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The Return of the State to Development:
The State, Donors, and NGOs in Post-Soviet
Kyrgyzstan

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PhD in Sociology
University of Edinburgh
2011

Abstract

The thesis explores international donors' promotion of civil society in post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan since the mid 2000s with a particular focus on how policy changes in the promotion of civil society have influenced Kyrgyz non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and their relations with the state. The thesis is based on ten-months field research, which involved ninety semi-structured interviews with nineteen donors, forty-seven NGOs, six community based organisations, and three representatives of local authorities, together with two small-scale surveys with twenty-five NGO employees and thirty-three NGO leaders. The key finding is that donors' focus on civil society promotion in Kyrgyzstan has decreased since the mid 2000s rather their agenda now aims at state capacity-building. Donors' more limited funding to NGOs is targeted toward the promotion of NGOs' advocacy role and the encouragement of collaborative relations between NGOs and the state. These findings indicate a shift from donors' civil society promotion in the 1990s where the key stress was on building civil society in Kyrgyzstan from scratch. Consequently, the thesis discusses the return of the state to donor agenda and the interaction between the state, donors, and NGOs in Kyrgyzstan.

These changes have impacted the NGOs sector in Kyrgyzstan. The research has revealed that, as a result of these changes, NGOs are becoming more professional and formal. The thesis argues that reduced donor funding has resulted in a stronger competition among NGOs for funds, while increased interaction with the state institutions has also placed pressure on NGOs to become more professional and to increase their institutional capacity. The thesis suggests that relations between the state and NGOs are characterised by apparently contradictory elements in which both cooperation and counterbalance feature. Notwithstanding the prevailing trend toward NGO professionalisation and formalisation, the thesis argues that NGOs also display other features such as voluntarism, philanthropy, and constituency responsiveness. Consequently, the thesis makes a contribution to the literature on civil society in Central Asia by providing a detailed account of the complex and diverse NGO sector in Kyrgyzstan.

I hereby confirm that this is my own work, unless otherwise is acknowledged. The thesis is submitted for the degree as specified.

Kanykey Jailobaeva

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Acknowledgements

This thesis is dedicated to my Grandmother Batma Bayalieva and my Aunt Roba Abdysamatova. Their influence on my life has been enormous. My teenage years with my Grandmother in Aksy taught me independence, persistence, and determination. From my Aunt I learned compassion for others alongside a deep admiration for her career achievements during the Soviet time. Her intelligence fostered in me a thirst for knowledge and hard work. My childhood would not have been joyful without her.

I also dedicate my thesis to all the women and children in the world. If this thesis does something, it should be a symbol for peace, love, and well-being for every woman and child in the world. Finally, I dedicate my thesis to Kyrgyzstan, my sweet motherland. Let your future be prosperous!

I am heartily thankful to my supervisors Dr. James Kennedy and Professor Roland Dannreuther for their tremendous support, great encouragement, insightful comments on my work and helpful guidance. It is a pleasure to thank my funders who made my PhD study and research possible. My special thanks go to the School of Social and Political Science and the Sociology Department at the University of Edinburgh for providing me with scholarships. I acknowledge and express my gratitude to the following institutions for awarding me grants: Open Society Institute, British Sociological Association, Roger and Sarah Bancroft Clark Charitable Trust, Trustees of Miss CAM Sym's Charitable Trust, British Federation of Women Graduates. I am also grateful to the Social Research Centre of the American University of Central Asia for providing me with a fellowship when I was doing my fieldwork.

I owe my deepest gratitude to my parents, Janvarbek Bayaliev and Cholpon Sulaimanova. My Father has been a perfect example for me. I have always admired his broad knowledge, liberal philosophy, and passionate devotion to his homeland. My heartfelt gratitude goes to my Mother for sending me to English courses despite the economic hardship we faced at that time. She believed that I would benefit from learning English. This thesis is a testimony to her belief.

I wish to thank my entire extended family, the Bayaliev, Sulaimanovs, Abdysamatovs, Jailobaevs, and Kulnazarovs, for providing emotional and material

support during my fieldwork in Kyrgyzstan. Special thanks go to my cousin, Aisulu Sulaimanova, for making my conference visits to New York possible. I also truly appreciate her warm friendship.

I am indebted to many of my colleagues for their help. I am grateful to Daniel Stevens, Sada Aksartova, Matteo Fumagalli, and Jeanne Féaux de la Croix for sharing their PhD theses. I thank most sincerely my office mates, Heather Jayne Blenkinsop, Amy Chandler, and Miriam Snellgrove for their supportive and interesting conversations about PhD's, families and life. Particular thanks and gratitude go to Colin and Alison Spurway, Jeanne and Michael Féaux de la Croix, Rebecca Reynolds, and Penny Richardson for proofreading my thesis. I am also grateful to Professor Neil Spurway for very helpful comments.

Finally, this thesis would not have been possible without the support of my husband, Temirlan Jailobaev, and my son, Amir Jailobaev. My eternal gratitude goes to them for all the great support and endless patience. I deeply appreciate their love and care.

Acronyms

ABA	American Bar Association
ADB	Asian Development Bank
AED	Academy for Educational Development
ACSSC	Association of Civil Society Support Centres
AKDN	Aga-Khan Development Network
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CDS	Country Development Strategy
CSS	Civil Society Support
DFID	Department for International Development
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
EC	European Commission
ECCA	Ecumenical Consortium Central Asia
EFCA	Eurasia Foundation of Central Asia
GONGO	Governmental Non-governmental Organisation
HIPC	Heavily Indebted Poor Countries
HRW	Human Rights Watch
ICNL	International Centre for Not-for-Profit Law
IFC	International Finance Corporation of the World Bank
IFES	International Foundation for Electoral System
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
INTRAC	International NGO Training and Research Center
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
IREX	International Research and Exchanges Board
IRI	International Republican Institute
JCSS	Joint Country Support Strategy
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
GTZ	Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (German Government-Owned Corporation for International Cooperation with Worldwide Operations)
MCC	Millennium Challenge Corporation
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
NCO	Non Commercial Organisation
NDI	National Democratic Institute
NED	National Democratic Institute
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
OSI	Open Society Institute
SIDA	Swedish International Development Operation Agency
SMO	Social Movement Organisation
SRC	Social Research Centre
TICA	Turkish International Cooperation Administration
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Family Planning Association
UNHCR	UN Refugee Agency
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
UNV	United Nations Volunteers
WHO	World Health Organisation

KYRGYZSTAN



Territory:	199 900 km sq
Population:	5,013 million
Capital:	Bishkek
Administrative divisions:	7 provinces consisting of 39 districts and 10 towns 2 cities: Bishkek and Osh (Abdraev and Dubanaev, 2003).

Introduction

This thesis explores donors'¹ civil society promotion in post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan since the mid 2000s. Kyrgyzstan's experience of civil society building is exceptionally interesting and an important case to understand and assess donors' civil society promotion in the former Soviet Union. Kyrgyzstan appeared to have all the ingredients to build a democratic and civil society after gaining independence in 1991. Its government welcomed the establishment of a lively civil society and demonstrated a commitment to promote democracy unique in authoritarian Central Asia. Donors invested an enormous amount of funding into the emergence of Kyrgyz non-governmental organisations (NGOs), which represented civil society for donors in the 1990s. However, Kyrgyzstan's civil society building endeavour has encountered numerous difficulties and has failed to bring about expected outcomes.

The case of Kyrgyzstan is a clear illustration of donors' difficulty in civil society building and, consequently, democracy promotion in the former Soviet Union and beyond it. Therefore, in the late 1990s and early 2000s, the literature on development started arguing that the state, in developing countries such as Kyrgyzstan, should be strengthened in order to promote development. In the 1990s, the state was in the background of neo-liberal policies of donors. In other words, by the early 2000s, donors were re-examining their development agenda and making changes to it. In this regard, the thesis focuses on the changes in donor promotion of civil society since the mid 2000s and their implications for NGOs, the state, and relations between these actors in post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan.

Civil society as a panacea for development in Kyrgyzstan?

After independence in 1991, President Akaev² claimed that Kyrgyzstan needed a lively civil society to build democracy (Anderson, 2000). His words

¹ I define donors as international governmental and non-governmental development agencies. Examples include the United States Agency for International Development, the UK Department for International Development, Mercy Corps, National Democratic Institute. See chapter 3 for further discussion.

² Akaev is the first President of the Kyrgyz Republic.

resounded in the first constitution which grandly declared in its preamble that Kyrgyzstan would build a democratic and civil society³. For the international community, newly independent Kyrgyzstan became a nascent “island of democracy” in Central Asia (Anderson, 1997). In Huskey’s words “Kyrgyzstan captured the imagination of the West” (1997a: 667), especially during the euphoria from the triumph of civil society over totalitarian state in Eastern Europe in the late 1980s (Seligman, 1992).

This tremendous enthusiasm about civil society brought it to the centre of neo-liberal policies (Wimpelmann, 2006) and democracy promotion programmes (Carothers, 1997) of donors in the 1990s. Notwithstanding a great diversity of definitions of civil society, in the development milieu, civil society was reduced to NGOs for the most part (Ottaway 2005, Van Rooy and Robinson 1998). Donors regarded NGOs as service providers, promoters of democracy and a liberal economy, and as counterbalance to the state. In fact, the state was ignored (Van Rooy and Robinson, 1998).

In Kyrgyzstan, donors rushed to provide millions of dollars to promote civil society. The 1990s, as Kyrgyz NGOs say, was a period of a “grant rain”. Two large donors, the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and UK Department for International Development (DFID), had programmes specifically focused on promotion of NGOs in Kyrgyzstan and building their capacity. The World Bank, the European Commission (EC), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and Soros Foundation also supported NGOs by providing funding and training. All in all, Kyrgyzstan received an enormous amount of funding from the international community to promote development. In 1995 alone, Kyrgyzstan received a \$21.3 million loan from International Monetary Fund (IMF) and a \$550 million loan from the World Bank (Olcott, 1996: 101).

³ Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic adopted in 1993.

Kyrgyz NGOs: outsiders or insiders?

As a result of this significant donor support, NGOs began to emerge in Kyrgyzstan like mushrooms after the rain. Their number has grown rapidly year by year. In 1993, there were just 611 NGOs (Shishkaraeva, et al 2006). In 2008, this number reached 11,035 (Kaipov, 2008). Kyrgyzstan has become a country with the highest NGO density in Central Asia (Garbutt and Heap, 2002). This has earned the NGO sector in Kyrgyzstan an image of the most vibrant civil society in the region (Howell and Pearce, 2002). Similarly, for donors, the dynamic growth of NGOs has served as an indicator of civil society development (Howell and Pearce, 2002; Roy, 2002).

The quality of NGOs, however, has been far less impressive than their quantity. NGOs in Kyrgyzstan have encountered various criticisms since their genesis. They have been criticised for being opportunistic. The rapid growth of NGOs has been connected to their hunt for abundant donor funding (Giffen et al., 2005; Petric, 2005). “Grant-eaters” has become their sobriquet among the public. According to Ruffin (1999), NGOs lacked key principles such as voluntarism, philanthropy, and sustainability. In this regard, Petric (2005) and Roy (2002) argued that NGOs became professional organisations financially dependent on donors rather than independent voluntary associations. At the same time, Mininni (1998) claimed that NGOs suffered from a weak organisational capacity, especially in terms of financial and human resources management. A key criticism has been that NGOs have failed to reach out to local communities, who they were supposed to represent, because of their urban characteristic, highly educated staff, and donor dependence (Roy, 2002; Earle, 2005; Petric, 2005).

Fickle state: from civil society promotion to its curtailment

The government led by Akaev was initially democratically inspired. Akaev welcomed civil society promotion. As stated above, it was proclaimed in the constitution that Kyrgyzstan strived to be a democratic and civil society. However,

Akaev's government gradually grew authoritarian. Akaev used different and, sometimes, unconstitutional techniques to expand his power. For example, during his rule, the constitution was amended four times in 1994, 1996, 1998, and 2003 to increase central power (www.state.gov; www.osce.org). Regular amendments to the constitution undermined its meaning and credibility. Moreover, the economic situation in Kyrgyzstan did not improve under Akaev's rule. In fact, Kyrgyzstan sank into foreign debt and became, as Petic (2005) called it, a "global protectorate". Similarly, Aksartova (2005) argued that, after independence, Kyrgyzstan had replaced Moscow subsidies with Western ones. It is worth noting that Kyrgyzstan was one of the poorest Soviet countries and heavily depended on Russia under Soviet rule. Consequently, it inherited a poor economy from the Soviet Union (Abazov, 1999). On the whole, Kyrgyzstan is a small, landlocked country with relatively limited natural resources and poor transportation links (Olcott, 1996; Huskey, 1997).

Akaev's image as a liberal democracy promoter was completely destroyed when he became a president for a third term by violating the constitution which stipulated that the president could serve only for two consecutive terms⁴. Akaev received permission from the constitutional court to run for presidency based on the fact that his first term should not be counted since it commenced in 1990 when Kyrgyzstan was still in the Soviet Union (Akcali, 2005). Further, the 2005 parliamentary elections were the worst during Akaev's presidency. According to the report of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) on these elections (www.osce.org,c), their shortcomings included vote-buying, de-registration of candidates, pressuring media, mistrust of candidates and voters in electoral and judicial institutions. As a result, the 2005 parliament came to include the President and his proponents' family members. Akaev's daughter, son, and sister-in-law are the most vivid examples. Some commentators suggested that, by enlisting his family members, Akaev had wanted to hold on to power despite declaring that he would not run for the fourth term of presidency (Saidazimova, 2005). Such outcomes of the elections, particularly many constitutional violations, and the fact that the opposition was sidelined led to massive public protests. On 24 March 2005, a large crowd of

⁴ Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic amended in 1996.

protesters occupied the main government building in Bishkek. Akaev fled to Moscow; while his government collapsed (www.osce.org, c).

The new government was headed by Bakiev who led the opposition movement during the revolution. Bakiev had a promising start and engaged with NGOs. He declared that he would not abuse power and, specifically, would not employ any of his family members (Andersen, 2010). For people, the new government was a renewed hope for better future. However, Bakiev failed to deliver on his promises. Bakiev's government suppressed civil society and elements of vital attributes of democracy such as right to assembly, and freedom of speech. The 2007 constitution no longer stated that Kyrgyzstan would build a democratic and civil society⁵. Further, the government made an attempt to exert control over NGOs' activities and funding (www.state.gov, 2008). Mass media cracked down and the government repressed religious freedom as well. Members of the political opposition also encountered state harassment including imprisonment and life threats (<http://kg.akipress.org>). As a result, Kyrgyzstan was downgraded from "partly free" to "not free" by Freedom House in 2009 (Marat, 2009). Most importantly, Bakiev in early 2010 announced that democracy based on human rights and elections was not appropriate for Kyrgyzstan (Pannier and Heil, 2010). Within five years of Bakiev's rule, Kyrgyzstan encountered increased corruption, a hydro-energy crisis, and increased organised crime (Marat, 2008b). The life of people worsened dramatically with the increase in prices. Furthermore, Bakiev surpassed Akaev in appointing his family members to government positions. His six brothers and two sons held key positions in the government (Reeves, 2010).

The rapid deterioration of living standards and state suppression of political and other freedoms prompted protests against the government of Bakiev. In April 2010, the opposition planned to hold "people's gatherings" (*kurultai*) in each provincial center of Kyrgyzstan. However, the reaction of the government to the first gathering in Talas on 6 April 2010 was violent with the involvement of military forces. This provoked more anger in people and escalated into a violent clash between people and the government forces in Bishkek on 7 April 2010. After a day-long fight, which took the lives of more than 80 people and left hundreds wounded,

⁵ Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic amended in 2007.

Bakiev fled the capital and his government collapsed. The opposition formed the interim government led by a female leader, Roza Orunbaeva, which was legitimised in a referendum in June 2010⁶.

Research questions and aims

The case of Kyrgyzstan shows that donor efforts to promote a liberal civil society throughout the 1990s and early 2000s did not produce the desired results. Donor programmes on civil society invested generously in the emergence of NGOs and in strengthening their capacity. As a result, a large number of NGOs emerged in Kyrgyzstan. However, according to the literature, they failed to meet the key expectation of donors: to establish a link with local communities and represent and promote their interests. Conversely, NGOs grew dependent on donors. The Kyrgyz state had a liberal start by striving to build a democratic and civil society. However, it gradually turned authoritarian and abused democratic mechanisms. Interestingly, the government in Kyrgyzstan also grew dependent on financial support from the international community.

Disappointed with the promotion of civil society, the literature on development (Zaidi, 1999; Fukuyama, 2004) suggested reconsidering development strategies, for example, by strengthening the state. Meanwhile, the literature on civil society in Central Asia (Earle, 2005; Giffen et al., 2005) indicated that donors started working with community-based organisations (CBOs) in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Consequently, by the early 2000s, it is evident that donors were re-examining their development agenda and making changes to it. It should also be noted that, since the early 2000s, Kyrgyzstan has gained geopolitical importance and has become even more important for some donors such as the US, the European Union,

⁶ I closely observed the situation in Kyrgyzstan during these protests which included daily reading of news, personal conversations with friends and relatives in Kyrgyzstan, participation in different online discussions, and others. Since I have collected too much information about this, I have decided to give a number of reference in the footnote: Reeves, M. 2010. 'Breaking Point: Why the Kyrgyz Lost Their Patience.' Available at: <http://www.opendemocracy.net/od-russia/madeleine-reeves/breaking-point-why-kyrgyz-lost-their-patience>; Radio Free Europe – Radio Liberty. 2010. 'Kyrgyz Interim Leaders Try To Impose Order After Unrest.' Available at: http://www.rferl.org/content/Kyrgyz_Interim_Leaders_Try_To_Impose_Order_After_Unrest/2018733.html; Levy, C.J. 2010b. 'Kyrgyzstan President Says He Will Not Step Down.' Available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/09/world/asia/09bishkek.html>; Dale, I. 2010. 'Logic Behind The Kyrgyz Chaos.' Available at: <http://enews.ferghana.ru/article.php?id=2622> and many others.

and Russia. Kyrgyzstan has hosted an American airbase for the “war against terror” in Afghanistan. There is also a Russian airbase set up for regional security purposes. In light of this, the research had three key questions:

- 1) what kind of changes have donors made in their civil society activities⁷ since the mid 2000s?
- 2) why have donors made these changes?
- 3) what are the implications of these changes for Kyrgyz NGOs, the Kyrgyz state, and relations between the two?

The thesis also has two aims. First of all, by exploring changes in donors’ civil society promotion, the thesis seeks to understand the current activities of donors from a theoretical perspective. In the 1990s, donors promoted a liberal civil society mainly in the form of NGOs (Edwards, 2004). Following donors’ disappointment with civil society and possible shift to other actors suggested by the literature, it is essential to draw out whether a new theoretical stance informs the new orientation among donors.

Secondly, the thesis aims to contribute to the debate on the replication of western liberal civil society in the non-Western context (Kaviraj and Khilnani, 2001; Hann and Dunn, 1996). The mismatch between the promotion of civil society and actual results has triggered a debate with regard to (a) whether it is possible to replicate civil society in its Western form in the non-Western context and (b) whether non-Western societies can have their own civil society. There are two positions providing answers to these questions. The first position is universalistic which implies that a Western liberal model of civil society can be applied cross-culturally (Gellner, 1994). The second position is relativistic which recognises that non-Western societies can have different and often incomparable social and political systems. Therefore, civil society needs to conform to the cultural specificities of each society (Hann and Dunn, 1996:18).

⁷ The phrase ‘civil society activities’ is translated from Russia ‘*deyatelnost po grajdanskomu obshestvu*’. This implies a broader interaction between donors and NGOs which goes beyond merely provision of funding by donors to NGOs. For examples, it might include informal meetings between donors and NGOs when they discuss different issues for potential programmes of donors.

Outline of the thesis

The thesis consists of seven chapters and a conclusion. Chapter 1 aims to set forth a conceptual framework for the thesis and to put the research in context by reviewing three bodies of civil society literature on: a) classical and contemporary theories of civil society, b) civil society in donor development agenda, and c) civil society in the non-Western context. Chapter 2 provides a detailed account of civil society promotion in Kyrgyzstan since 1991. In this regard, it discusses donor activities on civil society from 1991 to the mid 2000s, the development of the NGO sector, and the interaction between NGOs and the state. Chapter 3 focuses on the methodology of the research by providing a critical description of the research implementation process: research design, data collection, data analysis, and reflection.

Chapter 4 presents research findings about the current civil society activities of donors in Kyrgyzstan with a particular stress on the changes that have taken place in these activities since the mid 2000s. Therefore, this chapter answers two research questions: what kind of changes have donors made in their civil society activities since the mid 2000s? and why have donors made these changes?

Chapter 5 looks at the influence that the changes in civil society activities of donors have had on NGOs in Kyrgyzstan which is the focus of my third research question: what implications the changes in donor civil society activities have had on Kyrgyz NGOs?

Chapter 6 explores if changes in civil society activities of donors have influenced the state and the state-NGO relations in Kyrgyzstan. As a result, the chapter answers the last research question: what implications the changes in donor civil society activities have had on the state and the state-NGO relations? It should be highlighted that the thesis looks at Bakiev's government since the research was conducted in 2007-2008 when Bakiev was in power.

Chapter 7 presents research findings that shed light on aspects of the NGO sector in Kyrgyzstan such as voluntarism, philanthropy, and constituency responsiveness. It also discusses the prospect for the NGO sector in Kyrgyzstan

based on the arguments of the previous chapters. The conclusion highlights the main arguments of the thesis, outlines the contribution of the thesis to the literature and scholarly debate, and addresses the aims of the thesis.

Chapter 1

Civil society: from western social and political thought to development aid strategies

In this chapter, I present a conceptual framework for my thesis and put my research in context. To do this, I review three bodies of civil society literature. In the first section, I examine classical and contemporary theories of civil society from the liberal and communitarian perspectives. In the second section, I discuss the literature on civil society in donor development agendas to explore why and how donors have applied this concept in their activities up to the mid 2000s. In the third section, I give an account of how civil society has developed in the non-Western context and what outcomes the efforts of donors on civil society promotion have brought about.

Theories of civil society: liberal and communitarian traditions

Notwithstanding a widespread use of the concept of civil society, it is not an easy task to agree on one definition due to their diversity and complexity. While its origins can be traced back to the times of Cicerone (Kumar, 1993: 376), the real rise of civil society as a centre of an intellectual and political discussion came about when a social order of a community was challenged by the progress of a market economy (Howell and Pearce, 2001). This issue was central in various classical theories of civil society expounded by thinkers of the past including Locke and Hegel. Since a recent revival of civil society in Central and Eastern Europe in the late 1980s, the diversity of its theories has further been amplified with works of contemporary theorists, such as Gellner, Hall, and Taylor (Kumar, 1993). The various sets of civil society definitions within the western thought, nonetheless, can be subsumed under two traditions: liberal and communitarian (Cohen and Arato, 1995).

Liberal tradition

From a historical perspective, the liberal understanding of civil society is expounded clearly in the work of Locke. His vision of civil society revolves around a main flaw of the state of nature, which is a lack of impartial judges. According to Locke, only civil society can resolve this inconvenience of the state of nature by providing equal and independent people with a legitimate political authority, which takes over a function of making impartial judgement on their conflicts (Dunn, 2001:50-55). Put differently, Locke considered civil society as a legitimate political order, where people who have learned to discipline their conduct, the civilised, could co-exist as a community. In other words, it was a contrast to the state of nature (Khilnani, 2001:18-19). Christianity is a central element in Locke's vision of civil society. It holds a community together by providing it with a shared culture. Civil society is built upon it to maintain community life (ibid). The Christian creed that all people are equal before God is the basis in Locke's work. Locke asserted that people were "equal and independent, no one ought to harm another in his life, health, liberty, or possessions...; all servants of one sovereign master" (Dunn, 2001:44).

According to Locke, there is no distinction between civil and political societies. In fact, civil society is a synonym for the legitimate political order. This is because Locke did not consider the state in modern post-Hobbesian form "of a coercively effective monopoly claimant to the power to coerce legitimately" (Dunn, 2001:55). For Locke, the government is derived from the people and represented different groups within society (Khilnani, 2001:18-19). This means that society comes before the government and could "recover its freedom of action" if the government violated its trust (Taylor, 2006:92). Locke asserted that trust was a basis of the relationship between society and the government and between people in general (Dunn, 2001). Although he did not make an explicit distinction between the state and civil society, Locke laid the ground for such a distinction since he distinguished two actors (cf. Cohen and Arato, 1995), where one of them existed against another (Kaviraj, 2001: 293).

When Christianity was no longer a sufficient response to the problem of the community, theorists of the commercial society, such as David Hume, Adam Ferguson and Adam Smith, offered a new approach, a secular one. A crucial point in

their civil society was that relationships between people were based on trade, need, and more importantly, on private sentiments. The latter ones not only made a distinction between market exchange and private relationships but they also introduced voluntariness and choice in relationships. People were freed from pre-commercial kin-bond and patron-client relations. They could enter into relationships with anyone they sympathised with (Khilnani, 2001:21-22). As a result, strangers were not enemies any more. A community of indifferent citizens emerged. Such a transformation of people took society from barbarity and rudeness to politeness and polish. This led to a social, economic and moral order in the community – “being the products of the unintended collective outcome of private action” (ibid).

Taylor (2006: 95) placed special emphasis on two features of civil society of the scholars of the commercial society. The first feature is that these philosophers introduced a notion of public opinion as “something that has been elaborated in debate and discussion and is recognised by everyone as something held in common”. Most importantly, it was formed by society not by a political structure or a church as it was done before. The second feature is that a notion of civilisation was introduced. The concept meant “pacification, enlightenment, technical development, arts and sciences, and polished mores”, which led people of modern Europe to distinguish themselves from other nations or their predecessors based on civility (Taylor, 2006:96).

The history of British civil society can excellently illustrate these aspects of civil society presented by the scholars of the commercial society. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries public opinion and civility in Britain were produced in coffee houses. People with different social statuses and political outlooks came together in coffee houses to listen to political news, read newspapers, and discuss political events both at home and abroad. This resulted in the creation of public opinion. Most importantly, coffee houses offered “a social space for public criticism of the state” (Habermas in Pincus, 1995: 808). Furthermore, coffee houses also produced civility by attracting “most civil” and “most intelligent”, who diffused norms of their conduct and manner; as is stated in Pincus’ work “they could not but civilise our manners, enlarge our understandings, refine our language, teach us a

generous confidence and handsome mode of address” (Coffee Houses Vindicated in Pincus, 1995:176).

Furthermore, the notion of public in Britain also concerned associations. In the eighteenth century, British associations became more public oriented and underwent key changes. In the period of 1780 – 1820, the associations increased their transparency and openness. They started to relate to “their members and to a wider public through annual general meetings, printed annual reports, audited accounts and published subscription lists” (Morris, 1998: 298). Most importantly, they began publishing their activities in the newspapers. Moreover, their membership became less exclusive. Potential members were supposed to pay a subscription fee and agree to follow the rules. This means that access to the associations was through “the cash economy and choice rather than through processes of nomination” (Morris, 1998: 298).

The importance of associations to civil society was discussed extensively by Tocqueville, whose work on democracy in America made a great contribution to the development of the civil society theories. He distinguished two types of associations: political and civil. Political associations aim at debating politics in a peaceful manner and achieving a consensus jointly (Tocqueville, 2005). They include local self-government, juries, parties (Kumar, 1993:381). Civil associations are concerned with private and economic interests of people and include churches, moral crusades, schools, literary and scientific societies, newspapers and publishers, professional and commercial organisations, organisations for leisure and recreation (Kumar, 1993:381). For Tocqueville, political associations constitute a political society and civil associations constitute a civil society (Kumar, 1993:381; Bryant 1995:146).

Most importantly, Tocqueville asserted that people should have a right and skills to assemble. According to him, the significance of political associations in teaching people the skills of getting together in an association is enormous. He asserted that people of “all conditions, minds, and ages”, who came together in political associations, not only debated politics but also learned what it meant to associate and how to do that. After learning the principles of association, people transfer their new skill to the civil aspects of their lives for numerous different purposes. For this reason, Tocqueville claimed that political associations were “great

free schools to which all citizens come to be taught the general theory of association” (Tocqueville, 2005:113-115).

At the same time, Tocqueville argued that civil associations laid the basis for a debate in political associations by being a platform for the formation and exchange of people’s outlook: “It is there that feelings and ideas are renewed, the heart enlarged, and the understanding developed” (Tocqueville in Kumar, 1993:381). In other words, while political associations generate the sense of and skills of association, civil associations form and renew the viewpoints of people. Therefore, political and civil associations are the conditions for each other’s existence and operation. Finally, for Tocqueville, associations are the loci of democracy, are “the mother of all sciences” (Tocqueville, 2005:111). They enable a society to self-rule itself and provide a check on the government, while their multiplicity and diversity prevent a majority from dominating in the society. These are the factors that, Taylor pointed out, make democracy work (2006:98).

In the contemporary discourse, “Ernest Gellner’s work on civil society is one of the clearest expositions of the liberal position” (Howell and Pearce, 2001:19). Gellner (1994:32) believed that a modern, standard definition of civil society as a cluster of NGOs standing against the state to prevent its domination had pitfalls, which could undermine the very sense of civil society. According to him, central authoritarianism was not always the chief oppressor. He claimed that there was another kind of oppression by referring to communities of the pre-modern times. The key point of his argument is that a social structure of communities, which was organised based on kin bonds, oppressed individuals. There was a certain place and role for each person in the community, which did not depend on the individual’s will. Disobedience of community rules was punished. Therefore, Gellner argued that civil society had to guard individuals not only from central authoritarianism but also from communalism, as he puts it from the “tyranny of kings” and the “tyranny of cousins and rituals” (Gellner, 1994:7).

For example, individuals in Kyrgyzstan have been under dominance and tutelage of either communalism or central authoritarianism throughout history. Around the seventeenth century, the Kyrgyz society had a particular political and administrative structure. A family leading a nomadic life was its basis. Each family

belonged to a certain clan which then made up a larger tribal confederation. Each such confederation had its own territory which consisted of pastures. Further, it was ruled by an aristocratic leader whose status was determined by the number of cattle he owned. When the dominant family in power did not produce a proper candidate for leadership, communities would look for eligible people for the post of a leader from other leading families (Anderson, 1999: 2). This can be identified as the form of societal organisation that Gellner (1994) referred to as communalism because individuals are tied to their families which are further part of the larger clan and tribe. In other words, individuals could not lead their life without their family, clan, or tribe.

During the Soviet time, the communist state in Kyrgyzstan as well as in other former communist countries repelled civil society due to the Marxist ideology that they followed. According to Marxism, civil society is a deceitful and misleading concept since it is used to maintain and even reinforce a clandestine and malign domination in the society⁸ (Gellner, 1994). The practical implementation of Marxism in the former communist countries brought about “the near-total fusion of the political, ideological, and economic hierarchies” (Gellner, 1994:5). Any independent civic initiative was abolished. It was not possible to set up even a philatelic club without political supervision (Gellner, 1994).

Giffen and her colleagues (2005) stated that, although public associations existed in Central Asia during the Soviet period, their nature differed from what is known under the liberal conception of associations. These institutions came into existence as a result of either state encouragement or state permission and supervision. Their agenda did not transcend beyond an ideology of the Communist Party. In fact, trade unions, co-operatives, different foundations with millions of members throughout the Soviet Union served as an additional means for the government to promote Soviet ideas. It was not possible for Soviet people to come together in associations independently from the state (Giffen et al., 2005). The

⁸ Within Marxism civil society, as an institutional pluralism which opposes and balances the state as well as receives protection from it, is fraudulent. This is because a clandestine and malign domination present in the society uses civil society to maintain and even reinforce itself. Therefore, civil society is a deceitful and misleading concept. Further, Marxist theory claims that both the state protecting civil society and civil society counterbalancing the state are unnecessary when exploitation is eradicated. Once the division in the society, which requires the creation of the state, is overcome; there is no need for the state. Consequently, there is no need for civil society to counterbalance it (Gellner, 1994).

fundraising methods of Soviet public associations included either government subsidies or a membership contribution. As far as the latter is concerned, members were forced to buy stamps as their contribution. It was typical for a Soviet person to be a member of a public association, buy its stamps, and not to know anything about its activities (Kasybekov, 1999). For instance, the Red Cross was one of the largest foundations in the Soviet Union. Although it had a branch in each Soviet republic; its management was based in Moscow in the Ministry of Health. The majority of population were “members” of the Red Cross through their work place or school. All of them were supposed to buy stamps for their membership card. These funds were used for the social support activities of the Red Cross such as providing home care for those who needed help and emergency assistance for victims of natural disasters (Giffen et al., 2005: 94).

To avoid the “tyranny of kings” and the “tyranny of cousins and rituals”, according to Gellner (1994), civil society should consist of modular men, who are free from kin bonds and rituals and can express their ideas and pursue their interests freely. Gellner believed that the modular man must be taught certain moral and intellectual qualities such as a capacity of “undertaking and honouring, deeply internalising, commitments and obligations by a single and sober act” (Gellner, 1994: 104). Further, he went on that there should be cultural homogeneity for the modularity of men. This means that individuals should have the shared communication symbols which Gellner referred to as culture. According to him, each individual should be replaceable so that a vacant slot could be filled by any individual or group. However, this does not imply that individuals should be identical. Conversely, they should be different for the sake of development. As a result, Gellner claimed that the homogenous culture allowed individuals to be modular and to change their social identity within a flexible social structure. However, it also limits their employability, effective participation and citizenship and makes them nationalists to protect their culture (Gellner, 1994:43-44).

Another key contemporary thinker, John Hall (1995), developed his conception of civil society around the same idea as Gellner, that is, the freedom of individuals. He defined civil society by referring to an agrarian civilisation. According to him, agrarian civilisation is not civil society notwithstanding the fact

that it cannot penetrate thoughts of different pastoral tribes and peasant communities. For Hall, civil society is self-organisation of the society by means of different associations. Like Gellner, Hall said that individuals should be unconfined from kinship ties and rituals. They should be able to join and leave any association voluntarily to pursue their needs and interests. Moreover, they should be able to join voluntary associations as many as they want. Furthermore, Hall claimed that civil society was also about a civilised interaction of the state and society and has to do with modernity, where such a state-society interaction is necessary. Hall drew his view of state – society relations from the eighteenth century England, “in which state and society interacted continuously, with state capacity being increased by the ability to work through notables who accepted this because they trusted an institution – their institution – that they could control” (Hall, 1995:16).

It is obvious that the classical and contemporary liberal understandings of civil society have both similarities and differences. One of the examples that demonstrate this is the interaction between the state and society within different works. For example, Locke did not distinguish civil and political societies. In fact, civil society is a legitimate political order for him. The government derives from the society, represents its different groups, and is based on trust. However, what is important to note in Locke’s work is that there is an implicit acknowledgement of the fact that the state and society are two different bodies (Kaviraj, 2001). In the meantime, Gellner made a clear distinction between the state and society. The latter have to check on the former so that it does not inhibit the freedoms and rights of individuals. This results in more balancing relations between the state and society. Hall was more sympathetic with Locke rather than Gellner saying that the state and society should interact based on trust rather than counterbalance each other.

To conclude the liberal tradition can be summarised as follows. The freedom and interests of individuals are at the heart of the tradition. Every individual is autonomous and needs driven. There is also an idea of moral egalitarianism (Cohen and Arato, 1995:8) which is expressed differently in various works. For example, in Locke’s work, it results from Christianity preaching equality of people before God; while, in Gellner’s work, it results from modularity of man. The central point is that the freedom and interests of individuals should be guarded, be it from the state of

nature lacking impartial judges, central authoritarianism, or communalism. For this, individuals should be able to interact with each other and come together in associations voluntarily and in a civilised way. This also ensures the institutional and ideological pluralism (Gellner, 1994). Consequently, civil society within the liberal model can be understood as a society where individuals can obtain and exercise their freedom as well as pursue their interests of different kinds.

Furthermore, in the liberal tradition, the state is seen from two perspectives. It is an order-keeper as well as a potential threat against monopolising power and truth. As an order-keeper the state provides individuals with rules to pursue their activities freely and to maintain their interaction in a civilised way (Kaviraj, 2001:292). At the same time, liberals asserted that the state still had a tendency to extend its power beyond its limits (Gellner, 1994). Therefore, individuals through different associations need to check on the state in order to prevent its dominance and encroachment on their lives. As a result, the state is both essential and needs to be limited (Kaviraj, 2001:292).

Communitarian tradition

Hegel is known as an eminent communitarian. Along with his liberal predecessors, he discussed the repercussions of the rise of the market economy on the social order of the community (Khilnani, 2001:23). By critiquing the liberal understanding of civil society, Hegel developed an alternative vision of the concept. He refused to believe that an autonomous and unregulated economy could have only benign effects (Taylor, 2006:97). He also could not accept self-interest as the basis of social organisation (Femia, 2001:134). Therefore, the central element in Hegel's variant of civil society is that the interaction between people is premised on more than just self-interest. The individuals interact with each other because of solidarity and their will to live as a community (ibid).

For Hegel, an individual cannot achieve his ends without referring to others. When he refers to others, his ends become universal. Therefore, the achievement of his ends satisfies not only his welfare but that of others too. Thus, he turns from an individual unit to a social whole (Kumar, 1993:378; Jones, 2001:123). Owing to

educational power of civil society institutions, the individual comes to understand that “he wills his ends only in willing universal ends” (Kumar, 1993:378). The universal ends find their ultimate destination in the state. In this way, the society becomes politically organised (Taylor, 2006:97). In other words, Hegel’s civil society is a space where the individuals achieve their welfare collectively. This means that the welfare of one individual depends on the welfare of others, that is to say, on civil society. Therefore, according to Hegel, civil society becomes a “universal family” by “drawing people to itself and requiring them to owe everything to it and to do everything by its means” (Hegel in Jones, 2001:123).

For Hegel, civil society lies between the state and family (Kaviraj, 2001). He institutionalises civil society in the form of different corporations, “which are concerned with social, religious, professional and recreational life” (Kumar, 1993:379). He asserted that their key function was to educate and represent their members. Trade unions and professional associations are the main corporations. These are legally organised bodies “with powers to determine the recruitment of new entrants, to enforce standards of work, and to organise the welfare of their members” (Jones, 2001:124). Other civil society institutions include “the whole range of public institutions such as courts, welfare agencies and educational establishments” (Kumar, 1993:379).

The most salient feature of Hegel’s civil society is a relationship between the state and civil society. Hegel made a clear distinction between these actors (Kaviraj, 2001:300). Nevertheless, the state and civil society are interdependent and complement each other. The state is not just a “convenient partner” for individuals to achieve their needs but it is a token of their “deep inner need to identify with social whole” (Femia, 2001:134). Further, the state is a force that keeps civil society away from destruction by incorporating corporations and associations of civil society into itself (Taylor, 2006:97) and supervising them (Jones, 2001:124). In other words, civil society cannot self-regulate; therefore, it needs the state to do so for it. In the meantime, according to Taylor, the variety of civil society institutions makes the distribution of power along the political system possible. This ensures that “the undifferentiated homogeneity of the general-will state, which Hegel thought must lead inevitably to tyranny and terror” is avoided (Taylor, 2006:98).

Hegel's vision of the state-civil society relationship can be found empirically but from a historical perspective in the relationship between these actors in Britain in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. According to Morton (1998), British civil society in the nineteenth century was enshrined by the state in order to exist as a form of social structure. This means that the state provided civil society with a legal framework and preconditions for its existence and operation. Morton made a special stress on the role of the local government which was "the guardian of civil society and the protector of the civic virtue of the voluntary organisation" (Morton, 1998: 354). Morris (1998) gave more insights on this issue by looking at the relationship between the state and civil society in the 1750s and the 1850s. According to him, these actors interacted rather than opposed each other. In fact, Morris (1998) asserted that civil society failed in places where associations were underdeveloped and traditions of local government were poorly established.

Hegel's understanding of civil society is echoed in works of Gramsci particularly with regard to the motivation of people's actions. Gramsci developed his conception of civil society as a response to the question of why capitalism did not fall as Marx and his followers predicted. He rejected Marx's idea which reduced civil society to a mere economic sphere and stated that capitalism makes people egocentric. Gramsci did not consider capitalism as an ethics-free place. His idea is that the exploitative exchange relationships between the classes are "underpinned by a complex of moral injunctions that make this relationships seem right and proper to all parties in the exchange" (Femia, 2001:139). Gramsci agreed with Marx that one class has hegemony over society. Thus, he asserted that the hegemony was manufactured and maintained in civil society through so-called private organisations (Kumar 1993:383).

According to Gramsci, people are not driven just by their basic needs but also by their values notwithstanding the fact that they might be biased due to such factors as class and others (Femia, 2001:139). Therefore, the superior class spreads its values through different private institutions to maintain its power (Kumar, 1993:383). As a result, for Gramsci, civil society is a place where "the values are established, debated, contested and changed". It is a necessary instrument for the ruling class along with "ownership of the means of production and capture of the apparatus of the

state” to ensure its dominance in the society. It is also a space, which any new class striving to overthrow the old one has to capture (Kumar, 1993:384). Therefore, for Gramsci, civil society can be found in the superstructure - the state – which is a combination of political and civil societies (Femia, 2001:139).

As their precursors, contemporary communitarians also assert that civil society should be based on values and strive for common good. For example, Walzer (1998:16) asserted that civil society was a space, where people can freely associate and communicate with each other, form and reform groups of all sorts, “not for the sake of any particular formation – family, tribe, nation, religion, commune, brotherhood or sisterhood, interest group or ideological movement – but for the sake of sociability itself”. This is because people are by nature social beings first rather than political or economic beings (ibid:16). For Walzer, associations are important because they produce civility, which makes democratic politics possible (ibid: 24).

Further, Walzer (1998) claimed, as Hegel did, that the state not only framed civil society but also occupied the space in it. “It fixes the boundary conditions and the basic rules of all associational activity. It compels association members to think about a common good, beyond their own conceptions of the good life” (ibid: 24). Civil society without the state engenders “unequal power relationships”. Only the state can challenge this flaw of civil society. Furthermore, the state has to foster the roughly equal and widely dispersed capabilities that sustain the associational networks (ibid: 24).

An interaction of the state and civil society is further elaborated in Taylor’s conception of civil society. Taylor (2006) asserted that civil society was a politically organised society, where a key principle is self-rule. Unlike the liberal scholars, particularly, Gellner and Hall, Taylor did not regard civil society as autonomous associations existing free of the state. For Taylor, civil society is about distribution of power throughout society from independent associations to the state. That is to say in Taylor’s (2006:98) own words “different associations would be agents of power on different levels, which in the end find their place in the state and self-rule”.

To sum up, in essence, both classical and contemporary theories within the communitarian tradition focus on the same issue as the ones within the liberal approach, which is freedom and interests of individuals since the former has

developed upon criticism against the latter. In others words, civil society within the communitarian model can also be defined as a society where individuals obtain and exercise their freedom as well as pursue their different interests; however, their motivation is different from the one in the liberal approach. Here individuals interact with each other because of a sense of community and sociability rather than self-interest and need. The common good is a central feature. Moreover, they can achieve their interests and needs through achieving common interests and needs.

In most cases, this leads to understanding the liberal and communitarian approaches as opposing each other: an individual-centred approach (liberal) versus a community-centred approach (communitarian). However, the difference between the approaches should be put rather differently, that is, a needs-driven individual (liberal) versus a value-driven individual (communitarian). This is because the communitarian tradition does not aim to suppress individuals for the sake of the common good. In fact, it aims at liberating individuals. Therefore, the communitarian tradition as the liberal one stresses on the importance of voluntary and choice-based membership in associations (Walzer, 1998; Taylor, 2006).

Furthermore, in the communitarian tradition, the state is not a mere order-keeper and framework for civil society. The state and civil society are complementary elements of each other. Therefore, the state not only frames civil society but also guides it to the common good and shares power with it. Furthermore, the state is a necessary condition for the existence of civil society since it keeps it away from self-destruction. In other words, in the communitarian tradition, the state has a more extensive role. In fact, the state and civil society are interdependent parts of the whole body.

Conceptualisation of civil society within the thesis

Based on the preceding discussion of the liberal and communitarian traditions of civil society, the thesis defines civil society as a society where, through a free and civilised interaction and communication, individuals obtain and exercise their freedom as well as pursue their interests. However, it clearly emphasises that, in each of the traditions, individuals and the state have different positions. In the liberal

tradition, an individual is interest and needs-driven; while, in the communitarian one, he/she is driven by value of the common good and sociability. Furthermore, in the liberal tradition, the state and civil society provide a check on each other. The former provides a frame for the latter to have a free and civilised interaction; meanwhile, the latter counterbalances the former so that it does not over exceed its power. In other words, the state and civil society are clearly demarcated actors with explicit functions towards each other. In the communitarian approach, the state and civil society are complementary. The state not only frames civil society but also leads it towards the common good by encompassing civil society in itself (see Table 1).

Table 1

<i>Position</i>	<i>Tradition</i>	Liberal	Communitarian
Individuals		Needs-driven	Value-driven
The state		Frames civil society by providing rules for a civilised interaction between individuals	Frames, mentors, and encompasses civil society and guides it to the common good.

Notwithstanding these key differences, both traditions need the same three factors for their respective successful operation. The first factor is voluntarism. As stated elsewhere, in both traditions, it is important since it signifies that an individual is truly free from either suppression or tutelage coming from the state and/or community (Gellner, 1994; Taylor, 2006).

The second factor is civility. Both traditions suggest that individuals should possess a sense of civility. The notion of civility was introduced by the thinkers of the commercial society, which implied that individuals, particularly strangers, interacted with each other voluntarily and based on polished manners. In the contemporary discourse, the meaning of civility is expanded to mean presence of and toleration for social diversity (Hall, 1995), that is, a multiplicity of ways of living, working, and associating (Bryant, 1995:145). Civility is claimed to be crucial for democracy to work (Walzer, 1998).

The third factor is associations. Civil society within both traditions is institutionalised by means of associations. Their availability is crucial since they are

a clear sign of individuals' freedom both from the state and community and a key vehicle for individuals to pursue their needs. Further, associations are strongly interconnected with voluntarism and civility, which act as mechanisms to filter associations with benign and malicious goals.

Associations are also connected with urbanism. Tonnies considered civil society, *Gesellschaft*, as a city phenomenon. He contrasted *Gesellschaft* with *Gemeinschaft*, which is a rural life guided by folkways and mores. Its main trait is a bond of "blood", a physical relation and expresses itself in deeds and words (Tonnies, 2005:154). What is important to note is that, according to Tonnies, the relationships between individuals taking place in *Gesellschaft* are not possible in *Gemeinschaft* since the latter does not have conditions for individual autonomy to exist. Religious and community groups of *Gemeinschaft* can suppress individual autonomy by requiring compulsory membership and commitment (Kaviraj, 2001).

This issue is further elaborated by Wirth (1938), who argued that cities produce a new form of social relations. According to him, in cities, individuals become emancipated from the traditional basis of social solidarity existing in rural areas such as kinship and family (ibid: 80). Consequently, individuals become flexible and freed from communalism, that is to say, they become modular in Gellner's words. As a result, they are free to pursue their vocational, educational, religious, recreational, and political interests.

However, at the same time, Wirth (1938) noted that individuals remained powerless to pursue their goals on their own. Therefore, according to their interests, people come together into different voluntary organisations to pursue their interests and have their interests represented. Consequently, a great number of different voluntary associations emerge. Most importantly, individuals can join a number of voluntary associations in accordance with their various interests rising from different aspects of their life. As Hall (1995) stressed, multiple memberships are crucial for civil society. In other words, voluntary associations in cities enable individuals to pursue their interests and meet their needs such as economic, political, educational, cultural or other. However, according to Wirth (1938:77), if an individual wants to take part in the social, political, and economic life of the city, "he must subordinate some of his personality to the demands of the larger community and in that measure

immerse themselves in mass movements”. This is congruent with Hegel’s assertion that civil society institutionalised in the form of corporations and associations draws people to itself because they can achieve their goals only through achieving common goals (Jones, 2001).

Civil society and the state: donor development policies in the 1990s

In the late 1980s and the early 1990s, donors became extremely enthusiastic about using civil society in their activities to tackle social, political, and economic problems in the developing countries. As Hawthorn (2001:269) pointed out, civil society was considered as “the best option for the South”. A mainstream strategy in global politics was criticising the state and moving activities from the public sector to civil society and private market (Fukuyama, 2004). In general, at that time, the idea of the state domination in the societal organisation was challenged. In Eastern Europe, particularly in Poland, civil society could resist the totalitarian communist party (Seligman, 1992). The Soviet Union began falling apart. This undermined the belief that the state could deliver all the solutions. Western countries also encountered negative consequences of the welfare state’s excessive intervention (Edwards, 2004). In other words, there was a global disenchantment with the state and a widespread discontent with its extensive power.

Consequently, the international aid community led by IMF and the World Bank premised their aid delivery strategies on neo-liberal economic policies which were agreed in a Washington consensus in the 1980s (Fritz and Menocal, 2006; Wimpelmann, 2006). According to these policies, aid-recipient countries were supposed to reduce the size and reach of the state. In the meantime, civil society was encouraged to develop (Fritz and Menocal, 2006). For example, the state owned enterprises were greatly exposed to privatisation in the former Soviet Union after 1991. Kyrgyzstan received particular support from the international organisations. For instance, IMF assisted the Kyrgyz state to carry out its economic policies based on shock therapy. In fact, privatisation and market liberalisation were the key aspects of IMF’s suggestions (Anderson, 1997). As a result, state assets were privatised.

Market prices were deregulated (Gleason, 1997). Meanwhile, large donors such as USAID, DFID, the World Bank, and the United Nations (UN) agencies had programmes focusing on promotion of liberal civil society in the early 1990s (Adamson, 2002; Aksartova, 2005; Giffen et al., 2005).

Donors defined civil society as a space where different voluntary, not-for-profit associations and organisations, such as NGOs, labour unions, and political parties could operate (Van Rooy and Robinson, 1998) between the state, market, and family (Edwards 2004). Put differently, for donors, civil society was an associational realm (Edwards 2004), which eventually became a synonymous for “the third sector” (Van Rooy 2002). In practice, civil society was reduced to NGOs (Howell and Pearce, 2001; Van Rooy, 2002) mainly for financial and monitoring purposes (Ottaway, 2005).

Further, donors assigned a number of roles to civil society. First of all, civil society was regarded as a service provider which could surpass the state. Donors deliberately channelled their funds through NGOs because they considered NGOs more effective and economic rather than the state and its institutions (Van Rooy and Robinson, 1998; Fritz and Menocal, 2006; Rakner et al., 2007). For example, the percentage of aid coming from countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development through NGOs increased from 0.7% in 1975 to 3.6% in 1985 and to at least 5% in 1993–94, totalling \$2.3 billion (Edwards and Hulme, 1996: 962 in Ebrahim, 2001: 95). On the whole, the state was avoided. In fact, NGOs replaced the state in some aspects (Edwards, 2004).

Secondly, for donors, civil society was crucial in promoting a liberal economy. Donors found it difficult to promote a liberal economy in the developing countries because they did not have a key precondition for it, which was economic individuals interested in “opening markets and curbing government” (Van Rooy and Robinson, 1998:39). In this regard, donors considered social capital diffused by the associational life as the best way to create this precondition (Van Rooy and Robinson, 1998:39). Availability of social ties was thought essential for individuals to “function effectively in modern economies where the demand of exchange grows increasingly complex” (Edwards, 2004:15). Drawing on Tocqueville’s work on the American associational life and voluntarism, donors believed that associations

diffusing social capital would ensure an accountable system of governance. This, in turn, would result in sustainable economic and social development (Van Rooy and Robinson, 1998). Therefore, civil society was supposed to nurture the social values, networks, and institutions that underpin successful market economies including trust and cooperation (Edwards, 2004:13).

Thirdly, donors asserted that civil society promoted democracy. The process of neo-liberal economic policies coincided with the third wave of democratisation that took place throughout the world in the late 1980s and the early 1990s. As a result, democracy promotion became a top priority in foreign policies and development programmes of donor countries. A wide range of activities on democracy promotion were launched (Rakner et al., 2007) where, as Carothers (1997) noted, civil society was a fundamental component. According to donors, civil society, to be precise NGOs, contributed to democracy by representing different groups in the society and influencing the state to have democratic policies and institutions (Van Rooy and Robinson, 1998). For donors, NGOs could either represent or reach out to vulnerable groups in society, such as the poor, more reliably than the state. As a result, NGOs gave an opportunity even to the most marginalised groups to express their interests. Consequently, NGOs could promote better, equitable policies (Van Rooy and Robinson, 1998). Therefore, civil society was also regarded as a counterbalance to the state.

The above makes it clear that donors' civil society promotion in the 1980-1990s adhered to the liberal model of civil society, particularly to the liberal view of state-civil society relations. As the conceptual framework has stated in the previous section, in the liberal tradition, the state has a limited role, which is reduced to administering justice in the society and being a framework for civil society. In the meantime, civil society is an autonomous, self-regulating actor and acts as a balance to the state. Clearly, donors aimed to create an autonomous civil society, which would function on its own, self-serve itself by providing different services, and counterbalance the state and make it more democratic by representing voices of different people. In the meantime, the size and role of the state was reduced. Moreover, in order to promote the liberal economy, donors connected the emergence and operation of economic individuals, who are interested in opening markets, with

civil society (Van Rooy and Robinson, 1998). In other words, donors needed needs-driven individuals who are the key aspect of liberal civil society, according to the discussion in the previous section.

Liberal civil society in the non-Western context: NGO expansion

The preceding discussion has indicated that donors have their efforts to promote the liberal civil society in the non-Western countries from the late 1980s to the early 2000s. However, the outcome of these efforts has taken a different shape. The former communist states are one of the examples of this. As mentioned elsewhere in this chapter, these states used to repel civil society before their independence in the early 1990s due to the Marxist ideology that they adhered to. Any associations that existed during the Soviet time were under the supervision of the state and promoted the state ideology. Their membership was far from being voluntary (Giffen et al., 2005). Therefore, the argument in the literature, which states that donors promoted the liberal civil society in post-Soviet Central Asian countries from scratch, has some grounds (Roy, 2002; Giffen et al., 2005).

It should be highlighted that donors promoted only NGOs in the former communist countries under their civil society banner because of a general tendency among donors to reduce civil society to NGOs. Consequently, there was a proliferation of NGOs in the post-communist region. About 100,000 independent associations such as environmental, human rights, and women emerged by the mid 1990s (Starr, 1998). For instance, in Kyrgyzstan, in the course of 1993 – 2002, the number of NGOs reached from 611 to 7,630 (Ubysheva and Pogojev, 2006; Shishkaraeva et al., 2006 respectively). They have also become part of the social and political context in Kyrgyzstan (Anderson, 2002). This can be considered as a great breakthrough given that there were not any independent associations before the independence.

However, NGOs in the former communist block have had a number of weaknesses. Some NGOs have been criticised for failing to establish strong links with their societies. For example, Mendelson and Glenn (2002) stated that, in Russia, Hungary, and Poland, a number of women's groups became isolated from their

constituency, who they were supposed to represent, and from the state, who they asserted to influence. In fact, they grew closer to their donors and international partners, whom they depended on financially. In other words, although the former communist countries have acquired a new local NGO sector, its relationship with their perceived supporters, the state, and between each other has been very weak (Mendelson and Glenn, 2002). Furthermore, some NGOs have been blamed for being opportunistic. For example, NGOs in Kyrgyzstan, as stated in the introduction, has been called “grant eaters” because of their donor funding oriented nature. Howell (2000) neatly summarised that dependence of NGOs in this region as well as other developing countries on donor funding raised doubts about their sustainability, autonomy, and self-definition.

In fact, NGOs in other parts of the developing world faced the same criticism as NGOs in the former communist countries. For example, according to Chatterjee (2001), civil society in India is represented by modern associations. They were established by the Indian nationalist elite during colonial modernity. In fact, these elite aimed at replicating the forms and the substance of western modernity in their society for their anti-colonial struggle. As a result, associations emerged in India; but they were the domain of the elite rather than of the actual “public” because the latter could not meet the standards required by civil society. Moreover, the role of associations towards the public has been “one of pedagogy rather than of free association” (Chatterjee, 2001:174).

