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AXIOLOGICAL FOUNDATION OF NON-DEMOCRATIC REGIMES IN SELECTED POST-SOVIET REPUBLICS

Introduction

Building an independent country based on the model of the presidential system was a characteristic legacy of the Communist period in most post-Soviet republics. Although their regulations reflected the traditions of a given country, the newly born independent countries in Central Asia accepted the declarations of independence and constitutions largely based on western countries. The Constitutions of Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan define explicitly a democratic character of the state, political and ideological pluralism as well as the principle of three-division of authorities. In some principal laws the role of political parties has been exhibited. Apparently, the constitutions of the Central Asian countries do not differ much from the constitutions of the countries belonging to the consolidated democracy. In the principal laws of the post-Soviet Asian republics one can find a solid catalogue of individual rights and liberties. However, the way the authority is held differs greatly from the standards defined in the constitutions. In the post-Soviet republics there has shaped a hybrid model of political relationships where the institution of free elections has been carefully fixed gaining the range of the primary assumption of democracy. At the same time, other principles of the democratic state under the rule of law have been marginalised, especially the character and scope of the responsibility put on those who govern the countries. The authority have failed to create the socio-political structures which take part in in the process of formation of the state policy. They have also failed to create party forms of the political life. Finally, they have not managed to properly ensure and strengthen the base, forms and institutions of the democratic state. In the atmosphere of intensive political, religious,

social, and ethical conflicts, a further building of democracy has become impossible. What is more, its principles, ignored or instrumentally abused by the majority of the members of the political life, have failed to ingrain into the society.

This article aims at highlighting the axiological and political foundation of non-democratic regimes in the Central Asian states. The system of ruling the country in the Central Asian republics results in their approach towards a clearly authoritarian model of authority¹ and their depart from the democratic standards guaranteed by the constitutions. It seems, therefore, that a key meaning for a relatively easy acquisition of authoritarianism in the states under analysis are revealed by the following factors: historical, cultural and religious traditions, the legacy of the Soviet totalitarianism, their structural foundation, as well as constitutional and international conditions.

1. Historical and cultural conditions

The understanding and perception of the way the authority is held are greatly rooted in the historical and cultural basis which applies both to those governing and the ones being governed, the consequences of which are both heterogeneous and difficult to combat. Firstly, authority seems to be the most stable element of the social system from a historical perspective. While it is true to say that intense conflicts do change its composition and form, they do not change the very character of the regime. Secondly, the thesis that authority is based on historical and cultural premises as accepted by the regime and society discourages the authority to undertake deep changes which could disturb that historically based understanding. It results in the inadequacy of the regimes to undertake a deep auto-reflection and inner reformations. Probable changes are caused by a growing discrepancy between the authority's demand and what they can really execute (e.g. Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan). In case of the Central Asian republics, historical and cultural experiences are characterised mostly by despotic relations on the level of those who govern and those who are governed connected mostly with numerous conquests of the regions by Arabs, Persians and Mongols in the XIX Century by the Russian Empire, as well as a specific clan-organisation of the society.

¹ А. Ю. Мельвиль, *О траекториях посткоммунистических трансформаций*, "Полис" 2004, № 2, pp. 64–75.

In the area of Central Asia there were independent states such as Khorasm (XI–XII Centuries), the Shaybanid Khanate (XVI Century), Khanate of Bukhara (XVI–XX Centuries), Kokand (XVIII–XIX Centuries) and Khiva (XVI–XX Centuries). They were conquered and destroyed by stronger neighbours from the south and north.² In XIX Century Central Asia became the area of the “Great Game” penetration³ and new conquerors – Russia and England – appeared. When England, with a poor effect, was penetrating Afghanistan, Russia concentrated on its southern neighbour: the Emirate of Buchara, Khanate of Khiva and Kokand. In 1862–1868 the Emirate of Buchara was in war with Russia. In 1866 the Russian Army occupied the area situated in the south of the contemporary Tajikistan – Khodjent. Two years later a Russian – Bucharian agreement was signed which declared Russia the owner of the conquered lands and the Emirate was to remain under the Russian protectorate. In 1867 the Russian-occupied Turkestan governorship was created in the area conquered by Russia. An intense Russian colonisation had begun which was intensified in 1899 when the Central Asia railway was opened.

