# A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF DEMOCRATIZATION IN KAZAKHSTAN AND UZBEKISTAN

*Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the Degree of*

## MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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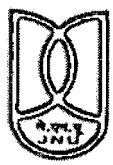

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## DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation entitled **"A Comparative Study of Democratization in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan"**, submitted by me in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy**, is my own work and has not been previously submitted for any other degree of this or any other university.

Date: 5th January 2010

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## CERTIFICATE

**We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.**

**Prof. Anuradha M. Chenoy**
**(Chairperson, CRCAS)**

**Dr. Rajan Kumar**
**(Supervisor)**

*Dedicated to*

*Dadaji & Mama*

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# CONTENTS

# *Preface*

Since their birth as independent states, the Central Asian Republics have been under constant scrutiny by political observers and strategic analysts alike. Their newfound affinity for democracy, their unique ethno-religious culture, their geostrategic location, and the shifting contours of global politics, offered a new case in point towards the study of societies in transition.

Both Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan had similar conditions to face at the dawn of independence in the Central Asia and as sovereign states both of them have their own fabric of political organization. For a researcher it becomes necessary to determine how much democracy does the fabric of each of these two states entail and what else is desirable to make the political fabric of these two republics more accommodating towards democratic reforms.

Democracy in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan would pave the way for rapid democratization of the Central Asian region as both these countries are major political and economic players in the region. The pace, character and extent of political reforms in these two republics are definitely going to either push or stall the prospects of genuine democracy in the region.

## Rationale and Scope of Study

The proposed work is essentially a comparative study with the focus directed on the comparative analysis of the democratization process in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. The comparative study would attempt to locate the dynamics of democratization within the political and institutional set up in the two Central Asian Republics to identify the common as well as the unique stumbling blocks to the democratization process.

A comparative approach would help us locate the problems and opportunities for evolution and consolidation of democracy in the region. It would also be helpful in obtaining some generalizations for democratization patterns in societies undergoing transition. Moreover, democratization is imperative for a smooth functioning of the state system through power sharing in a multi-ethnic society like Central Asia.

## Research Questions

The study addresses the following research questions:

1. What is the status and nature of democratization in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan?
2. What has been the role of the political institutions in driving the transition process?
3. What has been the role of the civil society and media in shaping the democratization process in the two Republics under study?

## Hypotheses

The study tests the following hypotheses:

1. The absence of a vibrant multi-party system has weakened the process of democratization in Central Asia.
2. A weak civil society, centralised state institutions and politically embedded media are hampering the process of democratization in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.

## Research Methodology

The proposed comparative study would apply Mill's method of comparison based on 'most similar design' and 'most different design'. In the most similar design, the similar elements in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan would be compared while in the 'most different design', the dissimilar elements of these two states are compared. Comparing the civil

society and the state institutions of these two countries would throw light on the process of democratization, especially their successes and failures.

The major theoretical approaches explaining democratization have been reviewed at length and used for the purpose of making a comparative analysis of democratization in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan within the context of democratizing developments in Central Asia. The proposed study is primarily descriptive in nature. Examining and comparing the detailed data of democratization in the two countries constitute the prime task of the research.

Both primary and secondary sources have been used. Primary sources include the constitution of the two republics, official documents, policies, projects and the speeches made by authorities of the highest level at various domestic and international fora. The constitution of the republics in question would be analysed to trace the democratic initiatives undertaken through the constitutional provisions. The constitutional amendments also serve as a guide to measure the consolidation or erosion of democratic measures. Electoral data has been taken into account for a thorough analysis. The reports and documents of international organisations like UN, OSCE etc. and the relevant analytical data used by civil society groups like Freedom House, Transparency International, World Bank have been used for examining the various indicators of democratization.

The dissertation has been divided into the following scheme of chapters:

**Chapter 1: Introduction**

This chapter introduces the topic through a general background on Central Asia with a focus on social and political developments in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan prior to independence.

**Chapter 2: Review of Literature**

This chapter discusses various theoretical approaches making explanatory generalisations about democratization and the pattern of democratization in Central Asia through a review of the relevant literature on democratization and democratization in Central Asia.

**Chapter 3: Status of Democratization in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan**

This chapter examines how democratization has taken its course in these two republics and factors affecting it. It traces the course of political developments and the role and status of various institutional factors which impart a democratic character to a state.

**Chapter 4: A Comparative Analysis of Democratization in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.**

This chapter makes a comparative analysis of the factors that may affect the process of democratization, highlighting the similarities and differences that explain the variation in the approach that theses two republics have taken towards democratization.

**Chapter 5: Summary and Conclusion**

This chapter sums up the findings of the research.

# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---|---|
| ANSDP | All National Social Democratic Party |
| ASSR | Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic |
| BBC | British Broadcasting Corporation |
| CACS | Central Asia and South Caucasus |
| CEC | Central Election Commission |
| CIS | Commonwealth of Independence States |
| CPPK | Communist People's Party of Kazakhstan |
| CPSU | Communist Party of the Soviet Union |
| GONGOs | Government Organized Non-governmental Organizations |
| HRW | Human Rights Watch |
| KzSSR | Kazakhstan Soviet Socialist Republic |
| LDPU | Liberal Democratic Party of Uzbekistan |
| NGOs | Non Governmental Organizations |
| PDPU | People's Democratic Party of Uzbekistan |
| ODIHR | Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights |
| OSCE | Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe |
| RFE/RL | Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty |
| RSFSR | Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic |
| USSR | Union of Soviet Socialist Republics |
| UzSSR | Uzbekistan Soviet Socialist Republic |

# Chapter 1
# *Introduction*

# CHAPTER 1
# INTRODUCTION

## Background

> A particular feature of Central Asia is that it is both a geographical concept and a cultural region, albeit one whose different components have never been brought together into a single political entity. Central Asia has thus never been a single state (Fourniau and Poujol 2005: 29).

The republics of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan are part of a larger cultural entity called the Central Asia. The political formation of these republics as they stand today and their identity as separate nations cannot be properly understood without grasping the historical, political and cultural dynamics, which has shaped the trajectory of Central Asia through centuries. The expression 'Central Asia' defines a vast historical configuration consisting of several entities (khanates, emirates etc.) and covering many different political, economic and cultural situations, ethnic groups and identities (Fourniau and Poujol 2005).

The political fate of Central Asia has historically been dictated by its geographical location. Manz, emphasizing on this geopolitically significant role of Central Asia says, "Just as Central Asia is now the border between two spheres, so it was earlier a boundary between the two great worlds of pre-modern history – the settled agricultural civilizations and the pastoral nomads of the steppe" (Manz 1998: 4). Being located at the crossroad to Asia and Europe, the region was exposed to expeditions and invasions from the rising powers through the ages. Wheeler argues that continuous foreign invasion and domination, Russian being the latest in the order, was one of the reasons why the natural process of nation-forming among the people of Central Asia couldn't take its root (Wheeler 1964: 29).

The fabled ancient east-west trade route, the 'silk road' passed through Central Asia making it an economically vibrant region. It was the most important trading route in the surrounding region in the ancient times, until the major sea routes to the adjoining region (the Indian subcontinent) were discovered. The silk route passage not merely served as an economic lifeline but also contributed to cultural exchange among the

people of the regions. In fact, it was the decline of the silk route as the most significant route for trading that later led to the economic decline of the Central Asia.

Much of the Central Asia's population was Iranian in origin during the early ancient period. In the sixth century, the Turks began to dominate as a new force in the steppe. It was not until the rise of Chingiz Khan when the might of the Turks started to wane. However, the interaction between two lifestyles and populations – nomad and sedentary, Turkic and Iranian – dominated the history of Central Asia well into the nineteenth century.

The political and cultural ascendance of the Central Asian society in the medieval period can be traced to the mighty rise of Chingiz Khan, who conquered the whole of Central Asia in 1210-1227. His descendents, the Chingissids continued to rule the region for centuries. The unity of this empire facilitated the spread of Islam in Central Asia and helped in the evolution of a system of governance, society and legitimacy, which held on well till the Russian conquest of the region. The Mongol empire left behind a society with dual cultural and ideological loyalty. In the religious sphere legitimacy was derived from religion, a ruler's claim for spiritual legitimacy was inextricably linked to his adherence to the Islam and the Islamic religious laws. In the political sphere, the legitimacy depended on the Mongol lineage – only the descendents of Chingiz Khan could legitimately wield sovereign power over the people of the region (Manz 1994: 7).

The death of Chingiz Khan changed the political landscape of Central Asia in a significant way. The weakness of the Mongols in the wake of Chingiz Khan's death was exploited by the intermediaries and the local strongmen from the dominant clans. Thus were formed diverse cultural and political entities which continued to develop until the nineteenth century.

It would be appropriate to mention here that the Central Asian region could well be conceived as an amalgamation of two different set of cultural spaces which over a period of time became bounded by a common faith in Islam. First, would be the vast steppe area where the nomads prospered and second would be the area lying between the Caspian and the Aral seas where the settled agricultural population and urban

civilization prospered. Though relatively small in territorial stretch, it formed the core of the Central Asia.

However, the Mongol power had united the steppe and the settled land into one political unit with a uniform ruling class ruling the both. This unity was disturbed to a great extent with the waning power of the Mongols during the thirteenth and fourteenth century. It was only with rise of Timur (Tamerlane) in 1370, that the legacies of the Mongols were to be reclaimed. Timur, a Turco-Mongol conqueror, rose to power near Samarkand and tried to take over the legacy of Chingiz Khan. He went on to conquer a large territory but ultimately chose to consolidate his power only in the settled regions of Central Asia as these were easier to control and also offered more revenue. The death of Timur led to the disintegration of the political unity that was emerging during his reign.

## The Uzbeks and the Kazakhs

A significant development in the post-Timur era was the rise of Uzbeks, a fierce nomadic tribal confederacy of the Golden Horde[1]. The Uzbeks came into conflict with the descendents of Timur and later they marched towards the Transoxiana[2]. Some of the members of this group had earlier disapproved of the Uzbeks interference in the affairs of Timurids and left the group with their followers to further north-east and mixed with the splinter groups of the Golden Horde. These people and their followers came to be known as Kazakhs, meaning renegade or outlaw.

In 1501-07 when the Uzbek confederation led by Shaybani Khan conquered the Transoxiana, the Kazakhs occupied the former Uzbek territory while retaining the full mobility as nomads. The Uzbeks on the other hand chose to settle in the plains of the Transoxiana which later emerged as the centre of Islamic learning and culture. The ethnic identities thus began to appear in Central Asia and became consolidated in the later centuries. The Uzbeks came to be identified as the Turco-Mongolian ruling class of the Transoxiana where as the Kazakhs continued to have a more fully nomad life in the steppes under their own Chinggisid Khans. By sixteenth century Central Asia was

[1] Also known as the Kichpak Khanate or, in Russian the Ulus Juchi. The Golden Horde, which was first willed to Jochi, son of Genghis, became a power in its own right. The Golden Horde had become islamicised under Khan Oz Beg (Uzbek). It was Oz Beg's decision to cause his people to convert to Islam that has caused the countries of Central Asia to maintain that religion to the present day.

[2] The land lying between the Amu Darya (Oxus) and Syr Darya rivers.

divided into many Khanates (Emirates) e.g. Bukhara, Khiva (Khwarazm), Kokand (in the Transoxiana) and the Kazakh Khanate (in the Steppe – the modern Kazakhstan).

## The Russian Conquest of Central Asia

Central Asia being situated at the heart of Eurasia provided an intercontinental base for the Russian imperial influence in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. The Russian conquest of Central Asia was undertaken in two phases with an interval of more than hundred years. The first Russian advance into Central Asia covered most of what is the present day Kazakhstan and in the second phase, the Russians conquered the territories which now would include the republics of Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, with the partial exclusion of what were then the Khanates of Khiva and Bukhara (Wheeler 1964). The Russian conquest of Central Asia was driven by the imperial and colonial logic of exploiting the wealth, market and resources of the annexed territory. The Russian occupation of the region began with their annexation of the west Siberia that provided a strategic impetus for their southward movement into Central Asia. By 1847 the whole Kazakh land of the Steppe came under the direct rule of the Tsar.

The next phase of the Russian imperial venture started with their infringement of the borders of the Khanate of Kokand but Tashkent was the first complete territorial entity to have fallen in the hands of the Russians in the year 1865. The Russian imperial march in Central Asia continued with the annexation and truncation of Bukhara in 1868 and the Khanate of Khiva in 1873. The complete liquidation of the Khanate of Kokand was to follow next in the year 1876.

The swift Russian movements into Central Asia were to an extent also dictated by the imperial rivalry between Britain and Russia over the 'Eurasian Heartland', often described as the 'Great Game'. The British imperial stretch in the Indian subcontinent was being moved further north-west and Afghanistan became one of its potential possessions. However, the fiercely independent Afghans wouldn't allow them any permanent hold in Afghanistan. The Anglo-Afghan wars of 1838 and 1878 did not provide any substantial gain towards their imperial ambition over Afghanistan; nonetheless, these wars hastened the pace of Russian conquest of Central Asia.

Russia went on to complete its conquest of Central Asia with the annexation of Merv in 1884. The acquisition of Merv was significant as it brought the Russians near the borders of Afghanistan. The fall of Merv to Russians greatly alarmed the British and a confrontation between the two imperial powers looked imminent, not because they intended to confront each other but for the fact that both anticipated aggressive moves from the opposing side. The tensions finally eased out as they worked out their boundaries and areas of influence under the auspices of the Pamir Boundary Commission in 1895. These agreements were further strengthened by the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, which bound the two powers to respect each other's zones of interest and as a buffer, created an elongated a stretch of territory between the Pamir and Kashmir.

A particular feature of Russian colonisation of Central Asia was the establishment of Russian settlements – both agricultural and urban. It was made possible largely due to the contiguous boundaries between Russia and Central Asia. The contiguousness of territorial spaces also helped Russia to consolidate its positions in Central Asia. The Russian conquest of Central Asia had put an end to the perennial power struggle among the various rulers and tribes in the region and the subsequent Russian rule provided much needed peace and stability in the region which was a welcome development for the people inhabiting the area.

Russia administered the conquered region through a military Governor and named the Transoxiana region as the Governorate-General of Turkestan. Turkestan was divided into five Regions or Oblasts and two protectorates. The regions were Syrdarya (center Tashkent), Semireche (center Vernyi), Fergana (center Skobelev), Samarkand (center Samarkand), and Zakaspie (Transcaspia, center Ashgabad); the protectorates were the emirate of Bukhara and the Khanate of Khiva. Tashkent functioned as the seat of the colonial administration for the whole of Turkestan.

The administrative organisations in the Steppe – the greater part of the present day Kazakhstan – however followed a different pattern. The Steppe was divided into four regions and most of the governors of the regions reported directly to the Russian ministry of the interior (Soucek 2000). The diverse Russian approach towards administering the Steppe and Turkestan was grounded in the historical ties that they

have had with the Steppe. The more integrated approach towards the Steppe also made strategic sense as Russia and Kazakhstan had a contiguous boundary.

According to Wheeler (1964), the Russian conquest and the consolidation of its rule in Central Asia were facilitated by the absence of nationalism and the lack of consciousness about a 'nation' or nation state. The Tsarist government, thus never faced the need for compromising with nationalist movements for, granting self determination to non-Russian nationalities, or for justifying the retention of imperial domination to the word opinion.

The same cannot be said as true in case of the Soviet regime that was to continue the Russian dominance in Central Asian, albeit consensually, in the garb of a benevolent liberator of the Central Asian people from the Tsarist yoke. The establishment of Soviet regime coincided with the rise of nationalism all over Asia and Africa, which restricted and reduced the British and French imperial empires to a large extent and also led to the disappearance of the Ottoman Empire (Wheeler 1964). The idea of nation and the binding force of nationalism were to penetrate into the Central Asia from the adjoining regions, i.e. India, Turkey, etc.

## Soviet Central Asia and the Genesis of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan

> Turkestan, because of its geographical position, is a bridge connecting socialist Russia with the oppressed countries of the East, and in view of this the strengthening of the Soviet regime in Turkestan might have the greatest revolutionary significance for the entire Orient (Soucek 2000: 213).

The October revolution of 1917 in Russia ushered a new era in the history of Central Asia. The Bolsheviks' rise to power was to irreversibly affect the political and social dynamics in Central Asia. The establishment of Bolshevik power in Central Asia was accompanied by an important set of policies that aimed to consolidate Soviet control and transform the communities of the region into a communist society. Soviet policies were focused upon restructuring the administrative structure of Central Asia, creating new identities in the form of national communities, drawing native personnel into communist political structures and modernizing society as a whole. Together, these policies were to lay the foundations for the emergence of contemporary republics of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and also the respective Kazakh and Uzbek nationhood (Melvin 2000: 17). The Russian Revolution thus gave the Central Asian people a hope

to strive for modernization and self-determination as the leaders of the revolution professed that the rights of the nationalities would be recognized and respected. The Bolshevik's stand on nation building and cultural autonomy to nationalities was, however to an extent inconsistent with the ideological foundation of the Soviet Union. Hunter brings forth this contradiction as:

> Socialism is a universal and transcendental philosophy based on the solidarity of the working and oppressed classes. The idealistic vision of a socialist society holds no racial, ethnic, or class distinctions, whereas, Nationalism—as an ideology based on ethnic differences and attachment to a particular group of people, their history, culture, and land—can have no place in the socialist Utopia. For the true socialist and socialist society, loyalty is to other like-minded socialists, irrespective of their ethnic group, and to the ideals of socialism (Hunter 1996: 08).

The socialist leaders of the Soviet Union had grasped these inconsistencies very well, and they tried to adjust the theoretical inconsistencies to suit the reality by taking a pragmatic position vis-à-vis the question of nationalities. The ideological underpinnings behind their position on the nationality question came from Lenin's understanding that to develop a nationalistic identity was an important milestone on the way, before the road of transformation reaches the destination of socialism from the present juncture of feudalism and tribalism in Central Asia.

Thus they wanted to achieve socialism and socialist internationalism through the often contradictory logic of nationalism as far as Central Asia was concerned. Though unconvincing, it was indeed a pragmatic approach for it was hard to expect that people of Central Asia, where identity and loyalty were limited to family and clan, would suddenly become conscious of their role in the Soviet project of socialist internationalism. In retrospect, the Soviet approach only succeeded in achieving the consolidation of national republics in Central Asia on an ethnic and linguistic basis but beyond that nothing much was achieved to further the cause of socialist internationalism.

With a clear oversight of the goals to be achieved, the Bolsheviks set in motion the process of national delimitation in 1924-25. The process aimed at replacing the pre-colonial and Tsarist administrative divisions by new territorial and administrative units based upon national communities. On October 27, 1924 the Uzbek Soviet

Socialist Republic (USSR) was established by dissolving the Khanates of Khiva and Bukhara.

In May 1925 the Uzbek SSR became a constituent republic of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). By the end of the year, the Fergana valley was also incorporated into the Uzbek SSR. The Constitution of the Uzbek SSR was adopted in March 1927, which declared the republic to be an equal and sovereign component of the USSR. The Uzbek SSR government was headed by Faizullah Khojaev who together with the other Young Bukharans had earlier formed an alliance with the Bolsheviks following the end of the Civil War.

The Khojaev government strove to promote the interest of the Uzbek people and this was reflected in the increasing proportion of the Uzbeks in the state apparatus and economic bodies. This proportion rose in the republic's central bodies from 23 to 32.3 percent between 1924 and 1928, and in the lower levels of the state apparatus reached 75 percent by the end of 1930. At the same time, greater use was made of the Uzbek language in administrative work (Alimova and Golovanov 2005: 225). The Uzbek government was keen on integrating the productive forces and reducing dependence on cotton monoculture as a mainstay of agricultural production in the republic.

The death of Lenin in 1924 and rise of Stalin at the helm of affairs in the Soviet Union did no good to the republics of Soviet Central Asia. Stalin's purges and his bid to overcentralize the administration and the economy came as a bolt to the nascent political awakening that the Central Asian republics were witnessing. By the end of 1920s and the following years the totalitarian administrative model of the Soviet social and state structure based on ideologization of economy and strict centralization of management had firmly entrenched in the Uzbek SSR (Alimova and Golovanov 2005: 225).

The Stalinist onslaught in Uzbekistan was all pervasive. However, the nationalist who had earlier aligned with the communists and were the leading force in the government at the republic level were in conflict with certain policies which they believed to be an assault on their culture and faith. These developments strained the carefully cultivated alliance between the nationalists and the communists and the dissenting voices against the Soviet policies were successively purged during the period 1930-38. Faizullah

Khojaev was arrested in 1937. He was tried alongside Akhmal Ikramov, the first secretary of the Communist Party of the Uzbek SSR, and Nikolai Bukharin, a leading figure of the so called 'Right Deviation' in the Communist Party in 1938. They were all held guilty and Khojaev was executed (Melvin 2000: 19).

The communist patriots and nationalists were thus purged in the 1920s and1930s and were replaced by a new breed of apparatchiks whose main ambition was to please their masters in Moscow and thereby attain a good and comfortable life with a privileged position in the party and the state apparatus. However, in doing so they betrayed the interests of their countrymen who initially had placed their hopes in the overhauled system under the Soviets (Soucek 2000: 237).

A positive development in Central Asia during this turbulent period was the success that the Soviet efforts had achieved in spreading modern and scientific education. The increase in literacy level in the Uzbek SSR clearly manifested the appreciable measures undertaken by the soviet regime. The literacy level among the native population rose from around 3.8 percent in 1926 to 52.5 percent by the year 1932. The republic had introduced the compulsory primary education and began the transition to universal seven-year schooling (Melvin 2000: 21). Education statistics were especially impressive with regard to raising the literacy of Muslim women. The efforts to develop the system of secondary and higher education also bore fruit and provided much desired specialists to the industrial and administrative structures.

However, the spread of education did not contribute much to the cultural and spiritual space as the soviet model of education did not correspond to the cultural and spiritual expressions of the Uzbek people. Any religious endeavor was treated to be against the 'socialist spirit' and atheism was the professed creed. Clergy was repressed and sent to labor camps, mosques and madrassas were demolished and the sacred relics were confiscated. These efforts on the part of the Soviet regime was clearly an onslaught on the fundamental beliefs, customs and symbols, which constituted the national consciousness of the people who were not yet ready to reject the longstanding and cherished traditional way of life for the still illusory and fluid promises of modernity.

> Great harm was done to cultural development by the policy of accelerated 'Internationalization', which was based on communist ideas about the priority of class interests over national interests and the inevitability of nations

> merging. By the end of the 1920s Stalin's administration had already begun active curtailment of the appointment of native cadres and set about the formation of a culture which was 'socialist in content, internationalist in spirit' and national in the form. This approach led to the pernicious process of changing Uzbek culture to match the demands of 'class purity' and 'proletarian internationalism'. The result was the increasing alienation of the people from the roots of their thousand year-old spiritual heritages and the destruction of their historical memory (Alimova and Golovanov 2005: 230-231).

The language policy adopted in the republics was also used as a tool to destroy the national consciousness. By a resolution adopted by the leaders of the Soviet Union the study of Russian language was made obligatory, this naturally entailed the reduction of hours devoted for learning the mother tongue. The Cyrillic script was introduced by a decree in the year 1940, abandoning Arabic, the established script since centuries. Tinkering with the established language and scripts had nothing to do with socialism, but it was driven by the logic of maintaining a multinational empire and for that the regime needed a common denominator in the form of the Russian language.

By the year 1937 the Soviet project of national delimitation was complete. Five Republics had come to occupy the map of Soviet Central Asia. Each of the republics acquired the status of Union Republics. Uzbekistan as discussed earlier had become a Union Republic in 1924 along with Turkmenistan. Tajikistan acquired the status of Union Republic in 1929, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan in 1936. A new constitution was adopted by the Supreme Soviet in each of the Republics in 1937, where their status as the Union Republics was recognized, and was given sovereign rights guaranteed by the constitution of the USSR.

The onset of the Second World War eased the pressure on Islam from the Soviets. As the Hitler's treatment of Jews became a public knowledge, the Soviets tried to accommodate religion in the autonomous personal space of the individuals. Moreover, to fight the war Soviets wanted to forge a wide alliance pervading all creeds and beliefs.

After Stalin's death in 1953 the cultural spaces in Central Asia started opening up further to accommodate the religious, spiritual and nationalistic expressions of the people. However, the assault on Islam was renewed under Khrushchev (1958–64) with the closure of mosques and reduction in the number of clergy. Under Brezhnev

the anti-religious campaigns were moderated but from the late 1970s renewed moves were initiated against religion pursuant to the resurgence of Islam in Afghanistan and Iran.

