Chapter 3

Civil Society as a Phenomenon of Post-Soviet Political Life: A Threat or a Guarantor of National Security

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3.1 Introduction

Post-Soviet civil society today is perceived not only as a complex system of values, a set of ideological and philosophical principles, and rules of political life, but also as a special way of development, the completion of a stage of political modernization, for the success of which a combination of a certain level of social well-being and a certain quality of political culture is required. In the modern world, civil society is often considered also in the context of numerous and increasing risks, requiring new and quick answers to a number of intractable contradictions and problems (Applebaum 2016; Shevtsova 2016; Altstadt 2017; Gel'man 2016; Marsh 2016). Examples of post-Soviet civil society organizations (CSOs) and actors are the All-Russian Popular Front,¹ the Civic Chamber of the RF,² Republican Public Association “Belaya Rus”³ (Shraibman 2016), Assembly of People of Kazakhstan,⁴ National NGO Forum of

¹All-Russia People's Front. 2019. “History.” Accessed October 24, 2019. <https://onf.ru/structure/istoriya-onf>; Wikipedia. 2019. “All-Russia People's Front.” Accessed October 24, 2019. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/All-Russia_People%27s_Front.

²Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation. 2019. “About.” Accessed October 24, 2019. <https://www.oprf.ru/en/about>.

³Republican Public Association “Belaya Rus”. 2019. “About.” Accessed October 24, 2019. <https://belayarus.by/about>; Belarus in Focus. 2016. “NGO “Belaya Rus” [White Russia] aims for politics.” Accessed October 24, 2019. <https://belarusinfofocus.info/society-and-politics/ngo-belaya-rus-white-russia-aims-politics?>, page = 7.

⁴APK. 2019. “The activities.” Accessed October 24, 2019. <https://assembly.kz/en/ank/deyatelnost-assamblei-naroda-kazakhstana.php>.

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Azerbaijan,⁵ trade union organizations,⁶ student councils and unions of universities,⁷ and others which largely support the ruling elite and the parliamentary majority. The exceptions are Georgia (after 2004), Ukraine (after 2014), Moldova (after 2014), and Armenia (after 2018), since the active NGOs of these countries are members of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum (EaP CSF).⁸

The accumulated problems of civil society and democratization in the post-Soviet space show the need for their new creative rethinking and comparative analysis. The human dimension is determined by the effectiveness of the civil society organizations (CSOs), the basis of which is determined by the state of the economy, the development of democratic processes in civil society, the level of welfare and social security, and their personal safety. In the conditions of newly independent countries and unrecognized statehoods, crises and challenges arise in the post-Soviet space which requires transit regimes of formation of mechanisms to improve the quality of life and sustainable development.

Civil society over the past decades has gained the widest distribution in the post-Soviet space. A comparative analysis of civil society involves the consideration of such fundamental problems as the relationship between the individual and the community, the individual and society, the individual and the state, society and the state, as well as ways to implement such basic values as freedom and justice, equality and solidarity, tolerance and human dignity. That is why one of the urgent tasks is

⁵Turan News Agency. 2018. "The position of civil society for about 5 years remains very difficult." Accessed October 24, 2019. <http://turaz.az/ext/news/2018/10/free/Interview/en/76151.htm>; OGP. 2017. "Azerbaijan National NGO Forum." Accessed October 24, 2019. <http://ogp.org.az/index.php/rauf-zeyni-azerbaijan-national-ngo-forum>; Humanitarian Research Public Union. 2015. "History of NGOs in Azerbaijan." Accessed October 24, 2019. <https://hrpu.org/2015/04/13/history-of-ngos-in-azerbaijan>.

⁶The Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia supports the president and the ruling party "United Russia", such a situation in Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan and the Federation of Trade Unions of Belarus is so politicized that with their help, President Lukashenko controls the opposition political parties. In Armenia, Georgia, Ukraine, and Moldova, the trade union movement is still in crisis, since the unions of these countries have been dominated by bureaucratic methods of work, the leading trade union bodies have been separated from members, and they need democratic reforms.

⁷Post-Soviet student councils in state universities, except for Ukraine (after 2014), Georgia (after 2004), Moldova (after 2014), and Armenia (after 2018), are very specific actors, as they are politicized and especially activated during the election cycle. It is with the help of student self-government and the university administration of state universities that the ruling party is solving its own political tasks, and not the issues of improving the entire life of the educational institution. For example, so far the issues of social security, medical insurance, hostel, and other issues of social rights and freedoms of students remain unresolved in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Russia, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, etc. Student councils of universities of many post-Soviet countries are limited or not involved in resolving the issues of reforming and modernizing the modern system of higher education.

⁸EaP CSF. 2019. "Civil society forum." Accessed October 24, 2019. <https://eap-csf.eu/civil-society-forum>.

the analysis of CSOs as a holistic system, reflecting the most significant features of modern society.⁹ And this requires a look at the problem posed in the general context of modern social development, the transformation of the Western model of civil society and its options outside the European world, that is, to see the uniqueness of this phenomenon in other social and cultural conditions. Therefore, in political science, the question of the nature and problems of post-Soviet civil society, about which national options for civiliratic development can be considered successful, is gaining particular relevance, as is the question of the content of the concept of civil society—in the whole variety of its interpretations, from traditional to modern. The quality of a developed, held, and consolidated democratic model has a decisive influence on this ability to respond to the risks of our time, while preserving CSOs and the democratic nature of the regime. With the change in the political courses of the new independent countries in the post-Soviet period, the vision of its national security has changed. In this regard, the national security strategies of the post-Soviet countries stipulate that the main directions of ensuring national security are strategic national priorities that define the tasks of the most important social, political, and economic transformations needed to create safe conditions for the realization of constitutional rights and freedoms of citizens, the implementation of sustainable development of the country's territorial integrity, and sovereignty of the state. It is important to note that among the priorities in the first place is ensuring the rights and freedoms of citizens. This makes it necessary to rethink the role of civil society in the national security system of these countries, which is intended to articulate and convey its interests to state structures. The main difference between “soft” securities is that a person with all his problems is put in the spotlight, and the security of a state is achieved through the security of its individual citizens.

