

Civil society in Tajikistan: problems and perspectives

After disintegration of Soviet Union and formation of the independent states has begun the new period in history of these countries. The main line of development had been proclaimed creation of a democratic, legal secular society. Along with strengthening of national statehood the main important component is the civil society. Without creation of institutes of a civil society creation of a civil, progressive society is impossible.

Formation and development of a civil society in Tajikistan have the specific features. First of all they are connected with features of psychology, mentality, habits, customs and traditions which should be considered during construction of the democratic institutes of a civil society and their mutual relation with the state power.

Formation of a civil society in Tajikistan faces also with such problems, connected with regionalism, tribalism and a clan relationship. Among these factors which interfere with formation of the democratic state and a development of principles of democracy it is necessary to indicate such factors as the raised religiousness of the population, psychology of a worship of personalities, servility, absence of political consciousness and culture.

One of a difficult of process of becoming Tajik civil society is that in it fighting two contrary factors: secular and religion where a dominant position occupies religion elements and values. The situation use Muslim fanatics. They are calling the young people to the radical activity and on a fight with a secular state. Those activities are based on the fundamental and extremists ideas and are directed on a destabilization and destroying of a secular state.

Before proceeding to the consideration of the nature and features of the formation of civil society in Tajikistan, it is advisable to highlight the stages and periods of its development. Tajik philosopher P. Shozimov stops on its three main stages.

The first stage - from 1991 to 1997. It is characterized by community ties, functioning in the form of primordial relations with a focus on local or regional socio-cultural roots. Here prevail emotional and unconscious forms of identification of people and traditional norms of behavior. The general sense of gained national independence at this stage was not reflected and rationalized.

The second stage - from 1997 to 2006. There is a transition from the communal form of social relations to the state. 1997, when a peace Treaty was signed between the government of the Republic of Tajikistan and the United Tajik opposition, can be considered the beginning of state-building. During this period began to form and institutionalize state symbols that reflect the formation of political elites. Political elites began an active process of using various social and political structures and projects aimed at mobilizing the population in solving **common** national problems; national independence was reflected by the elites (who became at this stage the main driving force), and not by the people.

At the first stage, civil society existed in the form of a community, at the second-already as an extension of state institutions. This was reflected in the state's control of many civil and informal sectors, such as the mahalla (quarter), mosque, etc.¹

On the third stage (from 2006 to the present) is dominated by rationalism and instrumentalism. Cultural and political elites are replaced by technocratic ones. And it is now in Tajikistan can emerge a stable foundation for the formation of a modern civil society.

For the formation, strengthening and development of civil society, first of all, it is necessary to have a strong, economically stable and politically stable state, which guarantees the safe functioning of all systems of political power and civil society institutions. In turn, the strengthening and development of civil society institutions will serve as an important factor in the stability of the state, strengthening and expanding the democratic freedoms in society. Without civil society institutions,

¹ Шозимов П. – Государство в роли Гражданского Общества // Независимая газета, 28.10.08

an economically developing state will **eventually** transform into an authoritarian state, and in the worst case, degenerate into a feudal dictatorial state. (Recall Turkmenistan in the era of Turkmenbashi).

The world experience shows that in totalitarian and dictatorial regimes it is possible to achieve relatively stable and peaceful coexistence of society mainly through the use of rich natural resources and the use of individual levers of the market economy. In some cases, it is acceptable that such regimes can achieve the level of industrial society in their socio-economic development. However, such regimes are unlikely to reach the level of post-industrial society. To this end, along with economic components, it is necessary to ensure political and intellectual freedom, to promote the development of civil society institutions that can play a leading role in the socio-economic life of society, with the ability to control the official power as a deterrent and creative force of society.

In conditions of political instability and weak economy the state itself acts as a civil society i.e. performs a number of functions of civil society institutions. This process is typical for countries with underdeveloped democracy, lack of democratic traditions, domination of Patriarchal relations. In such situation turn out Tajikistan in the 90 years of the twentieth century when they gained political independence.

Of the emerging sectors of civil society the most active has become the religious sector. Given the increased religious consciousness of the masses, the supreme religious elite in the person of “Islamic party of revival of Tajikistan” sought to dominate in public life with the prospect of seizing political power and establishing an Islamic state. It became a catalyst in unleash of civil war in Tajikistan, which had a devastating impact on the fate of the young democratic state.

