Power and Change in Central Asia

Edited by Sally N. Cummings

London and New York

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The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 saw the creation of new, independent countries and governments in Central Asia. In this volume, a distinguished international collection of scholars assesses the emergence of strong authoritarian presidential regimes in this strategic region. They analyse structures of government, styles of leadership, power struggles and recent election victories in:

- Kazakhstan
- Kyrgyzstan
- Tajikistan
- Turkmenistan
- Uzbekistan.

Using empirical data and original research from indigenous sources, the book analyses and compares local developments and places them within a broader historical and comparative framework. In so doing, it assesses what it means to exercise power in the specific context of Central Asia.

This book provides a detailed, accessible and up-to-date overview of the politics of a rapidly evolving region, and as such it should be essential reading for undergraduate and postgraduate students of transition studies and post-communist affairs, and for scholars and practitioners of the area.

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1 Introduction

Power and change in Central Asia

Sally N. Cummings

Many predicted that the collapse of the Soviet Union would be followed by the democratization of the successor states.[1] This notion has turned out to be at best premature, at worst misguided. Nowhere is this more so than in Central Asia, where the first decade of independence has been marked by strong authoritarian presidentialism. These contributions examine how the presidents of the Central Asian republics came into office and how they have managed to stay in office in the face of enormous transitional challenges. This book is thus an exploration of comparative presidentialism in the post-Soviet Central Asian states of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

As is frequently asserted, these five states had not desired independence.[2] Writes Gregory Gleason: 'The greatest irony of independence in Central Asia [was that it came] as had Soviet-style colonialism several decades before – it was imposed by Moscow'.[3] In Central Asia, communist elites resisted Gorbachev's democratization and liberalization reforms and independence came by default only when the Soviet centre collapsed in 1991. The absence of an anti-colonial struggle in these states – with the notable exception of Tajikistan's – denied these leaders historical legitimacy.

Authoritarian presidentialism has emerged in all five states with important geopolitical and economic differences. Kazakhstan is the largest, spanning an area eleven times the size of the United Kingdom but with a population of under 15 million; its geopolitical destiny is primarily shaped by the two neighbouring great powers, China and Russia. By contrast, its main regional competitor, Uzbekistan, has the highest population density in the region, and borders on the unstable states of Afghanistan and Tajikistan. Tajikistan has recently partially emerged from a civil war that has been ongoing between 1992 and 1997; like Kyrgyzstan it is mountainous and inaccessible. Turkmenistan is similarly isolated; in fact, it was the most isolated of all Soviet republics in the Soviet period. Its border with Iran is an important geopolitical influence. While Turkmenistan and Tajikistan have emerged the poorest of the post-Soviet economies, those of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan benefited considerably from Soviet rule. As Caspian littoral states, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan stand to profit substantially from oil revenues if transport can be found. Like Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan has gas as well as a substantial cotton

crop. Both Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have hydroelectric power and mineral resources.

The presidents of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan – Nursultan Nazarbaev, Islam Karimov and Saparmurat Niyazov, respectively – are all former first secretaries of their republics' Communist Parties. Each one made himself president, like Gorbachev, prior to the fall of the Soviet Union and has managed to hold on to power ever since. By contrast, President Askar Akaev of Kyrgyzstan, a physicist and dissident, had by the close of the 1980s severed his links with the republican party leadership, and thus assumed the office of the presidency without a consolidated political elite behind him. Similarly, Tajikistan's Imomali Rahmonov did not have a ready constituency and, unlike Akaev, did not embody reform credentials. All five presidents of the region have become known for running tight ships; they wield the most authoritarian rule, along with Belarus, in the post-Soviet space.

The following outlines the aims and rationale of the book, its structure and its principal findings. This piece thus serves as both an introduction and conclusion to the book.

Aims and rationale of the book

This book is written in the same spirit of two recent works on post-Soviet leadership and with the same basic assumption: leadership matters. In *Patterns in Post-Soviet Leadership*, Timothy J. Colton and Robert C. Tucker explore, *inter alia*, various post-Soviet presidents' individual characters and values; leadership roles and institutions; the state and cultural framework within which leaders operate; and leadership effectiveness.[4] In Ray Taras' edited volume *Postcommunist Presidents* his contributors 'consider how the "character and values" of incumbents of the executive branch of government have affected the political system'.[5] They both suggest a linkage between presidential power and authoritarianism.

No single definition of political leadership currently exists. Jean Blondel calls 'specifically national political leadership . . . the power exercised by one or a few individuals to direct members of the nation towards action'.[6] Other definitions of political leadership encompass personality, environment, behaviour and roles, and institutional structures. Indeed, the entire political (and social) system, to the extent that it affects political life, is part of the instrument that a leader has at his or her disposal. As Blondel explains, the way in which the relationships are organised between leaders and their immediate entourage is an important element in how leadership works. This is why leadership is often viewed in terms of a 'regime' – an institutional style characterising polities under a given ruler.

The present volume offers a comparison of post-Soviet Central Asian presidentialism. Like Colton and Tucker, we aim to look at the exercise of presidential power in terms of leadership roles, institutions, environment and effectiveness, and like Taras' work but to a lesser degree, it explores down-

stream analysis, that is, the effects of institutional choice on regime type. More specifically, this volume aims to look at how these five presidencies have built their power and managed to keep it for, in most cases, a decade, along with more general reasons for the emergence of authoritarian presidentialism in this region. By asking these questions about one geographic area with similar historical legacies, we can attempt a controlled comparison.

Is it possible to speak of one type of presidential leadership in Central Asia, or are there different types? To answer this we need to both classify and explain. Where do these regimes fit in terms of nondemocratic states, and what are the principal reasons for this type of presidentialism having emerged? Observers of Central Asia often remark on the uniformity among these states; this book sets out to both confirm and challenge these claims. The contributions here do not deny these similarities, and part of this book's remit is to show how those common characteristics have been important. Indeed, as is demonstrated, there is a stronger case today than there was at the beginning of the 1990s for arguing that the Central Asian states are marked by a considerable degree of uniformity. In its ten-year history, post-independence political development in Central Asia has shown a relatively limited number of trajectories, processes and political systems. Nevertheless, this book is also very much about the differences in leadership displayed by the presidents in the region, and how the first decade of independence has demonstrated varying levels of willingness and ability to experiment and innovate, and of pressures to liberalize.

In its focus on presidential rule, the volume explores the role of agency in regime creation, maintenance and change. In Robert Fishman's words, a 'regime may be thought of as the formal and informal organisation of the centre of political power, and of its relations with the broader society. A regime determines who has access to political power, and how those who are in power deal with those who are not'.[7] Regimes are typically less permanent than states but more permanent than governments. In reaction to the momentous global transformations scholars have shown a renewed interest in regime change. As emphasized by Herbert Kitschelt, the main theoretical division within this field is drawn between those who seek more 'structural' and 'configurational' explanations, on the one side, and those who focus on the process of change itself – the sequence of events and the strategic moves of the actors.[8]

Structure-oriented scholars usually contend that actors are constrained by their environment and face a limited number of choices. By contrast, process-oriented scholars attribute considerable autonomy to leaders and hence greater opportunities to experiment and innovate. This book emphasizes process, even if individual contributors illustrate how leadership choices and strategies, in the spirit of Blondel's definition, need to be assessed in the context of their environments.

Essentially, then, the aim of this book is to reach a sense of where power is in the Central Asian state. Power is a crucial category for political theory, yet it is a very elusive one. Is power derived from agency or structure? Should it be seen as conforming to social reality or as a capacity to act? As Steven Lukes has

usefully formulated, a state might have power over but not power to.[9] The first, represented by the pluralist and elitist traditions, emphasizes the dimension of 'power over' and the existence of power struggles linked to conflict of interest. The second, advanced by Talcott Parsons and Hannah Arendt, among others, stresses the collective ability, the 'power to', and underscores consensus. Still others argue that power should be considered an autonomous force that shapes and reshapes structures and processes.

What does it mean to exercise power in the specific context of Central Asia? Writing on post-colonial Africa, Chris Allen remarked that 'to have power was to have the means to reproduce it; to lose power, however, was to risk never having the means to regain it'.[10] The same could be said of the leaders in Central Asia. Once in office, Central Asian presidents have sought to consolidate their power and build their authority and all have viewed their office as a zero-sum game, as a winner-take-all position. Locating and unpacking power will help to classify, or typologize, the five regimes. Unpacking the source and nature of power in each state will help us explain both the similarities and differences in regime type among the five states. In addition to establishing categories and exploring causes, the book finally assesses the likely trajectories of these regimes.

Methodology and structure

This book operates on two levels. Chapters 2 and 3 provide a broad perspective for the discussion by drawing historical comparisons of post-empire politics and regime types. The remainder of the book, Chapters 4–8, is firmly grounded in empirical evidence, in which each President and his rule are analyzed in turn. There is one chapter examining each of the five presidents. All these empirical essays draw on indigenous sources and provide details about presidential regimes in their respective states.

In Chapter 2, Dominic Lieven compares the impact of empire and its aftermath in Central Asia with other regions of the world where empires have ruled. Lieven shows how the newly independent states of Central Asia have survived without the periodic crises of sovereignty that have plagued post-imperial states elsewhere, such as Africa. This more robust sovereignty stems partly from the fact that Russian and Soviet rule in Central Asia, while relatively brief in its history, did entail the transformation into a region of modern, urban, secular and industrial societies. Lieven concludes that it 'is on the whole a fair generalization that these Soviet colonial-era notables have done less damage since 1991 than the nationalist forces which came to power, above all, in the Caucasus region.'

Indeed the single most astonishing fact about the collapse of the Soviet Union, as stressed by Lieven, is that it was not accompanied by wider regional conflict. Of course Tajikistan did have a civil war.[11] But overall the collapse was comparatively remarkably peaceful. Lieven does not rule out the possibility of a violent nationalist upsurge at a later stage, however. He outlines some variables:

the fate of Russia and its former periphery cannot easily be divorced; Russia will have an even greater impact on those states where national unity is fragile and regional and clan loyalties are strong; and the impact of huge export earnings on political stability can be particularly destructive.

In Chapter 3, John Ishiyama assesses the authoritarian regimes now emerging in post-Soviet Central Asia and speculates on the consequences of current regime formation processes for future moves toward democratization. Through an analysis of the evolution of the presidencies of Central Asia, he sheds light on the process of institution building prior to political transition. This chapter is divided into three sections: Ishiyama first places the five Central Asian states into the literature on personalist regimes, particularly neopatrimonial authoritarian states; then he demonstrates how different types of neopatrimonial regimes are likely to lead to different types of transition; finally, he places Central Asia in this framework of neopatrimonialism.

In the first of the five country studies, Sally Cummings argues that by concentrating on power consolidation, Kazakhstan's president, Nursultan Nazarbaev, has neglected to build authority. The 1995 referendum and early 1999 elections, for example, can be seen in this light; the former served to consolidate power, the latter to build authority (even if these elections were eventually not free or fair). Part of the process of authority building is to target the right constituency. For the moment, that constituency is the elite rather than society. Furthermore, Nazarbaev has been increasingly unable to unite the political and economic elite with the central and regional political elite. The upshot is a hybrid, transitional regime of part-authoritarianism.

In Chapter 5, Eugene Huskey argues that Askar Akaev has remained in power in Kyrgyzstan through a mix of deferential political culture and 'an economy of authoritarianism'. This is no mean feat: not only was Akaev the only post-Soviet leader to have survived a reformist agenda which brought with it profound and painful political and economic change, he did so from coming outside pre-existing Soviet institutions. As also highlighted elsewhere by Adrian Karatnycky, the other anti-Communist reformers of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Tajikistan did not survive, falling either in coups (Azerbaijan and Georgia), forced resignations (Armenia) or civil war (Tajikistan).[12] Furthermore, Akaev took office at a moment of ethnic crisis, and continues to lead in the context of an ethnically divided society. Huskey argues that the deferential political culture gave the president the space to enact radical economic reforms directed from above without a popular backlash.

Huskey emphasizes also the importance of agency, and how Akaev has been instrumental in marketing his poor, isolated country aggressively to the world as a place to do business. Although Akaev has clearly been the most progressive of the Central Asian presidents, in the second half of the 1990s he employed a minimalist authoritarianism in response to a number of factors: pressures from neighbouring states; social strains brought on by economic chaos and ethnic tensions; and challenges to his own authority and honour. Huskey claims that Akaev's more authoritarian style does not represent a turnaround from his

progressive intentions as yet; nevertheless, '[s]hould economic performance continue to worsen, or economic resentment along ethnic lines deepen, Akaev will be tempted to apply even larger doses of authoritarianism. Such is the logic of states detached from the societies over which they rule.'

In Chapter 6, Muriel Atkin characterizes Imomali Rahmonov's rule as one of 'ineffective authoritarianism'. Presidential rule in post-Soviet Tajikistan is unlike that in any other Central Asian state; Rahmonov enjoys neither authority nor power. Like Akaev, Rahmonov hails from outside the structures of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), but he was chosen not for his standing but for his very insignificance. Rahmonov rules a war-torn society from within a coalition – a divided elite. Writes Atkin: 'At times, contemporary Tajikistani politics appears to be the war of all against all'. Far from being master of the land, Rahmonov depends heavily on Russian backing to remain in power.

In Chapter 7, Sally Cummings and Michael Ochs show the presidency of Turkmenistan to be an inglorious semi-sultanism. The term sultanism is primarily illustrative because it conveys the personalism, excesses and arbitrariness that have characterized presidential rule in the first ten years of Turkmenistan's independence. But the regime differs enough from traditional sultanistic regimes for the comparison to shed much light on the processes of regime genesis and maintenance. The differences stem primarily from the particular imprint Saparmurat Niyazov has made on his political system. Of the Central Asian presidents, he has had the most enduring and far-reaching effect on state, regime and population. The chapter demonstrates how a peculiar confluence of factors has enabled personality to play this important role in Turkmenistan.

Finally, in Chapter 8, Roger Kangas discusses Islam Karimov's rule in Uzbekistan in terms of 'benign authoritarianism'. Karimov has built his authority and consolidated his power, and as a consequence he enjoys great popularity. He has gained authority through a mix of charismatic, traditional and legal–rational forms: he has portrayed himself as a strong leader; he has called on traditional leaders, particularly Amir Timur, and clan networks, to bolster his legitimacy; he has appealed to a complex mix of Islamic, secular and national identities; and he has 'legally' confirmed his rule by using elections and referenda.

These legal forms, however, have been fraudulent – Karimov has used façade democracy. He has been helped here, Kangas writes, by a subservient political culture inherited from the Soviet and pre-Soviet eras. But, to turn around George Breslauer's phrase as Huskey does, consolidating power is not the same as building authority. Power consolidation requires the development of effective institutions of rule and the forming of a loyal and competent leadership team. Kangas demonstrates that Uzbekistan's institutions are consolidated, but not necessarily effective. Karimov has achieved this situation through the wide use of his formal and appointive powers, which have ensured a loyal and centralized elite. The state is also highly centralized: regional appointments are made by the president and regional powers are curtailed by the centre. Karimov's task has

also been helped by the perceived threat of Islamic fundamentalism. The succession process in Uzbekistan, Kangas predicts, is likely to be protracted, but will not lead to state collapse; it will probably involve an interim government.

In short, all country contributions have assessed creating presidencies, maintaining power and the dynamics of change. Under regime maintenance, we look at both consolidation of power through institutional mechanisms and the development of authority. This gives us an explanation as well as a typology. Does the president's rule depend on rational, legal or traditional authority? Has the president developed a cult of personality? In whose name does the president rule? What level of support exists for the current political system? How, if at all, has the power base of presidential support changed over the decade since independence? Has marketization threatened presidential power? We look also at both the *de facto* and *de jure* methods of control the presidents exercise over their systems. The main findings presented now are drawn from the succeeding chapters.

The main findings

Classifying Central Asian regimes

The contributions suggest that none of the five Central Asian states has engaged in democratization, defined by Linz and Stepan as requiring 'open contestation over the right to win control of the government, and this in turn requires free competitive elections, the results of which determine who governs.'[13] None of the presidents has been tested in free and fair elections.

As Linz and Stepan proceed to argue, it is possible to have liberalization without democratization. Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have engaged in liberalization. Liberalization in the early 1990s in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan entailed a mix of policy and social changes, such as less censorship of the media, the introduction of religious tolerance, and most important, the toleration of opposition. In Tajikistan liberalization in part obliged the incumbent regime to form a coalition government with the Opposition. By contrast, in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan any liberalization has been very limited and, by the close of the 1990s, both had not tolerated opposition. By the end of the 1990s all of the five presidential regimes, even Kyrgyzstan, had regressed and become increasingly repressive.

If the case studies confirm that none of the states can be seen to be democratizing, then what are they doing? Amongst others, Karatnycky argues that Freedom House's designation of states as transitional may ultimately not only be unhelpful but inaccurate since dynamic transformation may be over.[14] These regimes may be durable (as many other authoritarian and corporatist states around the world have demonstrated). This argument about durability aside (it is simply too early to tell), they are nondemocratic. Linz and Stepan have identified four types of nondemocratic regimes: authoritarian, totalitarian, post-totalitarian and sultanistic. How relevant are these distinctions for Central Asia,

or are the five states simply variants on the first, authoritarianism? And to what extent do these distinctions matter?

The chapters here suggest that these are not simply post-totalitarian states. Indeed, all post-Soviet states have moved very far from the Marxist–Leninist model. Even if some remnants of the old system remain, the CPSU no longer has the monopoly of power, a guiding ideology no longer exists, there is very little, if any, routine mobilization of the population within state-sponsored organizations to achieve a minimum degree of compliance, and leadership recruitment is no longer restricted to the official party. The independent states of Central Asia are qualitatively new entities, with their new internal logics.

In Linz and Stepan's typologies, we are left with a choice between authoritarianism and sultanism. In his seminal 1964 article 'An authoritarian regime: Spain', Linz defined his new category of authoritarian regimes as:

> political systems with limited, not responsible, political pluralism, without elaborate and guiding ideology, but with distinctive mentalities, without extensive or intensive political mobilization, except at some points in their development, and in which a leader or occasionally a small group exercises power within formally ill-defined limits but actually quite predictable ones.[15]

Authoritarianism differs from sultanism along the four dimensions of pluralism, mobilization, ideology and leadership identified by Linz. Under sultanism there is no rule of law, no allowance for a semi-opposition, no possibilities of pacts between regime moderates and democratic moderates, and no autonomous sphere of the economy or civil society. The different degrees of pluralism translate into the degree of mobilization found in both regimes: while there is little or no mobilization in authoritarian regimes, sultanistic ones have low but occasional mobilization manipulated by the sultan. Authoritarianism operates without an elaborate and guiding ideology but with distinctive mentalities; sultanism does not even have these mentalities (outside of despotic personalism), and relies instead on the personality cult of the ruler. Indeed, while 'the essence of sultanism is *unrestrained personal rulership*',[16] leadership in authoritarian regimes is formally ill-defined but nevertheless predictable.

Linz and Stepan highlight how it is possible to have a mix of sultanistic and authoritarian tendencies at any one time or at different times in one state. By the end of the 1990s Kazakhstan had become authoritarian with limited liberalization; Kyrgyzstan had become mildly authoritarian (Huskey describes Kyrgyzstan as displaying consociationalism – with a powerful presidency, a weak parliament, and fledgling parties that are not ethnically based); Uzbekistan is situated between sultanism and authoritarianism; and Turkmenistan is the closest to sultanism. Tajikistan is an example of oligarchic government with some opposition, and is the state that has kept most to its original trajectory. The other four have become increasingly authoritarian.

The five country contributors have thus chosen a distinct label to describe

their respective presidential regimes. Kazakhstan is a hybrid authoritarianism; Kyrgyzstan displays 'an economy of authoritarianism'; Tajikistan, steeped in civil war, demonstrates an 'ineffectual authoritarianism'; Uzbekistan is a 'benign authoritarianism'; and at the most extreme, Turkmenistan is described as a semi-sultanism (hybrid between authoritarian and sultanistic systems). Freedom House in its 1999–2000 report designates Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan as autocracies (one-person rule) and Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan as transitional regimes (where rule is by the few).

The different typologies are essentially about how much power is institutionalized. John Ishiyama has formalized this relationship between power and institutionalisation by characterizing the five states as neopatrimonial authoritarian regimes. He highlights how neopatrimonialism distinguishes them from other types of authoritarian regimes, particularly corporatist regimes: while the latter are characterized by the existence of an organic ideology of national unity and attempts at direct political mobilization along controlled bureaucratic channels, in neopatrimonial systems personal patronage, rather than ideology or law, buttress personal authority. Like the classical patrimonialism described by Max Weber and Robin Theobold, the right to rule is ascribed to a person rather than an office. Drawing on Michael Bratton and Nicholas Van de Walle's distinctions of four types of neopatrimonial regimes, Ishiyama contends that Turkmenistan corresponds to a personalist dictatorship; Tajikistan to an oligarchic neopatrimonial regime; Uzbekistan to a plebiscitary single party model; and Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan to a competitive single-party neopatrimonial regime.

As to whether these distinctions matter – whether there is a causal relationship between institutional choice and regime type – the contributions suggest: yes. As Taras acknowledges, focusing on presidencies may not provide conclusive evidence as to their effects but it may give some sense of correlation. The findings of this volume would appear to support the correlations made by Timothy Frye in his article on institutional choice, where he demonstrates that higher presidential powers are positively correlated to more authoritarian regimes.[17] The implications of Frye's analysis for downstream analysis are: presidential powers do lead to authoritarian regimes. Frye determines that the greater the presidential powers, the greater the authoritarianism. According to Frye, in ascending order of presidential power and therefore authoritarianism are: Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. The chapters demonstrate how the semi-sultanistic state of Turkmenistan, and to a lesser degree Uzbekistan, are associated with repressive, sometimes violent regimes; they have also shown that the weaker presidencies in the early 1990s were associated with more liberal regimes. What, then, are the powers enjoyed by the five presidencies and how have they been able to exercise those powers?

Central Asian presidents and their powers

The empirical evidence presented in this volume demonstrates how presidents have been concerned with building and maintaining power. Power consolidation

involves manipulating formal institutional mechanisms to strengthen the ruler's grip on his office. The five presidents have basically employed the same techniques, and these are: the creation of a powerful central executive by subordinating other institutions to their fiat through constitutional means; consolidation of a patronage network; repression and sometimes violence. Presidents are thus able to exert influence over other actors in the system.

The five presidents have used a variety of techniques to manipulate institutions and the creation of a powerful central executive has been a fundamental part of their strategies. In all five republics, revisions to the constitutions of these states have strengthened the executive – in particular the office of the presidency – to the detriment of the legislature and judiciary. Furthermore, presidents have attempted, to varying degrees and with mixed success, to centralize their polities.

Simultaneously these presidents have been concerned with maintaining a veneer of democracy, emphasizing the apparent constitutional separation of the branches of government into executive, judiciary and legislature. In reality, however, these three branches are often fused, with the latter two subsumed by the much more powerful executive. The extreme case is Turkmenistan's Niyazov, who simultaneously holds the offices of Head of State, Prime Minister and Head of Constitutional Court. Nevertheless, as Cummings and Ochs emphasize, that the president felt it necessary to introduce these trappings of Western institutions is testimony to the use presidents have made of constitutional hypocrisy and façade democracy. However abused, this form of democracy has forged a new relationship between ruler and ruled.

All five presidents have also employed the tools created by the Soviet system to advance and protect the interests of a monopolistic elite. The Soviet system created a self-perpetuating ruling elite, equipped with powerful instruments with which to protect its interests. While Rahmonov and Akaev were unable to draw on the institution of the CPSU, the other three presidents have rigorously exploited their post-Soviet networks and have created new presidential parties. Parties such as these have often been essential devices, in divided and underdeveloped societies, for the pursuit of national integration and economic development. The extensive use of patronage powers renders informal powers critical in an overall assessment of the powers of these presidents. The less institutionalisation and rule of law, the more informal presidential powers have come to bear on the system.

Consequently, presidents in Central Asia enjoy both specific and residual powers. In the same article on institutional choice Frye usefully employs this distinction.[18] Specific rights are assigned to each contracting party (in the case of political institutions, to parliament, the judiciary, government, for example); when shared with another body these powers are reduced. By contrast, residual rights belong to one actor only in the many circumstances that lie outside the conditions of a contract. Frye explains how the concept of residual rights derives from incomplete contracting in economics and was later applied to political science.[19]

Specific powers include the rights explicitly granted to a president in the constitution and are mainly procedural, appointive and symbolic. All have been used by the Central Asian presidents. For example, and as highlighted, political power is highly centralized and much of it is concentrated in the president's hands. They have retained important appointive powers, notably their input in the appointment of regional bosses; all Central Asian presidents continue to reject direct elections for the regional elites. These appointment powers enable the presidents to exert not only formal but also informal power, as they allow them to retain crucial patronage positions.

Presidents draw to different degrees on a cult of personality. Niyazov is the most extreme indeed among all post-Soviet states in that he has invented a name for himself, Turkmenbashi ('Leader of All Turkmen'), although the less developed personality cults of Nazarbaev, Akaev and Karimov are political forces; in some cases imprisonment follows criticism of the president. Referring to Karimov, Kangas notes that 'there is a surprising lack of a "cult of personality" that one might expect in such a situation'.

Central Asian presidents have become known above all for their residual powers. These include: decree powers; right to dissolve parliament; emergency powers; martial law powers; interim powers; impeachment; veto powers; sweeping clauses; and, referenda powers. The regular use of referenda as a means of prolonging presidential rule and bypassing elections has become a common Central Asian political practice in the post-Soviet space. Niyazov was the first to use the referendum, soon emulated by other Central Asian leaders. The practice of the referendum cemented an informal Central Asian club, with its membership rules and practices. When Kyrgyzstan joined the WTO in 1998 Karimov (and to a degree Nazarbaev) considered this move treacherous.

Residual powers have been used illegally by all five presidents. In addition to the use of the referendum to bypass elections, all have engaged in the rigging of both parliamentary and presidential elections, the banning of opposition parties, and the controlling of mass media. They have done so to different degrees, often resorting to repression and sometimes to violence. From the start, writes Atkin, the Rahmonov regime has found repression a useful tool in preserving its position. Its capture of the Tajik capital Dushanbe and other parts of the country in the winter of 1992–3 was accompanied by killings, disappearances, and expulsions. As emphasized by Lieven, in none of the five states are national armies effective or autonomous players. Instead, Presidential Guards and rapid deployment troops of the Ministry of Internal Affairs remain powerful organs of influence, intimidation and even violence for the presidential regimes.

Leadership effectiveness

Whatever the individual formal and informal powers of presidents, these do not necessarily amount to strong or effective leadership. 'Power over' does not necessarily equal 'power to'. 'Power to' implies the implementation of these goals, a degree of systemic support and personal authority, which refers to

the ability of a leader to respect and follow their leadership. For Central Asian presidents to be effective, the contributions suggest they require both state capacity and state autonomy. These stem partly from the loyalty of a presidential team, which is helped by a degree of popularity and mutual rather than dependent relations with the outside world. None of these requirements of effective leadership are unique to Central Asia, but they assume a particular form.

In both terms, the weakest president is Rahmonov. His power over both elites and society is severely constrained. Unlike the other Central Asian states, Tajikistan's elite is openly fragmented, and, as Atkin highlights, conflict *within* the ruling coalition is commonplace. Society is riven by civil war, which, although ending its most intense phase in 1993, continued through the end of the decade. Rahmonov's rule, including that of his government, is not perceived or actualized in many parts of the country. Rahmonov remains heavily dependent on Russian backing to remain in power. Hence Atkin's useful sobriquet for Tajikistan: 'ineffectual authoritarianism'.

State capacity here refers to both the state's economic and institutional strength, and the five presidents enjoy varying degrees of it. The relationship between privatization and economic restructuring is symbiotic and can have a significant effect on state capacity. Meaningful state restructuring increases state capacity and efficacy, enabling effective privatization. Privatization brings necessary funds into the state, and in the absence of domestic funds and effective tax-raising powers, assumes particular importance. As part of their economic liberalization agenda, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan have been the most successful at attracting funds; indeed Kazakhstan by 1997 had the second highest level of per capita investment of all post-communist states (after Hungary). By contrast, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan have not engaged in any significant privatization. In Uzbekistan, key ministries such as the oil and gas sector, cotton exports, and mining, have all remained state-owned and Karimov has stressed that strategic industries will remain in government hands. On state capacity terms, then, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan would appear stronger than the other three. It is not that simple, however.

If privatization is to increase state capacity then its proceeds must be channelled into the state; the reality in Kazakhstan (and to a lesser degree in Kyrgyzstan) is that proceeds have gone to individuals within the regime and state. Corruption is rife in all five republics, but Kazakhstan is often cited as the most serious offender. The use of public money for private gain is partly a factor of elite insecurity: frequent reshuffling of public office-holders encourages members of the elite to think not of the state but of themselves. This is not surprising given that Soviet officials were well placed to benefit significantly from the regime and are recruited through informal channels in highly personalist regimes. Linz and Stepan rightly emphasize the need for economic restructuring before privatization of assets can work. In only Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan has there been any serious attempt at state restructuring, but in the former particularly, state streamlining and consolidation had largely come to a standstill by the end of the 1990s. In short, while potentially stronger in Kazakhstan and

Kyrgyzstan than the other three, state capacity remains weak in all five republics.

The president also requires the autonomy to act. In particular he requires autonomy from other regime and state actors, society and the international environment. Within the regime, the president needs to dominate his faction. Domination is abetted by certain types of elite structure. The more consolidated the elite under the rule of the president, the more able he has been to assume loyalty of that elite. For example, some contend that Nazarbaev's decision to move northwards was partly driven by his desire to secure autonomy from powerful southern networks.

Social forces can also constrain leadership. Niyazov and Karimov have been more consistently and openly able to forge an ethnic identity in the more mono-ethnic states of Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. In Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, while real political power was moving increasingly into the hands of the titular nations, the Kazakhs and the Kyrgyz, Nazarbaev and Akaev, as underscored by Huskey, fought to make enough tactical concessions to the other ethnic communities to ensure their continued loyalty. Indeed, at the time of independence, ethnic Kazakhs were actually a titular minority in their own state. These findings challenge Horowitz's assertion that the more multi-ethnic a state, the more authoritarian it becomes;[20] Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan became simultaneously more mono-ethnic and repressive in the 1990s. The late 1990s have also seen the emergence of new perceived threats in Central Asia, notably drugs trafficking and terrorist insurgencies. These have both weakened the states, notably Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, and have justified, from the leaders' standpoint, additional repressive measures.

Barring Rahmonov, Central Asian presidents have not been fundamentally dependent on external actors for their office. That said, Kazakhstan's policies on privatization and management contracts has made it reliant on external economic actors (both countries and transnational corporations) and the regime is trying to reverse that trend. The degree of reliance of Central Asian states varies, with Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan more dependent on Russia than either Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, even post-Yeltsin. In autonomy terms, Niyazov appears the most autonomous, but, as Cummings and Ochs show, this autonomy has translated into an 'inglorious isolation' which may become destabilizing.

Atkin suggests that Rahmonov is a less-than-dominant figure within his own faction. Niyazov's affiliation is uncertain but as an orphan he is removed from clan domination. Nazarbaev, writes Cummings, lost some of his autonomy through privatization. Where, previously, economic power was fused in the hands of the dominant political elite, privatization began a bifurcation of the political and economic elite. He has thus been forced to engage in power struggles not incumbent on any of his neighbours. The case of Kazakhstan highlights the tension between state capacity and state autonomy, since gaining international capital comes at a cost to autonomy, namely dependency on new economic actors and foreign investors or donors.

Ultimately, the president needs to be assisted by a loyal presidential team.

Loyalty is bred by a system of punishments and rewards and a vast neopatrimonial network elaborated here by Ishiyama. This goes for both the regime and state. Team loyalty implies a consolidated elite structure, and only Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan would appear to enjoy this. By contrast, Tajikistan is ruled by a coalition and Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan have fragmented and even divided elites. As Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan have not undergone any serious state restructuring the assumption is that their elites are more hierarchical and consolidated. Cummings underlines how Nazarbaev's elite has become narrower in the 1990s and how that team has become more loyal; but again, this may have been at the expense of efficacy, since they do not necessarily have the expertise brought to government by the recruitment of technocrats in the mid-1990s.

Power is thus more highly nuanced and constrained than a simple description of formal and informal powers would suggest. Indeed somewhat constrained leadership is one of Linz's characteristics of authoritarianism. But despite these constraints the five have been able to play a decisive role in crafting these new regimes. The imprint of these presidents is suggested by the fact that similar situations have led to very different policies, indicating that presidents can lead to different policy outcomes. Both Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan have remained in the forefront of efforts to liberalize the economy and to create a favourable environment for foreign investment. Both have been broadly reformist and have stayed in power. As Ishiyama highlights, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are most likely to become 'rentier states'. The use of violence and repression is a sign of weakness rather than strength in these regimes.

The different degrees of authoritarianism have been shaped by elite structure (both Soviet and pre-Soviet); the degree of centralization (itself a factor of regionalism); the policies themselves (the more liberal, the more likely winners and losers and hence a divided elite results); by society (degree of cleavages); and by the international environment.

Legitimating their rule

The concept of legitimacy is complex. It is used mostly in a descriptive sense to indicate acceptance by the ruled of the ruler's authority. A 'legitimate' government is thus not necessarily a just or worthy or even popular government, but one where the ruler is seen by those ruled as having the right to govern. 'Authority' refers to the right to make lawful commands; it guarantees rulers, or those empowered by them, deference on the grounds that the commands are legitimate.

It is possible for nondemocratic regimes to be considered legitimate if we agree with Weber's contention that political legitimacy is grounded in the *beliefs* of those who are governed. If the masses believe that their rulers are legitimate, for whatever reason, then those rulers *are* legitimate.[21] This is possible but not verifiable. In the absence of free and fair elections or opinion polls, we can only speculate about the extent of these regimes' legitimacy. Weber argued that, even when democratic procedures for legally removing an incumbent are absent,

some political regimes are still regarded as legitimate by their populations. In his view there have been essentially three ways in which political leaders have legitimized their rule: namely through traditional, legal–rational and charismatic authority. The Central Asian presidents have employed all or some of these means to different degrees and at different times.

Few commentators have designated the five presidents as charismatic leaders, where legitimacy is earned by a particularly captivating or inspiring leader, even if Karimov and Niyazov portray themselves as such. Charismatic authority, in Weber's view, is the most unstable form of legitimacy since their ideas and support dies when these leaders die. Legal–rational authority is rooted in 'the belief in the legality of rules and in the right of those who occupy positions by virtue of those rules to issue commands'. Central Asian presidents have used rules to rationalize actions, even if those actions are illegal. Traditional authority rests on 'an established belief in the sanctity of immemorial traditions'. All Central Asian leaders have been nation-builders as well as state builders, reinventing the past to legitimate their rule. Only Karimov has employed a readily available hero in the national memory, Tamerlane. Central Asian presidents have overall resorted more to legal–rational forms than to charismatic or traditional ones.[22]

Legitimacy of the Central Asian presidents has not been automatic; as Lieven observes in his chapter, these leaders did not desire independence, were not pushed to independence by mass mobilization and did not embody any strong sense of national identity. Instead, leaders have had to work at cultivating legitimacy. Central Asia is therefore engaged in a process of re-legitimation. In that sense this authoritarian system is not simply a continuation of the old. Atkin argues that for the Persian-speakers of Central Asia, the ancestors of the modern Tajiks, 'a good ruler was someone who not only provided security and ensured domestic order, two virtues touted by repressive Central Asian regimes today, but also governed in accordance with prevailing political, social, and religious beliefs'. And she underlines that the fact that Central Asians only occasionally rebelled does not mean that the region's inhabitants approved of previous authoritarian regimes. For Nazarbaev and Akaev in the early years, legitimacy was nurtured through a careful playing to the two major societal constituencies, Kazakhs and Russians, as discussed earlier. Both Akaev and Nazarbaev have adroitly balanced relations between clans of the indigenous population, between the indigenous population and the Russians (both advocates of simultaneous civic and ethnic identity), and between foreign actors. Both claim their countries stand at the crossroad of East and West.

While issues such as the ethnic one have dominated political discourse at certain periods of the legitimation process, opinion polls would indicate that economic performance has become the legitimacy test for these regimes. Because the presidents have not been prepared to be subjected to competitive elections, they have denied themselves that layer of insulation. In such conditions performance criteria are a high-risk strategy, as emphasized by Ochs' reference to Niyazov's 'macro game plan'. The case studies suggest therefore

that populations are unable to decouple economic from political reform (which has not been the experience for East Central Europe, for example). Nevertheless, there is no conclusive evidence from elsewhere in the world that economic collapse triggers political collapse, but when the belief grows that other alternatives are possible, Linz and Stepan write, 'the political economy of legitimacy and coercion changes sharply'.[23]

In the absence of free and fair elections, is legitimacy irrelevant in the Central Asian context? Cummings and Ochs write that 'by ruling a police state, Niyazov has made questions of legitimacy irrelevant so far, and as long as the populace is too fearful of the consequences, there is no reason to expect any public expression of disapproval of him or to take at face value lavish, orchestrated praise for the sovereign'. This is perhaps only partly correct. Legitimacy means something different in the context of authoritarian rule and something different in the Central Asian context. An authoritarian regime must establish its legitimacy, or acceptance of the right to rule, among those on whom it depends to retain its position (usually key elites and certain sectors of society). It must also maintain passive legitimacy among society at large. The presidents in Central Asia have opted primarily for legitimacy on instrumental rather than normative grounds.

Explaining authoritarianism and its variations

We have considered how presidents built their regimes and what factors have helped or hindered them in this process. These factors emphasize the centrality of skill, tactics, timing and personality. All contributors therefore appear to substantiate Frye's 'electoral bargaining approach'. Electoral bargaining takes account of two factors: measuring the degree of uncertainty in electoral outcomes and the degree of bargaining power enjoyed by the candidate. Presidents bargain in order to 'maximize their individual political power by securing office and by designing institutions that will allow them to exercise their power to the greatest extent possible'.[24] For example, the higher support from parliament enjoyed by the president, the higher his bargaining power – in the early 1990s Nazarbaev had to struggle to introduce his conception of the presidency.

Nevertheless, the contributions hint at other reasons for the emergence of these presidential regimes, reasons that can be viewed as more long-term. They are cultural, historical, economic, social (all discussed by Frye) and international.

Various scholars have argued that institutions are a product of culture.[25] The temporal regression of Central Asia into a region of albeit diverse forms of authoritarianism can be interpreted by the culturalists as predetermined. From the culturalist perspective, it was only a matter of time before all five would become authoritarian. Thus, if in the early 1990s the states were embarking on different nation-building and state-building efforts, by the end of the 1990s the region is characterized by a uniformity of authoritarianism; Kyrgyzstan, for example, could no longer retain its title of 'island of democracy'. Two contributors, Huskey and Kangas, strongly endorse the cultural line of argument.

Kangas contends that there is little qualitative difference between the nature of rule in pre-Soviet, Soviet or post-Soviet times in Uzbekistan largely because of unchanging cultural factors which for Kangas are neatly summed up by Gregory Gleason's concepts of 'fealty and loyalty'.[26] The path to presidentialism was paved 'as a result of the inherent apolitical nature of the population'. Huskey shows how 'traditionalism has served as an instrument in the pursuit of modernity', namely, that culture is a determinant and has fundamentally reshaped the regime, making Kyrgyzstan's contemporary authoritarianism qualitatively different to that practised previously.

By contrast, Atkin argues that cultural arguments 'can be used as a kind of cultural relativism to excuse a regime's repressiveness or to assume that the resort to political violence is somehow primordial in a people and therefore not subject to change'. Cultural arguments have also been criticized for their vague character (for example, in a multi-ethnic state, whose culture is at issue?), and for failing to explain different paths within one culture or geographic area assumed to be culturally homogeneous. Why did Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan begin to liberalize in the early 1990s and why has there been a qualitative increase in repression post-1995 in both states? Why did the five states introduce presidencies at different times? Most essentially, why did the presidencies come to adapt different extremes, extremes that have placed these states possibly in different typologies? The varying perspectives provide further case studies for this enduring debate.

While contributors disagree over the importance of culture as a determinant of presidential authoritarian regimes, they concur that the Soviet legacy has had an important influence on post-communist institutional choice. Lieven's chapter is devoted to the legacy of the Soviet informal empire. He illustrates how the newly independent states of Central Asia did not gain legitimacy from revolutionary war, nor in fact from any anti-colonial struggle. Their independence arrived unexpectedly as a result of the implosion of the imperial centre in Moscow. What Atkin terms 'benign legacies' – the achievement of near universal literacy, expansion of the intelligentsia, development of the mass media, and contact with reform-minded people – can be applied to all of the five Central Asian states, although with important differences of degree. Cummings and Ochs, for example, highlight how Turkmenistan remained isolated even from the liberalization under Gorbachev. Elsewhere Alexander Motyl has argued that post-communist trajectories have been strongly influenced by (a) the degree of totalitarianism experienced by the given country; and (b) the degree of imperial rule experienced. The stronger both are, the less likely is democratization.[27]

Adam Przeworski argues that shock therapy economic reform tends to provoke a political backlash by the losers from reform and is therefore generally associated with authoritarianism since, under shock therapy 'the political process is reduced to elections, executive decrees, and sporadic outbursts of protest'.[28] Frye's findings, by contrast, suggest a negative correlation between radical economics and presidential powers. Instead, countries that have conducted a gradual economic reform have seen significant expansions of

presidential power. The case studies in this volume suggest a confirmation of these correlations (although not necessarily causation): Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan have seen a significant expansion of presidential power; Kazakhstan's and Kyrgyzstan's presidential powers were less at the moment of economic reform. By contrast, Cummings suggests an inverse relationship between authoritarianism and presidential powers in Kazakhstan. This is because economic reform has opened up the economy to significant new players and this has encouraged the political elite to tighten its grip both on political and economic power. With oil revenue potential the stakes of the political game are likely to increase, as Lieven highlights, and this may further increase presidential powers and possibly repression.

Political arguments are also used to explain institutional choice. Matthew Shugart notes that 'granting strong presidential powers minimizes the risk of unstable cabinets'.[29] Frye's findings suggest instead that fragmented governing coalitions have not created a strong presidency to mitigate this problem. Kazakhstan's and Kyrgyzstan's flirtation with an independent parliament in the early 1990s might however also explain why the president was keen to increase his powers to prevent the emergence of another recalcitrant parliament. George Tsebelis further argues that presidencies are created to enable presidents to carry out particular policies.[30] For example, Islam Karimov has justified his presidency increasingly as a bulwark against Islamic fundamentalism; Nazarbaev justifies his authoritarianism as a means of creating national unity and preventing the emergence of ethnically-based parties.

The influence of elite structure (both Soviet and post-Soviet) is perhaps the most compelling of arguments.[31] The more consolidated and centralized the elite, the more loyal to the leader. Gerald M. Easter argues that 'the structure of old regime elites as they emerged from the breakdown phase best explains the preference for presidentialism exhibited' in the newly independent states of the former Soviet Union.[32] Three structural types of old regime elites emerged from the post-communist transitions: consolidated, dispersed, and reformed. Variation in structure is determined by the continuity of the old elite and by the degree to which they maintain their access to power resources. Both Tajikistan's Rahmonov and Kyrgyzstan's Akaev seem to confirm Easter's view that systems are better preserved when the new regime's actors come from the old regime, since, as outsiders of the old regime they are also associated with the most liberalized regimes. In Tajikistan, Atkin describes how a brutal struggle for power followed the immediate aftermath of Soviet collapse, as members of those patron–client networks with the most power competed with others, suggesting that the Tajik Republic elite was already far more fragmented by the end of the Soviet Union. But Rahmonov proved considerably less effective than Akaev at harnessing the new structures and his hold on power remains precarious. The Soviet-era elite networks in Kazakhstan were bifurcated between Northern ones linked to Russia and Southern ones more closely tied to Central Asia proper. Nazarbaev's elite structure has narrowed, become increasingly dynastic, mono-ethnic, and has witnessed a bifurcation of the political and economic elite. Like Nazarbaev, Akaev

eventually replaced the old Soviet elite with new cadres and the process lost support. The old allies of Akaev – many of whom were weighty political figures in their own right, increasingly found themselves marginalized in politics. Huskey interestingly emphasizes that 'the second tier of officials in Kyrgyzstan represent a silent opposition force within the state, a fifth column inherited from the old regime'.

Donald Horowitz suggested that ethnic concerns may be paramount in designing political institutions.[33] He contended that countries with entrenched ethnic cleavages may create both a presidency and a parliament to enable major ethnic groups to discuss and bargain within an institutional framework. This applied to Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan in the early 1990s. He also argued that dominant ethnic groups challenged by a minority ethnic group may also use a strong presidency to unite this key ethnic group. This was also the case for Kazakhstan in the early 1990s. By the mid-1990s ethnicity had become less of an existential factor for Kazakhstan and thus a strong presidency becomes increasingly hard to justify in these terms.

Linz and Stepan contend that international forces cannot be discounted and must be distinguished in terms of foreign policy, *zeitgeist* and diffusion effects. Foreign policy refers to particular attempts at conditionality. *Zeitgeist*, in the German tradition of intellectual history, refers to the spirit of the times and to historical eras. Diffusion, by contrast, can occur over weeks, or even days. Linz and Stepan posit that the more tightly coupled a group of countries are, the more a successful transition in any country in the group will tend to transform the perceived political alternatives for the rest of the group. Central Asia is geopolitically isolated from democratic sources, instead being surrounded by two great authoritarian powers, Russia and China. The same factors that led to change in the early 1990s are again exerting their influence, but arguably the international environment has now become more important. This is because of the perceived threats of drugs trafficking, porous borders and Islamic fundamentalism.

