With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the whole newly independent Central and Eastern European region had engaged into the processes of state- and institution-building. As the basis for each country’s political system new or pre-communist constitutions were adopted in an attempt to break with the authoritarian past and to start transition from communist dictatorship to democracy and rule of law. The young post-Soviet states of Central Asia\(^1\) – Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan – have encountered the same challenges, although for them the difficulties were unprecedented and thus more complex, since these five states had never existed before as independent political entities. Having just appeared on the world map, the new Central Asian states were expected to participate in the third wave of democratization and to contribute to the world expansion of democracy and constitutionalism, albeit the lack of any democratic tradition or even any history of independent governance. Nevertheless, in the wake of their independences the countries adopted very similar democratic constitutions, and, formally, added to the number of democracies in the world, yet they became known as having some of the most authoritarian regimes on the territory of the former Soviet dominance.

This paper is aimed at understanding the evolution of the state structures, namely the models of government, adopted in the five post-Soviet Central Asian countries with the emphasis made on the role of the clan (kinship-based) networks in these formatting processes. It is clear that the countries under study have opted for the regimes with strong executive power, which in all of the cases is acting more and more to the detriment of the other branches of government. This institutional arrangement has multiple reasons to have been developed, such as undemocratic leadership, economic conditions, post-Soviet legacies, no democratic experience, and others. In this paper will focus only on the tribal factor that seems to be crucial in explaining the origins of the today existing constitutional arrangements in the region. Moreover, my working hypothesis is that the clan structures, as the main informal forces in the region, have predetermined the choice of institutions as well as the models of government in the Central Asian countries.

The studies of the models of government make an important part of the new institutionalist body of literature, especially when it concerns the merits and demerits of the presidential model taken in comparison with the parliamentary or semi-presidential forms of government and the aptness of each of the system for the building and consolidation of new or newly constituted democracies (see, for example, Lijphart 1992; Linz et al. 1994; Shugart et al. 1992). In this respect two remarks seem to be pertinent. Firstly, although the scholarly debate on comparative governments has taken into consideration most of the countries of the world, it has largely neglected, with some

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\(^1\) In geographical terms, the region of Central Asia is often referred to as comprising the territories of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Mongolia and Western China. Some researchers include also Afghanistan, Kashmir, Nepal, Iran and Pakistan. In this article, I use the term Central Asia to refer only to the five former republics of the Soviet Union.
rare exceptions\textsuperscript{2}, the Central Asian region as representing some of the examples of the systems with powerful institutions of presidency. Comparison of the macro institutional designs in the five Central Asian states would indeed contribute to the area of study of comparative systems of government. Secondly, most of the academic accounts on the impacts and influences of the institutional choice on democratic development and consolidation, as well as majority of others on the subject\textsuperscript{3}, are concerned with the effects and not with the causes of the institutional structure. While recognizing the importance of this body of literature, it is nevertheless necessary to examine the arguments regarding the origins of an institution, the reasons and preconditions for its particular development. Unfortunately, the theories of institutional formation and change are relatively underdeveloped, and as a result, we presently know more about the consequences of an institutional choice than about its origins and the institutional evolution. Therefore, in this paper I will examine the tribal/clan informal structures as one of the formative factors influencing the formal institution-building in the Central Asian states.

Since 1991, when the countries in question have acquired independence and have come under the attention of the international community as a region with huge gas and oil resources and strategic partner in the war against terrorism in Afghanistan, a growing number of academic literature has appeared on the region’s geopolitics, democratic transition, economic development, nationalism and identity, state-building and political regimes. Although more and more researchers dealing with the region take the clan/tribal factor into consideration as well as refer to it as one of the decisive aspects in the evolution of the countries’ political systems, the issue seems to be underdeveloped since most scholarly works refer to it only in passing, while familiarity with and closer look at Central Asia suggest that more attention should be assigned to the informal structures that shape and drive the formal political developments in each of the five countries.

In Central Asia, the intensity of the study of clans and tribal organizations has varied depending on the political situation in the region. During the Soviet period, for example, the degree of official necessity of the anthropological or ethnic studies had changed several times. So, since the 1920s, when the five republics were created as the products of the Soviet ‘divide-and-rule’ policy\textsuperscript{4}, and until the death of Stalin, the issue of tribal differences between the populations of Central Asia was prohibited. In the 1950s, the interest of the official historiography in the subject had risen and in the 1970s-80s, the issue of the tribal divisions and ethnic history was at its peak when, on the one hand, the national identities of the Central Asian peoples were becoming stronger and the role of ethnic Russians, on the other, was getting less important. Since the countries’ independence, the subject of clan affiliations and hierarchy is much more studied locally as well as internationally, although in the former case the academic works dealing with the subject are not always officially approved by the countries’ authorities. Even if today’s Central Asian regimes accept the fact that the region’s nationalities consist of peoples from different tribes and clans, they are not ready to recognize that there is an interaction between the two with important implications for the countries’ political, economic and legal developments.

In the first part of the paper, the formal institutional arrangements as established in the countries’ constitutional acts will be discussed, as well as their changes and dynamics. The second part will give an overview of the clan/tribal characteristics of the sub-ethnic communities existing in the Central Asian region; while the last part of the paper will illustrate the relationships between tribal and formal institutional structures within each of the countries under scrutiny.


\textsuperscript{4} In 1924, Uzbek and Turkmen Soviet Socialist Republics were created, in 1929 – Tajik republic and in 1936 – Kazakh and Kyrgyz republics.
Constitutional Arrangements

The Central Asian countries have adopted their first democratic constitutions in the period from 1992 to 1994, in which they determined their state structures, distributed powers between main organs of government and established regimes. Each of the constitutions described its respective state as ‘democratic’, ‘legal’ (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan), or ‘law-governed state’ (Tajikistan) or else a ‘state operating under the rule of law’ (Turkmenistan). All of them proclaimed their people as the expression of country’s sovereignty and as the sole source of power of the state. Human rights and liberties, as well as the separation of powers doctrine, including the judicial control, made an integral part of all 5 constitutions. These features, however, seem to have been incorporated into the countries’ basic laws as a lip service to the Western democracies, since the law is not always respected by the authorities, the human rights violations are common and the separation of powers has taken the form of full subordination of the legislative and judicial branches to the executive. Nevertheless, the formal arrangements, although they often serve only as façades, may reflect a certain degree of political reality as well as may be used as instruments in the hands of the countries’ elites. This is why a short overview of the countries’ systems of government as presented in their constitutions seems to be relevant.

It is widely accepted to refer to the types of regimes implemented in the Central Asian states as the presidential ones, as well as two out of five countries describe themselves in their constitutions as having a presidential form of government – Kazakhstan (Konstitutsia Respubliki Kazakhstan 1995: Art. 2) and Turkmenistan (Konstitutsia Turkmenistana: Art. 1). However, after an accurate examination of the five constitutions, we will be able to see that their regimes can be classified as operating in accordance with democratic mixed (semi-presidential) forms of government, which in many cases entail more fusion of power than the presidential system, typically providing presidents the right to dissolve the assembly and the assemblies the right to censure and dismiss the cabinet and its individual members. In Table 2, the distinctive characteristics of each model are described.

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6 For reports on human rights violations in the Central Asian states see Human Rights Watch reports on http://hrw.org/europe/index.php. For reports on human rights violations in Kyrgyzstan see the Kyrgyz Committee for Human Rights reports on http://www.kchr.elcat.kg/.