The stage of democratization and formation of CSOs and new democratic institutions, overcoming the polarization of society, and highlighting the conditions that are necessary for its successful implementation in the post-Soviet space are acquiring civilizational significance. A multiparty system and political competition is a driving force of post-Soviet democracy, as different political parties can reflect the real interests of social groups and repeatedly strengthen the CSOs and political opposition, for example, developed environmental and human rights NGOs¹⁰ (Ishkanian

⁹Oxfam GB. 2017. “What is really going on within ‘shrinking civil society space’ and how should international actors respond?” Accessed October 24, 2019. <https://oxfamblogs.org/fp2p/what-is-really-going-on-within-shrinking-civil-society-space-and-how-should-international-actors-respond>.

¹⁰Armenian Environmental Front (AEF). 2019. “Protection of Environment is Protection of Armenia.” Accessed October 24, 2019. <http://www.armecofront.net/en/about-us-2>; Armenian Environmental Network (AEN). 2019. “Evolving organically to meet Armenia’s environmental needs.” Accessed October 24, 2019. <https://www.armenia-environment.org/our-history>; Human Rights House Foundation (HRHF). 2019. “Strategy and impact.” Accessed October 24, 2019. <https://humanrightshouse.org/who-we-are/impact>.

2013, Kankanyan and Paturyan 2019), the protection of women's rights,¹¹ the anti-corruption policy of civil society,¹² the emergence of opposition political parties, increased civil disobedience, etcetera. It is obvious that the organizational arrangements of civil society form a new civiliarchic¹³ culture, thereby contributing to the mobilization of resources for social projects, as well as to provide protection and justice for citizens. Another example may be that today the quality of the state lags behind the readiness of civil society to participate in the management of the public and multinational authorities. This is what enables CSOs to be incomparably more active and responsible, thereby requiring the authorities to act in partnership with them and make democratic decisions. A comparative analysis of this stage, the effectiveness of which determines the subsequent development of civil society, from general theoretical prerequisites to specific national specifics in each post-Soviet country, remains one of the most important tasks of modern political science.

3.2 No Democracy Without Civil Society

Democracy always accompanies the affirmation of civil society organizations, such as NGOs, trade unions, social media, civic networks, associations and unions, into which active citizens enter on their own initiative for various purposes: professional communication, collective defense of their interests, and more effective dialogue with the authorities. Post-Soviet civil society is a very important factor in effective economic development, political stability, and social harmony. In post-Soviet countries, civil society (people's independence movements, Memorial, Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, international NGOs, and charitable foundations) became relevant in the late 1980s, after a huge break caused by the comprehensive pressure of the state on all aspects of society during the Soviet period. After the collapse of the USSR, a number of comparative political scientists paid great attention to the conceptualization of post-socialism and post-communism within the framework of transitological models, revealing the general tendency of transitions from authoritarianism to democracy that have occurred in different post-Soviet countries over the past two-plus decades (Huntington 1991; Fukuyama 2014; Shevtsova 2016; Ambrosio 2009; O'Donnell and Schmitter 2013; Gel'man 2015). The redistribution of property through privatization has created real opportunities for the formation of the middle class as the social basis of civil society. The development of private property and market relations

¹¹ Women's Support Center (WSC). 2019. "Our impact." Accessed October 24, 2019. <https://www.womensupportcenter.org>.

¹² "Armenian Lawyers' Association" NGO. 2019 "Statement of the CSO Anti-Corruption Coalition of Armenia." Accessed October 24, 2019. <https://armla.am/en/4411.html>.

¹³ Civiliarchy (from Lat. civil and Gr. archy)—civil power, civil governance, civil control. Civiliarchy issued to denote civil power based on civilized mechanisms and principles which ensure civil control over power. In this case, political regimes can be described either as civiliarchic and non- (anti-) civiliarchic (Alexanian, A. 2011. "The civiliarchic foundations of political democratization in Armenia." *Central Asia and the Caucasus* 12 (3): 117).

created the conditions for civil society to become a civilized actor in the political life of modern post-Soviet political systems.

In the post-Soviet space, democratization has a political dimension and provides for political diversity and civil society. Democracy, as well as a market economy, is impossible without CSOs, the existence of competition, and a pluralistic political system. This is manifested in the fact that in the post-Soviet space, democratization acts as a principle of activity of political parties in the struggle for state power. In a democracy, the diversity of political opinions and ideological approaches to solving public and state problems is taken into account. The democratic political process in the post-Soviet space is not yet based on the equal rights of citizens in the management of the affairs of society and the state, and above all on the equality of electoral rights. Such inequality makes it impossible to choose between different political options, that is, political development opportunities. The main goal of democratization in the post-Soviet space is to achieve the ultimate diversity of political and social life. In this regard, interest in various national and civilizational versions of democracy, reflected in the global political process, has grown unusually (Haggard and Kaufman 2016; Moghaddam 2019; Levitsky and Way 2010; Teorell 2010).

