6. General Comparison of Contemporary Regimes

All four Central Asian Republics became independent in 1991 as a result of the dissolution of the USSR. They did not have to struggle for their secession. In the absence of their own national liberation movements, their sovereignty resulted from the decisions of Jeltsin (Russia), Krawtshuk (Ukraine) and Schushkewitsch (Belarus) when they signed a document to dissolve the Soviet Union (Petric 2011: 166). As Matveeva makes clear, "With the break-up of the Soviet Union, independence was forced on Central Asian states rather than won by them" (Matveeva 1999: 24). In addition, although the Central Asian states were not founders of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) on 8 December 1991, they immediately became members two weeks later on 21 December 1991.

Independence led to the emigration of many Russians from the Central Asian republics, most notably from Kazakhstan and, during the civil war, from Tajikistan. One consequence of emigration in these two countries was the effect it had on their economies. Borjian, referring specifically to Tajikistan, states that: "The rapid departure of Russians from the [Tajik] republic has resulted in a shortage of skilled labor, professionals, and industrial managers […]" (Borjian 1997). By contrast, in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan not only the economic but also the infrastructural situation has deteriorated since independence. For instance, it took Uzbekistan eleven years to achieve its 1989 production level, the first of the CIS states to do so, but even so and in spite of subsidized staple foods, many Uzbeks today still live below the poverty line (Schulze 2010: 52).

Apart from economic and infrastructural problems, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan share institutional similarities which derive directly from their Soviet past. Indeed, the fact that the Soviet style of governance is still strong in all countries is an extremely important factor, not least because of the implications for regional identity, which as Matveeva points out, is "reflected in common political phenomena from referenda to extend presidential powers into the next millennium" (Matveeva 1999: 23), but also, as we shall see, since the national Muftiates are successor institutions of the Soviet SADUM.

All four countries are also currently concerned with developing both a cohesive national identity and countering security issues. Indeed, another commonality between these countries can be observed in the emergence of Islamic groups and states' reactions to them, which again can be attributed to their shared Soviet past. As we have already seen, Soviet ulama established contacts with Arab countries in the 1960s and brought 'foreign' interpretations of Islam to the region. Early Salafi groups had already started to appear during Soviet times and furthermore, the first political party based on Islam, the Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP) was founded during the reform years as an all-Soviet party under the presidency of Gorbachev (Roy 2000: 1; Schlageter 2003: 162). This resurgence of Islam has continued in the post-USSR era to the extent that today,

> "[…] there is a strong impulse within the societies to assign a new importance to Islam as a guiding principle for changes in the social, political and moral order, in ways that will present challenges for both the traditional practice of Islam and the secular character of societies" (Schoeberlein 2009: 106).

The political leaders of the Central Asian countries, however, try to subdue political Islamic groups which challenge their position (Schoeberlein 2009: 106): "[…] they all pursue policies toward Islam that reflect a deep anxiety that it could become a powerful force opposing Soviet-style secularism and undermining the legitimacy of existing regimes" (Schoeberlein 2005: 98). Although in all countries more and more restrictive laws are being enacted, legacies and practices on the restriction of religious groups and political parties differ. I will elaborate on these differences in section 7.3 and present my typology of state restrictions on folk Islam and Salafi groups in chapter 9.

This brings us to other differences which have emerged in the former Soviet republics since they became independent. What Matveeva wrote fifteen years ago has become even more true: "Today, the political development of the five Central Asian countries displays more diversity than uniformity, and Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are now distinct entities to a much greater extent than they were as Union Republics" (Matveeva 1999: 23). So whereas in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan the former first secretaries of the Communist Soviet party were able to stay in power, Kyrgyzstan underwent several regime changes and a civil war raged in Tajikistan. Besides the differing political trajectories of these countries, developments in the social and economic domains and differences in the ethnic composition of the states suggest diverging conflict potentials. Concerning the issue of political Islam, I show that although there are various ways of dealing with the opposition and promoting well-controlled versions of Islam, in all societies illegal practices and groups still persist since constricted political freedom of choice leads to the problem that the opposition, which consists mainly of Islamists, establishes itself outside the state institutions (Khazanov 2005).

I will now compare issues regarded as relevant for social conflict by theories such as relative deprivation theory, social movement theory and political opportunity structure theory. The comparison in this sense is theory-led and presents considerations and information on conflicts in the region. In the first part of the next chapter I compare general aspects such as demography, ethnicity and the socio-economic situation as well as infrastructure and the political system of the Central Asian states.

