the USA. That country does not have a permanent antagonism between the state and civil society. In the USA, civil society is an intellectual partner of the state and a resource for public government. For example, the previous US Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, is now the head of NDI, the largest NGO in the USA, while the current US Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, has previously worked for an analytical center. The former US Secretary of Defense took his position after serving as a vice-president of a business corporation, and his successor is the former head of Texas University.

The same picture can be observed at all levels of the US government. One and the same person can hold different posts in civil service, business, and NGOs, in due course. Because of this approach, the state in the US is not considered something obscure and hostile to society. The state is perceived as an open structure. Hence, national interests (and not interests of Republican or Democratic administrations) run through the prism of personal experience and set the tone for the activity of the individuals in various institutions.

One must admit that we had similar attempts of regular renewal in governmental institutions in early 1990s. However, those attempts had their own specifics: those who came to power were former heads of laboratories in various sciences. The matter did not get any farther.

At present, there are grounds for more active involvement of NGOs in the country's development. Today, we are witnessing a new stage of NGO-building, and these present-day leaders of NGOs will shape this sector and determine whether or not NGOs will play an important role in the country tomorrow. However, with no plan for the country's development and no vision of a goal and the means to achieve it, interaction between the machinery of the state and the NGO sector will be limited to their cooperation for the sake of cooperation.

Given this situation, it is worth emphasizing here that the clarified concept, mission and role of the NGO sector depend on the vision for Kyrgyzstan's development. Cooperation between the state machinery and NGOs will be productive if there is a well-defined scenario for country's development that is clear to all social groups. It would be even better to have a system of scenarios, i.e., a consistent, generalized range of alternative ways the country could develop over the years.

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1. Kozhokin, E. (2006). "The USA as an Intellectual Challenge to Russia." Expert, 39: 23 - 29 October.

Civil Society:
Searching for Identity

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Civil Society's Identity as the Charisma of the Power

It is difficult to separate civil society's identity from the country's general identity, which has been rather diffuse in post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan. No strategy, vision of the future, well-defined national priorities, or national project sets a general direction for the development of society.

While identifying the key actors of our society, civil society, and the state, one must understand the fundamentals of their substances and motivations, as well as their backgrounds and the conditions of their development.

The evolution of modern societies has led to common practices within individual countries. Only this framework can shape an atomized society into an institutionalized society of citizens in a country, i.e., civil society. The state itself has two main functions with respect to the civil society: organizing it and defining a purpose for it. The first refers to the state as an institution that has all necessary parameters identified by the international practice, such as power, territory, boundaries, security - all the formal attributes. The second function (defining a purpose) refers to the ideological background, which has to unite the country, determine and convey a meaning to the general line of its society development.

Civil society is a society of citizens within one country. These citizens are united by common rules and the acknowledgement that they are all part of one country. They build their activities in line with the country's development trends. Essential features of civil society are that it can control the state as an instrument of rule, correct it and, when necessary, confront it.

In usual, stable periods of development, civil society is a peaceful (though sometimes not completely peaceful) set of views, activities, and aspirations that coexist and have various forms and content. Those are corporate, group, communal and other interests represented in various institutions, corporations, associations, etc. This is what E. Heller defines as a pluralistic civil society represented by the whole range of opinions and interests that is available in this society. According to Heller, "the simplest formula of civil society has two parts: total centralization (secured by the mechanisms of accountability and rotation) on the one hand, and economic pluralism on the other."[1]

At the same time, transitional stages of social

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1. Heller, E. (1995). Conditions of Liberty. Moscow: Ad Marginem, pp. 101, 135. Quoted in translation from Russian. - Translator's note.

development (points of bifurcation, historic choice of one's own project, direction) involve consolidation of pluralities, i.e., integration around the national idea of the country's development. At this moment, a joint identity is formed. At the point of historical challenge, there occurs consolidation of the society's dissipated consciences that leads to a collective identity of choice. Durkheim named this a "collective conscience,"[1] which leads to the birth of a national spirit during a certain period of time and is capable of accumulating energy, resources and capacity into one constructive current.

