

THE POST-SOVIET TRANSFORMATION IN CENTRAL ASIA

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Abstract

Culturally and ethnically diverse Central Asia is a region of the Eurasian zone where five countries are located. Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kirgizstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan were independent countries after the fall of the Soviet empire in the world order. They were neither a strong social, political, economic country nor had a clear vision for individual and regional development. The perception of power was the main concept during the transformation of countries' electoral systems to run those countries politically, socially, economically. The perception of power was for individual gain by the creation of elites group in countries' political foundation. The conflict between central and regional leaders created confusion to establish a vision for future development. It shows that they were not interested to create a new nation on the basis of the democratic system and open economy. The conflict expanded surrounding the regions through the feature of the authoritarian political system and imperfect legal institution

Keyword: Newly Electoral Law, Regionalism, Ethnicity, Landlocked, Soviet Legacy, Transformation,

1.INTRODUCTION

The post-Soviet Central Asian states Kazakhstan, Kirgizstan Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan have gone through various political, social and economic struggles instead of transformation after the fall of the Soviet Union. It was their old leaders who did not able to settle a complete free economy, and democracy in every states in the region. The problem of ethnic identity, regionalism was their ancient social problem and it is still available. Mutual mistrust, poor governance,

corruption, fear of extremism, geopolitical dependency on water and energy created various political conflict between the countries. The progressive integration of the Eurasian landmass can bring the development for the region but it depends on their co-operation with each other, work together through a collective identity for a beneficial outcome. The electoral rule of law of every country needs to be modernized by the combined co-operation of central and regional leaders instead of the perception of power for status in the society as the supreme ruler. The countries need to be launched lowering barriers to trade and investments and de-securitizing from each other. They can be now separate, fully independent country but once they were all together socially. The region of Central Asia is important for the Russian Federation, Eurasian program; this is why the research of the entire region is important in the United States of America and in the global context. The entire region is now twenty-five years old since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the discussion raises about their present stand in the region and in the world order. Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan still have not a full mercantile/open economy since their transformation to now. Regions landlocked geography is an obstacle for communication with the rest of the world and it creates barriers for trade and economic development. Intra-regional trade relations also a big question between those countries because of their incompatibility of individual economic regimes, political tensions, conflict in the neighborhood like Afghanistan. However; China and the EU have a big impact on trade and investment in the Central Asian region, though Russian economic contribution decreases. Turkey has a bigger contribution to Tajikistan, while the EU is an important destination for Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. On the other side, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan can benefit from the transit trade between China and Iran. Conflicts cannot be harmful to the region if they follow their surrounding

counties and co-operative each other by the contribution of China, EU, Turkey and Iran. Overall membership in the WTO, and in EAEU will help them for the realization of collective identities and modernization in the region.

2.LITERATURE REVIEW

Post-Soviet Central Asia has various initiatives because of their geopolitical location between East and the West but the leaders have to be fixed it whether they wish for universal social and economic development in the Central Asian region. For those initiatives, they have to do a lot in the sector of political, economic and social transformation. They are all independent countries, has boundaries between them, they have to think for their country, they have to think collectively for regional development. Thus they can make a strong Central Asia economically, politically and socially. Unfortunately, leaders are authoritarian, Russia has influence over them and they are not fully transformed through democracy, an open economy. People have an identical problem, social problem and it makes the massless interested in a new process of the nation's foundation. As result leaders from the beginning have concentrated on their personal benefit and long-term power perception. They have to come out from all those ideologies, otherwise, conflict can be turned into a civil war in the region that it had already in Tajikistan. Uzbekistan's President Islam Karimov was a complicated President in the region. His desire not to co-operate with other regional countries, poor human rights records, self-isolation, distance with Russia finally made Uzbekistan an isolated country in Central Asia. The reform has to be full that is democracy has to be welcomed fully in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan. Corruption in daily life has to be reduced for better economic and social reform in the region. Better economic opportunities, higher quality of life has to be established for the betterment of the human being in the Central Asian region. The relations between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan have to be normal because of their completion as the regional power. The city of Tashkent seems like a leading city in the region but in reality, the city of Astana is the regional leading city and Kazakhstan seems like a regional leader because of their smooth economic growth, it shows dream Kazakhstan from the regional power to the global power. However; the role of Uzbekistan as the strongest