After the Bolshevik revolution in February 1917 in the areas of the Russian Central Asia there was a series of “pro-independence” activities. In April the Russian-occupied Turkestan governorship was cancelled. The victory of the Revolution of November, 1917 in Central Asia made the Bolsheviks active. November 15, 1917 the third district meeting of the Soviets gathered which proclaimed the victory of the Soviets in Turkestan. In reality, it was not until 1920 that, with the help of the General of the Red Army, Mikhail Frunze, who fraternally “helped” the Communists in the Emirate of Buchara, the Soviet rule was declared in Central Asia. In September, 1920 the foundation of the Bukhara People’s Republic was proclaimed. Earlier, in February, 1920 the People’s Republic of Khorasm was founded.⁴ The Soviet authority faced an armed resistance of the inhabitants. Resistant fights of the so-called “basmaches” continued till the beginning of the 30s in Central Asia.

A lack of historical continuity of the state authority and a native political centre (which, even if it appeared, was relatively weak) made the process of the creation of nationalities difficult. As a consequence, it was

² The history of the Central Asia states is described in: G. R. Capisani, *Nowe państwa Azji Środkowej*, Warszawa 2004.

³ See P. Hopkirk, *The Great Game: The Struggle for Empire in Central Asia*, Kodansha International 1992.

⁴ M. Haller, A. Niekricz, *Utopia u władzy*, Vol. I, Polonia Book Fund LTD, p. 90.

till the beginning of XX Century that clan-feudal relations of the Central Ages remained. Their continuation can also be found (although in a changed form) in the period of the rule of the Soviet where republics were represented by political dignitaries mostly represented by the local clans' heads. In those circumstances an advancing state centralism, previously difficult to achieve in nomad tribes, constituted the essential *novum*. A cultural model of the political authority concentrated in the hands of the governor and the elite (clan) associated with him revives nowadays. It has specific implications. The leaders of the Central Asia states try hard to establish the image of their nation's leaders and tutors rather than their political leaders. Their power rests in a wide social legitimization as well as the system of mutual informal connections with "clients". Regime's support conditions various concessions and benefits. The lack of that support may result in the possibility of their deprivation. What is more, it has become the specific elements of the majority off the post-Soviet states whose system has been described as *patronal presidentialism* by Henry Hale.⁵ In Central Asia a vertical stratification of "clientism" reaches whole societies. In this mechanism almost everybody can lose. That is why the president is supported.

Cultural traditions are another principle issue conditioning the functioning of non-democratic regimes in the Central Asia republics. Orient traditions (among which are clan mechanisms of politics, system of general law, Muslim law), customs and traditions do not only mark one's lifestyle but they greatly influence a political process in that region and forming of the elements of the system which is far from democratic. Tribalism and mechanisms of clan politics as well as the appeal to a traditional way of life and religion are unfamiliar with democracy. The apparent danger for a democratic style of governing are strong renationalisation and strong tradition of giving somebody an official post on the basis of clan connections or the potential of army conflicts instead of candidates' skills. Apart from that, there is an apparent inclination of the Central Asia political elite to deal with conflicts with the help of hand rather than conciliation (the so-called kalaschnikov culture). Cultural traditions result in a growing aggregation of the authority in the hands of the presidents. Kyrgyzia remains an exception where, after the "Tulips Revolution", the president Askar Akajev's authoritarian regime was subverted in 2005. However, it is necessary to remember that in the Republic of Kyrgyzia social protest was not based on

⁵ See: H. Hale, *Regime Cycles: Democracy, Autocracy, and Revolution in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, "World Politics" 2005, Vol. 58, No 1, Oct, pp. 133–165.

the attempt to overthrow a non-democratic way of governing and anti-democratic character of elections as it was in case of Gruzia and the Ukraine. In Kyrgyzia the protesters were supporting their local leaders affected by family and clan bonds.⁶ After Akajev was overthrown, the novelization of the constitution took place which significantly strengthened the role and position of political parties in the political system. Nonetheless, one may feel anxiety while observing a gradual return to Kurmanbek Bakijev's presidential quasi-dictatorship.

In the Central Asia states there has been present a tradition of individual's subordination to the hierarchy which has been emphasised by the institution of family. There is a clear attempt to achieve the state of safety (social and physical) which was previously guaranteed by the system of the USSR. In the eyes of the society safety is more significant than a few apparent disadvantages of the previous system such as lack of freedom of speech, inability to travel internationally, a ban on the contacts with strangers or administrative limits in daily life. Therefore, the fact that social trust has been given to politicians who promise to guarantee stability should not be surprising. An official discourse, where slogans such as "strong state", "strong leader" and "strong power" are common, is to face a very positive feedback. Democracy in this context is not a priority. Freedom of word and pluralism in the conditions of domestic problems remain a secondary issue. Moreover, freedom remains an empty term which is not completely and properly understood. Its meaning is only limited to the possibility of using it without a deeper reflection whether it is a real possibility or an illusive one. A distrust to democracy is additionally intensified by the fact that the policy of liberalization and the values which accompany it seem to be socially strenuous. Individualism and freedom strike the culturally ingrained values, which may discredit a social traditional model based on the family, patriarchal authority, obedience to the elderly and the primacy of the community over an individual. Moreover, in the public opinion, liberalization and democracy are accompanied by a great deal of corruption and growing social inequality. It results in a great frustration for the departure from the model of "general equality" has not been accepted by everybody.