7 It is especially interesting in the case of Kazakhstan, where no reference was made as to the model of government in the country’s first constitution of 1993, while according to this document the system corresponded to the presidential regime type rather than to any other. However, when in 1995 the new constitution was adopted, which specifically described the system of government as the presidential one (Constitution of Kazakhstan: Art. 2), in fact the features of the semi-presidential model of government were introduced.
<table>
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<th>Presidentialism</th>
<th>Semi-presidentialism</th>
<th>Parliamentarism</th>
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<td><strong>Main features</strong></td>
<td>President is popularly elected (directly or indirectly) for a fixed term and cannot be dismissed from the post, except in cases of impeachment</td>
<td>President is popularly elected (directly or indirectly) for a fixed term and cannot be dismissed from the post, except in cases of impeachment</td>
<td>Legislature is elected for a fixed term, no separate popular election for the executive</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Mutual independence of executive and legislature</td>
<td>Dual authority between president and legislature over cabinet</td>
<td>Mutual dependence between executive and legislature</td>
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<td></td>
<td>President is an exclusive chief executive</td>
<td>President shares the executive power with prime minister</td>
<td>Executive depends on confidence of the legislature</td>
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<td></td>
<td>President appoints government, which is subject to legislative confidence</td>
<td>Executive is entitled to dissolve the legislature</td>
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Sources: Lijphart (1992); Shugart et al. (1992); Linz et al. (1994); Sartori (1994); Haggard et al. (2001).

According to the original constitutions of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, the presidents are directly elected and are the heads of the states, highest executive officials, and commanders-in-chief of the armed forces. With the approval of the parliament, they appoint and release their prime ministers and other members of the government, which in the cases of Kazakhstan (Art. 88) and Turkmenistan (Art. 67 § 4) are subject to parliamentary confidence. The presidents of each of the five countries appoint heads of the local administrations, chairmen of their National Banks, Constitutional Courts, Supreme Courts and Supreme Economic Courts, Procurators General. They have a right of legislative initiative and of issuing decrees, resolutions and orders that are binding on the territories of their respective states. The president of Turkmenistan can as well issue laws on certain matters, which are subject to approval by parliament (Art. 66). All of the presidents are entitled to convene parliaments ahead of schedule, to call referenda and to declare states of emergency. The presidents have the right of veto, which can be overridden by a two-thirds majority of the legislature. In three of the five constitutions – Kyrgyz (Art. 52), Tajik (Art. 72) and Turkmen (Art. 60) – provisions for the impeachment of the presidents are included. The Kazakh (until 1995, when the new constitution was adopted) and Uzbek constitutions do not provide for the right of their parliaments to impeach the presidents, the provisions are made only for the presidents’ substitution in cases of their resignation, illness or death (Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan 1993, Art. 83; Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Art. 96). The president of Uzbekistan, in coordination with the Constitutional Court, has the right to disband the parliament in cases, when there is a discord among its members which threatens its normal functioning, or when the parliament repeatedly adopts decisions contrary to the constitution (Art. 95).

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8 The constitution of Uzbekistan until recently provided for the president to chair the Cabinet of Ministers (Art. 89), while the prime minister of the country fulfilled the duties of the head of government. The law “On Introduction of Amendments and Supplements to the Constitution” (Zakon “O Vnesenii Izmenenii I Dopolnenii v Konstitutsiu” 2003) adopted on 24 April 2003 dismisses the president from the post of the Chair of the Cabinet of Ministers.
Although the powers of the Central Asian presidents were already quite extensive, the original constitutions provided, at least to a certain degree, some balance of powers between the legislative and executive branches, as well as some form of checks and balances, common to the presidential model of government. For example, with the exception of Uzbekistan, none of the constitutions granted their presidents the power to dismiss the parliament. The parliaments were also provided with such important powers as amending the constitution, changing the borders of their administrative-territorial divisions, approving the budget, and electing higher court judges. However, the first constitutions, which were created in the yet unstable transition period, were considered to need some modifications and amendments, and as in the case of Kazakhstan (1995) even complete substitute. Although certain parts of the constitutions were left intact, such as the chapters on the duties of the citizens and human rights, other sections were completely rewritten, the progressive investigation of which gives a clear picture of the dynamics of the three branches of government: consolidation of the executive branch to the detriment of the legislative and judiciary branches.

The amendments to the five Central Asian constitutions look very similar. The first and the most radical change of the country’s basic law occurred already in 1995 when the Republic of Kazakhstan adopted its new constitution, thus outlawing the constitution of 1993. In Art. 2 §1 of the 1995 constitution, Kazakhstan establishes itself as a unitary state with a presidential form of government. If according to the previous constitution the president needed the assent of the parliament for all governmental appointments, in the new constitutional act the parliamentary approval was necessary only for the appointment of the country’s prime minister (Art. 44 §1.3). The president is now empowered to dismiss the government or any member of it. Although the parliament may now express a vote of no confidence in the cabinet, this procedure may result in the dissolution of the parliament itself if the president chooses to decline the resignation of the government (Art. 70 §6). The president is also granted the right to preside at the meetings of the government (Art. 44 §1.3). He issues decrees, resolutions, orders, and even laws in cases of delegation of legislative powers to him by the parliament (Art. 53 §4), as well as decrees having the force of laws if the drafts are declared urgent. Yet, as a kind of trade-off, the provision on impeachment was as well introduced in the 1995 constitution (Art. 47 §2).

The amendments to the constitutions of the other four countries took more or less the same shape, with only slight peculiarities in some of them. In Kyrgyzstan, the constitution was amended by referendum in February 1996 to strengthen substantially the presidency and define the role of parliament. In the same vein as the Kazakhstan’s new constitution, the amendments to the Kyrgyz basic law provide for the presidential appointment of prime minister with approval of parliament, however, the appointments of other members of government do not require parliamentary assent (Art. 46 §1.3); Art. 68 provides for the possible delegation of legislative powers to the president for 1 year or in the event of dissolution of the parliament; president can dismiss the parliament (Art. 46 §6.3); the procedure of impeachment became more complicated, which in case of negative ruling by the country’s Constitutional Court entails the dissolution of the parliament (Art. 51); government became subject to parliamentary confidence, but the president has a right to reject this decision, while the second vote of no confidence may result in the dissolution of the parliament (Art. 71 §5). The further amendments to the constitution of Kyrgyzstan introduced on 18 February 2003 establish the procedure for the drafts of law which are determined as urgent by the president (Art 65 §2); Art. 66 reinforces the presidential veto power, which can be overridden by two-thirds majority of the parliament but not earlier than six months, bills concerning financial and budgetary issues can be overridden not earlier than one year.

Some distinctive amendments were adopted in Turkmenistan on 29 December 1999. The highest representative body of the country – the People’s Council – was given more power at the expense of the legislative body. Furthermore, the People’s Council was recognized as organ of government together with the other three branches of government – executive, legislative and judiciary. The
People’s Council is an institution, which consists of the president of Turkmenistan, the deputies of parliament, the People’s Advisors (elected by the people from each district), the chair of the Supreme Court, Chair of the High Commercial Court, the General Prosecutor, the members of the Cabinet of Ministers, the heads of regional administrations and chiefs of the municipal councils (Art. 48). Thus, the People’s Council includes the elected representatives together with the governmental officials. In the case of Turkmenistan, not only the president but also the peculiar People’s Council weakens the existing legislative body.