In a more specific comparison, I afterwards concentrate on state institutions dealing with religion and the role of religion in the constitution. I then take a closer look at the religious laws of the contemporary governments and how they are implemented. Finally, I compare the security sectors of the Central Asian states according to factors such as domestic resources, international military aid and alliances. Although these latter aspects are more relevant for my study, the former more general comparison is important, as well, since it describes the context of the specific religious and security policies and what will be included in the computer simulation as context-legitimacy of the state.

6.1. DEMOGRAPHIC SITUATION

6.1.1. Demography

The two smallest Central Asian countries, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are at the same time the most mountainous and the ones with the smallest populations of 6 and 8 million, respectively. Uzbekistan is the Central Asian country with by far the biggest population of around 28 to 29 million people and the highest net-migration rate of – 2.55 yet it has the lowest birth rate with 17.2 births per 1,000 populations as well as the lowest population growth rate (0.94%). The most populous country after Uzbekistan is geographically the largest, Kazakhstan, which has around 15 to 18 million citizens. It has the highest median age of all Central Asian countries (29.5 years – this is still low by international standards; Switzerland's average age for example is 41.8). Furthermore, Kazakhstan is the only Central Asian country with more than 50% urban population and a positive net migration rate of 0.42 while Kyrgyzstan for instance shows a net migration rate of – 7.13. Tajikistan has the lowest average age at 23.2 as well as the lowest degree of urbanization with a percentage of only 26.5. Additionally, it shows the strongest migration to cities with an annual rate of 1.65%. I will go into further details of work migration in section 6.2.3.

Table 3: Demographic Benchmarks

	Kazakhstan	**Kyrgyzstan**	**Tajikistan**	**Uzbekistan**
Population				
Total population	18 million	6 million	8 million	29 million
Urban population in % of total population	53.6	35.5	26.5	36.2
Age structure				
15-24 years in %	16.9	19.4	20.4	21.1
Median age	29.5	25.4	23.2	26.6

Population growth				
Birth rate per 1,000 of population	20.03	23.67	25.49	17.2
population growth rate in %	1.2	0.97	1.79	0.94
Net migration rate per 1,000 of population	0.42	-7.13	-1.19	-2.55

Source: CIA World Factbook (2012)

6.1.2. Ethnicity

The biggest Russian minority in the Central Asian states today lives in Kazakhstan, where they amount to over 23% of the population and mainly live in the north of the county. Kazakhstan is the only state where the titular nation constitutes only just over half of the population (ARDA: KZ). This was not always the case but has only become so recently as a result of state's successful efforts to entice significant numbers of ethnic Kazakhs living abroad back to their homeland by means of economic incentives (interviews with Indira Burnashev).

Significant numbers of ethnic minorities can also be found in Kyrgyzstan, where ethnic Uzbeks living mainly in the south of the country constitute 14% of the population, and Tajikistan, where ethnic Uzbeks living mainly in Sughd province make up around 15% of the population.

These areas with significant minorities are most prone to ethnic conflicts. The most recent example of this was the 2010 conflict in Osh, where around 420 people lost their lives (ICG 2012). It is still debatable what influence Islam had on this conflict. Even if it did play a minor role, it was undoubtedly the representation of Uzbeks in Kyrgyz society which was the main factor. Uzbeks claim that they are underrepresented in the national government. Kyrgyz on the other hand take issue with Uzbeks for having a monopoly in the business sector. Uzbeks in the south not only feel marginalized and forced out of public life, they also suffer concrete discrimination, as ICQ point out:

"[…] most Uzbek-language media have been closed; […]. International organisations report continuing persecution of Uzbeks by a rapaciously corrupt police and prosecutorial system, almost certainly with the southern authorities' tacit approval" (ICG 2012: i).

The reference to ethnic identity in politics became a more significant issue after independence due to the partially arbitrary demarcation between the former Soviet Republics. Discrimination based on ethnic origins is not only a problem in Kyrgysztan, but takes place in Kazakhstan against Russians (Freedom House 2013 a) and in Uzbekistan against Tajiks. In Uzbekistan, for example:

"The belief that senior positions in government and business are reserved for ethnic Uzbeks is widespread. Moreover, the government appears to be systematically closing schools for the Tajik-speaking minority" (Freedom House 2013 d).