However, there are certain risks when inertia outdoes the activity of the collective conscience. This happens when the state provides no support to, and no direction for, the consolidating conscience of the society, when it takes no responsibility, does not strengthen civil consolidation, or does not transform it to the administrative level, the national one.

When the state, as an administrative machine, takes no interest in such changes, civil society, united by the collective conscience, wipes it away. This took place in Kyrgyzstan in the spring of 2005, when society's internal understanding of the need for change consolidated it, expelling the regime as an obstacle to the country's development.

Such examples show that civil society's identity as the collective conscience is an asset for the country, and that this asset is of managerial value, among other things. In this regard, civil society delegates its identity to the state as a certain kind of capital, a guarantee of development. At the same time, when the state understands this value, the state acquires the "charisma of power," which functions only when the state accepts, continues and strengthens civil society's identity, making it a national one. This can be observed in the practices of countries where civil society is strong and the state shares and supports its identity, for example, in the USA, France, and Japan.

At present, Kyrgyzstan's two main actors - the state and civil society - both lack the collective identity of the nation. Initially, both the state and civil society declared their "democratic" development and exhibited its attributes. However, collective development or social partnership was ephemeral, rather than realistic. These two - in the logic of democracy - partners (the state and society) have been living in parallel worlds rather than in connected ones.

The need to approach each other, to establish social and ideological partnership, became obvious only when the two actors saw the whole critical mass of accumulated risks, such as dependence on external forces, impediments to reforms, abundant flows of migration, systemic corruption, and challenges to the sustainability of the state system.

It was after the time when the principle of democracy was first proclaimed - and not only from the moment of independence - when those in power understood that it was absolutely necessary to involve all social strata in making key, if not central (and sometimes even symbolic) decisions. This was necessary, at least, to ensure the ideological self-identification of the society with respect to the state. Moreover, if such an understanding did not exist, the mechanisms of overall interaction would be imitated, sometimes at quite a grandiose scale, as in the USSR, for example. That would include nationwide involvement of the society through sessions, local trade committees, etc. Under the first president, those were various assemblies, kurultays, even the Public Council and related frameworks and programs.

National Identity as a Space of Perceptions

Before civil society becomes a real support, which consolidates power, it should find its own identity. What is the identity of a post-Soviet civil society, which is still traditional but claims the titles free and democratic? What is the identity of civil society in Kyrgyzstan today?

Since civil society itself is not uniform, we can see various identities all over the country today. Among these, one can find persisting traditional perceptions, remaining Soviet fundamentals, frameworks being implanted from abroad, and, finally, a modern perception. This modern perception takes place at the level of civil society as a whole and at the level of its internal segments, such as NGOs, parties, mass media, business, etc.

When describing the self-identification of Kyrgyzstan's civil society, one must distinguish its three main parameters: locality, Orientalism

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1. Durkheim, Emile (1996). The Division of Labour in Society. Moscow.

(Central Asianness), and transitiveness. These parameters attest to the multi-layered nature of existing identities.

Thus, traditional criteria of self-perception and individual reality building have been quite common in the organizational activities of various institutions of civil society. It is a well-known fact that many NGOs, especially at the local level, employ an organizational principle that is based on communal and tribal ties (very often on the ties of one to three families). This can be explained by the specifics of Oriental societies where trust, as the basis of inter-actions and joint business, is built through informal networks. An example can be those still persisting clannish and corporate systems of communication, such as makhalya. The traditional Kyrgyz ashar method is a prototype of the problem solving and operational mechanism applied by NGOs, especially at the local level.

During its entire period of civil society development, Kyrgyzstan did not reflect on the continuity of its Soviet heritage. Trends in the transmission of psychological, organizational, and socio-cultural origins almost fully escaped research. The paternalistic mentality is the most typical attribute of the Soviet past: a permanent, sometimes unreasonable, appeal to the state; steep expectations; and inertia in proposing (non-donor) projects, including those which go beyond private, local and situational dimensions.

