

**Gods of Central Asia:
Understanding Neopatrimonialism**

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Abstract

The reasons behind the amazing durability of authoritarian regimes remains among the most challenging but also the most central questions of social science. And despite the long tradition of scholars having worked on this topic, they are still far from consensus. This thesis is concerned with exploring the concept of neopatrimonialism and the relationship between formal and informal forms of political behavior in understanding and explaining forms of rule in Central Asian political landscape. The central aim of this research is to identify the key factors behind the persistence of neopatrimonialism in Central Asian states. To do so, this thesis focused on two main explanatory factors for the persistence of neopatrimonialism in Central Asia: presidentialist models of executive-legislature relations and political culture of the region.

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Introduction

The strategic location of Central Asia, at the crossroads of the two continents: Asia and Europe, has always attracted the interest of world powers throughout the history. It is represented by five “stans” (Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan) with different levels of economic developments and with a population reaching over 60 million people (Aldulhamidova, 2009) . It is a geographic area where the “Great Game” was played between the British and Russian Empires in the 19th century and gained new emphasis with a war on terrorism launched by the United States at the beginning of the new millennium. Central Asia is not only known for its rich natural resources but also for its long lasting authoritarian leaders, political repressions, widespread corruption and weak establishment of rule of law. It is a region that has witnessed only one peaceful transition of leadership (Kyrgyzstan) after the demise of the Soviet Union, and two transitions followed by a civil war and death of the leader (Tajikistan and Turkmenistan.) Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan are the only Central Asian states that have not experienced a leadership transition since their independence. Both Karimov and Nazarbayev, the presidents of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan respectively, aged over seventy, are occupied with the question of succession dilemma. The importance of the topic lies in the scale of the consequences that the power transition in Central Asian states will entail not only to the region but also for the big powers that have significant economic investments in the region. There are many questions that need to be answered, such as: In what manner the succession will occur? Will it be peaceful or violent? Will it lead to civil wars and destabilization in the whole region?

However, if we want to analyze the power structure in these countries, it is important to look at what really characterize their regime types, namely neopatrimonial power mechanisms. Even though there are formal bureaucratic and legal-rational power structures, all power is derived from the leader himself. The legitimacy of the leader is coming from not the democratic

structures and processes and ideologies, but rather from a strong cult of personality and effective clientelistic elite networks. In such neopatrimonialistic types of regimes, the leader exercises his power by appointing people close to him, family or friends, to positions in key ministries, state companies or sovereign wealth funds, typically surrounding the oil, gas, and other natural resources, which they can use to advance their private interests (Giersch, 2013). These agent-principal relations are often followed by state corruption and nepotism. The privileged elite groupings, in turn, extend their support to the president by securing votes in their constituencies and opposing anyone who is threatening the president's authority (Giersch, 2013). Since there are no established democratic institutions and rules that can ensure the transparent and peaceful transition of power, this makes the question of succession to the autocratic leader in neo-patrimonial states such a fundamental issue (Giersch, 2013).

The objective of this thesis is to investigate the main factors of the persistence of neopatrimonialism in Central Asia. In particular, the thesis intends to address the following questions: what are the main reasons of the emergence of neopatrimonialism in Central Asia and the factors behind its persistence? It is hypothesized in the thesis that the neopatrimonialism in Central Asia will persist in a country with a presidentialist models of executive-legislature relations, and local political culture, represented by clan politics . Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan were chosen as a case study; firstly, because the regimes in both countries have outlived all other regimes in the region, the amazing longevity of these authoritarian and personalistic regimes makes them the focus of academic interest, secondly, the recent political developments in these two countries are exhibiting strong prerequisites, among the other countries in the region, for the leadership transition in Central Asia in near future. I will address the above mentioned questions by selecting adequate conceptual tool that will scrutinize key elements for an explanatory framework.

Chapter 1. Theoretical Framework: Defining Neopatrimonialism

The origins of the concept of neopatrimonialism lie in Max Weber's sociological classification of domination and legitimacy, where he defines three types of authority: traditional, charismatic, and legal-rational bureaucratic. Weber writes that the difference between Western and medieval patrimonial societies is that institutions in the first one constitutes impersonal source of individual connections while in the latter the separation between private and public does not exist (Brunns, 2012). In traditional patrimonialism, the right to govern usually is materialized through heredity. Traditional authority is legitimate because it has deeply rooted in the traditions and continued for a long period of time. There are two sub types of traditional authority: a form of oligarchic rule that is based on elders called gerontocracy; and second type is based on male line of hierarchy that is called patriarchalism. In a purely patriarchal structure, "the servants are completely and personally dependent upon the lord" (Weber, 1958, p. 5).

In 1973, Shmuel Eisenstaedt first conceptualized the term "neopatrimonialism", in his book "Traditional Patrimonialism and Modern Neopatrimonialism" (Eisenstadt, 1973) and proposed to use the prefix neo- to distinguish the Weberian patrimonialism embedded in tradition from the regimes that rests on more diverse mechanisms of legitimation and authority (Eisenstadt, 1973). By 1970s, the concept of neopatrimonialism has been put into use mostly to describe the personalistic regimes in sub-Saharan Africa. However, I must note here that the term became "in danger of losing its analytical utility" (Theobald, 1982, p. 555) and has been overused to explain the very diverse notions not necessarily related to the core essence of the term. As Daniel Bach, a prominent scholar on neopatrimonialism, noted, the concept has become a "teleological explanation of the decline of the state," (Bach, 2012) and an easy explanation for underdevelopment which some scholars take it as granted.

When it comes to neopatrimonial power mechanisms, it has common characteristics with an old-type patrimonialism similarly placing personal loyalty at the epicenter of the system. However, unlike patrimonialism, the neopatrimonialism does not rest purely on heredity or traditional forms of authority (Snyder, 2002, p. 396). Bratton and van de Walle in their work “Democratic Experiments in Africa”, state that neopatrimonialism unlike classic patrimonialism can co-exist with legal-rational legitimacy (Laruelle, 2012). In a neopatrimonial regime, both formal and informal mechanisms, which sometimes are found in well-established democratic systems, are employed to maintain the submission and loyalty to the ruler. Neopatrimonial regimes “are based not only on patriarchal values and norms, but on rationally driven exchange of services, when a patron buys a loyalty of a client in exchange for protection of clients’ interests” (Ilkhamov, 2007, p. 66). Even though there are formal bureaucratic and legal-rational power structures, all power is derived from the leader himself. The legitimacy of the leader is coming from not the democratic structures and processes and ideologies, but rather from a strong cult of personality and effective clientelistic elite networks. In such neopatrimonialistic types of regimes, the leader exercises his power by appointing people close to him, family or friends, to positions in key ministries, state companies or sovereign wealth funds, typically surrounding the oil, gas, and other natural resources, which they can use to advance their private interests (Giersch, 2013). These agent-principal relations are often followed by state corruption and nepotism. The privileged elite groupings, in turn, extend their support to the president by securing votes in their constituencies and opposing anyone who is threatening the president’s authority (Giersch, 2013). Since there are no established democratic institutions and rules that can ensure the transparent and peaceful transition of power, this makes the question of succession to the autocratic leader in neopatrimonial states such a fundamental issue (Giersch, 2013). The other important difference is that in a neopatrimonial regime both legal-rational and informal components are equally

important (Ilkhamov, 2007). The presence of well-established state bureaucracy and formal law creates a condition where in the first sight seemingly impersonal relationship between the ruler and subjects turn out to be the key element of the neopatrimonial regime. It is hard to trace which components-legal-rational or informal, are prevalent in neopatrimonial regimes. However, in prevalent cases, informal component is dominant over legal-rational mechanism.

The concept of neopatrimonialism is multidimensional and multidisciplinary. The concept found its utilization in different fields of study including economics, sociology and anthropology. The economic scholarship has used the concept of neopatrimonialism to explain the reasons of poor economic performances of states and their underdevelopment. It was also used to shed light into rentier economies, “as rent seeking and nepatrimonial practices are mutually reinforcing patterns toward non-productive economic activities” (Laruelle, 2012, p. 303). Despite the fact that the concept of neopatrimonialism comes from political science, it found its usage in the typology of regimes only recently (O'Dwyer, 2006). Some scholars have contended that neopatrimonialism is not characteristic to only authoritarian states but is compatible with all types of regimes (Laruelle, 2012, p. 303). They justify their argument by saying that the elements of neopatrimonialism can reproduce or even strengthen themselves in well-established and functioning states that are accountable to their populations. However, there are other scholars that challenge this argument, claiming that the relationship between neopatrimonialism and authoritarian states are obvious and describing the existence of neopatrimonialism with its legal-rational rules in well-established democracies are misleading. They state that the concepts of corruption and cronyism carry more explanatory power in explaining the informal politics in democratic societies.

There are many terms that are used interchangeably with the concept of neopatrimonialism. However, not all of them could be used as synonyms and their meaning should be clearly distinguished from each other. Neopatrimonialism has often been used as a synonym for corruption, nepotism, cronyism, clientelism, patronage, “the big man” syndrome, godfatherism, warlordism, capture, predation, kleptocracy, prebendal regime and many others (Laruelle, 2012, p. 304). Most of these terms have narrower meaning than neopatrimonialism, which is a broad concept that encompasses many of these terms. Let me define the terms and look at how they differ the concept of neopatrimonialism.

According to Laruelle’s definition, corruption refers to “specific practices that may occur in non-patrimonial states. It can be non-politicized and decentralized, thus indirectly ensuring a certain balance in the distribution of wealth in the absence of state-enforced legal property rights” (Laruelle, 2012, p. 305). On the other hand, neopatrimonialism manifests a more centralized and structural corruption that constitute a part of political legitimization process. Cronyism also is prevalent in many well-established democratic societies, because it supposes “an exchange of services between business groups and political circles, especially when it involves the allocation of public funds” (Laruelle, 2012, p. 305). One of the striking differences between cronyism and neopatrimonialism is that the former does not necessarily prevent the economic growth and sometimes can even contribute to the development; however, the latter one does not contribute to the economic growth, because in this system the distribution of wealth is not fair. Branko Milanovic, in his book “Is inequality in Africa really different?” demonstrates that states with neopatrimonial systems have the highest Gini coefficient, which is the main indicator of unequal distribution of wealth (Milanovic, 2013).

