

## GROWING ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY AND MASS MOBILIZATION IN PAKISTAN

MUHAMMAD ALI<sup>1</sup> & MUHAMMAD AHMED QADRI<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup>Department of Political Science University of Karachi, Pakistan

### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this descriptive study is to examine the growing role of civil society and mass mobilization -over the last decade and evaluate its various dimensional impacts that took place in Pakistan. In contemporary social and political movements in the world, civil society organizations (CSO) take this daunting takes to lead them in a straightforward and right directions. It is, therefore, a clear fact that civil society can play a vibrant and a systematic strategy to promote peoples participations in decisions making process. Mass mobilization by the civil society is considered a genuine and true movement, not directed towards parochial approach, rather with liberal objectives and goals. The research problem behind the study is to critically examine that how far the mass mobilization under the mechanism of civil society is successful in Pakistan? Keeping the views of the research problem the research paper is organized into five sections. First section focuses on the brief but comprehensive introduction of research problem. After the introduction, section two elaborate on research problem and historical background. Third part is to identify the relationship between the civil society and mass mobilization. Part four evaluates the role of civil society and its socio-political impacts in policy making and implementation in Pakistan. Last section is the conclusion of the study.

**KEYWORDS:** Civil Society, Mass Mobilization, MASS Participation, Political Change and Good Governance

### INTRODUCTION

The idea of civil society has become more prominent in political and developmental parlance over the past three decades. Change and transformations are assurance of an active society. A community can be judged by dint of its dynamic and vibrant characteristic in a region or a structure of the state. So revamping and re-organization of a community in a high powered and passionate way require accurate thinking. In contemporary social and political movements in the world, civil society organizations take this daunting takes to lead them in a straightforward and right directions. It is, therefore, a clear fact that civil society can play a vibrant and a systematic strategy to promote mass participation in decisions making process. Mass mobilization by the civil society is considered a genuine and true movement, not directed towards parochial approach, rather with liberal objectives and goals. The study is planned as a qualitative method and based on the research problem. Keeping in view the nature of research objectives, the efforts are made to collect material from diversified sources. Thus, there is a combination of primary and secondary sources. It is hoped this work will not only facilitate the scholars of political science and experts of public policy, political communication as well students but it would be an immense contribution in this field also.

### Historical Context of Research Problem

The term civil society has different meaning in the history of political thought. For the Greeks, who lived within the city state, were called civil with the passage of time, its sense of meaning transformed, the term civil was coined only for those, who were considered civilized. However, in modern contemporary political thought, its meaning those groups

and organizations which work collectively to achieve their objectives within the assigned parameters of the constitution. Therefore, for some of its advocates, the achievement of an independent civil society is a necessary precondition for a healthy democracy. So, its absence and decay of this group may cause many socio-political complexities within the state circle. The term civil emerged from the European thought, but it has spread almost all over the democratic countries since, totalitarian and dictatorial structure does not allow its existence. So, civil society is a contemplated part and parcel of a modern democratic state. The role of a civil society has no doubt widely augmented for the last two decades and it might expand its area in succeeding years also.

However, it is not the clear picture of the phenomenon.

According to Cicero, the Roman thinker, even in Greek society, such a group was there, where it (they) demanded equal rights for all society and also supported the concept of rule of law for urban community. This kind of society was understood in contrast to uncivilized or barbarian peoples. However, this type of thinking changed with the passage of time by the European concepts of the term. Hobbes ((1588–1679) gave the name of civil to those who came under the rule of leviathan. On the other hand, Locke (1632–1704) claimed the civic sense existed even before the state of nature. So every society has given various dimensions to the term civil in their conceptions. In nineteenth century, German thought separated civil society from state in both ethical and analytical terms and regarded the two as separable and perhaps as opposite. However the term civil society remains even today as resourceful and powerful as it was in the past. It is considered the conscious voice of the society, which makes efforts to promote equality and rule of law in a community. A civil society is typically seen as a superior alternative to a barbarian, natural, despotic, traditional, or pre-modern societal order. (Bevir, Mark, 2006) Furthermore, for the last two decades, civil society has gained much importance to the political process of any society. Since, it grasps the intellectuals, social workers, political workers and other social groups to give practical shapes to any movements. So, it owes its origin from the European soil and now spreads almost all parts of the democratic states of the world.