Cultural traditions influence the way of granting the authority. It is typical that only small groups of opposition demand democratic elections

⁶ W. Baluk, *Republika Kirgiska*, [in:] W. Baluk, A. Czajowski (ed.), *Ustroje polityczne krajów Wspólnoty Niepodległych Państw*, Wrocław 2007, p. 254.

to nominate a leader.⁷ Both political elites and clans (representatives of the traditional structure of the local society) find it natural for the governing presidents to appoint a follower. Bearing in mind the fact that the Central Asian societies are patriarchal and Muslim, male offspring as well as male leaders are of great value. The Presidents of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan do not have sons. Therefore, the main role in the local politics is given to their daughters. Dariga Nazarbajew in Kazakhstan and Gulnar Karimov in Uzbekistan lead an active public life; the former is a founder and a leader of the political party “Asar”;⁸ the latter is a political adviser of her father. As Andrzej Lomanowski has noted, the system of authority built on traditional values contradict these values.⁹ It is not known what the reaction of the patriarchal society, leaders of the local clans and regional groups will be when faced with the attempt to give the authority to women. Nonetheless, it does not change the fact that the above-mentioned presidents have made the attempt to change it, probably basing on the Russian variant where first one gets the functions of the President and then confirms that in a referendum or elections.

Although the Presidents of Turkmenistan and Tajikistan have sons, they have not been preparing them to overtake the authority. The President of Turkmenistan, Saparmurat Nijazov, was thinking of empowering his son Murad but he was not interested in governing the country. After Nijazov’s death there were presidential elections won by Gurbanguly Berdymuchamedov who has remained the Chairman of the Parliament ever since.

The Soviet totalitarianism has had a great impact on non-democratic characteristics of the Central Asian regimes. The system which was built in the conditions of the domestic war and the Bolshevik elimination of independent moods constitutes the basis of the artificial division of the Central Asia in 1924 and marked the frames of the structural evolution of the Soviet Republics in the following decades.¹⁰ As a result, the republics were built somehow in an “outer” way and their structural models were mostly based

⁷ Interesting is the fact that in the Central Asian states only opposition political parties and Muslim groups demand free elections.

⁸ Dariga Nazarbajew holds 80% of the media. Her political party, “Asar”, has had poor results in the parliamentary elections: A. Orzelska, *Kazachstan*, [in:] *Systemy polityczne oraz polityka wewnętrzna i zagraniczna w państwach postkomunistycznych Europy i Azji w latach 2004–2005*, J. M. Fiszer, (ed.), Warszawa 2005, p. 152.

⁹ A. Lomanowski, *Wpływ dzieci przywódców Azji Centralnej na sytuację polityczną i gospodarczą państw regionu*, “Bezpieczeństwo Narodowe” II, 2006/2, p. 63.

¹⁰ T. Bodio, T. Mołdawa, *Konstytucje państw Azji Centralnej. Tradycje i współczesność*, Warszawa 2007, p. 15.

on the borrowed models with a homogeneous system of power, democratic centralism, monopolistic role of the Communist party and sovietisation, denationalization and displacement of nations.

The Central Asian Republics were born in the minds of the Bolshevik commissars. They were deprived both of any national traditions and state structures. On the other hand, they had a very complicated demographic situation intentionally increased by the actions of the Bolsheviks. The old imperialistic principle “divide and rule”, which was the creed of the Soviets, deprived Tajikistan of the two most important cultural centres: Buchara and Samarkand. Both cities with their inhabitants were given to Uzbekistan by Stalin. Whole Central Asia was greatly colonized by Russians. Building national states has remained an ideologically consolidating element of the regimes of Central Asia after 1990/91.¹¹ Even communists, initially negating the meaning of independence, and Muslims, referring to pan-Islamic visions from the past, have made the national ideology their primary message. It contradicts the actual ethical structures of the post-soviet republics of Central Asia. For instance, the ethnic Kazachs constitute less than half of the inhabitants in their country. Twice the number of Tajiks live out of their nominal republic. A considerable minority of the Uzbeks live in their neighbouring republics¹² which results in numerous international conflicts.