Besides gradually increasing their powers, the Central Asian presidents have also a clear tendency of prolonging their terms in office through employing their power to convene national referenda or their power to legislate, which often result in the constitutional amendments or separate laws allowing the current incumbents to stay in office for a longer period or at least to secure their leave. Having been directly elected for the posts of presidents in the course of 1991 (with the exception of the president of Tajikistan, who, as a result of the civil war, was elected only in 1994), the chief executives of the five countries rule ever since. In Kazakhstan and in Uzbekistan, referenda were held in 1995, resulting in the prolongation of the presidential terms for another five years, the presidents having been then reelected for a second term in 1999 (Nursultan Nazarbaev) and in 2000 (Islam Karimov). The Kyrgyz president, Askar Akaev, is the only Central Asian president to stand reelection every five years. Thus, in 2000, he was reelected for his third term in office, even though according to the constitution only two consecutive terms are allowed. With regard to the presidential elections of 2005, the Kyrgyz president has already stated that he has no intention to stand for reelection, but most of the opposition leaders as well as political analysts and observers seem to be quite skeptical about this decision, given his previous maneuverings as well as the Central Asian trend in general. In Tajikistan, the president of the country was first elected in 1994 and reelected in 1999 for a seven-year term following the referendum the same year, which has made possible the introduction of the longer presidential term. Another national referendum was held on 22 June 2003, which will allow Emomali Rakhmonov (president of Tajikistan) to stay in office up until 2020, if he decides to stand for reelection in 2006. The president of Turkmenistan had been prolonging his term in office by means of two referenda (in 1992 and 1994) until the 28 December 1999, when he was proclaimed the president for life by the People’s Council – the representative body of the country.

Some of the presidents have also taken care of the secure and prosperous post-presidencies. The presidents of Kazakhstan (Art. 46) and Kyrgyzstan (Art. 53) have incorporated provisions on ex-presidents in their constitutions and the President of Uzbekistan in a separate law, which assure inviolability of their honor and dignity and which provide for their maintenance and protection at the state’s expense. The articles extend this provision to the ex-president’s families as well. They also procured themselves with immunity from criminal prosecution after their term in office is over: in Kazakhstan by means of the “Law on the First President of Kazakhstan” passed by Mazhilis (parliament) on 27 June 2000, which also grants Nazarbaev access to future presidents, and influence over future domestic and foreign policy; in Kyrgyzstan – Art. 53 of the constitution on ex-presidents as well as the Law “On Guarantees on the Activities of the President of the

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9 The Kazakhstan president held the presidential election ahead of schedule, the decision which he explained by the worsening political and economic situation in the country, but which in fact impeded the other candidates as well as the opposition to prepare for the elections. In 1999, the president was reelected for a seven instead of a five-year term, according to the constitutional amendment of 7 October 1998 ("Law on Introduction of Amendments and Supplements to the Constitution of Kazakhstan").

10 In Uzbekistan, the presidential term is also extended to seven years since 24 April 2003 (Law “On Introduction of Amendments and Supplements to the Constitution”).

11 The Constitutional Court of the country had ruled that Akaev’s reelection in 2000 was not a breach of the constitution, because since 1993, the year of the adoption of the country’s first basic law, it would be his second term in office.
Kyrgyz Republic” adopted on 26 June, 2003, which also grants the Kyrgyz president the right to become a lifetime member of the Security Council of the country; and in Uzbekistan - by means of the Law “On Fundamental Guarantees on the Activities of Uzbek President” adopted on 25 April, 2003. To the presidents of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan the right is also granted to occupy the lifetime offices of members of their Constitutional Courts after they step down from their posts, as well as they automatically become members of their respective Senates.

When both the original and amended constitutions are scrutinized, it becomes evident how presidents have been concerned with building, consolidating and maintaining power. According to the strictly constitutional definitions of the separate models of government, the countries under scrutiny should be considered as semi-presidential regimes, which have as their characteristic features the power of the president to dissolve the parliament (as in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan), by the dual legitimacy inside the executive - of the president and of the prime minister, as well as by the government, which is subject to legislative confidence (See Table 1.). More precisely, these are ‘president-parliamentary’ hybrid regime types, according to the classification Shugart and Carey (1992) propose in their book on Presidents and Assemblies. They maintain that the performance of the regimes with the shared authority of the president and the legislature over the cabinet, as it is precisely the case in the five Central Asian states, has generally tended to be unsatisfactory. Moreover, the constitutional dominance of the executive inherent in such regime types is considered to be one of the serious problems of this model of government, the feature that might often create an affinity between strong presidencies and authoritarianism (Shugart and Carey 1992: 157).

All 5 presidents consolidated and strengthened their grip on power by manipulating formal institutional mechanisms. All of them have basically employed the same technique of creating and consolidating a powerful central executive by subordinating other institutions to their control through constitutional means. Although the presidents have emphasized the apparent constitutional separation of branches of government into executive, legislative and judiciary, in reality these 3 branches have always been fused, with the latter two subsumed by the powerful executive. It is needless to say that the revised constitutions strengthened the executive even more. Using their constitutions and powers provided in them as tools, the presidents managed to stay in power, to maintain it for longer than a decade, and to further consolidate their positions. Being the main constitution-framers in their respective countries, the presidents built their power bases, creating “tailor-made” presidencies, made “by tailor for the tailor” (Elster 1997: 232-236).

The formal processes of building state systems of government with concentration of power in the executive, however, have been developing not without the influence of tribal networks and clan-based politics. These informal sources of power are some of the decisive determinants of the Central Asian post-Soviet regimes.

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12 Shugart and Carey (1992: 23-25) define the president-parliamentary type of regime as follows: (1) president is popularly elected; (2) president appoints and dismisses cabinet ministers; (3) cabinet ministers are subject to parliamentary confidence; (4) president has the power to dissolve parliament or legislative powers, or both. In contrast to the president-parliamentary regime type, the ‘premier-presidentialism’ does not provide for the presidential power to dissolve the government, or any member of the government.
Traditional organization of society

The societies of the post-Soviet Central Asia are traditional in nature and majority of its population represents kinship-based groupings. Although owing to the sedentarization and Sovietization of the Central Asian populations most of the tribal communities were disintegrated and uprooted, they have often reincarnated in the form of region-based identity groups. These tribal/clan structures, even if sometimes transformed into the regionally united alliances, seem to effect significantly the political, social, economic and legal developments in the five countries.

The reality of clan politics dates far back into the history of the region. Throughout history the nomadic, as well as sedentary, peoples of Central Asia have organized their politics according to the tribal rules and traditions. The most important organizational units have been the tribe, clan and the family. Despite the weak attempts of the tsarist Russia to subdue the traditional forms of organization and regardless of the severe Soviet policies of repression and transformation, Muslim traditions and rites continued to be observed, especially in rural areas. In many locations, the apparent destruction of traditional society led only to its reappearance in other forms (Melvin 2000). Traditional organization of life, therefore, existed implicitly during the Soviet rule, but especially in the later decades of the Soviet era the identities of region, family, tribe and clan acquired even more importance. The conventional organizational structure of the Central Asian society looks as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1.

