

American University – Central Asia

Nation-building in the Post-Soviet Central Asia

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Abstract

The practice of nation-building is relatively recent for Central Asian newly emerged states. State aimed social-political programs and projects are increasingly prevalent in recent decades in all central Asian new independent states. The primary aim of this paper is, in political perspective, to elaborate the rule of states and state policies to make or remake national identities in the Central Asian countries. Particularly, it addresses the question of engagement of the states in nation-building projects while most of the state regimes are identical authoritarian and strong presidential system. The introduction part deals with the thesis statement, and a conceptualization of nation-building gives short background information about case countries. Secondly, paper discusses about Soviet Legacy and remaining obstacles that countries still do not get away with. Thirdly, paper compares and contrasts two countries' nation-building practices with their regime survival of Central Asia those are Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan. Particularly, it addresses early stages of nation-building processes in which the two states were busily engaged. Finally, the conclusion starts global comparison in what nation-building looks like in democratic states of the western countries.

Introduction

Many ‘*ENDs*’ were stressed in the last years of the twentieth century. Genius of politics Fukuyama Francis advocated “the end of history”, Daniel Bell discussed about “the end of ideology”, Jean Baudrillard talked about “the end of the social” and Michael Foucault analyzed “the end of subject”. But if anything, the end of the twentieth century vouched for evidence, I suspected, to the end of ethnic nationalism in Central Asia where the clusters of post-Soviet socialist states and some of whose members’ regime tend toward dictatorship. All these five Central Asian states have become known for running tight ships and they hold the most authoritarian rule in the post-soviet vacuum space.

Central Asia, it is a land locked region that has witnessed spectacular historical contradictions; bloody conquerors, terrifying massacres, tribal battles, cult struggles on one hand and trade prosperity brought by the ancient Great Silk Road, nomadic lifestyle, common culture, and common language on the other. Unlike other parts of the old world, Central Asia is less famous with its long lasting empires and nation-states. The region was frequently overrun by outsiders throughout known history starting with such great conquerors as Alexander the Great, followed by Genghis Khan and ending up with Russian imperialism. The region has thus always served as an object rather than a subject.

Eventually, in late 1991 following the break-up of the Soviet Union, the Central Asian countries became new and sovereign nation-states. Independent and modern centralized nation-state existence is a new experience for these countries in Central Asia. Historically nomads who were moving livestock from one grazing ground to another in a seasonal cycle, typically to lowlands in winter and highlands in summer, they now find themselves masters of their destiny. Nevertheless, as Karl Marx said “Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as

they please...”¹ So, now it might be the best time for people in Central Asia to make their own history just as they please... or maybe not?

Obtaining independence is not just an end in itself. It needs to consolidate and glue things up to work. After 1991, these premature countries had to face enormous challenges including state-formation, state-building, enabling inter-ethnic relations, economic growth, and regional issues such as security, water-conflict, terrorism, and Islamic-extremism and of course, finding permanent places for themselves in the international arena. While initially reluctant to separate from the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, Central Asian states nevertheless had to develop new national concepts that would designate their post-Soviet independence. Newly emerged independent nation-states and with the identical authoritarian nature, all Central Asian countries overloaded with heavy tasks that are mentioned above. Among the most important and, in fact, the most immediate task was initiating inter-ethnic relationship and nation-building in Central Asian states.

In this study, I am going to investigate the relationship between authoritarianism and nationalism in post-Soviet states of Central Asia, specifically in the case of Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan. I would like to explore the specific questions such as how authoritarian governances deal with nation-building process and how long authoritarianism and nationalism will go together. After investigating relevant literature and research about nation-building in Central Asia, I have come up with a hypothesis that nation-building designed for the ends of the current lame-duck authoritarian leaders of Central Asia and not for the good of the people. To prove my point, I will devote lengthy introduction and first chapters several courses of the history, concept of nation-building and Soviet legacy and impact on the agenda of nation-building in Central Asia. Specifically, Soviet Union policy on ethnicity is vitally important to understand the current outlook of the region.

¹ "Karl Marx: *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*. N.p., n.d. Web. 13 Apr. 2014.

Next second and third chapters will examine the specific country cases in Central Asia. In the case studies, I decided to investigate nation-building processes alongside with politics in Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan. It is safe to say that these countries are ideal examples of comparing and contrasting, because each of them lies at the opposite angles of the two extreme. While both countries have the high statues on extreme corruption and with slow development rates, Kyrgyzstan is softer and more open than Turkmenistan. Particularly, these two countries have obvious contrasting political competitions and participations in the domestic levels, which means that Kyrgyzstan is more inclusive for non-state institutions, groups and opposition parties while Turkmenistan is infamous with its ridged and oppressive authoritarian impulse of single dominant party system and J. Ishiyama ranked Turkmenistan as a “personalist dictatorship” in Central Asia (which I will talk about later in the next chapter).²

With a brief summary of Turkmen case, the third chapter slides into the conclusion. In the beginning of conclusion that I call it ‘the only game in town’ I dwell briefly on how nationalism differs in liberal democracies in comparison with authoritarian states. The former tends to promote civic nationalism while latter fosters ethnic ones.

Kyrgyzstan

Kyrgyzstan has both political and economic will to develop in comparing with Turkmenistan. In 2010, Kyrgyzstan was the first country in the region that granted considerable power to its multiparty parliament, which is still salient issue for the strong presidents of the other Central Asian states. None of the Central Asian presidents appear, thus far, comfortable of sharing power with other branches of state institutions. Though, Kyrgyzstan’s political struggle into democracy seems not to give up the idea of “Island of Switzerland”. Nevertheless, it is too early to celebrate Kyrgyz democracy achievement because none of the Central Asian states has

² John Ishiyama. Power and Change in Central Asia: Neopatrimonialism and the prospect for democratization in the Central Asian republics

engaged in democratization, defined by Linz and Stepan as requiring “open contestation over the right to win control of the government, and this in turn requires free competitive elections, the result of which determine who governs”³. In fact, in this perspective, none of the presidents has been tested in free and fair elections.

Another celebrating status of the country is that Kyrgyz membership in World Trade Organization, which is a quantum leap – trade liberalization and privatization on the one hand, removal of tariff obstacles among economic partners on the other. However, as Linz and Stepan proceed to argue, it is possible to have liberalization without democratization⁴. Both Kazakhstan and Tajikistan have also engaged in liberalization. Beside politics and economy, Kyrgyzstan has faced several uprising and ethnic disturbance since its independence. The relevant chapter will describe the first architecture of Kyrgyz nation-building up to the current stage and analyze the shortcomings and gaps that were the major contributor for south-north cleavages and presumably ethnic clash in the south part of Kyrgyzstan. Thus, it demonstrates the country’s failure to unite people by creating a national ideology and the strong national unity, which would consolidate democratization process in the country

Turkmenistan

Turkmenistan appears successful with its nation-building process regardless of its strong presidential authoritarian regime and status as one of the most isolated countries in the world. Almost all political and economic aspects of life are controlled by state. Dominant majority is Turkmen and it consists more than 90% of the population of the country. Other ethnic minorities have sharply decreased in the Turkmenistan. Nevertheless, this large figure of dominant majority seemingly challenges Horowitz’s assertion that the more multi-ethnic a state, the more authoritarian it becomes.

³ J.J. Linz and A. Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe*, Baltimore and London, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996, Pp. 3-7

⁴ *Ibid* Pp. 7

I will apply Anderson's "imagined community" in Turkmen nation-building process because Anderson's "imagined communities" is well-suited to the unique Turkmen-nation is artificially promoted by the state. The use of vernacular language, the media, history writing, propaganda and education mechanisms are all currently at work in the Turkmen nation-building process. Moreover, the unity of the tribes and gradual socio-cultural de-Russification were the main objectives of the nation-building agenda of Turkmenistan. Saparmurat Niyazov was the first architect of the nation building process and he made himself head of the nation and father of the all Turkmens. Turkmenistan—with the death of Niyazov in 2006—earned immense attentions of the international observers, including political analysts, neighbor states and nation-builders. After more than 15 years of misrule and rigged totalitarian regime was supposed to blow up, but in fact a real and shockingly stable power shift occurred. It remains relatively stable even as this misrule continues. How do we account for this paradox? Was nationalism as a political tool in shaping a country's policies? These questions will also be addressed in the part of Turkmenistan's case. For now it is important to conceptualize nation-building in general and describe how Central Asian states engage in it.

