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Symbols and the Image of the State in Eurasia

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Springer

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ISSN 2191-5466 ISSN 2191-5474 (electronic)
SpringerBriefs in Political Science
ISBN 978-981-10-2391-0 ISBN 978-981-10-2392-7 (eBook)
DOI 10.1007/978-981-10-2392-7

Library of Congress Control Number: 2016949585

Printed on acid-free paper

This Springer imprint is published by Springer Nature
The registered company is Springer Nature Singapore Pte Ltd.
The registered company address is: 152 Beach Road, #22-06/08 Gateway East, Singapore 189721, Singapore

Preface

One of the most abiding images of modern Uzbekistan and one that is regularly on the cover of books on the state is the imposing statue of Amir Timur, astride a horse, located in the Amir Timur Square in central Tashkent. While the park surrounding the statue itself has been significantly reduced in size by the addition of the Forum's Palace—which in addition to the Amir Timur Museum now crowds the square—and the ancient *chinar* (maple) trees have been replaced by firs, the statue itself remains a point of reference for the state. Time and again the casual visitor who may remember very little of the city otherwise would refer to the statue with the assumption that Timur remains the referent for the state. And in this they are partially correct. While Amir Timur's legacy is no longer the subject of discussion, academic of otherwise, his abiding legacy that of a strong centralized state continues to be significant for Uzbekistan's brand equity. The most enduring image for the Kazakh state, on the other hand, was generally a combination of vast steppes, yurts, apples, and the Aral Sea. Today it is represented by the city of Astana, compared to modern cities of the oil rich states of the UAE and identified as symbolic of the Kazakh state. Eclectic in design and cosmopolitan in form, it is symbolic of the inclusiveness that the Kazakh state portrays as its essential image. While most states actively promote an international 'image', in the Eurasian space the Uzbek and the Kazakh cases are interesting since they provide remarkable contrasts that are largely reflective of their heritage.

The two abiding 'images' that the two states portray are indicative of the way they wish to position themselves in the global arena. Uzbekistan positions itself as an ancient civilization at the crossroads of history while Kazakhstan promotes itself as a significant geostrategic player and a multicultural and multiethnic society. While both images are actively promoted by the state and reinforced by diplomatic campaigns, they are also occasionally challenged by alternative reporting and reflections that influence external perception of the states. International reporting about the Andijan incident in 2005 and the British-American film *Borat* (2006) are examples that affected the image of the Uzbek and Kazakh states respectively. On the other hand there are certain enduring images of the states, the blue domes of Samarkand or the vast Kazakh steppes for instance, that are clearly identified and

utilized by the state for tourism but have very little to do with recent state propaganda. The extent to which these images have impacted on the international standing of the states, however, still remains debated. *Symbols and the Image of the State in Eurasia* is an attempt at examining how post Soviet Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan legitimized their existence as separate states, redefined themselves in a 'new' form and projected national images for the global arena but also in the domestic context. In the course of this redefinition, the relationship between politics and cultural symbols/images acquired multiple possibilities. It goes on to argue that this image was also largely determined by the legacy of the states—an ancient state with a 'homogenous' people for Uzbekistan reflected in the image of a strong centralized state and the legacy of a constant process of negotiation among the *Zhuz* reflected in the cosmopolitan image that the Kazakh state subsequently portrayed. **The book went to press before 2 September 2016, the officially declared day of Uzbek President Islam Karimov's demise and so it refers to him as President and not late President throughout.**

The manuscript was written as a project for the Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute of Asian Studies, Kolkata. The author remains grateful to the Institute for the support extended to her for the completion of the manuscript. During the course of the research the author interacted with a number of scholars and researchers in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. A field trip was undertaken in Almaty, Kazakhstan in 2012 during which various departments of the Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, like International Relations, Resource Centre for American and Democratic Studies, Department of Korean Studies were visited and a number of meetings were held with scholars. Meetings were also held at the R.B. Suleimenov Institute of Oriental Studies of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Kazakhstan Institute of Strategic Studies. Interaction was held at various institutes/universities with scholars like Prof. Baizakova Kuralay Irtysovna Dean of the Department of International Relations, Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, Prof. Kukeyeva Fatima Turarovna, Kazakhstan Chair of International Relations, and Foreign Policy of Kazakhstan, Department of International Relations of Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, Almaty, German Nikolaevich Kim Head of the Department of Korean Studies at Al-Farabi Kazakh National University and one of the leading internationally recognized scholars of the Korean diaspora in Kazakhstan, Galymzhan M. Duisen, Deputy Director, R.B. Suleimenov Institute of Oriental Studies, Nazigul Shaimardanova, Deputy Director of International Cooperation at the R.B. Suleimanov Institute of Oriental Studies, Leyla Muzaparova, First Deputy Director, Kazakhstan Institute of Strategic Studies, and Prof. Dr. Azhigali S. Eskendiruli, Professor of Archaeology and Ethnography at the Valikhanov Institute of History and Ethnology, Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Almaty. The author also benefited from participating for a day at the University of Turan Regional Seminar for Excellence in teaching project, on *Writing History from Below: The New Social History of Central Asia*, being held at the Altyn Karghalay Sanatorium in the outskirts of Almaty. During a field trip to Tashkent, Bukhara and Samarkand in 2013 the author benefited from interaction with faculty

and students of the University of World Economy and Diplomacy, Tashkent and the Institute of History, Uzbekistan Academy of Sciences, Tashkent. The author is particularly grateful to Prof. P.L. Dash, the then Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) India Chair at the University of World Economy and Diplomacy Tashkent, Murat M. Bakhadirov, Head, Department of International Relations, University of World Economy and Diplomacy, Tashkent and Mirzokhid Rakhimov, Head, Department of Contemporary History and International Relations at the Institute of History, Uzbekistan Academy of Sciences, Tashkent for their support during the visit and subsequent research. Meetings were also held at the Al Biruni Institute of Oriental Studies, Tashkent with Prof. Bakhtiyor Abidov, Head of the Department of South Asian countries and Deputy Director of International Cooperation. At Samarkand meetings were held at the Institute of Central Asian Studies with the Director, Shahin Mustafayev. Discussions were also held with Ambassador Yususf Abdullaev, Director of the El Mirosi theatre, Samarkand, and with Qazaqov Bahodir, former Uzbek Ambassador to Iran. The author remains grateful to all of them for sharing their knowledge, research, information and in many cases documents, books and articles.

The author wishes to thank Shinjini Chatterjee, Senior Editor, Springer for her support in the publication of the volume. She also wishes to thank Rita Banerjee for her assistance.

As always the book is for Rajarshi, Paramita, Kana and most importantly Nayantara.

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About the Author

Anita Sengupta is Senior Researcher, Calcutta Research Group and Visiting Fellow, Observer Research Foundation, India. She was formerly Fellow, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute of Asian Studies, Kolkata. She is an area studies specialist and her work has been focused on the Eurasian region with Uzbekistan being her area of special interest. She has also worked extensively on Turkish politics. She has collaborated with academics and policy makers in a number of universities and institutes in Tashkent, Bishkek, Almaty, Ankara, Istanbul, Berlin, Washington and has published jointly with scholars in the Eurasian region. She has been associated with the Stockholm International Programme for Central Asian Studies, SIPCAS and the Nordic Network for Research on Migration, Identity, Communication and Security. Her book *Heartlands of Eurasia: The geopolitics of political space* (Lexington Books 2009) was selected by the Oxford Bibliographies Online in 2011 as a must read on the section Geopolitics and Geo-strategy. She is also the author of *The Formation of the Uzbek Nation-State: A Study in Transition* (Lexington Books 2003) and *Frontiers into Borders: The Transformation of Identities in Central Asia* (Greenwich Millennium Press 2002) She has edited a number of volumes on Eurasian politics. Her most recent publication is *Myth and Rhetoric of the Turkish Model: Exploring Developmental Alternatives* (Springer 2014).

Chapter 1
Introduction: Image, Influence and Legacy

The state in short will have to become the State.
Peter van Ham
The Rise of the Brand State
Foreign Affairs
www.foreignaffairs.com

Abstract This chapter argues that the relationship between politics and cultural symbols/'images', became particularly relevant for states that emerged in the wake of the disintegration of the Soviet Union in Central Asia. These were essentially states that had not seen the development of an independent movement prior to the implosion at the centre, and their emergence raised questions about the legitimacy of the state/nation not just from within the state but also from the global arena. How the 'new' states legitimized their existence as separate entities and redefined themselves in a new form, both internally and externally, therefore assumes importance. In the course of this redefinition competing images were articulated and new discourses were generated. Nation building and nationalist rhetoric, therefore, was intended as much for the international public as the domestic audience whether it was the projection of Kazakhstan as the 'Heart of Eurasia' or Kyrgyzstan as the 'Island of Democracy'. Though not as well articulated the image that the Uzbek state presented was that of an 'ancient state at the crossroads of civilization'. Here, the shaping of a 'post-Soviet' future, through the performative role played by the state in the arena of culture, historical memory, images and rhetoric, assumes significance. While most states actively promote an international 'image', in the Eurasian space the Uzbek and the Kazakh cases are interesting since they provide remarkable contrasts that are largely reflective of their heritage. This chapter focuses on a brief review of the history of the state in the Central Asian region since it points not only to the long history of statehood in the region, but also to the fact that the nature of the present state can only be understood in terms of an understanding of these pre-existing state forms.

Keywords Eurasia · Nation branding · State legitimation · History of statehood in Eurasia · Legacy and 'image'

A. Sengupta, *Symbols and the Image of the State in Eurasia*,
SpringerBriefs in Political Science, DOI 10.1007/978-981-10-2392-7_1

In an increasingly globalized world, nation-state building is no longer an activity confined to the domestic arena. The situating of the state within the global space and its 'image' in the international community becomes in many ways as crucial as the projection of homogeneity within the state. The relationship between politics and cultural symbols/'images', therefore acquires and represents multiple possibilities. This volume extends the argument further to contend that the image that the state projects is largely determined by its legacy and branding is impelled not just by political compulsions but also historical legacies. It attempts to do this by taking into account the Kazakh and Uzbek cases. The more inclusive and cosmopolitan 'image' of the Kazakh state reflects the legacy of the constant process of negotiation of the great, middle and small *zhuzs* that today constitutes the state. Nomadic economy was not self-contained. In fact it could survive only in a symbiotic relationship with the outside, non-pastoralist, mainly sedentary world. The dependence on the outside world was cultural and ideological, as well as economic and socio-political (Dave 2007, p. 34). This legacy of conciliation is replicated in the Eurasian ideology that the Kazakh state reflects and its numerous attempts at integration within regional and global markets and institutions. The Uzbek state on the other hand inherited the structures of the Bukharan khanate and this legacy is reflected in the exclusivity that the state showcases in its policies and rhetoric. The Emirate structure, which was the last structure that developed prior to the emergence of the territorially demarcated state, was a segmentary-lineage state. It had all the rudiments of a state, albeit of a highly authoritarian one. Under the Mangits in Bukhara, the state attempted to control all aspects of social, economic and political life. A complex system of administration was in place divided into four domains (political, financial, judicial and religious) organized at three levels (the capital, the main towns, and population centres) (Sengupta 2000). Parallel to these centralized structures of state power there was a well-established system of local government based around *muhallahs* (neighourhoods) and a group of influential clergy. The image of an ancient state with a homogeneous people that the Uzbek state presently portrays is distinctive of a state that reflects these centralized structures of state power. In the shaping of the post-Soviet future these legacies and projections as well as the policy implications of these projections in terms of governmentality and foreign policy have been decisive. The 'image' that the state projects of itself and the influence that it supposedly generates has meant that reflection on places and their reputation has now emerged as a global process.

Interest in the concept and practice of nation branding has proliferated in recent years as more and more governments around the world attempt to harness the power of commercial branding techniques in order to improve their country's image and reputation across a wide range of sectors.[1] There are numerous references in history that suggest place branding. The French state has undergone regular re-branding

[1]The literature on 'image building' covers a variety of state experiences. See for instance Kemming and Sandikci (2007), Wang (2003), Dinnie (2009), Marshall (2011), Fullerton et al. (2007), Griffin (2013).

exercises. Other examples include the remarkable transformation of the Ottoman Empire to Ataturk's modern Turkey and of the USSR to the Russian Federation (Olins 2002). As Olins argues, after 1945 the collapse of the Great European colonial empires created a new set of nations. Many of these gave themselves new names. Ceylon became Sri Lanka, Gold Coast became Ghana, Southern Rhodesia became Zimbabwe and its capital Salisbury became Harare. The Dutch East Indies became Indonesia. Its capital Batavia became Jakarta and its multiplicity of languages was replaced by Bahasa Indonesian. The former Belgian Congo was renamed Congo, then Zaire, and then Congo again. Entirely new countries like Pakistan and Bangladesh emerged from what had been the British Indian Empire. Bangladesh has had three names in just over half a century, first it was a part of India as East Bengal, then it became East Pakistan and then Bangladesh. All of these countries have sought to break away from their immediate colonial past. In doing this many of them, like their predecessors in the nineteenth century Europe uncovered or invented a pre-colonial heritage. Zimbabwe was a semi-mythical African empire located more or less where present day Zimbabwe is. The historical relationship between ancient Zimbabwe and contemporary Zimbabwe is negligible, though the emotional relationship is close (Olins 2002, p. 5). As nations emerge they create self-sustaining myths to build coherent identities. When political upheavals take place nations reinvent themselves.

While it is true that nations have always sought to promote their economic, diplomatic and military interests, it is only in the last decade that nations have turned to the explicit use of the techniques of branding. Terms such as 'brand image' and 'brand identity' are increasingly being used to describe the perceptions that are held of nations among their 'stakeholders'. This eruption of the vocabulary of branding into the international affairs of nations has not been without scepticism regarding the appropriateness and relevance of such overtly commercial practices (Velden et al. 2008). However, almost every government in the world is now engaged in one way or another with nation branding, more visibly through the commissioning of advertisements in international channels and less visibly though initiatives like consistent portrayal of certain symbols and images as constituting the essence of the state. A comprehensive nation branding strategy would also include initiatives and programmes to motivate diaspora mobilization, enhance the coordination of the nation's key institutions and organizations and ensure a reasonable degree of consistency in the country's official communications.[2]

Simon Anholt, who introduced the term 'nation brand' went on to argue that with the rapid expansion of globalization, 'place branding' becomes important because every place wants to enhance, reverse, adapt or otherwise manage its international reputation since the world has become one market (Anholt 2003, 2007, 2010). Consequently if a country is serious about enhancing its international image, it should concentrate on product development and marketing rather than branding. Potter (2009) approaches nation brand within the context of public

[2]See www.brandhorizons.com for information on nation branding.

diplomacy—cultural programmes, international education, international broadcasting, trade and investment promotion. He identifies the present age with 'communications revolution' and argues that countries need to present a 'distinct national voice' which determines how well the national image is projected. Keith Dinnie (2008) distinguishes between image and identity and argues that while image refers to how something is perceived, identity refers to its essence. Nation brand therefore includes three elements: nation brand identity which includes history, language, territory, art, religion, icons, etc.; communication of nation brand involves branded exports, sports achievements, brand ambassadors, cultural artefacts, government, tourism, etc.; the audience is the domestic and international consumer, domestic and international firms, investors, governments and media. Dinnie argues that the objectives of nation brand are to attract tourists, stimulate inward investment, boost exports and attract talent. Mellisa Aronczyk (2013) argues that commercial branding helps nations to articulate more coherent and cohesive identities, attract foreign capital and maintain citizen loyalty. She further argues that nation branding is also used as a solution to perceived contemporary problems affecting the space of the nation state, problems of economic development, democratic communication and especially national visibility and legitimacy.

Most of the literature on 'nation branding' focuses on one of the three dominant research areas: the country of origin effects for export products; branding tourist destinations and getting foreign investments (Kemming and Sandikci 2007). However, a powerful nation brand image involves much more than simply boosting branded exports around the world. It is now essential for countries to understand how they are perceived by the global publics in terms of the reflection of their achievements and failures, their assets and liabilities, their people and their products in their brand image. In the sphere of foreign politics reputation management and influencing public opinion in other countries have become important, and through public diplomacy a nation's policies and cultures are communicated to international audiences. The use of its history, geography and ethnic motifs to construct its own distinct image by 'brand states' is a benign campaign that often lacks the deep rooted often antagonistic sense of national identity and uniqueness that can accompany nationalism; yet it is quite significant in terms of 'identity politics'. In fact, place branding specialists emphasize that nation branding encourages one to revisit the debate on nationalism and the role and nature of national identity (Ham 2002).

Consequently, it is being argued that the very definition of identity politics is changing. In a section subtitled 'Identity Politics' in his seminal article in *Foreign Affairs*, The Rise of the Brand State: The Postmodern Politics of Image and Reputation, Ham (2001) notes,

> The traditional diplomacy of yesteryear is disappearing. To do their jobs well in the future, politicians will have to train themselves in brand asset management. Their task will include finding a brand niche for their state, engaging in competitive marketing, assuring customer satisfaction, and most of all, creating brand loyalty. Brand states will compete not only among themselves but also with super brands such as EU, CNN, Microsoft, and the Roman Catholic Church. In this crowded arena, states that lack relevant brand equity will not survive.

The success of any brand is determined by its ability to convince people of the viability of the brand. In terms of the state, this would be interpreted as the ability of the state to convince the international community about the viability of its policies. But the state's image also needs to work for its own economy and its citizens. Global economic forces make it quite imperative to develop a good brand. Similarly branding now has a very important role in the politics of security. In tune with commercial branding states are now variously described as 'friendly' (i.e. western oriented) 'credible' (ally) or in contrast 'unreliable' (rogue state). Thus countries could also be at the receiving end of a branding process. An example of this can be the clustering of states as the 'axis of evil'. Similarly an 'unbranded' state may find it difficult to attract economic and political attention. Assertive brand asset management has become central to keep both a competitive economic and political edge. Now proactive branding strategies are adopted by states, regions and cities as they realize that with a strong, attractive place brand they can expand their market and political share by creating a strong brand premium. By managing their location's brand equity, politicians do two things. Externally they aim at attracting more clients and generate overall economic/political advantage (Ham 2003). Internally, brand equity aims at creating a sense of belonging. Branding therefore is not just about gaining attention; it is also about managing identity, loyalty and reputation. It plays an increasingly important internal function of identity formation. Although primordialists assume that every nation has deep roots, modern nations are actually based on invented traditions and the continuous mobilization and adaptation of history. Ham (2002) argues that with its flag, anthem and constitution the modern state is nothing other than a brand with a logo and mission statement. It is not surprising therefore that most states, cities, ministries and government agencies now boost their own logos and 'mission statements' in order to reposition themselves in a fluid globalizing world. As Ham (2001) says, this change implies more than mere window-dressing. It implies a shift in political paradigms, a shift from the modern world of geopolitics and power to a post-modern world of images and influence.

This volume is an endeavour to examine this shift from the Uzbek and Kazakh perspectives. The relationship between politics and cultural symbols/'images', became particularly relevant for states that emerged in the wake of the disintegration of the Soviet Union in Central Asia. These were essentially states that had not seen the development of an independent movement prior to the implosion at the centre, and were states where an 'externally imposed collapse led to internally invented signs of certainty' (Cummings 2010). Their emergence raised questions about the legitimacy of the state/nation not just from within the state but also from the global arena. Therefore it is important to examine how the 'new' states, both internally and externally, legitimized their existence as separate entities and redefined themselves in a new form. In the course of this redefinition competing images were articulated and new discourses were generated. Nation building and nationalist rhetoric, therefore, was intended as much for the international public as the

domestic audience whether it was the projection of Kazakhstan as the 'Heart of Eurasia' or Kyrgyzstan as the 'Island of Democracy'. Though not as well articulated the image that the Uzbek state presented was that of an 'ancient state at the crossroads of civilization'. Here, the shaping of a 'post- Soviet' future, through the performative role played by the state in the arena of culture, historical memory, images and rhetoric, assumes significance. While most states actively promote an international 'image', in the Eurasian space the Uzbek and the Kazakh cases are interesting since they provide remarkable contrasts that are largely reflective of their heritage. This chapter therefore begins with a brief review of the history of the state in the Central Asian region since it points not only to the long history of statehood in the region, but also to the fact that the nature of the present state can only be understood in terms of an understanding of these pre-existing state forms.

1.1 The State in Central Asia

The early state in the Central Asian region is said to have emerged when the nomadic hordes of the Eurasian steppes came into contact with the settled populations of the oasis. The emergence of the nomadic state, according to Khazanov (1983) was, in most cases, directly linked to conquests of sedentary countries and regions. Frequently, the states created by nomads made considerable use of the heritage they took on from their sedentary and partly also nomadic predecessors. While the nomadic population became the ascendant political elite, the cultural supremacy of the settled population was ensured.

Khazanov, in his detailed examination of the emergence and evolution of nomadic statehood points to three main tendencies that emerged. States of the first type were those in which the subjugation and conquest of the sedentary population basically resulted in vassal-tribute, or other forms of collective dependence and exploitation. Sometimes the sedentary population would preserve its own state, sometimes nomads and sedentaries were joined within the same state. Under all circumstances, it was primarily in the political sphere that their very limited integration took place. Nomads and sedentaries lived side-by-side but not together. In the nomadic state of the second type, agriculturalists and townsmen were integrated into a single socio-political and partly an economic system. States of the second type were characteristic of situations in which nomads, after conquering a sedentary state, moved into the territory of the state and began to divide the same ecological zones between themselves and the agriculturalists. In a state such as this a synthesis took place between the relatively less developed social relations of conquerors and the more developed relations of the conquered. States of the third type were characterized by their having a single socio-economic and political system at the basis of which there is a division of labour between pastoralists and agriculturalists.

Ecological and geographical conditions affected the forms of states in the region. Central Asia at that time was characterized by separate settlements of nomads and a sedentary population in different ecological zones, with a relatively high proportion

of nomads. This also affected the ruling traditions of Central Asia, which were characterized by a symbiosis of nomadic and sedentary populations under the supremacy of the former. Another characteristic was decentralized rule, sometimes with physical separation between the nomads and the sedentary population. In the Eurasian steppes, there was primarily separate habitation of nomads and sedentary population in different ecological zones and relatively high density of nomadic population that ensured its unification. The major political characteristic of the region was that the outside sedentary world frequently opposed the nomadic state in the form of large states.

This nomadic-sedentary interface that characterized the form of the state in the region ranged across a broad spectrum of relationships. While generally a movement from 'primitive' to 'advanced-complex' society is seen as the norm, in Eurasia the state moved between degrees of forms of organization that has been characterized by some scholars as 'traditional stateless' and 'traditional early state' society. Golden (1992) has theoretically classified the former as egalitarian societies that had little or no formal government. The primary sources of social cohesion were found in the requirements of kinship (both real and fictitious) and its obligatory tribal custom and the needs of a nomadic life which demanded some degree of co-operation. Such a grouping according to Golden was incapable of governing others and hence could not subjugate them. 'Complex society' on the other hand is characterized by the development of central executive institutions that create sources of social cohesion beyond the traditional stateless society. When the political bonds of nomadic states dissolved, their constituent members are seen by Golden to reverting to some less advanced variant of complex or traditional early state society. Thus Golden opines that statehood was not a natural or even necessary condition for nomadic society. While this reflects the flux in the trajectory of state formation in the region, it is not an entirely correct representation as others like V.V. Barthold point out. Barthold, in A Short History of Turkestan (1962), refers to the fact that in the seventh century, 'politically Turkestan was divided into a number of small states'. The most powerful of them was the prince of Samarkand, who like the prince of Ferghana had the title *ikhshid*. However, he goes on to point out that even the *ikhsids* were only the first among the landowning noblemen and like them were called *dihqans*. The *dihqans* lived in fortified castles and from there completely dominated the countryside.

While the existence of states among separate groups is recognized even prior to the emergence of the Chengizid *Ulus Chagtai*, the *Ulus* is generally recognized as the earliest form of the state of which information is available in the region, dating to the first quarter of the thirteenth century. The year 1206, the date when Temujin became Chengiz Khan, is accepted as the year of birth of the Mongol state. The creation of a large nomadic state demanded that separate political units be joined together. This was usually done by force. However, in Chengiz Khan's lifetime, the authority of the Khan was recognized and single political administration acting in the name of the Khan prevailed though even during his lifetime he had allotted separate fiefs to his sons. Under his successors, this personal rule was superseded by that of a council of representatives from all the branches of the family (Barthold 1962).

Khazanov also points out that the military political system created by Chengiz Khan was in fact an innovation for it broke up the upper segments of the traditional social and political organization of Mongol nomads and partially reshuffled their subdivisions thus eliminating the threat of separatism (Khazanov 1983). However, the cessation of conquests coincided with the beginnings of the disintegration of the state.

After the death of Chengiz due to internecine struggle the state was divided between the Golden Horde and the *Kahan* (khan-in-chief) of the Turkic and Mongol tribes. The first type of nomadic statehood, as defined by Khazanov, was preserved longest and in its purest form in the Golden Horde, where there was a relatively clear geographical demarcation between the nomads and the sedentary people. A process of sedentarization began but did not develop to any great extent. Only a few nomads settled in the towns, which were developed into trading centres. When in the fourteenth century the Golden Horde began to disintegrate into separate political units, in each of these there were sedentary areas adjacent to the areas in which the nomads lived. In the Chagatay state that succeeded this state, a decisive step was taken towards the adoption of the traditional Islamic culture (Barthold 1962).

However, before this state could be established, thirteenth century Central Asia went through a period when the Chengizid legacy of the Mongol Empire was faced with disintegration and the formative stages of the Chagtaid Khanate appeared. According to a recent publication this was the work of Qaidu (1236–1301) one of the great Mongol *Kahans* and the grandson of Chengiz Khan's designated heir Ogodei (Biran 1997). Qaidu became an active player in the Mongol arena after the house of Ogodei lost its supremacy to the Toluids, descendants of Chengiz Khan's younger son Tolui. The coup of the Toluids and their seizing of the *Kahan*'s throne were accompanied by the purges of many Ogodeis, who had to give up their army and territory. Against this background, Qaidu strove to revive the Ogodei cause. From the 1270s onwards, Qaidu succeeded not only in challenging Kublai Khan, but also in establishing a kingdom of the Ogodeis in Central Asia. Qaidu's activities undermined the *Kahan*'s authority, shifted the balance of power in the Mongol Empire and accelerated its dismemberment. Though the house of Ogodei disappeared after the death of Qaidu, the Mongol state that he established in Central Asia survived him under the rule of the Chagataids, his erstwhile rivals, allies and successors.

It is interesting that in this state most of the Mongols including Qaidu continued to practice their native religion until the thirteenth century, although some did embrace other religions. Qaidu is reported by Mirkhwand to bow down to the sun several times. Qaidu's religious proclivities were further evidenced by the fact that he was buried in a high place between the rivers 'as is the usage of the nomads'. Mongol customs including sun worship is said to have survived in Central Asia at least until the time of the Chagtaid Khan, Tarmasharin (1327–1335) when most of the Central Asian Mongols converted to Islam. However a few Central Asian princes had embraced Islam before and during Qaidu's time, as is evident from their names. Most of these were marginal figures whose religious faith had little effect on

Qaidu's policy. The population in the territory under Qaidu's control was for the most part Muslim and Qaidu was reported as being tolerant to Islam. This sympathetic policy towards Islam was likely to have offered political advantage to Qaidu particularly in the years 1279/80–1287 when Kublai Khan adopted an anti-Islamic policy expressed chiefly in the banning of Muslim ritual slaughter. This tolerant religious policy was extended to Christians as well and would appear to be a reflection of tolerance rather than guided by any political consideration (Biran 1997). Qaidu attained a balance between the nomadic way of life and religion, with a consultative style of functioning and decentralization to attain stability in his state.

The states, which arose from the wreckage of the Golden Horde, developed in different ways. The Astrakhan Khanate was a smaller replica of the Golden Horde. The process of sedentarization was predominant in the Crimean Khanate. The Kazan Khanate where nomadism was unfeasible on account of ecological conditions within the khanate was a typical sedentary state. While the state that was established by the Quriltay of 1269 was a state of the first type, in Maveraunnahr, the second tendency in the development of the nomadic state gradually became the principle one. However the history of the development of states was not a single evolutionary line in which each new state achieved a stage of development higher than that of its predecessors. In individual periods there was continuity, but it was frequently interrupted.

However, recent writings on the history of the formation of the Uzbek state trace it back to seventh–eighth century B.C., when the 'early state structures' of the Bactrians and the Khorezmenians were formed based on 'military democratic governance'. There is recognition of the fact that the details of these states are hard to define though the fact that there were councils of elders who held the power of the rulers in check is recognized. The first state, which was organized around the elaborate structure of Ten Diwans among whom the functions of the state were divided, was the Samanid state in the nineth–tenth century. The state reflected local traditions and combined in the royal council members of the ruling elite with those of the settled layers of the population (Askarov 1997). Barthold also refers to the 'Samanid government' in connection with the growing necessity for organization of frontier defence (Barthold 1962). He also points out that Bukhara, by the beginning of the thirteenth century, assumed the form of an aristocratic municipal republic at whose head stood the *sadrs* who represented the interests of the aristocracy. A popular movement which established a different type of nomadic empire soon crushed the power of the *sadrs*. The Karakitays while retaining their nomadic habits absorbed many elements of the Chinese state. The Khwarazmians state that emerged at the end of the twelfth century became the nucleus of a powerful empire that fought for supremacy against the Karakitays.

The Chengizid state enjoyed a brief revival under Timur who succeeded in bringing the warring tribes under control. In the fourteenth century, the Timurid State was organized by a *kurultai* of forty tribes (a convention of *Emirs*, dignitaries and tribal chiefs) in Samarkand, who formulated the *Timurid Codes of the State.* The state had centralized state machinery and a standing army. It was divided into *uluses* ruled by Timur's heirs. These in turn had their state institutions, army and

treasury. The *ulus* themselves were further subdivided under the authority of city governors; village elders, tax collectors and guards' commanders. There was a systematic organization of taxation as also of troops. Civil law was determined by prevailing traditions, which regulated family, property, inheritance laws and the relationship between the state and the citizen.[3] As compared to Mongol military traditions, those of Islam held second place in Timur's mind (Barthold 1962).

The nomadic tribes, who accompanied Sheybani Khan in the sixteenth century, crowded out the semi-nomadic and partly even the sedentary population. According to Khazanov, from the very beginning the state created by Sheybani Khan had developed as the second type of state. However, it contained specific features, as some nomads were unwilling or unable to adapt to the sedentary way of life. The predominance of the appanage system meant that internecine wars continued without respite. As a result the heads of tribes who had been khans in various sedentary areas and had owned large *iqta* in the seventeenth century turned into petty independent rulers. In this state an attempt was also made to compromise between the laws of the *Shariat* and local customary laws. However it is significant that this state structure lasted till the mid-eighteenth century, by which time the Uzbeks had begun to assert themselves politically and economically over the entire region.

The sixteenth century is now recognized as the period when a somewhat different political formation with a different political culture emerged (Kilich 1997). While the traditional confrontation with the sedentary regions continued, this state system favoured a policy of power sharing. In fact the Mangit *Emirs* extended support to Sheybani Khan on condition that he obeyed the principle of power sharing. However, even this could not ensure complete loyalty of all the tribes and the Uzbek tribes, who generally acted independently, often abandoned Sheybani Khan. The compromise between the political and the cultural powers is also evident in the fact that Sheybani Khan had to attempt a balance between different Sufi orders that had become influential in the region. Though this balance was short-lived it points to the fact that process of state building in the Central Asian region had to take into account cultural elements that formed a crucial part of the social order. Towards the end of the sixteenth century the Sufi orders gradually became progressively dominant. It is also important to note that Sheybani Khan attempted a compromise between the Shariah and the indigenous laws of the people.

In order to cross the boundary which separated the early states from more developed ones, nomadic society had to be integrated with sedentary society into a single social, economic and political system. As a result the nomadic state became a state, which though created by the nomads had an agricultural and urban economic basis. The leading estate of nomads became the ruling class in a sedentary society, or at least one of the ruling classes. Khazanov concluded that in the Eurasian steppes over the course of almost 3000 years, two basic types of nomadic statehood

[3]For details of the organization of the Timurid state see Akhmedov (1996).

might be singled out. Transition from the first to the second happened far more frequently than a transition from the second to the first. However, development along the second course was rarely completed. In the states created by the nomads of the Eurasian steppes there was always a nomadic hinterland. The nomads of this hinterland frequently repeated the cycle of development that had been completed by their predecessors which explains the transitory nature of their statehood. However, this was not a cyclical process. Sedentary states developed and became more and more powerful although this broken, multilinear process should not be regarded as a smooth and unilinear evolution.

It is generally recognized that this generation of nomadic tribes is still not fully understood largely because there are few documents from the nomadic world that describes the goals of the state builders. Golden points out that these states emerged through a process of super stratification whereby a conquest state was born (Golden 1992). Others like Omeljan Pritsak give a primary role to the impact of international trade and 'professional empire builders rooted in urban civilization'. The primary motive for the state is seen in the role of tribal chieftains, who stimulated by contact with the cities and having developed a taste for the products of urban manufacture that passed in caravans across lands controlled by them, created a 'pax' which both guaranteed the safety of the merchants and their goods and provided them with a share of the profits.[4]

The Emirate structure, which was the last structure that developed prior to the emergence of the territorially demarcated state, continued to be a segmentary-lineage state based in Bukhara, Khiva and Kokand. It had all the rudiments of a state, albeit of a highly authoritarian one. The structure of this state, however, continued to have many of the elements of the previous states. It was based on kinship and a fine balance between the nomadic and sedentary population. Under the Mangits in Bukhara, the state attempted to control all aspects of social, economic and political life. However its centralized state structure was often challenged at the fringes. Parallel to these centralized structures of state power there was a well-established system of local government based around *muhallahs*. By now it also had to compromise with an entrenched Muslim clergy. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, therefore a fairly stable order was re-established. To the two Uzbek Khanates of Bukhara and Khiva was added a third, the khanate of Kokand. For the first time Ferghana became the centre of a large state which embraced nearly the whole of the Syr Darya basin. The Khans of Kokand succeeded to bring under their sway part of the nomad population in the eastern part of the Syr Darya province and in the western part of Semireche. The confrontation between the nomadic and the sedentary worlds in the region, continued well up to the eve of the revolution. The Khivan Khanate faced repeatedly the problem of having to come to terms with its nomadic Turkman periphery that refused to accept the authority of the khanate.

[4]Pritsak (1980), cited in Golden (1992).

1.2 Governance in Bukhara[5]

The khanate of Bukhara in the nineteenth century was an autocratic Muslim state, composed of a variety of ethnic and religious groups. Sunni Uzbeks were in majority and constituted the political and social elite. Bukhara, which at the end of the nineteenth century, embraced an area slightly larger than that of Great Britain and Northern Ireland was a land with little geographical unity. The western part of the khanate was a plain composed of three oases, each separated from the others by deserts. These oases formed the demographic, economic and political heart of the country. The central part of Bukhara consisted of the fertile valleys of several large tributaries of the Amu Darya and the intervening mountains. In the eastern region some of the world's highest mountain ranges were interrupted only by deep and narrow gorges, swift flowing mountain streams, and small isolated valleys (Becker 1968, p. 6; Sengupta 2000). This geographic setting of the khanate was not without political significance. Rebellions in the eastern regions, which refused to be assimilated within Bukhara was compounded by the fact that these were situated in such difficult terrain that complete control of the area often eluded the *Emirs*.

