Anja Mihr   *Editor*

Transformation and Development

Studies in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Member States

OSCE ACADEMY in Bishkek

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Editor
Anja Mihr
OSCE Academy
Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan

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Chapter 1
Introduction to the First Edition

Anja Mihr and Alexander Wolters

This first edition of the OSCE Academy compilation series on *Transformation and Development in the OSCE Region* is dedicated to looking at the political, economic and regional transformation processes that are shaped by international and regional policies, social movements as well as influenced by the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and that range from North America to Europe, from Central Asia to China. These policies and developments and the so-called New Silk Road between China and Europe, located between the BRICS countries Russia in the North and India in the South, cuts through the OSCE Region and is challenging the post-Soviet countries in several different ways. Many OSCE member states face economic difficulties, high levels of corruption, intransparent political processes and serious flaws of democracy. Not but a few depend largely on natural resources economy, suffer from weak formal institutions and defective democratic structures, or are still in the early consolidation process of their political regimes. Some countries in the region have for these and other reasons turned back to extreme authoritarian rulership with serious human rights violations, while others have opened up and allowed for political plurality, indicating that they would no longer take directions from any hegemonic powers in the region.

The political and economic pressure from the various poles of the OSCE region, such as North America, Russia, the European Union and from outside the region, from China and India, has influenced the dramatic transformations over the past decade within the region. Next to the varieties of authoritarianism—countries neither being full autocracies or consolidated democracies—, the shortcomings and inconsistency in aiming for good governance regimes, have led to massive brain drain and migration, to unbalanced economic developments and new social cleavages and to interregional rivalries with the emergence of corresponding, new security

A. Mihr (✉) · A. Wolters
OSCE Academy, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan
e-mail: a.mihr@osce-academy.net

A. Wolters
e-mail: a.wolters@osce-academy.net

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threats. Inside the OSCE, these must be faced bridging the widening gap between different levels of democracy between the Western OSCE region and the Eastern, an imbalance that is closely intertwined with economic development and lack of social mobility and equal opportunities in the region.

One reason for the delay in political (democratic) transformations in Central Asia, for example, as Christian Haerpfer and Kseniya Kizilova point out in this volume, has to do with the absence of non-communist new elites during the 1990s. The political regime change across the former Soviet empire was inherited, rather than fought for, in 1991. There was little to no bottom-up approach, and instead a severe lack of a civil society movement that was ready to take a lead, in part or fully, in the democratization process. The results of this rather imposed and half-hearted transition process, three decades later, can be seen in the weak and donor-depended civil society structures, as Ashot Aleksanyan illustrates in his chapter. This absence of alternative political and economic personnel facilitated the unbroken continuity of the old Soviet cadre who took over the top positions as presidents and prime ministers in the new political systems, without being challenged by new alternative and democratic elites, until now. But this is slowly changing. Some of the reasons outlined in this compilation for the lack of successful democratization were the structural weakness of the rule of lass and the high level of corruption inside the legal system, the legislative system or the parliaments and the media system and instead the strengthening of the structural dominance of the executive system of the presidency and central government since 1991.

One of the triggering factors for further change in the OSCE region is China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), that is pushing these countries and societies to transform—not only in Eurasia but also in Western Europe, if they want to be taken seriously as political and economic partners in this 'New Great Game' as some call it, or new geopolitics as do others, between Europe, Russia, China and India. Davron Ishnazarov illustrates some of the objectives of the BRI and the possible consequences this can have for all the countries in the OSCE region that are directly involved or indirectly penetrated by it. One of the possible outcomes is long-lasting interstate and interregional rivalries, such as those analyzed in Mihail Paduraru and Claudia Iohana-Voicu's contribution to resulting security dilemmas that apply to the whole OSCE region and Central Asia in particular. If the Eurasian region is to be considered an unstructured regional formation and a multilayered security complex, questions of coordination between countries and the factual lack thereof move to the center of the discussion, carrying further implications for the economic and political developments in the wider region. Such lack of coordination and cooperation weakens the region's resistance against external powers such as China, even Russia and India as well as terrorism and other threats including the regional capacities to meet the manifold challenges posed by the BRI. Similar processes and developments, defunct coordination and development traps can be seen in other parts of the OSCE region, suggesting further comparison. What, for example, the situation in and the political developments of the Western Balkans, and the recent political shifts in one of Central Asia's powerhouses, Kazakhstan, have in common, is found in the case

studies that Raffaele Mastrorocco and Nygmet Ibadildin and Dinara Pisareva provide. Their examples show that civil society has found somewhat innovative avenues to shape political transformation processes even in conflict-torn and authoritarian societies. It can be highlighted throughout all articles that one generation after the dramatic regime changes in Eurasia and Western Balkans, social movements and civil society is slowly growing and asking for change which is mostly expressed by the desire to fight corruption and nepotism on all levels. These dynamics continue, despite the re-emergence of traditional, autocratic and informal decision-making processes on all levels in many OSCE member states, as Arszuu Sheranova describes in her case study. The rise of new religious actors as well as the so-called or perceived re-traditionalization of many aspects of daily lives, such as the role of women, and the widespread practice of illicit economies and pervasive corruption, which are not new to the region, but nevertheless stronger in Central and Eastern Europe than in Western Europe, also call for a stronger role of civil society and external economic powers and investments which set more transparent and accountable standards. This edition is the first of more to come that will investigate the recent political, economic, security and societal developments beyond the standard reports of security emergencies, annexations, trafficking, migration and the rise of nationalism. It thus aims to do both, revitalize the study of larger processes of change in the wider region of Eurasia and to widen the scope and ask for a comparison of trends across the whole of the OSCE area.

Bishkek, February 2020

Part I
Transformation and Development

Chapter 2
Values and Transformation in Central Asia

Christian W. Haerpfer and Kseniya Kizilova

2.1 Introduction

The rapid growth of the East- and South-Asian economies, foremost China, the shift in the geopolitical balance of powers between East and West, and the actualization of the Silk Road partnership agenda have brought the former five "stan" post-Soviet republics from the periphery of the post-Communist world into the very center of a vividly developing Asian continent. While all former Soviet republics proclaimed their independence simultaneously in 1991 and announced their departure from the authoritarian communist political system, Central Asian countries belong to the camp of a "delayed" democratization—as compared to their European "comrades." As the post-communist world's surge of new democratic states produced a massive and compact "fourth wave" of democratization (McFaul 2002), pro-democratic political change in Central Asia remains in a "proto-stage," implicit and inconsistent.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, all former Soviet republics not only joined the group of transitional countries and prospective and potential democracies, but

C. W. Haerpfer
UAE University, Al Ain, UAE
e-mail: c.w.haerpfer@uaeu.ac.ae

University of Vienna, Vienna, Austria

C. W. Haerpfer · K. Kizilova (✉)
The World Values Survey Association, Stockholm, Sweden
e-mail: ksenniya.kizilova@gmail.com

C. W. Haerpfer
Eurasia Barometer, Vienna, Austria

K. Kizilova
V.N. Karazin, Kharkiv National University, Kharkiv, Ukraine

Institute for Comparative Survey Research, Vienna, Austria

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also became an object of an increased research interest for social scientists, political scientists, and academic survey researchers. During the Soviet era, the country remained mostly closed for foreign scholars, and those public opinion polls on political values and attitudes in all USSR member-states have been subject to heavy censorship from both the central government in Moscow and local rulers. After 1991, the situation started slowly to change. The impact of the Communist regime on the political culture and political values of the populations of newly independent states, social-psychological, and behavioral patterns of adaptation to the new political, economic and social order, dynamics of national state-building in countries with no prior experience as independent states (within their current borders), change of traditional values under the influence of globalization to which the new states have now been exposed—all these topics made Central Asian societies an object of exceptional scientific and research interest for both foreign and local scholars. The two research programs conducted under the leadership of the authors of this article are the World Values Survey (WVS)[1] and Eurasia Barometer (EAB).[2]

While all Central Asian countries have well-established survey research agencies and there are survey research programs (e.g., Central Asia Barometer), who study the opinion of the population in all five former Soviet Central Asian republics, censorship over the scope and nature of questions related to politics, and citizens' attitudes toward politics remain under strong state control and until recently have been under heavy censorship in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan. In addition to political censorship (which in varying degrees is typical for all autocratic countries), all Central Asian societies remain predominantly Muslim, and thus the acceptable scope of questions on religious and ethical issues is also affected. These limitations are particularly relevant when studying and comparing values inside Central Asia and beyond. The most advanced and open countries for foreign research efforts remain Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. Tajikistan and Uzbekistan have softened

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[1] World Values Survey is the world's largest social survey research program studying people's values and beliefs worldwide. WVS research program studies a broad scope of topics, including social, political, economic, religious, family, etc., values and norms. Data is available in free access at the WVS Web site (http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/). The WVS is operating since 1981, though the implementation of surveys in post-Soviet Europe became possible in 1990s only and in 2000s countries of Central Asia has joined the WVS as well. The survey has been completed in Kyrgyzstan in 2004 and 2011, in Kazakhstan in 2011 and 2018, and in Uzbekistan in 2018. In 2018, the survey will be repeated once again in Kyrgyzstan and will involve—for the first time ever—Tajikistan. Turkmenistan remains the only country where implementation of the WVS is not possible.

[2] A study on social and political transformations the "Eurasia Barometer" (http://office.eurasiabarometer.org/) conducted in the post-Soviet region since the late 1990s covers countries of post-Communist central and Eastern Europe and Southern Caucasus. In Central Asia, they study involved Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. Data on political moods and participation of citizens of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan were collected in 2000 and 2010. Survey findings from the two time-points represent public assessments of the political transformation process 10 and 20 years after the post-Soviet transition was initiated. Implementation of Eurasia Barometer program in other Central Asian countries was not possible due to political limitations. Data for the two countries is insufficient to estimate the overall situation in the region but gives a better understanding on how popular support for democracy, autocracy, and confidence in public institutions have been changing in the region during the post-Soviet transition.

their censorship over political studies during the last few years, while Turkmenistan remains the only country where inquiring about citizen's political values and attitudes remains almost impossible. As we will see later, the history of survey research in this region strongly corresponds with the dynamics of democratization (or further *autocratization*) of Central Asian countries.

From the mid-nineteenth century until the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the territory of Central Asia constituted first a part of the Russian Empire and later the USSR. As separate administrative units, the Kazakh SSR, Kyrgyz SSR, Tajik SSR, Uzbek SSR, and Turkmen SSR—the predecessors of the modern independent Central Asian states—were founded via the administrative decrees of the central Soviet government as a part of the policy of national delimitation in the 1920s and in 1930s. This statehood, which was planted from above in those Central Asian Soviet republics, became the source of numerous inter-ethnic cleavages and territorial claims in the region after independence. Above-planted statehood is also an important factor to consider in the analysis of the paths of post-Soviet transition and potential causes of democratization failures in this part of the world (Haerpfer and Kizilova 2018b).

In 1991, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union was pushed forward by the political leaders of Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine, the leadership of the new Central Asian states were presented with the challenges of nation formation and state- and peace-building, as well as the establishment of an autonomous, legitimate system of governance in societies which had no prior experience as independent states (Haerpfer 2002). In all Central Asian countries, political elites lacked the benefit of the political legitimacy that their "comrades" in European former Soviet republics had gained from their struggle for national independence. While in Russia, Ukraine, Georgia, and the Baltics, the leaders of anti-Soviet pro-independence movements have been seen as the natural leaders of the new independent states (and have been elected as the first presidents of the new republics), in Central Asia, for the old political elite, gaining the internal legitimacy in the new political setting became the foremost challenge (Matveeva 1999).

2.2 Post-Soviet Transition

Post-Soviet transformations should be considered as a complex process, which involve all spheres of the public, as well as the private life, of citizens (Haerpfer and Kizilova 2014a). The specific characteristics of post-Soviet political and economic change in comparison with other forms of democratization is that we are confronted with a trifold transformation: a political revolution from a communist one-party authoritarian state to a multi-party democratic system; an economic revolution from a centrally planned command economy to a free capitalist market economy; and finally, a social revolution from a communist and so-called classless society with a small political and administrative upper class (*nomenklatura*), to a modern and open society with a broad middle class. Essential transformations were also to be

made in relation to civil society: the collapse of the Soviet Union made the way free for voluntary associations, the freedom of speech, demonstrations, and other civil liberties and freedoms (Haerpfer and Kizilova 2018a).

The first free parliamentary elections—an important sign of the beginning of a democratic transition—took place in all countries in 1990, before the USSR was legally dissolved and ceased to exist. It is remarkable that in the countries which have since become electoral autocracies or consolidated autocracies—Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan—elections did not take place immediately and were postponed until several years after the end of the USSR. The timing and character of the first elections to be held in the country can be considered here as an important marker of the state of the polity and the civic consciousness of the population and an important precondition for the choice of a pro-democratic (or alternative) path of future political development (Haerpfer and Kizilova 2018b). Initially, the majority of political leaders represented a continuation of the previous Communist "party of power," which was attractive to the population because of its perceived ability to preserve the inter-ethnic and inter-tribal equilibrium and the stability and peace in multi-ethnic fragmented society, where clan and tribal affiliations and sub-ethnic identities remained very strong. Political opposition that emerged in the late 1980s and early 1990s, represented primarily by nationalist and Islamic-democratic movements with their sometimes radical and extremist statements, was viewed as a dangerous alternative to the old Soviet political elite.

The universal type of political system that emerged in Central Asia is a presidential republic with an extensive scope of power concentrated in the hands of the executive branch. Democratic de-jure, de facto these political systems comprise elements of authoritarian rule. Although the separation of powers into three branches (executive, legislative, and judicial) is formally present in all five Central Asian republics (which serves the purposes of establishing formal external legitimacy), legislative, and judicial institutions are heavily dependent and controlled by the executive bodies (Laumulin 2016). The significant empowerment of the president reflects the historical traditionalism in (patriarchal) Central Asian societies, where the head of state is perceived as the "father" of the nation. Differences between the five countries affect the scope of authority left for the legislative branch. In Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan national parliaments are (semi-)independent, but in other countries of Central Asia the power of the president is practically unlimited (Malysheva 2018). In addition to the hypertrophied role of the executive branch, political elites in Central Asia have merged with the business structures, giving them additional means of control over the economy, wealth, and natural resources. Another feature of post-Soviet politics—which is particularly relevant for Central Asia and which is both the legacy of the Soviet political system and the earlier monarchical period in the history in this region—is the malfunction of the democratic mechanism of power transfer and rotation of elites: in Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, the same political leaders who were newly elected into the president's office in the 1990s or who had held their position since the time of the USSR, remained in power for ten or more years, sometimes until their death. The absence of a clear mechanism of election of the Soviet leader

in the past and the lack of related democratic practices and experiences—both by the population and the political elite—turned the elections into a primarily confirmatory procedure in this region.

A transition toward the democratic multi-party system was initiated in most former Soviet Republics, including those in Central Asia, after the dissolution of the USSR. Some movements toward democracy have been made in all countries with the adoption of new constitutions, the creation of parliaments and political parties, and the holding of elections in all Central Asian countries. Consequently, the initial years following independence witnessed some progress and a shift away from the Soviet political system. However, this trend later weakened and most states in Central Asia moved to a more authoritarian system. In Kazakhstan, there were very modest attempts at democratization between 1992 and 1998. After Nursultan Nazarbayev, the Communist leader of Kazakhstan, became the first President of independent Kazakhstan, a number of reforms were introduced, aimed at transforming the economy into a free market one and to liberalize trade. While Nazarbayev was quite successful in re-building, Kazakhstan's economy (until the recent economic decline caused by the sharp drop in both oil prices and the Kazakh *Tenge*), an actual full democratic transition of the political system has never occurred and instead the consolidation of power and wealth around the "ruling family" took place. "Freedom House" defined Kazakhstan as a "not free" society (scoring "6" in 2018 with "7" being the lowest possible score). For the 2019 Presidential elections, where Kazakhstan elected their second new president for the first time since 1991, the OSCE concluded that "significant irregularities were observed on election day meant that an honest count could not be guaranteed" (OSCE 2019). This indicates a lack of democratic practices and weakness of those few that have been established. Nevertheless, former President Nazarbayev in his 2017 book "Era of Independence" states that Kazakhstan is a "democratic, secular, law-based state." In 2017, the President signed the Constitutional law on the redistribution of power between the branches of governance and the increase of the role of the executive brunch (the Parliament). The actual political change associated with the greater role and independence of the Parliament and whether this will lead to the establishment of the rule of law and smooth mechanism of democratic power transfer is yet to be seen.

In Tajikistan, the post-Soviet transition started with a bloody civil war, which lasted from 1992 to 1997 and was linked with the confrontation between the old Soviet elite and the opposition Islamic-democratic and nationalist parties. The war led to over 100,000 deaths and over 1.2 million refugees and internally displaced persons. Emomali Rahmon, elected as President in 1994, agreed a ceasefire in 1997, and has remained President of the country ever since. The civil war, a lack of natural resources and the economic decline of the 1990s resulted in political instability and somewhat delayed both the political transformation and the typical—for the region—consolidation of executive power, which became explicit in the late 2000s. The 2016 referendum, which was passed in Tajikistan, introduced further amendments into the Constitution, with the most significant of them referring to the removal of restrictions on the number of terms for the presidency, which would allow President Rahmon to be re-elected again in the next Presidential elections planned for 2020. For the

most recent 2013 presidential elections, an ODIHR/OSCE international observation mission concluded that "the election in Tajikistan took place peacefully, but restrictive candidate registration requirements resulted in a lack of genuine choice and meaningful pluralism" (OSCE 2013). Similar to other autocratic post-Soviet leaders, Rahmon introduced censorship and the media now has no freedom in the country, while opposition leaders are heavily prosecuted. Implementation of all governmental policies was made while exploiting the fears of the population about the possibility of resuming the civil military confrontation, and thus the consolidation of autocracy received no opposition from the population. While Tajikistan has made efforts to improve its economy, the country remains highly dependent on Russia, which is the main receiving country for labor migration from Tajikistan.

In Turkmenistan, which is labeled as the most authoritarian and closed political regime in the region, the leader of the Turkmen Communist Party, Saparmurat Niyazov, was elected as the President in 1992 after proclaiming Turkmenistan's independence in 1991. It is remarkable that Niyazov was the only candidate for the President's post in 1991 and got 99.5% of votes. Niyazov later assumed the title "Turkmenbashi" (meaning "Father of the Turkmen"). All opposition parties were banned, and the government obtained full control over the media and other information channels. Niyazov also introduced the politics of neutrality, causing total international isolation of Turkmenistan and preventing the country from entering any international organization. After Niyazov's death in 2006, his Vice-President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow was elected as the next (and current) President of Turkmenistan. Berdimuhamedow has undertaken small steps toward liberalization, initiating healthcare, pension system, and education reforms, and easing travel permit regulations for citizens. The cult of personality, which was developed under the previous president, was abolished. At the same time, Berdimuhamedow clearly showed that Western-style democracy was not a goal for Turkmenistan, and there was no substantial change to the autocratic, exclusive, monopoly power assumed by the President. Twenty-nine years after the fall of the Soviet Union, Turkmenistan remains one of the most authoritarian and closed regimes in the world.

Islam Karimov, the former leader of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan, became President after the declaration of independence in 1991. He announced the country's course toward becoming a free market economy and a secular democracy. In reality, the pro-democratic transition was never realized, having been prevented by the lack of democratic governance experience, old economic ties, and imbalances of the economic system, as well as the absence of democratic values and norms among both the political elite and the population. Shortly after independence, from 1992 to 1993, there were very modest attempts at introducing some minimalist form of democracy in Uzbekistan. However, those attempts were aborted very quickly and there was no democratization process in the country until the death of Karimov in 2016. Student protests of 1992 in Tashkent, as well as any further expressions of civil activities, were suppressed, meeting with a strong and brutal autocratic response. The newly elected President Shavkat Mirziyoyev had been Prime Minister under Karimov and was hence considered his successor. The institute of presidency in Uzbekistan—similar to other autocratic post-Soviet countries—is therefore reproduced not via the

democratic procedure of free and fair elections, but via nomination of the successor by the President from his close circle. After his inauguration, president Mirziyoyev initiated economic reforms aimed at the reduction of the isolationism of the Uzbek economy. Hence, Uzbekistan, after being "frozen" for over two decades in its economic and political internal and external development, obtained a new chance to change the vector of its development toward liberalization; though, it is too early yet to speak of any substantial progress (Haerpfer and Kizilova 2018b).

The only former Soviet Republic in Central Asia to attain the status of a democracy is Kyrgyzstan. Democratization in Kyrgyzstan began in the turbulent times of 1990/91, when Askar Akayev, the newly elected pro-democratic President, introduced new democratic institutions and replaced the Soviet *nomenklatura* with younger politicians. In the first years of democratization, comprehensive market reforms including liberalization of prices and foreign trade, privatization, and the freedoms of speech, religion, and participation were introduced (although these were slow to deliver economic outputs). Democratization in Kyrgyzstan was not a linear process and there were several backslides between 1995 and 2012. Over time, President Akayev became more authoritarian in his decision-making, causing significant dissatisfaction among the population. However, unlike other Central Asian states, Kyrgyzstan did not consolidate into a full autocracy. As a result of the so-called Tulip Revolution, which took place in the spring of 2005, the president was forced to resign and flee to Russia. After the revolution, Kyrgyzstan experienced several years of political struggle and civil unrest when protestors blamed the government for failing to eradicate poverty and corruption. During the 2009 elections, the new president, Bakiyev, was accused of falsifying the election results and was forced to flee to Belarus. The next president, Almazbek Atambayev, elected in 2011, had—despite his pro-Russian alignment—undertaken significant steps to improve the foreign trade of Kyrgyzstan and to obtain greater energy independence for his country. Despite recurring ethnic strife in recent years, democratization in Kyrgyzstan has not yet come to a halt. Kyrgyzstan remains the only country in Central Asia which introduced a parliamentary republic as the form of governance. Kyrgyzstan is also the only country in the region recognized as "partly free" by "Freedom House" (the other four countries are classified as "not free"). The Tulip Revolution signaled the beginning of a new wave of democratization, which led to a steady and continuous increase of democratic rule. The Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan had a similar historical function to the Rose Revolution in Georgia and the Orange Revolution in Ukraine: To keep the process of democratization in those new independent states alive and to prevent those countries from sliding into autocracy. The former Soviet Republics of Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan form the group of emerging democracies which have the structures and the potential to develop over time into full democracies like Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, the three Baltic states being earlier a part of the USSR and now holding membership in the European Union (Haerpfer and Kizilova 2018b).

2.3   Measuring Political Transformation

Most Western studies on political transformation tend to conclude that the optimal path of political change is described by the process of democratization that is from an autocratic, totalitarian Soviet Republic toward a "consolidated democracy" (Haerpfer and Kizilova 2018a). At the same time, local scholars and scholars from other post-Soviet countries (e.g., Russia) believe that the period of post-Soviet transition in the region is already complete and as a result the "emergence of albeit authoritarian, but generally consolidated new types of political regimes that form sovereign statehood and an independent foreign policy strategy" took place (Malysheva 2018). Others claim that due to objective reasons and the historical legacy, the democratization process in Central Asia belongs to the so-called Asian model, when the leadership symbolizes stability and is the source of internal and external policies (Kukeyeva and Shkapyak 2013). Others claim that political regimes in Central Asia do not "move along Tamerlane's paths," but they regress beyond the Soviet political system, without preserving its social benefits (Laumulin 2016). While we acknowledge the existence of other perspectives, in our further analysis, we use indexes of political change which define political change in the categories of "democracy" and "autocracy" as the side points of the scale. The process of political transformation can be measured by a variety of empirical indicators and indices. To analyze the progress of democratization in post-Soviet Central Asia at the macro-level of a political system, we will consider the Polity score from the Polity IV project at the Center for Systemic Peace in Vienna (VA, USA). The macro-level index is based on expert evaluations and is an aggregated measure of the elements of democratic and non-democratic regimes. The scale ranges from -10 to $+10$, with -10 to -6 corresponding to autocracies, -5 to 5 corresponding to anocracies, and 6–10 to democracies. The index, therefore, allows for tracking the dynamics of democratization processes at the macro-level of political systems and to categorize the studied political systems into three broad groups: democracies, autocracies, and hybrid regimes. For the countries of Central Asia, polity scores are available starting from 1991 when the five post-Soviet "stans" became independent republics and thus tracking their progress in political transition became possible.

Polity scores indicate significant variation in the paths, vectors, and dynamics of political transformations in the five countries (Fig. 2.1). The only country in the region with the clear positive dynamics of pro-democratic political change is Kyrgyzstan, which was categorized as a hybrid regime at the beginning of the transition and became a "democracy" after 2012. The democratization path in Kyrgyzstan features several recessions. However, the overall trend is clearly progressive. The first substantial breakthrough took place in 2005, when citizens' protests against the corruption and authoritarianism of President Akayev and his family and supporters turned into the "Tulip Revolution," which prevented further democratic backsliding and turned the political regime toward democratic liberties, a stronger role for the parliament and a greater accountability for political institutions. The pro-democratic gains of the Tulip Revolution have dwindled in the period 2005–2010 when the new
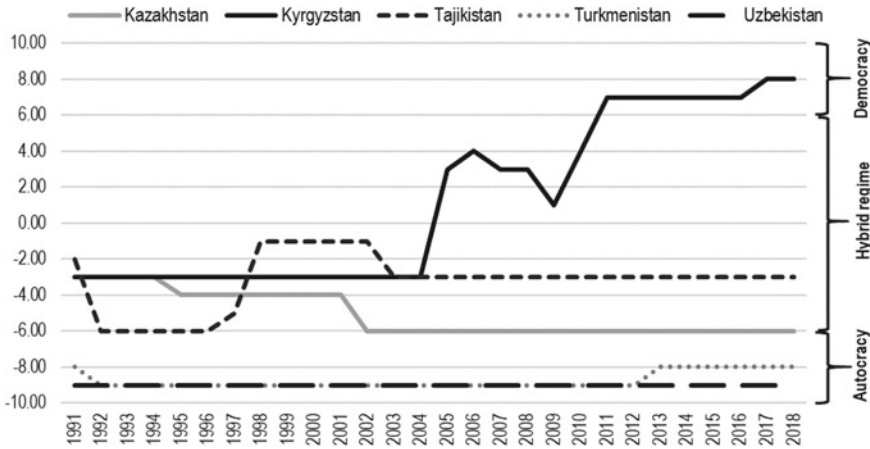
Fig. 2.1 Political regimes transformation in Central Asia. *Source* Polity research project (Polity IV data-set; http://www.systemicpeace.org/polityproject.html)

government failed to meet the citizens' expectations and to deliver improvements in well-being, and a reduction of poverty and corruption, which in turn led to another round of political struggle and civil unrest. The lowest point on the democratization trajectory after the revolution was reached by Kyrgyzstan in 2009, when President Bakiyev was accused of falsifying the elections results. Kyrgyzstan returned to the democratization path with the new elections in 2011 and since then shows slow but positive dynamics. Inter-ethnic and inter-tribal cleavages are among the factors which prevent the political elite of the country to elaborate a solid and coherent democratization policy.

Compared to Kyrgyzstan, other Central Asian countries show much less dynamics in the change of their political regimes. Some uncertain positive dynamics could be observed in Tajikistan, where the country shifted from primarily autocratic rule in the 1990s to a hybrid regime—a regime combining elements of both autocracy and democracy—in the 2000s. The civil war caused a decline in the pro-democratic changes and an emergence of pro-democratic institutions in 1992–1997 with Tajikistan backsliding into autocracy for this period of time. A minor recovery of the regime in 1998–1999 was not sustainable or progressive and Tajikistan remains in the group of "hybrid regimes" or anocracies—political regimes that combine elements of both democratic and autocratic political systems. The smallest political change is observed in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, as both countries remained very high on the autocratic score through the whole period of their independence. Negative dynamics could be traced in Kazakhstan where the country moved from a hybrid political system in the 1990s to a primarily authoritarian state in the 2000s. Political transformations in Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan can, therefore, be identified as the consolidation of autocracy—a form of government in which supreme and absolute power is utilized by a single person (or a group of people, often including the family members, close friends, and supporters of the political

leader) and power transfer does not occur through contested elections. Autocratic regimes feature such authoritarian elements as strong central power, limited political freedoms, restricted political pluralism, prosecuted or controlled opposition, low political mobilization of the population, and low political representation of minorities (Haerpfer and Kizilova 2014c).

Another powerful database that allows tracking the dynamics of political transition at the macro-level of political systems in the region back to 1990s is the "Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) project" (see Fig. 2.2). Similar to Polity IV, also based on expert evaluations, V-Dem democracy scores are available for all five Central Asian states at the macro-level of political regimes, starting from 1991. Expert scores for regime transformation are particularly valuable for the region in conditions when studying the public opinion of the population on important political issues is still quite challenging and complicated by the strict internal censorship and political restrictions on free academic survey research. "V-Dem Index" measures the countries' progress toward the achievement of ideal democratic principles of egalitarianism and liberalism, respect for human rights, free and fair elections, active participation of citizens in the political process, and common good as the motivation of political deliberations in the society. The aggregated democracy index which comprises all five of these components serves as the comprehensive measure of the transformation of political systems at the macro-level of comparative analysis.

Trajectories of political transformation, when measured by the aggregated macro-level democracy index based on the V-Dem data, are very similar to the patterns obtained from the Polity IV macro-level democracy measures. Democratization in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan is deficient; the U-shape suggests that a consolidation of authoritarian rule took place during 1991–2000. The recent minor and modest liberalization in Uzbekistan, which is noted by experts in 2016–2018, can be either
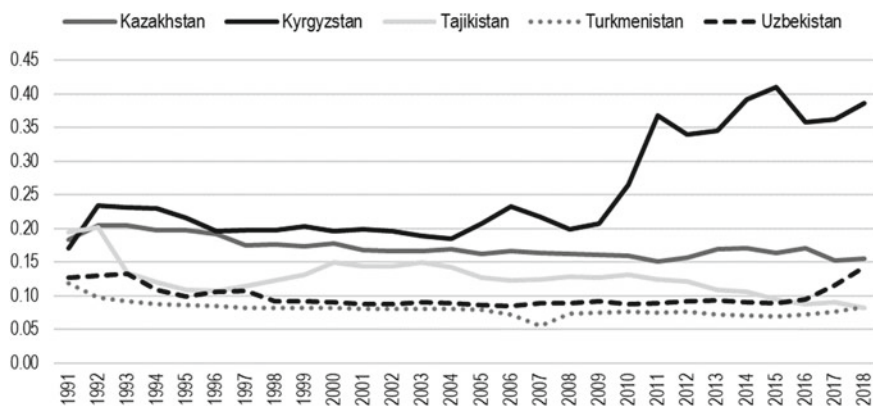
Fig. 2.2 V-Dem Aggregated Democracy Index in Central Asia. *Source* Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) research project (www.v-dem.net). Index varies from 0 to 1 and represents an average score of the electoral, liberal, participatory, deliberative, and egalitarian democracy indexes
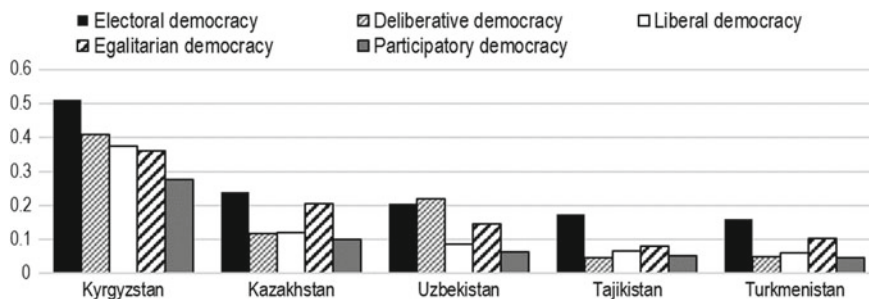
Fig. 2.3 V-Dem Democracy Indexes in Central Asia (2018). *Source* Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) research project (www.v-dem.net). Indexes vary from 0 to 1

attributed to a short-term revival or mark the beginning of a long-term democratization trend. Recently, emerged elements of liberalization are too weak yet to serve an evidence of a steady democratization in the foreseeable future. Thus, for instance, a minor liberalization was observed in Tajikistan in 1998–2002, after the end of the civil war. However, this trend was not sustained, and the short-term revival was substituted by autocratic consolidation with the country reaching, in 2018, its lowest democracy score since the political transformation commenced in 1991. Another example of slow but steady consolidation of autocracy is observed in Kazakhstan. All four countries have higher scores for the electoral democracy as the component of the index, but liberal and participatory democracy components remain at their lowest (Fig. 2.3).

2.4 Identity and National Pride in Central Asia

In the second part of the article, we will use the micro-level data from the World Values Survey and Eurasia Barometer research programs to examine the key characteristics of the value systems of the Central Asian public at the micro-level of citizens and explore the associational links between the paths and vectors of the political transformation process and the values of citizens in a given society (Haerpfer and Kizilova 2016d, 2017). The first difficult task for the post-Soviet states both in Europe and Asia was to create a new political community by consolidating the process of nation-building. The dissolution of the Soviet Union evaporated the supra-national Soviet identity that to a large extent served as backbone of the social and political sustainability of the national Soviet republics. After the Soviet identity lost its relevance in 1991, the old-new political elites in independent Central Asian states have been challenged with the necessity of nation-building, state-building, and filling the political vacuum that emerged after the dissolution of the central government in Moscow, while searching for sources of legitimacy of their rule within the new political agenda of independence. This process of state- and nation-building included the rewriting

of a national history by post-communist historians, the creation of national symbols, and new narratives. While at the beginning of post-Soviet transition, the leadership practiced the civic concept of the nation (and all residents of the new independent states were offered citizenship), substantial nationalizing measures, and at the same time suppression of ethnic identity and political rights of the minorities have been the main tools for the creation of coherent national community. This resulted in the prevailing policy of suppression of identities and political rights of ethnic minorities aimed at avoiding segregation, separatist movements, and political opposition undermining the new government. Nationalist policy has eroded liberal democratic values, foremost pluralism, and inclusiveness.

The available survey data at the micro-level of citizens suggests that the process of nation-building has been accomplished in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan (Inglehart et al. 2014). The vast majority of respondents have the strongest feeling of belonging to their national community (Fig. 2.4). National identity is an important component of the value systems of citizens of newly established independent states and crucial for their coherent development. Support for the national community reflected via the feelings of national belonging and national pride represents the most encompassing and basic level of political support according to the framework of a regime support as developed by Easton (1965, 1975) noted that national identity is essential for the endurance and long-term sustainability of a nation state and could provide a reservoir of diffuse support in times of political stress. Similarly, Almond and Verba (1963, 1980) emphasized the importance of national pride as part of the civic culture, especially as it involves pride in the political accomplishments of the nation.

Local identities emphasize the differences among individuals as they appeal to the peculiarities of the settlement or region of origin, namely its specific culture, a particular ethnic or sub-ethnic belonging. Strong micro-level attachment to the unique local community can make individuals less accepting of diversity and thus contributes to lower levels of trust and higher xenophobia in society. In the survey of 2012–2014, in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, only 29% respondents suggested that
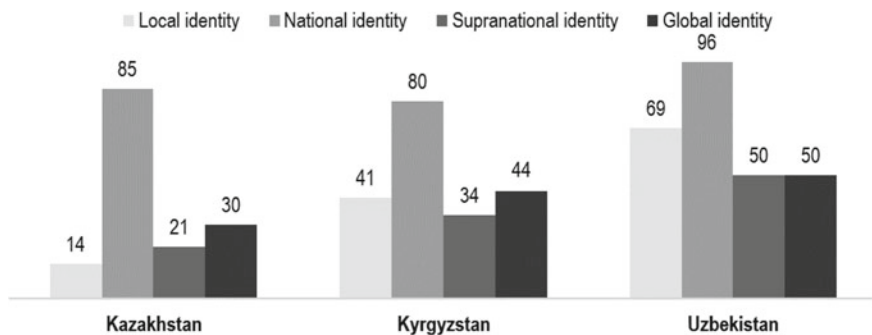

Fig. 2.4 Identity Structure in Central Asia (2011). *Source* World Values Survey (2010–2014) (http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/). Data provided in percentages

they trust representatives of other nationalities and only 24 and 20% said they trust people of another religion. Kazakhstani society appears to be more inclusive and trusting: 57 and 46% said they trust other nationalities and other religions.

A very high significance for local, regional, tribal or ethnic identities was an important obstacle to overcome in the process of building national identities in Central Asia. Strong local, tribal affiliations, and low attachment to the national community could have been used as a powerful tool for mobilization of the population. In a newly established independent state, such a situation would favor regional leaders or the opposition as a potential driver of federalization and segregation of power—a scenario the central government wanted to avoid. Kazakhstan, the country with the smallest share of the titular nation (68% Kazakhs)—comparing to Kyrgyzstan (73% Kyrgyz people) and Uzbekistan (84% Uzbeks)—experienced the most repressive nation-building process which resulted in the lowest levels of local affiliations the citizens currently experience. Local identities (affiliation with your local community, settlement, neighborhood) remains relatively strong in Kyrgyzstan, where the pro-democratic vector of national development made the nation-building process less suppressive, and in Uzbekistan, where the country's lengthy international isolation contributed to society's unification and developed the feeling of national belonging while at the same time maintaining strong ties with the local communities. Correspondingly, Uzbekistan also has the biggest proportion of citizens willing to fight for their country in case of a war (94% comparing to 72 and 77% in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan) and also the highest level of the feeling of national pride (88% of respondents feel "very proud" about their national belonging—comparing to 55–60% in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan). Citizens in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan have also developed some forms of supra-national identities while the respondents in Kazakhstan feel greater alienation and less closeness to both the population of other Central Asian societies and the world as a whole.