Conceptualization

Nation-building in a nut shell

There cannot be a firmly established political state unless there is a teaching body with definitely recognized principles. If the child is not taught from infancy that he ought to be a republican or a monarchist, a Catholic or a free-thinker, the state will not constitute a nation; it will rest on uncertain and shifting foundations; and it will be constantly exposed to disorder and change." Napoleon I, 1805⁵

French was still a foreign language to half of all people lived in current territory of France in 1860. "Outside major cities, France was a country of dialects and diverse currencies. Travel far outside one's own village was rare, and indifference or hostility to the French state common. Napoleon had considered the making of 'Frenchmen' a prerequisite to the future of a stable France".⁶ In 19th century governments of France and Italy enforced a lot of policies with the aim of establishing "communality" among the people and making what they titled 'Frenchmen' and 'Italians'. Policies that aimed at forming communality were manipulated education, including obligatory elementary schooling; prohibited other languages in schools, in administrations, and religious services⁷. These are just two classic examples of historical nation-building processes that aimed at integrating people from different places of the country.

The later wave of nation-building process was an issue after World War II and Cold War that most countries have faced soon after gaining their independence from their dominant colonizers and empires, and Central Asian states are no exceptions. Nation-building refers to government policies that are designed to create a strong sense of national identity⁸. Gellner

⁵ Quote by Napoleon I, Ramirez and Boli (1987)

⁶ Alberto Alesina, Bryony Reich. *Nation building**. Accessed 15. 03. 2014<<
[>>](http://faculty.chicagobooth.edu/workshops/econ-policy/PDF/Nation%20Building.pdf)

⁷ Ibid pp. 2-5

⁸ "Search Results." *MyCOBUILD.com*. N.p., n.d. Web. 06 Nov. 2013.

Ernest states that nationalism is primarily a political principle, which claims that the national and political unit should be congruent.⁹ The state is the main actor in the process of constructing and structuring a concrete national identity. The aim of the nation-building is the unification of the population in a country to create a sense of political, social, economic, and coherence among different groups. To achieve this end, the state uses a variety of propaganda including the establishment of social-culturally faith-based or nationalistic statutes, promotion of national heroes, poets, literature, history and creation and display of national signs and symbols.

Economic growth is also sometimes claimed as one of the positive elements of nation-building as well as consolidating legitimacy of a government. The state develops major economic infrastructure to foster the development of private property, trade liberalization and giving economic sectors to the private owners and facilitating entrepreneurship in the country. Unfortunately, the economic approach is not a planned strategy to promote national identities among Central Asian countries. The USSR legacy of command-economy is still largely in practice in these five countries' economies. As Arici points out, "The Soviet system was predicated on an idea that does not recognize the private as distinct from the public"¹⁰

For the Central Asian weak and authoritarian states, one of the easiest way of nation-building was to pick up some national symbols, promote previously forbidden traditions, and reincarnate bronze-age heroes (they are mostly brutal male warriors rather than scholars, philosophers, great thinkers or doubters) in order to foster national-identity, rather than building feasible infrastructural power to interact with the society. And governments have two main reasons for promoting national identity. First, they often help governments overcome the legitimacy crisis. When the feeling of legitimacy erodes (or does not exist), Roskin said, "Trouble begins for any government ... People feel less obliged to pay their taxes and obey the

⁹ Gellner Ernest. Nations and Nationalism. Pp 1-5

¹⁰ Bulent Arici. The State and Civil Society in Central Asia. << <http://sam.gov.tr/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/BulentAr%C4%B1c%C4%B1.pdf>>>

law. Disobeying the law is no longer considered dirty or dishonest because the government itself perceived as dirty and dishonest.”¹¹ Thus, states shore up their legitimacy by the manipulation of national symbols. The second purpose is that fostering national-identity can promote unity and conflict-prevention in the country. The government popularizes national history, flag, heroes, historic monuments, and uses patriotic parades and ringing speeches to convince people that they are a unique and vital nation on the territory. Reducing gaps between different ethnicities in the country can lessen ethnic tensions in the country. Both Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan have applied the similar path to create their national-identities, although they have reached different outcomes and faced different consequences.

In this part of the chapter define nation building and describes each countries stands on the process. It also avoids further confusion between nation-building with regime survival that I am mainly going to discuss later.

¹¹ Michael G. Roskin. Political Science: An Introduction “A Science of Politics”. Political 11th ed. Ch1. P. 3-4.

Soviet Legacy

Unlike other Soviet republics such as Georgia, and the Baltic states, Central Asian leaders did not even campaign to arouse public desire for independence of their nation-states. “Indeed, independence can be said to have occurred despite the wishes of Central Asian leaders, who suspected that they were not ready for statehood or sought to preserve some form of Union”.¹² Gregory Gleason also stated that the greatest irony of independence in Central Asia [was that it came] as had Soviet-style colonialism several decades before – imposed by Moscow.¹³ Although independence was imposed by Moscow on countries that were not ready for statehood, nation-building strategy now highlights that each of these Central Asian countries have achieved their “long desired” nation-states and independence from any country outside their boundaries. Nevertheless, the contemporary political institutions and prospects of five states - Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan - reflect little of the ancient history of the region, other than for purposes of propaganda, but are instead overwhelmingly the products of their recent Soviet past.¹⁴

Before Russian presence in Central Asia, people used to be spiritual and stateless nomadic peasants and semi-sedentary farmers but not that much harmful. Asian nomads were migrating from place to place wherever they felt free to safe for themselves and their cattle. In spite of fighting over land, women, water-wells, and resources, cooperation also took place to a limited extend wherever tribes and people met through migration. In fact, migration has always been central to the making, unmaking and remaking of nations¹⁵. There were no unique identity other than tribal and sub-tribal ones in the vast steppes, plain lands and mountain ranges of

¹² Andrew Wachtel, “Kyrgyzstan between Democracy and Ethnic Intolerance”. pp. 3-4

See Daniel L Burghart, —In the Tracks of Tamerlane: Central Asia’s Path to the 21st Century. In the Tracks of Tamerlane: Central Asia’s Path to the 21st Century, eds. Daniel L. Burghart and Theresa Sabonis-Helf. Washington, DC: National Defense University, 2004. pp. 6-7.

¹³ Edited by Sally N. Cummings. ‘Power and Change in Central Asia’, Introduction. pub. 2012. Page 1.

¹⁴ E. Wayne Merry. The Politics of Central Asia: National in Form, Soviet in Content

¹⁵ Brubaker Rogers. Nationalism Reframed: Aftermath of empire and the unmixing of peoples. Chapter 6. PP. 148-149

Central Asia. Nevertheless, people in Central Asia were not as stateless as Australian aborigines or Eskimos indigenous fishers. Khans and amirs were typical rulers of tribes, but not of the long histories about those mirzas and sultans.

Before communists' celebrated October revolution, Central Asia was already conquered by Tsars and under the vast influences of Tsars realm. Structural transformation was ubiquitous all the sphere of the region brought by Russian tsars Mensheviks who were opposed to Bolsheviks and defeated by them after the overthrow of the tsar in 1917 Russian 'Great' October revolution. Socio-political totalitarian authority was on the one hand, economic industrialization and exploitation on the other. Both Mensheviks and Bolsheviks devised tools to do their best to exploit whatever means justify the ends.

For the region, Bolsheviks victory that was led by Marxist communists was also up to no good. "Since the end of the 1920s, very few local individuals by themselves have possessed the authority or temerity to issue comprehensive histories of the region, although some Russian scholars have enjoyed greater latitude"¹⁶ Issued soon after the revolution that powerful rhetoric of "self-determination", that Bolsheviks' manifesto included liberation, independence, and anti-imperialism, but ... "anti-imperialism was not distinguished from the drive to *liberate* the former subject peoples of the Russian empire"¹⁷. Lenin was well aware of the power of nationalism, so it was ongoing dispute among Leninists, Stalinists and communist party members whether in terms of regional autonomy, national territorial and cultural autonomy or federative, or unitary state. Unlike tsars' engagement in the region, Bolsheviks had more strategic means to control power over the vast diversity. In fact, "Rather than a melting pot, the Soviet Union become the

¹⁶ Ivanov, *Ocherki po istorii srednei Azii* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Vostochnoi literatury, 1958).