security force and the largest population in the region has to be in a real context, in the real image which will help them to co-operate with every country in the Central Asian States. It is not only President Mirziyoyev's initiatives to focus Uzbekistan as a friendly country in the region and the process of co-operative approach with others, but it also has to be by every President of Uzbekistan because of importance in the region. Otherwise, Kazakhstan who already has the leading quality for the region in the world order will permanent set-up and the opportunities for Uzbekistan will be in danger. So co-operation must require with other countries along with the Russian Federation for Uzbekistan to become formidable in the Central Asian region.

3.METHODOLOGY

Books, academic journals are two stakeholders for information collection. Then reading over the issues. Drafts have been written three times over entire issues for better understanding and memorization. It was a process of realization on words like region, community, ethnicity, conflict, social and political transformation, perception of power in politics, and their overall circumstances. Editing overwriting has done several times. Finally, I made the final draft as my final paper.

4.RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic was a great victory for the West as a clear sign of ideological win through democracy and capitalism. Though theoretically, it has an argument as well between Russia and the United States by saying that it is a glorious moment by the fall of the Soviet Union and on the other side Soviet expressed their unwillingness to compete with the United States, caused the fall of status-quo between two superpowers. It is a perception of each superpower over the end of the cold war according to the constructivism theory. However; long waited for the Western political and economic systems thus welcomed by the successor states by denying the Soviet system in the area. Political and Economic Western systems had been welcome but it had been really able to adapt by the successor states because of their various social, political issues such as failure to meet the international standard of competitiveness and

transparency. Privatized enterprises were receiving government subsidies and directorship. Central Asian states Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, had experienced in the democratic system during the first few years of independence from the Soviet Union. Democratic impulse through the innovation of electoral law and procedures was a sign of the beginning of a new political system from their old Soviet political and economic entities/systems. The new electoral system showed its greater degree of continuity, bargaining power etc. The change made four states regionally-based actors through the concept of power (strongly connect with realism theory, which is power conceptualization to determine itself in International Relations). The new electoral system in their countries was a huge change to come out from Soviet policies in political-economic prospects, it was a shadow or we can say a trial to set-up a western-based political-economic system. Though regionalism was observed among the leaders of three countries, the pre-Soviet determination somehow existed among systems; but it was a complete game, a rule of the game for the future of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan. According to scholars, newly establishment of electoral system for national legislature was influenced by the elites, political leaders and thus the outcome of the decision was influenced by those sections of the country such as relations between the executive and legislature, formation of new parliament, its new rules for the function of the country, its constitutional decision etc. Electoral systems occupy a central place in the domestic politics of former Soviet Central Asian Republics. Election and the electoral process was crucial for the reward of political loyal elites by the states, it was an appraisal system of performances of all political personnel as well. Elected members were handicapped by the Soviet leadership and thus they lose their power. Each legislature of Central Asian Republics served as an instrument of regional leaders to make mental efforts in their regional issues, territorial issues, local politics and economic issues. The legislature was not a part of the law-making institution at the national level, they were not structured like Western democracies where provincial legislature also participates in making laws nationally for the entire nation/country. After independence; that provincial legislature of Soviet Central Asian Republics becomes national parliament of each state and the members achieved various power to set-up decisions for the nations. It increases their