2.5 Democratic Values and Pro-democratic Support

Among the various elements of a democratic culture, the idea that democracy is preferable to any of its authoritarian regime alternatives is considered fundamental to a stable democratic system (Rose et al. 1998; Diamond 2008; Linz and Stepan 1996). This is because a commitment to democracy as the preferred form of government implies the rejection of anti-democratic movements, whose proponents aim to undermine or overthrow a newly emerging democratic regime. Democracy is more deeply rooted when the citizenry embraces it as "the only game in town" (Diamond 2008; Linz and Stepan 1996). From the perspective of an assertive democratic culture, this domain of support for democracy is the key "battleground" on which the viability of a democratic culture is decided upon (Pye and Verba 1965, Haerpfer 2008).

Central Asian societies are characterized by a particularly strong support for strong authoritarian leaders (Fig. 2.5). This pattern is a consequence of the political transfor-
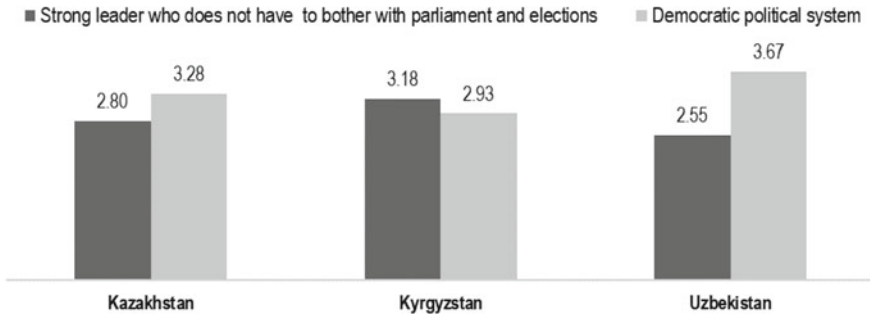
Fig. 2.5 Support for democratic and autocratic rule in Central Asia (2011). *Source* World Values Survey (2010–2014) (http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/). Indexes vary from 1 to 4

mation process when both economic dislocation, ideological vacuum, and external vulnerability generated an existential crisis for the population at the beginning of the post-Soviet transition (Patnaik 2018). A strong leader, a "father of the nation," was seen as a savior who could establish peace and stability in the new independent states. A strong leader, therefore, in the mass consciousness of Central Asian societies, is associated with the notions of "order" and "stability" rather than "despotism" and "tyranny"—as it would probably be seen in quite a few Western countries with an established system of liberal democracy. A rejection of the principles of liberal democracy by the "strong leaders" of the new Central republics causes little dissent in the population—because as we will see later on, there is overall little demand for the actual democratic freedoms and liberalism in the everyday life of Central Asian societies at the micro-level of the citizenry.

The dissolution of the Soviet Union brought very specific challenges to these countries; the reduction of poverty, inequality, and unemployment, and maintaining inter-ethnic peace and social stability were seen as the primary tasks for the new government. Surveys conducted in the 2000s and 2010s confirm that the highest level of political confidence and political support in the region is for those political regimes which deliver higher levels of well-being for their societies. It is also claimed that the experiences of "color revolutions" in Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan were driven not so much by discontent with the authoritarianism practiced by the political elite, but by the failure of the state leadership to meet the socio-economic needs of the population (Patnaik 2018). In particular, despite the internationally acknowledged successful efforts of Kyrgyzstan in building a democratic political system, the low efficiency of the government in resolving socio-economic problems (which accompanied the transition process in more or less all former Soviet or Communist states) contributed to the citizens' disappointment and disillusionment with democracy at the micro-level of post-Soviet societies. The ongoing inter-tribal cleavages, high levels of poverty, unemployment, and inequality caused the increased demand for a "strong leader" in Kyrgyzstan in 2011, when such a "strong leader" was seen as "a good way to govern this country" in various degrees by 82% of the respondents—compared to 55% in Uzbekistan and 64% in Kazakhstan, as well as 60% in

Kyrgyzstan back in 2004. As the 2011 survey in Kyrgyzstan was completed at a time when post-revolution turbulence was just finished, and the new president Atambayev was elected in fair and democratic elections, it will be essential to estimate the indicators of support for different political regimes in Kyrgyzstan at a later time once the micro-level data is available.

Paradoxically, support for democracy as the best system of governance is also quite high among the Central Asian public. In this context, it is important to stress the emerging discourse on the variety of notions of democracy (Welzel and Kirsch 2018). Scholars working in the field conclude that authoritarian societies are characterized by a widespread "authoritarian notion of democracy" when political leaders in Kazakhstan, Russia, and China claim their political regimes to be so-called managed or sovereign democracies. For example, in WVS-6 (2010–2014), when asked to estimate the democratic nature of their political system on a ten-point scale, citizens of Kyrgyzstan estimated it as 6.1, in Kazakhstan as 6.8, and in China as 6.4. The question was excluded from the survey in Uzbekistan though. While in Political Science terms, presenting autocratic rule as some form of a democracy would be a substitution of notions, promotion of this view has been quite successful in Central Asian countries (as well as China). While citizens in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan are generally familiar with the underlying principles of liberal democracy (see Fig. 2.6), both elements of autocratic governance and aspects characterizing wealth redistribution in the society in the minds of Central Asian citizens are very closely associated with the concept of a democracy as well. Central Asian citizens are aware of free and fair elections, civic rights, and equality being the cornerstones of a democratic political regime, yet they expand the concept of a democracy to the practices of authoritarianism, as well as loading this concept with substantial economic expectations. Strong support for a democratic political system, which was found in all Central Asian states (see Fig. 2.5 earlier), thus, refers not only to the citizen's wiliness to elect political leaders in free and fair elections and the establishment of rule of law, but also to have a system which delivers a certain level of societal and

Fig. 2.6 Notions of Democracy in Central Asia (2011). *Source* World Values Survey (2010–2014) (http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/). Indexes vary from 1 to 10

economic well-being, and where authoritarian elements can be acceptable, as long as their government performance is at a satisfactory level in the eyes of the population. In these conditions, a regime which "delivers" good government "outputs" has a high chance of receiving strong support from the population, even if the political leaders will neglect to exercise liberal democratic procedures. Moreover, memories of the civil war in Tajikistan and the turbulence of the post-Soviet transition in the 1990s make the narratives of peace and stability at this stage more desired for the population as compared to the liberal democratic values.

Low levels of citizens' participation in the political life of the country are another feature of Central Asian societies (Haerpfer and Kizilova 2016a, 2016c). Central Asia did not witness any substantial mass movements either for the greater autonomy within the USSR in the late 1980s or for the national independence in early 1990s. Consequently, there was little public accountability of the transition process for a long time. Contrary to Central Asia, in Georgia, Ukraine, and the Baltics where popular pro-independence movements were strong, citizens came to play a more significant role in the public life of the country during the transition period (Haerpfer and Kizilova 2016b, 2014b). Uprisings and protests occurred from time to time in Kyrgyzstan (less frequently in Kazakhstan), and citizens used these means to express their displeasure with the government performance and articulate their demands. However, the lack of solidarity and cohesion as well as an absence of past experience with democratic participation in public affairs pre-defined a primarily weak and insignificant role for citizens in setting the dynamics and paths of post-Soviet political transitions in Central Asia (The Tulip Revolution is one exception from this pattern). A high interest in the political life of the society, according to the WVS-6 (2010–2014), was indicated by about 25% of the respondents in Kyrgyzstan and around 10% in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan.

Central Asian countries whose economies were able to benefit from rich natural resources (primarily Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan) were even less affected by citizens' dissent and civil unrest. Similar to the modern Gulf monarchies, the relative economic well-being created a "cushion" for the population and a "safety bumper" for the national government when non-democratic elements in the governance style have been balanced by the high economic benefits delivered to the citizenry. With the economic troubles and decline of the national currency, which Kazakhstan experiences since 2012, civil unrests have become more frequent and issues of corruption of the state authorities, lack of transparency, suppression of the media, and the malfunctioning of political institutions have re-entered the public discourse in that country.

2.6   Post-Materialist Value Change in Central Asia

Values such as personal safety, economic progress, external security, and social stability are deeply embedded in both group culture and an individual's conscious beliefs about the significance of the subjects or virtues. A powerful tool in explaining the

role of values for the social and political transformation of the societies has been proposed by the theory of post-materialism value change developed by Ronald (1977, 1997). In his book *Modernization and Postmodernization* (1997), Inglehart argued that economic, political and cultural development are interrelated and take place in a coherent way. Modernization, which is linked with urbanization, industrialization, and the spread of education, changes the social and economic environment, which in its turn affects the way how people view the world and the virtues that they prioritize. Postmodern values in their turn bring new societal changes and facilitate the establishment of democratic institutions and regimes. The postmodern values system, with its greater emphasis on the values of freedom, equality, self-expression, participation, and solidarity, has proven to be congruent with the flourishing of the liberal democratic political system. While the establishment of a democratic regime to a large extent requires the emergence of its structural pre-requisites (such as free and fair elections, democratic institutions), the flourishing of a democracy is subject to pro-democratic values being deeply embedded in the consciousness of the population and prioritized by them over values congruent with authoritarian regimes.

According to Inglehart, value change in society occurs via the process of intergenerational value shift. This theory suggests that the priority of survival (materialist), existential, and economic values under certain conditions is replaced by an emphasis on the new values of autonomy and self-expression (post-materialist). Inglehart found that the emerging abundance and existential security (first experienced by the post-war generations after 1945) encouraged them to take their material security and personal safety for granted and instead attach greater importance to intangible values such as self-expression, autonomy, freedom of speech, gender equality, tolerance, environmental, and ecological values. According to the theory, with the growth of economic well-being and security levels, such post-material values will gradually increase among the population in the process of generational replacement, especially among the young age cohorts who experience affluence and security during their childhood and youth. Actualization of the values of freedom, inclusiveness, and self-expression would prompt citizens to amend the ways in which society and political system are organized by discarding authoritarian systems which restricts liberties and limit the opportunities for citizens' empowerment.

Some increase of the post-materialist elements in the value systems of the new, younger generation, and post-Soviet age cohorts of the Central Asian public (Fig. 2.7) indicates a transformation of the value system of the Central Asian societies occurring since 1991 alongside the political transition of post-Soviet regimes in the region. Post-materialist values have their greatest score in Kyrgyzstan, which is the closest to the society with the predominantly "mixed" system of values (which combines elements of both materialist and post-materialist values and equals to the score 2 on the scale above) and which is the only country in the region to establish a democratic political regime. At the same time, despite Kyrgyzstan having the highest score in post-materialist values among the three studied countries, there was no significant increase in these types of values among the youngest generation born in the period 1984-1993. As Inglehart has proven, while the improvement of economic and existential security leads to the advancement of post-materialist values, a decline in living conditions can
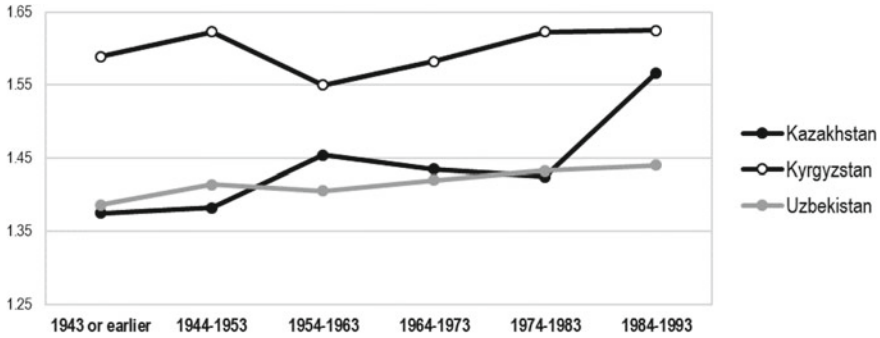
Fig. 2.7 Post-Materialist Values Dynamics Across Age Cohorts in Central Asia (2011). *Source* World Values Survey (2010–2014) (http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/). Indexes vary from 1 to 3 (1 = materialist; 2 = mixed; 3 = post-materialist value system). As WVS surveys adult population (18+) only, the youngest age cohort surveyed in 2010–2012 was those born in 1984–1993

also have the opposite effect and contribute to actualization of materialist or survival values, for example, the support for economic growth and improvement of the microeconomy of households and families. Existential survival values in their turn are associated with ethnocentrism, low levels of trust, intolerance of dissent, xenophobia, low assessment of freedom and human rights, acceptance of authoritarianism, as well as obedience. The relative economic, social, and political instability, and the clashes of political elites and political uprisings experienced by Kyrgyzstan during the first two decades of post-Soviet transition halted further advancement of the values of post-materialism and self-expression among the new generation. Presumably, further consolidation of democracy in Kyrgyzstan would be congruent with the establishment of peaceful social and political development and economic stability and growth which in their turn will trigger actualization of the values of freedom, liberty, participation, and self-expression.

Like most of the post-Soviet countries, Uzbek and Kazakh societies remain predominantly materialist (materialist values system equal to score 1 on the scale). As materialistic values are associated with higher security needs, societies with a predominant materialistic value system support authoritarian leadership styles, show strong sense of national pride, strongly advocate for the preservation of a large army and are more willing to sacrifice civil liberties in the name of law and order. However, the situation inside these two countries differs in the part which concerns the youngest age cohort, whose early socialization occurred in the time of the USSR's decline and after independence. In Uzbekistan, the ratio between materialist and post-materialist values remain without significant change over the generations suggesting that the consolidation of an authoritarian regime and the country's economic and cultural isolation during most of its independence (1991–2016) contributed to the maintenance of a unique stability of the value system with the new generations reproducing the same traditional and Soviet value system which is inherent to the older generations. In Kazakhstan, the opposite occurred. The rapid economic growth, the regime's
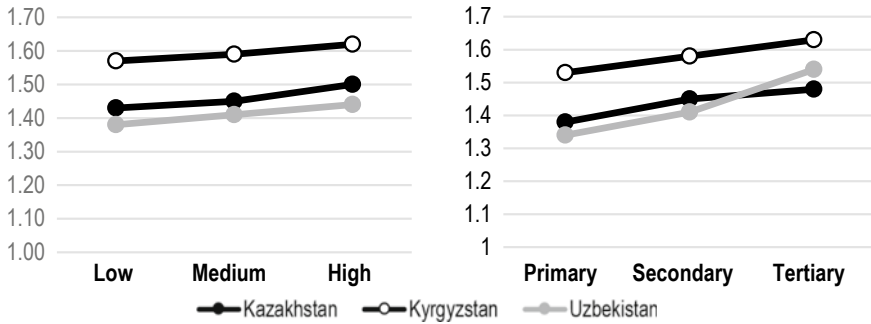
Fig. 2.8 Effect of Education and Income on Post-Materialist Values. *Source* World Values Survey (2010–2014) (http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/). Indexes varies from 1 to 3

openness, and the social and political stability over the first 25 years of independence facilitated a change of values among the new generation of citizens and contributed to the significant increase in post-materialist values among the young age cohorts in Kazakhstan. As post-materialist values are associated with the rising demands for participation in decision-making in economic and political life, the initiated inter-generational value shift in Kazakhstan implies the potential for post-materialist values are associated with the rising demands for participation in decision-making in their economic and political life, while the initiated inter-generational value shift in Kazakhstan implies the potential for regime democratization in the future after the cohorts with prevailing post-materialist values reach their critical mass (Fig. 2.8).

Even in societies with very homogeneous value systems across generations, post-materialist values tend to be positively affected by education and urbanization (Fig. 2.8). In all three studied countries, the actualization of post-materialist values increases among those with higher level of economic well-being at the micro-level of the household economy, and with tertiary education. Both urbanization and higher education expose individuals to greater flows of knowledge and information, often reducing unemployment and inequality, while contributing to higher levels of economic and existential security, thus fostering a shift to post-materialist values. According to the World Bank, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan feature similar levels of urbanization at the moment with the share of rural population being around 64%; in Kyrgyzstan, this indicator is lower and constitutes 44%. The same World Bank database suggests that enrollment in tertiary education is the highest in Kazakhstan—54%, lower in Kyrgyzstan—41%, and the lowest in Uzbekistan—10%. The cumulative effect generated by discrepancies in access to education, income, and access to the labor markets explains the variation in post-materialist self-expression values both between the countries and within them (across the regions and in distinction between urban and rural populations).

2.7   Conclusion

The post-Soviet countries in Central Asia—Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan—were, during the historical period of the Soviet Union, at the geographical periphery of the USSR and in the "Shadow of History and Geopolitics" in the course of the twentieth century, and before during the period of the Tsarist Russian Empire in the nineteenth century. The geopolitical tectonic shifts after the end of the so-called Second World of Communism in general and the Soviet Union in particular have moved Central Asia and those five post-Soviet countries toward the middle of the so-called New Silk Road between China and Europe on the one hand and located between the BRICS countries Russia in the North and India in the South, on the other. One main reason for the delay in political transformations in Central Asia in any direction was the absence of non-communist elites from non-communist religious groups, trade unions, music, literature, philosophy, arts, and sciences, who could take over the new political systems in post-Communist Central and Eastern Europe. The absence of alternative political and economic elites in Central Asia facilitated the unbroken continuity of the old Soviet elite taking over the top positions as presidents and prime ministers in the new political systems in Central Asia after the end of the Soviet Union in December 1991, without being challenged by new alternative and democratic elites. The main reason for the lack of successful democratization in the five studied countries in Central Asia was the structural weakness of the legal system, the legislative system and the media system in all countries, and the structural dominance of the executive system of the presidency and central government. The one and only country within Central Asia which achieved, at the macro-level (Polity 4 and Freedom House Indices) and the micro-level (World Values Survey and Eurasia Barometer Survey) of comparative analysis, the status of a "Democracy," is Kyrgyzstan. The latter is the only country in Central Asia which underwent a "color revolution" after 1992, the so-called Tulip Revolution.

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Chapter 3
Civil Society as a Phenomenon of Post-Soviet Political Life: A Threat or a Guarantor of National Security

Ashot Aleksanyan

3.1 Introduction

Post-Soviet civil society today is perceived not only as a complex system of values, a set of ideological and philosophical principles, and rules of political life, but also as a special way of development, the completion of a stage of political modernization, for the success of which a combination of a certain level of social well-being and a certain quality of political culture is required. In the modern world, civil society is often considered also in the context of numerous and increasing risks, requiring new and quick answers to a number of intractable contradictions and problems (Applebaum 2016; Shevtsova 2016; Altstadt 2017; Gel'man 2016; Marsh 2016). Examples of post-Soviet civil society organizations (CSOs) and actors are the All-Russian Popular Front,[1] the Civic Chamber of the RF,[2] Republican Public Association "Belaya Rus"[3] (Shraibman 2016), Assembly of People of Kazakhstan,[4] National NGO Forum of

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[2] Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation. 2019. "About." Accessed October 24, 2019. https://www.oprf.ru/en/about.

[3] Republican Public Association "Belaya Rus". 2019. "About." Accessed October 24, 2019. https://belayarus.by/about; Belarus in Focus. 2016. "NGO "Belaya Rus" [White Russia] aims for politics." Accessed October 24, 2019. https://belarusinfocus.info/society-and-politics/ngo-belaya-rus-white-russia-aims-politics?, page = 7.

[4] APK. 2019. "The activities." Accessed October 24, 2019. https://assembly.kz/en/ank/deyatelnost-assamblei-naroda-kazakhstana.php.

A. Aleksanyan (✉)
Chair of Theory and History of Political Science, Faculty of International Relations, Center for European Studies, Yerevan, Armenia
e-mail: ashalex@ysu.am

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Azerbaijan,[5] trade union organizations,[6] student councils and unions of universities,[7] and others which largely support the ruling elite and the parliamentary majority. The exceptions are Georgia (after 2004), Ukraine (after 2014), Moldova (after 2014), and Armenia (after 2018), since the active NGOs of these countries are members of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum (EaP CSF).[8]

The accumulated problems of civil society and democratization in the post-Soviet space show the need for their new creative rethinking and comparative analysis. The human dimension is determined by the effectiveness of the civil society organizations (CSOs), the basis of which is determined by the state of the economy, the development of democratic processes in civil society, the level of welfare and social security, and their personal safety. In the conditions of newly independent countries and unrecognized statehoods, crises and challenges arise in the post-Soviet space which requires transit regimes of formation of mechanisms to improve the quality of life and sustainable development.

Civil society over the past decades has gained the widest distribution in the post-Soviet space. A comparative analysis of civil society involves the consideration of such fundamental problems as the relationship between the individual and the community, the individual and society, the individual and the state, society and the state, as well as ways to implement such basic values as freedom and justice, equality and solidarity, tolerance and human dignity. That is why one of the urgent tasks is

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[5]Turan News Agency. 2018. "The position of civil society for about 5 years remains very difficult." Accessed October 24, 2019. http://turan.az/ext/news/2018/10/free/Interview/en/76151.htm; OGP. 2017. "Azerbaijan National NGO Forum." Accessed October 24, 2019. http://ogp.org.az/index.php/rauf-zeyni-azerbaijan-national-ngo-forum; Humanitarian Research Public Union. 2015. "History of NGOs in Azerbaijan." Accessed October 24, 2019. https://hrpu.org/2015/04/13/history-of-ngos-in-azerbaijan.

[6]The Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia supports the president and the ruling party "United Russia", such a situation in Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan and the Federation of Trade Unions of Belarus is so politicized that with their help, President Lukashenko controls the opposition political parties. In Armenia, Georgia, Ukraine, and Moldova, the trade union movement is still in crisis, since the unions of these countries have been dominated by bureaucratic methods of work, the leading trade union bodies have been separated from members, and they need democratic reforms.

[7]Post-Soviet student councils in state universities, except for Ukraine (after 2014), Georgia (after 2004), Moldova (after 2014), and Armenia (after 2018), are very specific actors, as they are politicized and especially activated during the election cycle. It is with the help of student self-government and the university administration of state universities that the ruling party is solving its own political tasks, and not the issues of improving the entire life of the educational institution. For example, so far the issues of social security, medical insurance, hostel, and other issues of social rights and freedoms of students remain unresolved in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Russia, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, etc. Student councils of universities of many post-Soviet countries are limited or not involved in resolving the issues of reforming and modernizing the modern system of higher education.

[8]EaP CSF. 2019. "Civil society forum." Accessed October 24, 2019. https://eap-csf.eu/civil-society-forum.

the analysis of CSOs as a holistic system, reflecting the most significant features of modern society.[9] And this requires a look at the problem posed in the general context of modern social development, the transformation of the Western model of civil society and its options outside the European world, that is, to see the uniqueness of this phenomenon in other social and cultural conditions. Therefore, in political science, the question of the nature and problems of post-Soviet civil society, about which national options for civilicratic development can be considered successful, is gaining particular relevance, as is the question of the content of the concept of civil society—in the whole variety of its interpretations, from traditional to modern. The quality of a developed, held, and consolidated democratic model has a decisive influence on this ability to respond to the risks of our time, while preserving CSOs and the democratic nature of the regime. With the change in the political courses of the new independent countries in the post-Soviet period, the vision of its national security has changed. In this regard, the national security strategies of the post-Soviet countries stipulate that the main directions of ensuring national security are strategic national priorities that define the tasks of the most important social, political, and economic transformations needed to create safe conditions for the realization of constitutional rights and freedoms of citizens, the implementation of sustainable development of the country's territorial integrity, and sovereignty of the state. It is important to note that among the priorities in the first place is ensuring the rights and freedoms of citizens. This makes it necessary to rethink the role of civil society in the national security system of these countries, which is intended to articulate and convey its interests to state structures. The main difference between "soft" securities is that a person with all his problems is put in the spotlight, and the security of a state is achieved through the security of its individual citizens.

The stage of democratization and formation of CSOs and new democratic institutions, overcoming the polarization of society, and highlighting the conditions that are necessary for its successful implementation in the post-Soviet space are acquiring civilizational significance. A multiparty system and political competition is a driving force of post-Soviet democracy, as different political parties can reflect the real interests of social groups and repeatedly strengthen the CSOs and political opposition, for example, developed environmental and human rights NGOs[10] (Ishkanian

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[9]Oxfam GB. 2017. "What is really going on within 'shrinking civil society space' and how should international actors respond?" Accessed October 24, 2019. https://oxfamblogs.org/fp2p/what-is-really-going-on-within-shrinking-civil-society-space-and-how-should-international-actors-respond.

[10]Armenian Environmental Front (AEF). 2019. "Protection of Environment is Protection of Armenia." Accessed October 24, 2019. http://www.armecofront.net/en/about-us-2; Armenian Environmental Network (AEN). 2019. "Evolving organically to meet Armenia's environmental needs." Accessed October 24, 2019. https://www.armenia-environment.org/our-history; Human Rights House Foundation (HRHF). 2019. "Strategy and impact." Accessed October 24, 2019. https://humanrightshouse.org/who-we-are/impact.

2013, Kankanyan and Paturyan 2019), the protection of women's rights,[11] the anti-corruption policy of civil society,[12] the emergence of opposition political parties, increased civil disobedience, etcetera. It is obvious that the organizational arrangements of civil society form a new civiliarchic[13] culture, thereby contributing to the mobilization of resources for social projects, as well as to provide protection and justice for citizens. Another example may be that today the quality of the state lags behind the readiness of civil society to participate in the management of the public and multinational authorities. This is what enables CSOs to be incomparably more active and responsible, thereby requiring the authorities to act in partnership with them and make democratic decisions. A comparative analysis of this stage, the effectiveness of which determines the subsequent development of civil society, from general theoretical prerequisites to specific national specifics in each post-Soviet country, remains one of the most important tasks of modern political science.

3.2 No Democracy Without Civil Society

Democracy always accompanies the affirmation of civil society organizations, such as NGOs, trade unions, social media, civic networks, associations and unions, into which active citizens enter on their own initiative for various purposes: professional communication, collective defense of their interests, and more effective dialogue with the authorities. Post-Soviet civil society is a very important factor in effective economic development, political stability, and social harmony. In post-Soviet countries, civil society (people's independence movements, Memorial, Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, international NGOs, and charitable foundations) became relevant in the late 1980s, after a huge break caused by the comprehensive pressure of the state on all aspects of society during the Soviet period. After the collapse of the USSR, a number of comparative political scientists paid great attention to the conceptualization of post-socialism and post-communism within the framework of transitological models, revealing the general tendency of transitions from authoritarianism to democracy that have occurred in different post-Soviet countries over the past two-plus decades (Huntington 1991; Fukuyama 2014; Shevtsova 2016; Ambrosio 2009; O'Donnell and Schmitter 2013; Gel'man 2015). The redistribution of property through privatization has created real opportunities for the formation of the middle class as the social basis of civil society. The development of private property and market relations

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[11]Women's Support Center (WSC). 2019. "Our impact." Accessed October 24, 2019. https://www.womensupportcenter.org.

[12]"Armenian Lawyers' Association" NGO. 2019 "Statement of the CSO Anti-Corruption Coalition of Armenia." Accessed October 24, 2019. https://armla.am/en/4411.html.

[13]Civiliarchy (from Lat. civil and Gr. archy)—civil power, civil governance, civil control. Civiliarchy issued to denote civil power based on civilized mechanisms and principles which ensure civil control over power. In this case, political regimes can be described either as civiliarchic and non- (anti-) civiliarchic (Alexanian, A. 2011. "The civiliarchic foundations of political democratization in Armenia." *Central Asia and the Caucasus* 12 (3): 117).

created the conditions for civil society to become a civilized actor in the political life of modern post-Soviet political systems.

In the post-Soviet space, democratization has a political dimension and provides for political diversity and civil society. Democracy, as well as a market economy, is impossible without CSOs, the existence of competition, and a pluralistic political system. This is manifested in the fact that in the post-Soviet space, democratization acts as a principle of activity of political parties in the struggle for state power. In a democracy, the diversity of political opinions and ideological approaches to solving public and state problems is taken into account. The democratic political process in the post-Soviet space is not yet based on the equal rights of citizens in the management of the affairs of society and the state, and above all on the equality of electoral rights. Such inequality makes it impossible to choose between different political options, that is, political development opportunities. The main goal of democratization in the post-Soviet space is to achieve the ultimate diversity of political and social life. In this regard, interest in various national and civilizational versions of democracy, reflected in the global political process, has grown unusually (Haggard and Kaufman 2016; Moghaddam 2019; Levitsky and Way 2010; Teorell 2010).

One of the most important tasks of political modernization, on the solution of which the prospects for the formation of civil society directly depend, is the phased democratization of post-Soviet countries in which authoritarian or even totalitarian political regimes existed for a long time. The stages of democratization of these countries in a "compressed" form reproduce the logic of the formation of a modern civil society in them. At the liberalization stage, the institutions and principles of civil society are legitimized, and new forms and mechanisms of its relations with the state are tested; there is an institutionalization of civil society. At the stage of democratization, there is a noticeable increase in the political and social activity of the population, and civil society itself takes on quite mature forms and turns into an influential agent of political and social transformations. At the stage of consolidation, relations between the state and civil society evolve in the direction of consolidating and "routinizing" the mechanisms of interaction, and the institutionalization of social partnership practices that arose in the previous stages, in the broad sense of the word. For example, the initiative of the trade unions of Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan annually, starting in 1992, became the Tripartite Commission and the conclusion of an agreement between the government, trade unions and employers' associations, and then the industry tariff and regional agreements that stipulate mutual obligations of the parties, increased the effectiveness of state, departmental and public control over labor protection and the environment, and expanded cooperation of this work at all levels of government.[14] For the authoritarian regimes of these countries, it is the Trilateral Commission that enables the presidents and the ruling elite to maintain

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[14]The Russian Government. 2013. "Russian Trilateral Commission on the Regulation of Social and Labour Relations." Accessed October 24, 2019. http://government.ru/en/department/141/about; ILO.2004. "Trade Union Rights in Belarus." Accessed October 24, 2019. https://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/relm/gb/docs/gb291/pdf/ci-belarus.pdf; Electronic government of the Republic of Kazakhstan. 2019. "Union Federations of the Republic of Kazakhstan." Accessed October 24, 2019. https://egov.kz/cms/en/articles/job_search/profsouzi.

their dominant standing. As a result of the political transformation in the post-Soviet countries, a form of government and a system of power have arisen that formally meets the criteria of electoral democracy, but that is virtually beyond the control of society. The institutionalization of just such a system of power was largely facilitated by the strategy of economic reforms, which was based on national ideas of independence. The result of economic reforms was the colossal property polarization of the population and the actual destruction of the old social security system. In the framework of the political system that arose as a result of the transformation, effective channels of interaction between the state and society have not yet developed, which has an extremely negative effect on the prospects for the institutionalization of civil society. The political and legal prerequisites for the intensification of civic activism are largely blocked and not realized due to the extremely difficult economic situation of citizens of post-Soviet countries.

The formation of civil society in post-Soviet countries is also complicated by a number of factors related to the transitional nature of public relations. This is manifested in the weaknesses of social institutions and in the difficulties in carrying out political, economic, cultural, and educational reforms in post-Soviet countries.

3.3   The Multidimensionality of a Transforming Civil Society

Over the past decades, civil society in the post-Soviet space has significantly strengthened. The multidimensionality of transformation at the national, international, and regional levels demonstrates the positive dynamism of post-Soviet civil society, since it is at the peak of its potential. Information and communication technologies, European integration, geopolitics, and the development of market relations provided the necessary basis and opportunities for creating a large number of social movements, NGOs, media, trade unions, political parties, religious organizations, and social groups.

The security of civil society presupposes appropriate human rights norms that allow for preserving the values of democracy; most fully realize the constitutional rights, freedoms of various social groups and citizens, and optimally neutralize the phenomena contradicting the principles of democracy. Personal security is to ensure constitutional rights, freedoms, legitimate interests, and a decent quality and standard of living of citizens, and involves the formation of a complex of legal and moral norms, CSOs that allow individuals to develop and implement significant abilities for them to meet relevant needs and interests, while not experiencing opposition from the state and CSOs. The full development of any democratic state or aspiring democracy requires an effective civil society, acting as a partner of state power, helping it in times of crisis and instability. Social and political partnerships between civil society and the state are most acceptable for a modern democratic society, which the post-Soviet countries are trying to become with the help of the UN, OSCE, Council of Europe,

and the EU. At the same time, it gives a new impetus to understanding democracy in modern post-Soviet countries while exploring the boundaries between the state and civil society. Preference in this model of relationships is given to the paternalistic scenario: a strong state supports a weak civil society. Democratization is interpreted here in purely elitist forms. Thus, the holder of sovereignty is the political elite of the country. For example, in Russia, the nature of emerging civil society is organically linked to the construction of its own special model of democracy, that is, "sovereign democracy." Here, the strengthening of state power is an important factor for the further development of Russian statehood, which, in turn, under favorable social and political conditions, can serve as an impetus for the maturation of civil society in the country.

Democratic processes in the post-Soviet space are contradictory; democratization often becomes a resource of the ruling elite of these countries, a pretext for interfering in the affairs of civil society, limiting the rights and freedoms of citizens, and a means of manipulating the international community. The transition to democratization of the post-Soviet countries has become one of the determining causes of the "color revolutions" in Georgia (2003), Kyrgyzstan (2005, 2010), Ukraine (2004, 2014), as well as the "velvet revolution" (2018) in Armenia (Lanskoy and Suthers 2019; Shirinyan 2018; Iskandaryan 2018). The revolutionary characteristic of these political changes in these countries is the high level of civil disobedience, public participation, the crisis of legitimacy, the struggle against the oligarchy, as well as the opposition's willingness to introduce deeper social or economic reforms.

The beginning of the twenty-first century revealed a new phenomenon in political transformation, the so-called "revolutionary waves" that gave rise to a change of political elites in several countries of the post-Soviet space. The main result of this kind of "revolution" was a change in the geopolitical orientation and foreign policy of the respective states toward integration into the Council of Europe, OSCE, EU, and NATO. Of course, the choice of a foreign policy strategy is formed taking into account many aspects of an internal and external nature, but, of course, one of the most important factors that influenced the transformation of the foreign policy of the post-Soviet states was a civil promise. An analysis of regime change in Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Ukraine, and Armenia and the impact of these processes on the foreign policy orientation of states is relevant in connection with the role of activating CSOs in the post-Soviet space.

Events in these countries have shown that CSOs are dissatisfied with the activities of the government and the ruling parties (Chaisty et al. 2018; Jankovic 2011; Pop-Eleches and Robertson 2014; Mihr 2018). The authorities, in turn, do not always adequately respond to such influences with civil society, being late with anti-corruption policies, or not striving to create new models of political dialogue and social partnership that meet the expectations of civil society and the challenges of the time.

According to "Nations in Transit" reports of Freedom House, in 2018, the level of development of democracy and civil society in post-Soviet countries remains on the path of transformation and development. From Tables 3.1 and 3.2, it is seen that the comparatively better results in Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia, which have a

Table 3.1 Nations in transit ratings and averaged civil society scores

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Armenia	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75
Azerbaijan	5.5	5.75	5.75	6	6.25	6.5	6.75	7	7	7
Belarus	6.25	6	6	6.25	6.5	6.5	6.5	6.25	6.25	6.25
Georgia	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75
Kazakhstan	5.5	5.75	5.75	6	6.25	6.5	6.5	6.5	6.5	6.75
Kyrgyzstan	4.75	5	4.75	4.75	4.75	4.5	4.75	4.75	5	5
Moldova	3.75	3.5	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25
Russia	5.75	5.75	5.5	5.25	5.5	5.75	6	6.25	6.5	6.25
Tajikistan	5.75	6	6	6	6.25	6.25	6.5	6.5	6.5	6.75
Turkmenistan	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7
Ukraine	2.75	2.75	2.75	2.75	2.75	2.5	2.25	2.25	2.5	2.75
Uzbekistan	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	6.75

Source Nations in Transit of Freedom House, accessed September 21, 2019, https://freedomhouse.org/report/nations-transit/nations-transit-2018

Table 3.2 Nations in transit ratings and averaged democracy score

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Armenia	5.39	5.39	5.43	5.39	5.36	5.36	5.36	5.36	5.39	5.43
Azerbaijan	6.25	6.39	6.46	6.57	6.64	6.68	6.75	6.86	6.93	6.93
Belarus	6.57	6.5	6.57	6.68	6.71	6.71	6.71	6.64	6.61	6.61
Georgia	4.93	4.93	4.86	4.82	4.75	4.68	4.64	4.61	4.61	4.68
Kazakhstan	6.32	6.43	6.43	6.54	6.57	6.61	6.61	6.61	6.64	6.71
Kyrgyzstan	6.04	6.21	6.11	6	5.96	5.89	5.93	5.89	6	6.07
Moldova	5.07	5.14	4.96	4.89	4.82	4.86	4.86	4.89	4.93	4.93
Russia	6.11	6.14	6.18	6.18	6.21	6.29	6.46	6.5	6.57	6.61
Tajikistan	6.14	6.14	6.14	6.18	6.25	6.32	6.39	6.54	6.64	6.79
Turkmenistan	6.93	6.93	6.93	6.93	6.93	6.93	6.93	6.93	6.96	6.96
Ukraine	4.39	4.39	4.61	4.82	4.86	4.93	4.75	4.68	4.61	4.64
Uzbekistan	6.89	6.93	6.93	6.93	6.93	6.93	6.93	6.93	6.96	6.89

"The democracy scores and regime ratings are based on a scale of 1–7, with 1 representing the highest level of democratic progress and 7 the lowest" (See Freedom House. 2018. "Nations in Transit 2018: Confronting Illiberalism." Accessed September 21, 2019. https://freedomhouse.org/report/nations-transit/nations-transit-2018)

Source Nations in Transit of Freedom House, accessed September 21, 2019, https://freedomhouse.org/report/nations-transit/nations-transit-2018

transitional government or hybrid regime. If in Armenia, civil society is faced with a semi-consolidated authoritarian regime, then in Russia, Belarus, Azerbaijan and all countries of Central Asia, it is faced with a consolidated authoritarian regime. As can be seen from Tables 3.1 and 3.2, the democratic transit of the post-Soviet countries initiating civil consolidation in the field of public interests determines, firstly, the difficult path of civil society formation, since the formation of democratic values is as difficult as the development of a national strategy; secondly, the involvement of CSOs in the political process and their active position in dialogue with the authorities. These quantitative data show that in the above-mentioned post-Soviet countries, the mediation of CSOs between citizens and the state is not yet ensured efficiently, and the establishment of a national model of democracy is determined by a weak political culture and experience in regime transformation.