¹⁷ Suny Ronald G. *The revenge of the past: State-Building and Nation-Making: The Soviet Experience*. Chapter 3. Pp 84-85. Stanford University Press, 1993.

incubator of new nations. Thus, Lenin reached the unanimity that full regional (and national) autonomy be guaranteed in the new states”.¹⁸ USSR policies towards non-Russians included:

- Nativization (коренизации)
- Economic and Social Transformation
- Territorialization
- Imperialism
- Traditionalism
- Localism
- National mobilization

The policies vitality differed with their geopolitical and other significant means of Soviet leaders favor. Nativization (коренизации) the policy that was given non-Russians was the both sensitive and key to nation-building processes of the autonomies nations. The policy was encouraged by Lenin and supported by Stalin, which consolidated the nationality of non-Russians in three vital ways. First, the nativization policy supported the native languages of ethnicities. The second, it allowed creation of national intelligentsia and political elite. The third, the policy allowed formal creation of institutionalizing ethnicity in the state apparatus.

The experience of regional autonomy, independence and intervention varied vastly from nationality to nationality. Among them Armenian and Georgian republics were more successful with their self-determination, while Ukraine and Kazakhstan end up with civil war and tribal secession in the 1919-20s. “As the present generation watches,” Suny says, “self-destruction of Soviet Union, the irony is lost that the USSR was the victim not only of its negative effects on the non-Russian peoples but of its own ‘progressive’ contribution to the process of nation-building.”¹⁹ Moreover, post-Soviet menacing discourse and fabrication of the history is mostly written by politicians and like-minded historians and intellectuals distorted the history and

¹⁸ Ibid Pp. 87-88

¹⁹ Ibid Pp. 101-102

alternatively represented the nations and ethnicities in Communist authorities favor. Smith and et al point out;

“The dryness of such skeletal works convinced the communist authorities within a few years that they had to institute a change in the rules for historiography. Their solution worked out tentatively by 1938-9, entailed close supervision through the nomination of an extremely limited set of safe heroes and a careful prior selection of their actions and written works, if any. Thus, these figures would become the pivots around which authors should compose all Central Asian history books, whether for children or adults. A discussion about the particulars of this method follows.”²⁰

Even today in the most independent Asian states there are misunderstandings and purposeful maneuvering of genuine Central Asian History still ongoing competition between politicians and cultural leaders. Those iconic national heroes including Kyrgyzstan’s Manas, Tajikistan’s Samani, and Uzbekistan’s Amir Temur, which were chosen by Soviets, are still at work in contemporary history of Central Asia, because they were neither challenging Russian communist leaders nor contemporary authoritarian presidents of Central Asia. Therefore, they sometimes called ‘harmless heroes’, due to their demonstration of political ineffectiveness.

Authoritarianism and political regime

Presidents of all Central Asian states (except Kyrgyzstan) are former members and first secretaries of Communist Party. Smith and et al describe them “...like Stalin, as the leading thinkers in their countries, attempting to transfuse their politics into the realm of thought.”²¹ The presidents of these countries are in constant struggle for enhancing their power in all possible

²⁰ Graham Smith, Viven Law, Andrew Wilson, Annette Bohr, Edward Allworth. History and Group Identity in Central Asia. Nation-building in the Post-Soviet Borderlands, The Politics of National Identities. Cambridge University Press 1998

²¹ Ibid p. 77

ways no matter constitutional or unconstitutional, and not surprisingly the presidents gain power by corrupting state institutions. There is no such a thing as checks and balances in state institutions of Central Asia.

Typical authoritarian characters are observable in all states of Central Asia, civil society is banned alongside media and press. USSR legacy remained more in CA countries than other satellite states as East Europe. Economy is largely state controlled, as I also quoted in the beginning “The Soviet system was predicated on an idea that does not recognize the private as distinct from the public”²². Corruption is terrifying and ubiquitous in every sphere of life. Denationalization is very slow and governments are still holding key economic sectors of countries. Even worse scenario is that Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and partially Uzbekistan have potential for becoming ‘rentier state’ and suffer from consequences of resource-curse. Economy is not diverse and largely revenue that comes from fossil and mineral exports. One can easily think that non-transparent budget and revenue from exports help presidents to fattening their Swiss accounts and building unnecessary skyscrapers in capital cities.

NGOs have hard time in going along with the CA governments. As OSCE scholars realize that “in some CIS States, where political activities are still restricted, a number of NGOs continue to be perceived as political opponents, and may suffer interference with their activities.”²³ For instance, given the government’s increasing discontent with the more active NGOs, several leading groups of foreign founded organizations were closed down, said one human rights activist in Tashkent. He continues “many NGOs close their doors out of concerns for their own security once the government identifies them as some kind of threat to its own

²² Bulent Arici. The State and Civil Society in Central Asia. << <http://sam.gov.tr/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/BulentAr%C4%B1c%C4%B1.pdf>>>

²³ OSCE. NGOs in the Caucasus and Central Asia: Development and Co-operation with the OSCE. Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Human Dimension Implementation Meeting October 2000 Background Paper 2000/1.

ideology”²⁴. There are many reasons for Central Asian leaders’ hostility towards NGOs. One of them is that the leaders regard these non-governmental organizations as an import of colorful revolutions that were sent to their countries. Aftermath of the Ukraine and Georgian revolution Uzbekistan’s President Islam Karimov confirmed that, “as inspections have shown, the activities of certain NGOs created at the expense of various sponsors go far beyond their declared charters and programs to carry out specific goals ordered up by others.”²⁵ Turkmen government is also known for kicking NGOs out of the country, Human Rights Watch expert states “In December 2009 Medicines Sans Frontiers (MSF) decided to close its Turkmenistan office after the Turkmen authorities repeatedly rejected project proposals, making it impossible for the organization to carry out its work in the country. MSF was the last remaining international humanitarian organization operating in Turkmenistan.”²⁶ Among the five Central Asian states, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are the two most repressive countries for non-governmental organizations. Civil society, therefore, has experienced stunted growth in Central Asia. Briefly speaking, the presence of a strong civil society and NGOs are the crucial factors to promote democracy as a mechanism for stimulating public pressure and leveraging the state institutions into becoming more responsible and accountable.

Strong presidential Neopatrimonialism

John Ishiyama classifies Central Asian regimes as neopatrimonial, a description also used of several African states. Neopatrimonial authoritarianism is also a type of the authoritarian regimes, but it is rather different from other forms of authoritarian regimes, especially corporatist

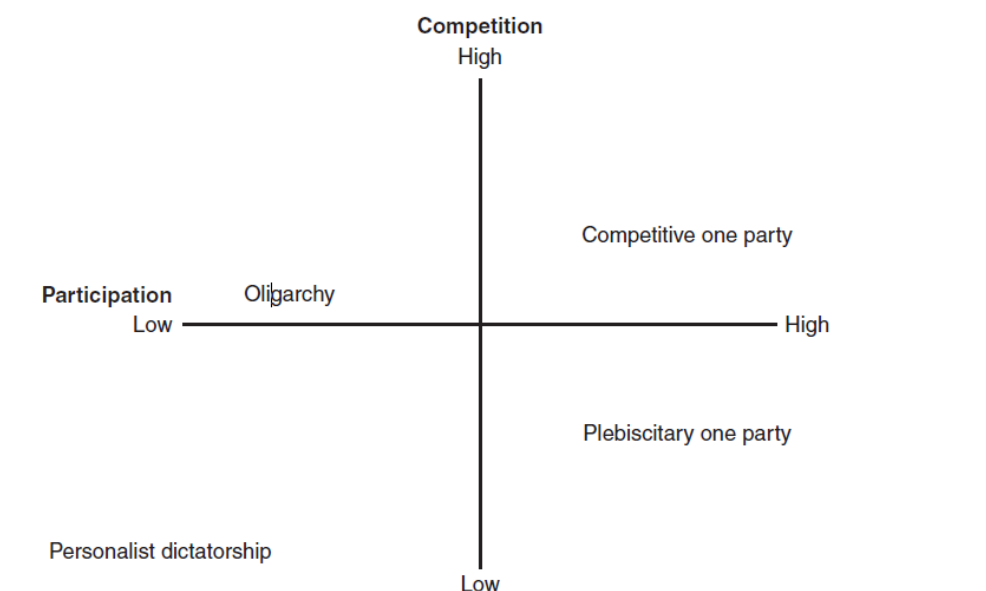
²⁴ "NGO Numbers Wane in Uzbekistan | GroundReport." *GroundReport RSS*. N.p., n.d. Web. 30 Nov. 2012. <<http://www.groundreport.com/World/NGO-Numbers-Wane-in-Uzbekistan/2864711>>.

