

ELECTORAL SYSTEM AND POLITICAL PARTIES IN CENTRAL ASIA,

1991-2015

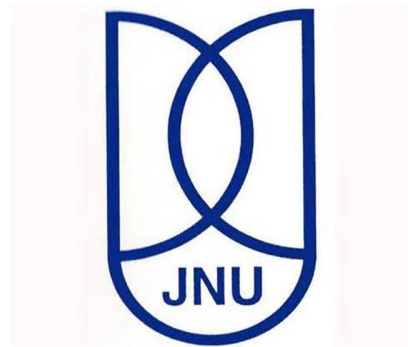
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DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation entitled "ELECTORAL SYSTEM AND POLITICAL PARTIES IN CENTRAL ASIA, 1991-2015" submitted by me for the award of Degree of Master of Philosophy of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my own work. The dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other University.

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CERTIFICATE

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

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To Maa and Deuta

Chapter One

Introduction: Theoretical Framework and Review of Literature

Electoral System and Political Parties are fundamental to modern political system. They play a noteworthy task in a country's politics, specifically in consolidating democratic political systems. Other than democratic regimes, they also help the authoritarian regimes to function. Schumpeter (1942) argued that democracy is an "institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote". Przeworski, Alvarez, Cheibub, and Limongi (2000) opined, "Contested elections as the primary litmus test for democracy." It is also said, "Whether sufficient or not, elections typically figure as necessary conditions for the existence of democracy" (Downs 2010). Thus, establishment or implementation of democratic principles need contested elections. Elections must be competitive where several individuals or groups fight with each other to win votes. Elections therefore are necessarily a pluralistic concept.

So far as electoral system is concerned, it is an essential tool in engineering of a constitution. Electoral systems have very rich literature and they provide innovative insights for countries in transition. It addresses key issues like negative campaign, voter's efficacy, popular participation, awareness, alternative voting, strategic voting etc. Difference in political choices led to different electoral systems. By means of polarization and representation of political parties and voters, elections establish stability of the political system. Farrell states, "Electoral system exerts huge influence on real world politics. It does so by including electoral formula, the district magnitude, ballot structure, and electoral threshold" (Farrell 1997).

According to the New International IDEA Handbook electoral systems are one of the most significant institutional arrangements for sustaining democracy. It says, "In almost all cases the choice of a particular electoral system has a profound effect on the future political life of the country concerned, and electoral systems, once chosen, often remain fairly constant as political interests solidify around and respond to the incentives presented by them. It is increasingly being recognized that an electoral system can be designed both to provide local geographic representation and to promote proportionality.

It can promote the development of strong and viable national political parties, and ensure the representation of women and regional minorities. It can also help to ‘engineer’ cooperation and accommodation in a divided society by the creative use of particular incentives and constraints.”¹ The Handbook also talks about electoral formula used during elections, “Electoral formula implies plurality, majority, and proportional representation formula. Ballot system deals with the way ballots are organized. Representation, inclusiveness, and transparency are the guiding principles of electoral system. Without the three of them it is not possible to achieve an effective political competition through electoral system. Presidential and Parliamentary electoral systems constitute as two important components of present day electoral system. In parliamentary elections the system is proportional, based on party lists and neither independent candidates nor coalitions of parties are allowed to take part in elections. The system is based on a single constituency and used a double threshold, hindering the development of a hegemonic party of power. On the other hand, the presidential elections are held using a two-round majority system with just one, national constituency. If a candidate wins more than 50 percent of votes in the first round he is automatically declared the winner, and the second round becomes unnecessary. They decide the nature and scope of electoral system.”²

It is crucial for electoral system “to manage ideological polarization and number of political parties, to enhance voter turnout and citizen’s participation” (Downs 2010), and finally to push democratization of political system. “Elections may encourage strategic voting; which means that the voters may vote a particular party not because they support that party, but to prevent the party of their dislike from winning. In this case, the voters vote against their least favorite party or candidate instead voting for their most favorite. One crucial merit of electoral system is that it can improve overall citizen satisfaction with the political system” (Anderson and Guillory 1997). Thus, in his study of

¹ Electoral System Design: the New International IDEA Handbook, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA), available at: www.idea.in , 2005.

² Ibid

democratic performance in 36 countries from 1945 to 1996, Lijphart (1999) establishes empirically that “electoral systems favoring consensus – oriented governance yield gains in citizen satisfaction.” This provides a hope that the interests of more people will at least be partially represented. It is also one of the principal duties of electoral process in a political system. However, electoral systems are manipulated sometimes by political elites to bring forth self-centered political gains. This reduces the efficiency of electoral system.

The electoral formula in election consists of Plurality and Proportional Representation system. According to Duverger, “A second posited effect of the single - member district plurality system is that it tends to reduce the number of parties and hence promotes governmental stability, particularly when governing coalitions are required” (Duverger 1984). Thus, by creating a two-party system, plurality system of election influence the nature of political parties. On one hand, the plurality or First Past the Post (FPTP) system brings political modernization to party system through the incentives candidates get in the form of maximum votes. On the other hand, proportional representation election system, according to Duverger ensures a multiparty system. Thus, electoral system influences the nature of political parties.

According to Duverger, electoral system possesses some electoral laws that have both mechanical and psychological effect. He writes, “In a given political system where the principal parties win, the remaining supporters of the minority parties tend to go and vote the ‘winning parties’, instead of ‘wasting’ their votes. So in due course of time, the ‘third parties’ may unite or form coalition to attain seats of power in elections” (Duverger 1984). In Proportional election system such event is a common sight and India is a great example of this where rumors are created during pre-election period. Therefore, elections may also alter the composition of new political parties or party alliance. Advocates of Proportional Representation system talk about the inclusive nature of the system. Lijphart and Grofman believes, “Inclusion of even extreme parties and their voters will have a moderating effect on politics, in as much as inclusion provides these parties and voters with a stake in maintaining the political system” (Lijphart and Grofman 1984).

A political party, in the words of Huckerson can be defined as an autonomous group of people making nominations and contesting elections so that they can hold power by holding most important positions in government offices. Antony Downs wrote about political parties in this manner, “A political party is a team of men seeking to control the governing apparatus by gaining office in a duly constituted election”. Giovanni Sartori gave the definition of political parties. He said, “Any political group identified by an official label that presents at elections, and is capable of placing through election, candidates for public office.” The most important task political parties carry out is that of representation. It is through political parties that citizens of a state get a chance to assert their voices. Parties are like tools or instruments of expressing the voices of various social groups in a country.

As far as the role of political parties is concerned, in the words of E.E. Schattschneider, “modern democracy is unthinkable to save in absence of parties.” Some opine political parties as a team of politicians whose primary aim is to win elections. They promote their agendas to convince voters to go along with them. However, this definition is very concise and limited. In contemporary times political parties are primarily held responsible for governance in a state. “Their key tasks includes: prioritizing the aspirations and demands of the party workers, members and also the supporters, spread awareness among common citizens about politics, parties and elections. Educate the members on how to take active participation in the activities of the parties. It is also important for parties to train and educate the party members about core values of the party, party activities, ideology and goals. The political parties also balance the demands by opposition parties. Their job is to channel and co-ordinate various demands by their targeted groups and transmits those demands to the government”. (Lisa Kammerud 2012).

A political party has to stand for political representation of the people during elections. It distinguishes itself from unions, non-governmental organizations. It also separates itself from other projects without any political responsibilities for larger groups and from those who do not contest in elections. “A party is an autonomous and permanent organization. It cannot be formed only for one election and cease to exist afterwards. Political *parties*

are assumed to be organizations and party leaders to be entrepreneurs” (Frohlich, Oppenheimer and Young 1971). They are organizations from the perspective that they seek benefits by holding public offices through elections. Party leaders are entrepreneurs in the sense that they organize political parties that supply public policies demanded by the electorate. Party leaders are motivated by their expected office benefits that they convert into private gains.

“Political parties that are strong, independent and accountable to their constituencies help ensure stability and sound public administration. Parties can help in creating conditions necessary for effective representation and citizens’ participation in political life through debate and competition”³ (Natalia Zarudna 2012). In fact competition is the best way to resolve political problems. Therefore parties must be allowed in multiple numbers so that maximum competition arises. It will do the work of checking and balancing the activities of the parties in the best interest of citizens. Competition will also enable parties to improve their work and planning to contest in elections. They recruit political elites which also shapes the political environment of a nation in due course of time. Thus to serve in the interests of a country and its citizens, it is important for political parties to function impartially. Political parties need to voice a large section of the society to garner popular support. These conditions shape the role and nature of political parties.

The categorization of parties is generally done based on their political behavior. Rational Choice theories (Downs 1957) have made important contribution while creating a theoretical framework for political parties. Since then efforts have been made to develop models of political parties. Party systems can be broadly categorized as follows:

1.Single-party systems: A single-party system is where a single political party forms government, constitutionally or unconstitutionally. The opposition parties are generally outlawed. Yet sometimes they are given the opportunity to take part in limited political activities and elections. Many legal bans are imposed upon them. “Sometimes the term de

³ “Two Party System”, [www.Uniblogger.com](http://www.uniblogger.com) , May 5, 2012,available at: http://www.uniblogger.com/en/two-party_system

facto single-party state is used to describe a dominant-party system that, unlike the single-party state, allows (at least nominally) democratic multiparty elections, but the existing practices or balance of political power effectively prevent the opposition from winning the elections.”⁴ Former USSR, China, North Korea are examples of single party systems.

2. Dominant party systems: “A dominant-party system or one-party dominant system, is a system where there is a category of parties/political organizations that have successively won election victories and whose future defeat cannot be envisaged or is unlikely for the foreseeable future.”⁵ In contrast to single-party systems, dominant-party systems are created and survive in a democratic environment. Unlike the Single-party system, the Dominant party system allows opposition parties to survive. However very limited power is given to these parties. Many restrictions are imposed to minimize their influence. Thus the dominant party gets majority of the support and votes in an election. Central Asian republics are the best example of Dominant party system where there are several parties, but one party always dominates.

3. Two- party system: In this party system there are two parties in dominance. They control the entire political competition in the political system. “Generally, a two-party system becomes a dichotomous division of the political spectrum with an ostensibly right-wing and left-wing party. There has been more speculation that the winner-takes-all electoral system as well as particular state and federal laws regarding voting procedures helped to cause a two-party system.”⁶ United States and United Kingdom are the most popular examples of Two- party system.

4. Multi-party system: “A multi-party system is a system in which multiple political parties across the political spectrum run for national election, and all have a similar or equal chance of gaining control of government offices, separately or in coalition

⁴ “Single Party State”, April 10, 2015, available at: http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Single-party_state

⁵ “House of Representative of the Philippines”, accessed on September 22, 2011,

Available at : http://www.absoluteastronomy.com/topics/House_of_Representatives_of_the_Philippines

⁶ “Two Party System”, December 18, 2013, available at: http://wikipedia.sfstate.us/Two-party_system

government. In the vast majority of multi-party systems, numerous major and minor political parties hold a chance of receiving office”.⁷ Examples are present in cases where countries have been ruled by coalition of parties since their independence. This party system is a common feature of Parliamentary system of government. It is rare in Presidential systems. The states that use ‘First Past the Poll System’ or Proportional Representation system are tend to experience multi-party system more often. India is the best example of multi-party system where formation of multiple parties is both a constitutional provision and a prevalent political tradition.

Apart from these, there are more categories of political parties. Some of the categories have been briefly discussed as follows:

1. **Electorate parties:** Such parties attach less importance to a large membership, but are particularly active in the scope of elections. The bond of the voters to such a party is usually weak.

2. **Membership parties:** This kind of parties seeks a large membership, preferably in all parts of the country. Traditionally, it is usually the popular parties and labor parties that strive for a well-organized party apparatus and a large membership. At the minimum, this facilitates the financing of the party through membership fees. The Congress Party in India is an apt example of Membership parties. It is also called ‘umbrella party’ by eminent scholar Rajni Kothari because its membership includes diverse societal groups and regions in India.

3. **Conservative parties:** Such parties want to retain the approved order or restore it; they are skeptical of innovations and changes, for instance, with regard to the perception and the role of the family, and alternative models of life (for example, same-sex marriages). They also do not like the transfer of national sovereignty to supranational institutions, but they do acknowledge that traditional ideas, values and principles cannot be continuously

⁷ “Multi party System”, May 30, 2016, available at: http://dbpedia.org/page/Multi-party_system

maintained without moderate reforms. The Republican Party in the US is example of Conservative Parties.

4. Liberal parties: These parties espouse the rights of individual freedom and emphasize the democratic character of the constitution. Traditionally, they are anti-clerical and mostly committed to a free market economy. The Democrat Party in the US is an example of Liberal Party.

5. Social Democratic parties: Parties of this kind mostly emerged in close relation to the labour movement and their political concepts are based on social equality of the people; they assign the state with a strong regulating role in the economy and society. The Labour Party in the United Kingdom is a Social Democratic party.

6. Socialist parties: Such parties also emerged in close contact to parts of the labour movement, but they represent a more radical approach to achieve social equality; the abolition of private ownership of the means of production and a state-driven economy are central targets of these parties. Regional parties like Samajwadi Party, Bahujan Samajwadi Party in India fall under this category.

7. Extreme right-wing parties: They preach nationalistic ideologies, which are often inter-mixed with ethnic ideology and possibly racist perceptions. Bharatiya Janata Party in India is an Extreme Right Wing Party.

8. Communist parties: Communist parties propagate the dictatorship of the proletariat and assume a predetermination of history. These parties are found in Communist states. The CPSU in the Soviet Union, the CPI and CPI (M) in India, the Communist Party of China falls under this category.

9. Popular parties: Such parties attempt to consider the interests and needs of as many social groups as possible. They thus try to integrate as many citizens as possible of various social origins within their party rank. Later they aggregate different social and

political aspirations in their programme. The Congress Party in India can be considered as a popular party. Most of the country's population is aware about this party's identity and working.

10. Parties of special interest: They feel responsible for the interests of a very specific group (a social, confessional, or regional group) and do not claim to be equally eligible for all parts of the population. Assam Gana Parishad in India is a regional party which deals with the problems of Assam and its people. It has not nation-wide ideology

11. Parties conforming to the system: Such parties accept the political system in which they are active and wish to either stabilize the political order or improve it gradually with reforms.

12. Parties opposed to the political system: This kind of parties does not accept the basic principles of their political system and pursue a change of the system, mostly with aggressive programmatic proposals.

However, Political parties hardly correspond to one of these classifications in their purest forms. There are fluent transitions and mixed forms. Apart from national level political parties, there are regional and local parties too. They play a greater role in political democratization of a state. "The local party organizations are of particular importance for a stable and active party-system in the state. Here, members can directly be politically active. At this level, they have the deep-rooted contact with their party and public in general. Local party organizations should conduct regular membership meetings, and support, promote and integrate new members. These should be invited to the party and district meetings and social events, as well as to discussions on local politics issues and local initiatives, for instance, residential redevelopment, road building, schools, business settlements etc."⁸

⁸ Ibid

Funding is a core issue for every political party. At times the functioning of political parties is influenced by the source of funding. Thus funding of political parties has always been a critical issue. “In countries that lean towards authoritarianism, extensive and elaborate political finance regulation is used to weaken the opposition and prevent the emergence of new and powerful political actors. It is important to regulate party and campaign finance”⁹ to ensure healthy and pluralistic democratic competition. Political parties are often alleged with misusing and dislocating public fund or state funds. Especially in authoritarian regimes it is difficult to differentiate between state funds and party funds. The major cleavage exists between government and opposition parties.

However in democratic systems too, at many times source of party funding remain mysterious. The IDEA Handbook on Party Funding stated, “The Copenhagen document on Security and Co-Operation in Europe emphasized on separating state control over resources than the control of the ruling party over the same. Unfortunately, such abuse is still widely prevalent and may even be on the rise in some countries.”¹⁰ Private sector funding to political parties are also there. They are based on seeking favors after the party wins election. There are several scandals over private sector- political party nexus. It not only paves the way for corruption but also promotes corporate interest over common good. It also reduces party efficiency and good-will. “Illegal means of party funding has entered into politics through funding from organized crime and the direct or indirect involvement of criminals in party affairs and elections.”¹¹ Central Asia and the Balkans, who fall within the drug and human trafficking routes, are prone to such kind of funding. However, there have been some recent reforms in party funding laws. “A well-built inclination towards restraining expenditures and contributions in party funding imply that the conviction in the regulatory power of the state is still strong. Yet, the implementation of such regulations seems problematic in many countries, including authoritarian

⁹ “Funding of Political Parties and Election Campaigns, New IDEA Handbook, July 8, 2015, available at: http://www.legislationline.org/download/action/download/id/5626/file/IDEA_Funding-of-Political-Parties-and-Election-Campaigns-A-Handbook_2014.pdf

¹⁰ “Funding of Political Parties and Election Campaigns”, Reginald Austin and Maja Tjernström, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2003, available at: www.idea.int.

¹¹ Ibid

regimes.”¹² The model of public financing is useful but has its own shortcoming including allocation of funds and accountability.

Although political parties are the means to sustain a democratic system for a longer term, yet now-a-days civil society and human rights organizations have outshined the role of political parties to a larger extent. “Political parties haven’t had a good public image. In both mature and emerging democracies they are held in low esteem, while the people who run them are viewed as pursuing their own interests rather than those of the people they seek to represent. But it would be a mistake to write parties off just because they do not always work well. Parties are the bridge between government and society. Much attention is paid to other vital matters such as building civil society and the institutions of good governance (Hofmeister and Grabow 2011). It could be that parties at times are being blamed for problems for which they are not responsible. And not all the criticisms are easy to reconcile. Sometimes parties are criticized for being too reluctant to cooperate with each other; sometimes they are condemned when they show a willingness to share power in ways that seem to leave the voters with little choice. Gradually, political parties are being taken more seriously. The United Nations Development Programme, the World Bank and the British Government’s Department for International Development, for example, are all increasingly recognizing the place of parties on the wider development agenda. Peter Burnell says that the Westminster Foundation for Democracy has worked in political party development for more than a decade, alongside democracy-building organizations around the world. This new wider interest in political parties presents a unique opportunity to mobilize the ideas and experience of those working to promote democracy”¹³ (Peter Burnell 2004).

The effect of political parties is similar to the effect elections exert on political parties within a political system. The electoral system controls the interactions among voters, candidates, winners and parties. Similarly, the nature, process and scope of elections in a

¹² “Funding of Political Parties and Election Campaigns”, Reginald Austin and Maja Tjernström, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2003, available at: www.idea.int.

¹³ Ibid

given political system are influenced by political parties. “Political parties consolidate democracy by taking power in an election. This happens when the parties compete on the basis of some agendas they have proposed earlier. They do not totally depend for their victory on the individual candidates and their popularity among general masses. Therefore political parties need elections in an indispensable way to maintain democracy in a country. Samuel Huntington called this relationship a “Two-Turnover” criterion (Huntington 1991). Another widely accepted proposition regarding the relation between electoral system and party system is that “the rules of election practices controls voter’s psychology and in this way determines the feasibility of political parties in a political system” (Duverger 1951; Rae 1967; Taagepera and Shugart 1989; Lijphart 1994).

“The end of the Cold War, the global spread of democracy, and new thinking about development spurred this process. During the late 1980s and early 1990s the flowering of transitional and consolidating third wave of democracies around the globe generated a wave of institution building. International agencies have used a triple strategy to promote democracy. Institution building has been one priority, by strengthening independent judiciaries and effective legislatures designed to curb and counterbalance executive powers. Civic society has been another, with attempts to nurture grassroots organizations, advocacy NGOs, and independent media. But among all the strategies, attempts to establish competitive, free and fair elections have attracted the most attention. Only the ballot box provides regular opportunities for the public to select representatives, to hold governments to account. Electoral systems are commonly regarded as some of the most basic democratic structures, from which much else flows. Elections are not sufficient by themselves for representative democracy, by any means, but they are a necessary minimal condition.”¹⁴

“Until the 1980s, international electoral assistance was fairly exceptional, applied only in special cases, such as in the first transfer of power following decolonization or the end of civil wars. Yet from the early 1990s onwards, international observers played a leading

¹⁴ “Electoral Engineering”, P. Norris, www.Havard.edu, available at: <http://www.hks.harvard.edu/fs/pnorris/Acrobat/APS2003%20Electoral%20Engineering.pdf>

role as dozens of transitional elections occurred throughout Central and Eastern Europe, Asia and Latin America. Attempts to deepen and strengthen good governance have focused on the basic design of electoral systems, and more generally on issues of electoral administration, voter education, election observation, and party capacity-building. Elections played a particularly important role in attempts to manage ethnic tensions in plural societies such as Bosnia-Herzegovina”¹⁵ (Norris 2003).

Debates about electoral systems have traditionally revolved around the desirability of the major ideal types. “During the postwar era, electoral systems have usually proved relatively stable institutions in most established democracies. Nevertheless occasional modifications to electoral law have occurred, including minor adjustment to voting thresholds, electoral formulas, and suffrage qualifications. Moreover, some long-standing democracies have implemented far more radical reforms of the basic electoral system during the last decade.”¹⁶

Electoral reform is an important feature of the electoral system. It is “founded upon the principle that altering the formal rules matters based on the assumption that certain desirable consequences for social and political engineering can be achieved through the public policy process. There is certainly persuasive evidence that electoral rules have important mechanical effects as they help to determine which candidates are elected to parliament and which parties form government.”¹⁷ Electoral rules impact the behavior of rational politicians. “Mass electoral behavior is profoundly influenced by the process of societal development, particularly by rising levels of human capital in the transition from agrarian to industrial and then postindustrial societies. This is an essential function in representative democracies.”¹⁸

¹⁵ P. Norris, April 29, 2014, available at: <http://www.olemiss.edu/courses/pol628/norris04.pdf>

¹⁶ “Electoral Engineering”, P. Norris, www.Havard.edu, available at: <http://www.hks.harvard.edu/fs/pnorris/Acrobat/APSA2003%20Electoral%20Engineering.pdf>

¹⁷ P. Norris, April 29, 2014, available at: <http://www.olemiss.edu/courses/pol628/norris04.pdf>

¹⁸ “Electoral Engineering”, P. Norris, www.Havard.edu, available at: <http://www.hks.harvard.edu/fs/pnorris/Acrobat/APSA2003%20Electoral%20Engineering.pdf>

Central Asia was a close society since time immemorial. Even before the Czarist occupation, the Central Asian region was feudal in nature. “During the Czarist period the colonial government established autocratic system in the region. The Socialist revolution took place in October 1917. After October revolution Bolshevik party came to power in Russia. In the aftermath of coming to power the Bolshevik party established totalitarian regime in Soviet Union. The Soviets brought all round changes in every aspect of their life, be it social or political or and cultural life. The political culture was rigid and centralized in the hands of Soviet government” (Phool Badan 2001).

It was only after 1991, that central Asian leaders have established authoritarian political system since their independence. The current face of elections, party system, and democracy in Central Asia is typical to its society. Central Asia has authoritarian governments since their independence. Political parties and elections are important features of Central Asian political system. However, the role and nature of electoral system and political parties in these authoritarian regimes are different from the democratic political systems. Hence, in order to understand the changing nature and role of elections and political parties in Central Asia, understanding of the same is required from a theoretical perspective.

Although political parties and elections are considered to be the salient “features of democracy, authoritarian regimes entertain multiple political parties and hold elections too”, says Barbara Geddes¹⁹. While elections assess the quality of governance under a leader or party, authoritarian leadership does not allow elections to perform this assessment.

¹⁹ “*Why Parties and Elections in Authoritarian Regimes*”, Barbara Geddes, Department of Political Science, California, March 2006, available at: <http://www.daniellazar.com/wp-content/uploads/authoritarian-elections.doc>

Diamond comments on elections in authoritarian regimes in this way, “Elections in authoritarian regimes neither choose the party which will govern them, nor the leader of the government. Barbara Geddens write, “In rare cases, such elections offer regime opponents with a focal point for organizing against the dictatorship, and sometimes dictators concede that the opposition has won an election and step down. These are historically infrequent occurrences, but they have happened often enough to show that elections are potentially risky for dictators, since they may promote the mobilization of the opposition exists, if any”. From the dictator’s point of view, supporting parties and elections are central elements in his personal survival strategy. The creation of a party that supports the ruling leader creates vested interests in his survival and can serve as a counterbalance to other intra-regime factions. Support parties can end up prolonging the life of authoritarian regimes not just particular leaders. The existence of a regime support party implies greater popular support.” The parties in authoritarian regime do not always benefit all party members or improve the quality of life for ordinary citizens.”²⁰ Yet, they provide their officials and volunteer activists with some benefits that give them a stake in the system. Thus, the party-members learn to take their responsibilities seriously. Parties therefore become tools which the dictator uses to keep the system under his full and direct control. The dictators can also crush their political opponents with all possible means.

Authoritarian parties differ from each other in their working and capacity. Some of them play important role in bargaining over policy, some of them cannot. Barbara Geddens describes, “Parties are expected to build mass support for themselves and for their policies. This must be done by delivering profit and educating the ordinary citizens about the authority’s will. The leaders expect the party to insure that government officials are loyal. They use the party to arbitrate among the demands of different groups of supporters and to co-opt former opponents. Several parties have failed their founders by failing to deliver profit to citizens. Party officials, rather than linking the masses to the center via the exchange of benefits for support, have instead used party offices to enrich

²⁰ “*Why Parties and Elections in Authoritarian Regimes*”, Barbara Geddes, Department of Political Science, California, March 2006, available at: <http://www.daniellazar.com/wp-content/uploads/authoritarian-elections.doc>

themselves. Therefore, they have aligned citizens from the party that claims to serve their interests. This has diminished popular support for the party. Like parties, elections also deter challenges to the dictator from elite rivals. Overwhelming victories at the polls demonstrate to potential civilian rivals that they have little hope of defeating the incumbent and that therefore it does not make sense to go into the opposition. Elections accomplish this through two mechanisms. First, they provide potential challengers with information about the extent of latent opposition. Second, they are a costly signal by the incumbent of how extreme the resource imbalance is between him and any potential challenger". Thus, they help to convince the potential competitors that the dictator's party is the only game in town. The Opposition started feeling demoralized and later cannot affect the Dictator's party during elections. Much has been written in recent years about 'electoral authoritarianism' or so-called 'hybrid regimes' (Levitsky and Way 2002; Karl 1995; Diamond 1999). However, this phenomenon is not new. Many authoritarian governments that hold elections are not hybrids but simply successful, well institutionalized authoritarian regimes. Elections in each type of authoritarian regime range from military and personalist to single-party elections. Sometimes there are transitional elections, i.e., elections that were intended to lead to regime transition in authoritarian regimes. Some of the regimes held regular national elections, some held irregular national elections, and some stick to local elections or indirect national elections. Nearly all single-party regimes hold regular national elections, as do nearly half of the personalist regimes. Even some military regimes hold regular elections. Elections always involve some risk, and the mobilization of support that goes along with them is quite costly, so it can be inferred from their prevalence that they must also provide authoritarian leaders with some benefit that can outweigh these costs.

The basic usage of elections in a political system changes when it comes to authoritarian or dictatorial form of political system. Studies show that authoritarian regimes that hold regular elections last longer than those that do not. Prior research has shown that single-party regimes, which almost always hold regular elections, last longer on average than military or personalist regimes. Dictators do not want to lose elections or even win in close races because such electoral outcomes, even if annulled, encourage potential rivals rather than deterring them. Dictators do not need popular majority support in order to win

overwhelming electoral victories. They monopolize resources and information. They can usually win elections regardless of considerable latent popular opposition. The enormous powers of the dictator in an authoritarian regime thus, make elections less fruitful, and sometimes meaningless. Dictators who think that with a sufficiently large investment in campaigning, distribution of goods, and repression they will win, will consider the investment worth it because of its deterrent effect on potential elite rivals. Leaders of authoritarian regimes can also come to power via internal transformation of a constitutional government. Elected ruling parties or leaders can engineer rules that outlaw opposition parties, the electoral playing field, and close or purge elements in administration”.²¹

Some suggest that institutionalized regimes lasts longer, which stands for formation of government through electoral system and political parties. B. Geddes speaks, “Przeworski and Gandhi see parties and elections, “As a way of co-opting opposition by offering regime outsiders limited control over policy” (Przeworski and Gandhi 2001)”.²² However, there is no single universal method for making elections successful irrespective of regions and regimes. Kuhne says “There have been a number of success stories in the past two decades. Such elections can be conducted successfully if important lessons are taken seriously and implemented. Apart from the difficult issues of timing and the choice of an electoral system properly tailored to local conditions, the establishment of an independent, well functioning Election Commission and an Election Complaints System are crucial elements for Success” (Winrich Kuhne 2010). As Electoral system and Party system will vary from region to region and state to state, therefore the nature and role of elections and parties in Central Asia must be studied keeping in mind the Central Asian context.

²¹ “*Why Parties and Elections in Authoritarian Regimes*”, Barbara Geddes, Department of Political Science, California, March 2006, available at: <http://www.daniellazar.com/wp-content/uploads/authoritarian-elections.doc>

²² Ibid

DEFINITION, RATIONALE AND SCOPE OF STUDY:

Electoral system and Political parties in Central Asia is the study of political system of the region. Studying them is essential in order to understand the democratic nature of Central Asian politics. It is crucial to study how elections and parties promote democratic norms in the region. The time period is since the independence of Central Asian republics till contemporary time for research.

The rationale of the proposed study is to evaluate the contributions made by elections and political parties. Also the challenges faced by them and their shortcomings while ensuring democratic practice is also a significant area of concern. Further study will highlight the measures that can be taken for improvement.

The scope of the study is to evaluate the past and present of political parties and elections to find the way for democratic process in Central Asia. It encompasses not only the role of elections and parties, but also their structure, nature, functions and drawbacks. It will also take into account how far the democratic process is dependent upon the two said political instruments.

HYPOTHESES:

Following are the hypotheses of the proposed study:

1. The overall development of political institution shows the impact of Soviet political culture.
2. Despite the existence of electoral process and multi-party system, the progress of democratization has been limited due to excessive focus on political stability and authoritarian control over institutions.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The study is based on historical, analytical, and descriptive methods of research. The study of the research is historical as it focuses on history of development of electoral system and political parties in Central Asia since independence. It is analytical and descriptive study as it will critically discuss the importance and contribution of the two in the democratic process of Central Asian republics. The study has both independent and dependent variables. The independent variables are the elections and parties and how do they interact with each other. The dependent variable is the democratic process that is influenced by the nature of party and electoral politics. Both inductive and deductive methods are taken into consideration. The study of historical development of elections and party system, the root causes behind their present status are examined deductively. The inductive method is used for generalizing the role of parties and elections in democratic process.

The study is based on both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources include constitutions of the republics, revised laws, Ordinance and Acts, statements made by leaders/ Presidents of the republics. Secondary source materials have been used for the study including books, journals, articles, newspapers, magazines and internet material available. The relevant information of lectures, seminars have also been included to carry out research.

TENTATIVE CHAPTERIZATION:

Following are tentative scheme of chapterization of the proposed study:

1. INTRODUCTION: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The first chapter deals with the outline of the subject. Besides it throws light on the theoretical explanation of the theme, including research design. A brief survey of the literature has also been given in this chapter.

2. ELECTIONS AND POLITICAL PARTIES IN CENTRAL ASIA IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

A history of evolution of electoral system and parties has been discussed in the second Chapter. The chapter elaborates on the pre-independence political situation of the region.

3. ROLE OF ELECTORAL SYSTEM IN CENTRAL ASIA

The third chapter sheds light on the role of electoral system prevalent in the region. Emphasis is given to the nature, role and importance of the same. Within electoral system electoral politics, laws and customs, and the socio-psychological aspects and their contribution to democratic process is also discussed.

4. ROLE OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN CENTRAL ASIA

The fourth chapter is a critical assessment of the political parties in Central Asia and their role in Central Asian political system. This chapter makes an attempt to explain how these parties have been promoting democratization in the region.

5. CONCLUSION

In the end of the research findings have been drawn from the study. It also includes observation and conclusion has been derived from the study.

Chapter Two

Elections and Political Parties in Central Asia in Historical Perspective

The demise of Soviet Union provided Central Asian republics with the opportunity to establish themselves as nation-states. The region, though most popularly known as a part of erstwhile Soviet Union, has a history of uncontested glory. In order to understand the Central Asian politics and their institutions such as electoral and party system, an inclusive understanding of its longstanding historical legacy is a must. Therefore, if we are to understand why Central Asia's political institutions are the way they are we must study their gradual development.

History is generally understood from either eastern or western discourse, but in the Central Asian context they both collide with each other. Central Asia is located geographically at the territory where east meets west. Long before the political entity called 'Central Asia' existed, these people were fragmented into numerous political, social and cultural groups. They were ruled by different political will, ideas, culture and philosophy at different times in history. In fact today's Central Asian polity and society is a creation of around 4000 year long blend of civilizations.

Central Asians were fragmented tribal societies. They were nomadic and agrarian, and majority of them lived in the fertile valleys existed around the two main river systems, Amu Darya and Syr Darya. Political movements took place that contributed to the region's history and altered these societies to a large extent. Hasse Scott said "A few examples that best describe the conditions that have altered the landscape and people of Central Asia include the Greek invasion lead by Alexander the Great in fourth century B.C., the Arab conquests of the early eighth century A.D, the Mongol occupation in the early thirteenth century A.D and the more recent Russian occupation in the nineteenth century (Scott Haase, 2008). Thus, the region enjoyed "A diversified political history under the Greeks (4th c. B.C.), Persians (2nd c. B. C - 226 A.D.), Kushans (3rd-5th c. A.D.), Huns (425 A.D.-557 A.D.), Arabs (8th c. -10th c. A.D.), Samanids (819-1005 A.D.), Turks (12th-13th c. A.D.), Mongols (13th c.-15th c. A.D.), Uzbeks (1600-1860

A.D.), Russians(1860-1917 A.D.) and the Soviets (1917-1991 A.D.).”²³ The presence of so many tribes made the region a place for political clash and contested interests since ancient period. Skrine and Ross stated, “Each dynasty and system transmitted its influence on the region which together transformed the region into a mixed brand of nomadic and sedentary cultures” (Francis Henry Skrine and Edward Denison Ross 1899). Most of the population that lives in present Central Asia is of Turk- Mongol origin. However, considerable amount of Slavic and Indo-European people are found in the region. The Iranian and Arabic culture made a permanent impact and domination over the various traditions of Central Asia. To cite examples, descendents of Genghis Khan assimilated themselves into both Muslim and Chinese cultures. They preferred the Sharia legal system over their own Mongol system of justice i.e., Yasa. Thus, Persians, Arabs, Mongols, Russians etc. created a melting pot of civilization in Central Asia.

Along with the assimilation of different cultures, nomadic and tribalism became new ways of life. These changes contributed to a particular type of political tradition in the region. Clan politics in Central Asia makes an important contribution in the politics of these five republics. It influences not only the elections that held at national or local level, but also impacts political party formation and their functions. According to Kathleen Collins, “The role of clan networks in Central Asia will exemplify the formal and informal dynamics between clans and the formal regime institutions – dynamics leading to the emergence of an informal pattern of politics, the hegemony of clan politics” (Kathleen Collins, 2006). Hunter writes about the clan politics in this manner, “In clan politics candidates are also often selected on the basis of their tribal affiliation. In a system where nationality is relatively new, their tribal and feudalist culture compels them to see loyalty confined to a tribe or region or within the clan” (Hunter, 1996).

“Iran’s conquest of Islam” as coined by Professor Adda Bozeman, transformed the religious movement within Central Asia. The indigenous culture of Central Asia adopted the Persian culture of art, urban and administrative skills and development etc. Even

²³Scott, Hasse, available at:
http://207.97.208.129/CHSS/History/GraduateDegree/MADMSTheses/files/HaaseScott_COMPLETED_MADMS_PROFESSIONAL_PAPER_09182009.pdf

today in Central Asia there can be seen a push towards connecting with the ancient Persian history. Islam came to govern all aspects of life and the population recognized Islam as their heritage. It also offered the legal and moral configuration for the entire region before the Russian arrival into the territory. Hunter states, “At present times, the states of Central Asia have included the practices of Islam into the political and social life of modern society as well. In theory, from Prophet Mohammad, Islam is expected to link the Muslim world as one unit and surpass all other characteristics that would divide an individual, tribe, or group, but unfortunately after his death the theory passed away as well. In the wake of gaining independence the leaders of these nations have attempted to build upon this belief infused with a sense of national identity as a Kazak, Kyrgyz, Tajik, Turkmen, or Uzbek” (Hunter 1996).

Politics for power existed among the horse-mounted nomads of Central Asia. The tribes of Turk, Mongol, Kushana and Uyghur are the most important ones. Initially they were nomads who later gained power and became ruling dynasties in Central Asia. These tribes existed during the ancient and medieval times. They were flourished nomadic tribes in the heartland of Asia. The plains and steppe regions were mostly inhabited by these nomads. In the humid areas, the agrarian community emerged as the dominant community. Thus the nomads and the agrarian community lived in isolation from each other. The first and great powerful ruling dynasties were developed by some of these tribes in the southern part of Central Asia. These tribal dynasties united not only Central Asia by their rule, but also occupied territories of China. According to George N. Curzon and Alfred Traski (1889), “The Bactria-Margiana Archaeological Complex was the first sedentary civilization of the region. The Huns of Attila, the Mongols of Genghis Khan, and Tatars of Tamerlane etc. were legends of adventure and great conquests. Political boundaries were ever-changing and migrations due to power shifts were repeated events on the steppes. The incursion and migrations of nomads was a significant force in history that greatly affected all parts of Eurasia. Nomadic states on the steppes relied purely on the skill of their leaders, a quality difficult to consistently maintain. Without strong leadership, these states were usually unstable due to the scarcity of permanent cities. So dynamic were the steppes that vast empires rose and fall within a generation. The

harshness of life on the steppes made nomads expert warriors and the nomadic lifestyle made them unmatched horsemen. When a strong leader was indeed present, nomadic groups were exceedingly powerful in war”.²⁴

This clearly was not a period of political stability. Wars were inevitable to attain power, to invade another tribe or to safeguard one’s own tribe for foreign invasion. And as the ruling tribes were adventures, the most capable person both physically and mentally could become the leader. Rule by Succession was hardly in practice among nomads. After the death of the leader, the mightiest in the group took to power. On the traits of leadership or political representation of those times, Paul D. Buell (1979) writes, “As it was a ‘one person rule’ phenomenon, the leader was made on the basis of ‘cult of personality’. After the nomadic, in most empires that came to rule Central Asia followed the hereditary system or monarchical system of leadership. The administration of these empires came to be governed through ‘ruling families’. As most ruling parties in Central Asia since ancient times like Tatars and Mongols were tribes, therefore they followed the Clan system of representation in order to elect a head. For example, to Mongols the head of their community was called a “Khan”. After Genghis Khan’s untimely death, his empire was divided and distributed among his four sons equally. Initially, all the four divisions of the empire were kept united. But later they emerged as ‘Khantes’ which served as crucial political units in the Soviet Central Asia.” As the election to the throne was successive based on the bloodline of the king, Ogedei as the eldest son of Genghis had adorned the Mongol throne. Thus even succession was done on the basis of age or might-based superiority. Of course it was crucial for the successor to earn the goodwill of his father, the King.

The Khans were the mightiest and the most feared rulers of all times. They were great warriors and the stories of Mongol power was known to those lived in far west. The merchants of Venice feared the Mongols very much as they traded at the pleasure of the Khan. It is appropriate to say that the Khans ruled by fear. After Genghis Khan’s death, trend in hereditary succession to throne emerged. However, ‘cult of personality’ of the

²⁴ “Russia in Central Asia”, by George N. Curzon and Alfred Traski, 1889, Longmans Green And Company.

suitable candidates played great role in deciding who the next 'Khan' would be. The 'cult of personality' was built by fighting heroic battles for the clan and family and for the empire. The most able leader was considered most suitable to be the next 'Khan'. And no one could challenge the authority of a 'Khan'. The Khan himself could decide who his next successor would be. One son of the current Khan was honored as the next Khan. Therefore, winning the confidence the Khan and his main advisory body was the motto of all throne-aspirants. According to UNESCO's volume on 'History of Civilizations of Central Asia', "after the death of Mongke, in 1260, two Khakhans were elected by rivaling Khuriltais (assemblies): Ariq-Boke (brother of Kubilai), who ruled from Karakorum, and Kubilai, who ruled from China. Kubilai defeated Ariq-Boke in a fight and killed him in 1264 to secure sole leadership."²⁵ The politics for throne or power within the *Khanate* is well understood from the descriptions offered by Marco Polo who served the court of Kublai Khan. Kublai Khan is considered to be the best among the Khans after Genghis Khan. He was the most able and the most feared rulers of his time. His son was about to take throne after Kublai. However, no leader was elected to the Mongol throne after Kublai. Yet, political conspiracy was knit to dethrone Kublai Khan by his own cousins. Most in the *Khanate* kinship wanted to rule the *Khanate*.²⁶

It is worth mentioning that during the *Khanate* period system of administration was patrimonial. Patrimonial administration stands for the reign of king as a blessing upon its subjects as the king is considered to be the 'father' and the subjects as 'children'. Moreover, the patrimonial administration was based on Sharia law which was more acceptable for the local population. It was one of the important components of Mongol rule that sustained it in the long run.²⁷ Therefore, it can be assumed that the rulers received some amount of consent from the subject tribesman. The ruler had to take care of the sentiments of both tribal and non-tribal subjects. Consent was needed to rule peacefully. Political equality had to be maintained in order to keep the population happy. The authority received the consensus of the Turkmen tribe who believed in political

²⁵ "History of Civilizations of Central Asia", Volume IV: The age of achievement AD 750 to the end of the fifteenth century (Part I& Part II), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 2016.

²⁶ Polo, Marco, "*The Travels*". Ed. Ronald Latham, London: Penguin Books, 1958.

²⁷ Howorth, Henry H., "*History of the Mongols*", Vol. 4, New York: Longmans, Green, and Co, 1927.

equality. The Kazakhs and the Kyrgyz obeyed the Khans due to their political supremacy. The relationship between rulers and subjects in Central Asia has changed from time to time.

The biggest challenge to the Khans came from the Sultan administration. Tamar Ali became the head of Sultans hatred among tribesman against the Khan spread to a great extent. *The* tribesman started thinking that their land was forcibly occupied by the Khan and they must take it back. They must claim their righteous ownership upon their ancestral lands. The Bersish tribe was the most responsive to this call. An uprising against the *Khanates* took place under the leadership of Ishatay Tayman. Another political challenge during the period came from Sekti leader Iset Kutebar.²⁸ These two are the most significant example of organized opposition against the ruling regime in medieval Central Asia.

The Tsarist conquest of Central Asia gave the Tsars control of a vast area of geographic and human diversity, won at lesser efforts in both men and money. The motives of the Russian conquest were not economic primarily. Peasant's occupation of the virgin and fertile steppes and cotton cultivation were later developments. The factors responsible for the Tsarist occupation of the area were multi causal. Among them were the historic reasons in the frontier, military glorification, the imperialistic attitude that was in fashion during that time and the fear of British aggression.

When the Tsars invaded Central Asia, they kept their activities limited to governance at minimum cost, extract benefits and take little interest in the internal matters of indigenous life like culture. The Tsars had few reasons to fear any organized opposition or resistance to the mighty regime. Most of the population was uneducated and were guided by religiously fanatics like Ulema. In due course, the rulers faced namesake resistance of a localized nature, but it was no danger to the mighty Russian empire as their power and ruthlessness was well known to the localities. The Duma was the legislative body and was responsible for all kinds of legislation. The Tsar himself was the administrative head

²⁸ Smith, R. David, "*History of Central Asia*", Encyclopedia Britannica, 2015 (last updated).

of the empire. Being an autocratic system of governance, the Tsar retained huge amount of powers with himself. In fact, Nicholas II was entitled as the 'supreme autocrat'.²⁹

Absolutism was the nature of rule in Tsarist Russia. The empire became strongest during the 17th and 18th century. Ivan III was responsible for the laying down the foundation stone of the Tsarist Empire. He was the one who built upon the Byzantine traditions and made the autocratic regime stronger. During the Tsarist Empire, election bodies existed. Examples of their existence may be found in the institutions like 'Assembly of the Land'. 'Assembly of the Land' elected Michael. He was Romanov dynasty's monarch. It was weak. It was barely administering its subjects and many predicted the untimely fall of the monarch as he was considered to be the weakest autocrat. However, the Empire was saved during Peter the Great's reign. It was time of turmoil. There existed clash between the authority of the Orthodox Church and that of the empire. The nobility was very powerful during that period. Therefore, Peter the Great decreased the Nobility's powers. He also curtailed the powers of the Orthodox Church and gave it to the Tsar. Thus the Church could no more retain the power to regulate rulers as well as common people's action in the Tsarist Russia. However, the noble class was in no mood to accept this humility. They organized several coups in Russia against the tsar. This effort did not go in vain. Catherine the Great, who is considered as the absolutist ruler of Tsarist Empire decided to tame the nobility class. She could sense that agonizing the nobility could not end up well for the regime. Hence, she authorized a charter of the nobility. In this charter the rights and privileges of the Noble class was people was mentioned. She also ordered the creation of a Municipal Court in order to establish self-governance. Thus, the nobility became the bureaucratic class. They became influential in the State Council, which was the Tsar's chief advisory body.³⁰

Tsar Alexander II established Zemstvo, which was a system of elected self-government. There was no national level assembly till the Revolution of 1905. The Tsar himself was the centre of all power and all the power to other authorities of the empire were dispersed

²⁹ Smith, R. David, "*History of Central Asia*", Encyclopedia Britannica, 2015 (last updated).

³⁰ Smith, R. David, "*History of Central Asia*", Encyclopedia Britannica, 2015 (last updated).

from the Tsar himself. Therefore, all the functions and decisions taken revolved around the Tsar. According to J. Llewellyn, “The Tsar gave power to persons and institutions, functioning in his name, by his orders, and within the limits or restrictions drawn for them by the Tsar. A metaphor existed likening the tsar to a father, and all of the subjects of the Empire, to his children. This metaphor is present in the common Russian expression "царь-батюшка", literally meaning ‘tsar-dear father’ ”³¹ (J. Llewellyn 2014).

Historians are of the opinion that the Tsarist period mainly paved the path for totalitarian rule in Russia in the succeeding years. The rise of ruler to throne was determined by autocracy and patrimonialism. The general Law of succession was followed in the making of a Tsar as there was no separate law to guide the succession to the throne. The system was hereditary, yet there existed rivalry for the throne among the most aspiring candidates. There was no elected Representative Assembly. Rule by Decree prevailed in all conditions. Some of the political bodies in the empire were the Senate, the Holy Synod, and the Imperial Council of Ministers. Senate was Russia’s highest court and its ministers were recruited by the Tsar himself. And they could be removed from their positions at the Tsars wish. The appointment of these ministers was not merit-based. They were not even answerable to the subjects. As they served at the pleasure of the Tsar, they were answerable only to the Tsar. The most-suited and reliable in the eyes of the Tsar himself were elected to important positions. Sometimes the spouses of the Tsar served as the chief advisors when it came to election of officials. That is why the ministers used to seek the good-will of the Tsar at all times (Smolasnsky, Starr 1994, pp 318).

The Russian empire was vast. It was divided into 34 administrative provinces. Governors were appointed by the Tsar to administer them. They were meant to rule those provinces according to the law made by the Tsar. Royal army and police were there at their disposal to maintain law and order situation in all the provinces. The Governors at the remotest provinces were allowed to function autonomously in some matters. The difficulty in channels of communication thus increased the powers of the Governors periodically.

³¹ “Tsarist Autocracy”, June 9, 2015, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tsarist_autocracy

Elected officials were there to maintain various departments like transportation, health and sanitation, education and communication. There were local councils and appointments were made at the council as directed by the Tsar. The main function of this council was to dispense services in various areas as the Tsar ordered. System of representation existed in the councils. People from various social groups like land-lords, traders, peasants etc. were represented in the Council. However, the upper classes always dominated the councils. The councils however did not enjoy autonomy and the Governor used to regulate their activities. Till 1906, the system of political representation continued with significant developments.³²

The year 1906 was very important in the political history of Russia. It was the year when the Revolution of 1906 took place and the political situation took an interesting turn. Introduction to legislative elections and formation of political parties emerged as new concepts in the Russian politics. Political modernization came into existence. Elections to the State Duma took place for 478 assembly seats.³³ The Duma was the lower house of the Imperial council of Tsarist Russia. O. Figes (1996) wrote, "In that year, between 27th April and 21st July, first State Duma elections were held. This generated a bloc of moderate socialists and liberals. This led to the wave of demand for reforms. The first election, popularly called 'Duma of Public Anger' was however boycotted by the Bolsheviks. For the first time political parties of various affiliations started forming. There were peasant parties like Labour Group (Trudoviks) which had approximately 100 deputies under their control, Constitutional Democratic Party (the Kadets) of the Liberal intelligentsia group having largest number of deputies (around 180), the less liberal 'Octoberists' union of October 17 who had 45 deputies and Union of Land owners who called themselves positive reactionaries. The Jewish labour Bund made an electoral agreement with the Lithuanian Laborers' Party. After the elections, 'Basic Law' was issued which set limits on this new political order by giving the Tsar absolute control over executive organ of state, foreign policy, church as well as the armed forces. Now any legislation had to be approved by the State Duma, State Council and the Tsar to

³² "The Tsars Regime till 1914", *BBC History*, 2014.

³³ *Ibid*

become law. The Duma could be evaded in exceptional situations. This was a provision under the Basic Law which was later frequently used by Nicholas II to pass those laws which failed to gain approval in State Duma. Thus, the Tsar retained the Veto power. He also had the power to dismiss Duma and announce fresh elections. The law also entrusted upon him the power to pass emergency laws by decree. The Tsar was not only reluctant to share power but also pushing for electoral reforms, land reforms etc. The Basic Law also dictated that the ministers could not be appointed by and therefore responsible to the State Duma. Thus, there was no responsible government at the executive level”.³⁴

The rising trend in electoral representation and political parties became a platform for political discussions, consent building and political organization. It seemed unsafe for the Tsarist reign. That is why the Tsar dissolved the Duma in July, 1906. It was reduced to a consultative body. The electoral laws were made and changed so as to suit the reign of the Tsar. “New electoral laws were made. While doing so, interest of the political parties that represented the upper class of the society were given priority over others. This increased the discontent among other parties against the Tsar. This act offended some of the revolutionary political parties. The Liberal Cadets Party launched Civil Disobedience. It was an open challenge to the Tsars authority. It also can be perceived as a systematic political opposition to the ruling regime” (John Paxton 1988).

The Duma elections in the later years were not very successful. In February 1907, the second election to the legislative assembly took place. It was not significant as it was short-lived. Walter Gerald Moss (2004) described the Second Duma elections in this manner, “The Russian Social Democratic Labor Party saw fractions in the form of the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks. They won a number of seats in the second State Duma Elections. The Kadets were outnumbered in the elections by their more radical counterparts. During the second Duma, the Tsar changed the electoral laws again adding greater values to the votes of landowners than those of peasants. The peasants were accused of violating fundamental laws.” The change in electoral laws favoring the upper

³⁴ “*Revolution or Reform: Was Tsarism Reformable*”, Orlando Figes, available at: www.Orlandofiges.info, July 3, 2016.

class was clearly visible. In the year 1907 elections to the third Duma took place. The elections showed the dominance of political parties of land-owner's and traders by a big margin. Hence, it was called the 'Masters' Duma' by the Peasants' and labors' parties. The 'Master's Duma' lasted for a much longer period of time and it was expected. The main reason behind this was that it was very conservative in nature.³⁵ Therefore, it served at the Tsar's will.

The Duma elections were confined to male voters only. Women were not allowed to vote in the elections. Soldiers or military men were also excluded from voting. Minimum age of voter was 25 years. There were four electoral colleges. These colleges conducted all elections. Various functions and formalities regarding elections were divided among these colleges. There were different constituencies and they were organized according to their sizes.³⁶

The political landscape of Tsarist Russia changed even more with the coming of the Communist Party (CPSU). The party was formed by the Bolsheviks. It was Lenin and Trotsky who founded and led the party. The party was based on Lenin's idea of Democratic Centralism. The party enjoyed uncontested monopoly over the Soviet Union till its disintegration in 1991. As the Soviet system was dominated by one party, therefore, the CPSU's organizational and functional features are the only source of knowing about political party. Elections took place among the various candidates of the CPSU itself. Therefore, all elections took place within the paradigm of CPSU. However, there were regional elections held at different Oblasts or provinces (*Ibid*).

Party Congress was the highest organizational body of the CPSU. It was convened every five years. It was also the Party's main decision-making body until Stalin era. Stalin did not liquidate the Congress but made it a nominal body. He came to realize that Congress was used by some CPSU leaders to exert their personal influence. After Stalin, the 30th congress of the CPSU held during Khrushchev's time. He delivered a speech called "The

³⁵ *Ibid*

³⁶ *Ibid*

Personality Cult and its Consequences”.³⁷ He vehemently criticized Stalin’s policy to curtail the powers of Congress. Abraham Ascher (2001) wrote about Congress, “Despite delegates to Congresses losing their powers to criticize or remove party leadership, the Congresses functioned as a form of elite-mass communication. The information provided was general, ensuring that party leadership retained the ability to make specific policy changes as they saw fit. The Congresses also provided the party leadership with formal legitimacy by providing a mechanism for the election of new members and the retirement of old members who had lost favor. The elections at Congresses were all predetermined and the candidates who stood for seats to the Central Committee and the Central Auditing Commission were approved beforehand by the Politburo and the Secretariat. A Congress could also provide a platform for the announcement of new ideological concepts for the Party. For instance, at the 22nd Congress, Khrushchev announced that the Soviet Union would see ‘communism in twenty years’ ”.

However, it was the duty of the Central Committee to regulate the party in the absence of Congress. There were approximately 300 members. The members were elected, although allegedly not on merit-basis. The Politburo and the Secretariat were the next most important party-bodies. The head of the CPSU was the chief of Politburo. Thus, he was the head of the government (O. Antrick 1938). Elections and political representation within the CPSU was a very controlled affair.

Regarding the party system, the nature and functions of the CPSU are discussed at length. The party ideology was Marxist-Leninist. It was based on the core ideas from Marx and Lenin’s writings. USSR followed the model of state socialism. Thus State became the most powerful entity. Lenin gave importance to mixed economy and thus he came up with his New Economic Policy. Still, almost all of the economic activities of USSR were nationalized. In the year 1929, Central Planning was adopted for the first time. Central Planning was perceived as state capitalism also. All the important matters of the CPSU were discussed in party conference. Party conference was organized by the Central Committee where policy matters were discussed. Appointment and dismissal of Central Committee members were also discussed by the Congress in the conference.

³⁷ *Ibid*

During Stalin's regime, the CPSU ruled over the state with iron fist, promoting Soviet Union's capacity as a powerful state in the world. It also promoted communist state in other nations. The CPSU became a very united entity which at the same time became so centralized that not even a single event in the Soviet state could escape the notice of the party. It is mention worthy that the Presidents were the CPSU general secretary, but they were elected representatives in name only (Birgit N. Schlyter 2005). B. Schlyter wrote about election of Presidents in the Soviet Union, "After Stalin's demise, Khrushchev rose to power overcoming political adversaries due to power struggle with fellow CPSU aspirants. It says that political competition existed in CPSU for Presidential position and only the most influential leader could grab that position." He further added, "CPSU had to go through several international tragedies like the Polish revolution and the Cuban Missile crisis (1962) that increased troubles for the Soviet state. Khrushchev was expelled in 1964 due to alleged inability to co-ordinate with the party, lack of consultation with members of the Presidium, economic mismanagement, and anti-party reforms." Thus, Khrushchev era saw decreasing trust and chain of command within the Party and lack of co-ordination between the party and the President.

The Party was facing several challenges during Brezhnev's rule. The CPSU assumed that the 1970 s financial crisis would bring doom to the western capitalist economy. And communist model would emerge as victorious. The Soviet Union also lacked in technological advancements. The CPSU faced criticism not only from outside but also from within the party. The great leaders started pointing out at the party faults and loopholes. Under the given circumstances the problems of the CPSU increased (Pamjav 2012).

Birgit N. Schlyter (2005) wrote, "It was under Andropov's leadership that the CPSU-KGB co-operation in political affairs increased. The party successfully conducted several important missions through the KGB. Now media was allowed to report on the problems faced by the party and the administration". One point became apparent that the President was so strong that he could easily influence the party-decisions by his aura. However, the

Party played significant role from time to time to influence the activities of the President as well.

After Andropov, Cherenenko succeeded him. But he could not consolidate power due to lack of support from within the Party (Birgit N. Schlyter 2005). This makes clear that in order to sustain as the President of the Soviet Union, the consent of the Party was a must. One either had to overpower the party, like Stalin did; or had to please the Party like Brezhnev. It was nearly impossible for the President to run without the consent of the Party. However, afterwards Gorbachev came to rule the Soviet Union. Although the party resisted his rising to power, later he could mould the Party's attitude towards him. His political journey began in the year 1985. Gorbachev was famous for his radical reforms which is said to have brought the doom of the USSR.

Pannier, Bruce (2015) wrote about Gorbachev's work and his relations with the party extensively, "He was influential in the party from the beginning and had adorned important administrative positions. Gorbachev made an important personnel reorganization in the CPSU leadership due to which the old party members that bear a conservative attitude were forced out of the party organization. In 1985, he adopted a new plan for party representation and membership called the acceleration. He brought about significant changes in the party structure as well as party ideology. These changes were treated with mixed reactions from within the party. As a positive consequence, these changes brought pluralism in the party to a certain extent." In 1987, a conservative movement against these changes gained momentum. In 1988, Nina Andreyeva who was a university lecturer received high appreciation from the conservatives within the party for writing an article named "I Cannot Forsake My Principles" (Nina Andreyeva, 1988).

Thus, it could be seen that how Gorbachev's policies initially brought him in close proximity with the Party, but later the differences between both increased. The Party's conservative ideology did not match the style of Gorbachev's work. The Party was unhappy that Gorbachev was gradually westernizing the Soviet politics. The Soviet Union was losing its allies and the Party condemned Gorbachev for this. Distrust grew at a rapid pace and there were many within the Party who wanted to replace Gorbachev as the President. However, there were a few party members who called themselves

reformers. They stood with Gorbachev at difficult moments. It was in Gorbachev era that the CPSU saw bigger fragmentations over ideological shift.

Pannier, Bruce (2015) described the nature of the Party in this manner, “In 1990, CPSU’s demise began as the state bodies gradually took away Party’s control over the Soviet affairs, both internal and external. Gorbachev as the president of the Soviet Union centralized most of the powers into his own hands which were otherwise previously enjoyed by the party. As the party apparatus in state affairs was gradually dying, Gorbachev was made independent of the politburo and tried to act freely. However, the party kept a good watch over his activities and he was prevented by several conservative party members in this regard. The CPSU was outlawed on 29 August 1991 and Gorbachev resigned from the presidency on 25 December; the following day the Soviet Union was dissolved.”

Parliamentary elections were a regular political feature in the Soviet Union. About the Soviet Parliamentary elections, Nohlen, D & Stöver, P (2010) said, “Elections were one of the primary mechanisms through which the Soviet government distributed political rewards to loyal elites as well as checked their performance. The elected officials were essentially handpicked by the Soviet leadership and incumbents at all levels were expected to bring out the vote or lose their positions. The electoral law allocated responsibility for both supervising the nomination of candidates and conducting the elections, and therefore, determined a crucial basis of power relations among the political elite. Moreover, under Soviet rule the republic-level legislature in each Central Asian republic served as an instrument for regional leaders to exert influence on republican affairs.”³⁸ It is mention worthy that in the Soviet Union, elections were held periodically. The Parliamentary elections were the most crucial ones. Representation was assured from different sections of the society. Although voting rights were not offered to all, yet the voter turnout used to be very high.

Robert Beard (1996) wrote about the Electoral system of the Soviet Union in this manner, “The electoral system of the Soviet Union was based upon Chapter XI of the Constitution

³⁸ “Presidential Elections in Uzbekistan”, April 15, 2016, available at: <http://fb.rferl.org/content/uzbekistan-karimov-presidential-election/26926111.html>

of the 1936 Soviet Union and by the Electoral Laws enacted in conformity with it. The Constitution and laws applied to elections in all Soviets, from the Supreme Soviets of the USSR, the Union republics and autonomous republics, through to regions, districts and towns. Voting was based on secret ballot method and direct”.³⁹ T. M. Schmeernoba (2003) discussed about some important features of the Soviet Electoral system. He stated, “Disenfranchisement was a crucial feature of the Soviet electoral system. Disfranchisement is the revocation of the right of suffrage (the right to vote) of a person or group of people, or through practices, prevention of a person exercising the right to vote. It is also termed to the revocation of power or control of a particular individual, community or being to the natural amenity they are abound in; that is to deprive of a franchise, of a legal right, of some privilege or inherent immunity. This may be accomplished explicitly by law or implicitly through requirements applied in a discriminatory fashion, intimidation, or by placing unreasonable requirements on voters for registration or voting. Lishenets (Russian word) thus, were those people who were stripped of the right of voting in the Soviet Union of 1918–1936. Disfranchisement was a means of repression of the categories of population that were classified as ‘enemies of the working people’ ”. According to Soviet law of 1936, “5,100,000 out of an eligible adult voting population of 93,411,000 were disenfranchised for various reasons. Being disenfranchised meant much more than simply being disallowed to vote or be elected. Lishenets could not occupy any governmental position, or receive higher and technical education. They were deprived of various privileges and subsidies: employment, housing, retirement. They also could not be a member of kolkhozes and other kinds of cooperatives.”⁴⁰The Soviet Constitution enumerated the categories of disenfranchised people:

- Persons who used hired labor to obtain increase in profits

³⁹ “Elections in the Soviet Union”, July 23, 2012, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elections_in_the_Soviet_Union, “Chapter XI, The Electoral System,” Constitution of the USSR 1936, Robert Beard, Bucknell University, Lewisburg, 1996, available at: <http://www.departments.bucknell.edu/russian/const/36cons04.html>

⁴⁰ “Soviet Union Elections, 1938”, January 15, 2011, available at: http://danpritchard.com/wiki/Soviet_Union_regional_elections,_1938

- Persons who have income without doing any work, such as interests from capital, receipts from property, etc.
- Private merchants, trade and commercial brokers
- Monks and clergy of all religions
- Persons who were policemen or military officers before the October Revolution
- Persons who have been declared demented or mentally deficient, persons under guardianship, etc.

Schmeernoba T.M. (2003) further described, “In 1929-1930, disenfranchised persons were also deprived of rations. Members of the family whose head was Lishenets were automatically disenfranchised. The voting rights could be restored by local election commissions upon the proof of engagement in productive labor and of the loyalty to the Soviet power. The ultimate authorities were the Central Election Commission and Presidium of the Central Executive Committee. The 1936 Soviet Constitution instituted universal suffrage, and the category of Lishenets was officially eliminated. Nevertheless, for a long time after 1936, Soviet citizens applying for any job had to make a statement if they or their family members were ever deprived of voting rights so they still fell into a disenfranchised category”.

In 1929 elections to the Congress of the Soviet Union, emergence of political opposition added an interesting element. According to V.A Sidorov (1978), “The Orthodox Church created an organized opposition to the CPSU. The Candidates from the opposition party included Kulaks, Tolstoyans, and Baptists who were totally anti-communist in their approach. There were oppositions within the party as well. Against the officially nominated candidates, the CPSU registered some unofficial candidates especially to create the impression of an opposition. Peasants and the trade workers formed new opposition groups citing the reason that the CPSU members made themselves an elite group. The electoral campaigns became violent as the CPSU candidates were attacked physically in some provinces. However, the oppositions forces could not gain much in the election and the Communists could maintain their hegemony.”

The Soviet Constitution was again changed in the year 1936. In 1937 elections were held. The election of 1937 was not multi-candidate like the last two elections. Under Article 124 of the Soviet Constitution Right to Freedom of Religion was offered. Taking advantage of this the Orthodox Church tried to register religious candidates.⁴¹ Other than this, many other independent candidates tried register themselves as candidates. Mass arrests were conducted and as a result of that most of the candidates were imprisoned. Sheila Fitzpatrick (1999) described the events in this manner, “With the mass arrests and with the tone more subdued than with the previous elections, there were still minor waves of dissent and opposition to candidates, especially major political figures (including Mikhail Kalinin, Anastas Mikoyan, and even Joseph Stalin himself) as well as celebrities (such as Aleksei Tolstoy). Approximately 325,000 out of an eligible adult population of 101,718,000 were disenfranchised for various reasons.”⁴²

The 1989 elections were the last national elections for the Soviet Union. They were held in two rounds. One round held in March and one in April in 1989. Democratic reforms were brought. Yet, to contest in elections the candidates were must be the CPSU candidates. The old Congress was replaced by the Congress of People’s Deputies (CDP) in the year 1988, consisted by 2250 deputies. It was the new legislative body of the Soviet Union. Pat Sloan, (1937) wrote, “750 deputies (one third) were reserved for the CPSU and its affiliated organizations, however, the remaining two-thirds would be elected under the reforms. Elections for the new legislature were set for March, 1989. While the majority of CPSU-endorsed candidates were elected (84 percent of the Congress consisted of the CPSU candidates by Gorbachev's estimate) over 300 candidates won out over the endorsed candidates. Among them was Boris Yeltsin, who won over the CPSU-endorsed candidate to represent Moscow's district with 89% of the vote. It was Yeltsin's first return to political power after resigning from the Politburo in 1987. On a union republic level Yeltsin was also later elected to Supreme Soviet. Anti-corruption prosecutor Telman Gdlyan, trapeze artist Valentin Dikul, ethnographer Galina

⁴¹ “Chapter X, *Fundamental Rights and Duties of the Citizens*”, 1936 Constitution of the USSR, Robert Beard, Bucknell University, 1996, available at:

<http://www.departments.bucknell.edu/russian/const/36cons04.html>

⁴² “*The Russian Revolution*”, Sheila Fitzpatrick, Oxford University Press, Oxford, London, 2008.

Starovoytova, lawyer Anatoly Sobchak, physicist Andrei Sakharov, weightlifter Yury Vlasov, and hockey player Anatoli Firsov were among the other non-endorsed candidates who were elected to the CPD. All in all, while the majority of seats were won by endorsed candidates, one Politburo member, five Central Committee members, and thirty five regional CPSU chiefs lost re-election to non-endorsed candidates.”⁴³

Apart from the above mentioned, regional elections took place in the years 1939, 1947, 1951, 1955, 1959, 1985, 1990. Henry Hale wrote that, “These elections raised similar expectations regarding the degree of political competition for parliamentary seats and the role of parliaments throughout the Soviet successor states following the USSR’s collapse” (Henry E, Hale 1999). The electoral system and the number of elections it organized later influenced a lot the present trend of elections in the post-Soviet space. Theodore H. Friedgut (1979) opined that, “They served as a vehicle for both limited contestation among political elites to achieve consensus and fully mobilized participation among the population to popularly legitimate decisions made undemocratically”.

Although Central Asia has been ruled by different dynasties and political entities, they all had certain commonalities among them. As a result of it, some common political features have been developed in the region. From nomadic life till Soviet rule, the entire region had experienced autocratic rules only. In the Tsarist or Soviet period, popular participation had never been an option. In the Soviet period, that is the most recent and influential past for the region, one party rule was prevalent throughout. Power was centralized in the hands of one party and one president. The Soviet Presidents were the most powerful and popular. It has been said that “Russian political culture is rooted in the historical experience of centuries of absolutism. And it is the impact of an absolutist political legacy from nomadic life to Soviet times that has influenced the current political discourses in the Central Asian republics.”⁴⁴

⁴³ “*Soviet Democracy*”, Pat Sloan, Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1937.

⁴⁴ “Tsarist Autocracy”, June 9, 2015, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tsarist_autocracy

Chapter 3

Electoral System in Central Asia

Electoral system in Central Asia has an important contribution towards political development. “In contemporary Central Asia, elections are as much political theatre as contests for office. After the break-up of the Soviet Union in late 1991, most of the countries in the region descended into one-man rule or civil war.”⁴⁵ The IDEA Handbook 2005 on Central Asian elections observed, “The semi-competitive elections held in the last months of the Soviet order gave way to elections of acclamation in the first years of independence, with political power becoming increasingly centralized in the hands of the founding presidents of the republics.”⁴⁶ Elections in the region can be studied in terms of constitutional provisions, both presidential and parliamentary elections held till 2015, voter’s behavior, facilities provided to the voters, Comments of election observers etc.

Kazakhstan: Elections in Kazakhstan are administered by the Central Election Commission. Elections in Kazakhstan are held on a national level to elect a President and the Parliament, which are divided into two bodies, the Majlis (Lower House) and the Senate (Upper House). Local elections for local representative bodies are held every five years. The Assembly is elected for a five-year term, consisting of 127 seats. Elections to the assembly are held by means of proportional representation, with a 7% threshold. The Senate has 47 members. Among them, 40 members are elected for a six-year term to the local Assembly constituencies. Re-election takes place to replace half of the members in every two years.⁴⁷

The international community, principally the western countries have offered negative remarks on almost every election held in Kazakhstan. ‘The Guardian’ in 2005 reported, “the election observing community from the west has charged these elections with unfair means, illicit funding, manipulated results, ballot tampering, crushing opposition parties, curbing democratic voices, multiple voting, press censorship and manipulating voters.”

⁴⁵ “Regions: Case Study”, Aceproject.org, May 7, 2009, http://aceproject.org/regions-en/rbi/KG/case-studies/esy_kg

⁴⁶ “Electoral Manipulation in Central Asia”, Eugene Huskey, Electoral System Design, The New IDEA International Handbook, 2005.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*

Since its independence the electoral laws were drawn more or less upon the skeleton body of Soviet-styled elections. However, in the year 2009 electoral reforms were introduced, allowing two new political parties to contest in elections and take part in power-sharing. Thus the reforms introduced multi-party systems in several Central Asian republics including Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. These reforms came as a response to president Nazarbayev's call for Kazakh society's need for multi-party elections. In 2012, Multi-party elections were held for the first time. In the same year the, United States praised this reform calling it a step towards political democratization. This reform gained mixed opinions. Those who were skeptical of this reform commented that the new parties are in no position to cause much of a challenge to confront president Nazarbayev's, ruling Nur Otan party. It was called a baby-step and a utopian change.⁴⁸

Kazakhstan is a state with significant ethnic diversity, where the political and economic interest of one social group differs from each other. After independence, Kazakhstan's ethnic Russians used to be the main opposition group of the Nazarbayev regime. The primary cause of this opposition was economic discontentment. The Russian population resides in northern Kazakhstan's industrial areas where oil and water scarcity made their lives difficult in the initial years of the last decade. Lack of government funding in the industries and mines brought about unemployment and poverty. Industrial mismanagement and corruption caused serious damage to the economy, making severe implications on the lifestyle of the Russian population. Ethnic Kazakhs who are ethnic majority in the state shared political hostility with the ethnic Russian population. There were clashes of both political and economic interests, mostly of resource-sharing. If one ethnic group wins a majority of seats, this election could widen the ethnic rift (Ian Mac William, 1994). However, the situation improved in the later years. After introducing multi-party elections, the 2012 elections provided the parliament with diverse political views and wider representation. "The fact that elections were held opposition parties and candidates campaigned and expressed their views and that international observers were invited indicates a desire on the part of the government of Kazakhstan to move toward

⁴⁸ "*History of Elections in Kazakhstan since 1991*", Permanent Mission of the Republic of Kazakhstan for United Nations, New York, 2012.

democracy," Van Houwelingen wrote (Van Houwelingen, 1994). Thus, it can be said that even the modest change in Kazakhstan is remarkable because Mr. Nazarbayev, a former Soviet apparatchik, has presided for two decades over a well-established system of one-man, one-party rule (Andrew E. Cramer, 2012).

The Reuters in 2015 reported the President's term in the following manner, "The President is elected directly and serve office for five years. Yet he can serve for two consecutive terms at maximum. On 18th May 2007, a parliamentary voting took place under which president's term limits were removed, after reducing term period from seven to five years."⁴⁹ In 2015, Nursultan Nazarbayev called for early presidential elections. According to The Diplomat, "Nazarbayev arranged early polls in 1999, 2005 and 20122 also".⁵⁰ The early calls mostly came due to political turmoil in the country, sometimes due to pressure from outside as well. Tengri News reported, "In the 2015 elections, two candidates contested against Nazarbaev, the Communist People's Party's Turgun Syzdykov and self-nominee Abelgazi Kusainov. The Central Election Commission of Kazakhstan decided to refuse registration to Limana Koishiyeva, Kanat Turageldiyev, Zharylkap Kalybai and Khasen Kozha-Akhmet, all of whom successfully passed the Kazakh language exam - knowledge of the state language is one of the requirements to become a presidential candidate - and received signature lists, but failed to provide all the necessary documents".⁵¹ During this time the political environment was calm and quite. There was neither much campaigning nor policy debate. As the oppositions are generally pro-Nur Otan party, no competition or hostile environment is observed. There is neither pre-election excitement, nor post-election speculations in view. The election results are obvious. "In the 2015 elections, members were directly elected to the Majlis from a single constituency. Method of proportional representation was with a 7% electoral threshold. Seats were allocated using the largest remainder method. If parties had an equal largest remainder, the party that was registered first was awarded the seat. If only

⁴⁹ "Kazakh Leaders Allies Suggest Early Election to Strengthen Economy", The Reuters, February 15, 2015, available at: <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-kazakhstan-president-idUSKBN0LJ0KQ20150215>

⁵⁰ "Why is Kazakhstan Holding Early Parliamentary Elections", The Diplomat, January 26, 2015, available at: <http://thediplomat.com/2016/01/why-is-kazakhstan-holding-early-parliamentary-elections/>.

⁵¹ "Presidential Elections in Kazakhstan scheduled to 26 April", Tengri News, February 26, 2015, available at: https://en.tengrinews.kz/politics_sub/Presidential-elections-in-Kazakhstan-scheduled-to-April-26-259243/.

one party crossed the threshold, the party with the second highest number of votes was to be awarded at least two seats. A further nine seats were elected by the Assembly of People, a body selected by the President’’.⁵² The distributions of seats in the Majlis are distributed generally in this manner.

Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) plays a significant role in election observance, especially in Central Asian republics. It does not only observe elections but also submit assessment and recommendation reports to governments for improvement. OSCE was allowed to observe the elections in Kazakhstan in 2015. In their press release they stated that elections were organized efficiently with satisfactory progress. However, it was indicated in their assessment report that Kazakhstan has a long way to go in democratizing its elections. It has not been able to introduce free and fair elections as yet due to economic limitations and vehement corruption in the state. The statement of OSCE further added that the legal framework on elections must be reformed to lift restrictions from civil and political rights of the citizens. This will definitely increase Kazakh citizen’s participation in upcoming elections.⁵³

Economic insufficiency is the reason why Kazakhstan cannot afford to spend much on elections. Although it is considered as a successful state in the post-Soviet space, Kazakhstan faces both financial and strategic instability mainly due to periodic decline in oil prices, fallout of sanctions on Russia, geopolitical instability, minimum economic co-operation with other Central Asian neighbors, turmoil in Afghanistan, West’s growing interference, Russia-Ukraine war etc. Environmental challenges and social tension such as ethnic conflict, drug and human trafficking, increasing number of miscellaneous crime etc. divert the government’s attention. Therefore, focus on conducting of successful elections or other such practice gets sidelined due to the numerous challenges faced by

⁵² “Kazakhstani Legislative Elections”, May 27, 2016, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kazakhstani_legislative_election,_2016, “Kazakh Rerun: A Brief History of Kazakh Presidential Elections”, Radio Liberty, March3, 2015, available at: <http://www.rferl.org/content/kazakhstan-brief-history-of-presidential-elections/26890276.html>, “Kazakhstani Legislative Elections”, May 27, 2016, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kazakhstani_legislative_election,_2016
⁵³ “Early Presidential Elections in Kazakhstan”, OSCE Report, April 26, 2015, available at: <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/kazakhstan/145006>

the state. Nazarbayev have been accused of holding elections prior to schedule. The West raises question on the political stability of the state. Nazarbayev is also accused of doing so on purpose so that he can take advantage of lack of mobility and unpreparedness of his political opponents. It is true that in any state, holding early elections always favors the incumbent ruler as the sudden announcement of elections tend to induce panic among the opponent candidates. They leg behind in both planning and campaigning.⁵⁴ This is why other than Central Asia many other countries have made it a common practice to call for early elections. As reported by The Diplomatic Courier in 2015, “In Israel, early elections were held in 2012 and another is scheduled for 2015. The United Kingdom, of course, has institutionalized the practice, and there, a Prime Minister is expected to call elections at the time that is most suitable for his party”.⁵⁵

Regarding the funding in elections, a resolution is adopted by the Central Election Commission of Kazakhstan according to which expenditures regarding election campaign are to be covered from state funds. According to the CEC, "Funds in the amount of 5,250,000 tenge (\$28,237) are allocated to the candidates for a 15-minute speech. For the 10-minute presentation of the program on the radio each candidate receives 200,000 tenge (\$1,075). To publish two printed articles each candidate receives 810,000 tenge (\$4,356). Candidates will also receive funds to rent premises for meetings with voters in the amount of 200,000 tenge and another 250,000 tenge (\$1,345) to print out campaign materials. Each of the registered candidates will receive 300,000 tenge (\$1,613) for travel expenses.”⁵⁶ Dinara Urazova of Central European University writes, “Each candidate is provided with funds for a fifteen minutes speech on TV, a ten-minute speech on the radio, as well as to publish two articles in printed newspapers. According to the CEC the amount of funding provided to candidates for their election campaigning in the media was calculated based on the existing rates provided by the Committee for Communications, Computerization and Information of the Ministry of Investment and

⁵⁴ *Ibid*

⁵⁵ “*Kazakhstan’s Snap Elections*”, The Diplomatic Courier, March 25, 2015, available at: <http://www.diplomaticcourier.com/2015/03/25/kazakhstan-s-snap-election/>.

⁵⁶ “*Information on Elections and Referenda in the RK*”, Central election Commission, Kazakhstan, available at: <http://www.election.kz/eng/>.

Development” (Dinara Urazova 2015). Thus it seems that the allocation of funds have been well-planned by the CEC.

It has been mentioned above that Kazakhstan has started offering several facilities to its voters recently. Kazakh voters vote through EVMs by Secret Ballot. Previously the voters get to use ballot papers. Kazakhstan also developed the AIS electronic voting system also used by Belarus. “This system is best described as an indirect-recording electronic voting system, as opposed to the DRE voting machines that have been more widely studied. In this system, the touch-screen voting terminal in the voting booth serves as a ballot marking device, recording selections on a smart card. The voting terminal itself retains no record of the vote after the voter takes the smart card. The voter then takes the smart card containing the cast ballot record to the computer at the registration table that serves as the electronic ballot box where the permanent record of the vote is retained and tabulated”⁵⁷.

However in 2011 this system was abolished on the grounds that voters did not prefer it. According to the CEC in Kazakhstan, the use of the AIS system would be discontinued because voters prefer paper, the political parties does not trust it, and the lack of funds required to update the system”⁵⁸. The transparency of the system was in doubt on the ground of pre-stuffing of the ballot boxes. Yet some of the ballot boxes are found to be transparent. During elections, each polling station contains a large and a small ballot box. According to the Kazakh Election law in 2007, “Each polling place is to be equipped with both a large ballot box and smaller mobile ballot boxes. The latter are designed to be carried, by poll-workers, to voters outside the polling place. This is an alternative to offering absentee ballots or proxy voting for voters with disabilities that prevent them from going to the polls”⁵⁹.

⁵⁷ “Elections in Kazakhstan”, March 23, 2016, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elections_in_Kazakhstan

⁵⁸ *Information on Elections and Referenda in the RK*, Central Election Commission, Kazakhstan, available at: <http://www.election.kz/eng/>. “Elections in Kazakhstan”, March 23, 2016, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elections_in_Kazakhstan

⁵⁹ *Ibid*

Aleksei Kartsov, an expert of the International Institute of Monitoring Democracy and Development remarked in a conference in Astana, “The regulatory control of the election process in Kazakhstan has space for improvement to better comply with international obligations related to elections undertaken by the country”, as per reported by the Tengri News.⁶⁰ The conference was organized to mark the completion of 20th anniversary of the Kazakh constitution.

Uzbekistan: Uzbekistan’s parliament is called ‘Oliy Majlis’ which is a bi-cameral parliament. The lower chamber is comprised of 150 members, while the upper chamber or Senate has 100 members. 135 members of the lower chamber are directly elected from single majoritarian districts. In case of draw among two or more candidates, second round of election is conducted among the highest voted candidates within one month. Re-election is held if the votes casted are less than 33% of the voters on the voter list prepared. There is no limit bars on the number of contestation by one candidate in the elections. However, independent candidates cannot contest in elections for the assembly seats of lower house. The candidates must be affiliated to a political party. The minimum age limit set for the candidates is 25 years of age. The candidate must be a permanent resident of Uzbekistan or at least a permanent residence from 5 continuous years.⁶¹

“The legal framework on parliamentary elections comprises the Constitution that was adopted in 1993. Its latest amendment was done in September 2014. The 2014 amendment included the 1994 Law on ‘Guarantees of Suffrage to Citizens’, the 2003 Law on ‘Elections to Oliy Majlis of Uzbekistan (parliamentary election law)’, and the 1998 Law on ‘Central Election Commission (CEC law)’. These laws were previously amended in 2012 as well. The laws on electoral system of Uzbekistan are supplemented by Law on Political Parties framed in 1996, and the Law on Financing of Political Parties framed in 2004. Provisions of the Criminal Code and the Code of Administrative

⁶⁰ “*Presidential Elections in Kazakhstan scheduled to 26 April*”, Tengri News, February 26, 2015, available at: https://en.tengrinews.kz/politics_sub/Presidential-elections-in-Kazakhstan-scheduled-to-April-26-259243/.

⁶¹ “*Resolution of the CEC, 2014*”, Central Election Commission, Republic of Uzbekistan, available at: <http://www.elections.uz/en/>.

Offences”⁶² are also considered significant to election-related regulations. They also were amended in 2014.

According to the constitutional law on elections in Uzbekistan, those who are convicted of crimes or charged under doubt of such activity in the eyes of law, active military man, or a professional clergyman in religious organization are disqualified to contest in elections. The parties need to register their candidates in their respective constituencies. Female candidates enjoy a 30 per cent reservation. The Central Election Commission is three-tiered body which administers parliamentary elections. “It has been made a constitutional body in a 2014 amendment of the constitutional framework on elections. It is a permanent body and is consisted of 18 members. The functions of the CEC are clearly mentioned in the constitution. These members are elected by the parliament after their nomination by the regional councils. The Chairperson is elected by the members and nominated by the president himself. The CEC administers both 135 District Election Commissions (DECs), and some 9,000 Precinct Election Commissions (PECs). According to the CEC, there will be around 124,000 to 183,000 voters in each DEC constituency. The Mahalla Committees are the smallest units which are formed under directions from the CEC. There are around 20 to 3,000 voters per constituency. The CEC also trains the leadership within the DECs to make them function efficiently during election season. The 2012 amendment of parliamentary election law provides enough information about this. One of CEC’s main functions is to generate awareness among the voters. Therefore, CEC organizes large scale ‘Public Outreach Campaigns’ to educate the voters about changed method of voting.”⁶³

Before the 2014 amendments, several amendments were made in the 2012 constitution. Freedom House News reported, “Specifically, the law was amended to provide for international observer access to the election of members of parliament from the

⁶² “Elections in Uzbekistan”, available at: www.osce.org, January 19, 2015
<http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/uzbekistan/126816?download=true>

⁶³ “Elections in Uzbekistan”, available at: www.osce.org, January 19, 2015
<http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/uzbekistan/126816?download=true>, *Resolution of the CEC, 2014*”, Central Election Commission, Republic of Uzbekistan, available at: <http://www.elections.uz/en/>.

Ecological Movement of Uzbekistan (EMU), as well as to clarify legal provisions for early voting, and registration and voting of those in pre-trial detention. Additionally, the law was amended to explicitly prescribe permissible campaigning methods and to prohibit publication of opinion polls up to three days prior to election-day. A constitutional law on presidential elections was approved by the Senate on 23 March 2012 which required presidential elections to be held 90 days after parliamentary elections. There were two rounds, the first of which took place on 23rd December, 2014; and the second round was completed on 4 January of 2015. After the second round in 2015, the results were declared. Islam Karimov won by a huge margin of 90% votes. Nearly 21 million eligible voters casted their votes in the two rounds of voting.”⁶⁴

The ‘cult of personality’ created by President Karimov was the primary factor which earned him this victory. This was Karimov’s fourth consecutive victory. “He defeated three other candidates, Khotamjon Ketmonov of the People’s Democratic Party, Nariman Umarov of the Social Democratic Party Adolat (Justice), and Akmal Saidov of the Milli Tiklanish (National Revival) Party. However they all are pro-government parties who were not much indulged in pro-election campaign for their parties. As Russian news agency Ittar Tass reported, around 91.01 per cent eligible voters turned out for voting. The Central Election Commission was managed to carry the elections peacefully and without irregularities. Commission Chairman Mirzoulugbek Abdusalomov said in a press briefing, no irregularities had been reported by polling stations. Some 300 observers from 43 countries would be present to monitor the election. The head of CIS election monitoring mission, Sergei Lebedev commented that the election was in compliance with democratic principles.”⁶⁵ On 9 January, 2000 Presidential elections were held “in which Islam Karimov and leader of the People’s Democratic Party of Uzbekistan, Abdulkhafiz

⁶⁴ “Nations in Transition: Uzbekistan”, Freedom House, November 3, 2012, available at: <https://freedomhouse.org/report/nations-transit/2012/uzbekistan>

⁶⁵ “Alternative Political Voices in Uzbekistan”, fpif.org, 29-May-2016, Available at: http://fpif.org/alternative_political_voices_in_uzbekistan/

Jalalov participated. Karimov was elected the President of Uzbekistan. At that time, 91.9% of the total voters voted for Karimov.”⁶⁶

The first parliamentary elections in Uzbekistan were held in the year 2004. This was an important development in the republic’s political history. The voters got four months time to equip themselves with the key electoral procedures and voting methods. This developed a consciousness among the voters to voluntarily participate in the 2004 elections. As this was the first time they were voting, joy was profound among the voters due to their direct participation in state’s political decision-making. The election took place on 26 December, 2004. According to the CEC of Uzbekistan, “The seats in the lower house of parliament were shared among five parties and independent candidates from citizen initiative groups. A total of more than 500 candidates competed for election to the Legislative House, that is, there were more than four candidates to each seat. In the upper house of parliament, approximately 15% of the senators represent the agrarian sector; more than 20% represent education, science, and culture. , 85.1% of the voters took part in it and elected 62 deputies (out of 489 candidates). Another 58 deputies got into parliament after a second election on 9 January, 2005, at which the voter turnout was almost as high as 80%.”⁶⁷

El *Khan* Nureyev of Central Asian University wrote about regional representation in the Majlis through this parliamentary election. In his words, “Among the deputies of the Legislative House only 18 (15%) were previously deputies of the Olli Majlis. There are far more well-known political and public figures in the Senate, particularly among those appointed by the president. It is also worth noting that almost 50% of the elected senators

⁶⁶ “*Uzbek Presidential Elections, 2000 Report*”, Central Election Commission, Uzbekistan, <http://www.elections.uz/en/>. Central Asia-Caucasus Centre, December 5, 2009, available at: [http://www.ca-c.org/online/2006/journal_eng/cac-01/cacE1\(37\).2006.PDF](http://www.ca-c.org/online/2006/journal_eng/cac-01/cacE1(37).2006.PDF)

⁶⁷ “*Uzbek Parliamentary Elections, 2004 Report*”, Central Election Commission, Uzbekistan, available at: <http://www.elections.uz/en/>.

are khokims of various levels. This essentially also reflects the world standard of regional representation at the national level’’⁶⁸ (El khan Nureyev 2005).

As several parties emerged in the political canvas of Uzbekistan, The elections of 2005 were set to be multi-party elections. Apart from the ruling People’s Democratic Party of Uzbekistan (PDPU), the Liberal Democratic Party, the Democratic Party and the Social Democratic party emerged in the scene.⁶⁹ However, the latter two remained inactive, even during elections. The Liberal Democratic Party nominated its candidates from all districts. Western critics were suspicious of this development and said that the authority curbed the growth of anti-PDPU parties or opposition parties. However, Tashkent was ready to disappoint their critics in the election race, as they allowed opposition parties to contest in election to ensure political pluralism in the republic. The officials clarified that only the radical and extremist parties have been banned from competing in elections as they may destabilize the peace in the state. Most importantly the different parties, whether pro-government or not represent the local population from both rural and urban areas. This was a very significant development that happened in 2005.⁷⁰

Due to the previous political culture of one-person rule, Karimov earned enough popularity in the republic. He emerged as the strongest of leader who could lead Uzbekistan towards multiple-growth. The charisma and competence of Karimov as Uzbekistan’s leader was rare. He also does not maintain isolation from the population. In fact the Uzbek population is more used to Karimov than it could get to any other leader replacing Karimov at the hour. There was an almost absence of a Karimov-like leader.⁷¹ Therefore, there was no point in yielding opportunities for a new candidate who could

⁶⁸ Central Asia-Caucasus Centre, December 5, 2009
available at: [http://www.ca-c.org/online/2006/journal_eng/cac-01/cacE1\(37\),2006.PDF](http://www.ca-c.org/online/2006/journal_eng/cac-01/cacE1(37),2006.PDF)

⁶⁹“Uzbekistan: Pressure Grows Opposition Rights Activists”, hrw.org.ru news, December 19, 2014,
available at: <http://www.hrw.org/ru/news/2009/12/21/uzbekistan-pressure-grows-opposition-rights-activists-0>

⁷⁰“Kazakh Rerun: A Brief History of Kazakh Presidential Elections”, Radio Liberty, March3, 2015,
available at: <http://www.rferl.org/content/kazakhstan-brief-history-of-presidential-elections/26890276.html>

⁷¹ *Ibid*

replace the president. Plus in the given environment, Uzbekistan needed a stable regime with a long term president. Regime change could hamper its steady growth.

Karimov is alleged to be a dictator by his western counterparts. But it is to be remembered that his domestic and foreign policies have been pragmatic. It is under his leadership that Uzbekistan has grown to become the strongest republic in Central Asia. It is currently one of the most stable of all the former Soviet republics in Central Asia. It is due to Karimov's firm hold on power. He has successfully neutralized country's perceived threats. El Khan Nureyev wrote, "At the beginning of the 1990s, he recognized new sociopolitical organizations, including the Birlik movement and the Democratic Party, which announced their opposition policy. At that time, Islam Karimov called on the opposition to engage in constructive cooperation. But its radical leaders placed their stakes not on participating in power, but on gaining it. In the sphere of international policy, Islam Karimov rendered tangible support to the U.S. by offering it bases for carrying out the antiterrorist campaign in Afghanistan. But when time came, he made U.S remove its troops from its bases. The president himself believes that today, when new threats in the form of nationalism, separatism, religious extremism, and terrorism are increasingly spreading throughout the world, it is difficult to talk about the development of democracy. The problem of security naturally has an impact both on the foreign and domestic policy of the republic's leadership. At the same time, Islam Karimov believes that the characteristic feature of democratization under conditions of the East is the consistency and gradualness of this process" (El Khan Nureyev 2005).

Karimov was right to point it out that the western democracy is not perfect after all. The Presidents in Central Asia needs to concentrate equally on economic, political and social development as new states. Therefore, they can never attend to democratic institutions

like the electoral process like western states. Karimov says that most of western criticism is futile and driven by selfish motives.⁷²

Despite all clarifications from Uzbekistan, western criticism has been flowing after every election held by Uzbekistan. The OSCE has stated that the Uzbek elections lack real opposition. Sharp criticism came from Human Rights Watch group. Mutabar Tadjibayeva who is an Uzbek human rights activist was also a political prisoner in Uzbekistan. He stated, “Not a single real opposition figure was able to register as a candidate because no opposition exists in Uzbekistan. Opposition in the country had been destroyed, jailed, driven into exile, or killed. In the 2000 presidential election, Karimov’s sole challenger, Abdulkhafiz Jalalov, emerged from the voting booth and announced to the media that he had cast his ballot for Karimov”. (Mutabar Tadjibayeva, 2015). On the other hand, the SCO and CIS sent their respective observers called the elections in Uzbekistan as open, free, and democratic. They said that gradually the republic is proceeding openly and democratically (Joana Lillis, 2015).

Kyrgyzstan: The Kyrgyz constitution provides for legal framework regarding elections. The 2010 constitution entailed laws on presidential and parliamentary elections. The law has been amended in the month of June in 2015. The amendment changed the voter registration system, abolition of early voting, reformed election-day provisions, finance and political campaign related laws.

The Central Election Commission is a constitutional body. It is elected by the parliament for five years term. There are total 12 members, out of which four are nominated by the President, the Parliamentary majority and the Parliamentary minority. The chairperson is elected from among its members. Four seats are reserved for female in the CEC. This indicates a positive development in the electoral system of Kyrgyzstan that ensures

⁷²"Islam Karimov's speech at the inauguration ceremony of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan at the joint meeting of Chambers of the Oliy Majlis", Embassy of the Republic of Uzbekistan in the Federal Republic of Germany, available at: <http://www.uzbekistan.de/en/nachrichten/aktuell/islam-karimovs-speech-inauguration-ceremony-president-republic-uzbekistan-joint>

reservation for backward social group. Here too, the electoral law has similarity with Kazakhstan's electoral law which ensures positions for female members, but in the parties and not in the CEC. The 2014 constitutional law of Kyrgyzstan on CEC states, "After the registration of candidate lists, political parties can nominate to the CEC a non-voting member from their respective parties. All polling stations will be provided with ballot scanning technology. Although the law provides for automatic counting of votes, only the results of a parallel manual count will be legally binding".⁷³

The CEC in Kyrgyzstan have enacted several measures to clarify the electoral process to the Kyrgyz public. It has stated the rules regarding candidateship, voter registration, voting method, financing, media coverage and role. CEC has also made public laws regarding grievance reporting, and election observance. According to CEC, "To qualify for seat allocation, a party must surpass a 7 per cent threshold of votes cast nationwide and at least a 0.7 per cent in each of the seven to avoid the dominance of any one party in parliament, the Constitution limits the number of seats that a single party can win to 65 regardless of the number of votes received". However, the limits of seats have been criticized. Both traditional and unconventional elements govern Kyrgyzstan's electoral laws. The parliamentary elections are conducted with system of proportional representation. The tenure of the members of parliament lasts for five years. The members of parliament are elected from single nationwide-constituency. Parliamentary elections are administered by a three-level structure: the CEC, 54 Territorial Election Commissions (TECs) and some 2,350 Precinct Election Commissions (PECs). Elections happen in two rounds and are decided by a majority run-off system.⁷⁴ This is similar to that of Kazakhstan where if none of the candidates attain majority votes, than a second round of elections are held within a month. Those two candidates with maximum number of votes can participate in the elections. Whoever earns more votes in the second round wins the elections.

⁷³ "Interim Report on Electoral Laws: Kyrgyzstan", OSCE, 2015, available at: <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/kyrgyzstan/182686?download=true>

⁷⁴ "Interim Report on Electoral Laws: Kyrgyzstan", OSCE, 2015, available at: <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/kyrgyzstan/182686?download=true>

Like India, Kyrgyzstan too grants voting rights to its citizens at the age of 18. The voter must reach 18 years of age by voting day. The State Registry Service (SRS) through its organ Unified Population Register (UPR) conducts the voter registration process. It is passive in nature. Mentally challenged people and criminals irrespective of severity of the crime are prevented from voting. Eugene Huskey and Gulnara Iskakova writes, “The UPR includes citizens based on personal and biometric data (photo and fingerprints), which could eliminate the possibility of multiple entries and inclusion of deceased citizens” (Huskey and Iskakova, 2010).

Regarding registration of candidates, candidates are required to gain voting rights and must not be less than 21 years of age. They should not be convicted under any crime by the law of the land. Every candidate must possess party affiliation. Like Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, independent candidates are not allowed to contest in elections here. According to OSCE’s electoral observance report on Kyrgyzstan, “The political parties can submit their candidates list until August 25 every year. The official electoral campaign starts on 4 September and ends 24 hours before election-day. Early campaigning by some contestants, potential pressure on voters, as well as a possible misuse of state administrative resources and vote-buying, campaigning in public institutions is prohibited and campaign posters can only be displayed in public places designated by mayors. The campaign is expected to focus on issues related to economic development, corruption, judicial reform, stability, and migration”.⁷⁵

The 2015 amendment of electoral laws imposed limitations on the sources of party funding. Political parties do not get direct funding as directed by electoral law in Kyrgyzstan. Parties fund themselves generally from their own resources that came from the candidate’s personal contributions to the party, or from a civilian entity like individual, organizations and groups. The parties cannot use funds earned through

⁷⁵ “Elections in Albania”, available at: [www.OSCE.org](http://www.osce.org), May 4, 2015, <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/albania/153461?download=true>, “*Interim Report on Electoral Laws: Kyrgyzstan*”, OSCE, 2015, available at: <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/kyrgyzstan/182686?download=true>

anonymous sources during elections. They must present to the CEC a detailed list of funding sources.⁷⁶

The OSCE Report also states, “The electoral law in Kyrgyzstan shows the changing rules which regulate electoral outcomes. Unlike its Soviet legacy, present day Kyrgyzstan has this law according to which if the Kyrgyz parliament fails to elect a member after two rounds of voting, than all the candidates would be disqualified. Initially the representative assembly elections were held in single member district. Two-round voting system was employed. After 1999, both regional and local assembly elections are conducted in multi-member district. This is a significant electoral development towards introducing pluralism in assembly elections. Yet, the regional Governors are appointed by the President himself. The Chief Executives of cities and villages are elected by the local assembly members.”⁷⁷ It further concludes “Kyrgyzstan’s competitive elections defy the stereotype that Central Asian countries are doomed to be ruled by autocratic dynasties.

The elections solidify the country’s 2010 constitution that sets out rules for fair competition for all political actors with the intent to prevent the emergence of one dominant actor. It delegates more powers to the parliament and aims to prevent the emergence of autocratic political center. Fourteen political parties competed in 2010 elections out of which six were able to pass the national and regional thresholds to win seats. The constitution caps any one party’s representation in the parliament at 60%, limits the president to only one six-year term, and grants minority coalition control over key committees. It also makes it difficult for the president to unilaterally dissolve the parliament or amend the constitution. The underlying assumption in the law is that all politicians are greedy and corrupt and therefore need to be checked by their competitors’.

To conclude, Kyrgyzstan is called the ‘Island of Democracy’ and one of the reasons are its healthy electoral system. It serves as an inspiration to other Central Asian republics when it comes to pluralism and transparency in elections. In the words of Dr. Erica Marat, a research fellow in the Caucasus Institute and Silk Road Studies Program,

⁷⁶ *Ibid*

⁷⁷ “*Interim Report on Electoral Laws: Kyrgyzstan*”, OSCE, 2015, available at: <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/kyrgyzstan/182686?download=true>

“Kyrgyzstan’s parliamentary elections have demonstrated that political competition can emerge among post-Soviet political leaders when an adequate system of checks and balances is created. Although Kyrgyzstan’s political parties are still built around wealthy individuals, there has been a gradual evolution of the political process: electoral rules are refined with each cycle and important political debates take place between elections. The country showcases one pathway that other post-Soviet states could take after cycles of authoritarianism and in the absence of consolidated political forces” (Dr. Erica Marat, 2015).

Tajikistan: The Tajik constitution play key task in building of historical path of the republic, its laws of governance, the protection of national and state interests, and to ensure important political activities and institutions like electoral system and political parties.

Electoral framework as mentioned in the Tajik constitution provides for Majlis Olli of the republic. It is a supreme bi-cameral assembly that enjoys significant legislative powers. According to OSCE report in 2015 on constitutional framework on Majlis of Tajikistan, “The lower chamber (Majlis Namoyandagon) has 63 members of parliament (MP) directly elected for a five-year term (OSCE, 2015). The upper chamber (Majlis Milli) has 33 members, of whom 8 are appointed by the president and 25 are indirectly elected by the councils of the regions and cities. Majlis Namoyandagon deputy shall not be a deputy of other representative bodies, to occupy other post and engage in business activities, except for scientific, creative and pedagogical activities. The Majlis is headed by the Chairman, his first deputies and deputies from amongst the members and deputies. The Chairman of the Majlis shall be chosen by secret ballot of the majority number of members and deputies accordingly.”⁷⁸ The Report further reveals, “The resolution on Central Commission for Elections and Referenda of the Republic of Tajikistan led to the establishment of District Electoral Commission on Elections of Deputies of the Majlis Oli. This initiative later led to the formation of Central Election Commission. The CEC of the Tajik republic established around 3,209 polling stations. Interestingly Tajikistan

⁷⁸ “*Parliamentary Elections: Assessment report*”, Republic of Tajikistan, OSCE, October 24, 2014, available at: www.OSCE.org

provides polling stations for its citizens living abroad as well. This came as a result of recommendation from the Foreign Affairs Ministry of Tajikistan. Around 37 polling stations in 27 foreign countries were established where there is significant Tajik population.”

Regarding electoral legislation article 27 and 49 of the constitution states about various electoral procedures like the elections will be direct and free. Methods of secret ballot will be put to use while voting. According to Tajikistan’s Country Report published by Freedom House Press, article 69 of the constitution says, “elections shall be announced and scheduled by the President of the republic. This procedure clearly puts the incumbent President in an advantageous situation. Elections should be held within 75 days from dismissal of the Majlis by the president. This procedure is applied in case of normal expiry date of the Majlis. In case of early dismissal of Majlis due to reasons provided in the constitution, the President must organize parliamentary election between 80 days from its dismissal.”⁷⁹

OSCE observes the Parliamentary Elections Law of Tajikistan in this manner, “Parliamentary elections are primarily regulated by the 1994 Constitution and the 1999 Constitutional Law on the Elections to the Majlisi Oli, last amended in March and July 2014. The legal framework also includes the 1998 Law on Political Parties, the 1998 Law on Public Meetings, the 2008 Civil Procedures Code, the 1998 Criminal Code, 1996 Law on Citizen’s Complaints to Government Bodies, the 2013 Law on Periodical Print and Other Mass Media, as well as Central Commission for Elections and Referenda (CCER) instructions. Parliamentary elections are administered by a three-level structure: the CCER, 41 DECs, one in each of the 41 single-mandate districts, and some 3,180 PECs. The CCER, a permanent body composed of 15 members, is elected by the lower chamber of the parliament for a five-year term based on proposals of the president. The CCER’s current term is due to end in December but it is expected to be renewed when the elections are officially called. Eight of the current CCER members represent all the

⁷⁹ “Nations in Transition: Tajikistan’s Country Report”, Freedom House Press, 2013 available at: <https://freedomhouse.org/report/nations-transit/2016/tajikistan>

registered political parties. The CCER is responsible for the conduct of the elections including the delineation of electoral districts, appointment of DEC's, registration of national lists of candidates, and the review of complaints against decisions and actions of lower-level commissions." OSCE's electoral observance body further states, "Additional polling stations are established outside of Tajikistan to facilitate out-of-country voting. The elections are held according to a mixed proportional-majoritarian system. A 50 per cent turnout is required for elections to be valid; otherwise, repeat elections must be held."⁸⁰

There are eight registered and several non-registered political parties in Tajikistan. They are the Economic Reform Party of Tajikistan, Socialist Party of Tajikistan, People's Democratic Party of Tajikistan, Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan, Democratic Party of Tajikistan, Agrarian Party of Tajikistan, Communist Party of Tajikistan, and Social Democratic Party of Tajikistan.⁸¹ According to United Nations Human Rights Committee Report in 2013, "Following the parliamentary elections in February 2010, the People's Democratic Party of Tajikistan (PDPT), led by the incumbent President Emomali Romanov obtained 45 of the 63 seats in the lower chamber. Other parties represented in the parliament are the Agrarian Party of Tajikistan (APT), the Communist Party of Tajikistan (CPT), the Islamic Revival Party of Tajikistan (IRPT), and the Party of Economic Reform of Tajikistan (PERT), each with two seats. The remaining seats are held by independent MPs. 13 of the MPs elected in 2010 elections were women. The parties not represented in the parliament are the Democratic Party of Tajikistan (DPT), the Social-Democratic Party of Tajikistan (SDPT), and the Socialist Party of Tajikistan (SPT). An initiative to form a new party, the New Tajikistan Party, was hindered by the detention and the subsequent conviction of its founder, the former Minister of Industry, Zayd Saidov. Central Commission registered 103 candidates from eight political parties officially registered in the country, which is a lot more than the parliamentary elections. The Commission included the Economic Reform Party of Tajikistan - 6 candidates;

⁸⁰ *Parliamentary Elections: Assessment report*, Republic of Tajikistan, OSCE, October 24, 2014

⁸¹ "Elections in Tajikistan", International Foundation for Electoral Systems, Washington, November 1, 2013, available at: www.IFES.org

Socialist Party of Tajikistan - 6 candidates; People's Democratic Party of Tajikistan - 27 candidates; Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan - 27 candidates; Democratic Party of Tajikistan - 4 candidates; Agrarian Party of Tajikistan - 13 candidates; Communist Party of Tajikistan - 7 candidates; Social Democratic Party of Tajikistan - 13 candidates.’’⁸² These parties contribute to the political pluralism of Tajikistan to a larger extent. It is because of the multi-party system, that multi-party elections have been a possibility in Tajikistan.

Adult franchise is given to citizens after 18 years of age. But those accused of any criminal activity or mental incapability are refrained for the right to vote. International Foundation for Electoral System's Report on Tajikistan's constitutional Referenda in 2016 says that, "There are almost 4.2 million voters as estimated in the year 2010. Voter registration is conducted locally, without any help from Central body for voter registration. The local authorities provide data on voters to the Precinct Election Commissions (PEC). On the basis of that data, the PEC forms a voter list. These voter lists are scrutinized 15 days before elections. New Voters can do registration during this time by providing necessary information to the PEC. The main document is a proof of residence or passport of the republic of Tajikistan. There is a system of advance voting for those voters who are away from residence on election-day. However, this facility requires the submission of a written justification. This facility also is availed to only those voters who are homebound. Polling booths are established for patients in the hospital, military bases for military man staying away from their residences and in foreign land."⁸³ Thus the rules on alternative voting options are encouraging in an underdeveloped economy like Tajikistan. According to the OSCE's 2015 Report on Tajikistan's electoral laws, "There is no minimum requirement for voters' participation and no matter how many people take part in the elections, the election results shall be recognized as valid. The Law prohibits using an individual's official position for

⁸² "Tajikistan Human Rights Committee Report 2013", United Nations Human Rights Committee, Washington, July 2, 2013, available at: <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/220618.pdf>, www.unhrc.org

⁸³ "Elections in Tajikistan: 2016 Constitutional Referenda", International Foundation for Electoral System, Washington, May 18, 2016, available at: https://www.ifes.org/sites/default/files/2016_ifes_tajikistan_constitutional_referendum_faqs.pdf, www.IFES.org

campaigning and imposes relatively strict restrictions, violations of which can be a reason for cancellation of an election registration. Among other reasons for cancellation of registration are campaigns financing violations and fraudulent income declaration by the candidates.”⁸⁴ It can be seen here that the law provides for enough options to make the electoral process transparent and flexible.

When the elections are announced by the president, candidates and party lists are registered by the CEC. The official campaign process starts right after the registration process and continues till 24-hours before the election-day. OSCE’s Electoral Assessment further reports that, “The CEC is generally held responsible for ensuring equal campaign opportunities for all candidates and parties. The media is given chance to telecast the various campaign-related activities on national television. Previously the local authorities assisted the parties and candidates with the organization of campaign programs in their respective localities. During the 2014 elections, amendments were made to aloof local administration from involving in the campaigning anymore. However, the local authorities must maintain public order during the campaigns.”⁸⁵ Therefore, the campaigners have to take prior approval of the local bodies. The Asia Plus news agency observed the campaigning in 2014 elections in this manner, “All eight registered parties participated in the 2014 elections, with some opposition parties stating their intention to co-ordinate efforts with a view to splitting the costs and enhancing their chances of being elected. The campaigns focused on issues of peace and stability, social welfare, and the secular status of the country. One of the parties allegedly called for President Rakhmonov to provide free and fair elections and not to misuse his position during the campaign. While the authorities expect an active campaign and high voter turnout, other interlocutors noted a growing level of voter apathy.”⁸⁶ It was in the year 2013 before elections that all the political parties announced that in order to ensure transparency and regularities during elections, field observance are a must. Especially, during vote counting the parties want observers in the field to counter forgery. Thus, it is

⁸⁴ “*Parliamentary Elections: Assessment report*”, Republic of Tajikistan, OSCE, October 24, 2014, available at: www.OSCE.org

⁸⁵ *Ibid*

⁸⁶ “Elections: Tajikistan News”, Asia Plus News, January 6, 2014, available at: <http://www.asiaplus.tj/en/news/politics/elections?page=4>

safe to say that the 2014 Tajik elections had some democratic elements during their campaigns.⁸⁷ Although not totally free, but the opposition used the platform to raise its voice to criticize the ruling party.

The rules on election funding or party-funding are both traditional and vague. This is because funding laws remain outdated. Private financing is banned in Tajikistan. Therefore parties always show grievance for not having proper and adequate funding sources for funding of their parties and elections. Funding scarcity is more felt during election time when insufficient resources affect the course of election campaigns. Often parties complain that their requests to resolve such issues go unheard or unattended on purpose. Before the elections, each party needs to register itself with the accounts to avail a personal account for the party. Public sector banking is used for such purpose. Amanat Bank is the state bank of the Republic of Tajikistan. Its branches temporarily open up special accounts to manage the electoral funds for different political parties.⁸⁸ These funds are very constraint. Therefore, reforms in funding laws are an urgent need of the hour. Lack of funds hampers the all-round growth of the political parties.

OSCE Reports state that, “The election Fund of the candidate and the political party is formed by: the funds of the respective election commissions allocated for pre-election campaigning; personal funds of the candidate not exceeding 500 indicators for calculations; the election Fund of the political party that nominated candidates in single-mandate election district, not exceeding 500 indicators for calculations; the election Fund of the political party that nominated the list of candidates in a single nation-wide district, not exceeding 10,000 indicators for calculations; charitable funds of natural and legal persons. The maximum size of the election Fund of the candidate should not exceed 1,500 and political party 30,000 calculation factors. Violations of campaign finance rules

⁸⁷ *Ibid*

⁸⁸ “*Elections in Tajikistan: 2016 Constitutional Referenda*”, International Foundation for Electoral System, Washington, May 18, 2016, available at: https://www.ifes.org/sites/default/files/2016_ifes_tajikistan_constitutional_referendum_faqs.pdf, www.IFES.org

may lead to deregistration of a contestant.”⁸⁹ This scenario explains the grievances political parties have over the allocation of electoral funds.

Regarding the use of media in elections, only state-owned television, radio channels and newspapers are granted the permission to publish or telecast relevant information regarding the elections. The coverage of electoral campaigns is granted to the local media channels along with state-owned media. However, censorship over private media exists in sensitive cases. They are allowed to cover the election activities of their local areas only. Most of these private media exists in urban areas only. Therefore, the election coverage in rural area remains mostly untouched. Moreover, lack of accessibility to media sources like the press, radio, television or electricity in the rural areas deprive people from receiving the broadcasted news and information. The media also plays role of a field observer by being there at all sessions in the polling stations as per the directions of Central Election Commission.⁹⁰

There are mechanisms in Tajikistan to solve electoral disputes. The judiciary and Election Commission have been entrusted with this duty. The decisions on a dispute given by the CEC can be challenged in the court, with the Supreme Court at the apex level. Even the CCER decisions can be challenged in the Supreme Court. UN Human Rights Committee in its 2013 report observes that all reported disputes are to be considered without delay in all matters as per the Tajik law. It states, “Complaints and appeals can be filed by political parties, candidates, their proxies, voters and observers within 10 days of a decision, with an adjudication period of 3 days. If a complaint is filed less than six days before election-day, it should be considered immediately. According to the Supreme Court, all election-related hearings are public, but the decisions of courts are issued only to the parties to the case and are not published. Although judicial remedies for violations of electoral rights are generally provided by the law, several political parties expressed a lack of confidence in the effectiveness of the redress system, mainly due to a perceived lack of independence of the judiciary, election administration, and law enforcement bodies”.

⁸⁹ “*Parliamentary Elections: Assessment report*”, Republic of Tajikistan, OSCE, October 24, 2014, www.OSCE.org

⁹⁰ “*Presidential Elections in Tajikistan*”, Jen Psaki, Diplomacy in Action, Washington, November 7, 2013.

The Tajik president Emomali Rahmon in his speech on constitution day emphasized upon the need for parliamentary elections in the state. He said that the government will make all efforts to ensure transparency, accountability and democracy. In his words, “We are always proponents of these elections, which were held democratically and transparently. Recognized that on the eve of the elections system development of a multiparty system and political pluralism is promoted many candidates, and we take it as a natural phenomenon of a democratic society. We are supporters of such parliamentary elections that would take place on an alternative basis, so that the people could elect their worthy representative” (Jononov Sherali 2015). Thus, he also asked the opposition parties and their leaders to take part in the parliamentary elections, keeping in mind the electoral rules and regulations in Tajikistan.

To conclude, in the words of Philip Shishkin, “Over the past few years, Tajikistan has shown itself to be vulnerable to homegrown radicalism. No country in Central Asia is more affected by the Afghan vortex of instability than Tajikistan. Corruption is widespread and feeds popular discontent with the regime. The government has shown weaknesses in its ability to control parts of the country traditionally dominated by the civil war. The tragedy of the civil war and the political compromise that ended it seemed to give Tajikistan a real shot at stability. After paying such a huge price in blood and destruction, Tajik people were weary of the civil war, and as a result of this the opposition now had a stake in the governing process. It was significant because it marked the first and only time that a government agreed to share power with the opposition. Perhaps now more than ever, the country needs a government that is less concerned about its own political survival and focused more on holding the country together”(Philip Shishkin, 2012).

Turkmenistan: Turkmenistan’s government is consisted of the President and the legislature or Majlis. Both are elected for a five year term. The Majlis has 125 members who are elected from single-seat constituencies. There are mainly two political parties, the Democratic Party of Turkmenistan (DPT) and The Party of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs (PIE). The DPT is the ruling party, the party of the President. The Party of

Industrialists and Entrepreneurs came into existence in 2012. Same year elections were held to the Majlis. The PIE registered 21 candidates, whereas DPT fined nomination for 99 candidates. There were 89 candidates registered on behalf of labor Unions, 37 candidates from Woman's rights group, and another 37 candidates from youth and other civil groups.

Saparmurat Niyazov as the first President of Turkmenistan was elected unopposed. At that time the term of the Turkmen President was 5 years. But in 1994 it was decided that the term of the President was to be expanded to 8 years. Before his death in the year 2006, Niyazov was declared as the President for life. Niyazov or popularly known as Turkmenbashi had a cult of personality which made him Turkmenistan's 'father of nation'. He created such a cult of personality around him, that even in the presence of a political opposition; it would have been very difficult for a person to challenge Turkmenbashi's leadership and aura.

Article 19, 89, and 98 of the constitutional is related to the electoral system in Turkmenistan.⁹¹ According to Article 19 of the Turkmen constitution, "guarantees the equality of rights and freedoms of individual and citizen, and also the equality of the individual and citizen before the law regardless of their nationality, race, gender, origin, property and official status, place of residence, language, religion, political beliefs, party affiliation or lack of affiliation to any party".⁹² Thus, voters have been provided the right to vote according to their own conscience. Neutrality has been given place in the constitution. Freedom House Press article on Turkmenistan says "As per the provisions, Elections of the President of Turkmenistan, deputies of Majlis, members of the Peoples Council and Gengesh are universal and equal. The citizens of Turkmenistan, having reached the age of 18, have the right to vote; each voter has one vote. Citizens recognized by the court as incompetent, persons serving sentence in prisons, do not participate in elections. Limiting the electoral rights of citizens in other cases is not acceptable, and is punishable by law. A citizen of Turkmenistan, who has attained the age of 25 and has

⁹¹ "Turkmenistan's Constitution of 2008", May 23, 2016, available at: www.Constituenproject.org , https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Turkmenistan_2008.pdf

⁹² *Ibid*

lived in Turkmenistan for the past ten years, can be elected as deputy of Majlis.”⁹³ Here the qualifications of voters are no different from the qualifications prescribed by the constitutions of other Central Asian republics. Depriving a voter of its right to vote on grounds other than those mentioned in the constitution is punishable by law. Thus, the constitutional provisions guard the voter’s rights. These are some of the democratic elements present in the constitution of Turkmenistan.

According to BBC News report on Turkmenistan electoral procedures in 2015, “The requirements for candidates for membership of Majlis, Peoples Council and Gengesh are defined by the laws of Turkmenistan. Elections are direct. Voting in elections is by secret ballot, manipulation of the will of the voters during voting is not permitted. The right to nominate candidates belongs to political parties, public associations and citizens' groups, exercised in accordance with laws of Turkmenistan. National and local referendums can be carried out for decision of major questions of state and public life”.⁹⁴ The law prevents the manipulation of voters during polls. And transparency is maintained in the elections through secret ballot method. Referendums are held before elections to discuss public interest. OSCE in its 2012 report on “Assessment of Electoral Legislation in Turkmenistan” discussed the procedure to hold referendums before elections extensively. It stated, “Decisions adopted by referendums may be repealed or amended only through referendum. The right to conduct national referendum belongs to the Majlis of Turkmenistan on proposal of at least two-third of its established deputies, or on the petition of no less than 250000 eligible voters. The right to conduct local referendum belongs to Gengesh on its territory, or at the suggestion of no less than one quarter of voters residing in that territory. Referendums are held through universal, equal, direct and secret vote. Citizens of Turkmenistan with electoral rights can participate in referendums. Conduct of elections, national and local referendums, is determined by law. The elections and referendums are not held during a state of emergency.”⁹⁵ It is evident from this

⁹³ “*Elections in Turkmenistan: Country Report*”, Freedom House Press, 2013, available at: <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2013/turkmenistan>

⁹⁴ “Turkmenistan Country Profile”, BBC News, September 10, 2015, available at: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-16098048>

⁹⁵ “Turkmenistan Presidential Election: Assessment Mission Report”, OSCE, January 3, 2012, available at: <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/86861>

statement that referendums take place with the consent of voters. They are also universal or common in nature. It shows what an important role referendums play in holding the elections effectively in Turkmenistan.

The Majlis of Turkmenistan has adequate legislative powers and it guides the President on legislative affairs. It has the right to pass electoral legislation, but with the consent of the President of course. Turkmenistan.RU, a local news website reported in 2015 that, “The Majlis of Turkmenistan unanimously passed the law ‘On Elections of Members of People's Councils and Gengeshes’. This law was developed as part of the process on improving the national electoral system. The members of Turkmen parliament noted that the new law is of great importance in light of upcoming election of members of Gengeshes. The upcoming socio-political campaign will become an important event in the life of independent Turkmenistan, and it will go down in history of the country as another step towards the further development of democratic processes in the modern Turkmen society.”⁹⁶ Hence, it can be stated that despite all criticisms, Turkmenistan is talking at least about political democratization within the system.

Turkmenistan experienced its first multi-party voting in 2012 despite its highly centralized political system. Turkmenistan's President Gurbanguly Berdimukhamedov initiated the multi-party parliamentary elections. The elections in 2012 allowed 283 candidates to contest for parliamentary seats. Among the candidates there were members of political parties, youth and woman’s groups, trade union as well as other civic groups. Thus, different sections from the society were offered an opportunity to contest in the elections, and therefore to participate in the decision making process.

However, introduction of multi-party elections has been criticized as a puppet-show like event, where the President controls every aspect of it. London-based rights group Amnesty International calls elections in Turkmenistan as, “the parliamentary vote, along with promised reforms, as token gestures designed to distract the international

⁹⁶ “New Election Law for Turkmenistan”, Turkmenistan.RU, January 5, 2015, available at: <http://www.turkmenistan.ru/en/taxonomy/term/3?page=217>

community, while enabling energy-hungry Western governments to engage Ashgabat in an uncritical manner”.⁹⁷ John Dalhuisen, Amnesty International's Europe and Central Asia program director, said in his statement, “Holding these elections will not address the atmosphere of total repression, denial of the basic human rights, and the all-permeating fear that has gripped society in Turkmenistan for years and all pretense of progress on human rights is simply deceitful”. Rachel Denber, deputy director of New York-based Human Rights Watch's Europe and Central Asia Division said that “The creation of one party, by the government, does not represent any loosening of the President’s total grip on the political process and society”.⁹⁸ However, it is meaningless to talk about human rights and democracy in a country as new as Turkmenistan. At many times the human rights are put at stake in the western democracies also.

The Turkmen President by allowing multi-party elections in the first place proves that the country is ready to be more responsive towards the call of time. The officials in Turkmenistan stated, “Elections in Turkmenistan is an event of extraordinary significance that is taking place amid the growing civic self-consciousness of the nation and outstripping socio-economic development of the country which is the result of the consistent implementation of Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedov's policy of reform. The Turkmen Government reportedly invited exiled opposition parties to participate in the vote via the sponsorship of candidates by Turkmenistan-based citizens' initiative groups.”⁹⁹ Although, not all of the statements made were true, but the invitation sent to the opposition to contest in elections is a significant development. The President also invited the OSCE to observe the recent elections. It is indeed a significant step for a country which has been constantly categorized as a very close political system.

There has been criticism regarding other aspects of electoral system in Turkmenistan, coming from the United States and Western Europe, as well as some scholars from Asian

⁹⁷ “Human Right’s Annual Report: Turkmenistan”, December 5, 2015, available at:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/europe-and-central-asia/turkmenistan>

⁹⁸ “World Report 2012: Turkmenistan”, Human Rights Watch, New York, January 22, 2012, available at:

<https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2012/country-chapters/turkmenistan>

⁹⁹ *Turkmenistan Presidential Election: Assessment Mission Report*, OSCE, January 3, 2012, available at:

<http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/86861>

countries. They maintain that elections in Turkmenistan are pointless as it is controlled by the President and his party in all matters. “Banning of candidates for administrative offenses, the leaders explain the discrepancies and attribute the differences to the Central Asian, quality of their societies and argue that higher goals, such as stability require them to permit only government-approved opposition within controlled environments” (Roger Kangas, 2015). On the other hand the Turkmen leadership justifies themselves by saying that they regularly hold elections, and provide representation to various social groups in the parliament. They also claim that the President and his party enjoy immense popularity throughout the country.

All the Central Asian republics have organized both Presidential and Parliamentary elections at regular intervals. The reason behind not being able to hold alternative elections can be other than undemocratic attitude of the leaders, like economic criteria. It is well-known that holding elections is an expensive business. In this regard El Khan Nureyev made a very good point by stating that people have become more acquainted with the culture of alternative elections. Though the trend in electoral system differs in the republics, it can be hoped that the gradually improving electoral system is bringing democratization and political stability in the region. The citizens as well as international observers are seeing ray of hope and more positive changes can be expected in the electoral trend of the Central Asian republics. (El khan Nureyev, 2005).

Chapter 4

Political Parties in Central Asia

The development of a democratic political process depends on a political party system. According to Sergei Abhasin, “The party is the most important political structure which represents not only the interests of groups of people but also the realization of their aims, through the attainment of political power or involvement in its implementation” (Sergei N. Abhasin 2006). There are a number of important components of a party other than their aims and objectives. Vastness of membership, funding, ideology etc, play crucial role. Although the popular trend stands for the establishment of a multi-party system, there are significant numbers of authoritarian regimes who still patronize single-parties system.

The erstwhile Soviet Union disintegrated in December, 1991. Soon after the dissolution the five Central Asian republics gained their independence. After getting independence the leaders of the Central Asian states established democratic political systems with multi-party systems in their respective countries.

Kazakhstan: The parliament of Kazakhstan has a bi-cameral legislature consisting of the Senate and Majlis. The President is the centre of all powers and he leads the executive. The executive is made so strong that the power of legislature looks faded in front of the powers of the President. And this is the case with every republic in Central Asia where the legislature and opposition parties have been traditionally weak. However, in the recent years a new model of party politics has emerged in Kazakhstan. The elections have somewhat become more competitive and as a result the ruling party is trying to have a tight grip of the Kazakh politics under the leadership of President Nazarbayev.

This model of political parties in Kazakhstan has taken inspiration from the party system in Russia, where the ruling party asserts total dominance over the political system of the state under the leadership of the President. “Kazakhstan’s ruling party Nur Otan, meaning ‘Fatherland’s Ray of Light’ acquired all seats in the Majlis of the state in the 2007 parliamentary elections. The lower house of the parliament is particularly dominated by the ruling party members. However, the Majlis is not solely dominated by the ruling party

only. It has facilitated diversity in its membership. The parliament is comprised of professionals who, while working under one platform, are well-educated individuals who lobby for the regions of the country they represent and the needs and concerns of their local constituents. The opposition is in recovery mode from the 2007 elections at present, and one must take a look at who the opposition is and how they have developed over time into the present landscape that we see today” (Anthony C. Bowyer, 2008). Thus, the political scenario has changed over the years and the Majlis plays more crucial role in the state’s politics than ever before.

The constitutional law on political parties prohibits the establishment of political parties based on ethnicity, religion or gender-based affiliation. According to the partly laws amended in the year 2002, “A party must have membership of 3,000 to 5,000. Only then the party is allowed to register itself with the Ministry of Justice. Every oblast must have no less than 700 members from every party.”¹⁰⁰ The OSCE Report on Elections in Kazakhstan states that, “In order to gain seats in the parliament, a party must attain no less than 7% of all votes cast, a high percentage retained from the previous mixed-system parliamentary election. In an all party-list election this percentage is high. Given the weakness of the opposition and the very short turnaround time from the adoption of a new constitution to the dismissal of parliament, the most organized and well-financed political parties would face serious challenges in competing”.¹⁰¹ This explains that in present times the competition among political parties exist to a certain extent.

About the status of political parties in Kazakhstan, Anthony C. Bowyer states that, “Nur-Otan’s sweep of all 98 parliamentary seats in 2007 can be understood in light of the party’s presidential status, its expansive platform, virtually limitless resources, and the opposition’s own reliance on personality-driven politics, all within the framework of limited preparation and campaign time. To better understand the present status of party politics, one must first review the origins of organized political movements in Kazakhstan” (Anthony Clive Bowyer, 2008).

¹⁰⁰ “*Law on Political Parties 2002*”, Legislation online, OSCE office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, available at:<http://www.legislationline.org/documents/id/8899>

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*

Initially the Communist Party of Kazakhstan controlled the elections in the state. The Party was based upon personal appeal. It provided narrow platform interests. Anthony Clive Bowyer writes about the Communist party of Kazakhstan in his manner, “The Communist Party of Kazakhstan, the original successor to the Communist Party of the Kazakhstan SSR, was reformed in October 1991 and registered in February 1994. The party has been led by Serikbolsyn Abdildin since its re-inception, and functioned as the only registered communist political movement in the country until 2004. The Communist People’s Party of Kazakhstan (CPPK) was registered prior to the 2004 parliamentary elections, competing with the opposition Communist Party of Kazakhstan, though not winning any seats in parliament. The CPPK, headed by Vladislav Kosarev, registered a proportional list numbering 20 candidates for the 2007 elections. Largely pro-presidential, the party promotes Marxist-Leninist ideology, but adapted to the new realities of social development.”¹⁰²

The one leader monopoly however still exists. For example, President Nazarbayev is the face of Nur Otan party. In fact a public opinion survey conducted in Kazakhstan by the International Republican Institute in 2004 suggested that “more voters still believe that a party’s leader is the most important factor in deciding whether or not to vote for a party (38%), with the party and its ideas in second place (26%) and another 22% people said that both the factors should be considered equally during voting.”¹⁰³ The nature of party system in Kazakhstan somehow has started to change. Though the leader is one of the most important components of the party, other factors like ideology, the groups it represent, the party’s attitude towards or against the ruling party matters.

Nur Otan Party was formed by the merging of two different parties namely the Civic Party (*grazhdanskaya partiya*), the Otan Party and the Asar Party during the 2004

¹⁰² “*Parliament and Political Parties in Kazakhstan*”, Anthony Clive Bowyer, CentralAsia- Caucasus Institute Silk Road Studies Programme, Washington, 2008, available at: http://www.silkroadstudies.org/resources/pdf/SilkRoadPapers/2008_05_SRP_Bowyer_Parliament-Kazakhstan.pdf

¹⁰³ “*Election Laws in Kazakhstan 2004: Annual report*”, International Republican institute, Washington, 2004, available at: <http://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/2004%20Annual%20Report.pdf>

Parliamentary elections. The Otan Party till then was the most famous by winning 24 seats in the 1999 Parliamentary elections to the Majlis. According to OSCE's report on Kazakhstan's political Party system, these three parties have namesake ideological differences. They unite together to form grand alliance and become stronger. The three parties together occupy 98 seats out of 107 seats. Thus there is undisputed support for the Otan party. As the most popular political party Nur-Otan enjoys a massive membership of 740,000. It also has 3400 deputies.¹⁰⁴

The Nur-Otan party currently dominates the party-realm of the state. It also dominates the Majlis and the public debate as well as all the political decisions of Kazakhstan. But the multi-party system exists. The opposition parties can be categorized as Supportive Parties, Mild Opposition, and Real Opposition. To explain these categories in the words of Anthony C. Bowyer, "Numbering among the current Pro-presidential political parties are Rukhaniyat and the Party of Patriots. Those falling into the category of Mild Opposition are the recently reconstituted parties called Adilet, Ak-Zhol, Auyl, the Communist Party, and the Communist People's Party. Those in the category of Real Opposition, those most opposed to the current leadership, include the All-National Social Democratic Party, Azat Alga and other unregistered political parties" (Anthony C. Bowyer, 2008).¹⁰⁵ The OSCE Report on Parties in Kazakhstan categorizes the opposition parties in this manner, "Supportive parties include Rukhaniyat ('Rebirth') Party, a small party that was registered in 2003. Led by Altynshash Zhaganova, it tends to support the ruling government's position. The party pledges to expand the economy, address social issues and develop the spirituality of society. Apart from these pro-government parties, there are soft-opposition parties. There is Ak-Zhol Party which led by Alikhan Baimenov, who ran as the party's candidate for president in the 2005 election. In 2006 the party signed an agreement of cooperation with the Adilet Party and the two parties ran a joint list consisting of 98 candidates for the 2007 elections. Ak-Zhol advocates an independent,

¹⁰⁴ "Law on Political Parties 2002", Legislation online, OSCE office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, available at: <http://www.legislationline.org/documents/id/8899>

¹⁰⁵ "Parliament and Political Parties in Kazakhstan", Anthony Clive Bowyer, CentralAsia- Caucasus Institute Silk Road Studies Programme, Washington, 2008, available at: http://www.silkroadstudies.org/resources/pdf/SilkRoadPapers/2008_05_SRP_Bowyer_Parliament-Kazakhstan.pdf

democratic and free Kazakhstan, and supports the fundamental values of democracy, independence, freedom and fairness. Ak-Zhol claims over 150,000 members nationally.”¹⁰⁶

The Alash Orda movement which emerged as a result of the 1917 revolution is considered as the first significant political movement in Kazakhstan. This movement provided an organizational structure to constitute political party in the later years. This movement later helped in the growth of the Kazakh nationalism and similar movements during the 1980s and 1990s. The movement re-emerged as a result of decline of the Soviet rule. The Alash Orda movement also ended the old system of clan politics among the tribes of Kazakhstan. It brought forth political modernization and a more organized form of political representation throughout Kazakhstan. This movement resulted in the birth of the Nur Otan party after independence.¹⁰⁷

The common people of Kazakhstan have become aware about the multi-party system in their country very recently. Few years back the awareness among the general population regarding awareness was very less. Douglas W. Jones in his article in 2003 said, “Public skepticism with elected leaders or political parties in independent Kazakhstan is not a new phenomenon. However, with five elections to parliament in the last twelve years, including two Constitutional referenda and two parliaments dismissed prior to fulfillment of their mandates, the population of Kazakhstan may have moved beyond skepticism regarding political participation”.¹⁰⁸ This reflects that the Kazakh people have become more aware and more hopeful. They have started realizing the importance of multi-party system and the popular participation the system facilitates. Few years back, popular participation and political pluralism were distant dreams for the Kazakh citizens.

¹⁰⁶ “Kazakhstan’s Political Party System Focus of OSCE”, OSCE, Astana, November 26, 2012, available at:<http://www.osce.org/astana/97485>

¹⁰⁷ “Alash Orda Political Party: History of Kazakhstan”, Encyclopedia Britannica, available at:<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Alash-Orda>

¹⁰⁸ “Kazakhstan: The Sailao E-voting System”, Douglas W. Jones, International Foundation for Electoral System, 2003, available at:<http://homepage.cs.uiowa.edu/~jones/voting/IFESkazakhstan.pdf>

People's response towards multi-party system was anticipated through a survey conducted by International Foundation for Electoral System (IFES) in 1996. Rico Issac too mentioned about this survey in his article.¹⁰⁹ It was a survey on public response to Kazakhstan's party system and recent changes in it. In its report, the IFES stated that, "it was found that Political party identification was just as tepid, with nearly half of respondents (44%) being unable to name a party which best represents the views and interests of people like them. While support for a multi-party system was high (61%) only one of the twenty parties or movements in existence in 1996 garnered double-digit support, with the Communist Party receiving the highest support at 10%. Only three others received so much as 5% or more support: the Nevada-Semipalatinsk movement (9%), the Party of People's Unity (5%) and the Slavic Movement LAD (5%). At that time it could be said that the Kazakhstani political party system was extremely dispersed and underdeveloped with none of them having established a level of organization or record that garnered substantial identification with the public".¹¹⁰ If compared to this scenario of unawareness regarding party system, interest in the affairs of parties and elections has significantly increased in today's Kazakhstan. The credit should be given to government's effort to educate the public, role of media, formal education, and the efforts made by political parties themselves during elections.

The party system in Kazakhstan provides for local community development projects through various means. The main aim of these projects is to facilitate maximum people's participation. Readdressing grievance is a very important agenda under this program. The people can approach the local deputies to file complaints regarding flaws in parties or harms caused to them by party activities. For example, "in 2007 the party reported that 1727 grievances were received by the Astana branch out of a total of 66,230 nationwide. It is not clear how many were resolved successfully, but it does seem, on the surface, to challenge the notion that citizens are entirely apathetic or unenthusiastic about addressing their problems to their local Nur-Otan or local government official. Among Nur- Otan's

¹⁰⁹ "Informal Politics and the Uncertain Context of Transition: Revisiting Early Stage of non-democratic Development in Kazakhstan", Rico Issac, *Democratization*, pp. 1-25, 2010.

¹¹⁰ "Preliminary FindingsMazhilis elections", International Foundation for electoral System, Almaty, December 9, 1995, available at:www.IFESkazkhelections1995.com

most heralded achievements is the formation of local anti-corruption councils, charged with investigating reported instances of official abuse and taking corrective action” (Diffo Tchunkam 2015).

Since several parties share seats in the Kazakh parliament, a number of serious issues are discussed. Lydia Karmazina in her article in 2008 said “Major issues include the state budget, development of Kazakhstan’s territory, social protection, cultural issues, tariffs and tax law, foreign policy, national security etc. During parliamentary sessions, course of action is proposed and the members can vote on any issue. When there was one-party parliament disagreements among the Nur Otan members were resolved by the local deputies too. Because most of the times the disagreements used to be regional in nature, regarding allocation of funds to different sectors, issues regarding infrastructure development, members trying to secure the interests of their home region over other matters etc.”¹¹¹

It is noteworthy that even after being in majority in Parliament for so many years, Nur Otan party is the custodian of multi-party system in Kazakhstan. According to IRI Public Opinion Survey Report in 2004, “Though vocal of other parties’ failure to successfully oppose them, they do make an attempt to reach out to citizens, businesses and other political parties through a forum known as the Citizens Alliance of Kazakhstan, with whom Nur-Otan shares a Memorandum of Understanding.”¹¹²¹¹³

Irrespective of their numerical strength, the condition of political parties is very weak. This crisis of multi-party system has been brought about by the lack of popularity among the masses, their outreach, lack of finances, true nature of opposition party etc. These weaknesses diminish the official weight of opposition parties in the country. The parties find it difficult to flourish amidst the unchanged political nature of Kazakhstan. It is one

¹¹¹ “Institutionalization of the Party System in the Republic of Kazakhstan: Past and Present”, Lydia Karmazina, Central Asia and the Caucasus, 2008, available at:

<http://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/institutionalization-of-the-party-system-in-the-republic-of-kazakhstan-past-and-present>

¹¹² “IRI Survey of Kazakhstan Opinion Polls”, International Republican Institute, April 19, 2004, available at: <http://www.iri.org/country/kazakhstan>

¹¹³ *Ibid*

of the reasons why the political parties do not give much effort in exerting their influence in the Kazakh politics. Absence of stronger ideas and a strong leadership is the cause of weakness of opposition political parties. The Ak Zhol Party and the Communist Party suffer from internal crisis of not only able leadership, but also funds and organizational issues within the party. It should be mentioned here that the fractured Communist Party faced split into two different parties. Altynbek Sarsenbaev, Oraz Zhandosov, and Tulegen Zhukeyev parted away from co-leader Alikzhan Baimenov to form the True Ak-Zhol (Naghzy Ak Zhol) party in 2006. Lack of discipline and order in the working of these opposition parties is the main cause of their failure. The different opposition parties also fail to co-operate with each other during elections against the Nur-Otan party.¹¹⁴

The parties have not come up with effective pre-poll coalition to exert larger influence on the voters. However, the amended electoral law banned electoral coalition few years back. The Nur Otan Party on the other hand, has good leaders that represent party in public platforms very well. The party also managed to reach out to the common people through their efforts. The party has earned uncontested popularity among the population. The people do not have choices that can make them go against the Nur Otan Party in elections.

Uzbekistan: “There are four registered political parties in Uzbekistan, who are approved by the Central Election Commission to compete in elections. These parties are People's Democratic Party of Uzbekistan, the Adalat (Justice) Social Democratic Party, the Liberal Democratic Party, and the National Revival Party. All of them are pro-government parties who have extended their support to the President Islam Karimov’s regime.”¹¹⁵ There are some parties who have become political parties from NGOs or Self Help Groups. For example, “The Ecological Movement of Uzbekistan, founded in August 2008 and apparently made up of activists, mainly from the ecology and health sectors,

¹¹⁴ “IRI Survey of Kazakh Public Opinion, International Republican Institute, December 9, 2010, available at:<http://www.iri.org/country/kazakhstan>

¹¹⁵ “Uzbekistan: Pressure Grows Opposition Rights Activists”, December 19, 2014, available at: <http://www.hrw.org/ru/news/2009/12/21/uzbekistan-pressure-grows-opposition-rights-activists-0>

gets 15 seats in the Uzbek Majlis out of the total of 150, under election law amendments passed in December 2008”.¹¹⁶

In the early 1990s, Birlik and Erk were two political parties that emerged on the political scenario of Uzbekistan. They emerged as alternative parties but later they were banned. “These two parties have been accused of deadly car bombings and having links with terrorist groups. Government reported that the members of the two parties are indulged in training of the Uzbek youth and use them against the state. They are also accused of co-operating with Islamic radical groups to win power in the Uzbek Parliament. The Erk party has not been able to establish its position in the Uzbek politics. At one point the Birlik and Erk leaders were ready to co-operate with each other for political gains. However, this was difficult as political alliance of parties is not only banned in Uzbekistan but also both the parties require a platform for this purpose which is absent in the state. The leaders of both the parties were persecuted from Uzbekistan long ago and thus they lost concerns of those party-members in the state.”¹¹⁷

Thus leadership crisis was another issue. Besides, both parties had huge ideological differences that certainly prohibited their co-operation against Karimov’s regime. This shows how the lack of unity, understanding and co-operation among the opposition parties benefits the ruling party in Central Asian states.

According to Human Rights Watch report in 2010, “Many opposition party leaders fled the country, seeking temporary refuge or political asylum abroad. For the past decade, the exiled opposition has limited its activities mainly to raising awareness about domestic developments and maintaining informational websites. Recently, there has been some discussion as to whether exiled political activists would be able to return to Uzbekistan. Nevertheless, Karimov’s most prominent political rival, Erk party leader Mohammed

¹¹⁶ “Uzbekistan: Pressure Grows Opposition Rights Activists”, December 19, 2014, available at: <http://www.hrw.org/ru/news/2009/12/21/uzbekistan-pressure-grows-opposition-rights-activists-0>

¹¹⁷ *Ibid*

Solih, continues to hold the status of persona non grata”.¹¹⁸ However, Tashkent has been also accusing the Islamic movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) of radical activities.

The resurgence of radical Islam in Uzbekistan rising against Islam Karimov’s government is cited by western scholars as a result of absence of political opposition. IMU was cited as a radical Islamic organization and was banned in the state for some time. It was accused of consolidating its forces in Tajikistan and Afghanistan. President Karimov has been accused of crushing political opposition by means of making them either political prisoners or by sending them to exile. The western media has always been a critic of Karimov’s political moves. The OSCE concluded in its report that the political field in Uzbekistan does not provide for political pluralism through multi-party elections. The opposition parties cannot possibly win elections, because the ruling party controls Parliamentary elections from top to bottom. Therefore, the report intended on saying that the multi-party system in Uzbekistan exists only in namesake. There has been no significant improvement on the electoral frameworks well as party framework. However it is important to see that it was Karimov himself who invited the opposition to form parties given their work does not disrupt the peace in the country. He talked to the opposition leaders and agreed for them to form parties based on non-extremist ideologies.¹¹⁹ Therefore, the western critic seems a little baseless here.

Over a decade the political life of Uzbekistan is controlled under the firm control of President Islam Karimov. Karimov’s critics assert that the government crackdown on freedom of expression and religious worship is fueling instability. However, these allegations seem far-stretched, as Uzbekistan is one of the most developed and stable countries in the region in comparison to its counterparts. Anti-government activities are currently pursued by two radical Islamic organizations, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and the Hizb-ut-Tahrir. In order to deal with them, the country needs strong leadership, which Karimov is sufficiently providing. There are numerous problems in Uzbekistan including social, economic, environmental, cross-border etc. And as a new-

¹¹⁸ *Concerns Over Uzbekistan*”, Human Rights Watch, February 2010, available at: http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrc/docs/ngos/HRW_Uzbekistan_98.pdf

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*

born country Uzbekistan has yet to develop enough resources and skills to deal with these problems. Among all this, it is illogical for the western countries to pressurize Uzbekistan to adopt west-styled democratic reforms immediately.

Tajikistan: In the aftermath of ‘Third Wave’ of democratization, Tajikistan’s political regime is said to have emerged as an example of ‘hybrid regimes’ (Diamond 2002). According to Levitsky and Way a Hybrid regime, “combines traditional elements of authoritarian regimes such as strong executive power, limitations on formal political competition, and a degree of censorship with traditional elements of democratic governments such as tripartite government, elections for executive and legislative offices, and some civil liberties.” (Levitsky and Way 2012, pp 51-52).¹²⁰ Such regimes provide for the existence and functioning of multi-party system and their participation in election. But at the same time they also put several limitations on the party-activities.

The legal framework on political parties of Tajikistan is provided in the constitution. Chapter one of the constitution includes citizens' right to associate with political parties, chapter two incorporates establishment and activities of political parties, chapter three deals with the rights of political parties and forms of supervision to their activities, chapter four encompasses participation of political parties in elections, and chapter five sums up on suspension, cessation, and ban on political party activities.¹²¹

People’s Democratic Party of Tajikistan (PDPT) is the main political party of Tajikistan and dominates the Parliament. The PDPT was formed in 1994, as a result of the decline of Tajik Communist Party. President Emomali Rahmon headed the party in power. It won the majority of seats in the Tajik Majlis during the 1995 Parliamentary elections. The PDPT developed into the only dominant party in the state.¹²²

Before the PDPT, the Communist Party of Tajikistan dominated the political realm of Tajikistan. The party was an integral part of the CPSU and controlled the Tajik politics in

¹²⁰ “The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism”, Steven Levitsky and Lucan A. Way, *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 13, April 2012, available at: http://scholar.harvard.edu/levitsky/files/SL_elections.pdf

¹²¹ “Law of the Republic of Tajikistan on Political Parties Chapter I to Chapter 5”, available at: <http://www.icnl.org/research/library/files/Tajikistan/POLITICALPARTIES.pdf>

¹²² “The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism”, Steven Levitsky and Lucan A. Way, *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 13, April 2012, available at: http://scholar.harvard.edu/levitsky/files/SL_elections.pdf

the first few years of independence. The Communist party faced sanctions in the independent Tajikistan. Therefore, it had to adopt survival strategy. For example, it changed its name from Communist Party of Tajikistan to Socialist Party of Tajikistan.

Before independence, several other opposition parties grew with different agendas. But few of them could survive in the post-independence era. The Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan (IRPT) emerged in the year 1990. Adam Saud speaks “The initial membership of the party was 10,000. With the coming of anti-reformist regime in Tajikistan in 1992, this party was banned. At that time the party enjoyed public support as its membership increased to 20,000. Yet it could not challenge the emerging PDPT in the long run. The main was difference in leadership and finance. It was difficult for IRPT to counterweight the growing powers of PDPT. Unable to attract constituents by promising access to employment with the state or advancement in government, the IRPT has relied on ideational appeals. It is a moderate Islamist party, which calls for bringing traditional values to Tajikistan’s secular government. After the civil war, the party changed its name to the Movement for Islamic Revival”.¹²³

Presently, some opposition political parties are there in Tajikistan but after the civil war several parties disappeared or became ineffective. Some party leaders flew to abroad and operate from there. The opposition parties have lost official sanctions to perform as opposition since 1993. The two parties, Democratic Party and Rastokhz Party which were born to serve as opposition parties were banned in 1993. The OSCE Report on Tajik Party system stated, “The Democratic Party, which has a secular, nationalist, and generally pro-Western agenda, was founded in 1990 and modeled on the contemporaneous parliamentary democratization movement in Moscow. In 1995 the party moved its headquarters from Tehran to Moscow. Although the government nominally lifted its ban on the Democratic Party in 1995, in practice the party remains powerless inside the republic. In early 1996, it joined several other parties in signing an

¹²³ “Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan Over The Years: Past, Present and the Future”, Adam Saud, Central Asia Journal, Vol. 69, 2010, available at: http://www.asc-centralasia.edu.pk/Issue_67/06_Adam_Saud.html

agreement of reconciliation with the Dushanbe government.”¹²⁴ These parties became more and more visible as political opposition. In the year 1992, they played crucial role in the opposition movement that led to the resignation of President Nabyev. Violence broke out in Dushanbe, and Rastokhz made peace with the Dushanbe regime in 1996. There was another opposition party named La’ali Badakhshan which considered itself as a democratic, secularist group. It was founded in 1991. Apart from them, there are several other opposition political parties that emerged after the civil war.

The political pluralism in Tajikistan is not well maintained as the parties in opposition are not well organized to challenge the ruling party. Pluralism must ensure capability to counter opposition parties in a political system. The government is too weak to control all the regions of the state. That’s why different opposition groups can sprang up easily. Plus the policy measures are weak and the needs of the populations is badly catered. Therefore, the resentful population finds no difficulty in extending their support to the rival political parties. The PDPT till today has not been able to fully marginalize the opposition. The organizational weaknesses prevail. However, among the opposition the IRPT is the only party which has achieved long-term sustainability. It has limited stake in the government. IRPT has also co-ordinate with some other opposition political parties, but has not been successful. PDPT knows that the allegiance the opposition parties enjoy from the population helps in legitimizing the power of the government in and outside Tajikistan. Therefore, it is safe to conclude that a weak ruling regime and lack of single strong political party is the reason why multi-party system is prevailing in Tajikistan.

Tajikistan has allowed genuine opposition parties to participate in the political and social activities in the country. The Tajik government allows an Islamic Party to participate in presidential and parliamentary elections. It has also given permission to the opposition parties like IRTP to hold seminars and conferences. They are also allowed to celebrate Muslim festivals with the hope that such developments will prohibit the growth of radical Islam. This is because the political regime in Tajikistan is less authoritarian than other Central Asian states.

¹²⁴ “Election Observance Mission Report: Elections in Tajikistan”, OSCE, March 1, 2015, available at: <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/tajikistan/158081?download=true>

Kyrgyzstan: The Kyrgyz party system is a multi-party system in the true sense. There is no one dominant party. According to S. Mainwaring, “Kyrgyzstan has a total of 184 parties, only ten of which are active in the political process. The Kyrgyz party system is quite fragmented. These political parties have different political platforms, ideologies, and leaders with different views on politics and the economy. The legal system of Kyrgyzstan has provisions to prevent fragmentation and the tyranny of one party” (S. Mainwaring, 1999).

“The Constitution has articles concerning parties; according to the Constitution adopted on 27 June, 2010, one party can receive a maximum of 65 of the 120 seats. As a result of the elections, a political party may not be granted more than 65 deputy mandates in the Parliament. This was introduced to prevent domination of the president’s party, as happened during the Akayev and Bakiev presidencies. No party has won more than 28 seats in the Parliament. Hence, this provision might have supported the fragmentation of the parties psychologically. The members of the Parliament are elected through proportional representation methods for a term of five years. Elections are held within a single nation-wide constituency.”¹²⁵ Therefore, it ensures fair or equal distribution of seats. It also causes more fragmentation than the elections from multiple constituencies.

Big change came for Kyrgyzstan’s political system when Kyrgyzstan officially introduced parliamentary democracy in the year 2010. In October of the same year, it held nation-wide parliamentary elections. Although there were numerous small and big parties, only five of them were qualified to contest in the elections. No party could win majority in the election. “Therefore, three parties, namely SDPK, Ar-Namys, and Ata Meken formed a coalition government. On the other hand, the two parties Respublika and Ata-Jurt decided to remain in the opposition.”¹²⁶ Thus, a competitive party system for the first time was noticed in a Central Asian republic.

The parties at times cannot be distinguished from each other. This is mainly due to their lack of experience in the field and the lack of having a clear cut ideology. This is why

¹²⁵ “*Election Observance Mission Report: Elections in Tajikistan*”, OSCE, March 1, 2015, available at: <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/tajikistan/158081?download=true>

¹²⁶ “*Election Observance Mission Report: Elections in Tajikistan*”, OSCE, March 1, 2015, available at: <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/tajikistan/158081?download=true>

coalition among the parties has been possible. It is said that most of the parties uphold cordial relations with Russia. They also treasure political values like social democracy.¹²⁷ According to Martha Olcott, “The communists mainly appeal to workers; Ata-Jurt and Butun Kyrgyzstan, with a slight nationalist rhetoric, try to garner Kyrgyz votes. The SDPK used nationalist rhetoric in the 2010 parliamentary elections, but it became more balanced during the presidential election in 2011 and acts as a catch-all party.”¹²⁸ Although the parties seem fragmented, there is polarization around the party-leaders. This is because the politics of Central Asian republics even to this day depends very much upon the cult of personality of the leaders. Some critics say that the Kyrgyz party system is just a proto-type of its western counterpart. They do not fulfill their role in interest articulation and interest aggregation of the various groups in the society. They do not facilitate democratic competition in the real sense, as they do not suit the Central Asian context.

The party system in Kyrgyzstan is also affected by the ambiguity that prevails regarding the adoption of Presidential or Parliamentary form of government. For example, “The SDPK, Ata-Meken, Republiska and Ak-Shumkar are advocators of a Parliamentary system. They led a coup against the Bakiev regime who wanted to establish a strong Presidential system in the state. On the other hand both Ata-Jurt and Ar-Namys parties are opposed to the newly established parliamentary system. These two parties want to restore the old Presidential system. However, all the parties are pro-Russia. Yet, they want Kyrgyzstan to have good relations with the west.”¹²⁹ So in foreign policy matters, the different parties stand together. The main five parties favor a balanced foreign policy for Kyrgyzstan.

It can be concluded that holding free and fair elections is still to be achieved in Kyrgyzstan. Although fragmentation exists among political parties, efforts have been made by the parties to bridge the gaps. The West is also assisting Kyrgyzstan in all

¹²⁷ “*The New Central Asia: The Creation of Nations*”, I.B Turis, London, 2000.

¹²⁸ “*Central Asia’s New States: Independence, Foreign Policy and Regional Security*”, Marta B. Olcott, United States Institute of Peace Press, 2007.

¹²⁹ *Ibid*

possible ways. However, it is a long process and it may become a reality in the distant future.

Turkmenistan: Turkmenistan is the most closed country in the region and very little is known about the political system of this republic. It is also called the least democratic Central Asian state. It is strictly authoritarian and not much can be expected regarding elections and multi-party system in Turkmenistan. However, the constitution of Turkmenistan provides for the establishment of a party system that is suitable for the republic and its citizens. According to Article 1 of the General Provisions on Political parties of the Turkmen Constitution, “A political party shall be a public association on a voluntary basis established in order to enable citizens of Turkmenistan to participate in the political life of society by means of the formation and free expression of their political will and participation in elections and referendums, as well as to represent the interests of citizens in government and local self-governance bodies.”¹³⁰

In December 1991, the Communist Party changed its name to the Democratic Party. Saparmurat Niyazov was named the Party’s chairman. He was also elected to be Turkmenistan’s President. The party represented itself as the ‘Mother Party’, projecting itself in a way so that patrimonial nationalism could deeply be rooted in Turkmenistan. This party controls the entire political realm of Turkmenistan and also promotes loyal opposition parties. The party promotes its propaganda as preserving peace and stability and inter-ethnic accord as well as social and economic prosperity of all citizens of Turkmenistan. According to OSCE report on party system in Turkmenistan, “the Democratic Party of Turkmenistan release party publications the boast that its primary organizations operate in every enterprise, organization, and institution, and that its membership includes over 165,000, whereas critics claim that most citizens hardly are aware of it. Actual opposition parties was almost absent in the first decade after independence. The trend of loyal opposition has been place since Turkmenistan’s independence. In 1992, an opposition party named Peasant Justice Party was introduced

¹³⁰ “*Law of Turkmenistan On Political Parties*”, Legislation online, 2012, available at:http://www.legislationonline.org/download/action/download/id/4035/file/TUR_Law%20on%20Political%20Parties_2012_en.pdf, www.legislationonline.org

as proposed by the then ruling party chairman Saparmurat Niyazov. Niyazov stated that the opposition parties lacked policies and leadership to replace DPT's policies. He also said that the opposition political parties were group-centric and they could promote fragmentation of the Turkish society. He cited these factors as the reason for banning of his political opposition for many years."¹³¹

Both the constitution of Turkmenistan and the 1991 Law on Public Organizations secures the right to craft political parties and other public associations that work within the framework of the constitution and its laws. Such activity is restricted by prohibitions on parties that encroach upon the health and morals of the citizens. This provision has been used by the government to ban several parties that were found in close proximity with an ethnic or religious group.¹³²

There is also a constitutional clause on political participation that states, "Citizens of Turkmenistan shall be provided with equal rights and equal opportunities for the formation of political parties and free participation in their activities. Citizens of Turkmenistan, on a voluntary basis, depending on their political beliefs, shall have the right to form political parties, in compliance with the established order, to freely join or refrain from joining them, to participate in the activities of political parties and to withdraw from membership without confronting any obstacles. The membership of citizens in political parties or the lack thereof does not lead to limitation of their rights and freedoms. It shall be prohibited to provide or refuse to provide citizens with privileges and benefits because of their affiliation with political parties or the lack thereof."¹³³

¹³¹ "OSCE Election Mission Report: Presidential Elections Turkmenistan", OSCE, February 12, 2012, available at:<http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/86861?download=true>

¹³² "Law on Public Associations (Law on PAs) of Turkmenistan", The International Centre for NGO Law Monitor, Turkmenistan, November 12, 1991, available at:<http://www.icnl.org/research/monitor/turkmenistan.html>

¹³³ Article 2, Right of citizens of Turkmenistan to unite in political parties, Law of Turkmenistan On Political Parties, Legislation online, 2012, available at:file:///C:/Users/CHHOTA%20DON/Desktop/TUR_Law%20on%20Political%20Parties_2012_en.pdf, www.legislationonline.org

The law also directs that the political parties have to hold territorial organizations. Therefore, regional parties can be formed in Turkmenistan as per the law. Membership to political parties is voluntary. To be a member of a party a person should be a permanent resident of Turkmenistan. He should not be less than 18 years of age. A citizen can have the membership of only one political party. The minimum membership of a party should be 1,000. No direction was found regarding the maximum size of membership. The political parties must frame their agendas and programs in a way that is both transparent and accessible to the public. Political parties can only be formed on professional grounds, thus eliminating ethnicity or religious basis of political parties in the republic. There will be administrative and territorial divisions that will govern the functioning of both national and regional parties. The OSCE Report on Turkmenistan's party system in 2012 stated, "When a political party is being registered with the state, fees shall be charged in the amount determined by the Cabinet of Ministers of Turkmenistan. While the amount of the registration fee is left unspecified, it bears recalling that international standards recommend such fees to be reasonable, applied objectively to all parties, and never of such amount as to prevent the registration of legitimate parties. Parties have the right to use the state media on equal conditions. Equal conditions can mean a range of things, for instance allocating equal airtime to all political parties, or simply affording equal opportunities to buy such time/space to all parties."¹³⁴

With regard to the improvement of the party system in Turkmenistan, the OSCE suggested that there should be gender quotas in the parties, so the representation of woman in the national parliament can be ensured. Introduction of gender-neutral selection of candidates should be introduced. Training programs should be launched to improve the functioning of parties as well as to create general awareness. The legal framework elaborates on political party formation and registration. The registered political parties are obliged to send representatives to the meetings and other political events of Ministry of Adalat or Law. Political parties are permitted to participate in elections either independently or in coalition with other parties and organizations. The

¹³⁴ "OSCE Election Mission Report: Presidential Elections Turkmenistan", OSCE, February 12, 2012, available at: <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/86861?download=true>

parties must send information regarding the registered candidates to the Ministry of Adalat before the elections. If not seem fit to contest in elections, the Adalat may declare any candidate as disqualified. The parties can publish their election manifesto in the media as per the legal framework. In this case the manifesto is scrutinized by the Adalat and then sanctioned to be published for public access.¹³⁵

Regarding the party-funding, the donations to parties can be made in both cash or non-cash form. There is provision for both individual and organizational funding options. It is the Ministry of Adalat that will regulate all the activities of the parties, from their organizational structure, to registration, candidates, funding, disputes etc. The political parties must have a charter where the goals and objectives of the party are clearly written. The Ministry of Adalat checks if a political party is in compliance with their goals and activities. If the Adalat evidences any irregularity on the part of the parties, it can issue written issues to the parties. In serious cases, it can even terminate a political party by passing an ordinance in the court. Thus, strict laws have been made to keep an eagle eye on the working of parties in Turkmenistan. Hence, emergence of new political parties is tough in the state. Turkmenistan discourages political representation coming through a wider platform.¹³⁶

According to the OSCE Report in 2012, “Political parties may have their activities suspended – by court decision based on an application by the Ministry of Adalat – if they violate the Constitution, a law or another regulatory act, as well as their charters and programmes, and fail to eliminate said violation within a one-month period following a written warning by the Ministry. The activities of a political party can be terminated for failure to submit, within one month, information on changes subject to state registration or inclusion in the register of legal persons. In cases when the termination of activities of a political party is carried out by court decision, the property of the political party will be

¹³⁵ *Ibid*

¹³⁶ “*Law of Turkmenistan On Political Parties*”, Legislation online, 2012, available at:http://www.legislationonline.org/download/action/download/id/4035/file/TUR_Law%20on%20Political%20Parties_2012_en.pdf, www.legislationonline.org

transferred to the State Budget of Turkmenistan.”¹³⁷ It is arguable that a party may face suspension in case its activities are in serious confrontation with the law. But it is illogical to suspend a party on grounds of non-compliance with its initial goals and objectives that were mentioned in the charter. Political parties are dynamic political bodies that grow with time. The party agendas are strategic documents. And the changes in political landscape of a country may lead to the changes in the political agendas of a party. It is a normal process to keep up with the domestic political developments. Therefore, suspension should not be issued because of changes in the party manifesto. Rather, suspension laws should be based on serious breach of law by the parties.

Foreign citizens, immigrants or stateless people cannot acquire party membership. A bankrupt person, a mentally-challenged citizen or a person of sound criminal records can also not become party member. A military person or a government officer also cannot retain party membership during their service period. They are also not permitted to express their support or allegiance for any party. The membership shall be done according to the legal charter on political parties. A citizen must submit a written application mentioning his/her desire for party membership. Once registered, the members become eligible to either elect or be elected to the different organizations of the party, and to be kept informed about the party activities. The member will also acquire the right to report to the Ministry of Adalat any illegal or disturbing party activity. The OSCE Report states further on the procedures, “Voluntary withdrawal from membership of a political party, death, exclusion from membership of a political party or joining another political party shall be grounds for the termination of membership in any political party. To participate in elections, political parties shall, under the established procedure, submit to the Central Election and Referendum Commission in Turkmenistan a copy of their state registration certificate, nominate candidates and use other rights in accordance with the electoral legislation of Turkmenistan.”¹³⁸

¹³⁷ “OSCE Election Mission Report: Presidential Elections Turkmenistan”, OSCE, February 12, 2012, available at: <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/86861?download=true>

¹³⁸ OSCE Election Mission Report: Presidential Elections Turkmenistan”, OSCE, February 12, 2012, available at: <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/86861?download=true>

Before independence, a party called ‘Agzybirlik’ originated in 1989. The party consisted of Turkish intellectuals and their goal behind creating the party was to introduce multi-party system in Turkmenistan. It engaged with activities like inspiring a feeling of national sovereignty among the citizens. But they were banned very soon. After being banned, they created a new party called Party for Democratic Development. This party focused on political reforms. This party too was soon banned as it became a critic of authoritarian regime in Turkmenistan. The party’s mouthpiece ‘Daynach’ was also prohibited. Since then few political parties have been noticed who could serve as real opposition.¹³⁹

After Niyazov’s death, Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedov had sworn as the new Turkmen President in 2006. During his campaign speech he said that he would work towards the establishment of a multi-party system. He stressed on the importance of political competition and co-operation. He stated that the existence of political opposition improves the working of the ruling party. That’s why it is the demand of the hour to facilitate more political parties in the political arena of Turkmenistan. The President however, denied the role of external pressure on this decision. He also spoke for independent media. In the year 2010, Berdymukhamedov ordered the lawmakers of Turkmenistan to work on framing of new legislation regarding opposition parties. It founded the base of a new party in the state. As a result of both internal situations and external pressure, Turkmenistan announced the creation of an opposition political party in 2012. A new law on political parties was passed, providing new opportunities to form political opposition. The law not only defined the provisions for creation of a party, but also its functions, privileges and limitations.¹⁴⁰

The new party is formed by leading Turkmen entrepreneurs in farming and industries. The party was officially formed at the Congress of trade organization in Ashgabat. Orzamammed Mammedov is the party high command. Although this party provided the citizens with a choice at the ballot box, it is not a real opposition party. The membership

¹³⁹ “*Turkmenistan: Political parties*”, The Library of Congress Country Studies, CIA World Factbook, November 12, 2004, available at: www.cia-worldfactbook.com

¹⁴⁰ *OSCE Election Mission Report: Presidential Elections Turkmenistan*, OSCE, February 12, 2012, available at: <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/86861?download=true>

of the party has been formed by the Union of Entrepreneurs and Industrialists in Turkmenistan. The agendas of this party are identical to that of DPT.¹⁴¹ That is why popular assumption about the new party is that it is a puppet of the ruling party. However, for common population, this party brings some hope of change.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid*

Chapter 5

Conclusion

Before the Soviet rule, Central Asia was a fragmented society, both politically and economically. It experienced modern administrative system under Soviet leadership. It also evidenced both political and economic modernization in the post-Tsarist period. This indeed was beginning of a new era for Central Asia. The Soviet Government united the whole Russian empire under one political umbrella. Central Asia too got a chance to unite by bridging the ethnic, religious and linguistic gapes. After USSR's disintegration, the republics became pathless for a short span of time. But soon the stability was restored. Central Asian states gained their independence twenty five years back. Since then they have been able to overcome the vast ethnic, linguistic, tribal, clan, religious and other such identities and build themselves into nation-states.

After independence, Central Asian states started with the process of nation-building. Elections and political parties became key factors that could boost the nation-building process. In the initial years, the influence of the Soviet-styled politics prevailed. Dominant party system and irregular elections continued to be a feature of all the five republics of Central Asia. Authoritarian regimes dominated all aspects of Central Asian politics. However, in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet system, changes have been initiated and the process of political opening up has started. Regular elections can be seen in the region. More political parties are emerging in the political scene. Most closed states like Turkmenistan too have allowed opposition political parties to act and contribute in domestic politics.

In the beginning of the dissertation, the theoretical frameworks on political parties and elections have been discussed. Both Electoral system and political parties have been defined from different theoretical perspectives. Topics ranging from their definition and meaning, to their features and nature, functions and role in a country have been elaborately discussed. It is clear that political parties and electoral system are essential to run modern nation-states. They ensure stability of politics by ensuring peaceful regime

change in a state. Elections and political parties are said to be indispensable for each other's existence and functioning, at least in a democratic regime. They not only contribute to political modernization, but also complement each other. Elections give political parties a chance to contest and secure their position in a State's politics. Similarly, political parties are those agents which make electoral process a success. Elections become lively and effective with the active participation of political parties. Political parties can fulfill their sole purpose of shaping national politics through elections only. Thus, electoral system and political parties are co-dependent.

A historical background of electoral system and political parties in Central Asia has been provided in the dissertation. From nomadic life and various dynasties to czarist period and Soviet rule, Central Asia has come a long way. Initially, the Central Asian society was fragmented. The society was divided into various clans and there used to be a clan-leader who led the group in political, economic and socio-cultural spheres. Thus, it can be said that there was political representation. Later the Greeks, Mongols, Arabs, Kushana, Persian, Tsarist Empires etc. created a legacy of political representation based on dynastic politics of succession. There were successions of the political heir, sometimes peacefully and sometimes by waging conspiracy and wars. Interestingly, the concept of political opposition was in practice. The ethnic groups raised their voices against the ruling regime, especially during the rule of the Mongols. As Central Asians were fragmented tribal societies, clash of interest was a common feature even under one empire. The commonness in clash of interest was organized to pose a political resistance to the ruling party.

When the Tsar invaded Central Asia, the main objective of the Empire was to exert political domination. The Tsarist government allowed the native *Khans* to rule over the region. But these *Khans* were under the control of the Tsarist Empire. Political Opposition was not present. During the first decade of twentieth century, political opening-up took place under the Tsarist regime and multiple groups emerged on the scene. These groups represented various sections of the society, for example, landlords, traders, farmers and wage earners. The groups could exert some influence to change the

politics of their time. The emergence of the groups led to the beginning of Duma elections. They also pressurized the Tsar to create laws on electoral provisions. In October 1917, Russian revolution took place. Soon after the revolution the bolshevik party came to power in Russia. After coming to power one-party monopoly was established in the entire Soviet Union. Elections were controlled. Opposition parties were not allowed to contest in elections.

Electoral procedures, voters' behavior, organizational structure and elections held in the five republics have been discussed at length. From constitutional procedure regarding elections to their occurrence, nature, role, voting behavior, voter turnout, funding, campaign related issues have been discussed. It has been seen that the legal procedures are adequate to run elections effectively in the republics. There has been mention of every aspect of electoral system, from election commission to nomination and qualifications of candidates. However, the electoral laws of Turkmenistan have been subject to criticism on grounds of inequality. Even today the voters do not have many choices regarding candidates. Except for Kyrgyzstan, elections in all other republics have been vehemently criticized by the western observers. Apart from Russia, Asian observers like Russia, India, and China have remarked positively about the elections in Central Asia.

Legal framework on political parties in all the five republics, their nature, development, role, funding, media response, inter-party relations etc. have been discussed. All the republics in Central Asia have Dominant-party rule. However, multi-party system has emerged as a recent trend. The Presidents have allowed existence of opposition parties and their membership in the national parliament through elections, but the activities of these parties remain highly controlled. Most of them are just puppet or loyal opposition. Existence of real opposition party is rare. Several opposition parties have been banned and their leaders are either sent to exile or imprisoned. These opposition parties are Erk and Birlik. There are some other Islamic groups like Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan; Hizb-Ut-Tahrir etc. They represent different sections of the society and the interest of those groups in the parliament. Thus these parties enable popular participation in policy-making at national level.

From the beginning of the research, the researcher had taken two hypotheses as the basis of the research. The first hypothesis is “Overall development of political institution shows the impact of Soviet political culture”.

With the demise of the Russian empire, Communist Party of the Soviet Union united the empire, and established monopoly rule till its collapse in 1991. CPSU ruled over Soviet Union with complete monopoly. Elections were conducted with the directions of the CPSU, and contestation for power happened among the CPSU members. In its initial years the party received some political challenge from the Orthodox Church who organized themselves under the banner of Christianity and demanded the right to contest in elections. They as a political group wanted to be included in the power-sharing. However, they could not succeed due to Stalin’s strict rules. Parliamentary elections to the Kremlin and presidential elections were in practice as well. Elections to oblasts also took place. All these features can be found in the political culture of Central Asian states. One party rule and controlled elections continued to remain in practice for so many years even after the independence of Central Asian states. Multi-party system is a recent trend in the region, and it is yet to grow mature.

The Soviet legacy of unfair and controlled elections as well as one party monopoly basically shaped the current political institutions and practices in Central Asia. Like the Soviet system, religious or ethnicity-based political representation in the elections was not allowed in any republic of Central Asia for a long time. Single-member assembly elections in the Oblasts are an important institutional legacy of the Soviet period. The party structure of all the ruling parties in the region is inspired by CPSU’s model. Presidents of these republics, except for Turkmenistan were the former members of the CPSU. And since the party leaders or Presidents have strong grip over the parties, elections or other political institutions; hence the Soviet influence over the political structures of the Central Asian states is certain. ‘Cult of Personality’ of the Presidents and party leaders is an important contribution of the Soviet legacy. It is noticed that in almost all the republics, the law regarding disqualification of a candidate is often used against

opposition party candidates. The tradition of disqualifying opposition party's candidates in Central Asian states on various grounds is rooted in its Soviet political culture. During Stalin's period, such disqualifications during elections were a common practice. Other political institutions and practices like controlled opposition; restrictions on media during elections, huge voter turnout are entirely inspired by the Soviet political legacy.

The second hypothesis deals with "Despite the existence of electoral process and multi-party system, the progress of democratization has been limited due to excessive focus on political stability and authoritarian control over institutions."

The concepts of national security and national unity are used to justify the authoritarian rule in Central Asian states. This strategy has enabled the Presidents in Central Asian states to eliminate their political opposition by alleging them of destabilizing the society. They have accused several opposition leaders of attempted crime against the country. Many opposition party leaders have been either jailed or exiled from the state on the grounds of anti-national activities. Fund cut and sanctions on opposition parties show how political rivalry has been crushed in the name of upholding stability, integrity and peace. Examples in this regard can be cited from Uzbekistan, where according to Human Rights Watch report of 2010 many opposition party leaders fled the country, seeking temporary refuge or political asylum abroad. For the past decade, the exiled opposition has limited its activities mainly to raising awareness about domestic developments and maintaining informational websites. Karimov's most prominent political rival, Erk party leader Mohammed Solih, continues to hold the status of *persona non grata*.

Since 1991, it was necessary not only to create attributes structures and institutions of state but also institute basic reforms for the transition from totalitarian to democracy. After independence the most important task was the solution of the problem to of democratic reconstruction of the society, establishing a new, democratic, secular and legal type of state. However, maintaining stability in the republics has been the main concern in these independent states. This became a popular idea that tight grip of one man, one party rule could certainly ensure durable stability in the states. Once

established, the practice continued on and on. This gave the leaders a chance to keep the powers monopolized. The Presidents often remarked during elections that stability was the primary goal even if political pluralism had to be put at stake. Despite the regime has allowed multi-party system, Dominant-party rule dominates in the region.

The ruling parties are established as a device for conveying the ideology of patrimonial nationalism. The most important reason behind this is the role of patrimonial nationalism that empowers the Presidents of these republics. Patrimonial nationalism makes the Presidents so immune from the rise of any other ideologies that challenge the prevailing ideology. Turkmenbashi's rule in Turkmenistan is a glaring example of this. The prevailing ideology is embodied in the persona of the President. All public officials as well as the local elites maintain their obedience to the president. Thus, all the institutions of the state come under direct control of the president. Powers remain monopolized as they always were. Authoritarian control remains uninterrupted. And thus, the process of opening up or democratization of the political culture is hampered in the region.

In the light of the above analysis, both the hypotheses stand varified. However, there are some other findings that came to be focused during the research. One of the findings implies that the state doctrines regarding elections and parties in Central Asian republics do not correspond to the well known western concepts of democracy. That is not because they differ from the Central Asian notion about democracy, but because Central Asian states are too far removed from real conditions of its creations. From the beginning the Central Asian republics did not speedup reforms both in politics and economy. They did not immediately break previous structures of power because a power vacuum could be created and some disorder would have appeared. They instead choose the road to gradual transformation of existing structures. They have correctly determined the nature of reforms based on local conditions but not as it is demanded by classical democratic formulas propagated by the West.

The Central Asian states take into account the world's experience of constructing a democracy as well as the national traditions and particularities of their own society. Each

state has its own road to the democratic society. It is important to know the mental preparedness of the citizens for political transformations. They have only now begun to understand their own political system. The Presidents of the Central Asian states believe that democratic construction varies from society to society. Central Asia, having no past experience of western-styled democracy, can never qualify the parameters set by the west. The Eastern and Western politics is different from each other and both cannot be looked from the same perspective. Therefore, the methods to understand the political systems should be different. And homogeneous solutions cannot solve their problems which are much heterogeneous in nature.

There have been significant developments in the electoral system of the region. One significant development in this regard is that voter turnout is very high, higher than even many western countries. The voters are also provided with facilities and comforts so as to enable them to exercise their voting rights. There are special facilities in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan for sick and physically impaired voters. This is a positive thing about elections in some of the republics.

However, at both structural and organizational level, several weaknesses exist in the electoral system and political parties of the Central Asian republics. The recent opening up does not change much in one-party monopoly. The absence of free and fair elections is harming the condition of opposition parties. Change in the nature of political parties and electoral system is an important requisite for political growth in Central Asia.

These weaknesses must be dealt with proper policy-measures. Removal of unnecessarily restrictive organizational structures will make elections and parties more efficient. They will ensure people's participation and pluralism in the political affairs of these republics. Central Asia needs to devise self-styled electoral system and party system that suits its political needs. Organized effort of the government, the civil society, political parties, the intellectual class and the citizens can fulfill the aspirations of the people of the region. The neighboring countries having accomplished a stable political system and democratization should assist these republics. Central Asian states must increase co-

operation among themselves. They can also take assistance from the international experts. In future when economic well-being is established, the Central Asian states will itself choose a new democratic path for itself. In the long run the ambitious project of democratization through multi-party system and fair elections will be achieved by the composite efforts of all sections of the Central Asian society.

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