influence on crucial issues including the direction of economic reform, state and national building while reinforcing their prior status. Social and legal issues like privatization of land, the establishment of the national language, definition of citizenship were confronted by the legislature for its new clarification. The members were powerful to act on national defense, natural resources while it was before controlled by Moscow. Commitment to liberalization, the formation of the old political system and to adapt democracy, adapting a liberal/free economy was significant for the newly formed legislature to reshape the country and nations. Therefore newly national parliament of Kazakhstan, Kirgizstan and Uzbekistan was the testing ground for the inauguration of the new political and economic system. Glasnost and Perestroika influenced a lot in the latter years of the Soviet Union and its Central Asian Republics for the reformation of political and economic systems in the entire region. However the new parliament of three Central Asian Republics did not launch a complete democracy, the game of power was still there and the existence of elites power, influence in politics was still available. The negotiation process of three Central Asian countries is somehow similar. Negotiation over the structure of parliament, the nomination of candidates, supervision over the election, and the determination of the seats were highly influenced, or we can say these core-issues frames the negotiations. Actors were divided into two groups; regional leaders such as governors and their deputies, and the central leaders such as the President and the advisors of the President. They all prefer the electoral system to maintain the status between two systems of administration. It was a reflection of power, status-quo between leaders and the authorities. Regional leaders wished to focus their region first and thus tried to be ahead of others through their power and influence and regional political-social and economic status. It was also focused on a balance between the region and the centre in the context of power as well. Kazakhstan's electoral system is a populist character because of the inclusiveness of local workers, collectives and residential committees, the total population in determining the number of electoral districts without any limitation. In Uzbekistan the form of electoral system is centralist. It limits the right to nominate electoral candidates to one per electoral district for each officially sanctioned political parties and regional level legislature. The supervision of all electoral

procedure and outcomes are controlled by the President appointed Central Electoral Commission (CEC). In Kazakhstan the electoral system formed by the dualistic approach which is a hybrid model between the system of Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. The supervision over the election is divided between the central level and the regional level leaders in Kazakhstan, the supervision is between the President and the Governors which is Central vs. Regional collaboration of power system for the building of the nation. The new electoral law system of Uzbekistan mostly in common with its Soviet predecessor while Kazakhstan's electoral law system is a brand new that departs from its old Soviet predecessor fully. Uzbekistan newly parliament Oliy Majlis retain both the structure of Supreme Soviet's, part-time basics (authoritative bodies) and unicameral (a single legislative chamber by unicameral chambers of legislative), in Kyrgyzstan, the new parliament system retain the Supreme Soviet's part-time characteristics, and in Kazakhstan newly parliament Oliy Kenges did not retain any Soviet administrative model in its new parliamentary system to run the country. Therefore it can be observed that only Uzbekistan still follows the Soviet model in its new electoral system, election, etc. However newly country Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan in Central Asia have a similar perspective of social-economic and political similarities but they form their newly electoral system differently; one factor that is power works for everyone. The power of elites in administration, electoral system influences in their social, political, economic issues, decisions domestically, externally which basically forms their nations newly after the demarcation from the Soviet Union due to its system collapse in the world order. The elites in politics were Soviet-influenced which is observable in the new political structure of Uzbekistan and Kirgizstan and it was their self-interest along with the country's newly social-political and economic formation. Therefore it can be said that the countries of Central and Eastern Europe; Hungary, Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia has driven their formation of new foundational structure (political-economic-social, identification) faster than the three countries of former Soviet Central Asian Republic; Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and. The Kyrgyzstan elites' power in politics had been experimented both in Central and Eastern European countries as well, but comparatively, it was less than Central Asian countries during the formation of their new system and in their

continual process of nation's structure as former Soviet successor. It was the demands of the mass in Central and Eastern Europe to profound democracy and economic formation (free/open economy) and it had a great influence over regional political formation; while in Central Asia, it was less attentive from the people to the government during their formation after the fall of Soviet system. The lack of popular mobility from one system to another was an opportunity for the elites to retain and re-establish their power in politics and to secure elite attachment to regionalism in Central Asia. In Central Asian countries regionalism is a big concept, therefore their regional political identities also expand instead of a broader globalized sense that forms a feature of Soviet institutional legacy. It is an example that they were not able to reshape themselves completely from the Soviet political-social model. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the first ten years of Central Asia was peaceful, it was a peaceful transition from Soviet rule except for Tajikistan; due to flashing the civil war. Kyrgyzstan accepted widely the rule of democracy and their transition to democratic system was way broader than Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan; it is therefore observed that Kyrgyzstan made more progress towards political liberalization than any of its regional neighbors; while Kazakhstan placed second in the context of democratic progress since their transition from the Soviet Union to now and Uzbekistan placed third and far behind than other two states, while unreformed and unrepentant Turkmenistan placed fourth in the context of formation of Western democracy and open economy. Ethnic conflicts in Central Asia were a big factor in the context of social and political identities after the transition from the Soviet Union. The elites of the region embraced the concept of regionalism in the area that they adapted during Soviet rule and thus they were able to maintain the primary system of political and economic distribution of resources and settled political disagreement. The distribution of political and economic resources, settlement of political disagreement, changes of the regime are part of democratic reforms that the political elites did, and thus they become interested to adopt democratic reforms. The setting of democratic reforms by the elites is welcomed, however, it is also observable that the reformation increased their bargaining power and to thus to capture distributive gains during the transitions. The post-Communist Central Asia, Central