It is questionable how far ethnic differences were a primary source of conflict in South Kyrgyzstan or if they were rather instrumentalized by stakeholders to mobilize the masses in the conflict. It is important to note that data about the ethnic composition of the Central Asian societies are used and misused as a political instrument and therefore should be carefully dealt with. This holds true also for the data presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Ethnic Composition of Central Asian Societies

	Kazakhstan	**Kyrgyzstan**	**Tajikistan**	**Uzbekistan**
Ethnicity	63% Kazakhs 24% Russians	65% Kyrgyzs 14% Uzbeks 13% Russians	80% Tajiks 15% Uzbeks 1% Russians 1% Kyrgyzs	80% Uzbeks 6% Russians 5% Tajiks 3% Kazakhs

Source: CIA World Factbook (2012)

6.1.3. Religion in Society

A strong correlation between ethnicity and religion exists in Central Asia. Ethnic Russians usually belong to the Orthodox or another Christian

church, which makes Christianity the second biggest religious community in all of the four Central Asian countries after Islam (see Table 5).

Table 5: Religious Composition: Muslims and Christians

	Kazakhstan	**Kyrgyzstan**	**Tajikistan**	**Uzbekistan**
Muslims in %	70%	75%	90%	88%
Christians in %	26%	20%	No data	9%

Source: CIA World Factbook (2012)

The ethnic origin of a person can also often reveal the *madhab* he or she adheres to. The Shafi'i Muslims living in Kazakhstan, for example, are usually Chechens (ARDA: KZ).

There are regional differences in the adherence or devotion to religion. In every country there are certain regions which are regarded as especially religious, such as the Fergana Valley in Uzbekistan or the area around Shymkent in south Kazakhstan. Salafis, becoming more numerous in recent years in Tajikistan (in the whole country there are around 5,000 according to government estimates) are most prevalent in Dushanbe, Sughd, and Khatlon (ARDA: TJ). Finally, in Kyrgyzstan "religious practice in the south is more traditional and devout than in other regions" (ARDA: KG). This observation is linked to ethnicity, as well, as many Uzbeks live in the south of Kyrgyzstan as well as in the south of Kazakhstan.

Due to SADUM's headquarters being in Tashkent, Uzbeks have for a long time played a leading role in religious affairs throughout the region. During Soviet times, the SADUM "administration's staff was made up almost exclusively of Uzbek clergy and all correspondence was conducted in Uzbek" (Rotar 2004a). As a result, Ponomarev and Jukeyeva claim that in 1989 most imams in Kazakhstan were non-Kazakhs, the majority of whom were Uzbeks (Ponomarev and Jukeyeva cited in Rotar 2004a). This changed only after independence when a "deliberate displacement of ethnic Uzbeks from their positions as imams at mosques began" (Rotar 2004a). In addition to being the seat of SADUM, Uzbekistan still retains its importance within Islam today as the main historical Islamic cities are located on its territory.

As Table 5 further shows, in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan 9 out of 10 people are Muslims – the biggest percentages among the Central Asian states. At the same time, Tajiks and Uzbeks are said to practice their religion more actively than Kazakhs and Kyrgyzs, as Rotar (2004b) makes clear: "Most devout Muslims in Central Asia are ethnic Uzbeks and Tajiks". This is usually explained with the assumption that the originally sedentary populations are more devout than the 'superficially Islamized' nomads (see section 5.1). My interviewees generally also stated that the Tajik and the Uzbek populations are 'more religious' than the Kazakh and Kyrgyz people and my own observations affirmed this – in Tajikistan in particular I met many more people performing the mandatory five prayers a day than in the other countries.

Even so, I challenge the widespread opinion that particularly the Muslim populations of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan constitute only "nominal believers" who "do not practice their faith actively" (ARDA: KG), and who "call themselves Muslims [but] drink alcohol, do not fast in the month of Ramadan and hardly ever attend mosque" (Rotar 2004b). As I show in section 9.1, the religious policies of the Central Asian states have had a significant impact on the practice of religion and on the attendance of religious services; for example, more scripturalist interpretations of Islam and religious worship have spread among Kyrgyzs while these have become less popular in Uzbekistan.

Demographic factors also play a role in the religiosity of the local population: in Tajikistan it is particularly city residents and young people under the age of 20 who are becoming more observant (ARDA: TJ). This is also the case in Uzbekistan:

> "Outside of Tashkent, practicing Muslims outnumber non-practicing Muslims […] mosque attendance continued to increase, particularly among younger men, who constitute the majority of worshipers" (ARDA: UZ).

In Kyrgyzstan, however, I observed that especially older people were becoming more devout – a phenomenon that is known in Europe as well.