In the wave of democratization began to emerge various religious groups and movements (for example, Salafis, Wahhabis, Hizb-ut-Tahrir, etc.), posing a

threat to the official secular power, with calls for changes in the constitutional order and the construction of an Islamic society.

In the absence of democratic traditions and political culture, the functioning of religious parties and movements in Tajik society and in general, in the entire Central Asian region, is a destabilizing factor, a hotbed of tension, pushing society into the maelstrom of medieval obscurantism, fanaticism and intolerance. The involvement and use of Islamic religion in political life is contrary to its nature, its primordial essence and spirit, which is designed to ennoble the human soul in perception and approximation to the Kingdom of heaven, to improve the moral world of man and to promote establishing the Kingdom of God in the hearts of each person.

The sad experience of Afghanistan shows how destructive and demolition can be the use of the banner of the Islamic religion in political struggle. The true warriors of Islam (in particular, the Taliban and a number of Islamic parties and movements), under the slogan of "Holy war" and "purity" of Islam, have torn and bloodied the land of Afghanistan, dragging the country into a large-scale bloodbath.

Religion and religious activity should be directed to the education of the spiritual personality, to awaken in man the bright feelings of love, mercy, kindness and tolerance. Its power is the divine power, which is above all power, including political power, and it should not use and call for violent methods to prove the truth and sanctity of religion.

Therefore, the role of the state in the early stages of democracy and civil society is very important to prevent the attacks of extremist groups.

A specific feature of the formation and development of civil society in Tajikistan and whole Central Asia is that its institutions are mostly formed and are formed with the financial support of external, mainly international organizations (e.g. OSCE, United nation, embassy of US, Institute of Open society, AGA-Khan foundation and others.) or from above – as a political mandate when, say, you want

to form an opposition party in order to show in the eyes of the world community the increased level of democracy, pluralism, open and honest political struggle for power in these countries.

As you know peculiarity of forming and developing of civil society in Tajikistan and also in Central Asia is determined such factor as a finances assistance of first of all by International organization.

The formation of civil society' institutions "from below" - as a creative, conscious association of the masses and supported by the government in order to defend democratic values is very insignificant. This can be explained by two circumstances: first, the consequences of the civil war in the country, when the opposing forces under the slogan of "democracy" shed blood, which had a very negative impact on the state of mind of the people; secondly, the weakness of the state economy to support the creative initiatives of the masses of the people from below.

Of course, we cannot say that the masses of the people were in a state of hibernation and amorphousness. The Tajik people, as well as other Central Asian peoples, both in the past and in the present, had national traditions and customs, indicating about their social activity in terms of adaptation and ordering of their social life, which allowed them to unite in various associations and social groups.

In Tajik society they are represented and function in different forms and on different ideological platforms. Some of them originated and were based on traditional, folk principles that have passed the historical test and proved their regulatory role in society. Among them need to underline such the stable and unstable unions of people as "Khashar" (joint gratuitous) labor, mutual aid provided to the member of a community or address social problems of the community as a whole), "Jamoats" in its various forms (urban dehkan etc.) neighborhood councils – governing the social life in the mahalla (community) etc. Others-have arisen in the conditions of independence of the Republic, under the influence and sponsorship of Western international organizations whose activities

are aimed at the development of education, science, culture, as well as such organizations as humanitarian, environmental, human rights, women's, youth, charity, professional, etc.

A special place in the civil society of Tajikistan occupies parties and movements that have a strictly political orientation. This is, first of all, the party in power-the PDPT, the social democratic party. Democratic party, Islamic Revival Party of Tajikistan (IRPT – now this party is prohibited) etc.

National communities also contribute to the development of the Tajik civil society with goal to protect their civil rights and freedom and preserve their national, ethnic and cultural characteristics, their identity, language and culture. These groups represented the national minorities of Russians, Uzbeks, Jews ("Chaverim"), Uighurs, Armenians (Mesrop Mashtots), Georgians etc.

A significant contribution to the development of civil society make the association promotes cultural and educational development of the society, its identity and patriotism. To such associations refer society "Paivand", "Sogdiana" (Moscow society of Tajik culture), etc.