Conclusions

The creation of new states in Central Asia poses substantial challenges for regime change, survival, order, legitimacy, and succession. The newly independent states are different polities to their Soviet predecessors. Presidential domination of these systems has played a substantial part in shaping these states during their initial years of independence. This bond between leaders and led establishes the bedrock upon which a stable government can rest, and exerts a decisive effect on political change.

The five presidents are adopting different approaches to the issue of succession. Martha Brill Olcott argues that the issue of succession in the Caspian region is assuming three different models. The first is dynastic; the second democratic, relying on institutional development; and the third 'avoidance' of the succession question.[34] Akaev, Nazarbaev and possibly Karimov appear to favour the first model; Niyazov has announced that he will step down in 2006

but does not seem to have a successor in mind. Extrapolating from Atkin, Rahmonov might be said to fall into the avoidance category.

All three succession models present their own problems. Robbins Burling establishes general 'theoretical claims' of political succession, of which three in particular seem relevant here: the establishment of a clear successor weakens current leadership; the absence of a clearly defined successor is an important source of political instability; and, centralization provokes succession struggles and sows the seeds of its own demise.[35] Cummings and Ochs cite one interpretation of Turkmenistan's succession which argues that Niyazor's regime may be the 'weakest link in Central Asia' because it has 'neither successors nor supporters'. The declared intention of the president to step down may indeed have heightened the competition between prospective candidates. Also, in Burling's terms, naming of candidates should be avoided and the presidents have so far managed this. The pursuit of centralization by all three presidents – albeit with mixed outcomes – would, according to Burling, make for bitter elite struggles. The next years promise to be an interesting and decisive time for the succession issue.

Presidential succession will not necessarily usher in regime change, however. Authoritarian regimes elsewhere in the world have proven highly durable even when their presidents have departed. Only when alternatives are possible and desired, and the coercive powers of the incumbent regime decline, is regime erosion or collapse likely. As Linz and Stepan reinforce, it 'is not changes in the economy, but changes in politics, that trigger regime erosion'.[36]

Changes in politics, as the discussion of post-Soviet Central Asian regime emergence has highlighted, is likely to stem from three sources. These are from within the governing structures (either from the ruling elite or a moderate opposition within the elite), from mass mobilization; or from foreign influence. The previous discussion of leadership has indicated that the elite – within the regime rather than the state – is the most likely source of regime change. The actors within the regime will vary from state to state. In Tajikistan, a peculiar constellation of moderate and maximalist oppositionalists and regime soft- and hard-liners may figure. By contrast, in Kazakhstan, elite divisions, both along political and economic, and along centralized and regional dimensions, will figure, with some input from a moderate opposition. The less divided elite in Kyrgyzstan may make for a smoother transition. Kangas hints that for a time a 'rule by committee' is likely and that intra-elite and intra-clan bargaining will come up with a successor, but that the process will be relatively stable. Turkmenistan's extreme personalism is destabilizing.

In sum, the volume highlights both similarities and differences in Central Asian leadership. This uniformity and diversity is a factor of agency and structure. All presidents have crafted institutions to retain power in the post-Soviet period and they have done so with considerable success. The varying degrees of authoritarianism and effective leadership stem from the personalities, skills, sequencing and policies. From this perspective the contributions suggest that there is nothing predetermined about presidential regimes being authoritarian,

rather that regime type is partly determined by actors' choices. The uniform regression suggests the importance of viewing institutional choice as a dynamic.

Structure – in terms of the elite, society and international environment – has also ushered in homogeneity and heterogeneity. The degree of fragmentation of the elite in the Soviet era, and its transformation in independence, has crucially shaped the five presidents' capacity and autonomy to act. Some contributors have argued that cultural factors play a decisive role. The degree of cleavages in these societies, especially those along clan, regional and demographic lines, have complicated leadership. The new forces of destabilization in Central Asia – drugs trafficking, porous or contested borders and nascent terrorist insurgencies – have heightened the international factor in the presidentialism equation.

Notes

1 Some examples of studies on the breakdown of authoritarian regimes include: G. O'Donnell, P. Schmitter and L. Whitehead (eds), *Transition from Authoritarian Rule: Prospects for Democracy*, 4 vols, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986–8; S. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*, Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 1991; D. Rueschemeyer *et al.*, *Capitalist Development and Democracy*, Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1992; G. DiPalma, *To Craft Democracy: An Essay on Democratic Transitions*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1990; T. Vanhanen, *The Process of Democratization: A Comparative Study of 147 States*, New York, Crane Russak, 1990.

2 See, for example, M.B. Olcott, 'Central Asia's Catapult to Independence', *Foreign Affairs,* vol. 71, no. 3, summer 1992, pp. 108–30.

3 G. Gleason, *The Central Asian States: Discovering Independence*, Boulder, Westview Press, 1997, p. 15.

4 T.J. Colton and R.C. Tucker (eds), *Patterns in Post-Soviet Leadership*, Boulder, Westview Press, 1994.

5 R. Taras (ed.), *Postcommunist Presidents*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997, p. 20.

6 J. Blondel, *Political Leadership: Towards a General Analysis*, London, Sage Publications, 1987, p. 3.

7 R. Fishman, 'Rethinking State and Regime: Southern Europe's Transition to Democracy', *World Politics*, vol. 42, no. 3, 1990, p. 428. Herbert Kitschelt also usefully defines a regime as the 'rules and basic political resource allocations according to which actors exercise authority by imposing and enforcing collective decisions on a bounded collectivity'. H. Kitschelt, 'Political Regime Change: Structure and Process-Driven Explanations?', *American Political Science Review*, vol. 86, no. 4, December 1992, p. 1028.

8 Kitschelt, op. cit.

9 S. Lukes, *Power: A Radical View*, London, Macmillan, 1974.

10 C. Allen, 'Understanding African Politics', *Review of African Political Economy*, no. 65, 1995, p. 304.

11 The others being Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Chechnya within Russia, all scenes of secessionist struggles.

12 A. Karatnycky, 'Nations in Transit: From Change to Permanence', *Nations in Transit 1998*, p. 8, online at: www.freedomhouse.org/nit98.

13 J.J. Linz and A. Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe*, Baltimore and London, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996, p. 3.

14 A. Karatnycky, 'Nations in Transit: From Change to Permanence', pp. 10–11.
15 J.J. Linz, 'An Authoritarian Regime: The Case of Spain', in E. Allardt and Y. Littunen (eds), *Cleavages, Ideologies and Party Systems*, Helsinki, Transactions of the Westermarck Society, 1964, pp. 291–342, reprinted in E. Allardt and S. Rokkart, (eds), *Mass Politics: Studies in Political Sociology*, New York, Free Press, 1970. See also the useful chapter 'Modern Nondemocratic Regimes' in J.J. Linz and A. Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America and Post-Communist Europe*, pp. 38–54.
16 Linz and Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation*, p. 54.
17 T. Frye, 'A Politics of Institutional Choice', *Comparative Political Studies*, vol. 30, no. 5, October 1997, pp. 523–52.
18 Ibid.
19 See, for example, S. Grossman and O. Hart, 'The Costs and Benefits of Ownership: A Theory of Vertical and Lateral Integration', *Journal of Political Economy*, vol. 94, no. 4, pp. 691–719.
20 D.L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1985.
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33 Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*.

34 See M. Lelyveld, 'Caucasus: Scholars Ponder Prospects for Caspian Stability', online at: http://www.rferl.org/nca/features/1999/11/F.RU.991101133610.html.
35 R. Burling, *The Passage of Power: Studies in Political Succession*, New York and London, Academic Press, 1974, esp. Chapter 8.
36 Linz and Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation*, p. 80.

2 Empire's aftermath

A comparative perspective

Dominic Lieven

This chapter studies the impact of empire and empire's aftermath in today's Northern Eurasia.[1] It does so by comparing the former Soviet Union to other regions of the world where empire first flourished and then collapsed in the twentieth century.[2] In the last hundred years the collapse of empire occurred in three waves. The first was the result of the Great War of 1914–18, which destroyed the dynastic, land empires of the Habsburgs, Ottomans, Romanovs and Hohenzollerns. The second wave occurred largely in the twenty years after the Second World War. It encompassed the West European, maritime empires, above all the British, the French and the Dutch. The third wave came with the collapse of the Soviet informal empire in East–Central Europe in 1989 and the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991. This chapter looks first at empire's legacy in its former colonies, then in the former territorial core of the empire, and finally at the impact of empire's disappearance on inter-state relations in its former territories and more broadly.

The attempt to compare these three waves implies that the polities concerned were comparable, in other words that they were empires. My definition of empire is simple and broad. An empire is above all a great power which makes a big impact on the international relations of its age. It is also, however, a polity which rules over wide territories and many peoples, since the management of space and multi-ethnicity is among empire's greatest challenges. An empire is also, in my definition, a polity that does not rule by the explicit consent of its subjects, which does not necessarily imply that it has to be illegitimate in their eyes. In these terms both tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union were empires, as were the dynastic empires that died in 1918 and Europe's overseas colonial empires. An interesting aspect of the tsarist and Soviet empires was that they combined elements both of the tradition of dynastic, land empire that stretches back to antiquity, and of the modern West European maritime empires. Like the former they were authoritarian, militarist regimes legitimised by a great religion and ruling over contiguous territory. On the other hand, like the maritime empires, they were a part of the expansion of Europe into the lands of non-Christian and often nomadic peoples, and they shared with the rest of Europe most of the technology and the ideology on which modern empire was built. Even Marxism–Leninism was of mainly European origin and shared with

Macaulay and the English Victorian liberals many assumptions of a pristine faith in unilinear progress based on the principles of the radical Enlightenment.

Attempting to compare the aftermath of these twentieth-century empires is a complicated business. In the first place one needs to distinguish between the impact of empire itself on the one hand, and of the way de-colonisation was achieved on the other. Independence can arrive as a result of war, either as a partly accidental result of world wars in which empires are involved, or as a direct consequence of wars of national liberation. Even in the absence of war, independence can come after a long political struggle in a colony against empire, or suddenly, perhaps because of the collapse of a metropolitan regime or the decision of central elites that the burden of colonial rule must be shed. What forms de-colonisation takes can have a big impact on the newly independent country and its political system. Independence can result in anarchy and in revolutionary upheavals in a society and its values, or at the other extreme it can appear to make very little difference to everyday lives or even the local structure of power. The latter is likeliest if power is ceded graciously by former imperial masters to local elites created and protected by the imperial regime itself.

It is true that certain kinds of imperial regime are likelier than others to cede independence peacefully. Except for Ireland, the British never attempted to integrate colonies into the metropolitan polity, and they were on the whole quicker to accept local self-government than the French, Portuguese or Dutch. It was therefore not entirely unexpected that, in the end, they were more willing to cede independence to most of their colonies without attempting the level of military resistance which the French tried in Indochina and Algeria, the Portuguese in Africa, or the Dutch in Indonesia. But it would be a mistake to draw a direct line between type of imperial regime and the manner in which de-colonisation occurred. Contingency was crucial. It would have been difficult to imagine before 1985 that the Soviet regime, with its tradition of repression and centralised power, would allow the dissolution of its empire almost peacefully and by something akin to due constitutional process.

Between them the empires which collapsed in the twentieth century covered much of the globe. Each empire was also a bundle of very different territories. No one can be truly knowledgeable about such a huge range of countries across most of the twentieth century. There are also inherent dangers that a scholar pursuing my goal will exaggerate the impact of empire and its demise, underestimating other factors that are far more important for a country's present-day fate. Ireland and Nigeria, for example, were both British colonies but their culture, their level of socio-economic development and their sheer geographical scale are obviously more significant than their common imperial heritage. The same could be said of the Baltic republics on the one hand, and the newly independent states of Soviet Central Asia on the other. It is also easy to end up comparing eras rather than empires. The ideologies and conventions that underpinned the international order in the 1990s were very different to those of the 1920s and 1930s. This was often more significant in determining empire's aftermath than the nature of the empire in question or the circumstances of its collapse.

Most obviously of all, but also most fundamentally, this chapter is being written less than a decade after the collapse of the Soviet Union. These are still very early days to write confidently about the impact of the Soviet empire and its collapse. In the Middle East, for instance, the Ottoman Empire was replaced for the following thirty years by British and French imperialism. It was only after their demise that the full consequences of empire's disintegration into a number of states became apparent. Ten years after the 'loss' of India, the Suez Crisis had just occurred, with the dramatic 1960s decline in Britain's relative power and status still further removed. The 'exemplary' de-colonisation of Ceylon (Sri Lanka) seemed a great success ten years after independence, with the subsequent decades of civil war still well in the future. Even the inherently improbable and unstable union of east and west Pakistan survived for a quarter of a century after the end of the British Empire in the Indian sub-continent. Ten years after the collapse of the Habsburg and Hohenzollern empires Europe was bathing in the spirit of peace and prosperity encouraged by the Locarno agreement and the Wall Street boom. The Crash, Hitler's regime, the extermination of the Jews, and the Second World War would have seemed barely credible to most Europeans in 1928.

Empires have existed for millennia, and all of them have ultimately collapsed. The great difference of the twentieth century, however, is that it has witnessed not just the collapse of empires but also the de-legitimisation of empire as a form of polity. In some ways this makes comparisons between the aftermath of Soviet and of pre-modern empires less rewarding. Very often in the past, for example, the fall of one empire has led to its place being taken by another. This is much less likely nowadays, at least if one confines one's use of the term 'empire' to direct alien rule and sovereignty. Though one could imagine Central Asia coming under the strong indirect influence of China, Russia or even (less plausibly) the United States, direct annexation and the reimposition of imperial rule is much less likely. Nevertheless, in some cases, pre-modern empire and its collapse have left their lasting mark on contemporary politics even after the passage of centuries. Comparisons with pre-modern empires also allow one to view the collapse of the Soviet Union within a very broad historical context.

Mere common sense suggests that the long-term impact of an empire will depend on a number of factors such as its longevity and the extent to which it penetrates, transforms or destroys the societies and cultures over which it rules. At one extreme one has the White colonies of settlement of the West European overseas empires in which indigenous society was destroyed or marginalised. A combination of disease, the expropriation of native land, and in some cases deliberate extermination devastated the indigenous population numerically, and the enormous gap between indigenous and White culture made matters worse. The new colonial national identities which emerged were those of the White settlers.

By this standard of comparison the basic point about the Central Asian nomadic peoples (meaning above all the Kazakhs, Kyrgyz and Turkmen) is that they have survived, and that they are now the masters of their own nation-states.

By the standard of the American Indians, the Maoris or the aboriginal peoples of Australia they have done well. Given the fact that the Kazakhs probably suffered worse under Soviet rule than any other major people, this tells one something about the fate of nomads and aboriginals worldwide. Living within the same ecological system as the Russians, Central Asian nomads were not exposed to the new diseases which devastated native peoples of the Americas and Australasia when Europeans first arrived. Russian colonisation was never quite so powerful a flood as the movement of White colonists into the United States, nor did the Soviet economy and Russian society match the immense power and sustained expansionist energy of American capitalism. In the last quarter of the twentieth century, first Russian birth-rates dropped dramatically and then the Soviet imperial economy and polity imploded. Moreover, the Soviet federal system, though in many respects a sham, did offer indigenous peoples much more than the political systems of the White anglophone colonies. In the latter, self-governing democracy confined only to White settlers and their descendants gave unrestricted control over power, land and the definition of national identity to those with the biggest interest in destroying or marginalising native society. The Soviet system was very different. It quickly suppressed the often thoroughly racist but semi-democratic soviets through which Russian colonists had exercised local power in the period immediately after the revolution. Thenceforth most power was centralised in Moscow but the guiding principle of Soviet federalism was that territories were, in symbolic terms, national homelands, that they possessed institutions of statehood, and that native cadres dominated public offices in their republics. On the whole, especially in Central Asia, the 1970s and 1980s saw non-European minorities gaining both demographically and politically at the expense of Russians. When Gorbachev launched his policy of liberalisation, aspects of Soviet federalism which had long been largely theoretical became real, and the national republics and their native ruling cadres acquired first autonomy and then sovereign independence within what was usually their whole historic homeland.

A less devastating but also very great impact was made by empires which converted their subjects to their own religion or high culture. The conversion of the southern shore of the Mediterranean to Islam from the seventh century onwards totally transformed the region's history and European geopolitics. The Roman Empire's long-term impact on Western Europe was also immense. The British made less of an impact on India but their influence on the elites and on the political system was nevertheless enormous, and it is interesting to make tentative comparisons with Russia's impact on Central Asia.

In historical terms both British rule in India and Russo-Soviet rule in Central Asia was brief but it did cover a crucial period of transformation in which modern, urban, secular and industrial societies emerged. In Central Asia the transformation was much more complete than in British India, for better and worse. The Soviet regime, for example, went far further in uprooting traditional religious institutions and culture than the British attempted in India. By the regime's fall in 1991 universal literacy had existed for decades and the

percentage of natives even in higher education had reached Soviet–European levels. On the other hand, the intense commitment to modernisation had also resulted in catastrophes such as collectivisation and famine in 1932–3, and the destruction of the Aral Sea. In today's India it is arguable that empire's most important legacy is the division of the sub-continent between Hindu and Muslim cultures, and that this is a legacy more of earlier Muslim empires than of the British Raj. It is impossible yet to say whether older pre-Russian cleavages and heritages will prove more important than the Soviet legacy in Central Asia. The comparison with Britain's lasting impact in Central Asia is in any case very imprecise. Soviet-style socialist modernity was more vigorously imposed in Central Asia than British-style modernity in India but its political and economic principles have now been entirely de-legitimised. By contrast the liberal–democratic and capitalist principles which partly underlay British rule in India remain legitimate and dominant worldwide. Nor is the British heritage in India complicated by the presence of a large British settler community or the presence of a potentially powerful and resentful Britain as next-door-neighbour.

A big difference exists between the long-term impact of an empire embodying a great universal religion and high culture on the one hand, and a mere tribute empire on the other. Rulers administering conquered lands indirectly in order to extract tribute by military blackmail and at minimal cost will certainly have less long-term impact than empires intent on transforming their subjects' values or colonising their lands. Mongol rule in Russia was a good example of this 'superficial' kind of empire. Since Mongol overlordship of Russia collapsed five-and-a-half centuries ago one might have expected its impact to have long since disappeared and the whole question of the 'Tartar yoke' and its consequences to have ceased to be a focus of public interest and debate. In fact, however, Mongol rule is still seen by many Russian scholars as having sundered Russia from Europe in a manner that has important, lasting implications to this day. 'Westerners' and 'Eurasians' still argue over whether this was a good or a bad thing. In the context of this chapter what matters is that the impact of an empire whose cultural baggage was light and whose existence ended centuries ago is still bitterly contested. It is therefore hardly likely that we will come to any definitive conclusions about the impact of the Soviet empire and the consequences of its collapse only ten years after it disappeared.

In twentieth-century Europe the triumph of ethnic nationalism over empire appears complete. Even the multi-ethnic federations of Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia which emerged from empire's ruins disintegrated in the 1990s. The political and economic fragmentation of Europe, not to mention the international anarchy it bred in two world wars, spurred the development of the European Union, however. The Union is not a true empire but it shares some of modern empire's dilemmas. To be powerful and prosperous requires a market and a polity of continental scale. Continental scale implies multi-ethnicity. How is power to be legitimised and exercised effectively in such a polity, in an era when democracy is the only acceptable ideology and nationalism remains a powerful force? The European Union is, however, thoroughly *sui generis* and

there is very little chance of it either itself absorbing former Soviet republics (except the Baltic states) or providing a possible model for other regions of the world attempting to cope with empire's aftermath.

In South and South-East Asia something usually called nationalism triumphed over empire but it was a different nationalism to the one that dominated modern European history. Anti-colonial nationalism defined itself against European rulers and demanded the creation of a modern but indigenous state and society with which its people could identify. In the major colonies this nationalism usually was not, and could not be, ethnic, since stressing ethnicity in British India or the Dutch East Indies, for example, was to split the anti-colonial movement, to help White rulers often only too happy to play divide and rule, and to guarantee the disintegration of the post-colonial polity.

After independence the new states' legitimacy was derived from the successful anti-colonial struggle, though as time passed this became a waning asset. The colonial past is a key factor in the different levels of stability and strength of today's India and Indonesia. Dutch rule over much of today's Indonesia was only consolidated at the beginning of the twentieth century. Effective British rule in India was at least two generations older. In the army and the Indian Civil Service it bequeathed to independent India formidable institutions with a strong *esprit de corps* and many senior Indian officers even in 1947. Because power was transferred legally and peacefully to Indian elites these institutions were inherited intact by the new state. Independence had to be fought for, however, over a number of generations, albeit by mostly political rather than revolutionary means. Independent India thereby inherited an all-India Congress Party which had penetrated quite deeply into society and a political elite trained in the business of politics rather than revolutionary war.

The Dutch in Indonesia allowed much less freedom than the British for constitutional nationalism and Dutch rule was overthrown in a war of independence.[3] This war helped to legitimise the new leadership and it created an army which saw itself as the guarantor of Indonesian unity. Democratic political parties and the habits of compromise and bargaining which are at the heart of democratic politics did not take root, however, either before or after independence. For most of the fifty years after independence the Indonesian state rested on military force, the myths generated by the struggle for independence, the achievements of Suharto's policy of economic modernisation, and the (by European comparisons) astonishingly successful creation of a new all-Indonesian language which very deliberately was not the language of the country's Javanese majority. Nevertheless the new state was usually dominated by Javanese and when Suharto fell and the economic miracle collapsed not just an elite and a regime was endangered but also the Indonesian state itself. With the Cold War over, Indonesia's Western patrons and creditors were much less willing to accept the use of massive military repression to guarantee the state's survival. Whether Indonesia can transform itself into a democratic multinational federation, indeed whether it can survive at all, are open questions.

In very typically imperial manner, external power created a huge India and

Indonesia which it would have been almost impossible to build from within the two societies, and which post-independence leaders struggled to sustain with indigenous resources alone. The same was even more true in post-colonial Africa. By one reckoning 7,000 independent polities existed in pre-colonial Africa.[4] Creating viable, modern political units was, therefore, bound to be a nightmare. As elsewhere in the world, neighbours were likely to be traditional enemies who did not take kindly to being united in a single state. The colonial-era borders were the product of bargains between the European powers, not of local ethnic or economic realities.

At least in the colonial era these states could draw on external resources to preserve order and mediate between indigenous peoples. But this colonial era was short and nowhere in Black Africa was there time for institutions such as the Indian army or civil service to emerge. In any case most of these societies were much poorer and less literate than the eighteenth-century Bengal which was the core of Britain's early empire in India. Most of Black Africa did not gain independence or thereby acquire legitimacy by revolutionary war. In the Portuguese colonies where this did happen, continuing civil war between rival anti-colonial armies often devastated the newly independent states. In Portuguese Africa (as in the Belgian Congo) this occurred in part because independence was granted in a great hurry and with almost no political preparation. The newly independent African states very easily became the target for regional and other factions which sought to capture them for their own material benefit. When these countries possessed valuable commodities this increased the lure of political power, the scale of corruption, and the total destruction of any sense of citizenship or community.[5]

Africa is an extreme but not totally unique example of post-imperial disorder. In the Middle East, too, one has plentiful examples of an imperial-era territorial settlement which is a great source of post-imperial instability. Carving separate states out of what had been a single Ottoman territorial space resulted, as in Central Asia, in great long-term problems for the management of rivers and water supply, which were essential to the economies of the newly independent nations and the everyday needs of their peoples. The breakup of empire also created some countries too small to defend themselves against neighbouring predators, whose appetites were whetted by the immense oil wealth which a number of these statelets possessed. In the case of Iraq or Lebanon, to take but two obvious examples, French and British rule created states which had no historical or ethnic legitimacy and whose colonial-era elites found it impossible to preserve either their own power or peace and unity within their societies once their imperial patrons had departed. In Algeria and Palestine large-scale settlement by Europeans contributed to instability.

Empire often caused least long-term instability where colonisation was either massive or barely occurred at all. The greatest examples of the former case were North America and Australasia. White settlers swamped indigenous society: by AD 2000 North American Indians, Australian aboriginals and (to a lesser extent) New Zealand Maoris were at worst an embarrassment to the new Anglophone

societies created by empire and its heirs. At the other end of the spectrum, colonies were more easily and peacefully shed which had been ruled by bureaucrats and perhaps penetrated by merchants without, however, suffering massive colonisation by farmers and settlers. It was the middle ground, where settlers and their descendants formed a sizeable minority, that often caused the worst conflict.

A devastating example of this was the fate of the Muslim population of the Ottoman Empire in Europe, the overwhelming majority of whom were expelled or killed in the course of de-colonisation. The conflicts linked to the creation of ethnic nation-states from the ruins of the Ottoman Empire also resulted in the genocide of the Armenians during the First World War and the expulsion of the large and ancient Greek community from Anatolia. In the immediate aftermath of the collapse of the Habsburg and Hohenzollern empires the fate of the Germans was far kinder, though even in Czechoslovakia, where they were probably best treated, they generally felt second-class citizens of a Czech-dominated state to which they would not freely have consented to belong. After the failure of Hitler's attempt to re-constitute a Germanic empire in east–central Europe, however, the fate of the region's Germans was similar to that of the Ottoman Muslims. Virtually all of them were expelled and many died in the process. By that measure the fate even of the Pieds Noirs in Algeria, let alone of White colonists in Kenya, Zimbabwe and South Africa, has been relatively benign.

Faced by the impending or actual collapse of empire, settler communities in principle had a number of options. Which one they eventually took, or was imposed on them, depended on circumstances. In Ireland, for example, the descendants of English and Scottish settlers were marginalised (but never expelled) in the newly independent republic, which in typically post-imperial fashion saw independence as a reason to reassert a native, Gaelic and Catholic identity suppressed or diluted by generations of alien rule. In Ulster, on the other hand, the Protestant community seceded from Ireland when the latter chose to leave the Union and (de facto) the empire.

There are some parallels here with the ultimate fate of the Turkish minority in Cyprus, though in the Turks' case it could be argued that it was the Greek majority who themselves demolished the all-Cypriot consociational settlement which might have allowed the two communities to live together in an independent Cypriot republic. In Cyprus even more than in Ulster, however, secession from a newly independent colony only worked because the ethnic motherland (the core of the old empire) was contiguous and its government was willing to protect (or at least recognise) the secessionist province.

An important point about the Pieds Noirs or about British colonists in Ireland and most of the overseas empire was that they enjoyed democratic rights, which usually differentiated them from the empires' non-White subjects. These settler communities were therefore free to define their own identities, choose their own leaders, and defend their own interests. In this they differed for example, from the large German community in Hungary whom Franz Joseph abandoned to

Hungarian nationalist rule after 1867, from the Ottoman Muslims or from the Russian diaspora in the Soviet Union.

Diasporas closely associated with empire and its rulers were not necessarily drawn from the metropolitan people itself. The Jews of the Habsburg Empire or the overseas Chinese[6] and Indians of the British Empire were both in this sense imperial diasporas. Their elites were important players in the development of global commercial and financial capitalism, which helps to explain why they had no exact parallels in the Soviet Union, though the USSR's first generation Jews did play a very disproportionate role within the Communist Party elite, and shared with their Chinese and Indian counterparts in the British Empire very good reasons to fear ethnic nationalism in the empire's former periphery. In the wake of the British Empire's collapse, Indian business communities were expelled from Burma and parts of Africa, though they flourished in some former colonies. The descendants of the Indian immigrant labourers who had sustained much of the colonial plantation economy in Fiji, Guiana and elsewhere faced acute hostility in these newly independent states, in which indigenous elites and peoples often felt their identity to be threatened by the consequences of massive immigration in the imperial era, during which the local peoples had lost all control over immigration and were faced with the likelihood of becoming minorities in their only cultural and ethnic homeland.

Chinese in colonial South-East Asia and Jews in the Habsburg Empire were often the core of the emerging financial and commercial elite, which made them an easy target for nationalists, anti-capitalists and anti-imperialists alike, especially at times of economic crisis and among those groups which saw themselves as victims of emergent international capitalism. Protected by the imperial power, both groups were subsequently subjected to discrimination and pogroms. The terrible ultimate fate of the Jews was, however, owed in the last resort not to the hostility of empire's former subjects but to the dominant imperial people, namely the Germans. This was not merely utterly evil but in imperial terms wholly illogical since the Jews had been among the most loyal subjects of both the Habsburg and Hohenzollern empires. Though anti-Chinese pogroms and discrimination in post-imperial Indonesia or Malaya do have some parallels with the fate of the Jews in inter-war Europe there is, of course, one very great difference. The Chinese have a potential protector in China, which by 2001 was emerging as a potential hegemon of East and South-East Asia. In the very improbable event of a South-East Asian government attempting to carry out a policy of extermination of the ethnic Chinese, it is inconceivable that Beijing would stand aside. The Jews had no similar protector.

Some comparisons between empire's aftermath in Central Asia and elsewhere are easier than others. As in most former empires, some republics and borders in the Soviet Union had more historical legitimacy than others. The three Baltic republics have the most unequivocal claim to historical legitimacy, above all because of the independence they possessed between the world wars. Though their present borders can be disputed, most people (save modernist scholars of nationalism!) believe that the Georgians and Armenians are ancient

nations. In the case of Central Asia's five states, however, historical legitimacy is much more weak. Even Uzbekistan, which does possess considerable traditions of statehood, is really a conglomerate of regions constructed around the old emirate of Bukhara. The formerly nomadic peoples are historically deeply divided along clan lines, and unity is further threatened by the immensity of thinly populated Kazakhstan and the mountains which sharply divide Kyrgyzstan. Even so, Central Asia is unlike most of Black Africa, where state boundaries had minimal ethnic or historical legitimacy, and were derived above all from the continent's division among the European powers into spheres of control. The Soviet ethnographers who attempted to create homogeneous nations out of the tribes and statelets of Central Asia made a real effort to follow ethnic logic and at least had only a single political master. The newly independent states of Central Asia did not gain legitimacy from revolutionary war, nor in fact from any form of anti-colonial struggle. Independence came unexpectedly as a result of the implosion of the imperial centre in Moscow. Like many other native elites who had enjoyed empire's protection, Central Asian rulers by no means necessarily wanted immediate independence or were confident that they could survive in power without imperial support. The manner in which independence was achieved deprives the new regimes of some legitimacy but it also means that, with the exception of Tajikistan, their societies have avoided the trauma and upheaval of revolution and war. Their rulers are political bureaucrats, not generals, revolutionaries or demagogues. They do not yet need to fear military coups since, in the absence of either national liberation struggles or separate colonial armies inherited from empire, the armed forces of these new states are still very weak. On the other hand, very obviously, these former communist top officials have none of the experience of democratic politics possessed, for example, by the cadres of India's Congress Party in 1947. Nor do they have the historical and pre-colonial legitimacy of the traditional monarchies which survived European domination in parts of the Muslim world and in South-East Asia. Though inertia, repression and public deference to power may help to sustain these Central Asian presidential regimes for a time, their lack of legitimacy could exact a heavy price in terms of repression, succession crises and public demoralisation.

Both the populations and the ruling elites of these new states are better educated than was the case when most Third World countries gained their independence. Though on the whole this is of course to the good, a mass of relatively well-educated young men searching for jobs in a shrinking economy can be a source of great political instability, as Sri Lanka graphically illustrated in the 1970s. The emigration of trained Russians from the region makes good political but bad economic sense, in typically post-colonial fashion. The legacy of the socialist and centrally planned imperial economy means that integration into the global economy is even harder than for most ex-colonies in the Third World. Nor would an oil and gas bonanza necessarily guarantee political stability, in fact quite the opposite. Where states are weak and their elites lack legitimacy or patriotism, immense wealth from exports can very easily flow into the pockets

of a small elite whose ill-gotten gains fill foreign bank accounts, and whose gross wealth and corruption contribute to destroying any sense of unity or public spirit in the population. If national unity is already fragile, and regional and clan loyalties are strong, the impact of huge export earnings on political stability can be particularly destructive. Sometimes in Africa it is difficult to distinguish between regional, clan and clientelist politics but easy to see the way in which they undermine the effectiveness and impartiality of government, particularly when political power brings control over lucrative export earnings. It is not hard to imagine a similar future for parts of Central Asia.

At present Central Asia, like most of the former Soviet Union, is ruled by what in comparative imperial terms we could describe as former colonial-era notables, in other words by former communist high officials. Very often the former republican first secretaries now occupy the presidential palaces. It is, on the whole, a fair generalisation that these Soviet colonial-era notables have done less damage since 1991 than the nationalist forces which came to power, above all, in parts of the Caucasus region. The same has often been true in a range of former colonies stretching from Sri Lanka to the Middle East. In particular, nationalist populists from a historic, majority community can easily de-stabilise multi-ethnic societies by their claims that control over the polity and the definition of its true identity is the exclusive birthright of their people. The aftermath of empire often encourages the sense that historic wrongs must be righted and the value of the native, majority culture re-asserted against all minorities, but particularly against those who have immigrated into the territory under imperial rule. Combined with socio-economic developments which weaken the position of traditional elites, this creates a fertile soil for nationalist populism and inter-ethnic conflict. It is too early yet to say whether we will see similar developments in Central Asia.

In comparative post-imperial terms, perhaps the major surprise is the relative quiescence of the 25 million Russians whom the collapse of the Soviet Union deposited outside Russia's borders. The Russian diaspora in most republics is in numerical terms precisely in the danger zone: in other words, like the Muslims in the Balkans or the Pieds Noirs, it is a large minority. When contrasted with the Ulster Protestants or the Pieds Noirs, the political inactivity of the Russian diaspora is striking. A key point here may well be that the Russians had no means to organise themselves, choose leaders and defend their own interests in the Soviet era. The enormous power of the central state and its security forces must in any case have seemed to many to make the Soviet Union immune to collapse and render political action unnecessary. When disintegration occurred in 1991 it came so quickly that the diaspora had little time to organise resistance. Moreover at that time the legitimacy of the Soviet regime had fallen very low and many Russians felt that they were empire's victims, not its beneficiaries.

The one exception to this quiescence was the secession of the majority Russian-speaking region of Transdniestria from Moldova, and its desire for incorporation into Russia. Here there are obvious parallels with Ulster and the Turkish Cypriots. These have to be tempered, however, by awareness of the fact

that Moldova's bureaucrats and managers were Soviet apparatchiki rather than elected leaders of their community or Russian nationalists. Moldova's secession therefore had a good deal to do with the power struggle within the Moldovan Communist Party elite in 1986–90. Secession was in part the Transdniestrian elite's revenge for being displaced by officials from Bessarabia from the top positions in the republican party which Transdniestrians had traditionally dominated. If the political quiescence of the Russian diaspora is remarkable, even more astonishing is the almost complete absence of violent conflict between the Russians on the one hand and the local ethnic majorities on the other. Of course, one reason why there has been no violence is precisely because there has been so relatively little political resistance, or indeed political activity of any sort, from the Russians. One reason for this in Central Asia since 1991 is repression and the absence of democracy but even in Ukraine and the Baltic republics, where freedom is greater, quiescence has been the rule. Thus far we have not seen the competitive mobilisation of ethnicity which multiparty politics encouraged in nineteenth-century Ireland or in British India in the years before partition. In addition, a truly crucial point, the Russian government since 1991 has given no support to elements in the diaspora who wished to challenge their republican governments or to call into question the international borders created when the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991. This has been the case even as regards the Crimea, whose loss to Ukraine the great majority of Russians regard as illegitimate and particularly painful. The contrast to the support given by metropolitan leaders and parties to Ulster Unionists and Pieds Noirs is very striking. Even greater is the difference between the Russian government's policy in the 1990s and German support for their diaspora and for revision of frontiers even in the 1920s, let alone under Hitler. Consideration of Moscow's policy leads logically to the next section in this chapter, namely the impact of empire's loss on the former imperial metropolis.

Empires by definition have fewer cores than peripheries. Comparing the impact of empires' demise on their core populations is therefore easier than making comparisons between their many and varied colonies. One reason why ordinary Russians often reject the idea that the Soviet Union was an empire is that their conception of empire, largely derived from Marxism–Leninism, entails the enrichment of the core, metropolitan population at the expense of the colonised periphery. Since, with some justice, ordinary Russians feel they were losers rather than beneficiaries of empire they often reject the whole concept as regards the USSR.

A nodding acquaintance with, for example, the Ottoman Empire reveals,[7] however, that ordinary Turks were even less privileged under Ottoman rule than Russians were under the tsarist and Soviet empires. Not merely was Anatolia one of the poorest and most exploited regions of the empire, but the Ottoman elite's culture and language was incomprehensible to the ordinary Turk. The very word 'Turk' was usually a term of opprobrium to members of the elite, signifying provincial yokel. No Turkish nation existed before the twentieth century. Still less did this nation control the imperial, Islamic state. Given this similarity

with the Russians' own experience of empire, one might expect some similar attitudes among ordinary Turks and Russians after empire's fall. Certainly Western governments would rejoice if post-Soviet Russia trod the same path as post-Ottoman Turkey. Of all ex-imperial peoples, the Turks not only showed the least nostalgia for empire but actually rejected it totally in the post-imperial decades, in which the new Turkish republic was defined against its Ottoman predecessor and gloried in its allegiance to Western principles of modernity and to NATO.

In fact, however, the circumstances surrounding the collapse of the two empires were very different. The Ottoman Empire had been in obvious decline for almost 150 years before it collapsed. Unlike the Soviet Union in 1985, the Ottoman Empire in 1914 was not even a great power, let alone a superpower. The awful sacrifices demanded of Turks in 1914–18 came on top of generations of suffering and defeat in the cause of empire. In any case the end of empire came in 1918 as a result of clear military defeat. The peace-time implosion of the Soviet Union was more difficult to come to terms with. In the immediate aftermath of empire's collapse the mass of the Anatolian Turkish population was numbed by war-time suffering and anxious only to survive. Elites were, to some extent, torn between loyalty to the Sultan, Islamic Ottomanism, and the Turkish nation. Uncertainty was ended by the allied occupation of Istanbul and the Greek attempt to annex much of Anatolia. Against so obvious an affront Turkish nationalism could unite, define itself, and mobilise mass support. The fact that the war of independence proved victorious and produced in Kemal Ataturk a charismatic founder of the nation conveyed great legitimacy on the new republic.[8] Post-Soviet Russian nationalism has lacked such obvious targets, such heroes and such successes, but it has also avoided the vast suffering which went along with the Turkish war of independence and the massacre or expulsion of ethnic communities by which it was both preceded and followed. The British experience of empire's loss is even less comparable. Though British elites were humiliated and depressed by the loss of empire and the decline of Britain's status, to get the full measure of a comparison with the Russians one would have to imagine that the empire collapsed almost overnight when still, on the surface, at the height of its power, that Wales (Belarus) and Scotland (Ukraine) simultaneously seceded from the United Kingdom, that both the constitutional parliamentary monarchy and the capitalist economic system were overthrown, and that England was then faced by a depression worse than the 1930s.

In fact it was always a principle of the British Empire that colonies (Ireland apart) were sharply differentiated from the United Kingdom. Therefore the loss of empire had few immediate constitutional implications. In any case loss of empire followed victory in a world war which had increased the legitimacy of Britain's political system and bolstered English pride. The Commonwealth for a time provided some cover for decline, and participation as America's key ally in the Cold War meant that Britain could still feel itself to be a major international player with a continuing role in history. In any case a key element in the remarkably amicable transfer of global hegemony from Britain to the United States was

that the British felt that the Americans shared their values and would sustain a global order of which the British themselves were major pillars and beneficiaries. Russian elites by contrast had to adapt themselves to rapid demotion to junior (and often grudging) membership of a world order run by their former Cold War enemies.

It is true that in time the loss of empire contributed to a weakening of British identity and thereby threatened the continued existence of the United Kingdom. Institutions such as the monarchy and the army lost some of the aura with which imperial power and pomp had surrounded them, and the Scots and Welsh could no longer be drawn to the United Kingdom by the prestige and material advantages which the metropolis of a great empire had enjoyed. But the rise of Scottish nationalism had to do with many factors other than simply loss of empire. It reflected too the decline of Protestantism and of hostility to continental (and often Catholic) Europe, which in the past had been core elements in Britishness. It mirrored the rise of other 'regional' nationalisms (e.g. Catalan, Flemish and Corsican) in the old supposedly 'nation-states' of Western Europe. In any case democracy in post-imperial England was far more securely rooted than in post-imperial Russia. There was no possibility of it being seriously challenged by the breakup of the United Kingdom or by threats to traditional British identities.

In some ways the closest parallel to the collapse of the Soviet Union is provided by the disintegration of the Portuguese Empire. In both cases the immediate cause of collapse was the revolt of the core metropolitan population against the burdens of empire. Like most empires in history, Portugal and the Soviet Union were ruled by authoritarian regimes which did not need to ask the core population's consent to bear the burdens of empire. That is one reason why both the Portuguese and Soviet empires outlived the empires of the British, French and Dutch. Neither in 1917 nor in 1991 did the Russians reject the multinational empire as such. They did refuse to pay its price. In 1917 this meant refusing to carry on with the First World War. In 1988–91 it entailed demanding that the state's resources be spent on Russia and ordinary Russians, not on competing with the United States or subsidising ideological allies in Eastern Europe or the Third World. This sentiment was crucial to carrying Yeltsin to power in Moscow and to undermining the Soviet Union. After de-colonisation, however, the Portuguese (and before them the French and Dutch) had found a snug and prosperous alternative to empire in the European Union. In the 1990s Russia was isolated and in economic terms shattered.

In the end, too, the Austrians found a post-imperial home in the European Union. Well before that, the post-war economic boom had served to legitimise the Second Austrian Republic. The experience of Hitler's Greater German Reich and of two world wars had in any case convinced all but the hardiest Austrian that a snug life in a small republic was much preferable to paying the price and bearing the opprobrium of empire.[9]

Between the wars matters had been very different. The breakup of the imperial united market and then the Depression had denied the First Republic the chance to gain legitimacy through economic success. To be Austrian had always

meant to be the subject of a great power, to play a role in history and to count on the world stage: for Austrian elites in particular it was very hard to come to terms with citizenship of a small republic which enjoyed no international status and which could be pushed around even by third-class states like Czechoslovakia. All these factors matter greatly too in post-Soviet Russia. In addition, however, a sense of Austrian identity and nationhood was much weaker in the Austria of 1919 than in the Russia of 1992. Russians sometimes argue that Russia has never been a nation but always an empire: this is, however, much more true of the Austrians. By tradition the Austrian–Germans identified with the Habsburg dynasty and state, with their province, with the Catholic Church, and with German culture. It was not at all easy after 1918 to transfer this allegiance to the rump state left behind from the old empire once all the other nationalities had taken the territories they wanted and the allies had refused permission to merge into Germany.

What matters most when an empire collapses is the impact this has on regional and even global stability. The Austrian case is an excellent example of this. What happened within the small Austrian leftover of empire was in the end of little significance to anyone but the citizens of the new republic. But the fall of the Habsburg Empire left a great vacuum in East–Central Europe into which radical German nationalism moved under Hitler. Indeed the overall result of the collapse of the great dynastic empires in 1917–18 was to de-stabilise Europe for a generation and make a second world war likely.

The fall of the Romanovs and the coming to power of the Bolsheviks ended the Franco-Russian alliance which had been the main bulwark against German domination of Europe. Once America withdrew into isolation the viability of the Versailles order was always in jeopardy. Britain was committed to sustaining a global empire with inadequate resources: she was neither willing nor, in the long run, able to guarantee the territorial settlement in Eastern and Central Europe. France lacked the resources or the confidence to do so on her own, and ideological hostility (among other factors) doomed efforts to re-build the Franco-Russian alliance when Germany challenged the European balance of power in the 1930s. In the twentieth century, Germany and Russia were continental Europe's two potential hegemons: only they had the resources to dominate the whole continent. An inter-war order to which Germany was opposed and Russia was very equivocal was inevitably highly vulnerable.

Among the consequences of the collapse of empire in 1918 was, therefore, the Second World War. Indeed the end of empire is usually associated with war. The First World War destroyed the Habsburg, Romanov, Hohenzollern and Ottoman empires. The French and Dutch were driven from their most important colonies by war, as were the Portuguese. In both the Portuguese and French cases anti-colonial war was followed sometimes by even more devastating civil wars in the former colonies. Even the British, who on the whole de-colonised most successfully, nevertheless fought a number of small wars largely in order to extricate themselves from empire on their own terms. The first of these wars of independence occurred in Ireland in 1919–21, was followed immediately by

civil war, and had among its consequences the low-level but murderous conflict that still plagues Ulster. Moreover, the demise of the British Empire led to the greatest and most dangerous of all the conflicts between rival successor states, in other words the struggle between India and Pakistan which has now reached the level of nuclear confrontation.