²⁵ "Hysteria Ñ La Kyiv." *Hysteria Ñ La Kyiv*. N.p., n.d. Web. 30 Nov. 2012. <<http://www.bu.edu/iscip/vol16/blank.html>>.

²⁶ "World Report 2011: Turkmenistan | Human Rights Watch." *World Report 2011: Turkmenistan | Human Rights Watch*. N.p., n.d. Web. 30 Nov. 2012. <<http://www.hrw.org/world-report-2011/turkmenistan>>.

authoritarian regimes. John Ishiyama explains that Corporatist regimes are described by presence of an organic ideology of national unity and direct participations to politics through controlled bureaucratized channel. Corporatist regimes are also distinctive with their formal interest groups in society that can collectively bargain over core public policies.²⁷ On the other hand, in neopatrimonial regime, a chief executive holds and maintains authority through personal patronage, but not through law or ideology. “In contemporary neopatrimonialism, however, personal loyalty and dependence permeate all political structures, and individuals occupy offices more for self-enrichment than to perform public service.” In brief, “neopatrimonialism is the vertical distribution of resource that gave rise to patron-client networks based around a powerful individual or party”.²⁸

Neopatrimonial authoritarian regime is divided into four parts within itself. Robert Dahl managed to make precise classification of the four types of neopatrimonial regimes. They are personal dictatorship, oligarchy, plebiscitary one-party system, and competitive one-party system. Figure 3. 1 arranges below:



²⁷ John Ishiyama. *Power and Change in Central Asia: Neopatrimonialism and the prospect for democratization in the Central Asian republics*. Ed. London and New York by Sally N. Cummings. P. 43-44.

²⁸ *Ibid* p. 43-44

Figure 3. 1 Spatial positioning of neopatrimonial regime types. (Types of regimes that are arranged in the figure are mostly evaluated by their political competition and participation within country.)

These four types of the features can be observed in both African and Central Asian states. First, Turkmenistan can be comparatively ranked with those of African personalist dictatorship including Zaire, Malawi, Equatorial Guinea, Somali, Djibouti and Swaziland. The second, Tajikistan counted as 'military' oligarchies and oligarchy states of Africa are Nigeria, Ghana, CAR, Uganda, Sudan, Mauritania, Burkina, Faso, Chat, Mali, Burundi, Rwanda, Ethiopia, Liberia, Niger, Comoros, and Lesotho. Third, plebiscitary countries are Gabon, Togo, Congo, Benin, Madagascar, Guinea-Bissau, and Cameroon that comparable with Uzbekistan. Finally, Competitive one-party systems include Tanzania, Kenya, Zambia, Ivory Coast, Sierra Leone, Cape Verde, Sao Tome, and Seychelles and Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan are counted in competitive one-party system in Central Asia.

Beside the Soviet legacy and with authoritarian regimes what kind of national ideology and strong statehood could be built in central Asia? The next two chapters address this question and give detailed account of nation-building process of Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan.

In this chapter, I have shown that initially Asians did not experienced modern nation-states since Russian invasion. Soviet Union determined who belongs to whom, and doing so there were benefits for the Tsars and later for the Soviet communists; or more positively, Russians were renaissances for Central Asian nomads. Later part describes authoritarian characters of the states that were inherited through Soviet institutions system in general.

“Everyone in Central Asia wants to create something great; no one wants anything simple...”²⁹

Kyrgyzstan confronts a dilemma?

One of the most crucial questions to come up in the mass confusion following the break-up of the Soviet Union was how the newly emerging states would begin to establish convincing identities for their citizens and themselves. Kyrgyzstan is no exception. Kyrgyzstan is the smallest among the Central Asian five post-Soviet socialist Republics that became independent states in 1991. “Historically nomads who practiced transhumance stock raising, the Kyrgyz had no experiences of modern centralized statehood until the Soviet period.”³⁰ The state is the least-developed among the five Central Asian states (alongside with Tajikistan) and has an extremely corrupted system. Thus, the Kyrgyz government has focused on feeding people with few budget funds.

Kyrgyzstan is also a land of contradictions. Perhaps no one describes country’s initial statehood steps better than John Anderson. “Having acquired independence, Kyrgyzstan very quickly gained a reputation as an “island of democracy” located in a sea of dictatorship and countries ravaged by civil strife.”³¹ Although Kyrgyzstan is no longer dreaming about becoming the “Switzerland of Central Asia”, the “democracy-business” remained vital for the country's statehood-construction and the maintenance of its economy. This allowed conditional money to flow from Bretton Woods organizations, Washington and London, which was significant for a government that tried to preserve the country intact despite of lacking natural resources, civil strife and north-south elite struggles for power in the early nineties (and presumably until today).

²⁹ A quote by an Uzbek high official, Washington, D.C., April 2007.

³⁰ Wachtel Andrew. “Kyrgyzstan between Democracy and Ethnic Intolerance”. *Historical Background*. P.2.

³¹ Anderson John. *Kyrgyzstan. Central Asia’s island of Democracy?* (Harwood, 1999), p. 23

Ethnicities and Akayev

Askar Akaev was the first president of Kyrgyzstan. He was by training an optical-physicist and not a communist-party member. Although Western commentators and journalists hailed him as a bright hope for democracy in Central Asia... critics accused him of suppressing opposition, media, and violating civic freedoms.³² Akaev was also the main architect of the national projects in the country. Kyrgyzstan used to be one of the most heterogeneous states among other five Central Asian countries. In general, the “less ethnically homogenous the population of a Central Asian states and the less authoritarian its system of rule, the greater the controversy engendered by its nationalizing policies.”³³ Indeed, the country used to be a common land for different minorities in the Soviet period: Russians, Uzbeks, Jews, Ukrainians, Germans, and Uyghurs were the largest minorities. Akaev used the tag-line “Kyrgyzstan is our Common Home”³⁴ in his identity building scripture and for the purpose of uniting different ethnic groups in the country during the early nineties. Also it was supposed to grant civic rights and create a room for all minorities in Kyrgyzstan. People’s Assembly was set out in the early nineties to encourage minorities that they could join in. However, the large portion of minorities moved out of Kyrgyzstan throughout the nineties. Table 1 below shows the ethnic composition in the country.

³² BBC. 04 Apr. 2005. Web. << <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/4371819.stm>>> Accessed: 26 Dec. 2013.

³³ Graham S. Vivien L. Andrew W. Annette B. Edward A. Nation-building in the Post-Soviet Borderlands: The Politics of National Identities. The Central Asian states as nationalising regimes. pp. 139-141

³⁴ Akayev’s speech at Kyrgyzstan’s People’s Assembly in Bishkek, 22 January 1994

Table 1: Ethnic Trends in Kyrgyzstan³⁵

Ethnic Trends in Kyrgyzstan					
Ethnic group	1926 '000 (%)	1959 '000 (%)	1970 '000 (%)	1989 '000 (%)	1998* '000 (%)
Kyrgyz	661.1 (66.7)	836.8 (40.5)	1284.7 (43.8)	2229.6 (52.3)	2836.8 (61.2)
Russians	116.4 (11.7)	623.5 (30.1)	855.9 (29.2)	916.5 (21.5)	690.9 (14.9)
Ukrainians	64.1 (6.4)	137.0 (6.6)	120.0 (4.1)	108.0 (2.5)	69.0 (1.5)
Uzbeks	109.7 (11.1)	218.8 (10.5)	332.9 (11.3)	550.0 (12.9)	666.3 (14.4)
Kazakhs	1.7 (0.2)	20.0 (0.9)	21.9 (0.7)	37.3 (0.9)	42.8 (0.92)
Tatars	4.9 (0.5)	56.2 (2.7)	68.8 (2.3)	70.0 (1.6)	58.2 (1.3)
Germans	4.2 (0.4)	39.9 (1.9)	89.8 (3.0)	101.3 (2.3)	15.3 (0.3)
Others	(3.0)	(6.8)	(5.6)	(6.0)	(5.7)
Total	989.9 (100)	2066.1 (100)	2933.2 (100)	4257.7 (100)	4634.9 (100)

* As of 1 January 1998.