Accurate figures on the population of Bukhara do not exist before the late 1920s, since the *Emir's* government felt no need for such data and the inhabitants regarded with suspicion any attempt to collect statistical information. In fact most travellers to the region record the fact the foreigners were not allowed to record their observations openly; thus, they were compelled to keep their diaries in secret.[6] As a result all figures are at best rough guesses. Bukhara's population at the close of the nineteenth century was estimated at two and a half to three million, of whom two-thirds lived in the western oasis. Of the *Khanate's* total population, 65 % were sedentary, 20 % semi nomadic and 15 % were nomadic. Between 10 and 14 % of the population was urban. By far the largest town was the capital with 70,000 and 100,000 inhabitants. Next in order was Karsi with 60,000 to 70,000, and Shahr-i-Sabz and Chardjui with 30,000 each, followed by a dozen towns in the 40,000 to 20,000 range (Becker 1968, p. 7). In this multi ethnic state inhabited by about 50.7 % Uzbeks, 31.1 % Tajiks and 10.3 % Turkmen and others, serious conflict was found between the Turkmen's and the majority (Komatsu 1989, p. 130).

If there was lack of geographic unity in Bukhara, there was even less ethnic homogeneity. The earliest known inhabitants of Central Asia were Iranians, who survived as Iranian-speaking Tajiks. The descendants of Turkic conquerors from the Eurasian steppes constituted the khanate's two other major ethnic groups. The Turkomans had arrived in the tenth century but still preserved their ethnic and cultural identity and their nomadic way of life. The most recent arrivals were the Uzbeks, who were the ruling group. The Uzbeks were concentrated in the Zerafshan and Kashka-Darya oases and in the river valleys of central Bukhara. The Turkomans constituted a majority along the Amu Darya as far upriver as Kelif.

[5]For details on this section see Sengupta (2000).

[6]For instance, the diary of Alexander Burnes (1834).

Several thousand Kyrgyz lived in eastern Karategin and Persians, Jews, and Indians were present in every important town. The population of Bukhara was almost exclusively Muslim, the only exception being the numerically insignificant though commercially important Jews and Hindus. Among the Muslims the great majority were orthodox Sunni, but among the Tajiks of central Bukhara there were many Ismaili Shites, and in the east the entire population was Ismaili (Becker 1968, p. 7).

The *Emirs* of the Mangit dynasty made serious attempts at centralization, though not always entirely with success. As S.K. Olimova and M.A. Olimov point out, 'Hill valleys and their inhabitants with small pieces of cultivated land and no hope for irrigation came together in small groups and preserved their independence from the central government' (Olimova and Olimov 1995). This has led scholars like V.I. Iskandarov (1960) to point out that attempts to unite Bukhara were largely unsuccessful and that the absence of one stable centralized state power promoted formation of small units that demanded autonomy. While this was the state of the political boundaries, social decadence was also noted by numerous travellers who particularly criticized the religious organizations. Similarly, they criticized the condition of education.[7]

Since the Uzbek Mangit *Emirs* ascended to the throne of the khanate of Bukhara in the late eighteenth century, the religious character of the state was deliberately strengthened (Komatsu 1989, p. 115). For the Mangits, Islamic authority was indispensable for dynastic legitimacy. As a result the hold of the Bukharan *ulema* was strengthened and they tended to assume a strictly conservative attitude against any changes or innovations in Islam. In the course of political consolidation of the khanate there was an attempt to develop a complex system of administration divided into four domains (political, financial, judicial and religious) organized at three levels (the capital, the main towns, and population centres).

The khanate of Bukhara was composed of principalities called *vilayets* ruled over by *hakims* or *begs* who maintained relations with the *Emir* and to whom the *Emir* delegated virtually all the authority over local inhabitants. *Begs* were appointed by the *Emir* from among his relatives and favourites, and they ruled as petty princes. The *Emir* often tried to control distant *begliks* of central and eastern Bukhara by naming one of them viceroy with authority over the other *begs*. The *vilayets* were subdivided into *tumens*. These in turn were subdivided into smaller administrative units, known as *kents* and *amlakadarstvo*, which in addition to being tax collecting units were water administrative ones also. Each district was administered by an *amlakdar*, and its government repeated in microcosm the structure of the *beglik*. At the lowest level was the *kishlak*, which elected its own *aqsaqal*. Several hamlets or villages were grouped under the authority of a *min-bashi*. The nomads had an *il-beg* at the head of each tribe responsible for representing them in relation to the *amlakdar*. The *aqsaqals*, *min-begs* and the *il-begs* were chosen as an element of permanent contact between the central government and its subjects—a stable point of reference but without real effectiveness, since their role remained

[7]See for instance Vámbéry's description of Bukharan *ishans* in his *Sketches* (1868).

purely representative except when the centrifugal forces in the Emirate caused them to escape the control of the central powers.

At the head of the administrative complex stood the *khus-beg*, to whom was entrusted much of the actual business of running the state. He directed the secular and civil branches of the central government and administered the capital district. Subject to the *khush-begi* was the *divan-beg*, (finance minister and treasurer) and his subordinate the *zakatchi-kalan* (chief collector of *zakat*). Other important officials were the *kazi-kalan* (the supreme judge) who was in charge of all religious affairs, justice and education, his subordinate the *ishan-rais* (chief of police and supervisor of morals) and the *topchi-bashi* (war minister and commander of the army). All the officials were appointed by the *Emir* and were directly responsible to him. Besides the secular and civil hierarchy, there was a semi-official clerical hierarchy, headed by the *kazi-kalan*. He appointed the *muftis* who sometimes doubled as *mudarrises* and were often called in on legal cases. The clerical body, together with the hereditary social class from which it sprang and the *mullahs* formed a powerful group with a vested interest in the defence of tradition and religious orthodoxy (Sengupta 2000).[8]

It is often stated that the nomad and semi-settled populations lived by *adat* while the settled populations lived by *Shariat*. This, according to Holdsworth (1959) was not entirely correct. While *Shariat* governed civil and criminal obligations, penalties, religious observance, family life and inheritance, customary law was preeminent in land-holding and agricultural practices. The two normal sinews of centralization, taxation and a standing army, were in a transitional stage. Taxes were prescribed by the *Emir*, but collected and handed over by the *hakims*, which withheld a portion of the tax for the use of their court and administration. Some *hakims* did not carry out even this minimal degree of organized subordination. In Bukhara it was recognized that the *hakims* of certain *vilayets* gave 'gifts' from time to time like the *hakims* of Darvaz, Karshi and Karategin.

The city of Bukhara was divided into quarters where people related by birth, common origin or profession lived together.[9] The names of the quarters reflected the social composition or topographic specialty of the area. An examination of these names provides us with a clue to the changing nature of society. From the end of the nineteenth century, there was a change in the terminology of the quarters. Whereas previously they had been named after professional groups who lived in the quarter, by the end of the nineteenth century there was a larger number named after noble groups or spiritual people (*Ishan*, *Khodja*, etc.). This is a clear pointer to their increasing importance. The quarters were also administrative units and were administered by the older population. Most of the families were Uzbek, but after

[8]For administrative structure of Bukhara see Kislyakov (1962, pp. 42–62), Holdsworth (1959), Khanikoff (1845), D'Encausse (1966).

[9]For a detailed discussion on social, economic and political aspects of the quarters see Sukhareva (1976, pp. 13–40).

having lived in Bukhara for a generation they were assimilated with the local population and accepted the Tajik language.

Membership in the quarter was based on residence. Though often heterogeneous in terms of social position, they were unified by mutual interest, participation in common affairs and existed as closed communities. Occasions like marriage and death were communal affairs, and 'illusions' of closeness were created by visits and common attendance of all members of the quarter in these social occasions. However, in reality a social division was maintained. Mosques were the centres of the community and were maintained by the members of the community. In Bukhara the mosque was more a 'public home' where people gathered. Rituals were strictly adhered to and in the theocratic state, all instructions regarding religion was performed under the strict eyes of the *rais* (Sukhareva 1976, pp. 22–23).

In the quarters of Bukhara, the eldest was elected as the *aqsaqal*. This was an ancient practice and survived in some regions till the 1950s (Sukhareva 1976, p. 35). The post of the *aqsaqal* was generally a contested one. In the process of election the elders of the quarter had a voice and in this choice instruction from a holy person played a part. Since the *aqsaqal* was the official representative to the urban powers, he had to be approved by them. However people of noble birth and the rich were never chosen and the *aqsaqal* was usually a small trader or craftsman. Women had their own representatives. In case of disagreement in the matter of choice, the residents went to the *kazi* (Sukhareva 1976, p. 43). Each quarter was a self-governing unit. In quarters where there were two or more ethnic groups,[10] each selected their own *aqsaqal*. The latter had various judicial, social and financial powers and performed all the duties that were necessary to carry on the work of each quarter. In Bukhara there were thus two administrative systems juxtaposed: a representative system emanating from below and inherited from the political traditions anterior to the Uzbek state, and a system of political administration emanating from above and formed by state cadres under the authority of the *khush-begi*, who imposed themselves on the traditional democratic cadres (D'Encausse 1966, p. 26). By the end of the nineteenth century, professional guilds were formed in Central Asia. This led to the further development of trade and to the development of social consciousness.

An important aspect of the administrative system in Bukhara was the crucial position of the clergy in the system. While there was a system of local administration whereby the *aqsaqal* decided on all matters of dispute, it was to the *kazi* that one had to go in order to get the final resolution of the conflicts. Most descriptions also point to the excessive control of the religious hierarchy in the system as well as the conservative nature of the *ulema*. At the end of the nineteenth century, Bukhara exemplified a segmentary state where authority was weakest at the margins of the state and strongest at the centre. The state system experienced alternately a tendency towards centralization and strengthening of state power and the separatist tendencies of feudalism (Olimova and Olimov 1995). It also manifested another

[10]Buirabufon, for instance, was a quarter where there were people from Khwarezm and Turkmens.

vital characteristic of such state systems—the existence of subgroups, whose self-definition was genealogical and whose group membership was a function of descent.

On this state of affairs the establishing Tsarist government imposed its own system of administration. The first stage in the organization of the region was in 1865 by the Steppe Commission presided by F.K. Giers, which concentrated all powers in the hands of the military authority. It was in 1867 that a real administrative and territorial reorganization was carried out whereby civil and military powers was concentrated in the hands of the military authorities while all local affairs were relinquished to the traditional hierarchies. The structure imposed was effected throughout Russia, *oblast*, *uezd*, and *uchastok*. The Tsarist administration supported the traditional village structures, and they elected their own *aqsaqal*. The gathering of several villages formed the administrative unit called the *volost*. The shortcomings of an administrative system governed by different statutes were soon evident. This led to commissions of inquiry and the acceptance of the directives of the Giers Commission statute of 1886. Among the directives was one that a council of civil and military officials would now assist the Governor General. However the Tsarist administration did little to reduce the prestige of the *Emir* and the bureaucratic structures of Bukhara were largely preserved intact.[11] This policy of non-intervention, however, was not to last long. Russian studies of Bukhara were critical of the *Emir's* rule and by 1910, the annexation of Bukhara had become a distinct possibility as non-intervention failed to secure stability (Sengupta 2000).

This was also a period of economic transformation of the region in which Bukhara became a reluctant part. Important among these was the slow growth of the capital market and an attempt to incorporate the Bukharan economy within the economy of the entire region. This was helped by the building of the Central Asian railway and the establishment of the telegraph line, which broke the traditional isolation of Bukhara. Along with this was the development of the Russian settlement of *Noviye Bukhara* (New Bukhara), which grew up around the railway station south of the old capital. In 1886, the *Emir*, Abd al Ahad, granted the Russians the use of state lands along the Amu Darya and later in 1888, de facto control of these lands passed to the Russians. The development of a Russian settlement created its own administrative and judicial problems, and at the same time increased demands for curtailment of the authority of the *Emir*. Relationship between the two Bukharas had increased by the 1890s not only due to the development of roads, railroads and the telegraph, but also due to influx of Russians and other Europeans who now arrived in the city. This had its impact on the old city of Bukhara. In 1833, when Burnes arrived there, he found the Bukharan's preparing their tea in Russian samovars (Sengupta 2000).

[11]For the development of the Tsarist administrative structures see *Istoria Uzbekskoi SSR*, vol. 3; Sukhareva (1976), Pierce (1960), Allworth (1967), Khanikoff (1845), Boulger (1879), Kolarz (1952).

1.3 The Kazakh Steppes

The territorial expanse of present day Kazakhstan, an area that was generally known as the Kazakh or Eurasian steppe during the Tsarist period, is renowned for the confluence and assimilation of diverse peoples, cultures, religions, languages and dialects which generated a distinctive but malleable pattern of identities, institutions and socio-political formations. Yet, Bhavna Dave argues that underlying the fluidity of political structures and cultural syncretism of the Eurasian steppe was a static nomadic pastoral social organization and the absence of fundamental social or structural change (Dave 2007, p. 31). The Eurasian steppe has been, for centuries, the zone of constant encounters between numerous nomadic tribes and nomadic and agrarian communities. Although a succession of nomadic empires emerged in the steppes, the Mongol Empire being the last, nomadic conquests were transient. The inability to sustain an army over a long period, to introduce new techniques in warfare and to engage in land cultivation or exploit available resources made nomadic societies vulnerable to invasions by other tribes and incursions by settled communities. This ultimately led to incorporation into more powerful territorial entities. According to Anatoly Khazanov (1983), the Kazakhs of the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries and the Mongols of the eleventh and twelfth centuries and the various nomads who preceded them, all shared similar essential features of socio-economic organization.

A unified though highly decentralized Kazakh khanate, which existed from the mid-fifteenth to the late sixteenth century, symbolized the only common, albeit diffused political formation among the nomads. Since its disintegration in the mid-sixteenth century, a tripartite system of clan agglomeration or *zhus* (hordes) dispersed over three natural climatic zones was integral to the Kazakh nomadic organization. The designations Elder (*ulu*), Middle (*orta*), and Younger (*kishi*) clan agglomeration or *zhus* convey the seniority of their mythical progenitors, and not their size or strength. Dave (2007) argues that the etymology of the word *zhus* remains unclear. It is sometimes seen as meaning an agglomeration of clans whereas others note its role as a military formation. With the decline of the belligerent prowess of the nomads, the military connotation of the term receded to the background. More importantly all three hordes claim a common progenitor in Alash, the mythical founder of the Kakhs. The Elder horde inhabited the southern and eastern regions, the Middle horde wielded control over the entire northern region and parts of central Kazakhstan and the Younger horde occupied the western region from the Caspian Sea south of the Ural Mountain to the Aral Sea. The Middle horde was the largest in terms of population and the Younger horde the smallest.

Martha Brill Olcott argues that the tripartite division of the Kazakh hordes was in response to the unique geography of the steppes (Olcott 1995). Within the Kazakh held territories of the sixteenth century there were three natural geographical regions, each containing both summer and winter pastures. One such area was the Semireche region where the Great Horde migrated along the river basins of the Chu,

Talas, and Ili rivers with summer pastures in the mountains of the Ala Tau, an area that had its own internal trade network based on pre-existing agricultural oasis settlements. The second region encompassed central Kazakhstan, where the Middle horde wintered around the lower course of the Syr Darya and in summer migrated to the tributaries of the Sarysu, Tobol and Ishim rivers in the central steppe region, trading with the cities of Central Asia by water transport on the Syr Darya. The third territory was western Kazakhstan, where the Small horde wintered along the lower course of the Syr Darya and Ural rivers and in the region between the Irgiz river and Turgai mountains, summering along the tributaries of the Ural river, the headwaters of the Tobol and in the Irgiz and Mugodzhan hills.

Migration, displacement and general mobility have often created continuity through time, signified through centuries or generations rather than space. These temporal linkages that marked clan and tribal affiliations through generations often transcended regional identification. As Hilda Etizen (1998) argues, these long and varied links of genealogy were fragile but at the same time, dense. These lay below the surface of the Kazakh nation designating them in relation to or in opposition to neighbouring states and empires. These genealogies (*shezhire*) weave through Kazakh clan and tribal affiliations, connecting disparate groups through alliances and intermarriage, while often linking up with stages of history. The multiple indices of identity within the Greater, Middle and Small hordes and sometimes extending beyond them can legitimate conceptualizations of the past, selfhood and governance. A Professional folk musician with an interest in history comments

> The Great Zhuz were the ones who always owned the lands and the herds, the property owners….the Middle Zhuz were always associated, however, with symbolic leadership, if not the possession of land, the possession of the pen; the poets thinkers and writers. The Small Zhuz to the West were the possessors of martial spirit (Eitzen 1998, p. 436).

Hilda Eitzen (1998) argues that the multiple registers of genealogy figured within or beyond clan and tribe reflect not so much unbroken linear continuity as shifting tectonic plates of multiple political confederations and civilizations. Within such conceptualizations, whether or not identified specifically by *zhuz* or clan, there remains room for negotiation or contention.

Many commentators have underlined the egalitarian and democratic character of the Kazakh nomadic organization, underlying its diffused and localized authority structure and open and fluid pattern of leadership. At the top of this hierarchy were the sultans, who presided over the local clan organizations. They represented the privileged 'whitebone' (*aq suiek*) stratum known as *tore*, which claimed a direct lineage from Chenghiz Khan. The khans who headed the agglomerations did not enjoy hereditary position. They were elected by a gathering of sultans, judges (*bi*) and clan elders (*aqsaqals*). Another stratum of the whitebone elites was the clergy (*hoja*), who were of Arabic origins and which claimed descent from Prophet Mohammad. Relative newcomers to the steppe, they constituted the learned echelon and served as tutors to the sultans and khans, but did not enjoy high material status. It is unclear if the term *qazaq* included all the nomadic clans as well as the whitebone aristocracy. The remaining strata known as the 'blackbone' (*qara suiek)*

or commoners were composed of local notables, *bi*, *aqsaqals*, poets, and others who were closer to the common people and contributed to the cohesiveness of the various subdivisions at the lower taxonomic level.

Edward Evans-Pritchard has described the segmentary lineage system as one containing a balanced opposition between tribes and tribal segments that is able to preserve a fixed and self-regulatory structure in the absence of a single centralized authority structure in a tribe (Evans-Pritchard 1969, p. 142). The Kazakh clan-tribal organization, on the contrary, was highly fluid and resilient, as the pastoral nomadic life of the Kazakhs was dependent on their continued mobility in the face of the challenges posed by the harsh climatic conditions and the outside world of settlers. Although numerous oral epics and aphorisms romantically portray the free willed nature of the nomads and their love of an unfettered life style, pastoral nomadism was primarily a mechanism of survival in the arid ecology of the steppe in the absence of other means of livelihood. As Dave argues, pastoral nomadism was not just a functional mode of survival. It also came to symbolize a way of life rooted in a web of kinship, shared culture and psychological traits, and a common pastoral imagery and myths imparted through oral folklore. The dependence on livestock, pastures and climatic conditions had structured a distinct social and cultural life style (Dave 2007, p. 34).

The Kazakhs did not distinguish between civil and criminal law. Until the seventeenth century the *Adat* (Kazakh customary law) was non-codified and administered locally. It was not formal but natural law which had arisen under the nomadic lifestyle and values and ideals of nomadic culture (Ergaliev 1999, pp. 22–28). Traditional customary law upheld a man's rights and liberties. However, he was not an abstract man. Rather he was the member of a clan and the protection of his personal and property rights was provided by the solidarity of clan members. *Adat* requirements were transmitted orally. With the formation of the state in the sixteenth century these legal norms were made legitimate in special Steppe codes named in honour of their creators. The most famous were 'Tauke-khan's Zhety Zhargy'. Tauke's customary code encouraged formalization of the legal process and created a single judicial power in the form of institution of the *beys*, who were persons endowed with authority recognized by society and known for their justice, objectivity, competence, logic and rhetorical ability. Since the *beys* were charged with adjudicating disputes, by the end of the eighteenth century the term *bey* had come to mean judge. The main innovation of Zhety Zhargy was the protection of private ownership. To the Kazakhs, land had no intrinsic value. They owned their livestock but grazed these animals on common pasturelands over which tribes had usage rights. The basis of a man's wealth was his herd, not his land. Kazakh customary law was designed to maximize the stability and economic self-sufficiency of the community, which was threatened by external dangers and by the unpredictability of natural conditions (Olcott 1995, p. 16).

Clans and tribes carried great social and political obligations in nomadic society. It was difficult to rule the nomadic society of the steppes. The khan's power was never as strong as that of rulers in settled agricultural civilizations. Conflict with the khan would often encourage a clan or tribe to migrate. Authority in Kazakh society

was based on recognition of the merits of the person. Sultans, *beys*, clan or family elders met annually to affirm the khan's leadership, to advise him and receive his instructions. At these annual meetings the year's migration was planned and each clan or *aul* was allocated winter pastureland. The khan generally served for life, since to become khan an individual had to prove his own competence. Only an individual with charisma was proclaimed khan or leader and made responsible for the prosperity of the people. There also existed forms of popular oral songs and poetry which legitimized the right to express free opinion and criticize an unworthy ruler.

Through the observation of a procedure called *kurultai*—a meeting of representatives of ruling families, the khan of each *zhuz*, the elders of each clan and persons of social prestige likely to influence public opinion—the assumption of throne was decided. In the development of Kazakh statehood it became an absolute requisite because it demonstrated the creation of power capable of uniting all tribes. The *kurultai* was aimed at integration, union or confederation of tribes. The supreme khan had to take into consideration the precise relation between individual tribes. Each Kazakh *aul*, consisting of a few related, extended families had an elder, usually referred to as *aqsaqal*, who was charged with the protection of the *aul*'s pastureland and people. The elders met to choose a *bey* to represent the family in negotiations with other families and to mediate internal disputes, regulate migration and allocate pastureland. Although the title of *bey* often went from father to son, the office was not hereditary and could be shifted if the elders so choose.

The khans were required to be charismatic, with an ability to resolve differences among various clan segments and demonstrating adeptness at negotiating with other hordes. The khans ruled largely on the basis of personal talents and charisma. Power was not vested in the office itself. The authority of the khans had already been in decline since the end of the Kazakh khanate in the late sixteenth century. However, the abolition of the institution of the khan in 1824 by the Tsarist rulers undermined the emergence of an independent indigenous authority structure. The introduction of Tsarist decrees and colonial administration eroded the political influence of the whitebone stratum. The clan (*ru*) was the main axis of the nomadic organization. Kazakhs had developed segmentary lineage system, in which patrilineal unit traces its descent from a single progenitor, while a larger unit is sub divided into smaller components from parent lineages, through a process of branching or segmentation. Kinship and genealogy were central to nomadic life. A nomad was expected to be able to name his ancestors at least to the seventh generation. Those able to recount their genealogy up to forty generations enjoyed the highest status. However, the Kazakh nomadic system lacked the complex social or occupational stratification that is characteristic of agrarian society.

Symbols and the Image of the State argues that the relationship between politics and cultural symbols/'images', became particularly relevant for states that emerged in the wake of the disintegration of the Soviet Union in Central Asia. The 'image' that the state projects of itself and the influence that it supposedly generates has meant that reflection on branding as a process is becoming increasingly significant. The volume extends the argument further to contend that the image that the state

projects is largely determined by its legacy and it attempts to do this by taking into account the Kazakh and Uzbek cases.

Chapter 2 looks into the shaping of post-Soviet Uzbekistan where the projection of aspects like a common ancestry and history play a significant part in creating the image of an ancient state with a homogeneous people. Chapter 3 looks into the official projection of Kazakhstan as the heart of Eurasia. It focuses essentially on state rhetoric where the logic of governance has placed foreign policy at the epicentre of propagandist discourses seeking identity redefinition. Chapter 4 examines the image of societies with multiple faiths and identities that both Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan portray and relates this with the imperatives of nation building. Chapter 5 examines the image that the state portrays of itself as an integrated part of global and regional organizations, in the Kazakh case, and of itself as an 'independent' entity moving in and out of multilateral structures, in the Uzbek case. The concluding chapter looks into the significance of political symbolism in the face of official 'images' that state portrays and their credence both within the states and in the international community.

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Chapter 2
The Making of 'Brand' Uzbekistan as Symbolic Capital

What actually will the future be like for mankind? What kind of an era will it open? Will it be capable of overcoming a heavy burden of the past? Will it reach the level of openness and sincerity in inter-state relations, which will be able to eliminate mutual suspicion, distrust and diktat? The future of the community of nations depends on answers to these questions. Uzbekistan is determined to persistently advance towards the achievement of its top priority national objectives in organic harmony with the common interests of the world community in the wake of deep democratic processes characterizing the current level of its development. The Uzbek people are aware that hard times still lie ahead but they are assured of a great future for themselves in a single family of mankind.
From The Address of H.E. Mr. Islam Karimov,
President of the Republic of Uzbekistan
at the 48th session of the United Nations General Assembly.

Abstract This chapter looks into the shaping of post-Soviet Uzbekistan where the projection of aspects like a common ancestry and history play a significant part in creating the image of an ancient state with a homogeneous people. In this, the performative role of the state in the face of the reality of a multiplicity of histories and identities in the region is evident. In fact in a number of cases it results in rhetoric or policy that takes note of this multifarious heritage and recognizes its significance in the wake of a homogenizing global tendency. However, imperatives of state building within the global arena is also evident in the irony of a state that proclaims its existence as an ancient state, retrieves its Turkish identity yet speaks of its promises and potentialities in the language of the newborn. Therefore one finds in this phase of transition the juxtaposition of a cultural rediscovery of the past and a projection of the state as a developmental state. The chapter highlights the fact that while parts of the nationalist discourse was intended for a domestic audience, part of it was aimed at the international arena with the aim of capturing global attention. Public diplomacy and the creation and promotion of 'national' images were attempts to raise the prestige of the country and primarily aimed at the international business community and the global political leadership. The images

A. Sengupta, *Symbols and the Image of the State in Eurasia*,
SpringerBriefs in Political Science, DOI 10.1007/978-981-10-2392-7_2

and rhetoric that accompanies Independence Day celebrations in Uzbekistan, for instance, not only articulates the existence of a cohesive state, for the domestic audience but a prosperous one attractive for both international tourism as well as investment. Similarly, the rhetoric of 'nation under threat' is not just a projection for unity within the state but also a call for international recognition of the fact that Uzbekistan is both a victim and part of a global 'fight against terrorism'.

Keywords Uzbekistan · Performative state · Rhetoric and policy · Cultural legacy · 'Image' and legitimacy

A characteristic feature of modern world is the networks of interconnections and interdependences that permeate every aspect of modern social living. This connectivity, with its global-spatial proximity in the sense of shrinking of distances through a reduction of time taken to cross such distances, has become the hallmark of globalization. At another level of analysis connectivity shades into the idea of spatial proximity via the idea of 'stretching' of social relations across distance. There are enough metaphors of global proximity of a 'shrinking world' in the discourse of globalization to illustrate this point. The creation of globalized spaces also inevitably implies the creation of a degree of cultural 'compression'. The resulting de-territorialization is then taken to fundamentally transform the relationship between the places that one inhabits and cultural practices, experiences and identities.

Yet, paradoxically, this world of expanding de-territorialized boundaries is also one of many more, and in numerous cases, stronger states. And the politics of identity is even today largely determined within the old structure of the state. The relationship of culture to territory, that is, the extent to which groups have boundaries and conversely the extent to which cultures have borders, remains a significant part of the discourse on identity. This is especially true in regions such as Eurasia given the complex ways in which frontiers, even those determined by imperial partitions, continue to influence the determination of cultural identities here. Yet, the question as to whether there is an essential correspondence between territory, nation, state and identity remains unanswered. The cultural permeability of borders, the experience of people who are more comfortable with the notion that they are culturally tied to many other people in neighbouring states and the rigidity of states in their efforts to control cultural fields that transcend their borders demands that a variety of political and cultural boundaries be constructed. In fact the durability of cultural frontiers long after the political borders of the state has shifted implies the widening of perspectives to take note of the formal and the informal ties between local communities and the larger polities of which they are a part.

It has been 20 years since the emergence of the post-Soviet states, and over the course of the last two decades, there has been significant reflection on the direction that the politics of the region has assumed. The transformation from being part of the 'Soviet' to 'independent integration' within the global system has

been an ongoing process with multifarious manifestations. These have involved both attempts at reconnecting with the past as well as movements towards new definitions of identity. In all of this the state has played an important part—in the forging of new nations out of disparate identities, in the making of national languages and the reinterpretation of historic events or portrayal of personalities. Politically transition in this region is projected as a transformation from 'partially communized societies' to 'new political orders' (Anderson 1997, pp. 28–53). This would imply a ritualized appeal to democratic norms evident in the frequency of consultative exercises, which legitimize political elites in varying degrees. The assumption is that the major tasks of economic development and nation building are best served in this process. Paradoxically this fails to take into account the tensions between economic modernization and political freedom that exists in the phase of transition.

Such simplistic definitions also ignore the fact that each phase of politics carries certain elements of the previous stage with it and just as the Soviet phase could not have transformed the region completely the post-Soviet phase cannot represent a complete break with Soviet times. A closer look would indicate that the new states that declared their sovereignty in the aftermath of the dissolution of the Soviet system did not break out of the territorial confines of the Soviet times (Sengupta 2014). National elite groups of all the Central Asian states clung to the existing map of Central Asia as sacrosanct. 'National borders', drawn during the Soviet times were viewed and represented as embodying ancient civilizations. The borders of Uzbekistan with all its irregularities is defended by the Uzbeks as legacies of the glorious Timurid civilization and guarded as sacred lines separating the ancient Uzbek nation from other national groups (Akbarzadeh 1997).

More importantly there was no movement out of the definitional constructs of Soviet times. The designation *Uzbek*, for instance, is being used in the Soviet sense to mean *nation*, whereas previously it had been used to mean a *tribal* classification of a dominant dynastic tribal tier, the Shaybanids (Brockhaus and Efron 1902, pp. 608–610). Similarly prior to 1924 there was no single *Uzbek* language that was prevalent in the region. In a number of instances the official Uzbek response to the new stage of politics was pragmatic. A nationalist stress on various aspects of culture became evident in the immediate post-independence period, but was rarely supported by stringent official action. Similarly, the so-called anti-minority sentiments of the nationalizing state were restrained.

The transition in the Central Asian region also cannot be circumscribed within 'transitological' reasoning applied to the transition in Eastern Europe. Here, the success of former communist regimes in East and Central Europe is explained in terms of a comparative analysis of transition from dictatorship to democracy. Such reasoning points out that the fall of the first democratically elected government is a natural byproduct of the transition and consolidation of the new democracy (Bozoki 1997, pp. 59–102). Unable to handle the upswing of social expectations that accompanies a change of political regime, the governments fall. There is disappointment in moralizing political clichés and a turning towards professional politics. The final winners are not the radical opposition but the technocrats and

reformers of an earlier era. In the Central Asian case on the other hand, changes within the older structures of the party ensured its continuance in a new form. There was no intervention of a 'democratic' party as the existing structures reemerged with a nationalistic image.

Transitions, here, also need to be examined in broader societal terms where institutions and actual transition events play a critical role. Institutional arguments show how continuity is seen at work in the everyday functioning of the structures of the state. Rapid political changes create impressions of complete change. Some time is required for the discovery of continuity and of deeper undercurrents. This phase of transition in the Central Asian region, therefore, cannot be examined as an unproblematic implementation of a set of policies involving 'economic liberalization' and 'marketization' along with 'democratization' enabling the creation of a market economy and a liberal polity (Blokker 2002). Such an explanation of change reduces the complexity of the transition and fails to underscore the need to examine the diversity of forms of transition.[1] The fundamental reorganization of material life, the transformations of geopolitical relations and the major discursive shifts in the way that policies are to be framed and implemented requires a more rigorous study of the specificity of the situations, and also calls for a complex model of transition. The diversity of historical experiences of these states is also a compelling factor in the determination of the trajectory of transition.

Similarly the political economy of transition itself has to be critically examined. Here, the national mode of regulation and accumulation, the historical and geographic specificity of the path taken for transition, the role of different institutional actors and social relations have to be taken into account. This will show how 'legacies' become a central component in the understanding of the possibilities and limits to transition. While the 'national road to transition' is the central focus of examination, the emergence of regionally differentiated transitions also needs to be taken into account. All these involve a study of the complex system of adjustments of various issues and the intersections of political and economic arguments in the wake of globalization.

This chapter looks into the shaping of post-Soviet Uzbekistan where the projection of aspects like a common ancestry and history play a significant part in creating the image of an ancient state with a homogeneous people. In this, the performative role of the state in the face of the reality of a multiplicity of histories and identities in the region is evident. In fact in a number of cases it results in rhetoric or policy that takes note of this multifarious heritage and recognizes its significance in the wake of a homogenizing global tendency. However, imperatives of state building within the global arena is also evident in the irony of a state that proclaims its existence as an ancient state, retrieves its Turkish identity yet speaks of its promises and potentialities in the language of the newborn. Therefore one finds in this phase of transition the juxtaposition of a cultural rediscovery of the past and a projection of the state as a developmental state. The chapter highlights the fact

[1]For an examination of transitions in Eastern Europe and Russia see Pickles and Smith (1998).

that while parts of the nationalist discourse was intended for a domestic audience, part of it was aimed at the international arena with the aim of capturing global attention. Public diplomacy and the creation and promotion of 'national' images were attempts to raise the prestige of the country and primarily aimed at the international business community and the global political leadership. The images and rhetoric that accompanies Independence Day celebrations in Uzbekistan, for instance, not only articulates the existence of a cohesive state for the domestic audience but a prosperous one attractive for both international tourism as well as investment. Similarly, the rhetoric of 'nation under threat' is not just a projection for unity within the state but also a call for international recognition of the fact that Uzbekistan is both a victim and part of a global 'fight against terrorism'.

The first section begins with the rhetoric that accompanied the process of defining the 'new' Uzbek state both for its own members as well as for a wider international audience. The emerging state projected itself not as a brand new state but as a political player that sought to project itself more assertively than before. It then goes on to examine how the rhetoric that accompanies this reassertion is both a celebration of the state and a statement for the international community. It underlines how the 'art of politics' pursued through old style diplomacy has shifted to encompass the new art of brand building and reputation management.[2] In conclusion it seeks to come to an understanding of the relevance of the phenomenon of 'place branding' in international politics.