One of the most important tasks of political modernization, on the solution of which the prospects for the formation of civil society directly depend, is the phased democratization of post-Soviet countries in which authoritarian or even totalitarian political regimes existed for a long time. The stages of democratization of these countries in a “compressed” form reproduce the logic of the formation of a modern civil society in them. At the liberalization stage, the institutions and principles of civil society are legitimized, and new forms and mechanisms of its relations with the state are tested; there is an institutionalization of civil society. At the stage of democratization, there is a noticeable increase in the political and social activity of the population, and civil society itself takes on quite mature forms and turns into an influential agent of political and social transformations. At the stage of consolidation, relations between the state and civil society evolve in the direction of consolidating and “routinizing” the mechanisms of interaction, and the institutionalization of social partnership practices that arose in the previous stages, in the broad sense of the word. For example, the initiative of the trade unions of Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan annually, starting in 1992, became the Tripartite Commission and the conclusion of an agreement between the government, trade unions and employers’ associations, and then the industry tariff and regional agreements that stipulate mutual obligations of the parties, increased the effectiveness of state, departmental and public control over labor protection and the environment, and expanded cooperation of this work at all levels of government.¹⁴ For the authoritarian regimes of these countries, it is the Trilateral Commission that enables the presidents and the ruling elite to maintain

¹⁴The Russian Government. 2013. “Russian Trilateral Commission on the Regulation of Social and Labour Relations.” Accessed October 24, 2019. <http://government.ru/en/departments/141/about>; ILO.2004. “Trade Union Rights in Belarus.” Accessed October 24, 2019. <https://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/relm/gb/docs/gb291/pdf/ci-belarus.pdf>; Electronic government of the Republic of Kazakhstan. 2019. “Union Federations of the Republic of Kazakhstan.” Accessed October 24, 2019. https://egov.kz/cms/en/articles/job_search/profsouzi.

their dominant standing. As a result of the political transformation in the post-Soviet countries, a form of government and a system of power have arisen that formally meets the criteria of electoral democracy, but that is virtually beyond the control of society. The institutionalization of just such a system of power was largely facilitated by the strategy of economic reforms, which was based on national ideas of independence. The result of economic reforms was the colossal property polarization of the population and the actual destruction of the old social security system. In the framework of the political system that arose as a result of the transformation, effective channels of interaction between the state and society have not yet developed, which has an extremely negative effect on the prospects for the institutionalization of civil society. The political and legal prerequisites for the intensification of civic activism are largely blocked and not realized due to the extremely difficult economic situation of citizens of post-Soviet countries.

The formation of civil society in post-Soviet countries is also complicated by a number of factors related to the transitional nature of public relations. This is manifested in the weaknesses of social institutions and in the difficulties in carrying out political, economic, cultural, and educational reforms in post-Soviet countries.

3.3 The Multidimensionality of a Transforming Civil Society

Over the past decades, civil society in the post-Soviet space has significantly strengthened. The multidimensionality of transformation at the national, international, and regional levels demonstrates the positive dynamism of post-Soviet civil society, since it is at the peak of its potential. Information and communication technologies, European integration, geopolitics, and the development of market relations provided the necessary basis and opportunities for creating a large number of social movements, NGOs, media, trade unions, political parties, religious organizations, and social groups.

The security of civil society presupposes appropriate human rights norms that allow for preserving the values of democracy; most fully realize the constitutional rights, freedoms of various social groups and citizens, and optimally neutralize the phenomena contradicting the principles of democracy. Personal security is to ensure constitutional rights, freedoms, legitimate interests, and a decent quality and standard of living of citizens, and involves the formation of a complex of legal and moral norms, CSOs that allow individuals to develop and implement significant abilities for them to meet relevant needs and interests, while not experiencing opposition from the state and CSOs. The full development of any democratic state or aspiring democracy requires an effective civil society, acting as a partner of state power, helping it in times of crisis and instability. Social and political partnerships between civil society and the state are most acceptable for a modern democratic society, which the post-Soviet countries are trying to become with the help of the UN, OSCE, Council of Europe,

and the EU. At the same time, it gives a new impetus to understanding democracy in modern post-Soviet countries while exploring the boundaries between the state and civil society. Preference in this model of relationships is given to the paternalistic scenario: a strong state supports a weak civil society. Democratization is interpreted here in purely elitist forms. Thus, the holder of sovereignty is the political elite of the country. For example, in Russia, the nature of emerging civil society is organically linked to the construction of its own special model of democracy, that is, “sovereign democracy.” Here, the strengthening of state power is an important factor for the further development of Russian statehood, which, in turn, under favorable social and political conditions, can serve as an impetus for the maturation of civil society in the country.

Democratic processes in the post-Soviet space are contradictory; democratization often becomes a resource of the ruling elite of these countries, a pretext for interfering in the affairs of civil society, limiting the rights and freedoms of citizens, and a means of manipulating the international community. The transition to democratization of the post-Soviet countries has become one of the determining causes of the “color revolutions” in Georgia (2003), Kyrgyzstan (2005, 2010), Ukraine (2004, 2014), as well as the “velvet revolution” (2018) in Armenia (Lanskoy and Suthers 2019; Shirinyan 2018; Iskandaryan 2018). The revolutionary characteristic of these political changes in these countries is the high level of civil disobedience, public participation, the crisis of legitimacy, the struggle against the oligarchy, as well as the opposition’s willingness to introduce deeper social or economic reforms.

The beginning of the twenty-first century revealed a new phenomenon in political transformation, the so-called “revolutionary waves” that gave rise to a change of political elites in several countries of the post-Soviet space. The main result of this kind of “revolution” was a change in the geopolitical orientation and foreign policy of the respective states toward integration into the Council of Europe, OSCE, EU, and NATO. Of course, the choice of a foreign policy strategy is formed taking into account many aspects of an internal and external nature, but, of course, one of the most important factors that influenced the transformation of the foreign policy of the post-Soviet states was a civil promise. An analysis of regime change in Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Ukraine, and Armenia and the impact of these processes on the foreign policy orientation of states is relevant in connection with the role of activating CSOs in the post-Soviet space.