![Diagram of traditional organization of society]

In Central Asia, the main characteristic features of tribal societies were the paramount importance of the family; respectful attitude towards, and even worshipping of, elders (the custom that originates from the tribal system of governance founded on the principles of primogeniture and seniority, which in the pre-Russian times was fulfilling the ideological function and was the main instrument of social regulation); patriarchy; mutual support- and assistance-relations between the members of the same clan; strong attachment to the region. These traditional aspects of society have gone through several difficult processes of transformation during the long periods of Russian and Soviet colonization; nevertheless, up until today these kinship-based networks remain an everyday reality, even though in a somewhat different form. For the majority of the Central Asian population the tribal bonds have become extremely important: for some, they represent an instrument to achieve certain ambitious goals, for others it is the means for adaptation and survival in new circumstances. Kathleen Collins (2002) explains that clan members are interconnected horizontally (members are bound together through relations of kinship and mutual trust) as well as vertically (members represent different levels of society: elite

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13 There exist two different views on the definition of clans. Some scholars consider clans as being based on the shared interests and aims (Umbetalieva 2001: 6-25) (in Russian the word klan is used to refer to this phenomenon, which has a negative connotation), while others consider clans as having kinship, based on blood or marriage, and consisting of an extensive web of horizontal and vertical kin-based relations, as the central bond among members (Collins 2002: 142; Roy 2000) (in Russian the word rod is used to refer to this phenomenon). In this article the latter definition is applied.
and non-elite), which allows them to have access to different spheres of life. Whatever the social position of a clan member is, he/she is required to foster the well-being of his/her clan. This goes especially for the elite members of the clan, who, by providing opportunities or assistance to the members of their respective networks, count in return on these members’ personal loyalty and respect in order to maintain their status.

Before the Russian colonization of Central Asia in the 19th century, the clan structure served as a means to control and manage the society as well as to resolve conflicts. Tribal organization of life, besides shaping and ordering the social relationships inside a unit (clan, tribe or a confederation of tribes), functioned as well as a set of liabilities (for example, in cases of settlement of disputes by means of vendetta or peaceful conflict resolution) and law (customary law – Adat) (Geiss 2003: 33-38).

In the second half of the 19th century, the tsarist Russia did not take any considerable steps to change the conventional way of life in then already colonized Central Asian region. The reasons for Russia to incorporate the Central Asian territories were not primarily those of expansion and colonization, but those of protection of its southern borders in its rivalry with Great Britain. Therefore, Russian government was not inclined to start any administrative reforms in the area. Moreover, it was a rather problematic task for them to organize and integrate the region into the Russian state. Owing to these circumstances, the Central Asian people were able to continue practicing their habitual lifestyle although under the tsarist administrative order.

It is during the Soviet period that most of the modifications, such as administrative, cultural and social changes, were imposed on the region in an attempt to modernize the Central Asian society. First of all, the new administrative-territorial structure was established, according to which five ethnic groups were granted the right to become the titular nationalities of the five Soviet Central Asian republics. Secondly, the republican borders were drawn ‘artificially’ without taking into consideration the importance of the local ethnic and sub-ethnic composition of the region’s inhabitants. Thirdly, the Central Asian languages underwent Cyrillicization and Russification, while having used the Arabic script before. Finally, the formal institutions were set up to manage and regulate the persistently traditional society of the region, constraining the functions as well as the opportunities of the clan networks to dominate the society.

Besides the formal adjustments brought about by the central authorities, the period of the Soviet domination, especially during the Stalin rule, was as well characterized by intensive anti-clan policies carried out in the Central Asian republics. But these severe measures did not manage to weaken the clan networks. On the contrary, the clans survived and even became stronger. Already in the 1940s, the ‘clan problem’ was mostly ignored by the central authorities due to the World War II; in 1953 with the death of Stalin, the era of terror was over; and in 1960s-1970s with the Brezhnev’s ‘stability of cadre’ policy, the clan system has completely rehabilitated, even though unofficially. The Brezhnev period (1964-1982) was especially favorable for the clan networks to become established owing to the stabilization of the Communist apparatus in Central Asia. This was the period when a political culture had time to reinforce, creating conditions for future independence (Roy 2000: 101-124). After the death of Brezhnev in 1982, however, and up

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14 At that period, the territories of the today’s Central Asian region represented one political entity – Turkestan, which was occupied by several khanates, tribes and tribal confederations. During the colonization by tsarist Russia, the region was called the Governorate-General of Turkestan. The division of the region’s territories took place under the Soviet rule, when in the 1920s – 1930s five republics were created as a result of the ‘divide-and-rule’ policy.

15 For the systematic examination of the tribal organization of life of the Central Asian communities before and after the tsarist conquest, see Geiss (2003).

16 Brezhnev period was marked by the continuous stay in power of the First Secretaries of the Central Asian republican parties: Kunaev in Kazakhstan held the post from 1959 to 1986 (27 years); Rashidov in Uzbekistan from 1959 to 1983 (24 years); Gapurov in Turkmenistan from 1969 to 1986 (17 years); Rassulov in Tajikistan from 1961 to 1982 (21 years); Usulbaev in Kyrgyzstan from 1961 to 1985 (24 years).
until 1988, the Soviet authorities conducted severe purges in the region, which were aimed at the elimination of the clan-based abuses of the Soviet system. In Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, the republics’ First Secretaries were removed from their posts together with other members of their respective clans, which were swept away from the positions of power. In other republics of the Soviet Central Asia similar purges were carried out and the cadre from Moscow was appointed to occupy all positions of economic and political authority. Nevertheless, with perestroika paving its way and the Communist Party control weakening, the clans saw an opportunity to reassert themselves on the political arena. Elites in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan representing different clan networks brokered pacts\textsuperscript{17} with each other in order to regain power from Moscow and proposed their own candidates for the posts of First Secretaries, which were approved by Gorbachev due to his political weakness at the period. These same candidates later became presidents of the independent Central Asian states and govern in their countries until now\textsuperscript{18}.

This brief historical overview of the clan system transformation gives us a clear picture of the historical implications for the political and institutional evolution in the post-independence Central Asian region. The critical moment in the history of clan structure in Central Asia was the period between 1922-1923, when the Bolsheviks took formal control of the region as a whole and the integration of Central Asia into the centralized Soviet political regime began. The events following the Soviet take-over forced the tribal organization of society to transform into an informal and even subversive form of political arrangement and to stay in shadow until now. Since that crucial moment the clans had been developing as a counterbalance to the central authorities in Moscow. When under Brezhnev it became possible to reestablish the clan politics at the republican level, the powerful networks started to gain power and exploit the system to their benefit. But however powerful they were, they were still subordinate to Moscow and thus could be removed from the dominant positions at any time (exactly what was happening since 1982). The purges of the Central Asian elites led to the pact-making between the clans just before the independence and the reclamation of power by them. After the declaration of independence by the five countries, the power in the hands of the incumbents and their supporters remained unchallenged neither from the authorities outside the new states nor from the powerful clans inside them, leaving in powerful positions the presidents together with their respective clans, which successfully consolidate their positions ever since.

Between the clans as well as inside each of them a permanent power struggle goes on\textsuperscript{19}. Kathleen Collins in her article on clans and pacts in Central Asia (2002: 143) argues that in conditions of constant clan competition, it is extremely difficult to produce any other than clan-based politics. From her experience in Afghanistan, she suggests that in transitional societies with strong clan systems the ‘clan hegemony’ becomes a reality, since the state is weakly institutionalized and the clan politics turns out to be the main form of state governance\textsuperscript{20}. In these circumstances, clans are