According to Zaidi (1999) and Mercer (2002), who extensively reviewed the literature on NGOs in the developing world, the main criticism is that NGOs could not benefit their perceived constituency because they grew dependent on donors and started to orient their focuses more on their funders than on their target group. Moreover, they asserted that NGO projects were usually small scale and had an impact on a limited number of people. Further, supposedly participatory and democratic work strategies of NGOs have been questioned since they are elite and urban based institutions staffed with paid professionals. Decisions within NGOs are taken top down and by staff. As a result, these are not in tune with democratic and participatory methods. The cost-effectiveness of NGOs over the public sector has

also been argued. In fact, it has been asserted that this claim has been made without empirical support. These criticisms are not the end. In fact, it goes on and on:

NGOs have been called “‘opportunistic’ (Edwards and Hulme, 1996; Uphoff, 1993), ‘corrupt’ (Edwards and Hulme, 1995), ‘elitist’ (Fowler, 1991; Samad, 1993), ‘yuppie-ized’ (Najam, 1996; Samad, 1993; Bebbington and Farrington, 1993; Meyer, 1995), becoming mere fronts for rural development consultancies staffed with members of the elite or middle class” (Zaidi 1999:267).

Based on the above, it is obvious that NGOs could not meet donor expectations. Their failure, however, is partially attributed to donors themselves. It has been argued that donors applied an erroneous method to promote civil society. According to Carothers (1997), donors used one blueprint of liberal democracy, which included civil society, in all the countries they worked in. In the same vein, Howell (2000) stated that donors had used a universalistic approach to civil society promotion. Drawing on sixteen case studies looking at donor civil society activities in the former communist region, Mendelson and Glenn (2002) asserted that the democracy blueprint of donors had not resulted in the desirable outcomes because it did not take into account the local context.

Howell (2000) criticised donors for reducing civil society to NGOs and ignoring other civil society actors that could have brought social change better than NGOs. The review of theories of civil society in the first section has shown that it is a complex term and cannot be easily narrowed down to NGOs. In the same vein, Jenkins (2001) showed inconsistency in the way USAID used civil society in its activities. Further, the literature suggested that donor methods of work and their funding requirements to NGOs had made NGOs in the developing countries professionalise and institutionalise (Ebrahim, 2001; Markowitz and Tice, 2002). For example, in Central Asia, donors found it more convenient to work with English and Russian speaking NGOs, as a result of which NGOs came to be filled with educated people (Howell, 2000).

The mismatch between donors’ promotion of civil society and its actual results has brought about two debates in the literature. The first one asks whether it is possible to replicate a liberal form of civil society dominant in the West in the non-Western world or whether non-Western societies can have their own civil society. In

this regard, some argued that a western liberal model of civil society could be applied cross-culturally (Gellner, 1994). Meanwhile, others asserted that non-Western societies could have different and often incomparable social and political systems. Therefore, they can have their own civil society (Hann and Dunn, 1996:18). In the same line, Kaviraj (2001) suggested to followers of civil society that they must look for ideas bearing some resemblance to their ideas in cultural traditions of the non-Western world, and “begin to build arguments from some intelligible points of connection, rather than from the moral outside” (2001:323).

The second debate argues what role of the state should be in the development. Zaidi (1999) stated that the failure of NGOs had proved that they were an incompatible alternative to the state. According to him, “the only alternative to state failure is the state itself” (1999: 270). Therefore, he claimed that the state should be brought back to the development.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have sought to construct my conceptual framework and to place my thesis in context by reviewing three bodies of civil society literature. In the first section, I have reviewed the classical and contemporary theories of civil society from the perspective of the liberal and communitarian traditions to conceptualise civil society for my thesis. As a result, I define civil society as a society where individuals have and exercise their freedom and pursue their different interests. I explicitly acknowledge that the liberal and communitarian traditions have different views on how and why individuals do this. In the liberal tradition, individuals act and interact with each other based on their own interests and needs; while in the communitarian approach, individuals are driven by the common good and a sense of sociability. They still pursue their interests and needs but they are able to achieve them only through achieving common interests and needs.

Further, I clearly distinguish that the role of the state is also different in these traditions. In the liberal approach, the state is supposed to keep order and provide individuals with rules for their interaction. Therefore, it frames civil society. At the

same time, civil society counterbalances the state so that it does not monopolise power. In other words, the state and civil society are two elements that exist separately but provide a check on each other. In the communitarian tradition, the state and civil society complement each other, where the former not only frames but also encompasses the latter. This is because civil society is not a separate actor; on the contrary, it finds its final destination in the state. Moreover, it depends on the state since only the state saves it from self-destruction.

Finally, I have identified three key factors that both traditions need for their respective operation: voluntarism, associations, and civility. Civil society in both schools is institutionalised in the form of associations which should be based on voluntarism and civility. Furthermore, I have connected associations with urbanism. This is because, in urban areas, people become free from their traditional social networks such as family, kinship, and community, which exist in rural areas. As a result, individuals gain freedom to pursue their interests and needs; however, at the same time, they become powerless to do this on their own. Therefore, they create voluntary associations, which are various, numerous and concerned with a certain aspect of individuals' lives.

In the second section, I have shown that, from the 1980s to the mid 1990s, civil society was a central element in donor agendas which aimed to promote the neo-liberal economic policies and democracy. Donors conceptualised civil society as the associational realm between the state, market, and family consisting of associations with a voluntary membership. However, in practice, they reduced civil society to NGOs because of their organisational capacity to deal with finance. NGOs were seen as key service providers, promoters of democracy and a liberal economy, and a counterbalance to the state. In fact, the state was avoided and reduced. Therefore, from the theoretical perspective, donors promoted a liberal model of civil society.

In the third section, I have discussed civil society in the non-Western world based on the example of the former communist countries. The discussion has suggested that donors promoted the liberal civil society in the region almost from scratch. To do this, donors used the same strategies as everywhere in the developing world. They used one blueprint of democracy promotion without taking into account

local specifics. This means that, in the former communist countries, civil society was reduced to NGOs too. Consequently, there was a proliferation of NGOs which could be regarded as a remarkable achievement. However, NGOs in the former communist countries encountered a number of criticisms. Above all, they were blamed for failing to establish a link with their societies. As a result, they could not represent their constituency properly. I have also demonstrated that, in other non-Western countries, NGOs faced the same criticism. They were condemned for being elitist, opportunistic, corrupt, and undemocratic. On the whole, I have concluded that NGOs failed to meet donor expectations.

Based on these discussions, I have pointed out two debates in the literature: 1) civil society in the Western and non-Western worlds and 2) NGOs or the state. With regard to the first debate, it is argued whether non-Western countries can build a liberal civil society or whether civil society needs to conform to the cultural specificities of each society. In the meantime, the second debate focuses on whether the state is needed in the development. These debates underline the importance of the thesis since it presents findings about donors' policies and promotion of civil society and how these changes are influencing NGOs in Kyrgyzstan. Therefore, the thesis contributes to the debates. Moreover, the thesis seeks to explore whether donor civil society model can still be called liberal in the light of changes that have taken place.

Chapter 2

Donors' NGO experiment in Akaev's "island of democracy"

This chapter specifically focuses on donors' promotion of civil society in Kyrgyzstan from its independence in 1991 to the mid 2000s and what outcomes these activities brought about. It aims to further elaborate the arguments and debates in civil society literature identified in the previous chapter by illustrating the case of civil society promotion in Kyrgyzstan. Consequently, in the first section, I discuss why and how donors promoted civil society in Kyrgyzstan from the early 1990s to the mid 2000s. In the second section, I look at what influence donor activities on civil society have had on the development of the Kyrgyz NGO sector. In the third section, I review the state-NGO relations in Kyrgyzstan.

Donors' "grant rain": the "Golden age of NGOs"

During the 1990s, especially in the early years, civil society was an important element in the development agenda of donors in Kyrgyzstan as everywhere else. As discussed in chapter 1, this was directly connected with the neo-liberal economic policies and democracy promotion agenda which donors were implementing worldwide at that time. Consequently, civil society was crucial for donors in democratising the former communist countries and helping them transfer to liberal economy. Reviews of literature on civil society aid in Kyrgyzstan (Adamson, 2002; Aksartova, 2005; Giffen et al., 2005; Shishkaraeva et al., 2006) suggest that six specific donors were of particular significance in the promotion of civil society: USAID, DFID, EC, the World Bank, UNDP, and the Soros Foundation.

The United States was a key donor in the promotion of civil society in Kyrgyzstan. USAID has been the main US assistance provider. Since setting up an office in Kyrgyzstan in 1993, USAID has worked on supporting the Kyrgyz NGO sector within its democracy promotion agenda (<http://centralasia.usaid.gov>). In 1994,

it started funding a programme solely aimed at encouraging the emergence of NGOs in Kyrgyzstan. The programme was implemented by Counterpart Consortium (hereafter Counterpart), an international NGO from the USA, because USAID normally works through contractors⁹.

Within this programme, Counterpart provided emergent NGOs with three types of support: financial (seed grants), technical (trainings) and informational so that they could get established, acquire management skills, learn fundraising, and gain other useful skills to run their organisations. In 2000, Counterpart furthered its activities by establishing a network of civil society support centres (CSSCs) throughout Kyrgyzstan with two aims: 1) to localise its activities and 2) to provide technical and informational support to NGOs in the periphery. As a result, eleven CSSCs were formed in seven provinces of Kyrgyzstan. In 2004, Counterpart mounted another programme focused on strengthening CSSCs and local NGOs in terms of their transparency, accountability, professionalism, sustainability, and engagement in advocacy (Satarov, 2005)¹⁰.

Further, USAID has funded two other international NGOs, the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and the Eurasia Foundation, whose activities also covered civil society in Kyrgyzstan. Both of these organisations are not-for-profit and were formed in the USA. They have also had an office in Kyrgyzstan since the 1990s. Their activities, however, did not focus as exclusively on civil society as Counterpart. They have had other goals such as the development of media and political parties in the case of NDI and improving higher education and labour migrations in that of the Eurasia Foundation (www.ndi.org and www.ef-ca.org, respectively).

Since 1996, NDI has provided small grants and technical assistance to Kyrgyz NGOs (www.ndi.org). It has given out around 20 grants annually. The amount of each grant has been approximately \$1,500¹¹ (Interview with a

⁹ In comparison with other donors, for implementation of its programmes USAID normally employs a contractor or a grantee through a call for proposals. This is because USAID wants to ensure that experts in the field are involved (Interview with a representative of USAID in Kyrgyzstan, Bishkek, 15 February 2008).

¹⁰ This information comes from a Counterpart Consortium's brochure. It was provided by a former employee of Counterpart in Kyrgyzstan in 2005 for my Master's dissertation (Jailobaeva, 2005). E-copy is available.

¹¹ The funding amounts are indicated in US dollars in the thesis.

representative of NDI in Kyrgyzstan, Bishkek, 1 November 2007). As for the Eurasia Foundation, from 1996 to 2009 it provided \$299,813.36 to Kyrgyz NGOs in the form of 14 grants which addressed different issues on civil society such as the provision of capacity-building support, the improvement of the NGO-government collaboration and increasing the role of civil society organisations in the political and social arena (www.ef-ca.org).

There is one more programme financed by the US government which also promotes and supports civil society. It is called a “Democracy Commission Small Grants Programme” and it is carried out by the US embassy in Kyrgyzstan. Since 1995, within this programme, the US embassy has given out grants to Kyrgyz NGOs to work on a wide range of issues related to democracy such as the promotion of civil society, the free flow of information and the rule of law. NGOs can get a grant of up to \$24,000. However, on average, grants are around \$2,000 – \$5,000 (Interview with a representative of US embassy in Kyrgyzstan, Bishkek, 31 October 2007, and a Democracy Commission brochure).

It is evident from the above that US assistance considerably focused on the development of civil society, to be precise of NGOs, in Kyrgyzstan. Although civil society was a component of their democracy promotion agenda, the US agencies directed their efforts to creating civil society organisations in a liberal sense (i.e. NGOs) by providing them with capacity-building support and grants. Some US agencies also worked on other aspects of civil society such as increasing the role of civil society organisations in the political and social context and supported their projects rather than their institutions.

However, it is difficult to calculate the amount of funding that the above US agencies spent on NGOs because there are no consistent data¹². Furthermore, as Aksartova (2005:95) stated, “different elements of democracy and civil society assistance are inter-related and mutually reinforcing”. Nonetheless, according to Azpuru and his colleagues (2008), on the whole up to 2003, civil society received most of the US democracy assistance. In Eurasia, civil society received half of the democracy assistance. It is also known that, since its operation in Kyrgyzstan, USAID has spent nearly \$400 million on its programmes (<http://centralasia.usaid.gov>).

¹² Unfortunately, I could not find consistent data on the extent of civil society support funding on the websites of the US development agencies discussed in this section.

The UK development agenda shifted to civil society after the cold war (Howell, 2000). In 1992, the UK Parliament formed the Westminster Foundation for Democracy to promote democracy in the developing world and the former Soviet Union (Carothers, 1997). In 1999, DFID developed a civil society strategy (Howell 2000). In Kyrgyzstan DFID has been working since 1997 with a particular focus on civil society. It had a regional civil society support programme in 2002-2006. The programme aimed at building capacity of Kyrgyz NGOs and was implemented through the International NGO Training and Research Center (INTRAC) (Interviews with representatives of DFID and INTRAC Bishkek, 15 November 2007). DFID's programme, like that of USAID, provided technical and informational support to NGOs in Kyrgyzstan. However, it was relatively small-scale in comparison with USAID's programme. For example, DFID did not have any networks of civil society support centres as USAID did.

The EC started providing assistance to the former Soviet countries in 1993 through a TACIS programme. Although the key aim of TACIS has been economic development (Sodupe and Benito, 1998), it also gave attention to civil society. For the EC, civil society was an alternative to the central authority in service provision. For this reason, within TACIS, capacity-building support was provided to NGOs in Kyrgyzstan to strengthen them institutionally so that they could deliver services properly (European Community, 2007a). Consequently, the EC offered NGOs training on organisational management, strategic development, and other issues (Shishkaraeva et al., 2006). Civil society was also supported within a democracy programme of TACIS called the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (European Community, 2007b)¹³. Since 1994, \$238,053 (€333,275) has been provided to NGOs to address democratic issues such as elections and human rights.

Civil society has been important for the World Bank too. It has several programmes that provide grants to NGOs. The Social Development Civil Society Fund Programme is the most prominent one. It was launched in Central Asia in the mid 1990s. The aim of the programme is "to make development more inclusive and equitable by providing funds for activities that support the civic engagement of marginalised and vulnerable groups" (<http://web.worldbank>, c). Therefore, the World

¹³ After 2007 it was changed to the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (European Community, 2007b).

Bank supports those grants that seek to strengthen voices of excluded groups such as women, youth, and ethnic groups in the decision-making. The maximum grant for each project is \$4,000. In the period of 1996-2009, the programme provided more than 134 grants to Kyrgyz NGOs by spending \$370,000 in total (<http://web.worldbank>, c). On the whole, in the 1990s, civil society was of great significance in the World Bank's agenda because it regarded the role of the state and market as ineffective. Therefore, the World Bank encouraged its staff to involve and consult with NGOs in policy-making. In all resident offices, civil society officers were appointed (Howell, 2000).

UNDP has been working with civil society organisations in Kyrgyzstan since its arrival in 1993. At the beginning of the 1990s, UNDP was among the donors who provided capacity-building support to NGOs (Shishkaraeva et al., 2006). By the end of the decade, the focus of UNDP activity had shifted towards CBOs. NGOs have been involved to provide services for UNDP such as research and training (Interview with a representative of UNDP, Bishkek, 13 November 2007). In addition, different programmes of UNDP provide grants for NGOs to carry out projects in specified fields (Interview with representatives of UNDP and UNV, Bishkek, 13 November 2007 and 19 November 2007 respectively).

The Soros Foundation (hereafter Soros) made a considerable contribution to the development of the Kyrgyz NGO sector. Its activities were launched in Kyrgyzstan in 1993. Its founder is the Open Society Institute created by George Soros. The main mission of Soros has been assisting Kyrgyzstan to build an open society which would be based on freedom and pluralism of opinions in all spheres of life, the rule of law, and equal participation of all members of the society in the development (www.soros.kg).

The activities of Soros have been framed by the belief that education and knowledge result in change and enlightenment (Aksartova, 2005). George Soros, the key founder of the Soros Foundation, was greatly influenced by Karl Popper's work "The Open Society and Its enemies" (www.soros.org)¹⁴. In Soros's philosophy, NGOs were "bulwarks of both civil and open society" (Aksartova, 2005:103).

¹⁴ George Soros and Ernest Gellner, who worked in the Central European University in Prague funded by Soros, were influenced by Karl Popper and shared the same philosophical commitment to an open society.

Therefore, his foundation was very active in supporting NGOs (Shishkaraeva et al., 2006).

Soros had an NGO support programme in Kyrgyzstan at least as early as 1997, according to annual reports available on its website (www.soros.kg). It is evident from these reports that the programme grants were given out to NGOs so that they could build their capacity, acquire equipment and furniture, and conduct trainings on different issues. In addition to this programme, other programmes of Soros focusing on women, human rights, and other issues have also supported NGOs – but only those working in their specific field (Interview with representatives of Soros, 14 November 2007, Bishkek).

“Mushrooms after the rain” effect: the NGO boom

The previous section has shown that, by the mid 1990s, there was considerable donor support focused on the promotion of NGOs. Such significant funding opportunities and technical support have contributed to the development of the Kyrgyz NGO sector. The relevant literature suggested various chronologies of the NGO sector's development. For example, based on their research¹⁵, Shishkaraeva and her colleagues (2006) identified three developmental stages of NGOs in Kyrgyzstan. The first stage covers the years from 1985 to 1994 when civic initiatives rose in response to difficulties that resulted from the crisis and subsequent demise of the Soviet Union. The authors emphasised that arrival of donors in Kyrgyzstan in the early 1990s was an important element in this stage and a prelude for the second one. During 1995-1999, in the second stage, Shishkaraeva and her colleagues (2006) claimed that there had been a proliferation of NGOs due to financial and technical support of donors. These authors also said that, from 1999 to 2004, which is the third stage in their chronology, NGOs had become mature and started to influence decision-making and political processes in Kyrgyzstan.

¹⁵ Shishkaraeva and her colleagues (2006) had a question about periodisation of the NGO development in the research which explored the NGO sector in Kyrgyzstan.

Drawing on a number of INTRAC research projects on civil society in Central Asia and workshops with local specialists and researchers in the field, Giffen and her colleagues (2005) also suggested three stages of NGO development in Kyrgyzstan. The first stage in their chronology lasts from 1991 to 1997. It is characterised by the emergence of public associations in Kyrgyzstan and the arrival of donors and international NGOs promoting civil society such as Soros, UNDP, Counterpart, and INTRAC. According to these authors, the second stage began in 1998 when NGOs realised that they needed to become involved in advocacy and lobbying. The authors did not clearly delineate features of the third stage, which covers the early 2000s, since they were debated among INTRAC affiliated researchers and specialists. Some of them asserted that only the “fittest” NGOs were surviving. Others claimed that pro-active NGOs had emerged after an initial proliferation of NGOs which happened in response to external funding. The third group stated that interaction between NGOs and the state had increased since the early 2000s.

Both chronologies show the development of the NGO sector in Kyrgyzstan but from different perspectives. However, for the purpose of the present thesis, neither is sufficient. Since the thesis explores changes in donors’ civil society promotion and their influence on the NGO sector, it is more appropriate to identify developmental stages of NGOs since the launch of donors’ civil society activities in Kyrgyzstan. As a result, I divide the nineteen years of NGO development in Kyrgyzstan into three stages.

The period from 1991 to 1994 makes up the first stage when donors started to launch their civil society activities in Kyrgyzstan and NGOs began to emerge.

The years between 1995 and 2005, when the height of donors’ civil society promotion came about, are subsumed under the second stage of the NGO development. As described in the preceding section, donors focused on civil society building and provided technical, financial, and informational support to NGOs during this time. As a result, there was a proliferation of NGOs during this stage. Table 2 shows that, each year since 1995, the NGO sector increased at least by 8.3 %, the figure for in 1996-1997, while its growth reached 32.9% in 2002-2003. According to table 3, in the course of 1993 - 2002, the number of NGOs grew from

611 to 7,630. By April 2006, there were 8,284 registered NGOs (Ubysheva and Pogojev, 2006).

Table 2

Years (the 1990s)	Growth %	Years (the 2000s)	Growth %
Up to 1995	3.5%	2000-2001	21.1%
1996-1997	8.3%	2002-2003	32.9%
1998-1999	17.6%		

Table 3

Year	Key locations								Total number
	Bishkek (capital)	Chui	Issyk-Kul	Naryn	Talas	Jalal-Abad	Osh	Batken	
1993	298	55	36	20	27	60	99	16	611
1994	365	70	49	24	28	68	110	17	731
1995	475	95	56	29	35	82	139	23	934
1996	586	238	118	63	86	168	251	40	1550
1997	821	287	146	78	106	212	312	48	2010
1998	1036	369	199	106	164	289	461	98	2722
1999	1280	422	299	125	230	562	741	158	3817
2000	1065	519	365	183	269	672	878	178	4669
2001	1953	798	454	264	359	844	1109	280	6058
2002	2341	992	660	357	429	1113	1407	331	7630

The development of the NGO sector since 2006 to the present can be identified as a third stage when donors started reconsidering their policies. Research findings presented throughout the thesis will provide insights into this stage of the NGO development in Kyrgyzstan.

All in all, since their emergence, NGOs have been involved in the social, economic, and political lives of the Kyrgyz society (Adamson, 2002). In the 1990s, particularly in the early years, NGOs sought to address social and economic hardship that newly independent Kyrgyzstan endured after the collapse of the Soviet Union (Giffen et al., 2005). They were predominantly engaged in humanitarian work. By the end of the decade, NGOs broadened the spectrum of their activities by working with communities and the state and on the international level. At present, NGOs work in different fields including human rights, gender, ethnic harmony, poverty reduction, and ecology (Shishkaraeva et al., 2006). According to Aksartova (2005), NGOs have played a significant role in terms of training provision.

Quantity versus quality: NGOs as voluntary initiatives, professional organisations or non-governmental “individuals”?

In spite of their impressive growth as well as useful activities, the NGO sector in Kyrgyzstan has been criticised for an array of weaknesses. First and foremost, the large number of NGOs was considered as misleading since only a small part of the NGO sector is actually active (Ubysheva and Pogojev, 2006). It was argued that a substantial fraction of NGOs came into existence to take advantage of donor grants. Straight after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Kyrgyzstan encountered a severe economic crisis which resulted in the dramatic deterioration of life standards. Many people in the public sector were left without regular income. Other sectors experienced massive unemployment. Poverty became widespread (Anderson, 1997; Olcott, 1996). Therefore, Aksartova (2005) and Adamson (2002) noted that generous grants from donors¹⁶ were very tempting for local population to use for personal gain to ensure their own economic security rather than for public benefit. As Adamson (2002:193) put it, “everything from computer equipment to school textbooks and donated heating oil” went to the black market.

Moreover, procedures to get donor funding, especially the seed grants given out to individuals interested in establishing an NGO, were simple. People did not have to do anything complicated except for putting together a proposal indicating their interest in forming an NGO and proposing a couple of activities¹⁷. Further, it is suggested that since donors equated the growth of NGOs to the growth of civil society (Howell and Pearce, 2002), they were uncritically supportive of all initiatives coming from people to establish an NGO. Consequently, one can conclude that the rapid growth of the NGO sector in Kyrgyzstan was a mixed result of the poor economic situation, abundant donor funding, easy procedures to get them, and desire of donors for the formation of NGOs in the name of civil society building.

Large donor grants have also had another effect on the NGO sector. Because of the economic prospects in an NGO, educated and qualified people such as

¹⁶ For instance, individual donor grants of US agencies were very large (around \$15,000) when they just arrived in Kyrgyzstan (Adamson, 2002).

¹⁷ I base this comment on my own ethnographic experience and an interview with an NGO held on 26 February 2008 in Bishkek.

academics and other intellectuals, who lost their jobs or were poorly paid after the break up of the Soviet Union or were poorly paid, found employment with an NGO more financially secure. As a result, NGOs in Kyrgyzstan came to be staffed by highly educated, urban based intelligent people (Roy, 2002; Aksartova, 2005). This tendency was reinforced by donor work conditions and requirements. When donors arrived in Kyrgyzstan, they had little knowledge of local situation including local languages. Therefore, they needed people who knew languages, particularly English and Russian, to work with (Howell, 2000; Aksartova, 2005).

Moreover, donor projects required people in NGOs to have or to develop specific skills such as report writing and dealing with finance. For these reasons, according to Roy (2002), NGOs had to have people speaking languages with “bureaucratic” competence and who understood what donors wanted. As a result, NGOs in Kyrgyzstan began to be considered more as professional organisations where staff was well paid (Roy, 2002; Petric, 2005). In fact, Aksartova (2005) suggested that, in the West, employment in an NGO was not regarded as high in status terms as academics or doctors. However, in Kyrgyzstan, employment in an NGO was regarded as superior to these professions.

Some scholars argued that employment of educated and skilled people in NGOs had had a number of implications. According to Aksartova (2005) and Petric (2005), the high salaries and other benefits in NGOs enticed public sector servants to give up their jobs and opt for the NGO work causing an internal “brain drain”. Roy (2002) also harshly discussed the external brain drain that NGOs had brought about. According to him, intellectuals, especially young people, working for NGOs had scarce opportunities to have a successful career in their own country. This is because all prospective employment opportunities, especially in the public sector, were inaccessible for them since they lacked proper solidarity networks¹⁸. Therefore, he claimed, in order to succeed professionally, particularly in the NGO world or UN, NGO employees had to leave by such means as getting a scholarship to study in a

¹⁸ Roy (2002:127) has argued that Central Asia has a social fabric comprised of networks of people based on traditional patterns of solidarity groups: extended families, clans, neighbourhood clusters, and solidarity groups of varied sociological basis. Petric (2005:325) has also asserted that “solidarity networks are not only based on an identity/tribal membership but rest upon complex relations that link individuals through personal bonds (friendships, kinship ties, matrimonial alliances, professional bounds, etc.) of patronage”.

western country or even marrying a foreign colleague. Roy (2002:144) summarised that NGOs were “less likely to create a stable new generation of future cadres than to facilitate the thinning of the intellectual class within Central Asia”.

According to the literature, the concentration of intellectuals in the NGOs sector resulted in a failure to reach out to the local population, especially the poor. Petric (2005:326) suggested that people employed in NGOs had become a “new elite of ‘local experts’ closely related to international organisations and NGOs”. Similarly, Roy (2002:143) described NGOs as “a privileged class of employees who stand apart from local populace”. Moreover, he asserted that educated people in Central Asia usually had weak links with solidarity networks and groups, especially in rural areas. “Independent mindedness” of intellectuals attracted donors as right actors to promote a liberal type of civil society (Roy 2002). However, according to Roy (2002), this very fact undermined establishment of links between NGOs and communities since the former were disengaged from the solidarity networks.

Aksartova (2005) provided an alternative explanation for the gap between NGOs and local communities. According to her, in order to get support from donors, NGOs followed donor funding requirements too closely much, which resulted in their alienation from their society:

By learning how to make themselves recognizable to Western donors — how to look like an NGO, talk like an NGO, and behave like an NGO — local actors who form NGOs simultaneously make themselves illegible to their own societies, where almost no one outside the donor-NGO circle understands what the words for NGOs and civil society mean (Aksartova, 2005: 154).

For this reason, Aksartova (2005) argued that NGOs in Kyrgyzstan adapted the work style of donors. As a result, according to her, NGOs went through structural isomorphism by being forced by donors (powerful organisations) to imitate their own structure and relations (Meyer and Rowan, 1991:49 in Aksartova, 2005). Moreover, Aksartova asserted that NGOs also experienced coercive isomorphism “which involves “the direct and explicit imposition of organisational models on dependent organisations” as well as “more subtle and less explicit” pressures” (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991: 68 in Aksartova, 2005). However, it should be noted that Aksartova’s research did not focus on the professional and institutional capacity of NGOs.

On the whole, NGOs in Kyrgyzstan have heavily depended on donors financially. Petric (2005) reported that donors are the main source of funding for most NGOs. They do not obtain any financial support either from the Kyrgyz government or population. Such dependence of NGOs on donors has raised questions about the accountability of NGOs. According to Petric (2005), since they do not acquire anything locally, NGOs are not accountable either to their government or people apart from their donors. Furthermore, Petric (2005) argued that local NGOs were not as autonomous as they are believed to be because they were embedded into a complex web of relations between donors, international NGOs, and each other. Adamson (2002) and Roy (2002) suggested that financial dependence of NGOs on donors also pushed them to follow donor priorities rather than local needs. In the meantime, donor priorities have not always reflected local needs. As a result, NGOs tend to change their mission and goals regularly to match the donor agendas (Giffen et al., 2005; Shishkaraeva et al., 2006). According to Giffen and her colleagues (2005), this means that NGOs lack clear commitments to their target groups and specific fields of work. All in all, as Roy (2002) summarised it, NGOs had come to be regarded as a foreign funded artificial civil society.

Contrary to the above image of extremely professional organisations with educated staff, NGOs have also been criticised, especially by local researchers and NGO specialists, for being institutionally weak. Shishkaraeva and her colleagues (2006) observed that the organisational operation of most NGOs was limited to the most essential and basic. They have primitive equipment and furniture as well as few staff. They do not practise financial planning. According to these authors, despite different capacity-building trainings that NGOs had, the quality of their project implementation still remains weak (*ibid*). Kasybekov (1999) criticised NGOs in a similar sense by stating that many NGOs lacked a board of directors and other organisational and management skills such as strategic planning, accounting, and self-evaluation.

Moreover, Kasybekov (1999) noted that there was no clear separation in NGOs between policy and executive functions. As a result, NGO leaders have unrestricted power with no mechanism to ensure their accountability especially in terms of funding utilisation. Weak organisational operation, particularly in terms of

financial management, has led to poor NGO transparency and accountability hurting their image (Kasybekov 1999). Some authors argued that most NGOs were one person organisations, usually a charismatic leader, with very weak or absent infrastructure (Minnini, 1998; Shishkaraeva et al., 2006). As one of the aid specialists put it, NGOs are not non-governmental organisations but non-governmental individuals¹⁹. Tiulegenov (2008:3) has claimed recently that NGOs in Kyrgyzstan are “still one person endeavours”. Finally, Petric (2005: 326) criticised a recruitment process in NGOs by saying that it was not based on merit but rather on solidarity networks. Meanwhile, Marat (2005: 268) stated that the first wave of NGO establishment in Kyrgyzstan was based on a family principle when members of one family set up an NGO.

However, it should be noted that the studies on Kyrgyz NGOs discussed in this section did not explore the NGO sector in Kyrgyzstan from an organisational perspective by looking at their structure, administrative rules, leadership, membership, staff, and funding. The only exception is a survey of ACSSC which was conducted in 2006. It was a quantitative study aimed at investigating the institutional and financial sustainability of NGOs in Kyrgyzstan, and their public relations, activities, and current needs. 469 NGOs identified through a snowballing method took part in the survey. The key strength and, at the same time, weakness of this survey is that it only provides statistical data in a basic way. Moreover, during my research, I discovered that the list of NGOs identified active as a result of the survey included NGOs that did not exist any more. At the same time, it did not include a number of NGOs that I found to be active during my fieldwork. This means that the survey and results it produced have a number of shortcomings. This makes it possible to state that there is a gap in the literature. It lacks a study that explores the characteristics of the NGO sector, especially its professionalisation, based on a vigorous methodological approach.

¹⁹ This phrase was said by one of the OXFAM employees in the aid workshop in Edinburgh on 10 September 2010.

The turbulent path of state-NGO relations: donors as a bridge

Chapter 1 has established that, in the 1990s, donors ascribed to NGOs the roles of service providers, democracy promoters, and counterbalances to the state within their neo-liberal policies and democracy promotion programmes. Meanwhile, the functions of the state were limited. The previous sections of this chapter have discussed how donors promoted NGOs in Kyrgyzstan and the stages of NGO development pointing out both strengths and weaknesses of NGOs. This section looks at the relations between the state and NGOs.

Promising start: 1991 – 1999

In the early 1990s, when NGOs were nascent in Kyrgyzstan, the state led by President Akaev was very supportive of civil society. His enthusiasm stemmed from his will to obtain support, especially financial, from the international community (Anderson, 1997; Gleason, 1997; Huskey, 1997a)²⁰. Consequently, a legislative framework conducive to the emergence and operation of civil society was established. The Kyrgyz constitution of 1993 was a key document guaranteeing civic independent initiatives and freedoms. According to its Article 8, freedoms of all social organisations ought to be protected by the state²¹.

Up to 1999, Kyrgyz NGOs functioned within a law on public associations introduced in 1990 (www.state.gov, 2000). The law was adopted during the last year of the Soviet Union and governed not-for-profit organisations which included trade

²⁰ In comparison with other Central Asian countries, Kyrgyzstan had a weak point of departure after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Like other former Soviet countries, Kyrgyzstan experienced “the rupture of inter-republican purchase and supply links and the loss of labour” (Huskey, 1997a: 666). However, it also inherited a weak economy from the Soviet Union. Osmonov (2008) has argued that, during the Soviet Union, Kyrgyzstan was behind other countries in terms of development and work efficiency. In the same vein, Abazov (1999) has asserted that Kyrgyzstan was one of the poorest Soviet countries and heavily depended on Russia. In addition, it was a small, landlocked country with relatively limited natural resources and poor transportation links (Olcott, 1996; Huskey, 1997). For these reasons, newly independent Kyrgyzstan was unattractive to foreign investment but really depended on it to develop its economy. As a solution, President Akaev was convinced that economic and political reforms should be implemented to attract investment. He claimed that he would turn Kyrgyzstan into the “Switzerland of Central Asia” by making it a centre of trade, communication, and tourism (Olcott 1996:87; Huskey 1997a: 667). This aim shaped the political and economic policies of post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan in the early 1990s.

²¹ Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic adopted in 1993.

unions, political parties, cultural associations, and charitable organisations. According to the law, a not-for-profit organisation was supposed to emerge on a voluntary basis. Upon registration it could own property, establish mass media, publish, and act as a juridical entity (Human Rights Watch (HRW), 1990). In 1999, a law on non-commercial organisations was adopted for NGOs in Kyrgyzstan. It separated NGOs from political parties, trade unions, and religious organisations. It also eased NGO registration requirements. For example, only three people are needed to register an NGO, while, registration of a political party requires ten people. The law also introduced a tax exemption for NGOs receiving grants (www.state.gov, 2000). It was recognised by the International Centre for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL) as one of the most liberal in the former Soviet Union (www.icnl.org, 1999). In other words, the attitude of the Kyrgyz government towards NGOs throughout the 1990s was positive and favourable.

However, according to Kasybekov (1999), whose writing on the state-NGO relations in Kyrgyzstan is one of the earliest, there was no real or substantial cooperation between these actors, particularly on the national level, by 1999. The reason for this, he noted, was mistrust between the state and NGOs. In particular, the state was suspicious about NGOs due to their lack of accountability and transparency in them. However, Kasybekov (1999) claimed that there should be cooperation between these actors because “all parties – the NGOs, the government, and most importantly, the Kyrgyz population – would benefit from such cooperation” (Kasybekov, 1999: 72). He stated that NGOs had the potential to benefit different programmes through service and training provision. He referred to different examples of donor-funded projects where NGOs and the state were starting to cooperate and had a great prospect to do so. Particularly, he drew on a programme called “Employment Promotion Companies” funded both by the partner fund of the European Union and the Kyrgyz government.

The example of Kasybekov (1999) highlighting the involvement of donors brings up a central issue in the state-NGO relationship in Kyrgyzstan. It is the role of donors in these state-NGO relations. Donors have played a key part in the emergence of any type of interaction between NGOs and the Kyrgyz state. Donor-funded programmes have been a platform for the relationship between the actors. Aksartova

(2005) argued that this was not a two way relationship between the state and NGOs but rather a three way relationship which also included donors. According to her, since NGOs lack local constituency and support, they derive their legitimacy from donors and seek patronage from them to influence the state.

The state, on the other hand, is obliged to follow the requirements and norms of donors which include consultation with NGOs in order to obtain funding and support from them (Aksartova, 2005; Shishkaraeva et al., 2006). As mentioned elsewhere, being a poor country, Kyrgyzstan needs external funding. Shishkaraeva and her colleagues (2006) concluded that the state consulted with NGOs because it needed to include this among its numerous international commitments rather than because of a genuine interest in NGOs.

By the late 1990s, NGOs became active in the spheres of civic education, election observation, and human rights. In 1998, the Forum of NGOs was established with the aim to observe elections and promote civic education. Its first activity was training 150 independent observers to monitor a referendum in several regions of Kyrgyzstan. A year later the Forum was registered as the “Coalition for Democracy and Civil Society” (hereafter the Coalition). In 1999, it held a large campaign on election observation for local councils. The campaign involved 130 NGOs and 2000 citizens. This was an unprecedented activity in Kyrgyzstan. As a result of the campaign, 1,849 people were accredited as independent election observers. Building upon such activities and gained experience, the Coalition was engaged in different activities related to elections such as reforming the election code (Shishkaraeva et al., 2006). Further, it also moved to offering “vigorous and critical assessments of the government's actions and public affairs generally” (www.freedomhouse.org).

These types of activities gave a new twist to the attitude of the state towards NGOs and its perception of them. Aksartova (2005:193) observed that, “from the standpoint of the Kyrgyz officials, all disagreement with the state is political dissent”. Consequently, NGOs such as the Coalition started to be seen as part of the opposition. This meant that the nominal state promotion of civil society came to an end since it realised that civil society institutions could criticise it. On the whole, in the mid 1990s, Akaev opted to change his governance strategy in the direction of centralisation of power by initiating referenda to amend the constitution in 1994 and

1996 (Huskey, 1997b; Anderson, 1997). There were a number of issues with the referenda. For example, Gleason asserted (1997:100) that Akaev's referendum in 1994 to change the structure of the parliament was clearly illegal because "Kyrgyzstan's constitution empowered only the parliament, not the president, to call referenda".

Akaev's authoritarian grip: 2000-2005

Akaev's emergent authoritarianism deepened in the late 1990s and the early 2000s. Using the same technique of amending the constitution, Akaev managed to acquire public approval in another referendum to change the structure of the parliament in 1998. Consequently, the number of seats in the legislative assembly was increased from 35 to 60. 15 of them were allocated to political parties. Further, the number of seats in the assembly of people's representative was decreased from 70 to 45 (Abazov, 2003). In the 2000 parliamentary elections, mainly pro-Akaev parties and candidates were successful. Meanwhile, oppositional parties were suppressed. The elections also had such problems as government manipulation of results, voter intimidation by state institutions, falsification of ballots, and the curtailment of the media (www.osce.org; a). The OSCE report on the parliamentary elections (2000) claimed that these elections and the way they were managed had damaged Akaev's image of democracy promoter and had clearly shown his dictator preference.

In the early 2000s, the state under President Akaev started harassing and persecuting a small number of NGOs actively involved in human rights protection, civic education, and election observation. The Kyrgyz Committee on Human Rights (KCHR) was one of these NGOs. In 1999, the government revoked its registration, set up a new NGO under the same name, and demanded that the original KCHR hand over all their equipment and furniture to the new organisation. Consequently, the head of KCHR was forced to flee the country (www.state.gov, 2001; HRW, 2001). Although registration was returned to the KCHR, the NGO was continuously

harassed and persecuted throughout the remaining rule of Akaev (www.state.gov, 2000-2004; HRW, 2001-2005).

Furthermore, according to the reports of international organisations from 2000 to 2005, a few NGO leaders, who criticised the state publicly, were either attacked or threatened. For example, the 2002 HRW Report stated that the head of the Coalition had been attacked outside of her house after criticising the state at a round table. In 2004, the head of a Civil Society Support NGO received threatening calls regarding her criticism of a government plan on a constitutional reform at a UNDP meeting. In the same year, state-owned and pro-government media outlets began publishing articles critical of local and foreign NGOs (www.state.gov, 2004). One of the criticisms was that NGOs intended to destabilise the situation in Kyrgyzstan (Beshimov, 2004).

This said, however, according to different reports, Akaev's government had better relations with NGOs dealing with social issues. For example, NGOs working on education enjoyed much more freedom and state support (Abazov, 2003). The Assembly of the People of Kyrgyzstan, which brought together several large public associations and cultural centres, was chosen by the Akaev government as a focal point of state interaction with civil society. The organisation was given the status of a "consultative and advisory organ under the President of the Kyrgyz Republic" (Abazov, 2003: www.freedomhouse.org). Furthermore, the government created so called governmental NGOs (GONGOs). For example, in 2000 an Association of NGOs was established. Local NGOs were encouraged to join it. The Association of NGOs was reported to have been inactive during the first year following its establishment (www.state.gov, 2001). It has not been mentioned in the reports since the mid 2000s. In 2004, Akaev's government created an agency for relations with society to monitor and co-opt local NGOs (Huskey, 2005).

In general, the reports suggest that, under the rule of Akaev, NGOs enjoyed much more freedom than the media and political opposition and were relatively better protected by legislation. The state interfered little in NGO activities, except for the cases of large human rights NGOs. Even in their cases state actions against them were not severe and did not involve heavy violence but rather they were restricted to detentions, short-term imprisonments, fines, and refusals of permission to hold a

protest event. This suggests that Akaev's government still remained relatively liberal towards NGOs, particularly in comparison with other states in the region.

New government, new hope?: 2005 – 2006

After the March 2005 revolution the new government led by President Bakiev made efforts to work with NGOs but there was still some level of limitation. For example, the head of the original KCHR returned to Kyrgyzstan from his exile but his organisation could not recover its registration (www.state.gov, 2005). Nonetheless, most NGOs did not experience any problems with their registration. Moreover, the reports of international organisations asserted that a number of leading human rights NGOs were able to work independently (www.state.gov, 2006). Further, Bakiev appointed a few NGO leaders to government positions. For instance, Tursunbek Akun, who was previously a famous human rights activist, was appointed as chair of the State Commission on Human Rights (www.state.gov, 2005).

However, the Bakiev government continued the harassment and persecution of active human rights NGOs. For example, in March 2006, one of the leading human rights NGOs in Jalalabad was tormented by the government. A legal action was brought against three employees of the NGO for allegedly using false information against the government (www.state.gov, 2006). In the early 2006, Kaipov, the new Minister of Justice, declared that all NGOs receiving foreign funding would be investigated due to their potential threat to national security and the development of the country. This initiative stemmed from a claim made by the National Security Services that NGOs might be working in the interest of foreign donors. Moreover, foreign NGOs, namely NDI, the International Republican Institute (IRI), and the International Foundation for Electoral System (IFES), were exposed to government scrutiny (www.state.gov, 2006).

Gaps and debates in the literature

The available reports of different international organisations, namely HMW, Freedom House, and the US State Department, were very helpful in my construction of the above account of state-NGO relations in Kyrgyzstan from the early 1990s to 2006. However, they have a number of omissions and contradictions. All the reports predominantly focus on popular, human rights NGOs; they do not provide any data on activities of other NGOs especially from the geographical periphery. Further, the reports overstress state harassment and persecution of NGOs. They do not report whether any positive interaction between the actors. In fact, the reports do not give details of how the interaction between the state and NGOs occurs in the first place.

Furthermore, the reports do not provide a clear indication of whether NGOs can influence decision-making and the state. For example, US State Department Country Reports on Human Rights Practices claim that each year a certain number of demonstrations happens in Kyrgyzstan. However, they do not provide information on whether NGOs take part in the demonstrations and what their role might be. The reports also give the impression that NGOs in Kyrgyzstan are clearly divided into GONGOs and NGOs. Moreover, the latter are presented as uniformly Western-oriented and driven by Western values.

While the influence of NGOs on the government is not properly discussed in the reports of these international organisations, academic studies have very diverse views on this. Roy (2002) argued that the NGO sector neutralised potential political activism because intellectuals working in NGOs were drawn away from any political activity. Furthermore, he (2002: 144) claimed that NGOs did not either challenge “domestic elements of power” or address the real problems such as corruption and narcotics. In fact, according to Roy, they work where the government does not find any challenges. Therefore, he concluded that NGOs were not considered as “a threat to the status quo” (2002: 144).

Along these lines also, Radnitz (2006) argued that NGOs had not participated in the March 2005 revolution in Kyrgyzstan. He asserted that the revolution was organised by political opposition based on the strength of extended family, solidarity groups, and localism in Kyrgyzstan. This was identified as a key difference between

the revolution in Kyrgyzstan and the ones in Georgia and Ukraine which were organised based on “a large urban population, a strong civil society, and a national-level student movement” (Radnitz, 2006:133). In the meantime, Marat (2005), contrary to Radnitz, claimed that NGOs had participated in the revolution and could influence decision-making.

Kyrgyz experts have been pessimistic about state-NGO relations in Kyrgyzstan. For example, Tretyakov (2007) claimed that the relations between the two actors were based on mutual accusation and criticism. In the same vein, Omarov (Garaushenko, 2007:28), a famous Kyrgyz political scientist, stated that the state was suspicious of NGOs. He also said that, since NGOs were financially dependent on donors, in the state’s eyes they were a source of foreign influence on the Kyrgyz population.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have reviewed civil society promotion of donors in Kyrgyzstan from the early 1990s to the mid 2000s with the purpose of further expounding the arguments in civil society literature based on the case of Kyrgyzstan. Consequently, in the first section, I have stated that, by the mid 1990s, there was considerable donor funding aimed at civil society promotion. I identified six key donors which worked on the promotion of civil society. It is worth pointing out that their civil society funding was specifically directed at building capacity of NGOs which were just emerging in Kyrgyzstan at that time. Nonetheless, donors differed from each other in terms of why and how they promoted civil society. The US agencies were the key actors in civil society promotion in Kyrgyzstan. They focused on creating NGOs and invested the most. DFID provided the same sort of support to NGOs in terms of capacity-building. However, in comparison with the USAID’s programme, the DFID one was launched late and on a smaller scale.

The World Bank and Soros also had explicit programmes on civil society support. However, in contrast to USAID and DFID, these donors were not single-mindedly concerned with capacity-building of NGOs but they also incorporated

other issues into their grants to NGOs. For example, for the World Bank, civil society organisations were supposed to include excluded groups in decision-making. Further, the engagement of these donors with civil society was different also from a philosophical standpoint. For Soros, NGOs were an integral part of an open society.

Civil society support provided by the UNDP and the EC was less explicit. None of these organisations had a clear programme on civil society promotion. However, both of them provided capacity-building training to NGOs. They also incorporated NGOs into their programmes and provided grants to them for different issues, such as promotion of human rights in the case of the EC and community development in case of UNDP. In brief, the case of Kyrgyzstan demonstrates how donors' promotion of civil society, was discussed in chapter 1, was put into practice. Firstly, donors restricted their concept of civil society in Kyrgyzstan to the work of NGOs. Secondly, donors assigned NGOs the role of a service provider alternative to the state (EC), a democracy promoter (DFID and USAID), and representative of vulnerable groups (the World Bank).

In the second section, I have suggested that the enormous investment of donors in civil society enabled NGOs in Kyrgyzstan to develop rapidly, especially from the quantitative perspective. NGOs have also become involved in different aspects of societal life. However, in the third section, I have asserted that NGOs have faced criticisms which are, by and large, two-fold and contradictory. On the one hand, NGOs have been seen as donor driven, staffed with urban based educated people, and divorced from the local population. This has led to an image of NGOs as professional organisations without any links to their constituency. On the other hand, NGOs have been blamed for lacking proper organisational operation and management which has led to weak accountability and transparency. Consequently, NGOs have been called opportunistic, involuntary, and non-participatory. Most importantly, I have identified a gap in the literature on civil society in Kyrgyzstan. It lacks a study that researches professionalisation of Kyrgyz NGOs from an organisation perspective.

In the fourth section, I have discussed the state-NGO relationships in Kyrgyzstan which have been multifaceted. In the early 1990s, the government led by President Akaev embraced the idea of civil society for three different reasons.

Firstly, the government needed political and financial support from the international community which could come only when their agenda was shared. Therefore, I have emphasised that donors have played an important role in bringing NGOs to the attention of the state and initiating an interaction between them through their funding policies. Secondly, the state also had to address a post-Soviet crisis in the country. Thirdly, it did not understand the real implications of emancipating independent civic organisations.

With the development of the NGO sector and its activities, the attitude of the state towards NGOs became more attuned to the realities. Consequently, the relationships between the actors began to diversify. By the late 1990s and the early 2000s, the government of Akaev learned that: a) NGOs could be involved in different social programmes and donors are favourable towards this; and b) the emancipation of NGOs had a boomerang effect which came back to the government in the form of criticism against its activities. As a result, the state's attitude towards NGOs, especially towards the ones involved in human rights, civic education, and election observation, changed. A few NGOs were harassed and persecuted during Akaev's rule. When Bakiev came to power, efforts were made to work with NGOs. However, it took a negative direction after a year. Nevertheless, there has not been major curtailment of NGOs in Kyrgyzstan and they have still remained relatively free.

Finally, I would like to emphasise four points that are central for my thesis. My first point is that civil society was an important part of donor agendas in Kyrgyzstan. As in other parts of the developing world discussed in chapter 1, for donors civil society was a phenomenon that could promote democracy and development in Kyrgyzstan. Donors differed from each other in terms of why exactly, how, and to what extent they promoted civil society. Nonetheless, they had a commonality which was to encourage the emergence of a liberal civil society in Kyrgyzstan by providing capacity-building support to NGOs.

My second point is that the extensive and diverse NGO sector was a new phenomenon for Kyrgyzstan which emerged after independence mainly because of donors. In chapter 1, I mentioned that, in the pre-Soviet era, the social organisation in Kyrgyzstan was formed around pastoral clans and tribes. It was, what Gellner called,

communalism or the “tyranny of cousins and rituals” (Gellner, 1994:7). During the Soviet time as stated in chapter 1, public associations in Kyrgyzstan were within the domain of the state and promoted the communist ideology. In Gellner’s words, it was central authoritarianism or the “tyranny of kings” (Gellner, 1994:7).

My third point is that, according to the relevant literature, the NGO sector in Kyrgyzstan failed to meet the expectations of donors mainly because of their characteristic staffing. However, I problematised the professional image of NGOs by pointing out other criticisms against NGOs as institutionally and professionally weak. Therefore, I suggest that the literature has a gap indicating that NGO professionalisation in Kyrgyzstan is poorly explored. All in all, it is evident from the discussion in this chapter that the overall argument in the literature on civil society in Kyrgyzstan is that the NGO sector is an artificial civil society from outside injected by donors. As stated in chapter 1, it is argued that this has happened because donors used the same strategy for civil society promotion everywhere without taking into account local specifics. Furthermore, most criticisms against Kyrgyz NGOs are very similar to criticisms against NGOs around the developing world. As discussed in chapter 1, NGOs in other developing countries have also been condemned for being professional organisations with paid staff, lacking a link with their communities, and following donors rather than their constituencies (Zaidi, 1999; Mercer, 2002).

My final point is that the relations between NGOs and the state in Kyrgyzstan have been considered from two perspectives. Mainly, it has been stated in the literature that the state did not consider NGOs to be legitimate actors in the local context. Nonetheless, some authors suggested that NGOs became influential in Kyrgyz social and political life.

Chapter 3

Methodology

This chapter critically discusses the research methodology. The first section describes the research design. The second section expounds the data collection process. The third section explains the data analysis process. The fourth section reflects on some aspects of the research. Further, it is important to remind the research questions. The first and second chapters have demonstrated that the development strategy of donors based on civil society promotion did not bring about the desired outcomes in the 1990s. The case of Kyrgyzstan indicated that NGOs failed to represent the population, influence the state, and, therefore, promote democracy. In the meantime, the Kyrgyz state did not democratise properly. On the contrary, it grew authoritarian. As stated in chapter 1, in the late 1990s and the early 2000s, development strategies of donors started to be reconsidered. In this regard, this research explored the following: 1) what kind of changes have donors made in their civil society activities since the mid 2000s? 2) why have donors made these changes? 3) what are the implications of these changes for Kyrgyz NGOs, the Kyrgyz state, and relations between the two?

Research design

To answer my research questions, I found it important to explore and understand actions, experiences, ideas, beliefs, and motivations of donors and NGOs in Kyrgyzstan as institutions and, most importantly, of people working in them. This was of particular important to study the NGO sector. It was actions of the individuals, who constituted these NGOs, based on their beliefs, ideas, experiences, and motivations which determined the development of their respective organisations and, then, of the NGO sector in general.

Consequently, interpretive sociology, which is concerned with “*culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world*” [italic in

original] (Crotty, 2003:67), became the epistemological stance of my research. The origin of the interpretivist approach is traced back to works of Max Weber (Crotty, 2003; Gerth and Mills, 1946). According to Weber, social sciences should be concerned with understanding (*Verstehen*) (Crotty, 2003:67). In other words, human ideas, values, and beliefs should be understood since these are the forces that produce change. Consequently, for Weber, sociology should focus as much on social action as on structures (Giddens, 2005:18). In fact, an individual is the ultimate unit of Weber's analysis:

Interpretive sociology considers the individual and his action as the basic unit, as its 'atom' – if disputable comparison for once may be permitted. In this approach, the individual is also the upper limit and the sole carrier of meaningful conduct.... In general, for sociology, such concepts as 'state', 'association', 'feudalism', and the like designate certain categories of human interaction. Hence it is the task of sociology to reduce these concepts to 'understandable' action, that is without exception to the actions of participating men (Weber in Gerth and Mills, 1946: 55).

At present, this interpretive approach addresses the same key issues as the ones in Weber's thought. According to Blaikie (2000:115), the interpretive approach places "the meanings and interpretations, the motives and intentions, that people use in their everyday lives and that direct their behaviour" at the centre of social theory and research. Within this approach, a social researcher should grasp "everyday beliefs and practices, mundane and taken for granted" and articulate them to "provide an understanding of these actions" (Blaikie, 2000:115). In other words, I have found the interpretive approach to aptly represent my beliefs about the social world in general and to answer my research questions in particular, that is, from a perspective of social actors and their everyday beliefs and practices (Blaikie, 2000:115).

Furthermore, I used a concept of ideal type. It is, as Crotty (2003:70) put it, a "principal diagnostic tool" of Weber and conceptually based on the social researcher's imagination rather than on "an analysis of what is real" (Crotty, 2003:70). As a result, it does not exist "but can serve as a useful model to guide the social inquirer in addressing real life cases and discerning where and to what extent the real deviates from the ideal" (Crotty, 2003:70). Most importantly, according to Weber, the ideal-type can be used to study social behaviour which is "rational goal-

oriented”, that is, “the outcome of persons acting under a common motivation and choosing suitable means to the ends they have in view” (Crotty, 2003:70).

Ideal types

In my research I had three ideal types. The first one was within my conceptual framework. My research data revealed that donors’ civil society promotion in Kyrgyzstan, which was reduced to building capacity of NGOs, had developed differently. In chapter 1, civil society was conceptualised based on the idea of *Gesellschaft*, an urban phenomenon championing individual autonomy as a key prerequisite for civil society. A contrast to *Gesellschaft* is *Gemeinschaft*, a rural life prevailed with religious and community traditions (Tonnies, 2005; Kaviraj, 2001).

Consequently, civil society in Kyrgyzstan has been promoted in the form of *Gesellschaft*. In chapter 2, I discussed how donors wanted to create NGOs independent on local traditions and solidarity groups and networks. “Independent mindedness” of NGOs attracted donors (Roy, 2002). However, my research showed that NGOs in Kyrgyzstan had not necessarily been estranged from local traditions, groups, and networks. A number of cases suggested that NGOs in Kyrgyzstan had been built on religious traditions, solidarity networks, and local customs, that is to say, on *Gemeinschaftian* foundations. Therefore, I realised that there was a blurring of distinctions between the concepts of *Gesellschaft* and *Gemeinschaft* in the empirical material.