Events in these countries have shown that CSOs are dissatisfied with the activities of the government and the ruling parties (Chaisty et al. 2018; Jankovic 2011; Pop-Eleches and Robertson 2014; Mihr 2018). The authorities, in turn, do not always adequately respond to such influences with civil society, being late with anti-corruption policies, or not striving to create new models of political dialogue and social partnership that meet the expectations of civil society and the challenges of the time.

According to “Nations in Transit” reports of Freedom House, in 2018, the level of development of democracy and civil society in post-Soviet countries remains on the path of transformation and development. From Tables 3.1 and 3.2, it is seen that the comparatively better results in Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia, which have a

Table 3.1 Nations in transit ratings and averaged civil society scores

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Armenia	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75
Azerbaijan	5.5	5.75	5.75	6	6.25	6.5	6.75	7	7	7
Belarus	6.25	6	6	6.25	6.5	6.5	6.5	6.25	6.25	6.25
Georgia	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75
Kazakhstan	5.5	5.75	5.75	6	6.25	6.5	6.5	6.5	6.5	6.75
Kyrgyzstan	4.75	5	4.75	4.75	4.75	4.5	4.75	4.75	5	5
Moldova	3.75	3.5	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25
Russia	5.75	5.75	5.5	5.25	5.5	5.75	6	6.25	6.5	6.25
Tajikistan	5.75	6	6	6	6.25	6.25	6.5	6.5	6.5	6.75
Turkmenistan	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7
Ukraine	2.75	2.75	2.75	2.75	2.75	2.5	2.25	2.25	2.5	2.75
Uzbekistan	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	6.75

Source Nations in Transit of Freedom House, accessed September 21, 2019, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/nations-transit/nations-transit-2018>

Table 3.2 Nations in transit ratings and averaged democracy score

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Armenia	5.39	5.39	5.43	5.39	5.36	5.36	5.36	5.36	5.39	5.43
Azerbaijan	6.25	6.39	6.46	6.57	6.64	6.68	6.75	6.86	6.93	6.93
Belarus	6.57	6.5	6.57	6.68	6.71	6.71	6.71	6.64	6.61	6.61
Georgia	4.93	4.93	4.86	4.82	4.75	4.68	4.64	4.61	4.61	4.68
Kazakhstan	6.32	6.43	6.43	6.54	6.57	6.61	6.61	6.61	6.64	6.71
Kyrgyzstan	6.04	6.21	6.11	6	5.96	5.89	5.93	5.89	6	6.07
Moldova	5.07	5.14	4.96	4.89	4.82	4.86	4.86	4.89	4.93	4.93
Russia	6.11	6.14	6.18	6.18	6.21	6.29	6.46	6.5	6.57	6.61
Tajikistan	6.14	6.14	6.14	6.18	6.25	6.32	6.39	6.54	6.64	6.79
Turkmenistan	6.93	6.93	6.93	6.93	6.93	6.93	6.93	6.93	6.96	6.96
Ukraine	4.39	4.39	4.61	4.82	4.86	4.93	4.75	4.68	4.61	4.64
Uzbekistan	6.89	6.93	6.93	6.93	6.93	6.93	6.93	6.93	6.96	6.89

“The democracy scores and regime ratings are based on a scale of 1–7, with 1 representing the highest level of democratic progress and 7 the lowest” (See Freedom House. 2018. “Nations in Transit 2018: Confronting Illiberalism.” Accessed September 21, 2019. <https://freedomhouse.org/report/nations-transit/nations-transit-2018>)

Source Nations in Transit of Freedom House, accessed September 21, 2019, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/nations-transit/nations-transit-2018>

transitional government or hybrid regime. If in Armenia, civil society is faced with a semi-consolidated authoritarian regime, then in Russia, Belarus, Azerbaijan and all countries of Central Asia, it is faced with a consolidated authoritarian regime. As can be seen from Tables 3.1 and 3.2, the democratic transit of the post-Soviet countries initiating civil consolidation in the field of public interests determines, firstly, the difficult path of civil society formation, since the formation of democratic values is as difficult as the development of a national strategy; secondly, the involvement of CSOs in the political process and their active position in dialogue with the authorities. These quantitative data show that in the above-mentioned post-Soviet countries, the mediation of CSOs between citizens and the state is not yet ensured efficiently, and the establishment of a national model of democracy is determined by a weak political culture and experience in regime transformation.

According to Reports “Nations in Transit” of the Freedom House, in 2018, the level of development of democracy and civil society in post-Soviet countries remains on the path of transformation and development. From Tables 3.1 and 3.2, it is seen that the comparatively better results in Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia, which have transitional government or hybrid regime. If in Armenia, civil society is faced with a semi-consolidated authoritarian regime, then in Russia, Belarus, Azerbaijan and all countries of Central Asia, it is faced with a consolidated authoritarian regime. As can be seen from Tables 3.1 and 3.2, the democratic transit of the post-Soviet countries initiating civil consolidation in the field of public interests, determines, firstly, the difficult path of civil society formation, since the formation of democratic values is as difficult as the development of a national strategy; secondly, the involvement of CSOs in the political process and their active position in dialogue with the authorities. These quantitative data show that in the above-mentioned post-Soviet countries the mediation of CSOs between citizens and the state is not yet ensured efficiently, and the establishment of a national model of democracy is determined by a weak political culture and experience in regime transformation.