\begin{itemize}
  \item For details on pact-brokering between the clans in Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, see Collins, K. (1999).
  \item In Tajikistan, the dominant Leninabad/Khodjent clan was established in the country’s power positions during the whole Soviet period and the clan elites failed to make necessary arrangements in order to secure their stay in power. However, this improvidence has resulted in the inter-Tajik civil war. In Turkmenistan, Niyazov was appointed as the first secretary already in 1985 by the Communist Party authorities and only then did he establish links with his clan and the region.
  \item The concept of ‘tribalism’ (from Latin \textit{tribus} – a tribe) is applicable here. Under ‘tribalism’ we understand a political struggle for power between groups of people organized on the basis of clan and tribal principles. See also Kadyrov (2001), who defines ‘tribalism’ as a struggle of clan- and region-based sub-ethnic communities for hegemony; and Umbetalieva (2001:8-9), who distinguishes ‘political tribalism’ (the phenomenon of penetration into and influence on the politics by groups, organized on the basis of clan/tribal principles) from social and historico-cultural types of tribalism.
  \item Kadyrov (2003) in his book on tribal confederations in Turkmenistan also refers to clan hegemonism as the main informal force behind the political developments in the country. He defines clan hegemonism as political struggle of
\end{itemize}
the central actors that represent and pursue interests of their members, thus fulfilling the role which in democratic systems is assigned to political parties or other formal organizations. Even for the existent political parties it is problematic to operate in a clan-based society, owing to people’s strong attachment to and identification with their own region, which, even if they do not live there, determine their party preferences\textsuperscript{21}. This, therefore, makes parties that represent the bigger regions to be better off during the elections, and the clans occupying the territory of this region to be able to dictate the rules. The leaders of each country, belonging themselves each to a powerful clan, are nevertheless worried about the situation of domination of clan principles in their respective countries, fearing the formation of a clan-based counterbalance to the official power. As a result, the presidents make every effort to centralize the political systems of their countries even further in an attempt to weaken the regions together with the clans inhabiting them. Weaken, but not eliminate, because while pursuing their personal interests they nonetheless preserve and sustain the clan systems in order not to jeopardize the forces that brought them to power in the first place as well as not to lose their support-base.

In a nutshell, the traditional organization of society in Central Asia had not disappeared, but transformed into the informal political power, which exists along with the formal institutional arrangements. The fusion of the two fields has rendered the formal institutions and the political systems as a whole meaningless, resulting in the predominance of the informal practices as well as the traditional, by definition undemocratic, instruments and mechanisms of political pressure. Therefore, it is on the basis and under the close guidance of the clan-based networks that the formal institutions were created. In Table 1, the evolution of as well as the interplay between both the informal and formal structures is presented schematically.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Informal arrangements</th>
<th>Originally</th>
<th>Soviet time</th>
<th>1989 – 1991(2)</th>
<th>Post-independence</th>
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<td></td>
<td>clan structures – main form of social and political control</td>
<td>clans transform into underground structures</td>
<td>clan pacting and tribal redistribution of power</td>
<td>clan structures become informal political powers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Formal arrangements | Presidential models of government with limited balance of powers (in original constitutions) | Constitutional amendments or new constitutions, laws and presidential decrees (which have direct impact on the relationship between the legislative and executive branches of government) | Present day president-parliamentary regimes |

elites organized on the basis of ethnicity. This definition places ‘clan hegemonism’ in the same line as the term ‘tribalism’ given earlier.

\textsuperscript{21} Some scholars consider Central Asian informal structures of influence as based on regionalism (see, for example, Luong 2002: 51-101; Akerman 2002). In this paper it is assumed, however, that it is the tribal division that is at the basis of the social and political structure, because even though the members of clans are attached to and identify themselves with their respective regions, several different clans may share the territory of a region. Moreover, I believe that the previously tribal communities have managed to adapt to the new regional delimitation of their territories and today they make up the core community of each particular region.
Clan politics

There is a continuous interaction between the clan structures and formal institutions. In the years preceding the countries’ independence and immediately following it, the clans played the main role in putting together the strong presidential systems by agreeing between each other on the type of leadership they prefer. The reasoning behind this informal pact-making was that the clan networks were less concerned with the type of government they are to have than with the fact that they will have a leader who is controlled by them and who will guarantee the stability and economic prosperity to the key tribal communities. Clans brought the current presidents into power and this had predetermined the obligatory relationship between the formal and informal paradigms. In the long run, the influence of the clans was realized mainly through the mechanism of clan-based appointments.

Kazakhstan. The nature of clan division varies from one country to another. Sub-ethnic divisions in Kazakhstan are multi-layered. Here, besides several clans being bonded into one tribal structure, the tribes are united into a Zhuz (a horde), which is a confederation of several tribes united together on the basis of the territorial principle (several tribes occupying a particular neighboring territory unified to form one socio-political entity). Since the beginning of the XVII century, the territory of Kazakhstan is divided between three zhuz’: Small – Kishi Zhuz (North of the country), Middle – Orta Zhuz (West) and Great – Ulu Zhuz (South), the names of which indicate on the existence of a hierarchy between them. Each zhuz differs from another by means of its own territory, dialect, etc.

The current president of the Kazakh state, Nursultan Nazarbaev, comes from the Big zhuz, the members of which have been occupying the power positions in the republic since the late 1920s, but were at the highest point of dominating the political scene during the Brezhnev rule, when in 1959 Dimmukhamed Kunaev was appointed the First Secretary of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan and stayed in power until 1986. Kunaev was the one who supported the young Nazarbaev’s promotion into the leading positions in the republic, but he was paid back with the latter’s ingratitude. Hoping to succeed Kunaev in power, Nazarbaev used all means in order to push him out of the office, but his aspirations came true only in 1989, after the Gorbachev’s appointee Gennadii Kolbin (a Russian with no previous experience in Kazakhstan) had to leave his post owing to the student riots that rose in the republic, which were interpreted as the rise of the Kazakh youth against the appointment of an “outsider”.

After obtaining power in the republic and being elected as the countries’ first president, the new leader started to build his power base, counting mostly on his family as well as on other close and distant relatives. It is now common to refer to the ‘familisation’ of the government apparatus in Kazakhstan (Khliupin 2000). One of his most loyal supporters and assistants is his daughter Dariga Nazarbaeva, who presently owns the largest media company – Khabar – in the country, as well as heads the Congress of Kazakh Journalists, which unites the loyal to the regime media companies. In April of 2003, she has founded a social movement “Asar” (Mutual Help), which was transformed into a political party in October, electing D. Nazarbaeva as its leader. This initiative from the part of the eldest daughter of the country’s president triggered the questions about her longer-term ambitions. Most of the analysts predict the dynastic succession of the presidency, following the example from Azerbaijan. This prognosis, in fact, has all its chances to become true. The Nazarbaeva’s party counts already the membership of 167 thousand people.

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22 For a more detailed account of the Nazarbaev’s rise to power, see Olcott (1995: 169-190).


24 The Institute for War & Peace Reporting, Reporting Central Asia № 263 (6 February 2004).
enjoys the support of the government and has already created an “Asar” faction inside the parliament. The party is ready to take part in the legislative elections in October of 2004 and has as its aim to unite together with the other three main pro-governmental parties in the country – Otan, the Civic Party and the Agrarians – into one election block and to obtain half of seats in the lower house of the parliament. These intensive developments from the part of the pro-governmental activists may result in a fully controlled and manageable parliament for the leader of the country.

The present constitution of Kazakhstan includes a provision regarding one of the possible mechanisms of succession to the president. In cases when the president resigns from the office due to illness, Art. 48 of the country’s basic law provides for transmission of his powers to the Chairperson of the Senate of the parliament or, if he/she cannot assume the powers of the president, to the Chairperson of Majilis (the lower house) of the parliament, or, under the same conditions, to the Prime Minister of the country, for the rest of the term. Owing to the fictitious nature of the parliament, the president can easily manipulate the appointments inside it: first of all, under the constitution (Art. 50 § 2) the right is granted to the president to appoint seven deputies of the Senate (which consists of the total number of 39 deputies, while the rest of the senators are elected by indirect ballot) and, secondly, he can simply influence the appointment of the chairmen of both of the houses of parliament, especially of that of the Senate where the candidacy for that post is nominated by the president (Art. 58 § 1). Under these circumstances, the current initiatives of the president’s daughter can be seen in a different light. Once she is elected into the parliament, she then can be easily promoted to the highest positions and one day occupy her father’s post.