Table Source³⁵

One of the main problems was that Akaev's stated ideas regarding nationalities policy conflicted with the legislative base of the country. "Kyrgyzstan's constitution always contained the definition of a "titular nationality" and a "titular language" which referred to the ethnic Kyrgyz."³⁶ Kyrgyz politicians failed to create objective institutions that would treat all minorities equally and grant their rights. In his address to the Assembly, Akayev declared that "people's hearts are at pain because our brothers are leaving – Russians, Germans, Jews, Ukrainians. From that our country is becoming only poorer."³⁷ As a result, in a short period time, "Kyrgyzstan has shifted from being multi-ethnic state with large communities of minorities, to a state

³⁵ Source: Ainura Elebayeva, et al., "The Shifting Identities and Loyalties in Kyrgyzstan: The Evidence from the Field," Nationalities Papers, 28 (2), 2000.

³⁶ Erica Marat. "National Ideology and State-building in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan". *Post-Ideologies in Kyrgyzstan. Akayev and Ethnic Minorities*. Silk Road Paper, January 2008 pp 31-36

³⁷ Akayev's speech at Kyrgyzstan's People's Assembly in Bishkek, 22 January 1994. Erica Marat. "National Ideology and State-building in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan". *Post-Ideologies in Kyrgyzstan. Akayev and Ethnic Minorities*. Silk Road Paper, January 2008 pp 31-36

demographically dominated by Kyrgyz and containing only one significant minority population.”³⁸

Manas

To develop ethno-nationalist feelings in the Kyrgyz population, Akaev shifted the central interest of his ideology to the Manas epic in the mid-1990, which was also declared the world’s longest oral narration. A special state committee started working on Manas epic to permeate not just throughout the country as a state ideology but also to project out of the state boundary. *Manas* is the unrealistic collection of images that describes what it means to be warrior, male, wife, extraordinary father, exemplary son and defender of the motherland. Although the Manas epic is semi-mythic and its spatial and temporal origins are unknown, the government supported musicians, artists, and architects to promote Manas. Akaev organized celebrations for Manas’s symbolic 1,000th anniversary in the summer 1995. Nevertheless, Manas seems to have failed to feed the ideology demand of the Kyrgyz nation. E. Marat explains:

...The ideals of Manas did not resonate among the wider public, especially in the mainly Russian-speaking capital Bishkek. This is because Manas bears a profoundly ethnocentric identification of patriotism and emphasizes a spirit of defending the Kyrgyz nation from outsiders while befriending neighboring nationalities. The ideology based on Manas encouraged the use of the Kyrgyz language and the return of national traditions. Among the russified public and ethnic minorities the ideology of Manas was associated with a state-imposed idea and as an unnatural way for contemporary national identity to

³⁸ Wachtel Andrew. “Kyrgyzstan between Democracy and Ethnic Intolerance”. *The Post-Soviet National Compromise*. P.10.

develop. The epic was perceived as an ethnically discriminating story which was not relevant to the present day.³⁹

Language

The Kyrgyz language is still considered peripheral. Although more than twenty years have passed since the country's independence, Russian language fluency is still regarded as a sign of social status and education. Kyrgyz language could not gain its popularity among non-Kyrgyz and even the ethnic Kyrgyz people. Askar Akayev himself was not able to speak fluent Kyrgyz and supposedly failed a language test before the 2000 election. "Despite his good education, however, he did not shine in a language test in his native Kyrgyz which he was obliged to take before being re-elected in 2000."⁴⁰ Political rhetoric and many schools and universities are dominated by Russian language. Moreover, the universities and schools that offer education in Russian language are still favored as a good education and prestigious ones. Thus, the Kyrgyz government failed to develop the Kyrgyz national language alongside with the national ideology and solid nation-building in the country.

Unending ethnic clashes and regionalism

Besides the Manas, Akaev's administration launched a variety of ideological activities to find a common ground within the Kyrgyz nation and among different other ethnicities. These are "Manas-1000", "Osh-3000", and "2200 Years of the Kyrgyz Statehood", which introduced history as an important event into the political discourse. However, none of them seemed to generate ethnic solidarity within the Kyrgyz nation and among others. Kyrgyzstan is still one of

³⁹ Erica Marat. "National Ideology and State-building in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan". *Post-Ideologies in Kyrgyzstan. Manas-2000*. Silk Road Paper, January 2008 pp 31-36

⁴⁰ BBC. 04 Apr. 2005. Web. << <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/4371819.stm>>> Accessed: 26 Dec. 2013.

the unstable states in Central Asia. Some of the country's major internal issues are far from solved, which are connected to the absence of solid national ideology and ethnicity. Within two decades, the country has witnessed horrible events including Osh event (Clash of ethnic Uzbeks and Kyrgyzs), the sharp cleavage between South and North part of the country (Regional & clan rivalries), and the IMU's (Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan) series of raids in Southern Kyrgyzstan in 1999-2000. Bakiyev's administration even did not try to come up with visible or workable ideology and therefore, it is not very relevant to pay special attention in his nation-building process.

In this chapter, I depicted earlier and more salient stages of nation-building process. It also describes that state failure of the maintain countries diversity, which caused the large amount of minorities abandon the country. As any nation building starts with root primordial and essentialist approach, Akaiyev applied the same approach by promoting Manas and claiming Manas era was the next to starting point of Kyrgyz. Later chapter describes the failed attempt of language policy and practice. Then finally it concludes with mentioning the serial tragic events in Kyrgyzstan that shows largely (if not fully) nation-building failure and could not prevent the events that has happened in the country, and, even worse, cannot prevent them in the future.

Turkmenistan: Stable outside, Fragile inside

Turkmenistan is one of the former post-Soviet socialist Central Asian states that is politically classified as an authoritarian-regime (and sometimes tends toward dictatorship). The country is isolated and tightly closed to the outside world since its independence. Paradoxically, the permanent neutrality of Turkmenistan was accepted by the UN in 1995, which helped the government to integrate into country's foreign policy and aimed to the further isolate itself from the outside world.

Turkmen people are afraid to talk about any political issues in the country. Censorship is ubiquitous and extensive. The state is infamous for its violation of human rights, false elections, state-controlled media, sending political oppositions to psychiatric hospitals or exile, extreme corruption, personality cult politics, and patron-client-network economy. Despite an economic crisis in the early nineties, the country could supply its basic needs by the end of the decade and still maintaining its people with state controlled economy. In particular, Turkmenistan has the large proven gas reserve that is the fourth largest in the world, and the government has established a hydrocarbon-based rather than a knowledge-based economy. In spite of the state failure and ongoing misrule, the state is unfairly successful with its nation-building process.

Similar to Akayev in Kyrgyzstan, Saparmurat Niyazov, former for life president of Turkmenistan, played a major role in the nation-building process in the Turkmenistan. In the early years of the nineties, the government started to recall the national poets, heroes, and rising cultural traditions that had been forgotten during the 70 years of the Soviet period. State-controlled media started tirelessly advocating Turkmen culture and traditional songs, folklores, clothes, and foods.

Why Orwell is Matter?

Later in the nineties, the president himself became a game-changer and presented himself as #1 hero in the Turkmen history. Turkmen citizens were emotionally charged towards their Turkmenbashi (*S. A. Niyazov*) from independence until his death 2006. Turkmenbashi was regarded as not quite a God but certainly higher than just a human being and his book *Ruhnama* was regarded as no less holy than the Quran. People were encouraged to call him Türkmenbaşy (Head of all Turkmens), and the media, state officials, students, teachers, and doctors are unanimously and tirelessly praising and continued thanking him for everything he had done and sometimes with the aid of musical instruments⁴¹. After all, Council of People, *Halk Maslahaty*, an official annual conference with elders, *Aksakals* who have almost nothing to do with politics, made Turkmenbashi for life.