The instability of post-Soviet political regimes is caused, first of all, by the lack of a strong civil society, which implies, firstly, the exposure to European values and, secondly, the desire to prevent constantly emerging conflict situations. However, the reproduction potential of the above-mentioned regimes in the former static quality is very limited. In addition to political technologies that make it possible to temporarily consolidate post-Soviet societies (nation-building, civic identity, religious feelings, etc.); periodically arising foreign policy actions that distract the population from acute pressing social problems are an additional means of maintaining stability (Macedo et al. 2005; Bartels 2016; Achen and Bartels 2016). So, for Azerbaijan and Armenia, the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh became the epicenter of public attention and the subject of political manipulations, and for Moldova, it is Transnistria, the topic of the “Chinese threat” for Kazakhstan, and the danger of the promotion of Islamic radicalism for Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan (Isaacs and Polese 2015; Senggirbay 2019). Despite the support of the US and NATO forces, the Afghan

army is still not able to cope with the religious fundamentalist formations.¹⁵ This is due, inter alia, to the financial, military, organizational, and informational support of the latter coming from the Taliban, the Islamic State, al-Qaeda, and from some radical and fundamentalist movements. Obviously, the long-term potential for regime stability lies within the endogenous development of post-Soviet societies. At the same time, their transformation with a goal-setting on the Western model of democracy, despite official declaration, is not adequate. Attempts to explain the low “rootedness” of liberal democracy in post-Soviet countries by national specifics, prolonging its implementation, impede the actualization of strategies relevant to social development (Parvin 2017, 2018).

Multiparty systems in presidential and semi-presidential post-Soviet countries developed slowly. In authoritarian regimes with a majoritarian electoral system, either they did not exist at all, or they were openly a “facade” in nature. Parties of power such as “United Russia” (from 2001 till now), “New Azerbaijan” (from 1995 till now), “Union of Georgian Citizens” (from 1992 till 2003), Republican Party of Armenia (from 1999 till 2018), and “Nur Otan” (from 1999 till now, Kazakhstan) became a specific phenomenon in post-Soviet countries. Their difference from the “classic” dominant political parties is that they were created by the presidents of these countries, who gave their informal clients party status in order to represent and protect the interests of the executive branch in parliaments and public space. If classical dominant parties form power, then power parties form it.

The further institutional evolution of countries with parties in power depends on whether these parties can evolve from a tool of presidential power into relatively autonomous political entities, whether they follow the path of building more equal relations with their constituent and allied political groups, and whether at least some expansion of political pluralism, or the tendency to consolidate their monopoly in the party and political field will prevail. In the first case, a new model of democratization will emerge in the post-Soviet space through the dominant party, while in the second, the regimes will become semi-authoritarian.

In contrast to the policies of Central and Southeast Europe, all post-Soviet countries have chosen a presidential–parliamentary or “purely” presidential form of government. At the same time, the nature of the regimes in the former republics of the USSR had significant differences from the very beginning, which grew more and more during their post-Soviet development. Conditionally, these modes can be divided into four groups:

1. The presidential are in form and “purely” authoritarian in essence regimes in Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan from 1993 till now. The entire executive branch is vested in the presidents, and parliamentary elections are non-competitive.

¹⁵OSCE ODIHR. 2015. “Freedom of Religion and Belief in Central Asia: Trends and Challenges.” Accessed September 21, 2019. <https://www.osce.org/odihr/187521?download=true>; Olcott, M. B. 2016. “Religion and Security in Central Asia: Recommendations for the Next US Administration.” *The Review of Faith & International Affairs* 14 (2): 49–58.

2. There are a presidential regime in Belarus and formal presidential–parliamentary regimes in Azerbaijan (from 1993 till now), Kazakhstan (from 1990 till now) and even after institutional changes in the parliamentary form of government in Kyrgyzstan, gravitating toward authoritarianism (from 1991 till 2005, from 2010 till 2011).
3. Moving toward a weakening of the presidential power, Moldova (from 2009 till now), Ukraine (from 2014 till now), Georgia (from 2013 till now), and Armenia (from 2018 till now), which at the beginning of this century, passed from a presidential–parliamentary republic to a parliamentary one in the first case and to the prime ministerial in the second. In terms of political pluralism and competition, these countries are superior to all other states of the post-Soviet space.
4. This is a presidential–parliamentary form of Russian federalism. Despite the commonality of the Russian political regime with other post-Soviet regimes, the presidential vertical of this country nevertheless varies markedly in the scope of the president's powers (Yeltsin's Russia from 1991 till 1999, Putin's Russia from 1999 till now).

It is almost impossible to assess the first two groups of countries from the point of view of the development of civil society and democratic transit: with the exception of Belarus, these are countries that are influenced by both Islamic and totalitarian (communist) political cultures and have retained strong vestiges of the traditional patriarchal society. For these countries, the realistic agenda is not democratization, but the promotion of modernization processes in general and the expansion of political pluralism in particular. In most of the mentioned countries, the majority (Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan), or mixed with the predominance of the majority element (Azerbaijan, until recently Kazakhstan), operates (or operated); in Uzbekistan, most deputies are elected in indirect elections. The introduction of proportional systems in Kazakhstan (since 2007) and Kyrgyzstan (from the next election) marks the transition from non-partisanship to the dominant party in power.