According to Reports "Nations in Transit" of the Freedom House, in 2018, the level of development of democracy and civil society in post-Soviet countries remains on the path of transformation and development. From Tables 3.1 and 3.2, it is seen that the comparatively better results in Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia, which have transitional government or hybrid regime. If in Armenia, civil society is faced with a semi-consolidated authoritarian regime, then in Russia, Belarus, Azerbaijan and all countries of Central Asia, it is faced with a consolidated authoritarian regime. As can be seen from Tables 3.1 and 3.2, the democratic transit of the post-Soviet countries initiating civil consolidation in the field of public interests, determines, firstly, the difficult path of civil society formation, since the formation of democratic values is as difficult as the development of a national strategy; secondly, the involvement of CSOs in the political process and their active position in dialogue with the authorities. These quantitative data show that in the above-mentioned post-Soviet countries the mediation of CSOs between citizens and the state is not yet ensured efficiently, and the establishment of a national model of democracy is determined by a weak political culture and experience in regime transformation.

The instability of post-Soviet political regimes is caused, first of all, by the lack of a strong civil society, which implies, firstly, the exposure to European values and, secondly, the desire to prevent constantly emerging conflict situations. However, the reproduction potential of the above-mentioned regimes in the former static quality is very limited. In addition to political technologies that make it possible to temporarily consolidate post-Soviet societies (nation-building, civic identity, religious feelings, etc.); periodically arising foreign policy actions that distract the population from acute pressing social problems are an additional means of maintaining stability (Macedo et al. 2005; Bartels 2016; Achen and Bartels 2016). So, for Azerbaijan and Armenia, the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh became the epicenter of public attention and the subject of political manipulations, and for Moldova, it is Transnistria, the topic of the "Chinese threat" for Kazakhstan, and the danger of the promotion of Islamic radicalism for Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan (Isaacs and Polese 2015; Senggirbay 2019). Despite the support of the US and NATO forces, the Afghan

army is still not able to cope with the religious fundamentalist formations.[15] This is due, inter alia, to the financial, military, organizational, and informational support of the latter coming from the Taliban, the Islamic State, al-Qaeda, and from some radical and fundamentalist movements. Obviously, the long-term potential for regime stability lies within the endogenous development of post-Soviet societies. At the same time, their transformation with a goal-setting on the Western model of democracy, despite official declaration, is not adequate. Attempts to explain the low "rootedness" of liberal democracy in post-Soviet countries by national specifics, prolonging its implementation, impede the actualization of strategies relevant to social development (Parvin 2017, 2018).

Multiparty systems in presidential and semi-presidential post-Soviet countries developed slowly. In authoritarian regimes with a majoritarian electoral system, either they did not exist at all, or they were openly a "facade" in nature. Parties of power such as "United Russia" (from 2001 till now), "New Azerbaijan" (from 1995 till now), "Union of Georgian Citizens" (from 1992 till 2003), Republican Party of Armenia (from 1999 till 2018), and "Nur Otan" (from 1999 till now, Kazakhstan) became a specific phenomenon in post-Soviet countries. Their difference from the "classic" dominant political parties is that they were created by the presidents of these countries, who gave their informal clients party status in order to represent and protect the interests of the executive branch in parliaments and public space. If classical dominant parties form power, then power parties form it.

The further institutional evolution of countries with parties in power depends on whether these parties can evolve from a tool of presidential power into relatively autonomous political entities, whether they follow the path of building more equal relations with their constituent and allied political groups, and whether at least some expansion of political pluralism, or the tendency to consolidate their monopoly in the party and political field will prevail. In the first case, a new model of democratization will emerge in the post-Soviet space through the dominant party, while in the second, the regimes will become semi-authoritarian.

In contrast to the policies of Central and Southeast Europe, all post-Soviet countries have chosen a presidential–parliamentary or "purely" presidential form of government. At the same time, the nature of the regimes in the former republics of the USSR had significant differences from the very beginning, which grew more and more during their post-Soviet development. Conditionally, these modes can be divided into four groups:

1. The presidential are in form and "purely" authoritarian in essence regimes in Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan from 1993 till now. The entire executive branch is vested in the presidents, and parliamentary elections are non-competitive.

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[15]OSCE ODIHR. 2015. "Freedom of Religion and Belief in Central Asia: Trends and Challenges." Accessed September 21, 2019. https://www.osce.org/odihr/187521?download = true; Olcott, M. B. 2016. "Religion and Security in Central Asia: Recommendations for the Next US Administration." *The Review of Faith & International Affairs* 14 (2): 49–58.

2. There are a presidential regime in Belarus and formal presidential–parliamentary regimes in Azerbaijan (from 1993 till now), Kazakhstan (from 1990 till now) and even after institutional changes in the parliamentary form of government in Kyrgyzstan, gravitating toward authoritarianism (from 1991 till 2005, from 2010 till 2011).

3. Moving toward a weakening of the presidential power, Moldova (from 2009 till now), Ukraine (from 2014 till now), Georgia (from 2013 till now), and Armenia (from 2018 till now), which at the beginning of this century, passed from a presidential–parliamentary republic to a parliamentary one in the first case and to the prime ministerial in the second. In terms of political pluralism and competition, these countries are superior to all other states of the post-Soviet space.

4. This is a presidential–parliamentary form of Russian federalism. Despite the commonality of the Russian political regime with other post-Soviet regimes, the presidential vertical of this country nevertheless varies markedly in the scope of the president's powers (Yeltsin's Russia from 1991 till 1999, Putin's Russia from 1999 till now).

It is almost impossible to assess the first two groups of countries from the point of view of the development of civil society and democratic transit: with the exception of Belarus, these are countries that are influenced by both Islamic and totalitarian (communist) political cultures and have retained strong vestiges of the traditional patriarchal society. For these countries, the realistic agenda is not democratization, but the promotion of modernization processes in general and the expansion of political pluralism in particular. In most of the mentioned countries, the majority (Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan), or mixed with the predominance of the majority element (Azerbaijan, until recently Kazakhstan), operates (or operated); in Uzbekistan, most deputies are elected in indirect elections. The introduction of proportional systems in Kazakhstan (since 2007) and Kyrgyzstan (from the next election) marks the transition from non-partisanship to the dominant party in power.

Moldova, Ukraine, Georgia, and Armenia (since 2018) provide very interesting examples of "belated democratization" with a not yet clear outcome. They are noticeably inferior to their Western neighbors in the degree of maturity of multiparty systems; however, in terms of the level of political competition and the real involvement of parties in political decision-making, Ukraine and Moldova, undoubtedly, are ahead of all other post-Soviet countries. In the last two countries, the main reason for the delay in the democratization processes was the factors associated with the formation of national statehood: in Georgia, the loss of control over Abkhazia and South Ossetia, as well as the international war with Russia; in Armenia and Azerbaijan, the war for Nagorno-Karabakh, a confrontational style of domestic politics (1998 and 1999). In the parliamentary and presidential elections held in 2007–2008 in Armenia, contradictory trends were reflected: on the one hand, there was competition, on the other hand, the widespread use of administrative resources, massive protests, and their rather severe suppression by the authorities. Even after the Velvet Revolution of 2018 in Armenia, the new Prime Minister and the new ruling elite face many difficulties on the path of anti-corruption policy, deepening democratic

reforms and European integration. The phenomenon of "revolutionary waves" is an important factor that affects the national interests and security of post-Soviet countries. The events in Georgia (2003), in Ukraine (2004 and 2014), in Kyrgyzstan (2005), and in Armenia (2018) became evidence of the revitalization of civil society and support for the type of democratization outlined in the American and European countries' strategies. This contributed to the strengthening of sovereignty, as well as bilateral relations between Western European countries and countries with new political regimes, hindering the realization of Russian interests in the post-Soviet space, where the Russian Federation traditionally has strategic interests.

The most difficult thing is to evaluate the results of transformations in the Russian Federation, with the main feature of the initial stages of transit since 1990s being the extreme polarization of politics, the threat of communist restoration, and, consequently, the lack of consensus on a national development strategy. For this reason, for Russia in the mid-1990s, the choice of a model with a strong parliament was obviously impossible. The high polarization of society and elites along the axis of "reform–restoration" demanded the dominance of presidential power, carrying out "reform from above." It is interesting to note that Russia is the only post-Soviet country in which, during the period of the most painful reforms (until 2000), the president did not have a majority in parliament. Russia's progress toward building civil society is clearly insufficient; the opportunities for social and economic modernization were far from being optimally used. However, the barriers to successful democratization in Russia were exceptionally high. Therefore, if something causes concern from the point of view of democratic prospects, it is not so much the current, not too high, level of reform, but rather a strong presidential power and negative dynamics in the political life of Russia. In this context, Russian civil society, through social networks, anti-government movements, and civil disobedience, feeds on activating opposition political parties and also fights for a "blocked or failed democratic transition" (Sorensen 2018). In these unfavorable conditions, civil society is attempting to democratize and pluralize social life in modern Russia. Obviously, this is precisely why President Putin and the ruling elite gave CSOs the status of foreign agents.

In recent years, even the most authoritarian of the Central Asian countries, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, imitating formally pluralistic presidential elections, have been trying to imitate attempts. In turn, Kazakhstan, once distinguished by real, albeit built into certain framework pluralism, passed over to a one-party parliament. In Kyrgyzstan, the period of power sharing after the fall of President Akayev's regime was replaced by new "monocentrism." This persists even after the transition to a parliamentary form of government. At the same time, if in these countries civil society continues to move toward democracy, then authoritarian regimes imitate and even appeal to democratic values. It is significant that thereby, to some extent, these authoritarian regimes, in their fear of civiliarchic democracy, also contribute to its consolidation (Morlino 2012; Alexanyan 2010; Cameron and Orenstein 2012).

Over the past two decades, most post-Soviet countries have made significant progress toward the formation of civil society and democratic transformation, albeit in different models, with different goals and different successes. This dynamism and variety of models make the comparative analysis of the post-Soviet space extremely

important. In the political science of the post-Soviet countries, there is a consensus that the absence of clear signs of democracy consolidation in the newly independent states is not a sign of the end of transitology but only initiates a cognitive and practical search for directions of transition from authoritarianism to democracy.

3.4 Political Security Issues of Civil Society

At the current stage of globalization, CSOs should play a role in facilitating the activities of the public administration of post-Soviet countries, in ensuring national security, which includes an organic triad, namely: human security,[16] civil society security,[17] and social security.[18] At the same time, democratization, embodied by institutions and mechanisms borrowed from the Western cultural experience, always leads to the expected result (Gill 2000). The relevance of introducing Western democratic values and civil society organizations into the social and cultural environment of post-Soviet countries is especially obvious. An interesting example is the Baltic countries, which are incorporated into a single European political and legal field. It is appropriate to note that the realization of national interests and strategic national priorities of the post-Soviet space cannot occur outside of civil society, since the most important component of public security is the presence in the state of an effective network of CSOs, which traditionally include civiliarchic associations, NGOs, political parties, and social movements without formal status (Whitehead 2002, 65–90).

In post-Soviet countries, the national security strategy[19] is designed to consolidate the efforts of public authorities, other government bodies, regional government

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[16]"Human security means safety for people from both violent and non-violent threats. It is the condition or state of being characterized by freedom from pervasive threats to people's rights, their safety, or even their lives. Human security entails taking preventive measures to reduce vulnerability and minimize risk and taking remedial action where prevention fails." (Sociology Discussion. 2017. "Human Security: Concept and Challenges." Accessed September 26, 2019. http://www.sociologydiscussion.com/human-security/human-security-concept-and-challenges-sociology/13517).

[17]The civil society security is the sustainable development of CSOs, the preservation of humanistic values, civiliarchic norms and civic culture, and the viability of civil movements. This is an environment of partnership and dialogue, which expands the resources of political, social, economic, and cultural security by attracting the resources of civil society. The expediency of participation of civil society institutions in ensuring human security at the national and regional levels is substantiated.

[18]"Social security may be defined as any program of social protection established by legislation, or any other mandatory arrangement, that provides individuals with a degree of income security when faced with the contingencies of old age, survivorship, incapacity, disability, unemployment or rearing children. It may also offer access to curative or preventive medical care." (ISSA. 2019. "Social security: A fundamental human right." Accessed September 26, 2019. https://www.issa.int/en/topics/understanding/introduction).

[19]See Kremlin.ru. 2015. "The National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation of December 31, 2015." Accessed September 26, 2019. http://kremlin.ru/acts/bank/40391/page/1; Mfa.am. 2007. "The National Security Strategy of the Republic of Armenia of January 26, 2007." Accessed September 26, 2019. https://www.mfa.am/filemanager/Statics/Doctrineeng.pdf.

bodies, local authorities, and civil society organizations to create favorable internal and external conditions for the realization of national interests and strategic national priorities. That is, the task is to unite the efforts of state, public and political structures in the field of ensuring national security. The national security strategy of post-Soviet countries states that the main directions of ensuring state and public security, on the one hand, are strengthening the role of the state as a guarantor of personal security and property rights, improving the legal regulation of crime prevention, corruption, terrorism and extremism, drug trafficking, and the fight with such phenomena. On the other hand, the development of interaction between state security and law enforcement agencies with civil society increases the confidence of citizens in law enforcement and judicial systems. In addition, implementation is carried out through the consolidation of efforts and resources of state authorities and local governments, the development of their interaction with CSOs, as well as the use of the potential of political, organizational, social and economic, legal, informational, military, and other structures. The idea of consolidating the efforts of the state and civil society in various fields, including in the field of security, has long been reflected in many legal and doctrinal acts of post-Soviet countries. Considering that it is NGOs that play an important role in the civil society system; then, perhaps the first thing to discuss is the role and place of NGOs in organizing interaction between state and public structures in the field of national security. In addition, NGOs act as a link between the state and society, as they are an integral part of both the first and second. However, a lot of difficulties arise in the way of interaction between the state and civil society, especially in the security sphere of post-Soviet countries. And so, for the successful implementation of the national security strategy, it is necessary that an understanding of the role and place of NGOs, as the most important institutions after the state in the political system, is consolidated in government and public structures to consolidate the efforts of state and municipal authorities and civil society in ensuring national security. This requires dialogue and partnership between the state and CSOs in order to protect and realize national interests, strengthen national harmony, maintain political and social stability, develop democratic institutions, and improve interaction mechanisms among actors of the political system.

National security directly depends on the design and state of the public administration system. Between the strategic principle of supreme power and the differentiated pluralism of CSOs at the grassroots level, there should be a flexible system of political coordination of executive and legislative authorities at the intermediate level, which coordinate the expression of the will of CSOs to the country's leadership. Social dialogue and partnership in the post-Soviet countries will be most effective if the state will contribute to the formation of CSOs, and will also be able to control only those aspects of political life that are of strategic importance. In other non-strategic issues, CSOs are also given the right to determine the dimensions of political being at the local level.

The creation in the post-Soviet countries of a strong and capable statehood, based on a stable political system, requires the active participation of CSOs in ensuring an integrated political security, taking into account all aspects of this multifactorial phenomenon. A strategy to strengthen civil society, based on the recognition

of the decisive role of CSOs in ensuring the well-being, social, economic, and cultural development of citizens, maintaining internal order, managing and interacting with other states, will be aimed primarily at strengthening the political security of post-Soviet countries. Therefore, in the context of national security, CSOs and political security are of particular importance. Political security is largely associated with various challenges that modern post-Soviet countries face. In this context, the CSO Sustainability Index among the EaP countries and Russia for 2017 is of great importance (see Table 3.3).

Table 3.3 shows that in 2017, the highest level of CSO Sustainability among the countries of the EaP and Russia is Ukraine, and the worst is in Azerbaijan. Belarus was in the penultimate place in the CSOSI. Due to consolidated authoritarian regimes, Belarus and Azerbaijan are the only countries in the EaP region with low resilience of CSOs. For all countries, as can be seen from Table 3.3, financial sustainability continues to be one of the weakest sustainability parameters for post-Soviet CSOs. These countries have limited access to funding, which is why the activity and organizational capacity of post-Soviet CSOs are gradually decreasing. In addition to these countries in Russia, sharply worsening conditions for civil society put Russian CSOs in an increasingly risky situation, similar to the situation in Belarus and Azerbaijan.

The processes of globalization and integration have significantly changed the external and internal environment of the political system of post-Soviet countries, making it necessary to take a fresh look at the numerous political phenomena of CSOs, including political security. The traditional understanding of political security is losing its significance and requires a different interpretation with its broader functions, goals, with other methods and means, and other consequences. The political security of post-Soviet countries means the security of the political system along with influential CSOs. Political security is considered one of the central elements of national security in post-Soviet countries. In that context, political security is a set of measures aimed at ensuring the political system and constructive policy toward CSOs, and at preserving the constitutional legitimacy of state power on the basis of democratic values. In fact, political security is a set of measures to identify, prevent, and eliminate those factors that could harm the political interests of a country, people, society, and citizens, or cause political regression and even political death of the state, as well as transform power and politics from a constructive to a destructive force, a source of misfortune, and misfortune for people of the country. Therefore, the role of CSOs in strengthening the security of government and politics is growing. From this definition, it is clear that the basis for determining the essence and goals of political security is the political interests of the country. This definition not only broadens the spectrum of political security, including all vital institutions, relations, and processes in the political sphere, but also emphasizes the priority to protect the political security of actors such as civil society and citizens. Moreover, it is supposed to protect not only the legitimate authorities, but also the political opposition, as a kind of "guard against stagnation" necessary for the state and society. It is through CSOs that the political system is protected from destructive and destabilizing internal and external influences, thereby contributing to democratic development, a property of the political system, manifested in its stability, dynamism, and ability to maintain

Table 3.3 CSO Sustainability Index (CSOSI) for EaP and Russia in 2017

	CSO sustainability	Legal environment	Organizational capacity	Financial viability	Advocacy	Service provision	Sectoral infrastructure	Public image	Level of sustainability
Armenia	3.7	3.7	3.6	5	3	3.8	3.1	3.9	Sustainability evolving
Azerbaijan	6	6.6	6.1	6.6	5.8	5.4	5.9	5.8	Sustainability impeded
Belarus	5.5	6.8	4.7	6.4	5.2	5	5.1	5.5	Sustainability impeded
Georgia	4.1	3.3	4.4	5	3.7	4.1	4.3	3.8	Sustainability evolving
Moldova	3.8	4.1	3.6	4.5	3.1	4.2	3.3	3.9	Sustainability evolving
Russia	4.7	5.8	4.5	4.9	4.7	4.2	4	5.1	Sustainability evolving
Ukraine	3.2	3.5	3.2	4.2	2.1	3.2	3.2	3.3	Sustainability evolving

its essential characteristics. Obviously, in the absence of contradictions in the trans-formation and development that can lead to sharp qualitative changes or destruction, the most important attribute characteristic of the social system is the condition for its evolutionary and progressive development. It is significant that through CSOs, political security is based on political goals and values, such as reestablishing rela-tions between citizen and public institutions, or in CSOs of regional dialogue and partnerships, thereby maintaining a level of sustainable development, effectively overcoming threats and conflicts. As practice shows, in post-Soviet countries CSO threats may come from: conflicting interests of social groups; the pace and direc-tion of change; political struggle outside the legal framework; some unlawful acts of political power; actions of individual states or the international community in the framework of geopolitical confrontation and others. It is civil society in the post-Soviet space that creates a system of political values that forms the civiliarchic core of political culture, the spiritual quintessence of the needs and interests of CSOs, and is one of the most important incentives for political action and behavior of individuals (Fukuyama 2018).

Thus, political security presupposes the existence of sustainable political sovereignty within the framework of the system of interstate relations and politi-cal stability of the post-Soviet civil society, achieved by the formation of a political system that ensures a balance of interests of various social groups based on the prior-ity of the individual. The absence of both the first and the second inevitably destroys the political security of the country. Political security is characterized by a state in which political pluralism and the associated political struggle do not acquire the character of an antagonistic confrontation, which undermines the foundations of the existence of both the state and civil society.

3.5   Conclusion

Post-Soviet civil society with its focus on human rights, the rule of law and consti-tutional liberalism has its own value and has significant stabilizing potential. CSOs regulate political activity, reproduce, and consolidate certain political relations, sub-ject to the principle of continuity and continuity. The institutionalization of civil society is a process through which political relations gain stability. This means that the political system receives the necessary basis for partnership with CSOs precisely for the implementation of the necessary changes without destruction. As a result of a comprehensive analysis of the most difficult political processes experienced by post-Soviet countries from the twentieth century to the twenty-first century (includ-ing managed democratic transit and post-authoritarian development), it becomes clear that the modern post-Soviet model of civil society is a developed network of NGOs, social media, civic initiatives, and movements that promote democratic con-solidation. Despite significant achievements, this model is currently under pressure from new political risks and challenges associated with the high social expectations of society and the search for tools to implement greater social justice on the one

hand, and the need to continue effective economic policy, on the other. This deep contradiction, being a factor in potential conflicts of modern civil societies, forces politicians to reconsider the compromises that were once concluded and to correct development projects at each new stage. However, refusing to analyze the civil society of the post-Soviet countries as a whole would, it seems to us, be premature. Firstly, there are enough criteria by which the initial stage of political development of these countries at the turn of the 1990s can be considered common (redistribution of state property, regime transformation, decline in quality of life, liberalism, elite minority, a strong power vertical, weak governance and political opposition, and an institutional vacuum, ethno-political conflict). Secondly, within these subgroups themselves, the similarity of transformation models is also traced, which makes it possible to assess the effects of various institutional choices and political decisions and their impact on subsequent development. Finally, thirdly, far from all the countries under consideration have reached the level where it is possible to speak with confidence about the success or failure of modernization and democratization, which means that with the further development of transformational processes, civiliarchic factors will inevitably be included in them.

The modernization of post-Soviet political regimes, while maintaining a common strategy for any democratic transit, should be based on its own cultural tradition and in this sense have a conservative character, while, of course, eliminating the stagnation and static nature of the authoritarian content of power. This kind of modernization can only be carried out with the preservation of the socializing vertical of the executive branch due to the need to maintain legitimacy in the democratic process.

The constructive potential of CSOs in the newly independent states is obvious. After the anarchy of the 1990s, in the context of a strong vertical of power and personified presidential power, CSOs nevertheless managed to consolidate various social groups of the country and restore the controllability of public power, having successfully fought against corruption and clan communities. Moreover, it is the strong CSOs of the newly independent states that form the main core of traditionally oriented modernization that are platforms of special support from USA, Council of Europe, OSCE, and the EU.

The main civiliarchic heritage of the transformation of the post-Soviet countries, which gave rise to a modern political system, is the constitutional order based on democratic values, which are trying to ensure the modernization of legal, ethical and religious norms, public and local bureaucratic management, and the establishment of civil and social dialogue. The difference between the genesis and functioning directions of post-Soviet civil society from the West, special qualitative characteristics, such as: a significant presence in the political sphere and the priority of consolidation on the basis of public rather than individual interests, shows the social functions of the communicator of CSOs in the dialogue between citizens and authorities.

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Chapter 4
Security Risk Analysis Perspectives on Central Asia Dynamics

Mihail Păduraru and Claudia-Iohana Voicu

4.1 Security Concepts in Central Asia to the Security Concept

In the new complex security environment, states are undergoing a paradigm shift, defined by *collective security*. As an *element of action*, security is the ability of a system to preserve its functional characteristics under the action of destructive factors which may cause the system to change so that it becomes dangerous to the environment or to the health (including life) of the people who are there in the area of action, causing material, informational, or moral damages. As a *cybernetic process*, security has its own development, a precise objective (stability), a specific legislation, and an adequate technological support and is based on strategies, norms, methodologies, technologies, processes, actions, and specialized institutions, capable of providing security services, safety, protection, trust, surveillance, but also conditions for the availability and viability of their systems and users.

For a system, security acts both as an amplifier of the *positive reaction* (to increase the efficiency) and as a limiter of the *negative reaction* (at the limit of dynamic stability) and the effects of destabilizing factors. Consequently, security is, in fact, the main quality parameter (integrating the elements of reliability, adaptability, and stability) of all processes and systems, without which efficiency is not possible. Pragmatically, the concept of security can be equivalent to the phrase "absence of

M. Păduraru · C.-I. Voicu (✉)
Chamber of Commerce and Industry Romania-Turkmenistan, Bucharest, Romania
e-mail: iohana.voicu@ccirom-tkm.ro

Bucharest Academy of Economic Studies, Bucharest, Romania

M. Păduraru
National Intelligence Academy, Bucharest, Romania

C.-I. Voicu
Military Technical Academy, Bucharest, Romania

danger," and that of insecurity with the phrase "presence of danger." Therefore, high security corresponds to low danger, and low security corresponds to high danger.

Global strategies, homogeneous or hierarchical, aim to achieve an exhaustive security, either homogeneous on a certain level of security (minimal, sufficient, covering, or secure) or hierarchical on different levels of security for certain components, services, information, or users. The costs of global strategies are high, and their effectiveness depends on the security level established the functional importance of the protected component in the system and the accepted risk levels. But in order to maintain its relevance in the current context, the security concept, seen as a social function, must become more than a tranquility, harmony, and well-being insurer. Security must be seen as the ability of the international community to maintain the balance of power between states so that any individual and society as a whole can benefit from the best state services and maintain a sense of protection.

In addition, one can argue that the active dynamics of the modern-day security environment will revolutionize, reform, and transform at least four areas of social life: community structure, identity dynamics, collective actions, and social order and control. The changes experienced by these four segments converge toward modeling two paradigms specific to the security-based society: a paradigm of networks (marked by changes in the dynamics and social structure, identity, and collective action) and another paradigm of surveillance and monitoring systems (characterized by the new type of social order and control).

In this chapter, we will show that the development of the network paradigm represents the transformation in the social dynamics of communities and in their structure, by multiplying the frames of reference that the individual can use, because nowadays, more than ever, the individual identity loses its monolithic valences, being in a constant construction. Thus, through social mechanisms, the individual, as part of the community, can be influenced, remodeled, and nuanced according to the characteristics of each community. Furthermore, the surveillance and monitor system paradigm is also in a continuous transformation, constantly adapted to the new social challenges in the physical and virtual environment, depending on the security requirements and the needs that society develops in contrast with the spread of new technologies and different types of atypical threats. This way, the globalization processes in the modern world, international cooperation, and demand for continuous transparency have various and variable influences on the general security system of a country. And last, as military capabilities increased globally, to avoid the risk of a new large-scale conflict, state actors have moved away from classical warfare and resorted to a "war waged by other means" and yet, geopolitical rivalries remained unchanged in the quest for a position of influence. Increasing complexity of social, political, economic, and military relations between state and non-state actors demands from policymakers a deep understanding of global and regional dynamics. Therefore, in order to avoid "black swans" (Nassim 2007) and to address the knowledge gaps, researchers have resorted to design new methods of analysis focused on future risks identification and early warning indicators. Thus, the main objective of intelligence analysis researchers is to create a practical instrument for both specialists and policymakers that can decipher the future in relation to atypical threats and their root causes.

4.2   Security Threats

In the following pages, with a simple but effective method, we will briefly illustrate how we built a case study which described the main security challenges in the Central Asia region. The region was chosen due to its challenging nature, fragile stability, and sensitive geographical position. Moreover, since Central Asia is facing a covert multi-speed transformation process, the political, economic, and security developments remain uncertain and difficult to predict accurately. We have looked, for example, at how hard and soft power elements are intertwined with climate security in Central Asia. Some threats have chronic roots, inherited from the Soviet past (Ubiria 2015), and others have arisen as a result of the building of new national identities.

At the same time, extensive hydrocarbon reserves and mineral resources have increased the importance of the Central Asia region, while neighboring countries have started battles for gaining access and influence in the area. The Russia–China New Great Game has become a problem of strategic importance in the region since each of the two powers wants to decrease their need for food and energy while securing a low price for their growing imports.

Additionally, Central Asia hosts a network of trade corridors that ensure the flow of commerce between Europe and Asia. So, the stability in the region is mandatory to ensure the operational continuity of global trade and international projects. Planned large-scale infrastructure projects such as the pipeline projects, or the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) linking regional hubs, and transport corridors are essential for the sustainability of the global economy and efficient resource distribution.

Furthermore, the former Soviet countries underwent a difficult transition in order to design their new national identities after the fall of USSR. The Soviet political and security legacy, economic competition, and border demarcation issues that prevail among the newly formed states were the main reasons for the lack of interest toward cooperation in the region. Moreover, mistrust and lack of dialogue regarding common political and economic issues deepened the cleavages between communities and the countries in region, which are serious threats for long-term stability. Therefore, new challenges arose such as separatism, ethnic tensions, clan territory disputes, insurgency and terrorism, drug and weapons trafficking, and environmental problems (Bichsel 2009). Also, other threats arose from the surrounding geopolitical dynamics, proximity to an ongoing war in Afghanistan, the prevalence of proxy and hybrid warfare, as well as the Arab Spring and color revolutions. All these phenomena led to isolationism as a defense mechanism for all former Soviet republics

4.3   Risk Analysis

As illustrated earlier, risk analysis is an interactive process and involves assessing the situation, identifying and evaluating risk factors, determining the risks, and defining

the mechanisms of reaction and governance of the process. The assessment of security risks and the processes governed by risk consists of: establishing the objectives of the investigation for evaluation, collecting, processing, analysis of the information circumscribed to the objectives and processes, establishing the techniques of investigation and evaluation, elaborating the evaluation report, and formalizing the problems governed by risk (Ilie 2009). Hence, the perception of risk must be oriented toward knowing the reality, understanding the risk factors and consequences, thus becoming directly correlated with the level, the amplitude, or the evolution of the risk. The procedural knowledge, for example, is the social or procedural development and must be oriented toward the disclosure of the causes and correlations, to the evaluation of the impact and the frequencies of production and thus realizing the basis of the forecasts of future events. The harmonization of the differences of thought and concern must be supported by the deepening of the cognitive process, which is the basis of understanding, forecasting, and planning. The acceptance of the reality ought to be oriented toward the analysis of the evolution, and the deduction of causes, as well as the in-depth understanding of the phenomena in order to confront them, exploit them, or govern them.

In other words, risk is assimilated to danger and hazard, but in our context, risk does not only reflect danger or hazard, it can also have a positive connotation. In order to remove this contradiction of perception, it is necessary to approach the concept of risk so that it imposes the obligation to analyze and accept the risk, to treat it, to perceive it, to evaluate it, and to determine it, going beyond the stage of judging the risk as it is considered in everyday life. At the same time, the concept of risk cannot remain in the theoretical sphere, needing to be illustrated by specific situations, by real cases, both representative and particular. The concept of risk must take into account the elements of the apperceptive knowledge, which will guide one toward conclusions, synthesis, and even abstractions, as follows: *descriptive knowledge*— facts, happenings, and consequences must be oriented toward understanding and explaining (Ilie 2006a).

Concluding on the elements that define the concept of risk, it is necessary to emphasize that knowledge is a complex process, based on conceptuality, methodology, and procedure, with direct, intense, and continuous participation. Equally, knowledge must provide the necessary information and constructions for substantiating decisions that allow significant reduction of uncertainty and the proximity of residual uncertainty, but which can be mastered by rational assumption of risk.

As well, it is important to take into consideration the risk communication process, which implies, such as the existence of the subject, which must be an element of interest for both communicators and those to whom the subject is transmitted; the credibility of the subject, which is part of the motto that truth and trust are the fundamental elements of communication; the will to communicate, which must manifest itself in all situations (for good and for evil), at all levels, and the possibility of anticipating the occurrence of events by eliminating surprise and uncertainty (as much as possible), increasing the rationality and participation in informed knowledge.

According to the standard, risk represents the effect of uncertainty on the situation, with the following meanings which are, firstly, determined by the potential events

and consequences characterize the risk, **R**; secondly, by the product between the consequences, **C**, of an event and its plausibility, **p**, (possibility, probability, and frequency) determines the level of risk, **R = p * C**; and thirdly, by the *Uncertainty* represents the lack of information regarding the understanding, causes, consequence, plausibility, and event. Hence, risk refers to potential events, consequences, or their combination and is expressed as a combination of consequences and the plausibility of an event (probability and possibility). The risk, **R**, represents the probability of an unwanted event occurring, E_n, **p**, expressed by the formula **R = p (E_n)**. Thus, **R** represents the product between the probability of the occurrence of an unwanted event, **p**, and the impact, **I**, or the consequences, **C**, of it, which are illustrated by the formulas **R = p * C** and **R = p * I**, respectively. Also, the risk, **R**, represents the conjunction between a threat, **A**, and a vulnerability, **V**, which makes possible an unwanted event, thus **R = A * V** (Ilie 2011).

From these definitions and formalizations, the following conclusions can be drawn, for example, the greater the risk, the greater the probability of the occurrence of an unwanted event (with negative consequences), the greater the impact or consequences and the higher the possible threats and vulnerabilities; the risk is lower, as the same elements have lower levels. The attribution for an event of a certain risk (a certain value) is conditioned by two factors: the possibility of the unwanted event occurring and the consequences of its occurrence (Ilie 2013).

Returning to the characterization of the risk identification stage, we emphasize that this implies the perception of the risks and the causes (factors) that produce them and must take into account, such as (1) causality and consequences of risk factors; (2) the time horizons in which they manifest themselves; and (3) the correlations of causes and factors and their cumulative tendencies. The research methodology used to obtain the results presented in this study involved rigorous documentation applied in stages that are specific to the intelligence cycle, as follows: The planning stage, which involves careful planning in order to establish the key intelligence needs (Heuer Jr 2007). The process of gathering information is an essential process of investigation for risk analysis and not an adjacent one, as seen by many analysts. No matter how good an analyst is, one cannot substantiate the hypotheses or determine the results or causal links without the knowledge process on which he relies to ensure an adequate level of credibility, according to the volume, quality, and availability of the information collected for analysis.[1] For the analysis of information, the two

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[1]The intelligence gathering stage is supposed to organize a structured system of OSINT sources from which the information was subsequently extracted according to five criteria such as credibility, objectivity, III. accuracy, relevance, and completeness. The collection of information is not a mere gathering of information, but an activity of comparative analysis and research in order to clarify all the investigated aspects. In order to reduce the amount of information, the *processing stage* involves dropping the collected information through objectivity, accuracy, and relevance. Therefore, the synthesis and analysis stage involves the transformation of the information that was collected and processed in the previous stages into intelligence, through structured analysis methods. In this stage, the aim is to highlight the information that was in full agreement with the objectives of the study. The analysis of information aims to establish the level of credibility, relevance, availability, usefulness, and completeness of the information, as well as the predictive indices for the future evolution of the investigated process in order to anticipate a risk.

most commonly used analysis techniques are known: aggregate analysis and case analysis. This aggregate analysis characterizes the veracity and correlation of the information collected through statistical–mathematical techniques, as well as the correlations between different characteristics, a systematic representation, and the possibility of aggregation according to different criteria in order to elaborate the (strategic) synthesis information. The aggregation function must be sensitive (the variations of the function are determined by the variations of the arguments) and non-compensatory (the variations of the variables are not compensated), and the stage of drafting the intelligence product, followed by its dissemination to the OSCE, involves the transformation by coherent aggregation of the intelligence obtained through analysis, into knowledge. Thus, the final intelligence report is obtained and then displayed in a legible, coherent, and comprehensive format. During the research, the following predetermined objectives were taken into account, namely first, the selection of relevant data and information so that a solid study can be carried out, both methodologically and through the quality of the documentary value. Secondly, the defining a reference framework in accordance with OSCE standards, which will allow future research in order to anticipate unforeseen events that could adversely affect the dynamics of the Central Asian region's development. We used a number of exactly 100 risk factors and indicators that can influence the future security dynamics in the Central Asia region have been identified. They are divided into different sets of factors and indicators, sub-categorized into the following categories: political, security, economic, social, military, and environment. Both the factors and the risk indicators were compared to obtain the two most relevant ones, which can be used to create a 2/2 matrix in order to develop a number of four possible scenarios in a future research. Subsequently, a regional security index was created by assigning weights and measurement scales to each indicator for each country in the region separately. Due to the detailed break-down of identified relevant factors which determine the current security climate of the studied region, the index is an accurate tool to identify vulnerabilities and to measure the overall threat level. As the end results emphasize the elements which have a significant impact in the region, the results can be used in future in-depth studies.

For each stage of the research methodology, clear and coherent criteria have been established to highlight the objectives pursued. The criteria were introduced in some calculation matrices and scientifically measured to determine comparable results. By this method, mathematical (quantifiable) values could be attributed to subjective intelligence data, thus the result being an objective study, both quantitative and qualitative.