The single most astonishing and most important fact about the collapse of the Soviet Union was therefore that it was not accompanied by major war. Civil wars occurred in some of the smaller republics, and one inter-republican war pitted Armenia against Azerbaijan. In the no man's land of former Yugoslavia, the end of the Cold War contributed to ferocious inter-ethnic conflict. But there was no war between great powers or even really between their surrogates in the entire area of the former Soviet formal and informal empires. Given the example of earlier empires' demise, the nature of the Soviet regime, and the unexpectedness of its collapse, this was remarkable. Many factors help to explain this. Gorbachev's policies, for example, contributed both to the demise of the Soviet Union and to the peacefulness of its end. He refused to resort to large-scale illegality or to the massive use of force to save the Union and he ensured that the Soviet Union's collapse occurred at a time of unique international detente and goodwill. Both Gorbachev's policies and the Soviet federal system helped anti-Soviet nationalists to come to power legally in a number of republics, thus ensuring that independence could be ceded to legitimate governments operating within clearly defined and recognised borders. Yeltsin and the Russian movement he led, far from defending empire, actually contributed greatly to its demise. Once in power after 1991, Yeltsin's government, in fact, did everything possible to discourage irredentism either in Russia itself or in the Russian diaspora. His role in the peaceful end of empire was also therefore extremely important. Behind the role of individuals there were also certain underlying realities. In the nuclear age, war between great powers was immensely dangerous and in any meaningful sense unwinnable. Soviet socialism had lost almost all credibility and in so doing had badly tarnished the Union's cause: few people were anxious to die, or even kill, in its defence. Moreover the West's wealth, freedom and power made the model of society, economy and culture it offered very attractive to much of the Russian elite. Joining rather than confronting Western-led global society for many Russians became the order of the day, the road both to personal wealth and fulfilment and even, for some, ultimately to a more secure status and power for a modern Russia too.

Of course, as was noted at the outset of this chapter, in historical context these are still very early days. Terrible consequences could still flow in time from the collapse of the Soviet empire. As regards Central Asia, it is not difficult to imagine scenarios which could throw the region into chaos. The Central Asian states are all weak and their societies are poor. Every state has ethnic minorities. If a competition developed within the Kazakh elite for nationalist legitimacy then conflict with the Russian minority and Moscow's intervention is conceivable. Russia would find it less costly as regards Western indignation to intervene in Kazakhstan than in the Baltic republics. Russian soldiers would

confront Kazakhs much more happily than Ukrainians. Perhaps a likelier scenario is unrest in the Uzbek diaspora, combined with Tashkent's striving for regional pre-eminence. Both Russia and China have significant political and economic interests in the region, whose stability is therefore linked to the preservation of amicable relations between its two great neighbours. Corrupt and ineffective local regimes presiding over ever greater poverty and inequality would provide good soil for radical Islamic movements to take root across the region.

Unlike in the case of the European maritime empires, the fate of Russia and its former periphery cannot easily be divorced. Geography alone makes this impossible. Russia cannot like Britain, France or Portugal simply ignore the chaos and civil wars which erupt in its former empire, from which it is divided by artificial and indefensible land frontiers. Meanwhile given Russia's size and potential power, its neighbours have to fear any evidence of renewed imperialism. Russian intervention in Chechnya and Tajikistan have to be seen partly in this light, as do the concern they cause to at least some of Russia's neighbours.

The obvious parallel for truly apocalyptic pessimists is the rise of German revanchism in the 1930s and its role in causing the Second World War.[10] As with Germany after 1918, Russia was both the major loser in territorial terms from the 1991 settlement and is potentially much the most powerful state in the region. This is always bound to be a source of potential instability, though there is much less reason for pessimism now than was the case with Germany after 1918. It is conceivable that the 1990s Wall Street boom will end like the 1920s in a crash which will weaken and discredit the Western powers and the capitalist system, though it is improbable that the devastation would be as deep or long-lasting. Even if it were, however, there are not at present (as there were in 1929) fascist and communist regimes already in power in major European states with fresh and untested ideologies with which to confront a seemingly failing liberal capitalism.[11]

At present the grand alliance of Western states which far outweighed and finally defeated the Soviet Union in the Cold War remains basically united and would stand together against any Russian attempt to regain its former empire. Though China and Russia might unite diplomatically and rhetorically against American global hegemony, it is hard to see how Russia's interests and the security of its vulnerable Far Eastern possessions would benefit by backing a Chinese bid for hegemony in East Asia. In any case, and most basically, empire in today's world is a very poor basis for global power. If one accepted Hitler's evil premises, there was a logic to his efforts to make Germany a world power by annexing Central and Eastern Europe. At present any idea that Russia will regain control over its former East European satellites belongs to the realm of fantasy. Equally fantastic is the idea that Russia would really become more powerful in today's world by regaining direct responsibility for ruling scores of millions of former Soviet Muslims or even by annexing the rust belt of the Donets basin and the run-down defence industries of East Ukraine. The price of neo-imperialism would be a return to precisely that economic isolation and autarchy which doomed the Soviet Union to backwardness, at a time when

integration into the world economy is crucial to rebuilding the post-Soviet economy and remains a key objective of most Russian elites. At present the global order looks a great deal more robust than was the case between the wars and a weakened Russia seems an improbable source for any challenge to that order in the foreseeable future.

Notes

1 This chapter is based on my book, *Empire: The Russian Empire and its Rivals*, London, John Murray, 2000, and especially on its final chapter. Readers wishing for a fuller bibliography are referred to the notes to Chapter 10 and to the bibliographical essay at the end of the book. In this chapter I will usually confine myself to drawing readers' attention to works not cited in my book.

2 Three good recent collections of essays discuss the collapse of the Soviet regime and that of other empires: see G. Lundestad (ed.), *The Fall of Great Powers*, Oslo, Scandinavian University Press, 1994; K. Dawisha and B. Parrott (eds), *The End of Empire: The Transformation of the USSR in Comparative Perspective*, Armonk, M.E. Sharpe, 1997; K. Barkey and M. von Hagen (eds), *After Empire*, Boulder, Westview, 1997.

3 There is a useful comparative essay on inter-war British and Dutch policy by D.A. Low, *Eclipse of Empire*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991. See also Chapters 2 and 5 (by C. Trocki, and by P. Kratoska and B. Batson) in N. Tarling (ed.), *The Cambridge History of South-east Asia, volume 2, The Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994.

4 A figure cited, for example, by A. Clayton, *Frontiersmen: Warfare in Africa since 1950*, London, UCL Press, 1999, p. 1.

5 Subsequently to writing my book, I have read N. MacQueen, *The Decolonization of Portuguese Africa*, London, Longman, 1997. As regards types of corruption in Third World polities, I was first made sensitive to this issue many years ago by C. Clapham, *Third World Politics: An Introduction*, Routledge, London, 1988.

6 In addition to sources cited in my bibliography see, L. Pan (ed.), *The Encyclopaedia of the Chinese Overseas*, Richmond, Curzon, 1999.

7 A useful recently published guide to Ottoman history is S. Faroqui, *Approaching Ottoman History*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999.

8 Bernard Lewis summed up these factors splendidly in his essay on the aftermath of the Ottoman Empire: 'The Ottoman Empire and its Aftermath', *The Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 15, 1980, pp. 27–36. This issue of *The Journal of Contemporary History* remains the fullest introduction to comparative study of the aftermath of empire's collapse. It is unique in its breadth, covering the impact of loss of empire on a wide range of imperial 'core' peoples.

9 The great source on Austrian identity is G. Stourzh, *Vom Reich zur Republik: Studien zur Osterreichsbewusstein im 20 Jahrhundert*, Vienna, Atelier, 1990.

10 A thoughtful, though in my view slightly alarmist, key text on this issue is R. Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996.

11 Often unfairly criticised, F. Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, London, Penguin, 1992, is an excellent survey of American ideological hegemony in the contemporary global order and its great contribution to American power.

3 Neopatrimonialism and the prospects for democratization in the Central Asian republics

John Ishiyama

In the past decade or so, the notion that political institutions play a key role in affecting the course of political and economic transition in new democracies has become quite popular. In particular, considerable attention has been paid to the question of which institutional arrangements best facilitate democratic consolidation and political stability in new democracies. Indeed, much debate has revolved around whether presidentialism or parliamentarianism best facilitates the consolidation of political democracy.[1] On the one hand, a considerable amount of literature has suggested that parliamentary systems are superior to presidential systems in promoting political stability and hastening democratic consolidation. On the other hand, others, such as Donald Horowitz, have pointed out that parliamentary systems do not guarantee stability and that presidential systems can foster 'conciliation and consensus building'.[2]

In recent years, several scholars have investigated the effects of institutions on political and economic development in post-communist politics, or what Jon Elster has referred to as 'downstream analysis'.[3] Joel Hellman, for instance, examined presidentialism as an independent variable in relation to economic reform; Timothy Frye noted an association between increased presidential powers and authoritarianism, and an inverse relationship between presidential powers and parties in government in his analysis of twenty-four post-communist states.[4] However, John Ishiyama and Matthew Velten found no relationship between presidential power and various measures of democratic consolidation in the post-communist states.[5] Others have investigated the effects of previous regimes on the process of democratic transition, noting in particular that the configuration of the previous authoritarian system had an important impact in shaping politics following the transition.[6]

Yet much of the literature on the consequences of political institutions and previous regimes in post-communist politics has remained focused on those countries which have made a relatively successful transition to democracy. This in part might explain why, despite a growing amount of literature on the development and effects of political institutions in post-communist politics, very little systematic work has been done on the newly independent states of Central Asia. To a large extent, this is due to the fact that Central Asian regimes are far less than fully democratic in the Western sense, and the elections conducted (if any)

have often been stacked in favor of state-sponsored candidates. This makes it difficult to investigate the political effects of institutions and regime legacies on the process of democratic consolidation.

Nonetheless, although these systems are not fully democratic, an analysis of the evolution of the presidencies of the Central Asian States can shed light on the process of institution building *prior* to political transition. Indeed, as Martha Brill Olcott has noted, the logic and demands of presidents in authoritarian systems of Central Asia are the same as they have been for post-communist presidencies throughout Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union – how to transform personal charisma into institutional power?[7] Further, in terms of 'downstream analysis', given that much of the literature on the processes of democratic transition and democratic consolidation holds that *transitional institutions* have a crucial effect on those processes, then the analysis of current presidencies in Central Asia provides a basis to speculate on what might happen when, and if, these systems begin to democratize.

Thus, the purpose of this chapter is twofold: First, to assess what *kinds* of authoritarian regimes have emerged in Post-Soviet Central Asia and, second, to speculate on what consequences these regime formation processes will have on future moves toward democratization. To this end, this chapter is organized into four sections. First, I argue that an appropriate theoretical beginning lies in the literature on personalist regimes in the developing world, particularly the development of the *neopatrimonial authoritarian state.* Then I lay out a framework which outlines the features of different kinds of neopatrimonial authoritarian regimes. Second, I derive a set of theoretical expectations regarding the posited effects of different types of neopatrimonial regimes on the process of democratic transition. Third, I assess how the Central Asian states fit in the framework developed in the first section. In the final section I speculate as to which transition process is most likely in each of the Central Asian states.

The neopatrimonial state

Neopatrimonial authoritarian regimes are distinctive from other types of authoritarian regimes, particularly corporatist regimes. Corporatist authoritarian regimes are characterized by the existence of an organic ideology of national unity and attempts at direct political mobilization along controlled bureaucratized channels, which often involves the granting of subsidiary spheres of influence to occupational interest groups in society, the development of formal governing coalitions between organized state and social interests, and collective bargaining over core public policies. In neopatrimonial systems, on the other hand, the chief executive maintains authority through personal patronage, rather than through ideology or law.[8] Like the classical patrimonialism as described by Weber and Robin Theobold, the right to rule is ascribed to a person rather than an office.[9] In contemporary neopatrimonialism, however, personal loyalty and dependence permeate all political structures, and individuals occupy offices more for self-enrichment than to perform public service. Indeed the essence of

neopatrimonialism is the award by public officials of personal favors. In return for material rewards, clients mobilize political support for, and defer to the authority of patrons.[10]

Although it may be argued that one can find elements of neopatrimonialism in all polities, the core feature of the neopatrimonial system, like those that existed in Haiti, Philippines, Paraguay, Indonesia and Zaire,[11] is the reliance on personalism. In these states personal relations are not the factor at the margins of all bureaucratic systems but constitute the foundation and superstructure of all political institutions. The relations to the 'big man' define one's position in the polity.

What conditions lead to the emergence of neopatrimonial regimes? To some extent, neopatrimonial regimes can be seen as a form of transitional system, which is a function of the level of development of the state. As Robert Jackson and Carl Rosberg remind us, the political institutions we associate with the modern state often

> did not take hold until powerful rulers had first established effective governments and associated their personal authority with state structures. In most European states, strong personal rule preceded the successful establishment of impersonal, constitutional government. In general personal regimes may be thought of as typical of transitional periods, when an institutionalized order has broken down and another has not yet replaced it.[12]

In Africa, Jackson and Rosberg argue, the onset of European colonialism undermined existing political institutions, necessitating the construction of new indigenous institutions virtually from scratch upon the attainment of independence – hence, the reliance on personal rule in Africa. To a large extent, the Central Asian states that emerged from the carcass of the Soviet Union appear to be much like the African states which emerged from the collapse of European colonialism. Like the African states, indigenous political institutions were undermined by Russian and then Soviet imperialism, which necessitated the construction of new forms of governance, with a very heavy reliance on personal rule.

Another perspective contends that neopatrimonialism results from pressures external to the country. The literature on the 'rentier states' of the Middle East is of particular importance in this regard. A rentier state is defined as any state that receives a substantial portion of its income in the form of 'external rents'. Income generated from sources outside of the physical boundaries of the recipient country are classified as external rents (such as through the sale of oil or natural gas).[13] Further to qualify as a rentier state, the government must be the direct recipient of the external rents.

The classic 'rentier states' are the oil producing countries of the Middle East, and their rentier status has internal consequences, particularly on the development of the neopatrimonial state. When external capital in the form of oil revenues flows into the coffers of oil exporting countries, the state becomes

financially independent on domestic productive groups. Since state expenditures provide the main link between external rents and the domestic economy, domestic groups can gain access to the circulation of rents only through state institutions. Thus rentier states are likely to strengthen patrimonialism since, under rentier conditions, 'loyalty to the system is the most rational course of action for entrepreneurs. Instead of challenging the state, they will try to gain the government's favor by establishing patron–client ties with powerful individuals within the state structure.'[14] Further, since the rentier state's primary function is distribution (and not extraction) such states fail to develop extractive capacities. States normally have to penetrate society in order to extract and redistribute the economic surplus and develop links between state and society. However, the rentier state has little incentive to develop such links, and, as a result, possesses little in the way of adequate information about the domestic economy or society. Thus, rentier states, over time, become increasingly isolated from the societies they rule.[15] Moreover, because there is little incentive to penetrate society, rentier states do not develop the cooptive institutions characteristic of corporatist authoritarian arrangements. As a result, rentier states often produce highly personalist regimes.

Types of neopatrimonial regimes

This is not to say that all neopatrimonial regimes are alike. Michael Bratton and Nicholas Van de Walle identify four types of neopatrimonial regimes: *personal dictatorship*, *military oligarchy* and *plebiscitary* and *competitive one-party systems*. Each is defined by whether the 'strongman's' following is broadly or narrowly mobilized (participation in Robert Dahl's terms[16]) and the plurality of political associations within the governing institutions (competition). The spatial depiction of these four types of regimes appears in Figure 3.1.

The first type of neopatrimonial regime is the *personalist dictatorship.* In this type of neopatrimonial system, politics is highly exclusionary because the strongman rules by decree and existing 'participatory' institutions cannot check the absolute powers of the chief executive. Further, the regime seeks to destroy even the semblance of political competition by eliminating all opponents to the 'big man', often physically. Although it is often the case that the personal dictator emerged from some other institution (such as the army or a dominant political party) he seeks to weaken these political institutions and transform them into instruments of his personal political will. To facilitate his control of the political process, the personalist dictator invariably seeks to control the flow of public revenues and selectively disburse resources to a narrow entourage of clients. He takes exclusive charge of policy making and governs through personal emissaries rather than through formal political institutions.[17]

The second type of neopatrimonial regime, *oligarchy,* excludes participation. Decisions are made by a narrow elite behind closed doors. Although there is a visible personal leader (usually the chief executive) power is not solely concentrated in his hands. Decisions are made collectively in a junta or a committee or

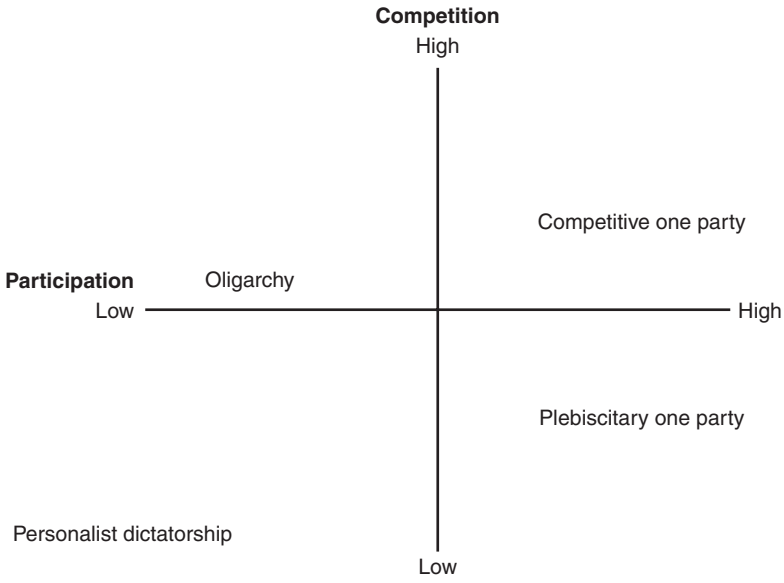

Figure 3.1 Spatial positioning of neopatrimonial regime types.

cabinet. Nonetheless the relationship between the leader and the junta is clearly not one of 'first among equals'. There is some degree of debate within the elite, and objective criteria may be brought to bear in assessing policy options.

Yet oligarchies are nearly as exclusivist as personalist dictatorships. There is very little or no participation outside of the inner circle of leaders. To be sure, parties themselves are viewed with suspicion as are other institutions of mass participation (such as trade unions and civic organizations). Often such organizations are ruthlessly suppressed or reconstituted in forms that are controlled and amenable to the oligarchy.[18]

The third type of regime is the *plebiscitary one-party system*. In this type of system, there is greater participation than in either the personalist dictatorship or the oligarchic forms of neopatrimonial regime. This mass participation usually takes the form of political ritual where the personal ruler orchestrates plebiscites which provide mass endorsement for himself, his officeholders and policies. Support is mobilized through the mechanism of one-party plebiscites. Between elections, the regime employs a party machine to distribute patronage to a wider array of economic and political interests than in personal dictatorship. Nonetheless genuine competition is absent, with opposition not tolerated, and power is concentrated in the hands of the 'big man', although not as exclusively as in a personal dictatorship.[19]

The final type of neopatrimonial regime is the *competitive one-party system*. This type of system is as inclusive as the plebiscitary one-party system, but there is also some degree of competition among elites. In some of these regimes

competition also exists at the mass level where two or more candidates may compete in party primaries or elections (but not representing separate parties).

Nonetheless, these regimes are still based on the omnipresent 'big man'. These types of regimes tended to be founded by the 'nationalist founding father'. In some cases, the original ruler has previously engineered a smooth but nondemocratic leadership transition to a handpicked successor. In these types of regimes, long-serving leaders have institutionalized their support in the ruling parties and feel secure enough to tolerate a degree of pluralism, which allows for a significant opposition to the government on the fringes of the single party and some freedom of the press.

Based upon the above literature, it is possible to identify two general dimensions which characterize neopatrimonial regimes. These relate to the dimensions identified by Dahl, and employed as the primary means to distinguish neopatrimonial regimes by Bratton and Van de Walle – competition and participation. Indeed, based on these dimensions we might identify different levels of competition and participation. For instance, in terms of the dimension *competition*, we might distinguish between systems which have no discernable competition among political elites to the situation where opposition is legal and afforded the opportunity to hold office. In terms of *participation* (and by this we mean the participation in national political institutions) we can distinguish between the various forms of participation in terms of the extent to which citizens are afforded the opportunity to express preferences. Certainly the situation where no elections are held at all provides the least opportunity for citizens to express preferences. In systems where elections are held only in terms of plebiscites on rulers and policies, or where only an officially endorsed slate of candidates is allowed, there is more opportunity for the preferences of citizens to be expressed, but these choices are limited to 'yes' and 'no'. More opportunity for the expression of choice is available when elections with competition are allowed (however, the odds might be stacked in favor of officially endorsed candidates).

Regime effects on transition type

In the literature on democratic transition, different types of previous regimes are related to different types of transitions.[20] This has also been the case with the literature on transitions from neopatrimonial rule.[21] However, transitions from neopatrimonial rule are particularly problematic. One of the principal problems with transitions from neopatrimonial rule is the legacy of the great concentration of power in the hands of a single executive. Indeed, the legacy of the concentration of power in such 'strong presidential' systems, according to its critics, does not bode well in terms of the promotion of democracy.[22] There is a great temptation by authoritarian successors to maintain the concentration of power characteristic of the previous neopatrimonial regime, simply replacing personalities as opposed to fundamentally altering the institutional arrangements. The emphasis on personality and the concentration of power in the hands of a single individual

often proves to be a great temptation for new presidents themselves to ignore constitutional limits on his or her power – thus dooming even tentative steps toward democratization.[23]

Nonetheless, the probability of successful transition from neopatrimonial rule depends, to a large extent, on the kind of neopatrimonial regime that existed. Thus, for instance, democratic transitions in personal dictatorships are almost invariably driven by forces outside of the state, either in domestic society or from the international arena. Personalist rulers are very unlikely to initiate measures to politically liberalize the system from above or relinquish power without a struggle; they have to be forced out. To a large extent this is because, in personalist dictatorships, power is so concentrated that the fate of the regime is tied to the fate of the dictator. Any threat to the regime is perceived as a personal threat to the ruler; thus personalist rulers cling desperately to power and if democratic transition is to take place it is invariably painful.

Not only is it likely that the transition under such conditions is painful, but the process is unlikely to result in the successful consolidation of democracy. Largely because of the nature of the previous regime which has pulverized any autonomous centers of power, the plethora of opposition parties, trade unions and human rights organizations are likely to be 'fragmented, impoverished, and themselves lacking in the traditions of participatory and competitive politics. The absence of institutions and habits of competition and participation combine virtually to eliminate the chances that a transition from personal dictatorship will end in the consolidation of a democratic order.'[24]

Transitions from within oligarchies, when they occur, tend to be conducted from the top down. This is in part due to the fact that the oligarchy has repressed participatory politics and hence there is little in the way of an organized political opposition. The opposition, thus, is in no position to challenge the oligarchy's plans. The great danger of managed transitions from oligarchic rule is that a real transition may never take place. A great advantage of a top-down, managed, transition is that it imposes predictability and reduces uncertainty, which both the weak opposition and the oligarchs may find advantageous.

The effects of the plebiscitary system on democratic transition are likely to be different when compared to transitions from personal dictatorships or oligarchies. The plebiscitary tradition generally creates enough political space for the emergence of a nascent opposition. Further, the opposition quickly realizes that the call for a national conference may refashion the rules to provide for genuine political competition. On the other hand, the leaders of the existing system see it as a harmless participatory ritual that will provide the regime with a much needed political boost, whereas the opposition views it as the first step in a democratic takeover. The outcomes are mixed and depend on the relative strengths of the parties and leaders.

Like other neopatrimonial regimes, competitive one-party neopatrimonial systems become vulnerable when economic crisis and donor mandated economic reform policies cut into the leader's ability to manage the political game. Transitions are generally easier in such regimes which have a history of elec-

tions and a tolerance of opposition. Despite very real obstacles, the prospects for the development of a consolidated democracy are greater for transitions which emerge from competitive one-party regimes than from other types of neopatrimonial regimes. This is because of the structure of the political institutions created by the previous regime, which fostered some degree of participation and contestation.

Categorizing the Central Asian regimes

What kinds of regimes are emerging in Central Asia? Many observers of Central Asian politics have noted the highly personalistic nature of these regimes, referring to them as 'strong Presidential systems', 'strongmen regimes' or even 'sultanates'.[25] Moreover, as indicated in all of the substantive chapters of this volume, each of the presidents has attempted to infuse personalism into their respective political systems, a personalism that permeates all political structures.

Table 3.1 illustrates how the Central Asian states fit into the framework developed above, outlining some of the basic features of the Central Asian states. As indicated, three of the five states (Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) are significant energy producers (with the average annual energy production from 1991–5 at 83,144, 51,433, 40,104 kilotons, respectively); Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, on the other hand, are net energy importers.[26]

Of the five Central Asian states, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan represent the states with the most potential to develop into 'rentier states'. Kazakhstan's oil reserves have been estimated to amount to as much as 2,100,000,000 tons. Further oil earnings make up for a substantial account for some 33 percent of total export earnings.[27] Uzbekistan is a significant producer of natural gas, with gas reserves estimated to be one trillion cubic meters. Thus far Uzbek oil production has been small, although the discovery of the Mingbulak oil field may ultimately dwarf Uzbekistan's other energy products.[28] However, the state with the greatest potential to develop into a 'rentier state' is Turkmenistan. Turkmenistan is a significant exporter of energy, ranking fourth in the world in the production of natural gas and oil extraction. Natural gas exports accounted for an estimated 70 percent of overall foreign export earnings in 1993, although much of the trade of natural gas is to countries that cannot pay (Georgia, Azerbaijan and Ukraine). Nonetheless natural gas constituted 66.2 percent of Turkmenistan's exports to non-CIS countries in 1993 and accounted for 60 percent of GDP in 1992. Oil reserves are estimated at 700,000,000 tons.[29] Further, the Turkmen President, Saparmurat Niyazov, also considers Middle Eastern states as models for his regime, citing in particular Kuwait, which would seem to support the notion that Turkmenistan is already developing features similar to 'rentier states'.[30]

Second, the Central Asian presidencies are extremely powerful as well. To measure the strength of the presidency, I employ the measure developed by Joel Hellman and Timothy Frye (1997) the *Index of Formal Presidential Powers.* This value takes into account the constitutional powers invested in the hands of

the president and whether the president is directly or indirectly elected. The measure evaluates symbolic, procedural, appointive and political powers. The resulting value ranges from zero to 27 with a high score indicative of a powerful presidency and a lower score a less powerful presidency. As indicated in the last column in Table 3.1, the scores for the Central Asian states are significantly above the median score for all twenty-five post-communist presidencies (at 9.25). Indeed in constitutional terms, the Turkmen presidency is by far the most powerful of all of the post-communist presidencies (with a score of 17).

Thus, at least three of the Central Asian states appear to share some of the characteristics of the rentier neopatrimonial regimes that exist throughout Africa and the Middle East, with the remaining two (Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan) representing non-rentier neopatrimonial regimes. Yet can we distinguish between different types of regimes among the Central Asian states? To assess differences among the regimes two measures are defined in Table 3.1: the *Participation Index* and *Competition*. The first dimension, *Participation*, is based upon two components listed in Table 3.1. First the reported voter turnout is calculated based upon the number of voters divided by the voting age population (VAP).[31] However, since turnout rates may be overstated (particularly in Turkmenistan) I consider a second component when calculating the participation index: the degree to which citizens can participate in political life 'freely'. To this extent I use 'political freedoms' measured by the average rating on the seven point Freedom House index of political and civil liberties for the period 1991–8 (where 1 is most free and 7 was least) as a 'deflator'. The Participation Index

Table 3.1 Basic characteristics of Central Asian states: energy production, participation, competition and constitutional presidential power.

Country	*Average annual commercial energy production 1991–5 in kiloton oil equivalent*	*Freedom House average civil and political rights 1991–8*	*Participation (average voter turnout in 1990s) = voters/voting age population (%)*	*Participation index = participation/ Freedom House score*	*Competition = 100 [(% vote received by president in last election + % seats controlled by supporting faction in legislature)/2]*	*Presidential power score*
Kazakhstan	83,144	5.00	64.3	12.97	27.3	15.5
Kyrgyzstan	1,807	3.85	51.2	13.30	21.3	15.5
Tajikistan	1,677	6.25	72.4	11.58	30.8	13.0
Turkmenistan	51,433	6.50	73.6	11.30	0.1	18.5
Uzbekistan	40,104	6.25	86.2	13.79	6.6	17.0

Sources: *World Development Indicators, 1998*, Washington, DC: World Bank; *IDEA: Voter Turnout from 1945 to 1997*, *A Global Report on Political Participation* at http://www.int_idea.se/Voter_turnout/index.html; *Elections around the world* at http://www.stm.it/; *Interparliamentary Union* at http://www.ipu.org; Timothy Frye, 'A Politics of Institutional Choice: Post-Communist Presidencies', *Comparative Political Studies*, vol. 30, 1997, pp. 523–52.

results from dividing the reported voter turnout by the political and civil liberties measure. The level of *Competition* is assessed by the strength of the electoral opponents of the President. The measure takes into account the average per cent vote received by President in elections since independence, plus the per cent seats controlled by his supporting faction in the legislature; this sum is then divided by two. Subsequently, the complement is calculated by subtracting this value from 100. The resulting score represents the Participation Index score.

The resulting *participation index* and *competition* scores are then used to define the dimensions in Figure 3.2. Figure 3.2 plots the five Central Asian states relative to each other, and then overlays the quadrants that appeared in Figure 3.1 on page 46. As indicated, the five states roughly correspond to the four types of neopatrimonial regimes; Turkmenistan with its extremely low competition score (.1) and with a relatively low participation score (11.3) would appear to correspond more to the *personalist dictatorship* than any other Central Asian state. Tajikistan, with its relatively high competition score (30.8) and its relatively low participation score (11.6) would seem to approximate an *oligarchic* neopatrimonial regime. Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan approximate the *competitive single-party* regime more than any other Central Asian state, with Kazakhstan slightly higher in terms of the competition score than Kyrgyzstan. Finally, Uzbekistan corresponds to the *plebiscitary single-party* model, with a high rate of participation, coupled with a low level of political competition.

The placement of these states into these four categories appears apropos. For instance, many scholars have noted that President Saparmurat Niyazov (or the Turkmenbashi) of Turkmenistan has busied himself in creating a political

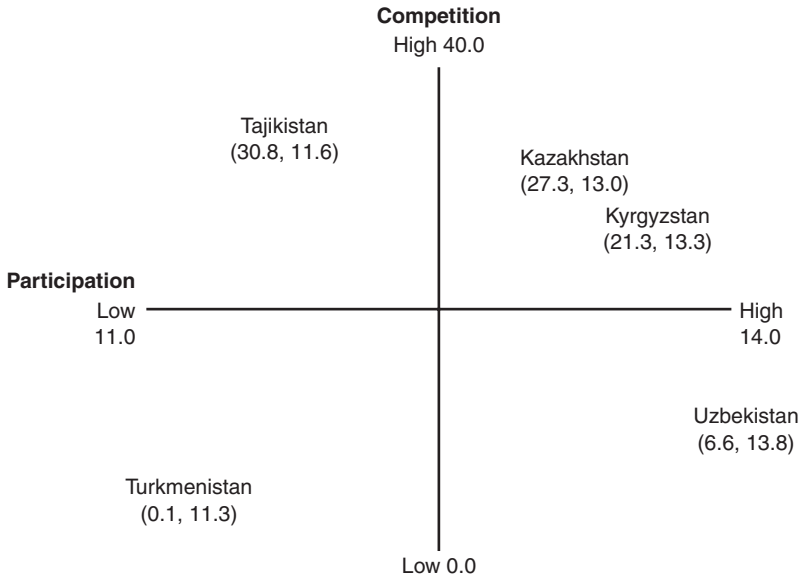

Figure 3.2 Spatial positioning of Central Asian regimes.

system of one person. The cult of personality created in Turkmenistan rivals that of Stalin,[32] to such an extent that apparently, even in 1995, Niyazov admitted that it had gone too far: 'I admit it there are too many portraits, pictures and monuments. . . I don't find any pleasure in it but the people demand it because of their mentality.'[33]

Niyazov's political weight extends throughout the system. Under the current constitution the President heads the Cabinet of Ministers, controls the appointment of all judges, can circumvent the *Meijlis*, or legislature, in the law-making process.[34] In the economy Niyazov maintains state control over the agriculture and the gas sectors through the establishment of parastatals such as *Turkmengasprom*. Although the parastatals appear to be private, in 'reality they are closely tied to government either through management of financial accountability. . .these entities appear to act as independent, profit-maximizing firms. In reality they function as branches of the government.'[35]

In Uzbekistan, President Islam Karimov has also attempted to establish a 'personality cult', with himself as the primary political actor, although not in as extreme a fashion as in Turkmenistan.[36] In Uzbekistan there is even a Mao-sized phrase book of quotes from the President.[37] Karimov has succeeded in institutionalizing his powers, particularly rule by presidential decree, which he has used to circumvent other branches of government. His handpicked Presidential Council acts as a conduit to the *Oliy Majlis* (or legislature) which serves as a rubber stamp organization. Further, the president exercises vertical control through his power of appointment. He appoints all of the governors (*hokims*) of the dozen *villiati* (provinces) and the Republic of Karakalpakstan.

In Uzbekistan the primary political organization through which the President exercises power is the People's Democratic Party (PDP) which is the direct successor to the Communist Party of Uzbekistan. Karimov relied heavily on the PDP apparatus to mobilize support for himself in the election in 1991 and again with the referendum which extended his term in office until 2000. No real opposition is really tolerated, except for small official opposition parties such as the Fatherland Party and the Peasant's Party, the latter having virtually disappeared. Other opposition parties have been banned or hounded underground.[38] Despite the lack of political competition, there appears to be higher levels of participation in Uzbekistan than in Turkmenistan, and a willingness to use referendums to supplant elections (as was the case in the 1995 referendum that extended Karimov's term). Thus, Uzbekistan appears to approximate a *plebiscitary one-party* neopatrimonial regime.

In Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, there is considerably more competition than in either Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. In Kazakhstan there is an open and fairly active legal opposition which although circumscribed, has challenged the President, Nursultan Nazarbaev, particularly in parliament.[39] Also Nazarbaev has allowed for some autonomy for the local (*akims*) who are appointed by the President. The local councils can express no confidence in the *akim* by a two-thirds vote (although the president can override or revoke the decisions of the local council). There is also a real opposition in Kazakhstan ranging from the

communists to nationalists.[40] Further, participation levels approach that of Uzbekistan, in part because Nazarbaev has also relied on referendums to mobilize popular support for his constitutional machinations and to extend his presidential term (which was extended in 1995).

The President of Kyrgyzstan, Askar Akaev, has been faced with opposition since the first days of independence. The opposition is ensconced in parliament and is made up of old communists and nationalists who have resisted many of the reform efforts of the president. Faced with this opposition the political system has become increasingly authoritarian.[41] Akaev has sought to change the constitution to weaken parliament and strengthen the presidency via a series of national referendums in order to bypass the opposition. Further the President has jailed many members of the opposition including four journalists from the weekly *Res Publica* in 1997 on libel charges.[42]

Nonetheless, despite the drift toward authoritarianism in both Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, both regimes tolerate opposition. The regimes seem intent (for the time being) to merely circumscribe opposition, not to eliminate it (as is the case in Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan).[43] Moreover, in both cases participation has not been restricted (or in the case of Turkmenistan probably fabricated); both Nazarbaev and Akaev rely heavily on mass mobilization to support their policies, often via referendums.[44] Thus, in many ways the Kazakh and Kyrgyz regimes approximate the *competitive one-party* neopatrimonial regime.

The regime in Tajikistan, more than any other Central Asian state, possesses characteristics making it akin to the *oligarchic* neopatrimonial state. Indeed as Muriel Atkin points out in this volume, unlike in any of the other Central Asian states where a clear 'strongman' emerged at the very beginning of independence, in Tajikistan there was a continual struggle among various factions for supremacy. Ultimately the rise of Imomali Rahmonov to the Tajik presidency had less to do with his ability to consolidate power as it had to do with his 'insignificance'. As Atkin notes 'he was the figurehead for other men who wanted to preserve the substance of Soviet-style rule by a self-selected elite and fought a civil war to get what they wanted'.[45] Indeed not only does Rahmonov face competition from his rivals in the opposition, but within his own ranks, particularly from the leaders of the former Popular Front, part of the old non-Islamicist opposition which joined him in the fight against the Islamicists.[46]

However, unlike in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and even Uzbekistan where relatively free participation is promoted, in Tajikistan, elections are rigged. Rahmonov's victory (60 percent of the vote as opposed to his nearest competitor's 35 percent) in the presidential election of 1994 was tempered by the fact that the election was essentially rigged.[47] Further in the legislative election of 1995, many of the results appear to have been fabricated, prompting international observers to question the integrity of the entire electoral process.[48]

Some speculations

Thus, the Central Asian states appear to correspond to the typology derived from studies of African and Middle Eastern neopatrimonial regimes. However, this is not to say that the Central Asian states are identical to African neopatrimonial regimes – there are substantial differences between the Turkmenbashi's Turkmenistan and Mobutu's Zaire, or Nazarbaev's Kazakhstan and Nyerere's Tanzania. Nonetheless, it can be claimed that, when compared to each other, the Turkmenistani regime has characteristics which make it closer to a personal dictatorship than the other Central Asian states, and that Nazarbaev's regime is closer to a competitive one-party system than the other states (save for Kyrgyzstan), etc.

Rather than offering a conclusion here, I would like to end with some conjectures as to what might occur when these regimes begin their first steps toward democratization. Although it is always dangerous to speculate on what has not yet occurred, we can, based upon what we know about regime type, offer some predictions as to the direction transition will take.

First, the transition, if it takes place in Turkmenistan, is likely to be quite painful. Indeed, as with other personal dictatorships in the world, pressures to democratize will be largely driven by forces outside of the state, either in domestic society or from the international arena; the initiative will not come from the Turkmenbashi. As with other personal dictators, Niyazov is very unlikely to initiate measures to politically liberalize the system from above or relinquish power without a struggle; he will either pass from the scene naturally, or he will be forced out. This will, of course, depend on his ability to buy off support (much as Mobutu did to remain in power) which, in turn, will depend on the price of oil and natural gas, and Turkmenistan's ability to deliver these commodities to clients who can pay in hard currency. Further, even if the Turkmenbashi passes from the scene, alternative centers of power have been so thoroughly pulverized that it is unlikely that democratization will proceed smoothly in any case.

The situation in Uzbekistan is more complex. The promotion of participation characteristic of the plebiscitary system has created some political space for the emergence of a nascent opposition. If the economic situation in Uzbekistan worsens (which is likely to occur) [49] and if the violence of the sort that occurred in February 1999 (when six bombs exploded in Tashkent) continues then it is probable that Karimov may seek a 'national conference' solution and invite dissidents and regime opponents to participate in a government of reconciliation. The outcome of such moves will depend on the relative strengths of the regime and the opposition at the time.

Tajikistan is unlikely to begin the process of democratic transition any time soon. Although there is considerable competition within the elite between various contending factions (which is characteristic of the oligarchic neopatrimonial regime) none of the factions appears intent on promoting democratic and economic reforms. Nor does Rahmonov appear to be in a position to challenge

the power of the factions (even in his own camp) even if he were inclined to do so.

The two states which appear to have the greatest potential to make a democratic transition are Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. Both regimes have had a history of elections and some tolerance for the existence of an opposition. Indeed the structure of the political institutions created by the current regimes fosters some degree of participation and contestation which, in turn, 'aclimates' both regime supporters and opposition to the game of politics. Thus, despite very real obstacles to the prospects to the development of consolidated democracies in these two states, there is a far greater likelihood that the transitions in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan will be successful, in contrast to the other three Central Asian republics.

Notes

1 See S. Mainwaring, 'Presidentialism, Multipartism and Democracy: The Difficult Combination', *Comparative Political Studies*, vol. 26, 1993, p. 198; J.J. Linz, 'The Perils of Presidentialism', *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 1, 1990, pp. 51–69; J.J. Linz, 'Presidential or Parliamentary Democracy: Does it Make a Difference?', in J.J. Linz and A. Valenzuala (eds), *The Failure of Presidential Democracy*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994, pp. 3–87; A. Stepan and C. Skach, 'Constitutional Frameworks and Democratic Consolidation', *World Politics*, vol. 46, 1993, pp. 1–22.

2 D. Horowitz, 'Comparing Democratic Systems', *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 1, 1990, p. 789; see also M.S. Shugart and J.M. Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992.

3 J. Elster 'Afterword: The Making of Postcommunist Presidencies', in R. Taras (ed.), *Postcommunist Presidents*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997, pp. 225–37. See also J. McGregor, 'The Presidency In East Central Europe', *RFE/RL Research Report*, vol. 3, no. 2, 1994, pp. 23–31; J. Hellman, 'Constitutions and Economic Reform in the Postcommunist Transitions', *East European Constitutional Review* vol. 5, 1996, pp. 46–56; J. Ishiyama and M. Velten, 'Presidential Power and Democratic Development in Post-Communist Politics', *Communist and Post-communist Studies*, vol. 31, 1998, pp. 217–34.

4 Hellman, 'Constitutions and Economic Reform'; and T. Frye, 'A Politics of Institutional Choice: Post-Communist Presidencies', *Comparative Political Studies*, vol. 30, 1997, pp. 523–52.

5 Ishiyama and Velten, 'Presidential Power'.

6 M. Bratton and N. Van de Walle, 'Neopatrimonial Regimes and Political Transitions in Africa', *World Politics*, vol. 46, no. 3, 1994, pp. 453–89. S. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Twentieth Century*, Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 1991; H. Kitschelt, 'Formation of Party Cleavages in Post-communist Democracies: Theoretical Propositions', *Party Politics*, vol. 1, no. 4, 1995, pp. 447–72; A. Agh, 'Partial Consolidation of the East–Central European Parties: The Case of the Hungarian Socialist Party', *Party Politics*, vol. 1, no. 4, 1995, pp. 491–514; J. Ishiyama 'The Sickle or the Rose?: Previous Regime Types and the Evolution of the Ex-Communist Parties in Post-communist Societies', *Comparative Political Studies* vol. 30, no. 3, 1997, pp. 299–330.

7 M.B. Olcott, 'Kazakhstan: Nursultan Nazerbaev as Strong President', in R. Taras (ed.), *Postcommunist Presidents*, pp. 106–29.

8 R. Snyder, 'Explaining Transitions for Neopatrimonial Dictatorships', *Comparative Politics* vol. 24, no. 4, 1994, p. 379. See also S.N. Eisenstadt, *Revolution and the Transformation of Societies: A Comparative Study of Civilizations*, New York, The Free Press, 1978; neopatrimonial regimes are 'neo' because they do not rely on traditional forms of legitimation and hereditary succession. See G. Roth, 'Personal Rulership, Patrimonialism and Empire-Building in the New States', *World Politics*, vol. 20, no. 2, 1968, pp. 194–206; Juan Linz using a term taken from Weber refers to 'sultanism' to describe a subtype of neopatrimonial regime in which military and administrative apparati are purely personal instruments of the ruler. J.J. Linz, 'Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes', in F. Greenstein and N.W. Polsby (eds), *Handbook of Political Science, Volume 3: Macropolitical Theory*, Reading, Addison-Wesley, 1975, pp. 259–60.

9 M. Weber, *Economy and Society*, New York, Bedminister Press, 1968; R. Theobold 'Patrimonialism', *World Politics*, vol. 34, no. 3, 1982.

10 Bratton and Van de Walle, 'Neopatrimonial Regimes and Political Transitions in Africa', p. 458.

11 Richard Snyder has identified a number of regimes that qualify as neopatrimonial regimes including (but not limited to) Marcos' Phillippines, the Duvaliers' Haiti, Stroessner's Paraguay, Somoza's Nicaragua, Iran under the Shah, Batista's Cuba, Trujillo's Dominican Republic and Noreiga's Panama, to name a few. See Snyder, 'Explaining Transitions for Neopatrimonial Dictatorships'.

12 R.H. Jackson and C.G. Rosberg, *Personal Rule in Black Africa*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1982, p. 5.

13 H. Mahdavy, 'The Patterns and Problems of Economic Development in Rentier States: The Case of Iran', in M.A. Cook (ed.), *Studies in Economic History of the Middle East*, London, Oxford University Press, 1970, p. 225.

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25 G. Gleason *The Central Asian States*, Boulder, Westview Press, 1997, p. 110; Olcott, 'Kazakhstan: Nursultan Nazerbaev as Strong President'; A. Stanley, 'Ex-Communist Rules Turkestan Like a Sultan', *The New York Times* 23 November 1995, p. A3; A. Leder, 'The Cult of Personality and Pipe Dreams', *The New York Times*, 4 January 1998, section 4, p. 4; R. Kangas, 'Problems of State Building in the Central Asian

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31 I use the voting age population (VAP) as the denominator as opposed to the number of registered voters, because the use of the latter tends to inflate turnout figures and does not take into account people who are so disaffected by the regime that they do not bother to register to vote, or segments of the population who are selectively disenfranchised. It also produces more realistic turnout figures. In Turkmenistan, for instance, voting turnout is reported at nearly 99.98 percent; however when using the voting age population as the denominator this figure is reduced to 72 percent.

32 For a description of the cult of personality, see A. Feur, 'The Cult of Personality and Pipe Dreams', *The New York Times*, 4 January 1998, section 4, p. 3; see also 'Oil of Freedom', *The Economist*, 11 April 1998, p. 32; and D. Nissman, 'Turkmenistan (Un)transformed', *Current History*, vol. 93, no. 582, 1994, pp. 183–6.