As a result, I developed two traditions of civil society, liberal and communitarian, for my conceptual framework. Each of these traditions served as an ideal type to enable me to analyse my data based on them. They were presented earlier in chapter 1. It is worth recalling here what these civil society traditions imply. In the liberal tradition, an individual is interest and needs driven; while, in the communitarian one, he/she is driven by value of the common good and sociability. Furthermore, in the liberal approach, the state and civil society provide a check on each other. The state provides a frame for civil society to have a free and civilised interaction; meanwhile, the latter counterbalances the former so that it does not over

exceed its power. In other words, the state and civil society are clearly demarcated actors with explicit functions towards each other.

In the communitarian approach, the state and civil society are complementary. The state not only frames civil society but also encompasses it and leads it towards the common good. It is important to highlight that, within my research, these traditions were not rigid models but rather a set of guiding criteria to understand and interpret data as it showed that a number of NGOs in Kyrgyzstan and their relations with the state and their constituency display features of both traditions.

The third ideal type was the one of professional and formal NGOs. Since I needed to explore what kind of impact the changes in donor policies had had on NGOs, I decided to approach answering this question from the perspective of NGO professionalisation. This is because a number of my first interviews with donors and civil society support NGOs indicated that NGO professionalisation might have been on the rise. Furthermore, I believed that collecting data on this would also enable me to give a more detailed account of the NGO sector in Kyrgyzstan and, thus, fill the gap in the literature on civil society in Central Asia which has been outlined in chapter 2.

I constructed the ideal type of a professional and formal NGO based on a resource mobilisation theory of McCarthy and Zald (1973). I unidentifed this work as the most useful for my work because the American social movement organisations (SMOs) that these authors studied in the 1970s have, subsequently, turned into advocacy organisations through professionalisation. For example, Common Cause, which was given as an example of SMO professionalisation in McCarthy and Zald's work, is now a large advocacy organisation aimed to "make voices of citizens heard in the political process and to hold their elected leaders accountable to the public interest" (www.commoncause.org).

According to Aksartova (2005), in the 1990s, in Kyrgyzstan along with other former Soviet countries, American advocacy organisations were used as a model by the US, which was the largest donor working on civil society promotion in Kyrgyzstan as noted in chapter 2. In the meantime, Carothers (1997) asserted that other donors might have also used the same model of NGO promotion as that of the

US. Therefore, I considered that it was important to look at how the American SMOs professionalised and what their professionalisation implies.

According to McCarthy and Zald (1973), in the 1960s, American SMOs started receiving funding from external sources: the government, foundations, churches, and business corporations. This funding was directed to institutional support of SMOs. As a consequence, a great number of “funded SMOs” came to existence. Further, McCarthy and Zald (1973) stated that the nature of SMOs’ membership and staff started to change. Substantial external funding made SMOs disconnect from their members since the former no longer need a contribution from the latter. Further, volunteer man-power of SMOs coming from their members came to be replaced with paid staff who were chosen based on their skills and experience. Consequently, a group of people emerged who could work in an SMO full-time and earn a respectable income. Most importantly, these new SMO professionals might not commit themselves to a single SMO since there were plenty positions in the social movement field for them. Therefore, they could move from one SMO to another (McCarthy and Zald, 1973).

Based on these, McCarty and Zald (1973) put forward an argument stating that SMOs professionalised in order to secure external funding. This process both caused and was accompanied by changes in the nature of their staff and membership. According to them, professionalisation of SMOs includes:

- (1) A leadership that devotes full time to the movement.
 - (a) A large, proportion of resources originating outside the aggrieved group that the movement claims to represent.
- (2) A very small or nonexistent membership base or a paper membership (membership implies little more than allowing name to be used upon membership rolls.)
- (3) Attempts to impart the image of "speaking for a potential constituency".
- (4) Attempts to influence policy toward that same constituency (McCarty and Zald, 1973:20).

Along with professionalisation, McCarty and Zald (1973) noted, SMOs also experienced bureaucratisation of their structure and work procedures. Therefore, it is useful to recall, very briefly, a concept of bureaucracy. According to Weber,

bureaucracy is when an organisation has: 1) a hierarchy of authority, 2) written rules regulating the behaviour of officials, 3) full-time and paid staff who are hired based on merit and can build a career in the organisation, 4) a separation between organisational and personal lives of staff, and 5) material resources that do not belong to members of the organisation (Robbins, 1990:232). Staggenburg (1988:587-588) suggested that, for SMOs, “formalisation” should be used rather than “bureaucratisation” because she has asserted that SMOs were not “as bureaucratic as established organisations such as corporations and government agencies”. Moreover, she went on that, in reality, this issue was more complex and, while, some SMOs became formalised, some of them never developed these features.

Based on these, within my research, the ideal type of a professional NGO included the following elements: (1) a full-time, paid leader; (2) a large amount of funding coming from external sources; (3) a limited or nominal membership base; and (4) activities directed at the interests of a certain constituency. I also decided to use “formalisation” to explore bureaucratic elements in NGOs. Therefore, formalisation implied the presence of the following factors in an NGO (a) a hierarchical organisational structure, (b) written administrative and financial rules, (c) full-time and paid staff recruited based on merit and who separate their personal life from organisational one, and (d) material-technical resources. I should note that I also drew on my own analysis of over 45 NGOs in Kyrgyzstan.

Research methods

The interpretive stance of my research as well as its questions determined my research methods. From the outset of my research, the key data collection method was semi-structured interviewing because it is one of the main tools to learn the social accounts of research participants (Blaikie, 2000; Bryman, 2004). There were also other practical aspects to my choice. I was not sure if I could handle an open, unstructured interview, especially taking into account that my interviews would be in three languages, Russian, English, and Kyrgyz. Therefore, it was crucial for me that semi-structured interviewing allowed me to have an interview guide with questions prepared beforehand which kept me focused on the research subject. However, at the

same time, I could be flexible to ask probing and new questions that could emerge during an interview (Blaikie, 2000; Bryman, 2004).

Documents were the second data collection tool. I decided to use them based on my previous experience in researching Scottish voluntary organisations for my master's dissertation. Every time I interviewed a voluntary organisation, I was provided with a number of documents such as annual reports, leaflets, and brochures. Most importantly, I learned that documents could be a very important source of information (Jailobaeva, 2005). In addition, I took into account that documents presented naturally occurring data in contrast to generated data that interviewing produced (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003).

In the course of my fieldwork, I had to employ two other methods of data collection. My initial research data indicated that I had needed to undertake some observation as well as to construct a social profile of NGO employees and leaders to further study research questions. In the second stage of my research, I observed the working environment of NGOs during and after the interview in order to learn their infrastructural context for my research focus on professionalisation and formalisation of NGOs. Bearing in mind that the role of a researcher in observation can be different (Blaikie, 2000; Bryman, 2003), I limited my role to observing and taking notes. This means that my observation did not imply participant observation, that is, a full immersion of the researcher "into the life of the people being studied" (Blaikie, 2000:234).

Furthermore, to collect data to construct social profiles of the NGO leadership and staff, I developed two self-administered questionnaires which had to be completed by NGOs leaders and staff (Blaikie, 2000). My purpose was to collect demographic data about NGOs which included age, gender, salary, and education. I was also interested in learning the perspective of NGOs' workers on their motivation to work and their career prospects in their respective NGOs. Questions related to career motivation and prospects of NGO employees had a set of answers that they could choose from as well as an option to add their own answer.

Data collection

My fieldwork lasted from September 2007 to May 2008. I conducted it in two stages. The first stage took place from September to mid December 2007. On this stage, my key purpose was to explore what donors were doing in relation to civil society promotion and what kind of changes they have introduced to their activities on this. For this reason, I focused on interviewing donors and international NGOs (INGOs). I decided to interview the latter for the following reason. Although they did not have their own funding, they played an important role in development assistance in Kyrgyzstan. They were contracted by donors to implement their activities. Consequently, they were aware of the situation on civil society, and even any other issues, more than their funders. Further, I interviewed local civil society support NGOs in order to learn their account of donor activities on civil society promotion in Kyrgyzstan and to explore whether they had experienced any changes in working with donors.

I made an initial data analysis within the second half of December 2007 and January 2008. The second stage of my fieldwork began in February 2008 and ended in May 2008. On this stage, I focused on further exploring my research questions, particularly in the light of preliminary findings discovered on the first stage of analysis. In other words, I concentrated on examining politicisation and professionalisation of NGOs and a nature of the state-NGO relations in the light of recent changes in donor policies and political environment in Kyrgyzstan. Consequently, my research priority was interviewing NGOs in the second stage.

Interviews

I used a non-probability sampling method to select my research participants. I focused on those organisations and documents which would be the most relevant (Bryman, 2004:334) and informative (Neuman, 2003:213). Nonetheless, depending on a situation in the field, I used different sampling approaches within non-probability sampling which are discussed below (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). When interviewing donors, I requested an interview either with a head of their civil society

programme, if they had one, or a head of the organisation since these people were identified to be the most informative about their activities on civil society and in general. As far as NGOs are concerned, I requested an interview with their leaders for the same reason, as they were considered to be in the best position to provide information about their organisations and activities.

Recruiting donors

I drew my sample of donors based on a joint website of donors in Kyrgyzstan, www.donors.kg, and a state list of foreign embassies, international projects, foreign and international organisations²². The website was set up by a donor coordination council²³ in Kyrgyzstan in the early 2000s (Interview with a coordinator of donor council, Bishkek, 2007). As of autumn 2007, it had seventeen donors mainly large bilateral and multilateral ones, such as the UN agencies, the European Commission, and USAID. The website provides information about the activities of these donors in Kyrgyzstan. In contrast to the website, the state list was much more extensive. It had information not only about large donors but also about embassies and INGOs.

From this large number of donors, I selected purposefully the most informative ones (Blaikie, 2000). The main selection criterion was whether a donor has worked before or works now on civil society promotion. To do this, based on the website and the state list, I developed three tables of three types of donor funding agencies. The tables indicated donors' main aims and funds that they have invested in Kyrgyzstan. The indication of the latter identified the weight donors have had in Kyrgyzstan. It should be noted that I also visited websites of these donors.

The first type of donors (Table 4) was governmental development agencies of developed countries known as bilateral donors. I discovered eight such agencies. They were mainly from western countries. The exceptions were Japanese and

²² Letter of Ministry of Finance as of 27 April 2007, No 14-2-3/3672.

²³ The donor coordination was established in the early 2000s to ensure better coordination and harmonisation of donors activities in Kyrgyzstan. The founders were DFID, the World Bank and Swiss Coordination Office. However, since its establishment, the donor coordination group has expanded (Interview, DFID, Bishkek, 15 November 2007).

Turkish agencies. Apart from DFID and Swedish International Development Operation Agency (SIDA), which launched their programmes in Kyrgyzstan in 2000 and 1998 respectively, all organisations have been working since the early 1990s. The largest donor is USAID which has provided \$400²⁴ million to Kyrgyzstan since 1992. The funding of other donors ranges from \$12 to \$248.01 million. In case of some donors, such as KfW Entwicklungsbank, a majority of their funding has been given as loans.

All donors have had the development of economy as their priority. Other activities have ranged from poverty reduction to cultural development. Most importantly for my sampling, it was identified that only four donors focused on promoting civil society under democratic governance: USAID, DFID, the US Embassy, and SIDA. The first two donors used to have large civil society promotion programmes. In the meantime, the latter two donors had a small-scale project where one of the elements was supporting civil society. In this regard, I contacted all four organisations for an interview. I managed to interview two respective representatives from USAID, DFID, and the US embassy.

²⁴ The funding amounts are indicated in US dollars.

Table 4 - Bilateral donors

Donor	Operating since	Key focus of activities	Aid provided since launch
1. GTZ (Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit - German Government-Owned Corporation for International Cooperation with Worldwide Operations)	1994	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improving the economy ▪ Developing agriculture ▪ Promoting environmental activities ▪ Providing technical support on health policy, statistics, and legislation 	\$248.01 million (€185.1 million) ²⁵
2. JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency)	1993	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reducing poverty ▪ Promoting a market economy ▪ 	\$18.19 million ²⁶
3. KfW Entwicklungsbank	1993	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improving the health sector ▪ Promoting economic reforms ▪ Developing a market economy ▪ Supporting agriculture and forestry 	In 1993-2004, \$79.99 (€59.7) million: \$37.52 (€28) million as grants and \$42.47 (€31.7) million as loans
4. SIDA	1998	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Promoting democracy, human rights and private organisations ▪ Reducing poverty ▪ Promoting health and gender issues 	No required data. But, in 2003 - 2006, assistance rose from \$1.02 (SEK 7.4) ²⁷ million per annum to approximately \$4.83 (SEK 35) million.
5. Swiss Cooperation Office (SDC)	1991	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improving good governance ▪ Promoting security and conflict prevention ▪ Improving macro-economic framework and conditions ▪ Developing the private sector ▪ Managing natural resources and infrastructure ▪ Improving the health sector ▪ Promoting gender equality and environmental protection 	\$150 million to Central Asia in 1991-2001. Additional \$38 million provided as credit.
6. TICA	1992	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Contributing to the economic, technical, social and cultural development 	\$12 million in 1992-2004
7. USAID	1992	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Promoting economic development, health and education, democracy and conflict mitigation. <p>Within democracy programme:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Supporting different civil society organisations such as media institutions, NGOs, political parties. 	\$400 million
8. DFID	2000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improving governance ▪ Addressing issues of water and sanitation ▪ Preventing HIV/AIDS 	\$43.67 (£29.3) million ²⁸
9. US embassy – Democracy Commission	1995	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Promoting the establishment of open and competitive political and economic systems ▪ Assisting in the democratisation process 	No data available

²⁵ The exchange rate as of 2 April 2010 was \$1.34 for € 1 (<http://www.expedia.co.uk/pub/agent.dll>)

²⁶ This is an approximate number calculated based on \$1.07 million (101,141,938.8 Japanese Yen) for 2007 (<http://www.jica.go.jp/kyrgyz/english/activities/>). This sum was multiplied by 17 which is the number of years that the JICA has worked in Kyrgyzstan. The exchange rate as of May 2010 is 0.01 Yen for \$1 (<http://www.expedia.co.uk/pub/agent.dll>).

²⁷ The exchange rate as of 2 April 2010 was \$1.38 for 1 Swedish kronor. (<http://www.expedia.co.uk/pub/agent.dll>).

²⁸ The exchange rate as of 2 April 2010 was \$1.49 for £1 (<http://www.expedia.co.uk/pub/agent.dll>).

The second type of donors (Table 5) was international development organisations – multilateral donors. I identified thirteen such agencies. The first five organisations were international development banks and financial organisations. Their key focus has been on economic development. All of them have been working in Kyrgyzstan since the early-mid 1990s. Their funding has been provided both in the form of grants and loans. The largest amount of funding has come from the World Bank in the sum of \$777 million. In terms of civil society promotion, only the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) have had programmes on this and have worked with civil society organisations extensively. I contacted both banks. ADB refused to give me an interview. A representative from the World Bank agreed to answer my questions in written form due to their internal policy.

The second half of donor agencies in this category was international organisations. Most of them have been working since the early-mid 1990s. Each of them has had specific aims which range from development of the private sector to improvement of reproductive health. Their funding has been provided only in the form of grants. In contrast to the banks, it was difficult for me to find out how much these agencies have spent in Kyrgyzstan. Based on available data, the highest amount of funding is \$315.48 million provided by EC over 1991 – 2006. UNDP's budget for 2005-2010 is \$117.4 million. It is obvious that these amounts are much smaller than the largest ones coming from USAID and the World Bank. Furthermore, these donors, especially the UN agencies, fundraise from other multilateral and bilateral donors to supplement their own budget.

For example, sources of the UNDP budget for 2005-2010 have been grant assistance (\$58.7 million), core funding (\$15.7 million) and external sources (\$43 million). Although almost all the international organisations have involved NGOs in their activities; only UNDP, OSCE, and EC have had civil society promotion as a component in their programmes. Consequently, I interviewed representatives from these organisations. In addition to these interviewees, I also interviewed a representative of the United Nations Volunteers which was not in the donor website. I interviewed a representative from this agency because he was involved in a new civil society board established for the UN agencies to ensure a better coordination between them and civil society.

Table 5 - Multilateral donors

Donor	Operating since	Key focus of activities	Aid provided since launch
1. ADB	1994	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reducing poverty through pro-poor sustainable economic growth, inclusive social development, and promotion of good governance. 	\$634 million
2. The World Bank	1992	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improving economic management ▪ Reducing corruption ▪ Promoting good governance and achieving effective public administration ▪ Building sustainable human and social capital through improved health and education outcomes ▪ Ensuring environmental sustainability and natural resource management. <p>The World Bank has a civil society fund programme.</p>	\$777 million
3. European Bank for Reconstruction and Development	1993	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fostering the private sector ▪ Strengthening of financial sector ▪ Supporting critical infrastructure ▪ Promoting a policy dialogue. 	\$267.98 (€ 200) million
4. International Finance Corporation of the World Bank	1996	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Developing the financial sector, tourism and agriculture ▪ Making mining investments in the country ▪ Encouraging development of the private sector. 	\$55.19
5. International Monetary Fund	1992	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Assisting in transition to a market economy 	138.4 million SDR ²⁹ as credits and loans for 1992 – 2003
6. OSCE	1999	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Preventing conflict and managing crisis ▪ Promoting economic, environmental, human and political security and stability. <p>Democratisation is a priority within a politico-military programme of OSCE. Its activities have focused on involvement of civil society in decision-making.</p>	No data available. But, in 2005, budget was \$3.222 (€2.4) million.
7. EC	1991	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Promoting development and cooperation between the regions ▪ Providing technical assistance ▪ Improving food security ▪ Promoting democracy and human rights <p>The EC provides grant mainly to non-profit organisations to carry out projects with the above domains.</p>	\$315.48 (€ 235.45) million for 1991 – 2006
8. UNDP	1993	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Assisting in achieving the national Millennium Development Goals through capacity-building, technical assistance and policy advice on poverty reduction, good governance, environmental sustainability, regional cooperation, and human security. <p>UNDP works closely with civil society organisations under its democratic governance programme.</p>	No data available. But, UNDP's budget for 2005-2010 is \$117.4 million.
9. United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund	1994	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Supporting: mother and child health and nutrition, clean water and sanitation, quality basic education for all children, and protection of children from violence and exploitation. 	No data available. But, UNICEF's budget for 2005-2010 is \$8,562 million.
10. United Nations Family Planning Association	1994	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improving reproductive health, population development, and sustainable development 	No data available. But, UNFPA's budget for 2005-2009 is 4.6 million.
11. The UN Refugee Agency	1996	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensuring protection and welfare of refugees of all nationalities. 	US \$6.73 million for 1996 - 2006
12. World Health Organisation	1993	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Assisting in improving the public health ▪ Reducing health inequalities by strengthening health systems, increasing access to basic health services, and improving the quality of care 	No data available. But major project's budget for 2000-2010 is \$2.9 million

²⁹ Special Drawing Rights <http://www.imf.org/external/np/exr/facts/sdr.htm>

13. International Organisation for Migration	1996	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Providing assistance in managing emergency and post-emergency operations ▪ Assisting in dealing with return migrants and preventing human trafficking ▪ Establishing technical cooperation on labour migration and migration management 	No data available
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Foreign private foundations were the third type of donors (Table 6). I identified two key foundations in Kyrgyzstan working on civil society: the Soros Foundation (hereafter Soros) and the AKDN. Soros has been working in Kyrgyzstan since 1993. Its main aim has been to promote an open and civil society based on transparency and openness. Its activities are diverse ranging from human rights protection to promotion of culture. Soros has invested \$60 million in Kyrgyzstan since 1993. Most importantly, it has focused on civil society promotion by running an NGO support programme since the mid 1990s.

AKDN started its programmes in Kyrgyzstan in 2002. Its activities are also diverse with the same range as Soros's ones. Nevertheless, it stresses more on rural community development. I discovered that AKDN also had a specific programme on civil society promotion. It was launched in 2006. In terms of AKDN's funding, I could not find the exact amount of its funding to Kyrgyzstan. Available data suggest that its annual budget for 25 countries, where it works, is \$450 million. Consequently, in average, it is \$18 million per country. As a result, I interviewed representatives from Soros and AKDN.

Table 6 - Private foreign foundations

Donor	Operating since	Key focus of activities	Aid provided
1. Soros Foundation Kyrgyzstan	1993	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Promoting human rights and freedoms ▪ Developing civil society ▪ Promoting public policy standards and formats ▪ Increasing effectiveness of state administration and local government via involvement of civil society in governance processes. 	Over \$60 million
2. AKDN	2002	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Supporting: economic development, culture preservation, rural development, health and education improvement, civil society, and others. 	No specific data. But, the annual budget of the AKDN for all 25 countries where it works is \$450 million.

Recruiting international NGOs

To draw a sample of INGOs, I used mainly the state list of foreign embassies, international projects, foreign and international organisations. I learned that a large number of INGOs worked in Kyrgyzstan on different areas such as civil society, elections, and health. Therefore, I purposefully shortlisted eleven INGOs which focused on civil society promotion (Table 7) (Blaikie, 2000). To acquire more detailed information about these NGOs for my table, which aimed to identify their key mission and funding, I visited their websites. Since it was impossible to find the amount of their projects' funding in Kyrgyzstan, I decided to indicate in the table their key funders.

Most INGOs have worked in Kyrgyzstan since the mid 1990s. All of INGOs in my table have had an element of civil society building, support of civil society organisations, and promotion of civic participation. All of them also have received funding from USAID at some point. For seven organisations, USAID has been the key and, sometimes, only funder. Other donors of INGOs have included National Endowment for Democracy (NED), the US Department State, DFID, SIDA, UNDP, the World Bank, and Soros.

I interviewed eight of eleven NGOs in my list. I did not interview three of them: Internews, Urban Institute, and International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX). Internews did not reply to my request for an interview. I did not interview Urban Institute because after learning more about its activities and interviews with donors, it became clear that this NGO had another focus. A representative of IREX said that they did not have activities on civil society promotion in Kyrgyzstan and directed me to other local NGOs.

Table 7 - International NGOs

International NGO	Operating since	Key focus of activities	Key funders
1. Mercy corps	1994	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Providing financial services and business advice▪ Improving education and vocational opportunities for youth▪ Establishing a framework for equitable and broad-based economic progress.	USAID
2. INTRAC	1994	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Providing flexible services to civil	DFID, ECCA

			society organisations such as training, consultation, information, and research.	
3. ICNL	1997	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Assisting in developing a legal and fiscal framework conducive to development of the NGO sector. 	USAID	
4. NDI	1996	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Providing small grants and technical assistance to Kyrgyz NGOs ‘to improve their advocacy skills, to promote active civic participation, and to strengthen their organisational capacity’ (www.ndi.org). 	NED, USAID, the US Department of State. Other funders include DFID, SIDA, UNDP, World Bank, OSI.	
5. Academy for Educational Development	Early 2000s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improving education, health, civil society and economic development ▪ Developing communities ▪ Addressing problems of youth. 	USAID	
6. International Foundation for Electoral System	1994	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Promoting civil society development, civic education, and political party development ▪ Providing technical election assistance. 	USAID Other funders include DFID, OSCE, and EC.	
7. Eurasia Foundation of Central Asia	1993	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mobilisation of public and private resources ▪ Strengthening communities ▪ Helping citizens to take an active part in building their future. 	USAID	
8. International Republican Institute	2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strengthening political parties. 	USAID and NED	
9. Representation of Internews Network in the KR	1995	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Supporting and developing local media to encourage pluralism of opinions and to deliver true and balanced information. 	No data available	
10. IREX	Early 1990s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Providing leadership and innovative programmes to improve the quality of education ▪ Strengthening independent media ▪ Promoting pluralistic civil society development. 	USAID, US Department of State, EC, British Foreign and Commonwealth Office.	
11. Urban Institute	No data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Implementing programmes on decentralisation, capacity-building of local authorities, democratic and effective management in associations of property owners. 	USAID	

Further, I had two more interviews based on snowball sampling, that is, expanding a sample by inquiring about further research participants from the ones already interviewed (Bryman, 2004). The first interview was with a representative of a donor coordination council to learn more about donor coordination in Kyrgyzstan. The second one was with a former employee of Save the Children, an INGO. I was recommended to interview her by one of the INGOs since she was involved in their community development project and could provide relevant information.

Recruiting local NGOs

To select NGOs for interviewing, I started with a database of the Association of Civil Society Support Centres (ACSSC) which is a local NGO aimed at supporting civil society organisations in Kyrgyzstan (www.acssc.kg). The database of 441 active NGOs was a result of the survey that ACSSC conducted in 2006 to explore the NGO sector in Kyrgyzstan³⁰ (Ubysheva and Pogojev, 2006). For the time being this database is the one providing information on active NGOs in Kyrgyzstan. The survey also identified that NGOs were mostly located in Bishkek and Osh, the two large cities in Kyrgyzstan.

These cities represent the northern and southern parts of Kyrgyzstan. Bishkek is located in the northern *oblast*³¹ of Chui that borders on Kazakhstan. Osh is a centre of Osh *oblast* situated in the south and part of the Fergana valley that is shared with Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. In the constitution, both cities are recognised to be of national importance³². There has always been an informal division between northern and southern Kyrgyzstan, which has come to the fore in social and political life since the mid 2000s. The differences between these regions are manifested in their language dialects, elements of culture, religiosity, and standard of life. For example, Bishkek is the most developed region in Kyrgyzstan and an economic, political, cultural, and social centre, while in Osh the level of development is, according to Barataliev et al (2010), average.

Crucially, the regions have different ethnic compositions. In Bishkek, the official population is 856,100. Almost half the population is of a Slavic origin (33.2% - Russians and 11.2 % - Ukraine), while Kyrgyz are 52.2 % (Barataliev et al

³⁰ In 2006, ACSSC conducted a survey to identify how many active NGOs existed in Kyrgyzstan, to learn the level of their organisational development, to assess their interaction with other actors (other NGOs, donors, the state, and business), to explore their programme activities, and to discover their needs and problems (Ubysheva and Pogojev, 2006: 21). ACSSC used a snowballing method to recruit NGOs. The criteria of its sampling were whether an NGO: 1) has operated not less than two years; 2) has not less than 2 staff members; 3) has implemented not less than three projects; and 4) is currently implementing not less than one project. As a result of this survey, ACSSC found 514 active NGOs in Kyrgyzstan. However, only 469 of them agreed to participate in the survey. At the end of the research, ACSSC produced a database of 441 NGOs on CD (Ubysheva and Pogojev, 2006: 25).

³¹ *Oblast* is an administrative unit in Kyrgyzstan. The administrative structure of the government is divided into *oblast* (province), *raion* (region), and *ayil okmotu* (local authority).

³² Constitution, Chapter 1, Article 8, Point 3.

2010). Osh officially has 243,200 people. In the whole of the Osh oblast, 64.2 % are Kyrgyz, 31.1% are Uzbeks, and 1.1% are Russians. The remaining part of population both in Bishkek and Osh are of other ethnicities (Barataliev et al 2010). The location and ethnic composition of these cities determine their culture. For example, Osh is known to be more traditional and religious due to the influence of the Uzbek minority and neighbouring Uzbekistan.

Taking into account these differences as well as the fact that most NGOs concentrate in these cities, I decided to interview NGOs from Bishkek and Osh. The differences between these cities were important in my research and in drawing conclusions. By interviewing Bishkek and Osh NGOs, I intended to gain a fuller and clearer picture of the NGOs sector in Kyrgyzstan. Therefore, in comparison with other studies (e.g. Aksartova 2005, Petric 2005) that focused mainly on the northern region, my research provided greater insights into the NGO sector by covering Bishkek and Osh as representatives of northern and southern Kyrgyzstan. As a consequence, I indicate the location of NGOs throughout the dissertation, although the names of the NGOs themselves are withheld for ethical considerations discussed in a later section.

In addition to city NGOs, I was interested in interviewing a few NGOs from rural areas. I wanted to make my sample of NGOs as diverse as I could in order to be able to cover the whole NGO sector. Therefore, I used a criterion based, maximum variation sampling method. This implies that the sample units “are chosen because they have particular features or characteristics which will enable detailed exploration and understanding of the central themes and puzzles which the researcher wishes to study” and differ from each other (Patton 2002 in Ritchie and Lewis, 2003: 78-79). According to the NGO database of ACSSC, there were 53 NGOs in Bishkek. I divided them into ten categories based on their missions and activities as shown in Table 8.

Table 8 – Categorisation of NGOs

Category	Number of NGOs
1. Civil society promotion	9
2. Disabled (invalids)	5
3. Humans Rights Defenders	4
4. Population well being (education, social issues, poverty reduction, ecology, conflict prevention)	7
5. Women	8
6. Old people	2
7. Health	4
8. Children	7
9. Young People	8
10. Occupational associations	8

Since my primary interest was on the promotion of civil society in Kyrgyzstan, the first category of NGOs on civil society promotion was of particular importance to me. I contacted all nine NGOs in this category with a request for an interview. Only six NGOs agreed to be interviewed. During the interviews, I learned that five of these NGOs definitely had civil society support in their mission and implemented activities on this. However, a representative of the sixth NGO was very surprised to learn that they were listed as a civil society support NGO in the database since their main mission was different. Nevertheless, during the interview, it became clear that they did support NGOs informally to help new and young NGOs to get on their feet. From the remaining nine categories, I interviewed 14 NGOs. My sample included at least one NGO from each category. Recruitment of NGOs depended on the number of NGOs in the category and their agreement to and availability for an interview. In addition to these NGOs, I interviewed an NGO expert from one of the local NGOs, who is also a lecturer in non-for-profit management at the Management Academy under the President. I decided to interview him after hearing his presentation on the state-civil society interaction at the American University of Central Asia where he touched upon issues that my research was looking at.

When interviewing NGOs in Osh, I had to make the best use of available time and funds. The ACSSC database was not helpful since there was a technical problem with it. It did not filter NGOs in accordance with their location except for those in Bishkek. Therefore, I had to draw my sample based on mixed sampling methods. Seven NGOs were selected because they could be easily accessed, that is, through a convenience sampling method (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003:80). These were the most

active NGOs in Osh which I found out about through my personal networks in international organisations in Osh. The remaining six NGOs were chosen based on a working AKDN's database of NGOs in southern Kyrgyzstan³³ which they work with. 61 of 136 NGOs in the database were from Osh. I selected 17 NGOs based on the same categories that I used to sample NGOs in Bishkek. I consulted a representative of the AKDN with regard to activities of NGOs in the database. Out of 17 NGOs in my sample I could arrange interviews only with six of them within the period that I could stay in Osh. As a result, I had interviews with 13 NGOs in Osh. I also interviewed two representatives from one of the INGOs in Osh.

The size of my research budget considerably determined my sampling of NGOs from rural areas. Since I could not afford extensive travelling costs, I decided to select NGOs from locations close to Bishkek and Osh. As in the case of Osh, the ACSSC database was unhelpful in selection of rural NGOs for the same technical reason that I could not filter organisations by area. It would have been too time consuming for me to find out the location of each village in the database to identify which of them were located close to Bishkek. For this reason, I chose two towns that I knew were definitely located close to Bishkek: Kant from Issyk-Ata district and Karabalta from Jaiyl district. I tried to contact all 12 NGOs in these locations (7 and 5 respectively) from the ACSSC database since the number was small and I assumed that I would not be able to contact all of them. As a result, I could interview only two NGOs from Kant. The rest including the ones from Karabalta were either unavailable or unreachable by phone.

To recruit more NGOs, I had to use a snowball sampling method (Bryman 2004). I asked NGOs working on civil society support from Bishkek that I interviewed to put me in touch with rural NGOs which they work with and were located close to Bishkek. As a result, one of the CSS NGOs provided me with a list of 15 NGOs meeting my geographical requirements. Out of this number I managed to interview five NGOs, the ones which I could reach over the phone, from the following areas: Vasilievka and Karl-Marx villages from Alamedin district, Nijne-Chuisk village from Sokuluk district. Based on this, it is evident that, within my

³³ This includes Osh, Jalalabat, and Batken provinces.

research, availability and quality of communication services in villages has become an unexpected criterion for the selection of rural NGOs which was out of my control.

After interviews with NGOs in Osh and from villages, I had four more interviews in Bishkek. Two of them were with two NGOs working on women's issues and community development respectively. I interviewed them to clarify some of the issues that I came across with in the course of my fieldwork. I also had follow-up interviews with representatives of an INGO and a local CSS NGO in Bishkek, which I had already interviewed in the first stage of my research, since I had a number of specific questions to them in relation to the NGO-state relationships in Kyrgyzstan. Furthermore, since politicisation of NGOs was a recurring statement on the interviews with donors, INGOs, and NGO, I interviewed NGOs identified by my interviewees as politicised. By asking to name supposedly politicised NGOs, I came up with a list of eight NGOs. All of them were based in Bishkek. I contacted all and managed to interview representatives of only three NGOs.

Interview guides

I had separate interview guides for donors, INGOs, and local NGOs. Each of them had certain objectives and consisted of several sections with formulated questions (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). The interview guide for donors had six objectives (see Appendix 1). The most important ones were to explore their past and present civil society activities, their definition of civil society and their interaction with other actors (other donors, the state, NGOs, and CBOs). For example, in the first section exploring civil society activities of donors, I used questions such as: How do you promote civil society at present? Have you had any changes in your approach to development of / working with civil society organisations, particularly NGOs, since the early 2000s? To explore donors' definition of civil society, I asked my interviewees from donor agencies if they had a particular definition of civil society within their programmes and whether it had been changed recently. All in all, there were around 26 questions in the interview guide for donors.

There were around 26 questions in the interview guide. Representatives of DFID and EC were interviewed twice. The second interview with them was based on

an individual interview guide. Questions were drawn upon the previous interview with them. I specifically focused on state building, good governance, and budget support to learn why and how these donors worked on these issues (see Appendix 2). Therefore, I asked questions such as: Is state capacity-building a priority in your programmes? Could you tell me what your organisation is doing on this in Kyrgyzstan? Do you provide budget support? In the 1990s, did you have the same priority – state capacity-building?

Interview guides for INGOs aimed at learning about their interaction with donors and whether they had experienced any changes in donors' civil society activities. As a result, my key questions sought to find out whether they had noticed any changes in the approach of donors to civil society promotion and working with NGOs since the early 2000s. I also explored how INGOs worked with local NGOs by asking specifically in what activities they involved local NGOs and what language they used in their work with them. Further, my interviews with INGOs aimed at learning if and how they worked with the state and community-based organisations. I also asked them about their mission, sources of funding, and activities (see Appendix 3).

I should note that every interview with donors and with INGOs differed slightly from each other in relation to the whole set of questions that I asked. This is because I had some specific questions to each of them based on information that I had about them from their websites and other sources. In other words, I was flexible about rewording my questions and add new ones depending on the interview progress (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003).

The interview guide for local NGOs had two overarching aims: 1) exploring their perspective on changes in donors' civil society activities, and 2) learning their development from an organisational perspective. There were 12 sections focusing on their establishment, funding, structure, activities, staff, relationships with the state, relationships with donors, understanding of civil society, interaction with other NGOs, interaction with target group/population, assessment of the NGO sector, and information about the leader. Each section had further detailed questions which ranged from 2 to 11 including probing questions (see Appendix 4). For example, the section on funding had 2 main questions and 6 probing questions as shown below:

1. Where does your funding come from?
 - A. If there are several sources of funding,
 - 1) What source does most of your funding come from?
 - B. If there are several sources of funding, but there is no the state and the private sector among them,
 - 1) Have you tried to get funding from the state or the private sector?
 - 2) If yes, what was the result?
 - C. If an NGO self-generates funding, how?
2. Does your organisation have membership fees?
 - If yes, how much is it?

The key section in the interview guide for local NGOs was on donors' activities on civil society and consisted of six questions such as how they usually work with donors, if donors involve them in designing their projects, planning, monitoring and evaluating their activities, and whether, in their opinion, donors have had any changes in their approach to working with NGOs. I did not go beyond the interview guide. In fact, my concern was to have enough time to ask all the questions since there were so many.

Interview contexts

At the beginning of each interview, I introduced myself and explained my research aims and objectives. I also asked my interviewees for permission to record the interview and ensured confidentiality to the interviewees (Neuman, 2003; Ritchie and Lewis, 2003; Bryman, 2004). Most interviews were recorded. Two interviewees from one of the donors refused to be recorded because of their internal policy. I took notes during these interviews. One interviewee also from a donor agency provided her answers in a written form due to their internal policies. I held twenty six interviews with donors and INGOs in their premises. The exception was one donor. We had an interview outside of his office because I could not use my recording device in his office. The overall atmosphere during the interviews was formal. I conducted interviews with representatives of donors and INGOs in English and Russian.

The interviews with most local NGOs both in Bishkek and Osh took place in their offices. This was a good opportunity for me to learn about their work environment and office infrastructure. However, with a number of NGOs without

offices and from villages, I had to conduct interviews in different places. The choice of the place did not always depend on me. In some cases, it was an initiative of the interviewee to meet in a certain place. After a few interviews and problems that I encountered such as noises present in the surroundings and undefined terms between me and the interviewees for unplanned expenses, I managed to arrange space in one of the institutions in Bishkek for interviews where I held several interviews. I conducted interviews with most local NGOs in Russian, and with some rural NGOs in Kyrgyz. I asked some questions both in Russian and Kyrgyz so that it was totally clear to the interviewees what I meant. I recorded all interviews with NGOs with their oral consent.

Interviews with donors varied in length considerably. Around a half of them lasted over 30 minutes but less than 50 minutes. The interviewees, who gave short interviews, were interviewed again. Nonetheless, it should be noted that the short length of interviews was not the only reason for the second interview but rather that I also needed more information. The interviews with INGOs had more or less the same length. The average length was 42 minutes. The interviews with local NGOs were the longest among three groups. They were an hour in average. Obviously, the length of interviews in three groups is different. It is connected with the length of interview guides.

To conclude, I conducted 16 interviews with 10 donors, 13 interviews with 9 INGOs as summarised in Table 9 (See Appendix 5). I also had 52 interviews with 47 local NGOs: 28 were from Bishkek, 13 from Osh, and 6 from periphery (See Appendix 6).

Table 9 - Donors and INGOs interviewed

Donors		International NGOs	
1	Aga-Khan Foundation	1	Mercy Corps
2	US Embassy, Democracy Commission	2	INTRAC
3	UNDP Democratic Governance Project	3	ICNL
4	Soros Foundation – Kyrgyzstan	4	NDI
5	The European Commission	5	AED
6	DFID	6	IFES
7	UNV	7	EFCA
8	World Bank	8	IRI
9	OSCE	9	ABA
10	USAID		

Self-administered questionnaires

It became evident after the first stage of data collection that, to research professionalisation of NGOs, there was a need to construct social profiles of the NGO leadership and staff. For this purpose, I developed two self-administered questionnaires (Blaikie, 2000). The first one was for NGO leaders and focused on collecting mainly demographic data such as their age, gender, education, and salary range (see Appendix 7). The second questionnaire was for NGO employees and aimed at not only constructing their social profile but also at exploring their career motivation and prospects in the NGO sector (see Appendix 8). Both questionnaires had a statement on the top ensuring confidentiality and anonymity to respondents. I should also mention that my questionnaires had a demographic question asking ethnicity of NGO employees and leaders. I decided to include this question because very few works discuss an ethnic composition of NGOs. For example, the recent ASCCS survey (Ubysheva and Pogojev, 2006) omitted this question but rather focused on gender and education of NGO employees.

33 NGO leaders and 25 NGO employees completed questionnaires. The respondents worked for the NGOs which I interviewed. After the interview usually with the NGO leader, I asked the interviewee and other NGO employees to fill in the questionnaires. Since some interviews with NGOs did not take place in their offices, their staff could not complete the questionnaire. Further, some NGO leaders could not complete the questionnaire either because of the inconvenient surroundings of the interview place. Some NGOs had many staff members. In such cases, depending on the number of staff, two or three were randomly requested to fill in the questionnaire.

Documents and observation notes

During my fieldwork, I also collected a number of documents such as reports, information leaflets, and others that I received from my interviewees either after the interview or via email. Table 10 provides a summary of the documents which I found the most relevant for my research. In addition to these, I downloaded a wide number

of documents in regards to activities of donors such as the UK White Paper on International Development 1997, the strategic plan of USAID and the US Department of State for 2007-2012.

Table 10 – List of documents provided by interviewees

No	Document title	Source
1	Definition of civil society (Report 2000)	Mercy Corps
2	Agenda of the specialist workshop on civil society in the Caucasus and Central Asia	Mercy Corps
3	Minutes of a meeting of British Overseas NGOs for Development	Mercy Corps
4	Active partnership between government and citizens: experiences from Kyrgyzstan	Mercy Corps
5	DFID strategy on Central Asia , South Caucasus and Moldova	Mercy Corps
6	In search of harmony: repairing infrastructure and social relations in the Ferghana Valley (Article by Christie Bichel)	Mercy Corps
7	Civil society at Mercy Corps (A case study on the institutionalization of a concept)	Mercy Corps
8	The civil society and conflict management strategy	Mercy Corps
9	Activity Matrix – European Neighbourhood working group (Excel file)	Mercy Corps
10	Introducing Mercy Corps' Vision for Change (Word file)	Mercy Corps
11	Give fish or a fishing rod? (Research report on self-help groups)	INTRAC
12	INTRAC information brochure	INTRAC
13	Contact details of NGOs - INTRAC partners	INTRAC
14	Review of History of Establishment and Development of the NGO sector in the Kyrgyz Republic (book based on NGO research)	Local CSS NGO
15	NGO sector: figures and facts (Survey report)	Local CSS NGO
16	Non-commercial rights (textbook)	ICNL
17	Regulation of a legal status of non-commercial organisations in civil codes in different countries	ICNL
18	Brochure of the local NGO working on civil society	Local NGO
19	Small grants programme (Brochure)	EC
20	Micro-projects programme (Brochure)	EC
21	EU assistance to the Kyrgyz Republic, 2007 – 2013 (Powerpoint presentation)	EC
22	Discussion of the bill on social contracting (Powerpoint presentation)	EC
23	Draft bill on social contracting	EC
24	Portrait of NGOs in Kyrgyzstan: opinions and reality (Book based on NGO research)	Soros – Foundation
25	Donor-Civil society relationship (Research report)	Eurasia Foundation
26	Informational brochure of the International Republican Institute (IRI)	IRI
27	Kyrgyzstan National Opinion Poll	IRI
28	Report of Cardoso on UN and Civil society (English and Russian)	UNV
29	Concept Note for a Civil Society Advisory Board for the UN in Kyrgyzstan	UNV
30	Membership of the UN Civil Society Advisory Board	UNV
31	A book on CS-state relationship produced by the local NGO working on civil society	Local NGO
32	ONTRAC 33 (INTRAC publication)	INTRAC
33	Oxfam-Novib Research Project, Central Asia and Global Civil Society (Draft report)	INTRAC
34	AKDN Civil Society Programme Briefing note	AKDN
35	Brochure of the NGO	NGO on property issues
36	A leaflet of the NGO	HR NGO
37	A leaflet of the NGO	NGO on conflict resolution
38	A leaflet on a 16-day campaign against gender violence	Women's NGO
39	A handout from a conference on women in politics	Women's NGO
40	A national action plan on gender equality in Kyrgyzstan	Women's NGO
41	A leaflet on women in politics	Women's NGO
42	Democratic Commission Small Grant Programme (Leaflet)	US embassy

Furthermore, I observed and took note of the work environment of NGOs. For this, I developed a form where I could write about the infrastructure and staff of

NGOs. I completed the form after interviews with NGOs. Some of my notes, particularly for strong NGOs, were short because information matched my form (see Table 11). However, my notes concerning weaker NGOs were much longer and more detailed (see Table 12). My notes on the working environment of NGOs were of particular use when I was writing about professionalisation and formalisation of NGOs. In fact, these notes enabled me to undertake an expanded classification of NGOs into professional and non-professional categories.

Table 11 – Observation form (An example of strong NGOs)

Name of an NGO: XXXX	
Premises:	It is located in the city centre in a flat. It looks like an ordinary project office with all equipment and furniture.
Equipment:	It has everything. I think even a car.
Staff:	There were 3 staff members.
Other comments:	The leader was an educated lady and very open. It was very easy to communicate and conduct an interview with her.

Table 12 – Observation form (An example of weaker NGOs)

Organisation:	XXXX
<p>The interview was held in Bishkek although the interviewee was Issykata region. We did not have place for the interview. She could not come to a place I prepared. Instead I came to a place she said. Since we could not find a room in the building where she was, we had the interview in the corridor. All in all, the interview went well. The interviewee was a talkative lady. At the beginning, she asked how I had found their NGO. I said that I had taken information about them from the ACSSC database and that I had had a special sampling technique. I also said that I had interviewed NGOs from Bishkek and now wanted to interview NGOs from regions. She was OK with this. Then I explained her about my research and asked her permission to record the interview.</p> <p>After the interview, when she was filling in my form [the recording device was off], we talked She is doing this job because she did not have a job in her specialty. She also noted that she had initiated the NGO partly because there were no jobs. She lived in Bishkek before and, as far as I remember, she moved to XXXX since she received a house as a heritage. At the same time, she said that she was not interested in writing projects for foreign funding and even got disappointed in them. ... She asked me to help her by sending information on different programmes.</p>	

Data analysis

My aim was to analyse my data in two stages: 1) after the first stage of data collection and 2) after the completion of the fieldwork. However, the process of data analysis turned out to be an ongoing process intertwining into data collection and

writing up (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). Below my data analysis is discussed in the order it was conducted since the purpose of each stage as well as techniques that I used on them differed.

Stage one – preliminary analysis

After the first stage of data collection, I conducted an initial data analysis from the mid December 2007 to January 2008. A deep and thorough analysis was not my purpose at that point; rather I aimed to identify the most salient findings and their implications for my further research actions. For my analysis at this stage, I used basic steps in the qualitative analysis suggested by Ritchie and Lewis (2003: 212). According to them, the qualitative data analysis involves: 1) data management when themes and concepts are generated from raw data; 2) making descriptive accounts after the themes and concepts are assigned to data and more abstract concepts are refined and distilled and 3) making explanatory accounts when data is assigned to refined abstract concepts. They also assert that themes and concepts can be used either in a cross-sectional “code and retrieve” or in situ, non-cross-sectional methods (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003: 203).

First and foremost, I transcribed all 30 interviews conducted within the first stage of data collection with donors, INGOs, and local NGOs. The transcripts were verbatim but did not include pauses, inflections, and other elements of discourse since I was interested in the substantive meaning of the accounts rather than their structure. Then I developed central themes and concepts, that is to say, a list of codes based on my interview guides (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003: 221). The key codes included the civil society activities of the interviewed organisation; its definition of civil society; and its interaction with other actors.

Each of the codes had sub codes whose number ranged from two to six. Some recurring ideas from the data were turned into codes or sub codes (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). After developing the codes, I proceeded to applying them to the data. To do this, I created a thematic framework for each central code with its sub codes. I put relevant data from interview transcripts into the corresponding sub code in the framework as shown in the extract below (See Table 13) (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003).

After coding, I developed their descriptive accounts. My aim was to look at each central code across all cases within each research population group and to refine categories further (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003).

Table 13 – E tract from a thematic framework: DONORS – 1. ACTIVITIES

Name	1.1 Project on civil society	1.2 Other projects involving civil society	1.3 Changes in the approach	1.6 Notes /comments
2 – AKDN	The civil society programme of Aga Khan is administered from Geneva. There is a programme officer in Dushanbe for TJ, KR, and AF. The programme mainly works with CBOs, which are not registered as NGOs. the main goal is to develop a village how they want. This programme started in August 2006. This is the first programme of Aga-Khan specifically targeting on civil society. ...	There is also a programme called a Mountain Society Development Support Programme working since 2003. It was an initiative of Aga-Khan Foundation but now it is registered as a local organisation. They are working in infrastructure development, income generation, livestock groups, handy craft groups and things like that. This is not a civil society programme. But, in fact, it is because it involves CBOs and works through them.	No reduction in aid but a shift in aid. Most funds are going to governance. Less money for civil society organisations. It is very competitive to get a grant. There are a lot of qualified organisations now. It is difficult to get a grant.	

In relation to documents, I reviewed twelve the most relevant ones and coded them as well. They were very helpful in putting interview data, especially the ones collected from donors, into a broader context. The outcome of my initial analysis was a description of initial findings in the form of a research progress report which was sent to my supervisors. Based on these, I refined my further research actions and focus.

Stage two – final analysis

The second stage of data analysis started after the completion of the fieldwork by transcribing interviews verbatim. I focused not only on data collected

on the second stage of my fieldwork; but also on the data of the previous 30 interviews. As a result, it became challenging for me to manage the overwhelming amount of data, which included 90 interviews, self-administered questionnaires, documents, and observation notes. Therefore, I decided to use Atlas.ti (computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software) to code data.

In comparison with the codes of my initial analysis, which I drew from my interview guides, this time I allowed codes to emerge from the data based on the principles of grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1998 in Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). Nonetheless, I still used some codes from my initial analysis. On the whole, the following themes - changes in donor activities, state-NGO relationships, and professionalisation and politicisation of NGOs - became central code families in Atlas.ti. Each of them has a number of sub codes both drawn from data and interview guides. The software was useful to sort, code, and retrieve data. I was also able to make some diagrams of codes and establish links between them. In other words, the software served as a helpful tool for me to organise and manage my interview data. However, data interpretation was still my responsibility and depended on my analytical skills (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003).

In relation to documents, I was very selective and chose only the most useful and relevant ones. After reviewing them, I coded the texts based on my interview coding list. Documents were very helpful to clarify and give more details on the facts that were discussed on the interviews. I analysed the self-administered questionnaires in Excel. I did not do a detailed statistical analysis because a number of questionnaires were small and their questions were mostly demographic since the aim was to construct social profile of the NGO leadership and staff. For this reason, it was a matter of summing up the answers in questionnaires.

Notwithstanding the distinct stages of data analysis within my research, I believe that data collection, data analysis, and writing up were intertwined processes because of my field notes, field reports, and conference papers. My field-notes were extremely useful during my data collection and analysis. I took them throughout my research with two key purposes. The first one was to organise my research better and to monitor my research progress. The second one was to record my notes on research issues such as data collection details, methodology, and ethics. They served as an

arena for development of my thoughts. I kept a record of the most salient and striking findings, thoughts, and ideas straight after the interviews. Therefore, I was able to go back to them later on for further follow-up and reflection. In retrospect, I can assert that I would have not reached my current ideas expressed in the thesis, if I had not had my field-notes. Field reports that I wrote for the SRC of the American University of Central Asia in the capacity of a visiting research fellow as well as a number of other conference papers based on early findings opened up potential ways of writing up my thesis. Further, they also indicated which aspects of the research needed more data. For example, after writing the field report on the state-NGO relations in Kyrgyzstan for the SRC, I conducted two interviews with NGO experts on this theme specifically aimed at exploring more because I identified which data I lacked.

Reflections on the research

In this section, I would like to reflect upon four specific aspects of my research. The first aspect is the abundance of research data and the reasons explaining why I collected so much data. At the outset of my research, one of the key questions was how many interviews I should conduct. A review of the literature on methodology revealed that interview data should be collected until it is saturated; that is to say, when data do not contribute new information or themes (Guest et al., 2006). However, Guest and her colleagues aptly noted that, although the concept of saturation was useful at the conceptual level, “it provides little practical guidance for estimating sample sizes, prior to data collection, necessary for conducting quality research” (Guest et al., 2006:59). Therefore, based on their experiment with data saturation and variability, they suggest that the first twelve interviews saturate data.

It was enlightening to know the number of interviews resulting in the saturation of data. However, I was still hesitant with regard to whether twelve interviews with each research population group (donors, INGOs, and local NGOs) would be sufficient for my research. For this reason, I decided to look at other works on the same issue and region to use them as a point of reference. The review of PhD

works on civil society in the former Soviet Union³⁴ suggested that the researchers held from 60 to over 100 interviews. In addition to interviewing, they also used other data collection methods such as case studies and observation. As a result, my decision regarding the volume of data was based on the theoretical idea of saturation, practical aspects of the above PhD works, and my research progress.

The second aspect of my research to be reflected is ethics. As stated above, I tried to follow a standard ethical procedure by informing research participants about myself and my research aims and objectives, assuring confidentiality for interviewees, and asking my interviewees for permission to record (Neuman, 2003; Ritchie and Lewis, 2003; Bryman, 2004). However, these all were done orally. This is because an oral tradition prevails in Kyrgyzstan. Further, being an insider and aware of social, cultural, and political nuances, I believed that I did not need to overstress on confidentiality and recording an interview since it could make people anxious, give a completely different impression about my research, inflict suspicion and, as a result, influence what they would tell me. Therefore, in each interview, I talked about myself and my research to a greater extent and briefly mentioned that information would be confidential and an interview would be recorded if they agreed. My pre-research assessments of potential drawbacks in using a recorder turned out to be correct. Some interviewees talked more freely and open after I said that our interview was over and switched off the recorder. A few of them openly said “while your recorder is off, I will tell you” (Interview, 12 November 2007, Bishkek).

Research ethics in the Central Asian region has also been discussed by Wall and Overton (2006). Based on their fieldwork assessing the adoption of new technologies in Uzbekistan in 2003, the authors have suggested that Western notion of research ethics cannot be fully applied in Uzbekistan where repression and Soviet type conspiracy still exist and create an environment of insecurity and fear. The authors have also asserted that Western ethics clash with local traditions. For example, permission for recording or signature was found inappropriate in their

³⁴ Aksartova, S. 2005. *Civil Society from Abroad: US Donors in the Former Soviet Union*. PhD thesis. Princeton University. Fumagalli, M. 2005. *The Dynamics of Uzbek Ethno-Political Mobilisation in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan*. PhD thesis. University of Edinburgh. Stevens, D.J. 2005. *Conceptual Travel Along the Silk Road: On Civil Society Aid in Uzbekistan*. PhD thesis. School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.

approach due to the region's oral tradition. Consequently, the authors have argued that western ethics should be applied in accordance with a local context. Otherwise there is a danger of conducting ethical research unethically. My research experience is congruent with Wall and Overton's (2003) one and supports that, in the context of countries like Central Asian ones, the Western research ethics should be applied by taking into account the local context and traditions.

Furthermore, the methods literature suggests researchers should inquire if their research participants would be interested in getting a report on the research findings (Blaikie, 2000; Neuman, 2003; Ritchie and Lewis, 2003; Bryman, 2004). I did not ask my research participants if they wanted anything from me because I was aware of practical obstacles that I would have in order to do this. I knew that I would write up my research findings in Edinburgh and in English. In the meantime, my interviewees are all in Kyrgyzstan and most of them do not speak English. Moreover, a number of NGOs, especially from villages, do not have email or other well-established means of communication, such as post, through which I could communicate with them. Nonetheless, I did agree to send something to those interviewees who asked me to do so. These research participants were mainly from donor agencies and large NGOs. As a result, I have sent all donors a couple of field-reports that I produced for the SRC of the American University of Central Asia where I was a visiting research fellow.

The third aspect of my research reflection is confidentiality of my interviewees in my writing. I ensured confidentiality to all research participants by saying that their names will not be identified in my writings. However, confidentiality of the names of their organisations was not discussed. Therefore, this has become an issue for me when I was writing up. I could not contact all my interviewees due to the above mentioned problems with communication. As a result, after a long deliberation with a particular focus on the political and social context in Kyrgyzstan, I decided not to reveal the names of NGOs. This is because it seemed to me that disclosure of NGO names would entail easy identification of my interviewees. However, I do provide other information about NGOs such as which field they work in, where they are based, and when the interview was conducted. In relation to donors, I could not conceal their names because presentation of my

research findings would not make sense without proper referencing to an organisation. Moreover, I think that interviewees from donor agencies have better security prospects.

The final aspect of my reflection is a slight change in my research focus. Initially, one of my research focuses was exploring CBOs. This was because the literature on civil society in Central Asia suggested that, in the context of Kyrgyzstan, donors started promoting CBOs as an element of local civil society which could reach out to people better (Earle, 2005; Giffen et al., 2005). Furthermore, there was an argument that Central Asia had a rich social fabric that could be used in the promotion of civil society (Roy, 2002). Therefore, my initial research proposal also had a question in relation to CBOs. However, after the first stage of my fieldwork, it became clear that donors' shift to the state was stronger than their shift to CBOs. Consequently, I focused more on the shift to the state and how it had influenced their civil society activities. Nonetheless, during the second stage of my fieldwork, I interviewed a number of CBOs to explore what kind of role they played in donor activities.