4.4   The Risk Factors

The main vulnerability identified was "social cohesion," and it represents the factor with the highest risk weight in our analysis that can influence the future political dynamics of the region. To provide context, to guarantee stability and predictability,

Central Asian states need to have a clear mechanism set in place to ensure a smooth transfer of power in case of a sudden power vacuum. However, as all the five nation-states are still young, state-building and nation-building processes are still under development. With the exception of Kyrgyzstan, all the other four regional state leaders have chosen to name successors in order to maintain stability and continuation of their political legacy.

Also, there is a widespread belief that the assimilation of western democratic values and organizing of open elections could bring chaos and weaken the current political elites by stimulating opposition. Moreover, regional leaders are threatened by internal forces and potential opposing coalitions and thus focus on regime survival above all else. As such, regional leaders have adopted a clientelist and authoritarian approach, strengthening their intelligence organizations and police forces. As a result of this, "internal police forces have been enjoying greater state resources than regular armies in all Central Asian states" (Blank 2012).

The second issue identified was "authoritarianism," a threat to global market access which can be defined by local trade barriers, corruption, excessive bureaucracy, and a lack of a proper physical and regulatory infrastructure due to limited regional cooperation. In other words, economic development in Central Asia is hampered by insufficient real economic cooperation and states' unwillingness to implement mutually beneficial strategies to common issues in areas such as energy, water, and agriculture. Namely, local regimes' chronic mistrust and preference for zero sum games prevents reaching an agreement on long-term issues such as creating new energy and water supply management systems to address the water–energy exchange mechanism nexus inherited from Soviet times. Another point of urgency of a common agenda instead of national self-sufficiency attempts is the impending water crisis in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan, which could lead to an agricultural blockage and potentially destabilize the entire region.

Likewise, research showed causality between capital flight and low FDIs, corruption, institutional weakness, and rule of law deficiencies. To emphasize, the absence of dialogue and conflict resolution mechanisms, in addition to local corruption, foreign capital restrictions, and overregulation, creates an unattractive investment environment as they raise the cost of doing business. The perception is enforced by a weak rule of law as an element of uncertainty, as countries lack agreement enforcement guaranties and investors lose confidence in their contracts being honored or resource availability in case of disaccord.

Another key point is that due to geographical positioning, resource distribution, and infrastructure, it is impossible for any Central Asian country to develop a sustainable economy without engaging in regional cooperation (Paun 1997). That is to say that an economically sustainable system must have the capability to ensure countries' growing goods and services demands while maintaining manageable levels of public debt, without creating extreme sectoral imbalances. With this in mind, the analysis of the political and economic index segments revealed a strong link between government policies and potential external support or loss of support.

Under the circumstances, it is clear why, while building their identity as new states, Central Asian countries mostly balanced the fragile geopolitical environment

by preferring bilateral agreements to multilateralism. Moreover, due to its position, the region has long been seen as a strategic chessboard for great power expansion, nowadays having to navigate foreign economic relations and diverging interests of actors such as China, Russia, the USA, the EU, Iran, India, and Pakistan. Significant in this case is the before-mentioned Russian-Chinese New Great Game in the region, which uses investment and export infrastructure dependency as leverage. Russia is the traditional transit route for bringing European goods and services to Central Asian markets, while also providing the infrastructure for regional countries to export their goods to Europe.

4.5   Case Study: Ukraine and Its Push Factor to Central Asia and Russia

The Ukraine conflict has exposed nations' vulnerability for their local economies, as logistical complications have made trade dependent on the geopolitical status quo. In addition, the crisis also became a direct threat for the business environment in Kazakhstan's case, due to the country's strong economic relations with Ukraine, while also marginally affecting small- and medium-sized enterprises in the rest of the region.

Simultaneously, these evolutions show that the international community's concerns regarding the economic sanctions imposed on Russia, and Russia-West mutual commodity trade slowdowns were not far off. International sanctions meant Russia's economic stagnation, labor market reduction, and ruble devaluation, while also lowering global hydrocarbon market prices (one of Central Asia's main source of revenue). Though all of Central Asia faced economic uncertainty due to strong ties to the Russian economy, the most affected was Kazakhstan, a founding member of the EAEU.

The economic circumstances reduced investments from Russia to the region, as well as labor migrant remittances. Another key point is that the Ukrainian crisis' ripple effects included the souring of the Customs Union activity, directly affecting Central Asia's economic security. The reason for this is Kazakhstan and Belarus' refusal to support Russian sanctions on EU, US, and allied imports. To add on this, as Central Asians began to feel the economic consequences of the trade war between the West and Russia, regimes began to question the economic dependency on the Russian economy and seek alternatives without damaging their ties to Moscow. Partnership with Russia based on Eurasian integration is not the only option for Central Asian states. Alternative economic projects should not be viewed with distrust or as a political aggression toward Russia.

To have a clearer picture which supports the understanding of the geopolitical complexity of the Central Asian area, one should analyze the Ukraine case. Furthermore, the conflict in Ukraine generated multiple events which changed the geopolitical configuration of Eurasia. In 2014, a disagreement between Russia and Ukraine regarding

the use of the Russian strategic military base from Black Sea set the premises for the invasion of the Crimea peninsula by Russian forces. The conflict later expanded to Donbas and Lughansk and led Ukraine into an internal war.

Moreover, the new geopolitical hotspot in Eastern Europe became the target of a mix of hybrid tactics matched by classical military actions, designed to legitimize Russia's presence and destabilize the country from within. Thus, the weaponization of ethnic tensions, social discontent, and the spread of propaganda and disinformation can expose the vulnerabilities of multiethnic societies where multiple identities coexist in the ideological field of a single state. This social engineering set of tactics is effective due to the Ukrainian government's failure to cultivate a unitary national sentiment, and the lack of a consistent domestic policy to address minorities' alignment with a common set of values.

Correspondingly, the evolution of Eastern Ukraine served as an example for Central Asian states, which also have significant ethnic Russian minorities, showcasing the need to implement a strong domestic policy to discourage potential dissidence. As such, all states tightened government control of interethnic relations, religious practices, and language policies. It is noteworthy to mention the proactivity of Kazakhstan, which also hosts the largest Russian community and chose to actively develop an interethnic accord. To compare, in response to religious tensions and the growth of an Islamic party, the Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan (IRPT), Tajikistan, chose to adopt a set of repressive measures that severely restricts the Muslim community and scrutinizes any religious gathering or association.

Also, since the operations in Crimea and, later on in Donetsk, proved that artificially joining "divided people" and targeting social fissures can create large ruptures in states' stability, it is likely that the scenarios will be repeated. Consequently, Central Asian regimes are trying to prevent the intensification of ethnic or confessional public movements, which could instigate wider revolts and threaten their legitimacy. Furthermore, the Ukrainian crisis showcased an additional challenge in social changes—the growth of militaristic sentiments in certain population groups due to discontent over government policies and a slow rate of development, all of which are fueled by the information background pushed in the media landscape.

In Central Asia's case, it is likely that the employment of similar tactics to destabilize current leadership could try to grow the Islamic solidarity-based identity and target Muslim groups (Jonson 2006), particularly in areas like the Ferghana Valley. Going forward with this scenario, a military intervention into the region would stimulate a rise in popular support of extremist organizations and the potential resurgence of an Islamic State, especially as all Central Asian countries are dealing with the return of foreign fighters since the fall of Daesh.

Moreover, the emergence of information warfare tested in Ukraine exposed a new set of vulnerabilities of the five regional states as their security systems are still highly interlinked with Russian technological and training assistance. Similarly, the weakness regarding information-flow control is also applicable to the entire public sector. The region's countries do not have a strong, authentic, and locally created information area. They still maintain a dependency on foreign media, particularly

of Russian origin. Consequently, local perception of political and economic realities is skewed by the perspective of external actors with their own foreign policy preferences.

In addition, the regional security index shows a higher level of instability risk for countries with a higher percentage of Russian-speaking minorities, as their discontent could be used as justification for military Russian intervention, as per the Ukrainian precedent. Moreover, local leaders' delays in simplifying Russian citizenship procedures for USSR-born individuals or their descendants are an acknowledgment of this risk. This potential threat is particularly relevant as Russian media outlets periodically demand legitimation of territorial claims against Kazakhstan and a number of other Central Asian territories. Also, during the height of the Ukrainian crisis, Russia systemized the management of labor migrants from Central Asia and the interaction with their most influential leaders. Additionally, a bill introduced for debate in the Federal Duma proposed an enhancement of the powers of ethnic and cultural autonomous communities by converting them into not-for-profit entities. This would entail the possibility of direct financing and turning them into vehicles for influence.

Further fueling Central Asia's mistrust and suspicion, the changes of Russia's borders after the addition of Crimea, as well as previous military involvement in regions with strong separatist sentiments such as the Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic, Abkhazia, and Ossetia sent a wave of insecurity through the entire former Soviet space. States changed their perception of the strength of their own borders against potential foreign military operations, especially as Central Asia is dealing with border demarcation issues, uncontrolled enclaves, and a diverse ethnic environment dominated by clans with dormant territorial claims (Collins 2006).

More uncertainty was added by Russia's accelerated strengthening of its military presence in the region, by setting up new military bases in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan and upping its military contingent in both countries. By the same token, the security indicators analyzed show increased militarization and an emphasis on policy of force among all the five countries. Similar significant threats include the lack of an independent cybersecurity infrastructure in every country, which could prevent the use of Internet resources by extremist groups to recruit people and conduct illicit trade, as well as potential disseminate unauthorized state secrets.

Additionally, collaborations with foreign entities which possess valuable know-how and could help advance the local economy is made difficult by excessive bureaucracy and state controls. This is a due to the fact that, to prevent potential replication of "color revolutions" in the region, which in Ukraine have led not only to a change of the political regime, but also to a civil war, Central Asian government authorities have been enhancing supervision of the tertiary sector—NGOs, Internet media, social networks, and foreign grant programs.

4.6 The Role of China in Risk Analysis

China has strengthened its position in the region and maintains its neutral status without engaging in any conflict overtly. China is the only strong global economic partner that has stepped up the implementation of major economic projects in Central Asia. Furthermore, the Silk Road Economic Belt project and its implementation are in synergy with the Eurasian integration processes. China is becoming an increasingly important investor and lender to the countries of the region. Beijing is trying to expand its road and rail infrastructure to export various Chinese goods not only to Central Asia, but also to Europe. The alternative to Russia's infrastructure with the most potential is China's BRI, which transits Central Asia, creating a direct trade corridor toward European markets.

Russia's actions in Ukraine have led Beijing to diversify its methods and make more efforts to intensify its influence operations in both Central Asia and the Asia-Pacific region. It is expected that China will also grow its mechanisms for economic cooperation in Central Asia, especially taking into account China's increasing energy demand and Central Asia's need to diversify its export markets. China is the largest importer of energy resources from Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. At the same time is the main economic partner for most countries of the Central Asia region. China filled the void left by the Russian economy's contraction and is currently building its economic presence in "Greater Central Asia," taking on large-scale infrastructure projects and investments. Thus, it is likely that it will deepen cooperation with regional regimes such as Turkmenistan, which need support to finance TAPI and export gas and oil to Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India (Kalyuzhnova 2008).

For local regimes, a new challenge will be to navigate between China's expansion of military interest in the region without losing the support of its traditional ally—Russia. An example in this case is China's creation of the Quadrilateral Cooperation and Coordination Mechanism (QCCM), which includes Tajikistan, Pakistan, and Afghanistan, on top of the existing SCO and CSTO security cooperation frameworks (Korzun 2018).

To address these risks and ensure their countries' proper autonomous development and interests, Central Asian leaders would have to develop a political and economic hedging strategy between Russian and Chinese interests (Jackson 2014). As the lines are blurring between economic and political agendas, regional leaders' weariness of potential effects of foreign influence on their countries' security is not unfounded (Geeraerts and Salan 2016).

4.7 Key Findings and Conclusion

Based on above-mentioned methods and case studies, a regional security ranking of the states was created, taking into account their overall score. The first position, of the most secure and stable state, was occupied by Kazakhstan, followed by Uzbekistan,

Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. Moreover, even though traditional rankings such as Global Firepower 2019 Military Strength Ranking (Global Firepower 2019) place Uzbekistan higher than Kazakhstan in terms of pure military strength, when also taking into account elements relating to troops' military sentiment, such as discontent over benefits, corruption, technology used, and other adjacent factors, the security index places Kazakhstan in first place.

Additionally, research showed discontent in all the five member states over the slow integration of new technology in the public sector infrastructure. Though Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have taken several steps to adapt to the digital economy, including developing their own cybersecurity systems, technical and administrative assistance from other countries or international organizations is needed to build the whole infrastructure (Omelicheva 2015).

In terms of business-friendly policies and economic competitiveness, Kazakhstan was the highest ranked among the states, while Tajikistan the last. Likewise, the same result arose from comparing quality of life. Also, regarding personal freedoms, while Turkmenistan ranked worst overall for religious freedom due to the severity of the repressive measures taken against religious minorities, the lowest score was received by Tajikistan.

The "three evil forces, radicalism, extremism, and terrorism" (Doyon 2019) exploit the problems already existing in society and economy in order to spread dissatisfaction and incite ethnic conflicts. Countermeasures should target the use of the Internet for terrorist and extremist purposes along with monitoring citizens of SCO states who have been involved in fighting activities in Syria, Iraq, or other states.

The fact that a large number of the population of Central Asian countries live in poverty can lead to a sense of marginalization, and, under the umbrella of this, individuals could seek refuge in religion. This vulnerability could be exploited by certain terrorist–extremist groups. Ignorance and lack of access to a decent education, in conjunction with the fear of publicly debating the issue of extremism and terrorism, may be a fertile ground for the development of extremism and radicalism in the region (Navrotskyy 2013).

However, in the recent years, Central Asian governments have stepped up their policies in the fight against terrorism and adopted preventive measures that have kept away terrorist attacks. The same measures must be taken to combat ethnic separatism. Transnational relations have negative connotations in the Central Asian region, such as cross-border organized crime, drug trafficking, ethnic and religious extremism. Moreover, these threats reflect the need for transnational cooperation and collective mobilization with the potential to eliminate cultural and social stereotypes that come as historical baggage (Cooley 2012). Increased transnationalism should not be seen as an alternative to national identities that are indispensable for regional cooperation and integration.

Weak democratic institutions and restrictions on society have made the countries of the Central Asia region unattractive as economic partners at interstate or corporate level (Omelicheva 2015). Neither investors nor businessmen trust that the contracts will be honored or that they will be treated fair by the authorities in the event of a

dispute or unforeseen situation. In the last years, due to corruption, weak legislation, and the prevalence of organized crime, the cost of business activities increases exponentially, creating economic uncertainty (Canfield and Paleczek 2011).

To sum up, the following aspects should be emphasized that first, it is essential to direct attention from internal threats to international cooperation with western partners in order to identify solutions for common problems. Secondly, it is imperative to initiate and develop a set of institutional partnerships aimed to address the foreign fighters' issue. Thirdly, it is important to organize working groups or videoconferences between officials from specialized western institutions and decision-makers and analysts from Central Asian countries, on issues related to extremism, ethnic separatism as well as other topics in the area of atypical threats, and last, in the field of counter-terrorism, it is necessary to transfer knowledge from the tactical to the strategic level regarding capacity building with respect for international laws and human rights, regarding understanding motivations, monitoring activities, cooperation between intelligence agencies and prohibition of certain rights for specific individuals.

When we look at Central Asia, one should take into consideration that the overall level of security and stability can erode quickly into a major conflict in the area due to its strategic position as a buffer between large powers. If one considers that the security forces of the Central Asian states are accustomed to an obedient population, one that is controlled and which dares not oppose the regime, the following questions are raised, primarily how would security forces from Central Asian states react to a confrontation with a well-defined, trained, and armed group, focused on causing chaos? It is also unclear, what support could the governments of Central Asian states expect from their citizens? If attacked, or faced with domestic challenges, to whom will Ashgabat, a neutral country with no clear defense agreements, ask for immediate help? If militants of an extremist or terrorist organizations intensified their activities in Central Asia, what would be the reaction of neighbors such as Russia, China, or Iran?

Traditional security concerns such as interstate rivalries and the security dilemma resulting from them can be applied in the context of Central Asia. Since the region can be considered an unstructured regional formation or a multilayered security complex, this gives rise to security challenges associated with the lack of coordination between countries (Haas 2016).

Also, the main security threats and risks in the Central Asian countries have internal roots and are direct consequence of weak governance policies. As in other fragile states, these challenges refer to identity issues. The absence of national cohesion and the weak institutions of the Central Asian countries represent strong internal risks to the governance regimes. These vulnerabilities generate responses of "regime stability policy" from the government. Under those policies, the short-term survival strategies of the regime replace long-term state-building policies.

At the international level, the security challenges in Central Asia are determined by the peripheral character of the Central Asia region in the global context. Considering the absence of an effective regional structure as a recognized security provider, this determines the presence of extra-regional actors of public and private nature

in the region. As a rule, this presence is associated with the desire to gain access to natural resources or with the desire to implement geopolitical projects that may bring new and very important security risks in the region. In addition, Central Asian states assume their satellite status quo and gravitate around different regional powers in the immediate vicinity. Thus, there is a risk of special importance, namely the fragmentation of the regional unit that can cause a transformation of the entire regional structure.

Finally, one of the most important security risks for the Central Asian countries is the ability of certain regional and international powers to influence and alter the perceptions of international law. This is caused by Central Asia's lack of its own internal and regional structures to provide complete security and tackle emerging challenges quickly. Therefore, the ongoing transformation and modernization process of the entire region could be the biggest security risk for the coming years.

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Chapter 5
China's Development Objectives and Its Belt and Road Initiative in the OSCE Region

Davron Ishnazarov

5.1 Introduction

The economic and political influence of China is growing intensively, and Europe is becoming more interconnected with Asia, particularly thanks to connectivity projects under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) that are causing the transformation of the OSCE region. The BRI has been referred to as the Chinese pivot towards the East; a regional integration project aimed at improving economic and trade cooperation among the participating states since its launch in 2013. The initial stages of the BRI idea started prior to 2013, and in recent years, there has been considerable debate over BRI's core objectives, whether it seeks economic benefits or if rather it pursues geopolitical and military goals. Essentially, BRI has the potential to provide significant advantages to China in all of these areas. It would also be a false assumption to expect that there is a single Chinese government endeavour behind the initiative. There are many other factors and actors whose actions under different powerful social circumstances contribute to the shaping of the BRI. More comprehensive and fair judgement can be made by examining perspectives from local, regional and global actors. The Central Asia region, being an important part of the ancient Silk Road due to its geographic proximity to China and its natural resource wealth, plays an important role in the BRI. In contrast to maritime projects and Chinese agreements with its neighbours in South and East Asia, China sees inland projects in Eurasia and Central Asia in particular as pursuing predominantly economic goals. For instance, construction of new rail lines and roads in Central Asia that connects China with Europe will cut the transportation time from China to Europe several times, compared to existing sea transportation routes. For example, rail infrastructure projects from China through Central Asia, with several alternative routes going through Russia or Turkey to the German city of Duisburg, the first stop in Europe for 80% of

D. Ishnazarov (✉)

Area Studies Program, Graduate School of Social Sciences, Middle East Technical University, Ankara, Turkey

e-mail: davron.ishnazarov@metu.edu.tr

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trains coming from China, will cut the transportation time from 40 days on the sea to 12 days by rail.[1]

The BRI refers to a 'Silk Road Economic Belt' on the land, a 'Twenty-First Century Maritime Silk Road' on the sea, and more recently, through releasing its Arctic policy white paper, China also included a 'Polar Silk Road'[2] into the initiative. Regarded as a hard dimension, through developing infrastructure projects on land and sea, the BRI is expected to lead to better connectivity, reduction in trade costs and other economic benefits. The soft dimension considers the fostering of policy coordination, creating single economic windows, free trade agreements, socio-cultural integration and other factors to limit administrative obstacles for the easy movement of financial capital, people and products, as well as ideas and technologies.

Recent studies, however, highlight that the BRI is a Chinese grand strategy to combat the US primacy in the global political and economic arena (Rolland 2017; Aoyama 2016). With regard to Central Asian countries, as they have been under the economic and political influence of Russia, the BRI projects challenge Russian hegemony in the region. Today, China has become the top investor and trade partner of the Central Asian states. Russia tries to balance the Chinese influence thanks to its long-term political, economic and military presence, and its historical and cultural ties with the region, but its response to challenge China in its neighbourhood—in South and Southeast Asia region—was not impressive due to the relatively limited investment capacity of Russia. It is worth noting that Russia has a technological, military and financial capacity and competence to become an important player in Africa where China is a principal player.

Overall, with the coming to power of President Xi Jinping, China systematically commenced its open foreign policy of claiming international leadership roles. The BRI should no longer be considered as a peaceful regional infrastructure venture, as its direct and indirect effects would encompass the whole world without exception, either positively or negatively. China has the financial, physical and human resource capacity to realise the BRI. The realisation of BRI in its full capacity would give a strategic advantage to China over other global powers.

Some researchers have analysed the economic and political impact of the BRI (Liu and Dunford 2016; Callahan 2016; Aoyama 2016; Rolland 2017; Cai 2018), while others focused on China's foreign policy, but relatively few of the papers focused on the domestic policies of the country as a shaping factor of the BRI. Among the most commonly cited (Summers 2016) studies is the official discourse analysis in China. Summers proved that BRI is a global version of sub-national development policies being realised in China since the 1980s. The main idea behind such sub-national policies, particularly in Yunnan and Xinjiang provinces, was about

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[1]The Guardian, Germany's 'China City': how Duisburg became Xi Jinping's gateway to Europe, accessed at https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2018/aug/01/germanys-china-city-duisburg-became-xi-jinping-gateway-europe.

[2]Reuters: China unveils vision for 'Polar Silk Road' across Arctic, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-arctic/china-unveils-vision-for-polar-silk-road-across-arctic-idUSKBN1FF0J8.

improving connectivity, benefiting from their geographical proximity to neighbouring countries, promoting trade openness and free trade agreements. In this context, the main goal behind the BRI is found to be similar to the sub-national development programmes in China, so the discourses are also similar. Some countries were successful in combining national development strategies and infrastructure projects into a global BRI.

The BRI lies at the core of China's contemporary foreign policy for the OSCE region and its neighbouring countries. As claimed above, the development needs of China are considered to be the core objective behind initiating the BRI when it is contrasted with energy security needs and strategic objectives. From the perspectives of public perception, in Central Asian countries, sinophobia and sinophilia towards China have grown parallel to each other (Vakulchuk and Overland 2019). While political elites are supporting the BRI, some small businesses, Uygur associations and nationalist groups, for example, are expressing negative attitudes towards the initiative. But in general, public perception is improving in the region and Chinese investments and tourist flows are accepted positively, and pro-Beijing political actors and businessmen are lobbying for an improvement in relations with China.

Overall, China instrumentalised the BRI to achieve its economic goals, and at the discourse level, most of its claims serve this goal. Particularly, discourse analysis shows that China is addressing its long-term strategic goals through developing an advanced technology sector in the country.

The literature lacks a perspective that combines China's most recent and earlier foreign policy analysis. It is noteworthy to consider that the decisions of the state may change or adjust over time because of powerful social factors and shifts. The state can continue with its core objective, in the case of the BRI, improving connectivity and international cooperation, but with the influence of some global, regional, national and even local factors, and the secondary targets like political and military goals may emerge. Thus, this study also tries to reveal the changing goals and motivations behind the BRI. The contemporary foreign policy of China was compared with China's foreign policy since the 1980s and onwards, as some studies (Summers 2016, 2018) put forward the continuity of China's foreign policy over last several decades.

While energy security needs were on the agenda of China's discourse in the earlier years of BRI, in recent years, the high-tech sector became the central target. China's state-owned enterprises (SOEs) are firmly following this target and are not constraining themselves to legal actions as they even entered into conflict with Russia and the USA as a result of copying intellectual properties. This study helped to prove the economic orientation of the BRI as a whole. However, in line with economic benefits, the BRI also pursues strategic goals.

By using the method of discourse analysis, one can see how Chinese leaders perceive the BRI over the period of time since 2013. Discourse analysis is a set of methods directed at revealing the context and producing the meaning behind the speeches

and texts. Usually, speeches of the leaders at the relevant forums, broadcasted interviews or conversations with leaders, newspaper articles or reports of relevant institutions are used as text material for the analysis. This is solely a socio-linguistic approach.

For example, official announcements and speeches of President Xi, the ministry of foreign affairs, and the speeches made by the central government body involved in the BRI—'Advancing the Development of the OBOR' responsible for the BRI have been analysed. This government body is chaired by Vice Premier Zhang Gaoli, Vice Chairmen: Wang Huning, a key policy advisor to Xi Jinping and one of the fathers of the Belt and Road idea; Vice Premier Wang Yang, whose portfolio includes trade, agriculture and tourism; former minister of Foreign Affairs and State Counsellor Yang Jiechi; and Yang Jing, who serves at key coordinating positions both within the Party Central Committee and the State Council. In particular, I have analysed the speech of President Xi Jinping at the Opening Ceremony of the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation held on 14 May 2017, and the remarks by the Executive Vice Foreign Minister Le Yuchenga at the Welcoming Dinner of The First Meeting of the Advisory Council of The Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation (BRF) on 15 October 2018, plus the announcements of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China on the series of visits and meetings of Vice Premier Zhang Gaoli to Albania, Estonia, Kazakhstan, Russia and Slovenia in 2017. I also reviewed the Chinese 12th (2010–2015) and 13th (2016–2020) five-year programmes and the 'vision and action document' on the Belt and Road Initiative.

5.2   BRI and Globalisation: Beyond the Global and Local

There is a common understanding that because of the 'globalisation' movement, financial, physical and human capital encounters fewer constraints with national and state borders. Global as well as regional-level organisations, unions and projects have been considered as engines for transformation, global integration and eluders of national borders. But in reality, it is not only globalisation that is responsible for the global transformation. There are three types of interrelated contemporary shifts that account for the global geographical transformation. The restructuring of 'geographical space'—a backbone of the claims of globalisation and internationalisation, a restructuring of 'geographical scale' that structures recent configurations of spatial differentiation, and finally the powerful social flows that directly challenge inherited patterns of geographical boundaries at all levels, whether it is global, regional, national, sub-national or local\query{Please check the clarity of the sentence 'The restructuring of...'.}.

The BRI, being a global-level project that so far embraces 125 countries and 29 international organisations, is the sum of the local, national and regional projects. The core theoretical idea in the heart of the BRI is that spatial difference between the areas and regions will facilitate the movement of ideas, people and capital. The comparative advantage of doing business across areas with different socio-economic

stances, needs and capacities will serve as stimuli for the businesses, companies and different enterprises.

Space is produced through social interactions. 'It is not that material and social events take place "in space and time", rather that material and social events make the spaces and times they occupy' (Smith 2010). The BRI involves the interactions between political, economic and social actors and is shaped by competition, cooperation and compromise between the local, regional and global forces. In this context, it is possible to explain the BRI through the light of powerful social events such as the global economic and financial crisis in 2008/9, Chinese relations with other global powers, territorial conflicts in the South China Sea, the Korean Peninsula, Chinese internal ethnic and religious conflicts, the Russia–Ukraine crisis and the energy security needs of China and energy exporting countries. These events are constructed within as well as outside of China. BRI strategy is affected by these events and vice versa. Smith hence noted that '(I)n abstract terms, spatial scales are the outcome of social struggles; the production of scale demarcates the sites of a social contest' (Smith 2010).

Advanced economies have complex and web-like transportation systems in contrast to the infrastructure of the poorest African or Asian states where ports and overall logistics serve to extract and export their commodities. The transformation of the physical and social infrastructure can provide a power base for social change or for the defence of the status quo (Smith 2010). Historically, European renaissance and the emergence of capitalism was largely a result of sea trade and merchants gaining more power (Wolf 2010).

The Belt and Road Initiative is a China-led infrastructure project aimed at removing spatial differences through developing networks and cooperation across Eurasia and the World. Concerning China's connection in the region Anoushiravan notes that '(I)n evaluating the implications of the belt and road initiative for global order, we, therefore, need to go beyond the standard frameworks offered by IR to integrate perspectives from both global and (sub-national) regional political economy'. (Ehteshami and Horesh 2018). The Belt and Road Initiative is not a novice project. It is a global-level version of an already existing regional development policy of China (Summers 2018). In 1992, for example, along with Yunnan Province and Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region of China, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam entered into a sub-regional economic cooperation programme—the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS)—developed by the Asian Development Bank.

Historically, the creation of national states from city-states involved cultural, political and economic interactions and territorial compromises between different opposing as well as cooperative forces. Infrastructure facilities promote trade, financial exchange and cooperation between a large number of market players across the regions on the one hand, and competition for access to resources and market share on the other hand (Smith 2010).

Today, another period of dramatic scale shifts or rescaling which marks the end of nation-states is being witnessed (Smith 2010). Chinas sub-regional development policies had put forward the target of benefiting from its comparative advantage considering the spatial differences between the coastal regions, East, West and Central

China, e.g. the 12th Five-Year program in 2011. Marked as Xi Jinping's foreign policy, BRI brings the idea to a global level. Spatial differences across the participating states in the initiative are expected to be engines of accelerated interaction and exchange.

According to the speech of the Executive Vice Foreign Minister Le Yucheng at the Belt and Road Forum held on 15 October 2018, '[t]o date more than 140 countries and international organizations have signed BRI cooperation agreements with China',[3] but its impact will not leave any country in the world untouched. In this paper, the set of complex factors affecting the BRI is addressed. Chinese energy security needs, China's international and regional security needs, and China's attempt to shift global power order in line with China's development targets are the primary assumptions of this research as key influencing factors. Social upheavals such as the global financial and economic crisis and other factors will be paid similar attention. Initiation of the BRI and its evolutional path will be considered as a dependent variable affected by local, regional and global factors.

5.3   BRI and the OSCE Region

China has implemented a very effective industrial policy since the 1980s. Coupled with its trade openness and accession to the WTO, China attained the most impressive growth in the modern economic era. Furthermore, the relative softer impact of the global financial and economic crisis of 2008/9 in China, compared to the western countries, further increased China's economic power. China played an important role in restructuring the post-crisis international order what led to questioning the US superiority in dealing with some global issues that are not only in the economic sphere (Kaczmarski 2015; Summers 2016), e.g. since the early 2010s, China has become more assertive in claiming maritime power in the South China Sea.

Despite the assertive statements and moves of President Xi Jinping related to the South China Sea and Chinese security in general, some scholars link the country's foreign policy shifts to its economic needs (Liu and Dunford 2016). Contemporary China has become one of the greatest economic powers. It is already one of the greatest economy in the world in purchasing power parity terms (IMF, OECD and World Bank) and not far from becoming the greatest economy in the world in absolute terms. In a corollary to its economic progress, China has accumulated immense foreign currency reserves, and it needs to find international markets and investment opportunities for their allocation (Liu and Dunford 2016). China has purchased the

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[3]Remarks by Executive Vice Foreign Minister Le Yucheng At the Welcoming Dinner of The First Meeting of the Advisory Council of The Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation (BRF) on 15 October 2018.

government debts of the USA, Japan and some other developed countries and became the largest global debt owner.[4]

While continuing to purchase, the foreign debts of these countries give strategic advantage to China, from the economic and financial perspective China needs to diversify its investment portfolio through investing in financial markets, real economic projects, joint ventures and many others. In this regard, China has become the third-largest country, in terms of outstanding investments, with around a 9% share in the world in 2017, following the USA's 24% and Japan's 11%.[5] It should be admitted that although Chinese state-level investments are aimed at taking out countries' excess financial resources and focused on economic benefits, its targets are generally considered strategic level projects.

Chinese investments in the USA were 171 billion USD between 2005 and 2017. Congress passed legislation limiting China's investments in the USA; as a result, Chinese investments fell below 6 billion USD in 2018.[6] Particularly, investments in the advanced technology sector allowed China to gain access to high-tech knowledge that can be transferred and used in developing the country's internal projects, including the military. The high-tech and overall soft power sphere is the only area where China lags far behind the USA, Japan and Europe.

There were some other economic factors lobbying implementation of the 'go out' policy. Particularly, the income level of the population in China increased substantially. Referring to Liu and Dunford (2016),[7] China needs to search for both new markets as current export growth reaches its limits. China also has to reduce manufacturing activities as the country is facing huge environmental issues. The BRI helps China to find new suppliers, consumers, as well as partner countries where it can transfer some of the industrial complexes.

Another important social factor that led towards the initiation of BRI is the growing demand for energy resources by Chinese industries and the energy security needs of China. There is the so-called Malacca Dilemma, in which around 80% of China's energy imports passes through the Malacca Strait, which poses a direct threat to Chinese energy and economic security considering the consequences the strait potentially coming under the control of pirates or powers with conflicting interests to China. Thus, China has started to search for alternative energy supply routes.

As for the OSCE Region, China–Russia negotiations regarding the energy sector started as early as 2006, but because Russia's primary target market was Europe, Russia laid aside the negotiations for the following years as mentioned by Kaczmarski (2015). The global financial and economic crisis of 2008/09 and the Russia–Ukraine

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[4]USNews, America Owes the Largest Share of Global Debt, accessed at https://www.usnews.com/news/best-countries/articles/2018-10-23/america-takes-the-largest-share-in-the-global-debt-pie.

[5]Authors calculations based on the UNCTADStat Data, accessed at http://unctadstat.unctad.org/wds/TableViewer/tableView.aspx.

[6]American Enterprise Institute, https://www.aei.org/feature/china-tracker/.

[7]For example, the annual salary of shop-floor workers exceeds US$6000. These wage increases will drive more manufacturing capital is relocated, globalisation: unpacking China's Belt and Road Initiative, Area Development and Policy, 1:3, 323–340. https://doi.org/10.1080/23792949.2016.1232598.

crisis altered the situation. With falling energy prices and western sanctions, Russia had no alternative but China. The Eastern Siberia Pacific Ocean (ESPO) pipeline was agreed upon in October 2008. Over a 20-year period, 300 million tonnes of crude oil would be supplied to China with a total value of 100 billion USD, and Russia's Gazprom and the Chinese National Petroleum Company (CNPC) agreed on the construction of the 'Sila Sibiri' (Power of Siberia) pipeline, through which 38 bcm of natural gas would be supplied to China annually over a 30 years period starting from 2018 with a total contract value of 400 billion USD according to Kaczmarski (2015).

China's dependence on natural gas imports is expected to rise from 57% of domestic production in 2017 to 75% in 2020 and the Central Asian–China gas pipeline together with the Myanmar–China gas pipeline carrying 40% of China's gas imports will deliver the largest portion of the increase.[8] In order to reduce its vulnerability to the energy imports from the Middle East through the Malacca Straits and further diversify energy supply sources, China secured its Central Asian gas imports at the level of 85 bcm per year (Turkmenistan 65 bcm, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan 10 bcm each) as reported by Kaczmarski (2015). Other economic observers have long argued that the Central Asian, Russian and Pakistani overland pipelines are essential features of the BRI but it may not fully compensate for the interruption of shipments by sea (Rolland 2017). Nevertheless, it has definitely made China less dependent and more energy secure. In other words, together with the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), new energy deals in Eurasia will ultimately lead China towards achieving its energy security goals.

5.4 Changing Dynamics of Regionalism

China's contemporary foreign policy is tightly tied with the BRI. The BRI is not a sole project with one objective and a specific timeframe. Rather, it is comprised of a set of independent regional- and national-level projects and targeted at reaching different goals that together may serve as a 'a grand strategy'. Grand strategy in this context refers to greater openness and connectivity, aimed at bringing international cooperation to the next level that will transform the OSCE region and the whole world. China's foreign policy is shaped by its economic progress. As China's economic development is largely dependent on and intensely tied with the global economy, it tries to take part in transforming global governance mechanisms and focusing specifically on the economic issues as it adapted western standards and norms. Kaczmarski (2015) states that. Therefore, ever since its accession to the WTO in 2001, China has been gradually broadening its participation in western-dominated economic multilateralism. It gradually 'learned' the economic rules laid down by the West, as Kaczmarski (2015) argues.

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[8]China Daily Newspaper, CNPC to ramp up its global output, accessed at https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201908/19/WS5d59f62da310cf3e355666f4.html.

The idea behind China's foreign policy was to keep a low profile while escaping unnecessary contradictions with global powers until China became one of them. China has transformed from a developing country into a global player but still acts as a regional actor in the international political arena. The position and the role the USA has delegated to China was not enough to satisfy its ambitions. A corollary of this circumstance was that China, after Xi Jinping came to power, commenced with anti-American policies. China challenged the US primacy in the neighbourhood. In 2012, at the Eighteenth Congress of the CCP, Xi Jinping was elected as President, Secretary General of the Communist Party, and the Chairman of the Central Military Commission (Kaczmarski 2015). The so-called Chinese Dream idea became a central point of China's foreign and internal policies. The foreign policy of China in the international arena as well as in Asia was dramatically altered when President Xi Jinping came to power, according to scholars such as Gabuev (2017) and Rolland (2017). Particularly, it was visible in China's relations with its near neighbours, and even with powers like Russia in the region.

China became more assertive, but not aggressive and despite insistently protecting its territorial rights in the South China Sea, and across other issues, it has been claiming collaboration rather competition with the USA. Despite its economic rise, China acts rather cautiously and tries to promote its image of a pro-western, peaceful and developing country. As indicated by Kaczmarski, 'Beijing engaged with global security issues only if Chinese vital interests were at stake' (Kaczmarski 2015). The question is not about how great powers are delivering global governance, but about how in practice global governance can be instrumentalised to shape the global institutions, norms and practices of the 'rules-based order'. Thus, whether or not the new global order will be led by China is not the appropriate question, but rather how the future global order will be formed under new conditions that include China's rise.