At the same time, there exists an implanted framework, in which civil society is positioned as an antagonist of the state, which is controlled by the opposition. A conflict between these two bases of identity takes place. On the one hand, there is the paternalist basis, and on the other there is the implanted one (classical, from the paradigm of the democratic regime), supervisory and mentoring. Such an inconsistent situation, in our opinion, is one of the factors that hamper the development of civil society in the post-Soviet area.

At present, Kyrgyzstan's civil society is at the stage of self-identification, on a quest for itself. This trend is typical of civil society as a whole and of all of its elements.

The formation of the legislative branch on the basis of party lists (according to the new version of the Constitution) caused parties to revise their positions and roles. Before, they were nominal institutions; now their mission is acquiring some substance. The parties are revising their ideological packages: programs, charters, strategies, slogans, etc.

In the NGO sector, which today is synonymous with civil society in Kyrgyzstan, self-identification is also underway. The evidence is May's NGO forums and the agenda of the next National NGO Forum, which includes issues related to the sector's self-identification, its role in the country, its interactions with the state, and inter-sectoral dialogue. Thus, civil society is at the stage when NGOs are trying to comprehend their place, identify their stage of development, and identify their vision of the future. The state and the donor community are currently undertaking the same tasks. The issue of social partnership, as a framework for the country's development, reforms and modernization, has become vital.

The country's expert and analyst community are asking themselves similar questions. Their role, place, importance, and construction of institutions and networks have been vital at an increasingly large number of forums and at various levels.

Having returned home, migratory communities of Kyrgyzstan's citizens are trying to strengthen their interests in various institutional forms, associations and parties. Being abroad, they understand the need to formulate and promote their interests here, in their motherland. They see their identity as an element of civil society (suffrage, property rights, inheritance, etc.) and as an element of national identity.

Civil Activity as Identity Formation

Currently, we are witnessing the formation of a general framework for the identity of civil society and the state. In this process, civil society plays the leading role. As for the state, its mission is to accumulate this identity, bring it to the national level and establish an infrastructure for the development of the whole society. The process of identity formation in Kyrgyzstan does not take place in isolation from similar or more advanced projects of identity formation in adjacent or dominant countries. In order to be sustainable and competitive in such environment, Kyrgyzstan's process of self-identification requires certain mechanisms of development:

1. Education. Collective identity can be formed by uniting various segments of civil society by laying a conceptual foundation with the help of educational institutions in the broadest sense of the term. The existing system of education is

part of Kyrgyzstan's Soviet heritage. It serves those in power rather than citizens, it serves the group rather than the individual, it erases the primordial and cultivates the implanted, it leads away from the established realities and answers given by new identities. "Civil society needs civil enlightenment."[1]

2. Public Policy. Civil society and the state, as Kyrgyzstan's two main actors, should start interacting with each other on specific lines of activity. These are joint projects, such as specialized, sectoral projects on the national scale (national projects in Russia, for instance), projects for crisis management, conflict negotiation, reform support, infrastructure modernization, project innovation, etc. Only under such conditions and in the context of such partnership, will we see the emergence of the identity of the society, its common goals and objectives, and its identity of development, which, in turn, will provide ideological support for the country's strategy, forming the ideology of the whole society, the nation.

3. Public Evaluation. Here, evaluation means comprehension of oneself, a complex and regular assessment of one's own path, capacity, achievements and current work. This is an understanding of one's own activity horizons and competence limits. There is a need for association of civil unions and organizations in order to establish competent, effective, and open evaluations of projects, programs, decisions, actions, and institutions in all areas of social life. There is a need to evaluate civil society, public policy and the policy of reconciliation of interests on contentious issues.