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37 M. Spector, 'Soviet-Style Rule in Uzbekistan Provides a Bearable Life "If We are Quiet"', *The New York Times*, 16 April 1995, p. 6.

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43 Although, in the past presidential election in Kazakhstan, a fairly popular rival to Nazarbaev, the former Prime Minister Akezhan Kazhegeldin was banned on a legal technicality from running for election.

44 Although the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) criticized the last Presidential election in Kazakhstan as falling 'far short' of international standards, these criticisms focused on the regime's restriction of competition (particularly the banning of Kazhegeldin) as opposed to limitations placed on participation.

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4 Kazakhstan

An uneasy relationship – power and authority in the Nazarbaev regime

Sally N. Cummings

Introduction

Nursultan Nazarbaev was elected President of the Republic of Kazakhstan by reportedly 98.8 per cent of Kazakhstan's voters on 1 December 1991, fifteen days before the republic declared independence from the Soviet Union. In August 1995, Nazarbaev used two presidential referenda to obtain public approval for postponing a presidential election (originally scheduled for 1996) until December 2000. The president then called elections for 10 January 1999, which he won outright. At the time of writing, President Nazarbaev is in his tenth year in office. His task is a difficult one, as it is for any post-Soviet leader; the difficulty is perhaps heightened in Kazakhstan by the fact that its society is markedly multi-ethnic, depriving any leader of the legitimacy and unity readily found in a homogeneous society.

This chapter analyzes the mechanisms through which Nazarbaev achieved power, and maintained it for a decade. Instead of focusing on the links between presidential power and democratization, this study examines the issue of system generation and maintenance. For a decade, Nazarbaev has steadily moved to consolidate his power; it is less clear, however, that this power building has been accompanied by a legitimization of his regime and an achievement of personal authority.

Nazarbaev's rise to power

Born in 1940 near Almaty (then Alma-Ata) and educated in the Kazakh and Ukrainian Soviet republics, Nazarbaev trained as a metallurgist in the Karaganda Metallurgical Combine in Termitau in north-central Kazakhstan. By 1979 he had already been appointed second secretary of the Karaganda Regional Committee. In 1984, he was appointed chairman of Kazakhstan's Council of Ministers, effectively second to the First Secretary of the Kazakh Communist Party, Dinmukhamed Kunaev. At forty-four years of age, Nazarbaev was the youngest of all the Soviet republic chairmen. He must have had expectations that he would be picked to replace Kunaev.[1] Moreover, he clearly had a reform-mindedness that should have made him a member of the

Gorbachev–Ligachev–Ryzhkov reform team, as evidenced by his criticism of Kunaev during the period between March 1985 and December 1986.

In January 1986 he decided to take a chance. At the sixteenth session of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan (KPK), Nazarbaev criticised Kunaev's brother Askar, then head of the Academy of Sciences, for his inertia and anti-reformist record.

In his memoirs, Kunaev, who had been instrumental in the original appointment of Nazarbaev, described his feeling of betrayal in light of this incident.[2] Shortly after this appointment, Kunaev flew to Moscow and demanded the removal of Nazarbaev. Meanwhile, supporters of Nazarbaev lobbied for Kunaev to be replaced by the young chairman. Gorbachev, who often preferred compromise, rejected both these options, instead parachuting in from Moscow an ethnic Russian, Gennadii Kolbin – a decision which set off three days of rioting in Alma-Ata in December 1986. These riots at the imposition of an outsider are often interpreted as the first major nationalist crack in the supranational Soviet edifice.

Elected as First Secretary of the KPK's Central Committee in May 1989, Nazarbaev moved steadily to bring the republic's administration under his control. In response to continued unrest, culminating in a series of riots in the Western oil town of Novyi Uzen, Kolbin returned to Moscow in June 1989, and Nazarbaev was appointed as his replacement, first as head of the KPK and then, in September 1989, as chairman of the republic's Supreme Soviet. Kolbin had not had great success in putting his own cadre of officials in place, which was one reason the Russian had had little effect on republic policy. Nazarbaev, by contrast, moved to heal rifts with other Kazakhstani officials that had been created by his fight with Kunaev. He even made peace with Kunaev himself in April 1991. In March 1990, following the example set by Gorbachev in Moscow, Nazarbaev converted his chairmanship of the Supreme Soviet to a presidency confirmed by parliamentary election.

Writing later in his memoirs, Nazarbaev stressed his own role in the 1986 riots:

> In everyone's life there are moments when suddenly a crucial choice has to be made, a choice between what is familiar, comfortable, and what is unpredictably complex or painful. A person faced with such a dilemma who does not conform to the circumstances, who remains true to himself, ultimately gains. When the people began their march into town I realised that I faced such a dilemma – either take a stand or return to the Central Committee offices. The latter seemed an inexcusable betrayal of the people who were right. I went with them, at the head of the crowd.[3]

Perhaps Nazarbaev's role in the 1986 events will never fully be known, but his actions in these events continue to be disputed by various indigenous analysts.[4] In any case, he was keen to assert his version of events. The above memoirs were strategically published four months before the December 1991 elections.

Interestingly, Nazarbaev's key contender for the post of president was the proud ethnic nationalist, Khasen Kozhakmetov, whose leadership of the 1986 riots remains undisputed. In order to secure a nomination as a presidential candidate, Kozhakmetov collected signatures from inside a yurt set up outside the state supermarket of Alma-Ata's busiest pedestrian mall. He had obtained almost the required numbers to compete for presidential office when, as the election date approached, his yurt was ransacked, leaving no record of the signatures – and resulting in Nazarbaev's leadership bid being uncontested. On 1 December 1991, Nazarbaev won a reported 98.8 per cent of the vote. About a fortnight later, he declared Kazakhstan independent.

The context of leadership in Kazakhstan

Nazarbaev gave birth to an 'accidental country'.[5] Kazakhstan was the only Soviet republic in which the titular nationality was a minority population: according to the last Soviet census, taken in 1989, Kazakhs constituted 39.5 per cent of the population, while Russians were 37.7 per cent. Combined with the Ukrainians (5.4 per cent) and the Belarussians (1.1 per cent), the Slavs constituted 44.2 per cent of the population. Another 5.8 per cent were largely Russified Germans; taken together, non-Kazakhs formed an albeit slight but clear majority. Moreover, many inhabited Kazakhstan's northern regions, on the border with Russia. This multi-ethnicity was at the root of Kazakhstan's problems in 1991, since it deprived the elite of an immediate source of legitimacy: mono-ethnic nationalism. Despite the new independent status of their republic, therefore, the Kazakh population had to share it with a substantial Russian minority from the era of nineteenth-century Russian colonization and twentieth-century Sovietization – a constant reminder to the political elite of its continued vulnerability to external political and cultural influence.

Indeed, the Kazakh steppe is distinct from Central Asia proper. As Donald Carlisle writes, 'it should be viewed as a Eurasian territory with a longtime – and enduring – subjugation to or dependence on Russia'.[6] Historically, the region had always preferred Russia to China as a partner, since Chinese–Central Asian relations were hampered by a 'legacy of mutual suspicion and fear. China built the Great Wall as protection against invasion by Mongol and Turkic tribes; China's Han dynasty ruled large tracts of Central Asia until the second century A.D.'.[7] And a large Turkic-Muslim minority resides in China's Xinjiang province as a result of Chinese expansion.

Despite the constraints of ethnic tension and geopolitics, Kazakhstan's prospects as a viable economic unit were better in 1991 than those of many other successor states. Only some sixty years earlier, before the launch of Stalin's collectivization policy, the vast majority of ethnic Kazakhs were still pastoral nomads.[8] Sovietization, however, had entailed sedentarization as well as collectivization. Like its fellow successor states, Kazakhstan emerged from the Soviet era industrialized and urbanized. It had inherited a somewhat obsolete but nevertheless significant industrial sector, which included the manufacture and

processing of phosphate fertilizers, rolled metal, train bearings, tractors and bulldozers. Furthermore, according to Olcott, Kazakhstan also supplied about 11 per cent of the total military production of the USSR and housed 1,360 nuclear warheads as well as the satellite-launching centres at Baikonur. Nearly a third of its workforce, which numbered 6.5 million at independence, had enjoyed at least a secondary education, and literacy was virtually universal. The Soviet period had also bequeathed to Kazakhstan a highly developed technical and physical infrastructure. Concludes Olcott: 'Indeed, at independence, Kazakhstan could claim to be one of the world's most technologically advanced states'.[9]

Unlike many other successor states, it also emerged with substantial wealth beneath its soil. According to Nazarbaev, Kazakhstan holds 30 per cent of the world's proven reserves of chromium, 25 per cent of its manganese, 19 per cent of its lead, 13 per cent of its zinc, 10 per cent of its copper and 10 per cent of its iron. The president has also claimed, although without citing percentages, that Kazakhstan ranked first worldwide with respect to estimated reserves of uranium, and seventh worldwide for gold.[10] Kazakhstan also possesses the longest shore of the Caspian Sea, which is likely to be a huge benefit once its oil reserves are tapped.[11] By 1997, Kazakhstan enjoyed the largest per capita foreign direct investment of all Soviet successor states.[12]

In an echo of communism's top-down structure, the political elite's legitimacy has depended to a large degree on its ability to redistribute those resources. The republic's international economic ventures are linked in another important way to geopolitics, however: as a land-locked country, Kazakhstan relies on the goodwill of its neighbours for the export of its products. By 2001 the majority of oil and gas pipelines still ran through Russia.

In sum, three main factors – demography, oil and geopolitics – complicate the task of leadership in post-independence Kazakhstan.

Main characteristics of the Nazerbaev presidency

Nazarbaev's presidency in the first ten years has been characterized by the following four features:

- a process of state- and institution-building;
- the absence of ideology in favour of a managerial type of leadership;
- a kleptocratic economy; and
- a strong personalism, buttressed by corruption, patrimonialism and venality.

While state- and institution-building have declined over the course of Nazarbaev's ten years in office, the last three elements of his rule have strengthened since 1991.

Of all the Central Asian regimes, Nazarbaev's featured the most emphasis on state-building at its beginning. This policy made Kazakhstan the most stable of the five states, from an institutional point of view, in the early years of independence. State-building ensured a depersonalization of the polity and prevented the

blurring of regime and state such as occurred in the early days of Turkmenistan's self-rule. State reform was at the heart of the World Bank recommendations in 1994, and by 1997 the Kazakhstani government had indeed downsized Kazakhstan's bureaucratic personnel by 25 per cent. The move of the capital from Almaty to Astana, officially completed in 1998, enabled a further downsizing. However, the move has entailed considerable institutional discontinuity. Furthermore, the structural reform process appears to have wound down in the late 1990s. There seems to have been very little, if any, further progress on this front subsequently.

As part of this initial state-building exercise, Nazarbaev recognized the need to bring technocrats into the management of the economy. This policy dictated the flavour of his rule for a good part of the 1990s. As noted, Nazarbaev was unable or unwilling to draw upon nationalism (including religion) to build his power base. Instead, he opted for a managerial vision of society; his 'State of the Nation' address, *Kazakhstan–2030*, embodies this technocratic style. By concentrating on the economy, Nazarbaev is gambling to buy off the opposition by improving living standards.

There has been little economic improvement in the lives of most citizens to date, however. While in theory Nazarbaev has the good fortune to rule a resource-rich, low-population economy, in practice substantial revenues have so far been unforthcoming, and what income as has been produced has not been transferred to the population. Kazakhstan has the benefit, however, of having emerged relatively unscathed from the Russian financial crisis of 1998; indeed, at the start of 2000, the government announced a rise in GDP and continued foreign investment.[13] The economy's growth rate was around 9 per cent in 2000, and foreign firms have already recovered some of their former optimism. The country has also repaid its International Monetary Fund (IMF) loans ahead of schedule, and, in sharp contrast to Russia, owes no backpayments to its pensioners or state workers. In 2000 an international consortium made a potentially substantial oil discovery in the Kashagan offshore block, in the shallow northern Caspian Sea off Kazakhstan. Some predict as a result Kazakhstan could be producing 6 million barrels of oil a day – more than twice the production of Kuwait.[14] Rather than re-investing money from such ventures into the economy and providing the fundamental source of generation for systematic change, Kazakhstan instead displays signs of developing into a kleptocracy.

As for Nazarbaev himself, he has not encouraged a cult of personality. Nevertheless, his rule has been characterized by a strong emphasis on personalism that has been increasingly dynastic in content. The president is at the epicentre of all state- and institution-building efforts, and the presidential office and executive order have come to dominate all branches of government. Since 1996 the political elite under Nazarbaev has become smaller in number and more homogeneous.

In sum, the polity of post-independence Kazakhstan is a hybrid regime dominated by the president. Nazarbaev's style, unlike that of Turkmenistan's Niyazov or Uzbekistan's Karimov, and more like that of Akaev, is to use implied threats rather than direct force or intimidation.

Regime creation and maintenance

Nazarbaev has built and maintained his power through both formal and informal mechanisms. These include the following:

- institutional manipulation, including the use of democratic façades to maintain power;
- cadre reshuffling;
- increased centralization through elite recruitment and territorial changes; and
- a careful balancing of both domestic and foreign constituencies.

Each of these mechanisms is examined in detail below.

First of all, President Nazarbaev has been very successful in centralizing power through institutional manipulation. Between 1991 and 1999 he outlived four governments, four parliaments and two judiciaries.[15] The institutional architecture of this period can be divided into three periods: 1991 to 1994; 1995 to 1996; and post-1996.

While the first three years featured an *apertura* of political activity, or partial liberalization, they also sowed the seeds of an authoritarianism that later became entrenched. In December 1993, the president 'invited' parliament to dissolve itself. A decree granted him plenipotentiary power until the new parliamentary elections of 17 March 1994. Many of the candidates for the parliamentary elections (42 of the 177) were picked from a 'state list' (*gosudarstvennyi spisok*) compiled by Nazarbaev.

Over the next two years, Nazarbaev accomplished several major, crucial steps in consolidating his personal power. In March 1995, the Constitutional Court, at the alleged prompting of the president, ruled to dismiss this thirteenth parliament on the basis of a complaint lodged the previous year by an Almaty candidate, Tatyana Kvyatkovskaya.[16] She objected that she had been disadvantaged by the large size of her own constituency and that smaller districts in Almaty enjoyed disproportionately large voting powers. The Constitutional Court, on the basis of this single constituency, declared the entire election of the previous year illegal. The regional parliaments (Maslikhats) elected in 1994 were not, however, dissolved. The dissolution of the Mazhilis reinstated the president's plenipotentiary powers until December 1995 when new parliamentary elections were held.[17] The alleged almost unanimous support for Nazarbaev in the 29 April 1995 referendum granted him the powers to push through the new constitution of August 1995, which in turn substantially increased his powers. This April referendum also extended his presidential term to December 2000, cancelling the competitive presidential elections that had been scheduled for 1996. Thus Nazarbaev was able to avoid standing against two reportedly popular alternative candidates at the time, Olzhas Suleimenov and Gaziz Aldamzharov.

After a year of relative institutional stability, 1997 witnessed the increased tightening of control over the media and repression. Central Asia's only

independent newspaper, *Karavan*, was bought by the establishment. Although it has changed ownership again since, it remains in pro-presidential hands. Under Prime Minister Akezhan Kazhegeldin, independent regional radio and television stations were abolished and national television became increasingly monopolized by the state television company, Khabar, which was run by the president's daughter Dariga. By 1997 Nazarbaev had surrounded himself with a core elite considerably smaller than that of 1991, largely consisting of relatives and close friends. These included, in addition to his daughter: Dariga's husband, Rakhat Aliev, a surgeon who in October 1997 was made head of the Tax Inspectorate while continuing to own a 60 per cent stake in the national sugar company, Sakharniy Tsentr; Nazarbaev's other son-in-law, Timur Kulibaev, deputy head of Kazakhoil (the state national oil company which replaced the Ministry of Oil and Gas in 1997); and Akhmetzhan Esimov, a more distant relative, who in 1997 was appointed head of the presidential administration.

Having thus consolidated his power, in 1998 Nazarbaev launched an informal election campaign for the 2000 presidential vote. Although his televised national address on 30 September 1998 promised far-sweeping democratization measures and ruled out early elections, Nazarbaev had meanwhile struck a deal with Parliament to call early elections for January 1999.[18] In return for their support, both houses of parliament would see their next term of office extended by one more year (beyond the parliamentary elections scheduled for October 1999). Also, parties and movements participating in the October parliamentary elections would need to pass only a 7 per cent hurdle of the popular vote instead of the previous 10 per cent to sit in Parliament. Meanwhile, the president's term of office was extended from five to seven years (meaning the next winner would be in office until 2006). The president's required minimum age was also increased from 35 to 40, and the age limit of 65 lifted.[19] All these amendments were incorporated in the October legislation.

The presidential elections of 10 January 1999 did not prove to be democratic. The early election call left only three months for campaigning, a process for which only the incumbent president possessed the financial and organizational means in any case. More seriously, the election commission barred the only serious contender to Nazarbaev, former Prime Minister Akezhan Kazhegeldin, from standing by invoking Clause 4.1 of the 8 May 1998 constitutional amendment to the electoral law. This barred anyone with a criminal record, including a minor offence, from running for elected office.[20] Kazhegeldin was accused of money laundering in Belgium (charges the government alleged it could prove) and of holding an unsanctioned meeting of his campaign movement, For Honest Elections.

And on 27 June 2000 the Mazhilis passed the Law on the First President of Kazakhstan, granting Nazarbaev access to future presidents, immunity from criminal prosecution, and influence over future domestic and foreign policy. Although a weaker variant than that introduced by Niyazov, this ensures that Kazakhstan's president has again used institutional resources to secure his power – even after he departs.[21]

While institutional and constitutional means have been important to Nazarbaev's ability to maintain power, the informal mechanisms of cadre politics have been decisive. Two broad forms of patronage can be distinguished: creating patron/client bonds through personnel policy, and drawing on pre-existing bonds. Nazarbaev's early post-independence recruitment policy was an effective blend of balancing clan interests, recognizing the need to bring in technocrats, and offering gifts to family and friends. Since 1997 the president's policy has emphasized the last of these. This kind of patronage often results in some unexpected appointments. Many commentators were surprised, for example, when twenty-eight year-old Nurlan Kapparov, former head of the trading conglomerate Accept, replaced the successful oilman Baltabek Kuandikov as head of the country's state oil company, Kazakhoil, in 1997. But it soon became clear that, however competent he might become, he was the front man for his deputy, Askar Kulibaev, one of Nazarbaev's sons-in-law. The president's other son-in-law, Rakhat Aliev, as noted was more visible, having been appointed tax police chief in 1996.

The result of Nazarbaev's tendency to give his family members such an active role in political life through the strictest and most tight form of patronage is a narrowing of his power base and a distancing from wider but potentially less reliable networks.

Nazarbaev's use of cadre politics has also served his third mechanism of power building: centralization. Through a combination of patronage and substantial territorial and administrative changes, the president has worked to centralize power over his ten-year rule in a number of ways: instituting the position of inspector; appointing the *akim*; parachuting central leaders to the provinces and then incorporating these provincial leaders in central institutions of power; and homogenizing provincial leadership through means that include forced ethnic Kazakh migration.[22]

Some of these initiatives have been more successful than others. The institution of the inspector has proved fairly ineffective, but the presidential prerogative to appoint and dismiss the *akim* provides him with both a carrot and a stick that are quite effective despite the important dynamics that privatization and foreign investment are bringing at the provisional level. These forces tend to increase the level of market capitalism and democracy, which Nazarbaev's tendency toward centralization counteracts. The fact that the regional leadership is not elected places limits on the types of working relationships and bargaining tools that the regions can develop with the centre.

Elite recruitment has also become more and more centralized over the years. It is possible to discern three phases in this area of government. In the early 1990s, the selectorate appeared to prefer continuity, selecting 'home-grown' leaders from the regions. In seven out of twenty cases, the former regional executive first secretaries became *akims*. During the second phase, under Kazhegeldin's government, there was a half-hearted attempt to introduce performance-related criteria to the post of *akim*. Technocrats or former businessmen were sometimes selected. In the third phase, since 1997, the central authori-

ties have further blurred the distinction between centre and periphery by a 'crossover' approach to elite recruitment: on the one hand, Nazarbaev has parachuted members of the national elite into some regions; on the other, members of the provincial elite have sometimes enjoyed a meteoric rise in the national corridors of power. The ethnic homogenization of central and regional power structures has also served to consolidate and centralize the face of power. The justification for this 'Kazakhization', particularly in the early years, was as a means of ensuring the territorial integrity of the state. By supplanting the Soviet-era recruitment networks in the northern provinces with an ethnically homogenous central recruitment drive, Nazarbaev has anchored these regions more firmly in the Kazakhstani state. In the south and west, a process of Kazakhization had begun already prior to 1991; by 1991 half of first secretaries were ethnic Kazakhs. Nazarbaev sought to strengthen further his grip on the periphery by reducing the number of regions from nineteen to fourteen in 1997. Significantly, no mergers occurred in the republic's western regions. Given the considerable resources enjoyed by these regions and the resulting concentration of their economic influence, their union might have undermined or destabilized the centre.

Another contributing factor toward centralization was, ironically, the physical relocation of the centre. The president in 1994 announced that the capital, Almaty, was to move 1,500 km north, to the north-central town now called Astana. The actual relocation happened in 1997 and 1998. The official reason given for the move was Almaty's location in an earthquake zone surrounded by mountainous terrain which allowed limited expansion. The real reason was allegedly to exert greater control over the northern regions, which, it was feared, were at risk of seceding and eventually uniting with Russia. The move was also privately said to have been prompted by a desire to distance the capital from China, thus illustrating the geopolitics faced by this landlocked country saddled between China and Russia.

The move places Nazarbaev close to the region where he spent the greater part of his working life, Karaganda, and to the place where his wife, Sara, was born. From his new northern vantage point, the president will presumably be better placed to proffer patronage to the elite in the north, and to distance himself from the grip of significant southern clan networks. However, several thousand officials made the move to Astana, providing some continuity with the old centre. It is difficult to predict the long-term implications of the relocation, but in the short run, it has served to delegitimize the centre in the eyes of the population. The vast cost of the relocation has meant that some regions have been deprived of additional resources. The new arrivals from Almaty are unwelcome in Astana, and Almaty resents its loss of status.

The final cornerstone of Nazarbaev's power bloc is his ability to balance the demands among various constituencies, both at home and in his foreign policy. We have already outlined how his approach to recruitment plays off both the central and regional ethnic Kazakh elites. He has also, through an important combination of strategies, managed to keep peace between ethnic Russians and

Kazakhs. Granted, many other factors have contributed to this situation: Soviet communism ensured a weak civil society that left ethnic groups unable to organize themselves into popular movements; substantial acculturation occurred among the Kazakh and Slav ethnic groups during the Soviet period, and both ordinary Kazakhs and Russians in private relate that they have not accorded primacy to nationality; furthermore, the emigration of many Germans and Slavs has left jobs and flats available for the rural Kazakhs who are migrating to the cities. Other elements contributing to the relative ethnic stability of Kazakhstan include the attitude of the Yeltsin leadership and the overwhelming priority given in the republic to socio-economic recovery rather than to politics, nationalist politics included. The existence of over one hundred nationalities in Kazakhstan has also deflected attention from differences between its two major groups.

But on top of this happy coincidence of subjective and objective factors is the politically astute policy of the elite to pursue Kazakhization in a covert and gradual manner. The ethnic Kazakhs' own numerical weakness at the time of independence, in the face of competition from another ethnic group almost its numeric equal, the Russians, posed initial limitations on the elite's ability to manipulate ethnicity and claim legitimacy on the basis of the Kazakh ethnos. By acting inclusively, the government avoided alienating large parts of the population and creating islands of ethnicity which could unleash ethnic conflict. The president, too, seemed to understand the dangers of pushing nationalism too far. He must also feel that demography ensures that the future is on the Kazakhs' side, as the Kazakh population is growing faster than the Russian, there is little to be gained by rushing it.

Within this geopolitical context, Kazakhstan has promoted relations with all states, but has placed Russia *primus inter pares*. Russia remains Kazakhstan's largest trading partner. Kazakhstan has also attempted to integrate into the world community by joining a plethora of international and regional organizations. Of all the Soviet successor states, it has been the staunchest defender of multilateral integration. Locally, it has promoted the Central Asian Union. Regionally, it has been a staunch promoter of the CIS, and, when this group appeared a bad bet, it was the instigator of the Eurasian Union proposal. Further afield, the regime has successfully launched the Asian security system and is also, more recently, part of the Shanghai Group of Nations (along with Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Russia and China). In short, it has pursued strong bilateral relations with Russia within the framework of multilateral links with other states, institutionalized through multilayered international bodies.

Destabilizing factors

The factors discussed above explain how Nazarbaev has sought to build *power* over the past decade. The question remains, however, as to whether or not the president has been able to consolidate true *authority* and hence ensure the long-term stability of the regime. Five main factors suggest that Nazarbaev's regime

by 2001 had still not become legitimized. First, the constant reshuffling of institutions that formed part of Nazarbaev's power-building efforts have delegitimized those institutions in the eyes of the population. This delegitimization includes the 'institution' of the capital itself; other than sectors of the population of Astana city and its surrounding area, few Kazakhstanis have welcomed the move northwards, regarding it as a drain on already limited resources.

Do institutions, then, as Barbara Geddes contends, simply 'reflect the interests of those who devise them'?[23] Or, as Stephen Whitefield asks, do political institutions in Kazakhstan preserve a balance between social groups?[24] Whitefield's conclusions appear to apply to Kazakhstan: where institutions mould interests they may be said to be relatively autonomous of those interests; where interests mould institutions, the latter may be said to be relatively captured. Institutional reform in Kazakhstan is still in an embryonic stage. So far, however, according to the 1997 United Nations Development Program report, it has led to a delegitimization of state institutions in the eyes of the population. The republic's citizens lack confidence in institutional longevity.[25]

Second, Nazarbaev's gamble on foreign revenues has not yet paid off. On several occasions, notably in 1997 and 2001, foreign companies have been embroiled in disputes with the Kazakhstani government. This tension is primarily over money, with the Kazakhstani government accusing foreign companies of not paying their way and the foreigners accusing the Nazarbaev regime of corruption. In July 2000 these accusations were even taken up by the US government itself: the US Justice Department confirmed that James Giffen, a New York banker and an official adviser to Nazarbaev, was under investigation for laundering money. Allegedly, in the mid to late 1990s, some US$60 million passed to accounts in Switzerland controlled by Nazarbaev, Kazhegeldin and Nurlan Balgimbaev, the former prime minister who now heads Kazakhstan's state oil company. The investigations into this matter are part of a larger political interaction that will affect the influence of both Russia and the United States in the region.[26]

The third destabilizing factor is particularly important. In traditional Kazakh society, the divide between rulers and ruled could not be breached, and each operated autonomously from the other, according to different rules. In many ways, the same can be said of Kazakhstani society today. For the moment, the society is not likely to revolt; already tamed by Soviet rule, it is increasingly fragmented and disorganized, and its traditional networks have been disrupted by changes in rural–urban relations. However, Nazarbaev may soon be forced to consider his other 'constituency', society. The policies practised by Nazarbaev and the ruling elite have only in the last couple of years given greater emphasis to the needs of the general population; a 1997 report by the International Red Cross Society concluded that 75 per cent of Kazakhstanis live below the poverty line (defined at around $100 per month).[27]

Kazakhstan is viewed by many as a prime contender for 'Dutch disease', in which an economy becomes dependent on one resource, a situation that drives up internal prices. Significantly, Kazakhstan is a rent-seeker, not a producer,

emphasizing profit over industrial restructuring. Another risk is that the country could become an 'enclave economy' in which only limited sectors benefit from the positive impact of growth. As David Stern points out, the chance of one or both of these scenarios is strong now that the former Soviet state shows signs of becoming a leading oil producer. Two key gas and oil projects, one at Karachaganak and one at Tengiz, have already exerted some effects on the economy of the northwest region, and the expectations generated by Kashagan are likely to attract even more resources to this area.

The northwest region stands to benefit from oil exploration revenues, but disproportionately, and this growing economic disparity among the different parts of Kazakhstan is one factor in the growing regionalism of the republic, which is the fourth major challenge to presidential authority. The president, as discussed earlier in this chapter, has ruled out *de jure* federalism, further centralizing power by forbidding the election of regional governors. However, Nazarbaev has been unable to resist a certain amount of de facto decentralization, partly because the regions' different resource bases have drawn in foreign partners and given elites of richer regions some autonomy in relation to the centre, and partly because the centre, lacking the money to provide necessary services at the regional level, has been happy to let regional administrations take charge of providing them by default. Despite all his efforts at recentralization since 1997, the president is, in some regions, unable to exert the type of influence over recruitment that he was able to do in his early years of office.

This distancing of the president from the appointments process in the region is mirrored by the fifth and final destabilizing trend, one which has also been especially noticeable in the post-1997 phase: the narrowing of the national elite. Up to 1997, as power became more diffuse and as resources began to be exploited, the elite became fragmented. Nazarbaev, however, as discussed earlier, resisted this fragmentation by narrowing and centralizing his elite in the period since 1997, especially after the capital's move northward.

It is, however, premature to speak of internal disintegration or to sound the death knell of a unitary state in Kazakhstan. Instead, the evidence as outlined in this chapter suggests that no one tendency has yet emerged. Some of the 'centrifugal' forces working toward fracturing the republic might grow stronger. The relationship of each region to the centre has been fundamentally shaped by the region's resources and its level of foreign investment. In regions where Nazarbaev has been increasingly unable to act as patron to regional economic clients, he is liable to lose relevance. If the national level ceases to be relevant, the result may be a figurehead national elite with little meaningful power in the economically most vibrant parts of the country. Some tribute or family-linked remittances may flow back to Astana in such a case, but not necessarily. There may be Astana–Regions elite crossover, or there may not. If power truly devolves to the regions – or, as is likely, if it is *created* there – then the Astana elite can close itself off in the manner of the French ancien regime. The composition of the national elite will not much matter if its members are largely ineffective. If, somehow, the centre regains tight control of regional profits and

succeeds in narrowing the group benefiting therefrom, then the central elite and state power will be strengthened. Either way, for the moment the unitary state is likely to survive.

Finally, what of stability within the elite? We have seen earlier how Nazarbaev successfully neutralized intra-elite tensions by incorporating foreign experts among his cadre of advisors and by stressing policies that appealed to various constituencies. This neutralization policy is best embodied in his *Strategy 2030*, with its emphasis on big decisions, broad outlooks and long-term perspectives. The challenges of an independent state demand strategic decisions, not tactical ones. Presumably, Nazarbaev expects the emphasis on technocracy to deliver economic growth and exclude potential political rivals from government. This approach reflects very traditional monarchical politics – and is all the more important for a politician without the institutional charisma or legitimacy of a monarch.

Where high turnover among the elite is usually associated with periods of crisis, Nazarbaev's frequent reshuffling of his political elite may have been instead a source of stability, as it has allowed the president to act as broker among different interests. It may be that by narrowing his top elite and by isolating himself in Astana, Nazarbaev will find himself increasingly unable to broker among the southern networks. Although the move to Astana was intended as a way of distancing himself from these networks and thus increasing his autonomy, he may also find it means he is increasingly unable to control intra-elite forces. It is clear, however, that by marginalizing the already small counter-elite, the incumbent political elite has ensured that the successor regime will come from within.

Conclusions

By concentrating on consolidating his power, Nazarbaev has in part neglected to build authority. The 1995 referendum, for example, served to consolidate power; the 1999 early elections were intended to build authority (even if they were undemocratic).

It appears that by mid 1998 Nazarbaev had begun to question the entire basis of his popular support, and viewed his chances of re-election in 2000 as lower than they had been in 1995. It is probably fair to say that in 1995 Nazarbaev had overestimated the chances of his two opponents; by December 2000 it was no longer clear who might be on the political horizon or what degree of economic downturn, which would have certainly lost him more votes, was likely. Already, Kazakhstanis were far worse off by the end of the 1990s than they had been in 1995, and by all predictions the situation was to get worse before it got better. Regional income disparities had grown substantially. The country also had a memory of popular protest by this point, in the form of both the leftist movement *Azamat* and the workers' protests of 1997 in southern Kazakhstan. Even if society remained generally apathetic, fragmented and apolitical, criticism of presidential policy in the media and by ordinary citizens on the streets had

already become more frequent by 1997. Consequently, the president probably felt a greater urge than in 1995 to reaffirm his popular legitimacy. Moreover, in 1998, the very seat of leadership had changed. Part of the process of building authority may be to target the right constituency. That constituency for the moment appears to remain the elite rather than society at large. While the general population should not be dismissed as indifferent – 1997 witnessed the first hunger strike in a post-Soviet state, in the south-eastern town of Janatas – classical elite theory shows that the social basis of power is rarely broad. Other power centres have been crucial to the maintenance of Nazarbaev's power.

However, new forces of elite formation are compromising the traditional Soviet patron–client methods of recruitment. Already in 1997 and 1998, the president found himself increasingly constrained in his role as patron. This is partly because marketization is creating a business elite that is increasingly separate from the political elite. This new elite is increasingly coopted by necessity rather than by will. In short, the formation of the Kazakhstani elite is likely to fall increasingly out of Nazarbaev's political control.

Notes

1 See the excellent account in M.B. Olcott, 'Nursultan Nazarbaev and the Balancing Act of State-Building in Kazakhstan', in T.J. Colton and R. Tucker (eds), *Patterns in Post-Soviet Leadership*, Boulder, Westview Press, 1995, pp. 169–90.
2 D. Kunaev, *O Moem Vremeni*, Alma-Ata, Deyir, 1992, p. 9.
3 N. Nazarbaev, *Without Right & Left*, London, Class Publishing, 1993, p. 101. Other principal works on Nazarbaev as president include: K. Asan Ata*, Prizrak Nezavisimosti*, Moscow, Academia, 1995; Zh. Kh. Dzhunusova, *Respublika Kazakhstan: Prezident. Instituty Demokratii*, Almaty, Jety Jargy, 1996; K.B. Zhigalov and B.K. Sultanov, *Pervyi Prezident Respubliki Kazakhstan: Nursultan Nazarbaev: Khronika Deyatel'nosti (1.12.1991–31.5.1993)*, Almaty, Kazakhstan XXI Vek, 1993.
4 Informal conversation with a local political analyst who requested anonymity, 2 July 1996.
5 M.B. Olcott, 'Democratization and the Growth of Political Participation in Kazakstan', in K. Dawisha and B. Parrott (eds), *Conflict, Cleavage and Change in Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997, p. 201.
6 D. Carlisle, *'*Islam Karimov and Uzbekistan: Back to the Future?*'*, in Colton and Tucker (eds), *Patterns in Post-Soviet Leadership*, p. 211.
7 S. Hunter, *Central Asia Since Independence*, Washington, DC: The Center for Strategic and International Studies and Praeger Press, 1996, pp. 124–5.
8 Some sedentarization had already occurred under the Russian period.
9 Martha Brill Olcott provides a neat summary of the industrial legacy. See *The Kazakhs, 2nd edition*, Stanford, Hoover Institution Press, 1995, p. 272.
10 Almaty Investment Summit, *Panorama*, 4 June 1998; and *Interfax-Kazakhstan*, 4 June 1998.
11 Oil reserve estimates for the Caucasus and Central Asia as a whole range from 30 billion to 200 billion barrels, including both proven and possible reserves. Industry analysts often use a middle-range figure of 90 billion barrels. See the useful analysis by Rosemarie Forsythe in *The Politics of Oil and The Caucasus and Central Asia*, London, International Institute for Strategic Studies, Adelphi Paper 300, 1996. She cites R. O'Connor, R. Castle and D. Nelson, 'Future Oil and Gas Potential in the Southern Caspian Basin', *Oil and Gas Journal*, 3 May 1993, pp. 117–26; M.J.

Strauss, 'Caspian Sea May Offer Wealth of Oil and Gas, Geologists Say', *Journal of Commerce*, 16 September 1991, p. 6B; Khartukov and Vinogradova, 'Former Soviet Union: Another Poor Year', *World Oil*, vol. 215, no. 8, August 1994, p. 69. See also J. Roberts, *Caspian Pipelines*, London, The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1996. Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan have the largest oil deposits of the region. Forsythe cites geophysical estimates of 10 billion barrels; she also points out that industry analysts cite Kazakhstan as the richest of the former Soviet republics in oil and gas, with more than 60 billion barrels.

12 *Statisticheskoe Obozrenie Kazakhstana*, Almaty, National Statistics Agency, 1997, p. 21, cites 1997 foreign direct investment. Japan tops the list of foreign direct investors at 28.7 per cent, followed by South Korea at 27.6 per cent, UK at 15.7 per cent, USA at 11.1 per cent and Germany, Italy and Turkey at roughly 4 per cent each. The largest sector of foreign direct investment is the metallurgical sector, followed by the oil and then energy sectors. See also *Interfax-Kazakhstan*, 12 January 1998 and *Panorama*, 31 July 1998.

13 D. Stern, 'Oil Poses New Dependency Risk', *Financial Times Survey: 'Kazakhstan'*, 11 December 2000, p. 11.

14 See reports by D. Stern, 'Oil Poses New Dependency Risk'.

15 See S.N. Cummings, 'Politics in Kazakhstan: The Constitutional Crisis of March 1995', FSS Briefing Paper, Royal Institute of International Affairs, August 1995.

16 This prompted Olzhas Suleimenov, poet, writer, politician and former leader of the anti-nuclear movement 'Nevada-Semipalatinsk' to state in March 1995: 'In Yeltsin's Russia, to dissolve parliament you need tanks; in Nazarbaev's Kazakhstan to dissolve parliament you only need one tank: Tatyana Kvyatkovskaya'.

17 Cummings, 'Politics in Kazakhstan'.

18 See *The Jamestown Monitor*, 1 October 1998.

19 *Interfax*, 7, 8 and 9 October 1998.

20 *Konstitutsionnyi zakon Respubliki Kazakhstan*, 8 May 1998, Astana 'O vnesenii izmenenii I dopolnenii v ukaz prezidenta respubliki Kazakhstan, imeyoushchii silu konstitutsionnogo zakona', 'O vyborakh v Respublike Kazakhstan', published in *Kazakhstanskaya Pravda*, 9 May 1998.

21 See B. Hogan, 'Sultan Nazarbaev?: Central Asia's Latest President-For-Life', Biweekly Briefing, online at http://www.cacianalyst.org/, 5 July 2000.

22 For an elaboration, see S.N. Cummings, *The Dynamics of Centre–Periphery Relations in Kazakhstan*, London, Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2000.

23 B. Geddes, 'A Comparative Perspective on the Leninist Legacy in Eastern Europe', *Comparative Political Studies*, vol. 28, July 1995, p. 239.

24 S. Whitefield (ed.), *The New Institutional Architecture of Eastern Europe*, London, Macmillan, 1992.

25 *UNDP Human Development Report*, Kazakhstan, 1997, p. 14.

26 L. Shelley, 'Corrupt Oil Practices Implicate President Nazarbaev', Biweekly Briefing, online at http://www.cacianalyst.org/, 19 July 2000.

27 *Kazakhstan Vulnerability Study*, International Federation of the Red Cross, November 1997.

5 An economy of authoritarianism?

Askar Akaev and presidential leadership in Kyrgyzstan

Eugene Huskey[1]

During the 1990s, only two presidents of Soviet successor states managed to maintain a firm hold on power while advancing broadly reformist policies. One of these was Askar Akaev of Kyrgyzstan.[2] What explained Akaev's success in maintaining his political authority as he negotiated the treacherous passages that led away from state ownership and economic nationalism toward a more liberal economic order? This chapter contends that the answer does not lie primarily in the country's economic or demographic inheritance, in its institutional design, or in the correlation of its social and political forces. It is to be found instead in the combination of the leadership tactics employed by the president – tactics described here as 'an economy of authoritarianism' – and a deferential political culture. In the case of Kyrgyzstan, traditionalism has served as an instrument in the pursuit of modernity. Although Akaev has clearly been the most progressive of the Central Asian presidents, he employed in the second half of the 1990s a minimalist authoritarianism in response to pressures from neighboring states, to social strains occasioned by economic decline and ethnic tensions, and to challenges to his own authority and honor. As the new century dawned, he began to resort to even cruder methods of rule to insulate himself not just from pointed criticism but from the contested politics that is the lifeblood of a democratic order.

Building presidential authority

The circumstances surrounding the transition in Kyrgyzstan have certainly been no more benign than those in other post-Soviet states. Indeed, in the first years of independence, Kyrgyzstan suffered a collapse in economic production that was among the most dramatic of those experienced by the former Soviet territories. In a country whose traditional livelihood was shepherding, the number of sheep fell from almost 10 million in 1991 to only 3 million in 1996. As a result of declines in industrial and agricultural production, by the mid 1990s, 20 percent of the population was effectively without work. The deepening crisis of unemployment in the countryside fed large-scale migration to the cities, which strained urban social services and threatened political stability. Alienated, uprooted Kyrgyz youth represented both a threat to public order and a potential support base for extremist politics.

Furthermore, unlike in some other Central Asian countries, President Akaev could not use the Communist Party – relabelled and ideologically repositioned – as his base of institutional support. Where Presidents Islam Karimov of Uzbekistan and Saparmurat Nyazov of Turkmenistan inherited intact the traditional institutions of rule, Akaev, like Boris Yeltsin, was forced to build a new structure of political authority, a new ruling 'vertical.' Although Akaev had been a Communist Party secretary for science and education in Kyrgyzstan for a year in the early Gorbachev era, he had broken with the republican party leadership by the end of the 1980s, and in his first year as president of Kyrgyzstan – from November 1990 to December 1991 – he ruled in opposition to an unreconstructed, and increasingly discredited, Communist Party apparatus. Akaev entered the independence period, therefore, without the benefit of a national political elite united behind him.

As the president of a small, mountainous, and geographically isolated country, Akaev also lacked the strategic bargaining chips in international affairs enjoyed by the leaders of neighboring states. Without nuclear weapons, vast energy reserves, or a border with the troublesome regimes in Iran and Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan seemed at first to hold little natural attraction for Western businesses or governments. That the country, and its president, later became something of a darling of the Western world derived not from its natural attributes but from its openness to westernizing economic reforms and an aggressively marketed image of the country as the Switzerland of Asia. Strobe Talbott remarked in 1994 that 'the reputation of Kyrgyzstan as a democratic country is one of its most valuable resources for the international community.'[3]

Lacking a comparative advantage in the commodities that form the backbone of the economy in many developing societies, Akaev sold Kyrgyzstan to the world as a model of democratizing and market-oriented politics. The main consumers of this 'good' were not multinational corporations – gold mining in Kumtor was a rare example of large-scale foreign direct investment[4] – but Western governments and international financial institutions. Unable to finance the post-communist transition from within, Akaev looked to the outside world for the means to keep a fledgling state afloat. In exchange for major assistance from the IMF, Kyrgyzstan became one of the first members of the Commonwealth of Independent States to establish its own new currency, the som, in 1993. Although at times in the mid 1990s Akaev adopted a more cautious approach toward the neoliberal ideas proffered by the West, the country remained in the forefront of efforts to liberalize the economy and to create a favorable environment for foreign investment. In the fall of 1998, Akaev used a popular referendum to advance private land ownership and other liberalizing reforms over the objections of a recalcitrant parliament.[5] And by the end of that year, Kyrgyzstan's adherence to the neoliberal model of development had gained it membership in the World Trade Organization, the first post-Soviet state to achieve this much-coveted status.