While drawing a sample of CBOs, I used a convenience sampling method (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). That is I relied on my personal networks in INGOs and local NGOs to gain information and access to CBOs since they were flexible and unregistered institutions. As a result, I had two interviews arranged by a local NGO in Osh with members of CBOs from Tolokon and Jany Jol villages, Aravan district. On my way to Jany Jol village I “opportunistically took an advantage of unforeseen opportunities” and interviewed three representatives of local authorities of Tobo Korgan *ayil okmotu*³⁵ (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003:80). Further, I was also assisted by an INGO based in Osh. It put me in touch with five CBOs from Kyzyl Jyldyz and Kyla villages, Nooken district, Oktyabrskei, Lenin, and Kyrgyzstan villages, Suzak district in Jalalabat province. Consequently, I interviewed the leaders of seven CBOs (see Appendix 9). The interviews were unstructured. My questions for CBOs focused on how they were established, operated, and interacted with other actors such as the local authority, donors, population, and NGOs. I asked representatives of the local authorities how they worked with CBOs and about their functions in general.

³⁵ This is the administrative cluster of villages which Jany Jol belonged to.

Interviews with CBO leaders took place either in their houses or at their workplace. In some interviews there were a few people around. For example, in the interview with a member of the CBO from Suzak district, there was a representative from an NGO based in Jalalabat. In the middle of the interview when the interviewee started talking about their joint project with this NGO, its representative could not help intervening to give more details on the project. I considered it in a positive light since it gave me more accurate information. Nonetheless, I took into account that the presence of the representative of the NGO from Jalalabat could have restricted the willingness of the CBO leader to talk in a relaxed way. I had interviews with representatives of local authorities in their offices. I conducted interviews with CBOs and representatives of *ayil okmotu* in Kyrgyz. I recorded all interviews with the oral consent from the interviewees. The length of interviews was relatively short. On average, they lasted about 30 minutes.

The final point of my research reflection is that my fieldwork discovered a number of interesting findings that might impact Kyrgyz NGOs, especially their future development. These findings are not discussed in the thesis because they were not its focus. However, I mention their significance when I discuss new research directions in chapter 7. One of these findings is emerging donors. During my fieldwork, some of my interviewees from donors said that countries such as Russia, China, Kazakhstan, and Iran were emerging as donors in Kyrgyzstan. According to the interviews with donors, the emerging donors work mainly on economic development and business promotion. They do not have classic development programmes as the western and international donors, discussed in this thesis, do. The emerging donors do not normally provide grants to NGOs either. However, one of my NGOs said that they had received funding from the Russian Embassy. Therefore, one can conclude that the emerging donors might influence Kyrgyz NGOs in future.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I critically discussed and reflected upon the methodology of my research. I would like to highlight that my data collection methods included semi-structured interviewing, document analysis, observation, and self-administered questionnaires. My research population were donors, international and local NGOs, CBOs and representatives of local authorities. The majority of my data comes from 91 interviews with 10 donors, 9 INGOs, 47 local NGOs, 7 CBOs and 3 representatives of local authorities. I analysed my data based on a cross-sectional “code and retrieve” method (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003) using Atlas.ti.

Chapter 4

Donor disillusionment: the return of the state

This chapter aims to answer two research questions: a) what kind of changes have donors made in their civil society activities since the mid 2000s and b) why have donors made these changes? Consequently, in the first section, I present my research findings about the changes in civil society activities of donors. In the second section, I put these changes in a broader context by looking at a shift in donor priorities towards state capacity-building. In the third section, I discuss why donors have made this shift. In the conclusion, I point out that the current civil society activities of donors as well as their focus on state capacity-building are different from their previous policies which focused on civil society promotion and limiting the state. Overall, in this chapter, I argue that the role and place of NGOs within the current civil society activities of donors is being shaped by their new priority on state capacity-building.

Civil society promotion since the mid 2000s: the diminishing NGO role

One of my central research findings is that donors' civil society promotion in Kyrgyzstan has encountered major changes since the mid 2000s. I present the findings about current donor activities on NGOs and civil society in four large themes. First of all, I suggest that donors withdrew funding for their civil society programmes aimed at building the capacity of NGOs. Now they support NGOs only in an advocacy role. Second, donors have reduced their funding to NGOs. I point out that this has made existing competition for donor funding among NGOs even stronger. Third, at present donors are promoting more collaboration between the state and NGOs. Consequently, I propose that the interaction between NGOs and the state is increasing. Finally, I also suggest that now donors are using NGOs to reform the state rather than to establish NGOs as a separate sphere from the state as it was the case in the 1990s.

Supporting NGOs in an advocacy role

My research suggests that the donor emphasis on encouraging the emergence of NGOs in Kyrgyzstan by giving out “seed grants” and building their capacity has shifted since the mid 2000s. USAID and DFID, the key civil society promoters, closed down their programmes on building capacity of civil society organisations. They have shifted to promoting NGOs which can advocate changes and reforms state policies. However, these donors had different reasons for making this change. For USAID supporting NGOs in an advocacy role is a second step in the development of civil society in Kyrgyzstan. Having concluded that Kyrgyz civil society has become active and vibrant, in 2006, USAID decided to take their civil society support programme one step further by targeting their support at NGOs that advocate reform and change in state policies (Interview with a USAID representative, Bishkek, 15 February 2008).

As a result, in 2007, USAID subcontracted Pact, an international NGO, to carry out a programme on civic advocacy for reform and stability in Kyrgyzstan. The aim of the programme is to support advocacy campaigns of Kyrgyz civil society organisations in order to promote governance reforms (Interview with a USAID representative, Bishkek, 15 February 2008). In 2008, Pact supported advocacy campaigns on five themes. Three of them directly concerned the state and its institutions and policies. They aimed at increasing transparency of the activities of the Kyrgyz parliament, improving access to information held by the state institutions and self-governance institutions in Kyrgyzstan, and improving procedures for registering land transactions and a law on legal regulations of land registration issues (www.pact.kg).

DFID also made a shift towards supporting civil society organisations advocating changes and reforms in state policies. However, in comparison with USAID, DFID did this for a different reason. An interviewee from DFID said that they had found it useless to build capacity of civil society institutions without a particular purpose. Their conclusion was that “capacity development for civil society has to be for a purpose”. As a result, they made their assistance to civil society more focused by supporting civil society organisations in influencing policy processes

such as budget allocation (Interview with a DFID representative, Bishkek, 12 February 2008).

It is clear that, in comparison with USAID, DFID's answer with regard to why they have changed their civil society support strategy is negative. For DFID, it was improving their ineffective method of promoting civil society rather than furthering the development of civil society as was the case for USAID. An interviewee from INTRAC, an international NGO subcontracted by DFID to carry out its programme on building capacity of civil society organisations, gave more insights into possible reasons of why DFID stopped its programme. According to him, DFID possibly was disappointed with NGOs particularly with the fact that they "could not make social changes in society on a sufficient scale". He also suggested that DFID might have realised that civil society was causing problems for local government by being too demanding of their rights (Interview with an INTRAC representative, Bishkek, 15 November 2007). In this regard, I propose that the INTRAC representative probably meant that civil society organisations were too opposing the state in accordance with the counterbalancing role that donors ascribed to them within their civil society promotion in the 1990s.

DFID's programme on public financial management can be one example illustrating how NGOs work within advocacy programmes of donors. The programme aims at strengthening "the way government manages public finance". Within it, DFID works with the Ministry of Finance on allocating resources in the budget. Eleven NGOs are involved in this programme in order to "strengthen citizens' engagement in the budget process", to "make sure that citizens have their voice in the way in which budget is allocated" and "to hold government to account on how money is spent" both at central and local levels. Each of these organisations has its focus within a programme such as a certain part of the budget, a certain sector, or a certain location. For example, one of the NGOs focuses on a procurement procedure within a health sector (Interview with a DFID representative, Bishkek, 12 February 2008).

By and large, interviews with other donors also suggested that they no longer provide "seed grants" and capacity-building support to NGOs. Now they cover only

project expenses of NGOs. Moreover, NGO projects should focus on advocacy. As one of the NGO interviewees summarised it:

Even if it [project] is in the field of healthcare, they [donors] try to include advocacy to reform the healthcare system (Interview with a head of an NGO, Bishkek, 26 October 2007).

Some international NGOs, which have supported capacity-building of civil society, had to reconsider their capacity-building approach because the previous one proved to be ineffective. For example, NDI has taken an individual approach to working with local NGOs. They are now working only with two NGOs; while, before the mid 2000s, they used to work with twenty NGOs. They believe that they need to work with a small number of NGOs to have better results. Instead of providing only a grant, at present NDI also provides its grantees with technical support including training and consultation. Further, NDI is concentrating on developing an NGO as an organisation by involving its whole staff; before, they mainly focused on developing the leader of the NGO, which led to the collapse of the NGO when the leader left. This example shows that NDI decreased its number of grantees and opted for promoting quantity to quality (Interview with a representative of NDI, Bishkek, 1 November 2007). However, like other donors, their grants also aim at advocacy.

Reduction in funding to NGOs

According to my research, another key change in donors' civil society promotion in Kyrgyzstan is the reduction in donor funding to NGOs. This finding is based on interviews with NGOs rather than statistical indicators. In fact, it was difficult to identify how much funding donors provide to NGOs both in the relevant literature and interviews. During interviews donor agencies could not provide an exact number of their grants to NGOs. Research of the Eurasia Foundation of Central Asia on the donor-NGO relationship in Kyrgyzstan (www.efcentralasia.org, 2008) has also shown incapability of donors to indicate the amount of funding which they have provided to NGOs. In the literature, only one article by Azpuru and his colleagues (2008) provides figures of worldwide US democracy assistance from

1990 to 2005. According to them, after 2003, civil society - the most funded component within US democracy assistance in the 1990s - was surpassed by governance.

Both international and local NGOs noted that donor funding to NGOs had been reduced. Representatives of international NGOs, namely Soros, NDI, INTRAC, and the Eurasia Foundation of Central Asia, which have been involved in the promotion of civil society in Kyrgyzstan since the 1990s, noted that there was a trend towards reduction in funding to NGOs. For example, an interviewee from NDI said that there were fewer and fewer grant opportunities for NGOs, which she noticed while assembling a digest on grant opportunities for their NGO information centres. As a result of this, she suggested, soon it would become difficult for NGOs to get funding (Interview with a representative of NDI, Bishkek, 1 November 2007).

Local NGOs working on civil society support made the same observations about the erosion of donor funding for NGOs. Some of them specified that donors stopped providing capacity-building grants to NGOs that covered expenses of NGOs for offices, staff, and running costs. Now only a few NGOs have these kinds of funds. All in all, there are no longer such grants available (Interview with the head of the NGO, Bishkek, 26 October 2007). An interviewee from the civil society support center in Osh assessed this situation as a critical period for the civil sector in Kyrgyzstan since NGOs might stop their activities because of the funding shortage (Interview with a representative of the NGO, Osh, 1 April 2008).

Local NGOs specialising on other issues both from cities and villages also noted a reduction in donor funding to NGOs. One of the interviewees from Issyk-Ata region specifically stressed that donor funding reduced after 2005:

I think yes it is [aid being reduced]. Because before the revolution I did not have an opportunity to go away even for a day. They [people] phoned me constantly, a lot of events, projects, invitations. For example, you could be gone to Issyk-Kul for a seminar for three days. Your telephone would not stop (Interview with a head of the NGO from Issyk-Ata region, Bishkek, 17 March 2008).

It is evident in the quote that there is a great contrast between activities of this NGO worker before and after 2005. Before 2005, she was very busy and involved in many activities that came to a halt after 2005. In fact, during the interview, it was revealed that this NGO had not had a project since 2006. As a result, based on the interview

data, I suggest that donor funding to NGOs has been reduced indeed despite a lack of statistical numbers.

Promoting collaboration between the state and NGOs

I identified from my research data that currently donors focus on the promotion of an effective and collaborative relationship between NGOs and the state. For example, DFID wants civil society to collaborate with the state effectively. This is clear from an answer of a DFID representative to a question of what he thinks civil society - state relationship should be like:

We would like civil society to interact very effectively with the government both in terms of service delivery and advocacy. Because sometimes civil society can access certain groups that government cannot. HIV/AIDS is a good example. Government is not very good at accessing drug users and commercial sex workers but civil society is. So they work together effectively. And also in terms of advocacy: civil society has a very important role to advocate certain issues, to represent certain groups that otherwise would be excluded from society (Interview with a DFID representative, Bishkek, 12 February 2008).

The part of the quote where the interviewee describes how the state and civil society can work together on HIV/AIDS indicates that the relationship between these actors is even seen as complementary because the state cannot access drug users and sex workers properly, while civil society can. However, the latter needs the former in order to have the needs and interests of the group met. In other words, the actors mutually complement each other.

An interview with a representative of the European Commission (EC) gives more insights to the idea of the complementary relationship between the state and civil society. According to the interviewee, the state and civil society have the same interests and work on the same field, that is, social problems. However, he goes on to say that one of them might lack something to carry out its activities effectively. For example, the state usually lacks funds and expertise. Therefore, the interviewee concluded that the state and civil society could work together by sharing with each other what they lack, differently put, by complementing each other (Interview with a representative of the EC, Bishkek, 13 February 2008).

The interviewee from USAID also expressed similar ideas about the collaboration between the state and civil society. First of all, a USAID interviewee was convinced that:

civil society is supposed to be a partner to the government, ...to help the government, ...to do things that the government always cannot necessarily focus on itself. (Interview with a USAID representative, Bishkek, 15 February 2008).

Based on this, he identified the role of civil society as a state partner which can be involved in different activities such as researching and polling. He also said that there had been such an interaction between the state and civil society in Kyrgyzstan recently. He referred to how Bakiev's government approached civil society groups (around 100 representatives) and conducted round tables with them during a constitutional reform process in 2007. According to him, there has been an improvement in the state-NGO relationships in Kyrgyzstan (Interview with a USAID representative, Bishkek, 15 February 2008). In other words, USAID is in favour of collaboration and cooperation between the government and NGOs in Kyrgyzstan.

In contrast to DFID, the EC, and USAID, which promote the state-civil society relationship as a component of their activities, the Aga-Khan and Soros Foundations have separate programmes aimed at improving the relationship of NGOs with the state. A programme of the Soros Foundation on NGO support focuses on developing approaches for NGOs to interact with the state. The Foundation supports initiatives which create a platform for the collaboration between the NGO sector and the state, where the former could have a representation and act as an equal partner in dialogue with the state. For example, in 2007, the Soros Foundation supported a national forum of NGOs, where the latter discussed their relationship with the state as one of the key issues of the sector (Interview with a representative of the Soros Foundation, Bishkek, 14 November 2007).

The Aga-Khan Foundation's project focuses on improving and increasing the state-NGO collaboration. The project is carried out on the national level. Its main aim is to develop a state policy and mechanisms on the state-civil society collaboration since there are no such mechanisms right now. For this, the Foundation established a working group consisting of representatives of NGOs, trade unions and the government. This group is supposed to develop necessary policies and

mechanisms (Interview with a local NGO, which implements the project of the Aga-Khan Foundation, Bishkek, 17 December 2007).

Looking beyond “traditional NGOs”: Media, political parties, and CBOs

My further research finding is that donors have been broadening their conception of civil society actors they work with and changing their definition of civil society since the mid 2000s. DFID and US aid agencies started working with the media. Their work with the media is framed by their global strategic documents: the DFID white paper 2006 on making governance work for the poor and the strategic plan of the US Department of State and USAID for 2007 – 2012. These agencies now stress the importance of media in promoting accountability and transparency in a political environment, in facilitating a public debate on different issues, particularly on the concerns of the poor and marginalised, and other aspects of democracy:

Free, independent and plural media (radio, TV, newspapers, internet etc.) provide a critical check on state abuse of power or corruption; enable informed and inclusive public debate on issues of concern to people living in poverty; and give greater public recognition to the perspectives of marginalised citizens. Engaged citizens need information that allows them to exercise democratic choices (www.dfid.gov.uk, c).

The way DFID and US agencies shape their activities on the media in Kyrgyzstan has depended on their assessment of the state of Kyrgyz media which varies between these donors. For USAID, the media in Kyrgyzstan is underdeveloped and has poor capacity. Therefore, USAID is supporting the media, be it a radio station or a television channel, in the same way it used to support NGOs in the 1990s, that is to say, by providing them with training on running their companies, such as management, finance, budgeting, and staffing. USAID is also giving out grants to the media companies for study tours, research, and the production of different programmes to promote freedom of speech and open press in Kyrgyzstan (Interview with a USAID representative, Bishkek, 15 February 2008). For the Democracy Commission of the US embassy, the media has become a priority too. In comparison with NGOs, which cannot receive any capacity-building support

from the Democracy Commission, media companies enjoy this opportunity (Interview with a representative of the US embassy, Bishkek, 31 October 2007).

For DFID, the media in Kyrgyzstan, as in other Central Asia countries, is curtailed by the government. Therefore, it has trained media specialists to improve their professionalism. It has funded training for journalists, supported the state broadcasting channel, and involved media in the work of development organisations to put across their message. The DFID interviewee emphasised that since 2006, working with the media has been a great, new change for DFID as they moved beyond “traditional NGOs” (Interview with a DFID representative, Bishkek, 12 February 2008).

Other donors also work with the media. According to a joint country support strategy (JCSS) of five donors³⁶, the Kyrgyz government rejected the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) debt relief initiative in February 2007 because of nascent nationalism and civil society’s disapproval (www.donors.kg, b). The JCSS suggests that this showed a lack of public trust in the international development agencies. Therefore, the JCSS highlights the need to improve the credibility of international development agencies through increasing communication with and awareness of the public about them. They argue that otherwise public scepticism might influence the work on reforms negatively. As a result, the JCSS calls donors to go beyond civil society and work effectively with the national media to improve communication with the public and the government (www.donors.kg, b).

Furthermore, USAID began working with political parties. Their support to political parties has increased since the adoption of amendments in the constitution in 2007, which introduced party-based elections to parliament. USAID believes that their assistance should focus on building the capacity of political parties because they are underdeveloped in Kyrgyzstan (Interview with a USAID representative, Bishkek, 15 February 2008). Therefore, USAID supports any political party established in accordance with the Kyrgyz legislation. USAID is building capacity of political parties in the same way as it did with NGOs:

³⁶ The joint country support strategy includes the World Bank, ADB, UNDP, DFID, and the European Commission.

So the work that we do with political parties is largely through NDI and IRI. The training is on really relatively quite basic things. How you build the constituency, how you develop a platform, how you get that information about your platform out to voters so they know what you stand for as an organisation (Interview with a USAID representative, Bishkek, 15 February 2008).

Supporting political parties is also explicitly stated in the US strategic plan as they are considered important for “a political competition since, in parties, people with similar ideas come together to represent interests of their members and constituency and to compete through electoral processes for the right to govern” (US Department of State and USAID, 2007).

According to my research, donors also work with different types of community-based organisations (CBO) such as self-help groups and initiative groups. I suggest that, on the whole, a CBO is a group of people from the same locality, which can be either a village or even a street, who come together for social and/or economic development aims. Further, I propose that CBOs are more a product of donor projects rather than a home-grown institution. Therefore, their size, aims, composition, and even name depend on a donor project since each development agencies has its own approach to working with CBOs. For example, some donors such as the Aga-Khan Foundation and UNDP work with CBOs directly. Other donors, particularly bilateral ones such as DFID and USAID, work with them through intermediaries which are usually international or local NGOs³⁷.

My research also identified that UNDP had played a crucial role in the emergence of CBOs in Kyrgyzstan. In the mid 1990s, within its poverty reduction programme, UNDP initiated forming CBOs in its pilot project villages. The aim was to reduce poverty by bringing rural people together into groups so that they would accumulate joint funding through a monthly contribution of each member, doing income-generating activities, and lending cash to group members. CBOs within the UNDP programme consist of 20-25 households from a certain area. A territory is a main criterion for the establishment of a CBO since it unifies people with the same needs. It can be a street or several streets. CBOs have a charter and can be registered

³⁷ The key difference between NGOs and CBOs is that the former are registered with the Ministry of Justice; while, the latter tend to be informal.

with the local authority. UNDP has called CBOs *jaamats*³⁸ in Kyrgyz. Within its poverty reduction programme, UNDP created 6000 CBOs in its pilot project sites throughout Kyrgyzstan. In addition, neighbouring villages created such CBOs. As a result, around 10000 CBOs emerged by the end of the UNDP programme. At present, UNDP has slightly changed their aim of work with CBOs. Now they want CBOs to work not only on poverty reduction but also on other aims of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) such as HIV/AIDS, maternal and infant mortality, and gender issues (Interview with a UNDP representative, 13 November 2007, Bishkek).

In 2001-2002, with the support of the development fund of Persian Gulf countries, UNDP created local development foundations in 19 pilot local authorities. Although the foundations are institutionally located within local authorities institutionally, they are independent and governed by the local population. Their main aim is to improve an economic status of population by giving out loans to people who have a business idea but do not have access to credits. However, the foundations do not give a loan directly to individuals. They give it to *jaamats* which make the final decision. Currently, the most successful of these foundations have increased the initial capital granted by UNDP (around 400000 soms – \$8,510) up to a million soms (\$21,300) and continue to function (Interview with a UNDP representative, 13 November 2007, Bishkek).

Since 2005 the World Bank and DFID have contributed to the diffusion and popularisation of CBOs. These large donors have provided grants to the government of Kyrgyzstan to improve the social-economic situation of population in the rural areas. The Kyrgyz government together with representatives of NGOs and Associations of Municipalities set up the NGO 'ARIS' which implements all the projects. These projects have covered every single village in Kyrgyzstan³⁹, where they created village and territorial investment committees on the basis of participation principles, that is inclusion of all groups of the community such as the elderly, young people, and women into decision-making (Interview with a representative of a local NGO, 14 May 2008, Bishkek).

³⁸ *Jaamat* means a community in Kyrgyz

³⁹ This means that there is an overlap between donor projects in communities.

Furthermore, my findings show that there are more donor projects working with CBOs in the south than in the north. For example, USAID has a project on the economic development of communities only in the south. The interviewee from USAID said that they worked in the south because a problem over resources is tenses there than in the north (Interview with a representative of USAID, 15 February 2008, Bishkek).

To sum up so far, the involvement of media, political parties, and different types of CBOs by donors in their work indicates that they started broadening their perception of civil society and looking beyond NGOs, which were equated to civil society in the 1990s (e.g. Howell and Pearce, 2002). The interviewee from USAID said that they intentionally included political parties in their definition of civil society. This is because they consider that civil society in Kyrgyzstan is nascent and there is a fine line between different civic institutions such as NGOs and political parties. Therefore, they do not want to put limitations on the emergent civil society by excluding some of these institutions (Interview with a USAID representative, Bishkek, 15 February 2008).

Some donors, such as the World Bank and the Aga-Khan Foundation, said that they were moving away from using the term 'NGO'. Now they prefer to use the term 'Civil Society Organisation' to be inclusive. The new term includes not only "traditional NGOs", which refers to registered not-for-profit organisations with developmental aims, but also other organisations, such as trade unions, grass-roots organisations, women's groups, social movements, faith-based institutions, charitable organisations, universities, foundations, and professional associations (Email file from a World Bank representative, Bishkek, 19 November 2007 and Interview with a representative of the Aga-Khan Foundation, Bishkek, 12 November 2007).

However, some large donors such as DFID and the EC still need to restrict their work with civil society to NGOs because they have proper organisational capacity to carry out projects of these donors. Nonetheless, in theory a definition of civil society within programmes of these donors is broad. For example, for DFID, civil society includes "any form of citizens getting together for the greater good, which is not for profit and not party-political" (Interview with a DFID representative, Bishkek, 12 February 2008). They even have a manual, which conceptualises civil

society and was developed with the involvement of renowned academics (www.dfid.gov.uk, a). However, in practice, when funds are involved, DFID is limited in who it can engage with. For accountability purposes, their partners from civil society should be formal entities (Interview with a DFID representative, Bishkek, 12 February 2008). These are usually NGOs in Kyrgyzstan.

From NGOs to the state: Donors and state capacity-building

The role and place of NGOs in donor activities described above are different from what was in the 1990s and the early 2000s. At that time, as discussed in chapter 2, the donors' focus was on promoting civil society in the form of NGOs. A significant amount of donor funding was spent on encouraging NGO emergence in Kyrgyzstan and building their capacity. However, this is not the case now. The preceding section has shown that NGOs are now much more limited in their funding from donors, being promoted only in an advocacy role, and encouraged to collaborate with the state. According to my research, these changes have been a result of a major change in donor overall policies. Interviews with donors revealed that now they premised their activities on the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness which identified the state in aid recipient countries as a key actor in development (www.worldbank.org). Within it, the governments of recipient countries take a lead in the aid coordination and the development process. Their key responsibility is to develop a country development strategy in accordance with local priorities and to coordinate its implementation by involving donors and encouraging civil society and the private sector. Donors are supposed to align their activities with this document and provide budget support to the state (www.worldbank.org). By and large, the overall aim of the Paris Declaration is to support the states to form a functioning public sector (Fritz and Menocal, 2006), with sound institutions and policies.

As part of the Paris Declaration, Kyrgyzstan has a country development strategy (CDS) which is a key developmental document. The CDS has four specific aims for the development of Kyrgyzstan: 1) an economic growth, 2) social development, 3) environment protection, and 4) combating corruption. The last aim covers not only tackling corruption but also improving poor governance, poor

legislation, and the poor capacity of state institutions since these are cross-cutting issues for the first three aspects of the CDS. Therefore, combating corruption implies fighting against corruption along with improving governance, particularly in terms of building capacity of state institutions (<http://webapps01.un.org>). Notwithstanding that all donors interviewed signed the Paris Declaration, my research data identified that there were some differences between the activities of US aid agencies and European bilateral and multilateral donors.

European bilateral and multilateral donors

Key European bilateral and multilateral donors in Kyrgyzstan, namely the UN, DFID, the World Bank, the EC, ADB⁴⁰, SIDA⁴¹, and GTZ⁴² have developed the JCSS as a response to the Paris Declaration. Within research, the first four donors out of seven were interviewed. The overview of the aims and objective of the JCSS revealed that they were aligned with that of the CDS and focus on:

improving economic management consistent with strong and sustained pro poor growth; reducing corruption; improving governance, and achieving effective public administration; building sustainable human and social capital through improved health and education outcomes; and ensuring environmental sustainability and natural resource management (www.donors.kg, b).

The above extract indicated that, as in the CDS, strengthening governance and improving public administration are central in the JCSS. All donor projects include a “good governance” component. In fact, in order to be launched and implemented, a project should demonstrate that it will have implications for overall governance. If a project fails to do this, the JCSS donors can refuse a request of the government for the project (www.donors.kg, b).

According to the Paris Declaration, donors are supposed to provide budget support to a recipient government. It is considered one of the mechanisms to build capacity of the government by giving it responsibility to identify aid priorities and to

⁴⁰ Asian Development Bank

⁴¹ Swedish International Development Operation Agency

⁴² Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (German Government-Owned Corporation for International Cooperation with Worldwide Operations)

use its institutions and policies to achieve them. In others words, donors provide funding to the government, who then makes a decision on which areas of development funding should be spent. This is called ‘general budget support’ (Williamson et al., 2008). In Kyrgyzstan, however, the JCSS donors provide ‘sector budget support’ which means funding only a ministry or a department in the government. This is provided when there are still problems with quality, transparency, and accountability of state institutions and policies, particularly financial ones (Williamson et al., 2008).

According to the interviewees from DFID and the EC, the general budget support is not acceptable in Kyrgyzstan because the financial systems of the Kyrgyz government, including internal and external audit and financial management procedures, are weak. The Kyrgyz government is still too corrupt. Therefore, they provide sector budget support. Moreover, they put extra efforts to ensure that funds are spent appropriately (Interview with a DFID representative, Bishkek, 12 February 2008 and interview with a representative of the European Commission, 13 February 2008).

My research shows that donors have divided government ministries and departments to work with amongst themselves. For example, the EC works with the Ministries of Agriculture, Labour, and Education (Interview with a representative of the EC, Bishkek, 13 February 2008). Meanwhile, DFID works with the Ministries of Finance and Health (Interview with a DFID representative, Bishkek, 12 February 2008). Taking into account the fact that the Paris Declaration calls for better aid coordination, I suggest that donors are trying to avoid the duplication of their work with the government by engaging only with a certain state agency. Most importantly, the provision of funding to the government is not only a financial mechanism but also a tool to build their capacity. These donor interviewees noted that they provided technical support to the government on how to manage funds and achieve their goals. For instance, DFID assists staff of the Ministry of Health in learning how to manage their funds better (Interview with a DFID representative, Bishkek, 12 February 2008).

It is not known how much donors are providing to the state. However, I should mention that overall donor funding to Kyrgyzstan has increased. For example,

DFID increased its budget to Kyrgyzstan from \$11,2 (£7) million in 2007 to \$16 (£10) million in 2010 (webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk). Taking into account the reduction in funding to NGOs and the sector budget support within the Paris Declaration, I propose that now most donor funding goes to the state and its capacity-building.

US aid agencies

Aid delivery strategies of the US government are different from that of the European bilateral and multilateral donors; although the US government also signed the Paris Declaration. First of all, the US aid agencies are not part of the JCSS in Kyrgyzstan. They have their own documents and mechanisms for aid delivery. A Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) programme is the most important one which was launched in January 2004 (before the Paris Declaration) to provide aid to developing countries. According to this programme, the USA can deliver development assistance only to those countries which are committed to good governance, economic freedom, and investing in their citizens. Eligibility of a recipient country is assessed by means of seventeen independent and transparent policy indicators and its policy performance. Those countries that pass all eligibility criteria receive a ‘compact’ grant which is large and lasts for five years. Those countries that succeed in meeting most of the criteria and show commitment to improve their policy performance receive a ‘threshold’ grant which is smaller. Kyrgyzstan receives this type of grant (www.mcc.gov).

The MCC shares the principles of the Paris Declaration by promoting the country-led implementation of development. As the Paris Declaration, the MCC requires a recipient-country to develop their MCC proposal with the involvement of public in which priorities for sustainable economic growth and poverty reduction should be identified. The MCC team only helps the recipient country to refine their programme. In Kyrgyzstan, the MCC proposal aims at supporting the government to fight corruption and improve the rule of law through judicial, law enforcement, criminal justice reforms (www.mcc.gov). It is evident that the Kyrgyz MCC proposal

has similar priorities with the CDS and JCSS, which is fighting corruption. On the whole, the US aid mechanism also assigns government as a key actor in development by giving it a role in identifying aid priorities.

However, the MCC differs from the Paris Declaration in terms of its funding delivery mechanism. Countries receiving a compact grant establish their own Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) entity which manages and oversees implementation of their MCC proposal, administers contracts and procurements, and monitors budget expenditures. However, the MCC does not transfer funds to the government. It pays directly to the vendors⁴³. Funds of countries receiving a threshold grant such as Kyrgyzstan are managed by other US government implementing partners (www.mcc.gov). In Kyrgyzstan the MCC funds, around \$16 million, are managed by USAID.

In fact, according to my research, USAID is one of the largest aid agencies in Kyrgyzstan. The interview with a representative of USAID suggested that one of their key focuses now was provision of technical support to the Kyrgyz government in the form of training, expertise, and advice on different issues such as budgeting, structuring different state entities at various levels from the high up to local authorities depending on the government's request. For example, currently USAID mainly works with the institutions of *ayil okmotu* (local authority) (Interview with a USAID representative, Bishkek, 15 February 2008). However, USAID does not provide any budget support. The abstinence of the US government from budget support can be explained with a quote of the interviewee from the US embassy who said that:

The budget support was ineffective since accountability was lost through funds going from one bank to another (Interview with a representative of the US embassy, Bishkek, 27 November 2007).

I suggest that, in this quote, the interviewee meant that accountability cannot be ensured in financial transactions between only two actors (in this case the government and donors) and without engagement of the third actor such as NGOs.

⁴³ By vendors, I mean contractors, e.g., for procurement.

State capacity-building: case of UNDP

An illustration of how donors have been working with the state on building its capacity is a project of UNDP on democratic governance. The project has three components: a) parliament, b) public administration reform, and c) local self-governance bodies, which include *ayil okmotu* and local *kenesh* (local council), and decentralisation. Here only the last component is discussed because it has been the main focus of donors since the early 2000s. Moreover, in 2007, a new law was adopted which changed the state budget from a four-tiered to two-tiered system. According to this, funding now goes straight from a national budget to the budget of local authorities bypassing the budgets of province and district administrations. However, many local authorities did not know how to manage these funds. As a result, the government requested donors to train *ayil okmotus* on budgeting and other related issues. Donors have been working with local authorities since then (Interview with a UNDP representative, Bishkek, 13 November 2007).

UNDP works with *ayil okmotu* on different levels. Firstly, it is engaged at the legislation level to ensure that *ayil okmotus* have a solid legislative basis for their activities. The UNDP team participates in different discussions about and attends parliament hearings on legal acts and laws on *ayil okmotus* and makes their suggestions. For example, UNDP proposed a national strategy on decentralisation of governance and development of local self-governance which was adopted by the Kyrgyz government in December 2002 (Interview with a UNDP representative, Bishkek, 13 November 2007)

Secondly, UNDP is involved in promoting fiscal decentralisation in the light of the new law described earlier. It started working with ten pilot *ayil okmotus* by assisting them in forming their budgets, to administer taxes, to raise additional funds for their budgets, and to expand their tax ranges. These *ayil okmotus* have already shifted to the two-tiered budget and now directly work with the Ministry of Finance. Thirdly, UNDP works with *ayil okmotus* on strategic planning. Every year, the UNDP team takes a certain number of *ayil okmotus* and helps them develop a strategic plan for their development. UNDP provides technical support by training staff of *ayil okmotus* how to develop their strategic plan and facilitates the process of designing one (Interview with a UNDP representative, Bishkek, 13 November 2007).

Fourth, UNDP has started introducing an electronic *ayil okmotu*. At present, they are in the process of providing nine pilot *ayil okmotus* with computers, internet, and training so that they do all their work on computers. At present, most *ayil okmotus* write everything by hand and all information is kept in hard copy. UNDP also wants all internal work procedures of *ayil okmotus* to be transferred to a computer so that they could have a data base in an electronic form (Interview with a UNDP representative, Bishkek, 13 November 2007).

UNDP also works on building the capacity of the local *kenesh* which are supposed to play a leading role in local self-governance. However, according to the UNDP interviewee, they do not currently fulfil this role because their members are either poorly trained for this or do not realise the importance of their job. The role of local *keneshs* will become even more important after the adoption of a bill on local *keneshs*. According to this bill, the *ayil okmotu* should obey the local *keneshs*, which will set priorities for development. Therefore, UNDP has been training local *keneshs* all over the country. They designed five modules and have trained 2000 out of 6000 members of local *keneshs* so far. They envisage the remaining members too (Interview with a UNDP representative, Bishkek, 13 November 2007).

Based on the overview of the UNDP project on local self-governance bodies, I suggest two points. First, the case clearly shows that UNDP has been working on building the capacity of local self-governance institutions by training them and improving their infrastructure. The second point is that the UNDP's experience indicates how weak local self – governance institutions in Kyrgyzstan are. This, in turn, means that the central government is also weak since it is unable to strengthen its local self-governance institutions. Such poor public administration highlights fragility of the Kyrgyz state.

Discussion

The shift of donors from civil society promotion to state capacity-building is not specific to Kyrgyzstan. I suggest that the latter focus of donors is embedded in a broader global context. Based on the review of the relevant literature and the reports and strategic documents of donors, I propose that state capacity-building came to the

forefront in development in the late 1990s and the early 2000s because of the three key factors. The main factor was that the reduction of the state and over-reliance on civil society within the neo-liberal policies and democracy promotion of donors in the 1980s-1990s failed to meet their expectations. Furthermore, economic success of East Asia shed some new light on the role of the state in development. Finally, fragile states came to be regarded as a threat to international security after 9/11. Therefore, the international community concluded that these states should be strengthened to improve international security. .

Failure of democratisation in the developing world

One of the key factors that brought back the state to development is the failure of the democratisation process. By the late 1990s the excitement about the ‘third wave’ of democratisation was evaporating (Carothers, 2002). Zakaria (1997) asserted that there had been a rise of ‘illiberal democracies’ in developing countries by the late 1990s. These ‘illiberal democracies’ held elections but ignored and even violated other key aspects of constitutional liberalism such as the separation of powers, the rule of law, and protection of basic liberties of speech, assembly, religion, and property. Their governments learned how to retain power with authoritarian features and, at the same time, have formal democratic institutions.

These countries have been called “hybrid regimes” (Rakner et al., 2007). As Carothers (2002) put it, they have been caught in a “grey zone”. They have some attributes of democracy such as a limited political space for opposition and civil society, regular elections, democratic constitutions. However, they suffer from serious democratic deficit including poor representation of citizens’ interests, low level of political participation beyond voting, frequent abuse of the law by government officials, elections of uncertain legitimacy, very low public confidence in public institutions, and poor institutional performance by the state (Carothers, 2002).

Based on the earlier discussion of the post-Soviet state in Kyrgyzstan and its relations with NGOs, I suggest that Kyrgyzstan was a hybrid regime under Akaev and Bakievs’ rule. It had a constitution committed to building democracy. The

president and the parliament were elected by the public. The political opposition and civil society had relative freedom to carry out their activities. However, the constitution was changed frequently in the interest of the central power-holders. Elections had a number of problems such as fraud, buying votes, and interference of the government. State officials, particularly the president, abused power. In other words, the attributes of democracy were nominal in Kyrgyzstan.

Further, Kahler (2007) echoed a widespread argument that civil society could not deliver on promises to promote democracy in developing countries. It turned out to be too weak to influence “recalcitrant state elites” (Kahler, 2007) and to promote democratic accountability (Rakner et al., 2007). NGOs displayed an array of deficiencies which were discussed in chapter 1 and 2. The most damaging shortcoming of NGOs in Kyrgyzstan and in other developing countries was that they could not establish a proper link with their constituencies. This totally undermined their role in democracy promotion since they failed to represent various groups in their societies. As a result, donors were disillusioned with NGOs. In fact, the discussion in the first section has shown that some donors in Kyrgyzstan did not hide their disappointment with NGOs.

Moreover, they are now trying to go beyond NGOs and involve other non-state actors such as political parties and the media which they think can bring about social change better. This finding updates the literature which used to state that donors worked only with NGOs in Kyrgyzstan (Howell and Pearce, 2002). Now donors are not limited to NGOs within their civil society work but try to go beyond them.

Further, Mansfield and Snyder (1995) argued that democratising countries were prone to conflicts. By looking at the statistical database, which is usually used to study democratic peace, these authors argued that democratising states inclined to conflicts more than established democracies and lasting autocracies. At the same time, they suggested that states, which changed to autocracy after their unsuccessful experiment with democratisation, also tended to have conflicts than those states which remained within the same political setting. Kyrgyzstan is an excellent example for this. It has been the most unstable country in Central Asia but also the most

liberal and democracy-oriented. It has gone through two so-called revolutions and an ethnic conflict embedded in a complicated social and political context.

Mansfield and Snyder (1995) proposed that the international community should seek to minimise the risks of democratisation process and assist in smooth transitions rather than promoting democratisation. Zakaria (1997) made a suggestion along the same lines: the international community should support democracy where it emerged and encourage gradual establishment and consolidation of other aspects of constitutional liberalism without which democracy was dangerous. These arguments and suggestions brought about an argument of 'democratic sequencing'. Carothers (2002) summarised this argument (which he opposes) as follows. 'Democratic sequencing' implies that democratisation is not always appropriate for countries unprepared for it; thus, before promoting democracy, there is need to achieve the rule of law and a well-functioning state.

Economic success of East Asian countries

The economic success of East Asia provided new insights into the role of the state in development. Research on the success of these countries showed that their developmental policies were contrary to neo-liberal economic policies of donors. In the late 1980s-1990s, the states of these countries intervened in labour, land, product, and financial markets. They also provided protection to nascent industries using trade policies (Wimpelmann, 2006). This suggested that even market-based economies require functioning, capable states in order to operate and to grow (Fritz and Menocal, 2006:3). Furthermore, in East Asian countries, states are expected by public to meet their basic needs and deliver essential social services (ibid).

In the neo-liberal policies of donors, the delivery of social services suffered considerably since the policies provided little practical guidance except for outsourcing services to NGOs and public-private institutions. Meanwhile, in many developing countries, neither the private sector nor local NGOs had the proper capacity to provide services without relying on the state to play a sound coordinating and regulating role. Consequently, services deteriorated, which had a negative impact on the welfare, particularly of the poor (Fritz and Menocal, 2006). In Kyrgyzstan, as

stated in chapter 2, in the 1990s, NGOs were emergent and did not have proper institutional capacity (Minnini, 1998; Kasybekov, 1999). Moreover, they failed to reach out to the poor (Aksartova, 2005; Earle, 2005).

Further research, which compared countries in East Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, revealed that the success of the former region had to do not only with state interventions but also with the quality of intervention. When the African states made an extensive intervention in the market, it did not result in any development; while the same activities undertaken by the East Asian states brought development. Therefore, a number of researchers suggested that:

“what has mattered more [than the size of intervention] is the quality of state interventions [in the market], which again has depended on analytical capacity, on resource mobilisation by the state, on the politics of the state and on the balance of material interests driving that politics” (Rodrik, 2002: 11 in Fritz and Menocal, 2006:4).

Although geography could play an indirect role; the key message from the East Asian experience was that institutions should be of good quality that could “provide dependable property rights, manage conflict, maintain law and order, and align economic incentives with social costs and benefits” (Rodrik, 2002: 11 in Fritz and Menocal, 2006:4).

For example, the process of privatisation in the developing countries that took place under the neo-liberal economic policies was flawed because there was no proper state involvement in terms of legislation. For the most part, key economic sectors such as telecommunications, energy, and mining were privatised in haste lacking a transparent bidding process. This often resulted in the emergence of ineffective private monopolies rather than increased market competitiveness (Fritz and Menocal, 2006). For instance, Russia did not have a proper capacity to undertake privatisation process. They failed to ensure legislation for a transparent process of privatisation and to protect the rights of new shareholders. As a result, public resources were stolen by the so-called oligarchs. This resulted in delegitimisation of the post-communist Russian state in the aftermath of the Soviet Union’s collapse (Fukuyama, 2004:28). In the same vein, in Kyrgyzstan, during the privatisation process, state assets were appropriated by former Soviet bureaucrats because they still had control and networks (Anderson, 1997).

The connection between the economic growth and the quality of institutions emerging from the experience of the East Asian countries were also revealed by research on aid effectiveness done by the World Bank. According to them, aid was effective where quality institutions and policies were available (Wimpelmann, 2006). Kahler (2007) defined quality institutions, which he called “good” policy regimes, by (1) macroeconomic policies and (2) institutional measures of policies such as the strength of property rights, the absence of corruption, and quality of bureaucracy.

The case of East Asia also showed that their success was due to a close relationship between the state and society. Based on this, Fritz and Menocal (2006:8) asserted that:

“the state cannot be too insulated from society because it would then run the risk of becoming self-serving rather than responsive to demands and needs for further development. Thus, it must also be embedded in society, that is, [connected to] a concrete set of social ties that binds the state to society and provides institutionalised channels for the continual negotiation and renegotiation of goals and policies”.

This type of relations between society and the state is more interconnected, where the state is imbedded in society and the latter has mechanisms to be involved in identifying the state goals and policies. It is different from that envisaged by neo-liberal economic policies, within which society was self-serving. This is because, firstly, economic processes between individuals took place within a market without the intervention of the state, and, secondly, services, particularly social ones, were provided by civil society organisations and the private sector. Civil society also balanced the state, whose role was reduced to the provision and surveillance of practice of legislation.

As a result, economists who pushed liberalisation and a minimal state came to the conclusion that “some of the most important variables affecting development are not economic but institutional and political in nature” (Fukuyama, 2004: 29). Therefore, Fukuyama (2004: 29) noted that there was need for a significant dimension of stateness for development to take place. The success of East Asian countries also suggested that not just any state institutions were needed but they should be quality state institutions with interconnected relations with society.

Fragile states as an impediment to international security, peace, and poverty reduction

After the 9/11 attacks in the USA and the “war on terror” that followed, countries with ineffective, failed states have come to be seen as a threat to the international security (Fukuyama, 2004; Kahler, 2007). They have been considered incapable to meet the social and economic needs of their citizens properly, to ensure political stability, and to police their territories. This has resulted in different tensions among their people and social and political unrest which has been seen as a source of the threat to international security (Kahler, 2007). The government of the USA has been a particular advocate of this argument. For example, the Bush administration defined “non-democratic, fragile and poorly-governed states as the most significant threat to national security” (Cammack et al., 2006 in Rakner et al., 2007:2).

Furthermore, the international community has realised that a strong state is needed to establish and promote peace in post-conflict zones. Their experience from providing humanitarian aid showed that, since states in post-conflict zones remained weak, conflicts resumed after some time. Therefore, the international community has concluded that it needs to invest in state capacity-building in fragile states in order to avert future conflicts and promote development (Kahler, 2007).

The concept of a fragile state has also been applied to those countries where governments are weak in providing people with the basics of a decent life and fighting poverty which is a key global developmental priority in the MDGs (www.un.org). These states lost public trust in providing an “inclusive political, social, and economic order made predictable by rule of law” (Ghani et al., 2006: 101). Their economies are dominated by illegality, informality, and criminality. Basic services are not provided properly. The essential infrastructure is dilapidated. The level of corruption is high and public assets are appropriated for private gain. Consequently, administrative control is weak and “the bureaucracy is seen as an instrument for abuse of power, in turn leading to a crisis in public finances – where both revenue and expenditure are unpredictable and budgeting becomes an exercise in emergency management” (Ghani et al., 2006: 101).

The World Bank defines fragile states based on its Country Policy and Institutional Assessment (CPIA) and “the presence of UN or regional peace-building or peace mediation operations”. The CPIA rates countries using 16 criteria subsumed under four categories: (a) economic management; (b) structural policies; (c) policies for social inclusion and equity; and (d) public sector management and institutions. Countries rating 3.2 or lower on the CPIA scale and having peace keeping forces are identified as fragile states. These states have “weak institutional capacity, poor governance, political instability, and often ongoing violence or the legacy of past conflict, with potential spill-over effects on neighbouring countries” (www.web.worldbank.org,a). In 2006, the World Bank categorised 27 countries as fragile states including such countries as Nigeria, Cambodia, and Sudan (www.web.worldbank.org,a).

Kyrgyzstan has most elements to fall into the category of fragile states. Kyrgyzstan’s corruption rate has been high. In 2008, Kyrgyzstan was on the 166th place out of 180 (the most corrupted) in a corruption report of Transparency International. In fact, its corruption rating has steadily increased since 2003 when it was on the 118th place (Lymar, 2008). In 2005, Kyrgyzstan received a rating of 3 in the CPIA of the World Bank, which is slightly higher than the threshold that the World Bank sets for fragile states (www.data.worldbank.org). This shows that economic management, structural policies, public sector management and institutions, and policies for social inclusion and equity are extremely weak in Kyrgyzstan.

According to Ghani and his colleagues (2006:101), once these institutions are weak, governments fail to provide the population with the basics of a decent life. This delegitimises the state since it loses people’s trust. The April 2010 revolts in Kyrgyzstan were manifestation of people’s discontent with their living standards and mistrust of the state (Reeves, 2010). Moreover, the June conflict between Uzbeks and Kyrgyz has put Kyrgyzstan into the category of the post-conflict zone. Although Kyrgyzstan does not have peace-keeping forces, it has all the other aspects to be called a fragile state.

State building as a new priority in donor policies

As a response to the failures of neo-liberal policies and democracy promotion and in the light of new priorities (international security and poverty reduction), discussed in the three above sections, donor development policies have embraced the idea of state-building since the late 1990s and the early 2000s. The post-Washington consensus reconsidered the role of the state in development. It acknowledged the importance of the state and extended its role both in economy and social service provision. The 1997 World Development Report “The State in a Changing World” stated that “good government is a vital necessity for development” (Wimpelmann, 2006:2).

As a result, donors started to concentrate on building the capacity of states and involving them into development policies. The World Bank and other agencies such as DFID renamed their Low Income Countries under Stress with fragile states (Kahler, 2007). The USA government ceased overstressing on democracy promotion. Rather it shifted to helping governments of fragile states to improve their quality and effectiveness. As Brooks summarised it, when Obama came to power, “the U.S. is not about to begin another explicit crusade to spread democracy. But decent, effective and responsive government would be a start” (Brooks, 2008: www.nytimes.com). Consequently, the USA government launched a Millennium Challenge Account programme to measure effective governance in the developing countries in order to help those countries which are committed to development (Brooks, 2008).

Further, the international community including donor and recipient countries reconsidered aid delivery mechanisms. In 2005, 61 bilateral and multilateral donors and 56 aid-recipient countries adopted the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. As stated in the second section, its central idea is the country ownership of development policies and encouragement of the government to be a focal point in the coordination of development (Fritz and Menocal, 2006). In other words, the governments in the developing countries have become a key actor in development. It is also government’s responsibility to encourage civil society’s participation in the development (www.worldbank.org). On the whole, with regard to civil society, the Paris Declaration provides limited guidelines on its role. Pratt (2006) stated that,

where it was mentioned in the new aid mechanism, civil society was seen as a sub-contractor of local governments.

The discussion on state capacity-building in Kyrgyzstan in this chapter has revealed that the state has indeed become a central actor in development. The Kyrgyz government receives sector budget support from donors. They also provide technical support to all the branches of the state as in the case of UNDP which works with the parliament, the government, and local self-governance bodies on their capacity-building. Moreover, donors now use NGOs in order to improve the state and its policies by funding their advocacy-aimed projects. Donors are specifically interested in the collaboration and cooperation between the actors where the role of civil society is as a partner of and assistant to the state.

With reference to the earlier discussion of the state-society relations, I explain the reasons of why donors are encouraging the state and NGOs to collaborate as follows. According to Fritz and Menocal (2006), the formation of the functioning public sector, which the Kyrgyz government and donors currently aim at, requires a state-society relation that would enable this process to take place. As mentioned earlier, based on the experience of the East Asian countries, the state-society relations are preferred to be interconnected when the state is embedded in society through social ties and society can be involved in identifying the state goals and policies (Fritz and Menocal, 2006). Furthermore, when looking at state-building from an international security perspective, it also implies nation-building, which is a product of state-society relations (www.dfid.gov.uk, c). Therefore, as Rakner and his colleagues (2007:39) put it, donors want the state and society to “work together in building a political system that is more responsive, accountable and broadly representative”.

From a theoretical perspective, I suggest that this type of relationship between the state and civil society can be described as communitarian. As the conceptual framework in chapter 1 has set out, in the communitarian approach, the state is not a mere order-keeper and framework for civil society. The state and civil society are complementary elements of each other. The state not only frames civil society but also encompasses it and leads it to the common good. Furthermore, the state is a

necessary condition for the existence of civil society since it keeps it away from self-destruction.

The CDS in Kyrgyzstan under the Paris Declaration is a good example that can be described within this model. One of the key features of this document is that it calls for sharing power between the state and society both vertically and horizontally. Put differently, everyone is involved in doing their part. In Taylor's words (2006), the power is distributed throughout the society, where different elements of the society from the state to independent associations play a role and share power to self-rule. Moreover, the CDS is an institutionalised mechanism for the involvement of the public normally through civil society institutions in setting priorities and goals for the development and promoting it⁴⁴.

My research findings also suggested that donors promoted the state and its institutions not only because they wanted to, but also because they needed to. Particularly, the example of the Aga-Khan Foundation has shown that civil society institutions need the state in order to succeed in their initiatives. This corresponds to what Hegel (in Jones, 2001; Taylor, 2006) and Walzer (1998) claimed in their respective works that the state was necessary for the existence and operation of civil society. It also has a parallel with Morton's work (1998) on the enshrinement of civil society in Britain in the nineteenth century, where local authorities facilitated the existence and operation of civil society by playing a mediating role between the central government and civil society. Moreover, the above discussion has indicated that donors want to be inclusive and go beyond NGOs.

Conclusion

To conclude, this chapter has sought to answer two research questions: what kind of changes have donors made in their civil society activities since the mid 2000s? and why have they made these changes? In this regard, based on my research data, I have identified that donors have made four main changes in their civil society activities. First of all, funding to NGOs, especially for their capacity-building, has

⁴⁴ I should mention that the CDS mechanisms might have weaknesses in terms of involving the public into the development and implementation of its aims.

been reduced. Secondly, donors are promoting NGOs in an advocacy role. Thirdly, donors are promoting the collaboration between the state and NGOs. Lastly, donors are expanding their civil society definition and a list of CSOs they work with. They have shifted their attention to the media and political parties. They also work with CBOs. As a result, I argue that civil society activities of donors are different from those which were in the 1990s and the early 2000s in Kyrgyzstan. The key difference is that donors stopped promoting the emergence of NGOs and building their capacity.

I have explained that the diminishing role of NGOs in the civil society activities of donors is connected to the return of the state to the development agenda. I have suggested that donors in Kyrgyzstan are concentrating on building the capacity of state institutions and improving public administration. My detailed review of the broader context has identified that the promotion of the state has gained prominence as a new priority because of the failure of democratisation and NGOs, the success of East Asian countries that undermined the neo-liberal policies of donors, and concerns over international security after 9/11 when weak states started to be considered a threat. I have suggested that Kyrgyzstan can be considered a fragile state taking into consideration its weak state, political instability, poor economy and recent ethnic conflict in the southern part of Kyrgyzstan.

Finally, from a theoretical perspective, I have suggested that the approach of donors to development and work with civil society shifted from the liberal one, which dominated during the 1990s, to a communitarian one, in which the state is given a more prominent role. Further, I have described the type of collaboration donors are promoting between NGOs and the state as complementary, where the actors are meant to complement each other in certain activity such as social service delivery. This differs from what donors supported in the 1990s, when civil society was seen as the antithesis of the state, an alternative service provider, and a key counterbalance. Finally, I have shown that activities and strategies of donors are not homogenous. American donors do not provide aid to the state in the same way as European and international donors do. The key difference is that US agencies do not provide any type of budget support.

It is evident that donors have made considerable changes in their civil society activities. Chapter 2 demonstrated that donors had played a significant role in the development of the NGO sector in Kyrgyzstan. Therefore, changes in their civil society activities are bound to influence the NGO sector in Kyrgyzstan and the impact of these changed priorities will be discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter 5

NGO response: adapting to new donor strategies

In this chapter, I discuss the influence of changes in donors' civil society promotion on Kyrgyz NGOs which is the first focus of my third research question⁴⁵. I have stated in the previous chapter that donors in Kyrgyzstan have made the following changes in their civil society activities: promoting NGOs in an advocacy role, reducing funding to NGOs, and promoting collaborative relations between the state and NGOs. To identify the influence of these changes on the Kyrgyz NGO sector, I start by discussing in the first section the influence that donors have had on NGOs from the beginning of their interaction in the early 1990s. The main idea that I put forward is that donors have influenced the way NGOs developed institutionally. I argue that NGOs have become professional and formal because of donor funding requirements and training. In the second section, I present research data on professional and institutional capacity of NGOs in Kyrgyzstan. In the third section, I report research findings on the influence of the above changes in civil society activities of donors on NGOs. I suggest that NGOs in Kyrgyzstan are further professionalising and formalising. NGOs have to improve their professional and institutional capacity to overcome competition for donor funding, which has become tougher, and to be able to influence the state within their advocacy projects.