2.1 The Making of 'Brand' Uzbekistan

In his *The Modern Uzbeks: A Cultural History from the Fourteenth Century to the Present,* Edward Allworth, cites the following lines from the Uzbek poet Abdu Razzaq Abduvashidaw's ballad *The Dear Soil*,

> Every Nation has its own desire
> its own song, its own epic
> It has its own place–its own garden
> so far preserved thousands of years.
> (Allworth 1990, p. 319)

This tradition 'preserved for thousands of years' has now become the focus of writings in Uzbekistan. It is a literature that looks beyond the recent past of Central Asia into a past that is glorified as the 'nation of desire'. In the Uzbek case there is an attempt at equating Turan, Transoxiana and Turkistan with the ancient Uzbek civilizational past. This theme of an ancient past for the Uzbeks that President Karimov himself emphasizes finds echoes in a large number of writings, which

[2]For an article that looks into the theoretical questions around this issue see Ham (March 2008).

have been published in post-Soviet Uzbekistan. These remain interesting in terms of examining how the story of the Uzbek past is now being told. One representative example of such writing notes

> Encyclopedias written in almost all languages hold to the one sided idea that Uzbeks are descended from the Uzbek Khan of the Golden horde from 1313–42, and from the Shaybanids, who arrived in West Turkestan in the fifteenth century. (Uzbek Khan brought down the Timurid dynasty and established Uzbek rule in its place) True, tribal Turks called Uzbeks did arrive with the Shaybanids, but they dwelled in the territory of Turk Stan during the Timurid era, in that of the Khwarezmshahs before that, during the Karakhanids and during the reigns of all the Turk khans, because, they, after all, were the original Turkish people of Turkestan, right? Why is this not openly acknowledged? (Qahhar 1996, p. 611)

The construction of political space in post-Soviet Uzbekistan has involved certain recurrent themes and elements that have made their presence felt time and again. One of the themes that emerged in a large corpus of literature is *ethnogenesis. Oz ozingi anglap et* or getting to know oneself began in the last days of the Soviet Union through carefully worded writings that departed from the usual practice of writing historical pieces in the form of fiction (Ali 1994). This meant an objective confrontation with the past and was distinct from efforts that traced a mythical history of origins of the Uzbeks. The current rediscovery of the past is also represented as a major change from the historiographical practices of the Soviet past when the possibility of studying the past independently was curtailed (Akhmedov 1996). These writings are also distinct in their attempt at implying an equation between the histories of the Turkish peoples living in the region with that of the Uzbeks. This equation remains problematic. However, it remains interesting as a representative example of the way in which the state constructs borders by using spatial strategies that homogenize identity and space.

A brief historical journey through the reading of a text that traces the development of the Uzbek state is an interesting comment on how the Uzbek space is being constructed today. The article was published in the journal *Obshestvenni Nayuki v Uzbekistane* which is the journal of the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan. The article points out that till very recently Uzbeks were mistakenly identified with the Shaybanids. There was no cognizance of the local Uzbek speaking population in the region. In actuality, it is pointed out, the people of the region consist of both the Turkish speaking people of the cities and villages of contemporary Uzbekistan bearing the name Sart and also the descendants of the Shaybanid Uzbeks who had lived here in the last four centuries and assimilated with the ancient indigenous ethnic layer of the region and spoke in 'one single old Uzbek language—the language of Ahmed Yassavi, Alisher Navoi and Babur' (Askarov 1997). It has also been pointed out

> The most ancient layer of the Uzbek people in the past consisted of the Sogdians, Bactrians and Khwarezmians as well as the cattle breeding tribes surrounding them—the Sakas—a part of which in the ancient time spoke in different dialects of ancient Turkish language. To this were added new ethnic components from the oasis of Tashkent, the Khidalites, Aftalites… With the advent of the Karakhanids, an ethnogenetic process began, and single anthropological type typical of Uzbeks takes place. Single territorial position started

> forming… Much later ethnic components are Shaybanids… Usually the history of the people is more ancient than its name. Uzbeks inherited only name from Shaybanids. It was political to begin with and then became ethnic (Askarov 1997).

They also pointed to the fact that while the Greek invasions was an important event in the history of Uzbekistan, subsequent centuries saw the like of the empire of Chengiz Khan and the states formed by his sons, an empire which according to this viewpoint was definitely Turk and not Mongol in origin. The Timurid period is also being taken up for close analysis, as the golden age when 'Uzbek' culture, society and art developed. Amir Timur and his contributions are being examined in depth and his legacy is now being appropriated by the state as exclusively Uzbek. Timur's contribution as having put an end to 'tribal disunity' in the region is lauded as a major achievement. The fact that he represented the feudal interests of the time is being interpreted as a minor failing of the ruling classes to which Timur was no exception.

It is equally significant that having established the fact that the Uzbeks have an ancestry longer than the one usually given to them, there is a tendency to equate the history of Uzbekistan with that of Turkestan, which in its turn is equated with the much larger unit of Turan (Akhmedov 1996). This is being attempted not only in terms of historical lineage, but also in terms of its literature. It is generally said that written Uzbek literature began with the Yassavids in the eleventh century. It is now being pointed out that Uzbek literature or Turkish literature of Turkestan, (including Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Uighur, Karakalpak, and Turkmen) started as written literature in the seventh century before Christ. The basis for this claim is a poem written in 626 B.C. dedicated to the death of Alp Er Tonga and which is still comprehensible to a modern Uzbek. Rather ambitiously, the *Shahnama*, where Alp Er Tonga is referred to as Afrasiab, is being held up as proof that the ancient Turks, 'the forefathers of today's Uzbeks ruled over two-thirds of the known world seven centuries before Christ' (Qahhar 1996). It is interesting to note that once again there is an attempt to equate the history of the Turks with that of the Uzbeks without addressing the question as to whether the modern Uzbeks and the Uzbek language today is to be completely equated with a general Turkish history and the Turkish language.

Another interesting aspect is the contemporary stress on linkages with the Persian language, with an onus on a cultural heritage that is so interlinked with that of the Tajiks that one can hardly be distinguished from the other. While this can be probably explained as prompted by the so called theorists of 'Greater Uzbekistan' that calls for a reunification of the now Tajik lands to Uzbekistan, the total eclipse of the Arabic linkages as also of the Arabic language is more difficult to explain. This recalls the Soviet tradition of ignoring the Arabic heritage for obvious linkages of the latter with the Islamic culture. However, while heroic traditions are being celebrated there is recognition also among the scholars that much of this is a construction. The book published on the occasion of the celebration of the 2500 years of Bukhara states clearly that there is no accurate data on the age of this ancient city. It is '… based on *legends* taken from Narsakhi's *History of Bukhara*'

and that 'the people of Bukhara *claim* that the city has been around for three millennia' (Azizkhodjaev 1997b).

In Uzbekistan today there is also underway an interesting reinstallation of personalities. The most interesting case is that of Sharaf Rashidov, the Uzbek First Secretary for nearly two decades, who was the main accused in the famous 'cotton affair' of the 1980s. An article written by Rashidov's Minister of Education and someone who was associated with him for more than 20 years, records his achievements in the *Obshyesvyenii Nayuki v Uzbekistane*. It points out that the restoration of Rashidov's name is the restoration of 'truth and justice' for the stones thrown at Rashidov were also thrown at the Uzbek people themselves. It recognizes that he may have committed some wrongs as a leader, but despite this he is praised as a man with numerous qualities who during his 'rule' devolved all his energy for the development of education, science and economy. He also displayed immense interest in education (Shermukhamedov 1992).

However, while heroic traditions are being celebrated and ancient linkages reestablished, there is recognition among the scholars that much of this is a construction. For instance, the book published on the occasion of the celebration of the 2500 years of Bukhara states clearly that there is no accurate data on the age of this ancient city. It is '… based on *legends* (italics mine) taken from Narsakhi's *History of Bukhara* "that the people of Bukhara *claim* (italics mine) that the city has been around for three millennia".' (Azizkhodjaev 1997b). Similarly, how *Istoria Bukharii,* a recent monograph written in the form of questions and answers, looks at the establishment of Russian protectorate on the economic life of the people of Bukhara is interesting. It begins by pointing to the coercive character of the assimilation, but then moves on to describe the development of trade that accrued from such steps as construction of the railways and the advancement in economic life. It then goes on to describe the period of transition between the end of Tsarism and the establishment of the Soviet system. Here it follows standard Soviet practice in criticizing the *Emir* who would not allow reforms of the system while the condition of the people worsened (Saakov 1997, ques. 50, 58, 59).

In 1924 a fundamental redrawing of administrative boundaries of Central Asia and Kazakhstan on ethnic lines was carried out. The Republics of Turkestan, Khiva and Bukhara were abolished and the whole region was divided into five republics. The Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic was constituted in 1924. It is interesting to note that today this delimitation along ethno-linguistic lines is being upheld on the ground that the language between the two great rivers was the old Uzbek language and it was on the basis of this unity of language that the delimitation created Uzbekistan (Askarov 1997). However this does not mean that there is no critical examination of the events between 1917 and 1924. A number of new dissertations that have appeared in the 1990s examine the times in a new light.[3] Still others seek to examine the developments of the period in terms of the larger problem of

[3]A number of new dissertations written in the 1990s are looking into the question of national territorial delimitation in Uzbekistan. See for instance, Alimov (1994).

modernization of society that was influenced by external factors and not restricted to developments within Turkestan. This also seeks to look into the character of the socio-political movements in Turkestan that were stipulated by a series of external political factors (Yuldashyeva 1995).

Where Uzbek historiography has departed from the standard accounts of the past years in the interpretation of such events as the 1898 uprising in the Ferghana valley, the autonomous government that was set up in Kokand in the immediate aftermath of the overthrow of the Tsar in 1917 and the issues of Russian military conquest and the popular resistance that this faced. This deals essentially with the first phase of transition, when the Soviet system was establishing itself, between 1920 and 1924 and various alternative forms were emerging. The role of what was known as the *basmachi* movement is also being reexamined. Uzbek scholars now refer to them as the *kurbashis* and *mujahids* (Radjov 1997). They are now designated as having been leaders of national movements and though they followed different political aspirations they had the aspiration to liberate their land from the *kyzylaskers* and restore the *Emir* to power. Their sacrifice has today been vindicated in the establishment of independent statehood.[4] Similarly trends like Jadidism and the writings of various Jadid scholars have been taken up for study (Khudaikulov 1995; Shapovalyenko 1990). The change in the attitude towards the movement is apparent even in the course of comparison of writings on the subject between the early eighties and the post-independence days.

There is today a large body of research writings of post 1990, on Uzbek history, in the Uzbek Academy of Sciences. These are reflective of the way Uzbekistan today perceives of its history of Tsarist colonialism and the subsequent period of transitions in the 1920s and 30s. An interesting example is entitled *Kolonialnaya Politika Tsarisma v Turkestane i Vorba za Natsionalnuyu Nezavisimost v Nachale XX veka* (The Colonial Policy of Tsarism in Turkestan and the war for National Independence at the beginning of the XX century) which interprets the events at the beginning of this century as the war of independence (Sadikov 1994). Similarly other recent dissertations have examined the traces of this 'national politics' in literature (Alimov 1994). This is to be expected of each new nation as it attempts to establish a new statehood.

Similarly, the way the period of transition is portrayed is interesting. The last days of the *Emir*'s government is said to have prompted local uprisings against the *terror* of the *Emir* (Saakov 1997). This negative attitude is once again very close to the views that Uzbek political figures like Faizullah Khodjaev, who became part of the Soviet regime, gave of the *Emir's* government in the immediate post revolution days. The period of the Bukharan People's Soviet Republic (BPSR) is reflected as one where steps were taken to nationalize the land and to distribute it among the landless peasants. The most significant incident of the period is pointed out as the

[4]A large corpus of literature has now appeared on the Basmachi movement in the form of dissertations in the Historical Sciences. They point to the fact that the movement should now be viewed as an 'armed upsurge of the local population'. See for instance, Norjigitova (1995), Khakimov (1992), Khidoyatov (1993).

signing of an agreement between Russia and BPSR. In the course of this agreement Russia is reflected as having refused to follow a colonial policy and accepted the independence of Bukhara and extended a loan to it as well as equipment and technical assistance for developing industries. Along with this was an effort to increase educational institutions. The constitution of the BPSR is also said to have reflected the effort to make private rights inviolable (Saakov 1997, ques. 61, 62). This again seems to be an effort that is close to the one the Soviets had followed all along.

In this context it is interesting to examine how the period of the development of Uzbek politics from the 1930s to the 1970s is being reexamined. This was the phase that non-Soviet scholars have traditionally portrayed as one dominated by the purges of the 1930s, of regulation of Uzbek economy through 'cotton monoculture', and a period when indigenous Uzbek culture, manifest in their oral epic traditions was branded as 'nationalist' and subverted. Soviet writings on the period, however, look to this phase as one of industrial and general economic development as also as a period when the general conditions of life and literacy saw massive changes. However, though written under the subheading, '*Totalitarian* System' (italics mine), the official writing on the history of Bukhara, for instance, focuses on this familiar story of economic and social development (Azizkhodjaev 1997b). Similarly, *Istoria Bukharii* examines the Soviet period in terms of social, economic, educational and scientific development and as a period of the development of women in society (Saakov 1997, ques. 63, 64, 65, 68).

The situation, however, may in fact be more nuanced and there may well be regional differences at how history is being reexamined. The resistance of the local populace to the establishing Soviet power is more clearly expressed in the rewriting of the history of Khiva, for instance. The fact that alien traditions were imposed on the traditional way of life, faith and historical tradition, is evident from the subtitle which identifies the era beginning in 1917 as the 'the era of collapse' (Azizkhodjaev 1997a). The reorganization plan of the Bolsheviks is critically examined with the existence of the 'historically formed states' of the region being identified as stumbling blocks for this reorganization. The division of the old Khanate within the constituent states of the newly formed Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan is said to have transformed the former capital to the status of a city with merely cultural significance. The difference between the reactions to the scheme of delimitation in the two cities is not surprising. While the former khanate of Bukhara was reborn as the new socialist republic of Uzbekistan, the fate of Khiva was not so fortunate. Yet even here the decades immediately following the delimitation is identified as one where industry developed, there was movement towards electrification, and Khiva developed all amenities of a modern city. It is also interesting that history for the Khivans seems to have ended with the Soviet delimitation of the period and the disappearance of the old khanate (Azizkhodjaev 1997a).

The construction of an Uzbek identity that was undertaken in the post delimitation period, and the writing of new histories for each of the new divisions, had meant the creation of separate histories and separate languages for each of the groups. Today these projects are being questioned. It is interesting that while the

construction is being critiqued the identification is largely circumscribed within Soviet divisions. And though historic linkages are sought with such groups as the Tajiks, who now constitute a separate national group, a political movement for reunification of the Tajik and Uzbek lands does not seem to be on the agenda. In fact the reaction to this project of historical revival is pragmatic. It is pointed out, for instance, that the revival of the historic past would not only go to enrich cultural heritage but would serve '…the course of integrating our country to the rest of the democratic world on the basis of programs developed proceeding from the special peculiarities of our traditions' (Karimov 1997, October 20). The above discussion thus makes evident how the imperatives of the politics of the developmental present calls for history writing along pragmatic lines where events of the past are interpreted not just in the light of present realities but also in the light of historical realities.

Speaking on the occasion of the 2500 years anniversary of Khiva, President Karimov stressed

> The Roman historian Pompey Trog who had lived 2000 years ago wrote the following about the most ancient ancestors of Turkish people: Bactrians, Sogds and Khorezmians may well compete with Egyptians by the age of their origins and genesis. They do not spare themselves both in labour and severe fight. They are extremely strong physically. They never give up a thing that belongs to them. They only go for victory.
>
> It was in Khorezm valley where the very first stones of the Uzbek statehood were laid 2700 years ago. In this regard the history of our national statehood can be considered along with such ancient states as Egypt, China, India, Greece and Iran. The history of Khorezm is foundation of the Uzbek statehood, the confirmation of its antiquity and might. (Karimov 1997, October 20, pp. 2–3)

A significant part of the official discourse is based on the image of a paternalistic state that stresses stability and development through what is identified as the 'Uzbek Path'. This emphasizes social protection and redistribution and is based on 'folk traditions and customs'. It was clearly stated that the new social and economic policy would also *promote the social program* in the country. This policy would take note of the *unique way of life* of the various cultures and civilizations in Uzbekistan and would consist of a variety of forms and methods (Karimova 1995; Sengupta 2014). The necessity of developing the basis of one's own model of development is recognized; a model which would be based on market relations but would also take into account the national historical heritage, foundations of life, traditions and mentality of the people. President Karimov points to this when he says

> We have selected an approach of rejecting egalitarianism in the system of social protection of the population and finding our own path corresponding to moral values, way of life and frame of mind of the nation which took shape throughout millennia in the East (Karimov 1995, pp. 115–116).

There is clear recognition of the fact that there can be no universal model of economic development, which can be followed. The Uzbek model would have to take note of concrete historical, socio-economical, national-psychological and

demographic aspects. This is being interpreted to mean an emphasis on stabilization.

This would mean that while on the one hand there would be an effort to move out of the administered economic structures of the Soviet system, this it would not do without taking into account the requirements of society. This in turn would entail the continuation of certain policies like the continuation of consumer subsidies on imported goods. It is interesting that G. Karimova refers to the disappearance of the Berlin wall between 'orthodox definitions of capitalism and socialism'. This is a possible pointer to movement towards a mixed economic pattern as the model of development (Karimov 1995). What is interesting is that in the course of this transition it is clearly recognized that while ensuring the macroeconomic stabilization of the society for market oriented reforms in order to ensure economic growth, is the foremost task, this is crucial for ensuring the *welfare of the society* (*Respublika Uzbekistan* 1994). There is also stress on the fact that social assistance reaches those for whom it is meant. Moreover the development is projected on the basis of the gains of the last seven decades, which has transformed Uzbekistan into a 'developed' society as far as social indicators are concerned. The emphasis here is on the transformation without *shock therapy* (Karimova 1995).

This is particularly evident in the case of monetary policy where quick transformation was postponed in favor of *stabilization with parity*. In fact in all this a *gradualist* policy is evident that makes place for the old within the new structures. The *Uzbek model of development* then goes on to point out that 'privatization is not the ultimate goal'. It is the means for ensuring competition of economic motivation. And more importantly, the fact that each man must 'improve his own position without hampering the position of others' (Karimova 1995, p. 22). The *Decrees and Resolutions* of the Republic of Uzbekistan further stress the 'social orientation (of the policies) should be reflected in every act under consideration'. The problems of protection of family with children during the reorganization are addressed (Karimova 1995). President Karimov identifies the final objective of the economic policy as the construction of a strong democratic law governed state and secular society with a *stable socially oriented market economy* and open foreign policy (Karimov 1995). This is also reflected in the fact that it is still the state that has primary responsibility in implementation of programs relating to land reclamation, irrigation, raising soil fertility etc. Since Uzbek economy is primarily dependent on the cultivation of cotton, it is important that the state has a definite agricultural policy (Karimov 1995, pp. 52–66).

There is therefore emphasis on the fact that

> We have made a simple choice—to consistently advance towards market economy stage-by-stage—evolutionary, not by great leaps or by revolutionary destruction….Popular saying has it never destroy the old house before you build a new one, It is unforgivable to neglect what could be used in the interest of economic reform during transition to market relations and make this process more efficient and less painful (Karimov 1995, pp. 11–12).

Development is the most constantly growing embellishment of the Uzbek national myth propagated by the current regime. Official propaganda and cultural

production has attempted to project Uzbek cultural identity much further back in history than was actually the case. This propaganda appropriates great cultural and historical figures of early and medieval Islamic science, art, and literature and world historical figures like Timur. The use of cultural and historical figures to enhance legitimacy has meant that young Uzbeks like Hayrullo Hamidov have attempted to turn this nationalist propaganda on its head. Claiming this cultural heritage for the Uzbek people themselves, he turns this against the status quo. In his most popular work, *What is Becoming of the Uzbeks*, he cites the lost greatness and achievements of this nationalist history as a rhymed lament about the current state of the country and its chosen path

> My country was free for centuries
> But now instead in total debasement
> The leading one is completely corrupted
> What is becoming of the Uzbeks? (Tucker 2014)

According to Noah Tucker the Uzbek national image created by the nationalist myth is supposed to show that the Uzbeks are heirs to the greatest heritage in the region and superior to their nomadic neighbours. Connected to this superiority to their neighbours in official propaganda is the notion that Uzbekistan is first and foremost independent and sovereign. Reflective of this central national propaganda is the image portrayed in the booklet by President Karimov, 'The Uzbeks will never depend on anyone'.

2.2 Celebrations and Performance

Once identities and developmental structures are constructed, states seek to institutionalize these identities both at the domestic as well as at the international level. The creation of new narratives of the Uzbek state was not just an attempt at homogenization. It was also an attempt at international projection and advertisement of the potential of the country. In Uzbekistan for instance there has been a consistent effort at promoting the image of a 'cultural gem'. The image that is portrayed is that of a culturally rich state at the 'Crossroads of Civilization'. In the 1990s a number of UNESCO sponsored events celebrated the ancient cities of Bukhara, Khiva and Samarkand at the crossroads of the ancient Silk Route. Uzbekistan has sought to accentuate its ancient traditions and modern cultures by organizing celebrations of its major public holidays and staging fashion shows of traditional clothing at embassies. Frequent cultural events at Uzbek embassies keep Uzbekistan's cultural brand on public display.[5]

[5]For more information see the publications at http://www.silkroadstudies.org/.

It has been generally argued that the Uzbek Government essentially promotes two different national images, one for domestic consumption and another for the international community (Marat 2010). Holiday celebrations like *Navroz* and Independence Day are carried out differently inside Uzbekistan and at Uzbek Embassies. Events organized for the international community emphasize traditional artifacts and modern paintings depicting Uzbek culture. These events promote national ceramics and *suzani* (embroidery) accompanied by traditional cuisine. Images of the blue domes of Samarkand's historical sites, of the Ark in Bukhara and the Fort at Khiva decorate all official leaflets, books and websites about Uzbekistan. There is also focus on promoting tourist attractions and other historical places in Uzbek Embassies and their publications. Marat (2010) argues that Uzbekistan's external emphasis is on its cultural richness built around the history of its ancient cities. It largely leaves out the Amir Timur heritage that is central to Uzbekistan's national identity and essentially supports President Karimov's state power.

Navroz was reinvented as part of creating a new national identity and included within Uzbekistan's official national holidays which are not religious in nature. On these secular holidays the national and local governments sponsor activities that involve all the citizens of Uzbekistan creating the basis for a civic rather than an ethnic national identity. Adams (2007) notes that while much of the content of the celebrations is related to Uzbek or Central Asian culture and heritage, the way the holidays are celebrated is inclusive of a broader civic community. She writes

> Of all the national holidays of Uzbekistan, Navroz and Independence Day are celebrated on the largest scale in terms of state spending (more than a million dollars per holiday in Tashkent alone) and have the greatest significance for the public representation of national identity.

Large scale spectacles are organized on Uzbek Independence day and *Navroz*. Independence Day celebrations feature a wide variety of cultural elements that characterize the country as a civic nation while *Navroz* focuses exclusively on an ethnic definition of the nation (Adams and Rustemova 2010). A typical *Navroz* address by the President would stress the 'ancient' nature of the holiday and the importance of customs 'pertaining to our people'. The people are called upon to carefully preserve the 'priceless traditions and values in tune with the spirit and philosophy of *Navroz* across centuries and pass them on to the current generations'.[6] These are generally orchestrated by the state through carefully selected symbols of the nation. These spectacles feature historical or mythical figures, fireworks, youth in national costumes performing group dances, musical dance performance by folk groups from ethnic minorities and large scale depiction of national symbols. The performance by ethnic minorities serves to highlight Uzbekistan's ethnic diversity to the international audience and is also a declaration of civic nationalism for the domestic audience. These spectacles, however, are basically intended for a domestic audience and the dialogue and lyrics as also President Karimov's speech is always only in Uzbek.

[6]See for instance *Greeting Address by President Islam Karimov at Grand Celebrations Occasioned to the Holiday of Navroz*, Press Service of the President of Uzbekistan, 21.3.2011.

Adams (2014) argues that *Navroz* is an important holiday in contemporary Uzbekistan not just because of its profound popularity but also as an exemplary case of a broader phenomenon of post-Soviet cultural renewal. National holidays are often used by states as conscious expressions of national identity, but as Adams argues, *Navroz* is especially felicitous case to examine in a post-independence context since as a New Year holiday, it is inherently a celebration of renewal. Furthermore, the holiday is one that the people themselves would celebrate even without any direction from the state which is different from a wholly invented tradition like Independence Day. Adams (2014) argues

> Although the elites I interviewed did not frame cultural renewal specifically as a post-colonial or anti-colonial movement, it is clear that there was a backlash against Soviet culture in general and Russian culture in particular, and that people in Uzbekistan resented these Soviet policies that promoted Russification at the expense of Uzbek language and culture. In Osmon Qoraboev's writing of Uzbek national tradition, Navroz stands for a whole set of cultural practices that were repressed by Soviet power.

Uzbekistan's holiday spectacles are elaborate explorations of heritage with focus on medieval history and ethnic heritage that aims to strengthen the population's identification with the territory. The celebration today is also an important component of global modernity to the way that cultural renewal took place in Uzbekistan in the 1990s. The particular symbol featured has varied with cultural policy. State building concerns during the early to mid-nineties were addressing with a focus on the symbol of the empire builder Amir Timur. Concerns with religious extremism are being addressed with a focus on the founder of the Naqshbandi Sufi order Bahaouddin Naqshbandh (Adams and Rustemova 2010). These celebrations are also planned at the highest level, with the Prime Minister at the head of the organizing committee. The 20th anniversary of the independence of Uzbekistan was organized according to a resolution signed by the President which approved the programme of the organization, practical, cultural, educational and awareness raising activities related to the celebration as well as the structure of the creative group to prepare the holiday programme in Tashkent. The slogan for the year was 'You are great and sacred independent Motherland'. Uzbekistan's achievements are showcased in all public spaces and schools. Schools and other educational institutions in particular have posters depicting developments in science and technology, a superfast train that travels from Tashkent to Samarkand, strong armed forces, a responsible armed force, flourishing agriculture and strong family values. A number of classrooms have brief notes and photographs of Al Beruni, Al Farabi, Ibn Sino and Ulug Beg. They all also carry framed posters of the first page of the constitution, the national song and a message from the President.[7] The desire of the government to showcase the achievements of Uzbekistan over the last two decades has meant that neighbourhoods in central Tashkent have been flattened and several large markets like Farkhad Bazaar and small shopping centers have been demolished for reconstruction efforts. The official news agency distributed a

[7]Visit to School No 10 at Bukhara (formerly Maxim Gorky School) on 8 April 2013.

statement to the effect that the 'architectural outlook of the capital ahead of the 20th anniversary of Uzbekistan has not only preserved its historical attractiveness but is acquiring new humanistic and aesthetic content' (*Eurasianet* 2011).

While in certain cases there is a gap between what is projected for the domestic audience and for the external one in others, like the projection of a 'nation under threat', the domestic and international intentions converge. The image of a sacred Motherland and particularly a sacred Motherland under threat is increasingly evident in political rhetoric. On the one hand the rhetoric seeks to rally popular feelings of patriotism and on the other seeks international legitimacy for state violence. Since the late 1990s there has been a shift in President Karimov's sense of the geopolitical identity of Uzbekistan, from a self-confident polity at peace with itself and its neighbours to a besieged island of civilization in a sea of anarchy that threatened to submerge it. Nick Megoran (2005) notes that the portrayal of 'a nation under threat' is reflected in Presidential writings, media reports and even in popular culture. One representative example is a part of the speech delivered by President Karimov on the occasion of the first session of Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

> Today our region is attracting attention of different extremist forces and centers that strive to undertake the expansion of religious extremism and international terrorism, to divert the states of the region from the democratic and secular path of development with a due rule of law. The drugs and arms trafficking represent a credible threat not only on the region, but also on the entire world. The current developments in the region and in the world urge us to create a system of security that would be able to guarantee in real terms the non-violability of our borders, territorial integrity of the country, stability and sustainable development of Uzbekistan. It is important that people comprehend the inseparable link between ensuring the public order, their personal safety and increasing their own watchfulness and an active participation in what is happening around them. It is necessary to promote the involvement of the population in eliminating extremism in all its manifestations, securing peace and stability in our common home (Karimov, cited in Sengupta 2009, p. 120)

It is evident that the rhetoric is aimed at both at the domestic audience who are urged to maintain public order in order to allow the state to move towards a path ruled by democracy and also at the international audience who are informed that the inability of the state to do so would be due to the threat faced by the state as a result of external extremist forces. The first channel that inculcated a sense of danger was Presidential writings themselves. The same geopolitical visions were conveyed through the national news media (*Halk Sozi*), which presented opposite images of a happy and prosperous Uzbekistan in contrast to consistent images of neighbouring states as spaces of chaos. There is also the suggestion that the chaos in the neighbourhood is threatening to engulf Uzbekistan. Megoran defines how the image of a 'nation under threat' is also reflected in popular music which is often an important site in struggles to control utilize and define space.[8] Similarly Mokhira Suyarkulova

[8]Megoran et al. argue that the interpretation of danger, whether from terrorists or trade flows is always subjective. The portrayal of Uzbekistan as a threatened state is evident in Presidential speeches, the media even the cultural sphere like pop music has been an important discursive strategy in the articulation of the politicized version of Uzbek national identity by the current regime (Megoran et al. 2005).

(2006) argues how Uzbekistan's ideology of national independence demonstrates that the foreign policy of the state has been shaped by discourses of danger.

The Andijan incident proved to be somewhat of a watershed. In the aftermath of the incident, there was need to justify the state action to the people and also to an increasingly critical international audience. A booklet was published from Tashkent that summarized the statements and responses of the President Karimov to the local and international press about the Andijan events of 12–13 May 2005. Entitled *The Uzbek People Will Never Depend on Others,* the booklet seeks to provide an explanation of the government's actions during the incident and show that this incident had nothing in common with the 'revolutions' that had led to changes in governments in Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan. Examining President Karimov's account of the events of May 2005, Megoran (2008) argues that four key themes have been deployed in the narrative to delegitimize the government's opponents. These are, terrorism and criminality; inauthentic Uzbekness and deviant masculinity/religiosity; constitutional illegitimacy and the subversion of the scientific laws of the state. In Megoran's (2008) opinion, the events were portrayed as orchestrated by a trained (and foreign aided) group of terrorist/criminal elements who were attempting to destabilize the state.

> During the first years of our independence we thought we were free and we had something different: we became members of the UN so now we would move towards democracy and everything ahead would be perfect. We freed ourselves from the Soviet communist ideology. But what filled the vacuum left behind? Different radical religious groups, some not always peaceful, started to make their presence felt in the region. Everywhere they proposed building mosques and they did so until we started opening our eyes. Something similar has been happening to our neighbors; for instance Kazakhstan has at the moment 1500 mosques of which 500 are not officially registered. Sometimes these groups offered loans or sometimes they showed their readiness to build these mosques for free.
>
> I want to reiterate again, using the ideological vacuum left after the collapse of communism, Hisb-ut-Tahrir put down its deep roots in the countries of Central Asia and in Uzbekistan, in particular in the Ferghana Valley. In the city of Tashkent you can find evidence of this sect (Karimov 2004, p. 18).

President Karimov's reactions following the events in Osh in April–May 2010 has been described as 'dispassionate and reasonable' by Kyrgyz state officials. Karimov argued that the tragedy was not the fault of either the Kyrgyz or the Uzbeks but was organized by 'third parties' with the key objective of drawing Uzbekistan into the conflict. President Karimov's reactions elicited keen interest among the international audience. It demonstrated the maturity of state reaction in the face of provocation and reiterated the image of 'threat'. As far as the domestic audience was concerned there was little coverage of the events in Kyrgyzstan and practically no information on the events that led to a change of government. Similarly, border control policies of the Uzbek state have been identified as theatrical/performative (Megoran et al. 2005). It has also been argued that this has in fact resulted in depressed trade flows within the region. The boundary

enforcement measures introduced at the Uzbek borders have been justified in terms of protecting the economic and political security of the state. Nick Megoran has described how the portrayal of Uzbekistan as a 'threatened state' is also reflected here. He has demonstrated how government framed the state border not merely as a legal line on the map but rather as a moral border where Uzbekistan was depicted as a realm of order, progress, stability and wealth surrounded by disorder, backwardness, chaos and poverty (Megoran et al. 2005). However, such boundaries also tend to overlook economic considerations and fail to come to terms with everyday experiences of negotiating borders. In a recent book Madeline Reeves (2014; see also Reeves 2012) shows how a border can be materialized in particular moments and settings, how it is affected by everyday acts but also challenged by movements outside its boundaries. By examining borders in the Ferghana Valley, both in a historical as well as contemporary context, she argues that geographical margins often venerated by states as ultimate markers of sovereignty may in reality be subject to various kinds of intrusion that affects the 'image' the state constructs of itself.

In recent years there is awareness that the 'image' of the Uzbek state in the international community has been influenced by the fact that large numbers of Uzbeks travel outside their countries, particularly to Russia and Kazakhstan to work. For the Uzbek state, anxious to portray an image of a strong 'self-reliant' and economically vibrant state, the large number of labour migrants to other countries becomes an embarrassment. Uzbekistan remains the largest migrant exporting country in Central Asia and therefore enjoys significant inflow of remittances. The dependence on remittances particularly in rural areas is high. Irnazarov (2015) argues even within Uzbekistan there are regions like Samarkand and Kashkadarya which show the largest number of migrants while Tashkent has the smallest as does the main industrial city, Navoi. Most remittances are sent to Syr Darya and Samarkand regions while Tashkent and Karakalpakstan have the smallest numbers.

During a trip to the Jizzak region on 19 June 2013 Uzbek President Islam Karimov commented rather harshly on the Uzbek labour migrants engaged as janitors in Moscow by referring to them as 'lazybones' and 'street beggars'. His comment clearly indicated that by travelling as migrant labour they are showing the state in poor light

> Who I think lazy ones are? Those going to Moscow to sweep streets and squares. What is it about that place? This is disgusting. The Uzbek nation is demeaning itself (by doing this) supposedly one has to travel that far (to earn) for a piece of bread. Nobody is dying from hunger in Uzbekistan, thank God! I call them lazy because they are disgracing all of us by pursuing ways of earning quickly (*Ferghana.News* 2013).

Karimov's comments were met with outrage by the migrants who argued that they had traveled to survive since there were no appropriate jobs at home. There have also been comments on the state of the Uzbek economy if not for the multibillion dollar transfers from these people. In 2012 alone according to the

Central Bank of Russia, remittances provided about six billion USD to the Uzbek budget (*Ferghana.News* 2013).[9]

2.3 Conclusions

Prior to the formation of nation-states, the state was never seen as crucial for the determination of the identity of communities. It was at best seen as a guarantor of an arrangement under which all communities existed. This was transformed in an era of 'nations and nationalism' when it was asserted that identities were to be largely defined by the nation state. In fact, in a number of cases the state not only defined the boundary within which identity was to be circumscribed, but also the basis for the definition. The rationality on which this basis was determined defined the principal characteristic of groups and subsequently assumed a significance of its own. As nations were constructed within the boundaries of the state the projection of a numerical majority defined in terms of rationally delimited criteria became crucial. In this projection the state came to play an increasingly significant part not just in defining the 'nation-state' but also in legitimizing it within the international arena. It is this performative role of the Uzbek state that been the focus of this chapter. The chapter has underlined that the performance of the state was aimed at the creation of 'brand Uzbekistan'—a stable, prosperous state with a vibrant ancient culture.