To be sure, just as in Russia, opposition to market reforms has been substantial. Kyrgyz nationalists resent the indebtedness and conditionality attached to

foreign economic assistance; Communists deplore the reduction of state power in the economy; and some ordinary citizens associate westernizing economic reform with higher unemployment, wage arrears, and a decline in living standards. But Bishkek is not Moscow. Kyrgyzstani businessmen cannot rival the political clout or the conspicuous consumption enjoyed by the Russian oligarchs. Moreover, like many of the new economic elites in post-Soviet lands, businessmen in Kyrgyzstan are less interested in displacing the current political class or influencing economic policy than in maintaining a protected space within which they can pursue rent-seeking behavior. Finally, attenuating the opposition to reform is Akaev's own leadership. Compared to the Russian leader, Boris Yeltsin, Akaev exhibited a vigor and at least a rhetorical sensitivity to popular welfare that are the hallmarks of strong leadership in a period of crisis.[6]

Like economic reform, interethnic relations had the potential to destabilize Kyrgyzstani politics and society in the 1990s. That it has not to this point is testimony to Akaev's ability to portray himself at once as an advocate for civic nationalism and traditional ethnic identity. Akaev took office at a moment of ethnic crisis, shortly after ethnic Uzbeks and Kyrgyz had resorted to massive violence to settle claims in the Ferghana Valley, leaving over 200 persons dead. A revival of Kyrgyz nationalism was at the same time breeding resentment among the socially and economically privileged Russian minority and fear among the many Russified Kyrgyz living in and around the capital of Bishkek, who understood that unchecked Kyrgyz nationalism would threaten their political hegemony. In the early 1990s, formal and informal changes in language, patronage, and toponymic policies granted the ethnic Kyrgyz certain symbolic and practical privileges. These changes formed part of a movement to undo decades of russification and to elevate the Kyrgyz to the status of the 'core nation' in Kyrgyzstan. In the language of Rogers Brubaker,

> The core nation is understood as the legitimate 'owner' of the state, which is conceived as the state *of* and *for* the core nation. Despite having 'its own' state, however, the core nation is conceived as being in a weak cultural, economic, or demographic position within the state. This weak position – seen as a legacy of discrimination against the nation before it attained independence – is held to justify the 'remedial' or 'compensatory' project of using state power to promote the specific (and previously inadequately served) interests of the core nation.[7]

Although the Soviet era had clearly helped to modernize the economic infrastructure in Kyrgyzstan and to lay the foundations for contemporary Kyrgyz nationalism, it had also reduced the vitality of the Kyrgyz language and culture and offered little opportunity for the traditionally rural and nomadic Kyrgyz to move into the better paid and more prestigious jobs in the industrial sector. Where Russians and other Slavs dominated the technical and engineering professions, Uzbeks controlled the potentially lucrative positions in retail trade, at

least in the south. The more privileged Kyrgyz were concentrated in state officialdom as well as in the intelligentsia, in realms such as education and culture. This occupational legacy left the Kyrgyz resentful of their underrepresentation in commercial and technical affairs and with a self-perception of being ill-prepared to compete in a market-based economy.[8]

Akaev's ability to harness the 'core nation' mentality of the Kyrgyz while earning the confidence of all ethnic communities derived from his own identity as well as his policies of ethnic moderation. In her analysis of Nursultan Nazarbaev, the Kazakh president, Martha Olcott argues that Nazarbaev possessed in effect two nationalities, Kazakh and Soviet, which enabled him to move confidently among his ethnic kin as well as among Russians and other Soviets. This dual patriotism, or dual identity, is an even more pronounced feature of Akaev's biography. Raised as a Kyrgyz boy in the Kemin district of northern Kyrgyzstan, Akaev spent his early adult life in Leningrad as a research scientist. His fluent Russian and respect for, and knowledge of, European culture and traditions recommended him to Kyrgyzstan's Russian, Ukrainian, and German populations as well as to russified Kyrgyz, of whom he and the writer Chingiz Aitmatov are the leading representatives. To the more traditional ethnic Kyrgyz, he projected the image of the favorite son who retained his cultural roots while mastering the ways of the larger world. Facilitating the construction of this image was Akaev's family lineage, which included princely relations – a fact rendered all the more weighty and mysterious because of its circulation by word of mouth rather than through official channels. With a foot in both cultural worlds, the Kyrgystani president could promote himself convincingly as a protector of the language and traditions of the country's two largest ethnic communities – Kyrgyz and Russian. After meeting with IMF officials in the White House in Bishkek, he could travel to an *aul* and drink *kumis* with the *aksakaldar*. Both images were then broadcast to the nation. Few politicians in Kyrgyzstan could offer a more attractive biography.[9] Akaev was proving adept at using Kyrgyzstan's apparent disadvantages – its economic backwardness and cultural pluralism – to build his own authority.[10]

While real political power was moving increasingly into the hands of the titular nationals, the Kyrgyz, Akaev struggled to make enough tactical concessions to the other ethnic communities to assure their continued loyalty, whether it was a high-profile meeting with an Uzbek cleric, a promise of autonomy to areas of compact German settlement, or a decision to retard the implementation of a Soviet-era language law, which threatened to diminish the role of Russian in the country.[11] One of the most visible instruments of Akaev's politics of ethnic moderation was the Assembly of the Peoples of Kyrgyzstan, which drew leaders from the country's twenty-seven ethnic communities.[12] The authority of this consultative organ was modest, to say the least, but it did grant its members a measure of access to the president and a role in drafting documents related to ethnic policy as well as a legitimation of their positions as leaders in their respective communities.[13]

Akaev was especially well-positioned, therefore, to champion a variant of

consociational democracy in Kyrgyzstan, which was designed to forge a grand coalition of the country's ethnic, linguistic, and religious groups under the slogan, 'Peace and Concord Between Peoples.' Where consociational democracy in the European context creates governing coalitions from parties that represent the country's main ethnic, religious, or linguistic communities, in Kyrgyzstan it establishes an extra-parliamentary coalition from the country's leading social groups. With a powerful presidency, a weak parliament, and fledgling parties that are not ethnically-based, consociationalism has taken a different and less robust form in Kyrgyzstan. Indeed, perhaps ethnic corporatism would be a more apt description of state–group relations in Kyrgyzstan.[14] As one Kyrgyz commentator noted, instead of serving as opponents of the regime, 'every single national–cultural group, association, and society. . .has come together behind [*integriruiutsia vokrug*] the president and fully supports his policies.'[15]

By using multi-ethnic institutions such as the Assembly of the Peoples, Akaev has tried to advance an idea of civic nationalism that would generate loyalty to the state and hold in check a rising ethnic consciousness among Kyrgyz, Uzbeks, and Russians. However, given the depth of the Kyrgyz ethnic revival and the discredited internationalism of the Soviet era, if Akaev had advanced a purely civic nationalism, stripped of all ethnic content, he would have been 'outflanked' by Kyrgyz nationalists. Furthermore, increased Kyrgyz ethnic consciousness was a vital antidote to the potent clan, tribal, and regional loyalties that divide the Kyrgyz themselves into competing factions, the most explosive of which has been the north–south divide. In the post-Soviet era, electoral behavior, personnel appointments, and business relationships have revealed the powerful pull of subethnic loyalties among the Kyrgyz. If the Kyrgyz tend to vote for other Kyrgyz rather than Russians or Uzbeks in multi-ethnic electoral districts, they often cast their ballots along clan, tribal, or regional lines in mono-ethnic Kyrgyz races. Although this preference for a favorite son – and almost all elected officials in post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan are in fact men – is especially evident in local electoral districts, it is also apparent in presidential elections, where Akaev has enjoyed far greater support in his native north than in the south. In the 1995 election, when he ran against the southerner and former Communist Party first secretary, Absamat Masaliev, Akaev received over 97 percent of the vote in the Naryn region, an overwhelmingly Kyrgyz area in the north. However, in the southern region of Osh, he obtained only 51 percent of the vote, with 46 percent going to Masaliev.[16] Without the support of Russians and Uzbeks in Osh, Akaev would almost certainly have trailed Masaliev decisively in the south. Akaev is acutely aware, therefore, of the value of Kyrgyz nationalism in strengthening his own grip on power by reducing the subethnic particularism that impedes the development of a modern economy and polity.

The reluctance of the southern Kyrgyz to rally around the president with the same fervor as their northern counterparts grows out of the southerners' resentment of their relative economic and political deprivation. Although the south has long lagged the north in what the Soviets would call their economic and cultural

level – only six percent of the country's medical students were from the south in 1993 – it had dominated republic-level politics in Kyrgyzstan at the end of the Soviet era. When Akaev came to power, northerners began to displace southerners in key executive positions in Bishkek and regional capitals. Indeed, at one point in the late 1990s, both the president and prime minister hailed from the same small district in the north, Kemin.[17]

Akaev's delicate task has been to unite the Kyrgyz without engendering the passions that come with sons of the soil movements. While laying the preliminary foundations for a Kyrgyzstani national identity based on citizenship, he has gone along with changes in law and policy that recognize the special position of the Kyrgyz as the core nation. For example, the preamble of the 1993 Constitution calls for the revival of the Kyrgyz as a people. But Akaev has also sought to coopt and defang traditional Kyrgyz symbols and rituals which, in the hands of ethnic entrepreneurs, could have been used to mobilize Kyrgyz behind an aggressive ethnic nationalism. Perhaps the most salient example of this strategy came in the Manas millennium celebration in the summer of 1995, when Akaev placed the Kyrgyz legendary hero Manas at the center of the country's founding myth, while at the same time emphasizing Manas' universal values and his multi-ethnic entourage. In the words of the Kyrgyz poet Sarnogoev, Akaev was attempting to replace Marxism with Manasism.[18]

Building on the idea of an inclusive, rather than exclusive, nationalism, Akaev issued an official foreign policy doctrine in 1998 entitled 'The Diplomacy of the Silk Road', which portrayed Kyrgyzstan as 'a connecting bridge between the countries and civilizations' of Europe, the Middle East, and the Far East. According to Akaev, Kyrgyzstan lies 'at the very center of the Eurasian continent, at the junction of several civilizations, having taken in and absorbed a multiplicity of cultures and ways of looking at the world...'[19] 'I would only agree to one form of nationalism,' Akaev asserted, 'a nationalism of the Kyrgyzstani.'[20]

By leading from near the ethnic center, Akaev has thus far avoided a repetition of the horrors of Osh. He has also helped to stem the exodus of Europeans from the country, though not before the departure of more than two-thirds of the country's Germans (100,000 persons) and almost a third of Kyrgyzstan's Russians (350,000 persons). In everyday street crime, in patronage and hiring practices, and in electoral politics, ethnic minorities in Kyrgyzstan still find themselves in an unenviable position. Contrary to the spirit of Akaev's initiatives, elements of Kyrgyz ethnic nationalism permeate the exercise of state power by lower-level officials, who at times use their administrative discretion to accord privileges to the Kyrgyz and complicate the lives of ethnic minorities. For example, in the two-tiered tariffs for airline and ground transportation common to post-Soviet states, foreigners pay a higher price for tickets than citizens. In Kyrgyzstan, however, foreigners of Kyrgyz ethnicity pay the privileged rate.[21]

One of the most difficult challenges for Akaev has been to maintain an official ecumenism in the face of a revival of religious expression in Kyrgyzstan,

whether among newly-converted Christians or the more numerous Muslim population. Although vestiges of shamanism and Soviet atheism continue to impose limits on an Islamic awakening in Kyrgyzstan, the ethnic Kyrgyz – along with the more traditionally devout Uzbeks – have exhibited a growing interest in Islam in the 1990s. The number of mosques increased from less than forty in the late Soviet era to over 1,200 by the end of the 1990s.[22] Much like their approach to a rising Kyrgyz nationalism, Akaev and the political leadership of Kyrgyzstan have sought to confine the Islamic revival within politically-benign boundaries. In a gesture to the Muslims of Kyrgyzstan, Akaev and other leading state officials – who are distinctly secular and internationalist in their orientation – have occasionally engaged in Islamic rituals in public and have helped to repopularize Muslim holidays. But they have, at the same time, continued the Soviet tradition of championing an official, non-threatening brand of Islam, whose leaders are bound closely to the state. Those Muslims who fall outside of the official religious establishment are branded as Wahhabis by the state and are subject to intimidation.[23] The state intensified its campaign against the so-called Wahhabis in the wake of the bombings in Uzbekistan in February 1999 and the arrest of the alleged perpetrators in Kyrgyzstan a few weeks later. By the summer of 1999, there were reports of police roundups of men whose only offense was the wearing of a beard, a mark of a devout Muslim in the minds of the authorities.[24]

Not all the circumstances of rule in Kyrgyzstan, however, have complicated presidential leadership. Deferential attitudes toward political and social authority that were inherited from the Soviet and Kyrgyz traditions have helped to insulate Akaev from criticism and organized opposition. Focus groups surveyed in Kyrgyzstan in 1994 identified 'the tendency to defer to authority' as one of the most important barriers to democratization.[25] It is difficult to judge, of course, to what extent political quiescence flows from deep-seated political values or from the grinding poverty and despair of everyday life in post-communist Kyrgyzstan. At times, financial circumstances can be more effective than the truncheon in bullying a population into submission.

Although the cult of personality surrounding Akaev cannot rival that of the *Turkmenbashi*, it is nonetheless a political force in Kyrgyzstan. Not only do many ordinary citizens speak of Akaev in respectful, at times almost reverential, language, but journalists and aides responsible for shaping the president's image in mainstream newspapers and the broadcast media can be heavy-handed in their praise of the president and their criticism of his adversaries. During a taping for Kyrgyzstan television in September 1995, I offered a mildly worded criticism of the proposal to re-elect Akaev through referendum, for which I received a tongue-lashing off air by the interviewer. Reporting on a meeting of the press with Akaev in this same period, one journalist wrote – without a hint of irony – that 'the press, which is the voice of the people, has selected Akaev.'[26] In 1998, the young prime minister, Kubanychbek Jumaliev, who was writing a hagiography of Akaev, emphasized that there was 'no alternative' to the country's leader: 'He alone is capable of being a symbol and guarantor of stability and interethnic

accord . . .'[27] If the results of the October 1998 referendum are accurate, the population appears to accept that view. The measures proposed by Akaev passed with 91 percent of the vote on a 96 percent turnout.[28] But then gauging the popularity of the president is difficult in a country where academic sociologists who are engaged in survey research regularly omitted the name of Akaev from the list of the politicians whose 'ratings' were published regularly in the press.[29]

A deferential political tradition, the everyday struggle to survive in harsh economic conditions, and presidential tactics that mobilize the press and officialdom behind an outwardly benign form of personalist rule: all these factors discourage the development of robust parties, interest groups, and independent associations that could coalesce into an effective opposition against Akaev. Another reason for the weakness of a civil society in Kyrgyzstan is the effort of the state to coopt social movements as they arise and to create its own 'grassroots' organizations. Akaev's administration recently formed, for example, a network of 'monitoring elders' (*dezhurnye aksakaly*), who serve in the villages and urban neighborhoods as the local agents of presidential rule. The intersection of political tactics and political culture is also evident in the very way language is used. A prominent parliamentarian in Kyrgyzstan admitted that he and his fellow deputies were in part to blame for failing to hold the president accountable. But if one tries to challenge the president, he notes, 'they buttonhole you [*tebia prizhmut k stenke*]. "What are you, against the President [*Ty chto, protiv Prezidenta*]? You don't want to support him?" '[30] Such verbal pressure resonates on two levels: as an appeal to traditions of deference to authority, and as a threat to withhold the spoils of presidential power.

Akaev's ability to rule through traditional as well as charismatic authority has facilitated his economic reform agenda by limiting the opposition of political elites to its enactment and by muting the public's reaction to its negative consequences. As Adam Przeworski argues in his pathbreaking work on the politics of economic transition, the movement toward markets creates severe short-term economic costs, which spawn political pressures to slow down, or even abandon, reformist initiatives. In trying to explain why certain societies tolerate the social costs of reform more readily than others, Przeworski contends that some populations have more confidence than others that 'the future stream of consumption' promised by politicians will materialize. Risk aversion, he continues, may also be a variable that makes certain societies less tolerant of reform. And finally, some groups may prefer a short, sharp shock to the ongoing pain of a protracted economic transition.[31] But what Przeworski fails to consider here is that some societies are more deferential and forgiving than others, perhaps due to a history of suffering and deprivation and/or political powerlessness. In choosing exit, voice, or loyalty, there is a variability across cultures as well as within them.[32]

A corollary of Przeworski's theory is that the more deferential the population, the freer a leader is to determine the pace and depth of reform. One need not have, therefore, an overtly authoritarian leader such as Pinochet to push through a painful economic reform while maintaining social and political stability. It is possible, as the Kyrgyzstan case illustrates, to have a relatively quiescent

population that accepts the bitter medicine of marketizing reforms in the absence of the heavy, repressive hand of the state. A deferential society may facilitate economic reforms, at least over the short term and at least on issues where the state is in command, such as macroeconomic policy.[33]

All societies, of course, have a limited patience. Akaev was fortunate that Kyrgyzstan began – at least in terms of aggregate economic production – to pull out of its prolonged decline by 1996.[34] In the first nine months of 1997, GDP in Kyrgyzstan increased by 19.2 percent compared to the same period in the previous year.[35] However, barely two years later, in the wake of the August 1998 financial crisis in Russia, the country experienced a steep and destabilizing downturn in its economic conditions. The national currency, the som, which had begun trading at 4 to the dollar in 1993, fell to 50 to the dollar by the summer of 2000.

Predictably, as the economy deteriorated, criticism of the president increased. In 1999, for the first time in a decade, protesters gathered regularly and in considerable numbers outside of government buildings in Bishkek and other cities. These pickets were drawn primarily from economically vulnerable groups, such as pensioners and teachers. In February 1999, a protest by unpaid teachers in Naryn led to minor skirmishes with the local authorities. At the same time, several opposition-minded deputies boycotted parliament. As we shall see below, in the year 2000, amid parliamentary and presidential elections, a deepening economic crisis, and the incursion of Islamic militants in the southern region of Batken, Akaev resorted to the well-tested tactics of the authoritarian to retain his hold on power.

Consolidating presidential power

To this point the analysis has focused primarily on circumstances, political culture, biographical traits, or policies that have enhanced Akaev's authority as president. But presidential leadership also rests, of course, on institutional power. To turn around George Breslauer's phrase, consolidating power is not the same as building authority.[36] At its most essential, power consolidation requires the development of effective institutions of rule and a loyal and competent leadership team.[37] Neither was in place when Akaev emerged in October 1990 as the surprise winner of an indirect election for the first presidency of Soviet Kyrgyzstan. With the disqualification of the three leading candidates for the presidency when none secured a majority in the first two rounds of voting, the parliament turned to one of the darkest horses in the race, Askar Akaev, a soft-spoken scientist and reform-oriented Communist who had the backing of Moscow.[38] During his first year in office, as we noted earlier, Akaev was forced to cohabit uncomfortably with a still vibrant and orthodox republican Communist Party organization. But the August 1991 coup in Moscow discredited the Communist Party in Kyrgyzstan and elevated the authority of Akaev, who adopted an early and unswerving stance against the coup-plotters. Two months later, on the eve of the Kyrgyzstan's birth as an independent state, Akaev won a

direct presidential election without opposition. The Akaev era had begun in earnest.

Through a series of incremental steps introduced after 1992, Akaev transformed the presidency into the pre-eminent institution of state in matters of patronage, political communications, and policy making and implementation. He crafted several major revisions of the country's institutional design, most strengthening the role of the presidency, and most enacted by referendum, an electoral device used to shore up personalist rule since the time of Napoleon III. By appealing for an up or down vote of the populace on constitutional changes, Akaev avoided the compromises and concessions that parliament or a constitutional convention would have exacted. Using language borrowed from the Soviet past to justify rule by plebiscite, Akaev argued that 'today in Kyrgyzstan the referendum is objectively becoming one of the most real and active forms of popular power.'[39]

The first plebiscite, in October 1994, revised the Constitution of 1993, and in so doing violated specific provisions of that document, which accorded to parliament the power of constitutional amendment. The second referendum, in May 1995, introduced fundamental changes to the legislature, including bicameralism and a dramatic reduction in the number of deputies. Annoyed by the parliament's intrusions into executive affairs, the president sought through these amendments to the constitution to reduce the cohesion and expense of the legislature. In February 1996, following his landslide election to a second presidential term, Akaev won popular approval for further changes to the constitution that widened the powers of the presidency. Finally, as noted earlier, in October 1998, Akaev once again relied on the referendum as a way of overcoming parliamentary opposition to policy change. By bundling into a single referendum ballot five diverse issues, ranging from private property in land to a reduction in the size, complexity, and privileges and immunities of parliament, Akaev forced the voters to cast a 'take it or leave it' ballot on wholly unrelated matters.

The formal rules of political power in Kyrgyzstan clearly place the presidency above the other three branches of state: the Government, headed by the prime minister, the legislature, and the judiciary, which in Kyrgyzstan has at its apex a Constitutional Court, a Supreme Court, and a Supreme Commercial (*Arbitrazh*) Court. The president, then, is not the head of the executive branch but a kind of republican monarch who serves as the guarantor of the constitution and 'the leading and guiding force in society,' to borrow the language used in the Soviet era to describe the role of the Communist Party. Operating at the pinnacle of state power, he appoints the prime minister to direct the Government and sends his personal representatives to serve as his eyes and ears in the parliament and Constitutional Court, much like Yeltsin did in the Russian Federation. Moreover, Akaev has created a deferential judiciary, not only by exercising his vast patronage powers but by subjecting all regional and local judges to regular performance reviews [*attestatsii*], which can be used to remove judges who challenge presidential authority.

In light of the institutional design changes in this period in Russia and other

post-Soviet states, it is instructive to recall what Kyrgyzstan did not introduce under Akaev. The Kyrgyzstan president successfully resisted attempts by regional authorities to adopt direct elections for the country's six governors, or *akimy*. Only in the capital of Bishkek did Akaev accede to elections of the mayor, and then with provisions for the involvement of the presidency in the nomination process. Elsewhere, the regional *akimy* continue to be appointed by the president. In a country with a tradition of sectionalism, gubernatorial elections would have diminished considerably the efforts of the president to create a strong center. Ensuring the faithful implementation of presidential decrees and parliamentary laws in regions as diverse as Osh, the Chu valley and Naryn was already a challenge. During an interview in the summer of 1993, Akaev became most animated and frustrated when speaking about the lack of 'executive discipline,' that is, the resistance of regional and local authorities to central direction.[40]

At least during his first term, Akaev seemed unwilling or unable to replace sitting governors with more loyal figures, in part because he needed their support and authority during his skirmishes with parliament, in part because they provided a measure of administrative stability at a time of weak central executive institutions. However, following his election to a second term, and the success of the February 1996 referendum, Akaev appointed a group of governors more oriented toward the center and toward himself personally.[41] These personnel moves, justified as part of a policy to 'rotate cadres' geographically, left Kyrgyzstan with no potent source of direct institutional resistance to presidential will. Where the leaders of regions in the early 1990s came from among prominent figures who had helped to give birth to post-communist Kyrgyzstan, their replacements tended to be drawn from younger and less experienced cadres – the 'yes men' so common to authoritarian states. The old allies of Akaev – many of whom were weighty political figures in their own rights – increasingly found themselves marginalized in politics. Even one of Akaev's closest comrades-in-arms, Felix Kulov, was so estranged from the president by the end of the 1990s that he feared arrest.[42]

Despite the absence of formal institutional or personnel counterweights to Akaev, the corruption and incompetence of the bureaucracy, both in Bishkek and the provinces, continued to serve as a check on the power and authority of the president.[43] Speaking in early 1999, Prime Minister Jumabek Ibraimov admitted that 'high ranking posts in the Government had been sold in the past,' and that he was under constant pressure to accept bribes in exchange for placing relatives and friends in official posts.[44] Moreover, as Akaev has observed on numerous occasions, the second tier of officials in Kyrgyzstan represent a silent opposition force within the state, a fifth column inherited from the old regime for whom there do not yet exist loyal and competent replacements. Akaev's impressive formal powers, therefore, have been subject to 'authority leakage' on a grand scale as the president's commands filtered down through the bureaucracy.

The weakness in Kyrgyzstan of a political and public opposition – as opposed

to an administrative and silent one – is due not only to cultural factors but to presidential tactics and the proverbial in-fighting that has complicated collective action throughout the post-communist world. The president has used numerous levers of influence over his critics, including coopting them into prominent executive offices, which encourages them to respect what the British call collective responsibility, or into ambassadorial posts, which removes them from the domestic political struggle altogether. The occasional attempts of opposition-minded elites to coalesce against the president have foundered on their profound ideological differences and, no less importantly, on their petty personal jealousies.[45] Furthermore, the very diversity of Kyrgyzstani society, combined with the frantic struggle to benefit personally from the partition of the country's wealth, has impeded collective action against Akaev's personalist rule. Finally, the elite themselves lack a fundamental prerequisite of leadership in democratic societies: 'acknowledged authority *vis-à-vis* an organized sector of society.'[46] Virtually all political parties and associations are organizations of notables whose social base does not extend beyond the capital or the home districts of their leaders. Unlike authentic parties, they fail to integrate diverse segments of the population.

Askar Akaev and the authoritarian temptation

Whether one labels Kyrgyzstan a delegative democracy, a plebiscitarian democracy, or a soft authoritarian regime, it is clear that Akaev has wielded power in a style incommensurate with certain principles of liberal democracy. In the use of criminal proceedings to silence critics of the regime,[47] in the intimidation or closing of opposition newspapers, in the efforts to force Kyrgyzstan's 'legendary' parliament into a premature dissolution in 1994, and in the cooptation of the media during the 1995 presidential election campaign, Akaev has undermined at times elements of contestation associated with democratic rule. One of the most egregious challenges to the principles of contestation occurred in the fall of 1995, when supporters of Akaev attempted to have him re-elected to a second term by referendum, a year before the expiration of his first term of office. Only the vigorous resistance of parliament prevented this well-orchestrated campaign from succeeding and thereby bringing electoral practice in Kyrgyzstan in line with its Central Asian neighbors, where presidential plebiscites ushered in second terms for Nazarbaev, Karimov, and Niazov. Parliament could not, however, prevent the country's Central Election Commission, which was allied to Akaev, from disqualifying two presidential challengers on narrow technical grounds.

The erosion of contestation continued in Kyrgyzstan with the July 1998 decision of the Constitutional Court to allow Akaev to stand for a third term.[48] The issue before the justices was identical to that posed to the Russian Constitutional Court: because the constitution was enacted in the middle of the sitting president's first term, should that term count toward the two-term limit? Where the Russian Constitutional Court denied Yeltsin the opportunity to run for a third

term, the Constitutional Court in Kyrgyzstan, which was filled with Akaev's allies, ruled that the counting of terms begins only with the first presidential election after the introduction of the Constitution. Akaev was therefore free to contest the presidential election in October 2000.

The Constitutional Court decision represented a prelude to a presidential election campaign in 2000 that shattered any remaining illusions about Kyrgyzstan's claim to be an oasis of democracy in Central Asia.[49] To prevent the political opposition from mounting serious electoral challenges, pro-presidential officials in Bishkek and the provinces placed insurmountable barriers in the path of Akaev's most popular opponents. Using criminal prosecution as an instrument in the political struggle, law enforcement agencies arrested and tried three of the most prominent candidates for the presidency: Felix Kulov, Daniar Usenov, and Topchubek Turgunaliev. In the case of Kulov, the arrest came on the heels of electoral fraud that deprived Kulov of a seat in the parliament from his home district in the Talas region. Amid the resignation and suicide of members of the electoral commission in his constituency, Kulov lost the election to a little known opponent, who inexplicably raised his vote total from 17 percent to more than 50 in the second and decisive round.[50]

After a vigorous international outcry against the arrests and the electoral irregularities, Kulov was acquitted in July. But in order to be certified as a presidential candidate, Kulov and other aspirants had to pass a Kyrgyz language exam administered by a linguistic commission with ties to the president. Although the Constitution of Kyrgyzstan mandates that the president possess Kyrgyz – and not just Russian, the language of the Soviet political elite – there had been no attempt in the 1995 presidential election to assess the linguistic abilities of the candidates. The formation of a linguistic commission for the 2000 presidential election was clearly intended to block the candidacy of Felix Kulov, a Russified Kyrgyz from the north who had only recently begun the serious study of his ancestral tongue. But in its zeal to protect the president against challenges from even minor candidates, the linguistic commission disqualified seven candidates, most of whom were able speakers of Kyrgyz, by posing obscure questions reminiscent of those used to disenfranchise blacks in the American South in the Jim Crow era. Recognizing the unwillingness of the linguistic commission to certify even accomplished Kyrgyz speakers, Kulov refused to submit himself for the examination, and instead threw his support behind an already registered candidate, Omurbek Tekebaev.

Through criminal prosecution, a language exam, technicalities in the registration process, and the offering of plum executive and ambassadorial appointments to opponents,[51] Akaev and his supporters managed to restrict the field of presidential candidates to six.[52] But the viability of two of these politicians, Omurbek Tekebaev, the leader of the Ata-Meken party, and Almazbek Atambaev, the head of the Social Democratic Party, meant that a victory – and especially a first round victory – could not be assured without further manipulation of the electoral process. At this stage, Akaev's camp mobilized provincial and

local officials and the journalistic community behind the re-election of the president.[53] Relying on newly-introduced statutes and executive discretion, local authorities imposed severe restrictions on public meetings and rallies held by opposition candidates.[54]

More importantly, the challengers faced what one organization called an 'information blockade' during the election.[55] The handful of opposition newspapers in the country was silenced, either by a change in ownership – such was the fate of *Vechernii Bishkek* – or by subjecting their editors to debilitating lawsuits and tax inspections. For their part, the broadcast media served as little more than extensions of Akaev's re-election committee. A careful monitoring of television broadcasts during the election campaign revealed that Akaev received a virtual monopoly of coverage. When other candidates were mentioned, it was usually in a negative light. For example, on the national channel, KTR, Akaev received 34,920 seconds of coverage, only 490 seconds of which were negative in tone. In contrast, KTR showed Tekebaev for 292 seconds, about half of which had a negative slant.[56]

Election day itself was marred by numerous irregularities. University students in some areas were required to drop ballots in the box unfolded so that professors standing nearby could ensure that they voted for Akaev. In a precinct in Bishkek, over 700 ballots were discovered in a ballot box before the polls opened, with virtually all of those cast for the president.[57] In many precincts, the sheets containing vote tallies, known as protocols, were prepared in pencil or left blank by local election officials, who then forwarded the protocols to regional election offices for tabulation. Summarizing its assessment of election day, a team of observers from the National Democratic Institute reported that 'Government officials improperly interfered in the electoral process throughout the country. Numerous incidents were reported of state officials bribing or intimidating voters, particularly students; posing as non-partisan election observers; and directing polling officials both inside and outside polling stations.'[58] The OSCE's observers concluded that 'international standards for equal, free, fair, and accountable elections were not met.'[59]

Like the international observers, Akaev's opponents severely criticized the electoral skullduggery and refused to recognize the contest as 'free and open' (*svobodnye i prozrachnie*). In the words of Tekebaev, there was a 'total falsification of the results of the election, unprecedented pressure of the state machinery on the popular consciousness, and electoral results that did not reflect the will of the people.'[60] And yet the challengers grudgingly accepted the outcome, pursuing a strategy of voice rather than exit. Again, to quote Tekebaev, 'our party . . . is prepared to cooperate [with Akaev]; we have no choice. To be implacable in opposition, or even worse to resort to radical measures, would be extremely dangerous.'[61] This sentiment was echoed by Kulov, who volunteered that his party was prepared to support the efforts of Akaev to advance reform.[62]

Tempering the anger of the opposition were numerous factors, including an elite political culture uncomfortable with *jusqu'auboutisme.* The opposition

recognized the risks of escalating political conflict at a time of economic crisis, rising ethnic and religious tensions, and threats from radical Uzbek insurgents who had invaded southern districts of Kyrgyzstan. During the election of 2000, Kyrgyz–Uzbek relations in the south worsened, in part because of campaign ads for an Uzbek candidate that pictured ethnic Kyrgyz robbing a peaceful and prosperous ethnic Uzbek. Furthermore, Akaev's opponents seemed willing to accept that Akaev, for all of his faults, was preferable to most representatives of *vlast*,' or state power, in Kyrgyzstan and Central Asia. Even after four months in solitary confinement and a fraudulent election, Kulov could comment that the presidential 'entourage was preventing Akaev from pushing democratic reform,' thus shifting some of the blame for authoritarian measures away from Akaev and toward his retinue.[63] Another presidential candidate, Melis Eshimkanov complained about the 'massive falsification that took place during the election,' but then stated that,

> in spite of that I have sufficient courage to congratulate Askar Akaev on his victory, achieved even at such a price. We must now think about the country. What will happen to the people, to the economy, to the exchange rate? I think he [Akaev] has sufficient intellect, conscience, and humanity to understand that we can't live like this any longer.[64]

It is certainly the case that throughout much of the 1990s, the president of Kyrgyzstan represented a force for moderation in a country where political discourse and behavior, especially in regional and local affairs, exhibited elements of extremism.[65] Even more than most politicians, Akaev wished to please his audience. The problem, of course, was that his audience had diverse, and often conflicting, interests. This was as true in the international arena as in domestic affairs. The moderation, and modulation, of Akaev's rule in Kyrgyzstan owes something to the countervailing pressures emanating from the West and from his Central Asian neighbors, most notably Uzbekistan, which resents the use of neighboring Kyrgyzstan as a haven for Uzbeks extremists and as the source of false passports and other travel documents for its nationals. Where Western governments and financial institutions make their assistance contingent upon Kyrgyzstan's adherence to liberal political and economic principles, Central Asian leaders discourage Akaev from establishing the sole open society in the region.

Each side has brought extraordinary weight to bear on Kyrgyzstan: the West by threatening to reduce or cut off desperately needed funding, Central Asian countries by halting the flow of natural gas supplies, imposing punitive tariffs on Kyrgyzstan's exports, and undermining the authority of Akaev among his own people. Angered by Kyrgyzstan's public commitment to free trade and other neoliberal policies advocated by the West, President Karimov of Uzbekistan complained to Akaev in late 1998 that the IMF 'is your Daddy.'[66] A few weeks later, Karimov began to broadcast insulting comments about Akaev on Uzbekistan television and radio, which are received by hundreds of thousands of ethnic

Uzbek citizens of Kyrgyzstan who live in the Ferghana Valley. Unable to satisfy both his Western and Central Asian audiences, Akaev has sought to avoid a rupture with either camp, a strategy that has contributed to a style of rule that blends elements of democracy and authoritarianism. Having succumbed to the authoritarian temptation to ensure a victory in the 2000 presidential elections, Akaev will no doubt come under increasing pressure from the West to compromise with moderate opposition forces.

Conclusions

How one views the superpresidential arrangements and constraints on contestation in Kyrgyzstan depends in good measure on one's understanding of the relationship between change and order in fledgling states. The empirical record, especially in the enormously overburdened post-Soviet transitions, suggests that it is difficult to have it all, and especially to have it all quickly. In the intricate triangular relationship among order and stability, ambitious economic, social, and mythological reforms, and democratic procedures, pressures to enhance one value may undercut others.

The most favorable interpretation of Akaev's leadership in Kyrgyzstan in the 1990s is that he employed a minimalist authoritarianism.[67] That is, given his resources and the country's political culture, he eroded only as much contestation and openness as was necessary to govern while advancing far-reaching policy reforms. In his reading of Machiavelli in *The Politics of Vision*, Sheldon Wolin argues that the Florentine theorist did not advocate gratuitous cruelty or force but only the dosage required to achieve the goals the Prince had set for himself.[68] Just as Machiavelli may have favored an economy of violence, so Akaev may have pursued an economy of authoritarianism.[69]

But if one can attribute such a benign and sophisticated strategy to Akaev in his first decade in office, is it equally appropriate to his current, and more authoritarian, leadership style? Perhaps, if one accepts that the threat of an electoral defeat in 2000 led the Kyrgyz president to administer unusually heavy doses of authoritarianism in order to retain power. Undoubtedly, the fate of Akaev's brother, Asankul, during the parliamentary election in February 2000 reminded Akaev of his own vulnerability. Although Asankul Akaev ran unopposed for a parliamentary seat from his native district of Kemin, he received only a bare majority of the registered vote, which is a requirement for victory.[70] And for Akaev, like other leaders in Central Asia, the goal was not simply to win an election but to win it in the first round, preferably by an overwhelming majority. Rather like de Gaulle in 1969, when the failure of a referendum on administrative reforms led to the General's retirement, a runoff election for the presidency in Kyrgyzstan would have undermined irreparably the myth that the president expressed the will of the nation. Whether rightly or wrongly, Akaev clearly believed that, in a winner-take-all presidential election, he needed more than a minimum winning majority to govern Kyrgyzstan effectively.

Whatever the sources of Akaev's conduct, he remains especially vulnerable to a backlash against the economic revolution imposed by the state on society. Kyrgyzstan is now facing mounting difficulties in servicing the debt accumulated in the 1990s. The danger of a default on its national debt looms on the horizon. A default would not only undermine further the political authority of Akaev and the population's respect for Western ideas and institutions, it could reduce living standards to levels not seen for decades. Yet another plunge in the population's well-being could serve as a triggering mechanism for conflict among Kyryzstan's diverse communities.

Although Akaev's leadership may be a stabilizing factor over the short term, the longer and more fully the country relies on his personal authority to undergird the functioning and legitimacy of the state, the greater the risk that his departure will occasion a period of serious instability. It is at such a moment of state weakness that the temptation of elites to resort to violence would be at its highest. Should economic performance continue to worsen, or economic resentment along ethnic lines deepen, Akaev will be tempted to apply even larger doses of authoritarianism. Such is the logic of states that are detached from the societies over which they rule.

In the long run, plebiscites and manipulated elections are no substitute for the dense network of institutions, such as parties and civic associations, that help to ensure the accountability of a state to its people.[71] Retarding the development of parties in Kyrgyzstan, and in Russia, has been the decision of the president to rule above parties rather than through them, to use state rather than social organizations as his political base. Akaev frequently laments that parties remain in their infancy in Kyrgyzstan, yet he has not taken the one step necessary to build a party system: lending his own authority – and binding his own fate – to a party. Writing at the end of the Second Empire, the French politician, Emile Ollivier, issued a warning about personalist rule in his own era that applies with equal force to post-communist presidencies in Central Asia: 'one is never weaker than when one appears to be supported by everybody.'[72]

Notes

1 My thanks to Sally Cummings, John Ishiyama, and Bill Nylen for thoughtful comments on an earlier version of this chapter.
2 The other was Nursultan Nazarbaev of Kazakhstan, though he was a more reluctant advocate of reform.
3 'Stavki ochen' vysoki,' *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, 24 September 1994, p. 4.
4 The most visible evidence of foreign investment is in gold mining, with several large Western companies involved. The much-anticipated Kumtor mine is in its fourth year of production in the Issyk-Kol region. A great hope for export earnings, it has had the misfortune of coming on stream just as gold prices collapsed to an eleven-year low and of experiencing a spill of cyanide near the mine, which polluted streams and villages and thereby undercut the popularity of the project among Kyrgyzstanis. H. Pope, 'Undeadly Cyanide Spill Taints Cameco's Kyrgyzstan Venture,' *The Wall Street Journal*, 18 November 1998, p. A18.
5 This referendum would also ban parliament from adopting laws that limit freedom of

speech and parliamentary immunity. 'President Akayev proposes amendments to constitution,' Kyrgyz Radio, 1400 GMT, 1 September 1998, BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, 5 September 1998; and 'MPs cautious about president's proposed constitutional changes,' Kabar News Agency (Bishkek), 0500 GMT, 10 September 1998, BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, 15 September 1998. Given Akaev's tendency to follow the lead of Russia in many policy initiatives, it is reasonable to conclude that the formation of the Kirienko Government in Moscow encouraged the Kyrgyzstan president to proceed with these amendments.

6 For a recent policy directive designed to stabilize the economy and address mounting social problems, see 'Programma mer po stabilizatsii sotsial'no – ekonomicheskogo polozheniia v Kyrgyzskoi respublike na 1999–2001 gody,' *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, 12 February 1999, pp. 9–14.

7 R. Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 5.

8 In order to ensure that minority communities did not gain control of a disproportionate share of newly privatized land, Akaev ordered the creation of a land bank whose inventory was to be drawn from unprofitable collective farms. One half of this land was to be distributed to ethnic Kyrgyz.

9 Abdygany Erkebaev, the former head of the Osh region and a close associate of Akaev in the 1980s, observed that the group of leaders who had spent considerable time in Russia were generally more progressive, and had a richer life experience, than the 'narrow-minded group' who remained behind in Kyrgyzstan. He compares this tension to that between native Poles and the Moskvichi in the aftermath of the Second World War. 'Abdygany Erkebaev: Nastupit vremia, kodga intellektualy ustupiat mesto professionalam,' *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, 24 September 1994, p. 3.

10 To take some liberties with Donald Horowitz's terms, Akaev was advancing a nonethnic ideology while, at the same time, building a multi-ethnic alliance of political forces. See Horowitz's *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1985, pp. 299–306 and *passim*. Because of the absence of vibrant parties, Kyrgyzstan does not fit neatly into Horowitz's paradigm.

11 As William Fierman notes in regard to neighboring Uzbekistan, '*symbolic* measures to assert ethnic Uzbeks' sovereignty over Uzbekistan may make it possible to suppress those who would nativize even more quickly in more substantive ways.' This approach mirrors that adopted by Akaev, who championed symbolic reforms because they were 'low-cost' both financially and politically. W. Fierman, 'Problems of Language Law Implementation in Uzbekistan,' *Nationalities Papers*, vol. 23, no. 3, 1995, p. 592.

12 A precursor to this institution, an informal 'roundtable,' drawing in members from the country's ethnic communities, was created in the late Soviet era by Akaev. 'Askar Akaev: svobodnyi Kyrgyzstan dolzhen byt' sil'nym,' *Izvestiia*, 10 October 1991, p. 2.

13 On the deference shown to Akaev by a leader of the Russian Orthodox Church in Kyrgyzstan, see A. Petrov, 'Skol'ko podal Akaev russkoi pravoslavnoi tserkvi?,' *Res Publica*, 28 February 1995, p. 3.

14 My thanks to Bill Nylen for suggesting this term.

15 A. Asankanov, *Kyrgyzy: rost natsional'nogo samosoznaniia*, Bishkek, Muras, 1997, pp. 126–7. 'Not a single deputy of the [parliament] from the south ran for a seat in the north, and no northerner stood in the south,' ibid., p. 15. Although such examples of localism may seem peculiar in a country like Britain, they have until recently been the norm in the United States, where politicians tend to be elected in their own backyard.

16 Ibid., pp. 19–20. In the other southern region, Jalal-Abad, Akaev received 61.3 percent of the vote, while obtaining 87.2 percent in the Chu Valley and 92.2 percent in the Issyk-Kol region.

17 Ibid., pp. 182, 13–17. Southerners could only aspire to capture the speakership of the parliament, which they did following the legislative elections of 1995. It should be

noted that southerners had also been put out by the bifurcation of the large southern region of Osh into two separate regions, Osh and Jalal-Abad, in the transition from communist rule. In the wake of incursions of Uzbek rebels in the remote southern territory between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, the Osh region was itself divided in 1999, with a new Batken region formed in the southwest.

18 Ibid., p. 161.

19 A. Akaev, 'Diplomacy of the Silk Road (A Foreign Policy Doctrine),' an online publication of the Central Asia–Caucasus Institute, Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, The Johns Hopkins University (www.sais–jhu.edu/centers/casia).

20 A. Asankanov, *Kyrgyzy: rost natsional'nogo samosoznaniia*, Bishkek, Muras, 1997, p. 108.

21 'Aviadiskriminatsiia, ili kogo schitat' etnicheskim kyrgyzom,' *Vechernii Bishkek*, 22 January 1999.

22 J. Bugubaeva, 'Ot izoliatsii – k partnerstvu,' *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, 26 March 1999, p. 6.

23 Just as in the Soviet era, there is a division between official Islam, which encourages Muslim quiescence, and parallel or unofficial Islam, which takes numerous forms, only one of which is Wahhabism (named after the eighteenth century Arabian theologian, Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab). Indeed, Wahhabism has limited influence in a region dominated by a very different approach to Islam, Sufism. However, Wahhabism has proved a convenient label for Central Asian governments who seek to discredit all currents of Islam that lie beyond their reach.

24 K. Maiskaia, 'Simvol neblagonadezhnosti,' *Vechernii Bishkek*, 31 May 1999. At the same time the police began to move against proscribed 'religious–political' organizations in Osh. See A. Zelichenko, 'Metodichno po ekstremizmu', *Vechernii Bishkek*, 28 May 1999.

25 R.B. Dobson, *Kyrgyzstan in a Time of Change: A Report on Ten Focus Groups in 1994*, Washington, DC, USIA, October 1994, R–3–94.

26 D. Kyshtobaev, 'S otkrytym zabralom,' *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, 12–13 October 1995, p. 1. Official press outlets, such as the country's wire service, Kabar, exhibit contempt for opposition political forces and their 'groundless criticism' of the president. See, for example, 'Lidery levykh sil Kyrgyzstana ob'ediniaiutsia,' Kabar News Agency, 30 September 1998. For an assessment of the press in Kyrgyzstan at the end of the 1990s, see Kyrgyz Republic Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1998, US Department of State, 26 February 1999. In a single issue of *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, on 16 March 1999, there were separate articles targeting for criticism two of Akaev's most vociferous critics, Tursunbai Bakir uulu and Topchubek Turgunaliev.

27 'Prem'er Kirgizii pishet knigu o svoem uchitele – Prezidente Akaeve,' Kabar News Agency, 14 October 1998.

28 'Absoliutnoe bol'shinstvo kirgizstantsev prinialo uchastie v referendume', Kabar News Agency, 19 October 1998.

29 The leading polls have been conducted by Kusein Isaev, Emil' Niazov and Karybek Zhigitekov at the Kyrgyzstan Humanities University in Bishkek and appear in *Slovo Kyrgyzstana* and other newspapers, such as *Res Publica*.

30 D. Latysheva, 'Samoobman?,' *Vechernii Bishkek*, 19 March 1999. The deputy in question was Daniar Usenov.

31 A. Przeworski, *Democracy and the Market: Political and Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991, pp. 167–71.

32 A fourth option, of course, is the political passivity that follows from social and economic degradation.

33 This is not to deny that excessive social deference may serve as an impediment to the development of a market economy if it discourages private initiative.

34 GDP grew by almost 6 percent in 1996, and real income by 1 percent (after a 14 percent decline in 1995). In the first nine months of 1997, GDP in Kyrgyzstan

increased by 19.2 percent compared to the same period in the previous year. However, the economy remains excessively dependent on large enterprises, as in the Soviet days, and many of those enterprises are financially unhealthy. Only 5 percent of the population is employed in small and mid-sized businesses, which are the backbone of advanced economies. Moreover, domestic capital investment represents only 4 percent of GDP, a third of what it was in 1991. The Kyrgyz economy also remains excessively dependent on imports. One of the most urgent tasks facing Kyrgyzstan leadership is reducing a ballooning trade deficit. In 1996, while exports fell by a quarter, imports shot up threefold. In 1996, 70 percent of consumer goods were imported. President Akaev committed himself in 1997 to a program of import substitution and assistance to Kyrgyz exporters in order to bring down the trade deficit. Finally, Kyrgyzstan is now having to service the loans received from the West in the early and mid 1990s. Without considerable economic growth and effective tax collection, debt service will put considerable strain on an already austere budget. Cutting back essential services to pay foreigners is always a politically thankless task.