Capture, predation and clientelism constitute the central elements of neopatrimonialism, which refer to the confiscation of public and private property for personal purposes, but cannot solely replace the concept of neopatrimonialism. There is a growing debate among scholars on the terminological intersections of neopatrimonialism and clientelism. Scholars led by Medard see clientelism and neopatrimonialism as competing notions, claiming that clientelism is a traditional legitimation to the patron-client relationship while neopatrimonialism is not (Medard, 1982). The other group of scholars such as Eisenstaedt, Bratton and van de Walle, Erdman and Engel, do not share this assumption, stating that clientelism and neopatrimonialism are not competing models, on the contrary, they are closely attached complementary concepts. Erdman and Engel believe that clientelism “implies a dyadic personal relationship between patron and client, while patronage refers to the relationship between an individual and a bigger group” (Erdman & Engel, 2006, p. 21). Clientelism supposes the relationship and exchange of goods and services on individual level may be present in all kinds of societies, while neopatrimonialism has a larger scope, and mostly includes the relationships on intra-elite level.

The patrimonial regimes may take extreme forms, which Weber classified them as Sultanistic regimes (Weber, 1978). In this type of extreme patrimonial regime, the loyalty of citizens, or often called subjects, is not to tradition and either not to the person seen as legitimate because of heredity, and not to the institutions, like monarchs, but loyalty is owned to person himself. As Kunysz notes, “although the general forms of authority in a sultanistic regime are identical to those in patrimonialism and neopatrimonialism, sultanism is distinguished from them by extreme and universal nature of personal loyalty to the individual ruler” (Kunysz, 2012, p. 2). Probably, the most important difference between sultanism and neopatrimonialism is the existence of loyalty at the middle range of executive power. For example, the executive power in a neopatrimonial system such as Uzbekistan is “limited by the indirect power relations

between the central executive and local authorities who are divided by middle-ranking governors and who in exchange for loyalty to the central authority are able to manage their own local patronage networks and thus accrue a significant degree of power in their own right” (Kunysz, 2012, p. 2). However, a sultanistic regime lacks this “middle space” within the executive power and the loyalty is solely dominated by the ruler. H.E.Chehabi and J.J.Linz in their book “Sultanistic regimes” provide a comprehensive analysis of the regimes that fall into the category of sultanistic, and clearly demonstrates the difference between the sultanistic and neopatrimonial regimes. According to them, “sultanistic regimes are particularly distinctive in their ability of the ruler to free him/herself from the dependence on traditional patron-client networks and support in civil society through some internal or external mechanisms” (Kunysz, 2012, p. 2). This state of uncontrolled power creates a situation where the ruler starts constructing a personality cult and granting him/herself unique titles. The opposition is oppressed and usually forced to exist outside of the country. The state apparatus members at all levels are subject to absolute loyalty to the ruler and must exercise their power as a representative instruments of the ruler (Chehabi & Linz, 1998, pp. 13-25). Another important aspect of sultanistic regimes noted by Chehabi and Linz is that the ideology of sultanistic regimes is for the most part “window dressing”, “used to justify the ruler’s personal authority, and that he/she often integrates themselves into this ideology by emphasizing the traditional nature of their authority” (Kunysz, 2012, p. 3). The only Central Asian republic among the other four that could be considered sultanistic is Turkmenistan. For its post-independence history, Turkmenistan has been entrenched in firm authoritarian leadership ruled by Saparmurat Niyazov and followed by Gurbanguly Berdimuhammedov after his death. Saparmurat Niyazov turned Turkmenistan, a country with one of the largest hydrocarbon reserves in the world, into the most closest and totalitarian regimes in the world. The governance system under his rule “more closely resembled Max Weber’s description of a

sultanistic regime than a neopatrimonial state like the other republics of Central Asia” (Kunysz, 2012, p. 2). The vivid examples from sultanistic regime of Niyazov include giving himself a title “Turkmenbashi” (father of Turkmen), building golden statues of himself that rotates to face the sun, proclaiming himself “the great Serdar” a title given to the heroes of the Turkmen nation, naming months of the year after his deceased parents, and many other elements of personal cult of Niyazov (Kunysz, 2012). Noteworthy, these are the elements that are rarely seen in other neopatrimonial regimes in Central Asia. However, with the death of Niyazov, and with the rise of current president Berdimuhamedov, Turkmenistan saw changes in policy and governance. The recent studies suggest that there is a “gradual move by the current presidential administration away from sultanism of the Niyazov era to a neopatrimonial system more in line with the other former Soviet republics of Central Asia” (Kunysz, 2012, p. 4).

Another debate among the scholars evolved around the difference between corporatist and neopatrimonial states. John Ishiyama, in his article “Neopatrimonialism and the prospects of democratization in the Central Asian republics”, attempts to demonstrate the difference between neopatrimonial regimes and corporatist authoritarian regimes in Central Asia. According to him, “corporatist authoritarian regimes are characterized by the existence of an organic ideology of national unity and attempts at direct political mobilization along controlled bureaucratic channels, while neopatrimonial regimes ostensibly maintain authority through exclusively personal patronage, rather than ideology or law” (Ishiyama, 2002). However, this observation is not truly coherent with the situation in Central Asian republics, where both corporatist and neopatrimonial relations are equally important and relevant.

The concept of neopatrimonialism has principally associated with post-colonial legacy of bad governance and corruption characteristic to local political elites in some developing countries (Lodge, 1998). The most striking common characteristic of these countries is the difficulty of

implementing rule of law and accommodating group interests in an institutionalized state. Theorists claim that neopatrimonialism is a master concept for comparative politics (Bratton & Walle, 1994). Theobald contends that “some of the new states are, properly speaking, not states at all; rather, they are virtually the private instruments of those powerful enough to rule” (Bratton & Walle, 1994). And Christopher Clapham claims that neopatrimonialism is “the most salient type of authority” in the Third World, because it “corresponds to the normal forms of social organization in pre-colonial societies” (Bratton & Walle, 1994). Bratton and Van De Walle also argue that personal relationships are important factor at the margins of basically all bureaucratic systems, but when it comes to Africa “they constitute the foundation and superstructure of political institutions” (Bratton & Walle, 1994, p. 459). Therefore, there is little chance for the regimes for peaceful and democratic transitions. They also argue that the structure of political power incentives in neopatrimonial systems provide insights for the absence of political transitions. According to them, when the ruling apparatus is built upon personal loyalty, “supreme leaders often lose touch with popular perceptions of regime legitimacy” (Bratton & Walle, 1994). The rulers in this regimes, lack institutional ties to consolidate various groups in society to maintain their own survival based on popular support. Instead, those supreme leaders “surround themselves with sycophantic lieutenants who protect their own positions by telling the leader what he wants to hear and by shielding him from dissonant facts” (Bratton & Walle, 1994, p. 162). Neopatrimonial rule also suppresses the vibrant civil society, because these regimes cannot tolerate the independent centers of power, as a possible threat to the durability of their regimes.

Despite the fact that the concept of neopatrimonialism was widely used for developing countries, little attention was paid by scholars researching the state-building process in post-Soviet political landscape in general and Central Asia in particular (Ilkhamov, 2007). As

Alisher Ilkhamov notes, “Whereas the concept of neopatrimonial regime has been widely used with respect to developing countries, it was surprisingly neglected by scholars of state-building process in Central Asia and the post-Soviet space in general” (Ilkhamov, 2007, p. 67). Regardless on what region the concept was applied, it encountered the region-specific debates. For instance, Sultanism in Middle East, Stalinism in post-Soviet space, and patronage systems in Africa (Hughes, 1996). The hybridity of the Soviet regime, “which was both highly personalized but with well-elaborated politics of popular participation, weighed heavily on the formation of the post-Soviet regimes” (Laruelle, 2012, p. 307). The Brezhnev regime (1964-1982) left an important legacy of informal politics and patronage system, with their own specific logic that does not necessarily corresponds with the needs and aspirations of the general population. The considerable part of current apparatus and leadership in Central Asia went through the Brezhnev-era school of elite formation and became the part of patronage networks established in the late Soviet period.

Two main Western approaches to Central Asian authoritarian nature of states could be traced, but both of them misleading. The first approach stems from theory of transition, that is, the authoritarian states in Central Asia are just “a temporary stage in a drawn-out transition toward democracy. Eventually, given the right encouragement and support, these political leaders will embark on the same economic and political reforms that worked in Eastern Europe” (Lewis, 2012, p. 115). The supporters of this approach believe that concerted effort and financial support from international community in strengthening the capacity building and accountable governance in those countries, will eventually produce the desired results and bring democracy. Billions of dollars were invested by international community and financial institutions to promote democracy and human rights since the independence of Central Asian states, but after two decades the results are disappointing. The second approach looks at Central Asia through

the lenses of strategic framework of the “war on terror” as part of “Greater Central Asia,” which includes Afghanistan and Pakistan (Lewis, 2012). According to the advocates of this approach, weak and secular Central Asian states are facing the threat of Islamist radicals and need security support from international community. However, both approaches are misleading and neglect many of the most vital internal dynamics of authoritarian regimes. Therefore, the alternative explanations are must for the durability of these regimes in Central Asia. David Lewis contends that the concept of neopatrimonialism, a term that describes a political system “in which the familiar institutions of the modern state (government ministries, a legal system, and a legislative body) are combined with informal, behind-the-scenes politicking based on patron-client relationships, regional networks and kinship” (Lewis, 2012, p. 116) provides an alternative way of understanding the authoritarian rule in the region.

Despite the differences in terms of internal political trajectories, economic development, and forms of rule, all political systems in Central Asia could be characterized by the dynamics of neopatrimonialism. Kazakhstan follow the pattern of classic neopatrimonialism with high levels of concentration of economic, political and symbolic power in the hands of “strong man” Nursultan Nazabayev. The leadership of the country managed to maintain stability much due to its vast supplies of natural resources, especially oil. The wealth accumulated as a result from oil and gas sectors benefited the family and close allies of the President and allowed a wider business elite to grow (Lewis, 2012). As Lewis notes, “since the largesse from oil and gas has been so great, enough has trickled down to at least some groups in society to provide a relatively strong economic performance overall” (Lewis, 2012, p. 117). Therefore, the neopatrimonial relations and activities of patronage and elite networks are partially compensated by economic growth that provide somewhat improved living standards for middle class citizens.

Uzbekistan, the largest country in the region in terms of population, also enjoys the advantage of oil and gas reserves. However, unlike Kazakhstan, it followed a slightly different path in distributing the wealth to the rest of the society. The patronage groups and elite in Uzbekistan have demonstrated strong persistence in tightening their grip on state wealth and such activities “appears to weaken the state in relation to the patrimonial dynamics of political and business elites” (Lewis, 2012, p. 117). The family members and close allies of the President Islam Karimov dominate the large sectors of domestic business. The Swiss Magazine Bilan reported that two daughters of the President, Gulnora and Lola Karimova, have acquired a family fortune of almost \$1 billion (Bilan, 2010). While there have been some economic growth in the cities, the rural areas remain poor and impoverished. Noteworthy, in Uzbekistan, the most produced product cotton is still relies on forced labor. But perhaps more ironically, it is not only forced labor of men and women, but also forced labor of children. The regime of President Karimov vanished all sorts of incentives for agriculture and innovation that the general population has let their agricultural capital depreciate and atrophy. As Lewis notes, “economic stagnation raises the price of loyalty and encourages the state to use coercion instead of financial persuasion” (Lewis, 2012).