Donors' impact on NGO professionalisation

In this section, I suggest that donors have had a considerable impact on how NGOs have developed institutionally. Their programmes, particularly the ones focused on provision of capacity-building support to NGOs, have led NGOs to develop in a professional and formal way. The interviewee from USAID, a key donor in the promotion of civil society, said that they had taught people in Kyrgyzstan very

⁴⁵ My third research question is What are the implications of these changes for Kyrgyz NGOs, the Kyrgyz state, and relations between the two? In this chapter, I will answer its first half.

basic things in relation to setting up and running an NGO, such as registering, developing a charter, and working out a budget (Interview, Bishkek, 15 February 2008). The training included a wide range of issues of NGO organisation and operation starting from project design and ending with network development as described in table 14. This means that, from the beginning, NGOs have been encouraged to act as organisations with a charter, budget, and other organisational features. For this reason, Aksartova (2006:19) concluded that American donors, particularly USAID, encouraged the formation of professional NGOs by requiring NGOs to have: a) the legal status of a non-profit organisation, b) paid staff, c) fundraising activities, and d) a purpose which represents public interest.

Table 14 – Training provided to NGOs by the Counterpart Consortium

◆ NGO and Community	◆ Social Partnership
◆ NGO Management	◆ NGO Governance
◆ Project Design	◆ Constituency Building
◆ Strategic Planning	◆ Presentation Skills
◆ Public Education through the Media	◆ Volunteer Management
◆ Success Story Writing	◆ Facilitation Skills
◆ Association Development	◆ Adult Learning Methodology
◆ Financial Management	◆ Coalition Building
◆ Participatory Monitoring & Evaluation	◆ Participatory Community Appraisal and Community Action Plan Development
◆ Financial Sustainability	◆ Microbusiness Basics
◆ Team Building and Conflict Resolution	◆ Network development
◆ Human Resources Management	◆ Business Planning
◆ Newsletter Development	◆ Fundraising
◆ Financial Accountability	◆ Advocacy

Donors have also had requirements within their grant programmes that NGOs need to meet in order to obtain funding from them. Interviews with donors, namely the UN, the EC, and DFID⁴⁶, revealed that they were mainly interested in the formal registration of an NGO, the availability of a bank account, financial procedures such as book keeping, auditing, and even a structure including a board of trustees. Other interview data and further exploration of different calls for proposals of donors suggested that other grant requirements of donors for NGOs included the availability

⁴⁶ Interview with a representative of the UN in Kyrgyzstan, Bishkek, 19 November 2007; interview with a representative of the European Commission, Bishkek, 14 November 2007; interview with a representative of DFID, Bishkek, 14 November 2007.

of project implementation experience, qualified staff, adequate expertise, language skills, and other organisational capacity. For example, a current advocacy programme of Pact, an international NGO financed by USAID, has the following requirements for NGOs in its call for proposals.

Who can apply:

Local non-governmental organisations registered in Kyrgyzstan which should:

- have work experience in carrying out advocacy campaigns on a subject of the tender;
- have at least one partner;
- have its own representative [branch office] or of its partner in each province;
- to be able to contribute at least 25 % of the whole amount of the project budget;
- to be able to carry out the project in all provinces of Kyrgyzstan (www.pact.kg)

This means that, in order for any NGO in Kyrgyzstan to acquire funding from donors, it should at least have a legal status, a bank account, and an organisational structure. Ideally, it should also have project implementation experience, qualified staff, adequate expertise, language skills, and partners. Interviews revealed that a majority of NGOs had a legal status (registration), a bank account, and an organisational structure. In fact, some NGO interviewees openly noted that they had to register their NGO, which used to exist as an initiative group, to be eligible for donor funding. A human right NGO from Bishkek is among these NGOs whose leader said:

It was important to us to get registered back then. You might know that, without juridical registration, it is not possible to apply for grants. It is impossible to work based on the legislation. They would ask who we were, from which organisation. Therefore, we decided to get registered in 2003 (Interview, 12 March 2008, Bishkek).

One of the vivid examples of a donor grant requirement is that of the staff employment procedures that NGOs must follow in their projects. A number of NGOs noted that, within their grant programmes, donors require them to employ competent staff to implement any project that they finance. Many NGOs echoed an NGO working on community development from Bishkek which explained the staff recruitment process as follows. First, they submit CVs of their candidates for positions in the proposed project. If donors are not happy with them, the NGO employs new people based on procedures ensuring that proper candidates are

employed (Interview, Bishkek, 4 March 2008). Drawing on these, I suggest that, through their NGO promotion training and grant requirements, donors have made NGOs take a form of formal organisations and share a certain set of organisational features (e.g. registration, bank account, structure, internal procedures). In other words, donor training and grant requirements have caused coercive isomorphism to take place among NGOs, that is to say, under pressures coming from donors, upon whom NGOs depend, NGOs have grown isomorphic (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983:150). This idea was also discussed by Aksartova (2005) who argued that:

The isomorphic pressure, experienced by post-Soviet NGOs, comes in the form of elaborate requirements for writing grant applications, budgetary plans, accounting reports, etc., that donors demand of their recipients. An NGO finds itself under the pressure to conform to donors' expectations even before it obtains its first grant, because the process of writing a grant application already requires it to mold itself according to the terms set by the donors (Aksartova, 2005:158).

Further, I propose that NGOs in Kyrgyzstan have also experienced mimetic isomorphism by imitating donors which they see as legitimate and successful from an organisational perspective (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983:150). For example, an interview with the leader of a civil society support NGO from Bishkek indicated that they recruited staff in accordance with their rules which they copied from donors as described below:

[Staff recruitment] happens absolutely in the same way as in the international organisations. This system is well developed in our organisation. There is transparency. First, we give an announcement. ... After this, we receive CVs. Then we do short-listing. For short-listing, we involve, first of all, me as an executive director; secondly, a member of the management board.... We put pluses and minuses [on CVs] when short-listing by looking at a job description Obviously, we have a job description. Then interviews. The panel includes 3 – 4 people: I certainly, someone from staff, 2 members of the management board. In our organisation, we have a document called 'conflict of interests' where the procedures are written that we should not hire relatives and so on. We do not have tribalism. We seek to work based on the international standards. Therefore, I think the process is open and transparent enough (Interview, Bishkek, 17 December 2007).

Based on my personal experience of working in a donor agency in Bishkek, I can say that the staff employment process of this NGO is identical to the one with which I was employed, even down to such details as putting plus and minus symbols on CVs. It is obvious that, in the above quote, the interviewee stressed that they recruited their staff based on procedures used by international organisations. Therefore, she claims

that their recruitment process is transparent and without a conflict of interest. In other words, for NGOs, donors are a legitimate model of how an organisation should operate. Therefore, by imitating them, NGOs learn how to run their organisations, and, most importantly, have a better chance to achieve success with donors since they have obtained legitimacy in their eyes. They also come to serve as a model for other NGOs. NGO imitation of donors can be seen as an unintentional influence of donors on NGOs.

Furthermore, the tendency of staff recruitment through merit based procedures among NGOs under explicit and implicit influence of donors seems to have caused normative isomorphism, that is, when organisations start sharing similar positions and a certain pool of professionals emerges to fill these positions – “almost interchangeable individuals who occupy similar positions across a range of organisations and possess a similarity of orientation and disposition” (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983:152). Furthermore, people tend to move from one NGO to another for a position within a certain range, e.g. manager. Additionally, in some NGOs, their leaders can be employed by other NGOs as specialists on a certain field.

For example, the heads of two rural NGOs working on refugees' issues from Alamedin and Sokuluk districts are among these leaders. Based on a number of interviews with refugee NGOs, it was discovered that these leaders were not hired to work as a manager for their NGOs but rather that they were nominated by the members of their NGOs. Consequently, these NGO leaders were not professional outsiders but volunteers who were given responsibility to represent and support their members. However, my research data revealed that these NGO leaders benefited from experience and skills that they gained while running their respective NGOs. This enabled them to find jobs with other NGOs. Now they work for another NGO's donor-funded project on establishing self-help groups. They receive a salary in the amount of €50-70 from the project (Interview, Bishkek, 14 March 2008). Based on this, it can be said that these leaders are earning a living through an NGO activity and, most importantly, are forging a career path. In other words, they have turned from voluntary NGO leaders into paid NGO specialists/workers.

Similar positions in NGOs can have further implications on the organisational and professional rules as well as structure of the NGO sector in general. Due to such

similarities, it becomes easier for organisations to interact with each other, to attract career-oriented employees, to be recognised as legitimate and reputable, and to meet administrative requirements and eligibility criteria of grants and contracts (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). According to DiMaggio and Powell (1983), if there is a great number of trained professionals in a certain organisational field, organisations will compete with each other to attract these professionals. Therefore, prestige and resources will be of pivotal importance to organisations. This also contributes to further homogenisation of organisations since they will try to “provide the same benefits and services as their competitors” (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983:154).

NGO professionalisation: facts and figures

The main argument of the previous section has been that the way donors have worked with NGOs has made them professionalise and formalise. Moreover, chapter 2 highlighted that there was a gap in the literature with regards to the professional characteristic of NGOs in Kyrgyzstan. This section looks at the extent to which NGOs in Kyrgyzstan are professional and formal. Based on the ideal type of a professional and formal NGO that have been constructed in the methodology chapter, the section discusses leadership, membership, funding, an organisational structure, administrative and financial rules, staff, and technical-material basis of forty five NGOs⁴⁷ that took part in the research. The availability of a full-time, paid leader, who has built a career in the NGO sector is a key criterion. The remaining aspects of professionalisation are considered in terms of whether they have contributed to professionalisation of Kyrgyz NGOs.

Here it is also important to give a brief overview of different legal registration options that NGOs have according to the law on non-commercial organisations (NCOs) in Kyrgyzstan. According to this law, NGOs can be formed either as a

⁴⁷ Although I interviewed 47 NGOs during my fieldwork as stated in the methodology chapter, in this chapter, I used interviews with 45 NGOs. Two NGOs were excluded because one of them was a branch of a large organisation that I also interviewed and the representative of the second one was interviewed in the capacity of an NGO expert. Consequently, information was repeated in the first case, and, necessary information was insufficient in the second case.

public association, or a public foundation, or an institution⁴⁸. The public association is a membership organisation which brings together citizens with common spiritual and other non-material interests on a voluntary basis. At least three people are needed to create one⁴⁹. The public foundation is a non-membership organisation which pursues social, charitable, cultural, educational, and socially useful goals. It can be set up by one or more individuals and/or legal entities⁵⁰. The institution is an organisation established by an owner to carry out managerial, socio-cultural, and other not-for-profit activities. It can be set up by one or more individuals and/or legal entities. The funding of the institution is supposed to be provided either fully or partially by the owner⁵¹.

Leadership

Twenty four of forty five NGOs in my sample were subsumed under a category of professional NGOs. In nineteen NGOs, managers were clearly separated from founders. Most importantly, it was their skills and experience that brought them to the position of a manager. Even some leaders did not go through a selection process for their position but rather were invited because of their skills and experience. My research data also suggested that most managers had worked in the NGO sector or a development project before taking up an employment with their current NGO. A vivid example is a manager of an NGO working on education. He has two high education diplomas. He started his career in one of the local NGOs. Then he had a job in the international NGO. A couple of years ago, he had an internship in the US through International Visitors Programme. A brief career biography of this manager posted on a website of the NGO states that, because of his broad experience in the NGO sector, he has knowledge in the field of civil society development, financial and managerial analysis of projects and programmes (Interview, Bishkek, 5 March 2008 and information from a web site of the NGO). In

⁴⁸ Law of the Kyrgyz Republic on Non-Commercial Organisations (NCOs) as of 1998, Article 6, Chapter I.

⁴⁹ Law of the Kyrgyz Republic on NCOs as of 1998, Article 20, Chapter II.

⁵⁰ Law of the Kyrgyz Republic on NCOs as of 1998, Article 23, Chapter III.

⁵¹ Law of the Kyrgyz Republic on NCOs as of 1998, Articles 31, 33, Chapter IV.

other words, managers of these nineteen NGOs have built a career path in the NGO sector.

Five of twenty four professional NGOs had full-time, paid managers; but, at the same time, these managers were either a founder or among the founders. However, for these managers, working for an NGO was not a voluntary job but rather a professional activity because they worked full-time and received a salary whilst being an NGO founder simultaneously. An example is a manager of a civil society support NGO from Bishkek. She founded the NGO in the early 1990s and has run it since then. The NGO has become one of the leading NGOs in Kyrgyzstan. Its staff consists of highly qualified specialists, who have professional education training from local, Russian and foreign educational centres, and wide work experience in the 'third sector'. The manager has become not only an experienced NGO manager but also a civil society specialist. She has written a number of articles on the development of civil society in Central Asia and Kyrgyzstan for international journals. She is also a member of boards of other NGOs (Interview, Bishkek, 5 November 2007 and information from a web site of the NGO).

The leader of an environmental NGO from Bishkek has had the same career path and experience. She founded the NGO in 2002. Before setting it up, the manager graduated from the Ecological Department of the International University in Kyrgyzstan. Then she studied in Slovakia. She also had internships in many places including the USA and Russia. She stated that the ultimate goal of her NGO was to become professionals in the field of sustainable development, whose opinion would be valuable in society. They also want to work not only in Kyrgyzstan but also in the neighbouring countries. They already have projects in Russia (Interview, Bishkek, 27 November 2007). These two examples clearly show that these leaders regard an NGO activity not only as their vocation (something that they do for worthy causes) but also as their professional activity (something that they can and want to do professionally). Moreover, they earn a full-time living here.

Members

The official registration of NGOs is central in discussing their membership. As has been outlined earlier, according to the law on non-commercial organisations, only NGOs registered as public associations are supposed to have a membership base. My research data revealed that fourteen of twenty four professional NGOs were registered as public associations. However, only ten of them have members. Five of ten NGOs said that their members were organisations which they supported and represented. The number of organisations in their membership varies from 6 to 209. For example, an NGO representing business firms has 48 organisations in its membership. Four of ten NGOs have asserted that their membership consists of individuals. Their number ranges between 30 and 50. The remaining NGOs did not specify their members but rather said they indicated their target group in general such as village people (For details please see table 15).

Funding

My research data indicated that all twenty four professional NGOs received funding from donors. Thirteen of them depend completely upon donors. The remaining eleven NGOs have other sources of funding, which include owning and renting real estate, membership fees, selling services such as training and monitoring, social entrepreneurship, and donations from local and foreign business. However, only two of these NGOs said that income from other sources was sufficient to maintain their activities and organisation. One of these two NGOs is an association of business firms from. It has 48 member organisations. Its budget is constituted from membership fees that its members pay on an annual basis. It is just enough for the NGO to fulfil its mission, which is to represent interests of business firms. They do not have any extra funding for additional activities and even for additional staff. For example, the manager of the NGO has experienced problems with finding an assistant for a low salary that their budget can afford. Nevertheless, membership fees are enough to keep this organisation going and to carry out its mission. It also

occasionally received donor funding for additional activities. For example, it had funding from OSCE and trained potential young specialists for the firms (Interview, Bishkek, 25 February 2008).

For the remaining nine of eleven NGOs, other sources of funding cover administrative costs and institutional development at best. For example, a civil society support NGO from Bishkek receives income from renting premises. However, these funds can only cover salaries of core staff which include the director, an accountant, an office-manager, security guards, and a cleaner. In the meantime, they are not sufficient to pay for any activities of the NGO. Consequently, the NGO needs to raise funds from donors for its activities (Interview, Bishkek, 17 December 2007). For some NGOs, the income from other sources is even more limited and can hardly cover office expenses let alone salaries of staff. Another NGO from Bishkek working on civil society support complained that the income from selling their services such as training provision and others, their income could only cover communication expenses but not the salaries of trainers (Interview, Bishkek, 5 November 2007).

Few NGOs have noted that their membership fees are nominal. They echoed the interviewee from a refugee NGO from Bishkek who noted that their membership fees are symbolic; around 10 soms (\$0.02). He also stressed that they could not demand a large membership fee from their members because they cannot afford such an amount at any rate (Interview, Bishkek, 29 November 2007). Based on the above, it is evident that, most professional NGOs heavily depend on donors notwithstanding the fact that eleven of them have other sources of funding in addition to donor grants. Only two organisations can exist independently and carry out their missions.

Organisational structure

The analysis of organisational structures of professional NGOs has shown that their structures correspond to the requirements of the law on non-commercial organisations. According to this law, in a public association, a general assembly consisting of all its members is a supreme body. Its main function is overseeing the

management and operation of the organisation⁵². The structure of a public foundation should consist of a board, which manages and represents the organisation, and a voluntary supervisory board, which oversees the overall activities of the organisation. These bodies are formed in accordance with a charter which is approved by the founder (s)⁵³. The structure of an institution including governing bodies and their functions is determined by the owner⁵⁴.

As table 15 shows, most NGOs have bodies corresponding to the ones stipulated in the law on NCOs. It is evident that majority of NGOs registered as a public association have a general assembly and an executive body. NGOs with a status of a public foundation are even more similar to one another. The prevailing majority of them have a founder(s), a supervisory council, an executive director, and staff. Therefore, a number of NGO interviewees described their structure as simple as did the leader of a human rights NGO from Osh:

The structure of our organisation is simple as that of other public associations. We have general assembly, 27 members, then management, board. So the hierarchy is like this. It is a usual structure (Interview, 31 March 2008, Osh).

By stating that their structure was “usual”, these NGOs meant that it was as that of other NGOs. There is only one NGO registered as an institution which has a supervisory council and an executive director. Most importantly, this means that all professional organisations despite their registration type have a body which is responsible for overseeing the overall direction of their activities. It is also evident that there is a hierarchy in professional NGOs.

Table 15

	Public Associations	Membership	Structure
1	NGO working on refugees, Bishkek city	30 members (individuals)	GA, MB, Staff
2	NGO working on children's issues, Bishkek city	34 members (individuals)	GA, EB, Consultative Body, Staff
3	NGO working on border issues, Osh city	27 members (individuals)	GA, MB, EB, Staff

⁵² Law of the Kyrgyz Republic on NCOs as of 1998, Article 20, Chapter II.

⁵³ Law of the Kyrgyz Republic on NCOs as of 1998, Articles 26, 27, 28, Chapter III.

⁵⁴ Law of the Kyrgyz Republic on NCOs as of 1998, Articles 31, 33, Chapter IV.

4	NGO working on HIV/AIDS, alcoholism, and other issues, Bishkek city	Members available (individuals)	CB, ED, Staff
5	NGO working on civil society support, Bishkek city	22 members (organizations)	GA, BD, ED, Staff
6	NGO working on HIV/AIDS prevention, Bishkek city	12 members (organizations)	GA, Staff
7	NGO working on civic education, elections, and other watchdog activities, Bishkek city	61 members (organizations)	GA, BD, P, ED, Staff
8	NGO representing business firms, Bishkek city	48 members (organizations)	GA, Presidium, P, ED, Staff
9	NGO working on housing issues, Bishkek city	209 members (organizations)	GA, MB, ED, Staff
10	NGO working on women, poverty, and other social issues, Issyk-Ata region	Village people (general)	GA, MB, SB, ED, Staff
11	NGO working on advocacy and civil society support, Bishkek city	No members	Founder, BD, ED, Staff
12	NGO working on civil society support, Bishkek city	No members	GA, MB, ED, Staff
13	NGO working on human rights, Bishkek city	No members	GA, Founders, CB, Staff
14	NGO working on women's issues, Osh city	No members	GA, Founders, ED, Staff
	Public Foundations	Membership	Structure
1	NGO working on HIV/AIDS prevention and other related issues, Osh city	No members	Founder, SC, ED, Staff
2	NGO working on HIV/AIDS prevention and other related issues, Osh city	No members	Founders' council, SC, Coordinator, Staff
3	NGO working on human rights, Bishkek city	No members	Founder, SC, ED, Staff
4	NGOs working on rural development, Bishkek city	No members	Founder, SC, ED, Staff
5	NGO working on elderly people, Bishkek city	No members	BD, ED, Staff
6	NGO working on educational issues, Bishkek city	No members	Founder, SC, ED, Staff
7	NGO working on environmental issues, Bishkek city	No members	Founder, SC, ED, Staff
8	NGO working on conflict resolution, Bishkek city	No members	Founder, GA (all staff), MB, P, Staff
9	NGO working on human rights, Bishkek city	No members	Founder, SC, ED, Staff
	Institution		
1	NGO working on rural development, Bishkek city	No members	SC, ED

GA - General Assembly (members), MB – Management Board, EB – Executive Body, ED – Executive Director, BD – Board of Directors, P – President, , CB – Coordinating Board, SC – Supervisory Council

Administrative and financial rules

In regards to administrative and financial regulations, my research suggested that NGOs in the professional category should at least follow their own charter developed in accordance with the law on non-commercial organisations since it stipulates that, regardless of their registration form, NGOs are meant to have a charter, which is a main document in their establishment and operation. The charter determines everything about an organisation including its activities, management, governing and controlling bodies, rights and responsibilities. Everyone engaged in an organisation is bound to comply with the charter⁵⁵. For example, the NGO from Bishkek working on human rights has only the charter. All the other rules within this organisation are announced on the general meeting. However, they are not fixed on paper but rather passed on orally (Interview, Bishkek, 28 February, 2008).

Nonetheless, most professional NGOs also have other internal regulations, particularly financial ones, in addition to the charter. My research indicated that the more experienced an NGO was, the more sophisticated its administrative and financial capacities were. For example, a women's NGO, which has existed since 1996, has organisational policies, which regulate internal relations between its employees, external relations with partners, and financial management (Interview, Bishkek, 19 March 2008). Data from self-administered questionnaires, which were completed by NGO employees within my research, revealed that twenty three out of twenty five respondents said that they had signed a contract and 16 said that they had been familiarised with their terms of reference when they started their employment with their respective NGOs. Although the survey included employees from all NGOs in my sample, the importance of these indicators is that NGOs have administrative practices and regulations, to which they adhere.

⁵⁵ Law of the Kyrgyz Republic on NCOs, Article 10, Chapter I.

Employment of staff and their remuneration

My research showed that there were two wide-spread methods of staff recruitment among professional NGOs. The first method is employing people based on merit with a particular focus on their professional and educational background as well as personal characteristics. For example, a refugee NGO from Bishkek hires its staff exclusively by giving an advertisement in the public newspaper (Interview, Bishkek, 22 February 2008). The second method is recruiting among active volunteers as does a human-rights NGO from Bishkek. In this NGO, people who come to it as volunteers, become their employees later on when the NGO launches a new project (Interview, Bishkek, 28 February 2008).

The self-administered questionnaires with NGO employees indicated that, out of twenty five respondents, seven were hired based on merit and eight on their volunteering experience in the NGO. Other answers included: “I was hired on recommendation of acquaintances” and “Establishment of an NGO was our joint initiative”. Further, the questionnaires have revealed that, employees of NGOs in Kyrgyzstan receive a regular salary around the national average one which is \$133.51 per month (www.for.kg)⁵⁶. Seven out of twenty five NGO employees said that their monthly salary was up to 5,500 soms (\$133.62); whilst the salaries of fourteen were more than 5,500 soms. Among NGO leaders, eight out of thirty three said that they received up to 5,500 soms (\$133.62); twelve received from 5,501 to 11,000 soms (\$133.64 to \$267.24); and four leaders received more than 11,001 soms.

Finally, the data from self-administered questionnaires have shown that the NGO leaders are predominantly middle-aged, Kyrgyz, married and with university education. In relation to gender, leaders of urban NGOs are mainly female; while rural NGOs tend to be led by males. On the whole, the leaders of NGOs in my sample are balanced between genders. The NGO employees are mainly young, from

⁵⁶ According to the National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic, the average salary in Kyrgyzstan in 2008 was 4,844.00 som (<http://www.for.kg/ru/news/69105/>). This is \$133.51. The exchange rate of the National Bank of the Kyrgyz republic as of May 2008 (when the research was over) was 36.28 som for \$1 (<http://www.nbkr.kg/DOC/18012010/00000000003605.xls>).

18 to 35 years old, Kyrgyz, female, and with university education. The number of single and married employees is almost equal.

Material and technical resources

On the whole, professional NGOs have an adequate technical-material basis including an equipped and furnished office. As with the administrative and financial rules, the stronger the NGO is, the better its technical-material basis is. There are NGOs with abundant technical-material resources. For example, a NGO from Bishkek working on civil society support has a large office in the center of Bishkek. The office accommodates around ten staff members. It even has rooms for large meetings and gatherings. The office is nicely equipped and furnished⁵⁷. There are also NGOs with minimal, essential technical-material resources such as the NGO from Bishkek representing business firms. It has a one-room office in the city center that can accommodate only two-three people. Its basic equipment and furniture is limited to a computer, tables, chairs, and a bookcase⁵⁸.

To sum up so far, slightly more than the half of NGOs in my sample were categorised as professional and formal. I have categorised the rest of the NGOs as non-professional. This will be discussed in a greater detail in chapter 7. However, at this point, it is necessary to note that a number of non-professional NGOs do resemble professional ones. They have an organisational structure, written office rules, and qualified staff, which are closely interconnected with their acquirement of project implementation experience, expertise, and other institutional capacity and skills. However, they work on a part-time basis and their leaders are not NGO career activists.

⁵⁷ Observation notes taken after the interview on 5 November 2007, Bishkek.

⁵⁸ Observation notes, 25 February 2008, Bishkek.

NGO survival: further professionalisation

The first section has shown that civil society activities and grant requirements of donors have made NGOs professional and formal. The overview of NGOs in the sample has revealed that slightly more than the half is professional and formal from an organisational perspective. Moreover, I have suggested that, even in the non-professional category, there are NGOs which have features of professional NGOs such as an organisational structure and administrative rules. The discussions earlier have also made it clear that NGOs are dependent on donor funding. According to the resource dependency theory, when an external environment of organisations changes, particularly the amount of available resources, organisations either adapt to a new environment or cease functioning (Pfeffer and Salancik, 2003).

Applying this theory to the Kyrgyz situation, one might anticipate that Kyrgyz NGOs are bound to experience considerable changes in the light of changes in civil society activities of donors. My research provided empirical support for this contention. In this section, I look at implications of the changes in donors' civil society activities⁵⁹ for NGOs in Kyrgyzstan.

The trend towards further NGO professionalisation

The key idea that my research data suggested is that the changes in civil society activities of donors were leading NGOs to further professionalisation and formalisation. Interviews with some donors and NGOs suggested that reduction in donor grants to the latter made the existing competition for donor funding among them fiercer. For example, one of the donor representatives stated that the last grant competition of their civil society programme was very strong (Interview, Bishkek, 12

⁵⁹ In Chapter 4, I identified that the changes in donors' civil society activities include reduction in donor funding to NGOs, especially to their capacity-building, promotion of NGOs in an advocacy role, and donors' encouragement of collaborative relations between the state and NGOs.

November 2007). Moreover, a number of NGOs⁶⁰ noted that donors have made their funding requirements stricter and have enhanced their control over the use of their grants. In this relation, the head of a civil society support NGO from Bishkek rightly observed that only competent NGOs with trained staff, proper skills, and experience can win the competition (Interview, Bishkek, 17 December 2008). In other words, a decreased pool of donor funding is compelling NGOs to meet donor requirements to be able to secure limited funding. As I have revealed earlier, donor requirements have resulted in professionalisation and formalisation of NGOs. Therefore, I suggest that NGOs are becoming even more professional and formal in order to meet donors' toughened requirements to receive reduced funding from them.

Furthermore, according to my research, the current donor promotion of NGOs in the advocacy role is also contributing to further NGO professionalisation and formalisation. The involvement of NGOs in advocacy has resulted in a closer interaction between them and the state institutions where the former seeks to influence the latter to undertake reforms in its policies. However, to do this, interview data indicated that NGOs needed expertise in the field that they worked on and proper analytical skills to analyse state policies and to develop adequate recommendations and comments. NGOs lack these at present, for which they have been criticised, especially by state institutions. For example, a professional NGO from Osh faced such a criticism from the city administration.

When we talked to the city administration, they said: "NGOs do not always have experts. For example, when we [the city administration] raise ecological issues at a round table, they [NGOs] can not always involve experts on ecology, who could explain professionally". They [the city administration] said that people from different background come to the NGO sector and they are not always competent in issues that they raise. ... For example, we are organising a public meeting on privatisation of the energy sector. We are sometimes blamed for holding public meetings without specialists on the energy sector, without an expert competent in the energy sector. In this case, they are right. They say that we need to have an expert evaluation. Moreover, the expert should be acknowledged on the level of our republic, whose opinion we can rely on and whose research we can believe so that it is not a biased perspective of the NGO (Interview, Osh, 1 April 2008).

Furthermore, most interviewees from donor agencies and even from NGOs noted that NGOs needed to improve their professional and institutional capacity in order to enhance their legitimacy before the state so that it could trust their work and

⁶⁰ For example, interviews with two Bishkek NGOs held on 1 November 2007 and 19 March 2008.

recommendations and consider them as an equal partner. Focus groups conducted with state representatives by the Aga-Khan Foundation within its research on the relationships between the state and civil society organisations (CSOs) in Kyrgyzstan revealed that one of the key complaints of the state institutions against CSOs was that they lacked professionalism, transparency, and accountability (Counterpart – Sheriktesh, 2007).

These weaknesses have also been identified by NGOs on the national and regional forums of NGOs in 2007 (Interview, Bishkek, 7 May 2008). This clearly means that, to work with the state effectively, NGOs need to have adequate expertise in their field, analytical skills, and a competent institutional capacity to ensure their transparency and accountability. Nonetheless, it should be highlighted that it is not that the state requires NGOs to be professional but rather it is the level on which NGOs are involved in the interaction with the state and the role that they play require them to be professional.

In other words, I argue that changes in donors' civil society activities, which are the promotion of NGOs in an advocacy role and reduction in funding to NGOs, are requiring NGOs to strengthen their professional and institutional capacity, which is resulting in further professionalisation and formalisation of NGOs. This is because, firstly, the competition for donor funding has become tougher and demands NGOs to perform better from the professional and institutional perspectives. Secondly, the promotion of NGOs in advocacy has resulted in a closer relationship between the state and NGOs, where the latter is required to demonstrate knowledge, expertise, transparency, and accountability in their collaboration.

The case of a women's NGO from Bishkek demonstrates how NGOs in Kyrgyzstan are further professionalising and formalising. The NGO has existed since the mid 1990s only on a voluntary basis with a main purpose of supporting regional women's NGOs. The interviewee from this NGO said that they had experimented with an idea of voluntarism and had come to a conclusion that an organisation like theirs cannot exist on a voluntary basis because regional NGOs depend on their support and services. Most importantly, their work involves developing their [women's NGOs] position and strategy conceptually and, as a result, requires great human resources, knowledge, expertise, and skills.

Consequently, they have volunteers, as the interviewee said, not housewives but women with high education, degrees with distinctions, and knowledge of several languages. For example, one of them used to work for a regional office of the Asian Development Bank in Thailand. However, the interviewee noted that they had been losing their volunteers because they could not employ them; meanwhile, all of them have families and need to earn living. The number of their volunteers has decreased from fifteen to four. They cannot afford to lose any more volunteers because it takes time to train a new one. Moreover, it is difficult to find qualified people. Therefore, they started looking for funding to turn their volunteers into their staff. The interviewee admitted that fundraising was a very difficult task (Interview, Bishkek, 16 May 2008).

Furthermore, reduction in donor funding to NGOs is making them look for additional sources of funding to gain sustainability. A number of NGOs both from professional and non-professional categories said that they were thinking about self-financing. Several NGOs noted that they wanted to develop social entrepreneurship in their organisation. For example, an NGO working on HIV/AIDS from Osh plans to set up a workshop to fix mobile phones. Their initiative has been supported by the World Bank (Interview, 2 April 2008, Osh). Meanwhile, a women's NGO from Issyk-Ata district has already started social entrepreneurship activities. They have been growing plants on rented land and selling the crops to villagers. As a result, they not only raise funds for themselves but also give an opportunity to villagers to earn cash since they hire them to grow plants; and, in the end, they sell the crops to them on an agreed price (Interview, 19 March 2008, Bishkek). The interviewee from a civil society support NGO said that, during their training, they encouraged NGOs to look at their organisations as social business since they believed that a work formula for NGOs was the same as for business: organisation – labour – client (Interview, 19 March 2008, Bishkek). This suggests that there is also a potential trend of commercialisation of NGOs in addition to their professionalisation and formalisation. However, the development of the former depends on the development of the latter since it requires professional and institutional skills.

My research also revealed that professionalisation and formalisation was a concern for the NGO sector on a collective level as a result of their changing

environment. Since 2005 NGOs have conducted regional and national NGO forums to discuss their strengths and weaknesses, their further development as the sector, and their relationship with the state and donors (ACSSC, 2007). In these forums, NGOs admitted their weaknesses such as having a poor public image and a lack of transparency and accountability, which undermines the trust of the state and the public in them. As a result, a couple of capacity-building projects have been launched. One of these projects is implemented by the ACSSC and funded by the Aga-Khan Foundation. Within it, the ACSSC developed a self-assessment tool which covers such aspects as strategic management and planning, management of human resources, service delivery, and public relations (www.acssc.kg). NGOs can use it to identify their strength and weaknesses (Interview, Bishkek, 12 November 2007). This is done in order to give a chance to NGOs to improve upon their identified weaknesses.

In addition, the ACSSC is also working on creating a certification process for NGOs. This implies developing certain standards that NGOs would use for their organisational operation. Any NGO can go through their certification process (i.e. an organisational audit) on a voluntary basis. If it meets the standards, it is awarded a certificate. If it fails, it will be provided with training recommendation to improve its weaknesses. It is believed that the certification process will help NGOs build their capacity. In addition, it will serve as a list of certified NGOs with which the government and business could get in touch with for prospective collaborations (Interview, Bishkek, 12 November 2007). This matches what McCarthy and Zald (1973) predicted with regard to SMOs. They asserted that the next step for professionalisation of SMOs would be an establishment of an association of SM organisers which would certify SM leaders. Although the NGO certification body described above is different, it can still be considered as a next stage in NGO professionalisation in Kyrgyzstan since it encourages NGOs to comply with certain professional and institutional standards.

Boundaries of NGO professionalisation

Notwithstanding the trend towards further professionalisation and formalisation of NGOs, my research data showed that not all NGOs were actually able or had necessary support to professionalise and formalise. The interviews revealed that NGOs, which have managed to build up certain institutional and professional credibility including a certain level of experience, necessary skills and at least an adequate technical and material basis, stood a better chance of obtaining donor funding and are becoming more professional and formal. In the meantime, NGOs, which do not have the above listed assets, are behind this trend. Usually they are new and small NGOs. Many NGO interviewees echoed the head of a refugee NGO from Issyk-Ata, who said that it was very difficult for new and small NGOs since to obtain funding from donors they still needed to meet donors' requirements such as availability of previous experience and skills (Interview, Bishkek, 14 March 2008).

Some of these NGOs have a very pessimistic mood. They expressed concern regarding a lack of funding. The only prospect that they see for themselves is closing down or turning into a commercial business. Interestingly, this problem concerns NGOs both in cities and villages. For example, a refugee NGO from Nijne-Chuisk has existed for several years, but has never managed to secure funding from donors. They have written eighteen project proposals. None of them was successful. The head of the NGO noted that they were so discouraged and they were ready to discontinue operation (Interview, Bishkek, 14 March 2008). A new NGO from Osh, which was the only NGO in my sample registered in 2006, encountered the same dilemma. They also submitted a number of proposals to donors, none of which were accepted. The head of the NGO explained their failure with the fact that she lacked time to write proper proposals since she worked at a university. She also suspected that donors might be corrupt (Interview, Osh, 4 April 2008).

Furthermore, there is no adequate capacity-building support for these NGOs to develop their organisations. As stated elsewhere donor agencies and INGOs either stopped providing or reduced dramatically their institutional support to NGOs. In a

few cases, where such support is available, NGOs are supposed to have some institutional capacity to be eligible for it. For example, as discussed in chapter 4, NDI supports those NGOs which have access to internet or phone in order to be in regular contact with them (Interview, Bishkek, 1 November 2007). This means that NGOs should be able to afford at least a computer and internet connection. As a result, NGOs without these, which are usually non-professional, small, and new, are left without any support.

Local NGOs working on civil society support (CSS) are also unable to provide proper capacity-building support to NGOs. An interviewee from one such NGO said that they trained new NGOs and helped them get established. However, the NGO could not provide the new NGOs with any information on donor grants since there were no donor grants for NGOs. Therefore, it has become difficult for CSS NGOs to function (Interview, Bishkek, 19 March 2008). Moreover, CSS NGOs are struggling to survive themselves because of donor funding reduction in their field – capacity-building of civil society. For example, a CSS NGO from Osh said that, in the past, their key support to NGOs included provision of consultation on different issues. Moreover, they were contracted by NGOs to provide training and to do research and evaluation. This was one of their ways to fundraise. However, the situation is different now. Since NGOs started receiving limited donor grants, their activities have reduced. They cannot afford consultation and training from the CSS NGO. Therefore, the CSS NGO is standing idle now as noted by this interviewee:

We used to have a lot of clients before. Now there is almost none. ... For example, before, we used to have 48-50-60 visits/requests per month. Now it is only 15-16. Even in this case they [NGOs] come to get services on project writing and information on grant programmes. ...we have become a centre, which distributes information about what and where is happening in the field of NGOs, where there are grant and training opportunities and others. As a result, resource centres are not functioning because there is no demand for information, consultation, expertise, ... trainings, expert evaluation, and research and so on. Now as there is no funding, everything is on halt (Interview, Osh, 1 April 2008).

As a result, local CSS NGOs are bound to change their strategies to obtain funding for their survival. My research data suggested that they were concentrating more on priorities for which donor funding is earmarked, such as advocacy and promotion of reforms in state policies rather than civil society support.

While the impact of scarce capacity-building support has an evident impact on small and new NGOs with weak professional and institutional capacity, according to the interview data, it can also have a negative influence on professionally and institutionally adequate NGOs. For example, a lawyers' NGO from Osh, categorised as professional, cannot conduct a general meeting because it does not have funds to bring together its members, who are located in three countries on Fergana valley. As a result, the proper operation and management of the NGO is at risk (Interview, Osh, 31 March 2008). The interviewee from a Bishkek based CSS NGO, who carries out organisational audits in NGOs, shared her experience. According to her, having an organisational audit is a new phenomenon for Kyrgyz NGOs. When they just started, NGOs considering themselves successful agreed to be audited. The interviewee noted that, after auditing these NGOs, they found considerable weaknesses in their structure and concluded that it was an outcome of limited investment in institutional support of NGOs due to a lack of capacity-building support (Interview, Bishkek, 19 March 2008).

Furthermore, the reduction in donor funding to NGOs is also resulting in the lowering of salaries in them. I have stated in the second section that NGO workers received a monthly salary of no more than an average one in Kyrgyzstan which is \$137. This is different from what was before when the NGO sector used to provide generous remuneration to its employees (e.g. Aksartova, 2005; Adamson, 2002). As a result, there is a problem of staff turnover in NGOs now. The interview data revealed that NGO employees, young people among them, were giving up their jobs in the NGO sector not only because of salaries but also because of its unstable nature. Instead NGO employees started taking up jobs in the public sector, business, and international organisations. Some interviewees generally suggested that working for an NGO was no longer prestigious; whilst employment with an NGO was previously considered enviable (Interview, 12 April 2008, Jalalabat). A number of NGO interviewees in my sample also noted that, for young people, the NGO sector had become a starting point in their career, where they could acquire new skills and gain experience before taking up employment in other sectors.

To sum up, I have suggested that the changes in donors' civil society promotion have had two key implications for the NGOs sector. The first implication

is that an existing competition for donor funding among NGOs has become stronger. The second one is that promotion of advocacy is leading the state and NGOs to have a closer interaction. These factors, in their turn, are making NGOs to further professionalise and formalise. The tougher competition is forcing NGOs to improve their professional and institutional capacity in order to secure limited funding. The increased interaction with the state is making NGOs acquire necessary knowledge, expertise, and skills in their fields to be able to influence the state. However, not all NGOs are following this trend. I have showed that only established NGOs, which are predominantly professional NGOs, are further building their capacity. In the meantime, new and small NGOs are being left out and do not have proper capacity-building support. A lack of such support is also jeopardising well-being of professional NGOs. Further, I have noted that reduced donor funding is making salaries of NGO workers lower. This is resulting in the problem of staff turnover in NGOs.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed research findings about how changes in donors' civil society promotion have influenced NGOs in Kyrgyzstan which answers the first half of my third research question: *what are the implications of the changes in civil society activities of donors for Kyrgyz NGOs, the Kyrgyz state, and relations between the two?*. To do this, first, I have discussed the influence of donors on NGOs since the beginning of their interaction. I have suggested that donors have shaped the development of NGOs in a professional and formal form through their training, grant requirements, and even by being a model of a legitimised organisation.

Consequently, in the second section, I have looked at how many NGOs in my sample are professional and formal drawing on the ideal type of the professional and formal NGO identified in chapter 3. The ideal type included the following criteria: leadership, organisational structure, funding, membership, administrative rules, and technical-material basis. Based on these, I have identified that slightly more than the

half of NGOs in my sample can be categorised as professional. I have also stated that, in the non-professional category, some NGOs resemble professional ones.

The influence that donors have had on NGOs in Kyrgyzstan through their funding requirements can be explained by organisational theories. According to the resource mobilisation theory of McCarthy and Zald (1973), when a considerable amount of external funding is available, non-profit organisations change their nature from voluntary to professional to obtain the funds. As a result, they separate from their membership base and hire professional staff to secure funding from external sources. In other words, donor funding requirements are bound to make NGOs professionalise and formalise. The case of Kyrgyz NGOs illustrates this. As shown above, in order to obtain funds from donors, some NGOs had to acquire professional and institutional capacity. This has happened in other developing countries too. For example, in India in the 1980s-1990s, NGOs underwent professionalisation because of the increased availability of foreign funding as well as donor requirements such as proper management of funds, reporting, and monitoring (Ebrahim, 2001: 88-89).

In the third section, I have specifically looked at the influence of recent changes in civil society activities of donors on NGOs. My key argument is that NGOs are further professionalising and formalising because these changes have been prompting them to improve their professional and institutional capacity to overcome the increased competition for donor funding and to be able to work with the state effectively under advocacy rhetoric and collaborative relations with the state. This is congruent with the resource dependence theory of Pfeffer and Salancik (2003) which states that organisations are bound to change when their environment changes.

For example, NGOs in Latin America had to further professionalise throughout the 1990s because of a greater donor demand for accountability due to concerns about NGOs' use of funds. Donors toughened their rules and required NGOs to show tangible outcomes of their activities. As a result, Latin American NGOs had to acquire specific skills and expertise such as designing proposals, meeting accounting and evaluation procedures, and dealing with international funding. Consequently, NGOs including grassroots organisations in Latin America experienced great professionalisation and formalisation (Markowitz and Tice, 2002).

In the similar vein, NGOs in Kyrgyzstan are becoming more professional and formal because of the changes in donors' civil society activities.

Nonetheless, I have pointed out a number of limitations in the trend of further NGO professionalisation and formalisation. My argument is that this trend concerns professionally and institutionally adequate NGOs which predominantly match a category of professional NGOs. In the meantime, small and new NGOs, which tend to be professionally and institutionally weak, are struggling to survive. This is because these NGOs cannot meet grant requirements of donors properly and, consequently, are phased out from a circle of grant receivers. Moreover, they do not have capacity-building support from donors since the latter ceased providing it. Therefore, it would be logical to assume that if the same NGOs continue to receive funding due to their high level of professionalism and formalisation, the NGO sector in Kyrgyzstan might become static. As a result, the sector will fail to experience growth, diversification, and dynamism.

I have also noted that a lack of capacity-building support puts professional NGOs at stake as well because they fail to carry out their organisational management properly. Finally, I have argued that reduced donor funding to NGOs has resulted in the decrease of salary rates in them. I have established that, within those NGOs that pay their staff salary, the majority is around an average salary in Kyrgyzstan. As a result, a problem of staff turnover has emerged in the NGO sector since their employees started leaving for the public and private sectors and other development organisations whose jobs are considered more stable.

The reduction in NGO salary and a staff turnover problem in them have implications for the literature on civil society in Kyrgyzstan. Some scholars (Adamson, 2002; Roy, 2002; Petric, 2005; Aksartova, 2005) argued that NGOs in Kyrgyzstan provided generous salaries and benefits to their employees, which in its turn triggered internal "brain drain" since people from other sectors moved to the NGO sector. However, based on the above research findings, I argue that the situation regarding this is different now. NGOs are no longer causing the internal "brain drain". In fact, I suggest that the NGO sector is experiencing the "brain drain" since its employees are leaving for the public and private sectors.

Most importantly, my exploration of NGOs from the organisational perspective has filled the gap in the literature that I outlined in chapter 2. The literature claimed that NGOs in Kyrgyzstan were professional. However, this claim was not based on studies of NGOs' organisational capacity. My research findings have indicated that only the half of my sample can be categorised as professional organisations. Therefore, I suggest that the NGO sector in Kyrgyzstan cannot be generalised as professional. Finally, I would like to point out that this chapter answered the first half of my third research question which focuses on the implications of changes in donors' civil society promotion for the NGO sector in Kyrgyzstan. The next chapter will answer the second half of my third research question which asks what the implications of the changes for the state-NGO relations in Kyrgyzstan have been.

Chapter 6

State-NGO relations

Chapter 4 established that the state has returned to development as a key actor. Donors are providing the state with capacity-building support and funding. In this regard, I suggested that the focus of donors on the state is new, since previously they concentrated mainly on civil society promotion as an alternative and antithesis to the state. Consequently, in this chapter, I discuss whether changes in donors' civil society promotion have influenced the state-NGO relations in Kyrgyzstan. Therefore, I address my last research question⁶¹.

The review of the relevant literature in chapter 2 revealed that the interaction between these actors was unstable. In particular, the state changed its attitude towards NGOs frequently from supporting civil society to limiting it. The literature review also pointed out that donors played an important role in state-NGO interaction (Aksartova, 2005). However, I suggested in chapter 2 that the literature did not provide a comprehensive account of NGO-state relations in Kyrgyzstan. Most works, especially reports of international organisations such as HRW and the US Department of State, preferred to focus on the confrontation between these actors. Some authors claimed that there was mistrust between NGOs and the state (Tretyakov, 2007). Meanwhile, others asserted that these actors did not intersect at all (Roy, 2002).

I start the chapter by looking at the role of donors in state-NGO relations. In the first section I identify to what extent these actors depend on donors to interact with each other. I argue that donors are still important because they provide funding to projects where the actors interact. In the second section, I discuss how NGOs and the state cooperate and work together and conclude that efforts of donors to make these actors work jointly are effective. In the third section, I look at the side of the state-NGO relations where NGOs counterbalance the state. A particular stress is put on how the state reacted to this. In the fourth section, I analyse the state in

⁶¹ My third research question is: What are the implications of these changes for Kyrgyz NGOs, the Kyrgyz state, and relations between the two?

Kyrgyzstan based on its relations with NGOs. The fifth section is a discussion of the research findings. Finally, I focus on the government of Bakiev in this chapter because I conducted my research during the rule of this government.

The continuing centrality of donor funding

My research revealed that donors were still important in the relationships between the state and NGOs in Kyrgyzstan. This is because they predominantly interact with each other within donor funded projects. As has been pointed out earlier, NGOs remain heavily dependent on donor funding. Interviews with NGOs showed that, in most cases, if there was a donor-funded project, there is a relationship between them and the state. “When we have a certain project, we turn to them [state institutions]” noted an interviewee from an NGO from working on conflict prevention and gave as an example that, when they had to develop a report on immigration processes in the south of Kyrgyzstan within their project, they worked with a range of state institutions such as committees on migration and labour and statistics (Interview, 3 April 2008, Osh).

This comment demonstrates that NGOs tend to initiate an interaction with the state and its institutions when they have activities funded by donors. This is usually at least a donor requirement for them. Once the project is over, the relationships between actors become weaker. For example, an action plan on the state-NGO interaction to fight domestic violence that the women’s NGO from Osh developed together with the state institutions worked only for one year. When the donor funding stopped, the actors did not continue a plan for the next year (Interview, Osh, 4 April 2008). This is very typical for the state-NGO relationships within donor programmes. Therefore, the state-NGO relationships can be described as desultory and very much dependent on the donor funding.

Donor grants also maintain NGOs as organisations so that they can carry out their activities including work with the state. It has been identified elsewhere that NGOs with a regular flow of donor funding tend to be professionally and

institutionally competent. According to my research, these NGOs interact with the state often. Meanwhile, NGOs with no funding tend to have minimum interaction with the state. It is also important to note that donor funding enables NGOs to interact with state institutions not only within donor projects, but also on their own initiative, because it maintains the existence, operation, and development of the NGO as an organisation. As a result, the NGO can get involved in activities in addition to the projects that are in accordance with their mission.

An NGO working on the prevention of HIV/AIDS is a good case to explain this point. In 2005, when the bill defining prostitution as a criminal act was initiated, the NGO worked with the state institutions, including police and parliament members, intensively to stop the adoption of the bill. After a 6-month effort the NGO managed to get the bill rejected (Interview, 23 November 2007, Bishkek). This means that, even though in 2005 sex workers were not the target group of the NGO, they still advocated for this issue because it was important for them strategically since their future projects would target sex workers. More importantly, they had the necessary capacity to do this, as they were maintained by donor grants from their other projects.

Furthermore, my research data suggested that a current donor focus on the promotion of effective relationships between NGOs and the state was leading the actors to work jointly. In other words, even though NGOs are involved in advocacy and have to influence the state; they should do it in a collaborative way because, according to donors, these actors are complementary: one can do what the other cannot and vice versa. Interviews also seem to suggest that donor projects have served as an involuntary incentive for the state to interact with NGOs. Many NGO interviewees said that the state interacts with them for the sake of appearance. In other words, the state institutions have to interact with NGOs to keep funding from donors coming.

All in all, according to my interviewees, the state institutions expect some funding from NGOs. In fact, potential funding is one of the incentives for the state institutions to interact with the NGOs. It has been a recurrent statement made by local and international NGOs that the state institutions believe that NGOs are abundant with donor funding. Consequently, the state institutions engage in

collaboration with NGOs in order to benefit from their funds, either in terms of cash or equipment, or furniture⁶². An interviewee from a civil society support NGO with wide experience and knowledge of the Kyrgyz NGO sector neatly summed it up:

They [the state institutions] collaborate well with those NGOs, which have money and when they have projects (Interview, 1 April 2008, Osh).

This, in turn, emphasises again the significance of donor funding in the state-NGO relationships in Kyrgyzstan. In other words, donors are important in the interaction of NGOs and the state institutions because they provide funding for projects where these actors can interact. Further, donors are the main funders of NGOs. Therefore, they support the existence and operation of NGOs in Kyrgyzstan in the first place. Finally, at present, donors are focusing specifically on the promotion of collaborative and effective relationships between the state and NGOs. Donor funding and strategies have been identified as central in the maintenance of the relationship between the state and NGOs since both of the actors do not have funding for their joint activities. Since donor funding is unstable, the relations between the state and NGOs tend to be unsystematic and irregular.

NGOs in a continuum with the state

According to my research, NGOs work together with the state. NGOs tend to act either as consultants, training providers, fundraisers, and even event organisers when working with the state. Some of them, especially those working at a national level in the capital, participate in the development of various legislative documents and policies. Based on this, I suggest that, through such activities, the state and NGOs tend to work together by sharing the same agenda. To illustrate this as well as a general pattern of the state-NGO interaction in Kyrgyzstan, I use below a case of a women's NGO from Osh.

⁶² For example, interviews with 2 representatives of the INGO in Osh, 2 April 2008, a representative of an NGO in Bishkek working on issues of disabled, 19 February 2008 and others.

The women's NGO is a crisis centre which was established in 1998 with an aim of preventing violence against women through educating the population in Osh province. Up to 2003, the NGO provided different social services to women. However, their experience showed that their services had had little effect on the solution of women's problems and they needed to interact with the local authorities in order to tackle the problems more effectively. As a result, in 2003, the NGO launched its first project aimed at the collaboration with territorial councils which were within the local authorities at that time. When carrying out their project, the NGO discovered that the territorial councils were not supposed to belong to the local authorities and obey the city administration since they were a public institution. Consequently, with the effort of the NGO, a decree to revise the status of territorial councils and other institutions of local authorities was issued (Interview, Osh, 4 April 2008).

The second project of the NGO explicitly focused on the improvement of the relationship between the state and NGOs fighting against domestic violence. The NGO developed this project because, firstly, the available legislation on violence against women was not carried out properly. Secondly, NGOs could not access the state institutions to work on this. The NGO received funding for this project from one of the donors. As a result, the NGO together with the city administration, the internal affairs department, and the social protection department developed an action plan for the joint interaction between these institutions and NGOs. The plan was published in the local newspaper (Interview, Osh, 4 April 2008).

This case suggests that through these projects the NGO a) identified the weaknesses of the state institutions regarding their structure and legislation, b) brought them to the attention of the concerned state institutions, and c) initiated and facilitated the actions of the state institutions to improve their weaknesses. This is a general pattern of the relationship between the state and most NGOs interviewed within my research. There is an issue with either legislation or state policy or any other aspect of the state institutions regardless whether it concerns refugees, disabled people, young children, elderly people or human rights. NGOs bring the issue to the attention of the respective state institutions through different projects such as the above, and involve them in solving the issue in question.

The actual dialogue between the NGOs and the state institutions takes place during round tables, seminars, and meetings. Round tables, in particular, are an important and wide-spread means of interaction. They serve as a platform for the actors to discuss the problems and negotiate solutions for them. For example, it was a series of round tables with the parliament members that enabled a human rights NGO from Bishkek to have the law on custody procedures amended. As a result of the NGO's efforts, a lawyer can now meet their own client, the accused, without permission from a prosecutor, which was not allowed before. The interviewee from this NGO made a particular emphasis on the fact that they could reach this positive change through negotiations and cooperation with the parliament rather than open confrontation (Interview, Bishkek, 20 February 2008). Based on this, I suggest that round tables enable negotiation, sharing of views, and establishing a joint agenda.

Further, NGOs are a provider of different types of resources to the state. This can be demonstrated with an example of an NGO from Bishkek working on the issues of disabled people. In December 2007, the Kyrgyz President declared that month as a month of additional support to disabled people. Consequently, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection invited the NGO to discuss how they could mark this month and what they could do together. The preparation process ended with the fact that the Ministry borrowed the NGO's banner, motto, logo, and videos which they prepared for a festival. The Ministry explained this that they did not want to spend funding on producing these attributes from scratch. The NGO interviewee said that they had not minded sharing their materials because it was for the benefit of their constituency (Interview, 19 February 2008, Bishkek). Based on this, it can be said that NGOs not only collaborate with state institutions but also act as a source of intellectual resource and work materials, meaning they have an influence on the state institution's agenda and activities.

Furthermore, a number of NGO interviewees said that their relationship with the state had improved since 2005 (the research was carried out in 2007-2008). The case of a human rights NGO from Osh covers all the aspects of improvements in the state-NGO relationships that were discovered by my research. The improvements include three specific facts. Firstly, the NGO had been invited by the state committee on migration and employment to hold training for their staff for the first time.

Secondly, after a round table in Bishkek organised by the NGO, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs invited them to carry out a joint project on border issues. As a result, they developed a joint project which is now under the consideration of donors for funding. Thirdly, they started signing a memorandum of understanding and collaboration with state institutions, namely the frontier services and passport departments of three provinces (Interview, 31 March 2008, Osh). This case indicates not only the recent improvement in state-NGO relations but also the fact that these actors started interacting without direct donor support.

In other words, for NGOs, the improvements in state-NGO relationships imply more collaboration and joint work together. It can be suggested that, by signing documents such as a memorandum with NGOs, the state institutions started to consider NGOs as partners. Further, NGOs now not only provide expertise and organise events but also provide training for the state institutions. My research also discovered that a number of NGOs now had donor funded projects aimed at building the capacity of state institutions. For example, an NGO from Bishkek focusing on conflict prevention is working with local authorities to increase their transparency and accountability by looking at their budgeting and engaging local population and different groups in the community (Interview, 12 April 2008, Jalalabat). Another women's NGO from Issykata district was invited by local authorities to conduct training for their staff which they did on a voluntary basis. This is strategically important to this NGO since, as the interviewee noted, they need qualified people in local authorities to work with effectively (Interview, 19 March 2008, Bishkek).