35 A. Niyazov, 'Economic Growth in Kirghizia Continues in 1997 – president,' ITAR-TASS, Bishkek, 15 October 1997. This success enabled the launching of an anti-poverty campaign in 1998. A. Niyazov, 'Kyrgyz President Outlines Priorities for Next Year,' ITAR-TASS, Bishkek, 27 December 1997.

36 G.W. Breslauer, *Khrushchev and Brezhnev as Leaders: Building Authority in Soviet Politics*, London, George Allen and Unwin, 1982, p. 3.

37 In general, Akaev granted his prime ministers less authority than Yeltsin did his premiers, even before Primakov.

38 The best account of Akaev's accession to power in 1990, and of the political events of that year generally, is to be found in A. Erkebaev, *1990 god: prikhod k vlasti A. Akaeva*, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, 1997, which is grounded in the stenograms of party and parliamentary meetings. Besides working as the head of the Osh region, Erkebaev served as speaker of the parliament in the second half of the 1990s.

39 'Sprosit' i vyslushat' narod – ne v etom li segodnia real'naia demokratiia v Kyrgyzstane?,' *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, 27 September 1994, p. 1. For an introduction to the role of referendums in politics, with special reference to the United States, see T.E. Cronin, *Direct Democracy*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1989. It is noteworthy that in the United States pressures for the calling of referendums have come from below, from populists of the left and the right, whereas in other parts of the world the device tends to be used by leaders, who seek to acquire a popular mandate as a means of removing constraints on their power or resistance to their policy initiatives.

40 Personal interview with Askar Akaev, 11 June 1993, Bishkek.

41 And less tainted by corruption. The governors of the Issyk-Kol and Naryn regions, Jumagul Saadanbekov and Bekbolot Talgarbekov, were dismissed in September 1996 for 'serious breaches of financial discipline.' 'President Sacks Officials for Financial Impropriety,' Interfax, Moscow, 0715 GMT, 13 September 1996, BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, 17 September 1996. Saadenbekov returned to prominence in 2000 as Akaev's campaign manager.

42 For a revealing interview with Kulov shortly after his chauffeur had been detained by the authorities, see A. Otorbaeva, 'Po zhizni – s dostoinstvom,' *Vechernii Bishkek*, 11 June 1999. Kulov at this time was helping to form a new party, Ar-namys, or 'Dignity,' and was considering a run for the presidency.

43 Impeding the development of a strong state and the introduction of a market economy is widespread corruption, evident in the everyday workings of law and administration, in the privatization of state property, and in foreign ventures. An example of the latter is the diversion of most of the million dollars that had been set aside by the Canadian gold mining firm, Cameco, to assist social services in Issyk-Kol region.

44 'Prime Minister on Economic Crimes,' *Turkistan Newsletter* [Turkistan–N], 8 February 1999.

45 J. Kasabolotov, 'Bez znameni,' *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, 19 March 1999, p. 6.
46 See M. Butler, R. Gunther and J. Higley, 'Introduction: Elite Transformations and Democratic Regimes,' in J. Higley and R. Gunther (eds), *Democratic Consolidation in Latin America and Southern Europe*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992, p. 9.
47 In one of the most famous criminal cases, a prominent party leader, Topchubek Turgunaliev, was imprisoned for embezzling funds from the Bishkek Humanities University, where he served as rector. Without having reviewed all the documents in the case, it is difficult to reach a judgment about the appropriateness of the prosecution or the verdict. But in a country like Kyrgyzstan, where corruption and venality are widespread, one must ask why certain officials are targeted rather than others. On this case, see B. Pannier and N. Idinov, 'Whatever Happened to Topchubek Turgunaliev?,' *Open Media Research Institute*, vol. 1, no. 534, 28 January 1997; and J. Sariev, 'O "demokratii" otdel'no vziatoi persony,' *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, 16 March 1999, pp. 2, 4.
48 It was the Assembly of the Peoples of Kyrgyzstan that submitted the original petition to the Constitutional Court seeking a ruling in favor of a third term for Akaev.
49 In the summer of 1999, law enforcement officials also began arresting several members of parliament whose immunity had been removed by the October 1998 referendum. The deputies, who apparently had been using their parliamentary status as a shield against prosecution, were accused of serious criminal offenses. During the parliamentary elections of February and March 2000, the authorities were intent on electing a sympathetic parliament. Among the many tactics used to prevent opposition politicians from gaining parliamentary seats was disqualification. A total of twenty-one candidates were decertified by the Central Election Commission, eleven before the first round and ten before the second. See 'TsIK daet svoiu otsenku . . .', *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, 17 March 2000, p. 2.
50 Kulov's arrest came while he was recuperating in a hospital from heart problems brought on by the disputed election. The electoral results and the subsequent arrest led to demonstrations in the Talas region and a several-month-long vigil of supporters in central Bishkek. See the excellent coverage of the disputed parliamentary elections in the Bishkek weekly, *Delo No*, 'V kara-buurinskom raione volneniia,' 15 March 2000; 'Narod ne liubit, kogda daviat!,' 15 March 2000; 'Zamochili!,' 15 March 2000; and 'Predsedatel' uchastkovoi izbiratel'noi komissii pokonchil s soboi . . .,' 22 March 2000. For an account of the most recent case against Turgunaliev, who was convicted of plotting to assassinate Akaev, see 'Pokushenie na Prezidenta Akaeva: kto za nim stoial? A glavnoe, kto ego v deistvitel'nosti srezhissiroval?' *Delo No*, 5 April 2000.
51 Usenov, for example, was offered an ambassadorship in Iran. Personal interview with Daniar Usenov, 24 May 2000, Bishkek.
52 This number may seem substantial, but remember that Kyrgyzstan had thirty political parties in the year 2000. If all had had candidates for the presidency, Akaev would almost certainly have failed to garner a victory in the first round.
53 It also sought to neutralize opposition politicians and parties through a combination of intimidation and bribery. The chair of the Democratic Movement of Kyrgyzstan, Jypar Jeksheev, reported that key aides to Akaev pressured him to join a pro-presidential alliance of parties, or failing that, not to allow his party to join an opposition bloc. In the event, some members of his party, Jeksheev states, left to join the pro-presidential alliance after receiving bribes. Personal interview with Jypar Jeksheev, 22 May 2000, Bishkek.
54 See the report by the electoral observers of OSCE, OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission, Kyrgyz Republic – Presidential Elections, 29 October 2000, 'Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions.' Available at http://www.osce.org/odihr.
55 'My ne dolzhny pozvolit' avtoritarnomu gosudarstvu izmotat' nashi sily . . . [pis'mo

ispolnitel'nogo direktora Koalitsii NPO 'Za demokratiiu i grazhdanskoe obshchestvo'],' *Res Publica*, 19 September 2000, p. 1.

56 'Monitoring of Electronic Mass Media in Kyrgyzstan during the Election Campaign,' 2–29 October 2000, Joint Press Release from IFES, Association of Journalists of Kyrgyzstan, and Internews.

57 The Central Election Commission would claim that this was a provocation organized by opposition forces to call into question an Akaev victory.

58 'Statement of the National Democratic Institute (NDI) International Election Observer Delegation to Kyrgyzstan's October 29, 2000 Presidential Election,' Bishkek, 31 October 2000. Available at http://www.ndi.org/ndi/worldwide/eurasia/kyrgyzstan/kyrgyzstan2000.

59 OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission, Kyrgyz Republic – Presidential Elections, 29 October 2000, 'Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions.' Available at http://www.osce.org/odihr.

60 'Omurbek Tekebaev: Rezul'tat etikh vyborov – padenie avtoriteta gosudarstvennoi vlasti,' *Res Publica*, 14 November 2000.

61 Ibid.

62 'Feliks Kulov: Ob'ediniat' nas dolzhno proshloe,' *Res Publica*, 21 November 2000.

63 Like many other politicians and citizens of Kyrgyzstan, Kulov reserved his strongest criticism not for Akaev but his entourage, whom he accused of plotting 'White House intrigue.' 'Playing politics [*politikanstvo*],' he argued, 'has begun to triumph over law.' *Vechernii Bishkek*, 11 June 1999.

64 'Melis Eshimkanov: u menia khvataet muzhestva pozdravit' Akaeva s pobedoi!,' *Delo No*, 1 November 2000.

65 For a far more critical interpretation of Akaev's leadership, see Z. Sydykova, *Za kulisami demokratii po – kyrgyzski*, Bishkek, Res Publica, 1997. Forces in parliament have sought in the last year to introduce legislation that would allow 'government officials ... to demand that any newspaper or magazine retract articles they find objectionable and give them unlimited space to write their own rebuttal. This will affect editorials as well.' J. Bransten, 'Kyrgyzstan: Democracy and a Free Press – Endangered Species?,' RFE/RL, 14 October 1997. Akaev's proposed referendum in the fall of 1998 represented, in part, an effort to head off this initiative. Thus, on matters of freedom of speech and the press, Akaev has been a relative liberal in the Kyrgyzstani context. For the critical comments of the presidency on the legislation to restrain the press, see V. Kozlinskii, 'Oblom', *Vechernii Bishkek*, 15 June 1999.

66 'O druzhbe, bez kotoroi ne prozhit,' *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, 2 December 1998, p. 2.

67 A Russian author of a sympathetic study of Akaev observed that, after a few years in office 'Akaev had become harsher. Circumstances had demanded from him more purposeful and resolute policies.' K. Abdymen, 'V sravnen'i zdravom vse prikhodit...,' *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, 26 February 1999, p. 8.

68 See S. Wolin, *The Politics of Vision*, Boston, Little, Brown, 1960, pp. 220–35.

69 Speaking in the United States in May 1993, the president of Kyrgyzstan argued that liberalism and democracy were still in their infancy in his country. 'In the beginning, there's freedom of information, the press, and association, but in the absence of a political culture. Next comes political freedom, but in the absence of political parties of the middle class ... And only after this arrives economic freedom, but in the absence of developed property relations...' 'Vystuplenie Prezidenta Kyrgyzskoi Respubliki A. Akaeva na zavtrake ot imeni Soveta po Mezhdunarodnym delam Fonda Karnegi,' Washington, DC, 20 May 1993 (typescript in possession of the author).

70 In another indication of the powers of the presidency, Asankul Akaev was the only person to stand unopposed in a contest for a seat in the Assembly of People's Representatives. If the numbers can be believed, he squeaked by with 50.23 percent support of the registered voters; over 4 percent cast their ballot against all candidates, a relatively high number for parliamentary elections in Kyrgyzstan.

71 By 1999, there were almost thirty registered political parties, though as one cynic observed, 'each has two and a half members.' A. Sabov, 'Kirgiziia: spory o fasade?,' *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, 4 March 1999, p. 6.

72 Quoted in T. Zeldin, *France 1848–1945: Politics and Anger*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1973, p. 141.

6 Tajikistan

A president and his rivals

Muriel Atkin

Presidential rule in post-Soviet Tajikistan is unlike that in any other Central Asian state. The current president, Imomali Rahmonov, is not a former first secretary of a republican Communist Party who made himself president, emulating Gorbachev, before the fall of the Soviet Union and managed to hold on to power ever since (as in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, or Turkmenistan). Nor is he someone who achieved some standing for non-political achievements and was tapped to embody a new kind of political order, intended to be different from the Soviet legacy (as in Kyrgyzstan). There were people in Tajikistan who wanted to play those roles, but they either lost power or never had it. Rahmonov's main qualification for leadership, at least at first, was his insignificance. Within a few months in 1992, this man who was not yet forty went from being the director of the sovkhoz (state farm) where he grew up, to the speaker of Tajikistan's Supreme Soviet, at the time, the highest office in the state. At least at the outset, he was the figurehead for other men who wanted to preserve the substance of Soviet-style rule by a self-selected elite and fought a civil war to get what they wanted.

Ironically, Rahmonov proved to be a survivor, although his hold on power remains precarious. Several of those who had expected to be the power behind the throne have themselves fallen. Rahmonov was elected president, when that office was re-established in 1994, and has ruled ever since, though 'ruled' may be an overly optimistic term. The government's writ barely applies in some parts of the country. Even apart from that, the government is in such a weak financial position that it cannot afford to do what needs to be done to address the country's problems and has little vision of what the effective remedies might be. Although the most intense phase of the civil war ended in early 1993, fighting continued through the end of the decade. A fragile peace accord was concluded in 1997 and began to be implemented in 1998, but many difficulties remain and a secure peace does not yet exist. Some of Rahmonov's erstwhile allies have turned against him, using force as well as politics in attempts to oust him. A striking feature of Tajikistan's political volatility is the extent to which that derives from conflict *within* the coalition which appeared to win in 1993, not just the more obvious antagonism between that coalition and the Opposition. At times, contemporary Tajikistani politics appears to be the war of all against all.

Rahmonov, far from being master of the land he heads, remains heavily dependent on Russian backing to remain in power.

None of this can be explained by the legacy of pre-Soviet concepts of rulership among the indigenous inhabitants of what is now Tajikistan. Rulers in those days, whether amirs of Bukhara, Russian tsars, or others, were remote, politically if not geographically, and tended to have less impact on the daily lives of the governed than is the norm in the typical twentieth-century state. There are people in contemporary Tajikistan who have a certain standing because they are descended from figures of some importance in pre-Soviet times, but those people are out of power now. In any case, Rahmonov boasts no such illustrious pedigree. There is a danger in explaining authoritarianism or conflict in contemporary Central Asian politics in terms of a people's historic traditions. Such arguments can be used as a kind of cultural relativism to excuse a regime's repressiveness or to assume that the resort to political violence is somehow primordial in a people and therefore not subject to change. This view also assumes that if people are unaccustomed to democracy they also do not object to being abused. Traditional concepts of kingship among the Persian-speakers of Central Asia, the ancestors of the modern Tajiks, put great stock in the notion of just rule, even though modern notions of democracy were unknown to them. Thus, a good ruler was someone who not only provided security and ensured domestic order, two virtues touted by repressive Central Asian regimes today, but also governed in accordance with prevailing political, social, and religious beliefs, rather than by personal caprice, and was attentive to the needs of his subjects, though there were no democratic institutions through which subjects could articulate those needs. Patronage of scholarship and the arts would add further luster to a good ruler's reputation. Amir Isma'il (d. 907), the founder of the Samanid dynasty, which ruled much of Central Asia from its capital in Bukhara, is one example of someone who was perceived in Central Asian traditions as a paragon of just kingship. Of course the Tajiks and other Central Asian peoples also had ample experience of rulers who did not meet those high standards. The fact that Central Asians only occasionally risked their lives to rebel against rulers who were likely to respond with brute force to crush rebellions does not mean that the region's inhabitants approved of such authoritarian regimes or that such uncritical admiration is a deeply rooted cultural trait, as contemporary apologists for the region's current crop of authoritarian rulers essentially argue.

No doubt the transition from a Soviet political system will be a prolonged and difficult process in Tajikistan, as elsewhere, and the outcome cannot yet be predicted. However, in contemplating those difficulties, some Western observers have forgotten what long, tortuous roads Western countries themselves followed before establishing the kinds of democratic systems they now have. There is no reason to assume that the inhabitants of Tajikistan must be locked into an unchanging past any more than the inhabitants of Western countries have been.

It is the legacy of the Soviet period, not what preceded it, which still has such a strong influence on leadership politics in independent Tajikistan. This takes

several forms, some of them benign, some more sinister. The achievement of near universal literacy, expansion of the intelligentsia, development of the mass media, and contact with reform-minded people throughout the Soviet Union contributed to the growth of political reformism in late-Soviet Tajikistan. The Soviet system also created a self-perpetuating ruling elite, equipped with powerful tools with which to protect its interests. When the Soviet Union collapsed, the dominant factions of Tajikistan's elite faced a double challenge to their privileged position. One was a struggle for power, as members of those patron–client networks with the most power competed with others, including high-ranking Communist Party officials as well as people outside those circles.[1] The other challenge was over the policies those in power would follow, whether the political and economic system inherited from the Soviet era would remain substantially unchanged or be supplanted by democratization and a transition to a market economy.[2] The dominant political factions opposed genuine reform, while a diverse coalition, which came to be known as the Opposition, endorsed it. This rivalry escalated into the civil war, which began in mid 1992.

While all of this was going on, two successive first secretaries of the Communist Party of Tajikistan tried unsuccessfully to reconfigure their position at the apex of power and survive in the changing political climate as many of their counterparts did in other republics. Qahhor Mahkamov became first secretary of the Communist Party of Tajikistan at the end of 1985, as part of Mikhail Gorbachev's shake-up of the party leadership in the Central Asian republics. A native of Tajikistan's northernmost province, Leninobod, home of many members of the republic's ruling elite, he had a fairly standard career path for a member of that circle, including the chairmanship of the republican Council of Ministers and membership in the Bureau of the republican Communist Party (both since 1982).[3] In November 1990, Mahkamov emulated Gorbachev's example for the Soviet Union as a whole and had himself elected president of Tajikistan by the republic's Supreme Soviet. Yet he made powerful enemies and critical miscalculations which ultimately drove him from office. Some members of the ruling elite perceived him as inept at dealing with Tajikistan's problems or protecting the Communist Party's position.[4] Others, both in the Party and the general public, blamed him for the bloodshed in the capital, Dushanbe, in February 1990. According to these critics, he handled a peaceful demonstration in such a way that it turned violent and then called on troops of the Ministry of the Interior, the KGB, and the Soviet army to restore order, which they did through the use of indiscriminate force. In the process, twenty-five people lost their lives and more than 800 were injured.[5]

Mahkamov's position became untenable after he supported the Party old guard's unsuccessful coup attempt in Moscow in August 1991. A large demonstration, socially and geographically diverse in its composition, occupied the square outside the building where Tajikistan's Supreme Soviet met in Dushanbe and called for Mahkamov's removal as well as for reforms. Inside the building, a large majority of the legislators turned against Mahkamov, some because he was such an uncompromising opponent of reform, others because he could no

longer defend the anti-reformist cause.[6] Mahkamov resigned and the Supreme Soviet accepted his resignation; he also resigned as Communist Party first secretary. (The establishment of a new upper house of Tajikistan's legislature in 2000 enabled him to take a modest step back from political obscurity. As a former president of the country, he was entitled to a seat in the new chamber.)[7]

Mahkamov's fall created the opportunity a rival member of the ruling elite, Rahmon Nabiev, had long awaited. For a few weeks after Mahkamov's resignation, the Communist old guard was in disarray, as in the rest of the Soviet Union. The republic's leading officials were still Party veterans, but some of them, including the speaker of the Supreme Soviet and the mayor of Dushanbe, showed a willingness at least to make gestures to please the advocates of change. How well this cooperation would have worked in the long run will never be known because the defenders of the old order staged a bloodless coup of their own in late September 1991 and returned to power. In their lead was Rahmon Nabiev, Mahkamov's predecessor as first secretary (1982–5), the man ousted in Gorbachev's sweep of Communist Party bosses. Nabiev had been looking for a way to return to power ever since. Though demoted to a minor position as head of Tajikistan's Society for the Protection of Nature, he held a seat in the Supreme Soviet. When that body elected Tajikistan's first president in 1990, Nabiev ran against Mahkamov but lost by a sizeable margin.[8] The old guard's successful coup in Tajikistan in September 1991 took the form of an extraordinary session of the Supreme Soviet which ousted the more conciliatory officials who had predominated since late August and elected Nabiev acting president.[9] The republic's first direct, popular election of a president occurred on 24 November 1991. Nabiev won with 58 percent of the vote, but his margin of victory was padded because the old guard prevented a free election from taking place. The Communist Party (temporarily renamed the Socialist Party) supported Nabiev; it was still able to mobilize large numbers of voters and controlled the electoral commissions. The restored hard-line regime ensured that the mass media would deny other candidates full or fair coverage and restricted their supporters from campaigning where they wished. The voting process itself suffered from improprieties.[10]

The most important of the candidates who ran against Nabiev was Davlat Khudonazarov, head of the Soviet Cinematographers' Union and a member of the faction led by Andrei Sakharov in the Soviet Congress of People's Deputies. His candidacy had the support of the main elements of the Opposition. He is the person who might have played a role comparable to Askar Akaev's in Kyrgyzstan, as someone who happened to be a Party member but who had reformist credentials and had not made his career in the *apparat*. According to official sources, he won 30 percent of the vote in November 1991. In 1992, he tried to promote compromise and a peaceful resolution of the civil war, to no avail. He was not able to develop his own base of support in Tajikistan, was accused of political crimes by the regime brought to power by the civil war, and has not been an important political figure there since 1993.[11]

Nabiev and his hard-line allies did not enjoy their restoration for long. Their

repressive policies and resistance to reform prompted a new wave of Opposition demonstrations in Dushanbe in the spring of 1992. By May of that year, as the situation became increasingly volatile, a most reluctant Nabiev was pressured into agreeing to the formation of a coalition government, which included a few prominent Opposition figures but remained dominated by the old guard. Nabiev's supporters launched a campaign of violence against the Opposition's supporters, at first in the southern province of Kulob, then elsewhere in the south. Some of the Opposition's supporters responded in kind. By June 1992, a civil war was underway. In September 1992, a group of armed Opposition supporters forced Nabiev to resign. He returned to his home in Khujand, the capital of Leninobod Province, and awaited the victory of his fellow hard-liners, which he assumed would restore him to power. With the civil war nearly won, the hard-line coalition convened a special session of the Supreme Soviet in Khujand in November and December 1992. Although the deputies removed the acting president who had succeeded Nabiev, much to Nabiev's satisfaction, it chose not to reinstate him.[12] He spent the remaining few months of his life in Khujand. Already in poor health, he died, reportedly of a heart attack, in April 1993.

The victors realized that they did not need Nabiev to defeat the Opposition. Moreover, certain factions within the hard-line camp were ready to end the decades-long dominance by factions from Leninobod Province. These rival factions within the neo-Soviet camp are often known collectively as Kulobis, after the southern province that was the power base of some of them, although they were really composed only of certain patron–client networks in that province, not Kulobis in general, and also of Uzbeks from southwestern Tajikistan. These 'Kulobis' had enjoyed a share of power and privilege for years, but always as subordinates of the leading factions from Leninobod. For logistical and geographic reasons, Nabiev had looked to the Kulobis to fight the Opposition in the civil war, not his fellow northerners.[13] Now the Kulobis, nearing victory, relegated the Leninobodis to the subordinate position in power. Opinion about whom to name as president was too divided at the extraordinary session of the Supreme Soviet in Khujand for any contender to garner sufficient support. Instead, the presidency was abolished. The highest state office became the speaker of the legislature. Imomali Rahmonov was elected to that position on 19 November 1992. Furious in-fighting dragged on between the factions in the legislature for three weeks. In the end, the post of prime minister went to a Leninobodi, Abdumalik Abdullojonov, who had occupied the post on an interim basis since September of that year, but most of his choices for the other main positions were rejected and the Kulobis' choices appointed instead.[14]

Rahmonov's qualifications for the country's highest political office were slight. Young (born in 1953) and inexperienced, he came from a village in Kulob's Danghara region, a formerly arid plain irrigated for cotton cultivation by the Soviets. Almost all of his career before 1992 had been spent in various jobs on his home *sovkhoz*. By 1992, he was the *sovkhoz's* director. A typical promotion from that position would be to a *raion* (district)-level office. However, Rahmonov had not even made it to the 'advancement reserve', the

pool of those tapped by the Communist Party for future promotion, by the end of the Soviet era. Yet in the second half of 1992, he went from *sovkhoz* director to governor of Kulob Province and then to speaker of the Tajikistan Supreme Soviet. At the same time, he was one of the organizers of the Kulobi fighters in the civil war.[15] Above all, he enjoyed the patronage of the leader of the Kulobis, Sangak Safarov. It was Safarov who, in October 1992, had shot and killed the previous governor of Kulob for being willing to reach an accommodation with the coalition government in Dushanbe; Safarov then made Rahmonov governor.[16] Even with the Kulobis' ascent during the civil war, Safarov, a career criminal, could not have become speaker of the legislature in his own right, but Rahmonov could occupy the office as his client. That is how many people perceived Rahmonov when he became speaker.[17]

Safarov, who turned sixty-five in 1992, clearly hoped to become the power behind Rahmonov. He began to act as if he were a high-ranking government official, making a speech at a memorial service for the civil war dead at which Rahmonov and several government ministers also spoke, and appearing on Tajikistani television to address the public at the start of Ramadan, the Muslim month of fasting.[18] His utter devotion to a Soviet type of government is ironic, given how his family had suffered under the Soviet regime (a father 'repressed', two brothers who died of starvation and another imprisoned under Stalin). Safarov himself had done poorly under the Soviets. He spent a total of twenty-three years in confinement for various offenses including automobile theft, vehicular homicide, and attempted murder. A staunch supporter of the Soviet order, Nabiev chose him to play a major role in his (Nabiev's) presidential campaign in 1991. In the spring of 1992, the president relied on Safarov to head the pro-regime demonstrations in Dushanbe to counter those of the Opposition. Safarov then led the Kulobi organization, the Popular Front, during the civil war.[19] In addition to obtaining the speakership for Rahmonov, Safarov put another of his clients, Yaqub Salimov, who had spent time in prison for extortion and theft and also fought in the Popular Front, in charge of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.[20]

Safarov's ascendancy was even shorter than Nabiev's had been. Early in 1993, he engaged in a power struggle with an ally in the Popular Front, Faizali Saidov, leader of the Laqai tribe of Uzbeks, who live in southwestern Tajikistan. The Dushanbe regime wanted to disarm the Laqais. Saidov was becoming increasingly assertive in seeking a greater share of power for himself. When Safarov went to meet with Saidov, a gun fight erupted and both men were killed, along with several others, on the night of 29–30 March 1993.[21]

For a while, Yaqub Salimov appeared to be Rahmonov's next *éminence grise*. He maintained his pre-civil war leadership of a large criminal network. In addition to his new power as minister of internal affairs, he had his own band of armed followers. This enabled him to advance that network's interests and bully Rahmonov. Several times Rahmonov tried to oust him, but Salimov's support among his criminal associates and the Popular Front thwarted those efforts. Finally, in 1995, Rahmonov, now president, with stronger Russian backing than ever, was able to remove Salimov, whose fall was softened by his appointment

to a new post, as ambassador to Turkey; this, conveniently, removed him from Tajikistan as well.[22] (This echoes a Soviet practice dating from the 1920s of removing political rivals from the arena by sending them on diplomatic assignments abroad.) He seemed on the ascent again when he returned to Dushanbe early in 1997 to become chairman of the Customs Committee. Later that year, for reasons which remain obscure, his men fought with troops of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and were defeated. Salimov had to flee. The government subsequently accused him of collaborating with the rebellious Colonel Mahmud Khudoiberdiev to overthrow the regime.[23]

Yet another Popular Front veteran who is believed to wield far more power behind the scenes in the Rahmonov regime than his title of office would indicate is the mayor of Dushanbe, Mahmadsaid Ubaidulloev. He had been an official in Kulob Province when the civil war began, at which time he became the head of one of the Popular Front's armed units. In the wake of the Front's victory, he became a deputy prime minister. One of Colonel Khudoiberdiev's uprisings forced him from office in February 1996, but he made a comeback as mayor of Dushanbe the next month and has remained in that office since then. Only a quirk of fate enabled him to survive an assassination attempt in February 2000 which killed a deputy minister of national security instead. The assassins' motives remain unknown as of this writing. Weeks after the assassination attempt, he was elected to a seat in the new upper house of the legislature. Since his days as deputy prime minister, he has controlled the export of the country's two main commodities, aluminum and cotton. Rumor has it that he has acquired a personal fortune. Also according to rumor, he has a big say in appointments and economic policy.[24]

One of the former allies who became an open rival of Rahmonov's after the defeat of the Opposition was the first prime minister of the Rahmonov era, Abdumalik Abdullojonov, a Leninobodi and member of Nabiev's patron–client network. He, too, had been actively involved in Nabiev's presidential campaign. Before then, he had had a standard and successful apparatchik's career, becoming minister of grain products in 1987 and then head of the company Non ('bread') that was formed from the ministry in a largely fictive economic reform in February 1992. He became acting prime minister in September 1992, while there was still a nominal coalition government, and then prime minister in the hard-line government established in November of that year.[25] One thing that is particularly noteworthy about him is that, in addition to his useful connections in the Nabiev patron–client network and the bakery industry, he tried to tap the prestige of an ancestor of his from pre-Soviet times to enhance his prospects in post-Soviet Tajikistan. He let it be known that his grandfather was a religious scholar and district chief before the revolution in what became Leninobod Province. An opponent of the Soviets, the grandfather emigrated in 1922 and spent the rest of his life in Saudi Arabia.[26]

Neither Abdullojonov's lineage nor his connections in the late-Soviet ruling elite were sufficient to give him victory in his power struggle with the Rahmonov faction. During the period of roughly one year when Rahmonov and

Abdullojonov held the country's highest offices, the two were at odds over economic policy and their respective factions' struggle for maximum power. At the end of 1993, the Rahmonov faction forced Abdullojonov to resign, on the grounds of policy disagreements and allegations of corruption.[27] He was sent off to Russia as ambassador. In 1994, the Dushanbe regime charged him with corruption and, the following year, issued a warrant for his arrest.

Abdullojonov pursued his rivalry with Rahmonov in a variety of ways. In the presidential elections of 1994, he ran against Rahmonov, hoping to persuade voters that he was the practical politician who could negotiate a settlement with the Opposition as the fighting dragged on, and fix the country's massive economic problems. The impressiveness of Rahmonov's landslide victory (60 percent of the vote as opposed to Abdullojonov's 35 percent) is tempered by the fact that the election was rigged.[28] Abdullojonov kept trying to recoup his position. He formed the People's Unity Party in 1994 to represent his interests. (Several political parties which functioned legally in post-1993 Tajikistan were this kind of personality-defined organization.) The Rahmonov faction subjected it to so much harassment in the 1995 elections for the legislature that he told the party not to try to field candidates. Once again, international observers faulted the integrity of the electoral process.[29] In 1996, he formed a broader anti-Rahmonov coalition, the National Revival Movement, which included his People's Unity Party and his two successors as prime minister, Jamshed Karimov, a second-generation member of the republican elite, and Abdujalil Samadov, another Leninobodi (both of whom had been forced out of power by then).[30]

Abdullojonov, in desperation, looked to the Opposition for support against Rahmonov, establishing contact in 1994. At first, nothing came of this. By then, the Opposition was weakened by its defeat in the civil war, the flight of many of its supporters, and the campaign of repression directed against it by the government in Dushanbe. His hard-line politics and earlier contemptuous remarks about the Opposition were obstacles to his winning whatever support it might have been able to give him once he was in trouble in the power struggle. Besides, the Opposition accused him of massive corruption while he was minister of grain products. Even his fellow Leninobodi and fellow member of the Nabiev faction, Nurullo Huvaidulloev, Tajikistan's chief prosecutor (until his assassination in August 1992), had tried to build a corruption case against him. By 1996, as the stalemated battle between the government and the Opposition continued, leaders of the Opposition came to terms with Abdullojonov. They criticized the Dushanbe regime's refusal to include representatives of the Abdullojonov faction on the National Reconciliation Commission established as part of the peace accord. In the end, however, the Opposition had to choose between this enemy-turned-ally, whom the government remained determined to exclude from power, and its own stake in the coalition government promised by the peace agreement; it chose the latter.[31]

From 1996 to 1999, the prime minister was Yahyo Azimov. He, too, is a Leninobodi, but, having been the manager of a carpet factory before his eleva-

tion to high office, did not have the kind of advantageous position in a patron–client network that could nourish political ambitions. He is perceived more as a technocrat. Rahmonov fired Azimov in November 1999. Four months later, he brought Azimov back into the cabinet as minister for foreign economic relations. The next prime minister was another Leninobodi technocrat, but one with more political connections, Oqil Oqilov, whose background was largely in construction and water resource management. He had also been a secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Tajikistan and a member of its highest executive body, its Bureau; immediately before becoming prime minister, he had been deputy governor of his home province.

Rahmonov's regime remains unpopular in Leninobod Province. When he visited there in April 1997, an attempt was made to assassinate him. His injuries proved minor but many others were killed or wounded. One of Abdullojonov's brothers, Abdulhafiz, was subsequently sentenced to death with several others for involvement in the assassination conspiracy, although Abdumalik Abdullojonov himself was not charged. The government alleged that Abdulhafiz Abdullojonov and his co-conspirators intended to make the former prime minister president once Rahmonov was out of the way.[32] These charges have not been corroborated independently.

The most dramatic and dangerous of Abdullojonov's alliances to recover his fortunes was with yet another member of the coalition that won the civil war, Colonel Mahmud Khudoiberdiev, although more is alleged about this connection than can be confirmed. Khudoiberdiev, an ethnic Uzbek from southwestern Tajikistan, defected from a unit of the Russian 201st Rifle Division (which was based in Tajikistan) to the Kulobis' Popular Front in 1992. After the Front's victory, he was rewarded with command of the First Rifle Brigade of Tajikistan's new army. He used violence in an attempt to expand his power several times since 1995, when he defeated the nearby Eleventh Brigade (led by another Popular Front veteran) to become warlord of the southwest. Since then, he forced the resignation of several key government figures, including the then-prime minister, Jamshed Karimov, and attempted, unsuccessfully, to expand his domain by seizing the western city of Tursunzoda, home of Tajikistan's most important industry, its aluminum smelter. Having overreached himself, Khudoiberdiev took shelter in Uzbekistan.[33] In November 1998, he led a band of several hundred men in an attack on several locations in Leninobod Province. His demands included that Abdullojonov be given air time on television. Whatever the true connection between the former prime minister and the warlord, the Dushanbe regime used Khudoiberdiev's pro-Abdullojonov statements to accuse the latter of complicity in the attack on Leninobod. Khudoiberdiev's forces were defeated after several days of fighting and he fled once again to Uzbekistan. The regime banned Abdullojonov's People's Unity Party, confiscated its assets, and launched a crackdown on his relatives and associates in Leninobod, including another of his brothers, the former mayor of Khujand.[34] The civil war peace accord signed in 1997 promises 30 percent of the top government positions to the Opposition but conspicuously excludes the Abdullojonov faction from any

share of power; both the Dushanbe regime and the Opposition rejected participation by the Abdullojonov faction once implementation of the accord began in 1998.[35]

Throughout this conflict with erstwhile allies as well as the civil war with the Opposition, Rahmonov and those elements of the Popular Front which remain in his camp have managed to hold on to power in Dushanbe, despite their regime's weaknesses. The ruling faction made use of the tools created by the Soviet system to advance and protect the interests of a monopolistic elite. The person responsible for Rahmonov's rise to the top, Sangak Safarov, clearly wanted the restoration of the pre-Gorbachev political system. As the civil war intensified, he stated that his goal was to see the red flag flying throughout Tajikistan once more. His Popular Front forces even flew various Soviet-era flags when they took Dushanbe at the end of 1992.[36] Since Safarov's death, Rahmonov and his circle have shown more flexibility in adapting Soviet methods to post-Soviet conditions in Tajikistan. This cannot be deemed a complete success, given the regime's many troubles, but it has been successful enough to help the regime to survive in the face of so much opposition, although that might not have been enough without Russia's support as well.

Tajikistan's post-Soviet constitution, adopted on 6 November 1994, restored the office of president, which had been abolished in November 1992, and gave it extensive powers, even greater, at least on paper, than those of the Russian president, according to the Russian constitution of 1993, on which Tajikistan's is largely based. The fact that Rahmonov was elected president simultaneously with the referendum on whether to adopt the constitution (and, therefore, before the presidency legally existed) serves as a reminder not to take the authority of the constitution too literally. A few provisions deserve comment. Initially, a president's term of office was five years, with a limit of two consecutive terms. In September 1999, the constitution was amended in several ways, including a provision which created a single, seven-year term of office for the president. As the end of his first term neared, Rahmonov stood for the newly created seven-year term in November 1999. Once again the election was rigged. The electoral law required an unreasonably large number of signatures on nominating petitions for other parties' candidates and Rahmonov supporters hampered efforts to circulate petitions for those candidates, with the result that no one besides Rahmonov qualified for a place on the ballot. Weeks before the election, the Supreme Court put the candidate the Islamic Rebirth Party had tried to run, Davlat Usmon, on the ballot, despite his objection that this was merely a ploy to disguise the fraudulence of the election. The mass media, mostly controlled by the regime, reported extensively on the Rahmonov campaign but ignored those who had tried to run against him. Rahmonov's supporters threatened those of other parties' candidates. The whole electoral process was so tainted that the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the United Nations refused to monitor the actual vote.[37] A Rahmonov ally had predicted, citing unspecified polls, that the president would win more than 70 percent of the vote if he ran for a second term, but apparently Rahmonov was not content with what

would be a resounding victory by the standards of a free election. Instead, the election gave him 97 percent of the vote. He received the least support in Leninobod Province, which was to be expected; there, he gained only 94.7 percent of the vote.[38]

According to the constitution, political power is highly centralized and much of it concentrated in the president's hands. For example, the president appoints the mayors and governors; those officials are not elected by the residents of the towns and provinces. This is significant not only as a measure of the extent of a president's formal power but also for the control it gives him of a network of plum patronage positions. In the span of a few weeks in 1997, Rahmonov made particularly active use of this power, replacing three central government officials (a deputy prime minister and two deputy prosecutors-general), three mayors, and three district executives.[39] Rahmonov has used this power not only to reward clients but also to deflect criticism from his regime by making some incumbents, whom he fired, scapegoats for local problems. The requirement of the peace accord that 30 percent of the positions in central and lower levels of government go to people nominated by the Opposition interferes with this presidential patronage system, although it remains to be seen how much real power, not just official titles, the Opposition appointees will actually have or even whether Opposition members will obtain the full 30 percent of positions at various levels of government that they were promised. In at least some cases, Rahmonov has been able to use the accommodation with the Opposition to suit his own personnel objectives. For example, one of the government positions the Opposition wanted was the office of mayor of Uroteppa, a city in Leninobod Province. That gave Rahmonov the opportunity to fire the incumbent, Qurbon Turaev, a veteran of the Leninobod *apparat* with no patronage ties to Rahmonov, and to blame Turaev, in the stock formula used when firing official scapegoats, for doing a poor job, leading to various local problems.[40] On the heels of his party's landslide victory in elections for the lower house of the legislature, another creation of the 1999 amendments to the constitution, Rahmonov removed several of the Opposition figures he had appointed to government positions at various levels in compliance with the peace accord. Foremost among those ousted was the Islamic Rebirth Party's Davlat Usmon, who had been minister of foreign economic relations. In at least one case, the Opposition member who was ousted was replaced by his predecessor, whom Rahmonov had previously removed from office to create an opening for the appointment of someone from the Opposition.[41]

The president has the power to nullify the acts of state bodies on the grounds that they are unconstitutional or in violation of the country's other laws. Yet the constitution also gives the Constitutional Court the power of judicial review. It does not address what would happen if the president and the Constitutional Court disagreed, something which has not yet occurred, but does give the president a key role in the removal of judges from that court. The constitution is self-contradictory on the independence of the judiciary. Although it asserts such independence, the president has the power to oust as well as appoint judges at

the city, district, and provincial levels as well as in the Military Court. The legislature decides whether to remove judges of the Constitutional Court or other high courts, but, until the 1999 amendments, only the president had the power to initiate the removal of judges on those courts; the legislature could not take that initiative.[42] Although the president retains his prerogative in this sphere, one of the constitutional amendments gives similar authority to the newly created upper house of the legislature. In practice, the president's powers remain decisive in this regard, since he appoints eight of the members of that chamber and the other twenty-five are elected by local government bodies, which are headed by the president's appointees.[43]

From the start, the Rahmonov regime has found repression a useful tool in preserving its position. Its capture of Dushanbe and other parts of the south in the winter of 1992–3 was accompanied by killings, disappearances, and expulsions which targeted not only Opposition fighters, but also supporters who were not members of armed bands and ordinary citizens who came from regions of the country considered sympathetic to the Opposition.[44] Non-combatant supporters of reform were held captive without due process of law; some were tortured; some died in captivity; some were eventually released in the face of international pressure.[45] The Presidential Guard and rapid deployment troops of the Ministry of Internal Affairs remain powerful, ruthless weapons to use against those the regime considers its enemies. (Tajikistan also has an army, but that is a much less effective fighting force.)[46] In addition, the regime also employs nonviolent methods to squelch opponents. Its effectiveness in rigging elections has already been noted. The parties belonging to the Opposition coalition were banned in 1993. By 1999 their legal standing had been restored, in keeping with the peace accord. That will not mean much as long as the Rahmonov faction's control over the mass media remains tight and elections continue to be rigged, as those for the lower house of the legislature were in February 2000, to minimize representation for Opposition parties.[47]

The Rahmonov faction makes considerable use of patron–client networks to advance its interests but does not need to channel that through the institution of the Communist Party, as had been the case during the Soviet era and the Nabiev presidency. In fact, the ruling faction has turned against the Communist Party. Instead, it relies primarily on connections from the Popular Front and certain networks from Kulob. For example, Ghafur Mirzoev had been a criminal boss in Dushanbe before the civil war. He joined the Popular Front and, after its victory, was rewarded, officially, by being made head of the Presidential Guard, so important to the regime's coercive capabilities, and, unofficially, by being allowed to make himself warlord of part of Dushanbe.[48] (The fact that the regime tolerates criminality among its friends also lends support to the argument that its corruption charges against Abdullojonov, whatever their basis in fact, are politically motivated.) In 1996, the ruling faction organized its own political party, the People's Democratic Party, which drew its membership largely from Kulobis. Its head was Abdumajid Dostiev, a veteran apparatchik, Popular Front member, deputy speaker of the legislature and later deputy chairman of the

National Reconciliation Commission established in 1997 as part of the peace process. He is another of the suspected powers behind Rahmonov. Given the number of officials from southern Tajikistan who have joined the party, it appears to be an important channel for the ruling faction's patron–client relations. In what may be another indication of the extent to which Rahmonov is a less-than-dominant figure within his own faction, he did not join the party until a year after its founding. He only became its head, succeeding Dostiev, and, tellingly, nominated by Dostiev, several months later, a move presumed to be preparation for his campaign for re-election in 1999.[49]

The fortunes of the Communist Party have declined since 1993.[50] Although it claimed to have the largest membership of any party in post-Soviet Tajikistan and did well in the 1995 legislative elections, various members broke away to join new parties associated with prominent individuals, themselves CP veterans, like Abdullojonov, Dostiev, or Safarali Kenjaev (a former speaker of Tajikistan's legislature, active hard-liner, and, until his assassination in 1999 by persons unknown, head of the Socialist Party). During 1998, the Rahmonov regime increased its pressure on the CP and confiscated its property by the end of the year.[51] In the elections for the lower house of the legislature in February 2000, the CP came in a distant second to the PDP.[52]

No matter how adroit or ruthless the Rahmonov regime has been in securing its hold on power, it would not have survived without the considerable assistance it received from Russia. Russia's motives for its actions in Tajikistan lie outside the scope of this discussion, but the extent of its involvement must be noted. Russian troops intervened in the civil war late in 1992 to help the Popular Front win. (Uzbekistan also intervened at that time but subsequently had a falling out with Tajikistan's government when it became clear that factions from Leninobod would no longer dominate.) Russian military involvement continued after the Popular Front took Dushanbe, in fights with Opposition bands holding out in the mountainous east of the country or staging cross-border raids from northern Afghanistan. The Russian 201st Motorized Rifle Division (which had been based in Tajikistan as part of the then-Soviet military since before the civil war) and the border troops (which devolved from Soviet control to Russian) were the main instruments of this military intervention. Russians have occupied important positions in the leadership of independent Tajikistan. The minister of defense from 1992 to 1995 was a Russian, Aleksandr Shishliannikov, a career officer who grew up in Uzbekistan and had no prior experience in Tajikistan. Although the minister of defense is no longer a Russian, a score of Russians serve as advisors in that ministry. In 1998, Tajikistan and Russia made an agreement for Russia to provide Rahmonov with a military advisor. The deputy minister of internal affairs, starting in 1993, was another Russian, Genadii Blinov. The deputy head of Tajikistan's successor to the KGB was yet another Russian who took office in early 1993, Anatolii Kuptsov. A Russian long-time resident of Tajikistan, Iu. F. Ponosov, became one of the deputy prime ministers in 1996. People on the staff of Russia's embassy in Dushanbe advised the Rahmonov regime. Russia virtually subsidized the Dushanbe government for several

years after 1992. It supported Rahmonov's candidacy for president in the 1994 election. During the peace negotiations, which ran from 1994 to 1997, Russia sided with the Rahmonov regime against the Opposition and encouraged the regime not to compromise, despite its occasional frustration with Dushanbe. That stance has been tempered somewhat since 1996, when the ascent of the Taliban in Afghanistan gave Russia new worries, but Moscow still tended to lay all the blame for problems in implementing the peace agreement on the Opposition.[53] Throughout his years in power, Rahmonov has made a point of expressing his good will and gratitude toward Russia. He has also played on Russian fears of Islamic extremism and threats from Afghanistan to argue for Russia's active involvement in Tajikistan's affairs and support for his regime.[54]

Tajikistan's presidency was intended to be strong, with broad powers concentrated in that office. That is not surprising, given that the views of the people who formed that system owed much to the Soviet tradition of rule by the leader and the privileged few. In actuality, presidential rule in independent Tajikistan has proven to be ineffectual despite being authoritarian. The president and those around him have just enough power to bully some of their critics and exclude them from power, but not enough to end all challenges from the Opposition or the ruling faction's own former allies. The presidential faction has a narrow base of support. The president himself is far from a charismatic leader. His circle's pursuit of its own interests has been so aggressively selfish that it could not accommodate the selfishness of allied cliques, which have since turned against it. Outside its own circle, the presidency has support from those who fear that greater instability and threats to their interests would come from a change in who governs and, perhaps, from those who associate Rahmonov with ending the civil war. Yet the regime's inability to deal with the country's economic problems weighs against its popularity. The economic problems would have been difficult for any regime to handle, given the legacy of the Soviet era, the destruction caused by the civil war, and the low prices on world markets for Tajikistan's main products, cotton and aluminum. That said, the current regime has been particularly maladroit in economic matters. One indication of the government's sheer administrative ineffectiveness is the fact that the World Bank extended $6.7 million in credit to Tajikistan in 1999 to pay for government reforms, training for officials, civil service development, removing regulatory obstacles to the establishment of private businesses, and related needs.[55] Although a few people have done well, most ordinary Tajikistanis now live at or near the subsistence level and social services are woefully deficient. The 1997 peace accord promised 30 percent of the ministerial and other high offices, and eventually lower-level offices as well, to members of the Opposition. In return for this, Opposition leaders have at times voiced their support for Rahmonov and at others criticized delays in implementing the power-sharing arrangement. It remains to be seen whether the regime allows these new members of the government a real voice in decision making or will restrict them to token authority. Even if the regime and the Opposition do become reconciled, that still leaves many Leninobodis, Uzbeks, and others disgruntled that their factions have not

been included in the power sharing. Until a full range of political parties can operate legally and unhindered in Tajikistan, until there are free and fair elections for the legislature and the presidency, and until those in power use that power to improve the standard of living for most of the inhabitants, neither Imomali Rahmonov nor his rivals will be able to claim political legitimacy.