### **Conceptual Context**

**Civil society** is the "aggregate of non-governmental organizations and institutions that manifest interests and will of citizens." (Lexicon Dictionary.) Civil society includes the family and the private sphere, referred to as the "third sector" of society distinct from government and business. Richard Holloway (2001) defines civil society in this way, "citizens, associating neither for power nor for profit, are their sector of society, complementing government and business, and they are the people who constitute civil society organizations". So, according to the aforementioned definition, civil society does not fight for its own power and advantages, rather it seeks to work for the betterment of the society. However, by civil society it does not connote that it invariably criticizes government actions; rather it also appreciates in view of Holloway the positive work of government. Furthermore, civil society makes concerted efforts to incorporate all the active organizations of the society, which are working in different sectors for various purposes and objectives as Haynes(1997) aptly remarks, civil society encompasses the collectivities of non-state organizations, interest groups and associations such as trade unions, professional associations, higher education students and religious bodies, and the media which collectively help maintain a check on the power and totalizing tendency of the state. (Haynes 1997:16)

It is, therefore, categorically clear that civil society grasps all other associations which are functioning as pressure groups to evaluate and check the unfettered and unbridled power of a government so, government takes meticulous steps toward undertaking any decisions, which might affect social fabric of a society. Civil society plays its significant role in

contemporary political system of a state. Hence, it is a major concern for a social scientist to analyze the social and political change occurring in that time without any predetermined and pre-supposed view. According to Almond Gabriel(2011) when a social or political scientist studies human and social behaviour he tries to be scientifically precise, observing changes in social and political phenomena in different periods of time, or noting differences in institutions and practices in different societies. So, a change can be mobilized by civil society organizations in contemporary world generally, since, they are considered the proclaimed voice of aggrieved parties. (Almond, 2011:3)

### **Mass Mobilization**

Mass Mobilization (also known as popular mobilization and social mobilization) means a process, where civil society mobilizes the civil population in a systematized and regularized manner to make demands to the government regarding any social, political and economic sphere of society. This type of movement mostly takes root at the grass-root level. Some time, such a movement might generate a revolutionary movement such as Arab spring in 2013. However, some time such movement also utilize by the elites of the society, the case of Nazi Germany (1932-1945) one of the prime example of it. Social movement organizers may use large public gatherings, such as mass meetings, demonstrations and processions. The said methods are considered a demonstrative way of protest agitation politics. One may define the social mobilization, a methodological and theatrical system, where civil population is organized and motivated by the pressure groups to exert extreme pressure on government to accept their possible demands. It is, therefore, clear from the above mentioned definition, that social mobilization undertakes a wide range of groups, members of political parties, intellectuals, civic and religious groups of the community. So, it is a coordinated programme launched by the different sections of the society in an interrelated way. It facilitates the change of progress and tries to uproot and eradicate the mindset of status quo in a conservative society.

### **Civil Society and Mass Mobilization**

It is not necessary that **mass** mobilization is invariably launched by the civil groups of the society. Sometimes, it is carried and started by the government itself to promote its agendas. Even many governments themselves try to convince and mobilize the masses to participate in election process and activity engage in political parties election campaigns. Its important for political parties in any country to be able to mobilize voters in order to gain support for their party, which affects voter turnout in general election. (Winders, B 1991) In the same way, the government of Nazi Germany applied mass mobilization techniques to gain favor for their parochial agendas. Such events appealed to the people's emotion to cause patriotic fanaticism for the fascist cause. On the other hand, civil society makes coordinated efforts and orchestrates well-thought out plans to mobilize people. Apply media group is considered one of the most pervasive and powerful tool used by the social mobilization organizers. They are truly aware about its significance for the promotion of their cause and strategy. Even in contemporary world, such media techniques, internet sources have brought revolutions for any such movements, since, they disseminate ideas. The internet has grown in political importance and has played a significant role in many mass mobilization efforts. (Krueger 2005:27) So, its major role cannot be overlooked and ignored keeping in view the scope of media. Furthermore, the meaning of civil society in social mobilization has tremendously gone to different dimensions. In the past, political, social and economic aspects were separated, however, now, they are inexplicably interlinked and interwoven to one another. The shifting meaning of the concept of civil society indicates changing theoretical attitudes towards the relationship between economy, society and state. So, the nature of the civil society is becoming complex with the each passing days. Society's relationships are changing and transforming swiftly. But one

thing is categorically clear that only democracy can permit and allow civil society to flourish and nurture itself within its jurisdiction. A controlled and guided civil society does not work independently and freely, which is considered one of the basic requirement of its grooming and development.