Moldova, Ukraine, Georgia, and Armenia (since 2018) provide very interesting examples of “belated democratization” with a not yet clear outcome. They are noticeably inferior to their Western neighbors in the degree of maturity of multiparty systems; however, in terms of the level of political competition and the real involvement of parties in political decision-making, Ukraine and Moldova, undoubtedly, are ahead of all other post-Soviet countries. In the last two countries, the main reason for the delay in the democratization processes was the factors associated with the formation of national statehood: in Georgia, the loss of control over Abkhazia and South Ossetia, as well as the international war with Russia; in Armenia and Azerbaijan, the war for Nagorno-Karabakh, a confrontational style of domestic politics (1998 and 1999). In the parliamentary and presidential elections held in 2007–2008 in Armenia, contradictory trends were reflected: on the one hand, there was competition, on the other hand, the widespread use of administrative resources, massive protests, and their rather severe suppression by the authorities. Even after the Velvet Revolution of 2018 in Armenia, the new Prime Minister and the new ruling elite face many difficulties on the path of anti-corruption policy, deepening democratic

reforms and European integration. The phenomenon of “revolutionary waves” is an important factor that affects the national interests and security of post-Soviet countries. The events in Georgia (2003), in Ukraine (2004 and 2014), in Kyrgyzstan (2005), and in Armenia (2018) became evidence of the revitalization of civil society and support for the type of democratization outlined in the American and European countries’ strategies. This contributed to the strengthening of sovereignty, as well as bilateral relations between Western European countries and countries with new political regimes, hindering the realization of Russian interests in the post-Soviet space, where the Russian Federation traditionally has strategic interests.

The most difficult thing is to evaluate the results of transformations in the Russian Federation, with the main feature of the initial stages of transit since 1990s being the extreme polarization of politics, the threat of communist restoration, and, consequently, the lack of consensus on a national development strategy. For this reason, for Russia in the mid-1990s, the choice of a model with a strong parliament was obviously impossible. The high polarization of society and elites along the axis of “reform–restoration” demanded the dominance of presidential power, carrying out “reform from above.” It is interesting to note that Russia is the only post-Soviet country in which, during the period of the most painful reforms (until 2000), the president did not have a majority in parliament. Russia’s progress toward building civil society is clearly insufficient; the opportunities for social and economic modernization were far from being optimally used. However, the barriers to successful democratization in Russia were exceptionally high. Therefore, if something causes concern from the point of view of democratic prospects, it is not so much the current, not too high, level of reform, but rather a strong presidential power and negative dynamics in the political life of Russia. In this context, Russian civil society, through social networks, anti-government movements, and civil disobedience, feeds on activating opposition political parties and also fights for a “blocked or failed democratic transition” (Sorensen 2018). In these unfavorable conditions, civil society is attempting to democratize and pluralize social life in modern Russia. Obviously, this is precisely why President Putin and the ruling elite gave CSOs the status of foreign agents.

In recent years, even the most authoritarian of the Central Asian countries, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, imitating formally pluralistic presidential elections, have been trying to imitate attempts. In turn, Kazakhstan, once distinguished by real, albeit built into certain framework pluralism, passed over to a one-party parliament. In Kyrgyzstan, the period of power sharing after the fall of President Akayev’s regime was replaced by new “monocentrism.” This persists even after the transition to a parliamentary form of government. At the same time, if in these countries civil society continues to move toward democracy, then authoritarian regimes imitate and even appeal to democratic values. It is significant that thereby, to some extent, these authoritarian regimes, in their fear of civilarchic democracy, also contribute to its consolidation (Morlino 2012; Alexanyan 2010; Cameron and Orenstein 2012).

Over the past two decades, most post-Soviet countries have made significant progress toward the formation of civil society and democratic transformation, albeit in different models, with different goals and different successes. This dynamism and variety of models make the comparative analysis of the post-Soviet space extremely

important. In the political science of the post-Soviet countries, there is a consensus that the absence of clear signs of democracy consolidation in the newly independent states is not a sign of the end of transitology but only initiates a cognitive and practical search for directions of transition from authoritarianism to democracy.

3.4 Political Security Issues of Civil Society

At the current stage of globalization, CSOs should play a role in facilitating the activities of the public administration of post-Soviet countries, in ensuring national security, which includes an organic triad, namely: human security,¹⁶ civil society security,¹⁷ and social security.¹⁸ At the same time, democratization, embodied by institutions and mechanisms borrowed from the Western cultural experience, always leads to the expected result (Gill 2000). The relevance of introducing Western democratic values and civil society organizations into the social and cultural environment of post-Soviet countries is especially obvious. An interesting example is the Baltic countries, which are incorporated into a single European political and legal field. It is appropriate to note that the realization of national interests and strategic national priorities of the post-Soviet space cannot occur outside of civil society, since the most important component of public security is the presence in the state of an effective network of CSOs, which traditionally include civil society associations, NGOs, political parties, and social movements without formal status (Whitehead 2002, 65–90).

In post-Soviet countries, the national security strategy¹⁹ is designed to consolidate the efforts of public authorities, other government bodies, regional government

¹⁶“Human security means safety for people from both violent and non-violent threats. It is the condition or state of being characterized by freedom from pervasive threats to people’s rights, their safety, or even their lives. Human security entails taking preventive measures to reduce vulnerability and minimize risk and taking remedial action where prevention fails.” (Sociology Discussion. 2017. “Human Security: Concept and Challenges.” Accessed September 26, 2019. <http://www.sociologydiscussion.com/human-security/human-security-concept-and-challenges-sociology/13517>).

¹⁷The civil society security is the sustainable development of CSOs, the preservation of humanistic values, civil society norms and civic culture, and the viability of civil movements. This is an environment of partnership and dialogue, which expands the resources of political, social, economic, and cultural security by attracting the resources of civil society. The expediency of participation of civil society institutions in ensuring human security at the national and regional levels is substantiated.

¹⁸“Social security may be defined as any program of social protection established by legislation, or any other mandatory arrangement, that provides individuals with a degree of income security when faced with the contingencies of old age, survivorship, incapacity, disability, unemployment or rearing children. It may also offer access to curative or preventive medical care.” (ISSA. 2019. “Social security: A fundamental human right.” Accessed September 26, 2019. <https://www.issa.int/en/topics/understanding/introduction>).

