1 Introduction

In this study I attempt to evaluate the impact of factors that influence the level of development of civil society institutions and to make a comparative analysis of Russia and Kyrgyzstan.

This study addresses the questions of development of civil society institutions and democracy. *The intentional background* is to produce knowledge about how to enhance the development of civil society institutions in order to strengthen democracy, pluralism, checks and balances of power. *The major research question* is to examine whether the "quality" of civil society has an influence on quality of politics. The emphasis is principally on socio-political, economic and cultural features of civil society institutions.

Since about 14 years the idea of developing a strong civil society as a central societal objective has guided national political interests of Russia and Kyrgyzstan. Presently, the concept of civil society is probably the most prominent and widely used conceptual framework for assessing the situation in Russia and Kyrgyzstan. Considering empirical operationalization of civil society, one can highlight different approaches and components. Nevertheless, the general feature of all concepts is the *focus on the individual*. On the other hand, several other concepts appeared within the last 10-15 years with the *focus on social qualities* such as spread of equality, freedom, quality and structure of the social relations within a society.

I am interested to investigate how the institutions of civil society like non-governmental organizations (NGOs) try to reduce the level of corruption and discrimination in Russia and Kyrgyzstan because it's all about the situation in which people live, measured by concepts like the equality, freedom, quality and structure of the social relations within a society. This all has consequences on their individual situations.

The ideas of *social capital* and *good governance* mostly belong to the second approach and are among the successful models that reflect this discussion and attract political attention both at the national and international levels. Against this

background in research I restrict myself to the second approach. Nevertheless there is no clear difference between two approaches, since the second is obviously focused on the individual in specific respects, whereas the first is the same, only not in a specified way.

First, an attempt is made to operationalize and measure civil society through these concepts. Second, with relevance to the latest social developments, the **objectives** of given research are to reveal the major existing concepts and theoretical approaches of civil society with which I will work, and to determine its inherent dimensions.

Third, this study explores the changing role and functions of voluntary associations, intermediary organizations and other social movements in transitional societies. It concentrates on Russia and Kyrgyzstan and on their situation with respect to the development of civil society. The recent research findings indicate that the structure of voluntary associations and intermediary organizations throughout these countries has changed significantly and their membership levels and relevance to democratic decision-making have grown.

The ultimate objective of my research is to produce scientifically relevant knowledge available to the political and social science research community. The research is based on analysis of writings of leading specialists in their field and will be tested by empirical evidence, and several data quality checks from validation to verification will be employed.

The aim of my research is to reveal the theory that is important for practical application, and to give some kind of <u>practical</u> advice (e.g., on how to improve the effectiveness and functioning of NGOs, political parties and other civil society institutions). Of course practical advice presupposes good <u>theoretical</u> knowledge, so that is why I want to aim at theory.

The overall objective of the study is to digest the relevant literature and distil a conceptual framework, which is useful for research purpose. The purpose of this study is to give a theoretically informed diagnosis of Russia and Kyrgyzstan with respect to the development of civil society:

- The respective state of affairs,

- The path to this state,

- The assessment of stability, problems etc.

- The prospects.

This study focuses only on the analysis of the attributes of civil society and does not analyze the level of democratization of Kyrgyz and Russian societies, nor do I intend to make any comparison or analysis of emerging democratic societies in the whole Central Asian region or Newly Independent Countries (NIC) / Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). The study concentrates only on analysis of the performances of three attributes of civil society in Kyrgyzstan and Russia based on the data of public opinion surveys conducted by author in 2003-2004 and independent international organizations in different years in the Kyrgyzstan and Russia. In this paper I consider the attributes of civil society in the countries so as to measure its development. The main approach employed in this paper is secondary and primary analysis of data. This particular type of research design is chosen in view of collecting the less biased data. I have used primary and secondary data on non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and their development since 1990 in Kyrgyzstan and Russia. The main sources for the data are the National Libraries of the Kyrgyz Republic and Russian Federation, the Kyrgyz and Russian National Statistics Committee, and international offices of OSCE and UNDP in Kyrgyzstan and Russia. The data can also be found on the web sites of the Central Asian NGO Network, the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute of Johns Hopkins University, the OSCE, the UNDP Kyrgyzstan and Russia, the Institute of War and Peace Reporting, the Kyrgyz and Russian Governments, the Internews Kyrgyz Republic, the Centre of Public Opinion Study and Forecast, and the Soros Foundation in Kyrgyzstan and Russia.