### **Whys Civil Society Participation is Important?**

Effective civil society participation in government decision making can play a critical role in the development and strengthening of a pluralistic, participatory and accountable democracy. It is in this context, the study of civil society organization has become very important in the literature of political science, communication sciences and development studies. Civil society organization is important for several benefits. The term “good governance” has become a major theme in social sciences to examine levels of responsiveness of the state towards meeting popular needs and aspirations, popular participation in governance and ensuring development with equity and justice.(Preti,2004 :57)CSOs are instrumental in promoting democratic practice and good governance by advocating for the interests and views of all groups in society. Civil society’s functional contribution to good governance could be:

- Watchdog — against violation of human rights and governing deficiencies.
- Advocate — of the weaker sections’ point of view.
- Agitator — on behalf of aggrieved citizens.
- Educator — of citizens on their rights, entitlements and responsibilities and the government about the pulse of the people.
- Service provider — to areas and people not reached by official efforts or as government’s agent.
- Mobiliser — of public opinion for or against a programme or policy. (Doraiswamy :2007)

### **Mass Participation and Civil Society**

Democracy is an essential prerequisite of good governance. A democratic government may also face crisis of governability. However, a democrat system is essential because that alone can promote the ethics of economic and political freedom and development for individuals increase the mass participation, which are features of good governance. The good governance is a situation where there is a mutual trust between the state and the citizen. Relatively, it is very essential to give emphasis on the democratic form of governance. The government must have participation from the citizenry; both men and women in the society should take part in various activities and organizations in the government sectors. The principle of equality is one of the most important constitutional principles upon which the contemporary system rests. This means that the principle of equality contained in the individual communities are equal in rights, responsibilities and public duties that will be enjoyed by all without discrimination of race, origin, or belief.It is believed by some scholar - Nasir Islam and David.R. Morision(1997)- believed that human rights, civil society and democratization are essential components of good governance. Mustafa Kamal (1997) has further been asserted by some scholars that the issue of building a civil society is central to good governance. It is believed that the civil society is indeed a driving force behind political and economic reforms which is a pre-condition towards good governance. In fact, good governance has been considered as tin- hall mark of a civil society: a society which ensures a democratic political culture with accountability and popular participation in the developmental process. In the present times, the globalized market process induced by globalization and liberalization has laid a greater demand for civil society and human rights. It means empowerment of

people, which is possible only through good governance.

### **Accountability and Transparency**

Civil society participation ensures greater accountability and transparency in all stages of decision making, and CSOs can play a critical watchdog role. Development of any kind cannot occur in the absence of a system that is accountable and transparent. Accountability is one of the core stones of good governance. Accountability in governance is basically about holding public officials responsible for their actions. The government should be held responsible to its citizens for its work, which means reporting to citizens on a regular basis. Transparency means that decision taken and their enforcement are done in a manner that follows rules and regulations. Transparency requires all information on government work to be available and easily accessible for the public. Information must be up-to-date and understandable to enable informed participation by civil society.

### **Civil Society in Pakistan**

Civil society takes roots, where the state structure system encourages the liberal thinking and education. In Pakistan, particularly civil society emerged during the 1990s, because at that time, NGOs were embolden to spread new thinking within the circle of the society. As Zaidi( 2008) explains it “Governance, democracy, and devolution form a critical union to make development sustainable, and are said to manifest the key pre-requisites for progress. From the above view, it is crystal clear that government support and democratic principles are basic Sine qua non for the emergence of civil society. Since, devolution, as Zaidi (1999) described, play a significant role for fostering this principle. Decentralization of power would enable to the common masses at the grass root level to solve their problems. Awareness and issue resolving strategy embolden them to actively participate in any matter. So, the role of NGOs enhanced with the passage of time from 1980s to 1990s. The decades of 1980s and the 1990s, saw an unprecedented growth and increasing role of the non-governmental sector in development and planning. However, the true face of civil society came Pakistan, against GeneralMushraf regime(1999-2008), when he ousted the sitting then Chief Justice ,Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudry in 2007 . The lawyer’s community mobilized the conscious sections of the society and initiated a wide range of agitations and demonstrations throughout the country in the protest against such step. People supported them in this regard, Pakistani Lawyers that denounced Musharraf’s action as illegal and demanded chief justice’s reinstatement.(Zaidi, 2008) . Therefore, it might be argued that lawyer’s movement paved the true path of emergence of civil society in Pakistan.