The period of the USSR rules shaped not only the boundaries of the states but also their political, economic and social life. The collectivisation and chaotic industrialization resulted in the collapse of the traditional social structures and irreparable ecological losses (e.g. drying out of the Lake Aral). The economy of the Central Asian republics was treated as a reservoir of raw materials by Moscow. A strong dependence of the local enterprise (industrial and agricultural) from the centre and dependence of republics on financial transfers resulted in a dramatic economic crisis at the beginning of the 90s. A rapid increase of unemployment as well as pauperization of people caused even more negative phenomena. Social marginalization pushed people towards a criminal net of connections. There was a rapid growth of corruption, nepotism, organized crime and, consequently, a growth of Mafia's influence which was illegally acting in the economy of the states and collaborating with the state officials to control

¹¹ A few months before the end of the USSR the Soviet Republics of Central Asia did not show their will to leave the USSR. Michail Gorbaczow was strongly supported by both the leaders of the Central Asian republics and their inhabitants who explicitly supported functioning of the USSR in the referendum regarding the future of the Russian Empire held in March 17, 1991.

¹² L. Włodek-Biernat, *Po co dziś państwo narodowe*, “Gazeta Wyborcza” 13.06.2006.

the state raw materials. A large scale corruption weakened the legitimization of the government and their ability to control the situation within the state. Groups and clans representing different interests were competing to get control in the state and promote Muslim, democratic or authoritarian principles which governed their rules. In such circumstances the consolidation of power in the hands of the local political leaders, who were getting the real power and independence, took place. As a matter of fact, the institution of president was being built basing on the remains of the local communist party's structures.¹³ Communists' actions have had a negative influence on the local customs and community resulting in the collapse of some of the traditional social institutions such as "the elders" or *Mahallah* – a gathering of citizens who constituted (and still constitute) an informal element of stability thanks to which there was a relatively low crime rate. Stalin's expurgation deprived local clans of their leaders of the family elite or, in other words, aristocracy. It was replaced by the new, sovietized elite who had a syndrome of totalitarianism and unconditioned obedience to the central power ingrained.

2. Foundations of the governmental systems

To define a specific character of the structures of the governmental systems after the collapse of the USSR, T. Carothers employs the term "grey zone of democracy". This term has been applied to the states which have failed to ingrain democracy and have strong authoritarian tendencies. Such states remain in a kind of suspension between full dictatorship and stable liberal democracy. They neither head towards dictatorship nor aim at complete democracy. They are in a transient state. In some states there has shaped a model of "irresponsible pluralism", in others the model of "dominating power" (authority) remains.¹⁴ The second model has been dominating in the states of Central Asia. It is expressed by the existence of limited political space, limited participation of opposition parties, dominance of the political leader or leading party over the political system, governors' ownership of the state, lack of competitors in elections, and frequent falsification of elections.

¹³ М. Олкотт, *Центральная Азия: перспективы смены власти*, "Pro et Contra", том 09, 2005 год, № 1, июль-август, р. 53.

¹⁴ Т. Carothers, *The End of the Transitional Paradigm*, "Journal of Democracy" 2002, vol. 13, nr 1, pp. 5–21.

The presidential system (in reality, authoritarianism) was to guarantee a successful departure from “anarchic democracy” which had occupied the post-Soviet lands just after the collapse of the USSR. The leaders of the states had serious advantages. In the collapsing post-communist world observed by the society they remained a guarantee of stability and consolidation of the state; they were a point of reference and reliability. In the initial period they had a true and public legitimization. The appearing authoritarianism was seen not as an individual form of political regime but only as an active and necessary supplement of the democratic system conditioning the improvement of its success. Undoubtedly, a significant point of reference for the character of the presidential power in the states situated in post-soviet lands was the example coming from Moscow. Russia was gradually leaving the principles of democracy evolving in the direction of quasi-authoritarianism. The post-Soviet states were not only following that direction of political changes but they also had a clear support from Moscow where presidential authoritarianism was seen as a significant element of political stability and control over the states of the region.

The Central Asian republics have gone through the revival of authoritarianism in different forms and shapes. The reason for this phenomenon is the lack of tradition or their own democratic models. This has been supplemented by the issue of periodical political instability for the post-Soviet regimes were copying the governmental models through political experiments or domestic wars (in Tajikistan there was a domestic war from 1992 to 1997). The post-Soviet republics adopted governmental solutions of the western democracy although the institution of president was based not on the western model but on the way of how Mikhail Gorbaczov was the president. The way of understanding the presidential power and its role in the state was modelled on the USSR. A departure from the democratic standards was seen not only in the legitimized concentration of power in the hands of the president but also in the model of sharing the power with the follower in the framework of some “family” connections or, in other words, basing on the Russian script of “inheritor”.