I have already mentioned above about the regime in Turkmenistan, an extreme dictatorship that “went beyond the complex networks characteristic of neopatrimonial rule” (Lewis, 2012) during the late Saparmurat Niyazov’s regime and his successor Gunbanguly Berdimuhamedov have continued his path with few exceptional attributes from the previous regime. Nevertheless, the regime remains highly authoritarian but under the current President, the government of Turkmenistan “has begun to move away from the ‘sultanism’ of the Niyazov era” (Kunysz, 2012, p. 1).

In comparison with its neighbors, Tajikistan remains the poorest country in the region with limited natural resources and lack of significant sectors to boost the economy. However,

Tajikistan also follows the similar patterns of neopatrimonial relations and remains one of the authoritarian regimes in the region. Imomali Rakhmon, current Tajik President who came to power after the civil war in the 1990s, “has gradually closed down rival political groupings and centralized power around his family and patronage networks, based in his hometown of Danghara” (Lewis, 2012, p. 117). The poverty is widespread in the country, while the large part of the population survive economically only by working in Russia. The Federal Migration Service of Russian Federation reported that there are an estimated 3 million illegal Tajik migrants in Russia, while the whole population of the country is slightly more than six million (RIA Novosti, 2013).

The Kyrgyz case is clearly specific, as it is the most democratic state in the region that have a vibrant civil society and relatively free market, an attempt that distinguishes it from some of its more authoritarian neighbors. The country experienced two revolutions in 2005 and 2010 that resulted in toppling the presidents and regime change. The country was proclaimed as “the island of democracy” and remained the hope for role model of democracy and openness in Central Asia by international community. However, under the first two presidents, Askar Akaev and Kurmanbek Bakiev, Kyrgyzstan followed the same “strong man” authoritarian patterns of its neighbors for almost two decades.

Chapter 2: Factors behind the Persistence of Neopatrimonialism in Central Asia

This chapter aims to consider the key factors that carry the most plausible explanatory power behind the persistence of neopatrimonialism in Central Asia. It considers the two key explanations: presidentialist models of executive-legislature relations, and local political culture, represented by clan politics.

2.1. Presidentialist models of executive-legislature relations

There is an ongoing debate on which system of governance, presidential or parliamentary, is more favorable to democratic consolidation. However, the general consensus has been reached on the role of institutional design for consolidation of democracy. A particular attention has been paid on the countries in transition, because of their specific path of democratization in their initial stage. It must be noted that the authoritarian states mostly have been neglected by the scholars of the field, because they considered these types of regimes unconstrained by the constitution and have not seen the necessity to include them in their studies (Abdukadirov, 2009).

However, some of the authoritarian regimes in present time represent a prototype of regimes with democratic institutions but almost never exercise their functionality. The majority of these authoritarian states conduct elections, however, they are neither free nor fair. Local elites employ various techniques of manipulation to hold on power and change the results of elections for their own favor (Schedler, 2002). Therefore, the institutional design has an immense impact on the internal politics of authoritarian regimes. Sherzod Abdukadirov, a prominent scholar on

Central Asia, contends that “a presidential system exacerbates the predatory nature of the regimes and increases the probability of violent conflicts” (Abdukadirov, 2009, p. 285).

2.2. Authoritarian regimes of Central Asia

Geddes claims that authoritarian or personalistic regimes arise from one-party systems or as a result of strong military presence in the state (Geddes, 1999). Most of the present political elite in Central Asian states started their career from the Soviet Communist Party *nomenklatura* at the last decades of communist rule. Therefore, “as the elites consolidate their power, parties became increasingly marginalized. Power became concentrated in the hands of a single leader relying on the support of relatively small circle of elites” (Abdukadirov, 2009, p. 286). During the Soviet times, the political trajectory of Central Asian republics was characterized by nepotism (Collins, 2004). The nepotism and other informal political practices were inherited from pre-Soviet Central Asia and integrated into Soviet rule. The Soviet Communist Party had attempts to eradicate such informal practices mainly through purges and appointing Moscow-based rulers, but such attempts could not be considered as very successful. Nevertheless, the purges brought to power the neutral leaders that were free from any strong connection with any particular clan or dominant elite factions. Consequently, “the presidents of Central Asian republics, who retained their power after independence, had relatively weak bases and so were dependent on dominant elite networks” (Abdukadirov, 2009, p. 287). Therefore, following the independence, the presidents in these republics became the brokers between different ethnic and regional clans competing for state resources.

2.3. Democratic institutions in Central Asian republics

In this section, I will elaborate on the formal institutions in Central Asia and how they are used to strengthen the neopatrimonial rule by the presidents. There is a necessity to clarify the

difference between parliamentary and presidential systems and in what context they will be used in my study. Shugart and Carey, in their work “Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics” present a comparative clarification of how to differentiate the two systems. According to them, “a presidential system is considered if the president has the authority to appoint and dismiss the cabinet. The system will be considered parliamentary if such authority is in the hands of the legislature. When the authority to appoint the cabinet is shared by the legislature and president, the system will be determined by the accountability of the cabinet. Thus, if the president has the authority to dismiss the cabinet, the system will be considered president-parliamentary. Otherwise, the system will be considered premier-presidential” (Abdukadirov, 2009, p. 288). It must be noted that, the formal democratic institutions do not serve to their purpose of creation, instead they “mostly serve as facades, covering the undemocratic nature of the regimes” (Abdukadirov, 2009, p. 288). As I mentioned earlier, elections are conducted both for the president and the parliament, however, the results are manipulated by the central governments of Central Asia in order to secure their status-quo and maintain the control over political and economic resources. Although there is a separation of power, “the balance of power is strongly skewed toward the executive” (Abdukadirov, 2009, p. 288). With the exception of Kyrgyzstan, in all other Central Asian republics the legislative body represented by parliament has little influence on internal political dynamics in the country and just serve for the interest of the executive body represented by the President.

All Central Asian republics were formally considered as presidential systems until 2006 (Anderson, 2003). All of the presidents had the power to appoint and dismiss the cabinet, which gave the massive power to control the elite and state resources. According to Abdukadirov, the parliaments had little influence on the internal affairs and did not have the authority to censure cabinet ministers. In addition to that, all the presidents could dissolve the parliament under

certain circumstances. Like in other strong presidential systems, Central Asian presidents had the power to decree authority and veto the bills coming from the parliament (Abdukadirov, 2009). After 2006, Kyrgyzstan adopted several constitutional changes in 2006 and 2007 restricting the power of the president and giving more power to the legislative body. The cases of Central Asian republics will be presented in a separate section in this chapter.

There are different groups of scholars that forward criticisms and arguments for and against presidential democracy. For instance, Linz (1994) poses two major arguments against the presidential democratic rule. The essence of the first argument lies in the right to represent the people. He contends that in the presidential system, both president and parliament are popularly elected and have the right to represent the will of the people (Linz J, 1994). Second argument evolves around the length of presidential terms. He argues that “the presidential system does not allow for the flexibility of responding to a changing political environment” (Abdukadirov, 2009, p. 289). Linz also emphasizes that “strong majoritarian tendencies and a winner-take-all approach to government in presidential systems due to concentration of most of the executive power in a single office” (Abdukadirov, 2009, p. 289). When the power and decision-making advantage is concentrated in the hands of the executive body represented by president, it will lead to the one-person executive nature of the whole governance system. In its turn, it will pave a way for shift of power balance between the elite and the ruler, where the former will be obliged to present their loyalty to the latter in order to acquire the share from the state resources. Of course, this is not the case for all the presidentialist systems, where there is a strong check and balance system, but it is characteristic to the systems with personalistic rule and weak democratic institutions. There are other group of scholars that counter this argument. For instance, Shugart and Mainwaring claim that the parliamentary systems are not either safe from dual democratic legitimacy (Shugart, M.S.; Mainwaring, S., 1997). Most of the parliamentary

democracies experience political deadlocks, especially in bicameralism, where both chambers have strong legislative powers. Concerning the fixed term of the presidents, scholars see the solution to this problem just to shorten the length of the presidential terms. In their view, it will lead to more flexible and less rigid election cycle. Moreover, Shugart forwards the argument that presidential system is more suitable for less developed states (Shugart, 1999). According to him, “strong cohesive parties are necessary in order to provide collective goods in a country” (Abdukadirov, 2009, p. 289). However, the party system in Central Asia is not developed and lacks cohesive political parties. Therefore, he contends that presidential system is better suited for less-developed countries, with social and ethnic cleavages, where the strong president representing the interests of all nations could rule the country.

2.4. The failure of Presidential model of governance in Central Asia

With the exception of Kyrgyzstan, all other four Central Asian republics are run by the strong presidential political systems. As Cummings states, “authoritarian political systems concentrate power in a small, usually closed, political elite, who may be elected or unelected by the population, and who possess the disproportionate power over any other institution or group” (Cummings, 2012). For the years of independence, these republics have seen many elections that were so called “free and fair” and let their leaders to go through. The leadership of the countries refresh their legitimacy every five or six years by conducting falsified elections. The presidents are not genuinely responsive to the general masses, mostly because of the absolute control of any protest or challenge to their regime. These countries lack vibrant civil society and strong cohesive political parties. For the last two decades, the institution of the president has been more strengthened than weakened in these republics, and dominated all other formal institutions (Cummings, 2012). The possible explanation of this tendency could

be the legacy of the Soviet rule, represented by the strong leadership and “the preference for an individual to symbolize and represent the polity” (Cummings, 2012, p. 63).

Despite the notorious differences in power-sharing and ruling mechanisms, all five presidential systems continue to demonstrate the features of authoritarianism. Although the last years of Askar Akaev and the rule of Kurmanbek Bakiev were marked by political repressions and explicit features of authoritarianism, Kyrgyzstan remains “the most liberal of all five republics in the region and continues to have the most vibrant contestational politics” (Cummings, 2012, p. 64). According to the scholars, “it boasted the only independent printing press of the region and its freedom levels in mid-late 1990s were regionally unsurpassed” (Cummings, 2012, p. 64). It was proclaimed as the “island of democracy” located in the middle of its authoritarian neighbors. The country joined World Trade Organization in 1998, thus adopting free market economy and adjusting its import and export capabilities. Some scholars argue that “Akaev’s personality served as a factor in his country’s liberalization, others to his decision to embrace a liberal ideology as a way of anchoring his rule and attracting direct foreign investment” (Cummings, 2012, p. 64). In 2010, the country shifted from presidential to parliamentary system of governance. This historical development was followed by another major event, Roza Otunbaeva, was elected as the first female president in Central Asia.