As can be seen in the speech of Wang Yi, the State Councillor and Minister of Foreign Affairs, at the Opening of Symposium on the International Situation and China's Foreign Relations on 12 December 2018, a narrative of China's contemporary foreign policy was focused on the BRI, its importance in the positive transformation of Eurasia and China–Russia relations. This is also reflected in the recent year's activities of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) launched by China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Russia in 2001. Particularly, the Bishkek Declaration of the SCO's Heads of State Council held in Bishkek on 14 June 2019 clearly condemns unilateral protectionist policies and other challenges in international trade[9] that are said to be hindering globalisation and the economic progress of emerging powers in Eurasia. The declaration highlights the importance of connectivity and interdependence for the development of the Eurasia region and particularly for SCO member states.

Chinese political leaders consider BRI as a favour to the world and China as a representative of the developing countries. According to Wang Yi, State Councillor

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[9]Bishkek Declaration of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation's Heads of State Council, 2019, accessed at http://eng.sectsco.org/news/20190614/550955.html.

and Minister of Foreign Affairs of China 'BRI proposed by President Xi Jinping has become the most popular public good and the biggest cooperation platform in today's world'.[10]

China's perspective on global and regional order, particularly in South and Southeast Asia, firmly differs from the US perspective. The most vivid contradictions observed in the security sphere manifested in the China-US confrontations in the South China Sea. Globalisation and global governance as meta-phenomena most widely used during the recent couple of decades promote reducing the governments' roles in interstate relations. It is a product of the so-called liberal international order based on international institutions. The important question in this regard from the social sciences scholars' perspective is whether China should be considered as a challenger of the current global order or as 'status quo' power. Chinese leaders actively use the term 'global economic governance' in the context of advocating openness through protecting and strengthening the role of multilateral systems, free trade mechanisms and institutions. Realisation of the BRI projects is generally conducted through multilateral institutions such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, where China has 26.5% of voting power among the total of 93 approved member countries.[11]

Central Asian countries after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 have not successfully commenced on any regional integration initiative except with the participation of Russia such as the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and the SCO. China's experience in regional integration projects and new Silk Road infrastructure projects in the region under the BRI can strengthen existing interconnectedness, expand transportation links, promote interdependence and increase trade turnover between the Central Asia states.

China puts a strong emphasis on regional integration and regionalism. It has successful experience of regional economic development programmes as a result of regional integration. In 1992, the China State Council issued a policy for opening up Yunnan Province and improving cooperation with more developed coastal regions of China and with Southeast Asia. An Asian Development Bank (ADB) project was also initiated in the same year as the establishment of the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) to promote trade and economic cooperation between Yunnan Province of China, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam.

Later, another very important regional project has emerged during the Bangladesh–China–India–Myanmar Economic Cooperation Forum (BCIM) in 1999. It was the free trade agreement between China and ASEAN (CAFTA) and bilateral regional structures between Yunnan and northern Vietnam, Thailand and Laos. During that period, China developed the idea of constructing and improving transborder infrastructure linkages between Yunnan Province and South and Southeast Asia. In

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[10]Speech by H. E. Wang Yi State Councillor and Minister of Foreign Affairs At the Opening of Symposium on The International Situation and China's Foreign Relations in 2018 Beijing, 11 December 2018, accessed at https://yizhiyoudao.kuaizhan.com/75/8/p58007285725f74?from=timeline.

[11]Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, Members and Prospective Members of the Bank, accessed at https://www.aiib.org/en/about-aiib/governance/members-of-bank/index.html.

this context, the BRI can be considered as a regional project connecting less developed regions of China with the other countries in the Eurasian continent, particularly Central Asia, South Asia and Southeast Asia. At the same time, it is a global project linking China with the world through maritime routes, rail lines, roads and pipelines.

5.5   China's Official Discourse on BRI

The BRI is about bringing China's regional and sub-national experiences to a global level. At the same time, there is a discrepancy or spatial difference between regions of China. From this perspective, while being a global scale initiative at the same time, it serves sub-national level development objectives of China similar to GMS and CAFTA. According to the remarks of Executive Vice Foreign Minister Le Yucheng at the Welcoming Dinner of The First Meeting of the Advisory Council of The Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation (BRF) on 15 October 2018, 'China is still confronted with development imbalance among different regions. The less developed western region, with 72% of China's landmass and 27% of its total population, accounts for a modest 20% of the GDP and 7% of foreign trade and outbound investment of China'.[12]

China's discourse is about cooperating with developing countries across the Eurasian continent in building national level infrastructure and development projects. China has broad experience of transforming into an industrialised state, thanks to industrial policies, developing connectivity, improving cooperation and promoting openness. In this retrospect, the BRI is to promote the so-called China's development model at the global level through promoting national-level projects and cooperation. In his speech, at the opening of Belt and Road Forum at 14 May 2017, President Xi stated that 'We have enhanced coordination with the policy initiatives of relevant countries, such as the Eurasian Economic Union of Russia, the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity, the Bright Road initiative of Kazakhstan, the Middle Corridor initiative of Turkey, the Development Road initiative of Mongolia, the Two Corridors, One Economic Circle initiative of Viet Nam, the Northern Powerhouse initiative of the UK and the Amber Road initiative of Poland'.[13]

This idea was repeated also at the Advisory Council meeting at the Belt and Road Forum by Vice Foreign Minister Le Yucheng, who said 'I have also witnessed how the BRI and Kazakh Bright Road Initiative have complemented each other, how the China-Europe Railway Express has helped catalyse local growth, and how the

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[12]Remarks by Executive Vice Foreign Minister Le Yucheng At the Welcoming Dinner of The First Meeting of the Advisory Council of The Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation (BRF) on 15 October 2018.

[13]Work Together to Build the Silk Road Economic Belt and The Twenty-First Century Maritime Silk Road Speech by H. E. Xi Jinping President of the People's Republic of China At the Opening Ceremony of The Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation.

world's biggest land-locked country has gained access to the ocean thanks to the BRI. The Kazakhs hail China as "Kazakhstan's ocean"'.[14]

Apart from rail lines, highways and ports, one of the most important elements of the BRI is pipelines for oil and natural gas transit. It was at the core of dialogue between Chinese leaders and partners, particularly Vice Premier who is also the Chairperson of the government body for developing BRI. Zhang Gaoli's visit to Russia[15] and Kazakhstan[16] in April 2017 discussed the realisation of the agreed oil and gas projects. The importance of energy security or energy trade has not been a hot topic of discussion in the recent BRI forums and the speeches of president Xi and other Chinese leaders. It has been in the Chinese agenda for a long time prior to the launch of BRI in 2013, and in the first couple of years afterwards. China's trade and foreign policy addressed the issues through bilateral negotiations with energy producers. This was the period when China had serious problems with energy supply. Notably, in 2006, Zhang Guobao, responsible for energy planning in China, expressed his direct concerns regarding Russia's uncertainty and unwillingness to make a contract to build an oil pipeline to China (Kaczmarski 2015). Energy security concerns are not as serious as they were then. The negotiations on energy trade and investment are still intensively continuing between China and its partners, particularly Russia, Central Asia and its neighbours. China planned large investment projects in Africa and even in the Arctic with Russia. However, these projects in their nature assume bilateral cooperation with China. These projects should be considered more so than any other investment project by Chinese SOEs as targeting economic profits and less as a project targeting the energy security needs of China. Besides, energy transit pipeline projects that exist under the umbrella of the BRI may have existed successfully without the BRI. Rail, road and maritime ports and routes benefit tens or even hundreds of countries, people, different enterprises and companies while interactions through oil and gas pipelines are generally limited to exporters, importers and transit countries.

The development of an advanced technology sector is very frequently addressed as the core area in the most important policy documents, including the 13th Five-Year programme[17] and the 'vision and action document' for the BRI. Chinese SOEs are not limiting themselves to legal actions. Behind the US decision on limiting Chinese investments to high-tech projects[18] is that Chinese companies were replicating the US

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[14]Remarks by Executive Vice Foreign Minister Le Yucheng At the Welcoming Dinner of The First Meeting of the Advisory Council of The Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation (BRF) on 15 October 2018.

[15]Zhang Gaoli Meets with President Vladimir Putin of Russia and Attends the Meetings of China-Russia Cooperation Mechanism, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1454100.shtml.

[16]Zhang Gaoli Meets with President Nursultan Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan and Chairs the 8th Meeting of China-Kazakhstan Cooperation Committee, http://www.china-un.org/eng/zgyw/t1455096.htm.

[17]The 13th Five-Year Plan For Economic And Social Development of the People's Republic Of China (2016–2020).

[18]USNews, America Owes the Largest Share of Global Debt, accessed at https://www.usnews.com/news/best-countries/articles/2018-10-23/america-takes-the-largest-share-in-the-global-debt-pie.

advanced technology designs of the USA, and similarly, the Chinese military complex was directly copying Russia's military technology. As a result, Russia insisted on signing an agreement on the protection of intellectual property. As the soft power of China is the only area where it lags far behind the West, China never failed to utilise opportunities to pursue an active foreign policy towards promoting its high-tech and IT sectors. Zhang Gaoli's visits in April 2017 to Estonia[19] and Slovenia[20] covered the advanced technology sector cooperation in aviation, machine electricity, information technology and other high-tech sectors important for China's strategic development goals.

5.6 Conclusion

China's foreign policy discourse has evolved since the launch of the BRI, but towards the same direction and with the same values. The BRI is not similar to regional development projects that China participated in before or any development project that existed prior to BRI.

Improving infrastructure and logistical performance has irrefutably been positioned as a driver of economic growth. As the OSCE region has failed to make sufficient investment in infrastructure development, it is a timely chance to be part of such a global project. This means that Chinese influence will increase in the Eurasia region.

It is indeed a global project with regional and national components that will give significant strategic dominance to China. In this regard, even if it is not only China's project, China is the country with a strategic advantage. Other participating countries will have some economic benefits while they may also grow their dependence on China. Because none of the national-level projects discussed in this paper will succeed without China, nor without all or most of the BRI states integrating into the initiative.

China's key official documents such as the 'vision and action document' of the Belt and Road Initiative and the Chinese 12th (2010–2015) and 13th (2016–2020) Five-Year programmes show the strong regional origins of the initiative. The BRI has been developed based on decades of Chinese development experience, which is continuing within the BRI framework. China's regional and provincial strategies and policies are important parts of the Belt and Road Official Documents mentioned above. It shows the continuity of China's development, trade and foreign policies over several decades, in contrast to the critiques of BRI that describe the initiative as a Chinese geopolitical weapon. One of the flagship studies promoting this perspective

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[19] Vice Premier Zhang Gaoli met with President Kersti Kaljulaid of Estonia in Tallinn at invitation on April 13, 2017, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjb_663304/zzjg_663340/xos_664404/xwlb_664406/t1454471.shtml.

[20] Vice Premier Zhang Gaoli met with President Borut Pahor of Slovenia in Ljubljana when visiting Slovenia at invitation on April 14 2017, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjb_663304/zzjg_663340/xos_664404/xwlb_664406/t1454468.shtml.

(Summers 2012, 2016, 2018) reviewed China's policies regarding the development of the provincial inland areas such as Yunnan and Xinjiang.

Indeed, the Belt and Road is not only a global-level initiative. It is the sum of the sub-national, national and regional projects of many countries at the global level. Tim Summers showed the Chinese provincial leaders involvement in shaping some regional integration projects, rather than the province having a special role within the PRC's participation (as in GMS), or even driving the cooperative institution itself as with BCIM, Summer argues, that the case of CAFTA shows provincial elites attempting to appropriate centrally designed policy frameworks in partial response to its own developmental imperatives (Summers 2012).

Overall, BRI is unique in nature and has many goals. It is interrelated and interwoven with China's foreign policy, trade policy and development policy. The backbone of the BRI vision and mission has been developed by the China's long development and foreign policy experience. From that perspective, it is an extension of China's regional development strategies to a global level, sharing the development experiences of China with other countries while bringing mutual economic benefits.

Furthermore, it was initiated by the provincial leaders' initiatives and lobbying. Energy security needs and the long-term strategic vision of China are strong engines and factors behind bringing the BRI to a global level, although in recent years, energy security needs has less so been brought to China's contemporary foreign policy and Belt and Road agenda. Our proposal for field studies in the area is to consider the local level factors behind the initiation of the BRI. The perception and reaction of the local people and provincial leaders through the implementation process should be studied in order to understand the contemporary shifts in BRI policy.

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Chapter 6
OSCE and Civil Society in the Western Balkans: The Road to Reconciliation

Raffaele Mastrorocco

6.1 Introduction

In this article, I will elaborate on the efforts of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) in pursuing reconciliation in the Western Balkans together with regional civil society. I claim that the process of reconciliation in the Western Balkans has produced so far mixed results, despite the strong involvement of international organisations in the region. In fact, after more than twenty years since the Yugoslav wars, the region has achieved limited progress in inter-ethnic rapprochement. Nevertheless, the OSCE is actively participating in the process concerning the promotion of dialogue and tolerance among the regional conflicting parties and stands out among the other international agents in pursuing the task, thanks to its inclusive concept of security. Furthermore, over the years, a flourishing civil society sector emerged as an outcome of the support provided by the international community, which recognises the fundamental role that civil society actors, being NGOs, women, youth or religious leaders, play in the process of democratisation and peace-building in post-conflict societies. In this context, the OSCE stands out as a firm supporter of civil society organisations present in the area as showed by the organisation's engagement with NGOs such as the Belgrade Center for Human Rights in Serbia or Vaša Prava in Bosnia and Herzegovina and by its efforts in allowing regional cooperation between different civil society agents as depicted by the initiatives 'Fostering NGO Human Rights Network in the Western Balkans Region' and 'Follow Us', among others. In this sense, the research contributes to making sense of the transformations and developments that the OSCE is undergoing by providing an overview of the organisation's activities and progresses in the Western Balkans.

R. Mastrorocco (✉)

Interdisciplinary Research and Studies on Eastern Europe (MIREES), University of Bologna, Bologna, Italy

e-mail: raffaele.mastrorocco@studio.unibo.it

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Western Balkans refers to six countries in South-Eastern Europe, namely Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo, North Macedonia and Albania. The region is afflicted by the consequences of the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s and, although Albania was not directly involved in the turmoil, caused severe inter-ethnic tensions and divisions that have threatened on multiple occasions the security of the region and of its citizens. Consequently, the international community took the lead in bringing about a resolution to the conflicts and then in fostering a process of reconciliation. Among the regional actors, the stabilisation of the area was perceived as something externally imposed and mainly linked to integration into the European Union. Despite the fact that the EU has assumed a greater role in the region as a stabilising factor, the actions of the involved countries are mainly aimed at accomplishing normalisation of relations in order to achieve EU integration, rather than showing true willingness to establish regional cooperation (Emini and Marku 2019). For this reason, the involvement of other international organisations such as the OSCE has led to more genuine outcomes in providing regional security, though with less resonance. Among the countries in the OSCE area, the Western Balkans witnessed a strong involvement of the OSCE since its first mission was launched in Macedonia in 1992. At the time of writing, the organisation still puts much attention into the region to ensure security, as shown by the large budgetary deployment for its missions in the Balkan countries, with the OSCE Mission in Kosovo being the first recipient among all the field operations with a total budget provided of around EUR 17 million and the OSCE Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina receiving around EUR 11 million (OSCE 2019). The peculiarity of the participation of the organisation in the Western Balkans stands in its approach to security issues that encompass all the dimensions of security, thus having a more comprehensive approach to reconciliation, which in turn requires the inclusion of all strata of society. Against this background, taking into consideration the contribution of the OSCE to supporting local civil society in the process of reconciliation is essential in order to outline the developments and transformations that this particular OSCE region has experienced.

The structure of the article is twofold. First, it provides the reader with a brief account of what reconciliation means and how it was pursued in the Western Balkans, also focusing on transitional justice, and it depicts the potential of involving civil society and international organisations in the process as well as its shortcomings. Then, I will move forward by presenting the activities of the OSCE in the region intended to pursue reconciliation, initiatives undertaken by it in boosting inter-ethnic rapprochement, and how the organisation is supporting civil society for these purposes. I will conclude that the OSCE, despite its weak financial capabilities, is a key agent in the region in fostering positive transformative changes also due to its strong support for local civil society.

6.2   Reconciliation in the Western Balkans and the Interplay Between Civil Society and International Organisations

The concept of reconciliation has been increasingly used in relation to the involvement of the international community in the Western Balkans in the aftermath of the turmoil that affected the region in the 1990s. However, the very beginning of the appearance in the academic literature of the term 'reconciliation' linked to the peacebuilding initiatives in the Western Balkans, the academic community has not agreed on a common definition. Bloomfield (2003) proposes a definition of reconciliation as the process of dealing with past conflicts in an effort to develop a degree of cooperation, based on respect and mutual understanding, such as to allow an improvement of conditions. It is the redefinition of the relationship between conflict parties consenting to coexistence and perceiving the effective achievement of reconciliation as the best guarantee of future peace. Put simply, although too generally, he asserts that it consists of "a process through which a society moves from a divided past to a shared future" (Bloomfield 2003). Moreover, he considers the search for truth, justice and forgiveness a fundamental factor for the process. This poses the definition proposed closer to the view of many scholars that see reconciliation as involving the pursuit of justice, dialogue and rebuilding mutual trust (Ferati-Sachsenmaier 2019). These scholars define this process as a complex process taking place in contexts of divided societies that consist of the relation between trauma, truth, history and politics and justice. However, the OSCE identifies reconciliation as "a process that aims to overcome conflicts by breaking vicious cycles of mutual misperceptions and divisive memories that often result in violence, through the transformation of political and societal relationships." (OSCE 2018a). In addition, it understands reconciliation as an inclusive process that has an effect both at the political and at the civic level; for this reason, it recognises the importance of involving a variety of civil society organisations in the process (ibid.). This offers a more complete and clear understanding of the process as it also recognises the importance of building trust and confidence, of promoting dialogue and tolerance and of transitional justice in post-conflict societies. For this reason, the present paper takes into consideration this definition of reconciliation.

Among other things, transitional justice has a great role in the process of reconciliation because it allows the formation of a shared memory of the past in post-conflict societies such as that present in the Western Balkans; hence, it is a necessary tool for maintaining peace in the long term. Transitional justice involves widespread truth and justice mechanisms, including human rights trials, truth commissions, reparations, lustration, apologies, memorialisation practices, institutional reform as well as local, non-traditional forms of justice (Volčič and Simić 2013; Mihr 2013). Since the admission of guilt and the punishment of perpetrators are necessary for re-establishing trust and dialogue among communities, it has become a primary element in the democratisation process of the region encouraged by the international community (Ostojić 2013). International actors such as the United Nations have sought the institutionalisation of transitional justice in order to guarantee the reconciliation process.

In the Western Balkans, the phenomenon saw the creation of international, national and local levels of war crime trials. In this context, the establishment of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) initially stood out as an instrument that would bring justice and that could give a chance to start again the relations among the divided parties. However, it soon failed to produce the expected outcomes as the trials became politicised because collaboration with the ICTY was linked to the Euro-Atlantic integration of the countries in the region (Subotić 2009). Consequently, the ICTY was perceived as unfair in countries such as Serbia, mostly because of the media campaigns that aimed at depicting Serbian convicts as martyrs and the ICTY as privileging some parties and disfavouring others; thus, the court saw its truth-telling agenda undermined (Ostojić 2013). Against the loss of legitimacy to act of the ICTY, the OSCE serves as an actor that is fostering judicial truth; in fact, the organisation has established a war crimes trial monitoring programme in order to enhance transparency and reliability in the state and the judiciary. The programme, based on the principles of objectivity and non-intervention, observes and reports on all war crimes cases in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), but it also goes further by undertaking capacity-building and technical-assistance initiatives in order to enhance the efficacy of war crimes processing (OSCE 2018a).

Apart from the lack of legitimacy of the ICTY in the context of the judiciary aspect of transitional justice, the poor political will among the divided parties has been another considerable constraint to reconciliation. In fact, official apologies from one side have come together over time with apologies from other sides through a series of declarations and official visits to former places of conflict, in a process that sees national political elites often waiting for the others' apologies before considering to do the same (Banjeglav 2013). This has led over time to political elites opening up about the question of truth seeking, although they have followed transitional justice measures mostly in the light of progressing with the process of Euro-Atlantic integration, as transitional justice has become increasingly a part of the regional integration process into the EU and NATO since it has become part of the conditionality to join the two institutions (Subotić 2009). Official acknowledgements of the harms done and apologies constitute a weak point for politicians, because they are aware that the recognition of war crimes might not be well received in their domestic setting, and thus could undermine their popularity; this leaves the burden of reconciliation to more reformist political forces (Petričušić and Blondel 2012). For this reason, truth seeking happens often in contexts in which the actors victimise their own group, resulting in mutually exclusive recognition of truth. Nevertheless, on other occasions, different groups have come to terms and together have accepted a common understanding of certain historical facts, however, at the expenses of a third group. This was the case of Croatia and Montenegro concerning the military campaign against Dubrovnik carried out by the Yugoslav National Army and by Montenegrin forces in 1991. In that occasion, Montenegro apologised to Croatia asserting that it was manipulated by directives coming from Belgrade, thus blaming the Yugoslav authorities in Serbia for the assault (Horelt 2015). This kind of behaviour allows the different conflicting parties to settle issues among them without taking any direct

responsibility, thus without provoking domestic resentments. In other cases, politicians have agreed, despite domestic controversies, to acknowledge their country's involvement in certain controversial episodes of the war but have diminished the internal debate on the issue, thus constraining the possibility to develop domestic consciousness; this was the case of Serbia and the 2010 acknowledgement of the Srebrenica massacre in which the domestic political elite agreed to recognise the event but did not allow a domestic debate on the issue, thus limiting the ability of society to reckoning with the past (Ostojić 2013).

Thus, the political elites in the Western Balkans so far have demonstrated, with some exceptions, a certain indifference towards encouraging the reconciliation process in order to achieve other goals. Accordingly, the international community has tried to foster inter-ethnic rapprochement, although with a lack of legitimacy in the judicial framework as a consequence of the politicisation of the ICTY. Against this background, international organisations interested in the area and dealing with the process have sought to involve different actors in order to re-establish trust and dialogue among communities. Indeed, reconciliation is an inclusive process involving both the political and the civic spheres that need to address different actors (Perry 2009; Petričušić and Blondel 2012). In this sense, the international community has understood civil society actors as those that could encourage building mutual trust and tolerance to a broader degree. The involvement of civil society in the process is beneficial to the extent that it promotes direct participation of citizens, as well as being important sources of information providing first-hand knowledge of local circumstances. This has the potential to transform social relations in post-conflict societies (Volčič and Simić 2013). Consequently, international actors have started to emphasise the local dimension of stabilisation and conflict-prevention measures as necessary to sustain and build peace (Simangan 2019). Local stakeholders provide the means and the competences to efficiently pursue reconciliation strategies, and the aid of international agents can provide them with these tools. On the other hand, in order to engage in reconciliation practices efficiently, international stakeholders need to be acquainted with the cultural context of the area, a skill that is enabled through the involvement of local civil society (Lederach 1997).

6.3 Civil Society in the Western Balkans

Over the past decades, the term 'civil society' has generated a wide debate on its meaning. It has been described as spheres of social life that are situated between the domestic life and the state that allow the possibility of concerted action and social self-organisation (Bryant 1995), or as a set of different non-governmental institutions that is strong enough to balance the state so as to prevent the state from controlling the whole of society, while avoiding the constraint of the state's role as keeper of peace and authority (Gellner 1995). However, civil society and civil society organisations (CSOs) are generally understood in broader terms as "the arena, outside of the family,

the state and the market, which is created by individual and collective actions, organisations and institutions to advance shared interests" (CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation 2012). This definition allows the wider understanding of civil society as being composed of "a diverse body of civil actors, communities, and formal or informal associations with a wide range of roles, who engage in public life seeking to advance shared values and objectives" (OSCE 2018b). Thus, civil society comprises actors such as community and religious leaders, the media, international and local non-governmental organisations, charitable and philanthropic foundations, academic and research institutions and community groups and public associations. Civil society development is also widely accepted to be an indicator of the level of democratisation of a state as well as one of the main contributors to the democratisation process of former authoritarian states (Volčič and Simić 2013; Strazzari and Selenica 2013). In addition, civil society is recognised to be an agent with the capability to protect citizens from potentially aggressive states. Its existence in societies provides citizens with a framework in which they can develop trust and tolerance by interacting outside the private sphere and in the public one (Volčič and Simić 2013).

The local aspect in processes of peace-building and peace-keeping led by international stakeholders has been emphasised on different occasions by international organisations themselves, as it was the case with United Nations in 2015 when it reviewed its peace-building architecture as a task to be achieved by national stakeholders, while international actors, for their part, can help the process but not lead it (United Nations 2015; Simangan 2019). In a similar way, the OSCE strongly encouraged participating states to engage with civil society in the Western Balkans in order to tackle violence, acknowledging the potential of involving the public sphere in the process of reconciliation (OSCE 2018b). Indeed, the international community understands an engaged community as one that is able to create its own political reality and that has the potential to deal with its turbulent past (Volčič and Simić 2013), producing preconditions for long-lasting peace, thus making its development almost indispensable for the reconciliation process. In addition, civil society is able to raise awareness of discrimination and hate crimes and to break the cycle of violence in post-conflict contexts (OSCE 2018b). This capability comes from the very features of civil society because it is locally rooted, and thus, it has legitimacy in the community in which it operates as well as direct access to and influence on the group's needs and interests. In the context of the Western Balkans, international organisations have encouraged the spread of civil society actors, recognising their important role in the construction of and support to democratic institutions and political culture, which as a result has led the region to host a great number of civil society organisations (OSCE 2018b). For instance, in BiH, the organisations registered by 2010 amounted to more than 12,000, while in Kosovo the number of registered NGOs in the same period was around 6000 (Belloni 2019; Strazzari and Selenica 2013). Consequently, due to its bottom-up characteristics, civil society stood out immediately in the aftermath of the Yugoslav wars as driver of change in the region (Simić 2013; McEvoy and McGregor 2008). The established civil society organisations work in different fields concerning democratisation, post-conflict stabilisation and rule of law (OSCE 2018b), following the neoliberal peace-building idea of the importance of security and human rights

(Belloni 2019). However, the flourishing civil society did not manage to meet the expectations of its role as driver of change because of barriers imposed by different factors.

First of all, civil society in the Western Balkans is excessively financially dependent on international donors, the main ones being the European Union and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) (Ostojić and Fagan 2014). The international financial support to civil society aimed to develop the latter as a means for policy development, pointing at the pressuring capabilities of local stakeholders (Fagan 2010). However, over time, civil actors did not manage to become independent from international funding because of the poor economic situation of the area; thus, they had to keep relying on foreign funds in order to continue their activities. However, this brought about severe consequences as civil society started to reflect the interests of its supporters and growingly lost legitimacy in the eyes of local communities (Kostovicova and Bojicic-Dzelilovic 2013; Ostojić and Fagan 2014). Hence, the population progressively developed feelings of distrust towards civil society actors, especially NGOs, as their influence was perceived as foreign interference into domestic issues, and as locals did not feel that their interests were being truly protected by them. This situation has been affecting the civil society sector in the Western Balkans for a long period, as confirmed by the USAID Civil Society Organisation Sustainability Index. The 2017 Index, which measures the level of development in civil society sectors, confirms that in the last decade no real improvement has been achieved regarding the financial independence of the civil sector in the region (USAID 2018).

Another issue for civil society in the Western Balkans is the ethnic division of its actors. In the region, as a result of the conflicts and the economic instability caused by them, affiliation to ethnic identities became stronger, as it provides a sense of security to the components of a given community (Branković et al. 2017). Therefore, the strengthened ethnic belonging inevitably reversed on local civil society actors. In fact, the local turn in reconciliation processes might bring about a resurgence of favourable conditions for conflicts as a result of the unsettled tensions (Simangan 2019). Throughout the years, civil society actors in the region have tended to emerge according to their ethnic affiliation, rather than expressing the interests of the mass (Mujkić 2007; Belloni 2019). This was particularly the case of Kosovo; Kosovar civil society emerged in the light of the regional turmoil in the 1990s and was strongly linked to the quest for national self-determination, providing alternative structures to the Serbian state. On the other hand, the Serbian minority in Kosovo kept following the directives coming from Belgrade, and this led to the creation of parallel societal and institutional structures in Kosovo that operate as an effective social welfare system (Strazzari and Selenica 2013; Ferati-Sachsenmaier 2019). Against this background, the reconciliation initiatives in Kosovo were endorsed and supported by the media and politicians only when they fit the political interests of political stakeholders, thus giving emphasis to the efforts of the Kosovar civil society only when they were portraying the Kosovar Albanians as victims of the hostilities; as a result, the domestic debate about the conflict became polarised (Ferati-Sachsenmaier 2019). At

the same time, BiH has also experienced problems linked to ethnic identities constraining the potential of civil society in the process of reconciliation, although in the country, the limits came from the divided nature of the Bosnian state itself. In fact, an organisation is automatically linked to an ethnic group because of the place in which it was registered; thus, the chances of involving other ethnic groups are constrained as the ability of local civil society actors to prompt a wider debate at the national level (Žeravčić and Biščević 2009; Belloni 2019). Furthermore, as a consequence of the ethnicisation of advocacy groups in the region, the Western Balkans have seen over the years a rise in the amount of illiberal civil society organisations that are using conservative and ethno-nationalist arguments in order to resist the process of reconciliation to avoid recognising their share of the blame for the conflict (Kostovicova and Bojicic-Dzelilovic 2013; Džihić et al. 2018; Belloni 2019).

The third issue affecting civil society in the Western Balkans is that coordination among different civil society actors has not developed enough (OSCE 2018b). Cooperation at the regional level is difficult to achieve and almost non-existent. Consequently, common projects do not take place, or they do so only in exceptional cases. However, this does not apply to those NGOs that are focusing on human rights across the Western Balkans, as their aims cause them to be more open to regional cooperation with other civil society actors throughout the region, at least in most cases (Kostovicova and Bojicic-Dzelilovic 2013). Nevertheless, those NGOs engaged in programmes involving reconciliation and operating at the national level fall back into the domestic discourses of ethnic self-victimisation as a consequence of their politicisation. This was especially the case for Serbia's civil society organisations that had the aim of promoting domestic debate about the offences carried out by the Serbian side during the Yugoslav wars; in this circumstance, the local organisations reinforced the self-victimisation narratives typical of nationalistic parties instead of denouncing the wrongdoings done in the past because their legitimacy was put under pressure by allegations claiming that they were working against the integrity of the Serbian state (Ostojić 2013). In the Serbian case, as in that of other countries, NGOs adapted to the stances of their domestic political environment in order not to lose legitimacy in the eyes of authorities and to keep open dialogue with them. In any case, civil society organisations across the region commonly suffer from a lack of cooperation with national governments (OSCE 2018b). In order to tackle the lack of communication between civil society and authorities, international organisations can support NGOs and local stakeholders in order to allow them to carry out their functions as pressure groups. However, considering what is mentioned above, advocacy groups are unfavourably perceived as they are heavily financially supported by international actors and thus are understood as being the carriers of the interests of external forces rather than of their own society. Against this background, the OSCE stands out as one of those international agents that are succeeding in supporting civil society activities in the process of reconciliation in the Western Balkans without resorting to providing financial aid.

6.4   The Involvement of the OSCE in the Reconciliation Process

The OSCE has been present in the region since its first mission started in North Macedonia in 1992. The OSCE Spillover Mission to Skopje was launched in the light of the tensions in the area that were threatening the stability of Macedonia. Since then, the OSCE has been credited as one of the most reliable international institutions involved in the Western Balkans for the process of stabilisation, peace-building and peace-keeping of the region (Galbreath 2007). The peculiarity of the OSCE when contrasted to other international institutions is that the organisation is based on a common and more comprehensive idea of security and that it is the only pan-European security institution that has linked the human dimension of security to the political-military concept of security (Galbreath and Seidyusif 2014). Indeed, the third dimension of security encompassing the OSCE points explicitly at the human dimension as necessary in order to guarantee security in the OSCE area. In this sense, the organisation aims to develop security in all its dimensions, being it economic, political, military, environmental or human, by involving in the process all the necessary agents that could contribute to it. However, talking about the efforts of the OSCE regarding the reconciliation process in the Western Balkans does not come so easily as the missions of the organisation in the different countries in the region are not directly aimed at the process, thus not all of them fall under the scope of third security dimension. For instance, while the OSCE Mission in Kosovo focuses on human and community rights, democratisation and public safety (OSCE 2017a), the OSCE Mission in Serbia focuses on the development of the democratic system and rule of law in Belgrade (OSCE 2018c). Despite not pointing directly to reconciliation in some cases, the missions and field operations of the OSCE contribute to the process actively. Indeed, the OSCE recognises reconciliation as a necessary instrument to achieve peace-building and in order to assure long-term stability and peace in the OSCE area; thus, all the actions that the organisation pursues towards the achievement of its goals also tackle the issue of reconciliation. As former Secretary General of the OSCE Lamberto Zannier pointed out in the opening speech of the workshop *Towards a Strategy for Reconciliation in the OSCE Area* held in Vienna in 2012, the OSCE facilitates reconciliation across all three dimensions of security by building confidence between police and ethnic communities, by bringing civil society groups in ethnically divided contexts together with local government institutions, encouraging regional cooperation regarding trade, energy and the environment and by promoting contacts between diverse ethnic groups (OSCE 2013).

To date, the OSCE has worked to allow judicial and legal reforms in the Western Balkans as part of its efforts to develop democratic institutions in post-conflict societies. The efforts of the organisation in fostering reforms came after it had identified a serious lack of political support for war crimes processing as well as interferences in proceedings (Jones et al. 2013). In order to tackle these issues, the OSCE has developed a programme aimed at monitoring war crimes trials (OSCE 2018a). In addition to this, the OSCE has provided capacity building and technical support

to the six countries' judicial systems, helping them to follow their constitutions and criminal procedure codes. Moreover, the organisation has improved the transparency of procedures, while avoiding interference in the judicial processes and allowing the public and NGOs to become the report recipients, thus encouraging trust-building towards institutions while increasing involvement of the public sphere in the process of transitional justice. Furthermore, in order to sustain transitional justice, the OSCE has promoted dialogue regarding the past in BiH by depoliticising the issue of establishing platforms in which the government, institutions and civil society could further the process of reconciliation (ibid.). As already mentioned, the OSCE puts a strong emphasis on carrying out its tasks in an inclusive way involving different key agents. Indeed, the efforts in pursuing transitional justice show exactly this feature. Against this background, the OSCE stands out among the different international organisations because of its ability to involve and support civil society actors in the process of reconciliation. Indeed, the OSCE missions in the different countries have supported local NGOs working to trigger judicial reforms. Among these civil society organisations, the Association of Public Prosecutors and Deputy Public Prosecutors of Serbia has carried out important actions in this sense. In 2013 and 2014, this NGO, supported by the OSCE Mission to Serbia and by the Embassy of Netherlands in Belgrade, has implemented the project 'Strengthening Independence and Integrity of Prosecutors' with the main goal of supporting the role and perception of the State Prosecutorial Council. Despite not being directly linked to reconciliation, reforms of the judiciary and the strengthening of transparency of court trials are essential in order to ensure the truth-telling potential of the judicial system (Association of Public Prosecutors and Deputy Public Prosecutors of Serbia 2015).

The relationship of the OSCE with civil society has a long history, drawing back to the mid-1970s when the organisation was founded as Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE); the CSCE gave much support to rising civil society actors in Central and Eastern Europe before the end of the Cold War and kept up this productive relationship in the aftermath of the fall of the Berlin Wall, when the Conference was institutionalised in 1994 and became an organisation. Today, the OSCE recognises the primary role of civil society actors, focusing especially on NGOs, in the field of democratisation and conflict prevention (Mayer 2008). In their efforts to tackle hate crime, they are perceived as agents providing supervision and reports on hate crime incidents, supporting victims and raising awareness on the issue (OSCE/ODIHR 2018). Thus, the organisation undertakes initiatives together with these actors, providing them with technical-assistance and capacity-building initiatives (Mayer 2008). In particular, the OSCE offers occasions for creating networks among NGOs in the region, thus tackling the lack of regional coordination and cooperation among civil society agents. In particular, OSCE supported projects such as 'Fostering NGO Human Rights Network in the Western Balkans Region', which then transformed in a well-established network of civil society organisations. The network comprises NGOs such as the Humanitarian Center for Integration and Tolerance and the Group 484 in Serbia, the Center for Peace, Non-Violence and Human rights in Croatia and the Serbian Democratic Forum and Vaša Prava in BiH. The network was born by the recognition of the OSCE of the divisions between civil

society actors in the region. The goal of its creation was the strengthening of civil society organisations links with each other in order to improve their pressuring and advocacy potentials (Group484 2014). The network of these NGOs deals mostly with supporting and protecting the rights of forced migrants in the region, thus also helping the process of regional reconciliation as the Yugoslav wars caused several displacements of people, and as their return has been demonstrated to be difficult in some cases.