In Kazakhstan in 2002 a new law regarding political parties was accepted which introduced rigid criteria of political parties’ registering. As a result, out of nineteen groups only eleven asked for registering and only seven were acknowledged as fulfilling the criteria of the law.¹⁵ The Constitution of

¹⁵ A. Czajowski, *Republika Kazachstanu*, (in:) W. Baluk, A. Czajowski (ed.), *Ustroje polityczne krajów Wspólnoty Niepodległych Państw*, Wrocław 2007, p. 231.

Uzbekistan states that the social life of the state is based on the “foundations of pluralism of political institutions, ideology and views”. As a matter of fact, the system of holding the authority is strongly repressive. The opposition is weak and infiltrated by special services. In the country there are neither independent non-governmental organizations nor independent mass media. Muslims, accused of radicalism by the regime, are especially subjected to repressions. Constant limits of the opposition in the Central Asian states have made the appearance of alternative elites impossible who, with the help of political means, could express the interests of social and regional groups. As a result, the opposition has gone through islamisation as well as radicalization which have caused a growing terrorism.

3. Constitutional conditioning

The constitutions of the independent states of Central Asia were dictated by the presidents who, being acquainted with the only model of holding authority, declared for the presidential system for their personal interest. The Constitution of Kazakhstan of December 16, 1991 in art. 2 states directly that Kazakhstan is a state of a presidential form of governing. It goes without saying that these constitutions are often treated instrumentally.

In the states of “grey sphere of democracy” there is a change of the constitution before a possible change of the head of the state. The reasons of this situation are different. Inner divisions which are one of the essential elements of the power alternation have started to take place in the pro-presidential groupings. The president, who is going to resign and who has concentrated the great deal of power so far, starts reaching for the balance in the division of power (president – parliament – government). Such events took place in Kyrgyzia where in 2003 the President Askar Akajev initiated the constitutional referendum ratifying the growth of the importance of the parliament and the president-parliamentary form of governing. The reason for doing so was that Akajev had a personal interest rather than he was worried about the state clearly advancing towards authoritarianism.¹⁶

However, changes of the constitution are more commonly carried out to strengthen the position of the president or/and to guarantee him a the ability to hold the post longer. The fact that constitutions or their novelizations have been accepted by people in a referendum has a significant

¹⁶ W. Baluk, *op. cit.*, p. 253.

importance. The President of Kazakhstan Nazarbaev (whose post was to finish in 1996) decided to extend it till 2000. To do that in March, 1995 he proclaimed a national referendum regarding the extension of the term of his obeying the president till December 1, 2000. In August, 1995 he declared a referendum to adopt a new constitution. With the approval of Nazarbaev in 1998 changes were introduced into the constitution which enabled the Parliament to shorten the term of holding the presidential post. As a result, presidential election ahead of time were conducted in 1999. Simultaneously, other profitable changes for the president were introduced into the constitution: the term of the presidential post was prolonged to seven years, the lowest limit as to the age of the candidates was changed from the age of 35 to the age of 40 years old whereas the highest limit of age was cancelled; the requirement of the 50% frequency for elections to be valid was cancelled. In June, 2000 Nazarbaev was given full powers of unlimited duration (life-long) to govern the state (as well as life-long financial and personal security). By the novelization of May, 2007 the term was shortened to 5 years and the regulation was accepted that the article limiting the presidential office up to two terms does not apply to the first President of Kazakhstan.¹⁷

The referendum regarding the extension of the presidential office of the President Emolala Rachmanov from 4 to 7 years took place in Tajikistan in September, 1999.¹⁸ One more referendum was carried out in June, 2003 to adopt some changes into the constitution so that Rachmonov could stay two more consecutive presidential terms;¹⁹ in June 22, 2003 respective changes were introduced into the constitution.

The extension of the presidential office term of the President of Uzbekistan, Islam Karimov, was approved in the referendum in 1995. Karimov, elected to be the president in 1991, on the strength of the referendum was given the right to extend his term till 2000. After the elections in January, 2000 he officially started his “first” term. In 2002 one more referendum was conducted on the strength of which his term was extended to 2007; in April, 2007 the constitution was changed to extend the presidential term to 7 years although the limit of only two terms of holding the presidential

¹⁷ M. Czerwiński, *Prezydent jako głowa władzy wykonawczej – model Białoruski*, (in:) *Władza wykonawcza w Polsce i Europie*, (ed.) M. Drzonek, A. Wołek, Kraków – Nowy Sącz 2009, p. 200.

¹⁸ *В Таджикистане прошел референдум. Предполагается внесение достаточно существенных поправок в действующую Конституцию*, “Независимая газета” 28.09.1999.