Kyrgyzstan’s neighbor Tajikistan demonstrated a pocket of liberalism in its early years of independence. However, its attempts of liberalization have been hampered by tragic civil war in the country took place between 1994-1997. Following the peace agreement, the country put itself into a firm authoritarian rule under Emomali Rahmon.

Another Central Asian republic is Kazakhstan, in which also the leadership of the country exhibited some levels of democratization in the beginning of 1990s, however, “it seemed more of a tactical compromise in setting up of a tightly run presidential system” (Cummings, 2012, p. 64). The large amount of natural resources and early economic liberalization created a ground for elite competition for the share of those state resources. However, the President Nursultan Nazarbayev has skillfully balanced the intra-elite competition. In fact, “the personality of Nursultan Nazarbayev is often viewed as having been a decisive factor in authoritarian nature of the regime, its dual civic and national character and in the art of compromise and nepotism” (Cummings, 2012, p. 64).

Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan on the other hand, pursued a more totalitarian path compared to their neighbors. In both countries, the centralization of the power took place, eliminating all the challenging forces from the political arena. The civil society has been harshly suppressed, NGOs were shut down, and opponents of the presidents were exiled or took asylum in other countries. Saparmurat Niyazov, the first president of Turkmenistan, “had been in power already for some five years when the Soviet Union collapsed and by the time of his death in 2006 he had become the longest-serving leader of the post-communist space” (Cummings, 2012, p. 65). On the other hand, Islam Karimov, the long-lasting president of Uzbekistan, has been known by his brutality. A separate chapter will be dedicated to Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan and authoritarian and neopatrimonial rule of the leaders will be elaborated in details.

The integral question that fascinates the scholars of the field is why Central Asia is authoritarian and fell into strong presidentialism. Thomas Carothers (2002) believe that the authoritarian trend is not peculiar to only Central Asian region, it is characteristic to much of the political landscape in post-Soviet geography. However, the distinctive feature of Central Asian

authoritarianism is that it tends to exhibit the personalistic nature of authoritarianism, the submission to one leader. (Cummings, 2012) One possible explanation for this question lies in the political culture of the countries in the region. Scholars emphasized the patriarchal and hierarchical structure of the society. As Gleason noted, “Central Asian traditions of patriarchy, popular submissiveness, deference to authority and to elders and weak democratic institutions would seem to impel Central Asian societies towards an authoritarian future” (Gleason, 1997, p. 38). After two decades of independence, “others see Central Asian tradition as having been, and continuing to be, immutable, the complete rejection of anything new introduced from the outside into the familiar, ‘traditional’ way of life” (Poliakov, 1992, p. 4).

Another explanation of why Central Asian states are authoritarian is that this type of regime “better serves these societies’ goals at this particular juncture of their development” (Cummings, 2012, p. 67). Paul Kubicek forwards a quite interesting argument that “authoritarianism may be a cure rather than a curse for Central Asia, including the avoidance of nationalism trap that often comes with democratization and the propensity of authoritarian leaders to reform” (Kubicek, 1998). Kubicek’s point is that democratization cost is too high that the states could face the consequences of the reforms in their early period of liberalization. The question of authoritarianism could be asked from the reverse: why Central Asian states have not been democratized? There are two contested approaches that attempt to answer this question. The first approach the modernist/structural approach that argues that “without a certain level of economic development and class configuration, the middle class will not develop to sustain a liberalization path” (Cummings, 2012, p. 68). On the other hand, the second transitional approach, “emphasizes the importance of political will, places primacy on leadership, and the ability of a new elite to forge unity and negotiate with oppositional elites” (Cummings, 2012, p. 68). John Ishiyama, on its turn, claims that authoritarian presidentialism

is an indispensable part of neopatrimonialism inherited from the Soviet past. (Ishiyama, 2002) To this date, all four leaders of Central Asian republics, are convinced that authoritarianism is the best way to maintain political power (Cummings, 2012). It is so because “the regime of presidential authoritarianism infuses perceived predictability into the system avoiding competitive elections, and ensures that the system remains closed to competitors” (Cummings, 2012, p. 69). Nevertheless, there are prerequisites that the current trend of presidential authoritarianism will transform itself into more democratic and responsive form of rule, as evidenced in Kyrgyzstan, a country that shares the common historical legacy of Soviet past with its direct neighbors.

2.5.Factor two: Clan politics in Central Asia

One of the important factors that contribute to the persistence of neopatrimonialism in Central Asia is the political culture of the region. The political culture is represented by a “sideshow relationship rather than what is occurring on the main political stage, which is dominated by great power brokers and networks they control” (Starr, 2006, p. 6). It is hard to imagine Central Asian politics without informal interactions between different actors, clans, and regional networks. These informal practices hinder Central Asian states to foster genuine democratic principles and strengthen its institutions to uphold the rule of law and ensure the protection of human rights. According to the Starr, the main challenge of Central Asian countries is not the mere relationship between the executive and legislative bodies-what he calls “Politics A”. But informal politics in Central Asia is characterized by the relationship between informal actors-which he calls “Politics B” (Starr, 2006).

In order to elaborate the informal politics in Central Asia, there is a necessity to clarify the terminology that is going to be used in my thesis. According to Kathleen Collins, a clan is an

informal organization of individuals linked by kin-based bonds (Collins, 2004). And she defines the clan politics as “the politics of informal competition and deal making between clans in pursuit of clan interests” (Collins, 2004, p. 224). According to her, informal organizations have received little attention by the scholars and have rarely been linked to major debates about regime change or political development” (Collins, 2004). Many theories deal with informal organizations and try to explain their role and function. For instance, modernization theory have always seen traditional and social organizations such as lineage, clan and tribe-as an obstacle to political development (Collins, 2004). Douglass North for instance, “has argued that informal institutions and organizations play important roles in both the economic and the political spheres. He further observes that pre-modern and informal collectivist organizations such as clans have proved to be surprisingly persistent and are key political and economic variables (Collins, 2004, p. 226).

When it comes to kinship, Collins stresses that affective ties of kinship are crucial, which makes up the core essence and relations of clans. These clan ties might be both horizontal and vertical “linking elites and non-elites, and they reflect both actual blood ties and fictive kinship, that is, constructed or metaphorical kinship based on close friendships or marriage bonds that redefine the boundaries of the genealogical unit” (Collins, 2004, p. 231). The boundaries of clans are blurry, without clear and fixed lines. However, it is difficult to enter or exit a clan, unlike if someone wanted to join a particular group or volunteer organization. Therefore, it is highly difficult to know the exact number of clans and their members in Central Asia. It is indeed not easy to define, measure and estimate the informal institutions with unwritten norms and values. The clans in different places are governed by different members of society. For instance, “in more traditional or rural areas informal councils of patriarchs and elders govern the clan; in more urban areas both wealthy elites and elders are in control” (Collins, 2004, p. 232).

However, the clans are much larger than this and include non-elite members represented by women, relatives, youth, council of elders, close friends and kinsmen. Clans are also divided by the social class affiliation of individuals (Edgar, 2001).

Every clan has its own distinctive identity which is characteristic only to its own members. Blood-based kins or fictive bonds are continually reinforced to sharpen the identity within the group. There is a continuous exchange of benefits within the clan, where non-elites present their loyalty and support to elites, in their turn, elites share financial and economic incentives with non-elite members of their clan. As Collins notes, “elites need the support of their network to maintain their status, protect their group, and make gains within an overarching political or economic system. Nonelites need clan elders and patrons to assist them I finding jobs, dealing at bazaar, accessing education, getting loans, obtaining goods in an economy of shortages, and procuring social or political advancements” (Collins, 2004, p. 233). Therefore, both elites and non-elites are in advantages position and are interested in maintaining reciprocal and mutually beneficial relations. Even if a member of a certain clan intends to exit it, he or she cannot join to another clan because of the different identity he/she holds in relations to other clan.

While, Kathleen Collins focuses on the dynamics between clans and pacts they make between each other, Edward Schatz “explores how these groups were able to conceal their relations, enabling them to evade Soviet surveillance and extend their influence into independence” (Gullette, 2007, p. 58). Schatz argues that genealogical descent is the main requirement for both clan affiliation and ethnic identity. He specializes in analyzing clan politics and informal networks in Kazakhstan. Schatz emphasizes several reasons for the persistence of clans in Kazakhstan. One of them is that kinship could be hidden. He notes that “sub-ethnicity was not rooted in visible markers (as ethnic divisions tend to be) but rather in exchange of genealogical

information that defines identity and difference. Clan background could thus be concealed from the agents of Soviet surveillance who prosecuted network behavior as illegal” (Gullette, 2007, p. 58). Therefore, the clan groups and informal networks continues to survive even under authoritarian rule of the Soviet times. A prominent scholar, David Gullette, argues that there is a larger conceptual term that has more explanatory power of informal politics in Central Asia, which is tribalism. According to him, “label of clan politics-as it is understood in mainstream analyses-offers a curtailed understanding of everyday political practices in the region. Usually, the link to tribalism reveals the evolutionist understanding of clan politics in Central Asia” (Gullette, 2007, p. 69). Gullette also contends that the accusations of tribalism and tribal links were “discursive tactics to foment political corruption.” (Gullette, 2007). During the Soviet times, the Communist Party declared a massive campaign to eradicate the informal relations, mainly represented by tribalism and nepotism. One of their main concerns were former manaps and bais, who were the rich landowners and elites in pre-Soviet Central Asia. The members of communists party feared that manaps and bais could mobilize the communities and challenge the communist ideology. For example, a Communist Party Apparatchik in Kyrgyz Soviet Republic, Belotskii, once filed a report in which he wrote: “The influence of feudal-clan remnants and groups struggles continue within the Kyrgyz Communist Party Organization” (Central State Archives of the Kyrgyz Republic, f.0, op.1, d.527, 1.12, (Gullette, 2007)). It was the main tactic for Party Apparatchiks to strengthen their status by accusing the opponents of tribalism and nepotism. Another interesting case was that Ailchinov reported on his fellow Communist Party member Chonbashev, for allegedly having ties with bais and manaps:

Comrade Chonbashev was sent out on business in the Karakol District to conduct important political work. There, he continued his old policy-he protected bais and manaps, was engaged in counter-revolutionary affairs and protected his brother and other class enemies from eviction out of Kyrgyzstan. When the rural party activists insisted on eviction of the bais, Chonbashev organized the persecution of rural Party activists and dismissed Part activists from their work. Chonbashev has not told the Party about this.
(Central State Archives of the Kyrgyz Republic, f.10, op.1, d.527, 1.76, (Gullette, 2007))

2.6. The significance of family networks, clans and regional power centers

According to Starr, the clans that dominate the invisible politics in Central Asia could be divided into three groups. First group is the family groups. Starr notes that “the formerly nomadic peoples, the Kyrgyz Kazakhs, and Turkmens, are comprised of large kinship systems that are in turn subdivided into lower units culminating in individual families” (Starr, 2006, p. 7). The Kazakh hordes and Kyrgyz northern and southern groupings constitute one of the best illustrations of these family groups. The next lowest level of these peoples he calls as clans or tribes, which is very important identity source for all the nations mentioned above (Starr, 2006). Starr points out to the longevity of memories of family groups. Tribal fights and historical remnants happened for instance in 19th century still have a psychological effect on tribe and family members of today. Thus, the kinship ties remain as an important factor that has an impact on individuals’ everyday life in Central Asia.