Nevertheless, the OSCE is not able to provide a high level of funding to civil society actors because of its lack of financial capabilities (Ostojić 2013); on the other hand, the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) uses a limited budget to support small grass-root projects that are articulated by OSCE's Missions in each country that are carried out together with local civil society actors (Mayer 2008). The lack of financial support provided by the OSCE might bring local civil society actors to turn to other international organisations in order to obtain more secure funds. This might prompt local NGOs to start doing international agents' interests instead of those of their societies in order to gain funding. Nevertheless, the OSCE results freed from the danger of inhibiting the real needs of local advocacy groups exactly because of its scarce sources of funding, thus meaning that those NGOs that engage with the organisation are doing so not for the sake of money. In addition, the organisation stands out in the region because of its attention towards civil society in contraposition to other international institutions. Indeed, while advocacy groups in Kosovo have lamented a superficial involvement of the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) because of the consultations it carried out with the local elites, thus leaving behind local civil society actors, prompting in them feelings of mistrust (Simangan 2019), the OSCE has always pursued a different approach to these actors. For instance, the Democratisation Department of the OSCE established an Interim NGO Council inviting NGOs registered with UNMIK to attend in order to allow the rising civil society groups in 1999 to take part in the process of institution building of the country (Strazzari and Selenica 2013). The OSCE has a in-depth mechanism for civil society groups and, despite NGOs not taking part in its political decision-making process, they meet regularly with the Secretary General of the institution and have a strong relation with permanent OSCE delegations; thus, they are able to raise their concerns and interests in order to advise the organisation of the necessity to deal with certain issues (Mayer 2008).

6.5 Empowering Women

In order to facilitate dialogue and reconciliation among conflicting parties in the Western Balkans, the OSCE engages and supports different civil society groups, with a major focus on women, youth groups and community and religious leaders. In relation to women, the OSCE focusses a particular attention on them because of their acknowledged role as agents of social change (OSCE 2018a, b). One of the most successful efforts of the organisation in pursuing dialogue among different

societies resides in the initiative that was launched by the OSCE Mission to Serbia together with the OSCE Mission in Kosovo that is known under the name 'Follow Us'. This initiative was started in 2012 and brought together renowned women from Serbia and Kosovo who are members of parliament, journalists, academics and civil society activists; the meetings focus on gender issues, a common point between the parties, and progressed to include social and economic topics. The initiative, met initially with scepticism from both sides, was successful in building reciprocal trust and dialogue and managed to overcome political turmoil between the two countries over the years, always allowing for an open channel of communication. The main goal of 'Follow Us' is to promote women's active lives in public and political spheres as role models and promoters of peace, reconciliation and tolerance. This succeeded to the extent that the initiative may expand to other OSCE areas where societies are experiencing strong divisions and conflicts (OSCE 2016, 2018a). As part of the 'Follow Us' initiative, both the OSCE Mission in Serbia and the OSCE Mission in Kosovo have established the Dialogue Academy for Young Women. The Academy, which at the moment of writing is in its fifth edition, consists of bringing together young women for 10 days from Pristina and Belgrade with the aim of encouraging collective initiatives of young women's activists from both societies to advocate for women's rights and trust-building in the region (OSCE 2018d).

6.6   Involving Youth and Education

Another crucial component of civil society with which the OSCE engages actively in promoting reconciliation is the youth. Indeed, the organisation has already proved its dedication to youth with the establishment of the Youth Advisory Group in BiH in 2014 with the goal of giving more importance to the opinions of younger generations in the projects pursued by the OSCE. In its activities, the organisations try to bolster youth engagement by supporting youth-focused initiatives. Among these initiatives stands out, the organisation of summer and winter schools for young people coming from areas of conflict is aimed at enhancing the intercultural dialogue and trust-building (OSCE 2018a). In addition, the OSCE Presence in Albania has organised in 2017 together with the Municipality of Tirana, the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) and the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO) a youth trail in order to raise awareness of OSCE values and to promote tolerance as means to achieve regional security (OSCE 2017b). Moreover, as emphasised during a workshop in 2012, the OSCE puts emphasis on projects revolving around building tolerance and inter-ethnic trust among younger generations, such as those comprising artistic initiatives (OSCE 2013). Indeed, the organisation has pursued such initiatives successfully, for example one organised by the OSCE Mission to BiH that sought to sensitise young people, through creative means involving dramatic arts, towards issues regarding radicalisation and violent extremism, which is a topic that can be tackled by reconciliation. Overall, the initiative involved university students from

Sarajevo and Banja Luka (OSCE 2018b). Furthermore, in order to help younger generations to overcome ethnic prejudices and rebuild inter-ethnic trust, but also because of its importance for achieving sustainable peace in post-conflict societies, the OSCE is highly concerned with the educational systems in the region, which especially in cases such as Macedonia and BiH comprise segregated schools. Against this background, the organisation supports the desegregation of school systems while seeking the involvement of civil society organisations in the process. These organisations have tried to promote integration by implementing activities and acting where the national institutions were unable or lacking political will to do so. Nowadays, the OSCE intervention, as well as the efforts of civil society, in Macedonia has been shown to have successful results in reducing school violence but also in involving the state in the process, thus prompting reforms in the educational system. On the other hand, the positive outcomes accomplished in Macedonia did not take place in BiH, where the efforts of civil society organisations and the guidance of the local OSCE Mission were reduced by the lack of support from the national institutions (Galbreath 2007; Barbieri et al. 2013; Kavaja 2017). Against this background, the NGO Vaša Prava has strongly engaged in efforts aimed at changing the 'Two School Under One Roof' policy in BiH. In 2012, the NGO filed suit in the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton, in Mostar, arguing that the education policy of the country was against the anti-discrimination law. The lawsuit ended up eventually in the hands of the Federation of BiH Supreme Court, which held that the policy was violating the law on discrimination. Nevertheless, the decision applied to the schools in Mostar but did not spread throughout the country because it would need the initiative of the government. Hence, Vaša Prava needs to put pressure on other cantons in order to achieve its goal. The NGO tried to do so also in Travnik, in the Central Bosnia Canton, but the court dismissed the claim citing language barriers and the parents' lack of concern for the issue.

6.7   Engaging with Religious Leaders

In the process of reconciliation in the Western Balkans, a tremendous role is played by leaders of religious communities because of their abilities in acting as mediators between conflicting groups, as they normally enjoy popular and political influence (OSCE 2018b). For this reason, the OSCE started to collaborate with religious leaders in an attempt to foster tolerance and re-open dialogue among divided societies. The organisation established an inter-faith dialogue framework in order to allow different religious communities to come in contact with the support of their religious leaders. In addition, the OSCE, apart from providing several occasions for inter-religious dialogue such as exhibitions, meetings of religious guides and sports events, has worked hard to allow for the first inter-faith meeting for paying respects together for the victims of war crimes from other ethnic groups (OSCE 2018a). Interesting and positive outcomes have come from the initiative led by the OSCE Mission in Kosovo that involved high school students from the municipality of Kaçanik/Kačanik

in a tour of sites belonging to different religious communities in the city of Prizren. The initiative also comprised discussions with different religious representatives and saw the participation of the Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport (OSCE 2018b). Eventually, the efforts of the organisation have resulted in successful outcomes as the different local religious communities are now working jointly against hate crimes and in order to re-establish inter-ethnic confidence and tolerance, while also publicly condemning incidents.

In many ways, the OSCE has been able to overcome many of the issues affecting the reconciliation process in the Western Balkans and the civil society of the region. Despite the scarce funding opportunities that the organisation can provide, civil society has enjoyed the support by the OSCE and consequently it managed to broaden its capacities. In addition, the organisation is providing civil society with important networking opportunities by bolstering regional cooperation between different NGOs and between civil society actors, and with support to engage with local authorities, allowing it to play its role as pressure group.

6.8   Conclusion

The argument advanced in this chapter is that civil society is benefitting from the support of the OSCE in pursuing reconciliation in the Western Balkans. The aid coming from the organisation is to support civil society groups in order to overcome the barriers they face in a context such as the one in the region. The obstacles faced by advocacy groups are mainly the lack of strong networks among themselves and with local authorities; their insufficient legitimacy as a consequence of their financial dependency on international donors; and in some cases, their politicisation as a result of their ethnic affiliation. Against this background, the OSCE has provided the necessary tools in order to foster regional security and engage different civil society groups in different ethnic communities. Indeed, the inclusive approach towards security of the organisation has favoured its activities, and consequently, it has experienced a positive response from advocacy groups who engage with it energetically. Indeed, as the reconciliation process needs to tackle both the civic and the political spheres of post-conflict societies, the organisation's approach appears the most effective one as it deals with both of these spheres, engaging simultaneously with governments and with civil society. Regarding the latter, the OSCE allows inter-ethnic engagement via groups of women, youth and leaders of different religious communities, all of whom are agents with an enormous potential for the development of reconciliation, and encourages interactions through initiatives both at the local and at the regional level. Furthermore, more locally oriented, it also supports capacity-building activities by providing training sessions, recommendations and guidance aimed at improving civil society's capabilities. Even more fundamentally, the OSCE has managed to support civil society organisations in engaging with governmental institutions and actors, which are often reluctant to engage in initiatives entailing reconciliation, thus allowing them to play their role as pressure groups. This has brought positive outcomes in

certain occasions, as shown by the cases of 'Follow Us' and of the efforts in deseg-regating schools in North Macedonia. Furthermore, the organisation has bolstered transparency in reconciliation procedures aimed at achieving transitional justice by establishing war crimes trial monitoring programmes. On the other hand, advocacy groups that engage with the organisation have offered their contribution to the activities of the OSCE in reporting and monitoring their local environments, especially regarding hate crimes and security threats.

Despite the efforts of the OSCE having been overshadowed by those of other international institutions such as the EU because of the huge disparity of budgetary possibilities, the organisation has established itself as an indispensable actor in the Western Balkans for the process of reconciliation. Building inter-ethnic confidence and tolerance is allowing the region to move forward and to transform itself into a more secure environment. Nonetheless, the six countries still have a long way to go before achieving reconciliation, taking into consideration that the process itself requires long-term efforts but also that the current regional cooperation level among them is still quite low. Against this background, the OSCE has the necessary potential to keep going with the positive developments and to enhance the abilities of civil society agents the way it has been doing this far. Indeed, the organisation has provided until now the necessary transformative impulse in certain contexts, strengthened by the mutual aid of the local civil society. The stabilisation of the Western Balkans requires further civil society involvement in order to allow the involved divided societies to both deal with the past and look at the future, and the OSCE has all the right means to assure it. To conclude, the reconciliation process is important for assuring stability, peace and security as its achievement would mean that the cycle of violence has been broken and that mutual trust and tolerance in post-conflict societies has been guaranteed. The OSCE work, together with the civil society of the Western Balkans, is progressing in implementing the process and, despite the final goal still being far from reach, their joint efforts are allowing the development of inter-ethnic rapprochement. Thus, by promoting and supporting civil society progression and regional networks, and by providing them with the necessary expertise assistance, the OSCE is actively engaged in transforming the social and political context of the Western Balkans.

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Chapter 7
Central Asia in Transition: Social Contract Transformation in Nazarbayev and Post-Nazarbayev Kazakhstan

Nygmet Ibadildin and Dinara Pisareva

7.1 Introduction

On March 22, 2019, during the festive mood of celebration of the national spring holiday of *Nowruz*, among the citizens of Kazakhstan, a sense of disorientation and confusion arose. Politics and people have for long existed in separate domains in Kazakhstan, but on March 19, Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev made a surprise announcement about his decision to resign with immediate effect and the surprising news that Kazakhstan's capital, Astana, was to be renamed Nur-Sultan in Nazarbayev's honor. Kazakh Parliament quickly approved the initiative put forward by then acting and later elected active President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, who previously served as chairman of the Senate. The public reaction to Nazarbayev's resignation and the renaming of the capital was mixed. While some Kazakhs were optimistic about the prospects for liberalization and political change, others were less so. Most people, however, hoped to see a calm, managed political transition from the old authoritarian regime to a new one.

Hence, this article looks at the evolution of the modern political history of Kazakhstan, from the collapse of the Soviet Union to Nazarbayev's resignation, using the social contract theory where key events of domestic politics are interpreted as a part of implicit agreement between elites and people. Back in 1991, there were hopes for possibility of democratic transition in Kazakhstan. But rapid strengthening of presidential rule and several forceful dismissals of Parliament in mid-90s clearly signaled that democracy was not among top priorities of Nazarbayev's regime. As

N. Ibadildin (✉)
KIMEP University, Almaty, Kazakhstan
e-mail: nygmet@kimep.kz

D. Pisareva
Australian National University, Canberra, Australia
e-mail: dinara.pisareva@anu.edu.au

the president himself said during the 2015 presidential elections, "democracy is not the starting point of our way, it is the final point of our destination" (Tengri News 2015).

The social contract that was instead offered by Kazakh elites to the people can be summarized as a focus on economic development and a provision of social benefits in exchange for unchallenged political rule and opportunities for the elites' personal enrichment. During the first decade of independent Kazakhstan, there was an increasing power concentration in the hands of the president and his close circle. However, as the country was becoming less democratic, there was no widespread public dissatisfaction as people were mostly preoccupied with survival and moving forward following the rough socioeconomic transition of the early 1990s, and therefore, one thing they wanted the most from their political elites was not to get in their way.

Until 2001, there was still a limited possibility for outsiders to gain a certain amount of political influence in the system, but the 2001 "revolt of new Kazakhs" led to restricting political access only to those who had proved themselves truly loyal to Nazarbayev. The 2001 events revealed that the young post-Soviet Kazakh elite was not entirely satisfied with a system where only Nazarbayev's inner circle had access to real political influence and resources, which prompted some of newly emerged businessmen and politicians to attempt a "revision" of the existing social contract by raising demands for reforms and democratization, which then soundly failed.

The president's extremely harsh response to the young reformers showed he viewed the revolt as a violation of the personal loyalty expected of the businessmen and government officials who made their fortune during his rule. It also signaled there would be no liberalization of the political system or any revisions of the social contract. However, as long as high oil prices supported Kazakhstan's economic growth, there was no widespread dissatisfaction with authoritarian politics from the public.

The frustration that existed was primarily concerned with the failure to modernize and diversify Kazakhstan's economy, with the ineffective state development programs, and with the corrupted government. The 2008 global financial crisis and volatilities on the oil market demonstrated that no hydrocarbon exporter, including Kazakhstan, was safe from macroeconomic shocks. A series of socioeconomic downfalls—rapid currency devaluation during 2014–2015 with the *tenge* losing more than 100% of its value and performing worse than the Ukrainian *hryvna* or the Russian *rouble*, and mass land reform protests in 2016—revealed decreasing levels of trust in Kazakhstan's government and an emerging realization that the old social contract was no longer perceived as legitimate.

By 2019, there was a lot of speculation about the future political trajectory of Kazakhstan and how the transition model would look in the Kazakh case. Nazarbayev had opted for a "Yeltsin" model in which he publicly announced his resignation, raising a lot of discussion about the motivations behind this choice. Following this development, by 2019 Nazarbayev had limited options as two fundamental narratives that had provided legitimacy to his rule—strong economic performance and political stability—failed to seem convincing. In terms of economic performance, the global fall of oil prices revealed the weakness of Kazakhstan's non-oil economic sectors

and its failure at modernization. Political stability and associated social security have also been questioned after the case of police violence in Zhanaozen in 2011 and mass arrests following land reform protests in 2016.

7.2 The Social Contract Theory in the Post-Soviet Space

Social contract is one of the most well-known political theories that introduce the concept of the implicit contract among citizens who are willing to accept limitations on their natural freedoms in exchange for security and protection of their rights provided by the government. While the idea of the social contract can be traced as far back as to ancient Greece, it became truly popular in the eighteenth century thanks to political philosophers such as Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau each of whom presented their own vision of a social contract that legitimized the existence of the modern state (Boucher and Kelly 1994). Even though the social contract theory takes its origins in Western political philosophy, its variations can be clearly observed in the non-Western world, such as the Soviet Union and post-Soviet states. For example, resource-rich Russia and Kazakhstan, where political regimes' legitimacy has been based on a very special sort of social contract between elites and society, can be described as a "rentier social contract" where the "state provides goods and services to society (…) while society provides state officials with a degree of autonomy in decision-making." The core of such a political system is the "feudal appropriation of unearned income" and its further distribution by elites (Sakwa 2014).

Earlier in Soviet times, a similar type of social contract was observed during Leonid Brezhnev's period (1964–1982) when, as a popular Soviet joke told it, "we [people] pretend to work, they [government] pretend to pay us" (Bacon 2002). Breslauer (1978) named such a type of political regime as "welfare-state authoritarianism," characterized by a "pattern of political, social, and material benefits offered by the ruling authorities… both to regulate relationships between themselves and to elicit compliance and initiative from groups in society." Jowitt (1992), however, described such a type of social contract in harsher terms as a "protection racket" between non-equal parties of a "parasitical party" and a "scavenger society."

Jowitt's description of Brezhnev's period is a reminder of the time, aptly named as *zastoi* (stagnation) by Russian historians, that was full of contradictions such as both economic stagnation and increasing consumption due to rising oil prices, people's alienation from the ruling CPSU (Communist Party of Soviet Union), coupled with formal compliance with its rules and ideology. It is perhaps not an accident that Russia under Vladimir Putin's rule has often been compared to Brezhnev's period because of the apparent similarities of the social contact in both the USSR's centralized system and contemporary Russia's market economies (Pisano 2014).

However, it should be recognized that Russia's social contract has been transformed to incorporate not only an "implicit trade-off" between social benefits and political control, but also neo-imperialist sentiments and assertive foreign policy that,

following Crimea's annexation in 2014, have become the main source of the regime's legitimacy. Russia's foreign policy is a big part of its post-imperial syndrome where modern Russia still harbors a great deal of resentment and regret over lost geopolitical power and territories. As Vladimir Putin famously said in 2005 about the collapse of the Soviet Union, for him it was the "greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the XX century" (Reuters 2018).

In comparison with Russia, Kazakhstan has been an example of classic "welfare-state authoritarianism" in the post-Soviet space, with several important periods in its post-independent history that could have been roughly described as post-Soviet opening, increasing centralization of power, revolt of new elites, and further authoritarian consolidation.

7.3 Nazarbayev's Key Periods and Changes

Post-Soviet Kazakhstan is traditionally considered as the leader of the Central Asian region due to its size, economic performance, and abundance of natural resources. While it might outperform its neighbors in economic terms, its political regime is quite similar to the rest of authoritarian Central Asian states (with the notable exception of semi-democratic Kyrgyzstan). Zakaria (1997) included Kazakhstan in the list of so-called illiberal democracies defining it as a "near tyranny" where certain electoral procedures are preserved, but the essence of the regime is an authoritarian one.

For a while, the discourse of the economic success of President Nazarbayev's leadership has been the main basis for the social contract with people who judged government by the "material benefits it provided to its citizens" (Olcott 2010b). To a large extent, such attitudes could have been explained by the socioeconomic hardships of early 1990 when material security and stability became the top priority for the first post-Soviet generation. Kazakhstan's early years of independence were challenging, to say the least. From 1991 to 1994, Kazakhstan's GPD fell by 60%, while the annual inflation rate in 1994 was 1800% (Akhanov and Buranbayeva 1996).

Such a social contract ultimately depends on citizens' long-lasting indifference to the political process and the state's non-interference into private lives, which for a while has been a satisfactory agreement for Kazakhstan's society (Dave 2007). However, since the 2010s there have been indicators of rising popular discontent with uncertainty in the political regime's future, the perceived compromises on sovereignty with Russia and China, the rapid currency devaluation, and the economic development that suffered from a drop in global oil prices.

In the beginning of post-independent Kazakhstan, there was a brief three-year period when post-Soviet elites "at least flirted with the idea of a transition to democracy" (Olcott 2010b). Nazarbayev selected a government of reformers to promote the liberalization of the economy and prepare the first post-independent constitution that came into force in 1993 and which established a parliamentary republic with

clear separation of powers, provision of Parliament with real law-making powers, and a ban on president's service beyond two terms.

At the same time, Nazarbayev convinced the Supreme Council (that acted as Parliament) that there was a need for strong presidential power to guide the country through the process of reforms, and he subsequently acquired their approval (Cummings 2005). As the Supreme Council at the time was an independent branch of power, there were often confrontations between Nazarbayev and Chairman of the Supreme Council Serikbolsyn Abdildin, who did not support the stabilization and privatization programs suggested by the International Monetary Fund. These ongoing conflicts resulted in a dissolution of the Supreme Council in December 1993 under the pretext that it was not legitimately elected (it was elected in March 1990 during the Soviet Union's existence) and with new parliamentary elections scheduled for 1994.

However, the Parliament elected in 1994 was also dissolved in 1995 as the elections were again called illegal by Nazarbayev. In the absence of Parliament, presidential powers were expanded further due to the pass of a special decree that gave Nazarbayev the power to declare a state of emergency, initiate referendums, and appoint personnel. Nazarbayev also called for two public referendums in 1995, the first one extending his rule until 2000, and the second one introducing the adoption of a second constitution that considerably strengthened presidential power and is still in force today. One of Nazarbayev's fierce critics, Abdildin, called the dissolution of the Parliament in 1995 and the following changes in the constitution along with the consolidation of Nazarbayev's power a *coup d'état* (Akkuly 2011).

As it can be seen, the first five years of independence determined Kazakhstan's political regime and its trajectory of authoritarianism that came into full force in the early 2000s. At that time, most elites agreed to Nazarbayev's demand for power consolidation and weakening of legislative power, not unlike in Russia where Boris Yeltsin was facing similar problems with the *Duma* (Russian Parliament). The confrontation between legislature and executive in Kazakhstan and Russia in the early years is a typical example of one of the most common dilemmas that emerge in the countries in transition that can be summarized as "democratization vs. governability." This dilemma describes the complexity of multiple transitions of political and economic levels when it is difficult to combine popular rule and take into account plural preferences with the necessity to implement radical economic reforms (Hobson and Kurki 2012).

During such periods, the necessity to overcome an economic crisis under consolidated rule usually outweighs the commitment to a democratic regime, as happened in Kazakhstan and Russia in the 1990s. Kazakhstan had experienced one of the toughest economic transitions following the collapse of the Soviet Union and its forced exit from the ruble zone. The popular motto of Kazakhstan's leader, "economy first, politics later," that Nazarbayev proclaimed during his 2011 inaugural speech certainly owed some of its origins to this chaotic time of post-communist transition when the shortcomings of democratization were justified by the necessity to introduce radical economic reforms (Aitken 2010).

The second decade of the 1990s was also followed by increasing concentration and centralization of presidential powers with further restrictions on democratic freedoms. Nazarbayev proceeded with the weakening of government branches by abolishing certain ministries and state committees (Cummings 2005). At this stage of his political career, Nazarbayev faced a major challenge from former Prime Minister Akezhan Kazhegeldin (1994–1997) who openly accused Nazarbayev's regime of corruption and who intended to rival Nazarbayev in the next presidential elections, but had to leave the country and seek sanctuary in the UK because of accusations of corruption and the possibility of arrest. Same as Nazarbayev, Kazhegeldin was an experienced Soviet party member who was a head of several executive committees in eastern Kazakhstan.

In 1997, Kazhegeldin was replaced by Nurlan Balgimbayev, the head of the state oil company, indicating the growing importance of the oil and gas industry for Kazakhstan (Olcott 2010b). During the Soviet times, Balgimbayev was chief engineer of Zhaykneft oil refinery, working for the Soviet Ministry of Oil and Gas. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Balgimbayev spent a short time in the USA doing an internship at Chevron. In post-independent times, Balgimbayev had occupied both positions as Minister of Oil and Gas and as president of Kazakhoil. Balgimbayev was the one who invited the so-called young Turks into the government, introducing young successful businessmen who had managed to achieve success during the transition and privatization of the early 1990s. Many of them would play a crucial role in forming a challenge to Nazarbayev's regime in the 2000s, such as Mukhtar Ablyazov, Oraz Zhandosov, Galymzhan Zhakiyanov, Alikhan Baimenov, and Bulat Abilov. Many of them worked with Kazhegeldin as well and made their fortune under privatization programs and the initial development of capitalism.

The early presidential elections of 1999 were negotiated with Parliament and concluded with Nazarbayev's victory of 79%. By that time, Kazakhstan was shaped into a political system most suited to elites' preferences, consisting of strong presidential power, tightly controlled opposition and censored mass media. But this transition to an authoritarian regime was not smooth, as the ruling regime had to overcome resistance from opposition actors using oppressive means that considerably worsened the reputation and legitimacy of the 1999 elections and attracted international criticism. Moreover, the broad extent of corruption of Nazarbayev's regime was publicly revealed and highlighted during the struggle between him and opposition in the second half of the 1990s.

2001 was a crucial moment for Nazarbayev's political regime, as for the first time since Kazakhstan's independence his monopoly on political power was openly challenged by new Kazakh elites. The irony was that these Western-oriented self-made businessmen who gained their assets during privatization in the early 1990s were a class created by Nazarbayev's regime itself, comparable to Russia's oligarchs that emerged during Yeltsin's rule. In other words, the regime's main opposition was also a direct creation of this regime. They all possessed a considerable amount of wealth and influence, but their power was still far from those of the inner circle or Nazarbayev's clan who controlled all resources and distribution of rents.

Two prominent figures from Kazakhstan's political elites were at the root of this conflict, Nazarbayev's deceased son-in-law and former husband of Nazarbayev's oldest daughter Dariga Nazarbayeva, Rakhat Aliyev, and former Minister of Energy, Industry, and Trade Mukhtar Ablyazov, whose assets Aliyev tried to seize (Olcott 2010a). At that time, Aliyev's influence as the deputy head of the Committee of National Security was almost limitless due to Nazarbayev's support, so virtually nobody's property was secure from being seized. The desire to constrain Aliyev's influences was one of the main factors behind the creation of the first political party not affiliated with the ruling regime, the Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan (DVK).

DVK was an aggregation of various interests represented by the new elites frustrated with their outsider status, distance from decision-making, and inability to gain genuine political influence. On the one hand, former participants such as businessman Bulat Abilov said their true agenda was to introduce "changes" to the corrupt neo-patrimonial system based on the dominance of Nazarbayev's clan, while pro-Nazarbayev's supporters such as Nazarbayev's political advisor Yermukhamet Yertysbaev claimed that the DVK was created by Ablyazov to gain an upper hand over Aliyev and he had no further political ambitions, "Ablyazov himself confessed in his unpublished memoirs that he did not look further [than dismissing Aliyev] and did not plan to make any further moves" (Akkuly 2009). Each of DVK's leading actors joined the movement with his own agenda, and there was hardly a common goal shared by all of them.

This lack of unity and diverse interests turned out to be fatal for the party's future, and in 2002, the party split into the moderate Ak Zhol led by Altynbek Sarsenbayev, Oraz Zhandosov and Alikhan Baimenov, and "radicals" Mukhtar Ablyazov and Galymzhan Zhakiyanov. Both Ablyazov and Zhakiyanov were arrested in 2002 and sentenced to prison over accusations of corruption. Ablyazov was released in 2003 after he allegedly promised not to return to politics and was even appointed as Chair of Board of Directors of Bank Turan Alem (BTA). However, he did not stay in a favorable position for long as in 2009 he fled the country, followed by the state's accusations of him illegally moving the bank's capital out of Kazakhstan and abusing his position as chair of the board by giving loans to companies associated with him (Trifonov and Rubnikovych 2010). Zhakiyanov suffered a harsher fate, spending his sentence in worse conditions. He was released only in 2004 due to serious health concerns and international pressure (Olcott 2010b). After the 2004 elections, he left the country and there is scarce information about him in the public domain since 2008.

Nazarbayev's harsh reaction to the emergence of this new pro-reformist group that demanded changes has been explained by his fear that the opposition wanted to overthrow his regime and him personally. As Abdildin remembered when he asked Nazarbayev in 2003 why he did not want to release Ablyazov and Zhakiyanov, Nazarbayev responded with indignation, "They almost brought me down" (Akkuly 2009). DVK's emergence in 2001 demonstrated there was no uniform consensus about the existing social contract among Kazakhstan's new elites, and those who

were left outside the inner circle of Nazarbayev's clan were not satisfied with the distribution of political influence. Although Nazarbayev succeeded in dividing and suppressing the newly born opposition, this was not the last challenge to the dominance of Nazarbayev's clan in Kazakhstan's politics.

After numerous public scandals that involved Rakhat Aliyev in 2001, he was sent as an ambassador to Austria. The main source of Nazarbayev's disappointment with Aliyev was the revelation that Aliyev was planning a *coup d'état* to take Nazarbayev's place. In 2007, Parliament approved an amendment to the constitution that allowed Nazarbayev to be reelected without any limitations. At that time, Aliyev started openly opposing Nazarbayev, saying that "a younger, more open generation should come to power" (Smale 2007). Ironically, he almost repeated Nazarbayev's own words from twenty years before, "A leader shouldn't keep one post for decades… a desire to look legitimate in the end creates a perception of sanctity. There is a need for a time limit. Only a democratic society would be a guarantee of a stable happy future" (Radio Azattyq April 2, 2008).

In response to Aliyev's political statements, Kazakhstan started a criminal investigation, accusing Aliyev of kidnapping and torturing two bankers from Nurbank. The government filed a request for Aliyev's extradition from Austria, a request that Vienna declined, providing Aliyev with political sanctuary (Gorst 2007). Kazakhstan's military court stated that Aliyev was guilty in absentia, quickly followed by Dariga Nazarbayeva's divorce from Aliyev. Aliyev's most visible strike against Nazarbayev was the publication of a book with the telling name *The Godfather-in-Law*, a publication that provided, in great details, information about the role of corruption and bribes in Kazakhstan's political system, while directly naming many high-ranking people who were forced to pay large tributes to Nazarbayev. The dissemination of this book was prohibited in Kazakhstan under the pretext of protecting the privacy of the people mentioned in the book. Aliyev's struggle against Nazarbayev ended abruptly in February 2015 when he was found hanging in his prison cell in Vienna while awaiting trial for murder charges (Weber and Groendahl 2015). Although there were certain suspicions surrounding this sudden death, Austrian investigators officially declared that Aliyev committed suicide (BBC News February 25, 2015).

Aliyev's case became a psychological point of departure for Nazarbayev's regime, after which it had significantly narrowed the circle of ruling elites and shed all features of a hybrid regime with limited pluralism, turning into fully consolidated authoritarianism.

According to Freedom House, Kazakhstan's democracy score has been gradually declining since the early 2000s, with the exception of 2009 when Kazakhstan introduced some liberalizing amendments to electoral and media law in advance of its much-sought OSCE's chairmanship in 2010 (Freedom House n.d.). In general, already by the mid-2000s Kazakhstan was a consolidated authoritarian regime, and after the 2001 failure of democratic opposition, there were no large-scale challenges to the existing regime from the side of elites.

The lack of democratic procedures and alternatives to Nazarbayev's regime did not seem to be a concern for Kazakhstan's population, with one prominent exception in 2011 when there were protests by oil workers in the small town of Zhanaozen in

Western Kazakhstan. Political authorities took the decision to employ force and as a result of violent clashes with police 16 people died. The situation was followed by Nazarbayev's declaration of a state of emergency in the region that basically gave unlimited authority to law enforcement for brutal interrogations, torture and arrests (Nurumov and Vashchanka 2016). On the one hand, these protests were related to the specific issue of salaries in oil sector, and however, on a higher level, it was also "emblematic of the overall social and economic deterioration and failures of the political system, in other words, of what has been called 'authoritarian modernization'" (Malashenko 2013).

Much of the regime's legitimacy during the late 2000s came to rest on its economic performance, which largely depended on high oil prices and left the economy vulnerable to macroeconomic volatility. Declining oil prices and devaluation of the Russian *rouble* in 2014 resulted in Kazakhstan's decision to cancel the fixed exchange rate for *tenge*, immediately followed by a sharp devaluation (Kourmanova 2015). During 2014–2015, the tenge was called the world's "most volatile" currency, losing more than 100% of its value in relation to the USD something that did not happen even in conflict-torn Ukraine (Seputyte and Gizitdinov 2015). Although the official position was that the devaluation would the benefit the economy as it would increase the competitiveness of the private sector, the real beneficiaries were export-oriented companies whose interests were lobbied by the government.

The 2014–2015 devaluation raised a high level of dissatisfaction among people. However, there were almost no public protests with the only exception of Almaty where a few dozen people gathered to protest during the first devaluation wave in 2014 (RFE Kazakh Europe 2014). Genuine social tensions broke out in 2016 when Parliament passed a law that allowed foreigners to rent agricultural land for 25 years, triggering mass protests not only in Almaty and Astana but also in small towns across all of Kazakhstan (BBC News April 28, 2016). Although the law itself was quite progressive and did not include permission for foreigners to purchase land, people clearly did not trust the government to hold its end of bargain and were concerned it would mean foreign investors (mostly Chinese) would come to monopolize Kazakhstan's land.

Such an interpretation of the government's actions first and foremost signaled the high level of distrust in the society of the government and political elites (Toleukhanova 2016). Many of the protesters were detained, but no deadly force was used this time. Nazarbayev took the decision to put a moratorium on land reform until December 31, 2016, and ordered a Presidential Commission on land reform that included not only public officials, but also actors from civil society and NGOs (Sholk 2016). It was obvious that such large-scale protests took the president and elites by surprise and raised serious concerns as Nazarbayev in his speech emphasized the overall importance of national unity and not letting a Ukrainian scenario happen in Kazakhstan (Reuters May 1, 2016).

2016 was also the last year of parliamentary elections to be closely observed by the OSCE mission. The mission noticed there were still many problems with the conduct of the electoral process in Kazakhstan. In the words of Marietta Tidei, special coordinator and leader of the short-term OSCE observer mission, "It is clear

that Kazakhstan still has a long way to go toward fulfilling its election commitments…
the ruling party had a clear advantage over others in these elections and, while the
parties were generally able to campaign freely, genuine political choice remains
insufficient" (OSCE 2016).

2014–2016 was also the period during which it became apparent there was mass-
level dissatisfaction with how things were done under the existing political system.
Nazarbayev and elites had also received this warning signal and tried to introduce
some limited reforms and development programs.

7.4   Weak Social Contract in the Late Nazarbayev Period

In March 2015, during presidential elections, Nazarbayev said there was "colossal
work" done in Kazakhstan, with GDP per capita increasing from $600 to $13,000
and the economy growing 21 times larger compared to 1991 (Tengri News March 20,
2015). The economic achievements of post-independent Kazakhstan have been the
main reason why some regional experts consider it as a successful political model,
especially in the context of much-troubled post-Soviet transition.

The less-talked aspect, however, is that such economic growth has been dependent
on the exploitation of natural resources. Although the government has invested in
infrastructure and institutions, it has still failed to develop non-resource sectors of the
economy, tackle corruption and introduce effective governance (Hoen and Irnazarov
2012). In social contract theory, there is always "a moment in the history of a society
when it will be obvious to enough people… that the government has betrayed its
trust and has to go" (McClelland 1996). Although Kazakhstan still has a long way
to go till such a moment, there is a feeling of deteriorating trust in the government
and its capacity to provide for the people. In July 2016, the Center of Political and
Social Research Strategy conducted a public survey in Kazakhstan to assess the size
of population that desired socioeconomic changes, and the results were quite telling,
as more than 75% of participants wanted to see changes (Tatilja 2016).

At the end of 2015, Nazarbayev introduced the "100 Steps to Five Reforms"
program, designed to establish a professional government apparatus, the rule of
law, industrialization and economic growth, transparent accountable government,
national identity and unity (Kazinform 2015). According to Nazarbayev, these mea-
sures and laws would be an adequate response to the global economic crisis and
would restore economic growth and social stability (Tengri News, January 6, 2016).
Moreover, these reforms would allow Kazakhstan to achieve the ultimate goal of
becoming one of the thirty most developed countries in the world by 2050, which is
reflected in another state program, "Kazakhstan-2050."

However, such optimistic scenarios have not been supported by experts such as
Oraz Zhandosov (one of the founding members of the Democratic Choice of Kaza-
khstan in 2001 who chose to stay with moderates after the split in the democratic
movement). He predicts that unless there are radical changes in the government, the
approximate economic growth during 2017–2021 will be 1% per year, which means

Kazakhstan's agenda of getting to the list of most developed countries is highly unlikely (Forbes 2016). Any radical changes in Kazakhstan's political system are unlikely to happen due to the lack of recognition of the problems among the ruling elites. Nazarbayev himself always emphasized that the roots of the crisis were external, due to "falling energy prices… difficult international situation, confrontations between leading powers," and called for people not to look for guilty people among the elite, stating "I would like to say to those who will try to politicize the situation and look for someone to blame, this [crisis] is a global process that no country could influence" (Tengri News January 20, 2016).

7.5   Nazarbayev's Resignation in 2019

Following Nazarbayev's unexpected resignation in early 2019, one of the main questions was why he decided to follow in Boris Yeltsin's steps and voluntarily step down from the ruling position he had occupied for almost two decades. For a long time, Kazakhstan was perceived to be a post-Soviet version of smart authoritarianism where wise and balanced leadership had produced economic development and political stability. However, the question is to what degree these dominating narratives reflected the reality of modern Kazakhstan, where stories of economic and political success were often used as a façade to mask deeper structural problems and social tensions.

As with many other authoritarian regimes, Nazarbayev used economic development to legitimize his indefinite stay in power, starting in the mid-1990s when he dismissed the only independent Parliament Kazakhstan has ever had. He aptly summarized his beliefs during the 2015 presidential election, "democracy is not the starting point of our way, it is the final point of our destination" (Tengri News 2015). By the look of macroeconomic indicators, Kazakhstan seems to perform well compared to other post-Soviet states when it comes to GDP growth, poverty rates, and quality of life. Since 1991, Kazakhstan's economy has grown by more than twenty times. In the mid-2000s, Kazakhstan moved from the lower-middle- to the upper-middle-income category, which is more than can be said for many other former Soviet states.