and Eastern Europe have similarities with post-colonial Africa. That is the lack of transition to full democracy and a truly democratic political regime in those countries. Political leaders were interested in power to shape the new foundation in their own way, self-determination, therefore they were not interested in democratic rule. The behavior of mass publics did not play a vital role through their popular protest, sustained mass mobilization to bring a new political and economic transformation in the region. They were confused and suspicious about a new political and economic foundation to rule the nation. As a result, Central Asia's political regime makes it personalize and concentrate power through their influence and unique position to the political and economic foundation. In Central Asian states regionalism is a big factor in politics and political decisions. In Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan regionalism goes beyond the institutional design process. It has been developed through regionally-based social movement and political parties, and it has been developed between regional administration and central government for the dominance of power and politics in those countries. Regionalism thus developed in two ways. In Central Asia, the ethnic clash was a big factor as well for identical purposes, tribal and clan's conflicts were their ancient conflict even before the Soviet conquer over Central Asia. The Soviet Union failed to control those ethnic clashes. The rise of Muslim nationalities was another factor for the purpose of identity in Central Asia, Soviet anti-Islamic attitude was one of the point of Islamic nationalities in the region. After independence, the Muslim community becomes the dominant political force in Central Asian countries. Therefore identity is very weak in the region because of clashing between various ethnics. The Soviet administrative-territorial structure is another reason for fostering regionalism in Central Asia. Its local identity is stronger than its national identities. In Kyrgyzstan administrative-territorial level was formulated and reformulated in the 1920s and in '30s for the correspondence of tribal communities in the territory (Clans, mixed tribes etc.). In Kazakhstan Soviet-made regional boundaries to keep entire Clans intact but created a regional distinction between tribes by the division of nomadic tribal confederations into separate territorial units. There were five identified regional distinctions among the Uzbeks in Uzbekistan. Clans were kept intact while other tribal communities

geographically and administratively dispersed. Collectivization campaigns in Central Asia was a movement to the forcible settlement of Kazakh and Kyrgyz nomads and the combining Uzbek villages on the basis of traditional kinship and/or social units. Though the communities of tribes, local people and the elites groups reinforced the incentives of social-political features among them, yet there was no official recognition of identities over tribal structure in Central Asia during the pre-Soviet time that disempowered them. It was a similar image in the economic specialization. The Soviet economic system reinforced the regional rather than national ethno political cleavages. Central Asian agricultural product would go to Moscow under the leadership of regional leaders, it was an initiative of the Soviet Union to focus on regional economic prosperity and to aware of regional leaders in their particular regions. Based on Moscow's fulfilment regions' of Central Asia could become more prominent in national politics. The Soviet Union was not able to reunite ethnic communities of Central Asia, they either were not able to understand them, or they did not intentionally reunite them and thus regional ethnic problems and the lacking their national identity was one of the burning issues in Central Asian Soviet Republics. It was also a result of the rising of the Muslim community as the political actors on the other side. As a part of the transitional process in August 1991, Kyrgyzstan declared its independence and set up new electoral rules in January 1994. Fast-paced political and economic establishment set-up during the reformation and international actors were invited in their reform process. The reform process of Kirgizstan reduced central control over political affairs. Decentralization had been set-up to the regional-level administration, open-media had been set-up for public access to information etc. Regional leaders were given importance and they received more political and social resources. Regionalism thus had been promoted after the transition from the Soviet Union. Under the leadership of President Askar Akaev, Kirgizstan recognized the law on local self-governance and local administration in March 1992 that empowered regional leaders to become more active in national politics, powerful. From independence to the beginning of 1994 Kirgizstan was the freest and open country in the former Soviet Union. Media and press were more democratic and less state intervention during the Akaev regime. The development