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7 Turkmenistan

Saparmurat Niyazov's inglorious isolation

Sally N. Cummings and Michael Ochs

Introduction

Turkmen never had an independent state until 1991. Turkmen tribes occupied all of today's Turkmenistan by the eighteenth century, but not in a united state. The territory inhabited by tribes that came to be known as Turkmen was frequently invaded throughout the centuries.

Russians were the region's most recent invaders, and Turkmen tribes mounted the fiercest resistance in Central Asia to their advance. Not until 1881, at the battle of Goek Tepe, did Russia take eastern Turkmenistan, which finalized Russia's conquest of all of Central Asia. By 1920, the territory fell to the Red Army, and in 1924 Soviet authorities created the Turkmenistan Soviet Socialist Republic. Soviet rule entailed the collectivization of agriculture in the 1920s and the gradual settling of the still largely nomadic Turkmen. Under Soviet central planning, the economy came to feature cotton, gas and oil, most of which was exported to other republics for processing. Turkmenistan's demographic composition was also transformed by the influx of non-Turkmen. Bordering Iran, Turkmenistan was one of the most isolated and least developed Soviet republics. During Mikhail Gorbachev's *perestroika*, Turkmenistan had a reputation as one of the most conservative and backward Soviet republics. In August 1990, Turkmenistan declared sovereignty, but like the other heads of the Central Asian Communist Parties, the leadership in Ashgabat did not seek or welcome the breakup of the Soviet Union.[1]

Since gaining independence, Turkmenistan has become the most repressive of all post-Soviet regimes and is ranked as one of the most repressive in the world. The extremes do not end here. Saparmurat Niyazov has ruled gas-rich Turkmenistan since 1985, which makes him the longest serving post-Soviet leader. The object of Eurasia's most developed personality cult, Niyazov is the only post-Soviet ruler to have invented a new title for himself: Turkmenbashi ('Leader of All Turkmen'). Turkmenistan is the only post-communist state to have preserved a one-party system, in which only the Democratic Party (the renamed Communist Party) is registered. No opposition is tolerated. Virtually all opposition activists have emigrated, have ceased activity, or are in jail. Niyazov's regime has also blatantly repressed non-traditional religions.

This chapter sets out to do three things. First it characterizes Niyazov's rule, drawing on H.E. Chehabi and Juan J. Linz's categorization of Niyazov's regime as an example of emerging sultanism. Second, the chapter explains how and why Niyazov's regime has both emerged and endured. Third, the chapter analyzes how, if at all, the regime may change.

Characterizing Niyazov's presidentialism: a sultanistic regime?

The majority of sultanistic regimes, which have been relatively few in number, have been found in the Caribbean and Central America, and almost all have now disappeared. Nevertheless, Chehabi and Linz stipulate that both Belarus' president Alexander Lukashenko and Turkmenistan's Saparmurad Niyazov appear to be emerging as sultans.[2] With reference to Chehabi and Linz's work, Anatol Lieven remarks that 'a number of the regimes now ruling former Soviet republics have taken on "sultanistic" patterns identified in this book' and cites Central Asia and Azerbaijan as particularly relevant examples.[3]

The term sultanism was originally coined by Max Weber to describe 'an extreme form of patrimonialism' involving 'an administration and a military force which are purely personal instruments of the master'.[4] In Linz and Chehabi's definition,

> The ideal type of a contemporary sultanistic regime is based on personal rulership, but loyalty to the ruler is motivated not by his embodying or articulating an ideology, nor by a unique personal mission, nor by any charismatic qualities, but by a mixture of fear and rewards to his collaborators. The binding norms and relations of bureaucratic administration are constantly subverted by arbitrary personal decisions of the ruler.[5]

Thus, a regime in which some sultanistic tendencies are present, but where the circle of clients is wider and the discretion of the ruler less extensive, should be called neopatrimonial. Sultanistic regimes differ from totalitarian regimes by virtue of the fact that they lack a genuine ideology, the private and public roles of sultans are unashamedly fused, society is controlled very unevenly by the sultan and there are no single party or movements to link ruler and ruled. Sultanistic regimes also differ from authoritarian ones principally in that authoritarian regimes are more institutionalized and enjoy a limited political and social pluralism.

Chehabi and Linz argue that sultanism masks the distinction between regime and state, and is characterized by corruption, venality and patrimonialism and supported by a subservient army and a single party; encourages an elaborate cult of personality around the leader and a tendency toward dynasticism; may rest initially on the support of clearly identifiable groups but eventually relies on fear and rewards; in the absence of an ideological basis, it often governs with a constitutional façade; and is consolidated by a 'kleptocratic' relationship between state and market.[6]

These conceptual categories can be applied to Turkmenistan with partial success. On the one hand, they convey the regime's extreme development of the ruler's discretion and also the decay or incomplete development of modern legal–rational authority. However, various specific features of Turkmenistan's reality do not comfortably fit into the model. One fundamental distinction between sultanistic regimes and Turkmenistan immediately comes to mind: the absence of a significant, sizeable and autonomous military. With the partial exception of Uzbekistan, it is not possible to speak of any meaningful standing armies in Central Asia. Instead, the region's internal security services assume this role, and in Turkmenistan, these are firmly in Niyazov's hands.

At the same time, regime and state are all but blurred in Turkmenistan. Their fusion is made possible by the president, who stands at the epicentre of the political system. State power and national legitimacy are fused in his person. The president concentrates in his hands both key institutions of modern governance and supposedly Turkmen traditional institutions. Niyazov has wholly subsumed all institutions, including the Democratic Party, which effectively exists only in name. State functionaries are individual servants to Niyazov, beholden to him in a complex patronage network. The bureaucratic elite is periodically reshuffled, even if dismissed officials in Turkmenistan suffer no other serious consequences and may well be rehired in some other capacity. With officials beholden to the president, the Turkmen state is fundamentally weak. In this respect, Niyazov's rule may be just as helpfully be dubbed patrimonial as sultanistic.

Niyazov's subsuming of the roles of state and regime, his unyielding conviction that he alone can and may decide how the state is run and how individuals live, and his intolerance of any form of dissent carry decisive consequences for the political system. Turkmenistan disallows political pluralism, religious diversity or alternative expression. There are no opposition parties and no registered opposition non-governmental organizations in public life. Most registered 'independent candidates' are either members of the incumbent Parliament, civil servants, employees of state enterprises or affiliated to one of the state-sponsored organizations. The media have long not enjoyed the partial freedoms they acquired in the *glasnost* period and are today even duller and more bereft of information than in the Soviet era. Opposition activists, for their part, are in exile, jail or otherwise removed from the political arena. Some are dead, such as Khoshali Garaev. He died in September 1999 under extremely suspicious circumstances in prison. Though a Russian citizen, Turkmen authorities had arrested him in Uzbekistan in 1994 and brought him to Ashgabat, where they subsequently sentenced him and Mukhammetkuli Aimuradov to twelve and fifteen years, respectively, in a maximum security labour camp for allegedly plotting to overthrow the government and kill Niyazov. On 26 February 2000 the largest showing to date of the Turkmen opposition, almost all of whom live in Europe, met in Stockholm and urged the Turkmen government to release political prisoners, among them the leader of the banned opposition party Agzybirlik, Nuberdy Nurmamedov and religious activist, Khodzha Ahmed Orazgylych.[7] In January 2001, Niyazov released Nurmamedov and Pirkuly Tanrykuliev,

after they had repented on television. Niyazov's record indicates his determination to keep real or potential opposition activists from acting on their beliefs or from 'infecting' others; once they incur his wrath or incite his suspicion, they must, at least, publicly recant their dissent and praise him to avoid imprisonment or worse. The message is not lost on the general population.

Personalism, buttressed by an extensive cult of personality, is a second essential attribute of sultanism. In Turkmenistan the president defines and characterizes the Turkmen polity. His portraits are ubiquitous, along with the slogan 'Khalq, Vatan, Turkmenbashy' (People, Nation, Turkmenbashy). Cities, towns and enterprises have been renamed after him and his image adorns the currency (many portraits were replaced to depict the sudden change of his hair colour after a heart operation). Generally, sultanistic rulers like to be seen as great thinkers and fill many bound volumes, and Niyazov seems headed down this road, though with a unique twist. After initially emphasizing the construction of monumental palaces and an orphanage, or the more recent construction of a gold statue of himself, his megalomania has intensified over time. So has the personality cult, with Turkmen media occasionally referring to him in practically divine terms. To complete the picture of sage, statesman and lawgiver, Niyazov has promised to introduce the 'Rukhname', which is supposed to become the bible for the virtual new religion he seeks to introduce. The guide will answer 'all of life's issues', said Murad Karryev, a member of the council on Religious Affairs who described it as a 'secular book with sayings from the Koran'.[8] A work in progress, a first version of the Rukhname was distributed to officials at the 18 February 2001 session of the Halq Maslakhaty. The fortunate recipients are expected to spread the word – supposedly, the public's comments will be considered before the final version is released, perhaps in late 2001. Though Niyazov told the session of the Halq Maslakhaty (People's Council) that the Rukhname is not in the same category as the Koran, he reportedly contacted embassies of Islamic countries and asked how they would react if he called himself a prophet. Even if this particular report is inaccurate, Niyazov's campaign of self-glorification has clearly reached new heights, inspiring one journalist to call him 'arguably the world's most deluded autocrat'.[9]

According to Chehabi and Linz, sultanism owes its uniqueness to the particular combination of personalism and dynasticism, since rulers eventually trust only their kith and kin. Dynasticism, however, is not an option for Niyazov. His grown son reportedly lives in Vienna and plays no known role in Turkmen politics. Moreover, according to official biographies, Saparmurad Niyazov was born in 1940, in a worker's family. His family was killed in the Second World War, and his mother and the rest of his family died during the 1948 earthquake in Ashgabat. He grew up in an orphanage and subsequently lived with distant relatives. As an orphan, Saparmurad Niyazov lacks the family and clan connections that still play a powerful role in Turkmenistan's society and politics.

Very often sultanistic rulers come to power with the support of clearly recognizable groups – sometimes even through fair elections – but then come to lose that support and rely on only a small trusted circle. In Niyazov's case rather than

enjoying the support of any specific constituency, it is most likely nobody thought of any alternative to him in the beginning, as he was already in power and had been since 1985. As he consolidated power and demonstrated his determination, sometimes brutally, to remain in office, there was even less challenge. Niyazov's support base seems to consist primarily of powerful bureaucrats, especially Committee for State Security Chairman General Mukhammed Nazarov. To retain their backing, Niyazov makes and rotates appointments with a careful eye to officials' tribal affiliation, making sure to spread the wealth around. Though many believe him to be a Tekke, he eschews open discussion of his tribal affiliation, emphasizing that he is President of all Turkmen.

How far Niyazov is legitimate – i.e. is genuinely supported by the public – and has a social base, the third feature of sultanism, is difficult to judge. It would be impossible to conduct a serious public opinion poll in repressive Turkmenistan; the answers of frightened respondents would be unreliable, whether positive or negative. In the absence of any reliable gauge, it would be best not to venture beyond speculation. In any case, by ruling a police state, Niyazov has made questions of legitimacy irrelevant so far, and as long as the populace is too fearful of the consequences, there is no reason to expect any public expression of disapproval of him or to take at face value lavish, orchestrated praise for the sovereign.

Often sultanistic leaders gain their legitimacy abroad through the support of powerful superpower neighbours. Niyazov has gone to the other extreme by pursuing 'positive' or 'permanent' neutrality, which the United Nations recognized in 1995. Niyazov apparently views that diplomatic success and his decision the same year to join the Non-Aligned Movement a means of shielding himself from external influence, notably Russia. Under his rule, Turkmenistan is notorious for avoiding regional entanglements and staying away from initiatives fielded by his Central Asian neighbours, with whom, reportedly, his personal relations are very poor. In fact, Niyazov seems determined to emphasize his isolation not only from neighbours. One of the hallmarks of his rule is indifference to international public opinion, especially criticism of his flouting of OSCE commitments on democratization and human rights. Niyazov often does not respond to letters protesting his repressiveness and appeals for clemency, including even from Members of the US Congress.

True, to gain legitimacy abroad, traditional sultanistic regimes often govern with constitutions inherited from a previous democratic regime or introduced to give a veneer of democracy to their rule. To a degree, Niyazov has engaged in this: he did establish Western institutions, such as a parliament, a government, a court system, supplementing them with allegedly traditional Turkmen institutions, like the Halq Maslakhaty and the Council of Elders. However, having created these façade institutions, Niyazov largely ignores them and, even very early on, did not shrink from demonstrating to Western leaders his resolve to run the show on his own, even if it caused embarrassment. For example, during Secretary of State James Baker's visit in 1992, opposition party head Nurmamedov was unabashedly held under house arrest. Despite Turkmenistan's

accession to the OSCE, the regime does not observe Helsinki Final Act commitments on political pluralism, freedom of speech, assembly or other fundamental human rights. Instead, Niyazov has gone out of his way to emphasize how Western institutions are simply not appropriate to his country. He has argued, on general terms, that the 'East is the East' and applying Western models 'is fraught with serious cataclysms'. At the July 1992 CSCE Summit Meeting in Helsinki, Niyazov said 'for us, human rights are inextricably linked with national interests', a formulation that emphasizes the needs of the state over the inalienability of human rights.

Sultanistic rulers also often turn to plebiscites to prove their democratic legitimacy. Indeed, Niyazov was the first to introduce the practice of referenda in post-independent Central Asia. Elected president of the Turkmen SSR in 1990 with 98 per cent of the vote in an unopposed race, Niyazov had his term extended in national referenda in 1992 and again in 1994; in the latter case, a purported majority of 99 per cent of the voters approved an extension of Niyazov's term of some office until 2003. These referenda – which were subsequently copied by other Central Asian leaders – exemplified Niyazov's exploitation and perversion of democratic values and practices. Why he even bothered to hold referenda is not very clear. Most likely, it was simply impossible, even inconceivable, for him to accept the prospect of anyone running against him.

In sum, Saparmurat Niyazov was willing to create enough of the institutions of modern statehood to be accepted by the international community and the OSCE as a member in good standing. But he was never willing to give any of those institutions any autonomous authority or power. They serve his interests and whims, reflecting neither themselves as institutions nor the people they theoretically represent.

The sultanistic economy is subject to considerable government interference, but this interference is not to develop and restructure the state but rather to extract resources. This monopoly ownership is possible in state-owned industries whose revenues can be partly or wholly appropriated by rulers. Oil and gas play this potential role in Turkmenistan, where production has been monopolized by Niyazov. This stifles private enterprise and ensures that the president, as the initial beneficiary of any foreign investment, will be responsible for any further distribution of wealth. However, while Turkmenistan has interested foreign investors, many have concluded it is too difficult to do business with the erratic Niyazov. Moreover, the country's distance from bodies of water and trade routes makes energy resources less easily exploitable, complicating this fifth and final criterion of a sultanistic regime.

In short, while successfully conveying the excesses, personalism and arbitrariness of Niyazov's presidency, sultanism falls short in a number of important respects as a classification of his regime: the absence of an army; the unavailability of dynasticism; the absence of international norms or actors to determine or buttress his rule; and the inability to exploit resources easily and cheaply.

Regime genesis and maintenance

Classifying a regime is one exercise; explaining how presidentialism came to take the form it did in Turkmenistan and how it has been maintained is quite another.

Chehabi and Linz pinpoint institutional, personality and macrostructural factors behind sultanistic regime emergence and maintenance. Institutionally, sultanistic regimes tend to emerge from the breakdown of clientelist democracy or the erosion of nondemocratic regimes. And a particular type of domineering personality is associated with sultanism. The authors' list of macrostructural features is the most exhaustive and includes: a modernized transportation and communications system; isolation of the rural masses; smaller, less complex (not bound by tradition) population; easily exploitable resources whose production is in the hands of one or only a few enterprises; substantial doses of foreign aid; interest by foreign actors in 'order' which maintains the existing regime; and, persistent crises of sovereignty.

Without doubt, with the collapse of Soviet communism, patrimonial administration replaced bureaucratic administration in Turkmenistan, but this happened elsewhere in the post-Soviet space and does not explain the excesses that have sadly become the hallmark of Niyazov's regime. Those excesses are primarily explained by the personality of the leader himself, but that borders on tautology. Finally, Chehabi and Linz's macrostructural explanations for regime genesis are particularly problematic when applied to Turkmenistan. Turkmenistan does not have a modernized transportation or communications system. Its population, though relatively small (about five million) remains bound by tradition, where tribal differences are significant and complex. Even if Niyazov has monopolized the production of oil and gas in his country, he cannot rely on revenue because of the transportation problems mentioned above. Foreign support and aid have traditionally acted as midwives to sultanistic regimes; by contrast Niyazov's refusal to pay lip service to the international community and his increasing isolation mean that he has not attracted any significant foreign aid. And Turkmenistan, like the four other states of Central Asia, has not been prone to the external crises of sovereignty characteristic of sultanistic regimes, largely because the erstwhile colonial power, Russia, has been unable and unwilling to reassert its influence in Central Asia.

The notion that a regime's emergence and maintenance are explained by agency and structure is useful, but these concepts need to be unpacked. What emerges is a very different content to both when applied to Turkmenistan. In explaining Niyazov's regime, agency relates to Niyazov's own personality, which cannot be dissociated from the regime and has been partly responsible for its maintenance; it relates also to two specific policies that appear to have been remarkably successful: the peculiar mix of ideologies created by Niyazov and his policy of 'positive neutrality'. In terms of structure, the legacy of the past (both pre- and Soviet) and the new institutional architecture are particularly important.

To take these structural factors first, since the other four Central Asian states were also Soviet, features peculiar to the Turkmen and to Soviet-era Turkmenistan may partly account for the extremes and durability of Niyazov. Turkmenistan was one of the poorest and most isolated republics in the Soviet era. The country was isolated not only from events and trends in the outside world but even from the more open, liberal trends of the former Soviet Union. Thus, Turkmenistan was relatively not involved in the historic developments of the late 1980s under Gorbachev. The leadership has consistently allowed only the merest modicum of public engagement in politics and there have been no mobilized masses. In sum, as the longest serving leader in the post-Soviet space and in the absence of domestic or external pressures, Niyazov has been better able to entrench his rule.

Geopolitics also accounts for the type of regime that has emerged under Niyazov. As highlighted by Ochs in 1995,

> [the regime's] apparent 'macro' game plan has been to hold down on any domestic political liberalization or economic reform while working to increase revenues from the sale of natural resources on the world market. This income in turn would allow the government to continue large-scale subsidization of basic goods and services provided to a small population.[10]

And later as echoed by Olivier Roy: 'Turkmenistan's only guarantee of independence is by selling its natural gas. . . . Turkmenistan is in the process of becoming a "gas republic" in which the power of some major international companies and that of a megalomaniac president sit comfortably side-by-side.'[11] More recently, and as part of a recent shift of Turkmenistani foreign policy from the West, Niyazov has found new allies in authoritarian China and Iran, which similarly deplore Western practice of intervention on human rights matters.

Severe repression has also prevented the emergence of any alternative economic or political networks. Lacking an obvious heir, Niyazov has apparently created a virtual presidency for life. On 28 December 1999, delegates to the Halq Maslakhaty, ostensibly the most authoritative representative body in the country but actually a rubber stamp for Niyazov, gave him the right to remain in power permanently. The legislature, whose fifty members are, for all intents and purposes, the president's nominees, passed unanimously a constitutional law which extends Niyazov's presidential term indefinitely. This extension of his presidential term seemed effectively to have ended the right of Turkmenistan's citizens to elect a president.[12] Niyazov's virtual coronation as 'president for life' flagrantly flouts OSCE commitments, which call for regular and competitive elections. No other Central Asian state has gone this far (Nazarbaev introduced a far weaker variant in 2000). The OSCE and the United States government, in parallel statements, deplored the decision in Ashgabat as violating the right of citizens in any country to elect their leaders in regular, free and fair elections.[13] Commented Aaron Rhodes, Executive Director of the International Helsinki Federation of Human Rights (IHF):

> Without choice, the population is in captivity. But international reaction to this outrageous development has been muted or non-existent. . . . If the OSCE and United Nations do not take the appropriate actions, the principle of democracy will be eroded and other leaders may follow the example of Turkmenistan.[14]

Typically, and in line with Niyazov's indifference to international public opinion, he ignored the criticism.[15]

Furthermore, a curious blend of resurgent Islam and secular dictatorship with his cult of personality buttress Niyazov's rule. Most Turkmen are Sunni Muslim, but like other nomadic peoples in the former Soviet Union, such as the Kazakhs and Kyrgyz, who accepted Islam relatively late, Turkmen are not primarily defined by religion, especially after seventy years of Soviet rule and enforced atheism. Like other Central Asian leaders, Niyazov has sought to gain recognition by playing up to Islam when necessary but in reality the record has been one of intensifying repression and control, rather than accommodation. Tribalism, rather than nationhood, has defined the Turkmen. To offer the most lenient interpretation, Turkmenistan's cult of personality could be interpreted as a type of nation-building device that strives to overcome the traditional tribal divisions and provides the ordinary citizen with a new, albeit not overt, ideology. This patriotism is perhaps best symbolized by this oath: 'Turkmenistan, beloved fatherland, land of my birth, in my thoughts and in my heart, I am always with you. For the slightest harm I cause you, may my hand fall off; for the slightest calumny about you, may my tongue become powerless; at the moment of treason to your holy banner, may my breath be cut off.' Pupils are expected to recite this oath in school.

Turkmenistan's policy of 'positive neutrality' has further helped to maintain Niyazov in power. The country's demographics and physical isolation allowed Ashgabat to distance itself from uncomfortable alliances at an early stage of independence. Turkmenistan's relatively small ethnic Russian population provides Niyazov more freedom of manouevre *vis-à-vis* Moscow than Kyrgyzstan's Akaev and Kazakhstan's Nazarbaev enjoy. Meanwhile, apparently convinced that the Western desire for Turkmenistan's natural gas and oil – which the United States also does not want transported through Iran – protects him from any serious consequences from Washington, Niyazov simply ignores the numerous condemnations of his suppression of any viewpoint other than his own. He justifies his harsh domestic policies as a temporary necessity, contending that his programme of long-term democratization accords with Turkmen national traditions and is primarily intended to maintain Turkmenistan's stability during a difficult transition period which will last until 2010. Moreover, carefully 'neutral' Turkmenistan does not threaten its neighbours or attempt to export its political system and has therefore not been targeted by the international community as a pariah state. Niyazov's often bizarre actions are treated with contemptuous amusement rather than concern. At the same time, by consistently pursuing repression and displaying indifference to international criticism, Niyazov has successfully 'lowered the bar' of expectations.

Ultimately, though Turkmenistan shares a Soviet legacy with other former republics and many other historical and structural similarities with other Central Asian states, the single most important differential lies in the personality of its president, who – more than any other factor – has shaped the regime. In the context of Soviet successor states, Turkmenistan represents a case of consciously arrested development (compare Belarus), in which a single individual has come to dominate totally the visible political process. President Niyazov has no apparent rival or credible opposition, having permitted no individual, group or institution to emerge, much less to challenge his authority.

In sum, the characteristics and genesis of Niyazov's regime explain how he has successfully maintained his position and status. Through a careful balancing act of cooptation of elites mainly through the powers of patronage, the absence of any persuasive pressure from a frightened society for liberalization or protest, the promised benefits of natural wealth, and the conservatism of the international system, Niyazov's regime seems set to endure.

Regime change?

Democratic elections, the accepted Western mechanism for governmental change, have so far been rejected in Turkmenistan. Not even minimal conditions for democratic elections, including basic freedom of expression, freedom of association, political pluralism and free media exist. Niyazov has not demonstrated any inclination to loosen his absolute control of Turkmen society and his occasional promises of liberalization remain unfulfilled. In May 2000 preparations were reportedly underway to develop the legal basis of the Presidential programme for socio-economic development to 2010. According to Niyazov's ten-year democratization plan, Turkmenistan was moving gradually towards a multiparty system, with increased powers to be granted to the Majilis at the end of 1999, and the creation of opposition political parties to be allowed by 2008 or 2009. But soon thereafter Niyazov reiterated that Turkmenistan should not experiment with democracy until society was ready for it. In sum, there is no evidence that Niyazov is prepared to tolerate any sort of political opposition or even the expression of other viewpoints.

Still, at a session of the Halq Maslakhaty on 18 February 2001 – which was also National Flag Day and Niyazov's birthday – Niyazov announced that he would not be a candidate in the next presidential election, which he said would take place in 2010. He explained the long delay by the need to introduce the practice of holding elections at all levels, from heads of production units to local and regional officials. Niyazov said new political parties could arise in Turkmenistan as long they were grassroots efforts. He also declared that nobody over seventy could hold the office of president. Though some diplomatic circles privately welcomed Niyazov's proclaimed pledge not to rule for life, his announcement did not necessarily signal responsiveness to international disapprobation, much less a renewed commitment to democratization. In fact, by scheduling a presidential election only in 2010, he officially cancelled the election that had

been slated for 2002. Considering his age, Niyazov's declared intention to remain in office another ten years is tantamount to a lifetime presidency, and of course, assuming he is still alive and in power in 2010, Niyazov could change his mind about not running. Indeed, he could change his mind at any point before 2010.

Still, he may not remain in office that long. There may be growing instability from three main directions: Niyazov's gamble on oil and gas revenues has not materialized and is problematic; the careful domestic and foreign balancing act appears to be slipping; and, the president himself has become more and more deluded and erratic in his actions.

Stability has been in part predicated on a revamped 'goulash communism', in turn dependent on gas revenues to fuel economic growth. In general, however, society's patience is not infinite, and without serious structural reform of the economy, discontent is likely to grow. Channels for voicing discontent are now all closed, heightening the risks of radicalism and reducing the prospects for gradual change. Structural reform in Turkmenistan relies on gas exports, but it appears Niyazov's negotiations with the West have foundered, with capitals and companies despairing of his extravagant demands. In February 2000 Niyazov accused US envoy John Wolf of setting out political conditions for the trans-Caspian export pipeline, which the United States has long supported. Mutual irritation has soured relations and heightened Niyazov's suspicions of outsiders. The Council for the Supervision of Foreigners, run jointly by the National Security Committee, Ministry of Internal Affairs, and Foreign Ministry, as of 2000 has been monitoring the movement of foreign nationals arriving or temporarily residing in Turkmenistan.[16] Foreign human rights activists and journalists have been barred from Turkmenistan, or deported, making independent monitoring extremely difficult.[17] This is part of a more general crackdown on the internal movement of foreigners; almost a third of the country's territory is already off limits to foreigners and the Council will be used to control the activities of foreign diplomats and tourists. Furthermore, on 28 May 2000 the government revoked the licences of private Internet providers, creating a de facto state monopoly. At the same time, Niyazov is also isolating former allies by demanding entry visas from CIS citizens. The recent rapprochement of Turkmenistan with China should be taken as a sign not of diplomatic entrepreneurship but of Ashgabat's isolation among post-Soviet states. The apparent failure of talks with the West about transporting gas has again left Niyazov dependent on Moscow. But reliance on Russia offers, first of all, lower than world market prices and compromises Niyazov's doctrine of 'positive neutrality'. Russia also has little interest in letting Turkmenistan develop an independent pipeline grid or become a competing supplier of natural gas, and Moscow has in the past cut Ashgabat's access to pipelines leading to Europe.

Consequently, Niyazov is increasingly isolationist, isolated and short of options, which threatens the careful balance he had been pursuing. Exacerbating the situation farther is his intensified emphasis on 'Turkmenization'. On 28 July 2000 Foreign Minister Boris Shikhmuradov, who had overseen Ashgabat's

diplomacy, was removed. The official reason for Shikhmuradov's departure, as usual, was 'health considerations' but perhaps he was not sufficiently 'Turkmen'.[18] With the ethnic Russian share of the population having dropped, according to official figures, from 15 to 2 per cent in 1999,[19] the maintenance of interethnic harmony is no longer a priority or even an excuse. Niyazov has stepped up Turkmenization of society, including the introduction of a stringent language law which could alienate both non-Turkmen and Turkmen alike. Neighbouring Uzbekistan may also be less patient and more of a threat than Russia: the Uzbek minority is situated mostly along the Uzbek–Turkmen border and Uzbekistan's government subsidizes the education of Turkmenistan's Uzbeks in the Uzbek language. In sum, Niyazov's campaign of intensified Turkmenization could lead to ethnically-based discontent.

Meanwhile, and perhaps not coincidentally, the regime is becoming more irrational and repressive. In a particularly bizarre move, Niyazov recently closed down the country's only opera and ballet theatre, declaring these art forms alien to Turkmen. He said a new national theatre and six radio and television channels would disseminate culture with a 'national flavour'.

Though the decisions were decried, or ridiculed as the latest folly of an all-powerful, if unbalanced ruler, the closures were of a piece with Niyazov's general approach to education, which he has curtailed, while reshaping curricula to reflect glorious Turkmen accomplishments. In July 2000 Niyazov said that the curricula at the country's higher educational establishments should be cleared of subjects unrelated to a given student's chosen profession. He added that a check of applicants' family background three generations back is important for revealing the worthiest higher education applicants, and that the priority should go to Turkmen-speaking candidates.[20] The same month Niyazov gave his education officials thirty days to prove that they have a good command of the Turkmen language or to resign.[21] The Academy of Sciences has been effectively gutted and the same fate is planned for the National Library.

At the same time, an interesting recent development is the regime's intensified assault on freedom of religion, which, like all other basic rights, is severely restricted. Only Sunni Islam and Russian Orthodoxy are registered in Turkmenistan. Turkmen law requires religious communities to have 500 members in order to be registered. When religious groups attempt to register, persecution intensifies. Far more striking, a Hari Krishna temple and the Seventh Day Adventist Church in Ashgabat were demolished in 1999, making Turkmenistan the only country in the former Soviet Union where places of worship have been destroyed by the authorities. Niyazov's campaign against non-traditional religions, which officials usually explain by the need to combat possible threats of Islamic fundamentalism, indicates his determination to extend his hands-on control into all spheres of societal and personal life, as well as his apparent desire to supplant established religions, and religion in general, as the source of authority, wisdom and spirituality.

The reasons behind this renewed crackdown are unclear. Niyazov may be 'simply responding to the lack of enthusiasm for his new status. His state-

appointed lifetime rule generated no response from other CIS presidents.'[22] Intensified repression may also highlight the regime's growing sense of vulnerability. According to Wayne Merry, a Senior Fellow at the Atlantic Council in Washington, DC, recent moves to restrict Internet access in Turkmenistan appear consistent with Niyazov's efforts to 'isolate the country from the modern world and prevent what he would see as subversive influences, particularly from the West, and particularly from manifestations of globalization from penetrating Turkmenistan'.[23]

The likely effects are destabilizing but whether and how such possible instability might lead to regime change is difficult to predict. Any regime in which power and authority are vested in one individual, as opposed to established institutions, is inherently unstable. There is no vice-presidential post or an obvious successor to a president who has required treatment in Western hospitals for heart problems. Article 60 of the constitution specifies that the president can be relieved of his office due to illness, if two-thirds of the Halq Maslakhaty's members so decide. Article 61 stipulates that the chairman of the Mejilis becomes acting president and elections must take place within two months. What would actually happen, though, is debatable.

Richard Snyder usefully outlines some pathways from sultanism, highlighting the importance of taking both structure and agency into account.[24] The particular constellation of regime hard-liners, regime soft-liners, the moderate opposition and the maximalist opposition is crucial. In Turkmenistan, regime hard-liners dominate, regime soft-liners are weak, a moderate opposition is almost non-existent and the maximalist opposition is exiled, resident in Russia and Europe. Structural factors are also important; the particular relationships of ruler–state, ruler–society, and foreign–domestic all have an impact. Given its lack of links with civil society and its narrow social base, the regime's capacity for counter-mobilization is severely limited, which encourages maximalist tendencies in the opposition. Even if a social revolution cannot therefore be ruled out in Turkmenistan, the weakness of societal forces *vis-à-vis* the regime and its intelligence and law enforcement agencies render change 'from below' improbable.

In the likely absence of a social revolution and international intervention, change is most likely to emerge from within the incumbent elite. The degree of military autonomy is irrelevant in the Turkmenistani context and this reduces the scope for regime soft-liners (usually in the form of the military) to emerge. The more inclusive Niyazov's network, the harder it will be for any nascent elite opposition to carve out independent space. A December 2000 article in *Nezavismaya Gazeta* contends that Niyazov's regime 'is the weakest link in Central Asia' because it has 'neither successors nor supporters'. It proceeds to offer four political forces that might offer a candidate in 2010: a member of the Turkmen technocrats, portrayed as the wealthiest of the Turkmen leaders and closely allied with the gas industry; an ethnic Turkish candidate, since Turks allegedly are the most powerful and best organised economic grouping in Turkmenistan; a pro-Russian candidate who enjoys Moscow's support; and a pro-Taliban–Pakistani candidate, backed by the United States.[25] While it is difficult to judge

the accuracy of this analysis, it is reasonable to assume that Moscow, Ankara and Teheran have an interest in who comes to power in post-Niyazov Turkmenistan, and their efforts may well work at cross purposes, increasing the likelihood of intra-elite conflict. Washington also has an interest in who comes to power, but appears, at least at present, to have fewer prospects for influencing the transition.

Barring the most unlikely scenario – a policy of democratization implemented by an increasingly megalomaniacal Niyazov – or a popular uprising, Niyazov may well remain in power indefinitely, with only his departure from the scene ushering in a period of change, which could well be chaotic and swift. If for whatever reason (foreign pressure, attempt to defuse mounting opposition by providing a safety valve), Niyazov decides to liberalize his regime, the chances that this might lead to democracy are limited. The experience of other regimes which have promised liberalization is that during the crisis following the initial promise the regime loses whatever vestiges of legitimacy it may have retained with at least some citizens. Given the entrenchment of the present system, chances are that any successor regime will continue to display strong clientelist tendencies.

Conclusions

In an analysis of Niyazov's regime – its classification, genesis, maintenance and decay – the concept of sultanistic regimes is a useful starting point of comparison. It is primarily helpful because sultanism conveys the personalism, excesses and arbitrariness that have characterized the first ten years of independent Turkmenistan. But the regime differs too markedly from traditional sultanistic regimes for the comparison to shed substantially more light on regime genesis and maintenance. Those differences stem primarily from the particular imprint Niyazov has made on his political system. Of all the Central Asian presidents, Niyazov has had the most enduring and far-reaching effect on state, regime and population. This chapter has shown how a peculiar confluence of factors has enabled personality to play such an important role in Turkmenistan.

The chapter has also highlighted how post-1999 marks a new phase in the consolidation of Niyazov's power, characterized by Niyazov's even more erratic and megalomaniacal behaviour in the backdrop of growing isolationism. Niyazov might, like many authoritarian leaders, stay in office well beyond the point where he can effectively exercise power. The Central Asian regimes, and that of Turkmenistan in particular, demonstrate how the higher density of international exchanges, the emergence of a transnational civil society, and the end of the Cold War, are still insufficient to counter the emergence of nondemocratic regimes.

Notes

1 For background analysis on Turkmenistan's political development, see M. Ochs, 'Turkmenistan: the Quest for Stability and Control', in K. Dawisha and B. Parrott (eds), *Conflict, Cleavage and Change in Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997, pp. 312–59.
2 H.E. Chehabi and J.J. Linz, *Sultanistic Regimes*, Baltimore and London, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998.
3 A. Lieven, 'Post-Communist Sultans on the Caspian', 12 January 2001, online at: http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/culture/articles/eav110800.shtml.
4 M. Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretative Sociology*, G. Roth and C. Wittich (eds), Berkeley, University of California Press, 1978, pp. 231–2.
5 Chehabi and Linz, *Sultanistic Regimes*, p. 7.
6 Ibid., Chapter One.
7 For a useful assessment of political pluralism, see the Report of the ODIHR Needs Assessment Mission, 8–11 November 1999.
8 *RFE/RL Turkmen Service*, 26 February 2000.
9 G. Whittel, 'Autocrat Leads Asian State Into Cultural Desert', *RFE/RL Turkmen Report*, 6 April 2001.
10 Ochs, 'Turkmenistan: the Quest for Stability and Control', p. 314.
11 O. Roy, *The New Central Asia: The Creation of Nations*, London, I.B. Tauris, 2000, p. 194. A senior US businessman reportedly said in January 2000 that a project to lay a natural gas export pipeline from Turkmenistan across the Caspian Sea offers economic advantages too big to be dropped because of Turkmen restrictions on democracy.
12 *Reuters News Agency*, 3 April 2000.
13 *Agence France Press*, 30 December 1999.
14 Statement of the OSCE Troika on Turkmenistan, 27 January 2000.
15 Niyazov was not indifferent to domestic censure; after Nuberdy Nurmamedov, in a Radio Liberty interview, blasted the decision to make him president for life, he was promptly arrested.
16 N. Mitrokhin, 'Turkmenistan's Open Surveillance of Foreigners Caps Policy of Isolation', *RFE/RL Turkmen Report*, 15 July 2000.
17 Harassment and imprisonment of religious believers, *Amnesty International*, EUR 61/07/00, March 2000.
18 In another interpretation, Shikhmuradov had become too much a threat to Niyazov and had failed to play Niyazov's game of manipulating the tribal structure to maintain power.
19 L.A. Uzzell, 'Turkmenistan Continues Harsh Measures Against Protestants', *Keston News Service*, 14 July 2000.
20 *RFE/RL Turkmen Report*, 16–22 July 2000. See also, M. Rasner, 'Learning to Love the Turkmenbashi', online at: http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav091900.shtml, 19 September 2000. Selection on the basis of genealogy is also being applied to cadres.
21 *The Jamestown Monitor*, 26 July 2000.
22 B. Pannier, *RFE/RL Turkmen Service*, 11 January 2000.
23 B. Hogan, 'Internet Access Issue Underscores Clash of Economic and Political Priorities in Turkmenistan', http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/business/articles/eav101800.shtml, 18 October 2000.
24 R. Snyder, 'Paths out of Sultanistic Regimes', in Chehabi and Linz (eds), pp. 49–84.
25 *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 15 December 2000.

8 Uzbekistan

The Karimov presidency – Amir Timur revisited

Roger D. Kangas

On 16 February 1999, a series of bombs exploded in the heart of the government district in downtown Tashkent, Uzbekistan. Ostensibly, the target was President Islam Karimov, who was on his way to a late-morning meeting. His motorcade had not arrived when the first of six bombs went off and a running gun-battle between suspected bombers and militia ensued. Explosions took place in other parts of the city, resulting in a casualty count of at least fifteen dead and over 100 injured. It was the worst case of domestic violence in Uzbekistan since the Soviet-era riots in Fergana almost nine years earlier. Within a month, several hundred suspects were in custody, and by spring's end, over a score of suspects had been tried and convicted. All during this time, the Uzbek and international media has focused on how and why 'Islamic fundamentalists' would want to remove the president and destabilize the country.[1] After all, the official view in the country was that the current president is, in fact, synonymous with stability in Uzbekistan.

While still addressing the political fallout from the February bombings, the Karimov government was beset with another threat – the militant Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU). During the summer of 1999, the IMU engaged in hit-and-run battles with the Kyrgyz army in the Batken region of that country. The Uzbek government claimed that the insurgents were actually on their way to Uzbekistan. The summer of 2000 saw the IMU active in several parts of Central Asia, including the Surhandarya region of Uzbekistan. Although militarily defeated by the end of the summer, the IMU has not gone away, and it is believed that the insurgency will continue for some time to come.[2] The effect that these events have had on Uzbek politics is predictable: President Karimov firmly believes that he must lead with more 'authority' and is cracking down even harder on possible opponents within and without. In November 2000, opposition figures abroad, including Erk leader Muhammed Solih, were tried *in abstentia* and sentenced to death.

In spite of these problems, there is evidence to suggest that Karimov remains a fairly popular, or at least acceptable, leader for the citizens of Uzbekistan. The January 2000 election, which saw Karimov garner over 95 percent of the vote and ensure that he remains in office until at least 2005, underscores this belief.[3] Even if one concludes that these numbers are fabricated, public opinion polls

and surveys conducted by Western organizations also indicate that, perhaps as a result of his 'fight against terrorism', Islam Karimov is viewed as a strong and needed leader.[4] At least in the short run, the Uzbek president has been successful in asserting his power to remain in office. While it is easy to dismiss the Karimov presidential style as somewhat crude or 'thuggish', the reality is that he uses both heavy-handed and deft means to remain in power and ultimately increase his authority. The 'benevolent authoritarianism' of Islam Karimov is not an accident, and reflects the historical legacy of power relations in Uzbekistan.

Dual legacies and the Uzbek leadership style

It is difficult to assess current Uzbek politics without a clear understanding of both the pre-Soviet and Soviet era legacies. Much has been written on the pre-Soviet past, with particular emphasis placed on the absolute authority of the Emirs and Khans of Central Asia.[5] A traditional pattern of elite–mass relations and forms of political leadership typified this era. A regional leader relied on a network of subalterns and bureaucratic agencies to carry out his commands. Failure to do so would result in immediate removal, or sometimes death. Gregory Gleason notes that this can be summed up as a combination of 'fealty and loyalty', concepts that have been carried to the present day.[6] In short, the relationship between the ruler and the ruled was one of detached subservience. The ruler would receive taxes, conscripts, and ownership of the land. In return, the ruled could expect some protection, although in the process, they had to supply the troops required. The population as a whole remained apolitical and this ability to 'know one's place' greatly assisted in making the overall political system work.

Challengers to the Emir or Khan generally came from within the power elite – often rival family members – and any change in authority would, at best, affect the ruling class members' standing. This is not to say that popular revolts did not take place. However, if one were to review the litany of rulers and dynasties in the region currently called Uzbekistan, nearly every transition was the result of inter-elite struggle or external conquest.[7] The Russian and Soviet eras in Uzbekistan are cases in point. When the Russians established the Governor-Generalship of Turkestan, and defined the borders of the protectorates of Bukhara and Khiva, the population witnessed little change in their daily lives. They remained outside of the purview of political activity. Indeed, this apathy was most distressing to the leaders of the various attempted rebellions in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Indigenous reformers – educated individuals from the Bukharan elite, in particular – felt stymied by the distrustful nature of the populous when pushing to gain support for their programs.[8]

When Uzbekistan was finally established as a *Soviet* political entity in 1924–5, it became apparent that the political life of the republic would remain controlled from above. Headed by Faizulla Khojaev, a Jadidist who was Prime Minister of the Uzbek SSR from 1924 to 1937, indigenous reformers tried to

assert their own agendas within the Soviet framework. While there was a certain amount of tolerance in the 1920s, by the early 1930s the situation changed. The CPSU leadership viewed 'nationalist' actions by the local elite as unacceptable and eliminated them during the Great Purge. From that point onward, political leadership in Uzbekistan remained in place at the behest of the central authorities in Moscow.