¹⁹ К. Дэвис, *Размонов сможет править до 2020 года*, http://news8.thdo.bbc.co.uk/hi/russian/news/newsid_3012000/3012084.stm (10.07.2009).

office was not annulled. Apart from that, in 2007 Karimov participated in the elections, won them and started his “second” term.

Aparent “tinkering” of the head of the state with the constitution took place in Turkmenistan. In 1994 a referendum was conducted whose results approved the extension of the President Saparmurat Nijazov, elected in 1992, to 2002. Then the presidential elections, which were to take place in 1997, were cancelled. In 1998 the ban regarding limiting the presidential office term was annulled. In 1999 the Parliament took a decision to grant the president a life-long office term. After Nijazov died in 2006, there appeared a necessity to introduce immediate changes into the constitution because the factual law did not allow for the election of the next president.

4. International conditioning

The collapse of the USSR in 1991 resulted in numerous consequences not only for the international system but first of all for the inhabitants of the post-Soviet lands. The collapse of the USSR started the processes of disintegration. The states which appeared in the ruins of the Soviet Empire had to choose the orientation of their international policy and safety. The definition of their policy and relations with the former leader – Russia – was of primary significance. However, economic relations were of no less importance. The economics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzia and Tajikistan are greatly dependant on the exchange of goods with Russia. Economic and political bonds have resulted in the process of reintegration, which is exemplified by the foundation of the Union of Independent states in 1991, the Taxation Union in 1995, in 2000 it was reorganized into the Eurasian Economic Community and in 2002 into the Collective Security Treaty Organization.

After the collapse of the USSR Russian strategists faced the dilemma: to stay directly in the region or to support the creation of the buffer sphere in Central Asia, protecting “south flank” from the dangers coming from Asia (drug trade, organized crime, and terrorism). Finally, the middle variant was chosen. Together with the Central Asian states Russia created a economic sphere which was collective, although controlled by Russia (WNP) as well as military sphere (the Taschkent Pact). From the Russian perspective, the condition of successful function of the post-Soviet sphere was not to allow alien world-powers (UE, USA, China) to intervene in the the domestic affairs of the states under the control of Russia as well as to continue political solutions in accordance with the will of the Kreml. Personal (authoritarian) power of the president in Central Asia was seen as a more beneficial (for

it was easier to control, addict and manipulate) than collective power of the Parliament (democracy). Therefore, the local leaders could rely on the Russian help in their conflicts with the political opposition, which made them even more addicted to Moscow.

In the second half of the 90s the Russian control over the region decreased. In some states attempts to weaken the relations with Moscow appeared. The post-Soviet states started advancing in the direction of Turkey, Iran and Pakistan. The interests of China, and later the USA and UE, were focused on whole Central Asia.

At the beginning of this century the political role of Central Asia increased significantly. It was influenced by some aspects. Firstly, the region had become important for the USA because of their anti-terrorist operations in Afghanistan. Secondly, Russia's control over the region had decreased because of the engagement of the USA and China. Thirdly, it appeared that the region could become the alternative for the Near East in the production of energetic material. The fourth reason was that Central Asia had become the area of penetration of the Muslim terrorists. An anti-terrorist union of Moscow and Washington against the Talibs in Afghanistan was the chance to introduce deep changes in the situation in Central Asia.²⁰ The Central Asian states bordering with the front-line were necessary as a logistical base of the coalition army. By allowing the American forces to use their lands, those states could expect not only financial help but also they could treat the presence of the USA as a counterbalance for the influence of Russia. The change in the layout of the force encouraged formulating demands addressed to Moscow. Coolness in the relations with the USA and the increase of political and economic pressure in the states were Russia's reactions to the changes in the region. It resulted in breaking the agreement of leasing the bases by Americans in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan as well as a quite sudden distance to the decision of building ways of transmitting oil and gas alternative to Russia.

“Colourful revolutions” were a decisive impulse pushing some states back to cooperation with Moscow. Authoritarian of the post-Soviet states presidents came to the conclusion that their cooperation with the USA encourages democratic revolts which could deprive them of their force. Nonetheless, leaders of the states in that region are constantly searching for alternative solutions for the deep relations with Russia, China and the USA.

²⁰ Read more: М. Олкотт, *Второй шанс Центральной Азии*, Москва – Вашингтон 2005.

The European Union is one of the possible partners. In 2009 Brussels activated the force to initiate the Nabucco gas main, which was greatly approved of, for example, on Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. A deeper penetration of the EU politics in Central Asia can stimulate certain limited social and political reforms.

5. Religious traditions

In the territory of Central Asia Islam is a dominating religion although its power does not affect political power. The position of religion on the margins of social and political life is certainly one of the indications of the Communist legacy. In the Soviet Union the issue of Islam was marginalized in the interest of the regime. Soviet scientists in accordance with the suggestion of the authority were interested in Islam only in the context of their anthropological and religious research.²¹ What is more, it was “Soviet” Islam or, in other words, totally deprived of identity and paralysed by the governing system. The extermination of the Muslim clergy and two changes of the alphabet in the period of twenty years (firstly, from Arabic to Latin, and then to Cyrillic) accompanied by the ban on the possession and popularization of any religious literature destroyed the chance of cultural growth of the local people for many years. The majority of Muslims adapted themselves to the new conditions, which resulted in the society’s secularization and sovietization in many cases. In the Muslim Central Asian republics, just as it was in the Soviet Empire, there prevailed a universal Communist system and legalized atheism. Islam was generally practised by the elderly. It was rather the element of tradition with no influence on the course of action.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union a revival of the religion and politicizing of Islam took place. The Renaissance of Islam was mainly caused by the search for Muslim identity and individuality, occasional becoming the weapon in a political fight. Yet, those who governed were Moscow’s deputies; they quickly adopted themselves to the new conditions replacing the red flag of communism with the green flag of the Prophet. It allowed them to preserve the power in already independent states which had quickly changed the past image from the universal Soviet and atheist to the national, Muslim, more or less subordinated to Islam. The power in the regions was

²¹ Compare Н. Азыров, *Эволюция ислама в СССР*, Москва 1973.

being overtaken by the local elites replacing ethnically (and religiously) alien Russians. The consequence of that was republics' deprivation of significant channels of political representation on a central level.²² At the same time it appeared that the local leaders frequently used Islam in a shallow way. They did not hesitate to fight Muslim parties and groupings when it came to the fight for power.

Undoubtedly, the neighbouring Muslim countries, especially Iran and the Saudi Arabia and to certain degree Turkey, have had a significant influence on the expansion of Islam in the post-Soviet republics of Central Asia. It has been estimated that a total number of Islam believers in the independent states of Central Asia (and in autonomic republics of Russian Federation – Volga Federal district and North Caucasus) has reached over 60 millions. So far, apart from the active infiltration and help coming from the Afghan Talibs as well as the aids from such countries as Iran and Pakistan, the attempts to ingrain the Islam fundamentalism in any of the Central Asian states have failed. Nevertheless, it is necessary to remember that Islamic fundamentalists, wahabits, who constitute the young counter-elite fighting for “souls’ governing” with moderate “traditionalists” are the main source endangering the safety of the states.²³

In Central Asia Islam appears in three main dimensions. Firstly, it is an element of the individual and group identity. Secondly, it is a national and state-building factor. Thirdly, it constitutes an ideological and logistical base to fight for the change of the political, social and cultural order.²⁴ Nowadays Islam is a significant aspect of building and defining of group and individual identity of the regional societies.²⁵ Muslim elites and structures are enjoying a good social reputation. Such a situation is perceived by the authority as a kind of endangered *status quo*. For this reason the activities of the Muslim political parties and religious organizations is frequently limited or even combated. The Constitution of Tajikistan 1994 introduced a ban on the activities of the parties of a religious character which stroke the main source of the Tajikistan opposition, Islamic Renaissance Party of

²² D. Gliniski, *Russia and Its Muslims: The Politics of Identity at the International-Domestic Frontier*, “East European Constitutional Review” 2002, nr 1/2, vol. 11, p. 75.

²³ Read: A. A. Казанцев, “Важхабизм”: опыт когнитивного анализа институтов в ситуации социокультурного кризиса, “Polis” 2002, nr 5.

²⁴ A. Jerska, *Rozdroża islamu*, “Recykling Idei”, nr 2/2004.

²⁵ *Ислам на постсоветском пространстве: взгляд изнутри*, под ред. А. Малащенко и М. Брилл Олкотт; Моск. Центр Карнеги. – М.: Арт – Бизнес – Центр, август 2001.

Tajikistan.²⁶ The Constitution's novelization of 1999 introduced a permission to organize religious parties. However, in June, 2004 the Parliament of Tajikistan passed a change in the suffrage law according to which on the day of elections there was a ban on the presence of armed outsiders and representatives of political parties taking part in the elections in polling stations.

The influence of Islam in the region is growing together with the intensity of a political situation in some states.²⁷ Crushing the democratic and nationalistic opposition makes Islam, with its structures and deep roots in the society, an attractive alternative to corrupted and compromised political groupings connected with the regime. Occasionally, religion has been serving as the strongest base for the opposition fighting not only for their traditions but also for the religious state.