of civil society, the proliferation of social and political organizations, development of political organization resulting in political mobilization, were few characteristics of Kirgizstan's political formation in the post-Soviet era. In the spring 1993 Uzbekistan President Islam Karimov denied existing electoral system for independent Uzbekistan. In December 1993 newly electoral law adopted for independent Uzbekistan. The new electoral law reduced the power of regional leaders and embraced the power of political elites in decision making for the nation-building after the transition. Political and economic centralization has given prioritized, while the power of the President newly described for its centered concentration to the President. The power of national leaders was all in all comparison to the regional leaders in the draft of new electoral law. The new electoral system is a shadow of Soviet rule of law. They basically prioritize goodwill among political elites and maintaining peace in the new system controlled by the national leaders (elites). The new parliament and electoral system were political institutions for the national leaders to control regionalism. Under the electoral rule central leaders agreed to extend the right to nominate candidates beyond the registered political parties to regional council without sacrificing central control over the nomination candidate; central leaders accept electoral districts based on administrative-territorial division. The perception of power in Uzbekistan was based on central leaders due to its newly electoral rule; but it was somewhere equal status between regional and central leaders especially for three Uzbek oblasts Samarkand, Fergana and Tashkent. Under the new electoral law, regional leaders found negotiations as their weapon to maintain an equal status with central leaders on the basis of power perception and reserve their place in a larger political game in independent Uzbekistan. In Kazakhstan, the central leaders, President and his advisors, number of legal experts, and a select group of Supreme Soviet deputies were directly involved in the actual design of the electoral system that adopted in December 1993. And the other side regional leaders had an indirect influence on the fate of the electoral draft. Under the Presidential guidance draft of the new electoral law had gone to the Supreme Soviet for approval. It was an idea by countries like Uzbekistan and Kirgizstan that after a few conversations between leaders of central and regional levels, the drafts of

Kazakhstan will pass finally; but instead of peaceful approval deputies of Supreme Soviet raised concerns over the draft formulated by the Presidential guidance. Kazakhstan's December 1993 and September 1995 electoral laws differed dramatically in terms of actors' preferences they reflected; this a winning situation over electoral law created; on the others side, December electoral law was ignored by the regional leaders because of their ignorance by the central leader's indirect participation during negotiation. The new electoral system through the first and second bargaining game in the region of Central Asia was somehow similar characteristics; that is a balance between the central and regional leaders in power perception in their countries. In Kirgizstan, it was more mobilized, democratic, and in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, it was leading to be centralized through the negotiations after several failed attempts of passing electoral law in the Supreme Soviet. However, Kazakhstan finally was able to reach a mutual acknowledgment through the negotiations of central and regional leaders in power perception and thus the new electoral law approved in Supreme Soviet.

5.CONCLUSION

The fall of the Soviet Union was not desirable in Central Asian political perspectives. Countries of Central Asian Soviet Republics; Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan became independent, but they were not fully formed for a new independent rule at the moment to be recognized as a fully formed country. The Soviet Union was unable to manage for its ideological commitment in the world order due to its own economic and political circumstances, through according to Soviet perception that it was the Soviet Union, who did not want any more to compete with the United States, resulting the end of cold war, and on the other side, the perception of the West allies was the win over communism and establish democracy in the world order. However; right after a big gap due to the absence of the Soviet Union, Iran and Turkey felt a key power in the region due to the Central Asian Muslim majority, through Central Asia from the beginning was struggling with national identities. Even after independence countries like Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan have their authoritarian President and they made their newly electoral law to make them powerful which favors