6.2. SOCIO-ECONOMIC SITUATION

6.2.1. Natural Resources, Energy and Infrastructure

The economic situation of the Central Asian states is very diverse. Kazakhstan, for example, is an exceptional case; its GDP per capita is much higher than in other Central Asian countries. Whereas Kazakhstan GDP amounts to $14,100, the GDP of Uzbekistan is $3,600, Kyrgyzstan $2,400 and Tajikistan $2,300 respectively. Recently Kazakhstan has become especially concerned with the expansion and exportation of its energy resources as well as with the diversification of the economy outside the energy sector (ARDA: KZ). Not only the country's vast natural resources but also its relative political stability give Kazakhstan an economic advantage over its Central Asian neighbours (ARDA: KZ). Apart from Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan is another main energy producer of the region: while the former holds eighteenth place in the country comparison for crude oil production the latter holds fifteenth place in the country comparison for natural gas production.

Export Commodities (CIA World Factbook):

- *Kazakhstan*: oil and oil products, natural gas, ferrous metals, chemicals, machinery, grain, wool, meat, coal
- *Kyrgyzstan*: gold, cotton, wool, garments, meat, tobacco, mercury, uranium, electricity, machinery, shoes
- *Tajikistan*: aluminium, electricity, cotton, fruits, vegetable oil, textiles
- *Uzbekistan*: energy products, cotton, gold, mineral fertilizers, ferrous and nonferrous metals, textiles, food products, machinery, automobiles

Table 6: Economic Benchmarks

	Kazakhstan	**Kyrgyzstan**	**Tajikistan**	**Uzbekistan**
Economy				
GDP real growth rate in %	5.0	-0.9	7.5	8.2

GDP per capita in $ (country comparison)	14,100 (95)	2,400 (185)	2,300 (189)	3,600 (171)
Energy				
Crude oil production in bbl/day (country comparison)	1,635,000 (18)	1,000 (98)	215 (100)	104,400 (49)
Natural gas production in million cu m (country comparison)	20,200 (33)	12.5 (90)	40 (85)	62,900 (15)

Source: CIA World Factbook (2012)

However, the most important economic sectors are conflict-prone. As the income from the energy sector in Kazakhstan, for example, makes up two thirds of the national budget (Schulze 2010: 33) it is hardly surprising that the state does not respond kindly to disruptions to oil production. In December 2012, after more than six months, an oil-workers' strike against Usenmunaigas (affiliated company of Kazmunaygas) in Zhanaozen turned bloody. During the celebration of Kazakhstan's independence, protestors set fire to administration buildings and the oil company's headquarters. The police responded with lethal force. Officials state that 16 people were killed and around 100 injured, however correct numbers might be higher (Bensmann 2012: 7).[1] Similarly, in Kyrgyzstan, the exploitation of the most important export-product, gold, also led to protests.

"The protests against the operations of the Kumtor gold mine (which generates 12% of Kyrgyzstan's GDP) in the Issyk-Kul district in the north of the country, continued until 3 June and resulted in 50 people being injured. The protesters demanded to be paid damages for the destruction of the environment caused by gold mining and to have social allowances increased for miners (the mine is now the property of the Canadian company Centerra Gold)" (Lang 2012).

1 See also Amnesty International report: http://www.amnesty.org/en/for-media/press-releases/kazakhstan-no-accountability-entrenched-torture-2013-07-11.

The Krygyz conflict concerning the conditions for gold exploitation are between Kyrgyz citizens and an international private company. Yet in contrast to the Kyrgyz case, in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan the companies exploiting natural resources are still in the hands of the state. This is also true of Uzbekistan's second most important export product: cotton. International observers regularly criticize the government policy of forced cotton harvest among school children (Antonikis 2012).[2] In recent years though, the government has sought to "[…] gradually lessen its dependence on agriculture while developing its mineral and petroleum reserves" (ARDA: UZ). Also in the poorest of the former Soviet countries, Tajikistan, the main export company is state run: the Aluminium company Talco. It is directly controlled by President Rahmon and was criticized by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for "most worrisome financial operations [which] remain non-transparent" (Helmer 2008).

Economic problems have become more conflict-prone since independence:

> "As part of the Soviet Union, the five countries were tightly woven into a single system. These interdependencies have proven difficult to unravel, and have produced serious imbalances. During the Soviet era, the countries were obliged to work together. Now they no longer have to get along, and usually do not, especially as far as energy is concerned" (ICG 2011).

Several exclaves were formed when the Soviet Union dissolved, especially in the Ferghana valley. This still occasionally leads to territorial disputes, for example the conflict in Batken Oblast, an Uzbek exclave in Kyrgyzstan (Wechlin 2013). As recent events have shown, infrastructural problems often serve as triggers for such disputes: in January 2013, in the village of Hoshjar around 40 Kyrgyz were taken hostage and cars destroyed because a high-voltage mast was erected on the territory of the enclave (ZA 2013: 28). This shows how easily violence can erupt in a conflict-prone environment. