

**PARTY SYSTEM AND ELECTIONS IN POST-SOVIET
UZBEKISTAN & KAZAKHSTAN (1991-2000)**

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CERTIFICATE

Certified that the dissertation entitled ***PARTY SYSTEM AND ELECTIONS IN POST-SOVIET UZBEKISTAN & KAZAKHSTAN (1991-2000)*** Submitted by SHAIENDRA SHARMA, Centre for Russian, Central Asian and East European Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi 110067, India. For the award of the Degree of **Master of Philosophy**, is his own and has not been submitted so far, for any other Degree or Diploma of any University.

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

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To
mummy
&
papa
with love

CONTENTS

	Page No.
Acknowledgement	
Chapter-1: Introduction	1
Theoretical framework of party system and electoral democracy	
Chapter-2: Nature of transition process in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan	21
Chapter-3: Political pluralism and emerging party system	37
Chapter-4: Multiparty election: an assessment	74
Conclusion	93
Bibliography	99

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION- A THEORETICAL FRAME WORK OF PARTY SYSTEM AND ELECTORAL DEMOCRACY

The term party system is generally used to refer to a complex of parties that are closely related one to another or to a common entity, such as a given state.¹

Political parties have become the most important factor in every political society which express and form public opinion through organization and mobilization of the electorate. According to Larry Diamond the working of any system of representative government is in large measure determined by the nature of the political parties which operate it.²

The generally accepted classification of the party system is between the two-party system, the multi-party system and the single-party system.

The multi-party system is one in which there are a number of political parties, more or less powerful, but where no single-party is able to monopolize the system. In many instances the multi-party system leads to conditions of government instability like the countries on the continent (or Europe) have in the last few decades.

Whereas in one party system there is one party in power, which either dominates all other groups trying to absorb political opposition, or suppresses all opposition groups. The basic function of the party appears to be – selecting

¹ A. Niel, Macdonald, *Party perspectives: a survey of writings*, in Harry Eckstein and David Apter (eds.), *Comparative politics; a reader*, New York: The Free Press, 1963, p.348.

² Larry Diamond, *There paradox of democracy. the global resurgence of democracy*. (2nd edition) Larry Diamond and Marc Platter, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1996, p.112.

candidates, conducting elections, operating governmental apparatus and providing political leadership. But in the single party system there are few variants. One type is where on principles, only one party is recognized. No other party is allowed to exist like the Communist party in the former USSR.

The second variant is where one party prevails by restricting opposition parties or absorbing them like in Burma Kenya ,Egypt and Ghana . These are not totalitarian dictatorships in the full sense of the term, but they are authoritarian regimes. The third is one in which one party continues to dominate the political life continuously for years or decades and other parties are allowed full freedom to operate and propagate their views and also to contest the elections but they remain so ill organized or unorganized that one party can rule for decades like the Communist party in Bengal.

If we discuss more about the single-party system in which the communist party is the indispensable factor as defined by Marx “the dictatorship of proletariat ” we can say “that the communist party has always connoted two features, first the vanguard of the working class, and second, the monopoly exercise of the power of state. The first is the core of the Leninist doctrine: but the second has been a practice dating from the post revolutionary regime. These two aspects were not usually adequately distinguished: but both have now been abandoned”.³

As the matter of fact modern representative democracy has brought out party system as an indispensable factor in every political society and after the disintegration of single party system, Central Asia is faced with seemingly irreconcilable choices. The task in the domain of politics may be

³ Madhavan K. Palat, *Ideological choices in post-Soviet Russia*, New Delhi: Delhi Policy Group, 1997, P.17.

superficially stated as a shift from dictatorship to democracy. This fact lays stress on the maximization of political participation by involving upon the members of a political elite to take the people at large into confidence to justify the very legitimacy of their leadership and authority.

The main question raised in the aftermath of disintegration of USSR and the new political order that took place in Central Asia is that of transition from dictatorship and democracy or from single-party system to a multi-party one.

Democracy as Finer observes, 'rests in the hope and doubts. Upon the party system'. A study of party system is however beset with one difficulty. A political party "is notoriously difficult to define accurately."⁴ It is not always easy to differentiate it from a function, or interest group, or a parliamentary group with independent and electoral opinion or from a political movement which may temporarily transcend a number of parties or groups.⁵

According to Edmund Burke, a political party "is a body of men united for promoting the national interest on some particular principle in which they are all agreed."⁶ Whereas Duverger argued that, "a party is a community which a particular structure."⁷ Though burke defined a party as

⁴ Curtis Michael, *Comparative government and politics*, New York: Harper and Row, 1968, p.139.

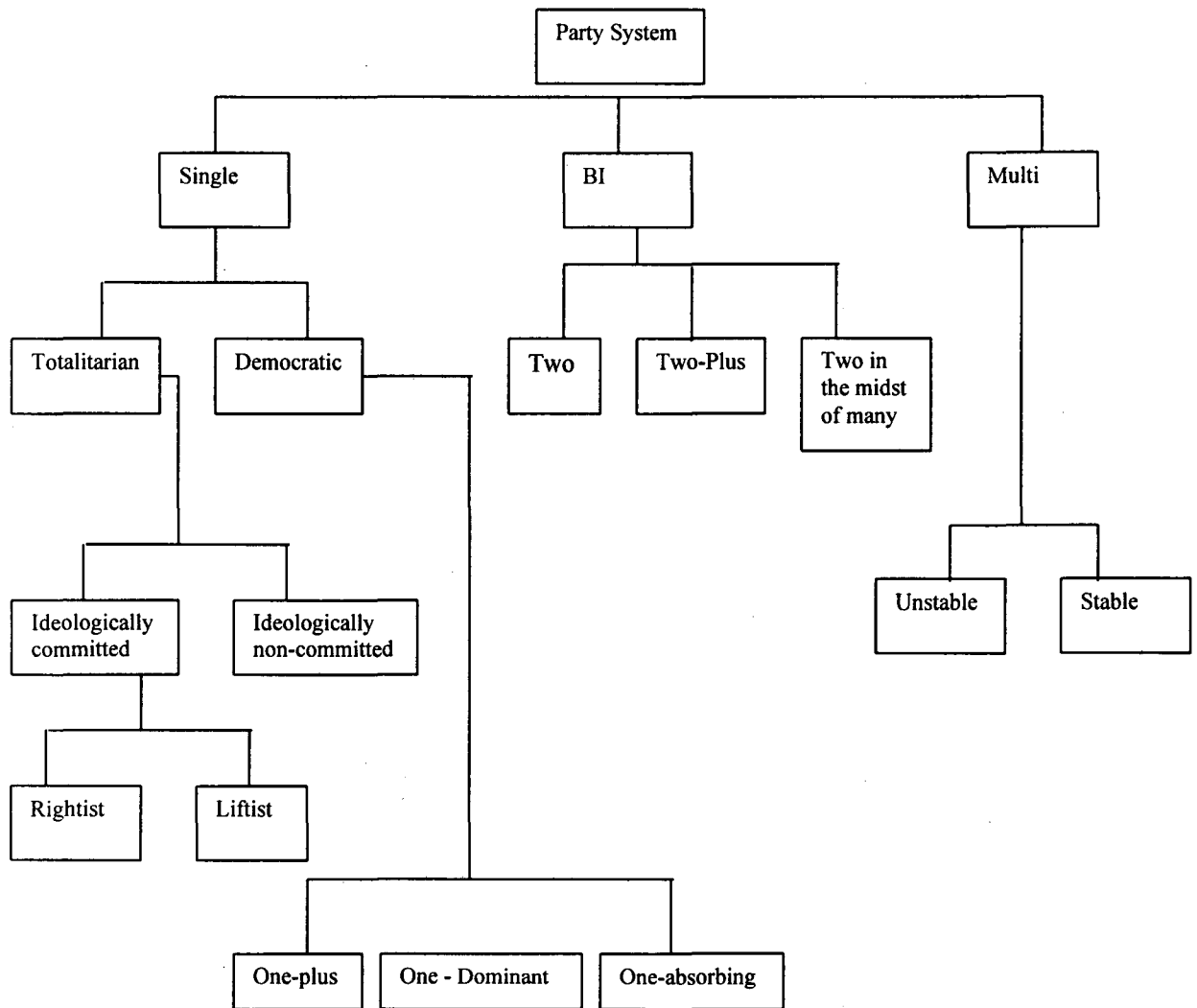
⁵ Ibid., p.139.

⁶ E.Burke, *Thoughts on the causes of the present discontent*, p.16. cited in Almond, Gabriel and G. Bingham Powell, *Comparative politics: system, process and policy*, (2nd edn.), Baston: little Brown 1997

⁷ Maurice Duverger, *Political parties*, New York, 1955, p.24.

a group of a men who has agreed upon a principle by which national interest might be served.

Figure -1



A political party emerges whenever the activities of a political system reach a certain degree of complexity, as whenever the notion of political power comes to include the idea that the mass public must participate or be controlled. Sigmund Neumann defines a political party as “the articulate

organization of society's active political agents , those who are concerned with the control of governmental power and who compete for popular support, with another group or groups holding divergent views. As such it is the great intermediary which links social forces and ideologies to official governmental institutions and relates them to political action within the larger political community.”⁸

Durverger differentiates between internally created parties and externally created parties, which are those that arose outside the legislature and invariably demand some challenge to the ruling group and a demand for representation. Such parties are “invariably associated with an expanded suffrage, strongly articulated secular or religious ideologies, and in most of the developing areas. Nationalistic and anti-colonial movements”.⁹ Parties that emerged in post-communist countries are also externally created. Such parties may receive their original organizational and theoretical impetus from such varied sources as co-operatives, university students, trade unions, intellectuals, religious organizations and veteran association.

According to Duverger, externally created parties tend to be more centralized than those that are internally created, “more ideologically coherent and disciplined, less subject to influences from the legislative contingents of the parties, and generally less willing to ascribe major importance to be

⁸ Neumann, Sigmund, “Towards a comparative study of political parties,” in Neumann (ed.) *Modern political parties: approaches to comparative politics* ,Chicago: Chicago University press, 1956,p.403.

⁹ J.Lapalombara and M.Weiner (eds.) *Political Parties and Political Development*, Princeton : Princeton university press, 1969, p.10.

differential towards parliament.”¹⁰ This may not be applicable to the political parties that emerged in post-communist countries.

It is not merely that the externally created parties are more ideological, more disciplined or more aggressive in making demands on the system. It is also that, largely as a result of the circumstances under which they arose, they have frequently not developed a vested interest in existing political and in most instances social or economic institutions. While some scholars have stressed the importance of parliament and the expansion of the suffrage as a critical variable in the emergence of parties, others have stressed the role of ideology.

Especially after the break up of the single party rule in USSR, the successor nations have experienced many internal political crises during the period in which political parties were being formed. Of these the most salient in their impact on party formation are the crisis of legitimacy, integration and participation.

In the case of Central Asia republics the legitimacy crisis has been more central to the early formation of parties when the existing structure of authorities failed to cope with the crisis itself and a political upheaval ensued. As argued by Ajay Patnaik, “among the political options for the newly independent states of Central Asia the choice between the models of a state in

¹⁰ Maurice, Duverger op.cit., p.24

a plural society is the most crucial issue.”¹¹ Due to the crucial ethno-demographic factor the question of legitimacy has become more central in the formative stage of the party system.

A crisis of integration has also provided the milieu in which political parties have often emerged, while in some places the crisis of legitimacy and integration have after been accompanied by the creation of the political parties and particularly of incipient political parties, the earliest parties in most countries have typically been associated with the “crisis of participation.” The creation of parties in post-communist countries after the fall of Soviet system regime can also be attributed to the crisis of participation and legitimacy.

Parties emerge in political systems when those who seek to win or maintain political power are required to seek support from the large public. Such a development occurs under at least two circumstances. A change may already have taken place in the attitudes of subjects or citizen towards authority. Individuals in society may believe that they have the right to influence the exercise of power.

In the second circumstance a section of the dominant political elite or an aspiring elite may seek to win public support so as to win or maintain power even though the public does not actively participate in political life.

The study of parties is rather confined to a description of characteristics obtaining in each particular party, its relation to the

¹¹ Ajay Patnaik , “Nation - state in a multi ethnic society: the case of Central Asia” , in Shams-uddin (ed.), Geopolitics and energy resources in Central Asia and Caspian Sea region, New Delhi: Lancers Books,2000.

government, its requirement and leadership, its objectives and programs, and its electoral performance.¹²

Maurice Duverger has given a general theory of parties which can embrace the phenomenon of parties in different political systems. According to Duverger, a party is a community with a particular structure. To quote Duverger, "the protozoa of former period have been succeeded by the twentieth century party with its complicated, and differentiated organisation."¹³

Duverger distinguishes parties in terms of direct and indirect structure and in terms of whether the basic organizational unit is a caucus, a branch, a cell, or a militia-type unit .

The political parties with direct structure are those whose members or affiliates are related directly, that is a party which has individuals as members. Indirect are those which are built upon after social formations as their basic component units. The individual comes to his party membership or affiliation by virtue of his membership in a non-party agency .

The party whose main organizational unit is the branch is characteristic of democratic socialistic parties. The branch party would be having a centralized party structure with its basic units being distributed

¹² David Apter, *Comparative politics: a reader*, New York : The Free Press , 1963 , P. 328.

¹³ Duverger Maurice, *Political parties*, London: University Paper Backs , 1964 , P. 15.

geographically in space. The branch is more formal and an agency of more general purpose than the caucus.

The cell based party has been developed by adherents to communist doctrine. The main difference between a cell and branch or caucus is that the cell is organized around the job or profession and is very small and conspiratorial in its mode of operation.¹⁴ It is well suited for revolutionary purpose and not suited for winning electoral contests.

In the militia based type of party, the members are an elite with distinct insignia, a uniform or a coloured shirt, and they drill and march. The militia type unit finds main use in practicing a kind of quasi – legitimate violence in pursuit of its members' or leaders' purpose. But according to Duverger, none of those parties can be found in reality. Parties in actual formation will always have mixed structures.

If we further includes the view of Sartori regarding party system than there is a more classified formation of different forms.

1. Witness parties , uninterested in maximizing votes.
2. Ideological parties, those interested in votes primarily through indoctrination .
3. Responsible parties, which do not submit policies to maximizing voters.

¹⁴ A. Neil Mcdonald, op.cit., p.348.

4. Responsive parties, for which winning elections or maximizing votes lack priority, and
5. Purely demagogic irresponsible parties, which are only vote maximisers.

In the view of Michael Curtis, “Essentially party signifies a group of people who hold certain political beliefs in common or who are prepared to support the party candidates, work together for electoral victory, attain and maintain political power.”¹⁵ Political parties are specialized associations whose purpose is to secure power within a corporate group for their leaders in order to attain ideal or material advantages. “Parties are thus specialized associations and become more complex organized and bureaucratic as a society approaches the modern type.”¹⁶ The central object of a political organization is to capture power either singly or in collaboration with others.

Duverger’s classification of Party System

Duverger had formulated a simple classification of single-, bi- and multi party systems and thereby sought to place the party systems of the world in one of the three related categories.

A single party system “is characterised by the party in power either dominating all other groups, trying to absorb the political opposition, or in the extreme case suppressing all opposition groups which are regarded as counter

¹⁵ Micheal Curtis, *Comparitive government and politics*, Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1962, P. 21

¹⁶ E. Bernard Brown., *New directions in comparitive politics*, Bombay: Asia Publishing House 1962, P. 21.

revolutionary or subversive of the regime as forces dividing the national will.”¹⁷ A two-party system may be said to exist where there are only two parties sufficiently strong to take part in the struggle for power. There may be other parties, but the alteration of power remains between the two major ones.

A multi-party system is one in which no party is able to obtain majority in the legislative entitling it to form government. According to Duverger’s analysis, multiparty systems arise either from splits or overlappings in a natural two way diversion. A split may come within either bourgeois or socialist parties and may be encouraged by the electoral system. Splitting creates a centrist position which is highly unstable because the centre position represents a tentative and compromised position.

Overlapping comes about as a result of a non-coinciding dualism in a society. For example, if a society is divided into two classes and two sections, but classes and sections do not coincide, there is a strong tendency for parties to rise.¹⁸

Duverger distinguishes two kinds of multiparty systems. The first type came into existence because the existing parties would not accommodate the emerging views of the socialists. Thus, there was no alternative political choice for an increasingly popular point of view. Under the second type the

¹⁷ Curtis. Michael, op. cit., p,165.

¹⁸ A. Neil Macdonald, op.cit., p.348.

agrarian interests find a congenial party home in neither the socialist-labour nor in the bourgeois-type party. Thus, the agrarians create their own party.

Sartori's Classification

Giovanni Sartori has given a much more diverse classification of the party systems covering several sub-varieties within the one party system. He differentiated the two party and multi-party systems on the basis of 'pluralism' and 'atomism'.¹⁹

According to Sartori, the single party system is one where political competition between different political parties is either non-existent, or is not very effective. The single party model may be said to have three main varieties. It is monopolistic when political power is wielded by one party if others are permitted to exist at all. Such a party system exhibits three sub-varieties. It is totalitarian and has the rubric of "dictatorship" when the degree of coercion is very high; policies adopted by it are highly destructive to the opponents; only the official ideology is sacrosanct; no autonomy to other groups is sanctioned and the element of arbitrariness is unbounded and unpredictable.

It is authoritarian when the criteria of ideology is weak and non-totalistic; degree of coercion is medium and some autonomy is available to different groups. It is pragmatic when the hold of ideology is very feeble,

¹⁹ Giovanni Sartori, *Parties and party systems: a framework for analysis*, London: Cambridge University Press, 1976, p.222.

even irrelevant; degree of coercion is quite low; sub-group independence is also allowed; and the element of arbitrariness is limited.

While the totalitarian and authoritarian parties are assumed to reflect different ideological intensities, the one party pragmatic variety represents that end of the continuance at which an ideological mentality gives way to a pragmatic mentality. Totalitarianism and authoritarianism appear as different points of an ideological scale whose lowest point is called: pragmatism.

Another variety of the single party system is its hegemonic position where the existence of other parties is allowed but only one party counts more than all the other parties. The other parties exist like its “satellites” or subordinate entities without posing any challenge to its hold. The hegemonic party “neither allows for a formal nor a de facto competition for power. Other parties are permitted to exist, but as second class, licensed parties; for they are not permitted to compete with the hegemonic party on antagonistic terms and on an equal basis. Not only does alternation not occur, in fact it cannot occur, since the possibility of a rotation in power is not even envisaged. The implication is that the hegemonic party will remain in power whether it is liked or not.”²⁰ In the case of hegemonic party system there are two sub-varieties-ideological and pragmatic. In the ideological hegemoic party system

²⁰ Ibid., p.223.

the ruling party is committed to a particular ideology. It is pragmatic when the ruling party has no such commitment.²¹

Another variety of the single party system is the predominant party system where a power configuration exists in which one party governs alone without being subjected to alteration as long as it continues to win absolute majority in the elections.

According to Sartori, a bi-party system is one where the existence of third parties does not prevent the two major parties from governing alone and, therefore, coalitions are unnecessary. It involves these important conditions: two parties are in a position to compete for the absolute majority of seats; one of the two parties actually succeeds in winning a sufficient parliamentary majority and this party is willing to govern alone; and alteration or rotation in power remains a credible expectation.²²

Sartori's bi-party and multi-party systems embody the characteristic of 'polarised pluralism'. In a case of polarised pluralism, different parties exist and operate including those relevant anti-system ones that may go to the extent of undermining the legitimacy of the regime. There exists bilateral and multilateral oppositions and counter-oppositions with the result that interaction may be biangular, triangular or quadrangular. The system is

²¹ Ibid., p.230

²² Ibid., p.188

multipolar in that its competitive mechanism hinges on a centre that must face both a left and a right. In this way, centre party that attempts to outdo the parties located at its right and left will contribute, more than anything else, to a crescendo of escalation and extremisation. The degree of ideological distance may be discovered between different parties. Cleavages are likely to be very deep, consensus is low and that the legitimacy of the political system is widely questioned. Centrifugal drives prevail over the centripetal ones. Ideological patterning may also be visualised. Politics contain parties that disagree not only on policies but also and more importantly, on principles and fundamentals. Irresponsible oppositions, governmental instability and shifting coalitions are a feature of the political system.²³

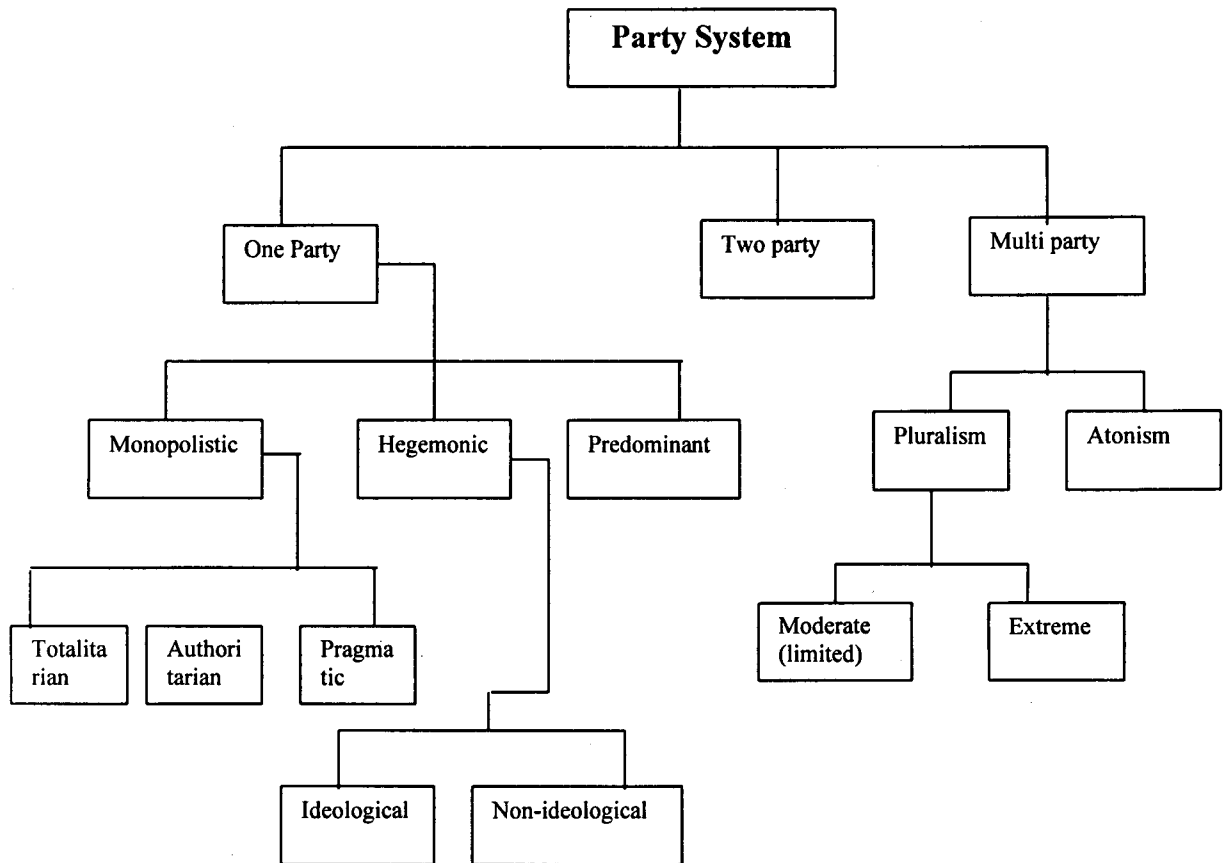
Sartori propounds a case of extreme pluralism which is the hallmark of an “atomised” party system. A multi-party system having a highly fragmented character leads to the existence of highly fluid party politics. Here no party is in a position to cast a noticeable effect on the other. An atomised party is fragmented leader by leader, with very small groups revolving around each other. As such, it “had no signification factional articulation beyond the face value of all that characterizes a political party.”²⁴

²³ Ibid., p.132.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 75

Figure – 2

Sartori's Classification



Finally we can say that the continuous changing political developments shows that there won't be any sustainable theory of party system which can be presentable either in the form of multi-party system or classifications of the party system.

Party system in Central Asia

Historical Background :

The history of the political development in a plural society like Central Asia is a history of its own kind with multi dimensional upheavals. The ethnic composition of Central Asia plays a major role in the political development of Central Asia. As the Uzbeks consolidated their power in Bukhara and Samarkand, they turned Samarkand into one of the centers of world trade. Uzbeks consist of 92 tribes and the places of their settlements acquired the names of those tribes, like Nukus, Kungsat, Kipchak etc. whereas the Kazakhs or Kyrgys as they were then called, took over the Northern steppes under the leadership of Burundak Khan (1488-1509) and Kasim Khan (1509 – 18).

Though both the states had become very important places of trade, but the state formation was still based on weak, half nomadic and half settled unification process. The mutual fights, often without any specific reason weakened them in XIX century and they become the easy spoils for new conquerors – the Russians.

Conquest of Central Asia was a part of “Great Game” i.e. political struggle between Russia and England for Asia. Struggle with England forced Russia to avoid conflicts with the local people who could weaken its external position but the uprising in 1916 showed the heightened nationalist feeling of Uzbeks.

On the other hand, during 1822 and 1848 the entire Kazakh territory was incorporated into Tsarist Empire. In both the states there was a strong feeling of uprooting the Tsarist empire and ultimately that happened when October Revolution took place in 1917. In the Russian revolution, the people of Central Asia saw the onset of freedom. They firmly believed in the promised of Bolsheviks about self determination. "National program of the Bolsheviks was Democratic and full of most optimistic promises."²⁵

The Bolsheviks started recarving its map on "nationality" principles. In 1924 the huge territory of Central Asia was divided into five national-republics Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenia, Tazikistan and Kyrghizia. Thus the Bolsheviks separated people of Central Asia and allotted them to national segments.

The Communist Party in accordance with their principle created a powerful centralized state with a single party system where every thing belonged to the state. Moscow the capital of Russia became a center of this state and all political power was concentrated there.

Under the slogan of cultural and social internationalization, the campaign of Sovietization of national republics spread widely. Industrialization led to huge migration of population leading to greater heterogeneity. "In Soviet Union all the republics were plural societies due to

²⁵ G. Khidayatov, "Uzbekistan between the past and future", *Contemporary Central Asia*, Vol, 1, No.1, 1997.

extensive migration of the population across republics resulting from industrialization and moderisation, there came about significant changes in the ethno-demographic situation in the Soviet period.”²⁶

This migration resulted into “ethnic-hetrogenity” of Central Asia. For example, in Uzbekistan in 1989 non-Uzbeks comprised 29% of the population including about 21% non-Russians, Kazakstan had about 60.3% of the non-Kazakh population including about 38% non Russians.²⁷

Some scholars have argued that Soviet Rule could not erase Islam’s print on Central Asian culture and Islam retained its influence on social norms and values. Central Asian languages, though systematically secularised under Moscow’s atheist rule, continues to reflect Islamic mores.”²⁸

Central Asian societies do not have a history of democratic popular participation in politics. Popular sovereignty was not even an issue before the 1917 revolution in the Khanates, where leadership was hereditary. Instead of that, Central Asia has been of fundamental importance in the history and politics of Eurasia.

Having been a region of unstable frontiers, the balance of power between its population and the surrounding states has determined its political status. Due to its geographical proximity to Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan,

²⁶ Ajay Patnaik, “Nation-state in a multi ethnic society, The case of Central Asia”, in Shams-ud-din (ed.), *Geopolitics and energy resources in Central Asia and Caspian Sea region*, New Delhi: Lancers Books, 2000.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Sharam Akbarzadeh, “The political shape of Central Asia”, *Central Asian survey*, Vol.16, No.4, 1997, pp.517-542.

Pakistan, China, Russia and India, Central Asia has played an important role in the geo-politics of this region.

After the political disintegration of USSR and CPSU, Central Asia has entered into the painful process of transition to market economy transition with a new political order and parties, the study of which can help in understanding the nature of transition process in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan.

CHAPTER -2

NATURE OF TRANSITION PROCESS IN
UZBEKISTAN AND KAZAKHSTAN

“Democracy in effect, shields the inner life of the community from the necessarily brusque actions of government. The state is a tool of the greater society; the ultimate meaning of democracy is that (in Henry Thoreau’s phrase) men should not become the ‘tools of their tools’”.¹

Following the break-up of the former Soviet Union, the Central Asian leadership began formulating new policies and new ideology, based on the secular, republican, Kemalist model of Turkey. It attempted to emulate Turkey’s economic development policies as well. Some of the ideas of Sultan Galiev, the Muslim Marxist leader of the 1970’s were also adopted in order to link the newly created state model to the communist, and pre-communist past, and to help those states make the transition to the present.²

In the first half of this decade political analysis turned their attention to Eurasia as unprecedented events suddenly followed the collapse of the unified state, that was known as the Soviet Union, resulting in a number of sovereign republics. In the year 1991, the final dissolution of the Soviet Union took place and the five Central Asian Republic declared independence.

¹ E.Bernard Brown., *New directions in comparative politics* Bombay: Asia Publishing House., 1962, p77.

² Igor Lipovsky, “Central Asia: In search for new identity,” *Middle East Journal*, Vol.50, No.2, Spring 1996, pp.211-23.

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Kazakhstan is the largest of the new Central Asian states that emerged as a result of this disintegration. In the CIS it is second in territory (2,724.9 thsd. Km²) and fourth in population (15,671 thsd. by 1 Jan 1998.). Before the disintegration, 40% of the total population were Kazakhs, 40% Russians and Ukrainians and 20% belonged to about 100 other ethnic groups. Approximately 1 million Kazakhs lived in Russia. The urban population was 9.6 mln., or 57% of the total. The capital of the country was Almaty (1.2 mln.). On 10 December 1997 the capital of Kazakhstan was shifted to Akmola (white city), renamed Astana in the spring of 1998. However, according to some, an important reason for the president to shift the state-centre from the outskirts to the centre of the country was to change the ethno-demographic and socio-political situation by taking the capital away from the area of Russia's influences in the northern part of the country.³

Uzbekistan is situated in the middle of the Central Asian region having an area of 447,800 sq. kilometers. Administratively it is divided into 12 provinces and the Karakalpakstan Autonomous Republic. The population of Uzbekistan is more than 25 million people with Tashkent as its capital. More than 71.4% of its population is Uzbek. Other Turkic, Slavonic groups are also represented including 8.3% are Russians. There are 4.7% Tajik, 4.1% Kazakh, 2.4% Tatar, 2.1% Karakalpak, 7% others.⁴

³ N.I. Petrov and M.S. Gafarly, *The case towards political stability*, New York: M.E.Sharpe 1998, p.181

⁴ Nodir Khudaiberganov, Issue: Oct, 1998. Country Listing, *The world fact book home*, Uzbekistan.

On August 31, 1991 the parliament of Uzbekistan proclaimed the independence of the Republic, and consequently a new page was turned over in the Country's History. A new constitution was adopted on 8 December 1992.

Since the Uzbek declaration of independence, there exists confusion not only in the outside world, but in the very republic itself about the new place Uzbekistan should take in the changing new world order. But before going into the new political order and the present political situation of Uzbekistan it is necessary to understand the situation which led to the disintegration of the Soviet Union and led these states into the path of transition.

It was only in the Soviet period that continuous efforts were made to forge distinct nation state identities in Central Asia. The Bolsheviks played a crucial role in forging new nations in Central Asia where the existing groups of different ethnic composition were lacking in national consciousness.

The policy implemented in the Soviet Union during 1924-25 created Union republics and autonomous regions, which signified the implementation of the policy of national self-determination in Stalinist terms. Stalin defined nation as a "historically constituted stable community of people formed on the basis of common language, territory, economic life and psychological make up manifested in a common culture."

Before going into detail of the Soviet Nationality Policy which created Uzbekistan as a modern-nation state, it will be worthwhile to examine the policy within the broader theoretical framework of Marxist Lenninst ideology.

According to Marxism, Nationalism and the nation state are the characteristic of capitalism which in its later state, are bound to yield to class rivalries and to the international unity of the proletariat.⁵

Marxism in principle, is irreconcilable with nationalism. Marxists advocated internationalism in place of nationalism of any kind.⁶

The political situation in Central Asia was very messy for quite some time after the Bolsheviks came to power in 1917. It was only during 1924-25 that “National delimitation” was effected which led to the redrawing the map of Central Asia, giving birth to Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic.

The Soviet nationality policy was successful in creating a nation but out of an ethno. It laid the broad parameters within which the Uzbek nation was to grow and consolidate itself, whereas in the political history of Kazakhstan the situation was some what different though on 26 August 1920 the Kazakh autonomous Soviet socialist republic was created and in October the first constituent congress of Soviets of the new republic was held with the participation of many Alash leaders.

⁵ V.I.Lenin, *On historical materialism* ‘from the discussion on self determination’ progress publishers, (Moscow). 1954

⁶ V.I. Lenin, *Collected works*, Vol.VII progress publishers (Moscow), 1968, p.145.

The Kazakhs have been a minority in their own home land ever since the civil war and have never recovered either their numbers or ability to defy the Russians. Instead Kazakhstan had always been pointed out as the finest example of inter-ethnic harmony in Soviet Union though Gorbachev tried to erase it but he lost the support of the Communist party of Kazakhstan (CPKZ) and his appointment of a Russian Kolvin, was soon changed by the elevation of Nursultan Nazarbayev as first secretary of the CPKZ. In the first direct elections on 22 February 1990, Nazarbayev was re-elected as first Secretary and became chairman of the Supreme Soviet – on 26 October 1990 Kazakhstan declared its sovereignty. Nazarbayev was to emerge as the most important leader in Central Asia because of his adroit handling of the crises that were to follow the collapse of Soviet Union and Independence in Kazakhstan itself. However, serious efforts to transform the political and economic system in the country had begun a couple of years previously. On 25 April 1990 the Supreme Soviet elected Nazarbayev president of Kazakhstan.

On 28 January 1993 the new constitutions of Kazakhstan was adopted proclaiming Kazakhstan a Presidential republic with a single house parliament. During the years of his leadership Nursultan Nazarbayev has shown himself to be a pragmatic technocrat and advocate of strong state power, under whose control the republic is undergoing a gradual transition to a market economy. Nazarbayev's political ideals are Turkey (the first country to recognise Kazakhstan's independence) and South Korea. Nazarbayev is among the most consistent advocates of the CIS and is aware of the necessity

of preserving the links among the former republics of USSR. He was the first leader of a CIS country to raise the important question of identifying the political mechanisms which could serve to enhance practical interaction within the commonwealth.

According to numerous public opinion polls, Nursultan Nazarbayev is among the most popular politicians in the territory of the ex-USSR. The year 1995 was marked by a phenomenon for which political scientists invented a special term 'bashism' the word derives from turkmenbashi, the head of the Turkmens and the title of Saparmurad Niyazov the president of Turkmenistan.⁷

Changing symbols and names proved to be easy, but finding a new ideology was a much more difficult problem for Central Asia's former communist party elites. In the formative stage Central Asian republics turned toward Turkey as a model of a modern state. What the leaders found appealing in the state model of Kemal Ataturk the founding father of the Turkish republic was its fundamental principles nationalism, secularism and republicanism. In addition Kemalist emphasis on national character and revolutionary change allowed for the development of a populist, somewhat demagogic ideology familiar to the people of the ex-soviet republics.

⁷ N.I.Petrov and M.S. Gafarly, op. cit., p.181.

Finally the Kemalist economic system, which had changed to include principles of a mixed economy, provided the model for the transition to capitalism of the Socialist economies of the Central Asian States.⁸

Politically the Central Asian leaders had a natural affinity for the Kemalist form of democracy: controlled and directed as it was, from above, it fitted well both with the ways of traditional Central Asian society and the deep rooted norms of the old Soviet system. Kemalist ideology was both anti-imperialist and anti-communist and rejected the exploitation of Islam and any involvement with Pan-Turkism.

The later version of Kemalism, is a different matter altogether. It represents an ideological and political line that is not so much Ataturk's as it is of his successors. Anti-imperialists rhetoric was abandoned then in order to enhance Turkey's rapprochement with the west and encourage foreign investment. There was a gradual withdrawal from etatism with the introduction of a multiparty system (albeit one controlled from above) and concessions were made to Islam.

The Tatar muslim marxist Sultan Galiev in the 1920's had given another added elements of another which combined a number of features taken from three ideological movements with significant influence in Central Asia: Pan-Islamism, pan-Turkism and Marxism. He didn't see Islam as a mere religion but as an integral system that governed the way people led their

⁸ Igor Lipovsky, *op.cit.*, p 212.

lives – a system, moreover, that could be destroyed only at the risk of provoking a popular uprising. He was considered as the ideological successor of the ‘Jadids’.

From pan-Turkism, Sultan Galiev took the idea of creating a republic that would unite all the Turkic people, and in which their ideals and national aspirations could be realised. Reflecting the views of many other marxists, Sultan Galiev saw in marxism the expressions of societies striving for social equality and justice.

While the Central Asian peoples understand that the collapse of Marxism-Leninism in the former Soviet Union was both economic and ideological, Central Asia leaders are also aware that there can be no quick transition from socialism to capitalism. They believe that a lengthy transitional period is required, during which it is necessary for them to build an alternative ideology on elements taken from traditional Central Asian society, as well as from nationalism and Islam. The post-communist transitional period has made Sultan Galiev’s ideas relevant to Central Asia once more. This model allows the Central Asian leaders to retain the structure of power and methods of leadership of the old communist system, while making a smooth transition to a moderate, secular, nationalist political system, while recognizing their Islamic traditions.

The acceptance of the Kemalist model also reduces the possibility that a pan-Turkic ideology would gain widespread support in Central Asia and elsewhere. to the relief of their neighbors (Namely Russia, China, Iran and Afghanistan). Central Asian leaders have shown a clear preference for the tried and proven Kemalist Model of statehood, as opposed to Sultan Galiev's pan-Turkic ideal.

Kazakhstan in Transition:

Kazakhstan has remained largely free from the ethnic conflict and virulent nationalism plaguing many of its neighbours. Moreover because of its stability, Kazakhstan has ranked high on the western world's list of potential partners.

According to a Kazakh journalist "Nazarbayev has been able to synthesize different political traditions: European reformism, adherence to democratic procedure and the hallmarks of the Asiatic leader-traditionalism, intuition and oriental Authoritarianism. He is a child of two worlds, in each of which he is a friend among friends. Moreover he played local politics skillfully, balancing Kazakh clan interests with Moscow directives."

Nazarbayev has always been supported by local Russians and other minorities because of his moderate views. However a strong under current of polarization between Kazakh Nationalists and Russians is running through the republic, although president denies it by saying that "we are the only republic

which people are not leaving. We are multi-national and the ethnic problem will only become acute if the commonwealth disintegrates and economic problems worsen”.⁹

In December 1992 some 15,000 Russians demonstrated demanding that Russian be recognised along with Kazakh as a state Language and that dual citizenship with Russia be given to Russians. As a result a debate had taken place and a draft constitution was published in April 1992 and the public were encouraged to discuss it. But when the constitution was adopted on 29 January 1993 it endorsed Kazakh as the official language and made Russian the language of inter-ethnic communication.

It also declared that the president of Republic must have a command of Kazakh, a provision strongly objected to by the Russian Parliamentary deputies. According to them, this cause made it impossible for 60 percent of the population to stand as president. But Kazakh nationalists meanwhile insisted that not enough was being done to nurture a sense of Kazakh nationhood.

The ethnic issue is particularly acute since many Russians are unwilling to accept their new minority status – as they have dominated large areas of Kazakstan for centuries, especially in the North. Yet Kazakhstan is yet to finally secure the success of Kazakh nation-building as it threatens to provoke a backlash from the state’s substantial Russian minority, faced as it is

⁹ Ahmed Rashid , “The next frontier”, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 4 February 1993.

with 'political disempowerment' and 'social disorientation'. Therefore, Nazarbayev has coupled nation-building to a policy he has dubbed 'harmonization', which encourages the participation of Russians in all facets of Kazakh life. Automatic citizenship, wide tolerance of Russian language and culture and government subsidies to the Russian dominated industrial sector are all components of this policy. This has been evident across an entire array of political initiatives the state constitution, demographic manipulation, political parties, social organizations and the legislation system.

In the constitution also democratic principles are symbolically given centre stage-life, liberty and the inalienable rights of the individual are of highest value to the state. Freedom of speech, freedom of the media, freedom to demonstrate peacefully and freedom to create social organisations are also the basic components of Kazakh constitution.

Hence it is observed that the transition process of Kazakhstan has faced numerous challenges in different aspects as part of the transitional problem. However, Kazakhstan has overcome the issues which may cause a huge trouble in the sustainable transition process and the creation of a new political order.

Uzbekistan in Transition:

After independence the path covered by the Republic of Uzbekistan highlights the difficult situations faced by the new Central Asian States. Uzbekistan may thus be described as a republic which is full of

inconsistencies in its search for a particular path of development and entrance into the world economic and political system.

Uzbekistan is among the most stable and relatively trouble free states of Central Asia. However the price of stability has been quite high. The transition towards a democratic system of government has been slow in comparison with not only Russia but the other CIS countries, with possibly the exception of Turkmenistan.

The question of state formation, then, is one of transition-a transition that the state undergoes as it is transformed politically, from the earlier structures that existed in the region, into becoming an independent state.

The lasting legacy of nationality policy during Stalin's era was that his emphasis on ethnicity did capture one of the key ingredients of a potential cohesive modern nation state. Uzbekistan which has an Uzbek population of 70%, having one language and culture, do have a core ethnic identity that could provide a basis for a stable national identity.

The issue of a national identity which is a definitive characteristic of the nation constitutes a major element of political discourse in Uzbekistan. The problem facing this country since its independence is that of creating a viable national unity within a plural society divided into ethnic, clan, tribal, regional, affiliations.

Since the Uzbek declaration of independence, the role of the new state in the world order has been the subject of debate. The question raised was that is it at all part of the Orient or are the ties with its old political centres the determining factor. The rival Uzbek and Kazakh clans traditionally fought for power, while even within the Khanates there were dissensions.

Big hopes were built around Gorbachev's perestroika (Restructuring), but the response was the collapse of Soviet union. In the matter of fact it was established that system failed to change through "Revolution from above". Leader of Uzbekistan, Islam Karimov was one of the first national leaders to declare succession of the Republic from USSR.

Uzbekistan is moving towards a critical phase of transition. Most acute problem is to form a society where market economy is combined with social protection of the population. In search of a new appropriate state model, Karimov was influenced by Turkish model. Explaining the attractiveness of Turkish model of state, Igor Lipovsky observes that:

"what the leaders found appealing in the state model of Kemal Attaturk, the founding father of Turkish republic was its fundamental principle: nationalism which was lacking in Marxism – Leninism, Secularism, a *sine qua non* for the preservation of their own power, etatism which included control of the economy and republicanism. Also the Kemalist economic system which had changed to include principle of a mixed economy, provided the model for the transition to capitalism of the socialist economies of the Central Asian States".¹⁰

¹⁰ Igor, Lipovsky, op.cit., p.212.

Karimov has been one of the most enthusiastic supporter of the Turkish model, which has found support “even among the opposition groups like Birlik and ERK.”¹¹

Thus, in order to gain legitimacy, Karimov encouraged the rewriting of history to define a more authentic and nationalist historical period, drawing in the richness of pre-Russian Central Asian history and culture.¹² Karimov is opposed to the state adopting any ideology. But it did not inhibit him from stressing the importance of Islam. As he says, “consideration for religion and Islam plays an important part within our internal and international conduct... It manifests itself in the way of life of the people, their psychology and in the building of spiritual and moral values, and in enabling in to feel rapport with those who practice the same religion.”¹³

The favorite slogan of Islam Karimov domestically has been “order and stability”. In the guise of “stability” there has been an unmistakable centralisation of authority in the president and simultaneously a systematic attempt is being made to undermine all sources of challenge to Karimov. This has given rise to a strong authoritarian state structure in Uzbekistan.

¹¹ Hale Henry in Banvazizi and Weiner, (ed.) *The new geopolitics of Central Asia and its borderlands*, London: I.B. Tauris, 1994, p.156.

¹² Dannreuther Ronald, “Creating new states in Central Asia”, *Adelphi Papers*, London, 28 March, 1994, p.8.

¹³ Dilip Hiro, *Between Marx and Muhammad: The Changing face of Central Asia*, London: Harper and Collins; 1995, p.182.

Karimov's strategy has been to concentrate power in his own hands, the new constitution which was ratified by Supreme Soviet on 8 December 1992 ensured untrammled presidential power. The new constitution dissolved the regional Soviet and replaced them with a governance system based on regional 'Hakims'.

However once Karimov felt secure, the leaders of Birlik and ERK were subjected to physical attacks, periods of imprisonment, and enforced emigration. Both the organisations were banned later on.¹⁴ In their place Karimov has allowed his own hand picked opposition party Vatan Tarrakiet led by Anvar Yuldashev. Some argued that the constitution of Uzbekistan is the most democratic amongst the constitutions of all former Soviet Republics. Over 22 nationalities are residing in the republic and equal right have been provided to them. The new constitution paved the way for elections on multi-party basis in 1994.

There is thus the important recognition that each state is 'unique' and the result of distinct culture of the people. The final outcome of transition may well be a complex one as a result of rhetoric, mythical change and also of real political and economic transformation. This transition is comparatively different from the transitional experiences related to traditional decolonization.

¹⁴ Ahmed Rashid, *Resurgence of Central Asia, Islam or Nationalism?*, Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1994, p.100.

Both the states are moving through a phase of transition they move out of the first decade of independence and look towards a new century. Authoritarianism have remained effective in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, whereas Kazakhstan has already effected transition to a multiparty system. The Republic of Uzbekistan is still going through the one party system. The political development of both the nations and pluralism is a subject which explicitly provides some information regarding party the different transition experiences of these two states. But what is common in the words of Uzbek poet Nusrat Karim is the following:

*'Wake up and unite, you generation of turan!
You, man born between the two rivers,
People of Turan, the motherland calls you,
Uzbek, Tajik, Kirghiz, Kazakh, turkhen.
give yours hands to each other as fine Fingers.'*¹⁵

¹⁵ Poem by Nusrat Karim in independence brochure of the writers' union of Uzbekistan, cited in Anthony Hyman, "Minority out of, Moscow's orbit: The outlook for Central Asia", *International Affairs*, Vol. 62, No. 2, 1993, p.297.

CHAPTER 3

POLITICAL PLURALISM AND EMERGING PARTY SYSTEM

The transition from a single party system to constitutional pluralism was neither swift nor smooth. The political convulsions in Central Asia was unleashed by the theoretical changes in the notion of socialism in the Soviet Union under Gorbachev, since then the transition from state socialism to a democratic order based on a multiparty system, a market mechanism in which prices are decided by supply and demand, a multilevel ownership system and rule of law has, however proved to be the most difficult tasks. But the fundamental question arises is, what political pluralism really means?

While going through the meaning of political pluralism and party system one has to understand that political parties of a nation make a profound impact on various aspects of political development. Political development implies among other things a measure of political participation by large number of people who do not belong to the dominant political elite. Political development also implies a political complexity which requires a high degree of organization.¹

In this newly formed political structure in Central Asia the emergence of new political parties and groups is the outcome of the reforms policy started by Mikhail Gorbachev. But the number of these parties sharply increased only after the disintegration of the Soviet Union. The appearance of

¹ J. Lapalombara and M. Weiner, (eds.) *Political Parties and Political Development*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966, p.400..

these new democratic elements in the political system of Central Asian republics was initiated by alternative groups and movements that came up during the middle of 1988. The majority of these parties and interest groups did not have very large membership. They adopted very attractive slogans in order to collect funds and to enroll new members. The avowed aim of these informal and formal alternative groups was to establish a multi-party political system.

After the independence of Central Asian republics, the political system that emerged in the region can be characterized as secular authoritarianism. The trend towards authoritarianism has meant strict state control over the political process. Four of the five Central Asian republics have banned political parties as groups of a nationalist or Islamic character, although in general the Islamic parties have fared worse. The Uzbek government not only banned the Uzbek branch of the Islamic Renaissance Party but, in December 1992, it arrested its leader, Abdullah Utayev.²

Now it is clear that like many other former communist countries, the Central Asian political elite and bureaucracy have, by and large, succeeded in retaining the structures of the old regime along with many institutions, procedures and attitudes. The former elites have retained their power base. Hence politics in Central Asia remains dominated by Soviet trained elite groups, heavily influenced by their Soviet legacies. In terms of the moves towards civil society, the development of party political platforms is not being

² Shireen Hunter, "Islam in post independent Central Asia: internal and external dimensions", *Journal of Islamic Studies*, London, Vol.7, No.2, 1996, pp.299-300.

allowed to develop in a full-fledged manner. According to Sattmashe, there are greater threats to the development of the civil society through personality politics, authoritarianism and clientelism all of which are associated with corruption and fear.³

Gorbachev's well publicized policy of 'glasnost' opened the door for political pluralism in Central Asian republics. During the Gorbachev period, the Central Asian republics witnessed the birth of a multiplicity of political parties with a wide range of ideological predilections and strategic objectives.⁴ In the Central Asian region political pluralism is based on their own model of political development. Though in almost all the Central Asian republics, the pattern of political development is the same, however, the formation of these groups is based on their own social, political, national, cultural and regional interests, co-existing with an increasingly monopolizing government.⁵

Some of the parties in the region have been organized on ethnic and inter-republican line, incorporating the ideal of pan-Turkism, such as the Turkistan Party in Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan, and Erk (freedom) of Uzbekistan. Others were founded on a single issue, such as Ashar of Kyrgyzstan, which has been advocating large-scale land distribution. Some others are concerned with the substance and method of government. The

³ Saltmashe Douglas, "Civil society and sustainable development in Central Asia," *Central Asian Survey*, Oxford: Vol.15, Nos.3-4, 1996, p.391.

⁴ Haghayeghi Mehrdad, "Islamic revival in the Central Asian Republics", *Central Asian Survey* (Oxford), Vol.13, No.2, 1994, p.253.

⁵ Tadjbaksh Shahrbanou, "National reconstitution: the imperfect whim", *Central Asian Survey* Oxford: Vol.15, Nos..3-4, 1996, p.325

Islamic as well as the democratic parties belong to this latter category of political parties/organizations which have great potential of influencing the future course of action in the republics.

There are three types of political parties in the region.

(i) Ruling Parties

The Republic of Kazakhstan is presently ruled by “The People’s Unity Party of Kazakhstan”. Its objective is to establish a democratic society with a socially-oriented market economy, strengthening the real sovereignty of the people. Further, it aims at working towards international treaties and for social, inter-ethnic harmony through establishing political stability.

In Uzbekistan the ruling party is the “People’s Democratic Party”. It emphasises upon the principle of law and order in order to keep the nation out of bounds of extreme nationalism—in other words, Islamic fundamentalism.

(ii) Pro-Government Political Parties

There are two pro-Government political parties in Kazakhstan. The first is the “People’s Congress of Kazakhstan”, which advocates anti-nuclear status and seeks the establishment of a state united on the basis of humane democratic principles, and to be ruled independently and legally. Finally, it is in support of political pluralism rather than a single party system. The second is the “Republican Party of Kazakhstan”, which supports the reform

programme and the foreign policy course of the government led by the president of the republic. The “Vatan Tarakkiyet Party” in Uzbekistan proclaims itself to be pro-Government keeping in mind the country’s well-being.

(iii) Independent Political Parties

There are a lot of political parties which are working independently in the region. The republic-wise (Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan) independent political parties are noted below:

Kazakhstan: There are five major parties in the Republic of Kazakhstan: (a) Democratic Party of Kazakhstan, an independent party, lays emphasis on improvement and reforms through which the state could seek, in course of time, both stability and development that ensures high standard of living for all people of the country; (b) The Socialist Party of Kazakhstan reflects consistently the defence and the interests of all working people. Moreover, it identifies with market method of economy plus welfare-oriented state economy; (c) The Revival of Kazakhstan Party underlines the moral and spiritual tenets of the population. The party wants to base the state with socially-oriented market economy through which, it believes, it is possible to create a civil society and a law-governed state; (d) The People’s Cooperative Party has in its manifesto the establishment of a civil society and implementation of citizen’s rights and freedoms, as also and strengthening of

law and order. It also carries the interests of the both peasantry and the co-operatives, thus, giving an impression of being an agrarian party, and (e) the Communist Party which upholds the principles of scientific socialism, freedom and social justice and common human values.

Uzbekistan: In the Republic of Uzbekistan also, there are five major parties:

(a) The Islamic Revival Party which aspires to see the nation under Islam, in which religious education, economic principles of Islam and also the role of women as mothers and preservers of “home and hearth”, will become the characteristic of their deemed state; (b) the Birlik (Unity) which in particular, envisages a state in which the natural, material and spiritual values are to be the supreme governing principles of state; (c) the Erk (Freedom) party stands for political and economic reforms. Both Birlik and Erk are banned in the republic, carrying on their activities clandestinely; (d) the National Revival Democratic Party talks about political, economic, educational and cultural prosperity and national consciousness of the Republic. It plays special attention to rearing a lofty sense of internationalism and nationalism through values common to all human kind; and (e) the Communist party which believes in, and wants to retain the old order.

So both the nations had faced a political change with various political organisations, parties, interest groups and the changing role of media.

Political, parties interest groups and role of media: Political Parties and Movements in Kazakhan:

Parties on both the rights and left of the political spectrum do not exert any serious influences on the republic. Most of the population are politically passive. Opposition groups began to form in 1987, predominantly from Russian-speaking 'informal clubs'. The national movements in Kazakhstan proceeds with caution. However, after Nazarbaev and his team came to power, activities of political organizations and the independent press were restricted. In October 1991 the people's congress party was created, and it was then that Nazarbayev's political sympathizers came to the fore. In general all the political forces in Kazakhstan, except the revived Communist Party and the liberal wing of social democrats, are supportive of Nazarbaev's declared course of slow economic reform and the preservation of a considerable degree of state regulation.

Though the appearance of the political parties/groups on the political scene of Kazakhstan had started owing to the various movements which took place in the republic after mid-1988. In January 1996, the Justice ministry of Kazakhstan registered the constitutions of eight political parties; These were:

1. The Socialist Party of Kazakhstan:

The largest political organization in the republic is the socialist party of Kazakhstan, formed in 1991 on the basis of the Communist party, and declaring itself its successor, the party officially registered in October 1999.

The party has 1586 primary organizations with 55,000 members. It advocates 'consistent democratic reforms, social progress, inter ethnic and civil consent'. In their programme of economic transformation the socialists support the market method of economy. However it is not social in the classical understanding of the term. The important task before the party is to raise the status of workers engaged in intellectual labour, engineers, doctors, teachers, scientists and activists in the field of culture. In 1994 parliamentary elections, party members were nominated in fifty five electoral districts. However, they won only twelve seats: eight on party lists and four in single mandate districts. According to Olcott, by the end of the 1995, only 7 percent of both Kazakhs and Russians had heard about the party.⁶

2. The Communist Party of Kazakhstan:

The Communist party of Kazakhstan (CPK) was formed in the autumn of 1991. Its 40,000 Members, mainly some former members of the earlier CP consider this period as the time of 'reestablishment' of the self-dissolved former communist party and regard themselves as its successors. The party was officially registered on 28th February 1994. According to its first secretary, Serikbolysn Abdildin: there are ten sympathizers for each party member'. The party disapproves of Nazarbayev's policies, viewing them as leading to dependence on the western imperialist states and impoverishment

⁶ Martha Brill Olcott, "Democratization and the growth of political participation in Kazakhstan," in Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott, (eds.) *Conflict, Cleavage and Change in Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Cambridge, 1997, p.211.

of the masses.’ Its relations with the Socialist party, which also consists of former communists, are strained and unfriendly. On the eve of the celebration of the 80th anniversary of the October revolution, Abdildin stated that ‘the communists of Kazakhstan have not lost hope in the ideals of socialism and communism returning and pledged to use all peaceful means towards realizing that end. The main goal of the party, as laid down in its constitution, is to advance towards a society of freedom and social justice, founded on the basis of the principles of scientific socialism and priority of common human values.’⁷

3. **People’s unity party of Kazakhstan:**

On 25th March 1995, in the third congress of the union for popular unity of Kazakhstan, the party of popular unity of Kazakhstan (PNEK) was created. Its name was changed while earlier it was registered as Union of People's Party of Kazakhstan (SNKN) in 1993. The (SNEK) has its branches in all the nineteen regions of the country. The SNEK has 800 primary organizations with a total membership of 28,000 in the country. The main aim of the party, as listed in its manifesto, is to assist in every possible way the establishment of a democratic society with a socially oriented market economy and political pluralism, reaffirming the real sovereignty of republic and supporting the international treaties and accords and working for social, inter-ethnic harmony and political stability. The people’s unity party is led by

⁷ Askar Zh. Shomanov, “Social modernization of Kazakh society”, *Contemporary Central Asia*, New Delhi, Vol.1, No.1, 1997, p.15.

Kuanysh Sultanov. In the elections of parliament the party supported fifty four candidates for the Majlis, of whom thirty six were registered by the Central Election Commission. In the elections, twenty four candidates won on the support of the party, eleven of whom were its own members. Six members of the SNRN were elected as Senators.⁸

In its structure, SNEK resembles the old communist party and that is why it is unofficially known as the nomenkhatura alliance of Kazakhstan. This irony is not groundless, because the first congress of the alliance elected Kuanysh Sultanov, the former head of the ideological department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party as chairman of the political council of Alliance.

A proposal to transform the Alliance into a political party was raised at the congress, but this has not yet been supported by a majority of members. This is partly explicable by the fact that president Nazarbaev was involved in the creation of SNEK, actually heading the association. However, according to the constitution the president cannot be a member of any political organization.

For example, at the press conference held after the first congress, they had to withstand a sharp attack from both journalists and the public figures in the republic. Specially, Leonid Solomin, the leader of the independent trade union centre, who spoke openly about SNEK's attempts to 'monopolize'

⁸ Ibid., p.13.

president Nazarbayev as its leader. It was also said that due to its composition SNEK occupies an obviously privileged position among other political organizations and enjoys financial privileges.

Meanwhile, Nazarbaev has not concealed his attitude towards SNEK, and his plans concerning the role the alliance might play. Speaking on television immediately after the end of the first congress of the organization, he described SNEK as an alliance of the people 'who endeavour to embody the ideas of consolidation of the people's of Kazakhstan and accelerate the market reforms.' Nazarbaev also stated openly and unambiguously that 'Every honest citizen of the republic of Kazakhstan must become a SNEK member.'⁹

4. Democratic Party of Kazakhstan:

The democratic party of Kazakhstan (DPK) was created at the founding congress held on 1 July 1995 and registered on 31st August 1995. The party is formed on territorial basis. Its regional structure is formed by primary, district, city and regional party organizations which cover all the 19 regions of the country. The DPK has the membership of 15,000. The DPK is a party that is committed to reform and views it as a means for achieving and ensuring firmness and stability of development of Kazakhstan with a high living standard for the common people. In the Second (pre election congress)

⁹ N.I. Petrov and M.S., Gafarly, *The course towards political stability*, New York, M.E. Sharpe 1998, p. 181.

held on 20 October 1995 the democrats sponsored 30 candidates for the Majlis and 19 for the senate. Five members of the party become senators and twelve party supported candidates were elected to the Majlis of whom seven were the members of the party.¹⁰

5. The People's Congress of Kazakhstan

The People's Congress of Kazakhstan (NKK), was established before the August Coup as an opposition to socialist party (the former Communist Party). The founding congress held on 5 October 1991, and it was officially registered on 31 December 1991. The People's Congress of Kazakhstan is a liberal democratic party. Its manifesto is based on the credo of political pluralism. It draws support from other nationalities, including the Russians.¹¹

The NKK is headed by Olzhas Suleimenov and Mukhtar Shakhanov. It has its branches in eighteen regions with the sole exception of west Kazakhstan. The party has adopted anti-nuclear-campaign as its main agenda and enjoys considerable support among the masses. Its other objectives include the promotion of a humane democratic society and an independent and legally-governed unitary state. The political aim of the party is to achieve power through parliamentary means. The exact number of the membership of the party is not available. Though it has been assumed around 5,000 members and upto 30 MP's support its position in parliament. It supported twenty-three

¹⁰ Askar Zh. Shomanov, op. cit., p.15.

¹¹ Nuri Hasan Maqsudul, "Kazakhstan challenges of nation building", *Regional Studies* Islamabad, Vol.15, No.3, Summer, 1997, p.101.

candidates for elections to the Parliament (Majlis), including ten from the Movement Navada-Semipalatinsk. However, it managed to win just one seat. The party lends support to the Kazakh President, Nazarbayev.¹²

6. The Revival of Kazakhstan Party

The Revival of Kazakhstan Party came about at the founding Congress held on 27 November 1995. The party has its organizations in all the nineteen regions of the Republic with a membership of about 5,000. The party basically aims to ensure moral and spiritual rebirth of the population. On the basis of these principles, the party considers it possible to create a civil society and law-governed state with a socially-oriented market economy. An extraordinary congress of the party was held on 23 October 1995, when it proposed its election platform. It supported twenty-five candidates for the Majlis.¹³

7. The People's Co-operative Party

The People's Co-operative Party of Kazakhstan was founded on 15 December 1994 at the first party congress, and was officially registered on 20 February 1995. The Party draws its support from all the nineteen regions of Kazakhstan, and has 1223 primary party organizations. On the basis of individual membership, the party has more than 42,000 members. The main aims of the party are the establishment of a civil society; implementation of citizen's rights and freedom, and strengthening of the law based order. The

¹² Askar Zh shomanov, op.cit., p.14.

¹³ Ibid., p.14.

People's Co-operative Party is basically an agrarian party which works towards the integration and protection of the interests of the peasantry and the co-operatives. The second congress of the party, held on 13 October 1995, confirmed its election platform, and supported twenty-one candidates for the Majlis. The party won one seat each for the Majlis and the Senate.

8. The Republican Party of Kazakhstan

The Republican Party of Kazakhstan (RPK) was established on 22 November 1992, and was officially registered on 26 December in the same year. The RPK has its branches in all the regions of the country. It is a more moderate nationalist party that split from the Azat in October 1992.¹⁴ The Party has toned down its nationalist rhetoric and chosen to support the policies of President Nazarbayev over the explosive ethnic situation in the Republic's north. It claims a membership of about 17,000 people. The RPK is the only registered organization which claims to represent the interests of the Kazakh people. The RPK supports the programme of reform and the foreign policy course of the President and the government of the Republic. At the same time it criticizes the unpopular decision of the government, resulting in impoverishment of a section of population, particularly the agricultural and small property holders.¹⁵

The process of formation of new parties in Kazakhstan is not yet over. It would, therefore, be premature to talk about a fully-developed party system.

¹⁴ Nuri Hasan Maqsudul, *op.cit.*, p.100.

¹⁵ Askar Zh. Shomanov, *op.cit.*, p.15.

Uzbekistan

The process of democratization in Uzbekistan after 1989 was marked by ethnic disturbances between the Uzbeks and the Tajiks and other ethnic minorities. This led to a shake-up of Uzbek party hierarchy. Following these changes Islam Karimov was appointed First Secretary of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan. After becoming Party Secretary, Karimov adopted the slogans of nationalism and democracy. Due to the policy of openness, various social and political groups started taking part in mobilising public opinion. Perhaps it was the first exercise of democratic political participation in the heart of Central Asia. Some of the political parties and groups formed during the period under study are described in the following pages.

1. People's Democratic Party

In October 1990, Islam Karimov was elected as President of Uzbekistan and on 20th June 1991, he declared Uzbek republics sovereignty. Karimov separated himself from the CPSU and the Soviet State. He co-opted aspects of Islamic ideas into his speeches and gave official space and legitimacy to some of the clergies. After the August coup of 1991, the Communist Party of Uzbekistan was dissolved and was renamed as the People's Democratic Party of Uzbekistan (PDP) on 1 November 1991.¹⁶

¹⁶ Shahram Akbarzadeh. "Nation building in Uzbekistan", *Central Asian Survey*, Oxford, Vol.15, No.1, 1996, pp.25-26.

PDP has 300,000 members and 12,000 primary organizations. It is much more powerful than any other party in the Republic. President Karimov also belongs to PDP. The Party has its support base throughout the country. It has adopted the slogan “principle and order” with the aim of saving the nation from both extreme nationalism and Islamic fundamentalism.

2. The Islamic-Revival Party

The Islamic Revival Party (IRP) was established in the middle of 1990, and was headed by Abdullah Uttayev. The Party has its branches in all republics of Central Asia, except Kyrgyzstan. The objective of the IRP is to revive the ideals of Islam. The main aim of the party is the creation of an Islamic republic. This aim, however, has placed the Party on an inevitable collision course with the governments of the Central Asian Republics. The IRP is an anti-government political organization.

The publicly proclaimed programme of All Union IRP was based on the recipe of peaceful transformation. The organization claimed it would operate by constitutional methods and it openly condemned the practice of terrorism, extremism, and all forms of discrimination. It also advocated equality between believers and non-believers. Its “Islamic” inclination is confined to support for religious education and scholarship, introduction of

“the economic principles of Islam” and reinforcement of women’s role as mothers and preservers of “the home and hearth”.¹⁷

3. The Vatan Tarakkiyet Party

The Vatan Tarakkiyet Party is also known as “Progress Homeland”. The Party was founded on 26 May 1992, and was officially registered in the same year as the legal and constructive opposition party. The main difference between People’s Democratic Party of Uzbekistan and Vatan Tarakkiyet is that the latter calls for a faster pace for economic reforms and creation of favourable conditions for the development of small and medium-sized business.¹⁸ The Party was created to replace the ‘Erk’. The constituency of the party is the intelligentsia, entrepreneurs and young people, who are attracted by the ideals of national unity and liberalism of the party’s founders.¹⁹

The Vatan Tarakkiyet, rival of the People’s Democratic Party of the Republic claimed a membership of 35,000 on the eve of the parliamentary elections in December 1994.²⁰ The Party’s primary slogan, however, is not

¹⁷ William Fireman, *Political development in Uzbekistan: democratization?*, in Karen Dawisha and Bruce parott, (eds.), *Conflict, cleavage and change in Central Asia and Caucasus*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, p.375.

¹⁸ “Democracy: Election campaign begins in Uzbekistan”, *Sevodnya*. 11 November 1994, p.4; Cited in *Current digest of Post Soviet Press*, Vol.XLVI, No.45, 7 December 1994, p.21.

¹⁹ *Human development report, Uzbekistan 1997* (UNDP Report; Tashkent), 1997, p.29.

²⁰ Shahram Akbarzadeh, *op.cit.*, pp.26-27.

“the struggle for power” but rather co-operation with the government for the country’s well being.²¹

4. Birlik

Birlik started as a social and cultural organization having strong links with the Uzbek literary circles. It was established in November 1988, by a group of intellectuals, primarily writes. The Birlik (Unity) Movement was established for the preservation of Uzbekistan’s natural, material and spiritual riches.²²

The followers of the Birlik Movement advocate greater attention to the Uzbek Cultural heritage; the Uzbek language being the most important issue on their agenda.²³ The Birlik, headed by Professor Abdurakhim Pulatov enjoys a respectable following. The Party’s activities has virtually restricted since 1992 and its leadership is being frequently prosecuted. Birlik claimed 500,000 supports in December 1991. The programme of the Movement include:

- i. Revival of cultural heritage of the Uzbeks and other peoples of the Republic;
- ii. Replacement of the Soviet-period names of places with historical equivalents;

²¹ William Fireman, op.cit., p.389.

²² Ahmad Hasan Dani, *New light on Central Asia*, Delhi, 1993, p.96.

²³ Shahram Akbarzadeh, op.cit., p.24.

- iii. Publicity of the activities and programmes of several organizations banned in 1930s; and
- iv. Introduction of Arabic script in Uzbek schools.²⁴

The Movement has also formulated many programmes for social and economic development of the Uzbek society.

5. Erk

Erk came into existence following a split in Birlik in February 1990. It was headed by a Uzbek poet and secretary of the writers union, Mohammed Salih.²⁵ In December 1991, the party had 3000 members. In Uzbekistan, the two opposition democratic parties known as Erk and Birlik are pressing for political and economic reforms since 1989-90. The 'Erk' always has been in the forefront of the democratic struggle. Due to the critical nature and speed of democratic reforms, the Erk has openly opposed the present leadership structure which is believed to have retained too many of the old communist *apparatchiks*.

From the point of view of intensity and reach of political mobilization, Uzbekistan stands out as the most important Central Asian State. The two opposition parties, Erk and Birlik, were essentially socio-cultural organizations. Later they assumed the role of opposition to the ruling party.

²⁴ Ahmad Hasan Dani, op.cit., p.96.

²⁵ Shahram Akbarzadeh, op.cit., p.24.

The followers of Erk and Birlik were suppressed, like those of Adolat and Islamic Revival Party, by Uzbek authorities for their extremist activities. So there is no chance of new groups in the Republic at least coming into open. Abdurakhim Pulatov of 'Birlik' lives in exile. The leader of IRP, Abdullah Utaev has been in prison.

6. The National Revival Democratic Party

The National Revival (Milly-Tiklanish) Democratic Party (NRDP) was formed in May 1995. The main aims of the party are "to serve the political, economic, educational and cultural prosperity of our state, promote the revival of the nation growth of national consciousness and pay special attention to inculcating a lofty sense of internationalism as well as to propagating a national revival based on values common to all mankind." It also included objectives of building a law-based and democratic stability and increasing the state's scientific and technical potential.²⁶

7. The Communist Party

At the end of the 1991, Islam Karimov had banned the Communist Party of Uzbekistan, which renamed itself as the People's Democratic Party. But in spite of all these some of its conservative (hard-core) members retained their position as earlier. The party believes in the old Communist order. The

²⁶ New political parties to be set up in Uzbekistan, Pravdavostaka, 25 May, p.1: *Summary of World Broadcast*, Part-1, 27 May 1995, p.su/2314G2314G/1.

number of its membership is not available. But the Party does not have much importance in the Republic.

The Uzbek Government passed a new law related to political parties which came into force on 7 January 1997. The law prohibits political parties based on ethnic or religious affiliations and those advocating the subversion of constitutional order. Further, the parties would be obliged to submit details of at least 5,000 members, spread over eight provinces. Recognized parties would have the right to contest elections, publish newspapers and establish parliamentary and local groups.²⁷

It is not the first time when Uzbek authorities have taken such strict measures against the opposition parties in the country. Even in the middle of March 1992, Karimov crushed the Islamic self-government in Uzbekistan's Namangan region and imprisoned a number of leaders and activists of the fundamentalist Adolat organization.²⁸

The ban is not only a flagrant violation of citizen's right to form public associations, but also a violation of the Republic's own Constitution. As such, both Birlik (Unity) and Erk (Freedom), while technically legal organizations, are essentially unable to operate freely.

The well-known American human rights organization, *Helsinki Watch*, expressed its concern for the safety of the political parties, and anxiety over

²⁷ "Law on political parties," *Keesings record of world events*, Vol. 43, No.1, p.414-52.

²⁸ Hetmanek Allen, "Islamic revolution and Jihad come to the former soviet central asia: the case of Tajikistan," *Central Asian Survey*, Oxford, Vol. 12, No.3, 1993, p.374.

the brutal attack on their leaders. The freedom of speech and the ability to hold peaceful rallies are not allowed. In February 1990, a decree was issued forbidding rallies and demonstrations “in the open air”. Accordingly, the Uzbek authorities have imposed serious restrictions on political activities by independent groups and political parties.²⁹

The inability to engage in legal activity and the lack of freedom of the press are blocking the normal development of democratic institutions in the Republic. At the same time the deteriorating socio-economic situation in the state, on the one hand, and the authorities policy of “tightening the screws,” on the other, could eventually lead to a major explosion.

(ii) Interest Groups

A “Group” is defined as an informal or formal association of individuals who are linked together by common concerns, are aware of their bonds, and who act together for their advantage. The group theory of politics has been summarized by Harry Eckstein as follows:

Politics is the process by which social values are authoritatively allocated; this is done by decision that are produced by activities; each activity is not something separate from the other, but masses of activity have common tendencies in regard to decisions; these masses of activity are

²⁹ “Uzbekistan,” Helsinki Watch writes to president Karimov, *Current Digest of Post Soviet Press*, Vol.44, No.37, in October 1992, p.24.

groups; so the struggle between groups (or interests) determines what decisions are taken.³⁰

Political process is very tentative and subject to revision. Contesting groups outside the circle of groups in power are trying to get entry and there is continuous manipulation and negotiation among those on the inside over control of government and allocation of resources and values through it.³¹

For the establishment of political pluralism, the presence of the interest groups in their various form is must. It is known from universal practice that the interest groups are essential for all the activities of political parities, and the political system of any country functions on their basis. The presence of 'interest group' in any country strengthens the entire political system.³²

After the introduction of the Gorbachev's reforms in the Soviet system, the interest groups had started to emerge in the Central Asian republics. The formation of various groups in the region varies from republic to republic, because they are outcome of their own socio-political, national, cultural and regional interests, which are trying to influence the government of their respective country. Some of the major groups which are working in the region, are given below:

³⁰ Harry Eckstein, "Group theory and comparative study of pressure groups" in Harry Eckstein and Apter E. David., (eds.), *comparative politics: A Reader*, New York, 1963, p.39

³¹ Ibid., p.39

³² Askar Zh Shomanov, op.cit., p.16.

Kazakhstan

There are various groups in the Kazak Republic e.g., Azat, Jeltokhsan and Alash. Azat is a civic movement, established in the summer of 1990. The Kazakh community accepted it at the time when it became the champion for the cause of internationalism. It was by and large the most popular movement, and worked as a channel of communication between the government and the common masses. Azat has always opposed a violent approach to inter-ethnic relations. After getting mass support, it established its regional branches in most of the oblasts in Kazakhstan, and recruited members from Ukrainian Tatars, Germans and Chechens.³³

The Azat Party of Kazakhstan has its strength in urban areas. It calls for cultural and linguistic supremacy and complete decolonization of the country. It has got split thrice since 1991, and this, to an extent, has adversely affected its popularity.³⁴

Jeltokhsan, was officially registered on 29 March 1990, and is headed by a former anti-Communist activist, Hasen Akhmedov. Jeltokhsan is more radical in attitude than the Azat. It nurtures anti-Russian attitude, and has been pressing for the voluntary emigration of the Russians from the Republic. With

³³ Janabel Jiger, "When national ambition conflicts with reality: study on Kaghakstan's ethnic relations", *Central Asian Survey*, Oxford, Vol. 15, No.1 1996, p.16

³⁴ Nuri Hasan Maqsudul, *op.cit.*, p.100.

its emphasis on Islam, and anti-Russian stance, it has not been able to garner any mass following so far.³⁵

The group initially aimed at an official rehabilitation for the victims of the December demonstration in 1986. It has been insistently demanding that the government should respond to public demand for an enquiry commission. It provoked fierce protests from the Slavic communities for its radical move against them. Following the hasty removal of Dzherzinsky's statue from the centre of Almaty, it began to aim at the Russian community with such slogans as: "Kazakhstan for the Kazakhs and Russia for the Russians".³⁶ As the Jeltokhsan initiated confrontation with Nazarbayev's government, it was doomed to suffer a serious setback. Eventually, it was denied registration due to its policy towards inter-ethnic relations.

The Kazakh nationalist group, Alash, was created in April 1990 by Aron Atabek and Bolatbek Akhmet Ali. The Alash recruited members mostly from the participants of the December riots. Its extreme views were totally different from original Alash Party (1905-1920).³⁷ It adopted the slogan like "Islam, Turkish, Democracy" and its political agenda supported the expulsion of Russians from Kazakhstan. Alash believed that violence was the only effective way to reach the final goal, which is to restore the independent Islamic state of Alash – Orda (1917-1921), which will include all the Turkic

³⁵ Ibid., p.101.

³⁶ Janabel Jiger, *op.cit.*, p.16

³⁷ Ibid.

peoples living in CIS. In January 1992, Alash was indicted for violence against the Mufti of Kazakhstan, Ratbek Nysanbayev. The members of the Alash were charged for holding unauthorized rallies. Many members of Azat and Jeltokhsan were also arrested because of campaigning in front of Presidential Palace to demand the government's resignation. Alash accused Nazarbaev for disrespecting Kazakh nationalism.

The Alash Party acts as an opposition movement, and is critical of the Nazarbayev regime in Kazakhstan. The party attaches importance to Kazakh culture and traditions. Kazakhstan's national and economic resources remain its major concern. The Party accords to Islam a special place and role in the country.³⁸

However, Kazakh community's support to the Alash Party did not last long, mainly because the people did not approve of the irrational approach adopted by the Alash and Jeltokhsan. Eventually, when people's enthusiasm for these nationalists groups started declining, President Nazabayev took the opportunity of taking strong action against them; on 24 June 1992, both Alash and Jeltokshan were disbanded.

There were some Pro-Russian groups in the Republic. Edinstvo (unity) was created to promote Russian culture. But its registration was rejected due to its Russian nationalist stance.³⁹ The Union of Popular Unity of Kazakhstan

³⁸ Nuri Hassan Maqsudul, op.cit, p.100.

³⁹ Ian Bremmer and Cory Welt, "The trouble with democracy in Kazakhstan", *Central Asian Survey*, Vol.15, No.2, 1996, p.186.

(UPUK) was founded in February 1993. It held its first congress on 12 October 1993, but failed to attract support of the Russian Community. Like Edinstvo, other Russian organizations such as the Congress of Russian Communities (VRC), Russian Communities of North Kazakhstan, and Kazachesvo, do not enjoy wide support of the Russian masses. These groups were not able to spread their ideologies among Russians in Kazakhstan. The social movement known as LAD (Slavic Rebirth Society), was headed by V. Mikhaylov. Even this groups was not accepted by the Slavic people. Within the Slavic population the support developed on ethnic lines. The Ukrainians prefer Kazakhs rather than joining hands with the Russians. But the Byelorussians have remained loyal to the Russians.

Besides these groups and movements, there are also some more groups in the Republic. For example, the Akzhailyk Movement which was formed in May 1995, has soldiers, and even aged women as its members. The Movement wants to “prevent Military, interethnic, religious and social conflicts and to preserve people’s lives and health”⁴⁰

The Women and Law Movement, also known as the third society of lawyers in Kazakhstan, is committed to making women’s legal rights a reality and to help develop a mechanism to defend women’s rights and interest.

⁴⁰ “New political party and two organizations registered”, *Kazakhstankaya Pravada*, 27 May 1995; Cited in *Summary of World Broadcast*, Part-1, 1 June 1995, p.54/23184/1.

Uzbekistan

Till late 1989, there were no informal organizations in Uzbekistan besides Birlik which was a large and powerful group. But later, another group named "Intersoiuz" arose to protect the interest of the non-indigenous nationalities, especially the Slavs. Intersoiuz was created as an initiative group in August 1989. However, some Birlik leaders believed that the group was an invention of KGB, the Soviet Intelligence Agency. In any case it had a natural constituency among Uzbekistan's Slavs, many of whom feared the emergence of "nationalism", vividly portrayed in the Republic's press. Another group, the Democratic Movement of Uzbekistan (DMU), also became active in late 1989. It never gained substantial membership, but was known for its support to political reform. On the whole the group's approach was balanced keeping view the interests of various nationalities on the issues of language and culture. It adopted a middle path between Birlik and Intersoiuz.⁴¹

A number of violent incidents took place in the country in the spring of 1990, which encouraged Islam Karimov to pursue a more restrictive policy towards independent political groups, especially with regard to their involvement in public demonstrations. Violence broke out in May 1990 in Ferghana valley city of Andijan, and in early June in the nearby Osh oblast

⁴¹ William Fireman, *op.cit.*, p.370.

(Kyrgyz SSR). The violence that erupted in Osh oblast was serious and developed into a conflict between Uzbek and Kyrgyz.

Other organizations like the Samarkand Society came into being with political goals. Formed in 1991, it was committed to promote cultural interests of the Tajik population in the Samarkand area. The Milley Majlis was founded in May 1992 by a political dissident of the Soviet era, Babur Shakirov. The aim of the group is to coordinate with opposition organizations, and serve as an alternate parliament.

In 1995, President Karimov relaxed political controls and opened opportunities for meaningful political participation by opposition forces. In his speech to the new Oily Majlis (Parliament), Karimov called for new laws in order to expand the rights of public associations, foundations and unions. Because of these relaxations, a new organization known as Adalat Social Democratic Party (ASDP) was formed under the leadership of deputy Anvar Jorabayev, the editor of the government newspaper *Khalq Sozi*.⁴² The founders members of the Party include scientific and technical intelligentsia and employees of state structures. The party professes social-democratic ideals and believes in the principle of social justice.⁴³ Besides, there are some pro-government semi-official organizations, such as the Youth Union, the Federation of Trade Councils, the Women's Committee, and Society of

⁴² Ibid., p.391.

⁴³ *Human development report: Uzbekistan*, 1997, No.23, p.29.

Invalids; all these have close relations with the People's Democratic Party of Uzbekistan, and all have agreed to support PDP's candidates in elections.

The Movement Khalq Birlik (People's Unity) was formed in May 1995. It is a pro-government organization. The primary goals of the Movement are listed as the unity of the people, social and political stability and increasing the role of the intelligentsia.⁴⁴

In addition to the above parties/movements, there are also some of the political associations e.g. the Islamic Democratic Party (IDP) and the People's Front of Uzbekistan (PFU). The Islamic Democratic Party, which was established in 1988, pursues fundamentalist objectives. It has its support-base in the Tashkent region. The People's Front of Uzbekistan is a radical Islamic organization which supports a creation of an Islamic State.

Before the disintegration of the erstwhile Soviet Union, the media was regarded as an instrument of propaganda of political leadership rather than a source of information for the public. But after the introduction of 'glasnost' Soviet print and electronic media were permitted to address various problems that were actually present, but whose very existence had previously been denied.

⁴⁴ "New movement formally set up" *Summary of world broadcast*, Part-1, 30 May, 1995, p.54/23164/6.

The law of the USSR on the press and other news media, which came into effect from 1 August 1990, was the first law related to media in the entire history of the USSR. The Law provided for the promotion of openness and pluralism of opinion in the Soviet press.

To some extent the Central Asian countries, accepted the spirit of Perestroika and glasnost and guaranteed democratic norms at least in their newly formed constitutions. The media currently is playing a greater role in Central Asian politics. Hence it is crucially important to examine the role of media in the policies of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.

Changing Role of Media:

An important condition for a smooth political process in any country is the freedom of the means of mass communication. While the freedom of media in Kazakhstan has been under restriction, there still exist numerous independent media sources in the Republic. In Kazakhstan, more than 600 local newspapers and magazines are published in Kazakh, Russian, German, Ukrainian, Uighur, Korean and Uzbek languages, with an annual circulation of about 590 million copies. The official state publications of the country are Yegemen Kazakhstan which started publication on 17 December 1919, with a circulation of 55,000, and Kazakhstanskaya Pravda, which started from 1 January 1920, with almost the same amount of circulation as the former. Radio programmes in Kazakhstan are broadcast in six languages. The

television programmes cover more than 90 percent of the population. Although the television and radio of Kazakhstan give more than 200 different programmes, yet under the Constitution of the Republic, freedom of mass information is undermined within the framework of the basic law of the country.⁴⁵

All television and radio facilities, alongwith printing facilities and supplies, are owned by the Government of the Republic. As with social organizations, media organs are free to criticize the government to a surprising degree, but as long as they do not foster ethnic discontent. Newspapers with questionable content have found themselves without easy access to paper or printers, while blatantly intolerant ones, such as Kazakhs nationalist *Kazakhstanskaya, Pravda* and *Orda* have been banned. In one incident, two television news correspondents from Russia were denied entry for television facilities and their Kazakh press cards were revoked. They were prevented from transmitting further report to Moscow after broadcasting a story regarding the difficulties that were being faced by ethnic Russians in independent Kazakhstan. Following an uproar in the Russian press, which was spurred by Gunkin's arrests, the government threatened to clamp down on foreign Journalists investigative freedom.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Askar Zh. Shomanov, *op.cit.*, pp.15-16.

⁴⁶ Ian Bremmer and Cory Welt, *op.cit.*, p.187.

In the weeks before elections of March 1994, the press suffered serious restrictions and was unable to criticize violations. Following an attack on electoral procedures, Max, a popular independent Television and Radio company was shut down. A number of newspapers were forced to stop printing, because of paper shortage and mechanical problems at the state-owned printing facilities. Reports of intimidation of independent journalist were heard in several cities.⁴⁷

Uzbekistan

After introduction of Gorbachev's policy of glasnost in the Soviet system, the Uzbek authorities provided relative freedom in the field of mass communication in the late 1980s. But this relative freedom of the press quickly began to erode. At the end of the 1990, the Uzbek government appointed censor.

The new censor, however, permitted no direct criticism of the government and in the process had to stop some papers being published by various opposition parties and movements. The same thing happened with all the state-run newspapers and coincided with a crackdown on the political opposition. The situation was similar to the Brezhnev period.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Ibid., p.188.

⁴⁸ Tyson David, "The role of unofficial audio media in contemporary uzbekistan", *Central Asian Survey*, Oxford, Vol.13, No.2, 1994, p.283.

Due to government pressure the opposition is forced to curtail its activities. Eventually, the newspapers *Munosobat* ceased operation, and *Erk* in the face of strict censorship, had to drastically reduce its circulation; it was intermittently banned from public sale. *Mustaqil Haftalik* was also forced to stop printing, but presently it is printed in Moscow and is illegally brought into Uzbekistan for distribution. Organizations and newspapers such as *Mustaqil Haftalik* and *Erk* served to present the public with ‘alternative’ information which, going by the condition laid down by the government, could not be obtained from the official government-controlled media – e.g. from the government newspaper *Khalq*. The non-government newspapers documented local events and trends which received no coverage by the official press.

In 1991, the Uzbek authorities adopted a law on the mass media and also restricted the opposition to gather support. Article 2 of the law prescribed censorship, and other provisions were vague enough to provide for prosecution of a very broad range of offenses. Article 4 prohibited “use of mass media to propagandize war, violence, cruelty or racial, national or religious exclusivity, to disseminate pornography, or for the purpose of committing other criminally punishable actions.”⁴⁹ The law provided for suspending all institutional activities for repeated violations of requirements stipulated by Article 10. It guaranteed the right to established mass-media, registered political parties, public associations, and religious associations (Art

⁴⁹ William Fireman, *op.cit.*, p.376.

5). Significantly, in contrast to the analogous all-union law adopted by Soviet authority in 1990, Uzbekistan's Government did not give individuals the right to establish mass media.

The Birlik publication *Mustaqil Haftalik*, which was never available on subscription to anyone, was also subjected to new interference. In 1992, all the editions of the publication (published in Moscow) were being confiscated by the Tashkent authority. Local authorities all over the country were able to prevent publication in their jurisdictions, even without citing political reasons. By the end of 1992, the risks increased for anyone who might try to issue publications without official permission. Uzbekistan's Criminal Code was supplemented with an article threatening violators with heavy fines and confiscation of equipment.⁵⁰

The government controls all forms of mass media, and is completely intolerant of any independent political activity. Even the Uzbek Vice-President, Shukrulla Mirsaidov, was subjected to prosecution. In January 1993, he faced criminal charges, believed to have been fabricated by President, Islam Karimov, to dislodge a potentially powerful rival. Internationally, Uzbekistan had been criticized for the violation of human rights, but Karimov's Government paid little attention to such condemnations.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Ibid., p.386.

⁵¹ Shahram Akbarzadeh, *op.cit.*, p.26.

In the late 1992, the Uzbek Government tightened censorship not only of their own news media but also of Russian publications that were printed on a decentralized basis in Tashkent and were distributed from there throughout the Republic and to neighboring regions of other republics. The local censors are on duty every evening in the print shop of the SHARK publishing and printing concern. This vigil is by no means innocuous: after reading through the pages of *Izvestia*, *Pravda*, *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, *Argumenty-i-Fakty*, and other publications transmitted from Moscow by facsimile, they simply impose a veto until a matter is cleared by “higher-up”.⁵²

By the second half of the 1996, there were no signs of control upon the mass media being relaxed. Karimov continued to deal with his political opponents in a threatening fashion. In early November 1996, the son of former Vice-President, Shukrulla Mirsaidov, was kidnapped at gunpoint. This was followed by a court order threatening Mirsaidov and his sons with forcible eviction, if they did not vacate their homes voluntarily within a week. These and other recent events do not inspire hope that the blueprints for Uzbekistan’s new future has undergone any major change from the past.⁵³

In Uzbekistan despite the constitutional provisions for a free mass media, censorship has continued. The newspapers and journals, run by

⁵² “Uzbekistan has introduced censorship to all media”, *Current Digest of Post Soviet Press*, Vol.44, No.45, 9 December 1992, p.24.

⁵³ William Fireman, *op.cit.*, p.400.

political groups like the Erk, have often had difficulties in getting clearance from the Censorship Bureau. Even pro-democracy newspapers like Izvestia have been banned.

In short, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan have formally has gone through the phase of political transition from an authoritative single party system to political pluralism. Role of other interests groups and media has expanded during the formation of party system after disintegration of Soviet Union.

Though the collapse of the former Soviet Union has provided an opportunity to the Central Asian societies to introduces democratic norms in their political system they have a long way to go, since they would require more time to strengthen democratic institutions. The creation of stable and durable system of democratic government in Central Asia is not an easy task but there is no easy way to transform authoritarian political system based on centrally planned economies into liberal and pluralist societies.

CHAPTER 4

MULTIPARTY ELECTIONS: AN ASSESSMENT

In the formation stage of a new political order, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan have to find ways of unifying ethnically and politically divided societies in which the loyalty to nation is often weaker than loyalty to regional, tribal or family groups. Hence Kazakhstan has opted for the pluralistic forms of political system whereas Uzbekistan opted for authoritarian rule to achieve internal stability during transition process.

Both the nations have adopted presidential form of government, the president is the centre of all the powers. Though the Constitutions of both the nations envisage democratic political system, but they grant power to the president, periodic elections notwithstanding.

Presidential Elections in Kazakhstan

On the eve of the first parliamentary election held on 25th April 1990, the Supreme Soviet of a new convocation was elected in the Republic. Nursultan Nazabayev was elected its chairman with Sergei Tereshchenko as his first deputy, in March.

On 25 April 1990 the Supreme Soviet elected Nazarbayev President of Kazakhstan. On 1 December 1991 direct presidential elections were held, Nazarbayev became the president, and Asanbaev, who ran the election

together with him, was elected vice-president. The office of the Chairman of the Supreme Soviet was taken by Abdildin on 11th December 1991.

On 28 January 1993 the new constitution of Kazakhstan was adopted, proclaiming Kazakhstan a presidential republic with a one house parliament. During the years of his leadership, Nursultan Nazarbayev has shown himself to be a pragmatic technocrat and advocate of strong state power. Nazarbayev's political ideals are Turkey (the first country to recognise Kazakhstan's independence) and South Korea.

In May 1995, following the Turkmen example and as widely predicted, a nation-wide referendum extended Nursultan Nazarbayev's presidential powers up until the end of the century.

However a joint meeting of the Senate (the upper house of the Kazakh Parliament) and Majlis (the Lower House) decided to hold an extraordinary presidential elections on 10 January 1999. The meeting extended the term of the presidential authority from five to seven years. Thus, relying on both the houses, virtually controlled by the head of state, Nursultan Nazarbayev ensured his position as president until 2005.

In an attempt to ensure Nazarbayev's victory, the president's main rival and former prime minister of Kazakhstan, Akezhan Kazhegeldin, was not allowed to contest the election, and none of the three other candidates for the presidency were allowed to become serious rivals of the acting head of state.

Nazarbayev won a convincing victory: he was supported by 81.7% of the voters.

His rival Serikbolsyn Abdildin, the leader of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan, secured 12.08% of the votes. Ganti Kasymov, the former chairman of Customs Committee, was supported by 4.72% of the votes, followed by Engels Gabbasov, a senator, who secured only 0.78%. In total, 7,135,285 people voted during the election, some 86.26% of the total electorate.¹

Table 1

Votes of Presidential candidates, 1999 elections	
	%
N. Nazarbayev (Current President)	81
S. Abdildin (Communist)	12
General G. Kasymov (Patriotic Programme)	4.7
E. Gabbasov (Democrat)	0.8

(Source: Abazov Rafis, "The presidential elections in Kazakhstan: winner takes all?", *Contemporary Central Asia*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 1999)

The political conflict between the President and the Parliament has resulted into the "Voluntarily" dismissal of the Parliament by the Presidential decree in December 1993. A new 177 seat Parliament was elected on multi party basis on 7 March 1994, which again was dissolved by the decision of the Supreme Court declaring the elections invalid. In August 1995 a new

¹ N.I. Patrov and M.S. Gafarly, *The course towards political stability*, New York: M.E.Sharpe 1998 p.181.

constitution was adopted, and a new bi-cameral Parliament was elected in December 1995 with severely reduced powers. On 29 April 1995 Nazarbayev conducted an early referendum that prolonged his term at Presidency until December 2000, but the Political situation remained tense. In October 1997 the President replaced the old Government led by Prime Minister Akezhan Kazhegeldin. In an unexpected move in 1998 the Kazakhstan Parliament announced early presidential election for 10 January 1999.²

This happened due to the nineteen amendments made to the constitution on 7 October 1998 which affected the election for the presidency. An amendment to Article 94 allowed for extraordinary presidential elections as follows: by consent of the President to the Republic of Kazakhstan the present term of the powers of the President of the Republic may be reduced by resolution of the Parliament of the Republic, adopted at the joint session of its Chambers by the majority of votes of the total deputies of each Chamber. In such case the Majilis of the Parliament within one month shall order elections of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Under this Article of the Constitution, the joint session of the chambers of Parliament reduced the term of the President's office, and the Majlis ordered elections for the President of Kazakhstan for 10 January 1999.

² Rafiz Abazov, "The presidential elections in Kazakhstan: winner takes all?" *Contemporary Central Asia*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 1999, pp. 24-25.

Despite this the referendum was conducted and more than 91% of the total number of 8.9 mln. voters, supported the extension of presidential office. It is interesting to note that Nazarbaev himself believed that the referendum was necessary in order to 'lend dynamism to the transformation in economic, political and social life'.³

Direct presidential elections, based on the nation-wide poll of December 1999, only confirmed Nursultan Nazarbayev's presidency. The election law did not give any real chance of candidacy to anybody else. However, it might be noted that all the main political organisations supported him. Only radical parties with little influence offered any form of opposition.

As mentioned earlier, the main political parties which are in existence are mainly supportive of Nazarbayev's authoritarian presidential regime. However, even after all the negative measures, eight candidates expressed their interest to register for the presidential elections in November 1999.

Former Prime Minister Akezhan Kazhegeldin, and the former leader of the 'Azamat' movement, and Mourat Auezov, had the strongest potential chances in the elections. Both of them were able to mobilise serious financial resources for the pre-election campaign and both were widely known as strong politicians.

There were 3 other candidates beside Nazarbayev. Serikbolsyn Abdildin, representing the Communist Party and the former Speaker of the Parliament (Until 1994); Engels Gabbasov, a member of Parliament

³ N.I. Patrov and M.S. Gafarly, op.cit., p.181.

Commission on foreign relations, defence and security, who represented the democratic forces; and General Gani Kasymov, Chairman of State Custom Committee, who represented the 'patriotic' programme and called for 'establishment of order' in the country.

Nazarbayev, like former Russian President Yeltsin in 1996, did not affiliate himself with any single party, including pro-government parties. However, unlike Yeltsin, Nazarbayev did not build up his programme on the anti-Communist platform, instead he presented a highly technocratic programme. In order to broaden political support, especially from ethnic minorities, he strengthened further his emphasis on the 'policy of economic growth' rather than on nationalism alone, and brought up the 'technocratic programme' of transition "Kazakhstan 2030". Nazarbayev campaigning under the slogan 'my znayem kogo vybirayem' (we know who we elect) stressed the social and political stability in the Republic, rather than on democratisation and new changes for these election Nazarbayev has taken several steps one of which is as under.

On 30 September 1998 President Nazarbaev addressed the nation in a speech related to economy and democratisation. He stated that Kazakhstan must become a supporter and symbol of democracy and human rights. Seven fundamental elements of democracy were outlined:

- The electoral process must be honest, representative and encourage the fullest participation of candidates and voters.

- The role of parties in the system must be strengthened.
- It is necessary to strengthen and to provide autonomy for a Majilis (Lower House of Parliament) and Senate to have stability and the succession of power.
- The role of non-governmental organizations in building a civil society must be strengthened.
- An independent judiciary is a pillar of a democratic society.
- It is necessary to build on the already established record of a free, uncensored and independent press.
- Changes in attitudes to women must be made in increasing women's representation in all branches of authority.

The President also stated that authoritarianism of any kind in Kazakhstan is the road to nowhere. Only a free democratic society will be a guarantor of a stable and happy life. The contents of the speech encouraged widespread support for further democratisation.

However, President Nazarbayev unexpectedly issued a decree proposing a series of amendments to the constitution that brought several changes, including the removal of the two-terms limit for running for presidency. This step basically dismissed any doubt about eligibility of Nazarbayev to run for the office. Secondly, on 08 October 1998 a joint session of the Upper and Lower houses of the Parliament of Kazakhstan voted on early presidential elections to be held on 10 January 1999, despite protests from the opposition. In the mean time, the Supreme Court rejected the

registration of two candidates (Kazhegeldin and Auezov) on the grounds of their recent convictions for participating in illegal political meetings.

These actions were widely perceived by local and international experts as a drift towards establishment of a strongly authoritarian regime in Kazakhstan. The biggest question, however, is why an experienced politician like Nazarbayev tarnished his political reputation by these controversial moves. It seems Nazarbayev has taken lessons from the presidential elections in other transitional countries.

Parliamentary Elections in Kazakhstan:

The first free elections to the parliament (Supreme Soviet), which took place in March 1990, were significant for the emergence of the new order. For the first time deputies were elected under conditions of strict competitions. But 25 percent of them came to the parliament with party quota, as 90 places were given to the social organisations, including 17 to the representatives to the communist party. On the whole, from among the total elected members, 54 were party members, including 41 professionals with 23 directors of state forms, and chairman of collecting forms, 31 workers of Soviet organ, 55 leaders of industry. More than half of the parliament deputies were the representatives of nomenclatura.⁴

⁴ *Independent London*, 7 June, 1991

After independence there were elections in 1994 and the number of members representing the present Majlis is as follows: there are 24 members from Peoples Unity Party of Kazakhstan (PNCK) 12 from Democratic Party of Kazakhstan (DPK) from Farmer's Union 7, Federation of Trade Unions 5, Youth Union 3, Engineers Association 3, and Communist Party of Kazakhstan (KPK) 2, represented by one Candidate are People Congress of Kazakhstan, Peoples Cooperative Party, Kazakhstan Renaissance Party, Nevadasemi Movement, Kazakhstan Advocates Union, Social Funds for Poor Welfare, Aktubinsk Workers Club and Kazakhstan's Organisations Union. There are 14 categorised as independents.

Table 2

The breakdown of seats contested and won in by political parties and social movements during December 1995 elections			
Party	Candidates fielded for Majlis	Won in Majlis	In Senate
Peoples Unity Party Kazakhstan	38	24	14
Democratic Party of Kazakhstan	22	12	12
Federation of Trade Unions	21	5	
Peoples Cooperative Party	15	1	
Farmers Union	13	7	
People Congress Party	8	2	
Kazakhstan's Communist Party	9	2	1
Union of Kazakh's Youth	8	3	
Kazakh Revival Party	7	1	
Socialist Party of Kazakhstan			1

* (Source: Compiled from information released by Kazakhstan's Central Election Commission.)

* This table is reproduced from *Eurasian Studies*, Vol.3, No.2, Summer 1996, p.46.

Table 3

The changing face of Kazakhstan's Legislature		
Party	Number of Candidates Won	
	in '94 Elections	in '95 Elections
Total Deputies	177	67
Peoples Unity Party Kazakhstan	34	24
Democratic Party of Kazakhstan		12
Federation of Trade Unions	10	5
Peoples Cooperative Party		1
Farmers Union	4	7
Peoples Congress Party	9	2
Kazakhstan's Communist Party		2
Union of Kazakh's Youth	1	3
Kazakh Revival Party		1
Socialist Party of Kazakhstan	8	

* (Source: Compiled from information released by Kazakhstan's Central Election Commission.)

The ethnic breakdown of the successful candidates is given below.

Table 4

Ethnic Composition of the Legislature			
	Supreme Soviet '90	In '94 Elections	In '95 Elections
Total Deputies	253	177	107
Kazakhs	196	103	68
Russian	103	49	31
Ukrainians	24	10	2
Germans	14	3	1
Uighurs			

** (Source: Compiled from information released by Kazakhstan's Central Election Commission.)

* This table is reproduced from *Eurasian Studies*, Vol.3, No.2, Summer 1996, p.46.

** This table is reproduced from *Eurasian Studies*, Vol.3, No.2, Summer 1996, p.47.

The Needs Assessment Mission carried out monitoring of the media from 18 December 1998 to 8 January 1999. One radio station was monitored for nine hours a day; three television channels were monitored for twelve hours a day; and four newspapers were also during this time period. The methodology was to measure quantity (i.e. time on air, space in newspapers) and quality (i.e. positive, negative or neutral).

Overall, it was clear that the incumbent received a large share of the coverage on political issues and most of it was positive or neutral. The other candidates little coverage, and what they did receive was generally neutral or negative. Mr. Abdildin received a majority of the negative coverage. The overall time dedicated to politics was quite low. Political coverage included the election campaign as well as government activities. Television had two to six per cent of the time devoted to politics; radio had nine per cent; and newspapers had four to eight percent. The only exception was the state newspaper, *Kazakhstanskaya Pravda*, which had 24% of its space devoted to political coverage. The following chart shows the coverage of the candidates during this time.⁵

⁵ Office for Democratic institutions and Human Rights, *The Republic of Kazakhstan Presidential Election (10 Jan. 1999)* [http:// www. Osce.org/odihr/election/Kazak 1-2 htm](http://www.Osce.org/odihr/election/Kazak 1-2 htm).

Table-5

Time or space (%) for Each Candidates				
During the Total Time Dedicated to Politics				
Media Name	Nazarbayev	Abdildin	Gabbasov	Kasymov
Radio Khabar	49%	5%	2%	4%
Khabar TV	64%	11%	4%	6%
KTK TV	42%	3%	1%	9%
Channel 31 (TV)	38%	10%	14%	17%
Kazakhstanskaya Pravda (Newspaper)	83%	3%	2%	2%
Caravan Daily (Newspaper)	58%	27%	3%	1%
Carvan Weekly	77%	23%	0%	0%
Panorama (newspaper)	44%	13%	10%	12%

(Source: Office for Democratic institutions and Human Rights, the Republic of Kazakhstan Presidential Election (10 Jan. 1999) [http:// www. Osce.org/odihr/election/Kazak 1-2 htm.](http://www.Osce.org/odihr/election/Kazak%201-2.htm))

Journalists and editors claimed that coverage was low because the candidates did not provide information on their campaigns or there was very little to cover. The strong position of the incumbent in the media reflected both the weakness of the opponents and the constraints that led to self-censorship. There is no provision to respond to negative reports in the media. In short the freedom of media in Kazakhstan has been under restriction.⁶

⁶ *ibid.*

Election in Uzbekistan

In Uzbekistan, as else where in the Central Asian states, the initial development of a nationalist agenda came from outside the communist party. During their formative stage informal groups like Birlik and ERK began to express dissent. Islam Karimov, with his communist background saw himself under threat and he supported many of the demands of the nationalist groups. Karimov also got elected as executive president of the republic.

However, he sought to differentiate Islam as a religious faith as opposed to political Islam. Thus, though he undertook pilgrimage to mecca, started beginning his speech with 'Bismallah al Rahman- al Rahim', took oath of his presidential office in the name of 'Quran', he is also determined to maintain strict division between religion and Government.

The favourite slogan of Islam Karimov has been 'order' and 'stability'. In the name of "stability" there has been an unmistakable centralization of authority in the president, and simultaneously a systematic attempt is being made to undermine all sources of challenge to Karimov's authority. This has given rise to a strong authoritarian state structure in Uzbekistan. He combines the offices of president and head of the council of ministers.

The Supreme Council of the republic has always been a tool which Karimov has been able to use towards his own ends. When the 'legal' opposition surfaced in the autumn of 1991, the resulting conflicts were based not on ideological differences, but on the struggle between the ruling factions. At the time, a bloc of around 180 deputies ('democrats') and some of the earlier 'conservatives' had voiced criticism of the leader. The reciprocal measures did not take long to be put into place: at the 1992 summer session, the Supreme Council adopted an amendment to the law on the status of deputies, according to which any MP may forfeit his/her mandate for 'behaviour that discredits the title of People's Deputy, or for anti-constitutional actions, aimed at undermining the state system or at destabilization of the socio-political system, or for appeals to perform such actions.' In such cases the decision shall be taken by the Supreme Council with no input from the voters.⁷

On the eve of the presidential elections held on 29 December 1991, Karimov allowed some 'liberalization' for tactical reasons. Some opposition organizations were even registered, including the Birlik movement. However, the Supreme Council adopted the election law, and this, in effect, eliminated Birlik from participation in the presidential elections. Only two candidates were registered: Islam Karimov, the candidate of the People' Democratic

⁷ N. I. Petrov and M.S.Gafarly, *op.cit.*, p.181.

Party (ex-Communist) and Muhammad Salih, the candidate of Erk, a moderate opposition party. Karimov secured 85.0% of the votes and Salih 12.4%. Explanations put forward for the great disparity in these figures drew attention to the fact that Erk was not sufficiently well-known and could not attract the amount of support required. In addition, it was argued that the overwhelming majority of the population was characterised by a traditional respect for the existing authorities.⁸

Karimov's strategy has been to concentrate power in his own hands. The new constitution which was ratified by Supreme Soviet on 8 December, 1992, ensued untrammelled presidential power. The new constitution dissolved the regional Soviets and replaced them with a governance system based on regional 'Hakims', appointed by president Karimov ensured their loyalty towards him. His policy towards opposition has been a policy of systematic attempt to undermine them. Once Karimov "felt secure", the leaders of Birlik and Erk were subjected to physical attacks, periods of enforcement, and enforced migration. Both the organisations were banned later on. The new constitution prohibits political parties based on nationalistic and religious principles (Art. 54). It has also banned Islamic groups under this article.

⁸ Ibid.

There are no registered opposition parties. All media are tightly censored and there are no independent Human Right Monitoring Organization.⁹

There were no confirmed reports of political killings; however, security forces committed several killings. Security force mistreatment resulted in the deaths of several prisoners in custody.

On June 25, a Human Rights Watch representative viewed the body of Farkhod Usmanov, who was arrested on June 14 for the possession of a leaflet from the Islamic political group Gezbut Tahrir (Party of Liberation). The bruises and other markings on the body suggested the Usmanov, son of a well-known Imam, died from torture while in custody. Officials claimed that he died of heart failure. Akhmadhon Turakhaov died in custody on June 19, reportedly because prison authorities refused to treat his diabetes. Turakhanov was a member of the unregistered Birlik Democratic movement and the unregistered independent Human Rights Organization of Uzbekistan.¹⁰

The government is highly centralized and is ruled by a strong presidency. President Karimov, formerly the first secretary of the Communist party of Uzbekistan under Soviet rule, was elected in a limited multi-candidate

⁹ Ahmed Rashid. *Resurgence of Central Asia: Islam or Nationalism?* Karachi, Oxford University Press, 1994, p.79.

¹⁰ 1999 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices Released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and U.S. Department of State, Feb. 25, 2000.

election in 1991. A 1995 Soviet-style referendum and subsequent parliamentary decision extended Karimov's term until 2000. President Karimov and the executive branch retain control through sweeping decree powers, primary authority for drafting legislation, and control of virtually all government appointments, most aspects of the economy, and the security forces.

Most government officials are members of the People's Democratic Party of Uzbekistan (PDP), formerly the Communist Party and still the country's largest party. However, the party as such does not appear to play a significant role in the Government, and the president resigned his chairmanship of the party in 1996. There are four other parties, which have been mentioned in previous chapter. However, these were created with government assistance and are loyal to President Karimov. All parties participated in the December 1995 elections to the Oliy Majlis (parliament), during which 93 percent of the electorate cast their vote.¹¹

In early June 1999, the leaders of all five parties in the Khalq Birliqi movement met in Tashkent. They discussed the role of political parties in the life of contemporary Uzbek society and the questions of their participation in parliamentary activities and the legislative process, as well as the problems of regional security, including the situation in Tajikistan and Afghanistan. Specifically, the party leaders noted the threat to Uzbekistan's security posed

¹¹ Ibid.

by Islamic fundamentalism, religious extremism, and terrorism. They agreed unanimously that consent among nationalities is necessary as a guarantee for stability and peace.¹²

Hence one can say that sidelining the religious and extremists groups from the government and politics of Uzbekistan, President Karimov has opted for stability over democracy as a strategy for moving towards the acceleration of economic growth which can ultimately resolve the problem of transition. As a result, he has adopted some dictatorial measures in comparison to other Central Asian states.

In Kazakhstan a new political order of various political organization and parties are in existence. Though the same presidential rule and the politics of referendum prevails, Kazakhstan is facing at the moment less difficult political and external challenges than is Uzbekistan. This may explain the emphasis Karimov says on 'order' and 'stability'.

The transformation of political system in all the CIS countries have occurred but the difficulties and transformation in Kazakhstan is a unique one. It started with 'the structural adjustment' programme under the pressure of IMF and World Bank. Amendments to the constitution after 1994 paved the way to genuine electoral process and competitive politics in the state but in the

¹² N. I. Petrov and M.S.Gafarly, *op.cit.*, p.181.

absence of strong democratic institutions, and traditions some consistent efforts were needed towards the process of democratization.

President Nazarbayev have made compromises with different social, ethnic, tribal and political groups in order to implement the 'moderate technocratic programme of reforms' on the one side and to broaden the social and political base of reform on the other.

Though formarlly multi-party systems, one can say that parties are not strong enough to decide the political processes in both the nations. However, emergence of different parties and their programmes have resulted in tensions between authoritarian and democratic, centralizing and decentralizing tendencies.

However, if representative 'Majlis' or government is to be preserved in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan some decisive moves towards further decentralization and pluralism are required in order to system the slide to authoritarianism and to establish a strong multi-party system.

CONCLUSION

A peculiar political situation has emerged in central Asia, where no politician is openly critical of religion. Karimov and Nazarbayev too are secular by conviction and are projecting themselves as staunch nationalists, or 'cultural nationalists'. Perhaps their association with readily available ethnic identities will only slow down the march of democracy. Both the nations do not have any experience of democratic participation in politics.

Authoritarianism has become the common thread that runs through the pre-Soviet, Soviet and post-Soviet periods in Central Asia especially in Uzbekistan, whereas Kazakhstan have been playing lip service for democratizing the political system. So far no major initiatives have been taken by the leadership of these countries to alter the present political direction in these republics.

The formation of political parties is related to the contest for power and political control. The pre-Soviet party structures: organizations, institutions and personnel remain intact. In Kazakhstan, President Nazarbayev, 'established in February 1993 the union of people's party of Kazakhstan which was later changed as People's Unity party in March 1995. On the other side Uzbek President Islam Karimov effectively curbed ethnic nationalism and prevented the rise of Islamic fundamentalism by co-opting and representing a number of programmes and their ideas into the reformed

Communist Party, which he subsequently reconstituted as the People's Democratic party and presented it as the new nationalist party.

Some other parties and groups are also playing their role in the politics of both the nations. In Uzbekistan the Birlik and Erk mobilize people on the basis of Islam. Beside this, they have also widened their support base to include pan-Turkism. The Islamic Revival Party in the republic believes in the revival of the ideals of Islam.

After the collapse of Soviet Union, the countries of the region have drafted their own constitutions, which declare these nations as secular states with the presidential form of government. The development of pluralistic values and democratic institutions reflecting aspirations of the people are yet to stabilise.

Kazakhstan with its multiethnic character is trying to maintain a delicate balance between ethnic and tribal groups. President Nazarbaev kept his popularity despite being a former communist leader by promoting the policy of moderate nationalism and compromises, and the strategy of "stability" first. Kazakhstan had witnessed political struggles among different political groups during the first years of independence, which were also results of competition between tribal and clan groups among the ruling elite. The political situation in the state was complicated which ultimately resulted emergence of a polity of "presidential democracy" based on Latin American presidential regimes.

Political conflict between the president and the parliament resulted in the 'voluntary' dismissal of parliament by the presidential decree in 1993. On 7 March 1994 on the multi party basis parliament was formed which was dismissed by Supreme Court which considered the elections of 1994 invalid.

The political situation in the republic has remained tense even after the parliamentary elections and the referendum of 1995; but Nazarbaev has always been supported by local Russians and other minorities because of his moderate views. Nazarbaev has dubbed 'harmonization' which encourages the participation of Russians in all facets of Kazakh life. Automatic citizenship, wide tolerance of Russian language and government subsidies to the Russian dominated industrial sector are all components of this policy.

The appearance of the political parties/groups on the political scenario of Kazakhstan had started from the middle of 1988 which took its formal shape in January 1996 when Justice Ministry of Kazakhstan registered the constitutions of eight political parties. In general all the political forces in Kazakhstan except the revived communist party and the liberal wing of social democrats, are supportive of Nazarbaev's declared course of slow economic reform and the preservation of a considerable degree of state regulation.

President Nazarbaev made the continuous attempts to conduct negotiations with all the political groupings, and preserve relative inter-ethnic and religious tolerance in the country. The pro-presidential political forces are better organised than the opposition.

On the other side the multi-party nature of the social and political structure alongwith the secular character of society has become the main component of political system in Uzbekistan. Rejection of politicisation of Islam is one of the main principles of building a new type of society in Uzbekistan. Islam Karimov, in order to establish himself politically, stated that he held religious parties and the religions with high regard but on the other hand he firmly believed that religion should in no way interfere with politics.

It has been observed in the current study that on one hand the inherited legacy and the nature of present leadership of Uzbekistan plays a key role in building The new political system, on the other hand there is a possibility that the character of the democratic and political system can often be decided by religious parties which in turn are highly influenced by radical Islamic ideology. The Islamic influence or the rising strength of the fanatics not only reflects the popular religious sentiments but also are the root cause of the communal problems of central Asia.

Since, one of the main reasons of the political turmoil of the whole of central Asia is its geopolitical importance, other nations of the world like Russia Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, America, China and Pakistan etc. in order to gain influence are engaged in a competition. They have used various means including ethnic and religious ones by some neighbouring powers. Rise of fundamentalist forces and serious threats from the extremism and terrorism from across borders, have also affected the political and economic

development. On the other hand, countries like Turkey, Russia, China etc. even now, are struggling to shape these nations as a secular country like India.

Both Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, have modified their constitution from time to time and have tried to make things more simplified –The previous constitution of the Soviet times was replaced by a new one in 1993. In spite of all these attempts, issues like personal property, citizenship etc. posed tricky problems. Since the president received more powers in 1993, it was natural for authoritarianism to gain grounds. In spite of additional changes made in 1995 and 1998, in the constitution, the president still retains special powers, which in a way proved fruitful in checking the ensuing conflicts there.

The constitutional modifications of Uzbekistan are almost similar to that of Kazakhstan. In spite of the registration of eight political parties, one cannot yet claim that a completely developed party system still exists in Kazakhstan.

The main reason for this, lies in the fact that most of the political parties have relation with the ruling party, and due to the special powers of the president it becomes a challenge for true opposition parties to evolve.

Apart from taking full control over the public communication system, the ruling party also checked the canvassing and campaign of the opposition parties. Therefore, inference can be drawn that it will be a long time before a full fledged and strong party system is established in Kazakhstan.

In Uzbekistan also, it can be stated that inspite of the presence of many parties, there is an absence of a full fledged party system. The main reason for this can be attributed to the ban on parties like Birlik and Erk with the aim to attain stability and gradual progress. Another stated reason behind this was to maintain harmony inspite of the diversity in language and community. The ban on the Islamic Revival Party was to stop the growth of religious fanaticism within the state and society. Hence, as a result, only a very few parties remain active in the political scenario, which explains why there were two candidates in the elections inUzbekistan.

Conclusion can also be drawn that despite the presence of a strong centralised ruling system in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, the party system has formed a structure which will evolve in course of time.

This research, however, does not encompass all the aspects of studying the multi-party system in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan due to constraints imposed by time and scope. Hence, further research would certainly provide more interesting and better insight into this field.

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