¹⁹See Kremlin.ru. 2015. “The National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation of December 31, 2015.” Accessed September 26, 2019. <http://kremlin.ru/acts/bank/40391/page/1>; Mfa.am. 2007. “The National Security Strategy of the Republic of Armenia of January 26, 2007.” Accessed September 26, 2019. <https://www.mfa.am/filemanager/Statics/Doctrineeng.pdf>.

bodies, local authorities, and civil society organizations to create favorable internal and external conditions for the realization of national interests and strategic national priorities. That is, the task is to unite the efforts of state, public and political structures in the field of ensuring national security. The national security strategy of post-Soviet countries states that the main directions of ensuring state and public security, on the one hand, are strengthening the role of the state as a guarantor of personal security and property rights, improving the legal regulation of crime prevention, corruption, terrorism and extremism, drug trafficking, and the fight with such phenomena. On the other hand, the development of interaction between state security and law enforcement agencies with civil society increases the confidence of citizens in law enforcement and judicial systems. In addition, implementation is carried out through the consolidation of efforts and resources of state authorities and local governments, the development of their interaction with CSOs, as well as the use of the potential of political, organizational, social and economic, legal, informational, military, and other structures. The idea of consolidating the efforts of the state and civil society in various fields, including in the field of security, has long been reflected in many legal and doctrinal acts of post-Soviet countries. Considering that it is NGOs that play an important role in the civil society system; then, perhaps the first thing to discuss is the role and place of NGOs in organizing interaction between state and public structures in the field of national security. In addition, NGOs act as a link between the state and society, as they are an integral part of both the first and second. However, a lot of difficulties arise in the way of interaction between the state and civil society, especially in the security sphere of post-Soviet countries. And so, for the successful implementation of the national security strategy, it is necessary that an understanding of the role and place of NGOs, as the most important institutions after the state in the political system, is consolidated in government and public structures to consolidate the efforts of state and municipal authorities and civil society in ensuring national security. This requires dialogue and partnership between the state and CSOs in order to protect and realize national interests, strengthen national harmony, maintain political and social stability, develop democratic institutions, and improve interaction mechanisms among actors of the political system.

National security directly depends on the design and state of the public administration system. Between the strategic principle of supreme power and the differentiated pluralism of CSOs at the grassroots level, there should be a flexible system of political coordination of executive and legislative authorities at the intermediate level, which coordinate the expression of the will of CSOs to the country's leadership. Social dialogue and partnership in the post-Soviet countries will be most effective if the state will contribute to the formation of CSOs, and will also be able to control only those aspects of political life that are of strategic importance. In other non-strategic issues, CSOs are also given the right to determine the dimensions of political being at the local level.

The creation in the post-Soviet countries of a strong and capable statehood, based on a stable political system, requires the active participation of CSOs in ensuring an integrated political security, taking into account all aspects of this multifactorial phenomenon. A strategy to strengthen civil society, based on the recognition

of the decisive role of CSOs in ensuring the well-being, social, economic, and cultural development of citizens, maintaining internal order, managing and interacting with other states, will be aimed primarily at strengthening the political security of post-Soviet countries. Therefore, in the context of national security, CSOs and political security are of particular importance. Political security is largely associated with various challenges that modern post-Soviet countries face. In this context, the CSO Sustainability Index among the EaP countries and Russia for 2017 is of great importance (see Table 3.3).

Table 3.3 shows that in 2017, the highest level of CSO Sustainability among the countries of the EaP and Russia is Ukraine, and the worst is in Azerbaijan. Belarus was in the penultimate place in the CSOSI. Due to consolidated authoritarian regimes, Belarus and Azerbaijan are the only countries in the EaP region with low resilience of CSOs. For all countries, as can be seen from Table 3.3, financial sustainability continues to be one of the weakest sustainability parameters for post-Soviet CSOs. These countries have limited access to funding, which is why the activity and organizational capacity of post-Soviet CSOs are gradually decreasing. In addition to these countries in Russia, sharply worsening conditions for civil society put Russian CSOs in an increasingly risky situation, similar to the situation in Belarus and Azerbaijan.

The processes of globalization and integration have significantly changed the external and internal environment of the political system of post-Soviet countries, making it necessary to take a fresh look at the numerous political phenomena of CSOs, including political security. The traditional understanding of political security is losing its significance and requires a different interpretation with its broader functions, goals, with other methods and means, and other consequences. The political security of post-Soviet countries means the security of the political system along with influential CSOs. Political security is considered one of the central elements of national security in post-Soviet countries. In that context, political security is a set of measures aimed at ensuring the political system and constructive policy toward CSOs, and at preserving the constitutional legitimacy of state power on the basis of democratic values. In fact, political security is a set of measures to identify, prevent, and eliminate those factors that could harm the political interests of a country, people, society, and citizens, or cause political regression and even political death of the state, as well as transform power and politics from a constructive to a destructive force, a source of misfortune, and misfortune for people of the country. Therefore, the role of CSOs in strengthening the security of government and politics is growing. From this definition, it is clear that the basis for determining the essence and goals of political security is the political interests of the country. This definition not only broadens the spectrum of political security, including all vital institutions, relations, and processes in the political sphere, but also emphasizes the priority to protect the political security of actors such as civil society and citizens. Moreover, it is supposed to protect not only the legitimate authorities, but also the political opposition, as a kind of “guard against stagnation” necessary for the state and society. It is through CSOs that the political system is protected from destructive and destabilizing internal and external influences, thereby contributing to democratic development, a property of the political system, manifested in its stability, dynamism, and ability to maintain