Among these Civil society organizations of Tajikistan, the most active are non-political associations. The sphere of their activities includes solutions a significant socio-economic, cultural and educational problems and the interests of different segments of society: the poor and disabled citizens of society-children, women, the disabled, etc.

Less active political parties, except of the party in power- People-democratic party of Tajikistan (PDPT) which dominates at the political life of the country, which negatively influences on the overall atmosphere of the formation of a true democratic, civil society.

The institutions of Tajik's Civil society (NGOs and various associations) operating at the expense of international organizations often act as independent subjects, in isolation from segments of state structures, which to a large extent

contribute to the emergence of an atmosphere of mistrust, the creation of conflict situations in their relationship.

Significantly reduces the confidence rating in the eyes of the world of community the desire of the ruling elite of the Central Asian States to preserve their power by extending his powers, and sometimes blatant attempts to save a life rule, by changing and correction of the Constitution - the basic law of the state.

This practice generates seeds of legal nihilism and lawlessness, when the Constitution is manipulated, changing it like gloves in favor of their personal interests, referring to the changed conditions. Of course, we must admit that a life make adjustments to the living conditions of people and the Constitution is not a dogma. It is also subject to adjustment, change and improvement. But this should not become a daily practice when approaching the end of the presidential term and the next election campaign for the election of a new President, when arises the question of the transfer of power. At best, this practice will mean nothing more than a "game of democracy", with very unpredictable consequences.

Due to the black-and-white thinking of the masses and its ruling elite, who perceive the world through the prism of the thesis "their" and "others", in the conditions of independence gained from above, did not stand the test the values of democracy. True democracy requires social justice and respect for human rights and freedoms. The lack of political culture in Tajik society about the democratic path of development and ideological differences that arose on this basis led the warring parties on the other side of the barricades, which resulted first in rally passions, and then to a fratricidal war.

However, the formation and development of civil society in Tajikistan have their own specific features. First of all, they are associated with the peculiarities of psychology, mentality, habits, customs and traditions that should be taken into account in the establishment of democratic institutions of civil society and their relationship with state power.

Among these factors that prevent the formation of a democratic state and the triumph of the principles of democracy, it is necessary to highlight such factors as increased religiosity of the population, the psychology of community, dependency, reverence and cult of strong personalities, servility, negative attitude to private property, lack of work ethics.

The development of civil society in Tajikistan is also facing with such problems associated with some negative features customs, traditions, rituals, for example, related marriages, lavish weddings and the desire for luxury etc. But especially difficulty represent psychological factors, such as mentality, national character, national egoism, and developed sense of regionalism, localism, communities, kinship relations.

The dominant principle in the consciousness of the masses remains the psychology of dependency, the hope for the state in solving social problems. This attitude was characteristic of the early stages of the country's development towards a democratic society where dominated the communal psychology. Considerable difficulties were associated with the lack of work ethics.

Economic bases of formation of Civil Society. Difficulties in establishing civil society in Tajikistan are also caused by a number of economic factors. Among them is the absence of a “middle class» - acting as a social base of civil society and the subject of active activity of the masses.

Unfortunately, the state has not been able to ensure a smooth transition to a market economy and the formation of entrepreneurial skills among the population on equal and fair terms. The fruits of democracy were used, in the conditions of turmoil and anarchy, first of all, criminal elements, corrupt officials, drug barons and simply gangster groups that have accumulated by criminal way an initial capital. And then for a mere song bought and privatized tidbits of state property. As for the rest of the population: doctors, teachers, scientists and intellectuals in general, they were deprived of the opportunity to participate in the denationalization of property. As a result, there was a huge gap, on the one hand,

between a handful of oligarchs and powerful corrupt officials (the so – called new Tajiks), concentrated in their hands huge wealth, and on the other-the population deprived of this property, which was created for decades by the joint labor of all working masses. This process has significantly slowed the formation of the middle class, as well as hindered the formation and development of the economic basis of civil society.

Thus, we can conclude that the formation of civil society in Tajikistan is associated with great difficulties and diseases of growth. For the full functioning and development to overcome the above difficulties and to solve a number of new tasks related to economic and political development of the state, as well as with the spread of democratic traditions in society and above all with the recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of the individual.