The president of Kazakhstan has quite some other relatives making part of his high-ranking entourage. The spheres of influence used to be accurately shared between the two president’s sons-in-law: one controlling the security and media spheres, while another – the oil and energy areas. So, Dariga Nazarbaeva’s husband, Rakhat Aliev, used to be the deputy chairman of the National Security Service, or KNB, the successor to the Soviet KGB, but was released from his post and was ‘expelled’ from the country as an ambassador to Austria. He still manages to wield domestic influence through a media holding that includes the KTK television station (Kazakh Commercial Television) and the newspapers “Caravan” and “New Generation”. Timur Kulibaev, the husband of Dinara Nazarbaeva, the second daughter of the president, is one of the biggest oligarchs in the country, who has an enormous power over the oil industry and is head of one of the country’s largest banks. Dinara Nazarbaeva herself heads the national foundation of education named after her father. The president’s wife, Sara Nazarbaeva, is the chairwoman of the International Charity Foundation for Children “Bobek”, which is sponsored by national and foreign businessmen willing to prove their loyalty to the Family and to protect themselves from the tax controlling and other state services.

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26 It is interesting to note, however, in the context of the present paper that Dariga Nazarbaeva is a step-daughter of the president of Kazakhstan (Profil’ 06.12.1999). The president’s wife, Sara Kunakaeva (Nazarbaeva), was previously married and has two daughters from her first marriage, Dariga and Dinara. Contrary to the president, Sara Nazarbaeva comes from the Middle Zhuz.

27 The dynastic or “royal” marriage of the Nazarbaev’s third daughter with the son of the president of Kyrgyzstan did not work out and the couple had officially separated after three years of marriage. In summer of 2002, Aliya Nazarbaeva has married for the second time, this time with a young Kazakh businessman.

28 Each of the sons-in-law controls several companies, banks, night clubs, casinos and factories. For details see Mendybaev and Shelgunov (2002).
Owing to the family support and its engagement in the highest levels of state management, the president controls all spheres of life in Kazakhstan. Besides the close relatives of the president Nazarbaev, the majority of the high-ranking positions are held by the members of his Great zhuz. However, the leader of Kazakhstan tries to balance the power positions between the members of the other two zhuz': the Small zhuz occupies the territories containing the rich oil resources and, therefore, the friendly terms as well as the provision of a certain number of high-ranking posts seem to be strategically grounded; the Middle zhuz, on the other hand, is less represented in the presidential entourage, even though the president’s wife comes originally from that horde.

In Kyrgyzstan, the main division is territorial - between the North and the South, while the kinship-based identities develop on the basis of this regional split. The divide between the two parts of the country is first of all historical and geographical: already in the pre-Soviet period the Kyrgyz settled on either side of the mountains and since then failed to establish close links between each other. Owing to this natural divide inside the country, the two regions are highly disconnected today and the clans occupying each of the two regions tend to oppose each other in their struggle for state power. Kyrgyz politicians and academics, having recognized the crucial impact the regional and tribal divide have on country’s political developments, made numerous suggestions to render this phenomenon ‘civil’ so that it could serve the modern forms of politics. Such propositions were put forward as dividing the country into two, federalization or change of the administrative structure of the country by simplifying it and introducing the program of equalization between the regions, as well as changing the structure of appointments, which would regard merit and ability as decisive factors rather than kinship or affinity (Anderson 1999: 39-42).

The president Akaev as well made several attempts to de-traditionalize politics by introducing the policy of rotation of cadres, but these endeavors did not manage to solve the networking problem.

In Kyrgyzstan, the interstate division into the North and the South is extremely strong. Although the tribal divisions represent another source of separation inside the country, it is nevertheless largely responsible for the preservation of the Kyrgyz civil society (Achylova 1995: 326-327). And although the president of Kyrgyzstan, Askar Akaev, seems to disapprove of the role of the tribal/clan groups in the country’s political, economic and legal spheres, he tends to make use of these informal structures for consolidation of his lengthened stay in office.

The rise of Askar Akaev to the post of president of Kyrgyzstan was not conditioned by his Communist Party political career, as it was the case with the presidents of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. On the contrary, Akaev has made his career in the academic field, heading the republican academy of science at the time of his election to the post of executive presidency in October 1990, and therefore, came into the forefront of the Kyrgyzstan’s politics as an outsider. His ‘election’, however, could not have happened if not for the active interference of the tribal communities, which after the independence have busied themselves with the

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29 For the discussion about the necessity to incorporate the traditional structures into the modern forms of government, see also Akerman (2002), Achylova (1995).

30 Achylova (1995) argues that Kyrgyzstan is a not an absolutely new state, and it has in fact restored its independence in 1991, since the Kyrgyz state had already existed independently at the end of the fifth and the beginning of the sixth centuries AD. It must be noted, however, that it is the first independence for today’s Kyrgyzstan in its present territorial boundaries as well as with the present ethnic and tribal composition.

31 The posts of presidents were incorporated into the state structures of each of the Soviet Central Asian republics before they declared independence in 1991 (except Tajikistan, where Emomali Rakhmonov was the head of state and Supreme Assembly chairman since 19 November 1992, and the post of presidency was created only 1994, because of the civil war taking place in the country from 1992 to 1997). The first presidents were chosen by each of the republic’s Supreme Soviets.
redistribution of power according to the place of tribes and clans in the hierarchical structure of the Kyrgyz society (Kovalskii 2001: 235-239).

The northern clans used to be in the power positions in the XIX – XX centuries, especially the Talas region elites. These clans re-established their political influence after the independence by uniting with other northern clans and passing to the post of the country’s presidency their compromise candidate. Akaev was introduced into the power struggle between the North and the South, when during the elections in October of 1990 none of the three candidates (Absamat Masaliev (South) – the chairman of the Supreme Soviet; Zhumgalbek Amanbaev (North) – First Secretary of the Issyk-Kul region committee of the Communist Party of Kyrgyzstan; and Apas Zhumagulov (North) – the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the republic of Kyrgyzstan) got the necessary 50% of the votes. The Northerners managed to unite their forces and passed through the elections Askar Akaev, candidate which suited the main northern clans (Ryskulov and Erkinov 2001: 38-50). Today, the majority of the high ranking positions are occupied by the members of the northern clans, especially those from the Chu and Talas regions32 as well as the Issyk-Kul region.

Owing to the fact that most of the superior positions are given to the president’s or his wife’s clanmates, since according to the country’s constitution the president appoints the members of the government with the consent of the parliament, the majority of members of which are northerners, the president has a means to pass any legislative act through all necessary instances. These tools permit him to consolidate his power, manipulate the institutional and legal changes in the country. It appears, therefore, that this capability to engineer the state structure as well as the prevalence of the clan-based political principles serve only the president and his clan interests and do not ensure any stability in the country, where the threat of a conflict between the north and the south is constant.