Both primary and secondary data collection approach was chosen because the amount of available information for secondary data is rather limited. As a result the findings may lack a high degree of validity. The main disadvantage of the chosen method is the quality of the data used, which is limited by the questions asked by

others. Secondary data I have used for my research are collected by different kinds of organizations, mostly for political rather than academic purposes. This fact can affect the results and findings of the research as surveys suffer from some political biases and the preferences of data collectors. The chosen method of data analysis for the paper aims to allow the objective of the research to be fulfilled and contribute to a deeper understanding of the processes happening in Kyrgyz society. It will certainly not be possible, however, to make definitive conclusions from the findings of my research about the whole society in general. Nevertheless, I believe that the results obtained by using this research method can give a meaningful idea of what is happening.

The arrangement of the chapters of the paper has been determined by its purpose. Chapter One is Introduction to the whole study, explaining the importance of this study and reasons for selecting relevant case studies. The Second Chapter is the literature review and conceptualization and provides a general idea and description of the development of the attribute of civil society that will be considered, that is, non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Chapter 3 establishes the system of measurements and indicators employed by this study. Chapter 4 explains the relevance of study and statement of problem. It introduces the research questions, research hypothesis / theoretical framework and research objectives. To overcome the complexity around the term of civil society, this study was concentrated and limited to NGOs in order to examine what role the NGOs play in combating corruption and discrimination. Chapter 5 represents the method used for data collection throughout the field research and evaluation afterwards. Chapter 6 analyzes and compares the empirical evidence of as a result of two field-research stages in Russia and Kyrgyzstan and secondary data collection. The chapter sets out the situation in the both countries, analyzing the extent of participation of the citizens through NGOs. It assesses the extent to which citizens of the country used attributes of civil society to participate in the political life of the country. This chapter is also considering how much the fifteen-year period influenced the freedom of people and changed the attitudes of the citizens to politics through participation in non-governmental organizations. Chapter 7 introduces the public opinion survey conducted in these countries and its results. The conclusion analyses the results of both case studies through comparing the development and involvement of all three attributes of civil

society in political life of the countries. It goes on to analyze the changes, if any, and how much they influenced the establishment of civil society in Kyrgyzstan and Russia.

1.1 Choice of Case Studies

This study examines the impact of corruption and discrimination on the development of civil society in two relatively different and similar countries, one of which is regarded as developing (Kyrgyzstan) and another one is considered to be in transition (Russia).

Kyrgyzstan and Russia have been chosen as case studies due to the fact that both of them are ethnically divided and highly corrupted. Both of them have rapidly growing number of NGOs. The influence of NGOs in Russia is weaker, compared to Kyrgyzstan. On the other hand, Russia has evident economic and political advantage over Kyrgyzstan. Both of the countries have very tight relationship at historical, cultural, political and economic levels.

This study tries to reveal the major differences between the political processes in Kyrgyzstan and Russia and shows what kind of role do the NGOs play in stabilizing these processes. Comparison of findings of this study enables to highlight the factors general to all public policy areas. Since this study makes comparison of these given case studies, it will make it possible to represent the common picture between the processes of establishing civil society in both countries.

2   General Discussion, Literature Review and Conceptualization

Objectives of the chapter:

The objective of this chapter is to reveal the role of civil society and its theoretical relevance, to identify what is important theoretically and explain the theoretical problem itself.

This chapter aims at describing a context for the proposed inquiry and to explain why it is important and relevant. Therefore it examines and clarifies the relationship between the previous research undertaken on this topic and suggested research. It should also demonstrate the distinction of proposed investigation from previous work in this area of study. This chapter reveals thoughtful arguments of others to incorporate them into the research project and justify it.

The objective of the conceptual work is to establish indicators that are able to capture grassroots community level civil society features, and even more specifically, that capture improvements in linkages between the community and municipal government (attitudes, interactions, results).

There is a number of worth-mentioning books and articles, written about civil society, appeared in 2005, as in the previous years. Some of them should be particular interest to scholars, practitioners, students and the broad public, interested in the Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

This year, 2005 many publications seemed to center on three major topics: 1) what exactly is civil society? 2) how the effectiveness and the impact of civil society can be measured? and 3) how this information for promoting the goals of the civil society sector can be used?