A vibrant and energetic civil society undeniably plays an enduring and long lasting role in Pakistan, if it is directed in a right path without any ulterior motives of any group. In Pakistan, civil society did not play its true and genuine role, until, the last period of Musharaf era. The true and real picture of civil society in the role of social mobilization came, when General Mushraff ousted, then chief justice. The lawyer’s community refused to comply, with this decree, so resulted, a wide range of demonstrations and agitations in the jurisdiction of Pakistan. They organized and systematized all the processes and progress with the thought out strategy orchestrated all walks of lives to raise their voices against the disfiguring the basic tenets of constitutional supremacy in the state. However, in Pakistan, the phenomena are not as easy as someone comprehends it, because the nature of the society is not susceptible to any wide range social movement. Initially, the NGOs started different initiatives to mobilize people in order to make possible the participation of the masses. “The old is certainly dwindling to give way to the new. The process seems to be a complex one and thus the comprehension of this phenomenon is also not so simple. On the other hand, due to the supine and inactive role of civil society created a wide fissure for the regard for the democratic principles and values within the society. Since, democracy

does not only mean to change government, but also social transformations must be practiced in letter and spirit from all walks of life nevertheless, in our state, such pragmatism has not been practiced yet. Democracy has not been fully realized yet, and achievements of Pakistan in democratic governance are also not satisfactory. (Sethi Harsh 2008).

The emergence of civil society is considered to be excellent steps towards the practice of democracy. However, in Pakistan, the complex problem is many magnitude of society look democracy, as a form of westernization. As Akbar Zaid (2008) remarks, Pakistani civil society, whether westernized or Islamized, the issue in short was not democracy versus non-democracy, but rather liberalism versus some variously interpreted set of Islamic symbols and values. They criticize the harsh steps of a government and also appreciate the positive initiatives of it. The new set of relations, also called co-governance which meant "The power is no longer concentrated in the state. The state and its instruments of government remain of central importance: but it is no longer the sole actor in determining the direction of society (Ezra Mbogori 2011:109) However, in Pakistan, the case is diametrically opposite.

The civil society's organizations and institutions have not received advantageous support from the responsible quarters of the government, that's why their active participation in governmental section is less. Civil society's mobilization means, giving equal rights to all citizens living within the jurisdiction of the state. It reflects and upholds the dignity of all citizens. In Pakistan, the emergence of civil society's organizations owes their existence due to the vibrant role of human rights groups in our society. They are playing their pivotal role in this regard civil society organizations grew in number, and they particularly took up the takes of advocacy for human rights (Shaheen, 2012). Since, the civil society works within the defined parameters of constitutional framework. They fight for the true and genuine human rights. So, civil society holds everyone accountable for his / her actions. So, pursuing common good is the hallmark of social mobilization launched by the civil society organizations. However, it does not mean that civil society organizations only work within the state, rather they try to gain the support and favor from all over the world. Since they are fully aware about the concerted efforts in worldwide level. The Arab spring was one of prime example in this regard. Today, the civil society organizations are not only limited to classical theory of communications. They utilized and applied different means to achieve the goal objective oriented conference. National groups meet at international conferences and policy forums, and the network of social relations as well as internet connections, extends across national borders(Keck ,1998) So, the civil society's organizations establish and formulate policies at national and international level for the mobilization of masses; the citizens of different states come together to give one another favour for the positive programmes, like people in different regions looking for the promotion of democratic process. "The process of building new independent associational groups to articulate the specialized interest of different citizen is underway and will be important to the democratic process (Almond, G , 2011:5)However, in Pakistan, the problem underlying within the civil society's organizations, because they have not been working in a sustained and vigorous way. Therefore, social mobilization in Pakistan has been limited within the circle of some pressure groups.

A civil society can be energetic and dynamic when it is given political shape as Zaidi said, "civil society is critical but political society matters as much, if not more, so political society is regarded as the captain of the ship, without to it, ship would flout aimlessly (Zaidi, Akbar 2008) .For the mobilization of civil society, political society is crucial, because they work for the formulation of public opinion. Without strong public opinion, transformation and changes in the status quo would be a daunting task. Public opinion can help bring about various reforms by putting pressure on government leaders. Therefore, it goes without any saying that the public opinion is one of the strongest tool and instrument for the



formation of social behaviour in the contemporary world. The civil society should work whole heartedly in Pakistan to formulate a vibrant public opinion regarding important issues of country political, social, economic and particularly constitutional aspect.