Second group that dominate the invisible politics in Central Asia are regional networks. Connected with close political and economic ties, the regional networks constitute an important power center, which reflects the same power bases existed in the past during the Khanates. Noteworthy that “the largest of these, acting alone (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan) or in alliance with another regional power center (Afghanistan, Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan) have long dominated the politics of each country” (Starr, 2006, p. 7). The regional networks from Samarkand and Tashkent, two largest cities in Uzbekistan, control the politics of present day Uzbekistan. There were attempts during the Soviet times to “diversify” the control among other regions in the country, for instance, including Ferghana network, but it failed. In Tajikistan, “the transfer of power from north (Khojent) to south (Kulyab) led to civil war, while Kyrgyzstan’s 2005 “tulip” revolution’s shifted political power from north to south, which gravely destabilized the country” (Starr, 2006). Regarding Turkmenistan, late President

Saparmurat Niyazov tried to portray himself as the leader of all tribes and regions as to maintain the strong grip on power.

Last but not the least group that plays an important role in invisible politics in Central Asia are economic barons. This source of Politics B power in Central Asia comes from the control of the key state resources (Starr, 2006). During the Soviet times, the control of resources meant the control of irrigation systems. Today, it means “control of the whole sectors of the economy, whether cotton, power, mineral extraction, construction or transport” (Starr, 2006, p. 8). Those economic barons usually inherited their control from their ancestors from the Soviet times, an important factor that makes them different from Russian oligarchs who emerged after the downfall of the Soviet Union.

2.7. Clan politics during the Soviet times

The modern understanding of state, with bureaucracy and state apparatus, came to be known after Soviet rule established its domination in Central Asia. Before 1924, the clans and tribes were primary form of social organization in the region. After the Soviet Union established a modern state, it started to fight against all forms of informal politics and networks, because they undermined the Communist ideology that the Soviet rule tried to implement in the region. Not surprisingly, they faced resistance from the local informal leaders as the whole system was transforming not in their favor. Soviet state had attempts to replace clans and tribal links with more modern forms of social organizations, namely ethno-national identities: Kyrgyz, Uzbek, Tajik, Turkmen and Kazakh (Fierman, 1991). Collins points out to the additional factors that contributed to the survival of clans during the Soviet Union. First one, kolkhoz and korenizatsiya systems were introduced to reorganize the Central Asian societies and eradicate the clan system. Kolkhoz system “formed communal farms placing people into working

brigades. These new communities were often combination of villages. Yet, clans tended to live in close proximity to each other, and therefore, people were still close to their relatives” (Gullette, 2007, p. 57). Korenizatsiya-on other hand-was the policy to fight against tribalism to attract local leaders to communist party membership for the purpose of promoting Soviet ideology and values (Gullette, 2007). However, a paradoxical result of the Soviet policies transformed local clan leaders into civic or even national leaders (Starr, 2006) because these policies “provided a source of patronage networks for clan elites, who used the affirmative action appointment with little monitoring from Moscow” (Collins, 2004, p. 239). Moreover, the kolkhoz system strengthened the kinship bonds of ethnic groups, instead of destroying clans. With the beginning of the Second World War, the Central Communist party in Moscow had little time and interest in fighting with the informal networks in Central Asian region. Moreover, “Leonid Brezhnev’s near quarter century advocating ‘stability of cadre’ meant that as long as Central Asia and other republics were politically submissive, he would turn a blind eye to practices such as informal patronage of one’s network” (Collins, 2004, p. 239). Therefore, clans and regional networks in Central Asia had time and chance to strengthen their positions once again with little fear from punishment from Moscow. During Brezhnev era, nepotism and kinship ties once again manifested their revival. As Collins notes, “once a clan member had been given a position within the local or regional party apparatus or economic system, he brought in his relatives and extended kin through patronage; the Soviet state forced clans into more subversive roles; they continued providing goods and services for their members through an extensive underground economy and collusion against Soviet (mainly Russian) officials” (Collins, 2004, p. 239).

Despite seemingly similar traits, clans and informal networks differ in each country in Central Asia. The Soviet system tried to maintain balance of interests of different clans by appointing

strong and influential leaders to rule the republics. To achieve the balance of the divergent interest of clans, the Moscow supported local leaders like Turdakun Usubaliev in Kyrgyzstan, Sharaf Rashidov in Uzbekistan, Kunaev in Kazakhstan, Gapurov in Turkmenistan, and Rasulov in Tajikistan. They maintained in power because they were backed by local power brokers or simply, clans (Starr, 2006). However, Moscow appointed leaders established their own strong patronage networks in their republics, mostly under the Brezhnev time, that the Soviet state deteriorated internally in the region. Therefore, the following Soviet leaders like Andropov and Gorbachev started the policy of chistka (purge), eradicating the whole Soviet system from corrupted local leaders. The chistka was launched in 1983, and Gorbachev continued it between 1985 and 1988 (Collins, 2004). During the famous purge, around 30 thousand top and middle-class Soviet officials were dismissed from their positions and denied from economic and political power. Under Gorbachev rule, the first secretaries of Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, Sharaf Rashidov and Turdakun Usubaliev were fired from their positions because of the massive corruption in their republics and for establishing extensive networks that they supplied with economic and political resources during their rule. They were replaced by local leaders who were loyal to Moscow and had little connection with local clan networks, namely Absamat Masaliev in Kyrgyzstan, Inamzhan Usmonkhodjaev and later Rafiq Nishanov in Uzbekistan (Collins, 2004). Local dissatisfaction grew, as the clans were removed from economic power and excluded from the new arrangements. However, by 1989-90, the Soviet regime has been weakened by Gorbachev's policies of glasnost and perestroika, which let local clans to reassert themselves, and regain power from Moscow (Collins, 2004). By the end of 1990, local magnates and clan leaders started to regroup, and "with the first elections in 1989 they re-imposed the balances they had worked for thirty years, and lent their backing to new, younger leaders who could serve on their behalf, thus, it is the power brokers, clan leaders, and magnates who launched presidents Akaev, Nazarbayev, and Karimov, rather than vice-versa" (Starr,

2006, p. 9). Basically, “Kyrgyz and Uzbek clan elites, each representing powerful clan elite networks, thus informally selected new leaders who could manage these informal pacts, continue to balance clan interests, and stabilize the republics” (Collins, 2004, p. 241).

2.8. Clan politics during the post-Soviet period

The dissolution of the Soviet Union put Central Asian clan networks in an uncertain situation, because not a single leader in Central Asia did not support the collapse of the regime and the clans were not ready for the transition. Collins notes that it was not the clan pacts but the Soviet collapse that generated political transitions in the first years of independence (Collins, 2004). The republics of Central Asia followed seemingly similar but with small differences political paths after the independence. Kyrgyz President Askar Akaev, started his presidential career with rapid democratization of the country. Other neighboring countries, “leaders sought to re-create communism, albeit without ideology” (Collins, 2004, p. 246).

Kyrgyzstan

Historically, the first President of Kyrgyz Republic, Askar Akaev, was far from the clan politics and was not a part of a strong regional network. He made his scientific career in Russia and was close ally Gorbachev. In the first years of independence, Kyrgyzstan witnessed a large extent of liberalization: a broad and open constitutional assembly adopted a constitution in 1993; between 1992 and 1995, twelve independent political parties were registered which was not the case in neighboring republics; the freedom of press and expression existed to a large extent; local and presidential elections in 1994 and 1995 were called free and fair by international observers (Collins, 2004). However, starting from 1995, Akaev started to limit the liberal freedoms existed in the country prior to that. He publicly called for the abandoning of the informal norms and pursue the democratic ones, but unfortunately he “found himself

increasingly relying on clan support to keep himself in power” (Collins, 2004, p. 248). The clan politics once again began to flourish and posed an obstacle for democratic consolidation in the country. There are several striking examples of how clan politics were in place to undermine the critical elements of democracy. First example comes from elections. The clan politics severely affected Kyrgyz elections from 1995 and 2000 years. By late 1995, “upon the advice of his clan elites behind the pact, Akaev determined to stay in power to protect their interests....Akaev thereby abandoned his weak democratic constituency of urban intelligentsia and mobilized voters through his own clan network, that of his wife, and their closest clan allies” (Collins, 2004). This type of mobilization secured his victory in 1995 and 2000 presidential elections. Clan politics was exercised in all spheres of life and politics. Clan networks were there to influence of presidential institution, namely by making the president to appoint their representative to key positions. The parliament and judicial system had severely affected by clan networks and nepotism. Last but not the least, the allocation of public resources was conducted according to the rules of clan politics. Akaev, “generously fed several northern clans-Kemin, Aitmatov, Sarygulov clans and most especially his wife’s clan-while simultaneously doling out to rival clans just enough to prevent open conflict” (Collins, 2004, p. 250). The clan politics that Akaev exercised until the last days of his rule, became the main catalyzer of social unrest and his downfall in 2005 in popular revolution in Kyrgyzstan.

Uzbekistan

Unlike Akaev, Islam Karimov did not initiate any democratic reforms in the country, following the independence. Instead, he launched an authoritarian rule that was characterized by centralized government and tight control of economic resources. The political parties were shut down, the opposition leaders were sent to exile or had to run from the country. These authoritarian tendencies did not lead to the emergence of vibrant civil society in the country.

Despite appointing technocrats without clan affiliations, Karimov's agenda was largely controlled by informal politics. (Collins, 2004) It is evident that Karimov is dependent on clan support, and in their turn, clan patronage networks are dependent on his patronage as well (Collins, 2004). The strongest three regional networks from Tashkent, Samarkand and Ferghana continue to play key role in controlling and distribution of economic resources in the republic.