Open Society Institute published an outstanding overview of the legal issues hindering to Non-Governmental Organizations. That is the second edition of

Guidelines for Laws Affecting Civic Organizations,[1] among other several practical legal resources issued this year as well.

In addition, a set of papers analyzing the cooperation between government and civil society organizations, was published in 2004 by the Social Economy and Law Journal (SEAL). Definitely, this is a timely and hotly debated topic by academic and political circles, given recent events around the globe.

The notion of civil society has definitely become popular in the last few years as events have drawn an attention to this sector. Nevertheless, one will probably get as many responses to the question on how this concept can be identified as individuals asked from major donor organizations, governmental institutions, the mass-media, or simple people on the street. The definition looks rather simple at first glance, but highlighting a precise approach has proven quite complicated. In fact, even the most prominent contributors on that topic came to conclusion that no one definition actually reveals the concept sufficiently, as shows a review of articles and books which attempt to give interpretation of the term of civil society.

Michael Edwards in his work on *Civil Society*[2] reveals three ways of identifying explicitly what civil society is and how it affects the world. He comes to a simple result: there is no one definition.

Edwards identifies this sector according to three different theories:

- civil society as *part of a society*,
- civil society as a *kind of society,*
- and civil society in the *public sphere*.

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[1] Leon E. Irish, Robert Kushen and Karla W. Simon, *"Guidelines for Laws Affecting Civic Organizations,* OSI, New York, 2004.

[2] Michael, Edwards, 'Civil society', *The Encyclopedia of Informal Education*, 2005. Retrieved December 15th, 2005 (www.infed.org/association/civil_society.htm)

Further in his work he makes a statement that all three definitions contribute to identification and interpretation of what civil society is, but no one theory is regarded as comprehensive.

The first approach argues that civil society can be understood as *associational life*, one that captures several different groups and helps bring individuals together to help identify and resolve community demands while creating a feeling of reciprocal identity.

While this observation does happen in reality, Edwards argues that it is often difficult to distinguish these groups from other entities (government agencies, for-profit organizations and religious movements) and also that associational life can actually curb and deter individual and diverse thinking.

Civil society is regarded as the *good society*, according to the second concept, one that constitutes a combination of norms and values, by acting to implement the preferred outcome, and assists to reach them. Furthermore, this concept contributes to comprehension of meaning of civil society, but it also has some disadvantages. For instance, it is indicated that civil society organizations are in a greater extent involved in problems that affect a particular group, rather than the society in general. In addition, the values and norms of the society can be influenced equally or even stronger than civil society organizations, by different units, such as government structures, enterprises, and even families.

Another way of defining civil society as *public sphere* is considered in the concluding hypothesis. The public sphere is regarded as a place to discuss and argue issues in support of building more perfect society. Edwards points out in other two theories that there is some legitimacy to using this term to help understand precisely what civil society is but it is not complete.

Another book, edited by Rupert Taylor, titled *Creating a Better World: Interpreting Global Civil Society*,[3] tries to reveal the functions performed by civil society.

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[3] Rupert, Taylor, Creating a Better World: Interpreting Global Civil Society, Kumarian Press, 2004.

This book concentrates on the understanding and implication of civil society at the universal level as can be seen from the title. Taylor and his co-authors make an effort to promote "a more sociologically informed interpretation of global civil society and its transformative potential . . ." [4]

Particularly, Taylor insists on re-consideration of norms into the notion of universal civil society, pointing out that "at a subjective level, the intent of global civil society is to confront neoliberal globalization and create a better world through advocating a fairer, freer, and more just global order. . ." [5]

Another book, introducing diverse approaches to the role of civil society along with critical studies of its democratization is *Civil Society in Democratization*, edited by Peter Burnell and Peter Calvert. [6]

One of the major arguments of this book is that civil society in Central and Eastern Europe now has a role in the maintenance of liberal-democratic political systems and free market economies.

Two articles concentrate on democracy-building efforts to influence the growth of civil society in the Central and Eastern Europe. In the first monograph, "*Democratization in Bosnia: The Limits of Civil Society Strategies,*" David Chandler[7] points out that democratic institutions will only develop after the establishment of a vital civil society sector, and proposes that the top-down approach of international regulators, like the OSCE mission in Bosnia, and the bottom-up approach of civil society have not complemented each other, but produced future contradictions.