4. Modernized Identity. The pattern of new identity can be put together like a jigsaw puzzle, where puzzle parts are segments of civil society, and the general picture is their identity, while the state is the one who can endow the picture with meaning and project the future. This pattern should address the future and also meet the requirements and challenges of the time and of society. The idea behind the needed modernization of identity is three-fold: consolidation, development, and renewal (to meet challenges of the time). The modernized identity does not reject the previous one: it builds on it, revising and absorbing parts of the previous experience, adapting to the present, and accelerating toward the future all at the same time.

The globalizing world brings competition, expansion of influence (mass culture, Westernization, Islamization, etc.), increasing flows of human beings, etc. These distinctive features of globalization cause quick changes in the conjuncture of cross-country, cross-regional and global shifts in the international wealth hierarchy. In response, formation of one's own identity constitutes a basis for development and supports the ability to meet challenges, set objectives and, what is more important, attain them.

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1. A slogan of Elena Nemirovskaya's Moscow School of Political Studies.

Role of Civil Institutions in Society: Attempt at Analysis

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Introduction

The complex social and political situation in Kyrgyzstan has, inter alia, mainstreamed a question, which so far has seen no reasonable response. The question was voiced by high officials in their statements and embodied in the actions of some leaders in civil society. It has been growing roots and informing public opinion. The question addresses the most developed institutions of civil society in Kyrgyzstan, NGOs. Unfortunately, the question is a difficult one: Why does Kyrgyzstan need NGOs?

The question is too serious to turn our backs on. However, there is a paradox in the reply. A simple reply is not worthy for some, because of their political and civil illiteracy, while others would reject it for opportunistic reasons. What reply is needed then, and to whom?

The very mainstreaming of NGO issues, in our opinion, is one action in the row related to the critical attitude of some toward democratic institutions and processes. This very attitude of criticism is a consequence of a difficult social and economic situation in the country on the one hand, and of past political mistakes on the other.

Traced to early stages of democracy building in the country, political mistakes of the past were first of all caused by absolutization of the idea of democracy itself, its conversion to the objective of development and even to a self-sufficient goal. Such transformation of democracy-as-a-tool to democracy-as-a-goal deprived it of its constructive capacity: instead of working and being a resource for reforms in the country, democracy became a money-losing part of society's life. And it is not accidental that in Kyrgyzstan we have had opinions stating that Kyrgyzstan is not rich enough to afford such tools. Moreover, such statements can be heard despite the fact that Kyrgyzstan's democratic choice is secured in its Constitution.

It is clear that such a choice needs institutional reinforcement. However, the country still has not finalized the construction of its democratic institutions. While the institutions of electoral democracy are in place, on the whole, another important stage of democracy, which ensures public supervision over elected authorities between elections, is absent. There are no democratic institutions ensuring dialogue between the authorities and society. In other words, there are no institutions of daily democracy.

Furthermore, a strong impact on society has been made by lessons of direct democracy. Our society

learned an unambiguous lesson - that one can attain one's lawful rights, interests and objectives through force or threat of force. Unfortunately, this tool of "effective" settlement of issues has been increasingly dominant in social and political practice, thus obscuring the standard democratic tools or even removing them from the arsenal of options.

"The country is witnessing (thus, there is a support from the active government) projects of a nondemocratic nature. The following initiatives can be thought of as such projects: the nationalist project that divides Kyrgyz citizens into people of various grades; and the Islamic project, which breaks from the spills over from the private domain into the public one, into education, government, and information. The fact that the term "secular state" has been removed from the KR Constitution is used by conservative groups as a pretext for denying democratic accomplishments and limiting human rights, thus strengthening reactionary trends in political and social life.[1]"

In such a context, questioning civil society institutions looks quite appropriate, if it is done in a constructive way. The issue is NGOs' positive involvement in the country's affairs and in solving these and other problems

NGO Forum - 2007

A very important phenomenon for the civil society development in Kyrgyzstan has been the fact that NGO sector perceived and identified society's implicit and explicit requests for the sector to self-identify. It is also extremely important that the sector started looking for answers to difficult and uncomfortable questions and began replying first to itself and then to the society. Initiated by a number of authoritative NGO leaders, a process of broad discussions was launched in March - June 2007 to address vital issues related to the NGO sector and to develop proposals to strengthen the sector's influence on the current processes in the country.
   — Can NGO sector be thought of today as influencing all processes in Kyrgyzstan?
   — What is the distinctive role of the NGO sector during the modern stage of society- and state-building?