The interview data also revealed that some NGOs intentionally included representatives from the state institutions into their governing bodies. For example, a civil society support NGO from Osh has representatives of the local state administration in its council of stakeholders, which is a strategy-setting and activity-monitoring body. The interviewee noted that they wanted the state administration to be informed about their activities and to get feedback from them because state officials know where the gaps are and what are needed (Interview, 1 April 2008, Osh). This is another illustration of a common agenda shared between NGOs and the state and work between these actors without donor support.

Furthermore, many NGO interviewees said that they wanted to have relationships with the state that are collaborative, open, constructive, trust based, close, transparent, easily accessed and have a dialogue. Here an interviewee from a women's NGO from Bishkek highlighted how she wanted the relationship between the state and civil society to be:

[I]t should be an open dialogue so that all disputable issues are solved on an equal basis and a consensus is sought all the time and [state and civil society] could understand each other. There is no need to show the government the most hurtful issues, there is no need to talk with populist slogans. Civil society must, if it is promoting something [criticising], justify it ... and propose something instead (Interview, Bishkek, 19 March 2008).

Her comment not only underscores the above dominant vision of NGOs on their ideal relationships between the state and civil society but also adds that the actors should interact on an equal basis with understanding. She condemns NGOs that criticise the state which has been a common phenomenon lately in Kyrgyzstan. She condemns them for being populist and emphasises that they need not only check on the state but also help it by making proposals for change. She believes that there should be mutual support and understanding between the actors.

Further, some NGO interviewees were convinced that civil society was meant to assist the government. For them, the state should regard NGOs as a useful resource that it can use to interact with the society on the primary level, to help in implementing state programmes, to provide quality state service, and to monitor and evaluate state programmes. For example, according to the interviewee from the civil society support NGO, the President could contract an NGO to assess how the state administration is working in Osh province (Interview, 1 April 2008, Osh). Most importantly, these NGOs see the state and civil society as one whole. "NGOs are part of our civil society and without them the state cannot develop. It is its complementary part" declared an interviewee from a lawyers' NGO (Interview, 31 March 2008, Osh). In the meantime, another interviewee claimed that the state and NGOs should come to agreement over their joint partnership goals (Interview, 1 April 2008, Osh).

My research indicated that state institutions were open to the joint work and collaboration with NGOs. According to my interview data, they started to initiate

partnership with NGOs. For example, the human rights NGO from Bishkek among other several NGOs experienced occasions when the government made an initiative to collaborate with them. In 2007, the head of this NGO was invited to take part in a working group which was created by the decree of the President to develop a bill on juvenile justice (Interview, 20 February 2008, Bishkek). This example reinforces the idea of NGOs embracing the role of consultants. The state institutions are involving NGOs in order to make use of their expertise, knowledge and experience. Most NGOs regard this type of state initiatives as an improvement in their relations, that is, their willingness to approach NGOs and initiate a dialogue. Further, the same NGOs noted that the state had finally learned what NGOs were and what they did. They said that they were approached by the state institutions for consultation and were invited to their events.

The case of one of the few sustainable NGOs from Bishkek working on issues of elderly people showed that the state institutions, the Department of Social Protection in this case, not only take or expect something from NGOs, as claimed by other NGOs, but also contribute to their collaboration. This NGO provides monetary support, which is raised from worldwide donations, to lonely and poor elderly people. The state institution provides the NGO with access to a database of elderly people who need help. It also assists the NGO with the distribution of funds through their centres in regions (Interview, 19 February, 2008). Similarly, a number of other NGOs said that the state institutions provided their premises and equipment for their events for free. NGOs also received help from the state specialists and experts. In fact, most NGOs have noted that the state provided them mainly in-kind support. As one of the NGO interviewees put it “they provide us political and moral support” (Interview, 5 April 2008, Osh).

Furthermore, the state has made a number of initiatives to strengthen its relationship with civil society, in particular with NGOs. In December 2008, the President Bakiev signed a decree on the creation of the public chamber which would be financed by the state budget. It was meant to: a) coordinate the interaction of citizens with the President, state institutions, and local authorities to make sure that the needs and interests of citizens are reflected in the development and implementation of internal and external politics of the government; b) protect the

rights and interests of citizens; and c) carry out control over activities of the state institutions and local authorities. Forty five people representing civil society, business, and art associations, and an assembly of Kyrgyz people were proposed as members (Gorbachev, 2008).

In June 2008, the law on social contracting (giving out grants to NGOs for provision of social services) was adopted (Turdukulova, 2008). However, the Minister of Finance at once announced that there were not funds in the state budget to award grants to NGOs (Uldasheva, 2008). In the early 2009, the President met with a number of NGOs, where he acknowledged that Kyrgyzstan could not create strong state institutions without the support of the NGOs, and signed a cooperation agreement with them. The document was hailed as “historic” since it encouraged a new and positive cooperation between NGOs and the government (www.rferl.org, 2009c; Karimov, 2009 a). As a result of the meeting, it was decided to create a coordinating council of the state institutions and the NGO sector (Karimov, 2009 b).

To sum up so far, state – NGO relations in Kyrgyzstan have an element of joint work and agenda sharing. NGOs serve the state as consultants, training providers, fundraisers, and even event organisers. The interaction between NGOs and the state institutions mainly takes place during meetings and round table discussions, where issues of mutual concern are discussed and an agenda is shared. Some NGOs have even involved representatives of state institutions into their governing bodies so that their activities address key developmental issues, of which the state institutions are more aware of according to NGOs. Furthermore, NGOs want collaborative and cooperative relations with the state because, according to them, they share common goals with the state and could be a resource for the state to use in its activities. Furthermore, the cases showing that the relations between the state and NGOs have been taking place without donor support were demonstrated. Based on this, I suggest that there is an interaction between the actors without donor intervention. Even if the state cannot acquire monetary benefit from NGOs, it still can receive advice, consultation, and training.

NGOs as a counterbalance to the state

According to my research, the state-NGO relations in Kyrgyzstan also have elements of counterbalance. A few NGOs have identified their role as checking on the state. These NGOs are usually vocal, human rights NGOs with charismatic, experienced leaders. For them, the essence of NGOs is their independence from the state. For example, an interviewee from a media NGO described ideal relations between the state and NGOs in the following way.

In principle, the state should not help NGOs, but if we talk ideally it should not intervene in NGOs' affairs. ... If it [NGO] does not need the state to collaborate with it, so it should live on its own. Even it will be better for everyone. The state is an army of civil servants. Ideally, we should not notice them. They should do their business. We should do our business. They should not interfere in our affairs. But we can interfere in their affairs because we choose them. I think the relationship should be diplomatic, politically correct, and friendly ... in no case one side should dominate over the other. ...there should be a balance (Interview, Bishkek, 25 February 2008).

This account is opposite to the one of most NGOs presented earlier where the state and NGOs complement each other and work together. Here, on the contrary, the state and society are two different, clearly demarcated institutions. They do their respective affairs without dominating each other. Civil society is meant to check on the state to prevent its dominance over the society. For instance, a couple of NGO interviewees, who adhere to this stance, said that they would not accept government funding so as not to jeopardise their independence. Obviously, such a vision of the state-NGO relations has influenced the practical actions of these NGOs towards the state.

Some of these NGOs have checked on the state by lobbying the interests of their constituencies. For example, the interviewee from a Bishkek based NGO working on issues of disabled people said that they tried to keep the state institutions, which they work with, focused on the functions that they were supposed to do. He explained that the state has certain obligations to its citizens. In their case, the state has to take into account the needs of disabled people while, for example, building accommodation, buildings, roads and others. However, the state did not fulfil its

functions properly. Therefore, their NGO reminds the government to reflect the needs of their constituency, the disabled, in their policies. The interviewee highlighted that it was a difficult job (Interview, 19 February 2008, Bishkek).

Others, in the meantime, provide a critical assessment of the state's activities. For example, the initiatives of the President on the creation of the public chamber and the promotion of the state-NGO cooperation, which was mentioned earlier, have been challenged and even rejected by some NGOs. Right after the President signed the decree on the formation of the public chamber, a couple of famous NGO leaders declared that this institution would be illegitimate and would not be recognised by people. Moreover, they argued that the chamber duplicated the *jogorku kenesh* (the parliament) which would have had to be dismissed if the chamber had been established (Gorbachev, 2008). Meanwhile, according to the President, the chamber would serve as an official mechanism where civil society and the state would come together (www.24kg.org). The same NGO leaders did not attend the meeting of the President with NGOs as a protest. They were not happy with the fact that they were asked to provide questions to be discussed with the President in advance and were prohibited from raising any other issues (Lyman, 2009 b).

Another vivid example is a campaign of NGOs against the HIPC initiative in 2006-2007. A number of well-established NGOs and new post-March 2005 NGOs set up a movement called "People's Unity – Rebirth". They used radical methods for their campaign. These included debates, criticism of the progress of the activities of the Kyrgyz government and international donors since 1991. They also protested in Bishkek using slogans such as "IMF money is death", "The government is using the terrorist methods", "If you are for HIPC, you are not for Kyrgyzstan". Protestors also organised a symbolic "funeral of HIPC" by burning a stuffed image of the Director of the World Bank (Buxton, 2009: 54).

In my sample, one of the NGOs from Bishkek with a watch-dog role identified its mission as reacting to any changes in the country and letting the government and the public know that they know it, see it, and understand it, and think that it [this change] should be done in this way' (Interview, 4 March 2008, Bishkek). One of their recent critical statements was in relation to the crackdown of media in Kyrgyzstan where the NGO leader stated that state curtailment of media

would backfire since the dissatisfaction among people has been growing. In the same way, this NGO has made many critical statements concerning the activities of the government and parliament. Further, the interviewee from this NGO gave a negative assessment to state-NGO relations of that time. According to her, the state did not see NGOs as a power. Both actors had a stereotypical opinion about each other. The state did not want to work with NGOs because they did not want to ensure transparency in its work, which NGOs were demanding (Interview, 4 March 2008, Bishkek).

Furthermore, some of the actions of vocal NGOs have involved overt and dynamic methods of advocacy such as conducting demonstrations and protests which have been the most popular way to influence decision-making and to voice civil needs in Kyrgyzstan for the last five years. An interviewee from a refugees' NGO shared his experience participating in the demonstrations on the constitutional reform that took place in autumn 2006. Along with his NGO, at least five more NGOs took part in the demonstrations. The interviewee highlighted with excitement that they joined the demonstrations because they wanted a new constitution and a new life. They managed to have their draft accepted, which stipulated that the president would abandon the majority of his power. However, in December, it was replaced with a new draft proposed by the President Bakiev because of some political nuances (Interview, Bishkek, 29 November 2007).

The account of an interviewee from a youth NGO, an active participant of demonstrations including the 2005 March revolution, shed more light on how and why NGOs protest. When talking about their recent demonstrations against outcomes of the 2007 parliamentary elections, he explained that, after observing the elections and seeing how votes were forged, they could not keep silent. Therefore, a group of his colleagues from different human rights NGOs and youth political parties joined to express their discontent. In February 2008, they conducted a demonstration called "I do not believe" meaning that they did not believe in the results of the elections. Their independent initiative to dispute the outcomes of the elections ended with their detention. Nevertheless, the interviewee asserted that at least they managed to make the public know that "there are people who care about

the results of the elections which were unfair” and let the government know that rigged elections will not be tolerated (Interview, Bishkek, 7 March 2008).

Further, a few NGO leaders joined political parties in opposition to the government. Consequently, their NGOs have been in the spotlight, notwithstanding the fact that a couple of these leaders stepped down from their offices during their election campaign. Colleagues of some of these leaders supported their participation in political parties because they believed that their leaders lobbied for the same issues in the political party that they did in their NGO (Interviews with representatives of two NGOs: a) Osh, 1 April 2008 and b) Bishkek, 4 March 2008).

The above clearly shows that a number of NGOs in Kyrgyzstan have been trying to provide a check on the state as actors independent from it. I have established that NGOs counterbalance the state by criticising it and lobbying interests of their constituency. They also engage in demonstrations and protests. It is very important to note that only few NGOs in Kyrgyzstan are involved in the latter activities. As one of the interviewees noted, these NGOs can be counted on fingers (Interview, 28 February 2008, Bishkek). However, it is their activities counterbalancing the state are widely known to the public. As a result of their vocal and overt methods of interaction with the state, these NGOs have come to be known as politicised and allied with opposition. This is particularly obvious in the media. The review of different on-line articles on NGOs’ participation in political life indicated that they, especially Human Rights organisations, are seen as an ally of an opposition or intrinsically an oppositional power and thus there have been many interconnections made between NGOs and opposition.

My research data demonstrated that donors were cautious of funding supposedly politicised NGOs. They try to avoid NGOs engaged in more overt forms of advocacy, particularly demonstration, excessive criticism of the state, and joining political parties. For donors, these NGOs are also politicised because they have come to be associated with opposition and involvement in politics and political parties. Donors are very critical of NGO leaders and NGOs that join political parties. According to them, “[c]ivil society should not access forces that run a parallel system to the national democratic accountability mechanism, that is, through elections” (Interview, 14 November 2007, Bishkek). Therefore, it is very

problematic for donors to support such NGOs. Some NGOs have noted that donors were reluctant to fund them because their leaders were a member of a political party (e.g. Interview, 4 March 2008, Bishkek). Nonetheless, donors still provide funding to these NGOs for their other activities.

My research discovered that the state could not establish a proper dialogue with the vocal NGOs. In fact, it has made attempts to curtail them. As noted in chapter 2, Kaipov, the Minister of Justice, made an initiative in 2006. He said that all NGOs receiving foreign funding would be investigated due to their potential threat to national security and country development. This initiative came as a result of the National Security Service's claim that NGOs might be working in the interest of foreign donors. "Government officials later said no NGO investigations would take place and it was a misunderstanding attributable to a bad translation" (www.state.gov, 2008). Foreign NGOs also came under scrutiny. An investigation into the activities of three foreign NGOs was launched: NDI, IRI, IFES. All of them have been financed by USAID.

In the beginning of 2009, Masaliev, who was a parliamentary member and represented the communist party, and two of his party fellows initiated a bill to amend a law on non-commercial organisations (NCOs). According to the parliament members, the bill aimed at updating legislation on NCOs in accordance with specifics of the current time and to increase transparency in the interaction of NGOs with the state (Uldasheva, 2009). In particular, they proposed to add an article to the law which would prohibit NGOs from taking part in political activities and in the process of national elections. The parliamentary members also asserted that the 17th article of the law on transparency and openness of NGO activities should be amended. Their version of the new article gave the Ministry of Justice the right to prohibit a branch or a representative office of foreign NGOs from providing funding or any other property to certain local grant recipients (Petrov, 2009).

National security has been highlighted as a key concern that made the above parliamentary members initiate the revision bill on the law on NCOs. According to them, current internationalisation of relationships and an increase of international exchange represent a potential threat to the security in the country. They particularly referred to an insertion of religious extremist groups in Batken in 1999 – 2000.

Therefore, they believe that clear legislation regulating activities of international NGOs should be spelled out which the proposed bill intends to do (Uldasheva, 2009). For the same reason, the parliamentarians also put forward an initiative to revise a law on state registration of juridical persons. They argue that NGOs with foreign involvement, their branches, and representative offices should have a scrutinised registration process. According to the amendments that the parliamentary members suggested, NGOs should provide information about their activities, funding, and property to the state statistics institutions, the Ministry of Justice, and the tax department (Uldasheva, 2009).

The bill on the law concerning NGOs has some pitfalls. The explicit intention of the bill to prohibit NGOs from participating in political activities and election processes questions their true purpose. As has been mentioned above, according to the initiators, the main reason behind the bill was national security. However, one can wonder how isolation of NGOs from politics and, especially, from election processes will contribute to the enhancement of national security in the country where authoritarianism has tended to prevail. Taking into account that the majority of politicians want NGOs to deal with social issues (Ubysheva and Pogojev, 2006) and the statement of Masaliev highlighting that the revised law would concern only those NGOs engaged in politics (Petrov, 2009), it seems that the revised bills are intentionally targeted at removing NGOs from political and electoral activities because politicians do not approve of their participation in such activities.

Nonetheless, NGOs in my sample did not report any exceedingly violent interventions or harassment from the state. A few watch-dog and human rights NGOs mentioned cases when they have faced confrontation from the state. The interviewee from a watch-dog NGO in Bishkek said that their former leaders had been attacked several times, attacks which according to them were organised by the state. One of the leaders was also sued by an unsuccessful candidate running for a seat in the parliament. The NGO also received threats from the National Security Service. They have also been constantly checked (Interview, 4 March 2008, Bishkek). Another interviewee from a human rights NGO in Bishkek stated that they had been refused registration until they changed their name which had 'against torture' in it. The Ministry of Justice refused registration because, according to them,

there was no torture in Kyrgyzstan. However, once the NGO changed its name to a neutral one, it was registered. Interestingly, the NGO did not give up its initial aim and works on torture and political prisoners at present (Interview, 12 March 2008, Bishkek). A head of another NGO from Kant said that she was interrogated by the City Administration, the National Security Services when she came back from observing elections in Israel and Ukraine (Interview, 17 March 2008, Bishkek).

This section has revealed that there is the second side of the state-NGO relations where NGOs counterbalance the state and provide a check on it. To do this, they criticise, lobby, demonstrate, and, in extreme cases, join political parties. The most vocal NGOs have come to be known as politicised and associated with political opposition. It has also been said that some of these vocal NGOs have had difficulty obtaining funding from donors. Further, the state could not establish proper relations with them. In fact, it tried to crackdown on them under the camouflage of security rhetoric.

Weak state: Bakiev's retreat from democracy

The examination of the state-NGO relationships in Kyrgyzstan sheds light on the nature of the Kyrgyz state. Interviews with NGOs clearly indicated that the state in Kyrgyzstan had had a number of weaknesses. It has lacked funding to fulfil its functions properly. To some degree, state institutions have engaged in partnership with NGOs to obtain additional funding. As the interviewee from the NGO working on issues of disabled people said, how could the state build rehabilitation centres when it could not even come up with and afford a banner, a motto, a logo, and others [for a festival] (Interview, 19 February 2008, Bishkek)? The fact that the state has interacted with NGOs to obtain some funding from them or from donors demonstrates that the state remains dependent on external funding.

Furthermore, my interview data also revealed that human resources had been weak in the state institutions. A recurrent statement among NGO interviewees was that staff in the state institutions has changed frequently. Every new person has tried to start work from scratch. Consequently, NGOs have needed to start their relations

with the state institutions from the beginning. Moreover, sometimes a new staff member has turned out to be either under qualified for his/her position, making it difficult for NGOs to work with them, or hostile to NGOs all together⁶³.

According to my research data, the state under Bakiev was afraid of criticism coming from any source. As shown above, when criticism came from NGOs, the state tried to restrict legislation. One of the key sources of criticism was demonstrations. Therefore, the government under Bakiev limited the freedom to demonstrate. In December 2007, the Bishkek City Council issued a decree on protests, demonstrations, and manifests. It requires anyone wishing to hold a demonstration to inform the Bishkek City Administration about their intention ten days in advance, with the details such as when the demonstrations will start and end, who will participate, and what kind of provisions are made (transport, first aid, food, etc). Further, the decree designates three areas in Bishkek where demonstrations can be held. It also puts some limitations on what type of materials and equipment can be used by demonstrators⁶⁴.

The decree served as a basis for the introduction of the amendments and additions to the law on the right of citizens to assembly and to freely hold meetings and demonstrations without weapons in August 2008 (www.cascfen.net). The bill was initiated by Masaliev, the same parliamentary member who proposed to amend the law on NCOs. According to him, constant demonstrations in the city center disturbed the lives of city dwellers and, more importantly, undermined national security by creating a potential threat to stability. The main aspects that were amended in and added to the law are similar to the ones in the decree. The revised law also requires citizens to inform the state authorities about their perspective demonstration in advance and wait for their permission. Otherwise, the demonstrations can be regarded as unsanctioned (Safin, 2009).

Furthermore, a group of Human Rights organisations researched the feasibility of conducting a peaceful assembly in late 2008. According to their

⁶³ For example, these ideas were said by the interviewees from an NGO working on children's issues, 28 February 2008, Bishkek, an NGO working on civil society support, 1 April 2008, Osh, an NGO working on sex workers 5 April 2008, Osh, and others.

⁶⁴ Decree of Bishkek City Council on adoption of the rules for organisation of demonstrations, protests, meetings, manifests, and rallies in Bishkek city issued on 5 December, 2007.

research, “it is virtually impossible to get permission to hold peaceful meetings, especially if the planned meeting is political in nature” (Safin, 2009: www.ipp.kg). Moreover, the report stated that it had become risky to conduct peaceful meetings because state authorities under Bakiev were ready to suppress any initiative of citizens to express their concerns. People involved in such meetings could at best pay a fine or at worst undergo criminal prosecution. It was a considerable limitation for Kyrgyz people, particularly taking into account that political meetings have been widespread practice since 2005. According to the IPP report, “more than two and a half thousand political meetings were held in Kyrgyzstan during 2005-2009” (Safin, 2009: www.ipp.kg). This leads to the conclusion that the new legislation on freedom of assembly was used by the previous government to deprive people of a chance to voice their needs and concerns for the sake of supposedly insurance of security.

These show that Bakiev’s governments rolled back from democratic commitments. In fact, the constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic changed in 2007, to no longer state that Kyrgyz people strived for a democratic civil society⁶⁵. Moreover, in March 2010, Bakiev stated that western democracy based on elections and human rights might not be appropriate for Kyrgyzstan. According to him, ‘consultative’ democracy, which is “based on consultations between those in power and influential social groups in society” (www.asianews.it) with “deep roots in the traditions of Kyrgyz people”, could be more beneficial to Kyrgyzstan. Bakiev justified his argument with the debates in regards to applicability of western democracy in non-western countries and by referring to traditions of Kyrgyz society which values community and responsibility (Pannier and Heil, 2010: www.rferl.org).

In conclusion, it is clear that the state under Bakiev’s rule had two different policies towards NGOs. It was open to collaboration with those NGOs whose activities did not involve any criticism against the state but, on the contrary, shared their agenda, provided consultation, training, funding, and other resources. However, the state failed to create a proper dialogue with NGOs providing a check on it. Conversely, it took a number of initiatives to limit the legislative basis for the proper and free operation of NGOs. Bakiev’s government had a very similar attitude to NGOs as did Akaev’s one’s. Both of them, first, encouraged civil society to interact

⁶⁵ Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic amended in 2007.

with the government. However, later on, the two governments curtailed NGOs. Moreover, Akaev and Bakiev tried to centralise power. However, in comparison with Akaev who was committed to democracy, Bakiev openly asserted that democracy might not be appropriate for Kyrgyzstan. Moreover, Bakiev's state remained weak. Even though it collaborated with some NGOs, it could not support them. It used NGOs to cover its weaknesses.

Discussion

My research findings presented in this chapter demonstrate that state-NGO relations have had different elements. There have been NGOs which share the same agenda with the state and act as a consultant, fundraiser, training provider, and other roles. In other words, their relations with the state institutions have been collaborative. Based on this, I suggest that my research makes a contribution to the literature, which described that the state-NGO relations in Kyrgyzstan were based on suspicions and mistrust (Tretyakov, 2007; Omarov in Garaushenko, 2007). According to my findings, however, there has been some level of cooperation and reliance between these actors. In fact, NGOs have strategically built trust between them and the state institutions as shown in cases of NGOs involving state representatives in their board of directors.

Theoretically, this type of state-NGO relations can be called communitarian. My argument is based on Chandhoke's (2002) discussion of global civil society and the role of international NGOs. According to her, the international NGOs gained the weighty role by the end of 1990s by being involved in different decision-making bodies of multilateral donor organisations such as the World Bank. In this regard, Chandhoke questioned whether "we can continue to call agencies that become a part of global decision-making structures 'civil society organisations' that supposedly challenge the workings of the global order?" (2002: 44). It is worth pointing out that Chandhoke's vision of the state-civil society relationships is liberal where the actors counterbalance one another. Therefore, for her, their joint actions bring up the above questions. The argument in the thesis uses the same logic. However, it asks a

different question of if we can call the state-civil society relationships communitarian, when the latter is engaged in law-making and policy development and providing training for the former.

The second section has provided sufficient support to suggest that the state-NGO relations in Kyrgyzstan can indeed be called communitarian. This is because, by being involved in law-making, policy development, and training provision, NGOs have been becoming a certain part of the state or at least of a decision-making process. They have been an element of no small importance in the distribution of power throughout society (Taylor, 2006). Most importantly, with reference to Hegel (Jones, 2001), Gramsci (Femia, 2001), and Taylor (2006), NGOs and their ideas have found their final destination in the state through participation in law-making and policy development.

The third section has shown that there have been also those NGOs which negotiate their agenda with the state by lobbying. They have also engaged in criticising state activities, demonstrating and protesting to promote their agenda. In other words, these NGOs have counterbalanced the state and have provided a check on it. This means that Kyrgyz NGOs are no longer politically inactive as was claimed by Roy (2002). On the contrary, according to the cases discussed above, a number of NGOs have been a catalyst of political activism. The most notable example for this is a demonstration of NGOs against the notorious criminal Rysbek who threatened the Prime Minister, Felix Kulov, and demanded his resignation on a demonstration in Bishkek. Despite fear and potentially life-threatening implications, a watch-dog NGO organised a protest against the criminal (Interview, 4 March 2008, Bishkek).

In other words, NGOs do not estrange themselves from politics and pressing issues (Roy, 2002); conversely, they have been bringing these issues to the attention of the government and public to deal with them. This is exactly why the NGO sector has come to be seen as political power, particularly against the background of weak political parties in Kyrgyzstan. Moreover, the NGO sector has produced a number of politicians in Kyrgyzstan. For example, the former chief of staff to the interim government was from the NGO sector (www.eneews.ferghana.ru). Recent research by Paasiaro (2009:71) has made the same claim that “[a]cademics who wrote off NGOs

as incapable of affecting the dynamics of state–society relations or challenging the status quo (such as Roy 2002, p. 144) may have reached their judgements too soon” because the civil society promotion has produced NGO leaders who together with their personal goals promoted interests of the wider public.

Further, my research supports the claim in the literature (Aksartova, 2005) that the Kyrgyz state was still dependent on external funding in the same way it used to be during the soviet time. However, it has also made a contribution by stating that the state institutions and NGOs started interacting out of donor projects. Consequently, the role of donors as the key factor in the interaction of the actors is changing. Furthermore, my research findings indicated that donors were reluctant to provide funding to so called politicised NGOs. This fact has also been revealed by the research of the Eurasia Foundation in Central Asia which looked at the state-NGO relationships in Kyrgyzstan (www.efcentralasia.org). Further, Poolos (2007) reported, based on her interview with one of the popular NGO activists that, because of his political activism, NDI, their key donor, cut off their NGO from its funding in the amount \$100,000. NDI explained its decision by stating that this leader had become too political by turning from activist to politician. In the meantime, they do not want to be viewed as supporting political activities in Kyrgyzstan.

Despite the importance of donors in the state-NGO relations and the fact that the state can have a different attitude to NGOs depending on which issue they work with (social or human rights), my data suggest that the relations of an NGO with state institutions also depend on its professional and institutional capacity, the personality of its leader, its projects, its work experience, and even the qualifications and personality of staff in the state institution they work with. For example, a human rights NGO from Bishkek has a good relationship with the Parliament and a very poor one with the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The conflict with the latter is on a personal level. One of the consequences of such a tension was that the Ministry did not allow a joint research project between different institutions to commence until representatives of this NGO were excluded from the list of researchers (Interview, 20 February 2008, Bishkek).

Furthermore, the Kyrgyz state and its techniques of working with NGOs, especially with the counterbalancing ones, echo some tendencies in the region. The

fact that the government of Bakiev used national security as a primary reason for restricting NGOs and the civic right to assembly and freedom of speech suggests it, as that of Akaev and other states in Central Asia such as Uzbekistan used “war on terror” as an instrument for internal politics to sideline other powerful groups and civic initiatives (Stevens and Jailobaeva, 2009). It is evident from the above that Bakiev’s government tried to exert control over NGOs, as some governments in other former Soviet countries did. For example, in Uzbekistan, NGOs have been under government pressure since the early 2000s. Stevens (2010) has described nine ways in which the Uzbek government cracked down on NGOs, ranging from putting constraints on the rights to associate and form NGOs, to harassment, prosecution, and deportation of civil society activists. Most importantly, the Uzbek government has gained tough control over NGOs’ funding flows. NGOs can have a bank account only in two state banks and all their transactions are monitored by a special committee including representatives of the security services. Moreover, the Uzbek government introduced its own grants to NGOs and established an array of governmental NGOs (GONGOs) to coordinate and support civil society.

In Russia, the government under Putin has taken a number of actions to reassert its control over society which has concerned NGOs too. As in Uzbekistan, the Russian government has toughened NGO legislation and has sought to gain control over funding flows of NGOs. NGOs funded by foreign sources have been harshly criticised by the government as promoters of foreign agenda with questionable patriotism (Gilbert, 2010). Therefore, the new NGO law in Russia requires NGOs to provide the state with a report on their funds coming from foreign sources and how they are used. Further, the Russian government has also established GONGOs and supported them financially. It has set up a Public Chamber to oversee civil society. According to the recent research on the Russian NGOs by Gilbert (2010), the activities of the government have crowded out NGOs critical of the regime from the public sphere.

In a broader context, the same has happened in other developing countries. For example, in India, the state put legislative restrictions on NGOs working in the field of politics in the 1980s when their interaction with foreign funders increased. As in Uzbekistan, the bank accounts of Indian NGOs were monitored by the Home

Ministry. Moreover, the Indian government tightened tax exemption laws which concerned NGOs. Nonetheless, Indian NGOs and foreign funding aimed at promoting state objectives on welfare and providing social delivery were welcomed by the state (Ebrahim, 2001).

It is clear that the activities of Bakiev's government concerning NGOs had some parallels with the government activities on NGOs in Uzbekistan, Russia, and India. In particular, it seems that the Russian government and its NGO activities served as a model for Bakiev's government. First of all, like Putin, Bakiev initiated the creation of the Public Chamber in Kyrgyzstan to coordinate the interaction of the state with civil society. Secondly, before Bakiev's government was ousted, the Kyrgyz NGO law was in the process of revision to introduce state control over NGOs' financial flows in a way similar to the Russian law. However, the Kyrgyz state's account for its initiatives differed from that of the Russian state. As stated elsewhere, by amending the NGO law, the Bakiev government wanted to prevent any threats, especially from terrorist groups, to national security. In other words, "the war on terror" was the key rationale for Bakiev's government rather than NGO as promoters of foreign agenda as in the case of Russia. Nonetheless, it should be noted that the Russian rhetoric has also been present in Kyrgyzstan to some extent. NGOs were seen as promoters of foreign interests (Garaushenko, 2007:28).

However, the Kyrgyz government under Bakiev did not exert total control over NGOs and their funding as has happened in Uzbekistan and Russia. It seems that Bakiev's Kyrgyz government was as selective as the Indian government in its interaction with NGOs. As indicated elsewhere, it was open to collaboration with those NGOs which shared their development goals concerning social issues. In relation to GONGOs, I suggest that their nature and purpose has been different in Kyrgyzstan than in Russia and Uzbekistan. As stated above, in the latter countries, the government provides funding to these NGOs, established some of them, and promotes pro-governmental agenda through them. However, the governments in Kyrgyzstan under Akaev and Bakiev did not provide funding to NGOs. The law on social contracting was adopted in 2008; at once it was announced that the state budget did not have funds for NGOs. None of the NGOs in my sample has ever received state funding.

During my fieldwork, I came across only one GONGO. It was established by the state children's center and worked on children's issues. However, the case of this GONGO does not show that the state institution, which created it, has total control over it. Based on this case, I suggest that the state institutions in Kyrgyzstan set up an NGO to have an access to donor funding and to show their seeming interaction and even collaboration with NGOs. I have noted elsewhere that donors require state institutions to collaborate with NGOs to meet their funding requirements. By being dependent on external funding, the state institutions in Kyrgyzstan have to show interaction with NGOs to receive donor funding. Therefore, instead of working with an NGO from outside, the state institutions establish their own which would not criticise them and whose funding would come directly to its founder (i.e. state institution). Moreover, this GONGO is also an interesting case since it initiated another NGO of young journalists which have turned into a strong and open media NGO with a liberal approach to the interaction with the state. This makes it possible to state that the operation of GONGOs like in Russia and Uzbekistan is almost non-existent in Kyrgyzstan. Kyrgyz NGOs do not receive funding from the state. There are no large NGOs like the one called '*Nashi*' (Ours) in Russia which promotes the governmental agenda (Gilbert, 2010). Therefore, GONGOs in Kyrgyzstan are like a myth caught between existence and imagination.

Further, NGOs in Kyrgyzstan, especially politicised ones, under Bakiev still had much more freedom than their counterparts in Central Asia and Russia. On the whole, the crackdown of Bakiev's government on NGOs was not as harsh as on media and religious organisations in Kyrgyzstan which experienced considerable legislative oppression, physical attacks, imprisonment, and even murder. Therefore, it is a potential question for future research: why were Kyrgyz NGOs not curtailed as harshly as media and religious organisations, despite their political activism and constant criticism of the state?

Taking into account that the government of Bakiev tried to curtail NGOs through potential amendments in the legislation, turned more authoritarian, and asserted inapplicability of democracy in Kyrgyzstan, one can ask to what extent the state-building agenda of donors has been effective in making the Kyrgyz state strong and responsive to its people. Based on the above discussion, it can be said that the

new donor policies on state-building were empowered by Bakiev's government, by increasing funding to it and enlarging its role in development. This has enabled the government to act on its own way. Moreover, it has been noted elsewhere that the geopolitical importance of Kyrgyzstan for powers such as the USA and Russia has increased.

In the light of this, it can be suggested that these countries in the interest of their own went along with Bakiev's autocratic policies by ignoring the social, economic, and political situation in Kyrgyzstan. A number of statements were made after the April 2010 revolt in Kyrgyzstan claiming that, in the name of "the war on terror", the USA ignored the violation of democratic norms and social and economic inequalities in Kyrgyzstan which resulted from Bakiev's autocratic policies. For this reason, it has been asserted that the case of Kyrgyzstan is not only the failure of the state but also of *realpolitik* (Huff-Hannon, 2010; Reeves, 2010).

Furthermore, the above account of the state-NGO relations has shown that the state in Kyrgyzstan is still weak in terms of its capacity. A number of NGOs in my sample connected the weaknesses of the Kyrgyz state to its Soviet past. The further exploration of their accounts has revealed that a top-down approach and an urge to please the central government were still prevalent in the state institutions under Bakiev's government. In other words, state officials in Kyrgyzstan still adhere to a Soviet way of working, that is, when state members are concerned with their positions rather than with technical efficiency of their actions; who rather cheated the plan instead of increasing its output (Gellner, 1994: 4-5). Olcott in her recent book 'A new chance for Central Asia' (2005) said that the change in Central Asian countries would come only when politicians from the Soviet era leave the government.

Conclusion

In conclusion, in this chapter, I have looked at the state-NGO relationship in Kyrgyzstan since the mid 2000s and whether the changes in donors' civil society promotion have influenced them. This is the focus of my last research question.

Consequently, I have suggested that the state-NGO relationships in Kyrgyzstan have been diversified. There have been elements of cooperation and collaboration. A number of NGOs have collaborated with the state and have shared the same agenda which they promote on different round tables, meetings, and other events. I have described this as communitarian state-NGO relations. There are also a few NGOs in my sample which have provided a check on the state and have engaged in activities counterbalancing the state. However, it is their activities that have formed the image of the NGO sector as politicised and oppositional in front of the public and the state.

As a result, I have stated that, in comparison with the monolithic account on the state-NGO relationships that the literature gave, my research shows that these relations have been diverse and also dependent on the professional and institutional capacity of the NGO, their projects, and the personality of the NGO leaders. Further, I have pointed out that NGOs are not politically neutral any more. On the contrary, I argue that some NGOs have been politically active and concentrated on bringing up pressing issues to the attention of the state and the public.

I have also suggested that donor funding has been important for the state-NGO relations in Kyrgyzstan since it takes place within donor funded projects. Therefore, collaboration has happened unsystematically. Nonetheless, I have revealed that some NGOs started interacting with the state without donor support and intervention. I have also pointed out that politicised NGOs have had difficulties in receiving donor funding because of their openly confrontational relationships with the state.

I have also asserted that Bakiev's government was open to a dialogue when NGOs wanted to work jointly. However, the motivation of the state was linked to the material incentives, such as additional funds, equipment and others, which the state obtains from collaboration with NGOs. In the meantime, the counterbalancing relationship of NGOs was not welcomed by the Bakiev government and, as a result, it failed to have a proper dialogue with such NGOs. In fact, the government under Bakiev made attempts to change legislation to exclude these NGOs from politics and by limiting their rights to demonstrate.

Furthermore, Bakiev's government learned from its neighbours how to suppress NGOs and promote state dominance. However, because of its dependence

on funding of donors, it could not totally crackdown on NGOs. Finally, I suggested that Bakiev's government was explicitly taking an authoritarian path of development by declaring that western democracy was not appropriate in Kyrgyzstan. I have suggested that geopolitics and donors' state building have overlooked Bakiev's promotion of the authoritarian regime.

Finally, I have explored the nature of the state in Kyrgyzstan through the examination of its relations with NGOs. As a result, I have suggested that the state in Kyrgyzstan has been weak institutionally. It has had poor human resources, scarce funding, weak mechanisms of policy implementation, and has remained dependent on donor funding.

Chapter 7

Fall or Rise of the NGO sector in Kyrgyzstan?

The discussion of research findings in chapter 5 has suggested that NGOs in Kyrgyzstan are professionalising and formalising because of changes in donors' promotion of civil society. It also pointed out that this tendency is limited to those NGOs which have already built up some level of professional and institutional capacity while the NGOs which lack such capacity are being left out. In this regard, I proposed in chapter 5 that if the same NGOs continue to receive funding due to their high level of professionalism and formalisation, the NGO sector in Kyrgyzstan might become static. As a result, it would fail to experience growth, diversification, and dynamism. Further, the discussion in chapter 6 indicated that Bakiev's government made efforts to move away from democracy and sought to put some limitations on NGOs.

This chapter aims to explore whether the NGO sector in Kyrgyzstan has a bleak prospect of being static and limited by the state. It draws not only on research data but also my anecdotal observations of social activism during the recent social and political developments in Kyrgyzstan. In the first section, I present research findings about the diversity of the NGO sector by looking at non-professional NGOs and professional NGOs which have a degree of flexibility. In the second section, I present cases of NGOs in my sample that exhibit philanthropy, voluntarism, and constituency. In the third section, I discuss the recent social and political events in Kyrgyzstan and how they can influence the NGO sector and civil society in general. Based on this, I suggest directions for further research.

NGO diversity: beyond professionalisation

The key argument in this section is that the NGO sector in Kyrgyzstan is not completely professional. In chapter 5, I categorised slightly over half of the NGOs in my sample (24) as professional - based on such criteria as leadership, membership,

funding, an organisational structure, administrative and financial rules, staff, and their technical-material basis. As far as the remaining 21 NGOs are concerned, I subsumed them under a non-professional category. Below I present data on these NGOs in accordance to the above mentioned criteria of a professional and formal NGO and draw differences and similarities between the professional and non-professional categories of NGOs. Furthermore, I suggest that professional NGOs still have some degree of flexibility notwithstanding their professionalisation and formalisation which was discussed in chapter 5. Based on these, I argue that the professional image of NGOs promoted in the literature is not adequate since the NGO sector in Kyrgyzstan is much more heterogeneous and has organisations of different professional and institutional capacity within it.

Non-professional NGOs

According to my interview data, all leaders in the non-professional category have other jobs from where their main income comes. The majority of them, however, receive some payment from their NGO activity when they have a project. The rest of the time they work voluntarily and on a part-time basis. For example, the main job of a leader of the NGO from Osh working on women's issues is as a department dean in the pedagogical collage. Nonetheless, she considers her NGO work important since she wants to help women, especially young and from villages, to succeed in life (Interview, Osh, 4 April 2008). This type of NGO leader matches the concept of a non-professional staff leader proposed by Staggenburg (1988). According to her, such leaders are compensated for their work in the SMO but they do not seek to build a career in this field (Staggenburg, 1988:587) which is the case with the leader from the women's NGO.

A few NGO leaders in the non-professional category said that they worked for their NGO only on a voluntary basis. A leader of an NGO from Bishkek working on issues of Muslim women is among these. She said she volunteered for her NGO almost full-time because she was very passionate about the mission of the NGO. At the same time, she has another job where she earns her living (Interview, Bishkek, 17 March 2008). This type of leaders corresponds to Staggenburg's (1988) concept of a

volunteer leader who does not receive a salary from the SMO but might have volunteered for it for a long time.

More than half of non-professional NGOs are registered as public associations which are required to have members in accordance with the law on NCOs. My research data showed that almost all of them had members. Furthermore, two public foundations have members as well. As a result, 14 NGOs in the non-professional category have claimed that they have a membership base. Six NGOs noted that their membership varied from ten to 30,000 people. Each of these NGOs has a certain group of the population in its membership depending on their mission. For example, the NGO from Bishkek working on disabled people has 200 disabled people in its membership (Interview, 19 February 2008, Bishkek). Two NGOs have organisations in their membership. One of them is an association of NGOs working on women's issues from Bishkek with 80 NGOs in its membership (Interview, 16 May 2008, Bishkek). The remaining six NGOs gave a general answer without any numbers as did an NGO from Kant: "the whole region is our membership" (Interview, 18 March 2008, Bishkek).

Most non-professional NGOs receive funding from donors. Almost a third of them totally depend on donors and do not have any other sources of funding. However, three NGOs in this category have never received funding from donors. Each of these three NGOs has indicated different reasons for a lack of donor grants in their budget. The interviewee from a Bishkek based NGO working on women's issues said that they did not apply for donor grants since they wanted to experiment with the notion of working on a voluntary basis (Interview, Bishkek, 16 May 2008). In the meantime, the NGO from Kant working on social issues asserted that they did not know how to apply for donor grants (Interview, Bishkek, 18 March 2008). In contrast to this NGO, the grant applications of the refugee NGO from Nijne-Chuisk village, Issykata district have been turning down so far (Interview, Bishkek, 14 March 2008).

As a result, all these three NGOs along with another nine NGOs had other sources of funding which included philanthropy, personal contribution, business, and social entrepreneurship. They also relied on voluntary labour. Most importantly, according to interviews, these non-professional NGOs can carry out their key

activities, albeit on a small scale, despite the lack of funding from donors because they can draw on other financial sources, voluntary work, and their established target group. Donor grants are an addition for some of them and help them to do their activities in a better way or to expand them.

For example, an NGO working on issues of Muslim women uses different sources of funding and extensive voluntary labour. They receive funding from donors. Nevertheless, according to the interviewee from this NGO, the donor funding has never been large. The staff of the NGO does not receive salary from donor grants. In fact, the NGO manager is not paid at all. Moreover, when developing the project proposal, they indicate their labour as a contribution of the NGO. The NGO's funding mainly comes from its well-off members who can donate generously for NGO activities (Interview, Bishkek, 17 March 2008).

My research data suggested that the majority of NGOs categorised as non-professional had poorly functioning and almost nominal structures. Six NGOs could not describe their structures clearly. Instead they talked about their staff whose number was limited to two and three people. The interviewees from the remaining NGOs claimed that they had a structure. However, during the interviews, it became clear that the structures of a few of them do not really function. For example, an NGO from Kant working on a number of social issues had all the governing bodies in its structure according to the law on NCOs when it got registered. However, as they started to work, some of their bodies ceased functioning since they did not have funding to maintain them. Moreover, by the end of the interview, it was revealed that the NGO has not had any activity for the last two years (Interview, Bishkek, 17 March 2008).

Another couple of NGOs in the non-professional category claimed to have a well-defined structure which functions properly. Each of these NGOs has a board. For example, in the case of an NGO from Bishkek working on women's issues, its board meets regularly and plays an active role in the management and operation of the NGO (Interview, Bishkek, 17 March 2008). These NGOs share a number of similarities with professional NGOs such as a well-established structure, presence of some administrative and financial regulations, a moderate technical-material basis, and trained staff. However, their funding is not regular. Therefore, their staff,

particularly their leaders, do not get paid for their work on a regular basis and have other jobs where they earn their living. In fact, some of the leaders do not want any payment since they are passionate about the mission of their NGO.

Other than these NGOs, the rest openly admitted that they lacked administrative and financial rules within their organisations. Nonetheless, most of them followed financial regulations set out by the state even though they did not have proper rules within their organisations. Some NGOs said that they did not have an office. A few NGOs asserted that their office was either at their home or they use an office of their main job as an office of their NGO. The offices of those NGOs that did have one were at least minimally equipped and furnished. At most, up to ten people are involved in non-professional NGOs. The average number of staff is two and three. Non-professional NGOs do not have particular recruitment techniques since they cannot offer good salaries. Therefore, NGOs involve people who agree either to volunteer or to be paid on an irregular basis depending on the availability of the project. A few of them even involved family members as in the case of a refugee NGO from Alamadin village who said that their coordinator was his brother (Interview, 13 March 2008, Bishkek).

To conclude so far, there are a number of intrinsic differences as well as minor similarities between professional and non-professional NGOs. The key similarity is that NGOs in both categories financially depend on donors. This was revealed by other research as well. The ACSSC survey discovered that 82.9% of 469 NGOs, which took part in it, received their funding from donors (Ubysheva and Pogojev, 2006:39). Meanwhile, the research of the Eurasia Foundation of Central Asia on the donor-NGO relationship showed that 73% of 52 NGOs interviewed identified the role of donors as a funder (www.efcentralasia.org). Nonetheless, as my research revealed, there were still NGOs in both categories which have other funding sources.

One of the main differences is that a number of non-professional NGOs rely on voluntary work, other sources of funding, and a moral obligation to their constituency. This is not the case in the professional NGOs. Another difference is that non-professional NGOs have larger and more focused membership bases, particularly made up of individuals, rather than professional ones whose membership

base mostly consists of organisations. On the whole, non-professional NGOs are less formal, that is, they do not have regular staff and well-established rules, and strong infrastructural capacity.

Flexibility of professional NGOs

Below I suggest that, despite their professionalisation and formalisation stated in chapter 5, professional NGOs still have some degree of flexibility. For example, some professional NGOs could develop a structure to carry out their activities in a more effective way. According to the law, any other provisions can be made in the charter if they do not contradict the law⁶⁶. For example, public foundations can alter the functions of their supervisory council⁶⁷. Public associations can have other governing bodies⁶⁸. This means that NGOs can have peculiar structures, procedures, governing bodies, and other organisational aspects tailored for their context/organisation as did a watchdog organisation from Bishkek.

Its structure has three main bodies. The first body is a general assembly which consists of 61 NGOs that are members of the NGO. The meeting of the general assembly is conducted once every two years. Since the members of the NGO are in regions outside the capital, first, meetings are conducted there where member organisations discuss issues on the agenda and, then, select a representative for a meeting in the capital. The second body is a board of directors. There are 15 people in it. They are elected in the meeting of the representatives of the general assembly held in the capital. Eight directors are elected from regional NGOs to represent regions. Seven directors are chosen from the public based on their reputation and respect. This is done in order to promote the NGO. The third body is a president who is nominated by the board of directors. In addition to the president, the NGO also has an executive director (Interview, Bishkek, 4 March 2008).

Several aspects of this NGO's structure stand out and show its peculiarity. The first aspect is the phased conduct of the meeting of the general assembly to

⁶⁶ Law of the Kyrgyz Republic on NCOs as of 1998, Article 10, Chapter I.

⁶⁷ Law of the Kyrgyz Republic on NCOs as of 1998, Article 28, Chapter III.

⁶⁸ Law of the Kyrgyz Republic on NCOs, Article 21, Chapter II.

ensure that voices of the members - the regional NGOs - are heard. The second aspect is its unique approach to the election of the board of directors. The NGO intentionally included people respected in society to its board of directors in order to have better opportunities to promote itself and its activities. By having respected people on its board, the NGO seeks to prove to the public that it is a serious organisation with the support of people whose reputation cannot be disputed. The final aspect is how the NGO has managed its heavy work load by creating two managerial positions: a president to fulfil a representative role and to take part in different commissions, working groups and other events; and an executive director to deal with programme activities (Interview, Bishkek, 4 March 2008).

In contrast to this watchdog organisation, which used flexibility in the law to develop a structure to manage its large organisational membership and structure and heavy work-load, an NGO from Bishkek working on human rights made their structure flexible in such a way that its employees could replace each other easily and, most importantly, on a voluntary basis as described below:

Within each project we write terms of references - who does what. The system is also flexible. At the general meeting, a person [staff member] can say "my duties are this and this. But now I have a huge work load" or something like "something is going on in my personal life and I cannot take these duties". In this case, someone can say on a voluntary basis "I can do your duties during this time. In this way, duties are assigned" (Interview, Bishkek, 28 February 2008).

The interviewee's comment indicates that the operation of their NGO is not necessarily dominated by certain rules but rather it is flexible and enables them to approach cases individually. Moreover, this NGO does not have written rules. They announce their rules on the general meeting which are passed on verbally there and then.

Further, the interviewee from an ecological NGO asserted that NGOs were flexible and not bureaucratic because they can take decisions and act quickly. Moreover, the interviewee noted that the compactness of NGOs enabled them to travel, bring new ideas, and establish new contacts. She continued that NGOs have freedom and are not controlled by anybody. As an example, she talked about her own NGO where any idea of any staff member is welcome and creativeness is

appreciated. The interviewee also said that NGOs were not as hierarchic as state institutions (Interview, Bishkek, 27 November 2007).

A few other NGO interviewees further discussed the same issues, such as their activities, decisions-making, and creativeness by comparing them to those of the state institutions and claimed that the former are more flexible. For example, two representatives from NGOs working on healthcare noted that state institutions work in a top-down way where everyone obeys and carries out a decree coming from the high bodies in the state system. Meanwhile, according to these interviewees, in NGOs, people share their interests, establish different contacts, and work freely (Interviews, Bishkek, 5 March 2008 and Osh, 5 April 2008). The head of a youth NGO was convinced that the NGO sector encourages creativeness and supports ideas; whereas, in the state institutions, any initiative is discouraged (Interview, Bishkek, 7 March 2008).

In conclusion, it is evident that, despite the fact that I have categorised NGOs into the professional and non-professional groups, within each category, NGOs differ from each other in relation to their development, activities, commitments, and other aspects. Therefore, I argue that the nature of Kyrgyz NGOs is not homogenous but rather diverse and complex. For example, as shown in chapter 5, within a category of professional NGOs, there are urban based NGOs that have paid staff with qualification, well equipped and furnished offices, and donor funded projects. Some of them were established by donors or as a legacy of a donor funded project. At the same time, within the same category, there are NGOs of completely different origins and a way of operation as an NGO from Bishkek representing business firms. It does not have abundant external funding such as donor grants. Its funding is based on its membership fees. Its activities are not usual projects but rather services for its members. Moreover, despite evident professionalisation and formalisation, interviewees from professional NGOs were convinced that they were flexible. They tried to illustrate this mainly by comparing themselves with state institutions which were bureaucratic for them.

The category of non-professional NGOs is similarly complex and diverse. On the one hand, there are NGOs such as the one from Bishkek working on women's issues. It is partially formalised by having a structure, office, and regulations within

their organisation. However, its staff works on a voluntary basis despite their qualification and broad work experience. Most importantly, the NGO has become strong enough in representing the interests of their constituency and contributing to the sphere of their activities - in this case, women's issues. In the same category, there are also NGOs with no sign of formalisation but which still carry out important services for their constituency as in the case of a refugee NGO which provides assistance to refugees to obtain citizenship. There are also NGOs which have never had a donor grant but have managed to work on social issues on their community based on other sources. Based on these, I reiterate my key argument that the NGO sector in Kyrgyzstan is much more heterogeneous and diverse than only professional.

“Classic principles” in the non-classic Kyrgyz NGO sector

In this section, I challenge statements made in the literature in relation to urban characteristic of Kyrgyz NGOs, their failure to establish and represent a constituency, and a lack of philanthropy and voluntarism in them (Ruffin, 1999; Roy, 2002; Aksartova, 2005; Earle, 2005; Petric, 2005). I argue that a number of NGOs, particularly non-professional ones, in Kyrgyzstan exhibit elements of philanthropy and voluntarism. Further, I suggest that, according to theories of civil society, NGOs are largely urban based institutions since cities have proper conditions for them such as social relations based on individual autonomy. Finally, I suggest that some of the NGOs have a constituency and seek to represent their interest by finding crossing points between needs of their constituency and donor funding opportunities.

Voluntarism and philanthropy

My research findings raise questions about the arguments in the literature that have stated that philanthropy and voluntarism are absent in the Kyrgyz NGO sector (Ruffin, 1999; Roy, 2002; Petric, 2005). A number of cases of non-professional NGOs have indicated that philanthropy and voluntarism are not totally alien to the NGO sector in Kyrgyzstan. The central example for this is a Muslim women's NGO

whose staff works predominantly on a voluntary basis and which receive donations from rich Muslim women who are members of this NGO. Consequently, I suggest that Starr (1999) made an accurate projection that Muslim traditions could be a basis for generating elements of civil society as philanthropy. In fact, the case of Muslim women's NGO went beyond it by combining a Muslim tradition of donating and a western liberal way of associating and promoting interests of its members. Further, I would like to emphasise that, as discussed in the previous section, the whole non-professional category exists on a voluntary basis because their funding is irregular. Moreover, some of their leaders are very passionate about the mission of their NGO and constituency, and, therefore, work only on a voluntary basis. As a result, my argument is that so called classic principals of NGOs, namely voluntarism, philanthropy, and constituency responsiveness (Ruffin, 1999), are not necessarily absent in Kyrgyzstan.

Constituency responsiveness

The argument in the literature is that Kyrgyz NGOs failed to establish a link with the population, particularly the rural poor, by being professional and, therefore, that they could not represent them (Roy, 2002; Aksartova, 2005; Earle, 2005; Petic, 2005). However, my research findings shed a new light on this claim. Firstly, the findings suggest that it is misleading to say that NGOs could not establish a constituency at all. The previous section and chapter 5 demonstrated that a number of NGOs both in the professional and non-professional categories have an established link with their constituencies. In fact, a few of them were created by their constituency or members.

The most salient cases are a professional NGO representing business firms with 48 organisations in its membership and several non-professional NGOs working on issues of women and refugees with a relatively large membership. These cases have illustrated that NGOs in Kyrgyzstan can not only have members but also exist on their contributions. Based on them, I suggest that NGOs with a membership and a constituency are possible in Kyrgyzstan when there is a particular population group

that needs its voice to be heard and interests represented (e.g. disabled, Muslim women, business firms, refugees).

Furthermore, the fact that NGOs failed to establish a link with the rural poor because of their urban characteristic (Aksartova, 2005; Earle, 2005) can be challenged from the point of civil society theories. In chapter 1, I emphasised that, according to Tonnies (2005), civil society is *Gesellschaft*, a city phenomenon. Social relations that take place in *Gesellschaft* are based on individual autonomy. In cities, new types of social relations emerge where individuals are freed from kin and community ties that are central features of rural life which Tonnies (2005) called *Gemeinschaft*. In cities, people join different voluntary organisations depending on their interests to meet their needs and to be heard. They are small and numerous with a constant turnover of members who come and go depending on their interests and the aims of a voluntary association (Wirth, 1938; Hall, 1995; Taylor 2006). From this theoretical stance, it can be suggested that NGOs as urban based institutions failed because there were no preconditions in rural places for voluntary organisations due to prevalence of kin, community, and religious institutions. This is particularly relevant to Kyrgyzstan where social fabric in rural areas is characterised with dense traditional, kin, and solidarity networks (Roy, 2002; Petric, 2005; Radnitz, 2006).

The literature on Kyrgyz NGOs also argued that, in order to secure funding for their organisations, NGOs tend to follow donor priorities rather than local needs (Roy 2002; Adamson, 2002; Giffen et al., 2005; Shishkaraeva, 2006). However, I suggest that NGOs still have room to address the needs and problems of their constituency in their activities; although their methods depend on the strength of their personnel and organisation. My overall argument is that NGOs specialise in one field and shift their activities within that field depending on donor funding priorities rather than between different fields.