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[4] Taylor, *Creating a Better World: Interpreting Global Civil Society*, 2004, p.4
     Retrieved June 5th, 2005(http://www.kpbooks.com/pdf/creating.pdf)
[5] Taylor, 2004, p.4
[6] Peter, Calvert and Peter, Burnell, *Civil Society in Democratization.* London: Frank Cass, 2004.
[7] David, Chandler, Democratization in Bosnia: The Limits of Civil Society Building Strategies', *Democratization*, Vol.5, No.4, 1998, p.78-102.

In *"Building Civil Societies in East Central Europe: The Effect of American Non-governmental Organizations on Women's Groups,"* Patrice McMahon,[8] examines the relationship between American NGOs and women's groups in Russia, Hungary and Poland. Her final conclusion is that the effect of American organizations may actually have a negative influence on the other NGOs in these countries.

As one can conclude the concept of "civil society" ranges from the Roman Catholic Church in the United States (where roughly 30% of Americans are Catholic) to a local trade union, to a local flower arranging club, to the high theory of Hegel and Weber. Although the exact definition of 'civil society' is problematic, the notion, which originated in Europe, has been taken up by political leaders and scientists all over the world in the last 20 years, as a key to political, economic and societal success.

It is very problematic to give precise definition of the term "civil society" due to its complexity, different and contrary interpretations. Nevertheless, it was determined as a key to political, economic and societal achievement in the last 20 years throughout the world by political elites and academic circles. The notion of civil society originated from the Western Europe. Representatives of Scottish and Continental Enlightenment, such as Adam Ferguson, in the second half of the eighteenth century identified it as a realm where the citizens got together to express and protect their own interests and wishes. They expressed the views that "civil society consisted of a complex of stable interactions among "free, equal and independent" male individuals, whose properties are secured politically through their subjection to a state which monopolizes the process of formation, administrating and enforcing laws."[9] The rise of private property, market competition and bourgeoisie were very relevant to these new ideas.

The works of Hegel established the basis for modern tendency to make a rigid distinction or dichotomy (not drawn by Ferguson) between the state and civil society,

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[8] Patrice C., McMahon, Building Civil Societies in East Central Europe: The Effect of American Non-governmental Organizations on Women's Groups. In: Democratization, vol. 8 no 2, 2001, p. 45-68.
[9] Krishan, Kumar, "Civil Society: An Inquiry Into the Usefulness of an Historic Term", *British Journal of Sociology, 44(3):375-95,* 1993.

according to Chris Hann.[10] Civil society is conceived as a historically produced sphere. A mosaic of private individuals whose transactions are regulated by civil law and are not directly dependent on the political state itself, was pointed out by Hegel.[11] Marx continued the ideas of Hegel. He described civil society as a historical phenomenon, characterized by particular forms of relations of production, class divisions and struggles. His critical theory of civil society is only oriented to its system of production. But he does not consider such a very important dynamics of other forms of civil life as households, voluntary associations, professions, communications media and disciplinary institutions such as schools, prisons and hospitals. His theory of civil society is introduced as classes and relations to production and regarded as economic form created by the bourgeoisie.

Alexis de Tocqueville is considered to be a key figure in the modern "liberal-individual approach", as "a democrat who extolled the virtues of the 'habit of association', according to Chris Hann.[12] Tocqueville introduced a term of "political society", identifying political associations such as local self-government, juries, parties and public opinion. He emphasized on the role of the population in the matters of government and power.

There have been many definitions given to the concept but so far no one has developed a universally accepted systematic theory of civil society. According to Cohen and Arato's view the current discourse of civil society has focused precisely on new, generally non-class-based forms of collective action oriented and linked to the legal, associational and public institutions of society.[13] Nowadays civil society is defined in terms of mediating institutions between state and family. As the main idea and the basis of what is commonly called civil society they see a society with an ideal sphere of freedom and association; independent and voluntary activity of citizens. Generally recognized civil society activities include non-state activities like trade union activities, participation in protest groups, church and religious activities,

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[10] Christopher, Hann and Elithaberth, Dunn (eds.), *Civil Society: Changing Western Models*. London and New York: Routledge, 1996.
[11] Kumar, "Civil Society", p. 379.
[12] Christopher, Hann and Elithaberth, Dunn (eds.), *Civil Society: Changing Western Models*. London and New York: Routledge, 1996, p. 4.
[13] Cohen, Jean and Arato, Andrew, "Introduction" in *Civil Society and Political Theory*, Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press 1994, p. 1-26.