Uzbekistan is often regarded as the Central Asian hegemon, while its president, Islam Karimov, as the key figure in the Central Asian post-independence political relations. This predominantly has to do with the centrality of Uzbekistan in Central Asia, with the decisive role of Uzbekistan (together with Russia) in resolving the Tajikistan armed conflict, as well as with the fact that upon its creation the major cities of the region – Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva and Kokand – were incorporated into the Uzbek republic (Carlisle 1995)33. The inclusion of several historical centers, each of which made part of a separate khanate before the Russian expansion into the region34, resulted in the regional division inside the country. Nowadays the main divide is between the Samarkand, Ferghana and Tashkent areas, while the kinship-based networks are less developed owing to the fact that the Uzbek population had for centuries led a sedentary way of life and therefore the knowledge of one’s tribal and clan origins was not indispensable. The region-based networks, however, formed at the end of the XIX – beginning of the XX centuries, and it is considered by some scholars that the Soviet system has largely contributed to the reinforcement of this informal organizational structure and to the development of regional political identities by having emphasized their boundaries inside the republic (Luong 2000) as well as by having heavily relied on one region or on another in managing and controlling the republic (Chebotariov 2001).

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32 Chu is Askar Akaev’s birthplace and Talas is that of his wife, Mayram Akaeva.
33 The large cities in other Central Asian republics, such as Alma-Ata (today Almaty), Frunze (today Bishkek), Ashkhabad as well as Tashkent, were Soviet creations, while the cities Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva and Kokand were historical cultural centers of the region (Carlisle 1995: 211).
34 Except Samarkand, which was a part of the khanate of Bukhara.
Karimov comes from the Samarkand region and this same regionally-based group is presently in power. However, Islam Karimov had never been closely linked to his native region, nor was he adversative the other regional communities; moreover, he had more connections with the Tashkent clique while making his Communist Party political career. Following a range of unsuccessful cadre shuffling initiated by Moscow, which were the result of the purges aimed at the eradication of the regional networking system consolidated in the republic, the local elites have informally chosen Karimov as their candidate for the top republican position. For that purpose they brought him back to the national political arena from his ‘exile’ in a distant region of Kashka-Daria, where he was appointed the first secretary of the oblast. Owing to this dependence on regional politicians, who supported his appointment, brought him to power and actually thought of him as their puppet, the consolidation of Karimov’s hold on power was thorny. Throughout his first years in power, beginning as the First Secretary of the republican Communist Party and then as the president of the Soviet republic of Uzbekistan, he had to informally share power with the leading Tashkent politician, Shukurullo Mirsaidov, who played the key role in Karimov’s coming to power\(^{35}\). However, since October 1991, when the capital’s elites led by Mirsaidov endeavored to overtake the power, the Tashkent cohort fell in complete disgrace in the eyes of the president. Besides, once Karimov legitimized his position by holding the first presidential elections in December of 1991 and winning it, he was free from the regional manipulators that were trying to control his actions. Moreover, he immediately attacked the Mirasaidov/Tashkent group even more decisively, while concentrating power and authority in his own hands.

Today it is the Samarkand group, which is indubitably consolidating its positions and occupies the majority of the high ranking offices. Ferghana clan as well enjoys the privilege of the president’s backing, while the Tashkent region is totally discredited.

In Uzbekistan, besides the regional divisions and identities, the neighborhood communities (mahalla) exist and are even institutionalized into the country’s political structure since 1993, when the law on local self-government was adopted\(^{36}\). These are the political units, which function as the basic elements of local government. The chairman of each mahalla – aksakal – is chosen by the inhabitants in each locality. Traditionally, the purpose of mahalla had been the one of assistance to families and communal problem solution on the local level. But today, it is incorporated into the official institutional structure in order to perform the function of social control and is used to extend the central power to every locality (Melvin 2000:32)\(^{37}\).

Therefore, we may conclude that in Uzbekistan not only the political appointments and nominations are conditioned by one’s regional affiliations, but that certain features of the traditional social structure, such as mahallas, are brought into play by the authorities for their purposes of control and management of the society. Besides, since all the appointments to the official posts are dependent on the regional or clan attachments, it is a certain means to secure the president’s position in power. Although, these sub-identities are less influential today, when the executive power is consolidated and there seem to be no obstacles for its continuity into a longer future, they were the key forces in the ramifications preceding and immediately following the independence of the country.

\(^{35}\) For a detailed account of the Karimov’s rise to power, see Carlisle (1995).


Tajikistan is a divided state, characterized by deep cleavages between the country’s regional groupings and identities. There had never been an overarching sense of national Tajik self-consciousness, although it was persistently imposed upon the republic by the Soviet powers since its creation in 1929. On the contrary, the republic had always been a delicate amalgamation of several regions having quite diverse local features, such as distinct culture, dialects as well as everyday ways of life. This regional fragmentation of the Tajikistan society was not overcome by the country’s sub-ethnic communities during the long Soviet era, but sharpened in the post-independence period, became the dominant element in the country’s politics and even resulted in a full-fledged civil war.

In Tajikistan, five different regions are distinguished: the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (southeast – its inhabitants regard themselves as Pamiris, not Tajiks), the Leninabad district (north – also known as Khodjent after its capital), the Dushanbe region and its western Hissar area, the Garm valley (northeast), Kulyab and Kurgan-Tyube (south – now joined in the Khatlon Oblast). Today the main line of confrontation lies between the Leninabad and Kulyab communities, since the present head of the state comes from the Kulyab region, while previously the leadership of the republic had been almost continually held by the Leninabad/Khudjent group. However, it was the Pamiri/Garm regions that became central for the development of the Islamic/democratic opposition which dragged the country into the bloody conflict.

The civil war in Tajikistan is generally regarded as a war of the Islamists and the Democrats united in the fight against the Communists. However, although there were clear indications of the two confronting parties to uphold the ideological reasons, there is an indubitable regional basis of the conflict (Carlisle 1995: 204-206, Davydova & Umbetalieva 2001: 59-73), in which the Leninabadians (the leading group at that time) together with the Kulyabis allied against the Pamiri/Garm people. After Tajikistan had declared independence on 9 September 1991, the overt struggle for power started between the elites of different regions. One of the main points of protestation was the disagreement with the protracted leadership of the Leninabad group in power. Unfortunately, this power struggle had disregarded the peaceful means of power sharing and developed into a full-scale civil war, which lasted from 1992 – the peak of the conflict – to 1997, when the peace agreement was signed by the two conflicting sides.

The regional motive of the armed conflict can also be observed in analyzing the political appointments that were produced during the civil war, which were undoubtedly based on the clan/region affiliations of the candidates. With the intention of creating and sustaining the alliances, important governmental posts were given to the leading members of a different cohort. This was the case, when in September 1992 the opposition forces (mostly from Garm and Pamir regions) – the Islamic Democratic Block – have forced the president Nabiev to resign from his post and the coalition government was established comprising the main opposition leaders, which, however, became headed by the acting Prime Minister Abdumalik Abdulladjanov, a Leninabadian. This choice of the candidacy for the post of prime minister was motivated by an attempt from the part of the opposition to reach a compromise with the key community in the country – Leninabad/Khudjent group. The same scenario arose when the contra movement comprising all supporters of the legal authorities – the People’s Front – created its military detachments and threatened the Islamists to seize the capital. This had lead to the convening of the extraordinary parliamentary session, during which the Kulabi, Immomali Rakhmonov, was chosen the chairman of the legislative branch, while Abdulladjanov was approved as the Prime

The Islamic Democratic Block had control of the country’s capital from May to October of 1992. It was the peak of their political success, but even then they had only one-forth of the country’s territory under their command (Kuzmin 2001: 182-191).

At that time the deputies from Khodjent/Leninabad and Kulyab composed two-thirds of the parliament.
Minister. From that point on, Rakhmonov can already be considered as the leader of Tajikistan, since the institution of presidency was annulled during the same session of the parliament.