— What is the NGO sector's specialization with regard to other civil institutions and institutions of power?
The inclusion of such items on the Forum-2007 agenda attests to the fact that the sector has started to independently identify what it is, what it needs to do (and how it needs to do these things) pursuant to the needs of society and state and in compliance with its own mission.

The most important problems identified by the Forum were problems related to interactions between NGOs and public agencies. Traditionally, the system "state - civil society" had the state (power) domineering in Kyrgyzstan. That is why the state undertook to develop civil society. Consequently, Kyrgyzstan's society underwent a rather intense and artificially organized process of civil institution-building, with establishment of NGOs being the first step in the process. However, the maturation of civil society organizations did not transform the attitude of the authorities to that of a partner. "As a rule, these interactions are of mutual confrontation and accusation.[2]"

This relationship comes from public agencies' misunderstanding of the mission and role of NGOs on the one hand, and the internal problems of NGO sector, which has not formulated its mission yet, on the other.

Problems of Relationship: Historical and Theoretical Perspective

The complex nature of the relationship between civil society organizations and governmental institutions is not exclusive either to Kyrgyzstan or to the present time.

The point is that both civil society and the state are areas where human freedom is fulfilled, and rights and liberties are guaranteed. As a matter of fact, these actors play on one field. Hence, we can observe competition and tension in their interactions. Finally, civil society and the state are two interrelated and complementary concepts, but the nature of their relationship itself is changeable in historic terms.

"That is why a historical approach - an attempt to understand the tension between these two con-

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1 Association if Civil Society Support Centers (2007). Report on the NGO National Forum, 2007. Bishkek
2 Ibid.

cepts pursuant to the historical context and genesis of the tension - can succeed. Immediately, we can see that, for example, in ancient times these two concepts did not differ at all. In ancient states the number of free persons (the number of citizens) was equal to the number of people who had power. Therefore, people who were citizens were also people who held state power.[1]"

With the spread of Christianity, which declared each and every individual free, the equilibrium was disturbed. Now the number of positions of power is always smaller than the number of free people, people who have rights of citizens. Consequently, this problem has become increasingly acute, and even the methods of enlarging the number of sovereignty bearers (the Middle Ages was an epoch of feudal division) or dividing the areas of influence on the human being (the Enlightenment was an epoch of human division) fail to cope with this problem

The higher the tension is, the more acute the problem of interaction between civil society and the state becomes. At the same time, civil society starts being considered as a social ideal where the rights and freedoms of each individual can be fulfilled and guaranteed, while the state becomes a form with historical roots, which limits the society and the individual and interferes with the fulfillment of those rights and freedoms.

The peak of anti-etatist thinking is anarchism, which disputes any institution because of its certain connection to the obligations of the individual. The ideas of Locke, Rousseau, Marx, Payne, Jefferson, and others viewed the state as a suppression machine owned by a certain class; they attributed various historical timeframes to its existence and reserved various historical missions for it.

However, the attempt to build civil society and fulfill anti-state aspirations failed to guarantee the rights and liberties of citizens and increase freedom and the number of positions of power.

Etatism came into being as a reaction to theories that considered the state as a declining institution. As for the metaphysical perspective, etatism views civil society as a mechanical aggregate of individuals who collide with each other in their chaotic traipsing and, consequently, fail to achieve their goals. The state is what forms the substance of civil society, what shapes it. It is natural, from the etatist point of view, that the state is born because of the initial disparity in individuals' abilities and also that it reflects these disparities.