This economic success is the result of the development during the first two decades of Nazarbayev's rule when resource-rich countries worldwide reaped the benefits of high oil prices. In the 2010s, when oil prices dropped, Kazakhstan's economic growth quickly went into recession largely because of a lack of significant diversification in the country's resource-dependent economy, which was vulnerable to external shocks. Nazarbayev and his elites have tried to address structural weaknesses by launching new reforms and modernization programs, but economic reforms cannot be effective when coupled with weak political institutions, lack of rule of law, and all-pervasive corruption. On February 21, less than a month before his resignation, Nazarbayev indirectly recognized his socioeconomic failures when he fired his cabinet, saying it

had failed to raise income and living standards for Kazakhstan's citizens (Eurasianet 2019).

Nazarbayev has always touted himself as a wise political leader who has managed to rule a multiethnic nation without any episodes of conflict or violence. The discourse about political stability has been especially emphasized after Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 that turned into a protracted conflict with Ukraine. As Nazarbayev said in 2016, "Ukraine, the second-biggest ex-Soviet state, today has an economy which is half the size of Kazakhstan's, because there is no unity" (Reuters 2016, May 1).

It is true that Kazakhstan has been among the few former Soviet states that have not experienced any large-scale mass protests. This led some analysts to believe Kazakhs are satisfied with Nazarbayev's regime. However, there could be another explanation as to why we have not seen mass protests in Kazakhstan.

In 2011, when oil workers protested and demanded a wage raise in the small town of Zhanaozen in Kazakhstan's western Mangystau region, sixteen people—according to official statistics—died as a result of violent clashes with police. Nazarbayev declared a state of emergency in the region, giving law enforcement unlimited authority to make mass arrests, carry out brutal interrogations, and inflict torture. The situation in Zhanaozen is rarely mentioned in discussions about Nazarbayev's Kazakhstan, as this episode clearly falls outside the narrative of a modernizing regime. The crackdown in Zhanaozen sent a clear signal to the people that all serious challenges to the system would be brutally and mercilessly repressed and that the police were loyal to Nazarbayev and would not hesitate to use lethal force against dissenters.

Despite the fear of repression and public disengagement with politics, the past few years have seen multiple protests, including over the devaluation of the national currency, the *tenge*, in 2014; controversial land reforms in 2016 that allowed foreigners to rent agricultural land in Kazakhstan for twenty-five years; and the "mothers' protests" in 2019 following a fire in Astana that claimed the lives of five children (Radio Free Europe 2019). While these protests have not produced a major uprising, they have all heightened social tension.

7.6   Post-Nazarbayev Kazakhstan

The post-Nazarbayev transition is occurring in a strange, slow, and stumbling way. The strange part of the transition is that Nazarbayev still remains in charge of many aspects of the republic's policies. The ministers and local governors report to him regularly, and he meets with international official visitors regularly as well. The current President Tokayev also reports to him regularly. Nazarbayev's portraits remain hanging on the walls in all the offices of government officials.

The slow pace of transition is that the latest changes in the constitution grant huge powers to the first president, even in his current capacity. If officials report to him, it is not a personal loyalty question, and it is a legal process because Nazarbayev is the head of the Security Council.

The stumbling part of the transition is that it is not clear to people what is going on. The heads of the Presidential Administration have been changed three times since Tokayev stepped into the position. There are some signs of liberalization, but they are contradictory. There are very liberal interviews given to the West by the second president, websites and social media are not blocked, and internet traffic is not slowed down so often as before. At the same time, when people went to the streets after the announcement of the latest presidential elections' results, the police suppressed them as fiercely as usual. And there was the usual fraud during the presidential elections.

Finally, Kazakhstan's society is highly fragmented and divided today, meaning people live in different political and social realities. They are interested in different issues and do not notice issues that are important for the others. Political leaders are aware of these fragmentations and send different messages to these groups. All of the fragmented groups have become agitated after the resignation and expected the new president would take some steps for them as well. All the fragmented groups suddenly felt unified in the search for new conditions in which to coexist with the new authoritarian regime. These new conditions are the future social contract pillars.

7.7   Conclusion

Kazakhstan has been a stable authoritarian regime where political power has been held within a very narrow circle of elites close to the president, with the implicit agreement of a population that has not been interested in politics as long as the state could fulfill its social obligations. However, the late 2000s brought a double challenge to the long-term stability and legitimacy of existing social contract—economic stagnation due to the fall of oil prices and uncertainty with Nazarbayev's succession.

Nazarbayev's 2019 resignation was a surprise to many outside and internal observers, and his motivations behind this decision remain widely contested. At first glance, Nazarbayev's resignation may have been motivated by his determination to oversee a peaceful and managed power transition. However, given the growing gap between elites and the ordinary people, the lack of political accountability, and strong public mistrust toward state institutions, Nazarbayev's abrupt departure from power may also be an attempt to preserve his image as the "father of the nation" and an economic modernizer before things start to fall apart.

Given the high levels of inequality and wide public dissatisfaction with political elites, the future social contract in Kazakhstan at the moment remains unclear. Will the public continue to follow ruling elites and allow them to make decisions on behalf of the country, or will there be broader mass mobilization and attempts to challenge a weakened transitional government? The latter scenario that did not happen in Uzbekistan might still occur in more liberal Kazakhstan and would have broader security and geopolitical implications not only for the country but for the entire region—and neighboring Russia—that relies on Kazakhstan as a strategically and partner in the Customs Union.

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Chapter 8
The Interplay Between Formal and Informal in Conflict Prevention, Mediation and Community Security Provision in Kyrgyzstan

Arzuu Sheranova

8.1 Introduction

In post-transition countries of Central Asia, traditional informal institutions, such as *aksakals*[1] and religious leaders—*imams*,[2] continue to play a crucial role within local communities (Khalid 2007; Nasritdinov and Esenamanova 2014; Poliakov 1992; Polis Azia 2011). Local Crime Prevention Centers (LCPCs) are local state-regulated bodies responsible for conflict prevention, mediation and community security provision in Kyrgyzstan. Understanding the important role of *aksakals* and *imams* within local communities, LCPCs engage regularly with these traditional institutions to fulfill their everyday duties and tasks (Eginalieva and Shabdanova 2016). Respect for elders, or *aksakals*, in Central Asia is ubiquitous (Poliakov 1992). The role of *imams* or religious leaders in social life is growing too, owing to the rise of religiosity after communism: more people pray, fast during Ramadan, perform pilgrimage to Mecca and perform religious rituals for occasions of births, marriages and deaths (Khalid 2007). According to Khalid, Islam in post-communist Central Asia was more than just a religion, it was also about national and cultural revival, and the interest in religion started even before the collapse of communism:

> The Islamic revival that began during the Gorbachev era was part of a much broader assertion of national identity that took place throughout the former Soviet Union in the late 1980s as glasnost broke old taboos. It involved the exploration of national and cultural legacies beyond the constraints placed on nationalist discourse by the regime (2007: 125–126).

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[1] Elderly people, translated from Kyrgyz, lit. "white beard."

[2] Islamic preachers, affiliated to local mosques.

A. Sheranova (✉)
Corvinus University of Budapest, Budapest, Hungary
e-mail: arzuusher@gmail.com

In Central Asia, a person can be an *aksakal* and *imam* at the same time. Usually, *imams* are representatives of the elder generation, which puts them under the category of respected elders, or *aksakals*. Thus, in general, in the Central Asian context, these traditional institutions could sometimes be overlapping, although frequently most *aksakals* are not *imams*. However, what makes them similar in the eyes of local communities is that they are both respected by community members, have wisdom and knowledge to share and have the final word to say during important situations or events, and communities tend to obey their decisions and advice. Respect for *aksakals* and *imams* is not a novel phenomenon in post-communist Kyrgyzstan. As Altymyshbaev notes, respect for elders was one of the best national ethical traditions in Soviet Central Asia (1958). He writes that youngsters appreciate in elders the following traits: "wisdom, experience gained throughout life" (ibid.: 24). Altymyshbaev also refers to the Manas epic, where the importance of elders' wisdom is also narrated, stating that Manas did not take any single important decision without discussing it with his uncle Bakai (ibid.). However, Altymyshbaev warns that feudal or anti-communist movements could manipulate *aksakals*, apparently because of their influential role and standing within societies.

Today, in post-independence Kyrgyzstan, the role of the informal institutions of *aksakals* and *imams* remains strong even during an era of transformation and development of the region with international support. The country, as one of the young democracies, received huge international support for democratization efforts. Since 1992, Kyrgyzstan has been an OSCE member-state. As of 1998, the year of establishment of the OSCE Programme Office in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan has been integrated into various OSCE-led projects, from border management to rule of law (see OSCE Web site/OSCE Programme Office in Bishkek). In 2017, the country received OSCE funding totaling 6,797,400 EUR (see OSCE Web site/who we are). In particular, international support was high after the violent conflict in the south of Kyrgyzstan in 2010 (see Introduction in Megoran et al. 2014). To overcome the conflict damages, Kyrgyzstan received a large share of funding from various international organizations, including the OSCE (ibid.) and Saferworld UK[3] (see British Embassy Bishkek 2014: 7). International projects on the local and national levels were introduced to address post-conflict reconciliation, prevent the emergence of new conflicts in diverse communities and improve the sense of community security. The OSCE Programme Office in Bishkek implemented a nation-wide community security initiative project between 2010 and 2015. Since 2010, Saferworld UK, with the support of various donors, has been implementing a community security program in Central Asia (Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan). The interim government of Kyrgyzstan, after the 2010 conflict, in its turn, had re-introduced the Local Crime Prevention Centers established back in 2008 (AKI-press.org 2008).

This study narrates a complementary interaction between "formal" and "informal" in the implementation of Saferworld UK projects in 2015–2019 in the southern part of Kyrgyzstan. Namely, it discusses how LCPC, a formal institution, engages with informal institutions, such as *imams* and *aksakals*, for its everyday duties and tasks,

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[3]£409,728 in 2012–2014.

starting from information dissemination activities and information meetings. LCPC is local conflict prevention, mitigation and resolution mechanism, which also deals with community security issues. LCPC is made up of one or two representatives of the *Aksakals* (Elder's) court, Youth Council, Women's Council, community leaders (known as *domkoms* or *kvartalnyi*) and local neighborhood inspectors. All members work closely with each other to prevent violations and conflicts. The members of the LCPC collectively define and prioritize local security issues and jointly address community security issues. In 2008, based on the Ministry of the Internal Affairs decree No. 162 on "Implementation of the Law on Prevention of Crimes in the Kyrgyz Republic" dated 28.02.2008, in most parts of Kyrgyzstan, LCPCs were established. In 2015, the Kyrgyz Parliament, bearing in mind the importance of conflict prevention on local levels, passed amendments to the Law on the prevention of crimes (initially adopted in 2005). The modified law regulates the activity of LCPCs and indicates funding sources for LCPCs functioning, among which is a financing opportunity from local budgets.

This chapter presents empirical data demonstrating a crucial role that informal institutions play along with LCPCs in conflict prevention, mediation and community security provision in the south of Kyrgyzstan, based on the examples of the Saferworld UK led project on community security in Kyrgyzstan. Overall, the research draws attention to the understudied topic of exploitation/use of informal institutions by formal institutions. The study argues for a complementary interplay between formal and informal institutions in weak democracies and concludes with stressing the importance of informal local institutions in international aid. In contrast to existing studies, this research states that the role of informal institutions in young democracies should not be treated only as detrimental. As discussed below, practices in Kyrgyzstan suggest that interaction between formal and informal institutions resulted in positive outcomes in the implementation of international projects. This piece contributes to a wider literature on (in)formal institutions by defining how and why formal institutions exploit/use informal institutions for own purposes. This contribution studies LCPC's engagement with the informal institutions of *imams* and *aksakals*. This publication illustrates three practices of using informal institutions in conflict prevention, mediation and community security provision by LCPCs in the south of Kyrgyzstan under the Saferworld UK's community security project in 2015–2019. The study is based on field observations between 2015 and 2017, during the author's work with LCPC bodies in the Saferworld-led community security project, data provided in 11 written questionnaires by community members in the south of Kyrgyzstan in 2019 and an interview with a project coordinator of the branch of the NGO "Foundation for Tolerance International" (FTI) in Batken. First, in the theoretical part, the paper discusses key concepts and approaches to the study of (in)formal institutions. In the second part, more detailed information about LCPC is given. In the third part, empirical data is presented and discussed. In the concluding section, broader implications to the study of (in)formality are drawn.

8.2   The Formal and Informal Institutions

This section is a review of the literature on the topic of institutions. A review of previous studies on informal institutions and relations between informal and formal institutions is essential for understanding (in)formal institutions, understanding mainstream debates within the topic and defining gaps in the literature. Before examining informal institutions, let us define for the paper what an "institution" is. Using the neo-institutional approach developed by North (1990), the paper defines an institution as "a norm or set of norms, which have a significant impact on the behavior of individuals" (1990: 3). In other words, institutions regulate individuals' lives by setting restrictions on their actions. Using this framework, both LCPC, *aksakals* and religious leaders or *imams* can be defined as institutions. LCPC is a formal institution that regulates people's lives by preventing crimes and improving security. *Aksakals* and religious leaders, or *imams*, also set restrictions on community members' lives, enforcing norms using own reputation and influence. They can be framed too as institutions, but informal.

Hart was among the first who observed the informal system in 1971. The literature defines informal institutions as unregulated and unwritten practices, despite there is no agreed definition among most scholars. For instance, one of the seminal volumes on informal governance does not suggest a single conceptual framework to this phenomenon; it only separates three distinct uses of informality within "framework," "process" and "outcome" (Christiansen and Neuhold 2012). As this volume fairly notes in its Introduction, most proposed definitions in the literature are constructed on binary "juxtaposition" of informal and formal (2012: 5). Among other, prominent definitions of the concept of informal institutions are the ones proposed by Helmke and Levitsky (2004). According to them, informal institutions are "socially shared rules, usually unwritten, that are created, communicated and enforced outside the officially sanctioned channels" (2004: 727). Another fair definition was given by Harsh: "a means of decision making that is uncodified, non-institutional, and where social relationships and webs of influence play crucial roles" (2012: 489). According to Lauth, informal institutions last "only if they are rooted in the beliefs and/or attitudes of individuals… If they are not found there, they do not exist" (2012: 48). Therefore, it should be correct to label informal institutions also as "socially based institutions" (ibid.). However, Helmke and Levitsky suggest distinguishing between informal institutions and culture or tradition (in Christiansen et al. (Eds.) 2012). Lauth observes that informal governance is based on two assumptions (2012). The first is when formal governance is "limited" or "formal rules are not followed totally" (ibid.: 46). The second assumption is that governance per se includes formal and informal institutions. Similarly, Polese states that informal practices are outcomes of weak or absent formal institutions, and suggests "in spite of" and "beyond" the state informalities (Polese et al. 2017). Informed by key definitions of informality above, this paper defines informal institutions as socially (beliefs/attitudes) based and socially shared unwritten rules that are imposed on community members, beyond state control and beyond formal state channels. This study, in contrast to Helmke and

Levitsky (in Christiansen et al. (Eds.) 2012), examines the traditional institutions of *aksakals* and *imams* as informal institutions. These traditional institutions are neither formal institutions, nor informal behavioral regularities. They are not informal organizations. They share not only social values but also social expectations, especially expectation of sanction in case of disobedience to *aksakals* or *imams*. For instance, *aksakals*, according to customary laws called *adat*, can use a shame-based enforcement mechanism—*uiat*—and another mechanism of good-blessing—*bata*.

Initially, the informal sector was studied only in connection with labor and employment (Polese 2016). Previously, informal institutions were studied as short-term or transitional phenomena (Bekkers and Stoffers 1995). However, recent studies note that informality is an "inherent" part of the processes of development and modernization (Morris and Polese 2015). Despite prevalent attention to the study of informality in the developing world, recent literature describes informality as ubiquitous (Christiansen and Neuhold 2012). This study goes beyond the economic understanding of informality, as it discusses how informality is used in the implementation of international aid. In line with recent studies, this paper notes informal institutions as a ubiquitous, long-term and integral phenomena. *Aksakals* and religious leaders or *imams* in CA (Kyrgyzstan) have proven to be not a short-term and transition phenomena, but as a long-term and "inherent" part of the processes of modernization in post-independence Kyrgyzstan.[4]

Scholars of (in)formality are mainly focused on inter-relations between formal and informal institutions. They proposed several sets of relations between formal and informal institutions. Merkel and Croissant famously noted that in healthy democracies, informal institutions are complementary to formal ones and allow flexibility, while in "defective democracies," informal institutions are undermining the legitimacy of already weak formal institutions and could even replace them (2000). A more organized approach in the study of informality based on relationships between democratic institutions and informal institutions was suggested in Lauth: (1) "the complementary" relationship, (2) "the substitutive" relationship and (3) the "conflicting" relationship (2000, 2012). Helmke and Levitsky (2004) further elaborated on typologies of informal institutions. They proposed four types of informal institutions vis-à-vis formal ones: complementary, accommodating, competing and substitutive depending on formal institutions (Helmke and Levitsky 2004). In both classifications developed by Lauth and Helmke and Levitsky, under complementary ones, these authors mean harmonizing relations in a process where informal ones contribute to the efficiency of formal ones. An alternative study of formal and informal institutions as "a symbiosis" was proposed by Gel'man (2012).

In most reviewed works, there is an agreement that informal institutions are "exploiting formal institutions for their own purposes" (Lauth 2012: 56) or that informality exists within formal institutions (see International Handbook on Informal Governance, 2012). However, the inverse relationship between the two is underrepresented. Alternative questions in the study of informality to be further investigated could be: Do formal institutions exploit/use informal institutions for their own

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[4]For instance, traditional *Aksakals* courts were given legal status in Kyrgyzstan (see Beyer 2006).

purposes? Can formality exist within informality? Some examples of this reverse relationship of formal and informal within the European Union's governance were already noted by Crum and Héritier. As stated by Crum and Héritier, the European Parliament has been advancing its formal positions by using informal connections (see International Handbook on Informal Governance, 2012). The paper contributes to this gap in the literature, presenting a non-European and non-Western case that narrates the use of informal institutions by formal ones for their "own purposes."

8.3   Interplay Between "Formal" and "Informal"

The interaction between formal and informal institutions is not new phenomena for Soviet-era and post-independence Central Asia. For instance, Ledeneva (1998) notes how factory managers, to meet high state demands, used informal personal networks such as *blat* to help to meet the state targets during the Soviet era. Close to the collapse of the Soviet Union, during crises in 1990, Gel'man claims that informal institutions were "a valuable survival resource for individuals" (Gel'man 2004: 1023). In the post-Soviet literature on informal institutions, it is mostly the economic sphere that is described as informal (Aliyev 2015; Karrar 2019), despite some works noting that informality is beyond the economic sphere and is embedded in everyday social practices (Morris and Polese 2015).

In post-independence Kyrgyzstan, examples of the interplay between formal and informal in conflict prevention, mediation and community security provision are omnipresent. For instance, the role of the *aksakals* in conflict mediation is noted by Temirkulov (2018). As Temirkulov notes, *aksakals* play the role of mediators in conflict situations between cross-border villages (2018). According to Temirkulov, in the border village of Aksai in Batken region, *aksakals* from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan created the so-called "networks" that were used for negotiations between border communities during time of tension: "At the time of escalation, the *aksakals* of both communities arrive at the place of the incident, call for peace and jointly investigate the incident with an aim to punish the guilty. During such moments, the *aksakal* institution is one of key because of the mutual rule of respect for them" (in Sbornik analiticheskih statei 2011: 43).

Mobilization capacities of *aksakals* using *adat* (a traditional law) are also mentioned by Temirkoulov (2004). According to him: "Social control is maintained via sanctions, such as punishment by shame (*uiat*), exclusion from society, or rewards, such as prestige or respect. The capacity to sanction is given to *aksakals*, who, imbued with prestige and deference of judgment, can mobilize communities for different collective actions. The social sanctions of *adat* can compel members of the community to support and even participate in collective violent action" (2004: 97). Local governments tend to use *aksakals* to mobilize voters for elections or support a political candidate by giving legitimacy to them:

Aksakal were involved at local level as an authorizing and legitimizing body for the mobilization. At the end of their speeches, *aksakal* blessed the people with *bata*, thereby giving a traditional symbolic character and legitimacy to the event. Using their social status and authority, *aksakal* urged the population to support and take part in collective actions in defence of their patron and leader. In this way, the *aksakal* generated solidary incentives (Temirkulov 2008: 321–322).

The important roles *aksakals* play in the everyday social lives of modern Kyrgyzstanis are well described in Beyer:

> The image of the aksakal in Kyrgyzstan is that of an old, long-bearded man who wears a *kalpak* (felt hat) and a long robe skillfully embroidered with traditional ornamentation. Aksakals are assumed to be wise and knowledgeable about the customs and traditions, as well as the arts and crafts, of the Kyrgyz people. Their duty is to teach the younger generation about *ak zhol* (the right way; literally the white path) of living a moral life. They mediate between conflicting parties, drawing on their extensive knowledge of customary law, kinship relations, proverbs, and stories. As household heads or lineage elders, and sometimes both, aksakals need to be present at all life-cycle events – births, marriages, and funerals… (2015: 54–55).

Aksakals are also the ones who mediate between disputing parties within *Aksakals* courts. *Aksakals* court as an institution was formalized in 1993, and previously, it existed as a pre-modern or pre-Soviet mechanism of a customary law, *adat*. A law on *Aksakals* courts passed in 2002 outlined the court's authority and its organization. According to the law, *Aksakals* court is made of five to nine *aksakals*. The court has the authority to decide on disputes related to family issues, such as disputes between relatives and between neighbors over property and resources. *Aksakals* court decisions can be the following: "(1) issue a warning, (2) require a public apology to the victim(s), (3) administer a public reprimand, (4) require the guilty party to compensate for material damages, (5) fine the guilty party an amount not to exceed the equivalent of three months' salary at minimum wage, (6) sentence the guilty party to community service" (Beyer 2015: 56).

As practice demonstrates, the *Aksakals* court is often led by former Interior Affairs (IA) employees who have a legal studies background, while civilian *aksakals* are members of *Aksakals* court. *Aksakals* and *imams* also can be heads of condominium or house committees and be at the same time LCPC members. However, *aksakals* and *imams* are not always members of LCPCs, very often they are temporarily involved in work with the population on various issues carried out by local governments and LCPCs. Temirkulov distinguishes between formal and informal *aksakals* in the following way—he refers to *aksakals* in a court of *Aksakals* as formal ones, while *aksakals* out of official institutions as informal (2008). However, in this paper, *Aksakals* courts within LCPCs are considered as formalized or legalized institutions comprised of informal institutions—*aksakals*.

Finally, the role of *aksakals* and *imams* in maintaining community security became apparent and important during the inter-ethnic clashes in southern Kyrgyzstan in 2010. They both played the role of mediators between the conflicting parties and in most cases prevented the escalation of the conflict in other regions of Kyrgyzstan. The Kyrgyz government particularly emphasized the role of *aksakals* in the reconciliation

processes. In particular, the commandants of Osh city, after the conflict in 2010, thanked the elders for their assistance in preventing the spread of the conflict to other inter-ethnic *rayons* (districts). During an interview with the head of the Kara-Kochkor *aiyl okmotu*, the role of the *aksakals* is noted as a key one in the regulation of socially significant issues in Kara-Kochkor *aiyl okmotu*.[5] According to the head of the *aiyl okmotu*, only *aksakals* could restrain young people from joining the conflict in Osh in 2010. These were *aksakals* who did not allow aggressive youth to loot arms from the Kara-Kulja District Department of Internal Affairs and "blow into" the city of Osh. Instead, the elders were able to convince the youth to send humanitarian aid to Osh. Thus, it has turned out that the Kara-Kochkor *aiyl okmotu* was the first village in the southern part of Kyrgyzstan to send humanitarian aid to the city.

8.4   Inefficiencies Within a Formal Institution: The *Aksakals* and the *Imams*

As some of the earlier works noted above, inefficiencies within formal institutions can result in informal practices. In particular, Lauth (2012) and Polese et al. (2017) observe that informal institutions appear when formal ones are imperfect. This section aims to provide an institutional analysis of the LCPC institution, namely to define and analyze its inefficiencies and define what it means to democracy. First, it describes LCPC's organizational structure and points out its weaknesses. Second, it reflects on democracy versus the informal institutions idea developed by several studies mentioned earlier.

Despite its establishment in 2008, Local Crime Prevention Centers' activity largely remained on paper (Saferworld 2010). However, it was only after the 2010 inter-ethnic conflict, when their work had received greater national and local attention, mainly due to international assistance as a response to the crisis. It was only by 2015 when the Kyrgyz Parliament adopted the Law on prevention of crimes (further the law), which fully put the activity of LCPCs under regulation. To ensure the functioning of LCPCs, the government allocated rooms or offices in local schools or government buildings. It was mostly local municipal agencies, such as territorial councils or *aiyl okmoty* (village council) offices, that became LCPC offices.

According to the law, an LCPC consists of representatives of *Aksakals* court (court of elders), the local Women's Committee and the Youth Council and neighborhood police officers, with the first deputy head of a local municipality usually presiding as the head of the LCPC. LCPC members meet on a regularly scheduled basis to discuss community security issues and liaise directly with law-enforcement agencies to identify, prioritize and resolve community security concerns. Any citizen of the Kyrgyz Republic above 18 years old can become an LCPC member, including elected members of local *kenesh* (local legislative councils). Usually, LCPC members are

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[5]Interview with the head of Kara-Kochkor ayil okmotu during the work visit to Kara-Kochkor with Saferworld UK, Osh oblast, 2016 (from the archive of the author).

represented by the heads/deputy heads of self-governments, employees or veterans of IA, representatives of education facilities, local social workers and representatives of condominium committees. Because LCPC members work on a voluntary basis, LCPCs' composition is mostly represented by workers of local self-governments or other state workers, such as teachers, doctors and nurses. *Aksakals* court, during a hearing, consists of five to nine respected elders or pensioners from the communities who are invited to hear the case. Usually, ex-employees of law-enforcement bodies preside over *Aksakals* court hearings. However, among other members of the court are civilian *aksakals*.

LCPCs have the legal authority to carry out crime prevention activities within a neighborhood or territorial district. However, LCPCs are not police affiliated and do not operate under the authority of security structures. A representative of neighborhood police within the LCPC area attends LCPC meetings, cooperates with LCPC on particular criminal cases and even delegates petty cases, such as inter-family disputes and conflicts with neighbors for consideration to *Aksakals* court. LCPCs operate under the Conventional Regulation of LCPC, adopted by the governmental decree No. 747. LCPC in the document is defined as a non-commercial organization formed by local self-governments for ensuring participation of community members in the process of conflict and crime prevention:

> LCPC is aimed at strengthening of joint effort of local self-government, local communities, civil society, organizations and entities located within a respected territory of city, ayil okmotu in conducting activities aimed at prevention, identification of crimes elimination of conditions contributing to their occurrence and maintenance of public order and security of citizens (the Conventional Regulation on LCPCs, 2015: Article 2, par.8).

LCPCs annually develop their work plan based on the analysis of the security situation within their respective communities. The main LCPC activities include individual and public crime prevention, working with groups at risk, such as adolescents and lawbreakers. Major tasks include protection of citizens' rights and freedoms, crime prevention, joint work with law-enforcement bodies and local self-government in increasing civic awareness, monitoring of crime dynamics, participation in discussion of laws related to community security and crime prevention. Thus, LCPC has a legal authority to prevent crimes and conflicts on the local level in partnership with neighborhood police officers and local governments.

As stated in the amended law on prevention of crimes adopted in 2015, LCPCs activity can be organized in two ways: (1) LCPCs can be registered as a legal entity, or (2) LCPCs can become unions or associations without forming a legal entity. In the first case, LCPCs become a full rights party in property relations, i.e., they can conclude agreements, have own seal and bank account, can find independent sources of financing and receive social orders from the state and non-state bodies. In the second case, LCPCs can exist in the form of a non-commercial organization without a full rights party in property relations, because local self-governments take this authority. Besides, in the second case, local self-government is responsible for defining LCPC membership and developing the regulation of LCPC, while local *keneshs* are responsible for approving the membership and the regulations.

According to the policy brief of the civil union "For Reforms and Result," there are 553 LCPCs in Kyrgyzstan, which comprise in total 12,611 public members (2014: 7). Despite the high number of LCPCs, in practice, the predominant work of the LCPCs has a formal character, and very often, LCPC members are represented by local government members only. According to the "Community security assessment in Osh and Jalalabad oblasts (district)—November 2010," supported by the Saferworld, in many communities visited by the research group, the LCPCs existed only on paper. In practice, they did not function at all or only carried out minimal functions. A fair example of LCPCs' inefficiency as a conflict prevention institution is the recent ethnic clashes in June of 2010. LCPCs demonstrated their limited capacity as a conflict prevention mechanism.

LCPCs' activities do not have sufficient influence and successful outcomes due to several reasons. Firstly, there is a weak understanding of their roles and a low professional capacity of the LCPC members in making analysis and performing preventive activities in the target communities. Because most LCPC members are not educated on the basics of conflict, mediation technology and mechanisms, they resolve conflict cases and problems on the empiric level rather than on the professional. Secondly, the disinterest of the LCPCs members in their work, due to the lack of salary and necessary work conditions, serves as another reason for LCPC's ineffectiveness. Despite the law on prevention of crimes (2015) enabling financing of LCPCs from the local authorities, support to LCPCs remains weak because of limited local budgets. The final issue is related to LCPC membership. In most LCPCs, because of the lack of a salary, local self-government workers merge their major tasks with LCPC's tasks, thus becoming LCPC members. For instance, Women's Council members are usually specialists working in the social department of *ayil okmotus*. Furthermore, Youth Councils are usually not represented by youth, but by other *ayil okmotu* workers. Thus, *ayil okmotu* workers are mostly busy with their major tasks and usually have no time to fully commit themselves as LCPC members. Also, in some communities with an issue of trust between residents and local governments, the practice of merging LCPCs with mistrusted local administrations becomes a serious issue. Because of inefficiencies within LCPCs and the weak potential of LCPC members, LCPC members very often involve informal leaders, such as *aksakals* and *imams*, in their activities. The involvement of *aksakals* and *imams* is the key for the successful implementation of LCPC's everyday duties and tasks, such as information dissemination or information meetings with the public about important issues related to community security and rule of law.

8.5   Socially Rooted Beliefs and Attitudes

In most rural areas of Kyrgyzstan, informal leaders have a decent reputation and a strong influence within communities. It is socially rooted that one should listen to *aksakals* and *imams*. They participate in local decision making and even create public opinion due to their reputation and high social standing. Therefore, both *aksakals*

and *imams* remain influential in rural Kyrgyzstan. Using a statement suggested by Lauth, "If they [beliefs and attitudes] are not found there [in informal institutions], they [informal institutions] do not exist" (2012: 48), it could be framed that in rural Kyrgyzstan, these informal institutions are sustained because they are socially rooted in local beliefs and attitudes.

Democracy is a concept that is measured and framed differently by various scholars. For instance, Barrington Moore states that democracy is not possible without a middle class (1966), while Lipset argues that economic development is a precondition to democracy (1959). Schumpeter notes that electoral democracy is a minimalist definition of democracy (Mackie 2009), while Almond and Verba stress individualistic and civic values in democracy (1963). In the literature of post-Soviet Central Asia, the political transition of Central Asian states to liberal democracy after 1991 was widely criticized (see Omelicheva 2015; Collins 2006). For example, Omelicheva stressed the prevalence of "indigenous models of democracy" in Central Asia (2015: 133) that follow Russian and Chinese models instead of the Western liberal model of democracy. Likewise, Matveeva warned that "formal democratic institutions can become meaningless decorations" (1999: 33), and later labeled Central Asian states as "authoritarian" (2009). However, this chapter does not aim to go into the depth of these debates and accepts Central Asian countries as states with formally democratic systems of governance, which in comparison to Western democracies can be defined as weak.

Thus, according to Merkel and Croissant (2000), in strong democracies, informal institutions are complementary to formal ones and allow flexibility, while in weak democracies informal institutions replace or undermine the legitimacy of formal institutions. According to Lauth, three possible relations between informality and democracy can exist: (1) "the complementary" relationship, (2) "the substitutive" relationship and (3) "the conflicting relationship" (2000, 2012: 56). Helmke and Levitsky (2004) propose four types of relations: complementary, accommodating, competing and substitutive. While examining the informal institutions of *aksakals* and *imams* vis-à-vis democracy, based on the social and political reality of Kyrgyzstan, the *aksakals* and *imams* stand out as important contributing agents in building democracy and rule of law. *Aksakals* on local levels are given the role of justice-makers via the functioning of Aksakals courts, regulated by the state. Assisted by their reputation in rural Kyrgyzstan, *aksakals* enforce justice and rule of law along with law-enforcement institutions. Kyrgyzstan is a secular state, where state institutions and religious institutions are separated. However, in response to the rise of non-traditional forms of Islam in the region, Kyrgyzstan is among the first states in Central Asia to develop a single education curriculum and certification for *imams*. Increased state efforts in support of traditional (*hanafi mazhaby*) Islam can be observed. In a speech delivered on November 15, 2018, at the international conference "Islam in the modern secular state," President Jeenbekov stressed the role of religious institutions in supporting the state's core function of maintaining peace and

stability (President.kg 2018). Thus, today, *imams* along with *aksakals* have become key agents in building democracy and rule of law in Kyrgyzstan.

The following empirical part of this study further elaborates on the argument of a complementary relationship between formal and informal institutions by describing three practices of using informal institutions such as *aksakals* and *imams* by LCPCs in their activities under Saferworld UK's community security project in the south of Kyrgyzstan.

8.6 Informal Institutions in Local Crime Prevention Centers in the South of Kyrgyzstan

This study focuses on examining the reverse relationship between formal and informal institutions, namely formal institutions' exploitation/use of informal institutions for their own purposes, and by this, it demonstrates a complementary relationship between them. Arguing with Lauth (2012), the study in the following three empirical examples states that formal institutions can also exploit informal institutions. This contribution proposes that formality can also exist within informal institutions and exploit the latter—an idea under-represented in the non-Western literature; while relations between them are complementary.

As mentioned earlier, *Aksakals* courts are formal bodies within LCPCs. There are more than 500 *Aksakals* courts in Kyrgyzstan, according to a project coordinator of the FTI branch.[6] *Aksakals* court members are elected for three years by community residents, and they work on a voluntary basis. *Aksakals* court is usually led by an ex-employee of the IA within the institution or a pensioner with some legal background. According to the law on Aksakals court (2002), court members base their judgments and decisions on traditions, customs and personal judgments of ethics. Membership in the *Aksakals* court usually consists of *aksakals* with a minimum age of 50 years old, with a decent reputation and respect within communities. It is important to attract *aksakals* with a good reputation to *Aksakals* court in order to give legitimacy to LCPCs and ensure the effectiveness of *Aksakals* courts' decisions. From this point of view, *Aksakals* court within the LCPC can be conceptualized as a formalized institution built on an informal institution—*aksakals*. In most of the questionnaire responses, the residents in southern Kyrgyzstan note that they would obey the decisions made by *aksakals* if they were respected people and had a strong reputation in the community. As one of responses notes: "*El alardyn sozun eki kylbait*" (translated as "people would not disobey them"). To the question of what are key qualities that make *aksakals* distinct from others, respondents wrote: "prevalence of life experience and skills," "reputation," "respect," "neutrality" and "justice." According to an

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[6]Interview with a project coordinator of the branch of an NGO "Foundation for Tolerance International" (FTI) in Batken, 2019.

FTI representative, *Aksakals* courts are perceived by the public as impartial; people in rural areas try to resolve their own issues on a local level with the help of *aksakals*, without referring to higher courts that are perceived negatively by most people. Similarly, written questionnaire responses note that in general, *aksakals* are not involved in corruption, and they truly want to help (they even spend their own money, as a respondent from Suzak notes).[7] In the analysis earlier, in general, it was stated that LCPCs institutionally have weak capacity, and therefore, the functioning of *aksakals* with a decent reputation and a powerful final word in disputes within *Aksakals* court would be only an asset to LCPCs.

In addition, there is some truth that *Aksakals* courts ended up as a formal institution because of Kyrgyzstan's nation-building and decentralization policies (Beyer 2015). Beyer fairly interprets *Aksakals* court as "revitalized," "invented" and as a "continued vitality" at the same time because the institution is based on pre-Soviet tradition, which was re-introduced after independence (2006: 170). In her later work, Beyer refers to *Aksakals* court as "neo-traditional" institution and concludes that there are on-going processes of "customization" or "gradually incorporation of non-customary law into salt [custom]" in *Aksakals* court activity (2015: 66). She notes that non-customary law is a state law and is being presented to the public as customary. The author hints to another interesting relationship between formal and informal laws within *Aksakals* court. For the purposes of the paper, Beyer's statement could be put in the following way: formal laws are presented or interpreted to local communities by *Aksakal* courts members as traditional norms imposed by informal mechanisms of *adat*. Thus, informal enforcements within the formal body of *Aksakals* court can be also observed. The informal mechanisms of *adat* tend to be effective because of their continued legitimacy among local communities. Especially because these *adat* mechanisms are enforced by respected *aksakals*, communities tend to obey the decisions of *Aksakals* courts, indirectly enforcing the status of LCPCs in Kyrgyzstan.