Rakhmonov’s appointment served as a compromise gesture towards the Kulyabis (Kuzmin 2001: 188-191), since one of the causal factors of the dissatisfaction of the people, which in early 1992 joined the opposition forces and instigated the civil war, was their resistance to the extended domination of the country’s politics by the Leninabadians. The Leninabadian community, however, was not disregarded during the power distribution having obtained another important post, that of prime minister, still occupied by Abdulladjanov. It came as a big surprise, when Rakhmonov had actually managed to stay in power even after the critical moment of the inter-Tajik military conflict had passed, because according to the calculations of the political observers and analysts, Abdulladjanov, being an experienced politician and originating from the Leninabad group, was to prevail in the power struggle. During the same period, the main influential spheres were as well shared between the key regional players: economic issues were dealt with by the Leninabadian group, while the matters of states security and defense – by the Kulyabis.

It is in these circumstances that in 1994 the first constitution was adopted in the independent Tajikistan. Under the country’s basic law, the institution of presidency was restored and Rakhmonov became the head of the executive branch, to whom the right was granted to appoint and release the prime minister as well as the other members of the government with the accord of the parliament (Art. 69 § 3). Since also the appointments of the chairman of the country’s National Bank, the chairmen and judges of all courts, of the procurator general (although all appointments are to be made with the consent of the country’s parliament – the Supreme Assembly) were included into the president’s competences, as well as the president being the supreme commander in chief of the armed forces of Tajikistan (Art. 69, §§ 4, 7, 8, 9, 17), the president consolidated his already dominating position in the country together with that of his regional supporters. Therefore, such issues as domestic and foreign affairs, defense and national security became automatically controlled by the Kulyabi grouping. Moreover, the ministries of information, press and culture headed by the Kulyabis became as well parts of their share (Kuzmin 2001: 195-196). The Leninabadians were more and more losing their positions with Abdulladjanov sacked from his office of prime minister already in 1993 and lost in the presidential elections of 1994. The parliamentary elections held on 26 February 1995 had further proved this tendency. For the first time the majority of the deputies came from the Kulyab region. Nevertheless, some concession was again provided by the parliamentary appointment of a Leninabadian, Safarali Rajabov, as its chairman.

After the peaceful agreement was signed in 1997, the opposition leaders entered the country’s political arena as well. Some of the major offices, especially those of the first deputy ministers, were given to the members of this group. This conciliatory move was generated by the aspiration on the part of the state authorities to provide stability and peace in the country. Nonetheless, today all the regional communities in Tajikistan are highly dissatisfied with the ongoing ‘Kulyabization’ of the country’s politics.

In Turkmenistan the division into kinship-based groupings is critical for the country’s political development. The inter-clan solidarity in Turkmenistan had never been strong, especially because before the Turkmen republic was created by the Soviet authorities in 1924, the Turkmens identified themselves primarily with their clan and tribe rather than with the territory they shared. Therefore, the inter-clan relationship was substantially constrained, while the one’s own clan self-consciousness was thriving. That is mainly the reason why the Soviet Turkmenistan was for a long time (until the 1947) indirectly governed by outsiders – the appointees from Moscow – although they generally occupied the positions of the second secretaries of the republican Communist Party (until the late 1980s). Kadyrov (2003: 10-11), who refers to the Turkmen people as to the ‘nation of tribes’, maintains that the “foreign component” was decisive in the building of
statehood and state structure. Without foreign component, self-reliable state management in the post-tribal society is generally deemed to dissolution or ethnic despotism. Accordingly, with the disappearance of the foreign control in the post-Soviet period the Turkmen state has become the basis for usurpation of the state power by the hegemonic clan and for consolidation of the clan’s power.

In Turkmenistan, the main kinship-based communities are represented by the Akhalteke, Iomud, Ersary, and other tribes. The present president of Turkmenistan comes from the Akhalteke clan, which inhabits the country’s capital and its region. The clan had for a long time been deprived of the possibility to hold the leading position in the republic. The only real power-holder originating from this clan was Sh. Batyrov, who in 1947 was appointed the first secretary of the republican Central Committee of the Communist Party. He, however, stayed in power only until 1951 and since then none of the Akhalteke people reached the highest position on the republican level until Niyazov was appointed for this post in 1985.

On 18 January 1990, Saparmurad Niyazov was elected chairman of the Supreme Soviet of the republic and in October of that year he became the first directly elected president of Turkmenistan. It is since then that the leader had started to create his power base featured with sultanistic tendencies. Even if the broadest interpretation of the country’s constitution and laws dealing with the competences of the executive are analyzed, the real picture of the regime will not be embraced to the true extent. The country’s ideology is founded on the personality cult of the president, worshiping of the president as a savior of the Turkmen nation and the Allah’s messenger (Kuliev 2001).

The president of Turkmenistan, Saparmurad Niyazov, had been primarily selected by the central authorities as a person free from complicated family and clan ties. He was considered as a Gorbachev supporter having imitated the Moscow’s initiatives and policies (Dudarev 2001: 133). Once in power, however, Niyazov chose to use tribalism as a means to consolidate his position. Although he had never been very closely connected to his own tribal community since he grew up as an orphan, he followed the political tradition of clan hegemony. The Akhalteke clan benefits largely from having their clanmate in power.

Conclusion

The disintegration of the Soviet Union has rendered the five Central Asian states independent and free from any authority. The sudden independence provided the new countries with the opportunity to build their political systems in accordance with the principles of democracy and rule of law, however, the reality has brought about different results. Even though the five states have formally opted for the democratic regimes, their traditional cultures and ways of life have predetermined the real political settings.

The clan structures that represent informal powerful networks have existed on the territories of today’s Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan already for centuries. The severe repressions and attempts of their eradication conducted by the Soviet state did not prove successful and these signs of the continuous traditionalism that reigns in the region have not only been present but decisive for the formal political developments during the countries

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40 The president Niyazov has written a book “Rukhnama”, which is aimed at serving as a spiritual constitution of the Turkmen people. After Niyazov are named a city, two districts, a ship, an Academy of Agricultural Sciences, multitude of streets, squares, schools, kolkhozes and other units. The months of the year were as well renamed: January is now called Turkmenbashi (one of the titles of the president, meaning the ‘Leader of all Turkmens’).

41 Niyazov’s parents had died in the Ashkhabad earthquake of 1948.
transitions from totalitarianism. Moreover, the leaders of each of the five states, the majority of which were brought into power by the tribal and regional communities, preferred to use tribalism for their benefit as well as for that of their clan rather than fight against it.

However the issue of tribalism is dealt with in each of the five countries, the institutional arrangements and legal documents, such as countries’ constitutions, laws, etc., are exploited as instruments for consolidation of clan hegemony by the elites (Kadyrov 2003: 8). This instrumental approach towards the institutions renders them vulnerable and unstable, easy to manipulate and change, unpredictable and sometimes illegitimate. Moreover, these kinship-based networks and communities tend to produce the problems of corruption, political succession, and most importantly democratic transition. At the same time it might be argued, however, that the inter-clan cooperation managed to ensure stability in the countries and to reduce the risk of the inter-clan conflicts as it happened in Tajikistan, where the clans did not take the time to agree on the question how and by whom will they be governed.

The establishment of the hybrid political regimes based on the powerful executive has answered the clans’ interests to informally maintain the system of clan hegemonism and tribal delimitation. The availability of ‘proactive’ powers – powers that allow the president to establish a new status quo (Mainwaring et al. 1997: 463-465), such as appointative powers as well as powers to legislate and to change constitution – at the president’s disposal allows the country’s executives to shape the system to their liking as well as to that of their clans.
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