Table 3.3 CSO Sustainability Index (CSOSI) for EaP and Russia in 2017

	CSO sustainability	Legal environment	Organizational capacity	Financial viability	Advocacy	Service provision	Sectoral infrastructure	Public image	Level of sustainability
Armenia	3.7	3.7	3.6	5	3	3.8	3.1	3.9	Sustainability evolving
Azerbaijan	6	6.6	6.1	6.6	5.8	5.4	5.9	5.8	Sustainability impeded
Belarus	5.5	6.8	4.7	6.4	5.2	5	5.1	5.5	Sustainability impeded
Georgia	4.1	3.3	4.4	5	3.7	4.1	4.3	3.8	Sustainability evolving
Moldova	3.8	4.1	3.6	4.5	3.1	4.2	3.3	3.9	Sustainability evolving
Russia	4.7	5.8	4.5	4.9	4.7	4.2	4	5.1	Sustainability evolving
Ukraine	3.2	3.5	3.2	4.2	2.1	3.2	3.2	3.3	Sustainability evolving

Source 2017 Civil society organization sustainability index, accessed September 21, 2019, https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/2017_CSOSustainabilityIndex_for_Central_and_Eastern_Europe_and_Eurasia.pdf

its essential characteristics. Obviously, in the absence of contradictions in the transformation and development that can lead to sharp qualitative changes or destruction, the most important attribute characteristic of the social system is the condition for its evolutionary and progressive development. It is significant that through CSOs, political security is based on political goals and values, such as reestablishing relations between citizen and public institutions, or in CSOs of regional dialogue and partnerships, thereby maintaining a level of sustainable development, effectively overcoming threats and conflicts. As practice shows, in post-Soviet countries CSO threats may come from: conflicting interests of social groups; the pace and direction of change; political struggle outside the legal framework; some unlawful acts of political power; actions of individual states or the international community in the framework of geopolitical confrontation and others. It is civil society in the post-Soviet space that creates a system of political values that forms the civilizational core of political culture, the spiritual quintessence of the needs and interests of CSOs, and is one of the most important incentives for political action and behavior of individuals (Fukuyama 2018).

Thus, political security presupposes the existence of sustainable political sovereignty within the framework of the system of interstate relations and political stability of the post-Soviet civil society, achieved by the formation of a political system that ensures a balance of interests of various social groups based on the priority of the individual. The absence of both the first and the second inevitably destroys the political security of the country. Political security is characterized by a state in which political pluralism and the associated political struggle do not acquire the character of an antagonistic confrontation, which undermines the foundations of the existence of both the state and civil society.

3.5 Conclusion

Post-Soviet civil society with its focus on human rights, the rule of law and constitutional liberalism has its own value and has significant stabilizing potential. CSOs regulate political activity, reproduce, and consolidate certain political relations, subject to the principle of continuity and continuity. The institutionalization of civil society is a process through which political relations gain stability. This means that the political system receives the necessary basis for partnership with CSOs precisely for the implementation of the necessary changes without destruction. As a result of a comprehensive analysis of the most difficult political processes experienced by post-Soviet countries from the twentieth century to the twenty-first century (including managed democratic transit and post-authoritarian development), it becomes clear that the modern post-Soviet model of civil society is a developed network of NGOs, social media, civic initiatives, and movements that promote democratic consolidation. Despite significant achievements, this model is currently under pressure from new political risks and challenges associated with the high social expectations of society and the search for tools to implement greater social justice on the one

hand, and the need to continue effective economic policy, on the other. This deep contradiction, being a factor in potential conflicts of modern civil societies, forces politicians to reconsider the compromises that were once concluded and to correct development projects at each new stage. However, refusing to analyze the civil society of the post-Soviet countries as a whole would, it seems to us, be premature. Firstly, there are enough criteria by which the initial stage of political development of these countries at the turn of the 1990s can be considered common (redistribution of state property, regime transformation, decline in quality of life, liberalism, elite minority, a strong power vertical, weak governance and political opposition, and an institutional vacuum, ethno-political conflict). Secondly, within these subgroups themselves, the similarity of transformation models is also traced, which makes it possible to assess the effects of various institutional choices and political decisions and their impact on subsequent development. Finally, thirdly, far from all the countries under consideration have reached the level where it is possible to speak with confidence about the success or failure of modernization and democratization, which means that with the further development of transformational processes, civilarchic factors will inevitably be included in them.

The modernization of post-Soviet political regimes, while maintaining a common strategy for any democratic transit, should be based on its own cultural tradition and in this sense have a conservative character, while, of course, eliminating the stagnation and static nature of the authoritarian content of power. This kind of modernization can only be carried out with the preservation of the socializing vertical of the executive branch due to the need to maintain legitimacy in the democratic process.

The constructive potential of CSOs in the newly independent states is obvious. After the anarchy of the 1990s, in the context of a strong vertical of power and personified presidential power, CSOs nevertheless managed to consolidate various social groups of the country and restore the controllability of public power, having successfully fought against corruption and clan communities. Moreover, it is the strong CSOs of the newly independent states that form the main core of traditionally oriented modernization that are platforms of special support from USA, Council of Europe, OSCE, and the EU.

The main civilarchic heritage of the transformation of the post-Soviet countries, which gave rise to a modern political system, is the constitutional order based on democratic values, which are trying to ensure the modernization of legal, ethical and religious norms, public and local bureaucratic management, and the establishment of civil and social dialogue. The difference between the genesis and functioning directions of post-Soviet civil society from the West, special qualitative characteristics, such as: a significant presence in the political sphere and the priority of consolidation on the basis of public rather than individual interests, shows the social functions of the communicator of CSOs in the dialogue between citizens and authorities.

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