A new USSR constitution was adopted in 1978 and corresponding constitutions were also adopted in the constituent republics. The constitution proclaimed to build 'developed socialism' in the Soviet Union. It laid the legal foundations to legitimize the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) and its Politburo as the organ of power determining and directing state policies. The Supreme Soviet and Council of Ministers and the local organs of government were only to carry out party directives from the centre. The new constitution enormously increased the status of the first secretary of the CPSU Central Committee and the power in the republic came to be concentrated in the hands of the first secretary of the Communist Party of the respective republics.

Kazakhstan's evolution as a separate republic and the social, economic and political trajectory in the soviet period followed a similar pattern as that of Uzbekistan, though the developments in Kazakhstan were tempered by the fact that it shared a contiguous boundary with Russia and also had some historical linkages with Russia. It should also be noted that the Kazakh Steppe was the earliest victims of the Russian conquest in the region. The Tsarist Russia had incorporated much of the territory of today's Kazakhstan in Russia as many of its regions (oblast) and was administered under the Russian ministry of interiors.

The February Revolution and the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 had brought hope of autonomy and independence in the Steppe and both these revolution acted as a galvanising force in arming the elites of the steppe with a nationalist fervor. They saw the revolutions in terms of changing political sentiments in Russia, bound to have a positive impact on their nationalistic aspirations.

The nationalistic aspirations of the Kazakh elites and intelligentsia were manifested in the formation of the Alash, a liberal-nationalist party demanding greater autonomy and independence. Alash Orda held its first official party congress in Orenburg in April 1917. The congress demanded that: (1) all land seized by the Russians should be returned to the Kazakhs, (2) Russian immigration into Turkestan should be stopped,

(3) education should be in the Kazakh language and (4) Kazakhs should stop helping the war effort. At that time, these demands were the most radical nationalist demands put forward in Central Asia (Rashid 1994: 113).

Taking advantage of the extremely fluid political situation the Alash, in the aftermath of its party congress set up a provisional government (*Orda*) of the Eastern Alash Orda in Semipalatinsk in north-east Kazakhstan and elected Ali Khan Bukeykhanov as president. Because of the severe communication problems in the vast steppes, another centre of government was created in Zhambeitu in the Urals, which was called the Western Alash Orda. However, with the victorious red army taking control of the Steppe and the civil war on the wane, the Alash leaders joined leagues with the Bolsheviks and the Alash governments were disbanded. In aligning with the Bolsheviks, they thought that they could achieve their demand of autonomy and the Bolsheviks returned the favour by inviting the Alash leaders to participate in the Communist Party Congress (of the newly formed CPKZ) held at Orenburg in March 1920.

The message was clear, there cannot be different political setups projecting diverse interests. The Communist Party was to remain a monolithic agency representing the supreme interests of the people and every outstanding issue had to be settled within the party platforms through the mechanism of democratic centralism.

On August 26, 1920 Lenin and Kalinin signed a decree "On the creation of the Kyrgyz Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic." But it was not until the October of that year that Kazakh ASSR took shape, in reality. The Kazakh Soviets gathered in Orenburg for the Founding Convention, and it led to the birth of Kyrgyz[3] (i.e. Kazakh) Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic.

Soucek argues that though the process and the results in Kazakhstan were analogous to those in Turkestan, where the Turkestan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic came into being at about the same time; in one special sense, the formation of the Kazakh ASSR was ahead of the rest of Central Asia, for unlike that of the Turkestan ASSR, it was based on the ethno-linguistic factor of a native nationality, the Kazakhs

[3] At this point the Soviets didn't distinguish between Kyrgyz and Kazakh and term was used interchangeably.

Soucek (2000: 216). This factor was to become the principle based on which the other four republics of Central Asia, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan were formed in the year 1924. The Kazakh ASSR was accorded the status of a sovereign republic of the Soviet Union with the adoption of the new constitution in 1937. Henceforth the Kazakh ASSR came to be known as the Kazakh SSR (Kaz SSR).

Thereafter, the political, social and economic developments in Kazakh SSR followed a pattern that was hardly different from that of the other republics of the Soviet Union. The collectivization of the farms continued and the purges under Stalin would cost the life of many Kazakh Communist Party leaders who were accused of deviation from party programs and ideology. In the following years, the Kazakh SSR was to provide the Soviet Union its vast space for conducting nuclear explosion and base for a very ambitious and expensive space program. The virgin land campaign initiated by Khrushchev to cultivate wheat in the hitherto unseeded lands of the steppe was another ambitious project, which ultimately exposed the faults of the plan system with its heavy repercussions.

## The Dialectics of Political Development in Central Asia

The political developments in Central Asia as evident from the above discussions have been shaped by the interplay of various forces that stood against each other to shape and reshape the contours of politics in the region. The ideas loyal to conservative brand clashed with the ideas underpinned by the modernity. The autocratic and imperialist trends during the tsarist rule of Central Asia were decimated by the democratic beliefs that were realised in the February Revolution of 1917 but the ideals of democratic change were swept away by the radical socialist revolution of October 1917, which held its sway, for the most part of the twentieth century, only to succumb to its own shortcomings towards the turn of the twenty-first century.

The exploration of these dialectical dynamics would put into perspective the changes which accompanied the evolution of Central Asian political system and would also help in gauging their impact on the future course of its political journey. A convenient starting point towards the discussion of political developments in the Central Asian

region in this section would be the penetration of liberal-democratic ideas in Central Asia and its manifestations at various levels.

## Cultural Reforms and Democratic Ideals in Central Asia

The development of democracy in modern nation-states has followed a pattern which is easily discernable. It has forged its way through the rubbles of the dying feudal order, has won incremental concessions from the autocracy, paving the way for an overhaul of the autocratic system with the eventual transfer of power from a few privileged to the majority through constitutionalism. And in the colonial sphere democracy has been achieved through a long and ever evolving national liberation struggles. There has been one common aspect to the development of democracy in all the cases: a liberal progressive force took the lead in destroying the old order and in establishing a new order that was representative, liberal and equitable.

At the turn of the nineteenth century Central Asia witnessed the rise of such a modernizing force in the form of Jadidism. Jadidism first broke through into the ossified life of the antiquated feudal society as a Muslim cultural reform movement (Ashurov 2005: 186). Though the thrust of the Jadids was on modernising the education system and bring in sweeping reforms in the cultural arena through poetry, prose, theatre and vernacular media, the force and vision of the movement created a dynamics, which would generate an appeal for new political ideas and political reforms to complement and reinforce the reforms in the cultural arena. The logic of Jadidism's focus on cultural and religious reforms as a driving force towards broader political reforms has been explained by Ashurov:

> The exceptional position of Islam and the clergy was no coincidence and stemmed from the very nature of feudal society itself, in which religion and the religious nature of social consciousness had become the necessary attribute of society. First of all, the clergy had a monopoly over education. The whole system of education and upbringing, from the lowest level (the *maktab,* religious elementary school) to the highest (the *madrasa*), was concentrated in their hands. Second, the clergy also exercised legal functions, giving their class the highest level of political importance in society. They monopolised the right to interpret the law based on *fiqh* (jurisprudence understanding) of the *sharia* (Islamic law). In the circumstances, any criticism of the existing regime (especially in Bukhara and Khiva) had to be of a religious nature and form (Ashurov 2005: 186).

The February Revolution in 1917 came as a shot in the arms for the Jadids. They viewed the Revolution as a clear endorsement and an exemplary model for their ideals of progress. Buoyed by the desired developments in Russia, the Jadids were determined to put their declared principles into practice. The desire to defend and give priority to the political interests of the indigenous peoples determined the overall thrust of their action (Radjapova 2005: 154). They pinned their hopes on the new liberal democratic regime in Russia to act as a catalyst towards achieving the liberal goals of the reform project, they had undertaken.

The Jadids tried to make people aware of the changes taking place all around the world. They would portray the contradictions and the ills within the society through the medium of theater. The ideological positions and policies of the Jadids were disseminated through the vernacular media. *Najat*, *Kengash*, *Shura-yi Islam*, *Turan*, *Turk eli* [The People of Turkistan] and *Ulugh Turkistan* [Great Turkistan] in Tashkent; *Hurriyat* in Samarkand; *Tirik Soz* and the journal *Hurriyat* in Kokand were some of the popular newspapers and journals. The news media were also used by the Jadids to gauge and shape the public opinion in the region.

One of the basic democratic contributions of the Jadidism was its effort to incorporate the indigenous people as representatives in the state structures that were taking shape at the local level. The Jadid intellectuals like Ubaydallah Khojayev, Munawwar Qari, Abdallah Avlani, Behbudi, were at the forefront in mobilising and uniting the diverse social forces within the Muslim population. Their efforts at unity manifested in the formation of Shura-yi Islamiya (Islamic Council) launched in Tashkent in March 1917. In the following months, the Jadids took the initiative of launching local branches of Shura-yi Islamiya in the prominent urban areas of Osh, Andijan, Skobelev, Turkestan, Merv, Namangan, Samarkand, Kokand and other towns of Turkistan. This process coincided with the abolition of the governor-generalship of Turkistan and with a thorough restructuring of the government apparatus going on, the formation of local branches of the Shura-yi Islamiya aimed at ensuring maximum participation and role of the indigenous population along with the Russians in the local governmental apparatus.

The conservative section of the Central Asian society represented by the clergy and Ulemas – the chief benefactors of the prevailing system fiercely opposed the

modernising agenda of the Jadids. The struggle between the conservative forces trying to uphold the stagnant old order in the society and the progressive-liberal forces trying to mould the society on a liberal-secular model was more pronounced in Bukhara. Jadids being convinced that the new liberal democratic regime in Russia would force the Amir to promulgate the reforms they had advocated for years, boldly entered the political arena of the region and declared its determination to lead the democratic process.

Responding to the Jadids' challenge to his authority, the Amir of Bukhara got together with the conservatives to turn the issue of new Russian regime's intervention into an attack on the sovereignty of Bukhara and was quick to denounce the Jadids as traitors to Islam and Bukhara. Soon the Amir set in motion the persecution of the unrelenting Jadids. The persecution, only led to the radicalisation of Jadids who had now organized themselves in a political party and came to be known as the 'Young Bukharans'. The refusal by the Amir to pay heeds to the Jadids' reforming agenda and their own electoral setbacks in the political arena at the hands of the conservatives brought the Jadids closer to the Soviets. By the end of the civil war, Jadids had changed their tactics. Their emphasis was now on using the state as an agent of change. They viewed their electoral setbacks and their inability at transforming the society in relation to the widespread ignorance and lack of education among the masses and sought to achieve their objectives with the help of the state and therefore, joined the various organs of the government being built by the soviet regime (Khalid 1998: 148-149).

Jadidism thus had balanced its methods and agents of reforms within the changing political context. Khalid (2001) aptly describes the Jadids efforts as 'nationalising the revolution during 1917-20. In retrospect, we can say that Jadids' approach towards bringing cultural and educational reforms in the Central Asian society was taking a democratic route in the aftermath of the February Revolution but the October revolution brought a radical change in their approach and their patience for incremental change gave way for the alternative of a revolutionary restructuring of the society with the role of state being changed dramatically in their own favour.

The democratic and nationalistic fervour of the Jadids got mixed up with the radicalism of the Soviets as they were convinced that the cultural and educational

reforms were bound to be expedited due to the active intervention from the state. In the changed circumstances they thought of having gained an extended space to bring in further reforms at the cultural and political level. This, however, couldn't happen as the ideology of Marxism-Leninism was to become omnipotent in the Soviet state and with no breathing space available to the competing worldviews, all other alternatives hid behind the shade of communism.

## Consolidation of the Soviet Regime: Towards a New Political Order in Central Asia

The Soviet regime in Central Asia was consolidated with the establishment of five national republics. Each republic had its own legislative body in the form of the Supreme Soviet which met twice a year for three-day sessions to enact bills prepared between sessions by staffers. The Chairman of the Supreme Soviet, elected by the members of the Supreme Soviet, acted as the formal head of the republic. The Supreme Soviet was also responsible for appointing the Prime Minister and other members of the cabinet in the government. The Provincial Soviets worked as a governing body at the level of the provinces.

However, such an elaborate apparatus was merely a façade and the real authority rested with the Central Committee of the Republic's Communist Party. The Secretaries of the Central Committees of the Republics' Communist Parties were to provide guidelines to all agencies and institutions of the republic, monitor their daily activities, define who would be elected to the Soviet positions, made all key appointments in state institutions, and organize the work of lower-level (provincial and district) party committees. All chairmen of the republics' Supreme Soviets were simultaneously deputies of the chairman of the USSR Supreme Soviets (Roudik 2007). The Communist Parties of the Republics derived their authority to do so from the Constitution of the Soviet Union which provided for the Communist Party's leading and directing role.

The Communist Party thus acted as the primary agency of the Soviet regime consolidation. It controlled all aspects of the peoples' social and political life and the cultural developments in the Central Asian republics were scrutinised under the ideological scanner of the Party. Russification became one of the goals of the

Communist Party in the Republics. It was sought to be achieved through prioritising the Russian Language as a medium for technical and higher education.

The Soviet Regime under Stalin was particularly suspicious of the nationalist forces within the Central Asian Republics. Despite their switching over to the sides of the communists, the regime remained sceptical about their loyalty.

> Stalin was afraid that national traditions hid opposition to the Soviet Union, and he accused native leaders who preserved national traditions of opposing Communist policies, which was a crime punishable by death. Despite the fact that almost all former Central Asian nationalists switched to the Soviet regime, almost all of them were accused of anti-Soviet activities and executed, while their family members were sent to prison camps in Siberia. Approximately 110, 000 people were murdered in Central Asia between 1929 and 1953.In Kazakhstan, 17 percent of all party members were purged and eventually sentenced to imprisonment. In Uzbekistan, during the period of 1937 to 1953, almost 100,000 people were tried, and 13,000 of them were executed. Arrests affected all levels of the society, especially the nations' clerisy and people who received their education abroad or who participated in revolutionary movements outside of the Bolshevik Party (Roudik 2007: 137-138).

The arrival of Khrushchev at the centre of the Soviet political apparatus after Stalin's death in 1953 provided some kind of hope to the Central Asian elites and intellectuals. Khrushchev started rehabilitating the people, who had been persecuted in the show trials conducted in the Stalin era, but the rehabilitation remained limited and selective and the full rehabilitation started only in the late1980s, when Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev announced his policy of glasnost.

In March 1959, Sharaf Rashidov was elected as the first Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan. He remained ensconced to this position until his death in 1983. Rashidov's two decades' hold on power in Uzbekistan was marked by very personalized governance, exploitation of the people and endemic corruption. Rashidov's Kazakh counterpart, Dinmukhamed Kunaev, who was at the top of Kazakh political apparatus since 1942 until his dismissal in 1986, matched Rashidov in deeds and reputation. Both these leaders of the respective republics used the dominant position of their clans and their influential position within their own clan to entrench their personal authority. The misruling under these two leaders serve to vindicate that the soviet regime consolidation in Central Asia was carried on at the cost of the Central Asian people who were destined to suffer under decades of personalised rule. The political order that emerged during this period was

totally monopolized by the Communist Parties of the Republics. Dissensions within the party were not welcome and the cult of personality reigned supreme, often in disregard of the ideology that the person would swear by.

## Gorbachev's Bid to Reform the Political System

The advent of Gorbachev to power in 1985 as the general secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union paved the way for a dramatic turnaround in the Soviet Union's social, economic and political life. During his first year in the office, he sought to revitalise the Soviet system and society by tightening discipline, getting rid of the dead woods in the party apparatus, and attacking corruption.

The first step in this campaign was directed towards re-establishing Moscow's power over the regional party machines that had become deeply entrenched in the national republics during the past decades. He met with some success in renovating the party elite, but it soon became clear that replacing indigenous cadres and elites with the Russians loyal to Moscow cold produce explosive results. This was evident from the reaction over Moscow's decision in December 1986 to install an ethnic Russian as the chief of the Kazakh Communist Party in place of Dinmohamed Kunayev, an ethnic Kazakh and a staunch supporter of Brezhnev. The decision sparked riots in Almaty, the capital city. Dawisha and Parrott say, "Even if, the riots were fanned by Kunayev and his supporters, they showed that efforts to tighten Moscow's control over the borderlands could provoke a strong backlash among non-Russians". They further argue that the episode clearly suggested that the ideologically orthodox non-Russian apparatchiks could wrap themselves in the mantle of national rights when it was politically expedient to do so (Dawisha and Parrott 1994: 18).

Having learnt the lessons, Gorbachev changed his tactics to bring about change in the Soviet system and around 1987 his political strategy changed from tightening authoritarian control to political liberalization. He introduced multi-pronged reforms to inject life in the stagnating soviet economy and a dormant society. The reforms were undertaken under the broad headings of *Glasnost, Perestroika* and *Demokratizatsiya*. Gooding (1990) termed these reforms as "multifaceted and included not only economic but all other sides of social life, social relations, the political and ideological spheres, the style and work method of the party and its

cadres". To allay the fears of the conservatives in the party apparatus Gorbachev explained that "democracy is not the antithesis of order on a higher level, based not on unthinking obedience and the blind execution of directives but on the full fledged and resourceful participation of members of society" (Mohapatra 2006: 86).

His strategy essentially was to encourage public participation in political life to legitimately generate the power from below in order to put into practice the reforms directed towards rebuilding the institutional structures inherited from the Stalin era. To achieve his objectives, Gorbachev brought in a sweeping relaxation of censorship. He went on to introduce an element of electoral competition into the selection of state and party officials. Simultaneously, Gorbachev manoeuvred to launch "a de-Stalinisation campaign that, unlike Khrushchev's, located the origins of Stalinism in the institutional flaws of the early Soviet system rather than in Stalin's character" (Dawisha and Parrott 1994: 18).

These reform measures met with resistance from some of the Politburo members and to counter their objections Gorbachev encouraged the establishment of informal organisations created spontaneously to support social actions and movements. These informal organisations lay outside the realm of the Communist Party and the administrative structures of the state bureaucracy.

The spirit of reforms, according to Dawisha and Parrott "set in motion a historic shift in the relationship between society and the state in the Eurasian Heartland" (Dawisha and Parrott 1994: 18). Soon, a number of informal groups having diverse concerns sprang up in the Central Asian Republics. Prominent among these informal groups was the *Birlik* (unity) which became very popular in Uzbekistan with its aim being the protection of historical, cultural, spiritual and ecological heritage of Uzbekistan. In Kazakhstan, the Neveda-Semipalatinsk movement was at the forefront of resisting environmental degradation as a result of nuclear weapon testing. Another organization *Adolat* (justice) became a celebrated movement in Kazakhstan. Scores of informal organizations along with a few mentioned above spurted the political activities and became a breeding ground for demanding incremental democratic reforms in the region.

## Disintegration of the Soviet Union and Emergence of Independent Republics

The reforms unleashed from the above went to generate a dynamics that dictated some of the most significant events, which would shape the destiny of the Soviet Union. The pace and extent of the reform were changing the political fabric of the state and its people. The status and role of the Communist Party as ordained by the constitution increasingly became contested and proved to be much of an impediment in carrying out the reforms at the desired pace. By now, Gorbachev had decided to take a line, gravely detrimental to the effectiveness of the communist party. Thus he reported at the Party Plenum in February 1990:

> The Party in a renewing society can exist and play its role as vanguard only as a democratically recognized force. This means that its status should not be imposed through constitutional endorsement. The Soviet Communist Party, it goes without saying, intends to struggle for the status of the ruling party. But it will do so strictly within the framework of the democratic process by giving up any legal and political advantages, offering its program and defending it in discussions, co-operating with other social and political forces, always working amidst the masses, living by their interests and their needs. The extensive democratization currently underway in our society is being accompanied by mounting political pluralism. Various social and political organizations and movements emerge. This process may lead at a certain stage to the establishment of parties (Sakwa 1999: 447).

Finally, Article 6 of the USSR Constitution[4] which provided for the leading and guiding role of the Communist Party in molding the social and political life within the state was amended on March 14, 1990 to affect a change in this constitutionally ordained status of the Communist Party.

The post of Soviet Presidency became a reality the next day with the election of Gorbachev as the president of the Soviet Union. According to Sakwa, "Gorbachev

[4] Article 6 (before the amendment): The leading and guiding force of Soviet society and the nucleus of its political system, of all state and public organizations, is the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The CPSU exists for the people and serves the people. The Communist Party, armed with Marxism-Leninism, determines the general perspectives of the development of society and the course of the home and foreign policy of the USSR, directs the great constructive work of the Soviet people, and imparts a planned, systematic and theoretically substantiated character to their struggle for the victory of communism. All party organizations shall function within the framework of the Constitution of the USSR. *Konstitutsiya (osnovnoi zakon)* RSFSR (Moscow, *Politizdat*, 1980*), pp. 5–6,* reproduced in Sakwa 1999:347.

ignored calls to use the opportunity to place himself and the party before the people's judgment, and instead he was elected by the Congress of People's Deputies alone. (Thus) Gorbachev's claim to represent the best interests of the people was thereafter fatally undermined" (Sakwa 1999: 447).

On June 12, Russia's newly elected Congress of People's Deputies adopted a declaration on 'state sovereignty' that, in effect, declared Russia's laws superior to those of the USSR. This contentious move by the RSFSR to assert the Republic's sovereignty at the cost of the Union's unity was a blow to the vision and ideals of the architects of the USSR. The coup in August 1991 by conservatives who disapproved of devolution of the power to the Republics came as the final blow to any hope of keeping the Union intact. Though, the prime objective of the architects of the coup was to keep the strength of the Union intact, their imprudent move only accelerated the movement towards its disintegration. Following the coup the USSR Congress of People's Deputies dissolved itself, and the highest body of power became the State Council, composed of the leaders of the republics and chaired by Gorbachev.

The USSR State Council recognised the independence of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in its first meeting in September 1991. In the meantime, Russia had started taking over many of the functions hitherto fulfilled by the centre and referendum on 1st December in favour of Ukraine's independence made the dissolution inevitable. The decision to form a Commonwealth of Independence States (CIS) by an agreement between the three Slav republics of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus on December 8, 1991 was a clear advertisement of the end of the USSR. Part of the declaration on the creation of CIS read: "We, the Republic of Belarus, the Russian Federation (RSFSR), and Ukraine, as founder states of the USSR who signed the Union Treaty of 1922, designated below as the High Contracting Parties, state that the USSR, as a subject of international law and a geopolitical reality, is ceasing to exist."[5]

According to Vassiliev (2001), the dissolution of the USSR at the behest of the three Slavic republics came as a rude shock to the Central Asian republics, and they were forced by the circumstances to join the alliance. On December 12, 1991 the leaders of

[5] The declaration on the creation of the CIS was signed by the leaders of the three founding republics of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus (Sakwa 1999: 477).

the five Central Asian republics of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan met in Ashgabat and expressed their willingness to become equal co-founders of the CIS. Almaty became the venue where the heads of 11 former republics of the USSR (all except the Baltic and Georgia) adopted the Declaration on December 21, 1991, proclaiming themselves as members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Georgia became a member later in 1993.

## Independent States of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan and the Question of Democratization

As discussed above, the Soviet Union had formally ceased to exist by the end of December 1991. The Soviet republics, however, including the five Soviet Central Asian Republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan had already proclaimed their sovereignty in 1990, and had instituted the office of the president to head the republic's administration[6] (Akiner 2005: 118). Later they proclaimed independence one after another in the second half of 1991 as the disintegration of the Union looked imminent. While Uzbekistan was the first Central Asian republic to proclaim independence on August 31, Kazakhstan was the last to do so in Central Asia and also the last of the USSR republics (except for Russia) when it proclaimed independence on December 16, 1991 (Capisani 2000: 3).

The declaration of sovereignty and the institution of the post of Presidents in both the republics of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan were followed by a decision to submit it to a popular vote for gaining confirmation of the people and to provide legitimacy to the newly created institutions. The presidential election in Uzbekistan based on the universal suffrage was held on December 29, 1991 with a 95 percent turnout and Islam Karimov, the former First Secretary of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan, was elected to the presidency with 86 percent of the total votes polled. The only opposition candidate Muhammad Salih backed by the Erk party polled a mere 12.3 percent (Capisani 2000: 82). The national election for the post of President in Kazakhstan was held on December 1, 1991 and some 88.2 percent of the electorate

[6] With the institution of the post of President in the USSSR in March 1990 on the initiative of Mikhail Gorbachev, formerly General Secretary of the Communist Party of the USSR and his election to the post, the First Secretaries of the Communist Parties of the Central Asian republics followed the suit. They transformed their authority to become the president of their respective republic and later in the same year the republics made declarations of sovereignty. The main constitutional implication of their declaring sovereignty was that republican laws would henceforth take precedence over federal laws.

turned out for voting. Nursultan Nazarbaev, also a former First Secretary, of the Kazakhstan Communist Party was elected as the president by polling 98.7 percent of the total votes in his favour (Rumer 2005: 204).

These elections in Uzbekistan and Uzbekistan marked the emergence of new regimes in these republics, regimes that were unfettered by subordination to Moscow and had no adherence to any official ideology or party. Subsequent to the elections, both the republics have adopted new constitutions, which declare them to be 'secular and democratic'[7] The source of state power is claimed to be derived from the people of the republics.[8] The constitutions of these republics also provide for the separation of power among the legislature, the executive and the Judiciary within the state and broad freedoms to its citizens. Thus, the constitutions of these republics which remain the supreme legal document in present day nation-states would make us believe that the states of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan are like any other 'normal' liberal-democratic states. Indeed, the leaders at the highest level in both the republics made repeated claims to make a break with the soviet past and promised to herald these young republics into the fold of 'open societies'. The essence of their claims lay in their bid towards 'democratization', which means pushing the political changes in a democratic direction (Potter et al. 1997: 3).

The question of democratization in these two republics is important as democracy in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan would pave the way for rapid democratization of the Central Asian region as both these countries are major political and economic players in the region. The pace, character and extent of political reforms in these two republics are definitely going

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[7] Article 1; Clause 1: The Republic of Kazakhstan proclaims itself a democratic, secular, legal and social state whose highest values are an individual, his life, rights and freedoms.
Article 1. Uzbekistan is a sovereign democratic republic....
Article 18. All citizens of the Republic of Uzbekistan shall have equal rights and freedoms, and shall be equal before the law, without discrimination by sex, race, nationality, language, religion, social origin, convictions, individual and social status.

[8] Article 3; Clause 1: The people shall be the only source of state power. Article 3; Clause 2 : The people shall exercise power directly through an all-nation referendum and free elections as well as delegate the execution of their power to state institutions.
Article 7: The people are the sole source of state power. State power in the Republic of Uzbekistan shall be exercised in the interests of the people and solely by the bodies empowered therefore by the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the laws passed on its basis. Any seizure of powers belonging to state authority, suspension or termination of activity of the bodies of state authority contrary to the procedure prescribed by the Constitution, as well as the formation of any new or parallel bodies of state authority shall be regarded as unconstitutional and punishable by law.

to either push or stall the prospects of genuine democracy in the region. From this perspective, the establishment of Western style, multiparty electoral system in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan during the first few years of independence was indicative of a "democratic impulse" sweeping across these newly independent republics.

However, they failed to carry forward a sustained democratization and but for their initial promises towards democratization, their attitudes in bringing genuine democratic reforms have been a major concern to the scholars and political commentators as well as to the international actors pursuing the case for democratization in the illiberal societies. Akiner argues that only a semblance of democratic participation in government has been created in these republics by the holding of nationwide referendums to approve constitutional amendments (e.g., extending the term of office of the incumbent president). Even though elections, both parliamentary and presidential are held, the outcome of such polls is a foregone conclusion. The referendum for presidential proposals receives near unanimous approval and the electoral laws are routinely violated during the parliamentary and presidential elections. Therefore, the prospects for rapid democratization look bleak at this point (Akiner 2005: 126).

To this end, some of the scholars working on the Central Asian region have argued that the thrust of the forces, wanting to promote democracy in these two republics and the Central Asian region, from 'the above', is misguided as the political elites at the highest level certainly lack the political will to implement democratic political reforms. This line of argument is again reflected in the contentions that efforts to bring western model of economic liberalism and political democracy to the less developing countries like the republics in question become a force of democratization, violence and, more ant-democratic manifestations or 'illiberal democracy' (Blank 2005: 4).

Explaining the problems facing the democratization efforts in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, Matveeva (1999) explains that post independence political developments in Central Asia have been a product of fundamental structural elements in these societies. She further argues that democracy as a suitable basis of a legitimate political order in Central Asia should be established through a mundane and careful work by finding local governing arrangements, which would incorporate the values and

structures of societies they intend to service. She is critical of the way the democratization project in Central Asia has been carried through and is convinced that the form in which the reforms were undertaken, failed to take into account the realities of Central Asia.

## Conclusion

The political journey of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan is inseparable from the developments that shaped the destiny of the entire Central Asian region through ages. The present bid to democratize the political institutions and society at large must take into account the values and structures which define the social, political and cultural fabric of these republics. Blank (2005) suggests that it should also be kept in mind that just as continental Europe had to undergo a long, historical, often interrupted, and complex evolution before it could actually become democratic, the Central Asian republics of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan too, would have to go through a prolonged process of incremental political reforms before democracy could actually be achieved.

# Chapter 2
# *Review of Literature*

# CHAPTER 2

# REVIEW OF LITERATURE

## Defining Democratization and Democracy

Democratization has been a major global phenomenon during the twentieth century and the struggle of nation-states to move in a democratic direction and to sustain and entrench democratic political systems is one of the central narratives of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Potter et al. 1997). Given the importance and appeal of a concept like democracy and democratization to both the academia and the common people, the literature on democracy is abundant.

The merits and demerits of democracy have been debated since the days of Aristotle and since then the concept of democracy has occupied a central place in the discipline of political science. Given the acceptance of democracy today, it has become the most general term of approval in the political lexicon, and so has become emptied of all content; democracy is whatever we choose it to mean. Even the most ruthless dictators will claim the mantle of democracy, because they are carrying out the 'true will of the people'; for them, dictatorship is only a distinctive way of practicing democracy in their country (Beetham 2006).

Dwelling upon the merits of democracy and making the case for a democratic system over authoritarianism, Vanhanen (1997) argues that democratic governance is a very important aspect of political systems in the sense that it makes a difference from the perspective of people living under a particular political system. For him, the difference between a democratic government and autocratic system of governance is that by its very nature democratic governments are inclined to take care of the many and serve their interests in the endless struggle for survival in this world of scarcity, whereas it belongs to the nature of autocratic systems to serve the interests of the few. He brings the concept of power as a central variable in the hands of political actors and its use as per the will of the people becomes an important factor in imparting a benevolent character to democratic

political systems. Power, here, becomes a means for directing the effective outcomes of policies and for deciding the constituencies to whom the outcomes of the policies cater to. He holds that, power is shared by the many in a democracy, and is used, or at least attempted to be used, for the advantage of the many, and because power is concentrated in the hands of the few in an autocracy, it is also used to serve the interests of the few.

This is the reason, he thinks, why subjugated and common people living under autocratic systems dream of democracy or something like it and why they start to struggle for power and democracy as soon as they are able to challenge their rulers. It is reasonable to assume that a democratic system provides a better framework for the good life and human dignity of the many than an autocratic system, but this is not a sufficient reason for the ruling few to give up their monopoly of power and to share power and the fruits of power with the many. As a consequence, democracies do not emerge easily, and it is often difficult to maintain established democratic institutions. The many have to struggle for democracy and defend their democratic freedoms and rights against the few who would like to establish their own hegemony. It is difficult to know the results of such struggles in advance. In fact, most political systems may be somewhere in the twilight area between the rule of the few and the rule of the many. It is this quest to predict the results of such a struggle which makes him explore the causes and conditions of democratization and to evaluate the chances of democracy in particular countries (Vanhanen 1997: 4).

At this point it becomes important to discuss and conceptualize democracy to devise a framework to direct as well as to limit the research and also to make the proposed work viable and comprehensive. In linguistic terms 'democracy' is derived from the Greek *demokratia* that can be broken down into *demos* meaning the people and *kratos* meaning rule. Although the translation of democracy as 'rule by the people' implies decision making, viewing democracy primarily in this way covers only some of the meanings often assigned to the word. Lincoln summed up democracy by declaring a commitment to 'government of the people, by the people, for the people'. This simplistic but powerful summation of democracy clearly establishes 'the people' as both the means and ends of democracy.

Beetham defines democracy as a mode of decision-making about collectively binding rules and policies over which the people exercise control, and the most democratic arrangement [is] that where all members of the collectivity enjoy effective equal rights to take part in such decision-making directly – one, that is to say, which realizes to the greatest conceivable degree the principles of popular control and equality in its exercise (Beetham 1992: 40).

According to Tilly, observers of democracy and democratization generally choose, implicitly or explicitly, among four main types of definitions: constitutional, substantive, procedural, and process-oriented. A *constitutional approach* concentrates on laws a regime enacts concerning political activity. Thus differences among oligarchies, monarchies, republics, and a number of other types of regimes can be recognized across history by means of contrasting legal arrangements. Within democracies, furthermore, a distinction can be made between constitutional monarchies, presidential systems, and parliament-centered arrangements, not to mention such variations as federal versus unitary structures.

*Substantive approaches* focus on the conditions of life and politics a given regime promotes: Does this regime promote human welfare, individual freedom, security, equity, social equality, public deliberation, and peaceful conflict resolution? If so, one might be inclined to call it democratic regardless of how its constitution reads.

Advocates of *procedural definitions* single out a narrow range of governmental practices to determine whether a regime qualifies as democratic or not. Most procedural observers center their attention on elections, asking whether genuinely competitive elections engaging large numbers of citizens regularly produce changes in governmental personnel and policy.

*Process-oriented approaches* to democracy differ significantly from constitutional, substantive, and procedural accounts as they identify some minimum set of processes that must be continuously in motion for a situation to qualify as democratic (Tilly 2007: 7-9).

Dahl stipulates five process-oriented criteria for democracy. He also dwells upon their working in a voluntary association. The five process-oriented criteria proposed by Dahl are:

*Effective participation*: Before a policy is adopted by the association, all the members must have equal and effective opportunities for making their views known to the other members as to what the policy should be.

*Voting equality*: When the moment arrives at which the decision about the policy will finally be made, every member must have an equal and effective opportunity to vote, and all votes must be counted as equal.

*Enlightened understanding*: Within reasonable limits as to time, each member must have equal and effective opportunities for learning about the relevant alternative policies and their likely consequences.

*Control of the agenda*: The members must have the exclusive opportunity to decide how and, if they choose, what matters are to be placed on the agenda. Thus the democratic process required by the three preceding criteria is never closed. The policies of the association are always open to change by the members, if they so choose.

*Inclusion of adults*: All, or at any rate most, adult permanent residents should have the full rights of citizens that are implied by the first four criteria. Before the twentieth century this criterion was unacceptable to most advocates of democracy (Dahl 1998: 37–38).

Tilly points that the process-oriented approach to democracy underlined in Dahl's propositions neatly describes an interlocking set of political processes and how a voluntary association working through these interlocking set of political processes can practice democracy. When, Dahl moves from voluntary associations to national regimes he doesn't lose sight of his process-oriented insights but also introduces institutions. Institutions, for Dahl, consist of practices that endure. His six distinctive institutions in the 'Polyarchal Democracy' are: elected officials; free, fair, and frequent elections; freedom of expression; alternative sources of information; associational autonomy; and

inclusive citizenship. Tilly concludes that, taken together Dahl's criteria for polyarchal democracy describe a working process, a series of regularized interactions among citizens and officials. Such a construction of democracy goes far beyond the usual procedural standards (Tilly 2007: 10).

But is there any existing and working model of democracy that can be termed as an ideal democracy? The answer from the scholarly community is an emphatic, no. For them, there is not now and has never been in the modern world of nation-states a perfect democracy, one in which all citizens have roughly equal political resources and in which government is completely or almost completely responsive to all citizens. This is why Dahl uses the term polyarchy to characterize the more limited form of democracy that has been attained to date (Dahl et al. 2003: 38). Linz observes, "political democracy does not necessarily assure even a reasonable approximation of what we would call a democratic society, a society with considerable equality of opportunity in all spheres" (Dahl et al. 2003: 38). Thus the process of democratization is always incomplete and its achievements towards building democracies would only remain milestones in a perpetual journey towards perfection.

There has also been no unanimity about the forms of democracy that can be adopted for the purpose of governance within a polity. Indeed, scholars tend to view democracy beyond a method of governance and have argued to establish democracy as a way of organizing social and political life. Such a view makes democracy much extensive and inclusive. Working definitions of democracy divide into three overlapping categories: substantive criteria emphasizing qualities of human experience and social relations; constitutional criteria emphasizing legal procedures such as elections and referenda; and political-process criteria emphasizing inter- actions among politically constituted actors (Collier and Levitsky 1997).

If democracy is a political method, democratization is a social and political process (the set of independent variables); the process of achieving a working democracy (Pateman 1996: 7). Democratization would thus refer to political changes moving in a democratic direction (Potter et al. 1997). By its definition, democratization establishes itself as a process in transition; a transition characterizing the movement from authoritarianism to

democracy. Such a transition can either bring stability or provide further ground for instability depending upon the structure and political culture of the system within which the transition is being ushered in.

Democratization is an all encompassing process, a government's effort to provide open access to information reflects democratization, so does its effort to involve and engage the civil society in solving the problems affecting the society. Thus, democratization involves everything that may make a democracy deliver its goods effectively and efficiently. Tilly (2007), explaining the process of democratization and its starting point (conditions), argues that, democratization emerges from interacting changes in three analytically separable but interdependent sets of social relations: public politics, inequality, and networks of trust. In the course of democratization, the bulk of a government's subject population acquires binding, protected, relatively equal claims on a government's agents, activities, and resources. In a related process, categorical inequality declines in those areas of social life that either constitute or immediately support participation in public politics.

Finally, a significant shift occurs in the locus of interpersonal networks on which people rely when undertaking risky long-term enterprises such as marriage, long-distance trade, membership in crafts, and investment of savings; such networks move from evasion of governmental detection and control to involvement of government agents and presumption that such agents will meet their long-term commitments. He concludes that only where these three sets of changes intersect, does effective, durable democracy emerge (Tilly 2003: 40). Thus a regime is democratic to the degree that political relations between the state and its citizens feature broad, equal, protected, mutually binding consultation. Democratization then means net movement towards broader, more equal, more protected, and more mutually binding consultation (Tilly 2007: 59).

## Patterns of Democratization

There have been attempts to identify and generalize the patterns of democratization around the world. Huntington (1991) talked about 'waves of democratization' boosting the democratization process and the intermittent 'reverse waves' affecting the process of

democratization adversely. His wave theory, however, fails to explain the causality – why does democracy come about and what makes it endure, nonetheless he has made a significant contribution in the democratization literature by identifying various 'waves of democracy' and giving a sequential order to it.

The process of democratization has followed different trajectories in different parts of the word at different historical time spans. Perhaps, this is the reason why Potter et al. (1997) considers democratization processes as perhaps the liveliest and most prominent 'growth point' in the literature of comparative politics. By raising some important questions like why has democratization been a strong impulse in some countries, a weaker or non-existent impulse in others? Why democratic forms of government and politics have at certain historical points in time been more prevalent in certain regions of the world, less prevalent in others?, Potter et al. (1997) explains patterns of democratization under three general types of theoretical approach: i) The *modernization approach* emphasizing a number of social and economic requisites either associated with existing liberal democracies or necessary for successful democratization, ii) The *transition approach* emphasizing political processes and elite initiatives and choices that account for moves from authoritarian rule to liberal democracy and iii) The *structural approach* emphasizing changing structures of power favourable to democratization.

The *modernization approach* explains democratization in terms of economic development. The classic starting point for a set of ideas that has been used to approach the explanation of democratization is the essay 'Economic Development and Democracy' by Seymour Martin Lipset in his work *Political Man.* Lipset (1960) in the said work argues that democracy is related to a country's socioeconomic development or level of modernization. Based on certain empirical evidences he concluded that 'the more well-to- do a nation, the greater the chances that it will sustain democracy' (Lipset 1960: 31). He found five indicators of development like per capita income, telephones per 1000 persons, percentage of population involved in agriculture, percent of population living in the metropolitan areas and percentage of literate population.

While linking socio-economic developments with democratization, he focuses on the combination of economic development and spread of higher education as the determinants of the form of "class struggle" as both these factors provide with a capability to the lower strata to develop a long time perspective and a more complex as well as a gradualist view of politics (Lipset 1960: 45). His conclusions regarding education as a potent means of democratization come from his belief that education broadens the person's outlook, which enables him to understand the need for norms of tolerance. Thus, education restrains him from adhering to extremist doctrines and increases his capacity to make rational electoral choices. According to him, 'the lower the absolute standard of living of lower classes, the greater the pressure on the upper strata to treat the lower as vulgar, innately inferior, and hence unworthy of political rights and democracy'(Lipset 1983: 51). Socio-economic development, in his view, can strengthen the middle class, the moderates and democratic parties while penalizing the extremist groups.

The modernist school based its analysis on two general conjectures. First, it portrayed political empowerment at the mass societal level as the foundation of democratic advancement. Second, it presumed that such empowerment could only come about through economic development (Hadenius 2002: 64).

Studies by Jackman (1973) and Bollen (1979) also support Lipset's thesis. Their studies point that the level of economic development consistently emerges as having a substantively significant influence on democracy (Hadenius 2002). Hadenius developed a composite index of democracy and found that, while being 'well-to-do' matters (as argued by Lipset) at the level of cross-national comparison, it is not necessarily the economic, but the social factors such as literacy and education which are the most powerful explanatory variables (Hadenius 2002). On the other hand, Gasiorowski (1995) problematises the modernization thesis and concludes that inflationary crises tended to inhibit democratization in the 1950s and 1960s but seem to have facilitated the same process in the late 1980s.

Przeworski and Limongi (1997) have shown that socio-economic development and democracy do not share a linear relationship: the probability of democracy does not increase automatically as the level of development rises. They pointed to the importance of a middle income range, defined in terms of per capita income expressed in American dollar. It is for countries within this range, neither very poor nor very rich, that the probability of the fall of authoritarian regimes and their replacement by stable democratic regimes was highest. In countries below that range, the establishment of a democratic regime was possible (and did happen), but it was unlikely to endure.

Inglehart and Welzel (2005), without undermining the central insight of the modernization theory that – socio-economic development brings major social, cultural and political changes, present a revised version of the modernization theory that integrates socioeconomic development, cultural change and democratization under the overarching theme of human development. They demonstrate that fundamental changes are occurring in the belief systems of public around the world. They show how these changes are shaped by an interaction between the forces of socio-economic development and persisting cultural traditions.

Earlier versions of modernization theory did not foresee the massively strong linkage that the authors find between rising self-expression values and the emergence and flourishing of democratic institutions. Their main argument is based on their interpretation of contemporary social changes as a process of human development, which is producing increasingly humanistic societies that place growing emphasis on human freedom and self-expression. They further argue that democracy is not simply the result of clever elite bargaining and constitutional engineering rather it depends on deep-rooted orientations among the people themselves. These orientations motivate them to demand freedom and responsive government – and to act to ensure that the governing elites remain responsive to them. For them, genuine democracy is not simply a machine that once set up, functions by itself. It depends on people.

The *transition approach* emphasizes the role of elites as a vehicle of democratic change. Rustow (1970) in his article *Transitions to Democracy* challenges Lipset's thesis and the

modernization approach in general. Rustow points that Lipset and others using the modernization approach are motivated by a 'functional curiosity' which leads them to ask a functional question: what factors can best preserve or enhance the health and stability of democracy? Whereas he asks the question: 'how a democracy comes into being in the first place' (Rustow 1970: 340). To cope with such a question, Rustow argued that a historical approach, marked by holistic consideration of different countries as case studies, provided a sounder basis for analysis than looking for functional requisites.

Rustow's formulations on democratization process (passing through different phases) became elaborated into the transition approach. It has inspired the works of Guillermo O'Donell and his colleagues (1986) *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule* (4 volumes), Scott Mainwarring et al. (1992) *Issues in Democratic Consolidation,* Yossi Shain and Juan Linz (1995) *Between States: Interim Governments and Democratic Transition.* Like Rustow, all the above scholars have tried to distinguish between *transition* from authoritarian rule and the *consolidation* of liberal democracy. The rationale for such a distinction is that initial transitions sometimes succeed *i.e.* get consolidated, and sometimes they fail, or get stalled. 'Crucial to the outcome of Democratic transitions', say Shain and Linz, is 'the question of who governs in the interim period and the way they use their power' (Shain and Linz 1995: 21).

Rustow (1970) believed that certain actions, choices, and strategies of political elites are beneficial to democratic transitions, others are not. Democratization, according to him is largely contingent on what elites and individuals decide to do in a particular political context. He talks about four stages of democratization process through which every country passes in order to become democratic state. He elaborates on these four stages in his article *Transition to Democracy* (1970). The first stage in the democratization process is the 'national unity' stage. In this stage, a consensus emerges among the vast majority of the people in a country that they share the same political identity as a member constituting the nation.

The second stage is marked by an inconclusive political struggle in which new political elites take a centre-stage. This stage is characterized by a rapid industrialization and

development of various economic sectors. The new elites compete with the old elites for their share in the polity and a backlash becomes imminent as the old elites want to retain their significant positions in the system. Each country goes through a struggle among the elites at this stage but the mode and manner of the struggle differ depending upon the social and political set-up in which the struggles take place. However, the defining feature of such a struggle is that the conflict is major and not restricted to some kind of bland pluralism of group conflict. Rustow calls it, 'not a lukewarm struggle but a hot family feud' (Potter et. al. 1997: 14). Democracy, in short, is born out of conflict, even violence, never as a result of simply peaceful evolution. That helps explain as to why democracy can be so fragile in the early stages, and why so many countries do not make it through the preparatory phase to the first transition. The intense political struggle can result in the demise of democracy itself.

The third stage is an important stage as it is that vital 'decision phase', a historical moment, where, the parties to the 'inconclusive political struggle' decide to compromise by entering into a pact among themselves, thereby evolving some sort of power sharing mechanism guided by democratic rules. In Rustow's theory there is always a conscious decision by the political elites to adopt democratic rules, 'for a country never becomes a democracy in a fit of absentmindedness'.

The fourth stage is a 'habituation phase'. Rustow stresses the importance of this phase as democracy is firmly rooted in this phase through practice. He explains that the parties to the inconclusive struggle might have seen the conscious adoption of democratic rules during the 'historical moment' of the decision-making phase as a necessity rather than something conceived as desirable. But the compromises made to evolve democratic rules, deemed to be a necessity become a habit and an accepted norm in this stage.

Elite pact is very important in the context of post-soviet states which aspire to move towards democracy. As the post-soviet states are multi-ethnic, Hughes and Sasse assume that these states are inherently unstable, especially where there is territorialization of differences. They further argue that such territorialized differences are impediments to democracy building efforts (Hughes and Sasse 2002: 09). This pessimistic view of

considering territorial differences within a state and democratic aspirations of that state as mutually exclusive is born out of the views of John Stuart Mill, one of the founding fathers of liberalism.

Mill asserted that democracy in an ethnically diverse state was 'next to impossible' (Hughes and Sasse 2002: 09). Barry holds a similar view; he argues that democracy is inherently incompatible with multi-nationality or poly-ethnicity, precisely because the integrity of the state is threatened by secession (Barry 1989: 38). Dahl backs Barry's argument when he points that, 'in societies with high levels of sub-cultural pluralism', the price of polyarchy may be the breakup of the country itself. He further argues that, on the other hand, territorial unity may be achieved but only with the establishment of a hegemonic regime (Dahl 1971: 121). Linz and Stepan argue that the post-communist societies are prone to exclusivist 'nationalising' policies, rather than assimilation. Such policies may result in homogenization in certain cases, but are more likely to instigate and nurture interethnic rivalries leading to conflicts, which may obstruct democratization (Linz and Stepan 1996).

As a part of post-soviet constitution making process an elite pact is inter-ethnic and links centre and periphery (Hughes and Sasse 2002: 10). They assume that it is more likely to be a strategy of accommodation, whether in the minimalist form of a power-sharing agreement or some form of institutionalized autonomy or through a partial elite co-option. They stress on the basic constitutional engineering during a democratic transition and emphasize upon the stabilizing or-destabilising role of such an attempt, depending on whether a state opts for presidential, mixed or parliamentary system (Hughes and Sasse 2002: 10).

According to Linz (1990) the compromises due to parliamentarianism create a better environment for a politically stable democratic transition. While contrasting it with presidentialism he points that presidentialism has certain 'perils' that should make it least preferred institutional option for democracy builders. The dangers emanate from its tendency to polarize the society, engender authoritarian temptations, foster the personalization of power and retard institutional development. Horowitz (1990), on the

other hand argues that president is a useful device for managing territorial and ethnic challenges if it maximises accommodation by promoting inclusion rather than exclusion in divided societies.

The main problem with the transitional theories is that these theories do not emphasise on governmental institutions other than parliamentarianism or presidentialism and the engineering of electoral or party systems. Stepan (1999) admits the failure of transitology to address the role of state institutions in the management of multi-ethnicity. He argues that federalism can be a key stabilising factor in multiethnic states under democratization. Lijphart (1999) has also emphasised the role of the elites in democratic transition by arguing that the inauguration of democratic government depends crucially on the democratic commitment and political skills of the elites. He qualifies his assertions with two preconditions: 1) The parties must realise that they have more to win form a peace accord than from a continuation of conflict. 2) The parties must find appropriate solution; they must apply the right techniques. To this end he proposes a proportional electoral formula and argues that any nation having an experience of national liberation movement against the colonial powers is bound to have a positive impact on the democratization process as the joint participation of the popular groups in a common struggle impart a sense of unity among the groups.

Democratization can also be explained through the prism of *structural approach* which focuses on long term processes of historical change. Moore (1966) in his work *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World* seeks to place the process of democratization within the gamut of changing structures of power. He attempts to understand the pattern of democratization in terms of changed interrelationships between four changing structures of power. Three were social classes – the peasantry, the landed upper class, the urban bourgeoisie; the other was the state. Unlike the transition approach, the structural approach explains democratization as a process driven by the changing structures of power rather than through the agency of political elites.

The basic premise of the *structural approach* to democratization lies in its assumptions that the particular interrelationship of certain structures of power – economic, social, political, gradually change through history providing a set of constraints and opportunities that drive political elites and the other stakeholders within the changing structure along a historical trajectory leading towards liberal democracy. Thus, Moore concludes that a common pattern of changing power relationships between peasants, lords, urban bourgeoisie, and state led towards the evolution of liberal democracy.

He explains the emergence of alternative political models for e.g. fascism as a by-product of the conditions where the urban bourgeoisie was comparatively weak and relied on the dominant classes to sponsor commercialisation of agriculture within the state. This enforced labour discipline among the peasantry. For the rise of communist systems, he offers the argument that, the communist revolutions occurred in conditions where the urban bourgeoisie was weak and dominated by the state, also the link between the landlords and the peasantry was comparatively weak and as a result the landlords failed to commercialize agriculture. In such a situation the peasantry became a cohesive force and forged alliance with the organised industrial workers who led the revolution (Potter et al. 1997: 19).

Moore argues that the capitalist economic development creates growing pressure for democratization by fostering the emergence of the middle class – the flag bearers of democracy. Thus he concludes, 'without the bourgeoisie, no democracy'. Rueschemeyer suggests that democratic consolidation takes place only at a later stage of democratization when the working class accepts the principle of constitutional democracy. Without such an acceptance, democracy remains contested and is far from being the 'only game in town' (Elgstrom and Hyden 2002: 7).

The changing structure of society and the form of state power has thus been fundamental to democratization. This is manifested in the democratization demands that have emanated from within the structure due to the separation of the array of classes from the state apparatus. The subordinate classes demand for democratization as they want to be accommodated within the state apparatus. In his study, Rueschemeyer shows that the

changing configuration of the transnational power can again affect the class alignments and the nature of the state. For example, the economic dependence of one country on another can delay industrialisation and can keep the urban working class small, thereby weakening pro-democratic forces. Similarly, geo-political dependence can be unfavourable to democratic consolidation if massive military and economic aid strengthens the state apparatus unduly in relation to balance of class forces. Therefore, the relaxation of international tension may improve the democratic prospects globally (Potter et al.1997: 21-22).

Wydra (2007) offers a new perspective on democratization by bringing communism back into the study of democracy in post communist societies. As discussed above most of the existing literature on post communist political transformations disconnects communism from the study of the new order, viewing communism and democracy as polar opposite to each other and the communist legacy as an obstacle to democratic development in post communist societies. Wydra problematises this dichotomy and argues that communist experience must be central to the study of the nature and emergence of democracy in post communist countries. His prime contention being that emergence of democracy occurred within communism in the post-communist societies and that democracy was a search of meaning and self-grounding in response to traumatic experiences of communism.

## Waves of Democratization

Democratization has unfolded gradually across the globe since the nineteenth century but this process has not been linear or uncontested. Moreover, the causes of democratization have varied over time and space. One way to explain the expansion of democratization over time is to group experiences together in distinct 'waves'. This suggests that democratization in the countries linked together in the 'wave' at least have some common causes. The wave theory, used to explain democratization has now become a conventional approach in the democratization literature (Grugel 2002: 31). Huntington (1991) describes a wave of democratization in the following way:

> A wave of democratization is a group of transitions from nondemocratic to democratic regimes that occur within a specified period of time and that significantly outnumber transitions in the opposite direction during that period of

> time. A wave also involves liberalisation or partial democratization in political systems that do not become fully democratic. Each of the first two waves of democratization was followed by a reverse wave in which some but not all of the countries that had previously made the transition to democracy reverted to nondemocratic rule (Huntington 1991:15–16).

According to Huntington, the first long wave of democratization started at the beginning of the nineteenth century and had its roots in the American and French revolutions. In the following decades many European countries made a transition to liberal democracy. The first long wave of democratization was halted in the 1920s with the rise of Fascism in Europe and the first reverse wave began in 1922 with the March on Rome and Mussolini's easy disposal of Italy's fragile and rather corrupt democracy.

The first reverse wave saw the emergence and consolidation of the fascist, communist and militarist regimes. The anti-democratic ideas gained strength from the great economic depression of the 1930s (Huntington 1991: 17). The reverse wave, according to Huntington, lasted from 1926 until 1942. During this period, democratic political systems collapsed in Italy, Germany, Spain, Argentina and some of the fledgling democracies in Eastern Europe. Fascist ideology was clearly an anti-thesis of democratic ideas and though it was eventually defeated in Italy and Germany, the dictatorships that emerged in Portugal and Spain in the 1930s survived into the 1970s.

Starting in World War II a second, short wave of democratization occurred (Huntington 1991: 18). Its beginning was signalled by the physical defeat of the Axis powers in 1945. The American, British and French allies were the chief architects of democratization in the occupied territories of Germany, Japan and Austria. Democracy also took off around this time in parts of Latin America. Decolonisation after the Second World War further enlarged the number of democracies, initially at least, although democracy in much of Africa was both unstable and formalistic (Grugel 2002: 33).

According to Huntington, by the early 1960s the second wave of democratization had exhausted itself and by the late 1950s political development and regime transitions were taking on a heavily authoritarian cast (Huntington 1991: 19). These developments marked the beginning of the second reverse wave. The second reverse wave, according to him

dramatically changed the political systems within the newly decolonised democratic countries all over the globe. The change, according to him was most dramatic in Latin America where a new type of political system, "bureaucratic authoritarianism", replaced the nascent democratic systems.

Huntington identifies a third wave beginning with democratization in Portugal in 1974, followed quickly by Greece and Spain. The third wave gained its sweeping strength with the democratic transformation of the Latin American countries in the late 1970s and 80s. The democratic movement also had its manifestations in Asia; democratic transformation was swift in Korea and Taiwan and Pakistan saw the end of the military rule when the opposition, led by a woman, won an electoral victory and took control of the government. At the end of the 1980s, the democratic wave engulfed the communist world. In 1988 Hungary began the transition to a multi-party system whereas democratic reforms were introduced in the Soviet Union by Gorbachev. According to Huntington, during the third wave, the movement toward democracy was a global one and in fifteen years the democratic wave moved across southern Europe, swept through Latin America, moved on to Asia, and decimated dictatorship in the Soviet bloc (Huntington 1991: 25).

Huntington explains the democratization under the third wave as the product of five key factors:

- The deepening legitimacy problems of authoritarian systems. This was made worse by the fact that non-democratic regimes tend to depend excessively on performance legitimacy. A number of non-democratic regimes were undermined either by poor economic performance in the wake of oil-price rises in the 1970s or by military defeat;
- rising expectations following the economic boom of the 1960s, leading to demands for raised living standards and education, especially on the part of the middle classes;
- the liberalisation of the Catholic Church following the Second Vatican Council of 1963-65, assisting the transformation of national churches (and individual church leaders) and making it possible for them to act as proponents of reform;

- the changing policies of global organisations such as the European Union, and of actors such as Gorbachev and the shift in US policy towards endorsing an agenda of democratization and human rights; and
- demonstration effects, or snowballing, the result of the global growth of communication networks (Huntington 1991: 45–6).

The wave theory has dominated the democratization literature since the publication of Huntington's book: *The Third Wave of Democratization.* According to Grugel, the wave theory points to the importance of grouping democratizations in time and this is its strength as it forces us to look for commonality in democratization processes in countries that, at first sight, may be very different. It directs our attention to the big picture, beyond national experiences. It indicates the cyclical way in which democracy has waxed and waned as an organising principle for government and as a popular aspiration (Grugel 2002: 34-35). Nevertheless, scholars have convincingly pointed at its limitations.

According to Karl, Huntington adopts an excessively narrow understanding of democracy by seeing democracy simply as relatively clean elections, independent of the size of the electorate, the nature of the party system or the state of civil liberties which can easily give rise to the 'fallacy of electoralism' (Karl 1995). One of the factors that Huntington (1991) recognizes as crucial in propelling the third wave of democratization is the global acceptance of capitalism which leads to the development of a bourgeoisie and middle-class professionals who are the key to democratization. However, the relationship between classes, capitalism and democracy is complex. In particular, the industrial bourgeoisie is not always democratically minded. Furthermore, since democracy requires an inclusive citizenship, it can only be said to come into existence when the working class and other subaltern groups have effective rights and representation (Grugel 2002: 38). Rueschmeyer, Stephens and Stephens further explain the relationship between democracy and capitalism in the following way:

> [C]apitalist development is associated with democracy because it transforms the class structure, strengthening the working and middle classes and weakening the landed class. It was neither the capitalist market nor capitalists as the new

> dominant force, but rather the contradictions of capitalism that advanced the cause of democracy. ... The working class was the most consistently pro-democratic force [in history]. The class had a strong interest in effecting its political inclusion and it was more insulated from the hegemony of the dominant classes than the rural lower classes. ... The bourgeoisie [was] generally supportive of the installation of constitutional and representative government, but opposed to extending political inclusion to the lower classes. ... The middle classes played an ambiguous role in the installation and consolidation of democracy. They pushed for their own inclusion but their attitude towards inclusion of the lower classes depended on the need and possibilities for an alliance with the working class (Rueschmeyer, Stephens and Stephens 1992: 7–8).

Emphasising that class and other forms of social conflict within societies still matter for explaining democratization, Tilly says, contemporary democratizations indicate that 'proletarianisation constitutes the crucial conditions for democratization' (Tilly 1997: 276). Nevertheless, he argues that the term 'proletariat' should now be broadened to include subaltern social forces whose existence is not due solely to capitalism. In other words, the agents of democratization include not only the organized working class but also the groups located in civil society – the peasantry, women's movements, environmental networks, and so on – now equally play an important role in promoting and sustaining democratic change.

Finally, according to Grugel, by overemphasizing the global aspects of democratization, the wave approach misleads as to the causes of democracy. Even though Huntington argues that global factors are crucial in democratization, he is unable to specify chains of causality or identify the mechanisms that bring democracy into being (Grugel 2002: 35).

## Democratization and Civil Society

Democracy occurs when subordinated social groups achieve sufficient access to the state so as to change the patterns of representation contained within it (Rueschmeyer, Stephens and Stephens 1992). Since a democratic state claims to represent the whole of the community and to act on its behalf, the state can no longer, straightforwardly, serve simply as an instrument to protect the dominant class. A successful democracy would thus require the subordinated groups to have sufficient resources so that they play an important role within civil society and therefore also in relation to the state. Making

above considerations, Grugel argues that, any explanation of democratization, must pay attention to the concept of civil society and to the struggles to extend rights and citizenship throughout society (Grugel 2002: 92).

While making a case for the integration of the civil society in the process of democratization, he is critical of the minimalist or the Schumpeterian theories of democracy as they allocate little importance to civil society. Indeed, the democratic regimes which took the minimalist notion of democracy as the ideal construct of a democratic model tried to keep the civil society at bay.

However, the revival of social protest and political turbulence in the 1960s, put pressure on the minimalists to take note of the democratic potentials of social organisations independent of the state. According to Grugel, in recent times, 'civil society' has become a term which is now increasingly used to encompass social activity and societal organisations which, directly, or indirectly, support, promote or struggle for democracy and democratization and invoking 'civil society' as the bedrock of democracy has become popular within both policy-making and intellectual circles (Grugel 2002: 93).

But there is no clarity about the meaning of 'civil society'. In fact, the attempts to define the term has increasingly become challenging with the continuous extension of its realm and the legitimacy that it sought to build for itself. Walzer (1995) refers to civil society as the space of uncoerced human association and the set of relational networks- formed for the sake of family, interest and ideology that fill that space. For Gellner, a pivotal figure in pushing along what today is commonly referred to as "the civil society revival", civil society denotes "the social residue that is left behind when the state is subtracted" (Gellner 1994: 221). Gellner's definition of civil society indeed imparts it an omnipotent character and profoundly increases the role of the civil society. Hall points out the civil society as, 'at one and the same time a social value and a set of social institutions' (Hall 1995: 2). Diaz elucidates the concept of civil society by asserting that, there is an agreement, in a broad sense, that the civil society comprises socio-political institutions, voluntary associations and a public sphere within which people can debate, act and engage with each other in order to deal with the state (Diaz 1993: 55).

Linking democracy with civil society, Grugel asserts that, civil society is crucial for democracy because it is the space between the public and private spheres where civic action takes place (Grugel 2002: 93). Organisations and individuals from within civil society can hold the state accountable, share their experiences, promote their interests and learn values of civility and trust. Grugel's analysis of the link between civil society and democratization resonates with Putnam's proposition that civic associations have external effects on the broader political system by improving the articulation and aggregation of interests, facilitating consensus, and, in general, resulting in more effective coordination to solve collective action problems (Putnam 1993: 89–90). According to Armony (2004), a critic of the optimistic advocates of civil society, the lesson of the social-psychological perspective offered by the optimists tend to establish that, nations with high levels of civic engagement accumulate social capital, and a large stock of social capital is a key determinant of effective democracy. Liberal's perspective on civil society and its role in democracy takes a toned down approach and is cautious about civic engagements.

Diamond, thus offering a predominantly liberal perspective, explains civil society as:

> The realm of organised social life that is voluntary, self-generating, (largely) self-supporting, autonomous from the state and bound by a legal order or set of shared rules. It is distinct from the society in general in that it involves citizens acting in a public sphere to express their interests, passions and ideas, exchange information, achieve mutual goals, make demands on the state and hold state officials accountable. Civil society is an intermediary entity, standing between the private sphere and the state ... Actors in civil society need the protection of an institutionalised legal order to guarantee their autonomy and freedom of action. Thus civil society not only restricts state power but legitimates state authority when that authority is based on the rule of law (Diamond 1994: 5–6).

The radicals are critical of the restrained approach of the liberals and point that the liberal understanding of civil society does not pay sufficient attention to the question of power. They criticise the liberal assumption that civil society is automatically inclusive and identifies how unequal economic, social and cultural resources shape the contours of civil society itself. For the radicals, participation in civil society requires resources, knowledge, self-worth and recognition; under capitalism, therefore, not everyone can participate equally (Grugel 2002: 94). According to Jelin, civil society should be used analytically to refer to a 'conflictive practice related to power – that is, to a struggle about

who is entitled to say what in the process of defining common problems and deciding how they will be faced' (Jelin 1996: 104). This means it is important to identify who is active in civil society, or how citizenship is constructed, in order to analyse its democratic potential.

Ekiert and Kubick sum up the differences between the liberal and radical perspectives on civil society and its role in the democratization process by asserting that, the liberal perspective sees civil society essentially as an aid to the state, especially in terms of reducing the load the state carries, and as a check on state excesses. It envisages the democratic state as a minimal state. The radical perspective, in contrast, takes the view that the role of civil society is to transform the state. Community activism is a way to challenge unequal power relations and engage with the state, so as to require it to use its capacities for the benefit of all citizens. Civil society thus becomes an instrument to correct the imbalances of the capitalist state, and struggle between civil society and the state is a means to achieve democracy. The radical perspective assumes that collective action, social organization and protest are healthy signs of democratic life (Ekiert and Kubick 1998: 578).

## Democratization process in Central Asia

The process of democratization in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan in the post-Soviet period can be contextualised as a process being tempered to meet the requirements of societies where traditions still hold its place. The traditional values often affect the political situations; loyalty towards one's clan, barring political differences, greatly impacts a person's political choices. Though, it brings political stability in a sense that the dominating clan is strengthened by the unity forged among the clan's members which is further translated into the strengths of the regime. The political stability thus achieved is not in accordance with the principles of liberal democratic order as advocated by the West.

In order to understand the dynamics of democratization in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan it becomes pertinent to look at democratization in the context of "Asian Values". Asian Values is a concept used by Adel E. Abishev to study political cultures in the societies

where traditions still hold important place in the peoples' conscience. He has identified some common characteristics with regard to the process of democratization in most of the Asian countries. For him Asian Values are identical with the traditional values.

The traditional values stand for a system of ideas, the basic postulates of which are the priority of the group interests over the individual ones, organic understanding of a community, in which the state is a principal guarantor of its interests, family as a basic model of community structure, strong tribal and clan ties. As a rule, the traditional values are distinct from Western values, the idea of individual freedom and protection of human rights. On the whole, the Asian values in Kazakhstan are understood as a system, in which hierarchy, discipline and obedience form an entire structure spreading down from the state to the subject. Therefore, of a son to his father, a wife to her husband can be found in overall obedience to the state. There is no doubt that this system of relations and attitudes corresponds to the interests of the ruling elite (Abishev 2002: 21). Thus, these values become an important component of the community's political culture and play a crucial role in determining the nature of the regime and its attitude towards the process of democratization.

The disintegration of Soviet Union led many to predict that the fall of the communist system in Central Asia would lead to democratization in the region. Current reflections on such an assumption stand in contrast with the oversimplified predictions about democratization in the newly independent states of Central Asia. According to Cummings (2002) these predictions have turned out be premature and misguided and the political situation in Central Asia at present clearly vindicates the above assertion.

Matveeva (1999) has pointed that the post independence developments in Central Asia are a product of fundamental structural elements in these societies. She further argues that democracy as a suitable basis of a legitimate political order in Central Asia should be established through a mundane and careful work by finding local governing arrangements, which would incorporate the values and structures of societies they intend to service. While being prescriptive, she discredits the democratization project in Central

Asia because the form in which they were implemented failed to take into account the realities of Central Asia.

Given such a cynicism about the democratization process in Central Asia, it becomes important to look at ways in which the process of democratization has been approached in Central Asia. The democratization process in Central Asia has largely been studied through the *transition approach.* The rationale for using transition approach towards democratization in Central Asia is its focus on political elites as instruments of change. In *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule* (4 volumes), Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe Schmitter and Laurence Whithead put elites as the central drivers of regime change. This school posits that the division within the ruling class begins the process of political liberalisation and the strategic interaction among elites from state and society establishes the mode of transition and type of regime that then emerges. According to them, elite groups are the real actors with autonomous causal power to influence the course of regime change (O'Donnell et al. 1986).

For the past two decades, the "transitions" school has become the predominant approach for explaining transitions from authoritarianism and democratization. The study of democratization in Central Asia invariably shifts into the realm of transition approach on the account that this approach comes quite close to capturing the dynamics of political development during the transition phase in the Central Asian Republics. The central argument of democratization theory developed into the works of Dankwart Rustow, and later Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter stand in a sharp break with their pessimistic predecessors. Their argument that, elite actors can willfully reject authoritarianism and both initiate democratization as well as consolidate democracy irrespective of social, cultural, and economic conditions or historical legacies became a beacon of hope for successful democratic transformation of Central Asia.

However, this approach has only partially been vindicated in the case of Kyrgyzstan (Tajikistan remains a special case) and developments in the remaining central Asian Republics does not follow the proposed pattern. The plausible explanation for this could be the tight grip that the Presidents of the republics have maintained over the political

structure. The competing centres of power simply do not exist. Collins further explains the limited success that the elites met with in bringing democracy in Central Asia as following:

> An elite component to democracy is critical. At the same time, a social component is just as critical, if not more critical, to the sustaining of democracy. The social component is to a large extent rooted in social organization and in socioeconomic and cultural conditions. When social actors at the mass level are networked into a clan-based structure of patronage and dependency, they are less likely to check the actions of elites. When power is organised informally in the hands of opaque clan networks, the ideological choices and actions of the best-intentioned elites will ultimately have a very limited effect (Collins 2006: 11).

Ishiyama (2002) argues that the Central Asian Republics have developed neo-patrimonial system at the political level which hampers the process of democratization. In this system, he explains, the chief executive maintains authority through personal patronage, rather than through authority or law and like the classical patrimonialism as described by Weber and Theobald, the right to rule is ascribed to a person rather than an office. 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.

Hunter looks at the contradictions between the values enshrined in constitutions and the political realities in Central Asian Republics and points that, a superficial look at the constitutions and other laws of the Central Asian states could leave a false impression that liberal democracy has triumphed there. But not surprisingly, a more careful study of these laws and the Central Asian states' behaviour reveals it has not. Establishing a liberal democratic system of government requires more than legislation. Certain conditions — although not all of them to the same degree — need to be present for a society's liberal democratic system to function effectively, including (1) a relatively homogeneous society; (2) autonomous civic institutions to mediate between the government and the governed; (3) a reasonably large middle class; (4) a relatively well-developed private sector; (5) and a history of democratic evolution (Hunter 1996: 38).

According to Hunter, none of these conditions are present in Central Asia and on the contrary, in these countries ethnic cleavages and cultural divergences are quite deep, and both civil society and the private sector are still weak. Seventy years of communist rule has left a legacy of mistrust between the government and the governed, as well as a political culture characterised by authoritarianism, intolerance, mistrust, and clientism. The region's pre-Soviet political culture, although not totalitarian and much less repressive than communism, was also paternalistic and built upon the preponderant power of an authoritarian figure (Hunter 1996: 38). The rise of the ruling figures as highly authoritarian, perhaps, vindicates Hunter's arguments.

Olcott (2005), brings the international linkages to the process of democratization on the fore by emphasising upon democratization in the context of the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the United States and the effort to engage the Central Asian republics within the ambit of the US regional strategy to counter the spread of terrorism. She points that any such engagement would be futile without addressing the question of political institution building in the Central Asian republics.

## Conclusion

The literature on democracy and democratization is exhausting to say the least and perhaps beyond one's capability to cover all the aspects discussed therein. One can however, find that the debates and interpretations within the literature are open-ended and give enough scope for further research in understanding and explaining the process of democratization. The studies undertaken are also uneven in the sense that there is a tendency to focus on a particular region while ignoring others; hence we find a plethora of materials on democratization in Latin America or Europe whereas there are not many works which focus upon the process of democratization in Central Asia, much less in the specific Republics.

# Chapter 3
# *Status of Democratization in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan*

# CHAPTER 3

# STATUS OF DEMOCRATIZATION IN KAZAKHSTAN AND UZBEKISTAN

Both Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan became independent as a result of the upheavals that brought the end of the Soviet Union. These countries were reluctant to part ways from the Union and independence was almost forced upon them from the decision by Moscow to withdraw its maintenance of the Soviet edifice. Thus their independence from the Soviet Union in 1991 was neither a result of secessionist demands by their leadership, nor a national liberation movement (Cumming 2005: 1). Before gaining actual independence from the Union, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan had already proclaimed their sovereignty and had instituted, in the year 1990, the office of president to head the administration[1] of the respective republics.

Continuing with the Soviet-era nomenclature, both these countries proclaimed themselves to be republics and the official references read as the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Republic of Uzbekistan for Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan respectively. A republic is a state in which the head of the state is not a monarch, the sovereign power resides in the whole body of the people, and is exercised by representatives elected by them; therefore, retaining the word republic was more than symbolic for Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan in their new incarnation. In the Soviet era the term had become paradoxical in the sense that the claim about 'sovereign power residing in the whole body of people' became a farce, as the choice of the whole body of people to elect their representative was strictly limited to the nominee of the Communist Party and various groups recognized by the party; the candidature of

[1] In March 1990, Mikhail Gorbachev, formerly General Secretary of the Communist Party of the USSR, became President of the USSR; shortly after, the First Party Secretaries of the Communist Parties of the Central Asian republics were also transformed, by means of an internal administrative procedure, into presidents; later that same year, Uzbekistan (June), Turkmenistan and Tajikistan (August), Kazakhstan (September) and Kyrgyzstan (December) made declarations of sovereignty. The main constitutional implication was that republican laws would henceforth take precedence over federal laws. However, in the referendum on the future of the Soviet Union, held on 17 March 1991, the Central Asian republics returned a vote of over 90 percent (in Turkmenistan 98 percent) in favor of preserving the Union. There were some complaints of intimidation and ballot-rigging, but on the whole, this result was accepted as a reasonably accurate reflection of public opinion at the time.

course was determined by the ideological inheritance of the candidates. Gorbachev had sought to remove these contradictions and restructure the political system but his bid at restructuring the system had a far reaching consequence, leading to the disintegration of the Soviet Union itself.

The newly independent states of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan thus sought to obliterate the paradoxes of the Soviet era by promising the international community to democratize their political system and liberalize the economy. The first step in this regard was holding a direct election for the post of president – the highest position in the political set up of the republics. These republics also introduced a parliamentary framework to look over the governance in the republics, even though the institution of presidency was not merely titular and held a sway over the parliament.

A common feature of the political setup in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan was the continuing overwhelming dominance of the *nomenklatura* from the Soviet era. The president of both these republics were the first secretaries of the communist parties in the Republics during the Soviet period and significantly they were the once who had most reluctantly accepted the dissolution of the Soviet Union[2]. The political and ideological inheritance of the leaders of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan thus cast a doubt on their claims about making a break from the Soviet past.

The economic chaos in the republics that followed the disintegration did not augur well for implanting a free market economy until some kind of economic stability was achieved. The republics meanwhile had to counter the challenges of nation building and regime stability which became the first priority as the resulting ideological and political vacuum in the aftermath of the disintegration had all the potentials to reinforce ethnic divisions in both of these multi-ethnic republics, which could have led to political destabilization and further break-ups over the issue of power sharing or

[2] Kazakhstan was among the most reluctant of the constituent republics of the Soviet Union to part ways with the Union, indeed it was the last of the former Union Republics to have proclaimed itself as an independent state, doing so only on 16 December 1991, when it became established that there was no way it could cling on to the Union (Cumming 2002, 2005). In the case of Uzbekistan, it is widely assumed that Islam Karimov, the president of Uzbekistan at present and at the time of the anti - Gorvachev putsch in the Soviet Union had supported the action against the Soviet President and did not condemn the putsch in Moscow until it became apparent that it had failed. With the collapse of the coup, however, Karimov moved quickly to embrace independence for Uzbekistan and on 31 August, the Republican Supreme Soviet voted to declare the Uzbek SSR independent and on the following day the country's name was changed to the Republic of Uzbekistan (Melvin 2005: 29).

autonomy. Thus the leaders tended to tread cautiously on the path to transition. The leaders of the republics also faced the crisis of legitimacy in a changed political situation, they were trapped between providing stability and gaining legitimacy. Given such a background, the transition process in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan ought to have its complexities and any study attempting to analyze the process of democratization in these republics must cover all the relevant aspects that make such process a success or a failure.

The process of democratization could be conceived as a sub-process within the larger process of transition; though actual 'transition' may proceed independently of democratization i.e. democratization may or may not come into play at all or may be subverted. In the later case transition may ultimately end up with establishment of other regime forms but not democracy. One of the approaches of understanding the process of democratization, referred to as "transitology", thus focuses on process, contingency and pure politics. Its emphasis on process rather than structure and culture led the analysts to conceive regime change in transition as something inherently "undetermined". Some of its tenets which treat the appearance of a split within the authoritarian elite as the crucial spark that ignites the onset of regime change fits most of the cases in the post-communist region quite well (Fish 1999). In the final analysis about democratization in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan the work may test the "transitologist" assumptions to inform this study.

## Contextualizing and Understanding Transition in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan

'Transition' is usually meant to refer to a change in (or of) a country's institutional system, that is, a set of domestic institutions and the related mechanisms of individuals' interaction, such as the market (or central planning) or elections (Balcerowicz 2001: 17). The institutional system refers to the political and economic system. Thus the process of transition, among other things, operates at the level of political and economic sphere. The transitional features of the political and economic sphere are discernible, and even though, overlapping can be distinguished from each other.

According to Balcerowicz, political transition implies the changes in the role and structure of the state and to its democratization, whereas economic transition denotes a movement from a socialist economy towards a market economy with a growing share held by the private sector. Economic transition also includes, in some cases, macro-economic stabilization. The macroeconomic stabilization aims at correcting the large initial macroeconomic imbalances and, such stabilization requires, at least in the longer run, institutional (structural) reforms in the enterprise sector and in the fiscal sphere (Balcerowicz 2001: 17). However, the political and economic transitions do not necessarily go hand in hand. China has undergone a major economic transformation without changing its political trajectory, and so was the case with India which had a vibrant democracy with a mixed economy until the early 1990s.

The path to transition in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan began with the introduction of political and economic reforms initiated by in the USSR under the leadership of Michael Gorbachev. According to Hunter (1996), the historical ethnic and cultural differences in different regions of these republics became sharpened as a result of the relative opening up of the political system. The sharpening of the ethnic and cultural differences manifested in inter-ethnic tensions and sometimes degenerated into violence.

When the Soviet Union was formally being dismantled between mid-1990 and December 1991, the informal groupings, which had come up due to the breathing space provided by the reforms, transformed themselves into political parties with increasingly nationalist, pro-independence and to some extent religious-political goals. Thus the debate that emerged in the shadow of such developments seemed to capture the future trajectory of the socio-political developments in these republics. The main question being – what kind of socio-political philosophy and type of government would (and should) replace the existing socialist-communist regime (Hunter 1996: 22-23).

The answer to this question, for some, evoked the optimism for a changed political order underlined by liberal-democratic values while others were convinced about the emergence of an authoritarian regime as the natural successor of the Soviet regime. Since their emergence as independent states, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have undergone multiple transitions, including nation-building, state-building and

economic, political and social transitions, within a varying international political and economic contexts highlighted by the US led war in the gulf, rise of terrorism as a potent factor in destabilizing the domestic and international order, a war in Afghanistan, the economic downturns and booms. The transition process in the republics had to often negotiate with the turn of the events and a rapidly unfolding order at international level. The often unrealistic expectations of external forces, undue leverages extracted by the governments in the republics from the outside powers who in turn expect to gain some kind of geopolitical leverage and the diverse demands from an ethnically and culturally diverse domestic population have exacerbated transitional complexity in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan (Cummings 2003: 1). With the advantage of the hindsight and a retrospective analysis of the developments so far, one may attempt to comprehend the outcomes of the process which began towards the end of the Soviet era.

The transition in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan at the first instance signifies the transformation of like regimes, beholden to the ideas and principles of communism, to a more open system. The onset of transition marked the beginning of de-ideologisation of economic spheres and the efforts at dismantling the highly centralized Soviet command economy hinted at logical parallel efforts for uprooting its corresponding highly centralized political system, intolerant of any form of dissent. The emerging new economic systems seemed to be encouraging their respective political systems to be based on democratic values and practices such as openness, transparency, and accountability (Hooman 2002: 59).

However, it would rather be premature to judge the developments in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan since 1991, as a pre-ordained move towards the establishment and consolidation of democracy and therefore, most of the scholars who have analyzed the changes that have taken place in Central Eurasia since 1991 avoid using the concept "transition" in any closed-ended way. A closed-ended conception implies that post-Soviet countries inevitably and continuously move from communism to a predetermined endpoint (Gans-Morse 2004).

This is what the modernization approach would lead us to believe, that the natural endpoint would be a liberal democratic and capitalist regime but the others say that the alternative could also be true, instead of moving towards democracy and free

markets these states of Central Asia might return to a time before communist rule when feudal institution structured the societies in these countries (Burawo and Verdery 1999).

Such an alternative proposition could hardly be considered out of place as all of the former Soviet states, including Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan in Central Asia, had a long and rich history of autocratic executive rule. The notion of parliamentary-style democracy, with checks and balances on the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government, was a totally untested and unfamiliar concept within the two republics. While many Soviet people for decades wished for their authoritarian communist government to either fall or change, most had no idea what would be able to effectively replace it. The ideals of free elections, proportionate representation and a leadership responsible to the people was only a desired notion with no real grounding in the immediate post-Soviet reality. Tribal and clan connections still played a significant role in the political, social and economic interactions amongst the populations, but were now effectively utilized to maintain the ruling elite in power and not to successfully mobilize any significant opposition.

## State and Nation Building in Kazakhstan during the Transition

> From the stand point of a historical retrospective it is clear that priority must be given to economic rather than political transformation. The assertion of some of the political scientists that the path from totalitarianism to democracy lays across enlightened authoritarianism also appears quite convincing. But you would most likely have to have an ice-cold heart and a concrete intellect to 'issue' freedom in doses to people when they have been completely deprived of that freedom for almost seven and half decades.
>
> – Nursultan Nazarbayev, President of Kazakhstan, 1992[3]

The above excerpt from Nazarbayev's speech, delivered a few months after independence, serves as the most succinct prologue to the developments that unfolded in the following years. Indeed, Kazakhstan made a rapid development in the economic sphere. By 1997, it enjoyed the largest per capita foreign direct investment of all

[3] Excerpt from Nazarbayev's speech published in *Kazakhstanskaia Pravda*, 1992, March 10; reproduced from Pauline Jones Luong (2002:136).

Soviet successor states[4], this is not to say that the economic developments have had any significant trickledown effect on wellbeing of the common people in the republic (Cummings 2002: 63).

In the political sphere, immediately after independence and until the end of 1993 – when new sets of electoral rules were implemented, Kazakhstan followed a mixed path that gave an ambivalent impression about its approach to democracy. It was neither moving fully towards broader political reforms, nor was it restricting the trends in favour of democracy. The central government allowed independent political organizations and media to develop almost unhindered in the first few years but at the same time, the bulk of political authority was increasingly being concentrated in its own hands, challenge of providing political stability and state building were posited as justification for accumulating powers in the government's hand.

Kazakhstan took a cautious approach towards building a sate in a country consisting of multiple ethnic communities. The central government made a conscious effort to discourage the outbreak of nationalism in the initial years. According to Luong (2002: 136), the government's approach was unique in this regard as it sought to achieve the objective of national harmony by both appeasing and cracking down on social movements and political parties based on ethno-national criteria.

The prime source of tension that undermined the prospect of nation and state building in Kazakhstan emanated from the relation that the Kazakhs and Russians, two major ethnic groups of the country shared. The relations between Kazakhs and Russians were far from satisfactory from the point of view of national unity. The main source of contention is the different perceptions that the two ethnic groups have about each other. Olcott points out that many Kazakhs maintain that Kazakhs have historically, both under the imperial and the soviet rule, suffered at the hands of the Russians. The event of the Alma Ata Uprising in 1986, when Kazakh protesters were killed during demonstrations provoked by the replacement of long-time Kazakh party leader Dinmuhammad Kunayev by a Russian from outside the republic, serves as the grim reminder of historical wrongs committed by the Russians (Olcott 2002: 12).

[4] *Statisticheskoe Obozrenie Kazakhstana*, Almaty, National Statistics Agency, 1997, p. 21, cites 1997 foreign direct investment; reproduced from Sally N. Cummings (ed.) (2002), *Power and Change in Central Asia*, p.62

On the other hand, few of the country's ethnic Russians believe that the Kazakhs have any real claim to statehood, and most regard them as a late-emerging and socially and culturally backward people who have had no sense of identity or nation until the Soviets 'gave' them a homeland.[5] Further, at the time of independence, the Russians and the Kazakhs shared almost equal percentage of the national population and indeed Russians were in the majority in the northern Kazakhstan which forms a frontier with the Russian Federation and the combined population of the entire groupings of ethnic minorities comfortably outnumbered the ethnic Kazakhs. However, the ethnic Russians were in a shock and felt betrayed when the first post independence constitution, adopted in January 1993, referred to Kazakhstan as being "the home of the Kazakh people". The Russian people living in Kazakhstan had reasons to feel aggrieved because they had, to an extent, been disowned by their fatherland (Olcott 2002: 13-14).

The Kazakh government has since, been working to make Kazakh an overwhelming majority population in the republic as quickly as possible. To this end, it has introduced a formal demography policy, including programs to resettle the Kazakh Diasporas community and incentives for Kazakhs to have large families. Apart from achieving a Kazakh majority in the population, the government policies also aim at securing Kazakh control over the Russian enclaves and in the process the Kazakhstan government has often resorted to electoral and territorial 'gerrymandering' (Olcott 2002: 13).

There has also been an attempt at 'indigenisation of power', which manifests in the shrinking demographic base of Russians to control political processes and structures in Kazakhstan. Russians have almost completely lost the power in administrative and political sphere. Compared to their proportion in population, they are poorly represented at political level. Kazakhs have dominated the top positions in most major ministries and even the premiership that had been given to an ethnic Russian since independence was finally handed over to a Kazakh in October 1994 (Patnaik 2001: 25).

The inter-ethnic relations and the government approach to deal with the problems emanating from the complex mosaic of ethnic diversity in Kazakhstan indicate

[5] This refers to the creation of KzSSR during the Soviet period.

towards a lack of national cohesion. Bremmer and Welt reflecting upon the situation, say that given the clan-based nomadism through centuries of foreign domination, Kazakhstan has never been a consolidated independent state. They further argue that the historically not so developed Kazakh identity in addition with the ethnic diversity in the republic and democratization in the political sphere could significantly disrupt, and even reverse, the Kazakh state building efforts. They put into perspective the lack of political reforms in Kazakhstan by bringing the question of Kazakhstan's survival as a cohesive multi-nation state and making it a higher priority over other things, including democracy (Bremmer and Welt 1996: 179).

And, to this end of creating, sustaining and consolidating a viable independent state, basic democratic rights – freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of political activity and free elections – have routinely been curtailed and abrogated. Such an approach towards state-building, appeared to have given a decisive advantage for preserving the state and securing regime stability in the few years after independence, as Kazakhstan remained largely free from the ethnic conflict and virulent nationalism.

The resulting stability also paid huge dividends on economic fronts as foreign investments increased. However, the Kazakh government under Nazarbayev, consistently argued that taking a step back from democracy was only a temporary manoeuvre designed to allow nation-building a chance at success and, not a permanent feature of state policy (Bremmer and Welt 1996: 179-80).

## Constitutional Developments and the making of a Pre-eminent President

Democracy operates by means of rules embodied in law and constitutions establish the basic rules and procedures of democratic politics and government (Albert 2009: 128). The decision to enact new constitution in Kazakhstan signalled a transition from the old communist political order and it was expected that it would give enough scope for democracy to operate under the rules and procedures to be enshrined in the new constitution. The enactment of a new constitution in Kazakhstan was a lengthy process, perhaps, because open debates was possible in the initial years. A constitutional commission was created in the late 1990 by the order of the

Kazakhstan's President Nazarbayev to frame the constitution. The working draft became available only in the mid-1991 (Anderson 2004: 78).

Addressing parliament in June 1992 the president spoke of the need for a separation of powers and also argued for a powerful executive that would be capable of pushing through the changes required to further political and economic reform, thus giving an insight into the nature of constitution that was to be enacted.

The constitution was finally adopted in January 1993. The constitution bestowed considerable power in the hands of the president. Article 40 of the Kazakh constitution, by defining the president as the symbol and guarantor of the unity of the people and the state power, inviolability of the Constitution, rights and freedoms of an individual and citizen, effectively placed the president above the constitution. The constitution goes on to describe the government as responsible before the president, (Article 64), except with regard to the implementation of laws.

A new constitution was approved by referendum in April 1995 and was adopted in August 1995 which introduced a bicameral parliament, but also greatly increased the power of the executive. This April referendum also extended Nazarbayev's presidential term to December 2000, cancelling the competitive presidential elections that had been scheduled for 1996. Thus Nazarbayev was able to avoid standing against two reportedly popular alternative candidates at the time, Olzhas Suleimenov and Gaziz Aldamzharov (Cummings 2002: 64).

This new constitution gave the president extensive powers to dissolve parliament virtually at will, to appoint the prime minister and senior ministers, as well as seven members of the 47-seat Senate. It also permitted parliament to delegate law-making powers to the president for up to a year in certain circumstances. Though provision was made for the impeachment of the president, it was made unlikely by substantial majority requirements and a provision that those deputies involved in an unsuccessful impeachment effort would lose their seats (Anderson 2004: 80).

The newly adopted constitution, however retains, the democratic principles enshrined in the1993 constitution. It proclaims that the life, liberty, and the inalienable rights of the individual are of highest value to the state. The constitution ensures basic civil liberties. Freedom of speech, freedom of the media, freedom of public but peaceful

demonstration, and freedom to create social organizations are guaranteed by the constitution (Bremmer and Welt 1996: 183)

Kazakhstan's unitary character as a state is ensured by the constitution, regional governors (*akims)* are directly appointed by the president. Under the new constitution, the president has gained the right to petition for delegated legislative powers for a term not exceeding one year, provided that two- thirds of deputies at the joint session of the parliament agree to it. The president also has the right to dissolve the parliament in the event of it passing the vote of no-confidence against the government, and if the parliament twice rejects the president's nominee for the post of the prime minister. The constitution provides for a weak upper house (or the Senate) and is dominated by presidential appointees (Bremmer and Welt 1996).

The constitution was further modified in 1998 to facilitate the perpetuation of Nazarbayev's rule when the deputies of the Kazakhstan's parliament adopted 19 amendments to the country's constitution, 13 of which had been proposed by President Nursultan Nazarbayev himself. The six others prolonged the presidential term in office and removed restrictions both on the president's age and his eligibility to run for office more than twice. The president's term in office was extended from five to seven years. Another amendment removed any maximum-age limit for presidential candidates – previously no one over 65 could run for the office (Sharipzhan 1998).

The most notable development in recent years which marks the complete personalization of state and authority by the executive came in the form of amendments to constitution in the year 2007. On May 22, 2007 Nazarbayev signed constitutional amendments which would enable him to run for re-election after his third term in office expires in 2012. The most important constitutional change lifted the term limit (number of terms) on the country's first chief executive. These amendments thus certainly have the potential to make Nazarbayev president-for-life.

One of the amendments reduces the term period for a president from seven to five years starting in 2012. The other two additional amendments make way for the increase in the number of MPs from 116 to 154, and provides for representation in the lower house of parliament, apportioned according to percentage of the vote that a political party receives. In addition, the constitutional changes stand to enhance the

public role of the Assembly of Peoples, a state institution designed to promote religious and inter-ethnic harmony. The assembly will receive the power to nominate nine members of the Kazakhstani Senate (Cohen 2007).

These packaged amendments were clearly an attempt to balance the one with the other amendment, but it is not hard to see through the political game plan of Nazarbayev, who wants to perpetuate his regime. These developments, notwithstanding the lifting of a term limit for the president, widen the political space within the parliament.

## Political Process in Kazakhstan

Political process in Kazakhstan has been characterized by the acute lack of competitiveness among the political elites. There is no credible power sharing mechanism as president after independence made sure that he appointed new members to the two main executive organs of power – the presidential *apparat* and the Cabinet of Ministers – and placed them under his direct control. The election results reflect the complete hold of the executive over the political institutions. The political processes are also controlled and guided by the president of the republic – Nazarbayev. The political opposition to the established regime of Nazarbayev lacks mass appeal and does not pose a challenge to the Nazarbayev regime which has entrenched itself through the years.

Kazakhstan has a presidential system of government and the president remains the chief executive. He is also the highest official who determines the main directions of the domestic and foreign policy of the state[6]. According to the constitution, the President of the Republic ensures by his arbitration, concerted functioning of all branches of state power and responsibility of the institutions of power before the people[7]. The government of the republic of Kazakhstan is a creation of the president who appoints the prime minister and the cabinet hardly takes a decision independently and serves as a conduit for the policies originating in the presidential administration (Olcott 2002: 88).

[6] Article 40, Section 1of the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan
[7] Article 40, Section 3 of the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan

The political system has further been shaped by the President's proclivity for perpetuating his regime, and nowhere resembles a pluralist form that characterises a democracy. Olcott points that Kazakhstan has failed to establish even a quasi-pluralistic system. She argues that the failure to do so has resulted in the narrowing of the political arena of contestation; it has been limited in number and restricted in scope. The parliament has no power to impose checks and balances on the president. The local governments have also been kept at bay from becoming effective sources of political challenge and it has also become difficult for the dissenting voices to effectively organize themselves in opposing the changes that Kazakhstan has seen in the past years. These changes certainly hamper the prospects of democratization and establishment of a functioning democracy in Kazakhstan in the near future (Olcott 2002: 87).

## Electoral Politics: Presidential Elections

The elections in independent Kazakhstan are administered by a four tier Election Commission headed by the Central Election Commission (CEC). All election commissions consist of seven members appointed for five-year terms. CEC members are elected by the Majilis on the proposal of the President. One of the members of the CEC is elected as the chairman by the Majlis.

On December 1, 1991, even before declaration of a formal independence Nazarbayev had sought to legitimize his rule by calling for a popular election. He was the only candidate and the election was reduced to a mere ratification. The only opponent, leader of the nationalist Jeltoqsan Party, obtained a mere 38,000 of the 100,000 signatures required for candidature. Nazarbayev went on to obtain (under the strictest of Soviet procedure) 98.6percent of votes (Capisani 2000: 3).

In the next presidential election that was held almost two years ahead of the schedule[8] in January 1999, Nazarbayev, who "won" with more than 80percent of the vote after his main opponent and former Prime Minister, Akezhan Kazhegeldin, who had broken with the regime over corruption was not allowed to contest the election. The formal reason for his exclusion was both trivial and symptomatic: in October, Kazhegeldin had spoken at a meeting of an unregistered organization called "For Free

[8] After getting extension, Nazarbayev's term was to end only in the latter half of 2000.

Elections". Addressing an unregistered organization is illegal in Kazakhstan, and a presidential decree of May 1998 stipulated that individuals convicted of any crime or fined for administrative transgressions could not run for office for a year. Therefore, his registration for candidature was cancelled.

None of the three other candidates for the Presidency were allowed to become serious contenders. The candidates, Serikbolsyn Abdildin, the leader of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan, secured 12.8percent of the votes. Gani Kasymov, the former chairman of the Customs committee got 4.7percent of the votes followed by Engels Gabbasov, who could secure only 0.78percent votes (Vassiliev 2001: 34).

Assessing the election in Kazakhstan Christopher H Smith, representative to the OSCE, made the following observation:

> The exclusion of would-be candidates, along with the snap nature of the election, intimidation of voters, the ongoing attack on independent media and restrictions on freedom of assembly, moved the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) to urge the election's postponement, as conditions for holding free and fair elections did not exist. Ultimately, ODIHR refused to send a full-fledged observer delegation, as it generally does, to monitor an election. Instead, ODIHR dispatched to Kazakhstan a small mission to follow and report on the process. The mission's assessment concluded that Kazakhstan's "election process fell far short of the standards to which the Republic of Kazakhstan has committed itself as an OSCE participating State" (OSCE 1999).

The next and the latest of the presidential poll took place on December 4, 2005. It was only the second presidential election since independence, when multiple candidates took part in the contest for the highest post. The election was contested by five candidates namely, Yerassyl Abylkasymov supported by the Communist People's Party of Kazakhstan, Alikhan Baimenov supported by Ak Zhol Party, Mels Yeleussizov (independent), Nursultan Nazarbayev supported by Otan Party, and Zharmakhan Tuyakbai with the support from 'For a Just Kazakhstan' Movement (OSCE 2005).

The results released by the Central Election Commission showed President Nursultan Nazarbayev winning 91.15 percent of the vote, with his most serious competitor, Zharmakhan Tuyakbay, a former Speaker of Parliament and now leader of the opposition alliance 'For a Fair Kazakhstan', receiving just 6.61 percent.

As a measure to placate international concerns, earlier on September 9, 2005, the President had brought a 'Decree on Measures on Realization of Election Rights of Citizens of the Republic of Kazakhstan', instructing various state authorities to ensure free, fair and competitive elections.

However, the regime showed its colours when an effective information ban was placed on public discussions about the case of one James Giffen that was pending in a US Federal Court. Giffen was accused and indicted in 2003 for his alleged violation of the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, in which links about the payment of kickbacks in lieu of oil contracts, to the high ranking state officials of Kazakhstan had been made.

The ban was justified in terms of protecting the rights of the accused, who is considered innocent until proven guilty, but this principle cannot be applied to impinge upon the freedom of expression or opinion in a public domain. It was also construed that such a discussion constituted an "insult to the honour and dignity" of a presidential candidate (Article 27.7, Election Law) and of the President (Article 318, Criminal Code). These decisions certainly infringed upon the freedom of expression, in so far, the information was already in the public domain (OSCE 2005).

## Parliamentary Politics: Single Party Dominant Parliament and 'Multi-Party' System

Though a new constitution was adopted in 1993, the soviet era legislature continued to function and was dissolved at the end of 1993 when the President pressed for its dissolution. The legislature was dissolved without any compelling constitutional requirement and the dissolution was justified as a prelude to the upcoming institutional reforms, the real reason, however, lay in its not being amenable to presidential control (Akiner 2005: 125).

A new parliament was elected in 1994. But on a technical issue, Kazakh Constitutional Court ruled in March 1995 that the Parliamentary elections were invalid. In light of the verdict, the parliament was dissolved in 1995. In all likelihood, Nazarbayev was somewhat responsible for the verdict pronounced by the Constitutional Court as he was convinced that the new composition of the parliament

would not favour the implementation of his economic reform policies (Blackmon 2009: 152).

Parliament was restored in the late 1995 on the basis of the new constitution that was approved in referendum, the same year. Under the new constitution, the number of Deputies in the Parliament was greatly reduced to 102[9]. Senate, the upper house had the strength of 47 members and 55 seats were allocated to Majilis, the lower house of the Parliament. The Parliamentary elections were held on December 5 and 9, 1995. Subsequently, parliamentary elections have taken place in 1999 and 2004. In all these elections, pro-presidential parties have completely decimated the opposition and the parliament has become a monopoly of the ruling Nur Otan party led by Nazarbayev.

The Constitution of Kazakhstan provides for a multi-party system. According to a 2002 law, to get registered with the Ministry of Justice, a party must have at least 50,000 members on its roll, divided up proportionally by oblast with no fewer than 700 members in each of the fourteen oblasts and two major cities. Earlier, this limit was 3000. Kazakhstan's law on political parties prohibits parties based on ethnic origin, religion, or gender. In order to gain seats in the parliament, a party must attain no less than seven percent of all votes cast, a high percentage given the absence of competition in parliamentary elections (Bowyer: 2008).

The last parliamentary election in Kazakhstan was held in August 2007. The result of the election and performance of the political parties in the election would surely help us gauge the status of democratization in Kazakhstan. Before the election was to commence, a government decree had further made an amendment to the 2002 election laws and according to this decree, no candidate could fight contest in the election in an individual capacity; contesting election through a registered party was made mandatory.

This discourages individuals to associate themselves with the electoral process in an independent manner and makes them exclusively dependent on political parties, though one may not subscribe to the political views of the parties. Such blatant abrogation of basic political rights of individuals was done in spite of the knowledge that the success of the republics' bid for the OSCE chairmanship in 2010 depended on

[9] The earlier parliament (dissolved in 1993) had 350 members and the parliament that was elected in 1994 (and never started to function) had 178 members.

holding a free and fair election. Nonetheless, in retrospect, Kazakhstan succeeded in its bid to the chairmanship in the shadow of infringement of political rights of its citizens[10]. The development certainly questions the OSCE's ability to pursue its member to democratize its political system.

The result of the election is an indictment of Kazakhstan's rhetoric about democratization. Altogether, seven political parties participated in the 2007 elections and only one of them – Nur Otan, controlled by the President could cross the threshold of seven percent of the total votes polled in the election. It was able to secure 88.5 percent of the total votes and consequently, captured all the seats at stake.

As, mentioned earlier six other parties had also contested the election and it clearly gave the impression that a multi-party system in Kazakhstan was in place. However, all these parties – Ak Zhol, Aul, the Democratic Party of Kazakhstan, the Party of Patriots, Rukhaniyet, Social Democratic Party (supported by Nagyz Ak Zhol) failed to secure even a single seat as none of them could cross the seven percent threshold. It should also be made clear that only the Social Democratic Party can truly be termed as the opposition against the ruling Nur Otan Party as the other parties, mentioned above, supports the presidency of Nursultan Nazarbayev (Dave 2007: 254-56).

In such a situation, proclaiming Kazakhstan as a multi-party system would be a farce. There are many examples of multi-party systems where a single party dominates but in a democracy it is indeed rare to see a complete absence of the opposition in the legislative bodies at the highest level.

## Freedom in the Public Realm: Civil society and Media in Kazakhstan

### *Civil Society*

The concept of civil society today has become the 'hallmark' of liberal and democratic theories. Within the liberal and democratic framework civil society is conceptualized as the space where people can pursue self-defined ends in an associational arena of common concerns, a space which nurtures and sustains its inhabitants rather than control them and their relationships (Kumar 2000: 2777). Civil society thus becomes a reference point for understanding the state from outside the

[10] Kazakhstan would be assuming the OSCE chairmanship from January 1, 2010.

domain of the state's institutions. It becomes the site for a critical rational discourse which possesses the potential to interrogate the state. Therefore, the concept of civil society is very important in democratic theories as a vital precondition for the existence of democracies. It implies that stifling the civil society would amount to practicing authoritarianism by the state (Chandhoke 1995: 32).

Given its nature and role civil society plays an important part in establishing a foundation for democratization during a systemic transition. The relationship between the state and the civil society becomes particularly important in the discussion of a system in transition, or a transition to democracy (Kangas 1995: 271-72). Considering Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan as states undergoing transition, discussing civil society and it's relation with the states becomes important in analyzing the status of democratization in these states.

Western states have attempted to promote democratization in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan through civil society development. Political scientists have tended to look at the development of civil society and its contribution in promoting democratization in these countries and, have generally concluded that successes have been rare (Babajanian et al. 2005: 210).

The cotemporary theoretical literature on civil society makes a difference between civil society groups to help the observers understand their empirical manifestations depending on the contexts and the manner in which they operate to effect a change. The literature divides the civil society groups into 'ideal types', these ideal types suggest ways in which civil society has developed as a system of values, political project and organizational forms. 'Neo-liberal' civil society and 'communal' civil society are the two ideal types that the scholars have found to be of particular relevance in the Central Asian region (Babajanian et al. 2005: 210).

Babajanian et al while assigning a definition to the neo-liberal civil society, makes the following assessment about its evolution and forms that it has taken in Central Asia:

> As an organizational form most often neo-liberal civil society has been described as the 'realm of autonomous voluntary organization, acting in public sphere as an intermediary between the state and private life'. It is best represented by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the voluntary sector made up of organizations that are private, non-profit distributing, self-governing and voluntary. As of 1989 a large scale Western driven political project began to support these

> groups, grounded in the belief that external funding and training could strengthen nascent neo-liberal civil society. This has been criticised severely by many analysts as a neo-imperialist project to impose Western hegemony and prevent the recognition of more traditional and indigenous forms of civil society. Significantly many of the neo-liberal groups that first emerged in the late 1980s and early 1990s in CASC (Central Asia and South Caucasus), in part replicating political activist organizations based in East and Central Europe, did not survive long beyond the break-up of the Soviet Union. These organizations tended to attract Urban-based intellectuals, and in most countries of the region lacked widespread grassroots popular support. Several transformed themselves into political parties. In Central Asia in particular the new post-independence governments often repressed them, pushing their leaders into jail or towards emigration. Therefore, from the mid-1990s until today, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) became the most prevalent form of neo-liberal civil society to develop. They began to address a wide range of issues, including human rights promotion, women's leadership, election monitoring, environmental protection, education, micro-credit, microeconomic development, health and family planning. While much of the state run welfare system and infrastructure began to crumble, NGOs took over many of the functions previously reserved for government. Western donor organizations provided grants, training and access to wider networks to support them (Babajanian et al. 2005: 212).

They further, argue that a second form of civil society also existed in Central Asia that was rooted in tradition of mutual aid, localized forms of decision making and community organizing. This form of civil society would come under the second 'ideal type', called the communal civil society. The communal civil society in Central Asia existed through many centuries until the soviet state system put a halt on its development in the republics during its totalitarian phase (Babajanian et al. 2005: 212).

It was the neo-liberal variety of the civil society that took its roots in the post-independent Kazakhstan. In the absence of any exposure to the Central Asian traditional autonomous space or collectives, the foreign aid agencies heavily relied upon the NGOs to create an autonomous space for a variety of associations through the years. NGOs have proliferated in Kazakhstan in the last decade, both funded by the government and by outside agencies. They are involved in areas such as child support, women's rights, civil liberties, environmental protection and business training (Ruffin et. al. 1999: 235-321). Though, these developments make a case of a gradual opening-up and widening of autonomous spaces, they are not free from regular state intervention and restraint imposed by the government.

Many of these NGOs are 'crypto-government' organizations whose aims and programs are designed in accordance with the official policy directives. Some other group of NGOs are largely free from government intervention at the level of policy and program but are certainly constrained because they work within the ambit of the larger bilateral assistance programs. Moreover, these NGOs find it hard to integrate locally due to structural and cultural constraints. The indigenous NGOs, which tend to work independently and are more aware of the local situation but are mostly underfunded and incapable of achieving their stated objectives (Akiner 2005: 126-27).

The most visible failures of the NGOs working in Kazakhstan have been their inability to organize and mobilize masses for the causes they tend to pursue. One of the reasons for this is that there is a general reluctance on the part of the post-Soviet citizens to associate themselves to these organizations because of their experience under the Soviet system where they were compelled to join public organizations or social and political groups (Luong and Weinthal 1999: 1275).

The problem of creating a viable civil society in Kazakhstan has also been limited by the stringent and undemocratic laws of the state. The most striking example is Kazakhstan's Civil Code, which bars NGOs participation in political activities by defining non-profit organizations as engaged purely in social and philanthropic activities. The new constitution adopted in August 1995 also limits the scope and extent of NGO activities. Section 3 of Article 5 of the constitution prohibits public associations from activity that is 'geared to a forcible change in the constitutional system' or 'the incitement of social, racial, national, religious or tribal discord'. Section 4 of Article 5 prohibits public associations from receiving foreign aid of any kind (Luong and Weinthal 1999: 1276).

***Media***

The provisions in Article 5 also impose severe restrictions on the freedom of press as journalists' assessment of the political and social situation may be construed as violation of the said article of the constitution. It implies that the state has the right to filter and limit the opinions communicated through the press and the electronic media resulting in censorship and stifling of democratic and dissenting voices.

Moreover, the media in Kazakhstan is controlled and monitored by the regime. Nazarbayev's eldest daughter, Dariga owns the largest media company in the country – *Khabar*. She also controls three television and two radio stations. Her husband, Rakhat Aliyev, ran the *Karavan* media group, which controls the largest non-government newspaper in the country, as well as 'KTK' television (affiliated to the government), radio stations and a major publishing house (Akerman 2002: 138-39). In 2007, Aliyev fell out of the president's grace and was exiled to Austria as an Ambassador. He was dismissed from his post by the President and was later arrested by the Austrian authorities on spurious charges labelled by the regime in Kazakhstan. The status of his control over the media business is questionable as of now and is most likely to be transferred to his, now estranged, wife.

To keep other players out of the independent or private media segment, exorbitant licensing fees were introduced in the 1997 law which led to the closure of almost 20 stations by mid 1998, according to an OSCE report on the 1999–2000 elections. In 1996, the Ministry of Communications proclaimed that all VHF frequencies would be used for governmental television stations only, however, the decree was vague and enforcement provisions were not spelt clearly so the decree went unnoticed, until May 1997 when the majority of nongovernmental stations running on VHF frequencies were shut off. Only the government-affiliated station, KTK, was allowed access to VHF and satellite channels. Since then, few new stations have appeared in Kazakhstan, and the broadcast media remains monopolized by Nazarbaev's family's media ownership in many areas (Allison 2006: 97-98).

Though media owned by opposition groups also exist in fair number, these are routinely targeted by the state official on account of libel, a criminal offence in Kazakhstan, and other coercive means like arrest and detention of journalists who are too critical of the regime's policies. The creation in July 2008 of the Arna National Information Holding, which includes the national TV and radio stations and major pro government news agencies and newspapers, raised further concerns about the consolidation and dominance of pro government media (Freedom House 2009).

The media in Kazakhstan has in fact, become a tool in the hands of the political elites. It puts a question mark on their credibility in serving as a reliable means of communication and in shaping public opinion. The biases of the state owned media

are openly reflected in the amount of coverage they give to the ruling regime during elections.

## State and Nation Building in Uzbekistan

> The principal task which stands before [my] leadership is to preserve peace and stability, to achieve inter-ethnic harmony. Not considering the multitude of difficulties, Uzbekistan remains one of the most stable republics on the territory of the former Union. The Republic has chosen its own path of development, which is based upon a gradual transition to the market economy[11].
>
> – Islam Karimov, President of Uzbekistan, 1993

Uzbekistan declared its independence from the Soviet Union on August 31, 1991 soon after the failure of the *coup d'état* of August 19, 1991, in the Soviet Union. Islam Karimov, the president of the republic waited for the events to unfold during the attempted coup and with the failure of the coup he was able to see that nothing would now save the Union. In the aftermath of the coup he was rather quick to embrace independence for Uzbekistan.

With a population of more than 25 million, Uzbekistan is Central Asia's largest state, as well as home to the main historical centres of Central Asian statehood and Islamic culture. The path so far covered by the republic of Uzbekistan since independence underlines the difficult situations that it has faced towards the establishment of a viable state. The republic is characterized by a combination of economic transformation and a strengthening of authoritarian government. The transition towards a democratic government has been slow in comparison with all other Central Asian countries, except for Turkmenistan (Petrov 2001: 79).

At the beginning of Karimov's regime, he certainly lacked a strategy to guide the nascent republic but he soon realized that at this nascent stage when there was an ideological vacuum some sort of binding ideology was necessary to maintain the cohesion of the republic. And to this end, he tried to harp on nationalism. He invented

[11] Karimov, Islam. 1993. Tol'ko sil'noe gosudarstvo sposobno zashitit' svoikh grazhdan!*Narodnoe slovo* March 5: 1–2. Reproduced from, Luong (2004: 120)

new symbols to capture the sentiments of the people. His decision to reinvent the popular image of Timur was one of the pillars of the nation building project he had initiated. Melvin captures the developments in the initial years of Uzbekistan as under:

> A theme of growing significance in Uzbekistan has been the development of a national identity anchored upon Uzbek nationalism. Following independence, the Uzbekistani authorities launched a powerful top down drive based upon an essentially mono-ethnic vision of the nation-state, the official rhetoric about pluralism notwithstanding. Significantly, the former communist leadership has sought to position itself as the champion of a restored Uzbek nation. The Uzbekistani state has promoted Uzbek culture and the writing of a national history, including fostering a cult around the historic figure Amir Timur. Since 1989 Uzbek language has received increased priority within Uzbekistan and in 1993 it was decreed that Uzbekistan would replace a Cyrillic with a Latin script. While many of these measures have helped to bind Uzbek society closer together, major questions about the place of minorities in the nation-building project remain (Melvin 2000: 43).

The other aspect of the project was to bring in political stability through strengthening the regime. According to (Abdullaev 2005: 269), Political stability constitutes one of the main values if the 'symbolic capital' of the ruling elites in Uzbekistan. The issue of political stability was also appealing in the early 1990s and the break-up of Soviet Union was often invoked as a reminder of what could follow of a state if instability sets in.

Thus, preserving stability of the economy and of social and political order has become an overarching rationale for rejecting a shock therapy approach to market reforms, for delaying the introduction of democratic institutions and for developing a strict border regime by de facto sealing the country's borders under President Karimov's rule. The Karimov regime was also able to invoke achievement of stability and its preservation to reinforce the boundaries of the state, thereby strengthening state institutions and identity.

All this has greatly served the purpose of the state's elites of constructing and projecting the country's domestic and international image as an 'island of stability' in a region where cross-border threats of various kinds abound and other states are torn in domestic turmoil. Social stability has also been preserved by opting for a gradualist approach to economic transformation which has allowed the government to avoid the dramatic collapse of output following independence. The country has also been able

to condition and reinforce its reform choice strategy, the structure of the economy and its performance by preventing a dramatic output loss (Fumagalli 2007: 2).

But not all agree with such an optimistic analysis of the social and political realities in Uzbekistan. Kandiyoti (2007) forcefully argues that the series of piecemeal institutional adjustments made as a measure to alleviate the difficulties of economic transformation and simultaneously ensuring the retention of state control over the economy only defies the purpose of reform in the long run. He points that the partial reform measures fall short of creating viable alternatives in terms of catering to the needs of the population and have resulted in a gradual intensification of surveillance at the expense of 'service delivery'. In the long run this may generate societal dissent aggravating the political situation during the time of crisis.

## Civil Society and Media in Uzbekistan

### *Civil Society*

The institutional legacies of the communist era and its ideological underpinnings have often come into play in the current political and social scenario of Central Asia. The present state of civil society and democratization in Uzbekistan can as well be attributed to those legacies. In July 1990, before Uzbekistan gained independence, Karimov, at a press conference for international media, stressed that 'public movements and informal organisations appeared, not in places like Uzbekistan but in those where a vacuum of authority existed' (Gretsky 2003: 88). The statement would certainly reflect upon the state of civil society and democratization in now independent Uzbekistan, headed by Islam Karimov, uninterruptedly for the last 18 years.

In Uzbekistan, *mahalla* (neighbourhood), a local self governing body and a form of local communal civil society, was vested with new meanings and functions after independence. It was held as an indigenous form of self government that could constitute as the basis for more decentralized forms of civic participation (Kandiyoti 2007: 36). Indeed, revival of *mahallas* was considered as an important step towards democratization at the local level and ensuring civic participation. However, the later developments allayed such hopes. Islam Karimov soon turned *mahalla*, which could potentially have become part of a developing civil society, into an integral part of his

regime. *Mahalla's* leaders who earlier served as informal leaders of the neighbourhood community have became salaried state officials entrusted with sweeping powers over people's lives.

Another form of civic participation is ensured by Government Organized Non-governmental Organizations (GONGOs), like the Women's committee and the Kamalot. A common feature of these two civic organizations is that they are new incarnations of the old communist party's organs (Zhensovet and Komsomol respectively). These have been redefined as NGOs and are partially supported from public fund. The women's committees is dedicated to improving the lot of women and provide micro-credit support programs to women in rural areas whereas, Kamalot works for the welfare of the youth. It is the largest of any organization working in Uzbekistan. The problem with this kind of organizations is that they work within the limited ideological edifice upon which the state stakes its legitimacy and cannot make a meaningful contribution to the emaciation of the civic sphere (Kandiyoti 2007: 42).

Starting in 2002 and till the end of 2005, there was a growing synergy between the international NGOs and *mahalla* committees leading to positive development outcomes. By providing important financial and organizational inputs, NGOs helped *mahallas* to mobilize collective action and solve some of the immediate needs of *mahalla* communities. However, formalization of traditional *mahallas* in Uzbekistan runs the risk of undermining their legitimacy as autonomous of the government (Stevens 2005).

As in Kazakhstan, neo-liberal brand of civil society also gained roots in Uzbekistan, albeit with more difficulty, after independence. This brand of civil society represented by internationally funded NGOs got further foothold subsequent to the post September 11 developments which saw Uzbekistan becoming an important ally in supporting the US military operations in Afghanistan. In April 2002 the two countries signed the 'Declaration on Strategic Partnership and Cooperation Framework between the United States of America and the Republic of Uzbekistan'. Under the framework of the agreement US NGOs got permission for their operations in the country. According to the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Justice, Uzbekistan had accredited 90 International NGOs by the end of 2003 (Ilkhamov 2007: 298).

However, the onset of rose revolution in Georgia on 11 December 2003 made the Uzbek regime sceptical about the activities of the NGOs supported by international aid agencies as the former Georgian President Shevanadze accused the US and the Soros Foundation of supporting and igniting the opposition forces that had overthrown his regime. The Uzbek President Islam Karimov, did not take the accusations lightly and realized that civil society could actually mobilize enough strength for resisting governments and even succeed in overthrowing the regime. He was quick to change his stance towards internationally funded NGOs and the US as he started reversing the declared commitment to gradual liberalization of the political system (Ilkhamov 2007: 299).

The killing of several hundred people, including the government forces in a violent clash with the radical opposition, in the city of Andijan in the Fergana valley and the subsequent condemnation by the US and the EU which also imposed arms embargo, led to a crackdown by the Uzbek authorities on the NGOs in Uzbekistan. Almost all the international NGOs, including the Freedom House, and Open Society Institute were forced to close or suspend their activities in Uzbekistan. International media including the BBC and Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) were also compelled to leave in the months following the Andijan incident[12].

Further, HRW's (Human Rights Watch) Tashkent representative, Igor Vorontsov, was denied work accreditation and was informed by Uzbek authorities while traveling abroad that he would not be allowed to return to the country. According to the Freedom House 2009 reports, western non-governmental organizations (NGOs) practically do not exist in Uzbekistan.

***Media***

The Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan envisages prohibition of censorship on mass media but unfortunately the reality portrays a contrasting picture as government authorities have exercised tight control over the media. Most of the present day laws carry the legacy of the Soviet era and long lists of decrees announced from time to time have further infringed the freedom of press. One of the explanations forwarded for the republican press favouring authorities is unlimited

[12] http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/civilsociety/articles/pp021306.shtml

state control over mass media as Uzbekistan lacked a substantial stratum of liberal city intelligentsia that would establish favourable environment for pluralism.[13]

Almost all forms of media are state-owned and the present law makes it extremely difficult to set up a private, independent newspaper. The runs two news agencies, three TV stations, four radio stations, and controls 76percent of the 427 registered newspapers. Only the state-run media have national coverage. Independent media have either local coverage or limited audience because they are forced to broadcast on short-wave, or broadcast only entertainment programs (OSCE/ODIHR 1999).

Article V of the Mass Media Law states: "the right to find mass media belongs to Council of People's Deputies and other state bodies, to registered political parties, public associations, mass movements, creative unions, and co-operatives, religious and other civic associations set up with law, and to labour collective" (Shafer and Freedman 2003: 95). The registration of media is executed by the Committee for Print and government often resort to perpetuation of censorship, firing, harassment and intimidation of journalists.

In the wake of increasingly closer ties with the US, the media censorship officially ended in 2002. The State Press Committee was transformed into the Uzbek Press and Information Agency by a presidential decree in July 2002. The new agency was categorically forbidden 'to carry out censorship, editing, bans and other forms of illegal interference in the work of the media. Another step further in this direction was Freedom to information. Its Article VIII prohibits censorship and monopolization of information (Akabarzadeh 2005: 99). However, these measures on the part of the government have proved to be flawed and superficial. False allegations on media persons, even forcing them to resign have made mockery of the new initiatives. For instance, Amirkul Karimov editor of *The Hurriyat*, the only independent newspaper in the country and not attached to any political party, was removed without any explanation and charges. One of the reasons widely believed by the Uzbek human rights activists is that the paper published a number of articles probing into corruption among government officials (Akabarzadeh 2005: 101). The state television remains the main source of news and continues to concentrate on success stories of the

[13] Legal Freedom of Speech and Actual Right of Journalists to Criticize the Authorities of Uzbekistan, URL: http://www.eurasianet.org/resource/uzbekistan/links/freespeech.shtml

government as its primary news (ICG Asia Report 2003:9). The Internet is becoming an increasingly influential form of journalism. A string of news sites offer space for (usually anonymous) contributions from critical reporters. Access to such sites is sometimes blocked by the authorities but has improved since the removal of the monopoly held by the Uzpak internet service provider (ICG Asia Report 2003: 10).

The harassment against independent journalists has not been confined to locals but foreign correspondents also suffer various degree of harassment, ranging from being scolded by the presidential press secretary for asking difficult questions, to physical attacks by thugs in the street for reporting protest rallies. The reporters from *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* and the *Voice of America* were beaten in full view of Tashkent police on March 2003. They were interviewing women demonstrating in support of their husbands and other male relatives jailed for their alleged involvement with Hiz ut Tahir (Akabarzadeh 2005 :101).

In another initiative taken up on June 11, 2004, the government adopted decree No. 275 regarding licensing of publication to be given by a Special Commission and permission would not be allowed to publish any information distorting image of Uzbekistan and its spiritual values, and undermining the social and political stability of the country. It means that an independent opinion and criticism of the current realities would not be published even after setting up a formal institution abolishing censorship in 2002 (Ilkamov 2005:301).

## Electoral Politics: Presidential Elections

The Constitution of Uzbekistan adopted in 1992 guarantees a democratic multi-party system. The task of conducting presidential as well as parliamentary election in the republic is allocated to a permanent body, Central Electoral Commission constituted by not less than 15 members who are appointed by the *Oliy Majlis*. The Chairman is nominated by the President of the Republic from among the CEC members.

The democratisation processes in the republic could be gauged from the recent presidential election held in 2007. According to ODIHR observers, it marked a step forward in democratic evolution of the country, with increased participation of candidates contesting the election, enhanced number of female candidates and non-

partisan candidates from initiative group. But all candidates publicly endorsed the incumbent, Ismail Karimov and thus the electorate was deprived of a genuine choice.

The registration of political parties as legal entities and of candidates for presidential elections remains subject to excessively high requirements for supporting signatures. The current law mandates that a candidate to be nominated for presidency requires support of a political party or by an initiative group of 300 people. It is also mandatory to collect 700,000 signatures of eligible voters. It is therefore a mounting task to get supporting signatures of such a large population without independent media. The state controlled media as well as low internet penetration in the country weakens the prospect of candidates mustering signatures as well as curtailment of independent candidates' campaign. (Akhmadov 2007). In the 2007 elections, the media was restricted to promote the image of the incumbent, Islam Karimov, as eighty percent of relevant coverage of news confined to him.

Another facet of this election relates to the controversy attached to Article 90 of the Constitution that casts doubts over the claims of free and fair election. Article 90 of the Constitution restricts a person to contest election only twice, but the incumbent has already won elections held in 1991 and 2000, thus not eligible for contesting the present election. The opposition and civil society have raised criticism but there existed no formal challenges in the court, neither the constitutional court of the country did receive any petition with respect to this issue nor Article 90 has been interpreted by the court in the light of this controversy (OSCE/ODIHR 2007: 4).

The president election seems to be symbolic. Since the independence, the presidential election in the republic has been held thrice in December 1991 and January 2000 and lastly in 2007, for the rest of the time referendum has been instrumental in extension of the presidential regime. In the earlier presidential election doubts have been raised about it being participatory and competitive. The first presidential election held in 1991 with victory of Ismail Karimov with 86 percent of the total votes cast. His lone rival, Mohammd Salih, leader of Freedom (Erk) party, which had been established as an offshoot of Unity (Birlik) in 1990, won 12percent of votes. Unity was banned from contesting the election as it had still not been granted official registration as a political

party. In a referendum in 1995 the president's term of office was extended until 2000, while another referendum held in 2002 resulted in the extension of the term of office from five to seven years. The extension was applied to the running mandate, extending it to 2007.

In another presidential election in January 2000, two candidates were in the fray. People's Democratic Party of Uzbekistan (PDPU), probably with the president's backup, nominated its first secretary Abdulkhafiz Jalalov, the sole candidate permitted to contest was a public supporter of president's policies and leadership. In his campaign statement, he also declared his intension to vote for the incumbent president Islam Karimov. Other political parties supported Islam Karimov, however officially he was registered as a candidate of the recently established party Fidokorlar. President Karimov reported secured 91.9 percent of the vote cast, with his opponent gaining 4.2percent of the total votes cast. One of the reasons for such high participation in the elections is the fact that often one voter votes for all his/her family members. However, the criticism was levelled both by the OSCE and the US that the election was undemocratic as opposition parties had been barred from nominating candidates.

The extent of democratization in the electoral politics could be gauged from the growing number of candidates participating in the presidential election, but high registration requirements, highly state controlled and regulated media, resort to referendum by the president to seek his legitimacy keeps the future of the republic in the hands of president without paving way for a democratic and decentralized governance.

## Parliamentary Elections

The December 26, 2004 parliamentary elections were the third since Uzbekistan regained independence in 1991. These were the first elections since the Republic of Uzbekistan adopted a two-chamber parliament (*Oliy Majlis*) in the January 27, 2002 referendum. The new legislative chamber includes 120 seats (reduced from 250 seats) elected in single-mandate constituencies. The new upper chamber includes 100 senators – 84 indirectly elected by regional councils and 16 appointed by the President.

Five political parties were registered and fielded candidates for the legislative chamber: Peoples' Democratic Party of Uzbekistan (ex-Communist Party), Social-Democratic Party "Adolat" (Justice), National Democratic Party "Milliy Tiklanish" (National Revival), National Democratic Party "Fidokorlar" (Self-Sacrificers) and the Liberal Democratic Party of Uzbekistan (LDPU), registered on December 3, 2003. Only the Peoples' Democratic Party of Uzbekistan (PDPU) and LDPU ran candidates in all or virtually all 120 electoral districts.

Political parties represent one of the most fundamental components of a competitive democracy, but in the Uzbek context, political parties do not present the voter with their intended legislative agenda, critical policy analysis, or polity alternatives. The parties' public pronouncements supported the policies of President Karimov. During the campaign, the parties did not address topical issues appearing to be of most concern to the electorate. The parties or initiative groups expressing critical attitude towards the Uzbek authorities have been refused registration. The requirement for registration of political parties was made tougher with requirement of 5,000 to 20,000 signatures nationwide. Even, for an initiative group to field a candidate in election required signature of 100 to 300 individuals (OSCE/ODIHR 2004: 3-7). The registration of independent candidate with critical views of *status quo* marginalised the choices of the electorates. The independent candidates that were registered were in position of authority or in the state employment (OSCE/ODIHR 2004: 8)

The lack of competitiveness in electoral process is evident from very inception of parliamentary system in December 1994 that marked the replacement of old parliament in Uzbekistan by the *Oliy Majlis* leading to election to the new parliament on December 25, 1995, in which 144 out of 250 seats were bagged by candidates nominated by the regional councils, the People's Democratic Party took 193 seats, while remaining 57 seats were allocated to government supporters. The predominance of president in *Oliy Majis* could be gauged from the fact that 80percent of the representatives of this house were from institutions under the president's direct patronage. Though, unlike the democratic institution of debates and discussions it had limited itself by meeting every month merely to give approval and legitimise laws prepared by the government (Melvin 2004 : 33).

Another parliamentary election held on December 5, 1999 to *Oliy Majlis* (Supreme Council), manifested cases of trade union leaders being bullied to withdraw their candidature by the government officials. The parliamentary election laws providing equal conditions for nominating the candidates have been also violated. For instance, candidates nominated by local authorities (*khokims*) do not have to collect signatures to support their candidacies, whereas the political parties' candidates must collect no less than 50,000 signatures of voters, and the citizens' initiative groups — no less than 8percent of votes from the total number of electors in the electoral district.

## Constitution and the Presidency

The Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan was adopted on December 8, 1992 which established a Presidential system of governance. The text offered a wide range of civil liberties, but its adoption coincided with the arrest of many opposition leaders and the growing harassment of Islamic activists (Anderson 2004: 76). The very first article[14] of the constitution declares Uzbekistan to be a 'democratic' country and an entire chapter (Chapter 2 of the Constitution) is devoted to democracy which talks of the lofty ideals of democracy, democratic rights and separation of power among the state institutions[15].

Uzbekistan's constitutional and other laws include certain clauses in which certain rights are ill defined making them vulnerable to varied interpretations which give ample scope to the authorities to restrict the rights of the people, political parties and the civil society. Article 10[16] of the Constitution states that only the Parliament and the President can speak on behalf of the people and no other part of society, political party, or individual can do so. There is certainly a problem here, it severely limits the right of the individuals, political parties and civil society to ask or campaign for democratic reforms or any other interests which they might as well have. It also goes against the right to freedom of expression which is *sine qua non* of a democratic society (Hunter 1996: 60).

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[14] Article1. Uzbekistan is a sovereign democratic republic. Both names of the state — the Republic of Uzbekistan and Uzbekistan — shall be equivalent.

[15] Article11. The principle .of the separation of power between the legislative, executive and judicial authorities shall underlie the system of state authority in the Republic of Uzbekistan.

[16] Article10. The Oliy Majlis (Supreme Assembly) and President of the Republic, elected by the people, shall have the exclusive right to act on behalf of the people. No section of society, political party, public association, movement or individual shall have the right to act on behalf of the people of Uzbekistan.

The Constitution of Uzbekistan provides the legal bases for a multiparty system and forbids creation and activity of political parties and other public groups that aim to forcefully change the constitutional regime, stand against sovereignty, integrity, and security of the country, constitutional rights and freedoms of its citizens, propagate war, social, national, racial, and religious conflicts[17].

The Constitution was amended in March 1995 to extend the President's term till the year 2000. It was further amended in 2002 to extend the term of president from four to seven years. The amendments also renounced the combination of the offices of president and chairman of the Cabinet of ministers and transformed the unicameral parliament (*Oliy Majlis*) into a bicameral institution (Abdullaev 2005: 270).

Though, the Constitution provides for separation of power, the authority of the state is concentrated in the office of the President. He guides the political and economic life of the state and has tried to legitimize his authority on the premise of preserving political and economic stability within the state. The President of the Republic of Uzbekistan has been vested with the power by the constitution to appoint ministers, judges, and all administrators, including the head of the Central Bank. He can employ extraordinary powers at will in an "emergency" and dissolve parliament. More recently, the president was authorized to withdraw immunity from any parliamentarian charged with "anti-constitutional actions aimed at undermining the state structure". Such a measure has further weakened the national legislature (*Oliy Majlis*) which has always been under the control of the President (Spechler 2008: 29).

After winning his first election in independent Uzbekistan, President Karimov made some decisive moves to consolidate his power and position. To this end he had the support of the People's Democratic Party of Uzbekistan (the former Communist Party) which played the leading role in the political life of the country. Karimov systematically removed his potential rivals within the regime. The Supreme Council of the state and its successor, the *Oliy Majlis* have always served as a convenient tool to Karimov, who have used these institutions for his own authoritarian ends.

[17] http://uzbekistan.ms/constitution.php

When an opposition within the regime surfaced in 1991, and a bloc of around 180 deputies criticized the policies of Karimov, he was quick to turn to the council for silencing the voices. Thus, the Supreme Council adopted an amendment in 1992; according to this amendment, any MP may forfeit his/her mandate for 'behaviour that discredits the title of People's Deputy, or for anti-constitutional actions aimed at undermining the state system or at destabilization of the socio-political system, or for appeals to perform such actions.' It further said that, in such cases the decision shall be taken by the Supreme Council with no input from the voters (Petrov and Garfarly 2001: 80).

In January 1992 the post of Vice-President was abolished and thereby his rival, Shakrulla Mirsaidov was removed from an important position from where he could have exercised considerable influence. He was appointed State Secretary, but he chose to resign from the post (Melvin 2004: 32).

Since 1992 presidential *apparata* hold a direct control over regional and local government, as well as the media. According to one regional administrator interviewed by Pauline Jones Luong in 1994, these regional leaders (most of whom had been part of the former Party apparatus) had "increasingly little control of what was happening in their own oblasts," because "all the directives come from the president himself." However, the governors' (*hokims*) power within each region to distribute patronage was preserved and in turn the governors remained loyal to the regime (Spechler 2008: 29).

Such a control at the regional and local level has resulted into a highly centralized state with a vertical system of executive power based upon the president's power to appoint regional governors which is closely tied to the centre's ability to control local councils of people's representatives (Melvin 2004: 32).

The personalization of power and the President's obsession with it is evident in the law that was passed on April 25, 2003, according to this law, On the Fundamental Guarantees of the Activity of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the former President of the country will become "a lifelong member of the Senate of the *Oliy Majlis* of the Republic of Uzbekistan."(Abdullaev 2005: 268).

Another and perhaps the most glaring instance of Islam Karimov's attempt at defying democratic and constitutional norms pertains to the issue of his candidature and reelection in the Presidential poll that took place on December 23, 2007. According to Article 90 of the Uzbekistan's constitution, "A person may not be elected to the office of President of the Republic of Uzbekistan for more than two consecutive terms" and since the incumbent had been the President of Uzbekistan since its independence in 1991, having won both previous presidential elections in 1991 and 2000, against one competing candidate in these respective elections; he was ineligible to contest the next election but a very self serving explanation by the regime made him elected for the third consecutive term.

According to the CEC, Islam Karimov was elected president following the adoption of the Constitution in 1992 only once – in 2000 – and thus met the eligibility criteria under Article 90 of the Constitution. Despite criticism from some opposition forces and civil society groups, there have been no formal court appeals in this respect (OSCE/ODIHR 2007).

## Conclusion

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, though elections have been held in the republics of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, hopes for the institutionalization of democratic systems in the republics – in which free-and-fair elections would enable peaceful transfers of political power – have faded. Instead, an authoritarian trend has taken hold. Incumbents have tried to rig their respective political systems to defend their positions of political supremacy, engineering sham elections in an attempt to give their authority a stamp of popular approval. The root of the problem lies in the political system, which is the bottleneck for all other reforms. The *de jure* versus *de facto* democracy is demonstrable in many ways. According to their constitutions, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan are democracies, however there is little evidence to support that these are democratic systems in practice. There are no institutions that really serve as political training grounds. The basic minimal criteria for a functional democracy i.e. separation of power between the legislature, executive and the judiciary is absent. Weak political parties, curtailment of the freedom of press and absence of a vibrant civil society leaves much to be desired. International

organizations like Freedom House and Amnesty International frequently cite the problematic nature of both the elections as well as the electoral systems in the states. Opposition parties are either banned outright or restrictions placed upon organizations and on individual citizens wishing to participate in the political arena are so limiting that opposition parties are unable to consolidate. While these countries hold popular elections, their electoral processes are manipulated by the executive branches of government – calling into question the validity of competitive elections.

# Chapter 4
# *A Comparative Analysis of Democratization in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan*

## CHAPTER 4

# COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF DEMOCRATIZATION IN KAZAKHSTAN AND UZBEKISTAN

Before attempting to proceed with the analysis, it would be appropriate to briefly outline the methodology that underlies this chapter. The comparison would move from description to analysis. The method applied here is based on what has been variously termed as comparative method, the 'comparable cases strategy', or 'focused comparison'. This method is applied by the political observers to compare 'few countries'. Studies using this method tend to be intensive rather than extensive as the fewer cases involved in the studies allow to encompass more of the nuances specific to each country. The political outcomes that feature in this type of comparison are often seen to be 'configurative', i.e. the product of multiple causal factors acting together (Landman 2003: 27).

Studies on democratization have variously used the above method to identify the factors that either push or stall this process in different countries. The underlying assumption is that democratization or even de-democratization[1] (movement towards authoritarianism), its reverse, are processes which depend on a multiplicity of factors emanating from the social structure, political system and the pattern of economy of the state.

This assumption is based on rather competing but credible approaches which have tried to explain democratization on the basis of changing dynamics within the above aspects of a state or society. Thus, modernization approach, in general, focuses on social and economic prerequisites either associated with existing liberal democracies or necessary for successful democratization; the transition approach emphasizes on political processes and elite initiatives and choices that account for moves from authoritarian rule to liberal democracy and the structural approach emphasizes on changing structures of power favorable to democratization. The approaches

[1] Charles Tilly uses this term to denote a democracy's slide back to authoritarianism. See Tilly (2003), "Inequality, Democratization and De-Democratization", *Sociological Theory*, 21(1): 37-43

mentioned above are not tightly compartmentalized and often borrow from each other or to say, have various meeting grounds.

The point being made here is that, even though, these approaches separately work upon various factors to explain democratization, their credible explanations of democratization ably demonstrate that a multiplicity of factors common or unique to the variety of approaches lend explanatory power for justifying the political outcome – democratization. And it depends upon the choice of the observer, to work within a single coherent approach or take into consideration the lumped up strengths of individual approaches and ignore the perceived weaknesses in them while solving a research problem by using comparative method.

The previous chapter provides much of the descriptive groundwork by looking at the various aspects of transition – institutional changes, electoral processes and their outcomes, potential agents of democratization and their impact on democratization in the two republics of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. The present chapter would use the descriptive narrations of the previous chapter and supplement it with analysis. It would also enrich the descriptive accounts of social, political and economic developments which either further the cause of democracy in these two republics or serve to undermine it. Further, Freedom House[2] reports would be used to support certain arguments that would run through the chapter while analyzing democratization in the two republics.

## State Building Process and Democratization

Both Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan gained independence as a result of the collapse of the Soviet edifice. They embarked on the process of state and nation building at the same time and promised to follow a democratic path. However, the republics kept trading democratization for stability. This is not to say that both the process cannot go hand in hand. Political stability during the state and nation building process, of course, remains a priority before young states but when stability becomes an excuse for

[2] Freedom House is a Washington-based international Non-Governmental Organization that conducts research and advocacy on democracy, political freedom and human rights. It publishes an annual report assessing the degree of perceived democratic freedoms in each country, which is widely used in political science research.

centralization of state's authority into one single office or a person, it says a lot about ones commitment to democratization.

Kazakhstan took a rapid stride on a liberal path towards economic development; the democratic development lacked the same pace. Uzbekistan, on the other hand, followed a gradualist path towards economic reforms and focused more on stability in both economic and political sphere. A more pronounced liberal approach to economic development in Kazakhstan exposed it to the outside world, international regimes and multilateral institutions. It had to create a favorable environment and meet minimum international norms to pursue its economic goals. Thus, we find Kazakhstan following a mixed path that gave an ambivalent impression about its approach to democracy, at least in the initial years.

Uzbekistan had no such compulsions, its own concept of a gradualist path made it flout the democratic norms and slide towards authoritarianism as freely as it could. Moreover, the success of negating the effects of economic downturns due to a cautious approach towards economic reforms bolstered Karimov's authoritarian tendencies as he continuously rationalized his authority in terms of economic and political stability. However, that stability has now degenerated into economic stagnation and a morally depressed condition of the society (Rumer 2005: 26)

The nation building process in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan has been marred by certain problems they have been facing and the way in which the political elites of the republics have sought to wriggle out of these problems have done no good to democratization. The approach to state and nation building in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan has direct implications for democratic prospects and democratization in the republics. The emphasis on political stability in the republics has been translated into consolidation of regimes which personalizes power rather than distributes it to various state organs, thereby hampering democratization.

Kazakhstan at the dawn of independence had to face the problem of fragmented ethnic aspirations and interests; the titular population was far outnumbered by the combined numerical strength of the minorities and both the Kazakhs and Russians asserted their own identity and interests. But rather than co-opting the minorities into the state apparatus which would certainly have encouraged pluralism and distribution

of power – a feature of democratization, the Nazarbayev regime has sought to 'indigenize' power in favor of the titular elites. Thus, the premiership that had been given to an ethnic Russian since independence was finally handed over to a Kazakh in October 1994 (Patnaik 2001: 25).

In Uzbekistan, the state and nation building efforts face stiff challenge from the rise of radical and political Islam particularly in the Fergana valley, one of the reasons for the radicalization of Islam in the region could be the outright ban imposed by the state on politico-religious movements. An outright ban on such movements and parties has in effect led to ghettoisation and radicalization as the space of political contestation has been usurped by the state in the garb of secularism (McGlinchey 2005: 560). Though, dogged vigilantism by the state against divisive forces is legitimate, repression has often yielded the opposite results.

## Constitution, Presidency and Democratization

The constitutions of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan have been designed by the elites to give an impression that it incorporates democratic principles; however, the constitutional mandates are not the principles that guide the political elites in the republics. Seemingly pluralist, the constitutions mask the authoritarian style of the presidential form of government (Capisani 2000: 82)

Democracy, secularism and division of power between the three branches of government figures prominently in the constitutions but paradoxically, a bulk of power have been assigned to the president of the republics. The constitution of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan bestow unlimited power to the president in the matter of appointments of the president's *apparat*, ministries, judges and head of the economic institutions.

The constitutions of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have been amended several times in order to further centralize power in the hands of the executive. The political elites have also resorted to amendments for extending their terms, thereby skipping the electoral routes to power – *sine qua non* of democracy. The Constitution of Kazakhstan adopted in 1993 was replaced by a new constitution in 1995 after getting approval in a referendum. The new Constitution has increased the power of the

president. In Uzbekistan no such replacement was necessary as the executive had already centralized the power.

A referendum held in Uzbekistan during March 1995 confirmed Islam Karimov as president until 2000. While another referendum held in 2002 resulted in the extension of the term of office from five to seven years. Earlier, he was elected as president in the election held in 2002 and the 2002 referendum on extending the term was applied to the running mandate, extending his term to 2007[3].Kazakhstan's president followed his counterpart in Uzbekistan and in April 1995 a referendum extended his presidential term until 2000[4]. In 2007 another constitutional amendments signed by Nazarbayev made him eligible for reelection after his term expires in 2012.

The presidents of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan are head of the state as well as the head of the executive, thus Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have presidential form of government. The presidential form of government does not augur well for democratization in transitional countries like Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan as the Presidents in these republics have made parliament subservient to the executive and the regional governors are directly appointed by them (Linz and Valenzuela 1994). This again points to a very strong unitary nature of the state.

The direct appointment of the governors, the executive head in the regions, by the president implies that the prospect of democratization through elections in the regions has been decisively curtailed. One of the reasons for doing away with elections in the regions is the authoritarian logic that elected administrative heads in a region would sooner or later lead to the emergence of parallel power centers (backed by legitimacy earned through electoral victories) which in turn could challenge the personalized regimes at the centre.

## Super-Presidentialism and Weak Opposition

Democratization literature posits parliament as the institution that checks and balances the executive in a democratic system. It also strengthens the prospects of democratization in a transitional system by providing a platform to the multiple

[3] http://www.osce.org/documents/odihr/2005/03/4355_en.pdf
[4] http://www.osce.org/documents/odihr/1999/02/1263_en.pdf

political forces to impress upon the executive to accommodate their opinions and divergent interests.

Based on his comparative analysis of the performance of the fourteen advanced industrial democracies, Lizphart concludes that "the parliamentary-proportional representation form of democracy is clearly better than the major alternatives in accommodating ethnic differences and it has a slight edge in economic policy making as well." Similarly, Linz asserts that "parliamentarism provides a more flexible and adaptable institutional context for the establishment and consolidation of democracy". Scott Mainwaring offers a similar argument when he says that "presidential systems are generally less favorable to democracy than parliamentary systems, and their disadvantages are multiplied with a multiparty system".[5]

These arguments probably would not be applicable in case of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan as these republics have chosen a presidential form of government which is closely molded on the lines of executive president- a post that was created in the Soviet Union Republics to replace the position of First Party Secretaries in the constituent republics, just before its disintegration. However, these arguments would certainly help our assessment of democratization in these republics when posited as counterfactuals.

The parliament in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan rather than being a force that propels democratization, have become an adjunct to the executive. The parliamentary politics in these republics is a sham. Starting as unicameral legislative body, parliament in the two republics has evolved to become bicameral legislative bodies.

The weakness of the parliament is a direct result of the concentration of power in the hands of the executive in the republics. For example, the president can bypass the parliament at his will by the act of issuing decrees which has the same effect as of the laws passed in the parliament. Though the decrees are to be submitted for approval by the parliament, decrees have never been rejected.

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[5] Arend Lizphat, Juan Linz and Scott Mainwaring, all are quoted from Doh Chull Shin (1994: 159); *On the Third Wave of Democratization: A Synthesis and evaluation of Recent Theory and Research* ; World Politics 7(1): 135-170.

The power of the Presidents in the relation with parliament in the republic of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan is overwhelming by any standards. The executive head in Kazakhstan can veto the laws passed by the parliament and only the president can initiate constitutional amendments. He has the right to dissolve the parliament and can call for referenda at his discretion (Capisani 2000: 8). The chairpersons of both the chambers of parliament are nominated by the president. The president of Uzbekistan proposes candidacy of Chairman to both the chambers of the parliament proposes candidacy of the Prime Minister for further approval by both chambers, approves members of the Cabinet of Ministries, proposed by Prime Minister[6]. The President of the Republic of Uzbekistan also has the right to preside at sittings of the Cabinet of Ministers, adopt decisions on matters relating to the competence of the Cabinet of Ministers, as well as to abolish resolutions and ordinances of the Cabinet of Ministers and that of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

The composition of the Cabinet of Ministers is formed by the President of the Republics. The President of Uzbekistan can dissolve the legislative chamber; the Senate of the *Oliy Majlis* (parliament) of the Republic of Uzbekistan. The President of Kazakhstan enjoys the granting of special status by the parliament by virtue of being the "first President"; in July 2000, the parliament was forced to adopt a law "On the First President of the Republic of Kazakhstan" which declared that, the first president who is "the leader of the people of Kazakhstan, ensuring its unity, the defense of the Constitution, the rights and liberties of the individual and citizens,...[he] cannot bear accountability for actions associated with the realization of this status (Furman 2005: 231). Similarly, the president of Uzbekistan upon completion of his term of office shall be a lifetime member of the parliament of Uzbekistan and he can suspend or repeal acts passed by bodies of state administration at both the central and regional level.[7]

The sweeping powers enjoyed by the presidents of the republics have made the institution of parliament a farce. The institution of the parliament in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan has further been robbed off of their credibility as institutions which further the cause of democratization by limiting the representation of plurality of forces and interests.