He built his personality cult in the country, which included such extravagance as “a gold statue of himself put on top of a building in the capital, Ashgabat. The statue revolves so it always faces the sun. He also changed the names of the months in honor of members of his own family.”⁴² He also renamed week days and many towns, provinces, and even major cities, such as Balkanabat, with his name Turkmenbashi. In addition, all state TV and Radio programs start with prayer and good wishes for Turkmenbashi. And the widespread official motto was ‘*Halk, Watan, Turkmenbashi*’ (People, Motherland, Turkmenbashi). Besides that, many of the highways slogans used appear e. g. *Presidentin sozi kanundyr!* (The word of president is the law!). Furthermore, ‘sacred oath’ (kasam) was compulsory for each day’s starting of schools, media, and public related events, which purposefully aims to consolidate the loyalty to the President and Turkmen nation:

⁴¹ See the video, one of the high profile Turkmen artists is singing and Mr. president is dancing. The song is all about Turkmenbashi and his benovelance. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ahaPtZxoiWU>

⁴² "The Personality Cult of Turkmenbashi." Theguardian.com. Guardian News and Media, 21 Dec. 2006. Web. 29 Dec. 2013.

Turkmenistan, my beloved motherland,
My beloved homeland!
You are always with me,
In my thoughts and in my heart!

For the slightest evil against you,
Let my hand be lost!

For the slightest slander about you,
Let my tongue be lost!

At the moment of my betrayal, to my motherland,
To her sacred banner,
To great Spapmyrat Turkmenbashi,
Let my breath stop!⁴³

The irony is that George Orwell's '1984' totalitarian system started the part of reality in Turkmenistan closing down NGOs, civil society, religious groups, freedom movement, and assaulting political parties, tightly controlling media, education and even personal lives of the suspected people. Therefore, people could dare to neither express themselves nor mobilize into protest groups rather than praying and thanking Turkmenbashi for any single things that they have got. Besides oppression, there existed sheer threat and terrifying animal instinct, smash of intellectuality, art, and music. As George Orwell reminds us, "In order to be a part of the totalitarian mind-set, it is not necessary to wear a uniform or carry a club or a whip. It is only necessary to wish for your own subjection and to delight in the subjection of others"⁴⁴ Therefore, I called the name of sub-introductory part Orwell's matter in the case of Turkmenistan. The next part of the chapter will discuss about nation-building policy and how nation-building policy goes hand in hand with political regime and serves as a tool for controlling lives of people.

⁴³ Turkmenistan National Oath, Ruhnama. Book two. English. Accessed 17. 04. 2014 <<
http://inteltrends.files.wordpress.com/2010/12/ruh_2.pdf>>

⁴⁴ Christopher Hitchens. *GING, How Religion Poisons Everything*: Chapter 15. Page 80. Quoted from *George Orwell's The Prevention of Literature*

Nation-building agenda

Niyazov tried to create a new homogeneous Turkmen national identity to fill the post-Soviet identity vacuum. He used to call his approach national ‘revival’ rather than nation-building. “The latter, however, defines the current situation in Turkmenistan better than the former since unique Turkmen national identity did not occur in modern understanding until the foundation of the Turkmen Soviet Socialist Republic in 1924.”⁴⁵ Even though it is nation-building process in modern sense, Turkmenbashi tried to convince us that we are returning to our real history and spiritual sources rather than building a new nation. According to him,

“what is happening in Turkmenistan is only the rediscovery of the forgotten national identity: By forming an independent and totally neutral Turkmen state, by uniting a number of tribes into a whole, we did not create a new nation; what we did was to return its national pivot, which used to be strong and powerful but has been shattered by the blows of the historical fate”⁴⁶

The unity of the tribes and gradual socio-cultural de-Russification were the main objectives of the nation-building agenda of Turkmenistan. Tribal identity is still influential in the life of Turkmen people. The largest tribes are Teke, Ersary, Yomut, Salyr, and Saryk. Removing tribal hierarchy was significant for the government. Turkmenbashi himself was a part of Teke tribes but he never sought obvious domination for his tribe over the rest. Perhaps the underlying explanation was that he grew up in an orphanage and did not feel any tribal belongings from childhood. Thus, the implication of “national revival” is not that the state is creating a new nation but that a historically great nation is becoming conscious again after a several centuries of

⁴⁵ Turkmen Soviet Socialist Republic was founded in 1924 based on the Turkmen populations of Bukhara and Khiva People’s Socialist Republics and Turkestan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic. Adrienne Lynn Edgar, ‘Nationality policy and national identity: the Turkmen Soviet Socialist Republic, 1924–1929’, *Journal of Central Asian Studies*, Vol 1, No 2, 1997, pp 2–20.

⁴⁶ Kuru T. Ahmet. *Between the state and cultural zone: nation building in Turkmenistan*. Nation building policy of the Turkmen state. *Central Asian Survey* (2002) P. 73

historical failure and fate. Nevertheless, to better understand the aim of state policy whether creating a new national identity or recovering a historically extant national identity, perhaps Anderson's "imagined communities" explains the process best.

Indeed, Anderson's explanation is well-suited in the Turkmen nation-building agenda. Anderson describes a nation as an *imagined community* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.⁴⁷ In his emphasize, the four elements are vital to invent a nation that are the use of vernacular language, the media, history writing, propaganda and education mechanisms, and in fact, all of four mechanisms are currently at work in the Turkmen nation-building process.

Analyzing Turkmen nation-building approach with Anderson's imagined community one can easily understand, in fact, the national identity is artificially invented, purposefully devised and socially constructed concept, instead of a primordial and fixed phenomenon, and not even national revival at all. Therefore, nothing is hidden or magical about Turkmen nation-building process. Harder one looks, more fake and purposeful propaganda will be uncovered. And nowhere is this more true than for Turkmenistan. To apply Anderson's imagined community in Turkmenistan, we should analyze four aspects of agenda as explanatory variables. These are the vernacular language, the media, history writing, propaganda and education mechanisms. First, the state successfully has implemented Turkmen language as the national and official language. Although Russian is still used in some specific cases as bureaucracy and inter-ethnic communication, it has almost disappeared in the everyday life of the homogeneous Turkmen community. Every single source of information one gets in the country is in the Turkmen language, and even worst of all, information is deliberately distorted.

⁴⁷ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Community: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Introduction Pp. 5-6. Revised Edition 2006,

Second, the rule of state-controlled media is all about promoting national symbols, narratives, and nationalistic slogans. There are three Turkmen channels thus far serving for people all broadcasted in Turkmen language. Turkmen state broadcasted TV and Radio channels only serves for government's purpose and regime survival. None of them cover the major world, regional news and not even domestic news objectively rather than presidents daily activities and accomplishments. Moreover, there were several Russian channels till late nighties, but after 1999 all of them were shut down except ORT 1, Russia's biased news channel. Internet is still something new and not made available for majority of the population. Reporters without Borders with their famous annually internet record that is called "Enemies of Internet" again ranked Turkmenistan as the lowest in 2014. "The Turkmen government has curbed the very recent Internet growth and continues to practice widespread censorship. Its monopolistic takeover of the cell telephone market has allowed it to enhance its control over communications."⁴⁸

Third, historical writing is one of the major tools for nationalizing people. History was rewritten in the favor of leaders soon after the independence. It describes the great achievements and victories of the nation, while omitting sensitive facts such as inter-tribal wars and conflicts that might antagonize people of different tribes. Starting in early 2000, people only had to read the book of president the only main source of history and Ministry of Education ordered to install Ruhnama (Ruhnama is former president's book, which I will discuss later) into school curriculum as history and ethics subject (class). The book includes brutally distorted history and 'moral' ethics how to be a good son and girl while admiring his or her nation and president.

Finally, education and propaganda are extensively used tools for nation-building in the Turkmenistan. There are no private schools or higher education institutions in Turkmenistan. In the early nineties, Fetullah Gulen's several Turkish schools opened in different regions of the

⁴⁸ "Ennemis D'Internet - Turkmenistan - Reporters Without Borders." Ennemis D'Internet - Turkmenistan - Reporters Without Borders. N.p., n.d. Web. 26 Apr. 2014. <<
http://en.rsf.org/spip.php?page=ennemi&id_article=39772 >>

country but beginning of 2001 all the Turkish and remaining Russian schools were indiscriminately under attack by government, and as result, most of them were shut down or switched into Turkmen schools. Political department of San Diego University professor A. Kuru firmly confirms the notion that I argued above: “the Turkmen nation-building fits into many aspects of Anderson’s explanations. This supports the argument that Turkmen national identity is a socially constructed, rather than a given and fixed phenomenon.”⁴⁹

Ruhnama’s logical fallacy

Turkmenbashi once suggested that reading his Ruhnama (The Book of the Soul) three times would be enough to guarantee a person's place in heaven. In 1999-2001s, Niyazov wrote two series of books that are called Ruhnama, which is also aimed at consolidating nationhood and homogenizing the Turkmen nation. It could be inserted into propaganda and education aspects of Anderson’s imagined community. Nevertheless, in the book, he distorted enough objective history and fabricated many unknown happenings in the Turkmen past. For example, in Ruhnama, there is no mention of ethnic inter conflicts of Turkmens that actually took place sometimes in 14-16th centuries. They were just eliminated from the history not only for the purpose avoiding provoking current tribes with their ancestral conflicts, but for largely support for nation-building process and officials’ ends.