The broader issue that the chapter addresses is about the relevance of branding as a political phenomenon in international politics and about how to situate the emergence of the 'brand state' within a general trend of 'soft' and 'hard' power politics (Ham 2008). It is a widely accepted idea that nation branding draws on attraction and legitimacy in a transnational network of relations. What is employed is 'soft power', the ability to obtain desired outcomes by attracting others (Velden et al. 2008). Place branding is now accepted as part of a wider spectrum of power where 'soft' power and public diplomacy have a place. It is being argued that the rise of the 'brand' state is leading to the emergence of a new 'great game', not about oil and trading routes but about image and reputation. This has encouraged revisiting the debate on identity within the prevailing condition of world politics (Ham 2008). However, much like the debates on the viability of 'soft' power as an agent of influence, there is an ongoing debate on whether a positive 'brand image' has the

[9]Also according to Walker and Nardelli, 'Russia's rouble crisis poses threat to nine countries relying on remittances' (cited in Kanet and Sussex 2015), 31.5 % of Kyrgyz economy, 42 % of Tajik economy and 12 % of Uzbek economy is dependent on remittances. With the Eurasian Union bringing together Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan and now also Kyrgyzstan and Armenia, the plummeting rouble and consequent short fall in remittances will affect the GDP of all the states. Also these figures are based on official figures the real amount transferred in person by migrants is significantly larger. See also *MPC Migration Profile: Russia*, Migration Policy Centre June 2013, www.migrationpolicycentre.edu. The Profile provides details of migration figures, work permits, remittances all classified by state as also the legal framework governing the status of legal migrants.

power to influence international decisions. Conversely one would also have to examine whether projected images can have a constraining or constitutive effect on foreign policy behaviour. An interesting case is the Kazakh one where a negative brand image created by the film *Borat* was actually useful in generating interest in the state and increasing tourism.[10] There are also problems with the claims of the allegedly non-coercive nature of 'soft' power on the ground that soft power is strongly premised on the possession of military and economic hegemony and thus on a form of structural coercion. Understanding nation branding would therefore require a paradigm that goes beyond 'soft' power. It would be less focused on promotion and more concerned with a pluralistic understanding of political alternatives being developed at various levels.[11]

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[10]The film *Borat: Cultural Learnings of America for make benefit Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan,* made use of the fact that global audiences were unaware of the realities in Kazakhstan. The film reshaped Kazakhstan's image into a grotesque backwater inhabited by village idiots, interspersed with Soviet era footage of agriculture and heavy industry (Velden et al. 2008). Following the release of the film the Kazakh Government felt obliged to hire public relations firms to run advertisements in major international newspapers and television channels to inform the world about Kazakhstan, which presented an entirely different version of the reality.

[11]An interesting example is the U.S. which uses social networking forums to promote positive aspects of American democracy. See Velden et al. (2008).

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Chapter 3
Astana as the Global Brand in the Heart of Eurasia

Between the East and the West, there is the heart of the Eurasian continent, on the crossroads of world civilizations is the ancient land of the Kazakhs.
President Nursultan Nazarbayev
In a message from the President at the conclusion of the Kazakh film *Nomad.*

Abstract This chapter looks into the official projection of Kazakhstan as the heart of Eurasia. It focuses on state rhetoric where the logic of governance has placed foreign policy at the epicenter of propagandist discourses seeking identity redefinition. The integration of nation building and foreign policy making has emerged as a critical narrative for regimes throughout the region where foreign policy evolved into a recurrent element of official propaganda. The external policies pursued by elites in these states intend to redefine public perceptions of the spatial and temporal dimensions of statehood to reinforce the domestic power of the incumbent regimes. The incorporation of foreign policy making within nation building, in these contexts, are however germane to regime building and post Soviet leaders assigned foreign policy a temporal dimension in which the states' external outlooks acted as the link between the past and the present. In Kazakhstan, strategies of identity redefinition channelled through the spatialization and historicization of foreign policy were carried out through the progressive readjustment of the focus of foreign policy rhetoric. The progressive intensification of Kazakhstan's Eurasianist rhetoric was accompanied by the acceleration and intensification of identity making where the leadership channelled a substantive portion of its identity shaping efforts through its Eurasianist discourse. The final section of the chapter moves on to an examination of Astana as a national brand. This is interesting as it shows how a materially constituted locus of power can become a socially constructed label or idea. The making of the city points to how a provincial town became a capital city and was elevated to global status.

Keywords Kazakhstan · Kazakh eurasianism · Diplomacy and nation building · Astana as a national brand

A. Sengupta, *Symbols and the Image of the State in Eurasia*,
SpringerBriefs in Political Science, DOI 10.1007/978-981-10-2392-7_3

The film *Nomad* tells the story of a Kazakh tribe that fights the Dzungars, a tribe from Mongolia. It was a film sponsored by the Kazakh Government and made with the aim to make the world take notice of Kazakhstan. The last scene of the film relates the present to the past by creating a bridge in time frames. It also serves to situate the region as advanced and forward looking.

> Messengers come to the local king with a round object—an image of the earth created by Ulugbeg, a globe. It identifies the land of the Kazakhs as 'huge country'. Along with the globe there is a message from Ablai Khan about the land of the Kazakhs 'ruthless to its enemies and open to those who come in peace and friendship'. As the king starts reading the message images of Ablai Khan and his followers riding across the steppes appear with the men and horses dissolving into light. The film ends here and President Nazarbayev's message (cited above) appears marking the smooth transition from Ablai to the present leader (Doraiswamy 2013, p. 250).

Rashmi Doraiswamy argues that the post nationalism that the film portrays is different from the post nationalism of globalization. It has more to do with the imaginings of 're-territorialization of the sense of the nation that has shrunk from the supranational Soviet space into that of the national' (Doraiswamy 2013, p. 256). Cinema in Kazakhstan has been at the forefront of the ideological transition in terms of how the state has tried to portray itself and its nationalizing projects. Cinema, according to Doraiswamy, has been mobilized to represent the state's outward gaze and to present a window on Kazakhstan; it has participated in the representation of national identity in the contemporary post-Soviet sense of what it means to be a Kazakh. She goes on to argue that cinema is one of the many fields where Kazakhstan is making a mark within the international arena. The agenda is one of showing the Kazakh nation in a positive light and of providing a visual representation of what constitutes it as a nation (Doraiswamy 2014). Three films—*Nomad* (Kochevnik) *Mustafa Chokai* and the *Sky of My Childhood*—form a trilogy, each financed by the state and reflecting an aspect of the nation building strategy of the Kazakh state. *Nomad* deifies the steppes and posits the Dzungars as an enemy. *Mustafa Chokai* is about the proponent of Pan Turkic ideology as an aspect of the state's political ideology. *The Sky of My Childhood* underlines the multicultural heritage of Kazakhstan and projects an image of modernity that is intricately bound to tradition.

The Sky of My Childhood, the first of a proposed trilogy of films on President Nursultan Nazarbayev, is based on the President's works, *No Lefts, No Rights, Epicentre of the World and Centre of Eurasia.* In the film the state has tapped into the nomadic past of the people and the great steppes as part of the iconography of the new nation. Nomadism is viewed not as a precursor to sedentariness but as an essential characteristic that constitutes the nation of Kazakhs. What is represented is the memoir of the President, the leader of the state, but what is also represented is the nation. The historical events portrayed in the film and 'big' events of the Soviet Union: collectivization, World War II, the deportation of peoples to Kazakhstan and the events of the 1950s. Doraiswamy notes

> Rustam Abdrashov thus skillfully creates a rich tapestry of Kazakh, Central Asian and Asian images; he draws on the mythical, the *bytovoi* (the everyday) and the rhetorical; he brings together the past, present and future as simultaneous time frames; he creates smooth bridges between tradition and modernity……he presents the subjectivity of the President as well as the subjectivity of the nation. The film provides a narrative of the making of both of these subjectivities and their positioning in the region, continent and world (Doraiswamy 2014, p. 284).

Situated in the heart of Asia, the most persistently pursued goal for Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev since the country gained independence in 1991 has been to promote integration at various levels within Central Asia and the former Soviet space, but also within global markets and institutions. He has since been commended for attempting to bring the benefits of globalization to Kazakhstan. Nazarbayev's perception that Kazakhstan would benefit from enhanced ties with other countries and organizations has been the principal reason for his intense support of globalization. In his view as a result of insufficient integration Kazakhstan and its neighbourhood has not been able to assume their natural status as the linchpin of global governance. This is true in the economic sphere too, where greater integration would allow Kazakhstan and other neighbouring states to use their natural resources and pivotal location in a much better way. Kazakhstan can realize its potential as a natural cross road for east–west and north–south commercial trade through reducing obstacles to the free flow of goods and peoples among the Eurasian nations. Deeper economic integration would also make these countries more attractive to foreign investors and enhance collective leverage with external actors. In the security realm, greater integration would provide Kazakhstan more maneuverability among the great powers active in the region thereby reducing the risks of becoming a pawn in the emerging great power condominium. It would also help them coordinate their responses to regional economic, political and security problems. It has been emphasized that instability provides opportunities for external meddling; conflicts can spill across borders, either directly or through refugee flows that discourage international capital markets from investing in the region.

Regional integration would also help avert potential inter-ethnic and inter-confessional discord among Kazakhstan's heterogeneous population. The country claims to be home to more than a hundred distinct ethnic minority groups. The government promotes religious harmony at home and abroad. However, presence of large minorities including significant numbers of ethnic Russians means that Kazakhstan would not remain indifferent to developments in the neighbourhood. Kazakh leaders argue that their country's strong economic development, market reforms and commitment to regional prosperity makes it the most important factor in regional economic integration mechanisms among Eurasian states. Additionally President Nazarbayev has called for a geographically narrower but functionally deeper union of Central Asian states that would involve the sharing of water and energy resources, improvements in the regional transportation infrastructure, establishment of common customs and trading tariffs, mechanisms to respond collectively to environmental threats and natural disasters and support for region wide tourist networks. Nazarbayev supports transition from free-trade-zone

to a customs union and economic union with supporting political institutions. Within Eurasia and beyond Nazarbayev has sought to make Kazakhstan a 'transcontinental economic bridge' and a 'regional locomotive' of economic development. Kazakh officials have promoted closer regional transportation, pipeline and communication networks, reducing customs and other manmade barriers to trade, encouraging tourism and other non-governmental exchanges while strengthening relations governing labour mobility in Eurasia and promoting Kazakh private investment in other Eurasian economies (Weitz 2012).

In November 2006 the movie *Borat, Cultural Learnings of America for Make Benefit Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan* hit the American cinemas. The film generated a controversy centred around the main character, Borat, played by the British comedian Sacha Baron Cohen. In the film the actor poses as a fictional Kazakh journalist traveling across the United States to make a documentary to bring back findings for the benefit of the glorious nation of Kazakhstan. The movie creates the impression that Kazakhstan is a backward country. *Borat* was widely acclaimed. However, for a country like Kazakhstan bearing the brunt of all the hilarity, *Borat* was anything but funny. Kazakh official took serious offence where the film was declared as 'unacceptable'.

The episode started a debate among place branding specialists about the impact of *Borat* on the country's image and reputation as well as the less than amused reaction of the state to the film. Kazakhstan hired two PR firms to counter *Borat's* claims and ran four page advertisements in the *New York Times* and the *International Herald Tribune* (Ham 2010, p. 154). A 67 min film *In the Stirrups of Time* was aired in the CNN to showcase Kazakhstan, its cities, broad highways, smartly dressed people, empowered women, modern classrooms, dams and factories as well as Kazakhstan as the centre of Eurasian integration. Incidentally, in a couple of years the situation changed. The Kazakh ministry actually expressed satisfaction about the fact that the controversy generated by the film had increased tourism in the state and ended up thanking Cohen for the film (*The Washington Diplomat* 2010).

Simultaneously there was an attempt to promote Kazakhstan's image internationally. From being identified with steppes, yurts, apples, the Aral Sea, Baikanur and *Borat*, there was now a consistent effort to promote a new imagery centered on the promotion of Astana as a symbol of contemporary Kazakhstan in the global arena. Through publications, films, speeches and cultural events Kazakhstan advertised its potential and created new narratives about itself that portrayed it as a country at geopolitical crossroads. The contest for the OSCE chair played an important role in transmitting Nazarbayev's vision for Kazakhstan to domestic and international audiences. During the campaign for the chairmanship Kazakhstan's multicultural and multiethnic society was emphasized. Kazakhstan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs commissioned an international advertising campaign to point out that 'Kazakhstan is located right at the crossroads of civilizations and for this reason it blends in a most harmonious way, all the contrasts between the East and the West' (*The Economist* 2008). This was consistent with building the

Palace of Peace and Reconciliation also known as the Pyramid of Peace and Accord in Astana accommodating different religions under one roof.

In 2005, Nazarbayev published a monograph, *In the Heart of Eurasia* that outlined the rationale for moving the capital from Almaty to Astana. The President emphasized that Astana should rightly be called the centre of Eurasia, since it was located between Europe and Asia and reflected the cultural traditions of both. The 'Heart of Eurasia' was followed by the 'Road to Europe' programme that was designed to increase Kazakhstan's cooperation with European states in technology, energy, and transport, improving national legislation to improve international investments and preparing Kazakhstan for OSCE leadership. Kazakhstan has been consistent in promoting both the 'Crossroads of Civilization' and 'Heart of Eurasia' slogans. Internationally, the significance of such 'civilizational' slogans has been questioned since a number of countries portray themselves as gateways or crossroads to different regions (Marat 2010).

3.1 Multiple Visions of the Idea of Eurasia

The development of the idea of Eurasia was one of the many ways in which Russia negotiated her encounter with the 'East', thereby justifying her position among the Turkic peoples. Eurasianism was based on the fact that there was no discernable break across the Urals, linguistically, culturally and economically there were only continuities from the west to the east. This was a connection that was underlined not just in terms of a geo-cultural space, but also in terms of anthropological-racial considerations. The encounters and interactions were negotiated not just by the Russians but also by the people whom they encountered. It is not surprising therefore that while classical Eurasianists like Trubetskoi interpreted Russian history in such a way as to recognize Turkic Muslims as an integral element of Russian identity, Tatar reformers like Ismail Bey Gaspirali conceptualized Turkic Muslim identity to include coexistence with the Russian people as one of its fundamental tenets. In the *Tercuman* one of the ideas that he advocated was greater cross cultural sharing and contacts between the Russians and the Empire's Turko-Muslim population. This has been interpreted as a counterpart to the pan Eurasianist ideas expressed by Trubetskoi later (Akturk 2005). The Eurasian idea was therefore more than Russian Eurasianism and there were non-Russian thinkers and writers who sought to imagine this vast space and the encounter between the various ethno-linguistic groups who inhabited this space.

The idea of Eurasia as a geo-cultural space opened up new possibilities of imagining Eurasia. Aleksandr Dugin, in his book *Geopoltika Postmoderna*, points to a particular way of imagining this space when he notes, 'Eurasia does not have fixed boundaries. Eurasia is a civilizational structure, it is a geopolitical pole' (Dugin 2007). The term Eurasia or *Evraziia* was used by the Eurasianists to indicate a different 'geographical world', different from both Europe and Asia. It has been argued that the Eurasianists' 'geographical world' of Eurasia can be called a

mega-region (Vinkovetsky 2007). Eurasianists sometimes used the word 'continent' to refer to this mega region but that usage was for them metaphorical rather than scientific. In the new world of Russia-Eurasia the Eurasianists declared cultural independence from both Europe and Asia. Eurasianists strongly identified ethnic Russians with other Eastern Slavs and people of the Eurasian mega region, Finno-Ugric, Turkic and Mongolian. Eurasianists did not however define the boundaries of Eurasia with precision and in fact their various versions of Eurasia overlapped. Still the expanse of their 'Eurasias' roughly coincided with the boundaries of pre 1914 Russian Empire. For traditional Eurasianists, Eurasia was separated from Asia to its south by high mountains and impenetrable deserts, to its west Eurasia were separated from Europe by what Savitskii called the 'region between the Black and the Baltic Seas'. Eurasianists devised a series of detailed arguments to justify this as the legitimate geographical divide. A strict interpretation of this geographical scheme excluded all of Russia's territory east of the Lena River. On the other hand some regions that fall outside Russia's political borders—a large part of western China for instance—was seen as an integral part of Eurasia.

This continuity has been emphasized in the political and ideological discourse of contemporary Kazakhstan. It is emphasized that not just geographically but politically, economically and culturally, it is today ideally situated to be identified as 'Eurasian'. Within the state a variety of definitions of Eurasia have had their adherents and they remain significant as discursive reconceptualizations at the juncture of geographical and sociological imaginations. Similarly alternatives that critique traditional definitions as also the interests that they represent are equally significant. This is because they underline the political transformations currently underway within the region. They also reflect the interplay between sovereignty and identity. This, for instance is illustrated in the newly coined term 'Central Cucasasia', as an alternative to central Eurasia. It has been constructed by its author not merely to specify the region's geographic identity but also to reflect the interests of state sovereignty of local states, which in principle, contradicts and critiques the spirit and idea of Eurasianism which is identified as a Russian construct (Papava 2008). This brings to the forefront the necessity of an examination of how geopolitical ideas are adapted and then contextualized to reflect contemporary realities.

The concept of 'Muslim Eurasia' has been developed by South Caucasian and Turkish authors in Central Asia and Southern Caucasus which are not based on religiosity or political ideology but rather on secular, social-normative and cultural values and traditions. Farhod Tolipov argues that Central Asia should not be subordinated and covered by the concept of the heartland or an Economic Eurasianism claimed by Russia. Rather it should be a heartland by itself along with China and a version of regional Central Asian Eurasianism should be proposed (Tolipov 2003, pp. 99–106). A group of geo political Eurasianist mainly based in Azerbaijan and the Southern Caucasian region emphasize the role and importance of the Caspian Sea and claim that the Caspian zone is the centre of Eurasia situated as it is at the junction of three great civilizations—Turkic, Slavic and Persian and two world religions Islam and Christianity (Shrieman 2009, pp. 69–85). It is argued

that it is this region that held back the tides of 'Atlantic Civilization' and protected the area from European expansion. There is also an attempt to create a Eurasian Ecological Economic Union in the so called 'great Altai' region that claims to be located at the centre of the Eurasian continent and in the trajectory of four great civilizations: Russian, Chinese, Mongolian and Kazakh. The argument is that all the world religions and Eurasian ethnic groups and sects live peacefully in the Altai and the area has enormous natural resources (Ivanov et al. 2007). There is also discussion on Economic Eurasianism by those who believe that close economic and trade relations among post-Soviet states on the basis of economic integration will benefit all the member states as they share common economic interests and historically their economies are dependent and closely linked and connected with each other. President Putin's emphasis on the Eurasian Union is based on this idea.

It is necessary today to take note of the fact that the Eurasian debate itself is not a monolithic whole and in its various forms serves distinct purposes. Caroline Humphrey (1993) has noted that the concept of 'Eurasia' has enabled the governing circles of many Asian regions of Russia to create distinctive ideas about the nature of their existence within the Federation. What seem to be emerging are multiple visions where each region has its own perspectives. However, the idea of 'Eurasia' is also providing an arena for new political relations to be formed between the provinces. She has argued that Eurasia is likely to be highly influential both in conceptualizing federal relations and in shaping the political-cultural character of the constituent regions. However, not all reactions to Eurasianism have been positive. There have been critiques like Urkhanova from Buryatia who have argued that Eurasianism is built on Russian great power statehood. As a result the 'imprecise inclusiveness' of Eurasianism is a cloak for renewed Russian imperialism. Yet, she argues that the Buryats cannot refuse Eurasia as they have been part of it during the Soviet period (Humphrey 1993). However Humphrey notes that the idea of Eurasia has resurfaced among the new generation of leaders in the Inner Asian regions and Central Asia as an escape from their peripherality. She argues that it provides an arena of political imagination where the Inner Asian people can claim a dignified place. This has meant that there now exist various regional Eurasian perspectives.

3.1.1 Kazakh Eurasianism

Over the years, therefore, Eurasia has become a flexible concept used by different political and intellectual actors for different agendas. For instance, the Eurasian dimension of Russian and Central Asian geography and history has been claimed by a contemporary Kazakh poet, polemist and more recently environmentalist, politician and diplomat Olzhas Suleimanov in his book *AZ i IA*. The book is an example of the definitive intervention by a non-Russian Soviet intellectual to address the question of interethnic relations and their consequences for Russian and Central Asian history. It has been argued that Suleimanov in his book questioned

the boundaries of 'Russia' Eurasia as a shared space and attempted to come to an understanding of how to reconcile its destiny as a unified state with the local and contradictory aspirations of its constitutive ethnic groups. However, while arguing in favour of the ethnic dignity of his people Suleimanov's ultimate vision was one of synthesis and interdependence between the Slav and the Turk. He believed that this ideal of cultural reciprocity flourished in Eurasia's remote past and it is the recovering of this past that is the task of the creative writer. In *AZ i IA*, he attempted this by searching for Turkic lexical and narrative elements in one of medieval Russia's celebrated literary artifacts *The Song of Igor's Campaign* (Ram 2001). He argues that the history of the tale reenacts the encounter between the Slavs and the Turks over the ages and is a product of a Golden Age of pluralism. The ideal of cultural reciprocity was therefore something to be restored rather than realized for the first time since it flourished in Eurasia's remote past.

While Suleimanov had attempted a creative interpretation of the Eurasian space, in the present context Eurasianism assumes significance only to the extent that it becomes a part of the real world debate and influences Kazakh policies. In fact within Kazakhstan Suleimanov's position has been echoed both by political analysts and the political leadership in recent times. For instance D. Nazarbayeva writes

> Kazakhstan…is a Eurasian state strongly influenced by Europe and Western values. Contrary to what certain politicians and journalists assert we are not another *stan*. Saudi Arabia is not our historical landmark: we look to Norway, South Korea and Singapore (Nazarbayeva 2003).

For Kazakhstan, Eurasia is a unique region where all ethnic, cultural and religious groups live and co-exist peacefully through the centuries of mutual trust belief and understanding. The concept of space and geography is an important factor in determining the state's foreign policy goals and directions. Geographically, Kazakhstan is an Asian country and only about 10 % of its territory is located in Europe but geo-politically, geo-economically and geo-historically it considers itself to be Eurasian. During the early 1990s the leadership proposed that Kazakhstan is located both in Europe and Asia and plays the role of a 'bridge between Europe and Asia'.

The Eurasian idea became a doctrine in November 2003 when the International Institute of Contemporary Politics (Kazakhstan) published a report entitled *Kazakhstan, Rossia, Ukraina: liderskaia troika Evrazii* (Kazakhstan, Russia, Ukraine: Three leaders of Eurasia) (Nazarbayeva 2003). This alliance was justified on the grounds that in the course of the previous years the three countries had acquired new infrastructure of state institutions, created institutions of market economy and acquired stable political conditions. Similarly, the three are faced with the tasks of creating an efficient state system, moving away from raw material to high tech economic sectors, better conditions of personnel rotation, stemming illegal migration, integrating within the global economy under conditions conducive to higher living and stronger human rights and freedom and creation of civil society. The idea that Kazakhstan and the other Central Asian states, surrounded by

Russia, China and South Asia, constitute the geopolitical centerpiece of the Eurasian continent has been underlined in contemporary Kazakh strategic writings (Rywkin 2005). From the purely strategic and geopolitical perspective, analysts like Murat T. Laumulin have argued in favour of the emerging significance of Eurasia. Laumulin (2007) argues that with the expansion of the EU and NATO opportunities will be created for connecting West European and Eurasian security. He notes that in future instead of the notion of 'Atlantic Europe' the idea of a dominant 'Eurasian Europe' will emerge.

Among the Soviet successor states, Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev has been the most consistent promoter of the idea of Eurasianism. While President Nazarbayev's ideas have an indirect link to those of the *evraziitsy* of the 1920s, this remains a rhetorical link and the President selectively adopts these ideas stemming from his own reading of his country's geopolitical and demographic circumstances. The issue of anteriority in Eurasianist thinking became a concern for Kazakhstan's foreign policy rhetoric. Official propaganda usually presented Kazakh Eurasianism as an innovative force that had emerged after the collapse of the Soviet Union. While the existence of non-Kazakh Eurasianism was acknowledged, the Kazakh version was presented as the most innovative and was instrumental in placing Nazarbayev in a dominant position among Eurasian theorists (Anceschi 2014, p. 741). Officially Aleksandr Dugin and Aleksandr Panarin were identified as Nazarbayev's Eurasianist interlocutors. In determining the influence that classical Eurasianist thinkers exerted on Nazarbayev's outlook, official propaganda focused on the framework elaborated by Lev Gumiliev. From the 1990s Gumiliev became an icon of Kazakh Eursianism. He was placed at the centre of campaign that informed the Kazakh population about his life and work. A critical role in this was assigned to the Eurasian National University L.N. Gumiliev.

Among other considerations is the fact that at the time of independence Kazakhstan's economic infrastructure was arguably more integrated with Russia's than that of any other newly independent states. However, it has been argued that official Kazakh Eurasianism should not be interpreted exclusively as a foreign policy strategy and a doctrine of economic realism favourable to the preservation of privileged relations with the former Soviet republics and especially with Russia. Kazakh Eurasianism also has a domestic aspect relating to the country's ethnic balance which has encouraged the President to emphasize the 'mixed culture' of the Kazakhs and their affinity not to the South but to the North (Laruelle 2008). Vinkovetsky argues that President Nazarbayev also conceived of Eurasianist ideas as a means for overcoming ethnic divisions and as a multi-ethnic replacement for the no longer tenable Soviet identity. President Nazarbayev's domestic oriented Eurasia related rhetoric—the idea that all ethnic groups who live in Kazakhstan today have a rightful place in the heart of Eurasia—serves as an instrument of civic nation building (Vinkovetsky 2007).

Kazakhstan also shares a long land border with Russia. This has meant that even as the policies of Nazarbayev's government have shifted his rhetorical commitment to Eurasia has remained unchanged. President Nazarbayev first proposed his vision of Eurasianism in his speech at the Moscow State University in the spring of 1994

which he developed systematically and proposed as a series of projects including the creation of a Eurasian Union (Mustafa 2013, pp. 160–170). President Nazarbayev regularly makes Eurasianist speeches at the Lev N. Gumilyov Eurasianist University in Astana. The latter is held as an example of the institutionalization of Eurasianism as an official ideology. The website of the university cites clearly that the university was established by the Decree of the President in May 1996 'taking into consideration the expanding international contacts of the Republic of Kazakhstan its active participation in world integration processes, implementation of the idea of Eurasian Union'. It goes on to note that the University is a concrete realization of the idea of Eurasianism.[1] The President has also created an Eurasianist Centre at the University with the mission of formulating a distinctively Kazakh Eurasian ideology different from its Russian counterpart. This looks towards implementing Eurasianist ideas in practice. In addition there are Eurasian Banks and other social and cultural organizations and institutions bearing the name Eurasia who focus on aspects of the Eurasian space. The press and media feeds back concepts of Eurasianism on a continuous basis helping to mould social learning and consciousness about its ideas. Research institutions, academics, political leaders and government officials are actively involved in supporting, publicizing, propagating and justifying the needs and importance of Eurasianism for Kazakhstan through their research, publications, public relations and policy statements. Numerous seminars, conferences, roundtables are organized on a regular basis with the participation of domestic and foreign leaders, policy makers and specialists. Similarly the Eurasian Media Forum is one of the most powerful and strong media forums in the CIS aimed at defining the strategic role of Eurasia in world affairs (Mustafa 2013, p. 166).

The strong drive and motivation for creating the Eurasian Union can also be explained by the contending claims and counter claims on the country's real identity and belonging. As Nazarbayev argues

> There are individuals who like to make us a link between Kazakhstan and Europe; and there are others who like to see Kazakhstan to be in close tie with the 'Asian Tigers'; still others who want to consider Russia as our strategic partner while suggesting not to ignore the Turkish Model for development. Paradoxically they are right in their own way, since they have felt the issue from different angles. In reality, Kazakhstan as a Eurasian state that has its own history and its own future, would have a completely different path to travel down the road. Our model of development will not resemble other countries; it will include in itself the achievements from different civilizations (Mustafa 2013, p. 164).

On a practical level Kazakh effort at integration on a Eurasian level has involved numerous initiatives. Kazakhstan has emerged as a leader in efforts at promotion of regional economic and political integration in Eurasia. Under President Nursultan Nazarbayev, Kazakhstan has followed a foreign policy that has sought to maintain good relations with the most important external powers. In addition there has been an attempt to strengthen ties with countries of Central Asia and the Caspian Sea

[1]See the L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University website at www.emu.kz.

basin. Kazakhstan also plays a prominent role in most of Eurasia's international institutions and organizations like the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Collective Security Treaty Organization, the Eurasian Economic Community, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (Weitz 2008). In line with this the President has stated the objective of making Kazakhstan a 'transcontinental economic bridge'. He emphasized this when he noted, 'Occupying the position midway between Europe and Asia and serving as a lively arena for economic and political contacts, Kazakhstan is nowadays able to act as a link in the chain connecting the two great civilizations of East and West' (Nazarbayev 1995b, November 15).

The position of Kazakhstan as the pivotal Eurasian state is thereby ensured. In keeping with these efforts have been made to improve regional transportation, pipelines and communication networks, reduce custom and other manmade barriers to trade and encourage tourism and other non-governmental exchanges. At the same time labour mobility in Eurasia and promoting Kazakh private investment in other Eurasian economies is being strengthened. The strong Kazakh support for regional integration results in part from a recognition that Kazakhstan will benefit from enhanced ties among Eurasian countries. There is also a conviction that through this integration at the Eurasian level Kazakhstan and its neighbours will achieve greater maneuverability among great powers active in the region and reduce the risk of their becoming dependent on any one supplier, customer or market. The increase in regional prosperity that economists predict will ensue from this integration would help Kazakhstan expand its economic activities and realize its potential as a natural crossroads for east-west and north-south commercial links based on the reduction of manmade political and economic obstacles to the free flow of goods and people among Eurasian nations. It has been argued that Kazakhstan's geography allowed it to exercise decisive influence in two of Eurasia's most important sub-regions: Central Asia and the Caspian Sea (Weitz 2008). Similarly, the transfer of capital from Amaty to Astana was presented in terms of a Eurasian outlook. The book that the President wrote about the new capital was symbolically named *In the Heart of Eurasia*. Here he argued that Astana is the heart of Eurasia, where cultures and customs mix, reiterating Trubetskoi's position on the 'symphonic unity of the multi-ethnic nations' that comprises Eurasia (Sengupta 2009, p. 29).

In addition Kazakhstan has presented repeated proposals for a Eurasian Union covering a range of cooperative endeavours in the areas of politics, economics and security. The idea of a Eurasian Union was conceived in the mid-1990s and was intended to promote economic, social and to a limited degree political integration across the post-Soviet space. The Eurasian Union was conceived with the idea of first establishing a customs union and a common economic space and to enable the citizens of the post-Soviet successor states to travel visa free across newly erected borders. President Nazarbayev argued that the Commonwealth of Independent States had been impotent. In contrast the Eurasian Union would be empowered and legitimized by an executive committee and a parliament. The effort would be to erect an effective institutional framework for economic integration and mutual

security in order to avoid unnecessary expenses of border control. According to Nazarbayev the main characteristics of the Union would be

1. The Eurasian Union must be a global competitor in the economic space.
2. It must be as developed as a part of Europe and economically it should be a bridge between the dynamic developments in the European Union, East, Southeast and South Asia.
3. The Eurasian Union should be formed as a self-sufficient financial body which will be accepted as a part of the new global financial system.
4. Geo-economically and geo-politically Eurasian integration should follow a special evolutionary and voluntary path in future.
5. Such a Union can only be achieved through wide participation and the support of the society (Nazarbayev 2011).

President Nazarbayev argues that much of the world is integrating and in the post-Soviet space this integration should work better since till recently it was an integrated economic space. While this initiative failed, President Nazarbayev reaffirmed his commitment to a union launching a new initiative in April 2007 that focused on borders and water management issues that had long complicated relations among the Central Asian states but also matters that could only be resolved collectively (Weitz 2008). The November 2007 decision to award Kazakhstan chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in 2010 recognized the country's growing importance in Eurasia. Kazakh officials characterized this as an endorsement of their country's successful economic and political reforms, their leading role in Europe and Central Asia and their contribution as a bridge between the former Soviet republics and other OSCE members (Weitz 2008).

On the broader international front the rhetorical significance of the Eurasian union is stated as a self-evident move. The President argues

> ….it is absolutely clear to us that the main tendency in world development today is global integration, and the inspiring example of the member countries of the European Union is finding support in the most varied regions of the world. Moves towards unification are evident in the countries of Latin America, South East Asia and the near East. Along the same lines is the idea, advanced by Kazakhstan and having many adherents beyond its frontiers, for the creation of a Eurasian Union on the territory of the former Soviet Union. This not only pursues obvious economic objectives but also assumes the integration of the former Soviet Republics in the fields of science, culture, education and information. I feel sure that in the next century and beyond, the united subcontinent of Europe and Asia must develop as a single unit for the future of our children and our descendants and that there will come a day when Europe and Asia will develop together, drawing upon their huge natural and human resources (Nazarbayev 1995b, November 15).

The Eurasian idea is therefore presented as the ideal for the future not just on a political and economic level but also at a cultural level. President Nazarbayev called for the establishment of a Eurasian research centre that would focus on the unique spiritual heritage of the Eurasian people.

President Nazarbayev's idea of a 'Eurasian' space therefore serves several political aims. It has been argued that one of the most important is that it situates his country squarely in the centre of a far greater and potentially more consequential entity (Vinkovetsky 2007). At first sight Kazakhstan is a landlocked state far from the world's principal land routes faced with a precarious trade balance and a difficult geopolitical situation. In his geopolitical analysis of Eurasia President Nazarbayev writes

> From the vantage point at the centre of Eurasia we can easily see that there is a process of building new systems of international security going on in the west. For example NATO is actively moving eastward directly to the borders of Russia. In the east and the south east Asian countries are continuing to seek ways of political and military cooperation within the bounds of their structures. If we look at a geographical map then it is easy to notice that there is a consecutive vertical row of countries of Eurasia from Russia in the north to India in the south (Central Asian countries, Iran, Pakistan) that does not yet link either with the east or with the west. I would call this continuous belt of countries situated along the meridian of the centre of Eurasia the 'belt of anticipation'. Despite all the differences among these countries they constitute a relatively solid group from the point of view of potential resources and possibilities of influencing not only the balance of power in Asia or Eurasia but even the geopolitical balance of the world. Security in Europe and especially in Asia relations between global economic centres of Western Europe and Southeastern Asia will to a significant degree depend on how the countries of this geopolitical "belt of anticipation" decide their positions and orientation.
>
> The biggest and so far the mightiest of these countries is Russia. Precisely her choice will decide stability in the world and in Eurasia specially (Nazarbayev 1995a, October 21).

Nazarbayev's 'belt of anticipation' is interesting particularly because it indicates a vertical definition of the Eurasian space that is generally visualized as a horizontal expanse. It is also significant in terms of the actual states that are included, Russia, India and the countries in between, that is the Central Asian republics, Iran and Pakistan. The silences are of course more than important. The definition excludes Afghanistan, a state that is now sought to be identified as a link within the Eurasian space. What is also significant is that this definition places Kazakhstan squarely in the centre of this particular imagined Eurasia. In fact it has been argued that President Nazarbayev has moved his capital so that it coincides with the centre of Eurasia as he defines it. But then there is another dimension to Nazarbayev's Eurasia. It is also conceived of as a Union intended to promote a common economic space across the territory of the former Soviet Union. Nazarbayev was clear in pointing out that this was not meant as a restoration of the Soviet Union but as a post-Soviet construct that loosely resembled the European Union.

In a sense, this vertical definition of course has precedence in a vision where a North-South linkage was conceptualized as an alternative transport route that would link Russia, Iran and India. The corridor was conceived as stretching from ports in India across the Arabian Sea to the southern Iranian port of Bandar Abbas where goods would then transit Iran and the Caspian Sea ports in the Russian sector of the Caspian. From there the route stretches along the Volga River via Moscow to northern Europe. Along with Russia, India and Iran this project was subsequently joined by Belarus, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Azerbaijan. The Turkman President

Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov in his meetings with Iranian leaders also expressed interest in the project (*Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* 2007, June 20).

The following section moves on to an examination of Astana as a national brand. As Adrien Fauve argues, this is interesting as it shows how a materially constituted locus of power can become a socially constructed label or idea (Fauve 2015, p. 111). The making of the city points to how a provincial town became a capital city and was elevated to global status. Fauve goes on to argue that while the process of this national self-legitimation is similar to the one that Laura Adams refers to in the Uzbek case there is also a difference.[2] Adams talks about the re-appropriation of a traditional, mostly Soviet cultural legacy whereas Fauve's purpose is to underline 'the assemblage of people, ideas, places, and things that render Astana as a living object or an actor-network' (Fauve 2015, p. 212). This meant that while Astana was just one part of the Kazakh state it came to represent the entire state.

3.2 Astana as the Heart of Eurasia

> Geopolitics is certainly not geometry and a country's geographic centre is least of all like the geometric centre of a circle. The geopolitical centre of Kazakhstan is not just linear measurements and dimensions, but in many ways non-linear ideas and perspectives. The question was in fact not so much about moving the capital to the exact centre, if there is even a geographical centre of Kazakhstan. Rather it was about moving the capital to a point, which would become the centre of Kazakhstan in many ways. Not only geographically, but also the centre of gravity of geopolitical, social, economic and cultural ties and relationships within and outside the state. Astana—the new capital of Kazakhstan—also being very near to the geographical centre of the country, has become precisely this 'generalizing' and 'integrating' centre (Nazarbayev 2005).

In his book, *The Kazakhstan Way*, Nazarbayev writes that the idea of the transfer and construction of a new capital came to him in 1992, though he did not breathe a word about this to anyone since the Kazakh economy would be unable to carry the plan through. When he did start talking about it he was met by opposition. On 6 July 1994, in a speech to plenary session of the Supreme Soviet of Kazakhstan, Nazarbayev formally put forward the idea of the transfer of capital. His arguments were based on the fact that Almaty no longer met the requirements of the capital of an independent state in either economic or geopolitical terms and a new state needed a new capital. Also because of Almaty's high propensity for earthquakes, new construction cost more; in any case Almaty lacked the administrative buildings that were required of a sovereign state. But there was always the idea that 'the capital should be in the centre of the country' (Nazarbayev 2008).

Various options had been considered, among them Zhezkazgan and Ulytau, since it was in Ulytau that the 'Khans had once resided…and in by gone days, tribes from all over Kazakhstan used to gather here. It was here that the Kazakh nation

[2]This is a reference to Adams (2010).

became, as it were, cemented' (Nazarbayev 2008, p. 300). However, all such options, including cities like Karaganda and Aktiubinsk were found to be unsuitable. It was Akmola that was found to be most suitable. 'Akmola was almost in Kazakhstan's geographical centre, close to important economic regions and at the crossroads of major transport networks….Akmola was the centre of the virgin lands which also indicated that it was suitable to have the status of capital city' (Nazarbayev 2008, p. 300).

Nazarbayev summarized the reasons for the transfer as

1. The transfer was demanded by the need to strengthen Kazakhstan in geopolitical terms. That is why particular attention was paid to the capital city. Astana is at the centre of the Eurasian continent and a synthesis of European and Asian traditions. It has equal access to the South, East, North and West.
2. Not a small role was played in this decision by security considerations. Ideally an independent state's capital should be some distance away from external borders and located in the middle of the country.
3. Kazakhstan's economy needed improving. The transfer has had a positive knock-on effect in that respect. For instance district centres have started developing and there have been upturns in branches of economy such as building material, road surfacing, energy and machine building industries. Housing construction is developing at an unprecedented rate.
4. While transferring the capital to a region with a multi ethnic population we have confirmed our intention to set up a stable multi-ethnic state, maintaining and enhancing friendly relations between the people living in Kazakhstan (Nazarbayev 2008, pp. 304–305).

Timur is attributed to having remarked, 'If you want to know our power, look at our buildings'. This sentiment, according to Catherine Poujol, was addressed to both domestic as well as the foreign population. She goes on to argue that the urban and architectural transformations that are in process today follow the same aim of assertion of national independence and connecting it to new state identity for the international and domestic audience. Each capital projects its own distinct identity and for Astana it is architectural eclecticism. She points out that apart from promoting itself as the new capital and the symbol of the growing economic strength of Kazakhstan, the numerous political, economic and cultural events that take place in the city reflects its quest for international legitimacy. She argues that the city reflects both the 'despotic oriental' style of governance in the choice of the city being impelled by the decision of the President to architectural patterns and the setting of the central building, the Baiterek with an imprint of the President's hand but also the nomadic culture of the Kazakh people in the shape of buildings in the form of yurts with green space in between as also in the legend that forms the basis of the Baiterek (Poujol 2009).

However, as Bernard Koppen argues, the task of nation building, reflecting Kazakh history and creating a vision for the future is more complicated than it might seem at first glance (Koppen 2013, pp. 590–605). The Kazakhs were a

pastoral nomadic people of Turko-Mongol stock, and did not exist as a cohesive national entity before organizing themselves into three loosely united hordes. Territorial domination, however, was a relative concept given the nomadic livestock breeding economy. The territory occupied by the hordes roughly corresponds to the Lesser horde in western Kazakhstan, the Middle horde in northern and central Kazakhstan and the Great horde in south eastern Kazakhstan. By the late seventeenth century the hordes were faced with the movement of Kalmyk Mongol tribesmen moving west and occupying Kazakh pasturelands. The Khans of the Lesser and Middle hordes sought Russian assistance against them by swearing allegiance to the Russian Tsars. Over the next 150 years, the whole Kazakh territory was incorporated into the Russian Empire and colonized. During the Russian Revolution the Kazakhs formed the Alash Orda provisional government (1917–20) with an attempt to establish an independent Kazakhstan. Although short lived this is accepted as the first attempt to create an independent Kazakh statehood. Eventually, the Bolsheviks gained control, and Kazakhstan became an SSR within the Soviet Union. The collectivization campaigns of the 1920s and 1930s and the Virgin Lands campaign, transformed the traditional way of life as agriculture and industries were introduced accompanied by the immigration of Russian settlers. Nation building process was complicated both by the sheer numbers of non-ethic Kazakhs and the fact that traditionally Kazakhs tended to identify themselves through lineage rather than the modern markers of identity, language and religion.

The circumstances surrounding Kazakhstan's independence, also presented a challenge. The decision to dissolve the USSR was accepted with reluctance and the then Kazakh First Secretary negotiated for the inclusion of the Central Asian states within the CIS. Kazakhstan was also a multiethnic multi confessional state. It has been argued that at this juncture, capital relocation was an attractive strategy

> In Kazakhstan, most former nomads and semi nomadic people did not experience state institutions until the twentieth century. The Astana move was to counter the criticism that Kazakhstan was fundamentally unprepared for independent statehood because Kazakhs lacked a tradition of governance beyond the local level (Schatz 2004, p. 128).

The construction of a new state capital and urban iconography was therefore critical to the emerging Kazakh state. Yet, this had to be reconciled with the state's multi-ethnic population. It is within this context that the frequent use of the term Eurasian becomes important. Nazarbayev suggested that all people living within the territorial confines of Kazakhstan were Eurasian, an amalgam of people located at the heart of a super continent. References to Eurasianism were a strategy to promote inter-ethnic convergence and the repeated references to Astana, the new capital, as the heart of Eurasia makes sense within this context.

However, it was also underlined that the ethnic Kazakhs were the dominant nationality and that the current borders of the republic corresponded with the historically formed area of the habitation of the Kazakh people. There was also emphasis on the fact that the Kazakhs had no other state entity anywhere in the world that would show concern for their preservation and development reflected in the *oralman* policy of the state. This emphasis on the Kazakhs as the titular nation

was also reflected in the implicit and explicit references to traditions of pastoralism and nomadism. Icons referring to nomadic traditions are ubiquitous in public spaces particularly in Astana. The official state symbol includes a *shanyrak*, the round aperture at the top of the yurt, the nomad's mobile home. Circles are also a common presence as they represent perfection, the course of time, natural cycles, the shape of the sun and infinity (Koppen 2013). The central building of the city, the Baiterek, reflects this in its architectural style. According to legend, a bird called Samruk laid a golden egg in the magical tree Baiterek every year. The egg symbolized fertility and the continuation of the peoples. A dangerous dragon once tried to destroy the egg and therefore the whole Kazakh nation. However, it was defeated by the fearless warrior Jertostyk. The icon of the city therefore reflects a motif from ethnic Kazakh mythology translated into built environment. It also has a casting of the President's hand as a metaphor of his role as ruler and creator (Koppen 2013). Edward Schatz argues that the central imagery etched into Astana's design highlighted Kazakhstan's place as a legitimate actor in the international community (Schatz 2003). The symbolic face of Astana was created to underscore the outward, international aspect of the city.

There were clear indications from the beginning about the architectural appearance and the symbolic content of the city. The Mater Plan itself explained in great detail the importance of the new capital for the nation building process in Astana. It pointed out that the planned city would be Eurasian in character, represent national tradition and history and embody the future that the state envisaged for itself (Bissenova 2014, p. 128). Astana would represent a Eurasian style capital city characterized by the harmonious coexistence of eastern and western culture in its urban form, function and layout. This Eurasian form was also intended as a leitmotiv of Nazarbayev's geopolitical viewpoint. Eurasianism was seen as an organic outgrowth of the territory.

> Our geographical position is at the crossroads in the Eurasian region. The process of globalization of world economic and political processes elevates this factor as the key one. Our ancestors as a part of a united family of Turkic peoples used this important strategic factor to their advantage; along the legendary Silk Route, a wide trading corridor between European and Asiatic countries was organized. Today we are beginning to restore it in cooperation with other countries of our region and with the support of the world community. Of course, in the future of the trading system, financial currents and migrations of people between Europe and Asia will grow. For this very reason, to say nothing about the many politically stabilizing factors, I issued forth and will develop the idea of Eurasianism, which has, I am sure, a strategic future (Nazarbayev 1997).

Astana was a critical part of this vision and just as Kazakhstan was located in the crossroads of culture, Astana enjoyed a similar location at the heart of Kazakhstan. The ceremonies at the official representation of Astana in June 1998 displayed harmonious multi ethnicity. The relocation of the capital was a symbolic resource for reconciling alternative visions of nationhood. It has been argued that in Astana urban development was also perceived as a political tool. Architecture and town planning were reserved domains of the President and he was involved with every detail of the planning (Gintrac 2009). The 'global' image of the city was

encouraged by a state policy where well known urban planners and architects were invited to Astana. Landmark buildings include

> A place in the shape of a pyramid and a shopping mall in the shape of a transparent tent designed by Norman Foster, a concert hall by the Italian architect Manfredi Nicoletti and an airport by Kisho Kurokawa who is also considered to be the author of the Master Plan for the whole city. These are buildings that became a part of 'postcard Astana' in promotions locally and abroad (Bissenova 2014, p. 128).[3]

Alima Bissenova argues that Astana's experiments with international sources of architecture and urban planning reveals the aspirations of a Kazakh state and its people to acquire a cultural and symbolic capital that would enable them to be counted among modern cities in the developed world (Bissenova 2014, p. 129). Both Bissenova and Fauve argue that the opening of the Nazarbayev University in Astana with collaboration with major global universities was another reflection of this 'brand borrowing' strategy (Bissenova 2014, p. 144).

While talking about the visual impact of the buildings in the central space of Astana, Amanzhol Tchikanaiev, the chief architect of the city, in an interview in Astana in July 2010 noted, 'The image of Kazakhstan is linked to the giving up of nuclear weapons left on our territory by the Soviets (in the 1990s) and inter-ethnic peace and accord. This is something we must showcase to attract tourists. To get respected we need a niche' (Fauve 2015, p. 116).

It was intended that the new city would signify a break with the Soviet legacy and herald the birth of a new nation in the form of a new city that would be built by the Kazakhs themselves. Edward Schatz argues, 'The Astana move was symbolically to counter the criticism that Kazakhstan was fundamentally unprepared for independent statehood' (Fauve 2015, p. 128).

3.3 Conclusion

In post-Soviet Central Asia, the logic of governance has often placed foreign policy at the epicenter of propagandist discourses seeking identity redefinition through the manipulation of space and time (Anceschi 2014, pp. 733–749). The integration of nation building and foreign policy making has emerged as a critical narrative for regimes throughout the region where foreign policy rapidly evolved into a recurrent element of official propaganda. The external policies pursued by elites in these states intend to redefine public perceptions of the spatial and temporal dimensions of statehood to reinforce the domestic power of the incumbent regimes. The incorporation of foreign policy making within nation building, in these contexts, are however germane to regime building and post-Soviet leaders assigned foreign policy a temporal dimension in which the states' external outlooks acted as the link between

[3]Bissenova also describes in detail the complex process through which the Master Plan for Astana was finally agreed upon.

the past and the present. Luca Anceschi argues that in Kazakhstan, strategies of identity redefinition channeled through the spatialization and historicization of foreign policy were carried out through the progressive readjustment of the focus of foreign policy rhetoric. In the early and mid-1990s, official propaganda—in efforts to advance a civic identity hinged around the notion of sovereign, multi-ethnic statehood—centered its attention on the substantive policies implemented externally by Kazakhstan. After 1997–1998, the leadership's rhetoric concentrated on the glorification of the policy agency to promote regime centric identity among the population. It has been argued that the progressive intensification of Kazakhstan's Eurasianist rhetoric was accompanied by the acceleration and intensification of identity making where the leadership channeled a substantive portion of its identity shaping efforts through its Eurasianist discourse (Anceschi 2014, p. 734).

On 6 February 2014, at a meeting with intellectuals during a trip to the western oil town of Atyrau, President Nursultan Nazarbayev suggested changing the name of Kazakhstan to Kazakh Eli (Kazakh nation).[4] He noted that the suffix 'stan' was frightening off people and that foreigners show more interest in Mongolia whose population is just 2 million than in Kazakhstan. Apart from sparking debates among the state's minorities the name change would be costly as significant amounts have been spent on establishing Kazakhstan as an international brand. As a country's rebranding it is quite radical though not the first. In 1993 the capital Alma Ata became Almaty. Four years later the capital was moved to Akmola which was renamed Astana. However, it brought into question the 'global' Eurasianist perspective that was so central to Nazarbayev's politics over the last two decades. Needless to say it gave rise to both questions and speculations until in June 2014, the Kazakh Foreign Minister stressed that Kazakhstan would not change its name.[5] Was this hint of a change in the Kazakh 'brand' image reflective of a transformation in foreign orientation of the state or is the idea of a national community changing? Was the state becoming more 'Kazakh' and was this a reflection of this fact? Has the state moved beyond the need for an emphasis on calling for harmony and accord to a state comfortable in its 'Kazakh' image? While speculation thrived with the President himself pointing to the need for further public discussion, it also brought back into focus discussions on the relevance of branding as a political phenomenon in international politics.

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[4] *BBC News from Elsewhere* 2014, February 7.

[5] *Tengri News* 2014, June 13.

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Chapter 4
Reconstructed Pasts and Imperatives of Branding

Abstract The emergence of new states after the demise of the Soviet Union entailed both a reconfiguration of political space and a re-forging of collective identities within the borders of the states. In a sense this was inevitable. Defining the national self not only accomplishes a symbolic break with the previous political community but also sets out the parameters of statehood with regard to cultural rights. Yet, defining the parameters of this particularism is fraught with difficulties as the new states tend to be bundles of competing traditions gathered accidentally into concocted political frameworks. This chapter examines this paradox in two senses. It begins by examining two different kinds of margins in the two states. In Uzbekistan, this is a margin that exists within the state whereas in Kazakhstan this is a margin that is intruding from outside in the form of migrant labours from the other Central Asian states. In both the 'image' that the state projects of itself has been compromised. In the Uzbek case by the questioning of a centralized unified entity and in the Kazakh case by the questioning of a 'tolerant' state whose image has suffered because of the resistance to this intrusion. The concluding section examines the image of societies with multiple faiths and identities that both Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan portray and relates this with the imperatives of nation building. As "post-Soviet" states, both Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan have been faced with reconciling multiple traditions of faith, with the imperatives of their 'image' as states with a singular faith and the chapter examines how the states have negotiated these multiplicities.

Keywords Uzbekistan · Kazakhstan · Political space and collective identity · Margins and image · Multiple traditions of faith

The emergence of new states after the break-up of the Soviet Union demanded both reconfiguration of political space and re-forging of collective identities within the borders of the states. In a sense this was inevitable. As Anthony Smith notes, 'the rediscovery of the national self is not an academic matter, it is a pressing practical issue, vexed and contentious which spells life or death for the nationalist project of building a nation' (Smith 1986). Defining the national self not only achieves a

A. Sengupta, *Symbols and the Image of the State in Eurasia*,
SpringerBriefs in Political Science, DOI 10.1007/978-981-10-2392-7_4

symbolic break with the previous political community but also sets out the parameters of statehood with regard to cultural rights. Yet, defining the parameters of this particularism is fraught with difficulties as the new states tend to be bundles of competing traditions gathered accidentally into concocted political frameworks (Geertz 1973, p. 244). This was as true of the post-Soviet space as many other parts of the world. In fact, the emergence of new states in the 1990s meant that once again reconfiguration of states on the basis of ethnicity came into focus in the process of the formation of states. Of course 'ethnicity' and particularly 'majority ethnicities' had always defined nation-states. However, the formation of the 'nation-state' had somehow signaled that problems of ethnicity within states had been resolved. The underlying assumption behind this was the fact that once the 'nation' had been formed the need to take recourse to 'reconstructed' ethnic pasts would no longer be significant. Yet, recent events seem to point out that modern nations and nationalism have only deepened the meanings and scope of older ethnic concepts and structures.

As Stavenhagen argues, while the existence of numerous groups within the territorial limits of the states is a reality, from the perspective of the modern nation state the existence of ethnically distinct 'sub-national' groups, particularly when they are politically organized, is always seen to represent a potential threat and as a destabilizing force. This is specially the case when power in the state rests principally with a dominant or majority ethnic group, or when the national society itself constitutes an ethnically stratified system (Stavenhagen 1996, p. 2). Indeed, it is noted that the possibility of ethnic conflict remains inherent within the idea of a nation state itself. Within a world territorially divided into a number of political units there exists numerous groups who do not identify with the dominant model of the nation state or who are not accepted as full members of this state or the nation which it purports to be or represent, or who are actually excluded from it. Even in cases where the possibility of the conflict is potential, rather than real, states often resort to measures that are aimed at greater political and cultural cohesion. The 'image' that the state portrays of itself as a 'singular' entity requires the construction of a political, economic and social unit where marginality is reduced. The reality though remains otherwise.

The struggle of ethnic groups for recognition, equality or autonomy within the framework of an existing territorial state, or for independence from such a state, is not a recent phenomenon. Such endeavours, which are sometimes accompanied by violent conflict, have been inherent in the process of state formation and nation building. They have occurred not only at the juncture when large empires like the Tsarist, Ottoman and the Austro Hungarian broke up but also in the aftermath of decolonization within the successors states of the European empires. The counterpart of ethnic groups striving for recognition, equality or independence is an attempt by dominant elites to impose, preserve or extend their hegemony over other *ethnies* and or over territory which they claim as their own. And in the post-Soviet scenario both have been seen as crucial. In fact, today it is a truism that few states are 'nation-states' in the sense of their territories being congruent with their ethnic populations. Not only are ethnic populations of most states mixed, as most states

today have significant ethnic minorities, but they are also deeply divided. Boundaries of states do not coincide with the extent of any single ethnic population. And within each 'nation state' are full-fledged nations, *ethnie* and ethnic groups. However, the nationalist political demand remains that groups with historical myths of common origin, culture and destiny should rule themselves and that political boundaries should be coterminous with cultural boundaries. This is because while nationalism is a political identification, at its core lies a cultural claim that national movements are motivated by a desire to assume the existence and flourishing of a particular community, culture tradition and language identified with a particular 'ethnic' group. This is also a crucial part of the 'image' that the state projects of itself domestically but also within the global arena.

Ethnic groups are formed and acquire their identities as a result of different historical processes. Thus, some *ethnies* have ancient origins and are able to trace their ancestry continuously from earlier times to the present. Others have been constituted more recently. While most nations argue that they consist of ancient *ethnies*, in most situations, modern *ethnies* develop as a result of structural changes in their countries. This is true of the Central Asian states today, all of which claim continuous descent from ancient times and note that the ancient homelands coincide with the limits of the modern state. One of the most significant problems that any examination of the ethnic question involves is a determination of the clarity in the concepts of *ethnie*, ethnic groups, people, nation, nationality, community, clan and tribe. Here, a significant difficulty lies in the fact that the terminology used by scholars frequently reflects regional or national intellectual traditions or ideologies. For example, the connotation of the word tribe, used principally to denote groups in Africa and Asia, reflects the nineteenth century imperial ideas about these groups as lacking any organization or structures of governance. A correct understanding of the terms is therefore crucial in any analysis. Clans, for instance, generally denotes a unit of social action whose solidarity is based on kinship or a kinship like form of solidarity. Among the Uzbeks clans in the strict sense of the term does not exist. What are present are lineages of various sorts known as *qawm*, *taifa* or *avlod*. As Shahram Akbarzadeh notes, what have been identified as 'clans', in the Central Asian region are a collection of separate extended families living in the same area though subsequent intermarriage could lead familial bonds (Akbarzadeh 1996). Patron/client relationships and local alliances that are today dubbed as 'clans' actually represent geographically based factions among the elite.

Ethnic groups have been variously defined.[1] In broad terms *ethnies* usually share a common history, hold a common myth of descent, have a distinctive and shared culture, are associated with a specific territory, harbour a sense of solidarity and hold a collective name (Smith 1986). Frederik Barth added that an *ethnie* should also be recognized as somewhat different to their neighbours, i.e. they must recognize that their 'we' is different from 'others' beyond recognized borders (Barth 1990). Generally, ethnicities have been defined as 'pre-national' forms of

[1]For a detailed study see Hutchinson and Smith (1996).

integration that represent historical antecedents of the modern nations. However, ethnic solidarity does not in itself signify that a nation exists. It is also impossible to pinpoint accurately when an *ethnie* is transformed into a 'nation'. In fact scholars like Antony Smith ascribe similar characteristics to nation and ethnic groups except that nation also include a mass public culture, a common economy, legal rights and duties for all its citizens (Smith 1991).

Kamolouddin Abdoullaev points out that in all the post-Soviet states today the paradigm of class consciousness has been replaced by ethnicity and ethnic nationalism has emerged as the dominant ideology. Replacing the proletariat and his ally the peasant the 'ethnic person' is gradually becoming a central and dynamic figure in events throughout the former Soviet Union. He goes on to say

> Ethnicity may be said to represent an inheritable group solidarity based on common origin, culture and historic destiny. In other words ethnicity emerges as a social instinct of a collective way of life. A positive feature of ethnicity is that it is an important means of group adaptation to the surrounding world, helping it to survive under difficult political and economic conditions. Hence the instinct of group identity appears as an instinct for national self-preservation (Abdoullaev 1998).

The significance of the relationship between the ethnies and the nation state lies in the fact that it has been traditionally assumed that it is either with the transformation of an ethnic group in a multiethnic state into a self-conscious political entity or by the amalgamation of diverse groups and the formation of an inter-ethnic, composite or homogeneous national culture through the agency of the modern state that a nation is formed. The latter, also identified as a 'state to nation' model, gives a strong role to the state in the construction of the new civic nations and political communities. Although the 'state to nation' route was historically territorial it has always included within it cultural elements. The political nation therefore always incorporated both civic and ethnic factors based usually upon the ethnic core that created the state (Sengupta 2003, p. xiv).

In fact, in the Central Asian case an interesting combination of the two processes went hand in hand. The Uzbek case of modern nation-state formation, for example, is usually identified as a 'state to nation' model where the formation of the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic subsequently led to the creation of an Uzbek nation and finally to the formation of an independent nation-state. It is also noted that the process of national territorial delimitation involved a major political and social restructuring of the region. At the turn of the century a region that is said to have consisted of a combination of multi-ethnic Islamic states or Khanates were restructured in an effort to incorporate the major nationalities of the region into their own republics. At the same time, these institutions were instrumental in further developing a national classificatory grid within the region through their often Soviet orchestrated, language development programmes, codification of national histories and creation of national symbols. The process of 'nation' formation was thus seen to have been set into motion. What such explanations tend to ignore is that an internal process of cultural transformation, through the Jadid movement, had also already begun in the region by the turn of the century that had looked towards the

amalgamation of the various groups under a common identity and a change in the functioning of the political structures.

In any case the recognition of the two roads to nationalism implies that the myth of a common ethnic origin for nations is in many cases insufficient to explain the 'nationalist phenomenon'. People construct themselves as members of national collectivities not just because they and their forefathers shared a past but also because they believe that their futures are interdependent. This explains the subjective sense of commitment of people into collectivities and nations such as in settler societies and post-colonial states where there is no shared myth of common origin (Yuval-Davis 1993). At the same time it can explain the dynamic nature of any collectivity and the perpetual process of reconstruction of boundaries which takes place in them, via immigration, naturalization, conversion and other similar social and political processes. In the Uzbek case for instance, while the construction of the myth of common origin continues, the significance of the recognition of a 'common destiny' possibly cannot be ignored. It is the success of the leadership in the construction of this common destiny and the recognition of it that signifies the success of the nationalist endeavor (Sengupta 2003). In the Kazakh case on the other hand the commonality in history is transcended by a new commonality that the state provides as an alternative. It is this reconstructed state rhetoric about the significance of the multi-ethnic, multi-cultural existence that dominates the common existence.

The movements for a revitalized civil society in Uzbekistan, for instance, begun in the post 1985 period when certain crucial cultural, ecological and social issues were addressed. During this period of transition, the CPUz (Communist Party of Uzbekistan) had to contend with the emergence of two organizations, *Birlik* and *Erk*. An examination of the programme of these two organizations shows that most of the issues addressed here were later appropriated by the independent Uzbek state and the ruling party the PDP (Peoples Democratic Party). However, even in Uzbekistan marginalization of these forces has been attempted. This is evident from the fact that even an independent evaluation of the activities of these organizations is difficult as they have been declared illegal and as such no official press or newspaper documents their activities. In writings that document the multiparty nature of the state, they are cited only after detailed reports on officially recognized parties. An interesting example of this is an article in the *Obshyestvyennie Nayuk v Uzbekistane*. The article points out that the Uzbek state today grants the right for democratic participation and formation of associations. Pluralism is now an accepted part of the state. It then goes on to talk of the rights accorded to the Peoples' Democratic Party and the *Vatan Tarakki* to choose and field their candidates for elections. The election platforms of both are recorded in detail which includes that of a 'strong state with a humanitarian policy'. Other parties like the Social Democratic Party and the *Adolat* are also examined. It then only incidentally mentions the formation of two other political parties and the development of a 'movement' *Khalk Birlik* (Duekov 1997).

Another factor that has to be kept in mind is that objective ethnic attributes and collective identities are never permanent unchanging feature of groups. Culturally transmitted identities often become politicized and in fact an understanding of this transition is crucial since in a number of situations failure to identify this transition or a lack of understanding of these changes lead to conflicts. However, it must also be kept in mind that ethnic and cultural diversity by itself does not lead to conflict between groups (Stavenhagen 1996). In most cases ethnic conflicts pit specific groups against an ethnocratic state, that is, a nation state controlled by a dominant *ethnie*. In any case it has to be kept in mind that there are different kinds of ethnic groups and different kinds of conflict. In numerous cases ethnic minorities who are marginalized or discriminated against may organize or mobilize in order to achieve parity. Such civic and political movements do not necessarily lead to conflict but they may evolve into conflict if the legitimate demands of the groups are not met. A different kind of situation obtains when a subordinate ethnic minority demands recognition of its group rights by the state, relating to recognition of the distinctiveness of the group. Other kinds of conflicts occur between politicized ethnic groups that compete for state power within the framework of the modern electoral process or by extra legal means which occurred at the margins of both Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan.

The chapter moves on to examine two different kinds of margins in the two states. In Uzbekistan, this is a margin that exists within the state whereas in Kazakhstan this is a margin that is intruding from outside in the form of migrant labours from the other Central Asian states. In both the 'image' that the state projects of itself has been compromised, in the Uzbek case by the questioning of a centralized unified entity and in the Kazakh case by the questioning of a 'tolerant' state whose image has suffered because of the resistance to this intrusion.

4.1 Margins as Imperatives

The making of political identity has inevitably been accompanied by a search for territorial spaces as the legitimate homeland of communities. This sense of spatial identity and the search for homelands gained momentum in the wake of post imperial attempts at assigning clearly demarcated spaces to groups defined as 'nationalities' and the subsequent acceptance of identities as place bound. The assertion behind this emphasis is the claim that every community essentially belongs to its 'homeland'. This sense of exclusiveness was enhanced by the naming of the entities after the majority national communities, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and so forth literally meaning 'land of the Kazakhs, land of the Uzbeks'. The 'national' problem, today, therefore has a distinct territorial dimension. That is, indigenous nations resident in the state lay claim to particular geographic regions as their respective *national homelands*. The boundaries of these national homelands are perceptual and their legitimation claimed by nationalist who are both looking back to a mythical golden age when the 'nation' dominated vast lands, and also looking

forward to a time when it will once again regain sovereignty over the territorial spaces it considers home. In multinational homelands this exclusivity often becomes problematic as, very often, the claims of nations overlap.

It is now accepted that a close emotional attachment to a perceived homeland is a universal phenomenon among nations. This nationalist affinity for a homeland is motivated by more than simply a desire to control resources. The more subjective sense of place which ties nation to homeland is also an important element in the formation and maintenance of national self-consciousness which in turn revolves around a shared sense of common past and a belief in a common future. A nation's sense of a shared past refers not only to a mythical common ancestry but also to a common geographical birthplace. The homeland therefore becomes a part of the nation in the perception of its members. This relationship is clearly evident in this Uzbek verse by Chogan Ergash

> See that my generation would comprehend the Homeland's worth
> Men were always transformed to dust, it seems.
> The Homeland is the remains of our forefathers
> Who turned into dust for this precious soil. (Allworth 1973)

The distinction between homeland, nation and community is however a difficult one to make and in most cases overladen with naturalistic, biological and moral imageries. Yet, the theoretical alignment of home, homeland and nation remains significant for reinforcing and strengthening notions of belonging.

The determination of previously determined space brings to the forefront the significance of identification of homelands and the claim that the current boundaries of the state correspond to these ancient homelands. Along with this, the construction of a 'post-Soviet' identity becomes imperative for the legitimation of the new states. For Uzbek nationalists today, for instance, it is deemed crucial to have a political community to belong to and to define that community in terms of language, religion and history. Yet, this requirement also inevitably results in a dilemma for minority groups whose own claims of a homeland are then challenged and cultural identities questioned. A closer look at this shaping of a 'post-Soviet future', through the negotiation of the politics of transition by the state and the question of how the new state legitimizes its emergence as a new entity and deals with the problems of transition to a new state form, becomes crucial here. Such examinations clearly demonstrate that there is recognition of the fluidity of cultural identity within the boundaries of the state which predicates the nationalist imperatives and constitutes the dilemma of a transitional polity.

It is often pointed out that the 'restoration of national tradition' currently underway in Uzbekistan is the official Uzbek phrase for nativization of state institutions. This has been attempted through a process of appropriation of local institutions for the purposes of state building. It has been also argued that this appropriation, however, alienates non indigens and sets limits to who can be included within the Uzbek nation. Here an understanding of the way that 'Uzbekness' is defined today would be significant. The most significant aspect of this understanding is the realization that to an extent this very assertion is

problematic. Yet, the requirement for the construction of a new state necessitates the construction of a political community.

A political community has been defined as one that encompasses a clearly defined geographically delimited space with shared experiences, attitudes, values and perceptions which are different from that of other states. A unified political culture refers to perceptions of history, shared beliefs and values that are the focus of loyalty and identity by being common to the majority of the population (Brown and Gray 1979). One of the most essential components of the construction of a political community is the requirement of a collective historical memory. Here, the existence of a tradition of statehood is bound to be crucial. Similarly the existence of a common language and culture is significant. Though most significant is, perhaps, an ideology of state building. Yet very often the margins of the state remain isolated from this national ideology. In the Uzbek case both the eastern and the western margins have remained problematic. The western Karakalpak border is also interesting since it is a margin whose history is disputed between the Uzbeks and the Kazakhs.

Karakalpakstan is today an autonomous republic within Uzbekistan. However, it was not originally a part of Uzbekistan. During the Soviet period control of the territory occupied by the Karakalpak people were transferred a total of three times in slightly less than a decade. The Karakalpaks were first granted a titular territory in 1925. Then the Karakalpaks were administratively separated between the Uzbek SSR and the Kazakh ASSR and awarded the status of Autonomous Oblast. In 1930 the Karakalpak AO was transferred to the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic. In 1936, it was joined to the Uzbek SSR and given the status of Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic. The Republic of Karakalpakstan has its own constitution and laws but these are subservient to the Uzbek state. Chapter 17 of the Uzbek Constitution contains six articles that deal directly with the legal status of Karakalpakstan. The first article states that the sovereign Republic of Karakalpakstan is part of the Republic of Uzbekistan and that the sovereignty of the republic shall be protected by the Republic of Uzbekistan. The second article states that the republic shall have its own constitution which would be in accordance with the constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan. It is also clearly stated that the laws of the Republic of Uzbekistan shall be binding on the territory of the Republic of Karakalpakstan. The constitution also allows the republic to secede on the basis of a nation-wide referendum held by the people of Karakalpakstan. It guarantees that the territories and boundaries of the Karakalpak Republic shall not be changed without the consent of the republic and that it has the right to determine its administrative and territorial structures.

While in reality the legal and administrative structures in Karakalpakstan are subordinate to the central government in Tashkent it is interesting that in the large numbers of new writings on Karakalpakstan it is referred to as the *national republic* of Karakalpakstan, an interpretation of the reality, which may well be at variance

with that of the Uzbek state's.[2] Thus there may well be different levels of interpretation of current history, as well as resentment about unequal development in the regions away from the center. This is particularly evident, once again in the Karakalpak region as the proximity to the Aral Sea has meant that the area has been worst hit by the environmental changes affected by the shrinking of the Sea.[3]

On the other hand, Kazakhstan's resource fuelled economic boom and thriving market economy have turned it into a flourishing migrant receiving state. This image of Kazakhstan as a receiver has benefitted from a consistent state policy to encourage the return of the ethnic Kazakh diaspora referred to as the *oralman* under a state sponsored repatriation programme. However, unlike the *oralman* programme, migrant workers from other Central Asian states remain unaccounted and invisible to state authorities due to lack of appropriate legal framework and labour policies that dooms them to an illegal and irregular status. Despite lower wages many migrant workers from Central Asia choose Kazakhstan to look for jobs since it is closer to their home countries and easier for them to adapt to local cultural norms (Dave 2012). Since most work illegally, there are few correct estimates with numbers varying widely. About two thirds are from Uzbekistan, some 25 % from Kyrgyzstan and the rest from Tajikistan and other CIS countries. At least half of them work in construction and in work that is shunned by the locals. Several others work in the expanding service sector, catering, transportation, delivery, retail and sales and the rest work as seasonal labours in agriculture, in tobacco, cotton fields, food stuff packaging and processing. The Central Asian migrant labour movement had traditionally been a seasonal one, where most travelled as unskilled labors with no intention to settle.[4]

While labour migration remains a reality there is no official statistics or data available on the role of the migrant workers in the labour force or in the informal economy. It is evident that though the state authorities continue to fight illegal migration, regarding it as a security threat or as promoting criminal activities, they covertly allow influential recruiters or employers to hire the *gastarbeitery*. The only change is a December 2013 law that allows individual Kazakh citizens to hire foreign migrant workers with work permits. The law clearly states that it is intended to make it easier for Kazakhs to hire household help not for profit by private businesses (Weitz 2014). However, low skilled migrant labour primarily operated in the shadow sphere. This meant that state or legal focus on the migrants was practically non-existent. The urban residents and the media, however, tended to be critical. Reflective of this negativity is this article which says

> Gastarbeiter—an ill shaven person with a pale look and the smell of cheap deodorant. This labour migrant is shabbily dressed with a scared look. He is afraid of everything, cold,

[2]A number of new dissertations and writings reflect this. See for instance, Akhundjanov (1992).

[3]The concern with the need for economic recovery is reflected in articles as Vyektyemirov (1997).

[4]There have been exceptions. In the aftermath of the Osh conflicts in 2010, the profile of the Uzbek migrant from Kyrgyzstan changed dramatically. Entire families including women and children were seen to be on the move for good. See Abdurasulov (2012).

> police, dark streets on which ill fed lads walk with hands tucked into their pockets, ever so watchful babushka in the bazaars who suspect a thief or terrorist in the face of foreign nationality. He is vulnerable from all corners because he has no rights, is cut off from his homeland and doesn't know the laws of a foreign land (Dave 2012).

Bhavna Dave argues that despite its carefully cultivated image as a peaceful and tolerant state with a long tradition of hospitality, Kazakhstan is neither migrant welcoming nor a migrant seeking state. The term migrant or migration is used in law, official statements and media reports to refer to the ethnic Kazakh returnees—*oralman*—and to the internal rural migrants to cities. However, there are increasing reports of how the *oralman* faces innumerable problems in negotiating the legal institutional and bureaucratic obstacles in formalizing their status (Kamziyeva 2011). Some of these had meant the suspension of the programme 2 years ago in the wake of the unrest in western Kazakhstan which was partly attributed to the social discontent stemming from the mismanaged migration of Kazakhs from abroad.[5] The programme has been restarted in an attempt to limit Russia's potential ability to influence Kazakh politics particularly in northern Kazakhstan. Under new terms, perks to attract ethnic Kazakhs have been reintroduced including paid travel and subsidized housing, but to be eligible for the benefits migrants are required to settle in government selected areas. Of the seven target areas, six are in northern Kazakhstan, along the Kazakh border with Russia, which has sizeable Russian population. While Kazakhstan claims that this had nothing to do with demographics and everything with economy, the fact that Kazakhstan is also offering incentives for internal migration northwards seems to indicate that Kremlin's policies in Crimea and the armed separatist movement in the Donbass have a role to play in the recent reinstatement of the policy (Lillis 2014).

The Kazakh Migration Law of August 2011 identified three key directions and objectives of migration. First, facilitating repatriation, settlement and integration of the *oralman*, denoting an ethno-national vision; second maintenance of national security and prevention of illegal migration, reflecting a 'securitization' perspective; and third management of internal migratory processes from rural to urban areas, particularly resettlement of citizens residing in ecologically depressed regions to other regions, which addresses issues of social welfare and equal distribution (Dave 2012). The law also contains a quota for highly skilled foreign labour. The quota is miniscule. It was set at 66,300 in 2009 but then reduced to a third in 2011. The law is however silent about the status of CIS labour migrants who can enter the country legally under a free visa free regime, indicating that the purpose of the visit is

[5]In the energy rich western regions of Kazakhstan there is discontent due to the perception that the local people do not benefit sufficiently from the petro dollars that drives the Kazakh economy. The Ozen Munaygaz had been at the centre of protests in Zhanaozen where energy sector workers protested over pay since May 2011. Violence broke out on 16 December, the Kazakh independence day, with the injured admitted with gunshot wounds. The violence came as a shock to the state which has an image of a state as a bastion of stability and a magnet for foreign investment. For details see Lillis (2011).

'personal' on the migration card. Such migrants are required to register within five days, may only remain for the authorized period of stay and cannot work.

An 'illegal migrant', under Kazakh Migration Laws is simply defined as a person who has 'violated the laws of the Republic of Kazakhstan pertaining to migration'. Migrants are routinely charged for violating the terms of stay under Article 394, Part 1 of the Code 'On violation by foreign citizens or stateless people of rules of stay in Kazakhstan' and deported for repeated violations under Part 2 of the same code. The 1 month limit is normally negotiated by leaving the country to reenter on a new migration card with a new 1 month period (Dave 2012). Many find it easier and cheaper to pay someone to take their passport for a new entry stamp. An entire informal industry has developed for acquiring documentation. However, many simply overstay and pay the administrative fine of about $100, which gives them a 12 day grace period within which to leave the country. A complex web of personal connections, strategies and informal arrangements enable the migrants to acquire the relevant documentation to maintain their status as a 'visitor' and keep their real status invisible to the law. Every lacuna in the law and every restriction imposed by the law are dealt with by relying on informal connections and personal networks and resorting to quasi-legal practices.

The state, on the other hand, remains trapped in a self-limiting discourse within the framework of 'nationalism' and 'securitization'. This prevents it from addressing the complexities of a rapidly growing economy and adopting appropriate migration laws. This is true of all the states in the region and results not just in depressed trade flows but also increasing numbers of 'illegal' migrants (Megoran et al. 2005).[6] Boundary enforcement measures are introduced and justified in terms of protecting the economic and political security of the state. Megoran (2005), through his study of the portrayal of Uzbekistan as a 'threatened state' has demonstrated how governments frame the state border not merely as a legal line on the map but rather as a moral border where the state is depicted as a realm of order, progress, stability and wealth surrounded by disorder, backwardness, chaos and poverty. However, such boundaries also tend to overlook economic considerations and fail to come to terms with everyday experiences of negotiating borders. This naturally leads to further erosion of its ability to regulate or manage migration flows and the informal labour market. However, this is also a way through which the state covertly allows migrant workers to remain invisible and illegal while utilizing the cheap labour that they provide. To acknowledge the scale of the undocumented and informal labour would entail an obligation to enact appropriate legislation. The Central Asian *gastarbeiter* experience is closely interlinked with a process of internal and trans-national migration that is connected with what is popularly known as *Kitaiskii bazaars* in the region and the consequent influx of both Chinese goods and migrants. On the one hand these markets have created opportunities for

[6]Border control policies of the Uzbek state for instance have been identified as theatrical/performative.

internal migration from rural to urban centres within Central Asia but have also encouraged the specter of 'social problems' that every migrant situation creates.

As 'post-Soviet' states both Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan have been faced with reconciling multiple traditions of faith with the imperatives of their image as states with a singular faith. The next section moves on to examine how the states have negotiated these multiplicities.

4.2 Imperatives of a 'Singular Faith' and Multiple Traditions of Society

Historically, Central Asia's religious geography has been home to a diversity of faiths. Yet, the general impression that one gets, from any discussion on Islam in the Central Asian region, is of a religion of an all pervasive character and one that completely overwhelmed the earlier traditions prevalent in the region. That this is less than the whole truth became evident when in the course of the current rediscovery of 'roots' the search was more towards a pre-Islamic tradition than one simply in search of Islam. The multiple religious experiences of the region, in particular in the nomadic case, assumed numerous forms ranging from animism, totemism, shamanism, and polytheistic cults as well as Islam, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Manichaeism and Nestorian Christianity. A revival of all these forms in contemporary Central Asian literature in recent times is a pointer to their continuing relevance in society. Moreover, in the Central Asian situation, one would have to begin with the recognition of the fact that 'an Islam' was never a reality in the region. Islam, in Central Asia does not have a monolithic structure and various other trends like Sufism or even pre-Islamic faiths exerted influence and wielded power. In fact the Uzbek state itself recognizes *Navroz*, the festival symbolizing the arrival of spring and a remnant of Zoroastrian tradition, as an 'Uzbek' national tradition with a national holiday on the day. It is also important to remember that Islam itself is not monolithic. Apart from the major split between the Sunnis and the Shias, there were also different doctrinal tendencies—traditionalist, fundamentalist and in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, modernist. Interplay between dogmatic religion, Sufism and popular piety, 'official' Islam and 'popular' Islam can also be noticed in the region. All these streams share one faith, but the social structures in which their common Islamic sentiment developed differed, as well as their political experiences. In fact there are also regional differences in the practice of Islam even among the so called 'settled' peoples.

This leads to the realization that in most scholarship on religion in the Central Asian region, the emphasis on the crucial role of 'an Islam' probably resulted primarily from the supposed Soviet era emphasis on the identification of a structure that was to become the principle focus of anti-religious propaganda. As a result, it was pointed out that the current structure of Islam in the region is said to owe much of its organizational and academic existence to Soviet efforts. This, however,

ignored the fact that there was recognition of this diversity in Soviet ethnographic literature, which mapped the contours of these beliefs in detail. Examinations of Soviet research on the religious and cultural traditions of the region points to the fact that there was detailed examination of other religious traditions, albeit as *perezhitki* or survivals of older traditions that the socialist system would replace. This assumes importance in the light of the fact that official Soviet Islam was recognized as having remained a link in the chain of the modernist *Jadidist* version of Islam. Among the early forms of religion, totemism had attracted the attention of Soviet scholarship; attention had also been focused on magic, mythology and folklore. Soviet ethnography had also focused attention on syncretism, for example, on the syncretic character of 'everyday Islam' with the survivals of pre-Islamic 'cults', which having been absorbed by Islam, created distinctive everyday religious phenomena among different Muslim peoples. V. N. Basilov cites the works of O.A. Sukhareva, G. Snesareav, T Bayalieva and L. Lavrov to show extensive studies of pre-Islamic relics among the Uzbeks. He also pointed to literature that shows that besides the mainstream Islamic thoughts and beliefs, Sufism in its popular forms had absorbed certain pre-Islamic traditions of the region. Current studies on everyday life in the region point to a similar syncretism with the coexistence of '*namaz* and wishing trees' signifying the diversity of everyday religious life (Montgomery 2007).

While the reality was that of a society with multiple religious traditions, the imperatives of the post-Soviet era demanded the projection of a singular faith that would form the basis of the foundation of the new state. However, faced with global 'radical' challenges in the post-independence period, the emphasis soon shifted to the many pre Islamic traditions of the region. As such the political rhetoric of revival emphasized the multifarious traditions of faith rather than the structures of an 'Islam'. This section explores both the multiple traditions of Central Asian societies and the response of the Uzbek and Kazakh state to these multiple traditions in the face of the emergence of radical alternatives. It is interesting that while on the one hand the imperatives of state building necessitated a focus on a particular structure of religious tradition as the basis of the new state, on the other, the same imperative also called for the identification of the 'other' in the form of a threat from radical elements from within the same structure. It underlines how in the course of dealing with this perception of threat there is emphasis once again on the diversity of religious traditions of society.

In Central Asian society religion was a part of everyday life. This is well documented in Nora Chadwick's detailed examination of the oral epic tradition in the region which provides a pointer to the significant fact that religious themes had become so naturalized that they had ceased to have any 'special' place in the narration of the daily life of the people. An examination of the heroic poetry of the region would provide the following thematics 'raids, single combats, the theft of large herds, revenge and counter attack, wooing and marriage the birth and remarkable childhood of heroes, sports specially horse racing, wrestling long journeys and sundry adventures of a nomadic life' (Chadwick and Zhirmunsky 1969). What is a significant exception is a lack of reference to any religious

practice, except for the spiritual experiences of heroes, which in most cases is of a shamanistic nature. As the epic developed through the ages, of course, it acquired newer characteristics. It is significant that subsequently the epic hero Manas was recognized as a Muslim, with a definite mission to fulfill, 'open up the path of the Muslim and scatter the wealth of the infidel' (Hatto 1990). As the epic developed it intertwined Islamic ideals as well as the nomadic/shamanistic traditions, with historical events. However, the important mission that Manas fulfills is to unify his people and to establish their identity for years to come. For most Kyrgyz people, even today, this remains important. Many are unaware that he was Muslim, what is important is that he helped to provide identity for his people (Hatto 1990, p. 87).

Narrative poetry and prose, which is non-heroic in nature, is connected principally with professional *shamans* and *shamankas*. In poetry of non-heroic nature the main features of the Turkic spiritual world is expressed. However, as Chadwick points out the poems were composed and recited for purposes of entertainment and not for religious purposes (Chadwick and Zhirmunsky 1969). Here, in common with literature that has passed from a religious to a secular milieu, the spiritual beings have lost their austerity and remoteness. These recognize two spiritual environments; the personnel of the first are situated in the heavens above and the second live underground. The relationship between them is mutually hostile. The poems follow a similar pattern with the journey of the hero to the underworld and his safe return, as in the Kyrgyz non-heroic poem *Er Toshtuk*. Islam as represented in the epic is not orthodox. It is influenced by the customs of the steppe and there are no efforts to overcome any contradictions, which result from the merging of *Koranic* and shamanistic beliefs (Hatto 1990, p. 90). In the first Turkish poems also appeared the idea of a pre-Islamic monolithic religion whose deity was known as *Tangri*.

A detailed ethnographic examination of the relics of animistic elements in the lives of the Central Asian people is evident in the examination of the practices of shamanism by Sukhareva (1975). She points clearly to the fact that the more recent religious practices tend to retain the earlier traditions as much as the older religious traditions (shamanism) get saturated with the ideas of the newer faith (Islam). However the older practices merely take newer forms but otherwise remain unchanged.[7] She uses her fieldwork between 1918 and 1940 in Samarkand and in 1926–1929 in Northern Tajikistan to provide details of shamanistic practices among the plain Tajiks of the regions. Sukhareva pointed out that the importance of this examination emerges from the fact that while many people acknowledge little faith in Allah they profess to have seen or have known people to have seen spirits. She described in detail shamanistic traditions and interestingly points out that at the conclusion of the shamanistic rituals an Islamic clergy used to conclude the rituals with Islamic practices. She also pointed out that male *shamans* appear due to the influence of Islam and that Sufi *sheiks* are often the direct successors of the

[7]Sukhareva discusses the study of pre Islamic traditions from Chokan Valikhanov to M.S. Andreev and Snesareyev.

shamans. Also the *shamans* tend to face the *Kaaba* while conducting the ceremonies. The ceremonial practices of *shamans* dealt principally with medicinal practices or with fortune telling and were conducted to drive away spirits (Sukhareva 1975).

Ethnographers like V. N. Basilov have pointed out that in Central Asia shamanism took on a Muslim cast. While conflicts between *mullahs* and *shamans* remained, it was a 'professional competition, not a collision of different ideologies' (Basilov 1997, pp. 39–40). He pointed out that in their outlook, *shamans* did not differ from other orthodox Muslims. When beginning rituals *shamans* appealed 'first to Allah, then to various Muslim saints and only afterwards to their helping spirits'(Basilov 1997). Islam also influenced shamanism in other ways by abolishing shamanic ritual costume, by influencing a change of the traditional drum with rosary beads. Many Uzbek and Tajik *shamans* deemed it necessary to obtain the blessings of a clergyman for ordination to be a *shaman*. Shamanism in turn is said to have influenced the activities of unofficial Muslim clergy. Basilov pointed out that the residents of Bukhara, for instance, thought that certain *ishans* possessed a special ability to 'cure' the sick, because they had a protector spirit.

Similarly the relics of pre-Islamic faiths, prior to the revolution, have been examined in ethnographic studies that have stressed the indigenous forms of religious practices in the region (Mirkasilov 1972). The study by S. Mirkasilov, for example, comments on the fact that while some people did go to Mecca, most pilgrimages went to local sacred places. A number of *mazars* were to be found all over the region. Large numbers of people visited these *mazars*, brought offerings and believed in the power of these *mazars* to cure. Animist ideas, magic and shamanism were preserved in the region and certain beliefs about the existence of demons in walnut trees, for instance, was widespread (Mirkasilov 1972). The study also interestingly comments on the relationship between the Muslim clergy with the *bakshi* who was the upholder of these pre-Islamic practices. The study points out that the clergy regarded the *bakshis* as heretics and looked upon them negatively. The study points to the fact that apart from religious festivals other secular festivals connected with spring and autumn were widespread. The Muslim clergy did of course attempt to intrude on these festivals and introduce religious teachings during the fairs but in most cases this could not dampen the 'spirit of the people for life and cordiality' (Mirkasilov 1972).

However, it is also true that the Central Asian region had been an integral part of the world of Muslim civilization ever since the seventh century, when not long after Muhammed's death the Arab armies crossed the Amu Darya from the south and introduced their religion. The conquest of the people in *Maverhunahar* is today being noted as a holy duty, which the Prophet endowed on his followers. After the sixteenth century, with the development of sea routes to Asia and Africa, the relative isolation of the region, led to the increasing prestige of the centres of Islamic learning. *Bukara-i Sharif* gained prominence as one of the most sacred cities of Islam. In addition to the existence of the organized structures of Islam, there always existed a Sufi tradition in the region, as a region on the frontiers of Islam. It appeared in the first centuries of Islam. In the beginning it was a purely

individual experience, based on the personal relationship between the disciple, or *murid,* and his master, variously called *sheikh*, *murshid*, *pir*, *ustad* ar *ishan*. In the twelfth century when Islam was threatened by the infidel invaders, the Qara Khitai in the East and the Crusades in the West, Sufis assumed the role of defenders of the faith. Central Asia became one of the most active centres of Sufi expansion. Several of the most important brotherhoods were founded here, the Kubrawiya and the Yasawiyain the twelfth century and the Naqshbandi in the fourteenth.[8] Not all the sects were active everywhere. The Naqshbandi *tariqa* (order) was active in Bukhara, from where it originated and continues to be important there in independent Uzbekistan. The Yasawiya and the Kubrawiya were more important in the nomadic Kazakh and Turkmen regions, though an offshoot of the Yasawiya sect of Laachis were important in the rural regions of eastern Uzbekistan and the Hairy Ishans in the urban regions of Ferghana and Namangan. The Kalandariyas were active in rural Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. In the subsequent centuries Sufi orders continued to be important political and social factors representing as they did the popular side of Islam against the official hierarchy of the Muslim clergy of *ulema*. Later in the seventeenth century, the Sufi orders specially the Naqshbandia assumed once again their historic role when they led the *jihad* against the invading Buddhist Jungars. A correct understanding of the role of the Sufi orders in any region is possible through an understanding of the relations between the Sufis and the centres of power. This is particularly important in the Central Asian region where transitions in the socio-political situation became crucial.[9]

This duality of the co-existence of both the structures of formal Islam and those of local traditions is interestingly portrayed in Shaybani Khan. The latter, who is considered to have established the first Uzbek state in *Maverunnahar*, realized that the fact of being a descendent of Chengiz Khan was not enough to secure the loyalties of either the Uzbek tribes or of the sedentary people, and identified himself as a Muslim. The support that he received from the nobility was based on the fact that while his genealogy was important, he also acted according to the *Koran* (Kilich 1997). Yet he also made an effort to reconcile the *yasa*, the Chengizid traditions with those of the *Shariat*. This effort at reconciliation is brought out in the debates for inheritance in Islamic law in the Shaybanid court (Isogai 1997).[10] Shaybani Khan also recognized the importance of the cultural, political and social

[8]Central Asian sources of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries speak of four major Sufi orders active in Mawarannahr: Naqshbandi, Kubrawiya, Yasaviya and the fourth is sometimes the Zayniyya, the Suhawardy lineage introduced primarily in Herat and Samarkand by Zayn id-Din Khwafi. But is more often the Ishquiyya whose origins are linked with those of the Sufi communities called Khalvati. To judge from available sources neither of these orders was as widespread or as significant as the first three. In any case they seem to have disappeared by the second half of the seventeenth century (Deweese 1996, pp. 180–207).

[9]Detailed work on the development of the relationship between the Sufis and the centres of power particularly under the Soviets is provided in Bennigsen and Wimbush (1985).

[10]Isogai (1997) cites the jurisprudential discussions in *Mehman-nama-ye-Bokhara,* by Ibn Ruzbehen to show this.

roles of the Sufi orders and sought support among them. In his early life he was guided by them and their support helped him to win the support of the sedentary people and thus gain control of the cities.

Similarly, Sultangalieva (1998), in her examination of Islam in Kazakhstan argues that in the Central Asian region Islam was more of a historical peculiarity than a historical force but also an intra-ethnic phenomenon rather than a defining societal characteristic. Islam was introduced to Kazakhstan over a period of 800 years, from the eighth to the sixteenth centuries. It appeared not in one continuous wave but in a gradual current. Islam therefore never replaced other pre-existing faiths in the Kazkah steppes, such as Turkic animistic beliefs and Zoroastriansim. Instead it became synthesized with them. Moreover the influence of Sufism, an unorthodox, mystical branch of Islam brought to the region by the missionaries from Bukhara, became an important element of local faith. Sultangalieva points out that in contrast to a number of other Muslim regions, the inhabitants of the Kazakh steppes did not consider the Sufi brotherhoods as heretical.

Islam in Kazakhstan was further diluted by the practice of 'Cheghism', a system of belief introduced after the Mongol invasions that placed a particular emphasis on a genealogical connection with Chengiz Khan. More significantly this existed alongside Islam while blatantly refuting Islam's central tenet, there is no God except Allah. According to Sultangalieva, Kazakh society only began to coalesce around the sixteenth century. Even so it was a society divided along geographical lines separating the settled farmers in the south east from the nomads in the north and west. Society was further divided by ethnicity, with the result that local identities remained more important than any other collective identity, including Islam. This along with the gradual introduction of the faith and its fusion with pre Islamic and Sufi beliefs meant that Islam never manifested itself as a political force in Kazakhstan.

This held true even in later periods where Islam never became the focus of opposition to Russian colonization. Although in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Central Asia and especially in the Caucasus there was a revival of Islamic consciousness its impact on Kazakhstan was limited. It was in fact a strong secular influence emanating from educated western looking elite that led to the establishment of Kazakh national consciousness in this period. The Russian approach to Islam was a two staged one. The first stage was characterized by tolerance and a certain degree of cooperation: the Islamic clergy was courted in order to even out the process of colonization. The second stage of the Soviet period was characterized by both cooptation and repression with the establishment of state sanctioned Islamic clergy. Interestingly, Kazakhs constituted the majority of the state sanctioned Islamic clergy viewing this as a political opportunity.

Sultangalieva points out that a number of factors actually worked against an Islamic revival in the region in the post disintegration scenario. Islam in Kazakhstan had always been an internal ethnic identity rather than an external societal one. Thus though a majority considered themselves to be Muslims they did not actively practice the faith and were, in fact, mostly ignorant of the practices. Second, in

contrast to the other Central Asian republics, Muslims in Kazakhstan do not constitute a religious majority. In fact no one faith holds sway over the country and this allows many new faiths, including Christian sects to make a strong headway in the country. Over the years the Kazakh Government has also taken steps to reduce the impact of Islam. Internally, this policy translates into measures such as ban on religious political parties. Externally there is no special emphasis on relations with Islamic countries except on one based predominantly economic basis. Finally the influence of Islam in Kazakhstan remains geographically variegated. In the more devout south east Islam's main promoters are not Kazakhs but immigrants from neighbouring Uzbekistan.

In fact the officially declared policy is one where there is convergence of faiths represented by the Palace of Faiths. 'The Heart of Eurasia' is an officially promoted identification of the capital Astana and metonymically of Kazakhstan itself (Nazarbayev 2010). This title corresponds to an often heard ideological claim that Kazakhstan is situated at the centre of civilizational connections between the East and the West, and between the North and the South of the continent. The country is populated by the representatives of 130 national minorities and has representatives from a great variety of religions. For the first two decades of independence President Nazarbayev has focused on the fact that Kazakhstan is either one of few countries, or may be the only multinational and multi-confessional country where interethnic or religious conflicts is absent due to its tolerant and peaceful traditions.

Alexei Zelenskiy argues that this absence can only be justified in terms of the emergence of a New Age spirituality which is a global spiritual trend (Zelenskiy 2015, pp. 181–196). A common interpretation for the emergence of New Age spirituality is in terms of a compensatory response to global challenges and threats of the late twentieth century, such as the ecological crisis, the discrediting of the Christian values, social disintegration, existential uncertainty and others. An impact of New Age values on the secular spirituality as well as on social institutions and State decision making is unambiguously detectable in Kazakhstan in particular. Just after its 'official inauguration', New Age culture reached Kazakhstan in late Soviet times in 1970–1980s. According to Zelenskiy, a decade later it was already widely represented by extrasensory, astrologers, theosophists, UFO logists, cryptozoologists, heresiarchs, goddess, messiahs, occultists and so on. Today New Age is organically integrated into the Kazakhstani popular culture.[11]

The outburst of New Age mentality of the late 1980s and early 1990s was accompanied by a 'religious renaissance' of Christianity and Islam in Kazakhstan, when a taboo on religion was suspended and official ideology had to give religion its credence. Later, due to the sweeping criticism of Marxism it mostly degenerated into reactionary agnosticism. However, regardless of highly plausible prognoses, popular among Kazakhs, Islam did not get any definite signs of official favour, and the new State declared itself secular. According to Zelenskiy, the vacant place left

[11]It must be noticed, though, that the title New Age is still not well known among the people of Kazakhstan and almost no New Age phenomena are identified as such.

by atheism was immediately occupied by a sort of eclectic attitude, whose conceptual roots are still hidden. Here, one could univocally recognize typical New Age attitudes such as assumption of a convergence of all religions, distrust of organized forms of religion, praise of human moral and intellectual potencies, etc. In other words, the secular spirituality in the proclaimed secular State revealed ambiguous traits of non-secular or at least obscure flavor (Zelenskiy 2015).

However, the relationship between the Kazakh State and New Age culture are complex rather than uni-dimensional. While certain trends and concepts are favoured and promoted, others are completely ignored or even persecuted. A good example of the former is the activity of the First Lady, the President's wife Sara Nazarbayeva. She is well known as a proselyte of the teachings of 'Detka' by a Russian mystic Porfiriy Ivanov, and a student of an Indian guru Sathya Sai Baba. She encouraged propagation of Ivanov's teachings within state clinics and, according to rumors, of Sathya Sai Baba's teachings in governmental organizations. Recently she developed and introduced a discipline called 'Self-Knowledge' presumably inspired by what is called 'Religion of the Self' to secondary school education (Zelenskiy 2015). A more obvious case of official sentiments to the New Age culture is the architectural design of the capital Astana and national symbols. On the other hand one can notice, for instance, a certain hostility of the official authorities to both domestic and foreign messianic sects, like Ata Zholy, Allya Ayat or Scientology. Neither received official registration in 2012. Another feature is that the State recognizes Islam as the traditional religion of Kazakhs instead of shamanism or religion of Tengri. However, Zelenskiy argues that one shouldn't forget a place of shamanism and Tengri at the level of traditions and customs, and that those traditions and customs had an existence prior to Islam.

4.3 Conclusions

There has been an attempt at understanding the response of a multicultural society to radical global challenges where the assimilative character of society is emphasized in the face of what is identified as the 'import' of radicalism from outside. It is not surprising therefore that in the course of the current rediscovery of 'roots' the search has been more towards a pre-Islamic tradition than one simply in search of Islam. While there has obviously been an increase in Islamic rhetoric, even within the political elite, it should be emphasized that this so called 'revival' actually takes into account the multifarious heritage of the land. This is a fact that is emphasized by these lines of the Uzbek President Karimov

> Spiritual revival should also embrace the attitude of human beings towards the land and its richness. On the area, where agriculture during centuries has been based on irrigation, a careful treatment of land and water is not less important moral imperative than a careful attitude towards objects of civilization. Soil air water and fire, (the Sun) have been traditionally worshipped in Central Asia, they were given respect by all religions of our ancestors, from Zoroastrianism to Islam (Karimov 1997, p. 124).

It is further pointed out that the 'harmonic utilization of nature in the pre Islamic culture of the Central Asian nations should be specially stressed' (Karimov 1997). The appeal to revive pre Islamic cultures is closely connected to the beneficial effect that these cultures have on the preservation of natural wealth. Here Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Manichaeism, and the ideas of harmony in relationships between man and nature in the doctrines of Central Asian Sufism are all lauded as cultures that professed the preservation of nature. This stress on the recovery of pre Islamic faiths as a way of preserving the nature and fighting against ecological disaster is a pragmatic response in keeping with the current policies of the Uzbek state. In fact there is emphasis on the fact that during millenniums Central Asia had been a meeting place where different religions, cultures and styles of living have co-existed. As a result religious and ethnic tolerance is lauded as a part of spiritual revival.

A reflection of this rhetoric is to be found in the architectural structure of the Pyramid of Peace in Astana. It is a building dedicated to the 'renunciation of violence' and to 'bring together the world's religions'. The pyramid has been interpreted as representing the mysteries of ancient civilizations and divine wisdom. The missing/illuminated/floating capstone of the structure symbolically represents the unfinished nature of the new world order. An image of the sun occupies nearly the entire ceiling of the basement which houses the opera house. On top of the opera house is the central space of the pyramid. It acts as the meeting room for conferences reuniting religious leaders of the world. The symbolism is that all theologies are the outgrowth of the original object of worship, the sun. The sun image in the middle of the round table is exactly on top of the sun of the opera house. The apex of the building is windowed with images of white doves embedded in the windows, representing peace which will result in the unification of world religions. In July 1999, Astana was awarded the UNESCO 'city of peace' award. Both 'images' remain significant in terms of state rhetoric yet both also remain contested within the complex political reality of the region.

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Chapter 5
Regional Strategies and Global Image in an Era of Branding

Abstract This chapter examines the image that the states portrays of itself as a integrated part of global and regional organizations, in the Kazakh case, and of itself as an 'independent' entity moving in and out of multilateral structures, in the Uzbek case. When the world was analyzed in the categories of bipolar interaction the presence of regional or sub regional subsystems was subordinate to the logic of a global division into two worlds. This exclusivity is today challenged by visions reflecting contemporary geopolitics which is likely to recreate the context within which regions and 'regional' organizations are perceived. The creation of globalized spaces also inevitably implies the creation of a degree of cultural 'compression'. The resulting de-territorialization is then taken to fundamentally transform the relationship between the places that one inhabits and cultural practices, experiences and identities. It is within this context that the chapter examines multilateral initiatives in the region and in particular Uzbek and Kazakh attitude to these initiatives that reflect their regional and global perspectives and in turn conditions their global 'image'. The chapter begins with an introduction to initiatives in the years immediately after the independence of the republics.

Keywords Uzbekistan · Kazakhstan · Regions and regional organizations · Multilateral initiatives and 'image'

The modern world is today characterized by its complex connectivity. This is perhaps best exemplified by the networks of interconnections and interdependences that characterize every aspect of modern social life. This connectivity, which can be simply taken to imply global-spatial proximity in the sense of the shrinking of distances through the dramatic reduction of time taken to cross them, pervades all accounts of globalization. At another level of analysis connectivity merges into the idea of spatial proximity via the idea of 'stretching' of social relations across distance. The creation of globalized spaces also inevitably implies the creation of a degree of cultural 'compression'. The resulting de-territorialization is then taken to fundamentally transform the relationship between the places that one inhabits and cultural practices, experiences and identities. Logistics is integral to both the

A. Sengupta, *Symbols and the Image of the State in Eurasia*,
SpringerBriefs in Political Science, DOI 10.1007/978-981-10-2392-7_5

material and cultural aspects of connectivity and the dynamics generated by contesting logistic visions is likely to create competing networks that will reconfigure the way in which the world is imaged. In fact it could also fundamentally transform the way in which 'areas' or 'regions' have traditionally been conceptualized (Sengupta 2009, p. 128). When the world was analysed in the categories of bipolar interaction the presence of regional or sub regional subsystems was subordinate to the logic of a global division into two worlds. This exclusivity is today challenged by logistic visions reflecting contemporary geopolitics which is likely to recreate the context within which regions and 'regional' organizations are perceived.

An interesting example is the north–south connection that was conceived as stretching from ports in India across the Arabian Sea to the southern Iranian port of Bandar Abbas. From here goods would then transit Iran and the Caspian Sea ports in the Russian sector of the Caspian. The route then stretches along the Volga River via Moscow to northern Europe. Along with Russia, India and Iran this project was subsequently joined by Belarus, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan. This logistic vision re-imagines Eurasia as a vertical expanse which is very different from the traditional imagination of Eurasia as a horizontal expanse. Another alternative is a north–south axis that would then connect to the east–west one, thereby linking Central and West Asia to South and South East Asia. Late in 2005 the US administration introduced a novel idea about regional divisions by placing the Central and South Asian regions within the same division. The principles of the policy were outlined by the US State Department and reflected in the US National Security Strategy published in March 2006. This was a departure from the earlier US policy that regarded Central Asia as a separate region tied to the CIS and was in recognition of a trend in international affairs in the first part of the twenty first century where there is acknowledgement of a transformation of economic and political relations taking place throughout Southwest Asia, the Middle East and Eurasia. The goal was to formulate a concept to encapsulate the totality of these trends and this led to the idea of a 'Greater Central Asia' encompassing an area that included 'India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran the countries of the Caucasus and the countries that were previously socialist republics in the Soviet Union and Xinjiang province of China as well as some other lands in this large and pivotal region' (Gleason 2008). This was projected as a benign and equitable intellectual development that reflected the rich history of interaction in commerce and international affairs and deep rooted cultural commonalities and values.