The variety of etatist theories includes extreme totalitarian manifestations, such as the one represented in Hobbes's Leviathan, where a citizen's freedom exists only in those areas that have escaped the sovereign's attention. However, since the sovereign is prone to amplifying its interests, citizens' freedom gets increasingly scarcer, leading to a situation in which even their minds, imaginations and certain mental functions fall under the sovereign's control (an ideal for any contemporary police system).

"Similar to the anti-etatist theories, which condemn the state to disappearance or to a merely symbolic function, the etatist theories target the disappearance of civil society. Thus, in Hobbes's ideas, civil society gradually shrinks and disappears because of the sovereign's interest in expansion. Or it has a certain symbolic function left; i.e. civil society proves a theoretical structure, an ideal, a rhetorical technique, a declaration that, in principle, all people are free and have equal rights.[2]"

The dispute between etatists and anti-etatists indicates that there is a balance between civil society and the state, a certain scale mark around which these fluctuations take place. Therefore, the goal is to identify this mark, this mutual belonging of civil society and the state, and divide spheres of influence between them.

The first synthetic concept is a concept that views civil society as an embodiment of moral liberty. It came into being when classical German scholars, Emmanuel Kant in particular, analyzed and comprehended bourgeois revolutions. Kant's predecessor was Greber , who defined civil society as the sphere in which the individual's moral needs were fulfilled, the sphere in which their political and ideological interests were solidified, the sphere of communication. According to Greber, the state is a mechanism for fulfilling the consent reached during communication. Each person has a right to express his or her ideas and views, but only to express them. Unless he or she persuades all the other members of society of his or her rightness, using legal communicative means, implementation of his or her ideas, plans and political projects will be postponed. Implementation - and, therefore, the involvement of

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1. Matveychev, Oleg. Civil Society and State. Models of Interaction. www.matveychev.ru
2. Ibid.

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state machinery - can start only when an idea or moral norm is shared by everybody.

From this point of view, civil society serves as a locomotive, a vanguard, a laboratory for ideological and political projects, and the state is an anchor, a conservative structure that does not allow the society to plunge into adventure, in which case it would inevitably die if the restrictive and conservative force of the state did not exist.

According to the second synthetic model, the embodiment of moral liberty is the state. According to Hegel, history's lessons attest to the fact that the state is not something to serve human needs (for example, material needs or safety). On the contrary, it is the individual who protects the state in the most crucial periods of history, since he views the state as a symbol of his freedom. When there is a war, people do not urge the state to defend them; instead, they defend it. All this speaks for the state being the sphere in which an individual's freedom is fulfilled, while civil society is an area where material needs are fulfilled. The state proves an ideal symbol, ensuring the identity of a nation or of a human community, like an emblem, a flag, or a hymn.

If, according to Kant, people are free to say and think whatever they want, but should act in compliance with the law, Hegel emphasizes that a patriotic and moral attitude is compulsory, while fulfillment of one's material needs and other ambitions is an area of absolute freedom for all. Civil society is the area where all these ambitions are fulfilled. Thus, one can draw several conclusions:

1. Both the state and civil society exist simultaneously, as the moral and material needs of the individual always exist together.
2. A society needs to find a balance between civil society and the state, to divide spheres of influence and responsibilities between them.
3. An undeveloped state occurs along with an undeveloped civil society, and an undeveloped civil society occurs along with an underdeveloped state.
4. The problem of civil society development cannot be solved without a solution to the problem of state-building.

State-building[1]

State-building is one of the most important problems of the world community, since the weakness and destruction of states is a source of many of the most serious problems in the world. The strength of the state is an ability to plan and implement policies and ensure that laws are complied with, and do all of the above in an honest and open manner.

Such a statement of the question allows for the identification of a set of functions necessary for society; these functions should be implemented by relevant institutions, be they state or civil institutions. The World Bank Global Development Report of 1997 proposed one possible list of a state's functions, dividing them into categories from "minimal," to "moderate," to "active."
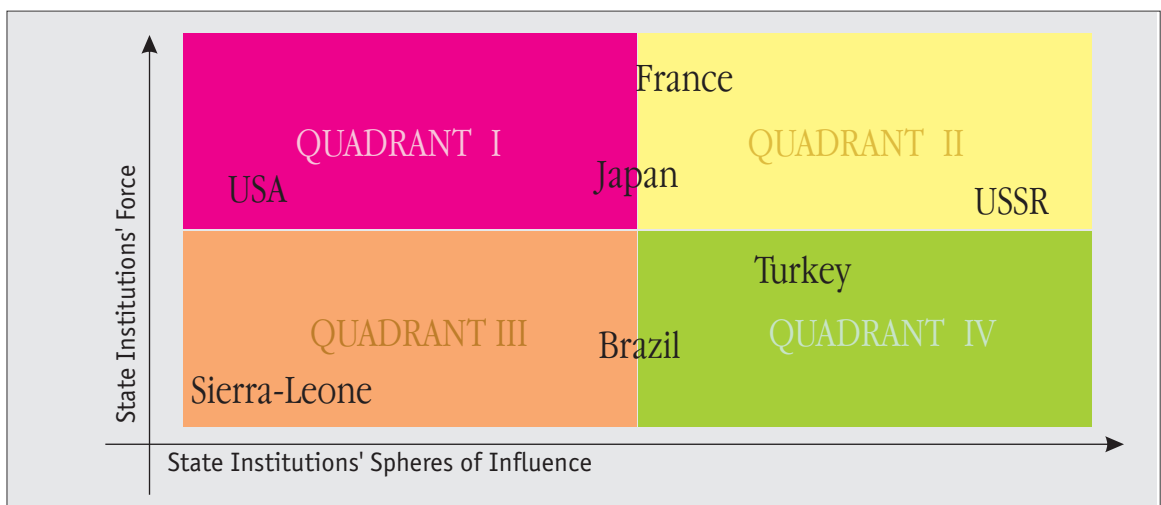

1. Fukuyama, Francis (2006). State-Building: Governance and World Order in the 21st Century. Moscow.

Contemporary theoretical approaches distinguish two aspects of statehood: the state's strength and its sphere of influence. As the diagram below shows, Kyrgyzstan, as a former Soviet republic can be placed in the second quadrant, which is distinguished by a broad sphere of influence and a relatively weak state.

Worldwide trends in state-building show that the state institutions' spheres of influence narrow as their strength grows (see the figure below).
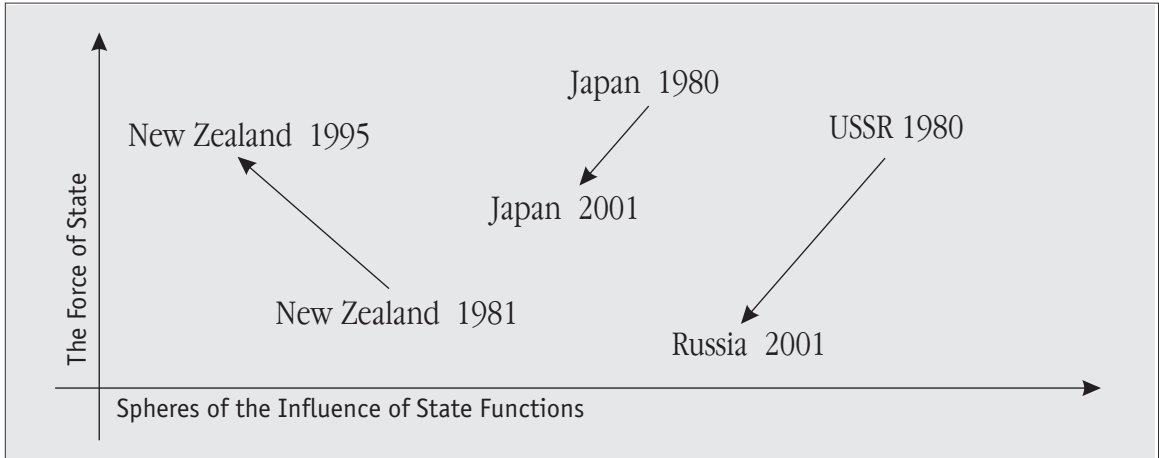
The general trend here is that state institutions delegate some of their functions to civil institutions. At the same time, a considerable increase in state institutions' strength with regard to the implementation of their functions occurs. "The gist of statehood consists of coercion, i.e., the exclusive opportunity to send somebody in uniform, with a weapon, to force people to comply with governmental laws."

Pattern of Analysis

In view of all this, one can chart a coordinate system for analyzing the division of functions between the state and civil society institutions. As it is shown above, it is not important either for the theory or for the society, which institution, precisely, will be implementing a certain function.
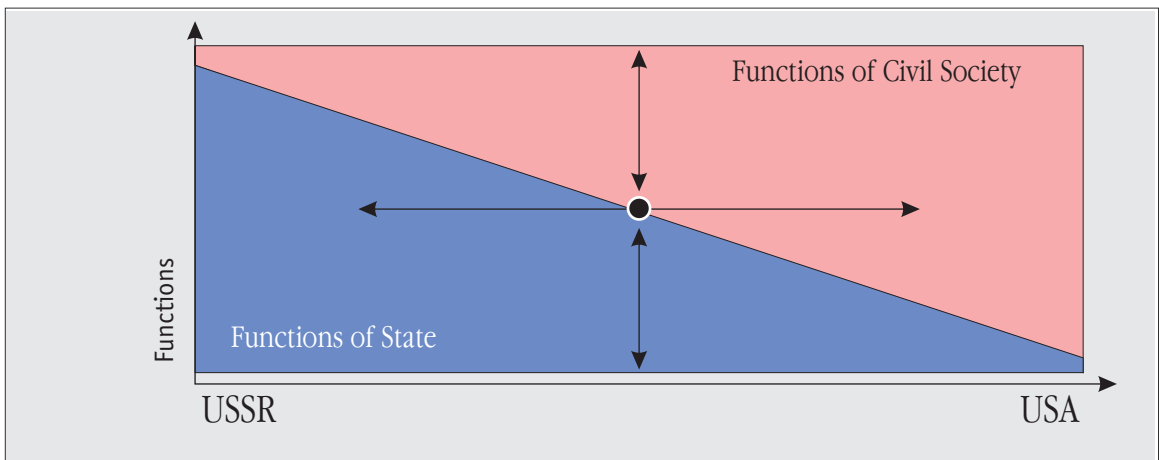
The figure above shows the functions necessary in a society. The area has two zones: one for the authority and responsibility of state institutions; and the other for the authority and responsibility of civil society (CS) institutions. The ratio between these two parameters changes from a maximum in a totalitarian state (the USSR) to a minimum in a liberal state (the USA).

It is obvious that Kyrgyzstan's location is somewhere in between these two extremes. A real - rather than theoretical - identification of this location could serve as a social contract; it would form part of Kyrgyzstan's Constitution, identifying restrictions on public agencies' power. At the same time, the figure shows a legitimate area for civil institutions' involvement and responsibility, as these institutions should also perform certain functions in the society.

Thus, the question raised at the beginning of this work needs an answer that would stimulate civil institutions, and particularly NGOs, to complement their functions of supervision over public agencies with a mastery of other functions necessary for society. The following steps are needed for that purpose: "Identify who we are (which model of the state and corresponding model of civil society and its institutions has been operating in Kyrgyzstan);

— Identify the functions and objectives of civil society institutions;

— Identify the parameters of the production, goods, and services necessary for society;

— Ensure the specialization and professionalization of civil society institutions;

— Master and provide relevant goods and services to the society.