However, below the surface, it was apparent that the traditional forms of power relations of the pre-Russian era did not vanish. The surviving Uzbek elite adapted to their new Soviet situation while simultaneously recognizing the importance of traditional loyalties.[9] This was accentuated by the fact that the Soviet leaders after Stalin – particularly Leonid Brezhnev – adopted a policy of passive control in the region. As long as the Uzbek leadership provided the state with raw materials at sufficient quotas, what took place *within* the republic was left more or less to the control of the Uzbek leadership. Representative of this approach was First Secretary of the Uzbek Communist Party, Sharaf Rashidov, who was in power from the late 1950s until his death in 1983. While dutifully adhering to commands from Moscow, Rashidov was able to remove rivals from key positions in the 1960s, replacing them with colleagues from his Samarkand-Jizzakh region.[10] This ability to satisfy the needs of the local elite while remaining loyal to Moscow paralleled the 'fealty/loyalty' framework of the pre-Soviet era.

This leadership style was challenged in the mid-1980s when the Moscow government brought charges of embezzlement and falsification of cotton harvest records against hundreds of top Uzbek officials – from party bosses to regional *kolkhoz* and *sovkhoz* leaders. Known as the 'Uzbek Affair', or the 'Cotton Scandal', the investigations that ensued in the mid 1980s caused a high level of turnover throughout the Uzbek ranks, before Islam Karimov took over in June 1989. Further wracking the leadership was a series of low-level ethnic riots that took place in the Fergana Valley which left hundreds dead.[11] Pulled between efforts to reform the system and the internal disintegration of the Soviet Union, the Uzbek elite in the late 1980s appeared to be in a situation where they did not have complete control of their own republic.

One might surmise that, at this time of *perestroika* and *glasnost* in Gorbachev's Soviet Union, the Uzbek population might assert themselves more vigorously. However, as a result of the inherent apolitical nature of the population, Uzbekistan did not experience the same pattern of political awakening that took place in other regions of the Soviet Union such as the Baltic States or in the Ukraine. Mass demonstrations that did take place in 1988 and 1989 were almost exclusively for language rights – specifically, the desire to increase the usage and official status of the Uzbek language. Beyond this, it was difficult for anti-government forces to muster support for their causes.[12] Thus, when independence was declared in August 1991, following the failed coup attempt against Mikhail Gorbachev, the decision was really an elite-based one. Islam Karimov, now with the title of President of Uzbekistan, was able to declare independence and successfully detach himself from his own Soviet legacy.

If one were to gauge the possibility of 'future leadership', Islam Karimov would probably not be high on anyone's list in the 1960s and 1970s – during his formative years. Biographies written in recent years would say otherwise, and note his drive, honesty, and integrity – character traits that would 'naturally' lead him to his current position.[13] However, the truth is perhaps a bit less dramatic. Islam Karimov worked his way into the Soviet system, earning his party card while moving his way up a technocratic career path. In 1960, at the age of twenty-two, he became an engineer for the Tashkent Aviation Factory, where he worked for the next six years. During this time, he specialized in accounting and finance, and in 1966, moved over to the Uzbek SSR office of the State Planning Agency (Gosplan). He remained with Gosplan for seventeen years, becoming a key leader of the republic agency in the early 1980s.

It is at this stage that national politics would play a large part in his career advancement. The 'Great Cotton Scandal' was just breaking, and a number of key officials in Uzbekistan were being accused and arrested.[14] The sudden death of First Secretary Rashidov in October 1983 obliged the Soviet government to select a new leader. Imanjon Usmankhojaev was selected almost immediately, as he was seen as a person not well connected to Rashidov. However, within three years, he would be ousted from office due to his 'ineffectiveness' in cleaning up political corruption in Uzbekistan.[15] Replacing him was Rafiq Nishanov, another person who was soon to be tainted.

It was during these changes in office that Islam Karimov was able to move up to a position of political importance. In 1983, he was named Minister of Finance and in early 1986, was appointed head of Uzbekistan's branch of Gosplan and Deputy Head of State. It seemed that he had won the favor of Usmankhojaev. With the First Secretary's removal from office, things changed. Nishanov, it seems, did not favor Karimov and had him removed from office and sent to become the Oblast Secretary of Kashkadaria. A series of crises prompted the removal of Rafiq Nishanov that once again forced the national CPSU to look for a viable party leader in Uzbekistan. In this case, it was Nishanov's inability to address interethnic tensions in the Fergana Valley. Karimov himself recollects that it was at this time that the national government looked more closely at his own candidacy. Without much explanation in the local press, on 23 July 1989, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan elected Islam Karimov First Secretary.[16] Some have noted that Karimov was a 'compromise candidate' – one who could be manipulated by the more powerful, inside elite.[17] Ostensibly headed by Shukhrullo Mirsaidov of Tashkent and Ismail Jurabekov of Samarkand, this clan-clique believed that Karimov could be controlled from within the apparatus, outside of the purview of Moscow's gaze. These individuals felt that the government in Moscow would not approve of *their* candidacies, as they were seen as part of the old apparatus. The veracity of this story aside, it is clear that Karimov came to his position without fanfare and, it appears, without much internal support.

Karimov's ability to maintain power at this stage is nothing short of remarkable. The riots that caused the removal of Nishanov did not disappear. Indeed, in

1990 and 1991, ethnic riots in the Fergana Valley, particularly in the Kyrgyz SSR's Osh Oblast, threatened stability in the region. However, Karimov was able to use these events to affect political changes at the Oblast level and direct the blame accordingly. In addition, because the central government was preoccupied with its own political drama, the likelihood that Gorbachev was paying strict attention to events in Uzbekistan is doubtful.[18] Karimov was savvy enough to consolidate power quickly and take advantage of the ever-changing conditions around him. The creation of substantive presidential offices in 1990 throughout the other Union Republics prompted Karimov to do likewise in March 1990. The happenstance of the 1991 August coup allowed Karimov the opportunity to claim independence for Uzbekistan.[19] However, Karimov did not have complete control of the family-clan network within the elite strata and was forced to move beyond relying on traditional measures of authority to maintain his political legitimacy.

Given this history, it is not surprising that the nature of the post-communist transition would be both 'slow' and 'top-down'. Recognizing the potential for chaos if reforms took place too quickly, President Karimov has repeatedly stressed the need to 'build a new house before destroying the old one'.[20] But then, given the general acceptance of incrementalism and the complete lack of a tradition of public involvement in high politics, it makes sense that decisions would also be made from above. At the same time, he has presented himself to the public as a fatherly figure. Despite what some outside observers suggest, he is truly a popular leader in the country and would, in most instances, win free and fair elections were they to be held.[21]

Political power and formal institutions

At the time of independence, the Uzbek government spent considerable effort explaining the development of formal political institutions as a way of proving that the country's system was well on its way to becoming a democracy. Much in the tradition of the Soviet Union, though, the institutional structures, and their powers as outlined in official documents and decrees, were more important on paper than in fact. Most importantly, the office of the president in Uzbekistan has a fairly broad range of powers. These include the right to initiate and approve of legislation, establish government policies, appoint and dismiss top national and regional officials, and set the electoral schedule. Karimov has been more than willing to exercise these procedural powers and has successfully created an environment wherein other offices often wait for presidential decrees to be announced before acting.[22]

Appointive powers are also critical to the president. The Cabinet is constantly reshuffled, thus rotating out potential rivals and successors before they become too popular. In the early 1990s, Karimov was able to successfully engineer the ouster of his Vice President and rival, Shukrullo Mirsaidov, before the latter was able to mount a credible campaign against the president. The current appointed Prime Minister, Utkir Sultanov, heads the Cabinet, which is considered to be the

highest executive council. However, he must answer to the President and can be dismissed by him at any time.

In contrast, the non-presidential components of government are subject to executive decisions, in spite of a complex and exhaustive listing of powers 'on paper'. For example, the Oliy Majlis (Supreme Council or Soviet) is considered by the constitution to be the highest legislative body in Uzbekistan. Originally comprised of 500 members (during the Soviet era), the Majlis was reduced to 250 for the December 1994 and December 1999 elections. It is charged with initiating and passing legislation, as well as executing policies through committee work. To date, it takes the lead from the president. Since independence the Oliy Majlis has only once voted against President Karimov – and that was to consider the extension of his presidential term part of his first, not second term against his 'objections', thus affording him the right to successfully run for re-election in 2000.[23] In the past, President Karimov himself exhorted legislators to act more assertively and to not be a 'rubber-stamp body, lacking all political initiative'. That said, the Oliy Majlis has not changed its ways. Following the pre-Soviet model of political interaction, the lower ranks of the elite exhibit a concern for 'consensual' politics. For example, in discussing economic reform, it is key that the Cabinet of Ministers and Oliy Majlis appear in agreement on critical government policies – especially those supported by the president. Clearly, there are times when disagreements exist, but these must be ironed out ahead of time and behind the scenes.[24]

The same can be said for the regional and local governments. Regional governments are also detailed in Uzbek law, but remain stunted as far as actual power. Uzbekistan is divided into twelve *wiloyatlar* (regions), the Karakalpak Autonomous Republic, and one city (Tashkent) – each possessing a *hokim* (governor) and Majlis (council). The president selects the former and the latter are elected in regional races. In the past several years, *hokims* have been removed from office for economic inefficiency, the ability to carry out presidential reforms, and for other 'shortcomings'. On several occasions, these figures have been subjected to sessions of public criticism whereat representatives from the center (Karimov included) denounce the disgraced *hokim* in front of an audience, with the discussion reprinted in the local newspapers.[25]

There is also a local level of government called the *mahalla*, or 'neighborhood'.[26] These regional organizations are often selected among more traditional leaders (village elders, or *aqsaqallar*). In recent years, Karimov has put greater emphasis on this level of government to address issues of 'immediate social need'. The rationale is that if the public can have their needs met at the local level, the national apparatus can devote its attention to more pressing regional issues.[27]

That these various political institutions lack real independent power does not negate their importance. These bodies offer the president means by which he can gauge the status of public opinion and potential problems in his country. The *mahallas*, for example, are now responsible for being his 'eyes and ears' on the issue of Islamic extremism. *Aqsaqal* leaders are required to note activities

of 'suspicious individuals' and can often act as extensions of the central government. The negative impact, though, is that these organizations are not developing as independent, or self-sustaining entities; relying on presidential authority will continue to weaken their own capacity as legitimate political institutions.

The same can be said for the constitution of Uzbekistan. To date, there has been only one constitution for the country: the Oliy Majlis approved of President Karimov's constitution on 8 December 1992.[28] Foreign consultants, most notably the American Bar Association (in its CEELI project), raised questions regarding the ambiguous nature of the constitution that have yet to be fully addressed by the government. Interestingly, when the constitution was first drafted, foreign consultants were allowed to comment on it. However, they were given the draft a mere week before the 8 December passage and their comments were never incorporated into the final draft.[29] To date, the Uzbek government has not viewed such concerns with alarm.

The 'legitimacy factor' represented in the constitution is also seen in the arena of competitive politics. Beginning with the December 1991 presidential election, the Karimov administration has touted the 'free and fair electoral process' as a justification for Uzbekistan's continuing movement towards democracy. It is through political parties that citizens are encouraged to participate in the national political process. According to the Law on Political Parties, parties can legally register as long as they are not religious-based and/or bent on violent means of expression.

As a result, a number of government-approved political parties have emerged. The Halq Demokratik Partiiasi (HDP, or 'People's Democratic Party') is the direct successor to the Communist Party of Uzbekistan (renamed as such in August 1991). The HDP supported Karimov in 1991 and continues to support him to this day. Although the President formally announced his 'retirement' as head of the party in 1996, he remains the de facto guide of the organization.[30] The other parties include the Watan Tarakiati Partiiasi (WTP, or 'Progress of the Fatherland Party'), the Milli Tiklanish Demokratik Partiiasi (MTDP, or 'National Revival Democratic Party'), the Adolat Demokratik Partiiasi (or simply Adolat, meaning 'Justice'), and Fidoqlar ('Self-Sacrificers'). Each of these parties tends to be Tashkent-based and fairly weak. Fidoqlar, for example, prides itself on being a party for the 'youth'. The MTDP considers itself to be the party of professionals and educators, much like the historical Jadidist movement. In 2000, the WTP officially dissolved itself, with members joining the MTDP. In various discussions, party officials note that the role of parties is not to be combative, but rather to represent various interests in the legislature so as to effectively assist the policies of the president. Thus, a choice exists for the voters – but it is a controlled one.

If the notion of formal politics is seen as illusory, then must power reside in the informal networks suggested earlier? The short, but almost impossible to substantiate answer to this question is 'yes'. As suggested earlier, the historical experience of Uzbek leaders has been one of patron–client networks operating at

different levels of government. During the pre-Soviet era, such ties were often familial or clan-related, limited to a select few in the political hierarchy. Early in the Soviet period, the Bukhara and Samarkand groups were able to dominate the political scene. As those elites rose through the ranks to the Union Republic level, subordinates from those regions followed upward. Indeed, until 1929, the capital city of the Uzbek SSR was Samarkand, further cementing that region's dominance in Uzbek politics. With the shift to Tashkent, and the concurrent purge of the first generation of the party elite in the 1930s, other regions in Uzbekistan were able to assert themselves, particularly the elite from Tashkent and the Fergana Valley.

Islam Karimov, while a product of the Samarkand region of Uzbekistan, has had to rely on more than just his regional loyalists to maintain power. *Intra*-regional competition is now a factor in elite placement, as the president attempts to balance out these competing interests. As he can appoint regional *hokims*, judges, and ministers, it is in these offices that one finds the reward system in play. Anecdotal evidence suggests that Karimov has a penchant for placing loyal subordinates in strategic regions – Samarkand, the *wiloyatlar* in the Fergana Valley, and Tashkent – as well as key ministries.[31] However, he regularly rotates their tenures, perhaps to give them a variety of experiences, or perhaps so they do not build up their own retinues. Suffice it to say that these informal relationships are realized and acted out through formal channels, particularly those offices that are appointed by the president.

Political power and informal relations in Uzbekistan

Given the weakness of the formal political system, it is not surprising that the informal channels of power, as developed through the pre-Soviet and Soviet eras, remain paramount in the continuation of presidential authority. These include both clan relations, as well as regional bases of power. Moving away from formal, tangible political structures requires an understanding on the part of the analyst that much of the discussion will remain in the area of generalities and speculation. However, by being able to work within the clan network, regional divisions, and even bases outside of these traditional networks, Karimov has fended off all challenges and has positioned himself to continue his presidency for the foreseeable future.

In recent years, studies on the clan and family relations within Uzbekistan offer support for claims regarding these power relations.[32] It is through clan relations, as well as personal connections, that the president can forge and maintain power. It is important to note that these ties are not necessarily synonymous with patron–client relationships which have their own dynamics. Whereas patron–client relations suggest that positioning is based on a perception of gain, family–clan relations do not have a cost–benefit analysis built in. Competition, as such, is often *between* clans – competition within would signify a weakness of the structure itself. In the *mahallalar* and *qishloqlar* (village, or rural settlement), as well in the urban settings, familial ties remain important. Within each

tribal or group setting, it is possible to distinguish a rank-ordering of clans, although exact 'placements' can change over time.[33]

Important in this discussion is the fact that clans in Uzbekistan tend to be regionally-based. From the Fergana Valley and Tashkent in the north and east, to the Samarkand-Bukhara center, to the south and Far West (the latter including Karakalpakstan), Uzbekistan is more appropriately viewed as a collection of competing regions.[34] The prominent clans of Rashidov, Komilov, and Jurabekov, as well as President Karimov, come from the Samarkand region.[35] The Tashkent region is represented by former Vice President Mirsaidov and his supporters, and the Fergana Valley is represented by the Azimov family, among others. All of these have held, or currently hold, top cabinet offices. The elite in each region tends to forge their own alliances and it is not uncommon for the top elite of each region to be in competition with the others for scarce resources and political power. Thus, for example, when observers note that the leaders from the Samarkand region of Uzbekistan dominate the Karimov administration, it is also a statement suggesting that other regions are somehow being excluded, or limited. The value that regional competition plays in the national political game is difficult to understand: and this has been the case since the formation of the Soviet Union and the early attempts by the Bukhara elite to dominate politics.[36]

Regional appointments in Uzbekistan are of great political significance as such sinecures can be either rewards or punishments for those close to the president. For example, in early 1992, Karimov made an almost clean sweep of the regional offices, putting his most trusted allies in the key Fergana districts and in Bukhara and Samarkand. As recently as November 1998, the *Hokim* of Samarkand was removed and replaced with a trusted ally from the center – whose job it is now to clean up that *wiloyat*.[37] Within each *wiloyat*, there are pressures to perform: fulfill quotas to the center, encourage foreign investment, and address the problem of land reform in a way that will not be controversial or upsetting.[38] These offices have become prime targets for appointments of favored supporters. In the current administration, Karimov has officials representing the Fergana Valley, Tashkent, and, of course, his home region of Samarkand. In the latter, even a 'sometimes opponent', Ismail Jurabekov cannot be excluded entirely, as he remains a powerful individual. As long as regional bosses have voice in the political process of Uzbekistan, then Karimov runs the risk of being challenged by one of these groupings.[39]

A problem with this type of system is that there does not exist a complete sense of trust and punishment/reward. While one can generalize about clan and regional loyalty, this is not the sole factor by which the president makes his appointments and decisions. It remains only an environment within which the president can act. By placing it in the specific public context of formal institutions, President Karimov can channel the effectiveness of these groupings and, if necessary, thwart efforts by them to unseat him. This is important to stress, for Karimov himself does not come from a major clan/family and he has had to use other means by which to build up his support.

This is where the value of creating public political institutions became so

important to Karimov's success. His appeal to 'legal–rational' means of government allowed Karimov a chance to parallel his authority to that of other 'rightful leaders' in the international community. In addition, Karimov resorted to addressing the population directly, thus bypassing the traditional networks. This includes the incorporation of Islam into political ceremony and the development of a national agenda, minus the 'nationalism'. It was relatively easy to replace Marxist quotations with ones from the Koran, and the impact has been noticeable.[40] By presenting himself as a Muslim, Karimov could identify with the new 'freedom of religious expression' afforded to Uzbek citizens. In this effort, Karimov is trying to appeal to a broader 'national character'.

From the rather straightforward calls to be proud of Uzbek citizenship to the more complicated developments of Uzbek military traditions and the re-evaluation of Uzbek history, the government is charged with creating a nation from the top down. His predecessors of the Communist era were able only to tap into the legacy of the Soviet Union and their ties to Moscow for public support. In the post-Soviet era, Islam Karimov has been able to rely on the leadership of ancient historical figures to symbolize his own power. Most important, of course, are the many references to Amir Timur, the fourteenth-century Central Asian leader who based his empire out of Samarkand.[41] Considered one of the first great Uzbeks, Amir Timur has been the subject of numerous historical works and is central to even the tourist trade in Uzbekistan.[42] Essential in these discussions is how a strong leader – Timur – is able to overcome external threats and internal stability and create a state wherein culture, economy, and society can thrive. When combined with actual political, procedural, and appointive powers, the symbolic importance of employing historical continuity has only enhanced the Karimov presidency.

Karimov himself writes that 'our duty is to replenish our national spiritual treasury with new names and works by our great ancestors – philosophers, scholars, and creators of beauty'.[43] By presenting himself as a caretaker and cultivator of a new, national history, Karimov is able to attain a wider support base among the population of the country. Karimov is establishing himself as an essential figure in modern Uzbekistan by making Uzbeks proud of their collective past. In all of this, there is a surprising lack of a 'cult of personality' that one might expect in such a situation.[44] Indeed, his repeated statements of *not* having one are important in the eyes of the public. However, Karimov *is* noted as a strong leader who can manage the complex array of issues confronting the new state of Uzbekistan.

One such area is the developing role of local authorities, who are theoretically in charge of the economic, social, and cultural developments in their regions. Administratively, each component develops and implements their own budget, may impose local fees and taxes, and provides the local legal and police protection systems. The executive and government administrations are guided by the laws 'On State Authority in the Regions' and 'On Bodies of Citizens' Self-Management'.[45] In practice, however, most executive authorities operate as extensions of the central government to implement centrally-directed policies.

Since passing these laws, the Oliy Majlis and, more importantly, the presidential apparatus have continued to dominate the budgetary process and policy initiatives. That the president still holds sway over office appointments also indicates that he is not willing to concede too much power to the regions, even if there is a structural mechanism for doing so.

In addition to the 'legal–rational' controls, there is also a form of political control that is very much a successor to the Soviet era. To put it bluntly, the Soviet experience is alive and well among local bureaucrats. The practice of simply following orders and not acting until decrees from above are announced seems to hold true for a number of local leaders and civil servants alike. Ironically, while President Karimov has spoken on the issue of local-level reform and the need for new personnel in these posts, he has simultaneously created a climate of discouraging innovation at these lower levels. With political power vested in the center, it might seem superfluous to even consider the opinions from the regions. After all, decisions are made in Tashkent – more specifically, in the presidential apparatus – and the regions have little room to maneuver beyond the parameters set for them. Regional leaders complain that Tashkent is 'out of touch' with their realities and the central leadership sets quotas without the means by which the regions can fulfill them.[46] The issue that remains unanswered is *how* the government can forge effective ties to the regions without giving up its own power.

In addressing the regions, the government has used investment opportunities to solidify support. The decisions to open up a Samsung plant in Samarkand and the Daewoo automotive plant in the Andijan wiloyat in the mid 1990s are examples of this.[47] One region that has been important in solidifying Karimov's power base is the Jizzakh wiloyat. As the center of power for the Rashidov family, Jizzakh has been the beneficiary of various construction programs and other economic opportunities. As will be seen, though, this process of 'terminal spoils' is a way of addressing the informal networks in the regions.

In this setting, has Karimov been challenged? In the Fall of 1991, under the guidance of his first (and only) Vice President, Shukhrullo Mirsaidov, over 200 members of the Oliy Majlis signed a petition demanding Karimov's resignation. Stating that he was a vestige of the Communist era, it would be in Uzbekistan's best interest for him to retire. Suffice it to say, not only did Karimov not resign, he forced out Mirsaidov through a series of 're-appointments' and marginalized those who signed the petition. By the time the Oliy Majlis was reduced to 250 members in 1994, few of these individuals were left in office. Anecdotal evidence also supports the belief that Ismail Jurabekov has periodically asserted himself, but his removal from the position of Minister of Emergency Measures in November 1998 indicates that his efforts at that time were thwarted. He has since taken up another position in the government, although a much less visible one.

Outside challenges to Karimov's authority have also failed. In the early 1990s, the secular opposition groups Erk and Birlik attempted to field candidates in elections and gain public support for their causes. From 1992 to 1994, the

government continued to force them to re-register, change office buildings, and generally make it difficult for them to function. By 1994, both had been forced underground and are currently not registered organizations in the country. Indeed, most opposition figures of that era are now in exile – either in the United States, Turkey, or Western Europe. The official media is now directing attention to other 'external threats', such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and Hezb-I Tahrir. A full discussion of these organizations is outside the purview of this chapter, but suffice it to say that since 1996, these groups – often labeled 'Wahhabist' – are the target of the president's efforts to eradicate 'threats' to state stability. There is speculation that these groups are more 'fiction' than 'fact' and could, quite possibly, be fronts for clan organizations opposed to Karimov. Whether disgruntled clan leaders or security ministry officials are also part of a larger conspiracy is also a conclusion that cannot be substantiated, but it makes for usable fodder for the president himself. Karimov can effectively use 'conspiracy theories' to root out enemies and maintain power.[48]

Characterizing power in Uzbekistan

If one accepts the view that formal political institutions in Uzbekistan are weak, and that the basis and nature of presidential power is inextricably tied to the informal structures within the society, what can be said about the state, in general? Specifically, does the state possess power in and of itself, or is it a vehicle through which individual actors can exercise their own authority? Given the strength of traditional power relations, it is not surprising that the state, more often than not, equals the president. In this respect, the 'state' in Uzbekistan can be characterized as 'benignly autocratic', as long as the population remains apolitical. Informal interviews and more formal public opinion polls suggest that, while there is some concern over limited freedoms, the overall situation is good. There is a sense that a 'strong leader' is needed.[49] The Uzbek press and government officials repeatedly note that the 'political mentality' of the citizenry are different from that of Westerners, thus one should not expect Uzbeks to openly embrace Western liberalism. Concepts such as individual liberty and market capitalism are, the argument goes, anathema to the Uzbek tradition.[50] Whether these views are true or not is, to a great extent, irrelevant to the current Uzbek administration, and if the population is not exposed to alternative views, the likelihood of a change 'from below' appears unlikely, at present.[51]

The president, because of his control over the economic, political, and social levers of power, sees it in his best interest to ensure that this is so. Today, Islam Karimov appears to have adopted the terminology and images presented in modern democratic theory. Formal institutions in Uzbekistan are described by using the 'proper terms'. Constitutional authority, electoral procedures, and rule of law are all liberally applied by government officials to underscore what is taking place in the country. Consequently, some analysts have concluded that Karimov is nothing more than an 'elected dictator', or perhaps an 'elected authoritarian figure'.[52] This was exemplified by the events surrounding the

January 2000 presidential election. The Central Election Commission publicized the procedural openness of the candidate registration and campaign season. In addition, Karimov's opponent, Abdulaziz Jalalov, played the role of the dutiful opponent, continually praising the president and even calling himself a 'loyal supporter' of the president, not an 'opponent', or even an 'alternative'.[53]

With this imagery, what can be said of the state structure itself? There is still a sense that the bureaucracy is not responsive to the needs of the citizenry and that any problems have to be addressed outside of the normal channels. Of the official channels, only the presidential apparatus commands respect and, it appears, the *mahallalar* appear to be the primary legal structures through which problems are settled. The 'state', as such, exists in the person of President Islam Karimov. Despite his own misgivings or declarations that he is *not* a supreme leader, his actions have de facto resulted in this evolution. Such descriptions of the state as either a source or arena of power should concern Uzbek officials. Unlike even its Communist predecessor, the modern Uzbek state appears to be more fancy than fact. For the state to function, it must ultimately rely on the informal networks.

Terminal spoils?

Islam Karimov has not been able to maintain support from a necessary percentage of regional elite without granting some access to potential economic and position benefits in the country. A case in point was the privatization effort that took place in the early 1990s. At the various auctions, the former managerial elite was able to 'buy' the factories and properties that they had managed during the Soviet period. Key ministries, such as the oil and gas sector, cotton exports, and mining, have all remained in the hands of top officials. Indeed, Karimov himself has a controlling share of the main Uzbek trading house responsible for shipments to foreign countries.[54] Financial requirements for these economic officials, as well as government appointees who oversee the taxation system vary, with hundreds of thousands of dollars being spent on acquiring the positions.

During the 1990s, the Uzbek government decreed that privatization would take place through a 'step-by-step' procedure. Criticized by international financial institutions for going too slowly, the privatization campaign was arguably one of the reasons why Uzbekistan's economy did not contract as much as those of the other successors states. Percentage estimates range from 13 to 25 percent decline through the 1990s, as compared to declines of over 50 percent for other states, including the much-touted Kyrgyz republic, which was the recipient of massive infusions of international assistance.[55] However, as the Uzbek economy privatized – starting with housing and cottage industries and leading to mid-sized industrial plants – the problems faced in other countries appeared. Regional bosses who had acquired personal wealth during the Soviet era were able to transform it into outright ownership of the businesses they 'managed' prior to independence.

More importantly, Karimov declared that certain strategic industries would remain in government hands. These include the cotton export sector, gold and mining, and the petroleum industry. In all these cases, the government has been able to work with international companies to form joint ventures whereby the government receives a substantial percentage of the earnings. Such ownership, ultimately in the hands of President Karimov, ensures his personal wealth. Equally important is the fact that this structure prevents others from fully profiting from any economic investment in the country without the president receiving a share. The danger present in this configuration is that as the economy continues to lurch forward at uneven rates, economic failure could be linked to a general failure of the government.

Endemic in this arrangement is the fact that the relations are inherently based on corrupt practices. The claim can be made that Islam Karimov is an 'honest' political leader and his record of removing corrupt officials on a regular basis speaks for itself. On the issue of corruption in Uzbekistan, very little research has been conducted as to its extent.[56] Anecdotal evidence suggests that citizens of Uzbekistan face episodes of corruption on a fairly regular basis. Civil servants, for example, are often portrayed as individuals who require bribes or 'fees' for licenses and permits. Services and access to higher education are also subjects of 'bribery stories'.

The Uzbek legal code and subsequent legislation outline penalties for corrupt practices. However, the enforcement of such policies is seen as weak to non-existent. Where it is enforced is usually for political reasons. In 1994, a well-publicized anticorruption campaign was waged against former Vice President Shukhrullo Mirsaidov. In that year, he was charged with embezzlement and misuse of public funds. After a short trial, he was found guilty and required to pay a fine in excess of US$1 million. The fact that he comes from a powerful clan suggests that, although harassed at times, he is 'untouchable' at present. If the political climate was to change, so might his status – but at present, he remains a force in Uzbek politics by the fact that he still exists. Does this mean that there is a terminal spoils system? Without real empirical evidence, relying on conjecture and anecdotes is the best that can be done. As already noted, it is clear that Karimov has elevated officials from his own region and from ministries familiar to him. However, such behavior is common to almost all political systems in the world, including liberal democracies. In a state that is fundamentally weak, such a problem can be politically dangerous.

Political succession in Uzbekistan

A critical question facing Uzbekistan's political *system* is presidential succession. As long as President Karimov is in charge, there is stability. The question remains as to what happens when he leaves. According to the constitution, there is a mechanism for succession already in place. The Speaker of the Parliament would take over, and elections would be held within sixty days. As this is not a

tested procedure, there is no evidence to indicate how the process would actually take place.

At present, there is no open discussion of political succession in Uzbekistan. President Karimov is relatively young (early 60s), seemingly fit, and in command of the political system. Likewise, there is no real sense that this is an 'inevitable' question that must be addressed. The press coverage of leadership politics remains almost exclusively focused on Karimov's personal activities. Any discussion of other political actors remains, at present, only in conjunction with Karimov's decrees or decisions. Barring an accident, Karimov has a good ten to twenty years as president, at least.

Does this mean that Uzbekistan could potentially fall into chaos without a strong leader following Karimov? Perhaps, although there is no indication that this has to happen. Examples abound of strong leaders passing on without a resultant collapse of a regime. In the early 1950s, Soviet studies experts debated what would happen to the Soviet Union once Stalin died. In the developing world, cases such as Anwar Sadat following Nassar also show that regime change *can* take place, even without a tried system of succession. In the Uzbek case, there will most likely be a period of muddling through – a 'rule by committee' reminiscent of the late-Soviet period (and the period shortly after Stalin's death). After some period of inter-clan negotiation, a leader will emerge that can take charge. The question at that point is whether the person will claim himself to be an heir to Karimov, or in contradistinction to the man. That, naturally, depends upon which course is more advantageous to the successor.[57]

A review of the traditional nature of politics and the continued emphasis on clan and regional alliances suggests that the succession will be one of alliances formed to present a new leader. Much like the 1980s, the successor could be a 'compromise candidate'; however, since the limits placed on the major rivals are gone (there is no need to appease the leadership in Moscow), the options are greater. The addition of external threats and internal implosion only add to the potential of chaos for the next leader of Uzbekistan, whoever he, or she, may be.[58]

It is relatively certain that the formal institutions are weak and that the informal power relations are paramount. Furthermore, the concept of the state, both as a structural phenomenon and an image for legitimacy, is inextricably associated with Karimov himself. When he dies, the state runs the risk of losing its legitimacy. More to the point, the state remains a temporal phenomenon that has not transcended personal politics. This brings us back to the central flaw in the current Uzbek political system, which is the inherent long-term weakness of the structure. Ironically, the ancient hero of Uzbekistan, Amir Timur, suffered the same conundrum. His own authority was built on centralizing power, removing opponents, creating rivalries, and ultimately, creating a dynasty wholly reliant upon the central leader – himself. While the Timurid dynasty continued after his death, the power of the regime dissipated and soon it was out of the region. Samarkand, Timur's city and Karimov's base of power, was captured by

the forces of Shaybani Khan and a new force emerged in the region. Succession crises in Central Asia tend to be addressed in this manner, after all. And like the end of Babur-khan's reign, if economic and security threats persist, the succession could be a violent one.

Conclusions

Is the Karimov presidency viable? On the surface, yes. Karimov has been able to chart the difficult course of clan politics in the country and with no backing from Moscow – as would have been the case during the Soviet period – he has done so on his own. He has also been able to use popular appeals and the fear of external threats to consolidate power. However, the ability to create a strong personality-based state at the current time may not be a good thing in the long run. Karimov has purposefully weakened the political system by not allowing opposition figures to emerge. In addition, he has created an environment wherein local leaders are not encouraged to assert themselves. From an institutional perspective, the process of policy ossification that plagued the Soviet system appears to be repeating itself in Uzbekistan.[59]

Is Uzbekistan a model for other former Soviet states, or for former Soviet leaders in general? In the past decade, leaders as diverse as Shevardnadze, Lukashenka, Aliyev, and Yeltsin have all complimented Karimov for his firm leadership style. They have openly admired his ability to rule with confidence, remove unwanted opposition figures (couched in terms of 'maintaining stability'), keeping the economy from contracting too much, and asserting Uzbek independence. In all, these are not necessarily mean accomplishments, but it is clear that Karimov is able to act as such given the social and political conditions within his country.

Ultimately, does this tell us anything about Asian presidents? Or simply presidents of post-colonial states? Given the diversity of regimes in Asia, it is nearly impossible to lay claim to an 'Asian political culture' or Asian leadership style. Indeed, one could also parallel the Karimov presidency to the tenures of various African leaders – especially those who lasted twenty to thirty years in office.[60] In these cases, the strong leader was often able to manipulate traditional power relationships in order to remain president. In addition, the state became linked to the personality of the president himself, thus making action against the president equal to action against the state. The leader in these instances also created formal political institutions for purposes of legitimacy. Essential in all of this is the recognition that somehow, particularly in instances when one must rely on the support of rival clans, a spoils system is in place to reward supporters. These concerns are not new to the region, nor to the Uzbek people. The same can be said regarding the ever-present difficulty of succession. However, historical examples show that consolidating power in the hands of the president can backfire, as the cases of Uganda, Somalia, Liberia, and Ghana show. For Karimov, and Uzbekistan more appropriately, to avoid this fate will take continued political skill and internal stability, the latter of which is not guaranteed. As Gerald

Easter notes, though, 'presidentialism is the preferred strategy of those actors who calculate that they have the most to gain by limiting the access of others to the state's power resources'.[61] Given the political tradition in Uzbekistan, it is difficult to see any change from this perception.

Notes

1 One of the more intriguing discussions of this event can be found in O. Yakubov, *The Pack of Wolves: The Blood Trail of Terror*, Moscow, Veche, 1999. The author suggests a worldwide conspiracy against Islam Karimov, made up of Islamic radicals, Uzbek opposition figures, Chechen fighters, and the financial backing of Osama bin-Laden. Real or not, such conspiracy theories do have some credibility within Uzbekistan.
2 In the fall of 2000, the US Department of State declared the IMU to be a terrorist organization. Because it is based in Afghanistan and perhaps Tajikistan, many analysts expect the IMU to return to Uzbekistan in the near future.
3 BBC News Service, 10 January 2000.
4 S. Wagner, *Public Opinion in Uzbekistan, 1996*, Washington, DC, IFES, 1997.
5 H.C. d'Encausse, *Reforme et revolution chez les musulmans de l'empire russe: Bukhara, 1867–1924*, Paris, Presses de la Foundation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, 1966, repr. 1981; and E.A. Allworth, *The Modern Uzbeks: From the Fourteenth Century to the Present, a Cultural History*, Stanford, Hoover Institution Press, 1990.
6 G. Gleason, 'Fealty and Loyalty: Informal Authority Structures in Soviet Asia', *Soviet Studies*, vol. 43, no. 3, 1991, pp. 613–28.
7 R. Grousset, *The Empire of the Steppes: A History of Central Asia*, trans. Naomi Walford, New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 1970, and E.A. Allworth (ed.), *Central Asia: 120 Years of Russian Rule*, Durham, Duke University Press, 1989.
8 A. Khalid, *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform: Jadidism in Central Asia*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1999.
9 J. Critchlow, 'Prelude to "Independence": How the Uzbek Party Apparatus Broke Moscow's Grip on Elite Recruitment', in W. Fierman (ed.), *Soviet Central Asia: The Failed Transformation*, Boulder, Westview Press, 1991, pp. 131–56.
10 D. Carlisle, 'Uzbekistan and the Uzbeks', *Problems of Communism* (Sept.–Oct. 1991), pp. 28–33.
11 The Fergana Valley is a densely-populated region that is divided amongst three countries. The Andijan, Namangan, and Fergana *wiloyatlar* are located in Uzbekistan; the Osh Oblast is in the Kyrgyz Republic; and the Hojend Wiloyat is in Tajikistan.
12 W. Fierman, 'Uzbek Feelings of Ethnicity: A Study of Attitudes in Recent Uzbek Literature', *Cahiers du Monde Russe et Sovietique*, vol. 22, 1981, pp. 187–229, and R.D. Kangas, 'The Challenge of Nationalism to the Gorbachev Reform Agenda', *Current World Leaders*, vol. 34, no. 2, April 1991, pp. 235–54.
13 L. Levitin and D. Carlisle, *Islam Karimov: President of the New Uzbekistan*, Vienna, Grotec, 1995; and N. Mishin, *Islom Karimov: Uzbekiston respublikasining birinchi presidenti*, Tashkent, Uzbekistan, 1997.
14 J. Critchlow, 'Corruption, Nationalism, and Native Elites in Soviet Central Asia', *The Journal of Communist Studies*, vol. 4, no. 2, June 1988, pp. 142–61.
15 *Pravda vostoka*, 27 July 1986, p. 1. Usmankhojaev was from the Fergana Valley and viewed by the CPSU elite as a counter to the dominance of the Samarkand clans.
16 *Pravda vostoka* 24–26 July 1989. For Karimov's personal description, see Levitin and Carlisle, *Islam Karimov*, pp. 8–9.
17 See D. Carlisle, 'Geopolitics and Ethnic Problems of Uzbekistan and Its Neighbors',

in Y. Roi (ed.), *Muslim Eurasia: Conflicting Legacies*, London, Frank Cass, 1995, pp. 105–22; and R.D. Kangas, 'Imposing Order on Uzbekistan', *Transition*, 6 September 1996, pp. 26–29.

18 N. Melvin, *Uzbekistan: Transition to Authoritarianism on the Silk Road*, Amsterdam and Reading, Harwood Academic Publishers, 2000, Chapter 1.

19 Karimov's reaction to the coup was slow, at best. His early statements were actually critical of Gorbachev, noting that problems befall those who act too rashly. When it was evident that the coup attempt was failing, Karimov came out against the plotters. These statements were reported in various Uzbek newspapers during the period 18–22 August 1991.

20 I. Karimov, *Uzbekistan: Along the Road of Deepening Economic Reform*, Tashkent, 'Uzbekistan', 1995.

21 This is obviously speculation, however the population – even educated individuals – repeatedly stress the need for a 'strong leader' at this stage in the transition.

22 Traditionally, newspapers such as *Halq sozi*, the Russian-language equivalent *Narodnoye slovo*, and *Vechernaya Tashkent* print presidential decrees in full.

23 'Uzbekistan', *Nations in Transit 1999*, New York, Freedom House, 2000.

24 Author's interview with Dr Robert Campbell, May 1994.

25 L.R. Robertson and R.D. Kangas, 'Central Power and Regional and Local Government in Uzbekistan', in T. Clark and D. Kempton (eds), *Unity or Separation: Center–Periphery Relations in the Former Soviet Union*, New York, Praeger, 2001.

26 S. Poliakov, *Everyday Islam*, New York, M.E. Sharpe, 1992.

27 Author's interviews with regional officials in Bukhara, Samarkand, Namangan, and Tashkent in May 1994 and February 1999.

28 *Narodnoye slovo*, 9 December 1992, pp. 1–2.

29 *Draft Report of the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan*, CEELI, December 1992.

30 Islam Karimov explained this action by stating that a president should remain above party politics.

31 Robertson and Kangas, op. cit.

32 See K. Collins, *Clans, Pacts, and Politics: Understanding Regime Transition in Central Asia*, doctoral dissertation, Stanford University, Fall 1999.

33 For a detailed study of the Rashidov clan, see D. Vaisman, 'Regionalism in Uzbekistan', in *Muslim Eurasia*, op. cit., pp. 105–22. See also S. Rizaev, *Sharaf Rashidov: Shtrikhi k portretu*, Tashkent, Tzuvkhi-Nur, 1991.

34 D. Carlisle, 'The Uzbek Power Elite: Politburo and Secretariat (1938–1983)', *Central Asian Survey*, vol. 5, no. 3/4, 1986, pp. 91–132.

35 The Rashidov clan is actually from the Jizzakh *wiloyat*, which was carved out of the Samarkand *wiloyat* during his administration in the 1970s.

36 During the early Soviet period, the Bukhara clans, including the Khojaev family, were in control of Uzbekistan. The more militant 'communists', which included Akmal Ikramov, were from Tashkent.

37 Author's interviews with Samarkand officials, February 1999 and May 2000.

38 Author's interviews with Bukhara and Samarkand officials, May 1994 and February 1999.

39 Collins, op. cit., Chapter 5. Karimov himself notes this problem in his book *Uzbekistan: On the Threshold of the Twenty-First Century*, Tashkent, Uzbekistan, 1997, pp. 83–93.

40 At his inauguration in 1991, Karimov swore his oath of office with a hand on a Koran.

41 In the West, Amir Timur is known as Tamerlane, or Timur the Lame.

42 The current Uzbek works on Timur are legion and often contain contemporary political relevance. For example, B. Akhmedov's *Timur the Great*, Tashkent, Abdulla Kadyri National Heritage Publishers, 2000, is a short, pithy assessment of the 'politically correct' interpretation of the medieval leader.

43 Karimov, *Uzbekistan*.
44 It is difficult to explain why he has not opted for the 'cult of personality' model employed by leaders such as Niyazov in Turkmenistan. Perhaps Karimov is politically savvy enough to know that such efforts usually engender ridicule among the population, which is still well-educated, and could be a rallying point for opposition forces within the government that are currently not able to challenge him.
45 *Halq sozi*, 2 September 1993, p. 1.
46 Such comments have been made to the author by officials from the following *wiloyatlar*: Khorezm (May 1992); Bukhara (June 1994 and February 1999); Fergana (February 1999); and Samarkand (February 1999 and May 2000).
47 Andijan Wiloyat is located in the strategic Fergana Valley. In addition to addressing the needs of the Fergana Valley leaders, this was also seen as an effort to create jobs in the region – one which suffers from high levels of unemployment and has the potential for unrest.
48 Even activists within Uzbekistan can be found 'guilty by association'. See Human Rights Watch's report *Crackdown in the Farghona Valley: Arbitrary Arrests and Discrimination*, New York, HRW, May 1998.
49 See Wagner, *Public Opinion in Uzbekistan*.
50 The reports of Human Rights Watch soberly reveal that many Uzbek citizens are fearful to express their personal views. In light of the fact that vocal opponents to the regime face incarceration, intimidation, and threats to their families, it is not surprising that people tend to shy away from open discussions of 'difficult issues'.
51 See V. Tismaneanu (ed.), *Political Culture and Civil Society in Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, New York, M.E. Sharpe, 1995. Chapters 10–12 address the states of Central Asia. P. Carley's chapter, 'The Legacy of the Soviet Political System and the Prospects for Developing Civil Society in Central Asia', stresses the institutional obstacles established during the Soviet period that hinder current democratization efforts.
52 See Melvin, op. cit.
53 The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), European Union (EU), and the United States government all refused to send observers. US State Department spokesman James Rubin issued a statement calling the Uzbek presidential election 'laughable', a comment not well-received by the Uzbek government. See *RFE/RL Uzbek Service Reports*, 9–11 January 2000.
54 See *Narodnoye slovo*, 27 September 1994, p. 1. This is cited and explained in greater detail in G.M. Easter, 'Preference for Presidentialism: Postcommunist Regime Change in Russia and the NIS', *World Politics*, vol. 49, January 1997, pp. 184–211.
55 The numbers vary substantially as a result of insufficient or irregular data. The World Bank, IMF, and other organizations regularly review these statistics in their annual reports. See J. Nicoud and E. Anderson, 'Outlook for Central Asia', in *PlanEcon Review and Outlook for the Former Soviet Republics*, Washington, DC, PlanEcon, 1997, pp. 133–69.
56 Important work on this topic has been conducted by Dr Nancy Lubin, as well as the organization Transparency International. See N. Lubin, *Central Asians Take Stock: Reform, Corruption, and Identity* [Peaceworks paper #2], Washington, DC, USIP, 1995.
57 A case in point was Karimov's own succession. Over the past decade, there has been a resurgence of *positive* writing and attention paid to former First Secretary Sharaf Rashidov. This has solidified the Rashidov clan's support of Karimov and had meant a return of Rashidovs into key political offices.
58 The concept of 'she' is important here if, and only if, Karimov's daughter is able to find herself in a position of some authority shortly before her father's death. While the past experience of female leaders in Central Asia is slight, one cannot exclude the potential for familial succession.

59 The progression of institutional ossification in the Soviet regime is the theme of P. Roeder, *Red Sunset: The Failure of Soviet Politics*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1993.
60 W. Zartman (ed.), *Collapsed States: The Disintegration and Restoration of Legitimate Authority*, London, Lynne Rienner, 1995.
61 Easter, 'Preference for Presidentialism', p. 211.

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