Richard Boucher, the then Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs, noted that 'South and Central Asia belong together' by virtue of Afghanistan, which lies at the centre of the region, and can be a bridge that links the two regions rather than a barrier that divides them (Boucher 2006). In fact this was also linked by a logistic vision—the Central Asian Infrastructure Integration Initiative—that was launched in October 2005 and was designed to execute the implementation of the idea of turning Afghanistan into a link between Central and

South Asia and integrate them into a single region. As part of the initiative priority has been given to the Almaty-Bishkek-Dushanbe-Kabul-Karachi highway, a transport and energy corridor that would cross Afghanistan and tie Central and South Asia together. In early 2006, the US State Department was restructured: Central Asia was taken away from the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs to become part of the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, an effort to integrate the region with its 'natural' neighbourhood. In Russia 'Central Asia' has been replaced with the term 'Central Asian region' which includes the former Soviet republics but also Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan. While a difference between the components of the two perceptions of a larger Central Asian region is evident there is nonetheless a convergence on the need for a larger conceptualization reflecting the inter-connectedness of regions that seem to be at play. It may be argued that this conceptualization is part of a larger global effort at creating regional configurations exemplified in Eurasia by the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. This requirement has meant that the geopolitical function of what is termed as Eurasia has been reinterpreted keeping in mind requirements of regional cooperation and connectivity. In the twenty-first century the function of the pivot area has been described as ensuring sustainable land contacts along the parallels (West–East) and the meridians (North–South) thereby contributing to consistent geopolitical and economic integration of large and isolated areas of the Asian continent (Sengupta 2009, p. 66).

While this re-imaging presents various possibilities, the overlapping of states (no longer contained within clear bipolar divisions) in multilateral 'regional' organizations is another case in point. In fact institutions like the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) which includes 17 noncontiguous Asian and European states including China and India may become a new 'region' in terms of significance. Some of these institutions have been created to support logistic visions and the AIIB itself is a recent example. This Chinese initiative supports China's logistic vision of the One Belt One Road (OBOR) with the aim to bring South Asian economies closer to China, Central Asia and West Asia. Compared to the post War Marshall Plan, as an initiative OBOR is projected as an instrument to create a continuous land and maritime zone where countries will pursue convergent economic policies, underpinned by physical infrastructure and supported by trade and financial flows. The inclusion of people to people links is recognition that soft power will play an important role in creating congenial political environment for sustaining the initiative (Saran 2015). The OBOR policy document further states that the initiative is designed to uphold 'open world economy and the spirit of open regionalism', an obvious counter to the more exclusive US led mega economic blocks in the making the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (T-TIP). Deeper economic integration within Asia is embedded in the larger framework of China's attempt to build rail, road and port infrastructures across Central Asia, Afghanistan and Pakistan, thereby dramatically shortening cargo transport time between Asia and Europe/the Middle East and Africa. OBOR has a transcontinental (Silk Road Economic Belt) and maritime

(Maritime Silk Route) component. Much of the transcontinental route passes through areas of traditional Russian influence and regions where Russia is attempting to recreate a common economic zone in the form of the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU).

It is therefore significant that there is a proposed amalgamation of China's Silk Road Economic Belt and the EEU and setting up of a dialogue mechanism which is likely to create a synergy that would cover connectivity, trade, energy and raw material production in the region. There are in addition two significant energy projects linking the two states, 'The power of Siberia' pipeline and the Altai gas pipeline. During the Putin-Xi summit that took place in Moscow on 8 May 2015, the leaders of Russia and China signed a joint declaration 'on co-operation in coordinating the development of the Eurasian Economic Union with the Silk Road Economic Belt'. The declared goal was to build a common economic space in Eurasia, including a free Trade Agreement between the EEU and China. While the positive implications of the connection is clear there remains the issue of implementing the merger of an institutionalized body like the EEU with what is essentially still an idea in the making. There is also the fact that since their interests overlap in Central Asia, multilateral formats would have to be developed for discussions. Also mechanisms would have to be developed to implement joint projects on EEU states, Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Armenia. The institutional framework developed for the EEU (free movement of funds, goods, services, and labour) would mean that implementation of these rules in the territories of the non EEU states that are within the purview of the SREB will be problematic. The extent of involvement of the Central Asian states will therefore become crucial.

It is within this context that the chapter moves on to examine multilateral initiatives in the region and particularly Uzbek and Kazakh attitude to these initiatives that reflect their regional and global perspectives. The chapter begins with an introduction to initiatives in the years immediately after the independence of the republics.

5.1 Forming *Tsentralnaya Aziya*

The term 'multilateral' can refer to an organizing principle, an organization or simply an activity. Any of the above can be considered multilateral when it involves cooperative activity among many countries. 'Multilateralism' as opposed to 'multilateral' is a belief that the activities ought to be organized on a universal, or at least many sided basis for a 'relevant' group. It may be a belief both in the existential sense of a claim about how the world works and in the normative sense that things should be done in a particular way. As such multilateralism is 'designed' to promote multilateral activity. It combines normative principles with advocacy and existential beliefs. The debate on multilateralism, defined in the broadest sense as international cooperation among more than two states in the international arena, reemerged in the light of the pervading unilateralist impulse emanating from the

Bush administration (Schlesinger 2005).[1] While a debate on the reform of the United Nations, as the principal global multilateral forum, had been an ongoing process, multilateral approach towards regional issues, particularly security issues, with emphasis on confidence building, preventive diplomacy and conflict resolution, are being increasingly accepted as significant to the maintenance of regional security and promotion of regional development.

Multilateral confidence building measures reflect the belief that through regularized dialogue and consultation existing and potential conflicts can be effectively managed without the necessity of recourse to coercion. It is pointed out that multilateralism is distinctive, not merely because it coordinates national policies in groups of three or more states, which is something that other organizational forms also do, but additionally because it does so on the basis of certain principles of ordering relations among states (Ruggie 1993). However, an understanding of multilateral initiatives remains incomplete without a close reading of how regions perceive their 'national' and 'regional' security. Underlying these national priorities are a set of assumptions about the security of the state and how shifting alliances with other states can best preserve this. This rather realistic understanding of the situation, of course, is not without its problems. Not the least of which is that states often do not act as unitary and rational actors. In actual situations state decisions are often determined by the interplay of domestic and international factors and influenced by partisan interests.

Writing in 1994 and echoing many others, Martha Brill Olcott had pointed out that the disincentives for regional integration in the Central Asian region was such as to ascribe to the eventuality of such integration the possibility of a myth (Olcott 1994, pp. 549–565).[2] The argument for this ran as follows. Rivalries within the region coupled with the fact that independence had been embraced with enthusiasm by each of the states, who also immediately began exploring independent developmental and economic relations with other international bodies, would effectively ensure that attempts to create any organization designed to treat Central Asia as a single unit would remain a 'specter conjured to ward off specific threats or problems' (Olcott 1994, p. 554). The 'weak state' structure argument was also put forward to point out that the Central Asian states, confronted as they were with the necessity of national consolidation, would be unable to take any action towards regional integration (Kubicek 1997). Otherwise, according to Olcott, regional integration and co-operation would only prove to be workable in such minor incentives as educational and scientific policy, a regional commission on the media and in commissions to address ecological conditions in the Aral Sea or the

[1]With the change in the US administration the focus has increasingly been on the need to be more oriented towards multilateralism, a need that arises not only from the nature of many contemporary issues and problems and the evolution of international diplomatic process but also from the necessity of rebuilding goodwill, soft power and the influence lost during the Bush administration. See for instance Karns (2008).

[2]Similar ideas were expressed by others who pointed to economic, political and social reasons of discord. See for instance, Khazanov (1995).

disappearing caviar yields of the Caspian. While the author also noted that the less than 3 years that had passed were insufficient to correctly indicate the complete failure of efforts at integration, yet she was of the opinion that the five states were being increasingly drawn apart rather than being brought together.

Prior to an examination of the Central Asian experience at integration and cooperation it is necessary to take into account debates centred around regions and regionalism and the sharpened awareness of the possibilities of regional cooperation and institution building that emerged in the post-cold war era. Three central elements have been identified by analysts as constituting the core elements of regionalism. First, a common historical experience and a sense of shared problems among a geographically distinct group of countries or societies which constituted a *region*. Second, close linkages of a distinct kind between those countries and societies, in other words recognition of a boundary to the region within which interactions would be more intense than those with the outside world, in other words, *regionalization*. Finally, the emergence of organization giving shape to the region in a legal and institutional sense and providing some rules of the game within the region, the element of conscious policy which is central to *regionalism* (Stubbs and Underhill 1994).

In the Central Asian case, it is pointed out, the identification of what could be termed as *Tsentralnaya Aziia* has itself eluded precise definition particularly since the people of the region never thought of themselves as 'Central Asians'. Geographically the region has been identified as the vast space between China and the Black Sea and in socio cultural terms it has been used to define the lands that lay beyond the borders of the great sedentary civilizations. There are, however, continuing debates on the validity of both positions.[3] In more recent times the five SSR's of the region were known by the Soviet era term *Srednaya Aziia i Kazakhstan*. The emergence of a region, known as *Tsentralnaya Aziia*, has been identified in a meeting held in Tashkent in January 1993. Here the presidents of Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan and the chairman of Tajikistan's Parliament, concluded their discussion of common concerns with the decision that they would now be known as *Tsentralnaya Aziia* (Olcott 1994). The element of construction that is pointed to is evident. This creation of a region, however, is neither new nor unique.[4] Every region and sub-region, indeed Europe itself, first had to be conceptualized in its current form before European institutions meant to tackle the problems of Europe as a region could come into existence. And the numerous concepts, alliances and ententes that finally resulted in the creation of Europe as the 'common homeland' of Europeans are still in the making.

A broader though more ambiguous definition of the region identifies it as a geographical area with limited scope, constituted out of at least three actors, which are objectively recognized by other actors as constituting a distinctive community, and whose members identify themselves as such. That *Tsentralnaya Aziia*,

[3]For a detailed discussion on definitions, see Andre Gunder Frank (1992).

[4]For a detailed discussion on the construction of a region see Samaddar (1996).

constitutes a region in this sense is evident in these words of President Karimov, when he notes that the region is

> ….conditioned by common territory, common communication means, basic and leading branches of economy, by need for joint exploitation of water and energy objects, provision of energy resources. To say nothing about common culture, language and spiritual values of our nations that have deep penetrating common roots. This region has always been integrated in this or that form. The nations of Central Asia comprehended the need to rebuild their future with joint efforts after they gained their independence (Karimov 1997).

The necessity of integration and regionalization is also well defined by President Karimov when he notes

> In fact there is a series of initial conditions and prerequisites for the integration of the Central Asian republics. They imply an equal starting level of economic development, similarity of social and economic problems, unified transport and energy supply, communications and water resources. Apart from this, there exist general threats to security of all the regions that inhabit this region. Among them are the drying of the Aral, drugs and arms smuggling, emerging terrorism and religious fundamentalism, threats to escalation of tension and instability that comes from Afghanistan and a number of other factors. Such threats despite their apparent disparity are unifying factors, because none of these threats may be surmounted autonomously, relying on one's own forces (Karimov 1997).

Similarly, the development differential between the states is narrow and this is seen as a significant advantage for regionalization.[5]

The basis on which a Central Asian Union could emerge is indicated in this passage by President Karimov

> As far as integration on the level of the Central Asian countries is concerned, it has its own specific features. This integration has always been and remains to be public in its essence. During all its history the nations of this region shoulder to shoulder struggled against the domination of foreign conquerors. Representatives of these nations had always been guided by the ideas of independence and creation of independent states. These nations have been living on a vast territory called Turkeston during centuries. First of all it is necessary to note that integration of the nations of Central Asia is not a dream or a project for the future, it is a reality which needs only organizational, legal and political forms (Karimov 1997).

The collapse of the Soviet empire brought to the forefront the idea of creating a Central Asian regional union. Almost immediately, it was pointed out that the five states that were being brought together were anything but homogeneous. It was also noted that the construction of five separate republics in the course of national territorial delimitation, and the identification of five separate groups of people, meant that 'national' identities could no longer be denied. Interestingly, however, while identities and histories were separated, in economic terms Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan were combined into a single economic region and a number of specialized organs were put into place to achieve economic integration (Rumer 1996). More importantly, infrastructural investments were made to the region as a whole which meant that the region inherited an integrated

[5]For details of the relative homogeneity of the Central Asian economic region see Dieter (1996).

infrastructure on achieving independence. This imposed a certain level of continuity.

Another element that ensures continuity is the emphasis that the problems of development must first be addressed on a regional level before being taken up on a global level (Karimova 1995). The linkages that had been established in vital spheres would thus necessarily be maintained in order to ensure that the period of transition is smooth. As President Karimov pointed out, 'The Republic's economy emerged and developed within the constraints of the former Union. A single transport and power system bound it to other regions by a tightly knit economic network…' (Karimov 1993).

This necessarily induced a certain level of enthusiasm about establishing regional economic links and a common economic forum among the Central Asian states. Unfortunately in most cases the economic requirements of the Central Asian States overlap, for instance, oil and gas are the principal items for Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and also Uzbekistan while cotton is a common item for Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan. As a result there is very little enthusiasm for integration on an economic level and an element of competition rather than complimentarily.

In fact it should be noted that steps towards the creation of a single Central Asian economic space was underway even prior to the disintegration of the Soviet Union, when prospects for integration were discussed in the 1990 during a conference in Almaty. In the subsequent years a number of measures were undertaken and agreements were signed to coordinate economic reforms and create multilateral institutions. A number of measures towards integration were undertaken and agreements were signed. In 1991, an agreement to form an Inter-Republican Council of Central Asian Republics and Kazakhstan was signed. This initiative was never realized, however, due to the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the formation of the Commonwealth of Independent States. In order to accelerate the integration process in Central Asia and fulfill previously achieved agreements, the presidents of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan signed the Treaty on the Formation of Unified Economic Space in 1994. The document laid a firm foundation for economic cooperation based on principles of friendship and neighbourly relations, equal rights and non-interference in domestic affairs, consistent implementation of mutual agreements and generally recognized norms of international law.

The Central Asian Regional Cooperation Conference held in Kyrgyzstan in June 1995, formulated cooperative solutions to the areas' political, social, environmental, demographic and economic problems. The Conference resulted in the Issyk-Kul Regional Cooperation Declaration. Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan have developed the Economic Integration 2000 Programme, which was adopted at the Bishkek meeting of the Council of Prime Ministers. In addition a Kazakhstan-Uzbekistan Science and Technology programme consisting of 107 projects in 16 fields has been developed. The International Council and the prime ministers of the member countries have chosen priority projects fop financing by the Central Asian Bank for Cooperation and Development. These include electric and gas meter production by the Saiman and Zhanar corporations and electric engine production

by Kyrgyzstan Electric Plants. As a whole the integration programme includes important industries related to fuel and energy production, iron and steel, chemicals, machinery, geological prospecting, light manufacturing, communications, construction materials and agriculture. The Uzbekistani-Kyrgyzstani New Technologies Centre has also been founded. The exchange of information and analytical materials and preparation for proposals to exchange data bases and data banks have created a largely unified domain of science, technology and information between these two countries. Discussions were also held on trilateral military cooperation between Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. In 1995 Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Azerbaijan were invited to join.

Similarly, political rhetoric reflected a commonness that had resulted out of centuries of existence as one people. Speaking at the inauguration of the Kazah day in Uzbekistan, President Karimov noted, 'We are well aware that in the past our states were not divided. We hope that in the future also it will not be so' (Karimov 1995).[6]

Yet, despite this, recent reports note that 'integration exists on paper' and that neither collective security arrangements nor economic integrative bodies have been successful either due to non-participation of some states or even noncompliance (Blagov 2000). On 11 October 2000 the presidents of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Belarus and Armenia met at the Kyrgyz capital Bishkek to sign an agreement on Collective Security Military Forces to combat aggression and carry out anti-terrorist operations. The absence of Uzbekistan from the Agreement however reduces its effectiveness. Similarly, on 10 October 2000, the presidents of Kazakhstan, Russia, Belarus, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan met in the new Kazakh capital Astana and signed an agreement to set up a new economic body called Eurasian Economic Union. The Eurasian Union aims to harmonize the tax and customs law of the member states, a goal that the customs union had failed to achieve. In fact Kazakhstan has introduced a 200 % tariff on imports from Kyrgyzstan (Blagov 2000).

Another level on which integration has been attempted is through the integration of the Central Asian economy with extra-regional states. The Economic Cooperation Organization has considered the Central Asian region as a sub-system and in 1992 Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Afghanistan were incorporated as members. The ECO was organized as a forum for the discussion of regional disputes and peaceful cooperation between the original members (Iran, Pakistan, Turkey) and the newly independent member countries. The ECO's plans of action underline the need for mobilizing the region's natural and human resource base on a market oriented economy. While there has been a certain amount of expansion of trade among the ECO members it has been constrained by the limited nature of the agreement on preferential tariffs,

[6]Similar ideas are found in 'Solnitse Drushbe Nashei Svetit iz Glubin Tesyacheletii', Rech na Torzheshtvennom Otkritii Dnei Uzbekistana v kazakhstane, 20 May 1995, in *Turkestan Nash Obshii Dom.*

the lack of transportation networks in the region as also competition among the member states on a number of issues (Buyukakinci 2000). It has also been observed that the basic minimum level of economic, cultural and political common ground that is required for the successful working of a regional organization does not exist among the states. Similarly the Organization of the Caspian Sea States (CASCO) for development of cooperation between the littoral countries of the Caspian Sea (Russia, Iran, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan) has been faced with similar dilemmas.

5.2 Multilateral Initiatives

It is generally accepted that the purpose for any regional organization is twofold: the acceleration of economic development and the reinforcement of regional stability and security. The role of multilateral regional initiatives on a Central Asian level as primary providers of security has not been rated very high. It has been observed that such initiatives have been unable to convey hard defense guarantees, create joint military units, negotiate arms reductions or enforce the end of overt conflicts. However, a correct assessment of these initiatives would have to begin with noting their existential significance as groups of states that recognize themselves as sharing some elements of community and can define their national identity as complementary rather than adversarial to their neighbours. Regular meetings and the creation of personal ties encourage *esprit de corps* and may help to defuse crisis. In fact non-traditional security issues like environment, defense against pollution, water management, drug smuggling, organized crime, migration and refugees have provided more useful areas for regional discourse. In addition there have been attempts at economic cooperation with an understanding that economic development is conducive to the security of the region (Meiirzhan 2000).[7]

It is undeniable that compared to the more successful regional multilateral efforts, a great deal remains to be achieved.[8] However, prior to any critical evaluation of these efforts it is crucial to keep in mind that in a number of indirect ways both development and stability have been contributed to by these regional processes. Representative of this are the numerous agreements that have been made regarding environmental degradation. This is a case that in the Central Asian region could lead to regional instability and also affect economic development. This is particularly so since the ecological crisis in the Central Asian region overlays and aggravates a structural, economic and social crisis. Central Asia is a developing region, characterized by a high share in agricultural production, low industrialization, mass unemployment and a high population growth. As its standard of living

[7]Meiirzhan, elaborates on the role of the Central Asian Economic Union in this regard in his article, Regional Security as a System Factor in Central Asian Integration. See Meiirzhan (2000).

[8]For a detailed discussion see Sengupta (2004).

was considerably below the Soviet average it was very dependent on the subsidies from the centre. A new process of nation building in the region and a redefinition of political and cultural identities began with the dismantling of the Soviet Union. It also saw the emergence of a new international water basin, the Aral, with all consequent consequences for the political, ethnic and economic relations between the states. The entire political geography changed and once shared natural resources that were controlled by central directions became the 'national wealth' of the newly independent states. Rivers became national borders and the division into up and down stream riparian became politically relevant. While it is accepted that environmental issues are unlikely to be the primary cause of conflict, it is also argued that they play a complex role in shaping relations among states. And here the success of regional initiatives in the Central Asian region cannot be denied. Speaking to the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Dr. Kadir Gulomov, Minister of Defense in Uzbekistan noted that security has many aspects. Efforts to promote regional cooperation through the use of water and energy resources are an important way to reduce tensions in the area (Carnegie Endowment 2000).

Within Central Asia, Kazakh commitment to multilateral initiatives has been strongest. This commitment has extended not just within the Central Asian region but also on a broader Eurasian level. On a practical level Kazakh effort at integration on a Eurasian level has involved numerous initiatives. Kazakhstan has emerged as a leader in efforts at promotion of regional economic and political integration in Eurasia. Under President Nursultan Nazarbayev, Kazakhstan has followed a foreign policy that has sought to maintain good relations with the most important external powers. In addition there has been an attempt to strengthen ties with countries of Central Asia and the Caspian Sea basin. Kazakhstan also plays a prominent role in most of Eurasia's international institutions and organizations like the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Collective Security Treaty Organization, the Eurasian Economic Community, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. In line with this the President has stated the objective of making Kazakhstan a 'transcontinental economic bridge'. He emphasized this when he noted, 'Occupying the position midway between Europe and Asia and serving as a lively arena for economic and political contacts, Kazakhstan is nowadays able to act as a link in the chain connecting the two great civilizations of East and west'.

In keeping with this there have been efforts at improving regional transportation, pipelines and communication networks, reducing custom and other manmade barriers to trade, encouraging tourism and other non-governmental exchanges while strengthening labour mobility in Eurasia and promoting Kazakh private investment in other Eurasian economies. The strong Kazakh support for regional integration results in part from a recognition that Kazakhstan will benefit from enhanced ties among Eurasian countries. There is also a conviction that through this integration at the Eurasian level Kazakhstan and its neighbours will achieve greater

maneuverability among great powers active in the region and reduce the risk of their becoming dependent on any one supplier, customer or market. The increase in regional prosperity that economists predict will ensue from this integration would help Kazakhstan expand its economic activities and realize its potential as a natural crossroads for east–west and north–south commercial links based on the reduction of manmade political and economic obstacles to the free flow of goods and people among Eurasian nations. It has been argued that Kazakhstan's geography allowed it to exercise decisive influence in two of Eurasia's most important sub-regions: Central Asia and the Caspian Sea (Weitz 2008).

In addition Kazakhstan has presented repeated proposals for a Eurasian Union covering a range of cooperative endeavours in the areas of politics, economics and security. The idea of a Eurasian Union was conceived in the mid-1990s and was intended to promote economic, social and to a limited degree political integration across the post-Soviet space. The Eurasian Union was conceived with the idea of first establishing a customs union and a common economic space and to enable the citizens of the post-Soviet successor states to travel visa free across newly erected borders. President Nazarbayev argued that the Commonwealth of Independent States had been impotent. In contrast the Eurasian Union would be empowered and legitimized by an executive committee and a parliament. The effort would be to erect an effective institutional framework for economic integration and mutual security in order to avoid unnecessary expenses of border control. President Nazarbayev argues that much of the world is integrating and in the post-Soviet space this integration should work better since till recently it was an integrated economic space. While this initiative failed, President Nazarbayev reaffirmed his commitment to a union launching a new initiative in April 2007 that focused on borders and water management issues that had long complicated relations among the Central Asian states but also matters that could only be resolved collectively (Weitz 2008). The November 2007 decision to award Kazakhstan chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in 2010 recognizes the country's growing importance in Eurasia. Kazakh officials have characterized this as an endorsement of their country's successful economic and political reforms, their leading role in Europe and Central Asia and their contribution as a bridge between the former Soviet republics and other OSCE members.

A very significant multilateral effort on a pan Asian level initiated by the Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev is the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building in Asia (CICA). The CICA vision for security in Asia elaborates on multilateral approaches towards promoting peace and security and visualizes itself as the forum for dialogue, consultation and adoption of decisions and measures on the basis of consensus on security issues in Asia. CICA originated with the idea that there was necessity for a pan-Asiatic system of security which while addressing problems of security and confidence building would also keep in mind cultural origins, national peculiarities and also the complicated history of relationship among them. The purpose behind the initiative was the creation of a system of

security in Asia where safety would be guaranteed by the whole complex of measures. CICA has been involved in dialogue over three groups of issues: military-political affairs, socio-economic development and humanitarian concerns. CICA identifies certain elements as challenges to security and seeks to find ways to eliminate them. In this context it resolves to support efforts for the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, to ensure the establishment of nuclear free zones, to curb excessive accumulation of conventional armaments, condemn terrorism, not to render any assistance to separatist movements in other states, reject the use of religion as a pretext for terrorists and separatists, emphasize the significance of curbing the movement of illicit drugs and corruption. In the context of achieving these objectives the CICA will take necessary steps for the elaboration and implementation of measures aimed at enhancing cooperation and creating an atmosphere of peace, confidence and friendship. All states are encouraged to resolve their disputes peacefully through negotiations in accordance with the principles enshrined in the UN Charter and International law.[9]

The most significant aspect of CICA is its membership which includes not just the Central Asian states and the two Eurasian powers, Russia and China but also major South and South East Asian powers. In addition it includes the US as an observer. This is significant as the reality of US presence and interest in the region cannot be wished away. Members include Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, China, Egypt, India, Iran, Israel, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Pakistan, the Palestinian National Administration, Russia, Tajikistan, Thailand, Turkey and Uzbekistan. Thailand was accepted as the seventeenth member in 2004 and Republic of Korea as the eighteenth member in 2006. Observers of CICA are Vietnam, Indonesia, Korea, Malaysia, USA, Ukraine, and Japan. International Organizations like the United Nations, Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe and the League of Arab States.

The multilateral basis of the CICA is evident in the first principle enshrined in the Declaration at the Second Summit of the CICA in Almaty in 2006. It notes

> We are convinced that multilateral cooperation based on the principles enshrined in the Charter as well as the Principles Guiding Relations among States and in the Almaty Act is more necessary today than ever for maintaining international peace and security. To this end we will intensify our efforts to develop a forum for political dialogue through elaborating common approaches to security on the basis of consensus.[10]

Strategic writings from Kazakhstan, for instance, clearly indicate that this is the preferred *multivector* policy that the state pursues.[11] Concluding the study on the post September 11 scenario in Central Asia it is pointed out

[9]For a detailed analysis of CICA see Laumulin (2002) and Ashimbaev et al (2003).

[10]From the Declaration at the second summit of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building in Asia (CICA), Almaty, 17 June 2006.

[11]*Multivector* refers to a policy where choices were kept open for both bilateral and multilateral agreements on particular issues according to specific security perceptions of individual states. In

> The multivector approach of foreign policy of RK has once again confirmed its expediency in complex conditions of international anti-terrorist campaign. It is necessary to pay attention to the following aspect of the foreign policy of RK in this period: in spite of the fact that Kazakhstan promoted active cooperation on the bilateral level, the importance of the regional factor and multilateral level of cooperation has greatly increased in our policy for the last year (Ashimbaev et al 2003).

There are interesting examples of the Central Asian states participating in different interstate organizations and in plans involving states outside the region simultaneously. For example, with the exception of Turkmenistan, the Central Asian states are participants of both the SCO and various NATO programmes. Kyrgyzstan joined the World Trade Organization in 1998, although this contradicted with the principles and interests of the customs union of various post-Soviet states and of the Eurasian Economic Community, headed by Russia, which was set up on the basis of the customs union and in October 2000 and of which Kyrgyzstan is also a member. Kazakhstan has been involved both with the Tengiz-Novorossiisk and the Baku-Ceyhan oil pipeline projects, the main lobbyists for which are respectively, the Russian Federation and the USA. Of course this policy has had its share of critics within the region. Talgat Ismagambetov notes that while this allows the Central Asian states to maneuver between the interests of the three world powers and where possible to extract for themselves certain short term advantages it does so without solving any problems related to the entire area of their national security (Ismagambetov 2003).

It is not surprising therefore that alternatives to the multivector policy have emerged. It has been argued for instance that Central Asia should be considered as an independent 'security system'.[12] As such participation of the Central Asian states in a single anti-terrorist coalition should be supplemented by their independent cooperation in this sphere. It has been argued that a 'market' for security and anti-terrorist activities has taken shape in Central Asia where a number of international organizations offer their 'professional assistance' in the field of regional security including UN agencies, EU, OSCE, CSTO, NATO and SCO. In addition there are a number of bilateral security agreements like the Uzbek-Russia strategic partnership, the CSTO joint military exercises and the Kazakhstan-China strategic cooperation established in July 2005. As such, it has been argued that Central Asian find themselves deeply entangled in this 'market' (Tolipov 2005). In order to avoid entanglement, arguments have been put forward for the states in the region to manage their security on their own in order to escape the effects of 'geo-politics and reliance on extra-regional powers' (Tolipov 2006). In any case, it has been emphasized that the Central Asian states need to reject the 'zero-sum game' and

(Footnote 11 continued)

the Central Asian case options for bilateral agreements were kept open with all the major powers, Russia, China and the United States.

[12]A security system, as defined by Barry Buzan, is a group of states whose security interests bind them sufficiently closely so that their national security cannot be realistically considered separate from each other (Cited in Hettne 2008).

adopt a 'win-win' strategy. Criticizing 'inadequate old-fashioned zero-sum game geopolitics', it has been argued that instead of regarding the states of the geopolitical triangle—US, Russia, China—as permanent rivals and worse still regarding themselves as victims of geopolitical rivalry, the states should take measures towards inviting all sides of the triangle to constructive cooperation in Central Asia. As for the powers involved, geopolitical pluralism rather than geopolitical antagonism will be based on the economic incentive of energy security.

Speaking at a conference in Tashkent Farkhod Fozilovich Tolipov raises a number of these new political and legal questions that the 'war against terror' seems to have thrown up particularly for states, like Uzbekistan, whose territories are being utilized for the conduct of the war. He emphasizes, 'The states involved in anti-terrorist campaigns of the future will always be faced with an option connected with a particular perception of the possible consequences of these campaigns for these states themselves in a much wider framework than the fight against terrorism itself' (Tolipov 2004).

There is thus, the necessity of a correlation of the national interest of the state, stable long term world order and the war against terror. This, he notes, will be difficult to achieve in the light of ontological problems regarding the definition of terror. Similarly, he raises the issue of 'military intervention beyond national borders in the fight against terrorism' and the requirement of legitimation of this intervention. He raises several questions in this connection. First, can all states threatened by terrorism work according to this formula, or is it valid for only some states? Secondly, how will military intervention beyond national borders be legitimated? Third, how and who will decide that in each case it is actually the fight against terrorism, since it has no universally accepted definition? (Tolipov 2004). He then raises the more significant question of how the Central Asian states benefit if their recent exclusive dependence on Russia is replaced by inclusive 'pluralistic dependence on several centres of power'. And also which formula of regional security would be acceptable not only to external powers but also the Central Asian states themselves.

5.3 In Lieu of Conclusions: Recent Developments

However, recent developments have not shown positive trends. In 2012, in an apparent move to limit travel to the neighbouring Central Asian states, authorities in Uzbekistan re-introduced exit-visa regimes for Uzbek nationals traveling to Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. The state run media said that the new regulation has been in effect since 1 June 2012. Since its independence in 1991, Uzbekistan has kept Soviet era exit-visa regimes in place for citizens who wished to travel abroad. However, the government had eliminated such requirements for Uzbek nationals visiting other states within the post-Soviet space. The reinstatement of the visa regime is reflective of a persistent deterioration of relations with Tajikistan that could have troubling implications for Afghanistan.

Relations between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan have been problematic over most of the post-Soviet period. Recently, Uzbek leaders imposed economic blockade on Tajikistan, halting rail traffic and interrupting electricity supplies. The principle cause of disagreement centres round Tajikistan's efforts to build the Rogun hydropower plant. Uzbek authorities fear that the construction of the hydropower plant would further reduce the amount of water available for Uzbek cotton fields. The problem of keeping Afghanistan stable after the withdrawal of American and NATO troops scheduled for 2014 would increase significantly with the continuation of the blockade. Washington's post withdrawal stabilization strategy for Afghanistan appears to be heavily dependent on regional economic development schemes through an initiative known as the New Silk Road strategy. There have been for some time initiatives to link the South and Central regions together. As part of this, a MOU was signed on 30 October 2006 which envisaged the delivery of Tajik and Kyrgyz electricity to Pakistan via Afghanistan. Whether this will further complicate issues remains to be seen particularly since the hydro-power generation has proved to be insufficient for the energy needs of the states within the region.

There is apprehension that the Uzbek-Tajik standoff would negatively impact on two US sponsored initiatives that have been on the cards—the establishment of a regional energy market via the construction of transmission lines connecting South and Central Asia and a long planned pipeline connecting Turkmenistan to South Asia, TAPI. There is also apprehension that if two frontline states are hostile to each other a collective effort to contain drug trafficking and militancy would stand little chance of success. The success of the strategies to link the two regions would be dependent on economic viability as well as prevailing political and security conditions. Moreover, it remains to be seen whether all the states would agree on a single strategy of development. In fact, there are already existing alternatives to the New Silk Road Strategy with the Chinese vision of a Eurasian Land Bridge linking China and Russia to Europe via Kazakhstan and the International North South Transport Corridor project supported by India, Russia and Iran which are at different stages of implementation.

Similarly, there seem to be varying perceptions about security interests. On 28 June 2012, Uzbekistan announced the suspension of its membership to the Moscow led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) saying that it does not agree to the 'CSTO's strategic plans on Afghanistan'. This is the second time that Uzbekistan has opted out of the CSTO, the first being in 1999. It is being argued that the present move is a signal that Uzbekistan may be willing to host a US air base on its territory after US troop withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2014. Under CSTO agreements, a member state would have to consult with other member states before hosting the armed forces of a non CSTO member (Kirchner and Dominguez 2014, p. 169). Tashkent is moving to project itself as the key link in the future troop withdrawal and the trans-shipment of cargoes to Afghanistan. Uzbekistan is also unhappy with Russian plans to open a military base in Kyrgyzstan. Relations between the two states have been strained by the existence of a number of disputed areas on the Kyrgyz-Uzbek border and the clashes that

occurred in Osh in 2010. The question that becomes relevant in the present context is whether there will be a search for a lasting regional solution to such issues where neighbouring powers also play a part. Unfortunately, the answer seems to be to the contrary and the recent imposition of the exit visa requirement indicates that the Central Asian states remain locked in what seems to be an intractable disputes. Here, the experience of other neighbouring regions with similar experiences of shared resources could be used as models. The South Asian region, for instance, has developed mechanisms to deal with the problem of shared rivers that often flow through multiple states. While these mechanisms may have been developed within a particular political and historical context their structures may well prove to be useful as examples of multilateral or bilateral agreements to deal with shared water resources.

One issue on which there is common agreement is the need to develop a multilateral response to the threat of terrorism. The regional initiatives that are involved here are the SCO, CSTO and NATO. These share a number of overlapping multilateral antiterrorist activities in the Central Asian region. It has been suggested that dialogue between the SCO, CSTO and NATO is most crucial since the United States, China and Russia are the most significant non regional powers involved in the region (Weitz 2006, p. 14). Here an ambitious idea would be to establish an overarching coordination mechanism for the region's major anti-terrorist institutions. In mid-December 2005, CSTO General Director Toktasyn Buzubayev said that the CSTO favoured creating a Eurasian Advisory Council that could include representatives from the CSTO, the SCO, NATO, the EU and the Eurasian Economic Community (which includes Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan) (Weitz 2006, p. 16). It has been suggested that at a minimum such a body would allow representatives from the various institutions to meet periodically to exchange ideas and explore possible collaborative projects.