6. Dangers brought by terrorism

The states of Central Asia are nowadays facing dangers brought by terrorism. Central Asia has become the area which is deeply infiltrated by terrorist groups and organizations penetrating from the lands of Afghanistan in the northern direction to Russia. A very intense situation is taking place on the borders of Afghanistan and Tajikistan²⁸ and in the Fergana Valley divided between Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Due to the density of the population, their poverty, unemployment, as well as ethnical, economic and social conflicts this region has become the place especially susceptible to the influence of Muslim radicals. By the end of the 90s the Fergana Valley had become the place of the activities of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, founded in 1998 by the Tajikian veterans of the domestic war and the soldiers fighting in Afghanistan in 1979–1989 (including Russians). The main aim of the Islamic Movement was to create the Islamic state in the Fergana Valley.²⁹ The priority and a long-term goal involved overthrowing the government in Uzbekistan and creating the Islamic state “Kalifatu Buchary” including the area of Central Asia. There were attempts

²⁶ Z. Cierpiński, *Republika Tadżykistanu*, (in:) W. Baluk, A. Czajowski (ed.), *Ustroje polityczne krajów Wspólnoty Niepodległych Państw*, Wrocław 2007, p. 286.

²⁷ A. Jerska, op. cit.

²⁸ J. Wendle, *How Afghanistan's War Is Spilling into Central Asia*, “Time”, 22.07.2009.

²⁹ H. Głębocki, *Radykalizm islamski w Azji Środkowej jako czynnik zbliżenia między Rosją a Chinami*, “Biuletyn”, Polski Instytut Spraw Międzynarodowych, 2005, p. 186.

to achieve that goal by the use of force: attacks on Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan (in August, 2000) which were to initiate a common Islamic revolt as well as attacks of terror in Zacaucasus. The Islamic Movement has been thought to be responsible for the attacks in Buchara as well as the ones taking place nearby the Embassies of the USA and Israel in Tashkent. In 2006 mudzaheadins attacked Kyrgyzia.³⁰ Uzbekistan is especially exposed to the Islamic Movement actions. In the governmental propaganda the movements of the Islamic groups are thought to be the biggest inner enemy. All anti-governmental performances are thought to be organized by the Islamic grouping Hizb ut-Tahrir (Party of Liberation). The intensification of repressive action as referred to the opposition results in the growth of its population. It is difficult to state explicitly which direction the above-mentioned conflict is going to take. Certainly, terrorism and the ways of fighting it constitute one of the most significant aspects of the legitimization of power as refereed to the local political leaders.

Summary

The struggle of authoritarianism with democracy in Central Asia leads towards the victory of the former. However, it is necessary to remember that authoritarianism in the region is internally differentiated, taking different forms and shapes: anocracy appears in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzia;³¹ authoritarianism in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, in Turkmenistan there was totalitarianism connected with the cult of the president Saparmurad Nijazov. The political system in Kyrgyzia seems to be the closest to the democratic one. It is partly explained by the specific character of the Kyrgyzian society which reveals ancestral and tribal structure characterized by the absence of authority uniting all nomadic groups and tribes.³² Ironic is the fact that the constitutional procedures of democracy are being successfully used to strengthen the powers of the president, which increases authoritarianism.

³⁰ W. Jagielski, *Mudzhedini rozlewają się po Azji*, "Gazeta Wyborcza" 02.07.2009.

³¹ In 2003 there was a novelization of the Constitution of Kyrgyzia. The newly accepted regulations made a huge step towards democracy. First of all, only two presidential terms taken by the same person were maximally accepted and the institution of a spokesperson of civil rights was established. In 2005 in Kyrgyzia there was the "Revolution of Tulips" which resulted in the abolishment of Akajev's regime.

³² A. Wierzbicki, A. Zamarajewa, P. Załęski, *Problemy transformacji, integracji i bezpieczeństwa narodowego w badaniach naukowców z Azji Centralnej*, "Studia Politologiczne" 2008, vol. 12, p. 58.

Apart from the declared civil rights and freedoms and the division of power, the constitutions of the Central Asian states in fact remain a collection of catchwords interpreted by the heads of the states in accordance with their needs. In turn, referendum, being one of the strongest forms of indirect democracy, in a sophisticated way is being used to build a stronger position of the president abusing democracy at the same time.

The failure of a democratic system in the majority Central Asian states has many sources. Lack of people's trust to the authority makes a successful democratic foundation of the state impossible. People do not trust the authority because the political elite to a greater extent is recruited among the bureaucratic nomenclature created at the times of the Soviet Union (therefore having nothing common with a democratic system). Additional, modern political classes in the region are characterized by the absence of ideas, fear of the new, and trust in the market economics rather than trust in democracy.