Even though many historians dispute the accuracy of the book's vision of Turkmen history, the message from President Niyazov on the inlay leaves little room for interpretation: “The Ruhnama has absorbed the five thousand year history of our nation, the pearls of its wisdom, philosophy, mentality, its dreams and aspirations, unique culture and lifestyle, as well

⁴⁹ Kuru Ahmet T. “Between the state and cultural zones: nation building in Turkmenistan” General Evaluation. Pp. 75-79. Central Asian Survey (2002) 21(1), 71–90

as its rich inner world.”⁵⁰ Soon after its publication, Ruhnama was included into all school and university programs as a required subject to graduate. Ruhnama also included universities’ entrance and graduation exams; no matter whether one applied natural science department, social science or humanitarian studies, everyone was equally tested by Ruhnama exam. Furthermore, new governmental employees were tested on the Ruhnama at the job interview and even at [their] driver’s tests.

Mainly, Ruhnama depicts unrealistic pictures of the Turkmen nation. One obvious fabrication, for instance, is about the Prophet Noah, according to Genesis who created the ark that saved his family and specimens of every animal from the flood. In the Ruhnama, Noah turned out to be an early Turkmen although Noah’s very semi-mythical existence itself was under the question. Oguzhan, in Ruhnama, is another hero who happened to born in the current Turkmen territory and conquered considerable parts of the old world. Even though there is no mention of his accomplishments anywhere else in the world history, Alexander the Great did little in comparison with Oguzhan in Ruhnama. Oguzhan conquered almost all the territories of the old world and (it is traceable, Ruhnama claims). Nonetheless, it is obvious that Ruhnama is purposefully written book to control lives of the people with totalitarian state ideology apparatus. And paradoxically it worked pretty well for sometimes in the early 21st century. The plain fact is that, of course, not all governments and peoples of the world could enter the 21st century at the same time. Unfortunately, some are still hanging around medieval times by embracing apocalyptic fundamental ideas as Ruhnama and Manas and the national and religious myths.

Silence does not mean consensus

⁵⁰ Farida Yoony. Turkmenistan's “Book of the Soul” Facing Difficult Times. Global Voices English. Published. 12 Aug. 2013. Accessed. 22 Mar. 2014 << <http://globalvoicesonline.org/2013/08/12/turkmenistans-book-of-the-soul-facing-difficult-times/> >>

Authoritarian states tend to maintain stability in short-term, so it cannot guarantee order to the long run, and Turkmenistan is no exception at all. Even though the majority behaves like loyal to the regime, several groups can become significant players in public spheres in the future of Turkmenistan. In spite of appearing steady and peaceful thus far, Turkmenistan is not certain to remain so.

Under the title of the silence does not mean consensus, I will briefly discuss about the major political transition that was silent and peaceful power transition in 2006 which happened after the mysterious death of Turkmenbashi in office. As Machiavelli advised to the Prince “*Born in power, live in power, and die in power!*”⁵¹ In the 21st century, Turkmenbashi Niyazov fulfilled the Machiavelli’s dreams to the Prince in 16th century, so Machiavelli can sleep soundly in his grave.

The death of the Niyazov earned attentions of the international observers political analysts, great powers and nation-builders. After more than 15 years of misrule and rigged totalitarianism, regime was supposed to blow up, but on the contrary a real and shockingly stable power shift occurred. It remains relatively stable even as this misrule continues. How do we account for this paradox? Was nationalism as a political tool in shaping a country’s policies?

To answer these questions, I will consider first and foremost the internal security of Turkmenistan. In general, the rest of the factors and entities such as formation of civil society, NGOs, free media, and political parties can be plainly explained in terms of the internal security in Turkmenistan and in most of the Central Asian states. Assuring internal security and the defense against external threats is the most important task of Turkmen government and it is also true in the rest of the Central Asian states (Kyrgyzstan is little exception). In 2006, silent power shift in Turkmenistan should not surprise the world, as Ayoob describes:

⁵¹ Nicolas Machiavelli. *The Princes*. 1513.

...their primary concern becomes internal security and their continuation in power, hence the proliferation of multiple military forces, intelligence, and police forces in these countries, often enjoying more resources than do their regular armies, and their governments' recourse to rent-seeking, authoritarian, and clientilistic policies.⁵²

Consolidating internal security in Turkmenistan is seemingly more about regime survival and less about positive peace and prosperity. M. Alekseev reasonably argued, in his *Reversed Anarchy* paper, "Unlike in the West, national security concepts in Asia are strongly influenced by concerns for regime survival. Hence, security policies in Asia are not so much about protection against external military threats, but against internal challenges."⁵³ Thus, nation-building process of Turkmenistan has no means of drifting from government's internal security track. Rather, both go hand in hand, and supporting, consolidating and encouraging one another.

The Apple falls under the apple tree

Turkmenistan is now ruled by another personalistic ruthless president namely Gurbanguly Berdimuhammedov. Since 2006, there are no major changes in politics, economy, and social spheres. This time people rename him not really *Turkmenbashi* meaning that head of all Turkmens, but *Arkadag* Protector who is continuing to misrule the country and to abuse his power. The cases of North Korea and Kyrgyzstan are similar. Reincarnation of the previous leader and continuing identical oppressive regime are still observable in the country. Although unfair sham elections happened twice in the country, Arkadag cannot help himself getting 99, 98% majorities vote in both elections in 2007 and 2012. Arkadag is also infamous with his

⁵² Mohammad Ayoob, "From Regional System to Regional Society: Exploring Key Variables in the Construction of Regional Order," *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, LIII, 3 (1999), pp. 247-260; Mohammad Ayoob, "Inequality and Theorizing in International Relations: The Case for Subaltern Realism," *International Studies Review*, 4, 3 (2002), pp. 127-148 and the works cited therein.

⁵³ Alekseev Mikhail. *Regionalism of Russia's Foreign Policy in the 1990s: A Case of "Reversed Anarchy"*, Donald W. Treadgold Papers, University of Washington, Henry M. Jackson School of International Studies, No. 37, 2003, p. 12.

rigged state propaganda, oppressing opposition, blacklisting suspicious and potential threatening individuals (including me). While a change of leadership does bring at least some hope that the new leader will prove committed and strong enough to effect democratic change, the post-Soviet history of the region provides strong reason to be skeptical.⁵⁴ After all both Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan are constantly continuing nation-building process throughout 24 years. The issue is what kind of nation and national ideology they build, and the question is (that I will answer it in the begging of next Chapter) if that long term, stable and compatible with the rapidly changing world around us?

This chapter is devoted to earlier phase of the Turkmen nation-building and politics. Particularly, it deals with the periods between 1991 and 2006 when considerable time of nation making process took part. The chapter also pays special attention the rule of state policy, and condemns the leader's dictatorial rule in both state policy and nation-building process that was devised to help regimes own end. It considers the book of president and its forcefully penetration in the all spheres of the Turkmen life, while Ruhnama has nothing to tell about reality but corrupts readers mind. The chapter ends by briefly discussing power transition and being skeptical about new leadership.

⁵⁴ Henry E. Hale. *Interpreting the Color Revolutions and Prospects for Post-Soviet Democratization; Conclusion*. P 40 Breaking the Cycles. PONARS Policy Memo No. 373. George Washington University. December 2005.

The only game in town, the way to conclusion

Significant features of these Asian countries' national ideologies are, unfortunately, backward-looking. For example, Niyazov's ideology stressed the Turkmen experience of statehood during the Oguz Empire, while Akaev tried to prove that Kyrgyz's experience of statehood dates back 2,200 years. And all those of Asian historical statehood activities are understood to have taken place exactly on the same territory as that of the current states in Central Asian, except Tajikistan (Bukhara and Samarqand are disputed as Tajik territory). The following part of the chapter describes the speedy global changes and depicts how much developing Central Asian states should speed up and fly off to catch up with the industrialized and modernized world progress.