Other republics: Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan

The case of Tajikistan is obviously different from other republics in the region. The failure of clan pacts between the regional elites in the country led to civil war from 1992-1997. The clan politics was reshaped following the civil war under the President of Emomali Rakhmon. Historically, the politics of Tajikistan and its resources was controlled by northern clans, represented by Khodjenti clan. The Khodjenti clan had extensive support from Moscow as they provided loyalty and control of the republic. Most of the members of other clans have been excluded from economic and political power for almost four decades. The collapse of the Soviet Union and cut off of economic resources from Moscow, severely affected the power base of Khodjenti clan. The competition of clans for the resources led the country to the bloody civil war in which approximately 40 thousand people were killed. Following the peace agreement reached in 1997, the President Rakhmon reorganized the clan politics and made new arrangements. The Khodjenti clan, which historically dominated the Tajik politics, was excluded from the economic powers, while Presidential clan represented by Kulyab region, occupied the key positions in government and ministries. Rakhmon and his clan asserted hegemonic control over Tajik politics since 2001 (Collins, 2004). Other two Central Asian republics, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan were equally pervaded by clan politics following the independence. However, Kazakhstan launched significant economic liberalization while

Turkmenistan maintained the communist style authoritarian rule (Collins, 2004). The striking difference of these two countries from their neighbors is that they are extremely rich in natural resources, which makes the control of economic resources a highest priority. The national parliaments of these countries became an arena for clan competition and regional networks. Both Nazarbayev and Niyazov, followed by Berdimuhamedov, maintained the appearance of a neutral podesta in managing the clan pact (Collins, 2004).

Chapter 3. Case Studies

In this thesis, I aim to investigate the main factors of persistence of neopatrimonialism in two Central Asian countries, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. There are number of reasons why I chose these two countries as a case study. First of all, the regimes in both countries have outlived all other regimes in the region, Karimov and Nazarbayev, the presidents of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan respectively, aged over seventy, have ruled the countries since the 1990 and 1989 respectively. The amazing longevity of these authoritarian and personalistic regimes makes them the focus of academic interest. Secondly, the recent political developments in these two countries, including arrest of business assets of Gulnara Karimova, the daughter of President Karimov, the appointment of Dariga Nazarbayeva as a deputy Speaker of Kazakh parliament and other significant political developments, are exhibiting strong prerequisites, among the other countries in the region, for the leadership transition in Central Asia in near future. The hypothesized factors that pave a way for the persistence of neopatrimonialism in these two countries, presidentialist models of executive-legislature relations and local political culture, represented by clan politics will be addressed by selecting adequate conceptual tool that will scrutinize key elements for an explanatory framework.

3.1. Uzbekistan

The current political regime in Uzbekistan could be classified as neopatrimonial. According to Transparency International, it is one of the most corrupt countries in the world. It is ranked 177th most corrupt countries out of 183 countries in public sector corruption (Corruption Perception Index 2011, 2011). However, the regime of the country has been successful in developing a strong state ideology and incorporating it with legal-rational procedures. Alisher Ikhamov, a prominent Uzbek scholar, developed a so-called the structural constitution of neopatrimonial regimes, where he highlights two essential components of neopatrimonial rule in Uzbekistan (See Table 1). First component is the regime of power control, which deals with

formal and informal institutions in shaping the power mechanisms of the regime. This component is mainly characterized by “exclusive control of power-wielding agencies; the apparatus of state ideology production, selective use of law and mechanisms of market economy in the interests of the ruling elite and quasi-societal corporatism” (Ilkhamov, 2007, p. 67). Second component of a neopatrimonial regime is the rational-legal government provision system. This component is characterized by the “rationally organized and steered state administration, and by impersonal legal rational rules and procedures in implementing law and administration” (Ilkhamov, 2007, p. 67).

Table 1. Structural constitution of neopatrimonial authoritarian regimes

Neopatrimonial authoritarian regime		
Power control regime		
Informal institutions and practices	Formal institutions and regulations	Rational government provision system
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patronage, ‘clan’ networks, personal loyalty relations and solutions • Patriarchal norms and values inherited from the past and enforced by the new state ideology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exclusive control of power wielding agencies • State ideology production and control apparatus • Hyper-centralisation • Selective use of law and mechanisms of market economy • Quasi-societal corporatism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rationally organised and steered state administration • Impersonal legal-rational rules and procedures of state administration and legal system

Source: (Ilkhamov, 2007)

3.1. The historical roots of neopatrimonial relations in Uzbekistan

It is difficult to trace a certain historical period that conditioned the present-day neopatrimonialism in Uzbekistan. However, it is known that patterns of patron-client relations existed and were the characteristic feature of Bukharan, Khivan and Kokand khanates. For example, the Bukharan Emir used the method of “tanho”, a system under which licenses were granted to favored local governors for their loyalty, military service or for sharing the tax

revenues with Bukhara (S.P. Tolstov, Abramzon, & Kislyakov, 1997, p. 175). The new facets of these vassal-suzerain relationships took a new breath during the Soviet times. Sharaf Rashidov, former First Secretary of the Uzbekistan branch of the CPSU, could be considered as the god father of the current neopatrimonial rule in Uzbekistan. His long years of rule of the country from 1959 to 1983 during which he successfully combined the Soviet-style leadership with informal practices close to *tanho*, manifests the new type of feudal state, under which the patronage networks flourished both in politics and in distribution of economic resources (Ilkhamov, 2007, p. 66). However, the patronage system and informal practices were not only characteristic to Central Asian republics, but also to the Central Committee of the Communist Party and the central government in Moscow as well. After establishing the dominance, the Soviet power in the former Soviet republics heavily relied on collectivization of the agriculture. In the long-run, the collectivization process entailed several side effects to the Soviet system. First, “it concentrated significant resources under farm chairs, reshaping the problem of political control around collectivized agricultural units, their managers, and local political elites” (P.Markowitz, 2012, p. 393). And secondly, “mechanisms of control, as in other Soviet republics, shifted markedly over time, giving rise to neopatrimonial orders within Uzbekistan’s territorial apparatus” (P.Markowitz, 2012, p. 393). In its turn, it gave an opportunity for local leaders to establish their economic bases through collective farms and build a patronage networks. The local committees of Communist Party did not tackle this problem, as some of the members were themselves involved in the process. The strong patronage networks were supported and protected by important office holders in *obkom* (provincial communist party branch) and there was a constant flow of economic resources between the farm leaders and local authority members. As a vivid example of this patron-client relations between farm managers and local authorities is “the protection and favoritism that *obkom* first secretaries provided to district (*raikom*) first secretaries in making their

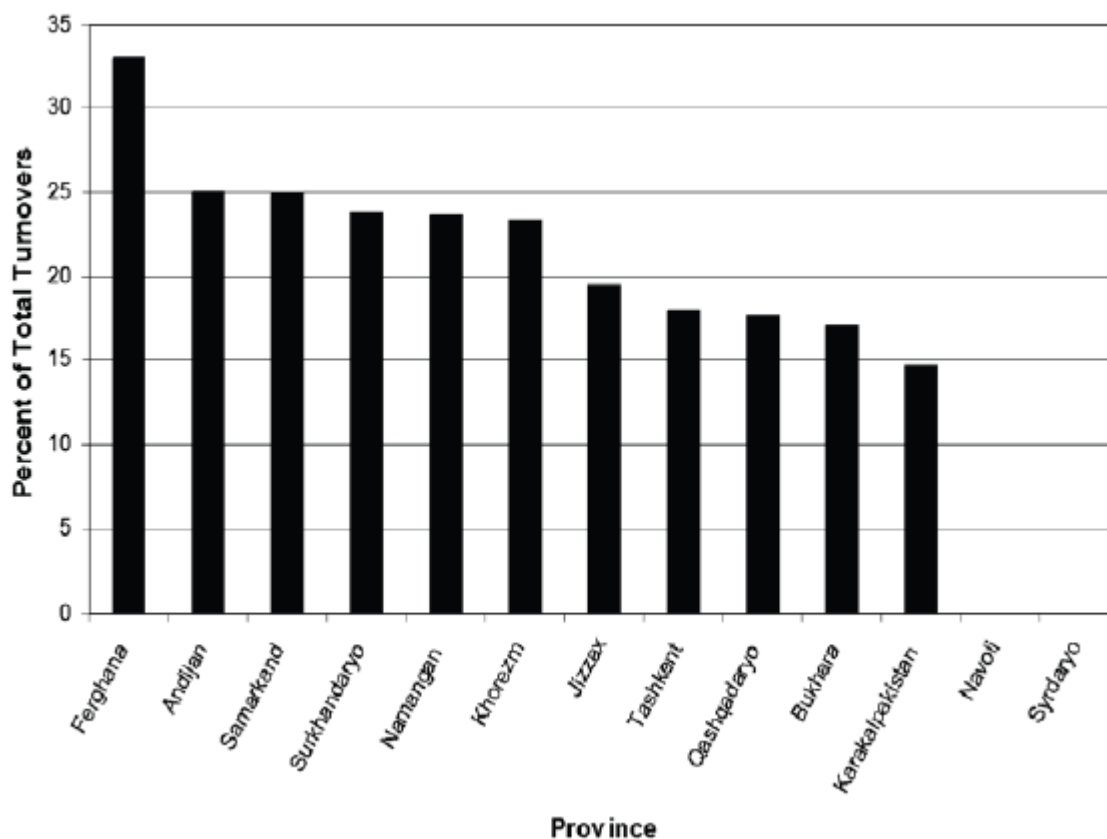
appointments” (P.Markowitz, 2012, p. 393). As Markowitz points out, in the last three decades of the Soviet rule, district first secretaries were often reassigned to the same post in another district (See Figure 1), (P.Markowitz, 2012).

In fact, the Soviet system itself encouraged and strengthened the patron-client relations within the state apparatus. During the Soviet period, one of the most important requirements for being selected to Communist Party membership in Uzbekistan was the diploma from Tashkent High Party School. According to Markovitz, “by 1967, 590 gorkom and raikom secretaries and raispolkom chairs passed through inter-republic of study. The same year, however, the School created six-month inter-oblast courses in Tashkent, Ferghana and Samarkand, and in its first year, approximately 900 staff members of district party and soviets were trained at the three sites” (P.Markowitz, 2012, p. 393). Later, these schools served as a platform for networking and making connections to further career within the Communist Party System. Following the years of independence, the graduates of this Party school filled the highest echelons of Uzbek state in early 1990s.

Ken Jowitt points out that the patrimonial practices were already exercised during the Stalinist regime, where blat principle, or *tanish-bilish* in Uzbek, was widely used among the office holders and party members (Jowitt, 1992, p. 127). The centralized economy and the rule of the few instigated the patronage networks and informal politics. The proliferation of informal practices and institutions continued to expand even after post-Stalinist era especially during the rule of Leonid Brezhnev (1964-82). According to Ilkhamov, the Brezhnev era was marked by the emergence and establishment of a certain type of political class consisted of communist party and high level administration bureaucrats linked with each other along the formal and informal relationships. And the establishment of this political class emerged on different levels

of governance and paved a way for interest group politics to take root (Ilkhamov, 2007). Sharaf Rashidov, in his turn, implemented the Brezhnev-style patrimonial rule in Uzbekistan. He managed to build strong patronage networks thanks to his cadre politics and through establishing “clan pacts.” Many of his cadres, who started their administrative career during Rashidov’s rule, including Islam Karimov, dominated Uzbek politics in post-Rashidov period.

Figure 1. Lateral movements of raikom first secretaries, Uzbekistan, 1960-1991



Source: (P.Markowitz, 2012)

3.2. Neopatrimonial relations in Uzbek politics after the Independence

The informal politics and practice of neopatrimonialism in post-Soviet Uzbekistan is closely connected with political biography and political regime of Islam Karimov (Ilkhamov, 2007).

A party apparatchik during the Soviet rule, Karimov launched a new political trajectory after

gaining independence. Under the emergence of strong nationalism, Karimov sought to centralize a strong state and from the very beginning tried to portray himself as ‘a leader of the whole nation and standing above any clan loyalty’ (Ilkhamov, 2007). He publicly denounced the clan politics and stated that it hinders the Uzbek society to develop and to move forward. However, in practice, Karimov pursued a politics that was directed at reshaping the clan formation. He managed to ‘liquidate the influence of some powerful clans around him, but not clan politics itself’ (Ilkhamov, 2007). The representatives of Rashidov clan once again took the stages of Uzbek politics and were given key positions in the government. In later years, Karimov consolidated power under his personal control and was successful in distancing himself from various clans thus decreasing his dependence on them. On the other hand, Karimov did not use the historic opportunity to dismantle the neopatrimonial rule in the country; on the contrary, all his actions were directed at strengthening the neopatrimonial hierarchy which helped him to sustain his personal power control (Ilkhamov, 2007).

After liquidating the leaders of old clans, Karimov significantly limited the channels of national resources for local elites, especially in the cotton sector (Ilkhamov, 2007). Karimov took all the export resources under his personal control. As I noted earlier, Uzbekistan preserved much of its command economy and monopoly over the key resources within the hands of one political grouping, which led to re-emergence of ‘clan’ formations and inter-clan rivalry (Ilkhamov, 2007). Noteworthy, the regional clans and local elites were significantly diminished and lost their importance due to some strategic measures taken by the central government. Firstly, the accumulation of financial and other types of capital in the hands of the grouping strictly controlled by the President decreased their role. Secondly, Karimov used the policy of frequent rotations of regional hakims from their posts every three years on average (Ilkhamov, 2007). This policy hindered appointed regional governors to accumulate financial resources and local

support to challenge the central government. However, these policies proved not to be effective enough to control sub-national state officials in the regions. Once President Karimov himself admitted this fact:

“... we need to perfect the system of selecting cadres, appointing them and renewing them... we should take the path of selecting the most suitable candidates for a position... The problem has never been solved easily. Usually at such times we always encounter subjectivity, cupidity, regionalism, tribalism, and many other evils characteristic of human beings. Unfortunately, it is very difficult to find ready ways to solve the problem...” (Eurasianet, 2000)

In the meantime, a new type of patronage network emerged in the political arena of Uzbekistan. This new type of informal network revolved around the key administrative departments in the central government such as security, law enforcement agencies, tax service, and customs. This could be called a new phase of neopatrimonial relations in Uzbek post-soviet politics. Therefore, a new era of inter-clan struggle could be characterized by a rivalry between the governmental departments unlike between regional factions used to be in the past. The vicious struggle was observed between the Interior Ministry and the National Security Service led by Zakir Olatov and Rustam Inoyatov respectively. The Ministry of Interior has been put rival of the National Security as a counterweight and as a kind of check and balance system (Ilkhamov, 2007). These two ministries gained considerable amount of uncontrolled coercive power and access to economic resources as a reward for their loyalty and sustaining the personal rule of Karimov. The example of mega-clan formation in Uzbekistan highlights an important feature of Karimov's style of neopatrimonial rule (Kavalski, 2010). Mega-clan refers to a clan formation centered around the Presidential family. One of the integral duties of aforementioned law enforcement agencies were to contribute to the enrichment of the Presidential family. The overarching goal behind the accumulation of wealth by mega-clan is to ensure the family capital as a retirement or insurance package in case of the death of Karimov (Kavalski, 2010). Although Karimov's political regime provided security and stability in the country, the patronage networks and informal practices employed by Karimov's regime failed

to build robust administrative and democratic institutions that could address the appealing socio-economic needs of Uzbek population.

Markowitz contends that neopatrimonialism in Uzbekistan had three main effects: it halted political and economic reform, weakened rule of law institutions, and drained social welfare provision (P.Markowitz, 2012). The lack of genuine interest in launching reform programs by state officials is related to their eagerness to preserve the status-quo, a system that best serves to their political and economic interests. The reforms urged by the international organizations and financial institutions endanger the system of corruption and nepotism inherited from the Soviet period. This situation is skilfully illustrated in International Crisis group's report where they say that:

“lack of reform led to sclerosis in the system, high levels of corruption went unchecked, and key income-producing sectors of the economy were taken over by vested interest groups with powerful positions in the government...leaving in place an elite that is only rhetorically interested in reform and largely happy with a status quo that provides it with significant incomes and no necessity to share wealth with the broader population” (P.Markowitz, 2012, p. 399).

Neopatrimonialism weakened the rule of law in Uzbekistan. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and establishment of the independent Uzbek Republic, the law enforcement agencies of the country obtained almost uncontrollable power to ensure the security in the country, but most importantly to safeguard the personal regime of Islam Karimov. However, more often than not, the state security and law enforcement agencies abused their status and power leading to the proliferation of corruption, bribery, extortion and other methods of illegal activities (P.Markowitz, 2012). The prosecutor's office, police and state security agency strongly influence the court decisions, which in itself undermines the judicial institution and pave a way for the decline of public trust in courts. American Bar Association Central and Eastern European Law Initiative notes that “although the law essentially provides for judicial review

of administrative decisions, the law is not frequently used, and the courts are reportedly hesitant to make decisions against the government” (P.Markowitz, 2012, p. 404).

The neopatrimonialism affected overall Uzbek social welfare system. Education and healthcare, coupled with other key basic services to the general population are worsening in the country year by year. The money allocated to these sectors are declining. According to the reports, Uzbekistan has experienced a decline in health expenditure (as a percent of GDP) from 4.5 percent in 1992 to 2.5 percent in 1999 and a decline in education expenditure from 10.2 percent to 7.8 percent for the same period” (P.Markowitz, 2012, p. 405). Like any other country in Central Asia, Uzbekistan fell short from bringing basic services to its population like gas and electricity. Despite the fact that Uzbekistan owns large reserves of natural gas, the central government decides to export rather than to utilize it for internal needs. According to U.S. Energy and Administration, Uzbekistan has been ranked third largest gas producer in Eurasia, just behind Russia and Turkmenistan in 2011 (U.S. Energy and Administration, 2014). However, most of the population outside of the capital remains without gas even in the coldest months of winter. As Markowitz aptly notes, “a frequent refrain heard in Uzbekistan is that the country is rich in natural gas, but many people go without gas to cook or heat their homes because a few elites at the top maximize their rents from natural gas exports” (P.Markowitz, 2012, p. 406).

3.3.Kazakhstan

The distinctive feature of Kazakhstan's post-Soviet political development is a regime underpinned by neopatrimonial characteristics (Isaacs, 2009, p. 104). In Kazakhstan, the challenges from new or altered institutions such as parliament, political parties and electoral competition have led the political leadership, namely the president Nursultan Nazarbayev, to

rely on informal political norms of behavior and relationships to secure and consolidate power in an effort to confront the instability that arises with transition and new institutions (Isaacs, 2009). These attempts exacerbated patronage groups and elites to a higher degree of political competition.

3.4. Soviet neopatrimonialism in Kazakhstan

As I mentioned earlier, the Brezhnev era was marked with the emergence of strong patronage networks in Central Asian republics. In Kazakhstan, Dinmukhamed Kunaev, former First Secretary of the Kazakhstan branch of the CPSU who ruled the republic from 1960 to 1986, established his extended network of informal political ties based on loyalty for the exchange of important material resources. Widely known with promoting the interests of Kazakh elites, Dinmukhamed Kunaev “built up an ethnic Kazakh, largely politico-administrative cadre and helped sponsor the educational and cultural development of ethnic Kazakhs” (Ian & Cory, 1996). His loyalty and faithful service under Brezhnev secured his position for almost three decades. His follower, Nursultan Nazarbayev, was appointed as the Chairman of Kazakhstan’s Council of Ministers, which was the second highest political position in the republic. At the age of forty-four, he was the youngest among all the Soviet leaders at that time. As Isaacs points out “patrimonial communism proved a good schooling for Nazarbayev allowing him to develop the bureaucratic skills and patronage necessary to rise to the top of Kazakhstan's party oligarchy” (Olcott, 2002, p. 28). Nazarbayev himself was a reform-minded leader. Under perestroika period, he furthered Gorbachev’s vision to reform the Soviet system, which in turn went against Dinmukhamed Kunaev, who played an important role in Nazabayev’s rise to power. In the last years of Soviet rule, Nazarbayev started to criticize Kunaev’s brother, who at that time was serving as a Head of Academy of Sciences in Kazakhstan, for inaction in the reform process. Later, Kunaev wrote in his memoirs about the betrayal feelings on Nazarbayev

and demanded from Moscow the removal him from the office (Cummings, 2001). However, Moscow appointed Gennadii Kolbin, an ethnic Russian, as a First Secretary of the KPK's Central Committee. This appointment triggered thousands of demonstrators in the capital Almaty to take to the streets, which transformed into country-wide mass protests, mostly including young ethnic Kazakhs, protesting against perceived status as a secondary class citizens in their own country and appointment of Kolbin, an outsider from Moscow.

Nazarbayev remembers his role in this demonstrations as following:

“In everyone's life there are moments when suddenly a crucial choice has to be made, a choice between what is familiar, comfortable, and what is unpredictably complex or painful. A person faced with such a dilemma who does not conform to the circumstances, who remains true to himself, ultimately gains. When the people began to march into town I realized that I faced such a dilemma-either take a stand or return to the Central Committee offices. The latter seemed an inexcusable betrayal of the people who were right. I went with them, at the head of the crowd” (Cummings, 2001, p. 60).

Nazarbayev assumed the power in 1989, later becoming the first democratically elected president of the newly independent Kazakh Republic.

3.5. Post-Soviet political trajectories in Kazakhstan

The Soviet state and party structures are characterized by “the neopatrimonial, vertical and horizontal relations of loyalty between members of the personal and bureaucratic administration” (Franke, Gawrich, & Alakbarov, 2009, p. 112). Therefore, the neopatrimonial elements in post-Soviet Kazakh politics are inherited from the Soviet past and are considered as Soviet habits.

Nursultan Nazarbayev faced important political challenges following the independence. The years of independence brought with themselves a high degree of uncertainty over political authority and power sharing mechanisms. This uncertainty was manifested in broad range of processes including institutional competition, electoral competition and emerging pluralism in the society. Nazarbayev turned to informal politics to maintain control over these uncertainties

(Isaacs, 2009, p. 104). According to Cummings, the first decade of presidency of Nazabayev is highlighted by four main characteristics:

- A process of state- and institution building
- The absence of ideology in favor of a managerial type of leadership
- A kleptocratic economy; and
- A strong personalism, buttressed by corruption, neopatrimonialism and venality

(Cummings, 2001, p. 62).

Except the first one, all other three characteristics were strengthened in the first decade of Nazarbayev's rule. However, I am concerned with the last characteristics that assumes the neopatrimonial relations in Kazakhstan. Starting from 1995, Nazarbayev began to consolidate power under his personal control mainly through referendums and Constitutional Court decisions. The so-called independent media existed at that time slowly shifted under the control of the Presidents close allies and family members. By 2000, Nazarbayev "had surrounded himself with a core elite considerably smaller than that of 1991, largely consisting of relatives and close friends" (Cummings, 2001, p. 65). The presidential and parliamentary elections had been widely falsified in 1999 and 2000. On 27 June, 2010 the Mazhilis, the highest legislative body of Kazakhstan, passed the Law on the First President of Kazakhstan, "granting Nazarbayev access to future presidents, immunity from criminal prosecution, and influence over domestic and foreign policy" (Cummings, 2001, p. 65).

3.6.Role of clans and informal groupings in Kazakh politics

Kazakhstan's political trajectory is plagued by the politics of clans. Nazarbayev initially needed to portray of an image of independent broker to manage the clan pacts, as Karimov did in Uzbekistan. He faced the historical divisions among three tribal groupings and smaller clan lineages (Schatz, 2000). Albeit some promises and to a certain extent the practical implications

of mass media and political party liberalization, inclusion of the representatives of all three hordes, Nazarbayev's regime turned its face to authoritarianism. As Collins contends, "bolstered by oil wealth, Nazarbayev sought to consolidate a super-presidential system in which his network controls power and resources" (Collins, 2004, p. 257). Nazarbayev employed his mega-clan to control the most important sectors of economy and politics. The president's younger daughter, Aliya, "wields control over important parts of the construction industry, as well as large parts of the water and gas industry" (Franke, Gawrich, & Alakbarov, 2009, p. 114). His other daughter, Dariga Nazarbayeva and his son-in-law (until 2007) Rakhat Aliev seized control over the media and other important business interests (Collins, 2004). Nazarbayev's other son-in-law, Timur Kulibaev, gained control of almost 90 percent of blooming Kazakh economy, especially in gas and oil sectors. In response to severe criticism of president's relatives hold high posts and own large business interests in Kazakhstan based on clan kinship, Nazarbayev once commented as follows:

"As for the members of my family, they, as all the rest of the citizens, have the right to do their professional jobs, hold public posts and go into business. But same as all the Kazakhs, they must not abuse the law, being equal before that law" (Novosti, 2010).

A Kazakh political scientist, Dossyp Satpaev, aptly notes that:

"Authorization to engage in politics involves a series of informal and personal pacts between 'the Family', or the inner circle of the regime and the various contenders, according to which the latter are expected to abide by the implicit but well-understood norms of business competition and political participation" (Franke, Gawrich, & Alakbarov, 2009, p. 115).

The power structure of Kazakh politics is designed as a pyramid, the President on the top, surrounded by his mega-clan including his family members, and business and political elite residing at the bottom level of the pyramid. When it comes to elite, it could be categorized under two subcultures. The first subculture "is the traditional order of the horde, which depends on the genealogical seniority and size", and the second one is represented by "strongly developed group system based on former leaders of the Communist party, former Soviet

economic structures and new business groups” (Franke, Gawrich, & Alakbarov, 2009, p. 116). These business elites do not necessarily see the blood ties or genealogical kinship lines essential to their structure. Rather, lobbying interests are the key element for them in maintaining their power and economic interests. Therefore, they tend to position themselves closer to the inner circle of the President in order to both present their loyalty and secure their status-quo in exchange for it. One of the business groupings that can exemplify this case is a Kazakh Group, led by former mayor of Almaty and current mayor of Astana, Imangaly Tasmagambetov. The factor behind the long existence of his grouping is owed to “personal ties, which go back to the Komsomol nomenklatura and officials who worked with Tasmagambetov in Soviet times” (Franke, Gawrich, & Alakbarov, 2009, p. 126).

To sum up, the state revenues are tightly controlled by the President and his close circles. It is in its turn, leads to corruption and even deeper entrenchment of informal politics in Kazakhstan. However, the general population’s discontent is on the rise, as it was manifested during the Zhanaozen events in 2011, where hundreds of oil-field workers protested against the government for uneven distribution of oil revenues in the country. Wealthy regimes might be more stable in the short-run, however, energy resources seem to be the catalyst of instability between the clans and hinder the democratization process in the longer run. Therefore, President Nazarbayev has been trying to secure his own position by arbitrating between the different clans and political groupings. To this date, Nazarbayev has been successful in balancing the power between competing business and political groupings and sustain his power pyramid. However, it is not clear what kind of trajectories business groupings and elite will follow after Nazarbayev steps from the power.

Conclusion

Many scholars predicted that the peaceful divorce of the former Soviet Union will result in democratization of post-Soviet republics in general, and Central Asian states in particular. However, after two decades of independence, almost all the republics in the region are entrenched in strong authoritarian presidentialism characterized by neopatrimonialism and informal politics. More often than not, the neopatrimonialism has not only never been genuinely tackled but even strengthened by the leaderships of the republics of Central Asia.

This thesis attempted to scrutinize the concept of neopatrimonialism and its implications in Central Asian politics. In the first chapter, I tried to analyze the meaning of the concept and distinguish it from other terms that are used interchangeably with the concept of neopatrimonialism. It has been found that most of these terms that are used instead of neopatrimonialism have narrower meanings whereas neopatrimonialism is a broad concept that encompasses many of these terms. Furthermore, the key differences were pointed out between Weberian classic patrimonialism and neopatrimonialism.

Despite the fact that the concept of neopatrimonialism has been widely used for developing countries, especially for post-colonial Africa, little attention was paid by scholars researching the state-building process in post-Soviet political landscape and Central Asia in particular. Different theories of political science have been employed to explain the political behavior in Central Asia. The transition theory is among the leading ones to have the strongest explanatory power. According to this theory, Central Asian states, like any other country in transition, have to experience the challenges of transformation from one system of governance to another. The theory sees the authoritarian nature of the states as a temporary phenomenon and contends that these countries will turn to democracy once state institutions become stronger and more effective. Apart from this, other approaches such as democratization theory and Greater Central

Asia approach have attempted to explain the informal politics in Central Asia. However, these theories proved to be misleading in explaining the regimes in Central Asia. Therefore, it became evident that the concept of neopatrimonialism best serves as an alternative explanation for the durability of the regimes in the region.

Identifying the main factors behind the persistence of neopatrimonialism was the integral goal of my thesis. The contemporary scholarship on this topic and my research revealed that there are two overarching factors that contributes to the persistence of neopatrimonialism in the region: strong presidential rule, supported by the Constitutions of the republics and clan politics that has deep legacies from pre-Soviet and Soviet history. However, I need to point out that these are not the only factors for the persistence of neopatrimonialism in the region but these are the ones that allow us to understand best the informal nature of political behavior in the region.

The first factor contributing for the persistence of neopatrimonialism I analyzed in this thesis was the presidential model of executive-legislative relations. I argue that the entrenchment of authoritarian nature of governance is due to strong presidential model of governance. With the exception of Kyrgyzstan, in all other Central Asian republics the legislative body represented by parliament has little influence on internal political dynamics in the country and just serve for the interest of the executive body represented by the President. However, the findings suggest that presidential system itself cannot explain the persistence of neopatrimonialism. The lack of strong check and balance system, robust parliament and vibrant civil society makes the presidential system so strong in Central Asia.

The second key explanatory factor for the persistence of neopatrimonialism in Central Asia is linked to its political culture. It is hard to imagine Central Asian politics without informal interactions between different actors, clans, and regional networks. I argue that even today the

clan politics play a significant role in shaping the political trajectories of the countries and contribute to the persistence of neopatrimonial relations between the political actors. These informal practices hinder Central Asian states to foster genuine democratic principles and strengthen its institutions to uphold the rule of law and ensure the protection of human rights.

Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan were chosen as a case study, because both countries demonstrate structural similarities and parallels in neopatrimonial and centralized political systems, which are slightly different in other neighboring countries in the region. The example of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan's post-Soviet state formation implies that the longevity of authoritarian practices rests on a complex of circumstances, most important of them, its ability to benefit from formal and informal, both traditional and modern institutions and practices, the mixture of which constitutes what could be characterized as neopatrimonialism. (Ilkhamov, 2007)

The recent political developments around the mega-clan of President Karimov and his daughter Gulnora Karimova, is a clear sign of stunning power struggle in the highest echelons of Uzbek politics. The economic performances of the country are deteriorating every year and social problems are becoming increasingly hard to conceal. Therefore, the upcoming Uzbek presidential elections in 2015 may very likely to reflect the consequences of long-lasting neopatrimonial rule in the country.

Informal practices and neopatrimonial relations seem likely to persist in Kazakhstan in near future. The regime stability in Kazakhstan is heavily indebted to oil revenues. The main characteristics of countries depending on oil are poor governance performance, a culture of rent seeking and corruption as well as personalization of power. Therefore, I contend that both Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan is likely to remain within the framework of neopatrimonialism for the near future.

This research focused only on the factors that are behind the persistence of neopatrimonialism in Central Asia. The further research could investigate the conditions under which neopatrimonial system could be transformed into more democratic and accountable system of governance. In addition, the role of neopatrimonial power relations on the leadership transition in Central Asian countries could be a subject of a separate research.

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