Alternatively, a mechanism could be devised whereby individual SCO hosts could invite NATO observers to its sessions. At the July 2005 summit in Astana, the then SCO Chairman and host Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev established a precedent by inviting senior officials from India, Iran and Pakistan to participate as 'guests of the Chairman'.[13] Although these countries obtained formal observer status at the summit, and subsequently full membership, Afghan representatives have attended several SCO meetings without receiving or requiring such status. Additionally NATO governments could seek to become a partner of specific SCO organs such as RATS (Regional Antiterrorism Structure). Similarly, in the field of narcotics trafficking there have been proposals for cooperation between the CSTO and the NATO. Strengthening security along the Tajik-Afghan border is another area where there could be collaboration between the SCO, CSTO and the NATO. The Tajik-Afghan border provides an optimal locale for multi institutional collaboration since the zone of interest of all three overlap here. The CSTO has

[13]'Natwar Singh Arrives for Central Asia... Summit', *Indo-Asian News Service*, 4 July 2005, cited in Weitz (2006, p. 15, fn. 10).

established a special contact group with Afghanistan and the SCO has invited Afghan delegations to several of its meetings. The NATO enjoys over flight rights over Tajikistan in support of its operations in Afghanistan and provides technical assistance to Tajik border guards. The members of the three institutions have been especially concerned with the transit of Afghan heroin through Tajikistan to Russian and European markets.

However, it is also true that the direction that multilateral initiatives assume within the region is yet to be seen. In the light of such varied developments the observation of the Viennese philosopher, Ludwig Wittgenstein, in 1929, seems particularly relevant. He noted

> When we think of the world's future, we always mean the destination it will reach if it keeps going in the direction we can see it going now; it does not occur to us that its path is not a straight line, but a curve, constantly changing direction (Wittgenstein 1980).

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Chapter 6
Conclusions: The Politics of Symbolism

Abstract This looks into the significance of political symbolism in the face of official 'images' that state portrays and their credence both within the states and in the international community. In post Soviet Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan the function of symbols and myths in the production of the 'image' of the state has acquired various possibilities. Neither the symbols themselves, nor the images that they supported however remain uncontested. The two abiding 'images' that the two states portray are indicative of the way they wish to position themselves in the global arena. Uzbekistan positions itself as an ancient civilization at the crossroads of history while Kazakhstan promotes itself as a significant geostrategic player and a multicultural and multi-ethnic society. While both images are actively promoted by the state and reinforced by diplomatic campaigns, they are also occasionally challenged by alternative reporting and reflections that influence external perception of the states. International reporting about the Andijan incident in 2005 and *Borat* are examples that affected the image of the Uzbek and Kazakh states respectively. On the other hand there are certain enduring images of the states, the blue domes of Samarkand for instance, that are clearly identified and utilized by the state but have very little to do with recent state propaganda. The 'images' themselves have faced contestation from within as alternative images have gained salience particularly in the peripheries and from the marginalized but also in the global arena. It therefore argues that the extent to which these images have impacted on the international standing of the states still remains debated.

Keywords Uzbekistan · Kazakhstan · Symbolism and 'image' · Public diplomacy and rhetoric · Alternative images

Since politics is a continual struggle over meanings and signification, understanding the political process requires an analysis of how the symbolic enters the political process, how symbols are consciously or unconsciously manipulated by political actors and how this symbolic dimension relates to the material bases of power. Literature that explores political symbolism now argues for a reconsideration of its role in political analysis. These propose that alongside analysis that centres on

A. Sengupta, *Symbols and the Image of the State in Eurasia*,
SpringerBriefs in Political Science, DOI 10.1007/978-981-10-2392-7_6

power and interests, consideration of political symbolism provides useful insights that evoke political recognition, promoting normative or positive ideas about politics (Croucher 2006). Political action of all types involves meanings for participants and observers irrespective of long term consequences or effects. While symbolism was seen as only peripheral to political analysis, it has always been perceived as central to cultural and sociological analysis. In recent times the importance of the role of symbols in nationalism has been the focus of studies (Smith 1991). This assumed prominence with the emergence of new states in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. In addition the increased media exposure of those who exercise political power means that symbols, gestures and gimmicks are now symbolically constituted and examined.

Studies of political symbolism have traditionally argued that much of the mechanics of modern liberal democracy can be understood in terms of meanings it generates for the polity as much as the functions it fulfils (Edelman 1964). As such, the ritualistic aspects of voting are as important as the vote that is cast. While certain political actions, emblems and signs invoke meanings that can be delineated from a literal understanding of the signs involved, certain other actions and images produce meanings that are both widely understood and evoke defined responses. While a flag has a literal meaning in that it designates a place and state it also connotes a variety of meanings about people, nation and governance. A national flag remains a pervasive and commonplace symbol of nationalism. While the notion of a nation is often that of an 'imagined community' and it remains at least in part a mythical construct the use of a flag permeates the national consciousness as a ubiquitous reference to the interests it exemplifies. Symbols, however, are not always uncontested and the ability of symbols to invoke different meanings or their *multivocality* has been the subject of analysis (Turner 1967). Often there is contestation between those who evoke the symbols and those who are subject to them. In fact at times power has been derived from the control over a society's symbols (Harrison 1995, p. 255).

Many symbols are also intimately related to myths. These are myths that are often ingrained in culture even if they are rarely acknowledged or celebrated publicly evoking symbols as their currency (Croucher 2006). Myths remain a feature of every society. They may be officially propagated or have a popular life of their own and is often part of a narrative that defines a society and the values it accepts. Political symbols may also be encapsulated in myths. In fact the foundational myths of states remain significant in each stage of nation building as states move towards legitimizing their existence within the global arena but also within its own state. Myths have symbolic power. They are constantly repeated, often re-enacted and essentially propagated for their effect rather than their truth value (Fulbrook 1997, p. 72). As N. Davies notes they are 'sets of simplified beliefs which may or may not approximate reality, but which give us a sense of our origins, our identity and our purpose' (Davis 1997, p. 141). It has been argued that the post-communist era is particularly susceptible to the influence of myths since it was characterized by 'discontinuity, fragmentation, confusion, collective passion, illusions and disappointments' (Tanasoiu 2005, p. 115). Here the role of myth has been

two fold, covering the ideological vacuum and facilitating transition. Political myths are not new inventions. They use frames already developed and established within a nation's collective memory by cultural myths. An analysis of cultural foundational myths provides an understanding of why certain political myths acquire relevance and have been successful in attracting public support.

Political leadership often mobilizes political symbols and appeal to commonly understood symbols to promote their agenda. More often than not this is done through what Pierre Bourdieu refers to as symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1991). For Bourdieu symbolic capital is essentially an abstract concept that encapsulates relations between individuals. As a form of capital it is recognized by markers that are possessed by individuals or groups that allow them certain benefits. Crucial for the concept is the acknowledgement of the symbolic recognition between groups. Though essentially an abstract concept it often has clear physical markers—titles, awards, institutions and buildings—all of which indicate forms of symbolic capital. In their communication, political actors and the state that they symbolize enjoy a form of symbolic capital which along with the considerable resources that they control legitimizes their opinion. As such even benign political phenomenon such as information campaigns assumes importance beyond that of simple political propaganda. John Thompson argues that political scandal is ultimately detrimental because it erodes the symbolic capital of a political actor, destroying trust and an individual's reputation (Thompson 2000).

In post-Soviet Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan the function of symbols and myths in the production of the 'image' of the state has acquired various possibilities. Neither the symbols themselves, nor the images that they supported however remain uncontested. In addition, both Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan are faced with a looming succession crisis. In both, presidents have been in power since independence and been re-elected multiple times. And in both there are rumours of change but no clear alternatives. Uzbek presidential elections were postponed from December 2014 to March 2015 and Kazakh presidential elections brought forward to April 2015. Election dates are therefore flexible and there always remains the possibility that succession could happen as handover of power. Analysts have argued that the principal driver of intra elite stability in both the states would be resource sharing and presidential successions would be determined through resource distribution which could create tensions within the elites and local business communities.[1] A key difference between the two is that Kazakhstan has powerful bureaucratic elites with economic interests whereas Uzbekistan has a security sector that wields substantial power with its own commercial sector. In both the countries the distribution of resources established during the first two decades of independence could be challenged by presidential succession. Prior to the elections it was being argued that in both, leadership change could point towards institutional reform, with the objective of creating institutions that are more amenable to political reform. The possibility of the emergence of a 'consensus successor' with a more predictable

[1]For a detailed discussion see Boonstra and Laruelle (2014).

regulation of elite interests was also seen to be on the cards (Boonstra and Laruelle 2014). Presidential elections were held in Uzbekistan on 29 March 2015. President Karimov won with 90 % votes giving him a fourth consecutive presidential term. Early presidential elections were held in Kazakhstan on 26 April 2015. The incumbent president won with 97.7 % votes. In both, procedures remain important in name only and the actual centres of power and stability remain outside these institutional processes.

There are few clues as to what would unfold given the potential for instability during a period of transition. In such circumstances the symbolism inherent in actions, reactions and responses assume particular significance. This concluding chapter argues that the 'image' that the Uzbek and Kazakh states have created for themselves is sought to be consolidated through symbolic speech and action, aimed in the first case at legitimizing its domestic position and in the second at strengthening its diplomatic leverage in the global arena. However, the 'images' themselves have faced contestation from within as alternative images have gained salience particularly in the peripheries and from the marginalized but also in the global arena.

6.1 Symbolism and Legitimacy

As in most post-Soviet states transition has been the abiding theme in Uzbekistan over the last 20 years. The assumption has been that the transition would be from a command economy to a market economy and from authoritarianism to democracy. However, transition is hardly ever a linear process particularly in states like Uzbekistan where the political elite remained in place and were able to transform their political power into advantages for their immediate family, 'clan' or regional factions. It has been argued that Uzbek politics has been dominated by weak formal state agencies and disproportionately influential informal institutions. Historically, regional and clan affiliations played a prominent political and economic role. Uzbek identity in public and private life is traditionally determined by an individual's belonging to five distinct geographical areas that make up separate provinces: Tashkent, Samarkand, Ferghana, Surkhandarya-Syrdarya and Khorezm. During the Soviet period, members of the Samarkand-Tashkent clans established dominant key economic and political positions (Said 2014).

Patronage politics, in contrast, has been in constant flux. The current elite hierarchy consists of two tiers. The top tier consists of three influential groups whose leaders are members of President Karimov's inner circle: Prime Minister Shavkat Mirziyaev, National Security Service Chief Rustam Inoyatov, First Deputy Prime Minister Rustam Azimov and Elyor Ganiev, Minister of Foreign Economic Relations Investment and Trade. Because power and wealth are interlinked they have developed reputations as the country's major oligarchs. The lower tier is made up of oblast governors, wealthy industrialists land owners and informal power brokers. Leaders of these lower tier groups are subordinate to those in groups linked

to major oligarchs. Some analysts argue that patronage groups are based on regional affiliations, as was the case during the Soviet period; Mirziyaev is said to represent the powerful Samarkand clan, Azimov and Ganiev the Tashkent clan and Inoyatov the Surkhdarya clan. However as Akhmed Said argues, the reality is far more complex and fluid. Regional affiliations do play a role in Uzbek politics however, patronage groups are now built on several factors, including individual loyalty to officials, common pragmatic interests, regional ties, family ties and professional ties. In a clear sign of pragmatism, Uzbek officials maintain their membership with multiple patronage networks to hedge their bets and defend their economies and political resources.[2]

At the juncture of transition to independence, the Peoples' Democratic Party replaced the Uzbek Communist Party, but while adherence to the party was not essential for political advancement, inter-personal ties of loyalty remained crucial. In Uzbekistan, as in a number of other post-Soviet states, the state remains a major actor in the economy as in social affairs. In such a context social advancement can only be pursued by participation in state institutions. At the same time any wealth that is accumulated can hardly be invested without political protection. Even though embryonic forms of market economy are emerging in various sectors, all economic activity is closely monitored by the state through fiscal and legislative means. As such the maintenance of informal networks for political protection remains critical. There is a complex process of reproduction where the nomination and selection of political personnel takes place in central academic institutions which according to Boris Petric (2011) are the real antechambers of power. However, this regional elite has only limited access to resources and there is central control to ensure that they do not come as a threat or pose an alternative to the central authorities (Baykal 2010).

Uzbekistan's potential power transition generated serious analytical discourse, rumours and mass speculation till President Karimov declared his intention to participate and elections upheld his victory (Malashenko 2014). Until Karimov declared his intention to participate in the elections, the question of who would take the reins was of particular interest. The President's eldest daughter Gulnara Karimova and the head of the National Security Service Rustam Inoyatov were seen as the main actors in the struggle. There were of course other contenders and powerful clans in the fray and more importantly, various political factions vying for power away from the immediate ranks of the ruling circle. Two other potential candidates were the Prime Minister Shavkat Mirziyoyev and the Deputy Prime Minister Rustam Azimov (Malashenko 2014). Speculation about whether Karimov would enter the fray himself or nominate a candidate was laid to rest as Karimov's intention to join the Presidential election was made clear. In addition to President Islam Karimov, three other names were proposed by parties as candidates from different parties. The Peoples' Democratic Party put forward as its candidate for President the Chairman of the Central Council of the party Hatamzhona Ketmonov.

[2]For details of key political and economic actors in Uzbekistan see Said (2014).

This, it is being argued, is similar to the situation in 2000 when Abdulhafiz Jalalov, the then chairman of the PDP was proposed as an alternative candidate for Karimov. It is interesting that Jalalov had made it clear that he along with all other members of his party would vote for Karimov.[3] The Social Democratic Party, Adolat, endorsed Nariman Umarov, a hydrogeologist who since 2009 had been chairman of the State Committee of Uzbekistan for the protection of nature. Milli Tiklanish put forward the name of Akmal Saidov.[4]

The presidential family, and infighting within the family that became public knowledge, overshadowed Uzbek politics in the year preceding the election and the 'image' of a state caught in the crossfire of a domestic power struggle gained momentum in the international press. A major allegation against Gulnara Karimova was the fact that her actions had not only shed 'negative limelight' on her family but also on Uzbekistan through her involvement in a Swiss money laundering investigation and related corruption cases (Lillis 2015, January 12). On the other hand, in the course of the controversy surrounding Gulnara Karimova's business deals President Karimov's image as the impartial leader of the state was reinforced as her business activities were curtailed and she herself put under house arrest. As at other moments of transition the symbolic significance of a threat perception and therefore the importance of stability were underlined. On the occasion of the Day of Defence of the Motherland on 14 January 2015, President Karimov drew attention to the expansion of the range of threats to international security and Uzbekistan in particular bringing back into the national discourse the theme of 'nation under threat'. These include increased geopolitical competition manifest in the Ukraine situation, serious aggravation of relations between Russia and the West, the creeping expansion of extremism, the threat posed by the ISIS including the fact that its ranks have now been joined by immigrants from many former Soviet countries including Uzbekistan. The withdrawal of international troops from Afghanistan and the possibility of chaos in the neighbouring states have once again provided impetus to the rhetoric (Panfilova 2015).

Political stability and economic progress have been showcased by the Uzbek state in recent times through lavish celebrations of events like Independence Day or *Navroz*. Unlike its neighbours Uzbekistan emerged from the global economic crisis unscathed, largely because of the relative isolation of the state from global financial institutions. The domestic political situation also seemed to have stabilized after the 2008 constitutional changes. Uzbekistan's international reputation which was significantly damaged because of the May 2005 Andijan events improved after a number of western states and international organizations lauded Tashkent for hosting refugees during the June 2010 interethnic unrest in Kyrgyzstan and because of Uzbekistan's key role in the Northern Distribution Network (Said 2014). The continuing possibility for chaos in the neighbourhood and the fact that Uzbekistan is the northern neighbour of Afghanistan has meant that Tashkent is key in efforts to

[3] www.uzmetronom.com 2015a.

[4] UZ24 2015.

contain radicalism. This has meant that despite being listed as 'county of particular concern' in the US State Department list, Nisha Biswal, the US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia argued that US policy should involve 'the right balance of pressure, partnership and a certain amount of strategic patience' (Swerdlow and Stroehlein 2015).

The 'image' of a state with questionable rights record has not hindered Uzbekistan's international legitimacy as a state with enormous geopolitical significance. On the other hand there is continuing state effort to foster a more progressive image. One such effort is through government allocation of funds for sport youth programmes. It is argued that this is impelled by the desire to keep the Uzbek youth occupied and apolitical and to foster a 'positive international image of Uzbekistan'. This according to some is an effort to promote through sports an image of themselves as a progressive, modern country as well as regional power (Giulianelli 2015). Similarly, the *Millennium Development Goals Report* (2015) argues that despite all challenges posed by an unstable economy Uzbekistan was able to maintain a balance between the most important key development goals, i.e. ensuring rapid economic growth through structural reforms and improving the welfare of all strata of the population. It goes on to argue that as a result of this balanced development paradigm the country has on the one hand seen the rapid development of technical, technological and financial foundation required for long term and stable economic growth. And on the other there has been a steady reduction of poverty, including among the most vulnerable groups and an overall improvement in standards of living.

In the parliamentary elections in December 2014, the Liberal Democratic Party received maximum seats. Forty-seven members were elected from the Liberal Democratic Party, 28 from Democratic Party Milliy Tikianish, 21 from Peoples' Democratic Party and 17 from the Social Democratic Party Adolat. Speaking to the deputies of the new Parliament on 12 January 2015, and thereby laying to rest any speculation that he would not contest the elections, Karimov categorically stated that his country would not join the Eurasian Union and the Customs Union. He noted, 'People who live and breathe the air of freedom and independence never turn from the chosen path'.[5] He also stressed that Uzbekistan will never be a part of any military-political bloc. It will not support foreign military on its soil and Uzbek soldiers will not take up arms on the ground of other countries. This was seen as the announcement of the Presidential election campaign programme scheduled for 29 March 2015.

While on the one hand, the state creates an 'image' for itself, an interesting aside is an on-going debate in the social media on the 'image' of the appropriate leader that seems to suggest that opinions vary. There is reference to Amir Timur as the ideal leader who conferred with his people but also the call for an Uzbek citizen who would be a non-ethnic and thereby a solution to the state's endemic corruption. In portals where questions about the future Uzbek society are being debated, the

[5] www.uzmetronom.com 2015b.

emphasis is on a clear understanding of the 'image' for the future leader (Salimov 2013). 'Change' is the keyword and it is underlined and much would depend on the leadership that comes to power in 2014–2015. It is being argued that Uzbekistan is now at crossroads and a conscious decision has to be made by society to move towards modernity leaving behind an inertia that is both endemic in the social fabric of society but also in the mentality of the people. Here, the article argues, the role of a 'creative minority' who will be able to balance the contradictory forces of development within society will be crucial.[6] The author refers back to the reformist Jadid movement at the turn of the last century and identifies the 'modern creative minority' as the neo-Jadids. The neo-Jadids would be able to identify all that was positive in the past and creatively adopt it to suit modern Uzbek society. There is obviously an expectation that the 'creative minority' would constitute the leadership in the future.

6.2 Symbolism and Diplomacy

Kazakhstan's incorporation within the Eurasian initiative has meant that Kazakhstan has seen substantial devaluation and setbacks and as Russia faces sanctions and its economy slows, Kazakhstan will also be affected (Michel 2014).[7] Events in Ukraine and Russia's relations with Turkey following the shooting of a Russian plane in Syria have created further problems for the Eurasian Union. Where Nazarbayev had once thought of the EEU as a coalition of equals, Moscow's policies have meant that the concerns are no longer just economic but also political. Since Crimea, Astana has proposed increased penalties for those calling for separatism and devised timetables for ethnic Kazakhs seeking citizenship (Michel 2014). Meanwhile nationalist anti-Russian protests are on the rise. The protests have been small but they hint at the fact that President Nazarbayev's unspoken social contract in which citizens' traded political freedom for prosperity and social stability is becoming fragile. Tensions surfaced in 2011 when 15 people were shot dead as striking oil workers clashed with the police in Zhanaozhen in the west of the country (*The Economist* 2014). The protests are small but they hint at the fact that President Putin's actions in Crimea have also affected the EEU momentum. Russian calls for potential common passports and currency has fallen flat and the possibility of a Eurasian Union, first proposed by Russia in 2012 has failed to materialize. The membership of Ukraine is essential if the EEU is to be considered for any consequential geopolitical role. But events since early 2014 preclude the possibility. Ukraine's non role in the EEU shares strong parallels with the other

[6]According to Gregory Pomerantz, a creative minority has found its own balance and is able to balance the destructive forces of society. See Salimov (2013).

[7]See also Tenge Fever, *The Economist* (2014, February 22) which records the anger at the devaluation of the tenge by 19 % on 11 February 2014 as the sign of a broader malaise.

attempt at post-Soviet integration, the Commonwealth of Independent States. The CIS was meant to be a regional successor but without Ukraine's participation (Ukraine was only an associate member and officially exited the group in June 2014) the effectiveness of the CIS was compromised.

In a cogent analysis Nicolás de Pedro (2014) states that with economic and political uncertainties looming on the horizon Kazakhstan has become an unsettled state. Its anxiety about the Ukrainian conflict and the deterioration of the EU-Russian relations is probably the greatest. Both the subjects threaten to reduce some of the pillars on which the Kazakh president built independent Kazakhstan. The country's economic sovereignty is in question. There is also a general impression that Astana now is an unwilling participant in the Eurasian integration process and recognition that changing course will not be easy. On 11 November, two months ahead of the normal date, Nazarbayev gave his traditional televised speech on the state of the nation to the two chambers of the Kazakh Parliament. The speech was an attempt to dispel uncertainty and project control in the face of a complex situation. However the reality is a cause for concern. The rate of growth of the Kazakh economy is falling. It was reduced from 6 % in 2013 to 4 % in the first nine months of 2014. Astana fears an even greater decline with the fall in oil prices. The drop in oil prices has been 25 % since mid-2014. This is the main reason of worry, but not the only one. Kazakhstan receives about $55 billion annually from the export of crude oil. An average price of $75–80 per barrel means a drop of around $15 billion a year, annually from the export of oil, though there are disagreements about the real impact on local finances. The most optimistic or closest to the government figures give a figure of $5 billion in real impact as the bulk of the reduction will be applied to the part of the capital that does not return to Kazakhstan and so the state will continue to bring in similar amounts as of now amounting to about $35–40 billion real annual income (Pedro 2014).

In order to tackle this reduction in income and avoid economic contraction, the Kazakh president announced the launch of *Nurly Zhol*, a plan of investment and public loans of some $4 billion annually from the Kazakhstan National Fund over the next three years. It is the second time since the beginning of the global crisis in 2008 that Kazakhstan has used money from this fund. The Kazakh central bank concentrated its efforts on maintaining exchange rate stability during 2015. The country is living with the psychological impact of the devaluation of almost 20 % of the value of the tenge in February 2014 that brought about an immediate increase in mortgage prices and consumer prices. The devaluation provoked protests and growing distrust among the population about the desirability and economic attractiveness of integration within the Eurasian Economic Union process. The Kazakh Government seems determined to avoid another devaluation. However in the opinion of many economists if oil prices remain close to their current level, devaluation would be inevitable. In Kazakhstan today the connection between economic uncertainty and the geopolitics of the war of sanctions between the EU and Russia with its impact on the Kazakh economy seems inevitable. The Kazakh President began his speech with declaring, 'Our country is affected by being located close to the epicentre of geopolitical tensions'. Astana has felt particularly affected

by the crisis in Ukraine. The Russian reaction to Maidan has been one of uncertainty particularly since the arguments used to question the Ukrainian borders were seen by many as being those that could be used to justify a similar intervention on Kazakh territory. In fact northern Kazakhstan has been as present in Russian ultranationalist rhetoric as the Ukrainian territory. This is part of the reason why the economic integration with Russia arouses suspicion among significant sections of the Kazakh population. Being aware of such reactions in a televised interview with a local channel *Khabar* on 26 August 2014, Nazarbayev said, 'If the rules set forth in the agreement are not followed Kazakhstan has the right to withdraw from the Eurasian Economic Union. I have said this before and I am saying this again, Kazkahstan will not be part of organizations that poses a threat to our independence' (Pedro 2014).

Moscow's response was immediate. On 28 August 2014, in response to a question at the *Nashi* youth nationalist movement President Putin questioned the historical legitimacy of Kazakhstan as a state, insinuating that it was a 'Soviet error' and indicating that an overwhelming majority of the Kazakh population was committed to the strong relations with Russia and staying within the Russian sphere (*Russki mir*). However, he did not clarify where the conviction about the will of the majority came from (Pedro 2014). Twenty-four percent of Kazakh citizens are ethnic Russians, concentrated in the north of the country that shares a border with Russia. Till date, Kazakh Russians have little interest in secession and it was generally assumed that they are well integrated within the new Kazakh state. However, events in Ukraine have indicated the capacity of inter-ethnic issues to divide society. The Kazakh Government opted for a discrete response and announced the celebration of the 550th anniversary of the Kazakh state in 2015.

According to President Nazarbayev, the Kazakh people had carved out a proto state on the steppes of Eurasia in the mid-1400s, a decade and a half before Russians shook off the Mongol yoke on the way to creating their own state. He argued that Kerey Khan and Zhanibek created the first khanate in 1465, which may not have been a state in the modern understanding of the term and with the present borders, but 'it is important that the foundation was laid then and we are the people continuing the great deeds of our ancestors' (Lillis 2015, January 6).[8] Designed to foster nation building, the Kazakh celebrations will harness popular culture and arts to promote a patriotic message and focus on 'great events and great heroes'. According to Dosym Satpayev what is important is '….not so much statehood, but the idea of the consolidation of the Kazakh state, the creation of a single people' (Lillis 2015, January 6). While on the one hand the celebrations are a reaction to Putin's comment they also reflect on how the Ukrainian crisis is testing traditional Russo-Kazakh relations. There has also been a stress on tolerance, unity and ethnic harmony amid the on-going troubles in Ukraine which has tended to divide public opinion. Mindful of competing ethnic agendas Nazarbayev used Independence Day

[8] http://tengrinews.kz/kazakhstan_news/kazahskoy-gosudarstvennosti-v-2015-godu-ispolnitsya-550-let-nazarbaev-263876, cited from Lillis (2015, January 6).

celebrations in December 2015 to issue a call for patriotism and unity. He said, 'Independence is the unflinching resolution of each citizen to defend Kazakhstan, their own home and the motherland to the last drop of blood, as our classic ancestors have bequeathed us'(Lillis 2015, January 6).

It is interesting that the idea of a post-Soviet Eurasian Union as an entity where political sovereignty would be preserved but a common economic space would be created had first been proposed by Nazarbayev. However, Kazakhs leaders have also clearly indicated that while Russia is an inevitable major trading partner, Kazakhstan would not be reduced to a satellite state. Bakytzhan Sagintayev, the first Deputy Prime Minister of Kazakhstan and its lead negotiator pointed this out clearly when he said, 'We are not creating a political organization, we are forming a purely economic union. The EEU is a pragmatic means to get benefits. We don't meddle into what Russia is doing politically and they cannot tell us what foreign policy to pursue' (Vatanka 2014). As such Astana has rejected all Russian attempts to deepen the EEU through measures such as a common passport and currency, a collective parliament and a common border force. President Nazarbayev has also cautioned against measures that would undermine the EEU if political showmanship is prioritized over genuine economic collaboration. He has also warned that the inclusion of additional members like Armenia would entangle the organization and Kazakhstan in the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict.

On 14 February 2015, the council of the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan called for an early presidential election in Kazakhstan. The council members, representing more than eight hundred ethnic associations throughout the country explained their action by citing 'numerous appeals of citizens', a need to give the president 'a new mandate' to implement his economic stimulus programmes against adverse external environments as well as the constitutional requirement to hold separate presidential and parliamentary elections, which could end up in quick succession in 2016. As the Assembly pointed out

> In the context of growing global economic crisis and complex international agenda this nation-wide initiative for holding the election is a requirement of time. It is necessary to give President Nursultan Nazarbayev a new mandate of national trust to steer the country in this period of global trials (Nurbekov 2015).

In the briefing at the central Communications Service, held on the same day, the nine members of the Mazhilis from the Ak Zol Party including a Chechen, a German, a Kazakh, a Korean, a Tatar, an Uzbek and a Ukrainian offered firm support for the initiative. According to the Assembly, amid the intensifying global economic crisis early elections would enable Kazakhstan to efficiently implement the Nurly Zhol Anti-Crisis Programme and to further pursue the long term priorities set by the Kazakhstan 2050 Strategy (Satubaldina 2015).

Concern over how the decision would be received in the international community was addressed by the Foreign Minister Erlan Idrissov when he said that early presidential elections would not affect the international image of Kazakhstan. Speaking to reporters in the Mazhilis on 16 February he argued

> I think it will have no effect on our international image. It is our own choice. This is a proposal by members of the Ak Zhol Party, and I think that the members of the Parliament will make appropriate proposals. It is the choice of our people. Therefore foreign states have nothing to do with it.
>
> We support and develop our relations with foreign communities. I believe that foreign communities will support the choice of our people, and if people express the wish to hold elections whenever they find it convenient, I think it should not have any impact on our relations with foreign countries. On the contrary, I think there will be more predictability, specificity and indeed we will hold elections in accordance with international standards. (Bupezhanova 2015)

The presidential election assumes significance since Nazarbayev is identified with the state itself. In addition to the creation of the Nazarbayev University, Astana Day, a holiday celebrating the capital happens to fall on the same day as Nazarbayev's birthday. He also rewrote the lyrics of the National Anthem. In 2010 the parliament named him 'leader of the nation' thus ensuring his immunity from prosecution. There are bronze handprints of Nazarbayev and Kazakhs place their hand on the prints to make a wish. Kucera (2011) argues that a feature of the propaganda surrounding Nazarbayev is that while it is intended for domestic consumption, its aim is to emphasize his stature abroad. In Astana's Museum of the First President of Kazakhstan, devoted to Nazarbayev, a couple of rooms focus on his early life, but the bulk of the collection is devoted to awards, honours and gifts that Nazarbayev has received from abroad. Kucera goes on to argue that in the initial years after independence, Nazarbayev decided to stake his internal legitimacy on his international reputation. As Edward Schatz argued, 'Nazarbayev sought to portray an image of state elite that was engaged internationally and therefore deserving of support domestically' (Kucera 2011).

The emphasis remains on state diplomacy with Erlan Idrissov, Minister of Foreign Affairs, stressing the need for expansion of diplomatic representation abroad and on promoting state interest in the 'farthest part of the world' (Idrissov 2014). Kazakhstan's bid for a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council was achieved. The conclusion of negotiations with the European Union on a new enhanced partnership and cooperation agreement and accession to WTO are highlighted as Kazakhstan's diplomatic victory and independent foreign policy. Kazakhstan is attempting to keep its diplomatic options open amid rising Western-Russian tensions. Unwilling to get dragged into western sanctions, Astana has enlisted the help of western specialists including former British Prime Minister Tony Blair to push for international roles that would add to its global weight. Kazakhstan is pursuing this aim through a variety of avenues which includes a bid for a UN Security Council seat but also bidding for the Winter Olympic Games. According to Rico Isaacs all this is part of Kazakhstan's strategy to promote itself as a player on the international stage and make the international community aware of Kazakhstan. He argues that Kazakhstan is promoting itself as a mediator of interests of competing powers in the region—big powers like Russia, China and the United States but also countries like Turkey and Iran (Lillis 2014, December 10).

Astana's Security Council bid is calibrated to show that a country with a foothold in both Europe and Asia is ideally situated to serve as a bridge between the East and the West and serve as a go between that could potentially help defuse confrontation between Kremlin and the western powers. The leadership is reinforcing the image of an 'honest broker in an unsettled and challenging world' (Lillis 2014, December 10).[9] Erlan Idrissov also highlighted initiatives designed to demonstrate Kazakhstan's benign international influence, from its track record promoting nuclear non-proliferation to its imminent launch of an overseas development agency KazAID which would engage in development initiatives involving poorer Central Asian neighbours and Afghanistan. The western-Russian standoff over Ukraine poses a particularly vexing problem for Astana. It is unwilling to sacrifice its relations with the United States and European Union for the sake of Russian ambitions. Moscow's policy in Ukraine along with territorial claims voiced by Russian nationalists on parts of northern Kazakhstan and aspersions cast by Putin on Kazakh statehood has meant that Astana now insists that it is important for Kazakhstan to indicate to the international community Kazakhstan's existence as a state separate and independent from Russia. However, Kazakhstan's diplomatic success story has not been without criticism from within. Opposition politician Amirzhan Kosanov has noted that while it is acceptable for every country to want a positive image in the eyes of the international community, in Kazakhstan the effort is to project every diplomatic success as the success of the President (Lillis 2014, December 10). It is also argued that this international image making is an attempt to divert attention away from Kazakhstan's domestic issues. Nazarbayev was inducted into his new term of office as Kazakhstan's president on 29 April at a ceremony at the Palace of Independence at Astana in the presence of members of parliament, cabinet officials and foreign ambassadors. In his inaugural speech the newly installed President pledged to move quickly on implementing his campaign platform of five institutional reforms that focus on building a meritocratic government, strengthening the rule of law and developing a middle class.

6.3 Image Building, National Identity and Transition

The newly emerging states in the post-Soviet era have engaged in a complex exercise in order to position themselves on the global geographical and mental map as stable countries with promising economies. This has involved a systematic identity and image transformation that was both internally and externally driven. Image building, or what in the case of states is referred to as nation branding, assumed particular significance in the time of transition. Transition entailed distancing the emerging state from the old economic and political system that existed

[9]Foreign Minister Erlan Idrissov, at the launch of the Eurasian Council on Foreign Affairs, cited in Lillis (2014, December 10).

before the transition. It is also an attempt to change negative stereotypes and reinforce positive stereotypes associated with the country and its people and to position the country as a reliable and eligible member of the international community (Szondi 2007). In most transitional states where the leadership has been in power for a number of years there also remains the challenge of differentiating between the 'image' of the state and the 'image' of the government. Country promotions are often politicized and there is frequently domestic disagreement on the way that reputation is managed abroad.

However, branding also facilitates the re-defining and the re-construction of national identities. Just like the states themselves, individuals are also faced with the question of definition during times of transition particularly in cases where previous images have been limited or incorrect. As Simon Anholt (2010) argues, the identity and image of the place people inhabit are a 'seamless extension of the identity and image of the individual. It is a natural human tendency for people to identify with their city, region or country'. This often means that states are redefined by titular nationalities or national majorities who then also construct peripheral nations and their images. It also remains true that the periphery may well redefine the centre through images that it projects about itself but also about the centre. In any case while 'brand equity' is often sought for, the 'image' that a state portrays of itself may be in conflict with the 'image' it enjoys in the international community. However, despite such multiple 'images' the effort of states to legitimize themselves both domestically as well as within the international community through the management of reputation and 'image building' remains a continuing challenge.

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