My interviews with some NGOs revealed that they developed their projects based either on their research or their strategic plan, or a decision of their board. The following three cases demonstrate the versatility of project development methods among professional NGOs. When asked a question about their procedure of project development, an interviewee from women's NGO based in Issyk-Ata district explained that they did it based on needs assessment. Before starting designing a

project, they conduct research using participatory community appraisal (PCA) and participatory rural appraisal (PRA) methods to identify needs of their target group. The interviewee also noted that, in addition to this, they conduct their activities based on their strategic, middle-term, and annual plans (Interview, Bishkek, 19 March 2008). I acknowledge that the effectiveness of PCA and PRA in terms of ensuring participation of different groups of people has been criticised (Earle, 2005), however it is important to underline that NGOs indeed use these methods.

In the meantime, an environmental NGO from Bishkek starts designing a project development with brainstorming on a problem. Then they go to the site, where the problem is, and talk to local population, particularly about how this problem could be solved. It is evident that their approach does not involve structured methods of assessing needs such as PCA or PRA but rather is based on informal interaction with population (Interview, Bishkek, 27 November 2007). An NGO from Osh working on human rights also starts project development with brainstorming. Additionally, it conducts online research, focus groups, interviews, and observations (Interview, Osh, 31 March 2008).

However, not all NGOs can afford to do research. As was pointed out above, project development methods depend on the professional and institutional capacity of NGOs. The availability of funding seems to be the most significant factor. For example, the funding of a refugee NGO from Bishkek includes grants only from one donor and a nominal collection of membership fees. It is not sufficient to conduct research. Therefore, they usually generate ideas for potential projects from complaints and suggestions that their constituency make as described below:

[A problem] comes to us, to our office. How does it come? Will you give it or not? Give what? Will you give me a passport or not? Aksakal [elderly man] came saying this. Will you give me citizenship or not? Then you sit and think how you can help him. For example, I am not Bakiev [president] to give him a passport. ... He is one person but there are many like him in a village. An idea comes – making procedures of citizenship acquisition easier ... we developed this idea. Soros supported our idea and it [procedures] became easier (Interview, Bishkek, 22 February 2008).

An NGO working on housing issues from Bishkek does not have enough funding to conduct research for its perspective projects either. Rather, it identifies project priorities based on complaints and questions that their constituency makes

and asks on the round tables, seminars, meetings, and other events (Interview, Bishkek, 15 February 2008). As a result, I suggest that the more an NGO is strong institutionally and professionally, which depends on availability of funding, the more it has the capacity to address the needs and interests of its target group. This is especially the case if the NGO's funding is diversified.

At the same time, my interview data showed that NGOs had a broad mission to match funding opportunities easier. The strong financial dependence of NGOs on donors has had a direct impact on how NGOs have developed their missions. My research showed there was a general tendency among NGOs in both categories to have a broad mission. For example, protection and promotion of human rights is the mission of a human rights NGO (Interview, Bishkek, 28 February 2008). This mission is broad indeed since human rights can encompass a great array of issues and no specific focus or target group is indicated. Another NGO working on media issues with the involvement of young people has a mission aiming to create an arena for young people to pursue their creative undertakings, ideas, and potential, to socialise youth into society, and to foster professional skills in the field of television (Interview, Bishkek, 26 February 2008). Yet again, it is obvious that this mission is broad and can focus on a wide range of themes not only on media but also on any aspect of youth development. With reference to McCarthy and Zald (1973), one can give an account for why NGOs have broad missions. According to these authors, the external provision of funding made SMOs dependent on them rather than on their target groups. Consequently, SMOs defined their missions to meet funding priorities. Moreover, their missions had enduring issues since it made it easier for SMOs to meet donor priorities and acquire funding; while SMOs with a narrow definition had limited chances in fundraising (McCarthy and Zald, 1973).

Nonetheless, my research data revealed that NGOs tried to find a compromise between funding opportunities and their missions. An example for this can be an organisation working on conflict resolution. It claimed that its activities always stayed within their mission. However, during the interview, it was revealed that now they were working on building the capacity of local authorities. When asked a question whether their current project was out of their mission, the interviewee said that they worked with local authorities since they were a main actor in the prevention

of conflicts, whose capacity should be strong particularly in terms of transparency and accountability to people (Interview, Jalalabad, 12 April 2008). Drawing on other research data, this can be seen from another perspective. At present, as noted elsewhere, donors are focusing on building the capacity of state institutions. As a result, most donor funding is being spent for this purpose in the form of grants to NGOs promoting advocacy and reforms in state policies and to the government itself. In other words, the NGO is working on the capacity-building of local authorities because it could find funding only for this. However, the NGO could link that donor's priority to its own mission.

It was neatly noted by one of the interviewees who said: "We look for these moments – crossing of interests. The main thing is that our interests should cross with interests of donors" (Interview, Bishkek, 5 March 2008). In brief, NGOs try to find a crossing point between their mission, needs of their constituency, and donor priorities. Consequently, I argue that NGOs specialise in a certain field and shift their activities within this field in accordance with donor priorities and funding rather than between different fields. For example, an educational NGO from Bishkek specialises in providing training for trainers and teaching methods. The interviewee noted that they could apply even for an HIV/AIDS grant if it has a component of training of trainers. An NGO working on community development expressed the same opinion by noting: "If there is a tender for teaching new types of income-generating activities, which is our niche, we write a project" (Interview, Bishkek, 4 March 2008). In other words, NGOs might shift between different donor priorities/programmes as long as there is funding for their niche. Therefore, although the missions of NGOs are broad, they still focus on a certain field, e.g. human rights, children, and women

Finally, with reference to the sub-sections on constituency responsiveness and urban characteristic, I suggest that donor expectations of and requirements for NGOs were unrealistic, contradictory, and, therefore, bound to fail. The great disappointment of donors with NGOs has been that the latter could not reach out to the rural poor. The above discussion has noted that NGOs cannot do this because, in rural locations, there are no proper preconditions for NGOs to exist and operate since traditional and kin bonds dominate rural life (Tonnie, 2005). Furthermore, according

to McCarthy and Zald (1973), professional NGOs grow apart from their constituency (be it the poor or others) because they depend on funders' priorities and funding for their own organisational survival.

New research directions

Drawing on the recent political and social changes in Kyrgyzstan in 2010 and my anecdotal observation of civic and political activism during this period, I suggest that there might be a new trend in the NGO sector. It seems that a new wave of NGOs in a western form with all the necessary components such as voluntarism, philanthropy, and constituency are emerging in Kyrgyzstan. Most importantly, they are the outcomes of voluntary, civic initiatives addressing pressing issues. I suggest that the emergence of these new NGOs is connected to the increase in the number of people, who have studied and lived in western countries, and the rise of new information and communication technologies.

A vivid example for this is the April Relief Fund initiative which came about after the social unrest and government overthrow in April 2010. The fund collected donations to help victims of the April uprising and the June ethnic conflict in southern Kyrgyzstan. It managed to collect \$3,552 which was distributed to families who lost someone or suffered from the April unrest. The fund also collected \$16,954 to help children in Osh and Jalalabad who have suffered from the ethnic conflict, go to school in September (www.aprilrelief.org). What is unique and important in this case is that all these activities were done completely on a voluntary basis by young people who either studied or are now studying in the West mainly through educational programmes of different donors such as Soros, IREX⁶⁹. Furthermore, most of these students participated in a programme called Students Institution for Free Enterprise - one of the donor projects in Kyrgyzstan.

⁶⁹ Personal acquaintance with organisers of this initiative.

There have been a number of such initiatives⁷⁰ in Kyrgyzstan. Such cases might have implications for the NGO sector in Kyrgyzstan and the civil society literature, especially literature focusing on civil society in the non-western countries (Hann and Dunn, 1996), since they open up new directions for further research. These initiatives suggest that the concept of an NGO might have widened in people's perception in Kyrgyzstan. Creating an NGO is not necessarily considered as potential work as in the case of professional NGOs discussed in the thesis. Now it involves people with western training who want to do good for the wider community on a voluntary basis. New initiatives like the April Relief Fund are capable of collecting donations. Moreover, they strive to transparency and accountability by providing reports on their websites.

In the light of this, I suggest two avenues for further research. The first one is exploring the experiences of young people who have studied in the west. My assumption is that the western training and experience of living in the West change the views of young people and influence their social and political activeness. This type of research would make a further contribution to the discussion on the impact of donors' promotion of civil society in Kyrgyzstan. For the time being the literature has argued that donors have failed to promote civil society in Kyrgyzstan. However, the emergence of initiatives such as the April Fund suggests that the investment of donors in education might have produced the desired results. For example, IREX administrates scholarship programmes of the US government. It has aimed at strengthening civil society through promoting education in Kyrgyzstan (www.irex.kg). It seems that this programme has had success on producing individuals who are capable of engaging in civic initiatives in a liberal sense.

The second avenue for research is the rise of information and communication technologies in Kyrgyzstan. It can be said that the April Relief Fund's success partly resulted from the ability of its members to access and use the Internet and social network sites such as Facebook. For example, they have a website and an account on

⁷⁰ The second similar case is Edinburgh-based initiative on raising funds to support victims of southern conflict. A number of activities were conducted to collect more than \$4,000. In this case, it is important that the collaboration of Kyrgyz diaspora consisted of students studying in Edinburgh combined with an initiative group in Kyrgyzstan consisting also of people who studied at a graduate level in the west and now work in different development and academic positions in Kyrgyzstan¹. A significant amount of work was done on a voluntary basis.

Facebook with many fans both within Kyrgyzstan and abroad. Therefore, it would be interesting to research what the methods of the fund's members were in relation to promoting their initiative and raising funds. All in all, the link between the rise of civic initiatives in Kyrgyzstan and the use of the Internet can be explored. For example, in 2007, Kulikova and Perlmutter asserted that blog 'Akaevu.net' served as 'a unique and rich source of information not available from other local sources or the world press' during the Tulip revolution in Kyrgyzstan in March 2005 (2007:29). Consequently, they claimed that such blogs could bring about and maintain democratisation in the Third World countries.

The third avenue for further research is why the governments of Akaev and Bakiev did not curtail NGOs as much as they curtailed media and political opposition. Chapter 6 demonstrated that NGOs had more freedom than the two above mentioned actors. Such research can reveal further the role and impact of NGOs in Kyrgyzstan. The last avenue for further research is exploring how the new government will shape its relations with NGOs. As stated in the introduction, Bakiev's government was ousted in April 2010. In June 2010, there was a referendum where people voted for a new constitution which stipulated that governance in Kyrgyzstan would be based on parliamentary democracy. In October 2010, there were elections for a new party based parliament. Five political parties with diverse agendas won the elections. Currently, they are in the process of building a coalition.

The last research direction is to explore emerging donors. In chapter 3, I mentioned that, during my fieldwork, I discovered that Kyrgyzstan's neighbouring countries such as Russia, China, and Kazakhstan, were establishing themselves as donors in Kyrgyzstan. Based on the case of the NGO, which received funding from the Russian embassy, I concluded that the emerging donors might influence the future development of the NGO sector. Taken into account the fact that western and international donors have reduced funding to NGOs as stated in chapter 4, the emerging donors might be a potential source of funding to Kyrgyz NGOs. Moreover, Russia's role has increased for the past couple years in Kyrgyzstan; while the position of America has staggered (Marat, 2008a; www.rferl.org, b; Kramer, 2010). Consequently, the focus of further research could be studying whether the emerging

donors had civil society in their agenda and worked with NGOs and what implications the rise of these donors could have on civil society promotion of “traditional” donors discussed in this thesis.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that the bleak analysis that the NGO sector is static and professional with funding limitations and suppression from the state might not necessarily be a case. First of all, I have argued that the sector is diverse and complex. There are non-professional NGOs. They are more likely to exist despite of donor funding shortage based on other financial sources, voluntary work, and moral obligation to their members. Secondly, I have questioned some statements in the literature in relation to NGOs’ failure to establish a constituency, and lack of voluntarism and philanthropy (Ruffin, 1999; Roy, 2002; Aksartova, 2005; Earle, 2005; Petric, 2005).

In this regard, I have raised a question if NGOs in Kyrgyzstan had a constituency and represented it. The relevant literature suggested that Kyrgyz NGOs were not able to do this so far (Roy 2002; Adamson, 2002; Giffen et al., 2005; Shishkaraeva, 2006). However, my work has indicated the reverse. Drawing on the cases of NGOs working with business firms, women, refugees, disabled, and other specific groups of population, I have argued that a number of NGOs could establish a link with their constituency. In fact, some of these NGOs were originally established by its constituency. This has led me to conclude that membership-based NGOs are possible in Kyrgyzstan if there is a group of population with real concerns and interests. Moreover, I have suggested that, although NGOs still depend on donor priorities because of their dependence on donor funding, they still have some flexibility in addressing the needs of their constituency or working on one field.

Further, I have stated that NGOs in Kyrgyzstan have not been deprived of voluntarism and philanthropy. In fact, the whole non-professional category of NGOs work predominantly on a voluntary basis since their payment is irregular. Most importantly, the motivation of a number of NGO leaders in the non-professional category is not driven with monetary interests but rather with passion to tackle social

problems. The unique case of a Muslim NGO also shows a level of philanthropy can exist in Kyrgyzstan. There are also NGOs which enable people to pursue their interests and meet their needs. In other words, NGOs in Kyrgyzstan display features of civil society defined in the beginning of the thesis as voluntarism, availability of associations, and enabling individuals to pursue their interests. However, Kyrgyz NGOs have been influenced by local specificities while acquiring these features (Kaviraj, 2001). The case of the Muslim NGO, which combined a Muslim tradition of donating and a liberal form of associating, is a key example for this.

Further, I have explored the recent civic initiatives of young people in Kyrgyzstan in the light of the political and social events in 2010. I have concluded that these cases can demonstrate new features of the NGO sector in Kyrgyzstan. I have identified that, in these initiatives, young people with western training and access to the Internet were very active. Therefore, I have suggested researching experiences of young people who have studied abroad and their activities back in Kyrgyzstan, particularly in relation to their social and political activeness. The second avenue for the research is exploring the influence of the new communication and information technologies on the rise of civic initiatives. I have also pointed out that the relative freedom of NGOs in comparison with media and political opposition under Akaev and Bakievs' rules can also be explored. Further, I have stated that the social and political context in Kyrgyzstan has changed with the adoption of the new constitution and election of the new party-based government. As a result, another field of the research could be to study the policies of the new government towards NGOs. Finally, I have suggested researching activities of emerging donors, such as Russia, China, and Kazakhstan, and exploring whether they have civil society promotion in their agenda.

Conclusion

The thesis has sought to explore the changes that donors have made in their civil society activities in Kyrgyzstan since the mid 2000s with a particular emphasis on the reasons behind these changes. The focus of the thesis has been on NGOs because they have been identified as the most salient element of civil society that donors promoted in Kyrgyzstan throughout the 1990s. Consequently, the thesis has studied what influence the changes in civil society activities of donors have had on Kyrgyz NGOs and their interaction with the state. Furthermore, the thesis has aimed to understand the current donor civil society activities from the perspective of civil society theories and to make a contribution to the debate on the development of western liberal civil society in the non-Western context.

Changes in donor agenda: the return of the state

I argue that, in Kyrgyzstan, civil society has receded into the background in donor agendas since the mid 2000s. This is different from civil society activities of donors in the 1990s. During the 1990s, donors promoted the development of civil society in Kyrgyzstan by encouraging the emergence of NGOs and building their capacity. Under the neo-liberal policies of donors, NGOs were a key actor in the development and preferred over the state. As stated in chapter 1, NGOs were involved in service provision, democracy promotion, and acted as anti-thesis to the state on the whole. The significant donor support for civil society promotion in the 1990s led to a proliferation of NGOs in Kyrgyzstan as shown in chapter 2.

However, my key research finding shows that this has changed since the mid 2000s in Kyrgyzstan. I suggest that donors' focus has shifted from civil society promotion to state capacity-building. The case of UNDP, discussed in chapter 3, demonstrated that donors provide support to, and work with, all the branches of state: a) parliament, b) a public administration reform, and c) local self-governance bodies. European bilateral and multilateral donors have also started providing sector budget support.

In chapter 3, I discussed why donors had moved to state capacity-building. I suggested that the shift in donor priorities from civil society to the state in Kyrgyzstan is connected to new donor policies. Since the early 2000s, donors have adopted global documents on aid effectiveness, such as Paris Declaration and Millennium Challenge Corporation, which stress on ownership and identify states as focal points in promoting development. This is because donors realised that capacity of the states in recipient countries have to be strengthened for development aid to work. Meanwhile, the effectiveness of NGOs has been questioned. Their accountability, transparency, independence, and democratic representation have been debated and harshly criticised. Furthermore, weak states have come to be seen as fragile and a potential threat to international security, particularly after 9/11.

In this regard, I argue that new policies of donors focused on state capacity-building have shaped their civil society activities in Kyrgyzstan. Donors stopped encouraging the emergence of NGOs as they did in the 1990s. In fact, most donors no longer provide capacity-building support to NGOs. My key findings are that, first of all, donors have reduced their funding to NGOs which has made a competition for donor funding among NGOs fiercer. Secondly, they are supporting NGOs mainly in an advocacy role to promote reforms and changes in state policies. Thirdly, donors are promoting collaborative relations between the state and NGOs.

Furthermore, I argue that donors are trying to look beyond traditional NGOs and have started working with media and political parties in the way they used to work with NGOs in the 1990s. In other words, donors are building capacity of media and political parties. Moreover, some donors are purposefully making their definitions more inclusive. Nonetheless, although I suggest that the overall trend in civil society activities of donors is similar, I point out that donors are not completely homogenous. There are differences between them. For example, one of the European bilateral donors found building capacity of NGOs without any purpose inefficient; therefore, they now focus on supporting NGOs working on advocacy. Meanwhile, American donors stated that they started promoting advocacy NGOs because the NGO sector in Kyrgyzstan became strong enough to self-sustain.

Communitarian and liberal trends in the donor agenda

I suggest that the current state oriented policies of donors have theoretical implications. The conceptual framework, set out in chapter 1, indicated that the state served as one of the key benchmarks in defining civil society; autonomy, boundaries, and functions of civil society are defined in relation to the state. In this regard, I presented two models of the state–civil society relations. The first model is liberal where the state and civil society are separate, independent actors providing a check on each other. The second one is communitarian where the above actors are in one continuum and mutually connected.

In the light of this, I argue that the current focus of donors on state capacity-building and promotion of collaborative relations between the state and civil society has elements predominantly of the communitarian model. Meanwhile, donor policies in the 1990s were characterised as liberal where civil society was encouraged and the state was limited. At present, the strong state is seen as the key precondition for development. Donors consider NGOs as assistants to the state rather than counterbalance where the common good is a shared agenda. Moreover, NGOs need the state and its policies and funding to exist and operate successfully. Therefore, the aspects of communitarian model of the state–civil society relations, such as a politically organised society where the state guides society (Taylor, 2006), a necessity of the state for civil society to prevent it from self-destruction (Walzer, 1998; Taylor, 2006), dominate in the present aid strategies of donors and their vision of the state-civil society relations.

The response to new donor strategies: state-NGO relations

I argue that the changes in donor civil society activities are leading NGOs to further professionalisation and formalisation. As discussed in chapter 5, because of their continuing dependence on donor funding, most NGOs have to raise their professional and institutional capacity to obtain donor funding which has been reduced resulting in a stronger competition for it among NGOs. Moreover, I suggest

that donor promotion of NGOs in advocacy is also requiring NGOs to raise their professionalism because effective work with the state demands from NGOs certain experience, skills, and expertise. Nonetheless, I point out that professionalisation and formalisation have concerned only NGOs which already have a certain level of professional and institutional capacity. NGOs, which lack such initial capacity, tend to fail to acquire donor funding. These NGOs are usually small and/or new. Moreover, there is very limited capacity-building support to these NGOs.

I suggest that donors' efforts to promote the state-NGO collaboration have had some success. In chapter 6, I showed that the state-NGO relations in Kyrgyzstan have an element of collaboration. There are NGOs which work with the state by sharing a joint agenda. For them, the state is a partner which they assist, work jointly, and provide technical support. Moreover, these NGOs regard the state and themselves as mutually complementary because they are both working on the same goals.

Nonetheless, I also suggest that there are NGOs which distinctly consider themselves as separate and independent from the state. They have their own agenda which they seek to carry out independently. Their relations with the state are characterised by negotiations with the state institutions, lobbying, making critical statements, and sometimes protesting. These NGOs also regard one of their key roles as providing a check on the state. Some of these NGOs became politicised due to their active role and their leaders' involvement in political parties. In other words, my argument is that the state-NGO relations in Kyrgyzstan have elements of both cooperation and counterbalance.

I also suggest that the government under Bakiev failed to establish a proper dialogue with the NGOs that sought to counterbalance it. I argue that the previous government did not welcome NGOs' critical evaluation of state activities and peaceful demonstrations. Conversely, Bakiev's government felt threatened by NGOs as a potential source of social mobilisation. This is evident from its actions curtailing legislation on non-commercial organisations and civic and political freedoms, such as freedom of assembly, which demonstrates authoritarian features of Bakiev's government. At the same time, it also shows the political role and weight of NGOs engaged in counterbalancing the state.

I also argue that the government of Bakiev tried to follow its regional neighbours, such as Russia and Uzbekistan, in dealing with NGOs. Bakiev's government attempted to exert control over NGOs' funding and to establish GONGOs as has happened in Russia and Uzbekistan. Neither of these initiatives was fully put in practice mainly because the government was overthrown. However, what is important to note is that, both under Bakiev and Akaevs' governments, the nature of GONGOs was different in Kyrgyzstan than in Russia and Uzbekistan. In the latter countries, the governments used GONGOs to promote state's agenda by providing funding to them. Meanwhile, the previous Kyrgyz governments could not promote GONGOs for such a purpose because they did not provide funding to NGOs. In fact, I suggest that, because previous governments in Kyrgyzstan depended on the funding of donors, they could not totally crackdown on NGOs.

Further, Kyrgyz NGOs, especially politicised ones, under Bakiev still had much more freedom than their counterparts in Central Asia and Russia. The crackdown of Bakiev's government on NGOs was not as harsh as on media and religious organisations which experienced considerable legislative oppression, physical attacks, imprisonment, and even murder. Further, in line with the Indian government in the 1990s, Bakiev's government was open to collaboration with those NGOs which shared their development goals concerning social issues.

By looking at the state-NGO relations in Kyrgyzstan, I identified that the government under Bakiev was institutionally and professionally weak and grew considerably authoritarian. Moreover, I suggest that its activities towards and interaction with NGOs were explicitly and implicitly impacted by different powers and global politics.

Contributions to the literature and scholarly debates

My thesis makes a number of contributions to the literature and scholarly debate on civil society in Central Asia and in development. My work fills one of the key gaps in the literature. As noted in chapter 2, NGOs in Kyrgyzstan were generalised as professional, that is, with paid, qualified and skilled staff and other

elements (Roy, 2002; Aksartova, 2005; Petric, 2005). Contrary to this, a number of authors asserted that NGOs were weak professionally and institutionally and lacked proper human resources, structure, rules and other organisational mechanisms such as accountability and transparency (Minnini, 1998; Kasybekov, 1999; Shishkaraeva et al., 2006).

I pointed out that, firstly, two perspectives on NGOs created a contradictory image of NGOs. Secondly, none of the works researched NGOs from an organisational perspective undermining the basis of their claim. The contribution of my work is that it researched NGOs in Kyrgyzstan from the organisational perspective. It identified that the NGO sector in Kyrgyzstan cannot be generalised as professional since it is very diverse and complex. In fact, I categorised NGOs in my sample into professional and non-professional almost evenly. However, there is a tendency towards professionalisation and formalisation due to reduction in donor funding as shown in chapter 5.

Most importantly, I believe that I used a unique methodological approach to study professionalisation and formalisation of NGOs in Kyrgyzstan. I should note that works on professionalisation and formalisation of NGOs that I reviewed did not provide a clear definition on these (Ebrahim, 2001; Markowitz and Tice, 2002; Cumming, 2008). Therefore, I created an ideal type of professional and formal NGO drawing on works of McCarthy and Zald (1973) and on my own analysis of over 45 NGO in Kyrgyzstan.

Furthermore, another popular argument in the literature on Kyrgyz civil society (Ruffin, 1999; Roy, 2002; Petric, 2005) was that the NGO sector was deprived of voluntarism, philanthropy, and a link with their constituency. However, I argue that this is not necessarily the case. I make this claim based on NGOs in my sample categorised as non-professional. As shown in chapter 7, a number of non-professional NGOs work only on a voluntary basis because of their commitment to social issues. Meanwhile, most NGO workers in this category receive payment when they have funding (normally from donors). When they do not have funding, they work voluntarily.

I also suggest that a number of NGOs, which include those working on issues concerning Muslim women, children, and elderly people, have received

philanthropic support from public. This indicates that people in Kyrgyzstan can donate for charitable purposes. I identified that philanthropy is particularly well developed in the Muslim NGO where well-off members donate generously. As a result, I argue that my findings provide empirical support to Starr's argument (1999) that Central Asian people could use their Muslim traditions for philanthropy.

My work also challenges the argument in the literature which claimed that NGOs in Kyrgyzstan had failed to establish a link with people especially the rural poor (Adamson, 2002; Aksartova, 2005; Earle, 2005; Petric 2005). I argue that some NGOs in Kyrgyzstan could establish a constituency. They work with a specific population such as Muslim women, disabled people, refugees, or institutions such as business firms to promote, represent, and pursue needs and interests of the group that they represent. In relation to this, I assert that NGOs in Kyrgyzstan can have a constituency if the latter is a well defined group such as the above with real interests. The link between NGOs and constituency is even stronger when an NGO is established its constituency/members.

On the whole, I suggest that donors have had high expectations of NGOs. On the one hand, donors have wanted NGOs to represent different groups of people, especially the excluded and poor, to provide services, and to influence decision making. On the other hand, donors have required NGOs to have proper qualifications and skills to deal with their funding, to monitor their own activities, and to report the results properly. I argue that these donor expectations of NGOs have been unrealistic taking into account their requirements for NGOs and theories of both civil society and organisations.

The civil society theories, discussed in chapter 1, state that voluntary associations normally exist in urban areas (Wirth, 1938; Tonnies, 2005) and are with a frequently changing voluntary membership base and a variable life expectancy depending on the interests and needs of their members (Hall, 1995; Tocqueville, 2005; Taylor 2006). Based on this, I argue that the difficulty in promoting NGOs in rural areas in Kyrgyzstan has been connected to the fact that rural areas lack favourable conditions since they are, in Tonnies words (2005), *Gemeinschaft* and guided by folkways and mores.

Further, the organisational theory of McCarthy and Zald (1973), set out in chapter 3, indicated that, when a considerable amount of external funding is available, non-profit organisations change their nature from voluntary to professional to obtain funding. As a result, they separate from their membership base and follow donor priorities. In other words, donor funding requirements are bound to make NGOs professionalise and formalise. Based on this, I argue that the donor expectations of, and requirements for NGOs were unrealistic and contradictory, and, therefore, bound to fail.

Furthermore, I suggest that my findings on state-NGO relations in Kyrgyzstan challenge a claim in the literature stating that there was no considerable interaction between the state and NGOs, and dismissing NGOs as active actors which could influence social and political life in Kyrgyzstan (Kasybekov 1999; Roy, 2002; Aksartova, 2005; Radnitz, 2006; Tretyakov, 2008). As stated in chapter 6, I argue that the state-NGO relations in Kyrgyzstan have elements of both collaboration and counterbalance. This means that the state institutions and NGOs indeed interact. In fact, their interaction is on the rise due to donor focus on the promotion of collaborative relations between the state and NGOs. I also argue that the rise of activeness of NGOs in a political domain undermines Roy's claim (2002) about NGOs' political inactiveness and alienation from addressing the pressing issues in the country. Conversely, I demonstrated that a few NGOs have become very active politically.

From a theoretical perspective, I suggest that the state-NGO interaction has had conflicting elements of liberal and communitarian models of state-civil society relations. The collaborative relations between these actors feature aspects of the communitarian model since the actors share the common agenda and, most importantly, NGOs consider themselves in a continuum with the state. I demonstrated that in cases where the state institutions were even involved in the operation and management of NGOs. In other words, NGOs has become an element in the distribution of power throughout society (Taylor, 2006). Their ideas have found their final destination in the state institution (Walzer, 1998).

The counterbalancing side of the state-NGO relations has mainly displayed characteristics of the liberal model. For these NGOs, they are separate and

independent from the state which does not intervene into their affairs. These NGOs are also convinced that they should provide a check on the state (Gellner, 1994). However, I point out that this does not mean that these NGOs oppose the state. They work with the state quite successfully but through negotiation. I also suggest that the professional and institutional capacity of NGOs plays an important role in building relations with the state. Although NGOs' interaction with the state is mainly shaped by their mission and activities; according to my work, it also depends on professional and institutional capacity of the NGO. Finally, I suggest that, although donors are still important in bringing together the state and NGOs through their project funding (Aksartova, 2005), the state and NGO relations started to take place out of donor projects.

Finally, I would like to suggest that the Kyrgyz NGO sector cannot be disregarded totally as donor driven, professional, and alien to local social and political life as the argument used to be in the literature. My argument is that the NGO sector is much more diverse and complex and displays features such as voluntarism, philanthropy, a link with constituency, and interaction with the state. Most importantly, these happen within local specificities.

In conclusion, civil society in Kyrgyzstan has developed considerably since the early 1990s. Its emergence and development was significantly influenced by the civil society support activities of donors who reduced civil society to NGOs. As chapter 2 showed, donors, such as USAID and DFID, invested generously in NGO capacity building programmes in the name of civil society promotion. As a result, there was proliferation of NGOs in Kyrgyzstan. However, it was widely stated that, while the quantity of NGOs rose, their quality lagged behind. The Kyrgyz NGO sector has faced harsh criticism. For the most part, the relevant literature condemned NGOs for being professional, donor driven, urban based, and divorced from local communities. In particular, the professionalisation of NGOs has been blamed for these characteristics notwithstanding the fact that none of the studies explored NGO professionalisation specifically. Another criticism suggested that NGOs lacked financial transparency and accountability, which raised suspicions about the real interests of NGOs.

My research showed that it was inadequate to state that the NGO sector in Kyrgyzstan was professional, donor dependent, urban dominated, and without links with local communities. I argue in this thesis that the NGO sector, as a key part of Kyrgyz civil society, was much more complex and diverse. There are NGOs of various missions, structures, capacities, work methods, funding sources, and values. While some of them have operated in the form of a liberal, professional NGO; others have incorporated local specificities such as Muslim traditions and solidarity. The examples of Muslim NGOs, refugee NGOs, and women's NGOs discussed throughout the thesis are vivid evidence of this. In other words, as a result of civil society promotion in Kyrgyzstan of over a decade and half, a much more complex civil society emerged rather than just a sector of professional NGOs.

Furthermore, my research gave insights into the professionalisation of NGOs in Kyrgyzstan. As stated earlier, the NGO sector has been depicted as professional in the literature and, most importantly, has been criticised for this. For example, Roy (2002) and Petric (2005) argued that, as a result, NGOs had failed to promote the interests of local communities. However, these studies did not concentrate on the exploration of NGO professionalisation specifically. In contrast, based on my research findings that focused on professionalisation of NGOs, I argue that the NGO sector in Kyrgyzstan is semi-professional. I categorised slightly more than half of my sample as professional. These organisations have full-time paid leaders and staff who have built a career in the NGO sector. They also have formal organisational attributes. Meanwhile, the remaining half of my sample was categorised as non-professional. Leaders of these NGOs are either volunteers or paid on an irregular basis and, more importantly, they have other jobs to earn a living. Non-professional NGOs are not formalised and lack strong infrastructural and organisational capacity. So, my characterisation seeks to rectify this mischaracterisation.

My thesis also showed that the professionalisation of NGOs in Kyrgyzstan was not necessarily a negative phenomenon as had been suggested by the existing literature. My research illustrated a number of NGOs categorised as professional which could establish a good link with local communities, address needs of their constituency, and find a crossing point between donor funding priorities and needs of local communities. The example of an urban based ecological NGO demonstrated

this perfectly. Notwithstanding being a professional NGO in Bishkek, it established a connection with rural NGOs and informally assisted them in building their own organisational capacity by sharing with experience and information.

The exploration of the NGO sector in Kyrgyzstan in this thesis shows that the promotion of the liberal form of NGOs has produced different results. My conceptual framework premised conceptualisation of civil society on the liberal and communitarian traditions of civil society where the role of the state and individuals differ. Despite the fact that donors' efforts to produce civil society in the liberal form, the NGO sector in Kyrgyzstan has not taken a form of purely liberal tradition of civil society. The sector also displays features of the communitarian tradition of civil society. This suggests that the line between "liberal" and "communitarian" traditions of civil society is blurred in Kyrgyzstan. Therefore, the case of Kyrgyzstan illustrates, what Kamrava (2001) called, *indigenisation of civil society*, when the meaning and utility of western civil society has encountered a number of changes in the local civil society discourse and context.

Further, referring to the debate outlined in the beginning of the thesis, it was stated that there are two positions in regard to development of civil society in the non-Western context. The first position asserts that liberal civil society can be replicated cross culturally (Gellner, 1994). The second position claims that, in non-Western countries, civil society needs to conform to the cultural, social, and political specificities, which are often incomparable, of each country (Hann and Dunn, 1996:18). The Kyrgyz case also supports Kaviraj's statement that "the processes of modernity are universal, but these processes are realised through a trajectory of historical events which are specific to each society" (2001:323). Therefore, non-Western countries can learn from western social theory; however, they cannot expect it to tell them about their precise future (Kaviraj, 2001). Therefore non-Western countries can develop a civil society, but in doing so, they draw on their own distinct traditions.

New directions for further research

I suggest four directions for further research. The first research direction is to explore why NGOs were curtailed less than media and political opposition in Kyrgyzstan during Bakiev's rule and what it can say about their role in social and political life of Kyrgyzstan. Chapter 6 noted that media and political opposition had been suppressed more than NGOs when Bakiev's government was in power; although NGOs became politically active at that time. The second research direction is to study the policies of the new government in Kyrgyzstan towards NGOs. As stated in chapter 7, Kyrgyzstan has acquired a new form of governance based on parliamentary democracy. Moreover, a number of NGO leaders have joined political parties. Therefore, one can assume that this is influencing the relations between state institutions and NGOs in Kyrgyzstan.

One more research suggestion is to explore emerging donors such as Russia, China, and Kazakhstan. In chapter 3, I noted that Kyrgyzstan's neighbouring countries started providing aid to it. In chapter 6, I demonstrated how Bakiev's government had tended to imitate the governments of countries from the neighboring region such as Russia, India in their work with NGOs. Consequently, one can conclude that the future of the NGO sector in Kyrgyzstan might also be influenced by the rise of the emerging donors. Therefore, I suggest exploring whether these donors aim to work with civil society.

Based on my anecdotal observations, in some cases participant observations, of recent voluntary initiatives such as the April Relief Fund, I suggest that the next avenue for future research can be exploring what young people do after studying in the West through scholarship programmes of donors. The case of the April Relief Fund has demonstrated that a group of young people with Western education set up a voluntary initiative and sought to ensure transparency and accountability. Most importantly, they managed to raise a large amount of funds for their initiative in Kyrgyzstan and abroad. This is bound to have influence on further development of civil society in Kyrgyzstan. Consequently, my proposition for future research is that donor scholarship programmes, which have aimed to build civil society through educating young people (Adamson, 2002; the case of IREX), might have had

positive outcomes. Such research will further provide empirical support to my argument about the NGO sector displaying voluntarism, philanthropy, and constituency responsiveness. It will also shed light on how successful donor scholarship programmes have been.

Relatedly, I suggest studying how the rise of new information and communication technologies, such as blogs, Facebook, and Twitter, has influenced civic and political activeness of people, particularly the young generation, in Kyrgyzstan. My observations on social networks suggest that people indeed become very active and undertake initiatives using online technologies during unstable political and social situations as it happened in April and June 2010. As noted in chapter 7, this can also influence civil society development in Kyrgyzstan.

Appendix 1 – Interview guide for donors

OBJECTIVES

1. to explore activities of a donor on the promotion of civil society and whether there have been any changes in them since the early 2000s;
2. to explore a definition of civil society within their programmes and whether there have been any changes in it since the beginning of their activities;
3. to explore whether they work with other donors, the state, NGOs, CBOs, traditions and the nature of their interaction;
4. to explore whether there have been any changes in their approach to working with local NGOs;
5. to explore their assessment of the current role of NGOs in the activities of donors;
6. to explore their general account about civil society in Kyrgyzstan.

SECTIONS:

1. Activities of a donor on civil society promotion (past and present)
2. Definition of civil society
3. Work with donors, int. and loc. NGOs, the state, CBOs, traditions
4. General account on an NGO sector in Kyrgyzstan

INTERVIEW TERMS

- Confidentiality
- Duration of the interview - 1-1.5 hours
- Permission for recording
- Researcher-participant relationship – making aware that I have a number of questions. I will start with simple questions concerning their organisation. Gradually, I will switch to more specific questions.

1. ACTIVITIES (PAST AND PRESENT)

- 1) How do you promote civil society at present?
- 2) Have you had any changes in your approach to development of / working with civil society organisations, particularly NGOs, since the early 2000s?
- 3) I heard that donors were reducing aid to CSOs? Is it the case in your organisation?

Probing: if yes – why are you reducing aid?

2. DEFINITION OF CIVIL SOCIETY

- 1) Do you have a particular definition of civil society within your programmes?

Probing: 1) If yes, what is it?

Has it always been like this? Or have you changed it?

If yes, what kind of changes did you have?

Why did you make these changes?

- 2) If no, how do you understand civil society?

3. WORK with other DONORS, GOVERNMENT, NGOs, and CBOs

NGOs

- 1) How would you describe local NGOs that you work with?
- 2) How do you work with NGOs?
- 3) What language do you use in your work with NGOs (e.g. applications, reports)?
- 4) What role do NGOs play in your current activities?

CBOs

- 1) Do you work with CBOs?

Probing: If yes

- When and why did you start working with CBOs?
- How do you work with them?
- What language do you use in your work with them?
- What is the difference between NGOs and CBOs?

Government

- 1) Do you work with the Kyrgyz government on the promotion of civil society?
- 2) If yes, how do you work with it?
- 3) Do you support the government through budget support?

Other donors

- 1) Do you work with other donors on the promotion of civil society?
- 2) What is different in your approach to civil society promotion from approaches of other donors?

4. GENERAL OPINION ON CIVIL SOCIETY AND NGOS IN KYRGYZSTAN (questions to be asked if there is time)

- 1) How would you assess the current role of NGOs in Kyrgyzstan?
- 2) What are the strengths and weaknesses of NGOs in Kyrgyzstan?

Probing: I got an impression from my previous interviews that NGOs in Kyrgyzstan are politicising. What do you think of this?

- 3) How would you assess a situation on civil society in Kyrgyzstan?

END OF INTERVIEW

1. Thank you notes;
2. Reassurance of confidentiality;
3. Informing that I will contact them if I have more questions.

Appendix 2 – Follow up interview guide for donors

MAIN AIM is

1. clarifying if they are prioritising state building and budget support and why?
2. exploring in details how they work with NGOs/CSOs;
3. finding out what kind of relations they are promoting between the state and NGOs.

INTERVIEW TERMS

- Confidentiality
- Duration of the interview - 1-1.5 hours
- Permission for recording
- Researcher-participant relationship – making aware that I have a number of questions.

1. Promoting state-building

Is state capacity-building a priority in your programmes?

- I read that one of your current key priorities is state capacity-building. Could you tell me what your organisation is doing on this in Kyrgyzstan?

- Do you provide budget support?

If yes, could you explain how it works?

If no, how do you provide funding to Kyrgyzstan?

- In the 1990s, did you have the same priority – state capacity-building?

- How do you usually identify priorities for your activities in Kyrgyzstan?

5. Civil society in their activities

I understood from the previous interview that you involve NGOs to implement certain components of your programmes. You have 11 grantees at present.

- How do you choose NGOs?

- What kind of tasks do they do?

- Do you build their capacity?

- Do you involve NGOs when you develop, monitor, and evaluate your projects and programmes?

- You mentioned last time that you stopped financing a programme on civil society development implemented by INTRAC. Why did you stop financing it?

- Do you promote interaction between the state and local NGOs?

END OF INTERVIEW

1. Thank you notes
2. Reassurance of confidentiality
3. Informing that I will contact them if I have more questions

Appendix 3 – Interview guide for international NGOs

OBJECTIVES

1. to explore activities of an INGO on the promotion of civil society and whether there have been any changes in them since the early 2000;
2. to explore a definition of civil society and whether there have been any changes in it since the beginning of their activities;
3. to explore whether an NGO works with other INGOs, the state, donors, CBOs, and the nature of their interaction;
4. to explore whether there have been any changes in their interaction with donors;
5. to explore their assessment of the current role of NGOs in the activities of donors;
6. to explore their general account about civil society in Kyrgyzstan.

SECTIONS:

1. Background information about an NGO
2. Their activities on civil society promotion (past and present)
3. Definition of civil society
4. Work with donors, international and local NGOs, the state, CBOs.
5. General account on an NGO sector in Kyrgyzstan

INTERVIEW TERMS

- a. Confidentiality
- b. Duration of the interview - 1-1.5 hours
- c. Permission for recording
- d. Researcher-participant relationship – making aware that I have a number of questions. I will start with simple question concerning your organisation. Gradually, I will switch to more specific ones.

1. ACTIVITIES (PAST AND PRESENT)

- 1) What do you do to promote civil society?
- 2) Have you had any changes in your civil society promotion since the early 2000s?
- 3) Where does funding of your NGO come from?
Probing: If yes, what kind of changes did you have?
why did you make these changes?
If no, does it mean that everything is the same?
- 4) What language do you usually use in your work (activities, reports etc.)?

2. DEFINITION OF CIVIL SOCIETY

- 1) What does 'civil society' mean within your civil society promotion programmes?
- 2) Has the definition of civil society been always like this? Or have you changed it?
Probing: If yes, what kind of changes did you have? Why did you make these changes?

3. RELATIONSHIP WITH DONORS

- 1) Do you work with donors on the promotion of civil society?
- 2) Have you noticed any changes in the approach of donors to civil society promotion since the early 2000?
- 3) Have you noticed any changes in the approach of donors to working with NGOs since the early 2000?

4. WORK WITH OTHER NGOs, THE STATE, and CBOs

NGOs

- 1) How do you work with local NGOs?
- 2) What language do you use to work with local NGOs (e.g. applications, reports)?
- 3) What role do NGOs play in your current activities?

Government

- 4) Do you work with the Kyrgyz government on the promotion of civil society?
- 5) If yes, how do you work with it?

CBOs

- 6) Do you work with CBOs?

Probing: If yes

1. When and why did you start working with CBOs?
2. How do you work with them (including language)?
3. What is the difference between NGOs and CBOs?

Probing: If no

4. Do you know about CBOs?
5. Do you know other NGOs which work with CBOs?

5. GENERAL OPINION ON CIVIL SOCIETY AND NGOS IN KYRGYZSTAN (questions to be asked if there is time)

- 1) What kind of role do NGOs play in Kyrgyzstan?
- 2) What are the strengths and weaknesses of NGOs in Kyrgyzstan?
- 3) If we compare an NGO sector in the 1990s and now, are there any differences?

END OF INTERVIEW

1. Thank you notes
2. Reassurance of confidentiality
3. Informing that I will contact them if I have more questions

Appendix 4 – Interview guide for local NGOs

THREE FOCUSES

1. State-NGO relationship
2. Professionalization of NGOs
3. Politisation of NGOs

INTERVIEW TERMS

- a. Confidentiality
- b. Duration of the interview - 1-1.5 hours
- c. Permission for recording
- d. Researcher-participant relationship – making aware that I have a number of questions. I will start with simple question concerning your organisation. Gradually, I will switch to more specific ones.

About an organisation

3. When was your organisation established?
4. What is a legal status of your organisation?
5. What is a mission of your organisation?
6. How many members does you organisation have?
7. How many volunteers does your organisation have?
8. What is a geographical coverage of your activities (nation, region, city, village)?

Funding

9. Where does your funding come from?
 - A. If there are several sources of funding,
 - 1) What source does most of your funding come from?
 - B. If there are several sources of funding, but there is no the state and the private sector among them,
 - 1) Have you tried to get funding from the state or the private sector?
 - 2) If yes, what was the result?
 - C. If an NGO self-generates funding, how?
10. Does your organisation have membership fees?
If yes, how much is it?

Structure

11. Could you describe the structure of your NGO?
12. Do you have a board of directors?
If yes, do they hold a meeting? If yes, how often?
13. Do you write annual reports?
If yes, what do you do with them?
14. Do you have administrative rules and procedures in a written form?

Staff

15. How many people work for your organisation?
16. How do you usually hire staff?
17. Do you have terms of reference for each staff in a written form?
18. Do you work full or part time?

Activity

19. How do you usually design projects?
20. How do you identify problems?
21. What language do you use in your work (activities, reports, project proposals)?

Relationship with the state

22. Do you work with the state?
If yes, how?
23. What is the main reason of your work with the state?
24. Who initiates joint work?
25. Do you get invited by the state to participate in its activities: planning, developing policies and documents?
26. Have your relationship with the state gotten better or worse for the last 3 years?
27. How would you assess the relationship between the NGO sector and the state on the national level?
If the relationship is poor, what are the reasons of this?
28. What is your attitude towards getting funding from the state?
29. What do you think of NGOs' involvement in politics?
30. In your opinion, why have NGOs participated in politics so actively?
31. In your opinion, should or not NGOs participate in politics?

Donors

32. What donors have you worked with?
33. How do you usually work with them?
34. Do donors involve you in designing their projects, planning, monitoring and evaluating their activities?
35. In your opinion, have donors had any changes in their approach to working with NGOs?
36. What do you like and do not like in your interaction with donors?
37. In your opinion, is donor aid reducing or not?

Collaboration with other NGOs

38. Do you collaborate with other NGOs?
If yes, how?
If no, in your opinion, why is there not any collaboration?
39. Is your organisation a member of any association, coalition, network?
If yes, which association, coalition, network?
If no, why are you not in any of these?
40. Do you know about other NGOs which work in the same field?

Work with target group and population

41. Which part of population is your target group?
42. Do you publicise your activities?
If yes, how? If no, why do not you publicise your activities?

43. How do you attract new members to your NGO?
44. Do you work with CBOs? If yes, how?
45. Is it difficult or easy to involve population or your target group to your projects? If yes, could you share success stories?
If no, why?

Leader

46. How long have you been working for this organisation?
47. Did anyone work before you?
48. How a leader is usually recruited in your organisation?

General questions about the Kyrgyz NGO sector (to be asked only if there is additional time)

49. What are the strengths and weaknesses of your organisation?
50. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the NGO sector?

END OF INTERVIEW

1. Thank you notes;
2. Reassurance of confidentiality;
3. Informing that I will contact them if I have more questions.

Appendix 5 – List of interviewed donors and international NGOs

No	Organisation	Date/Place	Time
1	US Embassy	31 October 2007, Bishkek 27 November 2007, Bishkek	14:00–15:00 14:15 – 14:45
2	Aga-Khan Foundation	12 November 2007, Bishkek	10:30–12:30
3	UNDP	13 November 2007, Bishkek	15:00–16:16
4	Soros Foundation – Kyrgyzstan	14 November 2007, Bishkek	15:00 – 15:40
5	Delegation of the European Commission in the Kyrgyz Republic	14 November 2007, Bishkek 13 February 2008, Bishkek	17:10 – 18:00 15:00 – 16:00
6	DFID	14 November 2007, Bishkek 12 February 2008, Bishkek	10:00 – 10:50 10:00 – 11:00
7	UNV	19 November 2007, Bishkek	14:00 – 15:00
8	World Bank	19 November 2007, Bishkek	Written interview
9	OSCE	5 December 2007, Bishkek	10:30 – 11:20
10	USAID	10 December 2007, Bishkek 15 February 2008, Bishkek	16:40 – 18:00 15:30 – 16:40
	Donor council	15 November 2007, Bishkek	Brief interview

International NGOs

No	Organisation	Date/Place	Time
1	Mercy Corps-HQ	29 August 2007, Edinburgh	4:00–5:05
2	INTRAC	21 September 2007, Bishkek 15 November 2007, Bishkek	11:00–12:15 16:20 – 17:10
3	ICNL	30 October 2007, Bishkek 12 May 2008, Bishkek	11:00–11:45 10:00 – 10:45
4	NDI	1 November 2007, Bishkek	9:30–10:20
5	AED	13 November 2007, Bishkek 21 November 2007, Bishkek	11:20–12:20 12:30 – 13:30
6	IFES	16 November 2007, Bishkek	11:00 – 11:50
7	Eurasia Foundation of Central Asia	16 November 2007, Bishkek	16:00 – 17:15
8	IRI	21 November 2007, Bishkek	14:00 – 14:45
10	American Bar Association	2 April 2008, Osh 2 people	14:00 – 15:00

Appendix 6 – List of interviewed local NGOs

No	Organisation	Location	Date/Place	Time
1	NGO working on civil society support	Bishkek	26 October 2007, Bishkek and 7 May 2008, Bishkek	10:00–10:45 14:00 – 14:45
2	NGO working on civil society support	Bishkek	5 November 2007, Bishkek	8:30–9:30
3	NGO working on AIDS	Bishkek	23 November 2007, Bishkek	8:00 – 9:20
4	Research NGO	Bishkek	26 November 2007, Bishkek	14:00 – 14:20
5	NGO working on environmental issues	Bishkek	27 November 2007, Bishkek	15:45 – 16:45
6	NGO working on refugees' issues	Bishkek	22 February 2008, Bishkek and 29 November 2007, Bishkek	10:00 – 11:00 15:30 – 16:00
7	NGO working on civil society support	Bishkek	17 December 2007, Bishkek	10:00 – 11:00
8	NGO working on home owners' issues	Bishkek	15 February 2008, Bishkek	10:00 – 11:10
9	NGO working on issues of the disabled	Bishkek	18 February 2008, Bishkek	10:40 – 11:40
10	NGO working on elderly people	Bishkek	19 February 2008, Bishkek	9:40 – 11:00
11	NGO working on the issues of the disabled	Bishkek	19 February 2008, Bishkek	17:15 – 19:00
12	Human rights NGO	Bishkek	20 February 2008, Bishkek	12:40 – 14:30
13	NGO working on tourist firms	Bishkek	25 February 2008, Bishkek	9:50 – 11:10
14	NGO working on young journalists/children's involvement in media	Bishkek	25 February 2008, Bishkek	14:00 – 15:00
15	NGO working with young journalists	Bishkek	25 February 2008, Bishkek	14:00 – 15:30
16	NGO working with young journalists	Bishkek	26 February 2008, Bishkek	10:00 – 11:00
17	NGO working on issues of children	Bishkek	28 February 2008, Bishkek	12:30 – 13:30
18	Youth human rights NGO	Bishkek	28 February 2008, Bishkek	10:10 – 11:50

19	NGO working on civic education and human rights	Bishkek	4 March 2008, Bishkek	9:50 – 10:50
20	NGO working on sustainable development	Bishkek	4 March 2008, Bishkek	11:30 – 12:30
21	NGO working on HIV/AIDS and drugs	Bishkek	5 March 2008, Bishkek I interview four people in these organisation	9:30 – 11:30
22	NGO working on young people and education	Bishkek	5 March 2008, Bishkek	15:00 – 16:00
23	Youth NGO	Bishkek	7 March 2008, Bishkek	14:00 – 16:00
24	Human rights NGO	Bishkek	12 March 2008, Bishkek	12:00 – 12:30
25	NGO working on art	Bishkek	12 March 2008, Bishkek	13:30 – 14:30
26	NGO working on refugees		13 March 2008, Bishkek	15:00 – 16:00
27	NGO working on refugees		14 March 2008, Bishkek	15:00 – 16:00
28	NGO working on refugees		14 March 2008, Bishkek	15:00 – 16:00
29	NGO working on women's issues	Bishkek	17 March 2008, Bishkek	10:16 – 11:00
30	NGO working on women's issues, social problems, and humanitarian aid	Kant	17 March 2008, Bishkek	13:15 – 14:00
31	NGO working on women's issues, social problems, and humanitarian aid	Kant	18 March 2008, Bishkek	14:00 – 15:00
32	Women's NGO	Issyk-Ata	19 March 2008, Bishkek	11:00 – 12:45
33	Human rights NGO	Osh	31 March 2008, Osh	14:00 – 15:00
34	Human rights NGO	Osh	31 March 2008, Osh	16:00 – 17:45
35	Environmental NGO	Osh	1 Aril 2008, Osh	15:00 – 15:40
36	Environmental NGO	Osh	1 Aril 2008, Osh	16:00 – 16:40
37	Environmental NGO	Osh	1 Aril 2008, Osh	17:00 – 17:40
38	NGO working on HIV/AIDS	Osh	2 April 2008, Osh	16:00 – 16:30
39	Human rights NGO	Osh	3 April 2008, Osh	14:00 – 15:00
40	NGO working on conflict resolution	Osh	3 April 2008, Osh	16:00 – 17:00
41	Women's NGO	Osh	4 April 2008, Osh	14:00 – 15:00
42	NGO working on women's	Osh	4 April 2008, Osh	15:15 – 16:00

	issues and environmental problems			
43	NGO working on HIV/AIDS and sex workers	Osh	5 April 2008, Osh	10:30 – 11:30
44	NGO working on civil society support	Osh	1 April 2008, Osh	14:00 – 14:45
45	NGO working on conflict resolution	Osh	12 April 2008, Jalalabat	14:00 – 17:30
46	NGO working on sustainable development in villages	Bishkek	14 May 2008, Bishkek	15:00 – 15:50
47	Women's NGO	Bishkek	16 May 2008, Bishkek	16:00 – 16:45

Appendix 7 – Questionnaire for NGO leaders

Research on NGOs

Please complete the questionnaire. You are requested to answer questions sincerely since validity of results depends on your answers. *All information that you provide in this questionnaire will be confidential.*

Age (please tick)

18 – 25 36 – 45

26 – 35 46 +

Sex (please tick)

Male

Female

Ethnicity (please tick)

Kyrgyz Russian

Uzbek Other (indicate) _____

Education (please tick)

Only secondary (school)

Professional/technical college

Specialisation: _____

Technical secondary school

Specialisation: _____

High (institute, university)

Specialisation: _____

Other

(please indicate) _____

Marital status (please tick)

Married Single

Monthly salary (please tick)

Note: you can leave this question

Below 5500 soms

5501 – 11000 soms

More than 11001soms

Additional comments (if any)

Why did you choose to work for an NGO?

(please tick all appropriate answers)

Prestigious

Perspective

High salary

This is my specialisation

It is interesting

I could not find a job in other places

To get experience

To learn something new

Other

(please indicate)

In your opinion, is your job in the NGO secure?

Yes

No

I do not know

Other

(please indicate)

Thank you very much!

Appendix 8 – Questionnaire for NGO employees

Research on NGOs

Please complete the questionnaire. You are requested to answer questions sincerely since validity of results depends on your answers. *All information that you provide in this questionnaire will be confidential.*

1. Age (please tick)

18 – 25 36 – 45

26 – 35 46 +

2. Sex (please tick)

Male Female

3. Ethnicity (please tick)

Kyrgyz Russian

Uzbek Other (indicate) _____

4. Education (please tick)

Only secondary (school)

Professional/technical college

Specialisation: _____

Technical secondary school

Specialisation: _____

High (institute, university)

Specialisation: _____

Other

(please indicate) _____

5. Marital status *(please tick)*

Married

Single

6. Your position in the organisation

7. Monthly salary *(please tick)*

Note: you can leave this question

Below 2000 soms

2001 - 5500 soms

5501 – 11000 soms

More than 11001 soms

Additional comments (if any)

8. Why did you choose to work for an NGO?

(please tick all appropriate answers)

Prestigious

Perspective

High salary

This is my specialisation

It is interesting

I could not find a job in other places

To get experience

To learn something new

Other

(indicate)

9. How were you hired?

- Based on call for job applications
- Based on the recommendations of my acquaintance
- Worked as a volunteer actively
- Establishment of an NGO was our joint decision
- Other

(Please indicate) _____

10. In your opinion, do you have a prospect for career advancement in this NGO?

- Yes
- No
- I do not know
- Other

(please indicate)

11. In your opinion, do you have a prospect for career advancement in the NGO sector?

- Yes
- No
- I do not know
- Other

(please indicate)

12. Does your job in this NGO secure?

- Yes
- No
- I do not know
- Other

(please indicate)

13. Did you sign a contract when you started your job in this NGO?

- Yes
- No

I do not know

Other

(please indicate)

14. were you familiarised with your terms of reference when you started your job here?

Yes

No

I do not know

Other

(please indicate)

15. A) Please indicate three aspects that you like in your work for an NGO

B) Please indicate three aspects that you do not like in your work for an NGO

Thank you very much?

Appendix 9 – List of interviewed CBO heads and representatives of local authorities

1	CBO member, former village head	4 April 2008, Tolokon village, Tolokon ayil okmotu	12:30 – 13:30
2	Head of Tobo Kurgan ayil okmotu	5 April 2008, Tobo Korgan Village, Tobo Kurgan ayil okmotu, Aravan district	15:00 – 15:30
3	Head of Jany Jol village	5 April 2008, Jany Jol Village, Tobo Kurgan ayil okmotu, Aravan district	15:30 – 16:15
4	Head of Gulistan village	5 April 2008, Gulistan Village, Tobo Kurgan ayil okmotu, Aravan district	15:30 – 16:15
5	CBO chair	5 April 2008, Jany Jol Village, Tobo Kurgan ayil okmotu, Aravan district	15:45 – 17:15
6	CBO member	21 April 2008, Kyzyl Jyldyz village, Kyzyl Jyldyz AO, Nooken district	
7	CBO member	21 April 2008, Kyla village, Mombekova AO, Nooken district	
8	CBO member	24 April 2008, October village, Bagysh AO, Suzak district	14:00 – 14:30
9	CBO member	24 April 2008, Lenin village, Lenin AO, Suzak district	15:00 – 15:30
10	CBO member	25 April 2008, Kyrgyzstan village, Tashbulak AO, Suzak district	14:00 – 14:45

Appendix 10 – Published papers

Published paper 1⁷¹: Stevens, D. and Jailobaeva, K. (2009) ‘False Choice?: The War on Terror and Its Impact on Civil Society in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan’ in J. Howell and J. Lind (eds) *Civil Society under Strain: the War on Terror Regime, Civil Society and Aid Post-9/11*. Sterling: Kumarian Press.

False choice? The war on terror and its impact on state policy towards civil society in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan

Daniel Stevens and Kanykey Jailobaeva

When reflecting on the impact of the war on terror on civil society, the full global consequences must be weighed up. While relatively peripheral to academic and popular debate, the countries of Central Asia were central to the operations of the war on terror with both Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan having grappled with a Taliban allied group and then hosted United States military bases in support of the operations in Afghanistan. This chapter offers an analysis of how the broader war on terror affected these countries’ policies⁷² towards civil society, first briefly setting the context, then analysing each country in turn before concluding on how the similarities and differences between these cases contribute to our understanding of the impact of the war on terror on the fortunes of civil society internationally.

9-11 occurred just decade after Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan had become independent and they were still in the process of adjusting from Soviet republics to independent states in the world community. The post-cold war order was not only facing new types of security threat but the 1990s also featured a surge of interest in the value of civil society in guaranteeing liberal democracy, market reform and cohesive societies⁷³. As such the idea of building civil society was a significant theme in these countries’ interactions with the international community. In particular they were recipients of international aid programmes supporting civil society development.

⁷¹ Permission from the co-author has been taken.

⁷² By state policies we refer to an approximate tendency aggregated from a variety of legislative acts, resolutions and practices of different state actors, rather than a single coherent policy document.

⁷³ In the 1990s ‘civil society’ was described as “the Rome of today’s internationalism; wherever we may begin, we will arrive at this debate sooner or later” in Alison Van Rooy, *Civil Society and the Aid Industry. The Politics and Promise* (London: Earthscan, 1998), 1.

Exactly what civil society meant, what it looked like, and what its role was to be in Central Asia are politically contentious issues⁷⁴, but broadly speaking Western donor organizations perceived a need for these former ‘totalitarian’ societies to build/rebuild a plurality of social organizations in order to embed liberal democracy, advance economic development and substitute for a retreating state in providing a social safety net. A number of organizations, most notably USAID and the Open Society Institute, developed programmes for funding and training an emergent modern NGO sector, as well as latterly engaging with more traditional community structures. Here we adopt a structural definition of civil society: those organizations that are neither formally part of the state or the market. It would NGOs, community organizations and other cultural and religious groups.

In the case of Uzbekistan the war on terror had a significant impact on state policy towards civil society, which we could broadly categorize as passing through two main stages, each subdivided into two phases. The first stage could be termed as ‘tactical tolerance’, and subdivided into an earlier phase of receiving limited external support (up until 2001) and then a second phase from 2002 to 2003 when external support rapidly expanded. The pivotal point was the Rose Revolution in Georgia of November 2003⁷⁵, and from 2004 a stage of ‘controlled localization’ began in which the sector’s independence was severely constrained and foreign funding cut off. The years 2004–2005 featured a retrenchment of civil society activity, but from 2006 this second stage may be entering a new phase, in which both carefully selected foreign funding and increased state funding are available to support an NGO sector seen as strategic in maintaining a social contact between state and society⁷⁶ in which individuals trade their freedom to engage in independent organizing in return for the state taking responsibility for addressing issues of social concern. These shifts in policy largely relate to state regulation of NGOs, and to a lesser extent community (*mahalla*) institutions. The regulation of religious groups, considered a separate

⁷⁴ An introduction to the debate in this region can be found in Babken Babajanian, Sabine Freizer and Daniel Stevens, “Introduction: Civil Society in Central Asia and the Caucasus” *Central Asian Survey*, 24, no. 3 (2005): 209-224.

⁷⁵ Alisher Ilkhamov, “The thorny path of civil society in Uzbekistan”, *Central Asian Survey*, 24, no. 3 (2005), 300.

⁷⁶ The idea of a social contract draws from the idea of a social compact between state and individual in Uzbekistan as outlined by Deniz Kandiyoti, “Post-Soviet Institutional Design and the Paradoxes of the ‘Uzbek Path’”, *Central Asian Survey*, 26, no. 1 (2007), 33.

category of organization, was much more consistent throughout this period, with only minor fluctuations around a policy of very strict control. The question we turn to now is to what extent the war on terror was a key factor in triggering these shifts in state policy towards the NGO sector.

The initial focus of the war on terror in the theatre of Afghanistan had profound implications for Uzbekistan, whose government was initially an enthusiastic supporter of the action taken against the Taliban. For Uzbekistan had also been dealing with its own Afghanistan based terrorist threat, that of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU). Prior to 1999 Uzbekistan had considered itself an oasis of stability in a region that had witnessed civil war and rapidly deteriorating living standards. However in February of that year a series of car bombings in the capital Tashkent raised the spectre of a serious terrorist threat. This threat was reinforced in the summers of 1999 and 2000 by incursions into the country's border areas by the IMU⁷⁷, which in September 2000 was designated by the United States State Department as a terrorist group⁷⁸.

The IMU had found an ideological ally and safe harbour with the Taliban, by then in control of much of Afghanistan. The Taliban advance of 2000, which at the time raised concerns that it might reach the border with Uzbekistan⁷⁹, only served to heighten concerns that the group would be able to project its threat even further into the country.

Fears that the socio-economic disruptions faced by the population might fuel increased domestic support for the IMU, and other radical Islamic groups, such as Hizb ut-Tahrir, meant that international humanitarian aid was broadly welcomed. Even though the concept of foreign funded NGOs was viewed by the government with suspicion, if these NGOs could introduce additional resources to help the government manage socio-economic problems then they were broadly tolerated and even actively welcomed at the regional level⁸⁰. With the NGO leaders being drawn

⁷⁷ International Crisis Group, *Uzbekistan at Ten: Repression and Instability*, (ICG Asia Report 46, Osh/Brussels: International Crisis Group, 2001), ii.

⁷⁸ U.S. State Department website, *U.S. Re-designates Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan as Terrorist Group*, 24 September 2004.

⁷⁹ Ahmed Rashid, "Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan's Incursion Assists the Taliban", *CACI Analyst*, 13th September 2000, available at <http://www.cacianalyst.org>.

⁸⁰ See Daniel Stevens, *Conceptual travels along the Silk Road: on civil society aid in Uzbekistan* (Unpublished, PhD dissertation, University of London, 2004), Section 5.1.

from former party figures and the intelligentsia, they were seen as a potential secular ally in deterring the population from embracing fundamentalist religious ideologies⁸¹. Western development aid was also seen as a useful buffer against another perceived threat – that of the excessive influence of the former ‘colonial’ power Russia⁸².

This stage of tactical toleration entered a new phase of increased external support after the events of 9-11. For the United States led attack on the Taliban bolstered support for the government of Uzbekistan, with a strategic partnership signed that elevated Uzbekistan to a position of key ally of the United States and promised a significant increase in aid to shore up the economy. President Karimov met with President Bush in the Oval office and was reputedly assured that on the issue of human rights, the United States was not going ‘to teach you.’⁸³ Exactly what signals were given to the Uzbekistan government about a reciprocal commitment to political reform is difficult to decode, but with subsequent contacts with President Karimov being largely mediated by defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld, one can surmise that the urgency of the situation and the perceived value of Uzbekistan’s air base near the border with Afghanistan meant that the strategic partnership was primarily presented as a military one, cemented by a common notion that such terrorists needed to be dealt with swiftly and ruthlessly⁸⁴.

In the short-term this led to an increase in civil society aid – expanding USAID programmes supporting NGOs administered by a growing number of United States based NGOs. Democracy support organizations that had previously been largely absent, such as the National Democratic Institute, International Republican Institute and Freedom House, became increasingly active in the country. The

⁸¹ See Daniel Stevens, “Political society and civil society in Uzbekistan – never the twain shall meet?” *Central Asian Survey*, 26, no. 1 (2007), 50.

⁸² Bruce Pannier, “Russia: Uzbekistan Renews Old Relations”, RFE/RL Newsline, 05 May 2000, available at <http://www.rferl.org>.

⁸³ John C.K. Daly, Kurt H. Meppen, Vladimir Socor and S. Frederick Starr, *Anatomy of a Crisis: U.S.-Uzbekistan Relations, 2001-2005*, (Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program In Cooperation with the Jamestown Foundation and the United States Institute of Peace, 2006) available at www.silkroadstudies.org, 21.

⁸⁴ The President was quoted as saying on state run TV that ‘I call on everyone to unite and protect our country from enemies like this, to come forward against them as one fist’: Associated Press, *Wave of Terrorist Attacks Kill 19 in Uzbekistan*, posted 30 March 2004. The President is also cited as claiming that terrorists ‘must be shot in the forehead! If necessary, I’ll shoot them myself’: Yilmaz Bingol, Nationalism and democracy in post-communist Central Asia, *Asian Ethnicity*, 5, no 1 (2004): 43 – 60.

operating environment was still challenging, and suspicions of these activities throughout the state system blunted the impact of the programming, but these concerns were subordinated to the foreign policy goal of partnership with the United States and its assistance in addressing the terrorist threat. As Ilkhamov notes in his summary of these developments, it was thus fitting that the international NGOs supporting civil society development were registered under and reported to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs⁸⁵.

However by the end of 2003 a conflation of factors created a tipping point in state policy towards the NGO sector. Operations in Afghanistan had significantly weakened the IMU (both losing its base and also many of its fighters, including reputedly its leader⁸⁶, in fighting alongside the Taliban) and in 2002 and 2003 there were no significant terror incidents in Uzbekistan. The threat of terror seemed to be receding but now replaced by a new emerging threat. In short the Uzbekistan ruling regime began to perceive the United States not as a guarantor but as a threat to its own survival. This may have been partly shaped by growing doubts about the motives of the United States in invading Iraq. Initially Uzbekistan was one of the 48 members of the 'coalition of the willing'⁸⁷ and Karimov contrasted the United States's decisive action with the inactivity of Europe⁸⁸, but eventually decided against contributing troops and became less vocal in support of the campaign.

But it was the November 'Rose Revolution' in Georgia that convinced that government that the United States, and more specifically its support for 'civil society', was a significant threat. There is a debate as to what extent a 'colour revolution' was perceived as a real threat or as pretext for deepening the regime's control⁸⁹, but either way it resulted in real change in state policy and a reassessment

⁸⁵ Open Society Institute, *Civil society in Uzbekistan: Status of affairs and international programs*, (Unpublished report), 40.

⁸⁶ International Crisis Group, *Uzbekistan: Stagnation and Uncertainty*, (Asia Briefing N°67 Bishkek/Brussels, 2007) available online at www.crisisgroup.org, 11.

⁸⁷ Daly et al, *Anatomy of a Crisis*, 84.

⁸⁸ Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, "Commonplaces of spring: Uzbek President bucks trend with attack on hypocrites, pacifists", *Central Asia Report*, 3, No. 13, 27 March 2003 – available online at www.rferl.org.

⁸⁹ One commentator on the March 2005 revolution in Kyrgyzstan argues that the 'narrative that exaggerated external factors and the role of civil society has been used by neighbouring authoritarian leaders, in their own interests', David Lewis, "The dynamics of regime change: domestic and international factors in the 'Tulip Revolution'", *Central Asian Survey*, 27, Nos. 3-4 (2008), 265

of the value of the strategic partnership with the United States and therefore the tactical toleration of civil society which had existed up until then.

The period of ‘controlled localization’ between 2004 and 2005 was marked by measures to cut off the foreign funding for NGOs in a number of ways⁹⁰. First all international NGOs were required to reregister with the Ministry of Justice and, starting with the most political⁹¹, were pulled up on operational irregularities, with the resulting closure of nearly all of those engaged in grant making to NGOs or working in democracy related issues⁹². A second tactic was to restrict bank transfers of grants, with some grant making organizations having nearly all their grant transfers returned to them⁹³. What was of particular interest is that while there was a readily available and internationally vogueish justification for such banking restrictions, there was little attempt to justify this using the pretext of combating terrorist financing. There have been measures on terrorist financing⁹⁴ but the thrust of the crackdown on NGOs was not on Islamic groups, but Western pro-democracy groups. These, according a 2005 Presidential speech, were ‘founded with use of sponsors’ funds’ and operating outside their charter and pursuing ‘ordered aims’ and as such ‘have no future in Uzbekistan’. President Karimov argued that ‘democracy and various so called “open society models” cannot be exported and imported’ and that ‘I want to underline once more that we are against any revolutions and fundamentalism in any appearance when it comes to reforming and modernisation of the country.’⁹⁵ There were also state supported insinuations that the United States was actually now aiding terrorist groups to destabilize the regime⁹⁶.

⁹⁰ Ikhamov, *The thorny path of civil society in Uzbekistan*, 300-302

⁹¹ The Soros foundation was the first to close, followed by accusations against the U.S. National Democratic Institute of International Relations, International Republican Institute and Freedom House: Press Service of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 73 International, Foreign NGOs Registered in Uzbekistan – Justice Minister’, available online at www.press-service.uz.

⁹² The National Democratic Institute remained open, and to some extent Human Rights Watch (though its most recent appointment of Country Director has been refused accreditation). These are the exceptions that prove the rule – widely seen as tokens to demonstrate the government’s commitment to dialogue in reaction to the European Union’s biannual reviews of sanctions on the country, originally imposed after the Andijan events in 2005.

⁹³ Authors interviews with international donors, March 2005.

⁹⁴ Uzreport.com, *Uzbekistan host conference on fighting intl terrorism*, 16 January 2009, available via subscription at www.uzreport.com.

⁹⁵ Uzreport.com, *President declares long-term priorities of Uzbekistan*, 31 January 2005, available via subscription at www.uzreport.com.

⁹⁶ Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, “Message in a courtroom -- the Andijon trial”, *Central Asia Report*, No. 37 (2005) available at www.rferl.org.

Now with foreign support and field monitoring cut off a sweeping up operation ensued, closing those local NGOs that refused to fall in line with the new controlled approach, represented by the newly created National Association of NGOs. An estimated 269 were closed down between August 2005 and February 2007⁹⁷. While difficult to determine exactly, it would seem that the government calculated that whatever social contribution these NGOs were making was outweighed by the collective threat they posed as potential bases for a 'colour' revolution. Now that the terrorist threat had receded, the value of the United States as an ally had diminished, and by 2005 the United States air base in Khanabad was closed down. Who exactly was to blame is the subject of some debate⁹⁸ but with the United States that year joining its voice to the call for an international enquiry into the multiple deaths that occurred during a complicated mix of terrorist activities and popular protest in the regional city of Andijan in May 2005, the partnership had dramatically broken down.

The seemingly erratic swings in Uzbekistan's foreign policy is a reflection of a bifocal United States policy in the region - promoting democracy and fighting terror⁹⁹. The pursuit of the war on terror chimed with the political discourse in Uzbekistan, but with the immediacy of the post 9-11 moment passing, voices were increasingly heard criticizing the United States's choice of ally and highlighting the human rights record of Uzbekistan. With the state department raising these issues, the government of Uzbekistan began to perceive 'two faces' of the United States. On the one hand the United States supported ruthless action against terrorist threats, but on the other hand it seemed to be criticizing Uzbekistan for its own attempts to pursue the war on terror - publicly criticizing its human rights record and calling for an international enquiry into the Andijan events,. This was perceived as hypocrisy, treacherous and during the Uzbekistan parliamentary session when the closure of the United States air force was publicly discussed, the Senator for the air base region proclaimed that a 'man with two faces cannot be a friend of Uzbekistan'¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ According to unpublished research by one international organization

⁹⁸ Daly et al, *Anatomy of a Crisis*, 87

⁹⁹ Thomas Carothers, "Promoting Democracy and Fighting Terror", *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2003 available at www.carnegie.org.

¹⁰⁰ Posted at Agonist.org website at <http://agonist.org/story/2005/7/30/6379/25761>.

As of 2005 the regime promoted the theme that ‘Uzbekistan will not be dependent on anyone’, also the name of a Presidential book that spring, and this policy was applied to the civil society sector. The notion of ‘civil society’ was not rejected, if anything the concept became even more entrenched in the government’s public discourse, reiterating a long standing commitment to move from a ‘strong state’ to a ‘strong society’¹⁰¹. International links were significantly curtailed and a process of localization of civil society began, mirroring the economic policy of import substitution and developing local suppliers for Uzbekistan’s manufacturing sector. In the place of foreign funding, the government started developing structures to not only to regulate NGOs, but also to provide them with funding. A series of measures were adopted to implement this, most recently amending the law on NGOs which envisages setting up a public foundation and a parliamentary commission on supporting NGOs.¹⁰² So called GONGOs (government organized NGOs) have become increasingly high profile in society.

Since 2007 there are signs of a softening of the hard line against foreign engagement with civil society, but now with the local NGOs negotiating from a position of strength. For example Fund Forum, a politically well connected foundation, offers political protection for international organizations who want to retain programming in the country in various social sectors¹⁰³. For, just as the terrorist threat was perceived to have diminished between 2001 and 2002, so has the threat of a colour revolution diminished since 2005, where there have been no more large outbreaks of political opposition. In both cases a policy of suppression has been successful in the short term, but at the risk of provoking a realignment of opposition groups into a broad based opposition in exile that would bring together more radical opposition groups and the previously more moderate NGO sector¹⁰⁴. Up until now opposition groups have been extremely fractious and ineffective in maintaining a constituency within the country, but the prospect of a slowdown in growth and

¹⁰¹ Jahon: Information Agency for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Uzbekistan, “Address by President of the Republic of Uzbekistan H.E. Mr. Islam Karimov at the meeting dedicated to the 16th anniversary of adoption of Constitution of Uzbekistan”, available at www.jahonnews.uz.

¹⁰² Uzreport.com, “Uzbekistan to set up foundation to back NGOs”, posted 19 December 2008 at www.uzreport.uz.

¹⁰³ Uzbekistan Press Agency, ‘*Uzbek-British cultural cooperation to expand*’, posted 1 November 2008 at www.uza.uz.

¹⁰⁴ Stevens, *Political society and civil society in Uzbekistan*, 60.

economic hardship over the next few years could see repeats of localized popular protest on issues such as the freedoms of petty-traders, provision of gas and allocation of land. Connections with these prosaic issues and the more abstract campaigning on political freedom by exiled groups¹⁰⁵ could spell longer term trouble for the current regime. As such the regime needs to address the social concerns of the population, and the promise of a state controlled civil society is that it could both mobilize additional resources and civic engagement in a carefully controlled way.

Overall the war on terror is best seen as having shaped the nature of the external threat, a theme that has been consistent throughout the period of this analysis. From colonial Russia, to the IMU, to subversive Western funded NGOs, the national building project in Uzbekistan is furthered by maintaining a sense of external threat that would unite and mobilize the population behind the regime¹⁰⁶. But the dramatic shifts around 2003 can be attributed¹⁰⁷ to the ‘two faces’ of the war on terror that the government of Uzbekistan perceived¹⁰⁷. The marriage of ‘freedom and force’ that lay at the heart of the conduct of the war on terror, the expectation that the overwhelming use of force and abrogation of international legal norms could engender new political systems that would then exercise self-restraint in protecting freedom, was rejected as hypocrisy from the perspective of a country like Uzbekistan. The proponents of the war on terror were seen having an eagle eye for human rights violations perpetrated by the government in its own, albeit ham-fisted, war on terror, but then turning a blind eye (and maybe even actively encouraging) the same behaviour when it suited the broader war on terror.

This in turn shaped perceptions of the freedom agenda as it manifested itself in the activities of international NGOs engaged in democracy promotion through civil society development. The ease in which the government was to frame it within a ‘great game’ discourse of external powers fighting for control over Central Asia was rooted in a popular perception that the 2003 events in Iraq and Georgia were two sides of the same coin – an extension of United States influence. NGOs which

¹⁰⁵ For example a recent coalition known as the ‘Coalition Against Forced Child Labour in Uzbekistan’ has called for both respecting human rights commitments and land reform to ensure broader ownership and control. Further information available at www.laborrights.org.

¹⁰⁶ For an elaborate argument to this end see Andrew March, “State ideology and the legitimation of authoritarianism: the case of post-soviet Uzbekistan”, *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 8, No. 2 (2003) 209-232.

¹⁰⁷ Daly et al, *Anatomy of a Crisis*, 8.

accepted such support were as such hirelings, a fifth column threatening the independence of the country.

The case of Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan's southern neighbour, echoes some of these themes. For at the same time as fighting terrorism, the Kyrgyz government has used the war on terror as cover for advancing its own purposes in suppressing both civil society in general, particularly its rights for assembly, and religious groups in particular.

As in Uzbekistan civil society in Kyrgyzstan started to develop rapidly after independence with the assistance of foreign democratization aid, however at a much greater pace as a result of a the relatively more liberal policy of the Kyrgyz government led by Askar Akaev. In the early 1990s, Kyrgyzstan was the most liberal and reform-orientated country in Central Asia¹⁰⁸, embracing the idea of civil society and democracy to a greater extent than its neighbours, in part reflecting its greater need for the financial and political support of the international community in tackling the particularly severe social and economic crisis that emerged after the collapse of the Soviet Union¹⁰⁹. Therefore, a legislative environment conducive to the emergence and operation of civil society was established. For example, the law on NGOs adopted in 1996 was called by the International Centre for Non-For-Profit Laws as "...one of the most progressive of its kind in the former Soviet Union"¹¹⁰.

As a result there has been a proliferation of NGOs, whose number has grown from 611 in 1993¹¹¹ to 11,035 in 2008¹¹². Kyrgyzstan has become a country with the highest NGO density in Central Asia¹¹³ (whereas Uzbekistan, with a population over five times greater,¹¹⁴ has never claimed to have more than 5,000 active NGOs). Likewise the lifting of the Soviet restrictions on religion has increased religious

¹⁰⁸ Gregory Gleason, *The Central Asian States: Discovering Independence* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1997).

¹⁰⁹ Gleason, *The Central Asian States*, 94-96

¹¹⁰ International Center for Non-for-Profit Law, "Kyrgyzstan Adopts Progressive New NGO Laws" (1996), available at www.icnl.org.

¹¹¹ Elmira Shishkaraeva et al., *Review of the History of Establishment and Development of the NGO sector in the Kyrgyz Republic* (Bishkek: Premier Ltd, 2006), 63

¹¹² An interview of Open Kyrgyzstan with Kaipov, the Ministry of Justice of the Kyrgyz Republic, available at www.open.kg.

¹¹³ Anne Garbutt and Simon Heap, "Growing Civil Society in Central Asia" *INTRAC Occasional Papers Series*, no. 39 (2002), available at www.intrac.org.

¹¹⁴ Based on population figures provided in UNFPA, *State of World Population 2008*, 93 – available at www.unfpa.org

organizations, with, as of 2008, 2,158 registered Islamic organizations. There are also a large number of Christian organizations (primarily Russian Orthodox and Protestant) and some Jewish and Buddhist organizations¹¹⁵.

Hizb-ut-Tahrir (the Islamic Liberation Party) is one of a number of more radical Islamic movements. It has been active in Central Asia since the mid 1990s pursuing its main aim of establishing an Islamic state governed by Sharia¹¹⁶. In Kyrgyzstan, Hizb-ut-Tahrir has managed to gain some support among the local population, particularly those most affected by the difficult socio-economic conditions¹¹⁷. For the time being, the movement has used non-violent methods to promote its goal such as distribution of religious literature and others¹¹⁸. The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), discussed above, and another group named Akramiya were mainly focused on Uzbekistan, but have an influence on Kyrgyzstan, especially in its southern parts where it shares a long border with Uzbekistan through the Ferghana valley¹¹⁹.

The 1999 and 2000 IMU incursions into Uzbekistan used the south of Kyrgyzstan as a transit route and began to emerge as a threat to Kyrgyzstan's own stability, such that the government sought international assistance from both Russia and the United States¹²⁰. After 2000, there were four incidents caused by radical Islamists in the south of Kyrgyzstan. For example, in December 2002, IMU members carried out a terrorist act in one of the markets of Osh city killing only civilians¹²¹.

Consequently, fighting terrorism and national security became pressing issues for the Kyrgyz government, particularly taking into account the poor condition of its military power. Their chosen strategy was fighting radical Islamism by banning the activities of the radical movements and tightening control over religious organizations. Furthermore, the Kyrgyz government allowed the United States government to establish an air base on its territory to fight the Taliban in Afghanistan

¹¹⁵ Erica Marat, "Religious Authorities in Kyrgyzstan Play Politics", *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, 5, no. 139 (2008), available at www.jamestown.org.

¹¹⁶ Alisher Khamidov, "The Power of Associations: New Trends in Islamic Activism in Central Asia" (2007), available at www.src.auca.kg.

¹¹⁷ International Media Support (IMS) and Public Association Journalists (PAJ), "Research Project: Political Extremism, Terrorism and Media in Central Asia" (2008), available at www.i-m-s.dk.

¹¹⁸ Khamidov, *The Power of Associations*.

¹¹⁹ Khamidov, *The Power of Associations*.

¹²⁰ IMS and PAJ, *Research Project*, 15.

¹²¹ IMS and PAJ, *Research Project*, 15.

after 9/11. This clearly showed the commitment of the Kyrgyz government to fight radical Islamism¹²².

The anti-terrorist measures of the Kyrgyz government concerned not only religious organizations but also secular parts of civil society, namely NGOs, following to some extent the pattern described in Uzbekistan of an increasing perception of NGOs, a former ally, as an emerging threat to the incumbent regime. The national security issue came to the forefront during the parliamentary elections in 2005 as an instrument for the government to repress the political activity of NGOs. This accelerated a trend which started in the late 1990s, when Akaev changed his vision on the development of the country from a liberal to a more authoritative direction. He started centralizing power¹²³ by pushing amendments in the constitution to extend presidential authority¹²⁴.

Before the parliamentary elections in 2005, there were some signs that Akaev still wanted to keep an influence over politics through having a political heir. As in Uzbekistan, he had watched with anxiety the Georgian and Ukrainian revolutions, which resulted in the replacement of the respective government. Therefore, he started criticising civil society groups for their intention to cause instability in the country when, according to him, it was under potential siege from Islamic radical groups such as Hizb-ut-Tahir, a faint echo of the charge in Uzbekistan that Western governments and Islamic terrorists were twin threats to national stability. As a result, attempts were made to restrict rights of civil society groups to stage demonstrations¹²⁵.

This suggests that the government of Akaev sought to use the issue of a national security and the war on terror as an instrument to restrain NGOs in order to keep the regime in power. Whereas in Uzbekistan the charge of foreign interference was more directly made, the restrictions in Kyrgyzstan were justified more in terms of the imperatives of the war on terror. Another key distinction is that the crackdown on civil society in Kyrgyzstan was not as harsh as in Uzbekistan. It did not include

¹²² Global Security Org, "Manas International Airport Ganci Air Base Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan", available at www.globalsecurity.org.

¹²³ John Anderson, "Creating a Framework for Civil Society in Kyrgyzstan" *Europe-Asia Studies*, 52, no. 1 (2000): 77-93.

¹²⁴ Avtar Singh, *Contemporary Kyrgyzstan: an Overview* (Bishkek: Al Salam, 2003).

¹²⁵ Erdin Beshimov, "Kyrgyzstan's Akayev: The Revolution Stops Here" (2004), available at www.eurasianet.org.

any of civil society curtailment methods of the Uzbek government such as controlling funding of NGOs or the mass closure of NGOs and donor agencies working on civil society and democracy. In fact, it did not go further than an informational war, some restrictions on demonstrations and the intimidation of a small number of watch-dog NGOs and human rights activists. For example, the Kyrgyz Committee on Human Rights was refused registration and its leader had to flee to Europe¹²⁶ and a few NGOs were subject to checks by the National Security Services¹²⁷. This comparatively soft approach arguably resulted in the removal of Akaev during the ‘Tulip revolution’ in March 2005.

In addition, unlike in Uzbekistan, the profile of radical Islamism has continued to grow since 2005. There were six more incidents caused by radical Islamic groups in the south of Kyrgyzstan, and their nature became much more political. In 2007, the Bishkek Department of Interior Ministry Press Service informed that a number of people had been arrested for distributing Hizb-ut-Tahrir leaflets, which discouraged citizens from supporting democratic institutions of Kyrgyzstan¹²⁸ in the upcoming elections. Furthermore, in 2008, the National Special Service identified 30 units of religious-extremist organizations, revealed 90 facts of religious extremism, and found 4,957 copies of religious extremism literature. Religious extremism has been declared by the government as the most serious threat to the national security of the country¹²⁹.

In other words, the post Tulip revolution government continues to see radical Islamism as an issue in Kyrgyzstan. However, it has used the war on terror for two different purposes just as the previous government did but with tighter control and suppression. In 2009, President Bakiev signed a new law on religion. It introduced a number of new rules for religious groups such as: 1) the number of people needed to officially register a religious organization was increased from 10 people to 200 people, 2) the involvement of children in religious organizations and proselytizing

¹²⁶ Freedom House, “Country Report – Kyrgyzstan, Accountability and Public Voice” (2006), available at www.freedomhouse.org.

¹²⁷ Kanykey Jailobaeva, “The State, Civil Society and The Donor Development Agenda: The Case of Kyrgyzstan” (PhD research, University of Edinburgh, 2007 – 2008).

¹²⁸ IMS and PAJ, *Research Project*, 15

¹²⁹ 24.kg News Agency, “Special Services of Kyrgyzstan has Identified over 30 Units of Religious – Extremist Organizations within 11 months in 2008” (2008), available at www.24.kg.

were banned, 3) the distribution of religious materials in public places, children's institutions, schools, and from house to house was prohibited¹³⁰.

The government claims that the new law on religion is an anti-terrorism measure and will enable police to contain radical Islamism better. Further, it states that the new law is necessary to restrain evangelical Christianity which is seen as 'a second social scourge'¹³¹. This clearly suggests that, under the war on terror, the government suppressed not only radical Islamists, but also all religious groups and, most importantly, restrained the people's right to freedom of religion. The new law has been criticised by human rights organizations for not meeting international human rights standards¹³². Furthermore, some experts on religion noted that the adoption of such a law did not ensure that the problem of terrorism would be solved. Conversely, it might intensify religious activeness of people and even make religious organization clandestine, particularly those whose membership is below 200 people¹³³.

Furthermore, the government is also restricting the rights of NGOs to diminish their political activeness. The political transition taking place in Kyrgyzstan since 2005 has increasingly drawn NGOs into the political domain. Some NGO leaders joined political parties. As a result, NGOs has become associated with the political opposition. The government sees such a politicisation of NGOs as a threat to its power particularly taking into consideration its experience with the revolution. As the next presidential elections in 2010 draw closer, it seems that the government is starting to use the national security rhetoric to suppress the political activeness of NGOs for its own political purposes.

Demonstrations proved to be one of the most effective ways for civil society to express its voice in Kyrgyzstan. Therefore, the Kyrgyz government restrained this ability of civil society by amending the law on freedom of assembly. The new law puts strict restrictions on public demonstrations for public safety. 'According to it, citizens cannot protest next to "strategic facilities" including all government

¹³⁰ Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, "Kyrgyzstan Enacts Law Restricting Religious Activities" (2009), available at www.rferl.org.

¹³¹ Eurasianet, "Religious Freedom under Siege in Bishkek" (2008) available at www.eurasianet.org.

¹³² Forum 18, "President's Signing of Restrictive Religion Law Condemned" (2009), available at www.forum18.org.

¹³³ Erica Marat, "Kyrgyz Government Reduces Rights of Religious Groups", *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, 5, no. 312 (2009), available at www.jamestown.org.

buildings. Further, they should also get permission from the government in advance to have a demonstration. There are also limitations on the times when protests can be held¹³⁴. This is a considerable change since before people had only to notify authorities about their demonstration in advance¹³⁵.

Furthermore, the government has attempted to take NGOs under strict control by checking their funding and activities. In 2006, the initiative was made by the Ministry of Justice to investigate NGOs functioning in Kyrgyzstan that receive foreign funding. He stressed that the investigation should identify NGOs that might be a threat to the national security of Kyrgyzstan¹³⁶. The Minister also emphasized that the government should support those NGOs that work on the advancement of Kyrgyzstan's development¹³⁷. NGOs expressed deep concern in relation to this initiative. In response, the Minister said that his proposal was aimed at fighting "religious extremism"¹³⁸. He pointed out that he did not want Kyrgyzstan to face a situation that the USA did when the American government found out after investigation that it financed some of 9/11 attackers through the NGO sector¹³⁹. However, this initiative has been on hold to this date.

In comparison with Uzbekistan, where the government is taking the initiative to shape and fund civil society, in Kyrgyzstan the government lacks a clear programme. In fact, most collaboration between state institutions and the NGO sector, regardless of the area and scale of their activities, takes place within projects funded by donors. Since donors prefer to fund one-off and short-term projects, the government-NGO relationship tends to be temporary and unsustainable. The lack of state programme on NGOs has led to a desultory and sometimes discriminatory government-NGO relationship. The government and its institutions tend to work more with social service NGOs than with civil activist groups since the latter are

¹³⁴ Central Asian and Southern Caucasian Freedom of Expression Network, "President of Kyrgyzstan Signed the Law on Assembly" (2008), available at www.cascfen.net.

¹³⁵ Russian and Eurasian Security – Specialized Network for Research on Security Related Developments, "Kyrgyz Rights 'Worse' than Akaev Era", available at www.rex.ethz.ch.

¹³⁶ Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, "Kyrgyzstan Tightens Rules on Public Assembly" (2008), available at www.rferl.org.

¹³⁷ Human Rights Watch (HRW), "Kyrgyzstan: Government Takes Measures against Civil Society" (2006), available at www.hrw.org.

¹³⁸ HRW, *Kyrgyzstan*

¹³⁹ An interview of Open Kyrgyzstan with Kaipov

considered to be more active in advocacy and policy-making processes¹⁴⁰. Moreover, the Kyrgyz government did not make any effort to localize NGOs as the Uzbek government did. Although there is a new law on state contracting as of June 2008 in Kyrgyzstan; the prospect of NGOs being financed by the government is very slight¹⁴¹ since there is no funding in the state budget for this purpose. Kyrgyz NGOs are still largely funded by donor organizations¹⁴².

In conclusion, the cases of Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan firstly offer up a number of common themes about the impact of the war on terror on state policy towards civil society in countries where democratic institutions are relatively underdeveloped. Second the differences between the two highlight the importance of local political context in mediating the relationship between the war on terror and state-civil society relations. Thirdly they shed light on some of the dilemmas facing the international community as it seeks to hold in tension demands for increased security and at the same time greater liberty.

Firstly the common themes – in both Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan state policy towards civil society organizations has become more restrictive, particularly since 2004 in Uzbekistan and 2005 in Kyrgyzstan (though the turning point may have come earlier in the late 1990s). The fact that the timing in both cases does not neatly coincide with the most intensive period of anti-terrorist activity in the region (between 1999 and 2002) suggests that the United States led war on terror was not the only factor in shaping policy towards civil society, and that its impact was mediated by other factors. However the ‘warlike’ pursuit of the terrorist threat has clearly shaped political dynamics in both countries – where national security is elevated to an almost supreme value, where non-government organizations become to be perceived as anti-government organizations, where collateral damage on those elements of civil society which are not directly contributing to the terrorist threat becomes politically acceptable, and where suspicions are raised about external funding of civil society. The image of the West in general and United States in

¹⁴⁰ Kanykey Jailobaeva, “Enhanced Government Commitment: A Key to An Effective Government-NGO Relationship in Kyrgyzstan” (2008), available at www.src.auca.kg.

¹⁴¹ 24.kg News Agency, “A law on “State Social Contracting” was Adopted in Kyrgyzstan” (2008) available at www.24.kg.

¹⁴² Kanykey Jailobaeva, “All the truth about NGO funding in Kyrgyzstan: Numbers and Facts” (2008), available at www.src.auca.kg.

particular, has also been a clear casualty in the War on Terror. Signs in early 2009 that Kyrgyzstan was requesting the closure of the United States air force base illustrate the extent to which American room for manoeuvre in the region is severely hampered by its reputation as a self-interested and unreliable ally. One of the factors pushing Kyrgyzstan to end this cooperation with the United States is the forthcoming Presidential elections, and a calculation by the President that being seen to learn towards Russia and away from the United States will be politically popular. While difficult to quantify given the absence, particularly in Uzbekistan, of robust opinion polling, the waves of the anti-Americanism that have swept the world in the post-Iraq invasion era have clearly changed the contours of popular opinion in the region.

However what is particularly instructive in comparing Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan is that despite their common regional location, Soviet heritage, Islamic terrorist threat and role in the international war on terror (both hosting United States bases to support the campaign in Afghanistan), this chapter has identified significant differences in which local political context mediated the impact of the war on terror on state policy towards civil society. Kyrgyzstan emerged from the Soviet Union in a much weaker position than Uzbekistan – smaller, less resource-rich, more ethnically diverse and geographically fragmented. All these factors made Kyrgyzstan more vulnerable to a committed band of terrorists able to exploit its weaker military, mountainous areas, ethnic and political tensions between the north and south of the country and the more serious economic situation in the country. This vulnerability led in turn to it being more dependent on external support, both in directly dealing with the terrorist threat (calling in United States and Russian assistance where Uzbekistan prided itself on dealing with it alone) and also developing the country. While the liberal policy partly has roots in the country's political culture, it was also driven by this need to align its development model with those of international development agencies and bilateral partners. This has shaped the relatively more tolerant and selective approach to civil society regulation – focusing more exclusively on religious groups and also restricting civil society activity only in its most politically overt forms – demonstrations at times of political flux such as during the election year of 2005. It has also meant Kyrgyzstan has refrained from shutting the door to international support for civil society groups.

With signals that Uzbekistan may also be relaxing its stance towards international organizations, there is an opportunity for international organizations to continue to shape the evolution of civil society in both countries. Successful interventions, however, will need to take into account these changes in state policy towards NGOs and address some of the underlying concerns. For the war on terror more broadly has shaken the previous image of civil society as some inherently positive dynamic¹⁴³, and increased suspicions about its role and relationship with state actors. This is definitely true in the cases of Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, where civil society has been put on the defensive – framed as a fifth column for foreign interests in Uzbekistan or in a milder version, as a distraction to the government as it seeks to deal with an Islamic fundamentalist threat. Civil society now has to more clearly articulate its contribution to national development and stability, and international assistance programmes now have to take this into account – focusing increasingly on building up the capacity of NGOs not just to run projects but to strategically position themselves within the broader political context in ways that emphasize their domestic roots and contribution to nationally owned development plans.

¹⁴³ Proponents of the concept have been accused of invoking the concept ‘to convey a benign glow than to illuminate debate or practice’: Deborah Eade, “*Preface*”, in Jenny Pearce (introduced by) *Development, NGOS, and civil society: selected essays from Development in practice* (Oxford: Oxfam 2000), 10.

Published paper 2¹⁴⁴: Jailobaeva, K. (2008) 'Enhanced Government Commitment: A Key to an Effective Government-NGO Relationship in Kyrgyzstan' in J. Couper (ed) *Kyrgyzstan Today: Policy Briefs on Civil Society, Migration, Islam, Corruption*. Bishkek: Social Research Center of American University of Central Asia.

Policy brief

Enhanced Government Commitment: A Key to Effective Government-NGO Relationship in Kyrgyzstan

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Executive summary

The government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Kyrgyzstan have achieved positive results in joint collaboration. Nonetheless, they still encounter a number of barriers, which hinder them from having a more productive relationship. The major problem is that the government does not have a unified and coherent policy on cooperation with NGOs. At present, the government-NGO relationship develops chaotically and fragmentarily. Donor-funded projects are the main factor bringing these actors together. Furthermore, the previous experience of the government in developing an NGO support programme suggests that the government needs more commitment on and control over the implementation of its initiatives on the collaboration with NGOs. Based on these, this policy brief proposes to create a State Department on NGO Relations. Its key aim would be to ensure that a proper legal basis for the government-NGO relationship is in place and implemented accordingly by coordinating the development and implementation of the legal documents on the cooperation of the government and its institutions with NGOs.

¹⁴⁴ Permission from the publisher has been taken.

Introduction

In Kyrgyzstan, the government-NGO relationship is in a nascent stage. Although there has been considerable progress in the collaboration between these actors, there are still obstacles impeding the development of a more effective relationship between them. Based on the recent research¹⁴⁵ on the government-NGO relationship in Kyrgyzstan, this policy brief discusses the barriers that hold the government and its institutions from establishing a successful partnership with NGOs.

To anticipate, the research has revealed that the government and its various institutions at all levels (national, regional, and local) encounter a common problem. The problem is that they lack for a clear state policy on the cooperation with NGOs, which would provide them with essential principles of how to work with NGOs. Put differently, there are no basic rules, which the government institutions regardless of the area and scale of their activities could refer to when collaborating with NGOs.

Furthermore, the detailed investigation of available legal documents on the government-NGO relationship has suggested that a lack of the state policy on NGO relations is a half of the problem. It has been revealed that the government already attempted to create a state programme on NGO support. However, this initiative failed since the government had poor commitment on and control over the implementation of the initiative. Therefore, it was concluded that, in addition to a bare initiative, the government should have the increased responsibility for its implementation accompanied with regular monitoring.

To sum up, there are two interconnected problems, which the government and its institutions in all areas and at all levels face with. They need the common state policy on the collaboration with NGOs, which would offer them the basic rules to work with NGOs. Furthermore, the central government needs proper mechanisms to

¹⁴⁵ This policy brief is based on the doctoral research, which has explored the NGO sector and its relationship with the government in Kyrgyzstan. The research was conducted from September 2007 to May 2008. Around 50 different NGOs from Bishkek, Osh, Issykata and Karakulja regions were interviewed. In addition, a number of documental materials on the government-NGO relationship in Kyrgyzstan were reviewed.

implement its policies and programmes on NGO relations. With reference to this, the policy brief suggests creating a State Department on NGO Relations. Its key responsibility would be to coordinate the development and implementation of the legal documents on the government-NGO relationship such as concepts, decrees, programmes, policies, and laws. In this way, the Department would ensure that a proper legal basis for the government-NGOs relationship is in place and implemented accordingly. It would also provide the different government institutions at all levels with information about and consultation on the legal documents on NGO relations.

In addition to these main functions, to contribute to the development of a more effective relationship between the government and NGOs, the State Department on NGO Relations would fulfill two additional tasks: a) disseminating information about the legal documents on the government-NGO relationship to NGOs through representatives of the NGO sector to ensure that NGOs are also aware of them and can refer to them when working with government institutions; and b) providing all government institutions with information about NGOs through maintaining an NGO database to increase their awareness about NGOs and their activities.

Problem Statement: Government-NGO Relationship in Kyrgyzstan

It would not be a mistake if it was claimed that Kyrgyzstan has the most advanced relationship between the government and the NGO sector in Central Asia. The Kyrgyz government has created conditions conducive enough to the emergence and development of NGOs: NGOs can easily register and carry out their activities. Furthermore, the government and its institutions have been collaborating with NGOs over the last decade. There have been successful cases of the government-NGO collaboration on different issues (gender, poverty, environment, and others) and at all levels (national, regional, and local) (Berk et al 2007).

However, the number of these cases is limited and dispersed all over the country. The research has revealed that the reason for this is that the government lacks for the complex policy to collaborate with NGOs. According to the research,

mostly, the collaboration between the government institutions and the NGO sector regardless of the area and scale of their activities takes place within projects funded by donors. Since donors prefer to fund one-off and short-term projects, the government-NGO relationship tends to be temporary and unsustainable. In justice to donors, it should be pointed out that, by requiring NGOs to involve the government and its institutions in their projects, donor grants have acted as a massive incentive to the establishment of the government-NGO relationship in the first place.

Furthermore, the research findings have indicated that the government institutions at all levels have little guidance to refer to when working with NGOs both on policy-making and social service delivery. Therefore, they do not know how to work with NGOs more effectively. The research has also suggested that, for the most part, the government institutions have a mistrustful attitude to NGOs and are not interested in working with them because they are poorly informed about NGOs and their activities. All in all, the idea of the collaboration with NGOs has been a new phenomenon for the government and its institutions since NGOs emerged only after independence. For these reasons, the government needs to develop the clear policy on collaboration with NGOs, which would provide the government institutions in various areas and at all levels with core principles on how to build collaboration with NGOs.

A lack of the state policy on NGOs has led to the desultory and sometimes discriminating government-NGO relationship. The government and its institutions tend to work more with social service NGOs rather than with civil activist groups since the latter ones are considered to be more active in advocacy and policy-making processes. The research has shown that civil activist groups, which criticize the government and its activities, especially those infringing rights of citizens, are treated differently by the government and its institutions. In comparison to social service NGOs, civil activist groups tend to encounter more problems, created by the government institutions, such as undermining NGO initiatives, refusal in re-registration and others. For example, one of the interviewees from a civil activist group said that they had been blacklisted for over-criticizing a government institution responsible for people in detention and had been refused cooperation.

Further, the government and its institutions, especially at the ministerial level, involve NGOs in different working groups and committees to make a joint decision. However, a process of NGO selection for such committees is unclear. A number of NGO interviewees noted that they had participated in different state committees. However, they could not explain how and why they were chosen to these committees. An absence of clear selection procedures undermines principals of democratic decision-making. It also indicates an unfair attitude of the government to NGOs since one would expect that NGOs would be selected for these committees on the basis of the competition.

Previous Experience: Concept on the Government-NGO Collaboration

The government has made an effort to establish the NGO support programme before. In 2004, the President of the Kyrgyz Republic signed the decree on the approval of the concept on the government-NGO collaboration (Decree, 2004). The main aim of the concept was to improve the government support for NGOs. For this purpose, it established a number of objectives: a) improving a system on the government-NGO interaction and collaboration; b) creating conditions conducive to growth of civil initiatives; c) funding public oriented programs of NGOs through state contracting; d) establishing consultative councils on the government-NGO interaction; e) conducting joint government-NGO events (conferences, round tables, seminars, trainings on social problems, charities, cultural–massive campaigns and others); and f) providing informational support to NGOs (i.e. supporting NGOs in publicizing their activities).

All in all, the concept has had great potential and could serve as a sound legal basis for the effective government-NGO collaboration. However, it has had little success since it was partly carried out. The concept has presented too general aims and objectives on the improvement of the government support for NGOs, but not exact actions. According to the concept, the Cabinet of the Kyrgyz Republic was meant to develop the state NGO support programme and an action plan to implement it. Unfortunately, it did not happen. A lack of these key documents made the concept of a more declarative character. It can be assumed that this happened because the

Cabinet, which was responsible for the development of the documents, lacked for commitment. Furthermore, no one from the government followed up the implementation of the concept.

Nevertheless, different government institutions and NGO representatives have contributed to the implementation of some objectives of the concept. The Ministry of Labor and Social Protection jointly with NGO representatives has been lobbying a law on social contracting since 2006 (the third objective of the concept). This law is an institutionalized mechanism, which delineates how the state can provide funding to NGOs. In June 2008, the law was finally adopted by the Kyrgyz Parliament. NGOs have high hopes for it since they consider the state funding as a way to financial sustainability.

The fifth objective of the concept encourages the government and NGOs to have joint activities such as conferences, round tables, and others. According to the research, this is exactly the most widespread form of the government-NGO interaction in Kyrgyzstan at all levels and in all areas. However, it is difficult to claim whether it was an impact of the concept because there are other factors, which might have had greater impact. The first factor is donor grants, which encourage NGOs to work with the government in order to influence decision-making.

The second factor is that NGOs have come to understand that any problem can be solved only in close collaboration with the government. Therefore, their interaction with the government and political activeness have risen lately. Most NGO interviewees said that, no matter how hard they tried to solve problems, they could not solve them because they were addressing the consequences of the problems not the reasons creating them. On the whole, the main reason of most problems is poor legislation or policy. Therefore, the interviewees noted that they concentrated more on influencing policy-making processes now. One of the examples for this can be demonstrations conducted by civil activist groups throughout 2006 and 2007 (winter).

Besides the above-described concept, there is one more legislative document, which slightly covers the government-NGO interaction. It is a law on non-commercial organizations (NCOs), adopted in October 1999 (Law on NCOs, 1999). According to it, the government can support NGOs by providing them with funding

to carry out their programmes aimed at public interest and in any other ways, which are not prohibited by the legislation (Law on NCOs, article 5, 1999). However, the law does not provide any details on how the government should provide funding. In other words, it lacks for implementation mechanisms.

To sum up, the government and NGOs have had quite positive experience in collaborating. However, it has been small-scale and short-term in most cases. Up to this date, the government-NGO collaboration has mainly occurred within donor-funded projects. Unfortunately, the government has not had the clear state policy on the cooperation with NGOs. Consequently, the relationship between two actors has developed unsystematically and disconnectedly.

The attempt of the government to create the state programme on NGO interaction and support failed due to the poor implementation of this initiative. This indicates that, in addition to a bare initiative, the state needs the enhanced commitment on and control over the implementation of its initiatives. In other words, there is need not only for legal documents such as concepts, decrees, laws, and others on NGO relations but also for an institutionalized mechanism, which would coordinate the development and implementation of these documents.

Recommendation: The More Government Engagement, the Better the Government-NGO Relations

The study of the government-NGO relationship in Kyrgyzstan has suggested that a lack of the state policy on the collaboration with NGOs is a major barrier for building a more productive collaboration between the government and NGOs. The solution of the problem might seem evident. The government needs to develop the clear policy for its various institutions at all levels, which would give them basic guidance to collaborate with the non-governmental sector on an undiscriminating, systematic, and regular basis. However, it is necessary to take into account the lessons learned from the previous experience of the government with the concept on the government-NGO collaboration.

The above overview of the concept and its outcomes indicates that the government should be more committed to the implementation of its legal documents

on the cooperation with NGOs. Put differently, the government should have not only the initiatives, but also the institutionalized mechanism, which would coordinate their development and implementation.

Based on this, this policy brief suggests creating a State Department on NGO Relations. From an administrative perspective, the Department would belong to the government. Its key mission would be ensuring that the proper legal basis for the government-NGOs relationship is in place and implemented accordingly. The main functions of the Department would be:

- 1) to coordinate the development and implementation of the legal documents such as laws, concepts, policies, decrees and others on the government-NGO collaboration;
- 2) to provide the government institutions in all areas and at all levels with information about and consultation on the legal documents on the government-NGO relationship.

To contribute to the establishment of a more effective partnership between the government and NGOs, the State Department on NGO Relations would also have two more subsidiary functions. The first function is to cooperate with representatives of the NGO sector (e.g. the Association of Civil Society Support Centres) to disseminate information about the legal documents on the government-NGO relationship to NGOs so that NGOs are also aware of them and can refer to them when collaborating with their government institutions in their field and at their level.

The second function is to maintain a database on NGOs and their activities in cooperation with representatives of the NGO sector and competent government institutions (e.g. National Statistical Committee and Ministry of Justice) to increase awareness of all government institutions about NGOs and their activities so that they would be properly informed about NGOs and engage in cooperation with them easily.

Challenges of the Proposed Initiative

Notwithstanding its great potential to improve the government-NGO relationship, there are some risks that the proposal for the establishment of the State Department on NGO Relations has. The first risk is that the Department might promote merely interests of the government and its institutions when developing and implementing the legal documents on the government-NGO relationship without taking interests of NGOs into account. The second risk is that the government can abuse its Department on NGO Relations. It can use it for a different purpose such as intervening into and controlling activities of the NGO sector. The third risk is that NGOs and their representatives might not want to collaborate with the Department because of fear of the potential state control.

Despite of these risks, for the time being, the establishment of this department is the best option that the government can do to improve the government-NGO relationship in Kyrgyzstan. As has been made plain, the problem is that the government does not have the overall policy on collaboration with NGOs. Due to it, the government institutions tend to work with NGOs without coordination and plan. Furthermore, the previous attempt of the government to establish such a policy has indicated that there is need for the institutionalized mechanism, which would coordinate the development and implementation of legal documents on the collaboration with NGOs. The State Department on NGO Relations would serve as this mechanism and ensure that the proper legal documents on the government-NGO relationship are developed and implemented. Furthermore, it would also disseminate information both to all government institutions at all levels and the NGO sectors so that both actors are aware of the legal documents. Finally, the Department would keep the government institutions informed about NGOs and their activities by collecting information for its NGO database and disseminating it to government institutions.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the government and NGOs in Kyrgyzstan have made some positive steps towards an effective collaboration over the last decade. Nevertheless, there are some barriers, which hinder the development of a more productive

government-NGO relationship. The key problem is that the government does not have the unified and coherent policy on NGO collaboration, which would provide the government institutions in all areas and at all levels with basic principals on NGO collaboration. Currently, the relationship between these actors happens mostly within donor projects. All in all, the state-NGO relationship can be characterized as selective, chaotic, and fragmented.

The government tried to create the NGO support programme in past. However, it came to nothing due to a lack of the government's commitment on and control over the implementation of its initiative. Taking all these into account, this policy brief has suggested creating the State Department on NGO Relations. The main aim of this institution would be to ensure that the legal basis for the government-NGOs relationship is in place and implemented accordingly. It would coordinate the development and implementation of the legal documents such as laws, concepts, policies, decrees on the government-NGO collaboration and provide the government institutions in all areas and at all levels with information about and consultation on the above-listed legal documents.

To contribute to the establishment of a more successful cooperation between the government and NGOs, the State Department on NGO Relations would also inform NGOs about the legal documents on the government-NGO relationship so that they can refer to them too when collaborating with the government institutions. It would also provide information about NGOs to all government institutions through maintaining the NGO database to keep them informed and open for the collaboration with NGOs.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Mr. Nokatbek Idrisov, Legal Consultant/Director of the Representative Office of the International Center for Not-for-profit Law in Kyrgyzstan. His consultation on a legislative basis of the government-NGO relations in Kyrgyzstan was very helpful.

I am also grateful to all my interviewees who shared their experience and information. This enabled me to write this policy brief.

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