[6] http://www.uzbekistan.org.sg/president/
[7] http://www.gov.uz/en/constitution/#s272

The last parliamentary election in Uzbekistan that was held on December 26, 2004, saw the participation of five registered parties namely, People's Democratic Party of Uzbekistan(ex-Communist Party), Social Democratic Party "Adolat" ("Justice"), National Democratic Party"MillyTiklanish"("National Revival"), National Democratic Party "Fidokorlar"("Self- Sacrificers") and the Liberal Democratic Party of Uzbekistan (LDUP) (OSCE/ODIHR 2005).

All the above parties which were allowed registration are shadow parties favoring the regime. The authorities did not allow a single political party, or initiative group candidate, which had indicated some critical attitude towards the Uzbek authorities. The political parties – "Ozod Dehkonlar" (Free Peasants), Party of Agrarians and Entrepreneurs (both established in 2003), "Birlik" ("Unity") and "Erk" ("Freedom"), in existence since 1989 and 1991 respectively were denied registration. Thus, the opposition was completely kept out of the parliament by denying a chance to participate in the parliamentary elections.

In Kazakhstan the last parliamentary elections were held on August 18, 2007, the Central Election Commission (CEC) registered all seven parties that submitted candidate lists – All National Social Democratic Party (ANSDP), Nur Otan, The Party of Patriots of Kazakhstan, Auyl, Ak-Zhol, Rukhaniyat and The Communist People's Party of Kazakhstan (CPPK). However, the result of the election doesn't represent the same plurality as evident in the multiplicity of parties that participated in the parliamentary elections. Every single seat was captured by Nur Otan, the party led by the incumbent president.

In such a context it would not be a tough task to judge the level of democratization in these republics. While, Uzbekistan outrightly denied registration to the opposition; Kazakhstan followed a circuitous route for denying representation, nonetheless the effect remains the same – parliaments without pluralism. As Dahl observes, "One is inclined to regard the existence of an opposition party as very nearly the most distinctive characteristic of democracy itself; and we take the absence of the opposition party as evidence, if not always conclusive proof, for the absence of democracy" (Lawson 1993: 193).

## Non-Competitive Electoral System

Having considered parliamentary politics and its electoral arena, a comparison of electoral politics pertaining to presidency in case of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan would add more value to this study, as president is the executive head in the two republics and the whole political process is centered on the presidency.

The first presidential election in Kazakhstan was held on December 1, 1991. Nazarbayev, the incumbent president won this election without a contest as the candidature of the other potential contender, Khasen Kozhakhmetov, a leader of the Zheltoksan Party was refused by the Central Election Commission because he failed to collect the requisite 100,000 signature endorsing his candidature. In the election that was held with only one candidate, Nazarbayev received 98.78 percent vote in his favor (Furman 2005: 204). Though, his term was only for the next five years, a referendum in 1995 allowed him to rule till the year 2000. Further, the 1998 amendments to the constitution increased the president's term period to seven years and dropped term and age restrictions which were earlier limited to 65 years.

The president called for an early election to be held on January 10, 1999. The Presidential election was the first multi-candidate election with four candidates in the race for presidency. However, the candidature of the former Prime Minister of Kazakhstan, Akhezan Kazhegeldin was denied on the basis of 1998 amendments, which banned the registration of any individuals who received an administrative sanction for an "intentional offence" in a court procedure during the year prior to registration. Earlier, Kazhegedin was sanctioned by the court for attending an October 5, 1998 meeting of an unregistered NGO called For Honest Elections (OSCE/ODIHR 1999). Nazarbayev won the election by polling 81 percent of the total votes polled. The next and latest presidential election in Kazakhstan was held in December 2005. The election was contested by five candidates and Nazarbayev again emerged victorious with 91.15 percent of voters polling for him.

In Uzbekistan, there have been three presidential elections and Islam Karimov has been the winner in all three. In the first presidential election held on December 1991, Karimov received 83 percent of the total vote casted. The only other candidate, Mohammad Salih, chairman of the Erk party received 14 percent of the votes. The

leading opposition party, Birlik was not allowed to put up a candidate in the election as it was not a registered party. The next presidential election was held in January 2000, earlier Karimov had secured his presidency till 2000 through a referendum held in March 1995. Karimov won in this election with 91.9 percent votes. The other candidate who was only a proxy for all practical purposes got 4.1 percent of the total votes. "So as paradoxical as it may sound, I voted for Islam Karimov," Jalalov, the only other presidential candidate said after casting his vote, adding that he stood in the election "so that democracy would win"[8]. The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe refused to send even a small assessment team to the election, accusing the government of failing to give voters a real choice.

The next presidential election was held in 2007 as the incumbent's term was increased from five to seven years in a referendum held in 2002. It and saw the participation of four candidates including the incumbent. An encouraging aspect of this election was participation of a women candidate, Diloram Tashmukhamedova and a candidate from an initiative group. However, the voters were left without a real choice as all the candidates publicly endorsed the policies of the incumbent president, Islam Karimov. Karimov won the election with 88.10 percent in the total votes polled (OSCE/ODIHR 2007).

The one single common feature that stands out in this comparison is the lack of competition among the candidates. Both Dahl and Huntington while talking about democratization see competition and political opposition as the cornerstone of democracy and an important aspect of democratization. For them, strength of political opposition is a function of democracy i.e. stronger the political opposition and political contestation in electoral arena, stronger is the prospect of democratization, thus consolidating democracy (Dahl 1971, Huntington 1991). The above discussed comparison of the electoral politics in the two republics (*see tables below*) clearly illustrates that though there is ample participation in the electoral process; one of the important elements that define Dahl's polyarchy[9] is conspicuous by its absence.

[8] http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/597046.stm

[9] Dahl essentially emphasizes on three requirements of competition, inclusiveness and civil liberties (borrowed by Huntington) are required for a democracy but for him there is no country in which these conditions are sufficiently met; therefore he prefers the term 'polyarchies' for political systems in

According to Doorenspleet (2000: 390) the first requirement of minimal democracies is the presence of competition which can only be met if there are institutions and procedures through which citizens can express effective preferences about alternative policies at the national level and if there are institutionalized constraints on the exercise of power of executives.

**PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS: KAZAKHSTAN**

| YEAR | Turnout | Nazarbayev | Others | Total No. Of Candidates |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1991 | 88.2% | 98.78% | N/A | 1 |
| 1999 | 87% | 79.8% | 18% | 4 |
| 2005 | 76.78% | 91.15% | 8.99% | 5 |

*Source*: OSCE, BBC, Election Watch (Journal of Democracy)

**PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS: UZBEKISTAN**

| YEAR | Turnout | Karimov | Others | Total No. Of Candidates |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1991 | 95% | 85% | 12.4% | 2 |
| 2000 | 90% | 91.9% | 4.1% | 2 |
| 2007 | 90.6% | 88.10 | 9.06% | 4 |

*Source*: OSCE, BBC, Election Watch (Journal of Democracy)

## Weak Civil Society and State-Controlled Media

### *Civil society*

As discussed in the previous chapter, civil society has become a reference point for understanding the state from outside the domain of the state's institutions. It is the site for a critical rational discourse which possesses the potential to interrogate the state

which the conditions are sufficiently met and uses the term democracy for the ideal type, in Doorenspleet (2000), p. 387.

(Chandhoke 1995: 32). Thus, civil society plays an important role in molding state behaviour and its perceptions towards the citizens, a role which democratizes the state.

In Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, development of an independent and vibrant civil society is intricately linked to the success of democratization in these republics. While both Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan allowed neo-liberal civil society to develop in the initial years, they became increasingly aware of the democratic potentials of the civil society groups in the later years and used the instruments of the state machinery to curb their growth and scope of participation along with the common people. In fact, Uzbekistan has developed the traditional communal *mahalla* community as an alternative to the neo-liberal civil society institutions; however, the problem with *mahallas* in Uzbekistan is their very limited autonomy for they have been co-opted by the state, which greatly undermines their legitimacy as a civil society.

In Kazakhstan, the civil society scene is dominated by the international and local NGOs. They are funded by the government as well as the international aid agencies. The government funded local NGOs are 'crypto-government' organizations which primarily buttresses government's policies and programs (Akiner 2005: 126-27). NGOs which oppose to engage in "constructive cooperation" with the government are portrayed by the authorities as obstacles in the path of development and growth. According to Freedom House, out of 5000 officially registered NGOs in Kazakhstan, less than 10% are working to promote civil liberties, human rights and minority protection issues (Dave 2009).

Civil society in Uzbekistan has been stifled by the regime. A decree issued by the Council of Ministers in February 2004 was designed to prevent the NGOs, not connected to the government, from directly accessing their international grant funds. All grants from abroad were to be overseen by a special Committee of the Central Bank. This committee was empowered to reject applications for access to grants and even to return the grant to its source in case the committee decided that the project for which the grant was sent is unsound or unconstitutional (OSCE 2004). The international NGOs faced a virtual crackdown when, as a retaliatory act to the Western response regarding the Andijan incident, most of the foreign based NGOs in Uzbekistan were forced to close down. As of now, Western based NGOs practically

do not exist in Uzbekistan. After neutralizing the foreign based NGOs in 2005-6, the state has further encroached upon the social and democratic space by coming heavily upon non-traditional religious groups (those outside the state-approved version of Islam or Russian Orthodox). The state media has also been used to malign the image of such groups (Pannier 2009).

***Media***

Media is aptly called the fourth pillar of democracy for it is the vanguard of freedom of expression and the most accessible source of information pertaining to day-to-day developments in state and society. To this effect, constitutions of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan guarantee freedom of speech and prohibit censorship. In states like Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan which are undergoing transition, a free and independent media could have served as an important agent for rapid democratization. However, the media in these two republics remains under sustained pressure of the state and has resorted to self-censorship.

According to Freedom House most of the media in Kazakhstan are privately owned, nominally independent, but in reality are regulated by the government and controlled by leading financial groups entrenched in the ruling circle. These media outlets compete intensely with each other but consciously avoid investigative work and do not criticize the president, his close family, or other top figures within the regime (Dave 2009). According to the 2009 Worldwide Press Freedom Index of the international media watchdog Reporters Without Borders (Reporters Sans Fronti`eres), Kazakhstan ranked 142 out of 175 countries[10].

Kazakhstan has been using the stringent laws on frequency licensing and permits for airwaves to TV to keep out independent broadcast media. Exorbitant licensing fees introduced in the 1997 law led to the closure of almost 20 stations by mid 1998. A favourable step by the Nazarbayev government has been revocation of revenue and value-added taxes for media since 1995 (Allison 2006:98). However, as in Uzbekistan, libel laws remain an obstacle in the smooth functioning of the media in Kazakhstan. The libel laws in entire Central Asia are very strict, which categorizes libel as a criminal act punishable by up to three years of imprisonment, in addition,

[10] Source: http://www.rsf.org/en-classement1003-2009.html

the Criminal Code of Kazakhstan provides special protection to the president regarding his 'honour and dignity'. Any adverse reporting about the president can be construed as an attempt to disrobe the 'honour and dignity' of the president. The unbalanced media coverage during elections remain a contentious issue in Kazakhstan, both privately and state controlled media have shown biasness in favour of the ruling regime and the party led by him. They give extensive coverage to the achievements of the president and Nur Otan – the party led by him and at the same time marginalizes the other parties while providing news coverage of campaigns during an election (OSCE 2007).

Independent media in Uzbekistan has practically been quarantined as the Uzbek authorities find the views communicated through the independent media as contrary to the values Uzbekistan's citizens should hold and respect. No independent media outlets are registered in the country and the journalists who continue to work independently, trying to report the developments in Uzbekistan to sources broadcasting to Uzbekistan from outside the country do so at great risk (Pannier 2009). In the aftermath of the Andijan incident, popular foreign radio stations such as BBC, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty and Inter-News were closed down and yet to reopen. Owing to the hostile situation faced by the media in Uzbekistan, it occupies 160$^{th}$ place in the list of 175 counties on the 2009 Worldwide Press Freedom Index composed by Reporters Without Borders[11].

Though, the official censors were abolished in Uzbekistan in May 2002, many unofficial censorship mechanisms are used to silence even the slightest of criticism by the media. The government turns off water or electricity; journalists are subjected to violence, tax details are scrutinized frequently so as to harass the agencies and individuals, sources of information are blocked and pre-publication reviews are demanded by the state authorities. Uzbekistan also has an extremely long list of forbidden topics which ensures that all divisive political issues and social problems are kept out of the newspapers. Moreover, Uzbekistan media outlets have to pay a VAT of 20% and a 15% advertising tax (Allison 2006: 100-4).

[11] Source: http://www.rsf.org/en-classement1003-2009.html

During elections in Uzbekistan, state owned media fails to provide balanced coverage of the candidates within its news programs. Coverage of the incumbent president far exceeds the coverage of the other candidates.

On a final comparative note civil society and media in Kazakhstan, though far from satisfactory as a catalyst for democratization, stand a much better chance for furthering the prospect of democratization than what it has to offer in Uzbekistan.

## Status of Democracy

A comparative study of the nation building process, institutions, constitutional developments, electoral politics, civil society and media of the two republics, would make it clear that both Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan suffer from an acute lack of democratization. The bold proclamation of democracy in the constitutions of these republics does not stand the scrutiny on the ground. The institutions such as the parliament and the party system, which were created to impart a democratic character to the republics, have been made subservient to the one single executive at the helm. There are more similarities than differences in the way these institutions have been designed and the manner in which they function in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, their features vary only in degree or procedure and not in essence or substance. A comparison of the institutions, processes and the agents which are seen as the stepping stone towards democratization and eventual establishment of democracy in these two republics, serve as an explanatory tool for assessing the extent of democratization or lack of it in the two republics.

A particular difference in the way democratization process in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan has preceded so far lies in the varied approach the regimes in these republics have followed towards its consolidation. While the Nazarbayev regime in Kazakhstan took a decisive break with the communist party of which Nazarbayev was the first secretary in the Soviet period, Karimov chose to maintain a symbiotic relation with the party in its new incarnation. This explains why Nazarbayev had some trouble in the parliamentary arena, leading twice to the dissolution of the parliament and enactment of two constitutions within the first five years of his rule. The emerging situation in the first few years of independence in Kazakhstan was politically vibrant with a multiplicity of forces trying to influence the political and economic course,

however, any compromise within the elites that would have led to the framing of 'new rules' of the game in the political arena was unacceptable to Nazarbayev. This greatly undermined the prospects of rapid democratization in Kazakhstan.In Uzbekistan the Karimov regime never had to face such a situation as the link between the party and the regime was not snapped at once. The gradualist approach to economic reforms under Karimov serves as a testimony to this relation.

The best currently available set of measures for multi-layer tracking of democratization progress and regression in Post-communist Eurasia are the scores developed by Freedom House over the past several years for its annual publication *Nations in Transit* (Basora 2008: 14). Freedom House' *Nations in Transit* provides a broad analysis of the progress of democratic change in a country using guidelines for ratings covering seven categories: electoral process; civil society; independent media; national democratic governance; local democratic governance; judicial framework and independence; and corruption.

Based on the abovementioned criteria, Freedom House has introduced a Democracy Score (*see table below*) – a straight average of the ratings for all categories, which provides a basis for evaluating progress and setbacks in the countries under study.

| **Democracy Score** | **Regime Type** |
|---|---|
| 1.00-2.99 | Consolidated Democracy |
| 3.00-3.99 | Semi-consolidated Democracy |
| 4.00-4.99 | Transitional Government or Hybrid Regime |
| 5.00-5.99 | Semi-consolidated Authoritarian Regime |
| 6.00-7.00 | Consolidated Authoritarian Regimes |

*Source*: Freedom House, *Nations in Transit 2009*

Based on these ratings, both Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan score between 6 to7 (*see table below*). According to Freedom House, countries receiving such a score are closed societies in which dictators prevent political competition and pluralism and are responsible for widespread violations of basic political, civil, and human rights. Elections serve to reinforce the rule of dictators who enjoy unlimited authority for prolonged periods of time. Power is highly centralized, and the country's national and local governmental systems are neither democratic nor accountable to the public.

Civil society faces excessive government restrictions and repression. Freedom of expression is stifled, and independent media are virtually nonexistent. Censorship is pervasive, and repression for independent reporting or criticism of the government is severe. The rule of law is subordinate to the regime, and violations of basic political, civil, and human rights are widespread. Courts are used to harass members of the opposition. Corruption and state involvement in the economy are excessive. Allegations of corruption are usually intended to silence political opponents of the regime (Freedom House 2009).

**FREEDOM HOUSE DEMOCRACY SCORE**

| YEAR | KAZAKHSTAN | UZBEKISTAN |
|---|---|---|
| 1991-2000 | 5.50 | 6.38 |
| 2001 | 5.71 | 6.42 |
| 2002 | 5.96 | 6.46 |
| 2003 | 6.17 | 6.46 |
| 2004 | 6.25 | 6.46 |
| 2005 | 6.29 | 6.43 |
| 2006 | 6.39 | 6.82 |
| 2007 | 6.39 | 6.82 |
| 2008 | 6.39 | 6.86 |
| 2009 | 6.32 | 6.89 |

*Source*: Freedom House, *Nations in Transit 2009*

The above discussions, comparisons and assessment of the Freedom House democracy score make it clear that the process of democratization has been painfully slow in these republics and as the freedom house scores would point, the democratization process in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan has been backsliding in the last few years.

Though, Freedom House report would label both Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan as consolidated authoritarian regimes, scholars has varied opinions when it comes to labeling these regimes. Their qualification of the regime in these republics is based on the overall relation that the governments of these republics share with the people. The regime in Kazakhstan has been termed as semi-authoritarian (Olcott 2005) or soft authoritarian (Schatz 2009) whereas Uzbekistan's regime has been termed as 'hard authoritarian' (Schatz 2009) or an outright authoritarian (Olcott 2005). Thus, while labeling the regimes in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan as authoritarian, observers tend to qualify the authoritarianism underlying these regimes in terms of the extent to which democratization has been back-paddled.

Adams and Rustemova (2009) offer important insights for such qualifications that have been attached to Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan in differentiating the relationship between state and population in the two republics which is a crucial measure of democratization[12]. In Kazakhstan, the state actors' primary role is to manage the society via incentives and arms length regulations within the framework of a market competition. The state initiatives in Kazakhstan tend to emphasize on this idea with slogans like 'a competitive nation' and 'competitive products'. The citizens are encouraged to pursue their personal enrichment through fair means but their successes are credited to Nazarbayev's policies.

The state and population share a different relation in Uzbekistan, the Karimov's regime promotes a strong state that is all pervasive. It penetrates and intervenes in all social realms, asks for unconditional support, patience and obedience among all its citizens. As opposed to market competition it espouses the 'Uzbek way' of incremental change in the economic sphere. The government portrays itself as the guarantor of the good in society, as well as the arbiter of what constitutes that good (Adams and Rustemova 2009).

This study also compliments the above categorization by suggesting that there are sufficient grounds, though not tangible in terms of the democratizing efforts in these republics but in its negation- authoritarianism, that a distinction between the regimes and their approach to democratization in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan can be made.

[12] They themselves use Foucault's term, 'governmentality' rather than regime to denote the relationship between state and society in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.

While the regime in Kazakhstan, has been subtle in its drive towards authoritarianism, that of Uzbekistan has been unabashedly pursuing a path that leads to authoritarianism.

## Conclusion

In the final analysis, we can say that Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan are yet to deliver on their promise of building democracy on the rubbles of a totalitarian past. However, the future of democracy looks bleak, particularly in the case of Uzbekistan, in these republics as democratization has definitely taken a backseat in a drive towards political and economic stability. And as the politics in these republics stagnates for the want of a competitive political environment, a functioning parliament with a vocal opposition, vibrant civil society, independent media and genuine electoral choices; the respective regimes in the republics have entrenched themselves firmly.

# Chapter 5
# *Summary and Conclusion*

# CHAPTER 5

# SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The process of democratization has followed different trajectories in different parts of the world at different historical time spans. The contemporary concerns with democratization have been fuelled by the surge in democratic developments during the twentieth century. In recent times democratization has come to occupy a central place in the contemporary democracy literature. The field of comparative study seems to be thriving on the current democratic developments across the globe. The coming out of the East European countries from the Soviet sphere and the disintegration of the Soviet Union had immensely widened the arena of democratization in the 90s. It has led a number of scholars to study the democratic developments in these states by taking a comparative approach.

The demise of the Soviet Union in 1991 and subsequent independence of Central Asian republics of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan brought an opportunity to the political elites of these countries to develop new alternative models of political system at the dawn of transition. The old Marxist-Leninist (socialist) Soviet model with an overwhelming role of the state (described as totalitarian) in every aspect of the political, social and economic life of citizens, was attacked upon by the elites ,who were until now the part of the *apparatchik*, as authoritarian, inefficient, devoid of civil liberties and political freedom. This sudden transformation in their ideological stance, however, did convince the ever so enthusiastic supporters of democracy that these two republics might as well transform into democracies in the near future.

However, as evident in this study, such optimism has turned out to be premature and misguided. The political situation in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan at this present juncture points to a consistent backsliding of the regimes, towards authoritarianism. These republics have failed to carry forward a sustained democratization and but for their initial promises towards democratization, their efforts in bringing genuine democratic reforms is a sham. Only a semblance of democratic participation in government has been put in place to buttress the rhetoric of democratization. Even

though elections, both parliamentary and presidential are held, the outcome of such polls is a foregone conclusion in these republics.

The over centralisation of power in the executive presidents along with the unitary nature of the states have put a hold on the prospects of democratization through parliamentary politics and regional devolution of power. The parliament in both these republics have been rendered ineffective as an arena of contestation of ideas and interests. The regions of the republics are virtually run by the presidents' *apparats.*

The civil society in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan is far from vibrant. There is some sign of a nascent civil society taking shape in Kazakhstan but the same cannot be said true for Uzbekistan where, *mahallas* – a potential civil society institution has been co-opted as an administrative structure at the lowest level. The state controlled media is no more than a mouthpiece of the regimes and the independent media in both the republics remains wary of the authorities. The situation in Uzbekistan is worse in this regard where independent media is almost non-existent.

Opposition in the form of political parties is toothless and lacks an alternative political agenda consistent with the secular credentials of the state. The lack of competitiveness in the political arena has further strengthened the regimes in the two republics. The electorates hardly have genuine choices in the electoral arena as most parties and candidates endorse the policies and programs of the regime.

The case of democratization in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan would fit into the theoretical framework of transition approach to the extent where it points to the role of the elites as the drivers of democratization. Certainly in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, the elites could be the most effective agents of transformation, if only they decide to do so. Borrowing from Rustow, one can argue that democratization in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan is largely contingent upon what the top political elites or individual holding the top political or official positions would decide to do in a particular political context.

However, the problem in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan is that the political context has stagnated in the last fifteen years or so with the complete hold of political and executive power in the hands of the presidents of the two republics. The political dynamics in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan draws its momentum not from the people or

mass mobilization by the opposition but from whatever little concessions the ruling regimes offer from time to time. Though, religion (Islam) in Uzbekistan, to certain extent, has played a role in political mobilisation against the regime but its potential as a democratizing force is highly questionable.

The democratization agenda of the external actors like European Union and the US lacks credibility when it comes to the Central Asian countries. The prospects of securing their energy needs through exploiting the vast hydrocarbon resources of Kazakhstan limits their concerns for democratization in the republic and their geopolitical interests prevail in the case of Uzbekistan. Moreover, their strategies of engaging these republics do not address the concerns of these states. Both Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan are nascent nation states and understandably their prime concern has been to maintain political stability and keep divisive forces at bay. Such concerns must be accommodated by the external actors while pursuing the agenda of democratization in the two republics.

To conclude, it would be wise to look at the post independent developments vis-à-vis democratization in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan as a product of the fundamental structural elements in these societies. Matveeva's assessment that, democracy as a suitable basis of legitimate political order in these two republics should be established through a mundane and careful work by finding local governing arrangements, which would incorporate values and structures of societies they intend to serve, makes much more sense than the idea of imposed democracy which manifests in many of the post-communist states.

At the same time, Blank's suggestion should be kept in mind, that just as continental Europe had to undergo a long, historical, often interrupted and complex evolution before it could actually become democratic, Central Asian republics of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan too, would have to go through a prolonged process of incremental political reforms before democracy could actually be achieved.

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