8.7 Aksakals and Imams as Means of Information Dissemination for Local Crime Prevention Centers

The second common practice of interplay between "informal" and "formal" in conflict prevention, mediation and community security provision in the activity of LCPCs is the involvement of local *aksakals* and *imams* in information dissemination activities to the communities on various issues. *Imams* in conservative religious communities in the south are key bridges between the population and LCPCs. *Imams* are usually attracted by LCPCs to deliver information related to (but not limited to) early marriages, bride kidnapping, domestic violence, school bullying, violent extremism and radicalism. *Imams* inform elder and young males about the consequences of these violations during Friday sermons at mosques. For instance, written questionnaires

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[7]Written questionnaire responses, 2019.

suggest that in Jalalabad, *imams* are important institutions in the communities of Yrys and Atabekov *ayil okmotus*.

Most LCPCs in the south of Kyrgyzstan under observation of the author during her work with LCPCs used *imams* to inform communities about changes in the penal code of the Kyrgyz Republic, such as bride kidnapping and early marriages. In most rural and traditional areas of Kyrgyzstan, bride kidnapping and early marriages are practices that still occur, despite they are penalized according to the penal code of the Kyrgyz Republic. For instance, in November 2016, a new article was introduced into the penal code of the Kyrgyz Republic, prohibiting the performance of religious ceremonies for early marriages. According to the penal code, there is a punishment of three to five years imprisonment for the person who has performed a religious ceremony of marriage for minors, for the parents of a minor as well as for the adult groom. In most rural areas in Osh and Jalalabad, such as Mirmahmudov, Yrys and Suzak *ayil okmotus*, *imams* were drawn by LCPC members to inform communities about penalization for early marriages. *Imams* conducted information meetings for the public with law-enforcement bodies about the consequences of early marriages and called communities to cooperate with LCPCs to prevent early marriages. Information meetings were followed by questions and answers sessions. *Imams* also referring to Islam noted that a marriage cannot be "blessed" according to Islam if it is a forced marriage. As practice demonstrates, in Kyrgyzstan, early marriages are forced ones. In similar ways, *aksakals* and *imams* are used by LCPCs to inform citizens about the strengthening of bride-kidnapping penalties from fines to imprisonment up to seven years, based on an amendment of the penal code in 2013. Despite changes in the penal code, in rural and urban areas of Kyrgyzstan, bride kidnappings are still not rare. For example, in 2017, in a resonant case of bride kidnapping in Jayil rayon police department in Chui oblast, a girl named Burulai was killed by a kidnapper in the police department (Sputnik.kg 2018). This incident brought increased attention to the situation of girls in Kyrgyzstan.

Moreover, both *aksakals* and *imams* are used by LCPCs in the prevention of violent extremism and radicalism within respective communities. *Aksakals* and *imams* along with LCPC members and representatives of law-enforcement bodies and university lecturers of the theology department in Osh, Jalalabad and Batken oblasts held several information meetings with local communities. During these meetings, *aksakals* and *imams* restrained youth from joining radical movements, guiding them instead toward non-violent traditional Islam—the *hanafi* branch of Islam, or *hanafi mazhaby*. In one information meeting in Suzak in 2016, teenagers from three schools participated. One could observe that the meeting was on time and important for schoolchildren. The schoolchildren were asking questions about differences between *hanafi* and other branches of Islam. Some teenagers spoke about WhatsApp voice messages and videos coming from strange numbers calling for extremist activities. Imams, theology lecturers and law-enforcement representatives answered questions coming from the young audience. Among invited guests for similar activities were also women from *medreses* or Islamic schools. Usually, they were invited to information meetings about early marriages, together with public health representatives to inform about the negative consequences of early marriages on health conditions for underage

girls. Thus, LCPCs tend to use *imams* and *aksakals* for the improvement of LCPCs' outreach to communities and to ensure that their activities are efficient and acceptable by communities.

Finally, another practice of interplay between "informal" and "formal" is the use of local *aksakals* and *imams* as community mobilizers. LCPC members increase their efficiency by attracting *aksakals* and *imams* for community mobilization or to assemble people for a meeting with law-enforcement bodies or with LCPCs. As was noted earlier in the paper, these informal institutions use own reputation and networks, use a shame-based enforcement mechanism—*uiat*—and another mechanism of good-blessing—*bata*. As was mentioned in written questionnaires by respondents too, it is a shame to not show up to events that are recommended by *aksakals*.[8] They are perceived in communities as life-guiding people, and their words are accepted as wise: "*aksakaldar nasaat aitat*" (translated as *aksakals* share with us their wisdom).[9] *Uiat* is a form of sanction that *aksakals* can inflict on members of community. To cite from Temurkulov:

> *Uiat* is a sanction, which is used to expose unworthy behaviour or an act which is publicly condemned. One *aksakal* or a group of *aksakal* can initiate it. Condemnation can take place publicly at a meeting or in a form of rumours. As a result, the community, or in most cases a part of it, can isolate the person. People stop greeting, communicating with and offering help to the person. Exile from a community could, in theory, be a most severe form of punishment; however, in the communities that were investigated, this does not happen in practice. People of various ages, social status and both sexes can be exposed to the punishment of *uiat* (2008: 321).

On the other side, *imams* rely on their religious social standing within communities. This social role empowers them too, especially in religious societies. People listen to *imams* and accept their advice or suggestions. Similarly, *imams* have similar sanctions. Both *aksakals* and *imams* are important socially based institutions. They are both present in the everyday lives of people, and they witness all significant life events of community members—such as births, weddings and funerals. Both *aksakals* and *imams* are invited to these private ceremonies to give a blessing *bata* and to recite the Quran. It is difficult to imagine the performance of these private ceremonies without the participation of *aksakals* and *imams*. Therefore, *aksakals* and *imams* are respected institutions whose words are final. Due to these devices, *aksakals* and *imams* remain influential in community mobilization. LCPCs understand the power of *aksakals* and *imams* among societies and often use them for their advantage. Not only do the LCPCs need *aksakals'* and *imams'* mobilization capacities, but also the local self-government bodies, as was noted by some of the scholars above.

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[8]Written questionnaire responses, 2019.

[9]Written questionnaire responses, 2019.

8.8   Conclusion

Despite the transformation and development of the region with the support of international actors following the 2010 inter-ethnic conflict, informal institutions, such as *aksakals* and religious leaders or *imams*, remain strong at the local level. The Saferworld UK project that involved formal institutions, labeled as Local Crime Prevention Centers in conflict prevention, mediation and community security, was not immune from the influence of informal institutions of *aksakals* and *imams*. It appears that today, LCPCs on their own are too weak to maintain community security and prevent local conflicts, and therefore, they tend to use the informal institutions of *aksakals* and religious leaders or *imams*. *Aksakals* and *imams*, by strengthening the weak performance of LCPCs, can help to create positive public opinions toward LCPCs or improve LCPCs' reputation.

More specifically, this research described the use of informal institutions by formal ones—a phenomenon under-represented in the literature, especially in a non-Western context, by describing three practices of formal institutions' use of informal institutions in conflict prevention, mediation and community security provision in Kyrgyzstan as (1) *Aksakals* court as a formalized institution made of informal *aksakals*, (2) *aksakals* and *imams* as means of information dissemination for LCPCs and (3) *aksakals* and *imams* as community mobilizers for LCPCs.

This study confirmed most of the assumptions proposed by scholars regarding the reasons for the endurance of informal institutions, such as weak or limited formal institutions and the social rootedness of beliefs and attitudes about informal institutions. Most importantly the chapter demonstrated that in weak democracies like Kyrgyzstan, a relationship between formal institutions and informal institutions is complementary rather than substitutive or competing.

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Part II
Research Endeavors

Chapter 9
What Happened to the Foundations of Eurasian Health Governance? Research Initiatives for Health Security Capacity Building

Ole Döring

9.1 Background

When China launched the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), or New Silk Road Initiative, in 2013, its mind was set on the first stage of globalization with so-called 'Chinese characteristics.' These characteristics, also known in general as China's 'third way,' indicate China's approach, which is to learn innovation rather than copy or follow tradition, in order to hardwire businesses connections to Southeast Asia, Europe and Africa. After six years of breathtaking construction of infrastructure for connectivity, roads and bridges, market interfaces and business interlaces, the overall activities are readjusted, from groundwork toward sustainable activities that propagate social goods and emphasize the soft skills for human flourishing, and generate the translational capacities for cultural engagement.[1] Ultimately, sustainable prosperity and peace become the desired gems. The craft that is now assigned to provide a sense of orientation and the means for deliberate planning is science.[2]

In the light of the 2020 dramatic Covid-19 Pandemia, this timing, however awkward, indicates an opportunity to consider germs. A look at geography from the viewpoint of microbes displays Eurasiafrica as a massive opportunity for all kinds of microbes and bacteria to prosper without control. The enormous salt-water barriers that block pathways to other continents are rendered inconsequential. Opportunities to adapt and procreate, owing to removed barriers and increased traffic between East and West, North and South, continue to excel. An ever-increasing air-mobility is destined to pave the way for the next wave. Regional stability, including security matters, economic development and the foundations of wealth are at stake. The OSCE region is prominently affected by this flow. This research endeavor elaborates

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[1] Döring (2018).

[2] Masood (2019).

O. Döring (✉)
Berlin, China
e-mail: ole.doering@igg.berlin

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on how policy makers, physicians, scientist, scholars and activists are prepared to prevent or manage the next epidemic or pandemic outbreaks across this vast region.

In 2011, Paul Unschuld and this author initiated preparations for a consortium that would eventually generate a roadmap, theoretical foundations and the methodological framework to describe a governance system that could address these issues, within a Eurasian context: the Eurasia Health and Disease Survey (EAHDS). More than just a quantitative survey in public health, it would provide a tool kit for preventive measures, embedded monitoring and pathogen detection technology, early intervention points and governance interfaces. It would inform protocols and technical, as well as social, legal and ethical, standards applying to security in general. Thereby, it anticipated not only the BRI but also the Global Health Initiative of 2013, and in that, it generates a multidisciplinary, transnational approach considering and cross-linking the social, environmental, political, commercial and other determinants of health in a 'global' discourse.[3] Admittedly, none of the foreseeable health and security issues could be immediately mitigated with this framework. However, without such provisions, it will become much more difficult for governments and non-governmental agencies to conceive, align and orchestrate the due measures to act 'in the unlikely event' of a major catastrophe.

9.2   Rationale

Under the Charité Medical University's Institute for the History, Theory and Ethics of Chinese Life Sciences, and directed by Paul Unschuld in Berlin, a public health project center was established to function as a facilitating base for EAHDS. The project outline explained how the Eurasian continent is not only a geographical but also a physiological unit. The land bridge from the Atlantic to the Pacific covers the whole OSCE region. It is gradually reshaping the old frontiers for trade and transport, thereby opening up new perspectives that also have significant consequences for the health and security sectors. In this view, it will be possible to systematically address international and cross-border issues of diplomacy, technology transfer, epidemiology and public health in a scientific way.

With the growing interdependence between formerly disconnected regions, such as Western Europe, Russia, Kazakhstan and China, the exchange of people, goods and knowledge—and also the accompanying disease germs—is increasing as seen during the Covid-19 Pandemia in 2020. In parallel, opportunities present themselves: to explore epidemiological interfaces and transactions, and the opportunity to address the urgent need for transnational cooperation on understanding, communication, prevention and crisis intervention and monitoring.

Researchers, activists, policy makers and the health and security sectors across these countries and across disciplines are encouraged to support research and take action with transnational and regional problem-solving mechanisms to cover and

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[3]Bonk et al. (2018).

address all these issues through one key rationale. Due to the historical conditions of the twentieth century, namely the Cold War and the Iron Curtain blocking this route, the necessary structures and also the required knowledge to benefit from the new situation are amiss. Against this background, the EAHDS project appreciates the potential of existing bilateral cooperation, e.g., European and Russian, or Russian and Chinese, or Eurasian and Chinese governments and scientists in the field of health and security. However, the existing structures and forms of cooperation should have and can now be transformed into a system that should cover the entire space, extending from Berlin to Novosibirsk and Astana to Beijing. This would, of course, include other centers such as Vienna and Warsaw, and even Addis Ababa or Accra in the future. For reasons of feasibility, however, the initial focus of EAHDS was set on the Berlin–Moscow–Astana–Beijing axis, to explore the possibilities of such a project.

9.3 Health Security Across the OSCE Region

Health security offers a neutral, and at the same time, promising framework for closer cooperation, because it aligns the interests of different states and offers true win-win potential. Health care is politically, economically and technologically relevant and foundational. The first phase therefore would explore questions of determining the basic health conditions, such as disease spread pattern mapping, institutional infrastructures outlines and state-of-the-art description in order to define desirables and priorities. As for a pilot study, it seemed reasonable to confine ourselves initially to focus a few problem areas which afflict, if not endanger, the Eurasian continent as a whole, in terms of pathogenic potency. Tuberculosis, HIV-AIDS and influenza were named as three closely linked areas of health, all prevalent across the entire land mass and, most importantly, transported in all directions. A scenario of an outbreak of a mutation of the SARS and Corona virus, with the velocity of Ebola, would be working in all directions and could serve as a hypothetical horizon to describe potentially realistic future events. In the first step, regional incidences and the prevalence of these three diseases would be documented as known, the affected populations described, official structures and authorities in charge in the participating states for monitoring mapped and the corresponding challenges addressed. These challenges would include social and cultural/ethical similarities or differences in dealing with these health problems among all relevant administrations. In these different constituencies, the transit and end-point countries, the relevant cultural key concepts such as 'health,' 'risk,' 'self-responsibility,' 'solidarity,' 'cooperation,' 'aid,' 'destiny,' 'individual' and 'science' may have different meanings and can be formulated in ways that require not just translation, but interpretation and even negotiation over practical implication and priorities.

The differences can also impact the structures of the respective health systems, since different values are associated with different norms. The related standards cannot simply be prescribed and implemented top-down, as their success depends on compliance and sometimes adherence, which only works out when actors 'see

the point' and share it within the horizons of their own experience. In concrete terms, the respective social structures and economic trends of the health governance systems in the participating countries must be accounted for. It includes but goes beyond the question of existing emergency crisis plans and the regional means of data collection, the existence of databases in the health sector and other relevant data related to security issues. The local scientific knowledge about and identification of possible biological agents or other pathogens that can spread along Eurasian transport routes, together with social skills in communication and collaboration, are crucial. A methodical question is, what types of pathogens will particularly benefit from increased flows of goods and traffic? What is the variability of pathogens with different pathogenic degrees of individual strains in the Eurasian space? How will they spread under epidemic conditions? Does the analysis of previous pandemics in the regions provide clues that are valuable for the future, for governance and for risk prediction?

Difficulties that arise in the event of an emergency or a crisis, beyond technical or administrative cross-border interaction, can be estimated, for example, from the different retrospectives of the SARS epidemic by European and Chinese representatives, who can now invite Kazakh experts to learn and contribute. In 2002/2003, Chinese statements suggested a belief that SARS only caused low death rates where traditional Chinese medicine had been applied, but much higher mortality where modern medicine was used. This, obviously, contradicts the assessment not only of Western scientists, but also of Chinese scientists, such as researchers at the Beijing Genomic Institute (BGI) who were the first to decipher whole genome sequence of four SARS viruses in early 2003,[4] but had to hold back making it public for political reasons. As far as China is concerned, relevant lessons seem to have been learned, according to the policies in dealing with the fatal pneumonia-variant caused by a corona virus originating in Wuhan that started to spread in the winter of 2019/20. Reminiscent of the SARS crisis in 2002/03, this variant was found to be transmitted across species into human systems. This potentially posed another serious challenge to Eurasian governance infrastructures, and China's President Xi Jinping decreed publicly that the virus must be 'resolutely contained' and transparently observed in order to secure the trust and collaboration of the people and that all cadres must make 'the safety of people's lives and their physical health' the top priority.[5] However, between Wuhan and Paris, different interpretations in health-related anthropologies, belief systems and social practices can have severe health and security impact but cannot be discussed only during or after an emergency. The cultural priorities and social standards must be resolved in advance. On this basis, the complex issues of how to harmonize legal, administrative or technical protocols and norms in order to make them work or even be mutually supportive across Eurasia can be addressed. Again, this raises questions about cross-border interaction, when cooperation depends on mutual trust and understanding.

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[4]Bi et al. (2016).

[5]Zheng (2020).

This research would be initially described as a basis for a structural inventory. Then, the most important action areas for transnational public health and security development would be mapped. Sustainable long-term repositories for knowledge, problem-solving and cooperation competence and advice for business, health and research policy could be informed and built up. The aim of the sub-project sketched here was to prepare an IT-supported crisis management system that is efficient when it is needed.

(1) It is already clear from these brief remarks that only a large, interdisciplinary approach can generate insights that respond to the complex themes at hand and make this project a success. Disciplines and faculties to be involved to some extent include public health, epidemiology, demography, geography, cultural studies/medical anthropology, medical sociology (risk and communication research), political science (and analytical methods such as genomics and bio-informatics), governance and translational sciences, all of which are perhaps the central areas of expertise. In order to work toward a coherent map and methodology, meta-studies and reflections from Global Health, theory of science and philosophy (ethics and language) would be needed. Moreover, experience from international non-governmental bodies and agencies such as WHO, Red Cross/Crescent and GIZ should be incorporated, as well as innovative science-technology developers, especially in the area of early detection and logistics.

(2) Both parts, the groundwork study and the case scenario, would be combined with a theory and technology development modeling project. The key question to be examined for such a scientific research program was then formulated in a hypothesis: Can central functions of swarm intelligence be translated and technically reproduced for cross-border governance tasks? The swarm, as a model, offers several fundamental characteristics of rational collaborating social entities (fish and birds) that does not depend on cultural or social specialization but leaves the option to employ such soft power factors as supplementary resources for added benefit. What technical, infrastructural, communicative and, if applicable, cultural conditions must be met in order to discuss such a project not only academically but with the concrete aim of providing recommendations for infrastructure development and regulatory collaboration across Eurasia? Obviously, IT- and AI-supported new technologies would be designed according to the purpose of such an infrastructure, with bio-sensitive monitoring propensities, semi-autonomous programming and interactive properties.

The described research agenda, especially for the modeling of governance interfaces and IT infrastructures, was seen as an unprecedented and genuinely innovative initiative. It would support the objectives of the EAHDS in a comprehensive and holistic manner, combining coherence of governance measures with aligned transdisciplinary work toward an integrated module-based Eurasian infrastructure technology. This project acquired a conceptually driven, empirically informed design including elements of public health, governance, information technology, artificial

intelligence (bio-robotics) and translational philosophy. It was prepared to build on structurally helpful approaches such as international health regulations and monitoring agencies, to further develop existing governance infrastructures at national and transnational levels and to rebuild a middle level along the sensory-causal interfaces along the Eurasian landmass.

9.4   Measures and Indicators

The Institute for the History, Theory and Ethics of Chinese Life Sciences at the Charité took over the coordination of the program agenda. In particular, over several years it cooperated with institutes in the Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft, as well as with the Institute for Informatics, Biometry and Epidemiology at Ludwig-Maximilians-University Munich and others.

(1)   Among the measures to roll out the program step by step was a project application, 'Partnerships for sustainable problem solving in emerging and developing countries—Research for development,' a pilot action for partnerships in science, research and education with the countries of Central Asia and the south Caucasus, responding to a call from the German Federal Ministry of Science and Technology, submitted in 2012. The proposal was signed by members of the consortium, including Fraunhofer Institute for Systems and Innovation Research ISI, Fraunhofer Institute for Interfacial and Bioprocess Engineering IGB, Molecular Biotechnology MBT, Fraunhofer Institute for Applied Information Technology FIT, Kazakh Medical National University, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (EU CDC), Society for International Cooperation (GIZ) and the EU Project Infectious Disease Prevention and Control.

The first international partner country at the focus of this feasibility study was Kazakhstan. Located at the core of Eurasia and part of notable modernization policies, Kazakhstan was chosen as a country of origin, transit and end point, where significantly different cultural conditions apply, as compared to Germany. Such differences also feed into security dimensions and affect the structures of the respective health systems. Especially, Kazakhstan differs in terms of the concrete practice in dealing with epidemics, since different values are associated with different norms and as a result with their own order. Kazakhstan had one of the highest prevalence rates of tuberculosis in the WHO region of Europe. At the same time, it was a transit region for pathogens in Central Eurasia, a region where the mobility of people and goods is rapidly increasing. Reported cases of tuberculosis in Kazakhstan have been declining since the early 2000s, but the number of cases of multi-drug-resistant tuberculosis was increasing, as in other Asian countries, such as China.

In this context, the consideration encompassed the respective general strategic interests, incentives, economic trends and special developments in the health systems, the question of the existence of emergency crisis plans and the regional conditions for data collection, or the existence of databases, in the health sector, as well as

communicative and cooperative peculiarities. Knowledge about possible biological agents or other pathogens that can spread along the Eurasian transport routes via Kazakhstan is crucial. Other epidemiological problem areas are co-infections with HIV and diseases in hard-to-reach populations, e.g., migrants. Governance-related collaboration seemed feasible and promising because an infrastructure for efficient disease control was under construction, as Kazakhstan had established a Center for Disease Control.

(2) At the interface of health governance and bio-security, with a special interest in cross-border collaboration and relief measures, as part of a regional strategy for prevention, control and early intervention, the availability of well-equipped human resources, together with academic and scientific institution building, inspired an initiative to frame and support measures, such as the above-mentioned research, with a 2016 proposal to establish a multi-center New Silk Road University (NSRU). Considering that particular attention should be paid to early prevention, disaster relief and disaster medicine, in the context of BRI, cooperation would benefit from a network of standardized education hubs, in terms of stability, quality, sustainability and outreach.

In 2016, a building bearing the programmatic name of Robert Koch, at Charite Universitätsmedizin Berlin, was available as a central unit at that time. Other candidate satellite and sister centers were identified or ready to collaborate in the region. The first strategic aim of this NSRU core was to train an international management based on the sciences, which are directly related to the realities of the growing exchange of goods across Eurasia and thus to the objectives of the BRI project. This properly ambitious institution was conceived as a space to think ahead, in order to become a strong and independent partner for experts and institutions to gather strength and momentum while China continues to make the BRI real.

A university network suggests itself as an academic and logistic base for an IT-supported crisis management system that is efficient and functional when emergency calls and continuously learning when it does not. The pilot projects described here, the EAHDS and NSRU, point to a constructive and responsible direction for the future. Meanwhile, any other interested foundations, academic institutions state authorities and companies with a clear humanitarian vision and ambitions for holistic quality are called upon to support this project and to work with the scientific project initiators to find ways to open the Eurasia health policy area.

It is true that, 'science and epidemic control should not be linked with politics,' as Gabriel Leung of Hong Kong's WHO Collaborating Centre for Infectious Disease Epidemiology and Control was quoted saying with reference to the Wuhan outbreak.[6] However, politics should be obliged to support the ability and freedom of science to serve for Global Health by all means necessary. This applies to the entire region,

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[6]Zheng (2020).

disregarding national borders, and to the joint resources from all trans-disciplinary fields of knowledge. The SARS-related strain, the Covid-19 from a wet market in Wuhan, fortunately, does not seem to bear the infectiousness of Ebola that could change any time and generate a cascade of security risks which could be prevented with some foresight and investment.

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Ole Döring Ph.D., Philosopher and China expert, with a research interest in translational studies related to health, security and ethics in the areas of health and life sciences between China and Europe.

Chapter 10
Transitional Justice Research in Post-Totalitarian Societies in the OSCE Region

Anja Mihr

10.1 Background

Since the mid-1990s, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) in Warsaw has supported Transitional Justice (TJ) processes in Central and South-East Europe under the Rule of Law and Human Rights Programmes.[1] This has become visible through the Office's engagement in former Yugoslavia and the work of the International Criminal Tribunal for former Yugoslavia (ICTY) through its plethora of Rule of Law and Institution Building Programmes in the Western Balkans. While the post-war societies of the Balkans are an obvious target for TJ initiatives, these programmes are predominantly financed by private donor organisations or the European Union (EU). TJ initiatives, programmes and policies also had a spill-over effect on other countries in the region which were not directly affected by the atrocious civil war in the former Yugoslavia. Albania, a former totalitarian socialist state and now a Council of Europe and an OSCE member state, was indirectly affected by the war. Albania had a short interval of TJ measures after the dictatorship ended in 1991 and then paused for over a decade—not unrelated to the war in the neighbouring country of Kosovo. Only a generation after the regime change in the 1990s, in 2018, the OSCE Mission in Tirana, together with political foundations and the University of Tirana, started conducting trainings and programmes to support young researchers and helped to fund a Centre for Justice and Transformation at the university to conduct TJ research in the country and region in their own language. Without proper language skills and access to the files of the totalitarian regime that lasted from 1944 to the 1990s, TJ research would be an impossible endeavour. Such initiatives can be an incentive and example for other post-totalitarian and authoritarian societies and

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[1]ODIHR Rule of Law and Human Rights Programs https://www.osce.org/rule-of-law.

A. Mihr (✉)
OSCE Academy, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan
e-mail: a.mihr@osce-academy.net

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researchers in the OSCE region, such as in Central Asia, the Caucasus and Eastern Europe including Russia.

International organisations such as the OSCE/ODIHR, in that respect, can support these research initiatives by collaborating with local and other public institutions such as universities, research centres, think tanks, and civil society organisations. However, any proper TJ research needs a bottom-up approach by domestic actors such as survivors, former victims or simply by the new post-totalitarian generation which is slowing coming of age in most of the post-socialist-totalitarian societies and is starting to ask questions about what happened under the previous regimes. Moreover, this generation across the OSCE region has started to realise that many of the current political and societal problems,—including the economic crisis or Pandemias in 2019 and 2020—the high level of corruption, lack of transparency, weak rule of law and poor economic development due to lack of social mobility and foreign trust in investments, are connected to, first, the non-revealed legacies of the past and, secondly, to the fact that many of the old political and economic elite of the communist regimes have remained in power for over two decades. Most political new and old elites have carried on with business as usual, applying top-down socialist methids in dealing with problems, using autocratic modes of governance for example in the security and the public education sector, without undergoing proper and systematic vetting or lustration, that is to say scanning ones' personal files and purging of governmental officials. But the interlinkage between the level of good governance performance and Transitional Justice is still under researched, not only in the OSCE region. Cynthia Horne is one of the researchers who has worked on this topic in Eastern and Central Europe and who has attempted to test the impact of lustration on trust in public institutions and national post-totalitarian governments. She runs numerous statistical models using the Transitional Justice Database, controlling for the timing of lustration, the degree of other TJ measures present, as well as additional political and economic factors.[2] Her findings indicate that 'countries with more extensive and severe lustration programs, and political and legal reforms connected to dealing with the past have higher levels of trust in public institutions'. But the impact of Transitional justice on trust in national government is widely under researcherd and mostly inconclusive. This brings us back to one of the main research questions in the field of TJ, namely how is the lack of and refusal to conduct a TJ process today linked with the democratic flaws, collapse of *Rechtsstaat* and the high level of corruption in many of the post-totalitarian and post-Soviet countries?

To begin with, there has not (yet) been overwhelming signs of a national catharsis in many the post-Soviet and post-totalitarian countries and societies since 1991—that is to say an urge and desire expressed by citizens for coming to terms with the past—let alone to connect present democratic deficits and economic shortcomings with the fact that the communist past has never been dealt with properly. One of the

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[2]Horne (2014).

causes of this present situation seems to be what Hannah Arendt had already described in her work in the 1950s and 1960s on the 'Banality of Evil'[3] in which she explained the root causes of totalitarianism, namely the willing support by citizens for such regimes and its long-lasting aftermath—until today. She explains that totalitarianism requires a mass that goes along with the system. These masses are intrigued by the positive aspects of a political regime that promises security, development and modernisation, as being superior to liberal norms. The sheer number of people who follow it, combined with indifference to liberal values and norms, continue to exist even if these countries have formally transformed to liberal democratic regimes and institutionally democratised. Many of the post-communist totalitarian countries (luckily) did not have to go through war to become independent, but they are by far not yet democracies. But what seemed a blessing at the time of regime change in the early 1990s is now a curse, namely the rather non-violent and peaceful transitio; for most of these countries, albeit not all; because in these societies, the past totalitarian regimes have never been completely delegitimised or demystified, and thus most of the old ways, methods and ideas how to govern continue. This includes human rights violations, censorship, levels of torture, nepotism, corruption and arbitrary justice.

10.2   Post-Totalitarian Particularities for Researchers

For research in post-totalitarian societies, researchers find the plethora of written documents and quantitative data in archives. It is the archival materials accumulated over decades by state institutions, secret services, police, prisons, courts, councils, governments and ministries that are the main sources that reveal the structure and the dimension of totalitarianism and its consequences. It is not as much the immediate victims of mass atrocities, killings, intimidation or violent crimes, but rather the institutions and systems that carry information on the decades of systematic manipulation, suppression and humiliation, including the security and education sectors. Most of the 'victims' and bystanders will not recognise themselves as such, because they had been politically indifferent people who never join a party and hardly ever go to the polls. The banality of evil, to speak with Arendt's terminology, therefore also determines TJ research in the post-Soviet and post-socialist realm and—among many—there are three reasons that make that research a challenge:

First, the post-communist-socialist and totalitarian states were highly bureaucratic. The main instrument of suppression was the security apparatus, especially the infamous secret services such as the KGB or the different Securitate regimes and organisations in the Soviet satellite states. They stored and collected thousands of miles of (paper) documents in files and archives across the OSCE region. To scan, vet and investigate them all will take decades, hence there is—despite serious cleancing efforts—still a valuable amount of documents availalbe for researchers. Of course,

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[3]Arendt (2016).

there is little doubt, as Christian Nielsen[4] and others have expressed that the key documents and files of that period have been destroyed right after the collapse of the Soviet Union and other post-communist regimes in 1990/1991 by those who potentially had to fear repercussions and trials, and who later became part of the new political elite in the country. Few civil society and victim organisations tried to save them, but not all have been successful, as was the case in East Germany after the fall of the Wall in 1989. The remaining documents still provide fascinating and investigative materials for researchers that allow us to reconstruct the past.

Second, the language disparity in the former communist countries and the Soviet empire. The number of satellite states range from East Germany, Slovenia, Estonia, Albania, Moldova and Azerbaijan, across Russia to Kazakhstan, Mongolia, in the Far East, and Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan into Central Asia. Key documents and files about the systematic violence and suppression during the 70 years of totalitarianism that would need to be investigated are written in many different languages—apart from Russian—mostly handwritten, and require thorough language knowledge not only in Russian, Polish, Albanian or Romanian, but also in the local languages of the former 'empire' such as Tajik or Kazakh.

Third, most former Soviet republics inherited their independence around the year 1991 and very few fought for it. There is a lack of national catharis and a desire of bottom up approach to Transitional Justice these former Soviet republics became independent not because there was a long enduring civil society or civil war that fought for independence—other than in Central Europe or the Western Balkans—but because states in Central Asia, Caucasus or the Ukraine inherited independence and with it the bureaucracy from the collapsing Soviet regime without much bottom-up pressure to change the bureaucratic regime they inherited. One might wonder if these societies and their leaders ever had a choice whether or not they would have wanted that independence? Thus, in 1991, there was no organised civil society, nor an intellectual elite that was demanding a thorough dealing with the past in all aspects of historical, judicial, political or societal matters of the totalitarian regimes, and which remains weak until present days. The lack of this civil society, organized victims groups or (state) commissions of inquiry pose a challenge for researchers, because those organizations are in TJ research usually the first contact points from which to start research and investigation into the past of that country or society.

Vello Pettai and Eva-Clarita Pettai, in their studies on TJ, memory and post-communist societies, highlight more challenges. They point out that whereas in the case of Central and Eastern Europe, the totalitarian regimes lasted for some five decades, in Ukraine it lasted more than seven decades, and thus encompassed several generations of which the youngest never remembered nor experienced any democratic reforms or behavior. Oppression went through several generations and had clear variations from country to country.[5] It encompassed not only restrictions on free speech, association and travel, but also more horrific human rights violations

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[4]Nielsen, Christian Axboe (2014).
[5]Pettai and Pettai (2014).

such as widespread surveillance, indiscriminate arrest, mass deportation and summary killing. Moreover, much of what had happened was kept secret, known only through individual recollections and family stories. While liberation between 1989 and 1991 was an exhilarating event for all of these peoples, it also came with hard questions about how to deal with this past: Who should be held to account, if many of them transformed 'overnight' into full-fledged liberal democrats—on paper—but kept their old bureaucratic Soviet mentality intact, and in fact deep down in their hearts never truly wanted to depart from the communist regime.

Many Eastern and Central European countries, after becoming members of the Council of Europe in the 1990s, the European Court for Human Rights in Strasbourg, had soon set legal and political benchmarks and incentives for dealing with the past. The Court set benchmarks and criteria for commissions of inquiry, trials and vetting, and lustration and citizenship education. But new states in Central Asia and beyond are not members of the Council, and they also lack of a strong civil society that could push hard enough to make TJ an issue in science and more importantly in politics. In the post-Soviet region and former totalitarian regimes, that is to say Eurasia and the former Soviet republics of Central Asia, ODIHR has been less active in this aspect, too, because of the lack of interest by local civil society and governments in proceeding the avenue of TJ. But nevertheless, despite the fact that many of the former post-Soviet countries do not enjoy protection by the Council of Europe, the OSCE has adopted many of the Council's legal norms and political measure to promote accountability and human rights compliance in the region, which serve as a benchmark for rule of law and democracy promotion by ODIHR.

10.3   Post-Communist and Totalitarian Research in OSCE Region

To foster TJ research in the post-totalitarian environment of the OSCE region, one has to see it as a long-term process and a concept that encompasses a number of different legal, political, judicial, historical and cultural instruments and mechanisms that can strengthen, weaken, enhance or accelerate processes of regime change and democratic consolidation. Today, Transitional Justice in this region is conducted by few younger scholars and growing number of internationally trained researchers who belong to the post-totalitarian generations and that is asking questions about the linkage between the lack of TJ processes, the high level of political corruption and the shortcomings of democracy at the same time. TJ measures such as truth commissions, trials, memorials, compensations or amnesties can foster or hamper successful transition or reconciliation processes, and there is no automatic guarantee for a certain political or societal outcome, because TJ measures can be politically instrumentalised, used or abused, and the process outcome depends on a variety of different actors involved, which has largely happened in these countries by old elites who remained in power and aimed at silencing the past forever. But we see now

that this process, as such, is inter-generational and it can not be silenced forever and the measures are multiple and can be applied at any time later in the transformation process.

Out of the plethora of truth finding methods, legal procedures, memorials, amnesties or vetting procedures and thee multiple ways of compensations, TJ measures apply in OSCE region and need to be researched. They are composed as a set of judicial and non-judicial instruments and mechanisms such as trials, truth commissions, vetting and lustration procedures, memorials, reparations, restitutions or compensations, and even amnesty and rehabilitation laws that redress the legacies of massive human rights abuses either during war, occupation, dictatorships or other violent and suppressive conflicts and situations. These measures include criminal and political procedures and actions as well as various kinds of institutional reforms such as security sector reforms or constitution building. These measure can be well researched with investigative methods, solid desk research and interviews, because they aim to facilitate civil or political initiatives during transition and transformation processes and hence their impact or non-impact can be seen at present times. In the hands of political and civil actors, such initiatives can lead to reparations and legal, security sector or institutional reforms. Whatever combination of measures is chosen by the government or by civil society actors during transition processes, they ought to be in conformity with international human rights standards and obligations in order to have any positive impact on democratic institution building.[6] Moreover, for researchers TJ measures can be divided into different categories: procedural, interpersonal and informational justice measures, such as trials, truth commissions, reconciliation programmes, vetting, lustration, security sector reforms, apologies, reparations, compensations or memorials and many different types of dealing with the past. They aim to lead to distributive and restorative justice and are often referred to as establishing the rule of law.[7] Justice is meant in an institutional sense to build up (democratic) institutions for the future, based on the (bad) experiences of the past, and less so in philosophical terms. Overall, TJ measures aspire to prevent society and their institutions, such as political regimes, to repeat the wrongdoings of the past that led to new forms of suppression and terror, war or personal loss and grievances. Consequently, the field of research of Transitional Justice is wide and large and often seems to never end—as seen in the post-WWII research endeavours in Europe up until today.

Hence, TJ is more forward than backward-looking, and its consequences can be seen in everyday's life, for example, by comparing current levels of political corruption with the failure to conduct thorough TJ processes in the past, and this has become a driver for political regime consolidation both in post-conflict and transition countries. The whole TJ process aims to demystify and delegitimise the past, and to legitimise and strengthen the future and present political or societal

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[6]United Nations (2010)

[7]Hague Institute for the Internationalisation of Law (2010).

structures or regime.[8] Against this backdrop, TJ can—but does not automatically have to—contribute to democracy, for example by (re-)building trust in institutions and among divided societies, former combatants, enemies or ethnic, linguistic or religious groups. Some mechanisms aim to reconcile societies and their former opposing parties, others focus more on building trust in institutions and others again seek to acknowledge and remember past injustice through memorials, compensations or apologies.

Hence, in analytical terms, TJ measures aim at dealing with an unjust or atrocious past in order to delegitimise that era's leadership (on all levels) and political system, and at the same time, these measures aim to re-establish and legitimise a new political and, hopefully democratic but certainly different, regime.[9] This way, researchers and policymakers can draw direct or indirect links to present political, legal and economic shortcomings and defective democratic performances to the past. TJ measures can affect both autocratic and democratic regime change and consolidation, depending on how inclusive and exclusive, and by what political intentions these measures are applied by policymakers and society.

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[8]Mihr (2019).

[9]Teitel (2014).