

Early Stage of Transition in Central Asian Countries: The Impact of Socio-Cultural Factors

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ABSTRACT

This article considers the features of the processes of political transformation during the formation of the foundations of national statehood in the countries of Central Asia. In particular, the article describes the nature of complex internal processes in the states of the region, the influence of sociocultural factors on them, and issues of sustainable development.

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Introduction

The general processes characteristic of the transition period in the countries of Central Asia began to develop under the significant influence of the historically established traditions of statehood.

In almost all the states of the region, priority was given to the development of secular and democratic nation building. Strong governance methods have paid off to some extent in terms of ensuring internal political stability.

A strong state administration served to maintain the status quo in solving long-standing complex issues in the region, as well as to eliminate problems and threats from neighboring countries. However, this method of management did not give the expected result in solving the internal problems of most of the states of the Central Asia.

Discussion And Results

Russian scientist D. Malysheva noted the following as important problems to be solved in the state building in the Central Asian region:

- the weakness of state institutions and the lack of reliable mechanisms for the peaceful transfer of power to the next generation;

- economic dependence on one or two export goods;
- infrastructure weakness; low level of population in many regions;
- problems in the field of education, employment and health;
- high unemployment rate of the young and rapidly growing population, etc.[1]

The early period of the transition period had few characteristics in each of the Central Asian countries.

Below we try to consider them by state.

As a feature of Uzbekistan's internal development, it can be noted that in the transition period, strong state traditions typical of Eastern countries were followed in the field of public administration. In particular, on the basis of the principle "From a strong state to a strong society", the country started to strengthen the position of state institutions in the society. There were enough reasons for this.

As Uzbek specialist Sh. Goyibnazarov noted, at the beginning of the 1990s, the invasion actions carried out openly and secretly by extremist groups were aimed at overthrowing the existing constitutional system in the country, weakening the foundations of power, turning it back from the chosen path of development, and establishing an "Emirate" based on extremist ideas. [2]

Therefore, in the difficult transition period, the state as the main reformer and the main institution stabilizing social and political processes in Uzbekistan had to create the necessary conditions for the development of the country. After all, it is known from world practice that only if the state is strong, it will be able to protect the interests of society, regulate social relations and ensure national unity.

During the transition period, the general state of the political system in Kazakhstan was determined by patron-client relations (*patron-client relations* - various power resources, service hierarchy (patron - high position, client - low position) and voluntary, is a system of stable relations - *author's note*) [3]. Political processes took place in the form of competition for power among representatives of three historically formed sub-ethnic groups of the Kazakh people: "Senior zhuz" (Southern and South-Eastern Kazakhstan), "Middle zhuz" (Northern, Central and Eastern Kazakhstan), "Junior zhuz" (Western Kazakhstan).

Currently, 35 percent of the population of Kazakh nationality is a representative of the "Senior zhuz" (11 clans), 40 percent of the "Middle zhuz" (7 clans), and 25 percent of the "Junior zhuz" (3 clans). [4]

The dominant position of the "Middle zhuz" among the Kazakh elites is noted as a strategy for maintaining the internal balance of the Kazakh society. Since most of the oil and gas fields are located in the East of the country, representatives of the "Junior zhuz" have the characteristic of striving for autonomy. It is known that for a long time the ethno-social support of the First President of Kazakhstan N. Nazarbayev was formed by the representatives of the "Middle zhuz" and partially the "Junior zhuz". [5]

At the same time, a lot of attention was paid to maintaining a balance in the relationship with the "Senior zhuz". Because the majority of the central bureaucracy of the republic was made up of representatives of this zhuz. [6] According to experts, on December 10, 1997, the capital was moved from Almaty, the center of the "Senior zhuz", to Astana, to the north, in order to ensure internal ethno-political balance.

The main factor of the stability of the state and society in Kazakhstan is the internal harmony and unity of the political elites. The only political way to ensure stability in the country is to balance the interests of all national, economic and political groups. [6]

Unlike other republics of the region, the political processes in the transition period in Kyrgyzstan are complicated by the difficulty of achieving the form of a political system that satisfies all political forces in society equally, periodic recurrence of political crises in the form of "color revolutions" ("Tulip Revolution", "Rose Revolution"), lack of balance in the interests of political forces, frequent changes in the forms of government administration, the high level of influence of external forces on the political situation in the country, the socio-cultural, territorial division of the country into two (divided into "North" and "South"). Therefore, in the course of the struggle for power, the constant competition between the parliament and the president has been manifested in efforts to change the form of government of the country to either parliamentary, presidential or mixed form.

In general, in Kyrgyz society, the mechanism of effective implementation of mutual restraint and balance of interests is not fully formed, which is the main factor of disputes and political crises between branches of power. Kyrgyzstan's limited economic opportunities will further slowdown the formation of this system.

According to some experts, the situation is complicated by the fact that there is no single legitimate decision-making center in the republic, and the division of the Kyrgyz ethnic group into northern and southern branches, which differ in terms of their level of settlement and adherence to Islamic values. [7]

The smallest country of Central Asia in terms of territory, mainly consisting of mountainous regions – Tajikistan is divided into four relatively independent regions separated by mountain ranges - the northern region (Khojand, Sogd region), the central region (Dushanbe), southern region (Kulob, Khatlon region), Pamir region (the Badakhshan Mountainous Autonomous Region, is an autonomous region in eastern Tajikistan, in the Pamir Mountains). The majority of the population of the republic believes in the Sunni school of Islam, and the Pamirs believe in the Ismaili branch of the Shia school. These factors are of particular importance in the analysis of political processes in the country.

It should be said that the civil war that lasted from 1991 to 1997 and the transition period that took many losses indicate that the process of forming a national state in Tajikistan was very complicated. After the end of the civil war and the reconciliation of the opposing parties, Tajik statehood was established on a new basis.

During this period, the influence of supporters of the radical Islamic movement on the political processes related to the formation of national statehood in Tajikistan became strong. It was Tajikistan that became the only republic of Central Asia to be engulfed in a devastating civil war. Conflicting secular and theocratic tendencies of the development of statehood were manifested in the political processes.

Constitutional reforms in Tajikistan focused mainly on post-civil war processes and served as a mechanism to resolve disputes regarding the restoration of secular statehood, the formation of a new parliament, and holding elections for the president, parliament, and local councils.

In the transition period in Turkmenistan, the process of formation of a new national state went rather quickly and smoothly. According to the official information of Turkmenistan, the period from 1991 to 2007 (presidential period of S. Niyazov – *author's note*) is a transitional period in which the foundations of national statehood and economic model were formed. In 1995, UN General Assembly Resolution No. 50/80 "On Permanent Neutrality of Turkmenistan" was adopted. This is an event of historical significance as the country's legal status was recognized at the international level. [8]

Turkmenistan, the strict requirements for observance of national traditions and mythological evaluations of historical events among the population of the country have led to an increase in the paternalistic mood of the population in social and political life. The weak attitude of the majority of the population to political processes is largely due to this.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we can say that during the transition period in the countries of Central Asia there were very contradictory processes that were associated with the formation of national statehood.

In the post-Soviet period, the process of establishing itself as a stable, modern sovereign democratic state free from internal and external destructive threats and influences (such as external aggression, sub-ethnic conflicts, social and political protest movements, environmental and natural disasters, terrorism and religious extremism, drug trafficking, etc.) in most Central Asian republics has not been completed.

During this period, political processes were carried out consistently in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, while in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan it was accompanied by political crises. In Turkmenistan, the ex-Soviet management method was mixed with the values and ethno-social characteristics of the Turkmen people. This created a unique national management model.

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