Under the Yoke of Globalization. Backward < OR > Forward?

The plain fact is the world is changing, and the reality is changing whether observer wishes it or not, and whether observer agrees with it or not. In social sense, globalization could be analogous to one of the iron laws of physics, the second law of Thermodynamics. According to this law, anything and everything in the Universe has the tendency to go from order to disorder and once the damage is done it is extremely difficult to reverse things and unmix them. It is a process known as entropy. Nothing is immune to the power of entropy, not even a single cell in our body. Globalization increases the social 'entropy' and this mixture makes the world smaller by bringing civilizations closer than ever. Once Samuel Huntington was not too comfortable with this process and he wrote the fabulous book titled "Clash of Civilization". Nevertheless, it is at constant shift and different people can think of globalization differently.

The world, we live in, has shifted from Stone Age to 'Silicon age'. Information can flow faster than the speed of light. The amount of information that can be transmitted is essentially

infinite. Computing power has doubled every 18 months for the last 30 years. “It now costs less than one percent of what it did in the early 1970s.”⁵⁵ At the same time, the growth of the Internet and the World Wide Web has been exponential.

Transnational cooperation and multinational companies increasingly focus their targets on developing global markets – far beyond any specific political, ethnic, or linguistic borders – where companies prosper by offering products with ingredients and images that are the same everywhere such as Coca-Cola, Levi’s jeans or Microsoft Word for Windows⁵⁶

To stick in getting obsolete nationalism and sovereignty ideas under the yoke of globalization, one never obtain long term national benefits but adverse effects in the generations to come. Besides supranational bodies as United Nations and European Union, transnational companies are expanding and turning the world governments into cosmopolitanism. Indeed, Economic and business institutions, for sure, have more power than the UN like organizations. And they are holding enormous world assets. Jed Greer points out “Itochu Corporation’s sales exceed the GDP of Austria, while those of Royal Dutch/Shell equal to Iran’s GDP. Together, the sales of Mitsui and General Motors are greater than the GDPs of Denmark, Portugal, and Turkey combined, and US\$50 billion more than all the GDPs of the countries in Sub-Saharan Africa”.⁵⁷ From the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank (WB), the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and later World Trade Organization (WTO) in the economic domain, to UNHCR, the International Criminal Court, the High Commissioner for Human Rights all of them are gaining larger ground step by step into the globalizing world and making world smaller and smaller. At the same time, International Corporations such as the G8 (now G7) meetings,

⁵⁵ Robert O. K. & Joseph S. N. “The Power and Interdependence in the Information Age” *The Early Days of the Revolution*. P.2

⁵⁶ Debeljak, Ales. *The hidden handshake : national identity and Europe in the post-communist world*. Chapter 1. Pp. 2. Lanham, MD : Rowman & Littlefield, c200

⁵⁷ Jed Greer & Kavaljit Singh. "Global Policy Forum." *A Brief History of Transnational Corporations*. N.p., n.d. Web. 26 Apr. 2014. << <http://www.globalpolicy.org/component/content/article/221-transnational-corporations/47068.html>>>

NATO, NAFTA, EU, APEC, ASEAN and many other regional forms are almost above the level of national states. Moreover, globalization brought that “below the top level of world politics there had emerged a dense network of professional cooperation, such as on drugs, technical standardization, health, telecommunications, fishing, tourism, aviation, banking supervision, atomic energy, insurance, accounting and so on”.⁵⁸ As a consequence, while in the middle of the 19th century there were just two or three interstate conferences per year, there were more than 4000 per year by the end of the 1990s. In the early 20th century there had been 37 International Governmental Organizations. In 2000 there were 6743 of them.... By 2000 there were more than 47.000 international NGOs.⁵⁹ As far as we can see in this world right now with above all mentioned multinational, NGOs, intergovernmental, regional institutions are gaining profits in the world. This is not a matter for concern, but we have to agree with as a part of coming reality including Central Asia.

⁵⁸ Don Kalb. Anthropological Theory. From flows to violence. P. 179. Vol 5(2): 176-204

⁵⁹ Ibid P. 180

Conclusion

What kind of nation(s) Asians build

There are many different types of nation building or nationalism that states promote. Sense of nationalism is not always bad or adverse as long as it is in the type of strategy that inclusive for all ethnicities in a country. Western democratic countries are not immune from nation building and they also have national promotion and social programs that tend to be national trends, but the vast difference from Asian type is that western nationalism is classified civic nationalism rather than ethnic nationalism. Therefore, civic nationalism is favored because of creating a sense of common identity for all people in a country, not leaving out minorities and not causing inequalities, conflicts, discriminations and grievances among people. All inclusive governance has institutions and policies for minorities in a country. Minority rights are recognized and protected and the minorities feel free to practice their traditions and customs in a country where they live. The ideal examples and successful states are Western European countries and Canada's Québec which is the home of millions French minority.

While the topic of this paper is not minorities or nationalism, it is inevitable not to mention minorities in a country where and which type of nationalism process is going on, therefore civic nationalism is favored and it tends to create rooms for diverse minorities in a country. Thus, civil national mentality should have been installed and should have been tolerated other minorities rather than imposing dominant majorities own value on the rest. In general, country is likely to develop faster in where diversity of ethnicities are at present and treated equally; so that people tend to join organizations, trade, and labor unions rather than tribes or clans; so that people used to work in offices, and in corporations, rather than fields or outdoors; so that a nation values education and produce goods that are compatible in global markets rather than relying on solely non-renewable resources; so that middle class emerges to push democratization in a country. That is, the civic nationalism or nation-building is the only game in

town and the best way forward for both countries of Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and the region as a whole. Unfortunately, authoritarian regimes tend to not go along with civil society, and are incapable of generating and building civic nationalism rather than ethnic one.

Now, does it sound reasonable that the democracy could survive in the current conditions of Central Asia? Theorists and activists of democratization have often been perplexed, but not to say irritated. Partial answer to the question is that Central Asia is geopolitically isolated from democratic sources, instead being surrounded by two great authoritarian powers, Russia and China.⁶⁰ It would be, therefore, silly to expect the region's rapidly growth of civil society, civil nationalism and democracy. Strong presidentialist regimes, instead, promote ethnic nationalism, which has detrimental effects in the decades to come, but it benefits their regime in a way. We are all well familiar that strong large-scale or national-scale nationalism and intolerances towards other nations and minorities had already burned alive more than a million Jews and killed millions of others just 65 years ago. Nationalism produces chauvinist patriots that are also detrimental in individual or personal level, as George Orwell convincingly argued in his 1946 "Politics and the English Language" essay. He described:

'Patriotism is as a repudiation of the most undesirable, shameful, and brutal aspects of nationalist chauvinism. A nationalist who believes in his nation as the incarnation of the Supreme Ideal, a mystical Truth, will do anything he can to ensure the collective existence of those like him. He will even resort violence and xenophobia so as to indulge more easily in the illusion that the blunders and failings of his own nation are entirely the fault of some foreign conspiracy'⁶¹

⁶⁰ Sally N. Cummings. Power and Change in Central Asia: Introduction. Ed. London and New York by Sally N. Cummings. P. 28

⁶¹ George Orwell, "Politics and the English Language (1946)". The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters. Volume IV. In Front of Your Nose. Pp. 127-140. 1945-1950

It seems like all the Bronze Age male warrior-heroes are suddenly reincarnated in the five Central Asian state institutions right after independence. Thus the mythic and ancient meld with the real and contemporary. It was as if each country could only exist thanks to its former “golden age” in Central Asia: Manas in Kyrgyzstan, God-given Amir Temur of Uzbekistan, Abylaikhan in Kazakhstan, Ismail Samani in Tajikistan and Turkmenbashi in Turkmenistan (currently Arkadag in Turkmenistan). For now they have little option but to cling to their backward-looking ideology and to sink or swim with it.

After all, the Central Asian states are still among the least developed, least democratized, least privatized and most corrupted countries in the world. While the immediate outlook for the future is still bleak, Central Asian states may one day come to blows, and start building a civic type of nationalism.

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