### **Challenges for Civil Society in Pakistan**

In today's Pakistan, the civil society has been facing problems from its inception. The nature of the state and nature of the society have not been conducive to this sphere. Therefore, the civil society is said to be still under developed. If civil society has been developed, there would have not been any of human rights violations in the country especially regarding the rights of women. The worth mentioning achievements of the civil society have been in the domain of women's rights, and to some extent children's rights. On the other hand, civil society has been struggling to achieve political rights for all sections of the society without any distinctions. However, this area has not been utilized in real sense of the term. Different political parties have not supported this cause of the civil society so far. No doubt, the civil society have demonstrated in most part of the political history of the country, whenever, seen by the conscious voice of the society. There have been movements for upholding political rights as well, when the state was out right. Violating them" (Shaheen, 2012). So, the role of the civil society undeniable, even, so guided and checks and balances in our system. Civil society has been asserting its character as a guardian of democracy at various times. However, it is not necessary that people should follow any movement without realizing its potential consequences. People should be fully aware about the nature of their demands, agitations and demonstrations. No doubt, that civil society promotes democratic ideas and principles, but it does not require and essential that all programs and agitations would bring possible positive results. As, Pasha(2007) refers "the expansion of civil society means democratic advance, but also states the view that blind faith might also take its root there (Pasha 2007:185) The civil society has not developed, because state has not allocated sufficient funds for their development. Without the support of government, it is not an easy task to develop the concept of tolerance and accommodative views. However, in Pakistan, the nature of the society is still in complex form, regarding the nature of the society Iftikhar, H. Malik comments, "It is inherently centralized, denying participatory politics owing to its colonial" (Iftikhar 1997:161)Hence, in centralized system where Biradari system runs and considered the sole motive of people, the concept of civil society cannot take tools easily. Furthermore, in social sector government concern has not been remarkable.

Civil society not only works in a simple democratic environment but also requires conducive and congenial system. However, this seems to be absent in Pakistan, where funds are allocated for non-development sector a lot but not for socioeconomic sector. This state has characteristics of a typical third world state, because it generously allocates to non-development sectors, leaves the vital social sectors in doldrums, hence damages the basis of the civil society. Moreover, society and state is more diversified common masses have not been able to achieve their true and genuine status. They have not been awarded true place in polity of Pakistan. Most of the time, only feudal lords and industrialists have ruled the country. So, the share of common citizens is less in terms of governmental affairs. Regarding its function, the state here faces the challenge of creating harmony and maintaining a social order which could fulfill the aspirations of peoples, who belong to different ethnicities, are in different social structures, at different levels of development, and follow different socio-political norms".( Shaheen, 2012) Thus, such structure and environment have made unable civil society to emerge. A viable civil society can play wide role in this regard to mobilize masses regarding the rights bestowed upon to them through constitutional guarantee. Constitution of the Pakistan (1973) has given every citizen of this country to take part in

political activities (within the parameters of constitution) social and economic spheres. (Article 8-28) However the state polity has ignored this vital aspect. To a greater degree, the recurring dilemma of Pakistan's govern ability is rooted in the dichotomous relationship between an all power full ever transcendent, and vetoing state structure and a feeble, ill organized, and vulnerable civil society". (Mirza, Saleem, 2002.), It is, therefore, deplorable fact that civil society is still considered feeble in Pakistan.

## CONCLUSIONS

Effective civil society participation in government decision making can play a critical role in the development and strengthening of a pluralistic, participatory and accountable democracy. It is in this context, the study of civil society organization has become very important in the literature of political science, communication sciences and development studies. Civil society is an important aspect of democratization process because it provides a vibrant link between citizens and the state. It also provides an environment that can be used to enhance community cohesion and decision-making. Information is vital to civic participation and also encourages its development. When people get better informed, they are most likely to participate in policy discussions and communicate their ideas and concerns freely. It is clear from the aforementioned point that civil society's role is undeniable in modern socio-political movements. It holds accountable everyone for his / her actions, promotes democratic ethos and values, protect human rights and foster the accommodative views of other. Initially, NGOs worked under the setup of the state and other civil society's organizations. Nevertheless, now the phenomenon has changed in Pakistan, civil society's organizations and groups criticize the government policies openly without any fear and favour, lawyer's movement against Mushrraf government. Today's politics the human rights groups often reprimand government actions the human right activist are considered the vibrant voice of the civil society's organizations. Therefore, they mobilize huge gatherings in such times, whenever required. The role of civil society is enhancing day by day in Pakistan. It makes people aware regarding their place in the state. People are becoming conscious, due to the active role of civil society in our country. However, the civil society should incorporate the true mindset of the society within its own sphere not from outside of its structure, as Mirza remarked, "In Pakistan, we are trying to introduce the concept of civil society from outside" So, the structure of class system should be removed and democratic principles and ethos be promoted in order that the mobilization of any movement should be directed in an objective oriented destiny by the civil society.

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