elitism in power and politics. Freedom has certainly been curtailed in Central Asian countries except for Kyrgyzstan. Turkmenistan is not formed and very poor, its population has one of the highest infant mortality rates in the world, while in Tajikistan the political turmoil made it hopeless, a conflict between Islamists and Communist Government is a big issue in countries formation from the beginning while the communist government is backed by Russian Federation and Uzbekistan. Fergana valley of Central Asian region is a big political-social and economic turmoil. According to the government, the Islamist fundamentalism in the valley due to poverty is a threat for the entire region while it has a controversial story as well, which is a power game that is to execute and imprison their political enemies in order to retain their power in the region. The social, economic and political development of Central Asia depends on their will, whether they expect it or not, it has various domestic and external issues such as crime, drug smuggling (opium in Southern Kazakhstan), political competition between central and regional leaders on power, political dictatorship, unwillingness of democracy and free market, U.S. military presence are indexes in the regions (except Kyrgyzstan) which may hamper socio-political and economic development in Central Asian countries. If we look back on its history, we will see that landlocked Central Asia at the heart of the Eurasian continent was a hub of the silk route between East and the West for more than 200 hundred years. The old stories of Central Asia were a proud concept through their ethnical glorious history which had no absolute indigenous claim. The pluralities of Central Asian society was a unique part of world history. In 1920 the region was under the U.S.S.R and Moscow focused by regionally everywhere until the collapse of the Soviet Union. The most productive part of Khiva on the lower Amu River was divided among Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan. Neighboring villages of the region had close economic and social ties. Suddenly they turned into a different republic with different identities. The centre of the great Persian culture, Samarkand, Bukhara fall to Uzbekistan, mountain areas fall to Tajikistan and Kirgizstan with minimal urban areas. The newly independent countries were feeling helplessness through their old communist minded leaders, and the leaders were also suddenly felt them the leaders of a new nation, instead of Soviet shadow. The conflict between Russians, Ukrainian in one side and the

Kazakhs on the other side in Kazakhstan is tensed on land rights and jobs in Kazakhstan, the conflict between Uzbeks and Tajiks over the status of Samarkand and Bukhara, conflict between Kirghiz and Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan, riot between Caucasian and Turks and Uzbeks in the Fergana valley of Uzbekistan are regions most tough ethical conflict and social-political, economic issues which they had never been able to solve since their ancient period. The ethnic roots of the Central Asian region are always controversial which even was not able to solve by then the Soviet Union. Another issue is their dependence each other, Uzbekistan has most cities and irrigated farmland but on water resources, they depend on more weaker Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, Turkmenistan has vast oil and gas reserves but they depend on their powerful neighbor for economic survival, as a result, simple need and greed may arise violently, war between these countries along with their ethnic socio-economic and identity problems. The leaders are looking for Turkey as their example of a strong secular government, democracy and nationalism based on Turkish identity, some leaders are looking for Iran and Afghanistan to re-establish their Islamic roots, and Tajiks are seeking new tie to a greater Persian world. In this various national identities and nationalism, it is clearly observable that the leaders are preserving old Soviet system in the region through authoritarian rule and the new electoral law for the building of the nation, elections have been made on the basis of Soviet system which is basically centralized structure in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan etc. and thus the elites group was able to inaugurate the administrative system on their own interest, and benefits, a corrupt new model of for the development of the progressive states. The region with many nationalities and the outcome of their struggle will impact worldwide. The question is why is the region so complicated in the context of political, social and economic prospects? It is because of their inability to come out from Soviet hegemony in Central Asia politically, it is because of political leaders' greed on political, economic power for their own benefits rather than countries problem solution, it is because of the lacking initiatives to amalgamate with rest of the world along with a free economy. The Authoritarian rule after post-Soviet Central Asia is a shadow of old Soviet legacy instead of a new full-fledged democratic government and an open economy in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, except Kyrgyzstan (comparatively

Kirgizstan has better open administration and economy than rest of Central Asian countries).

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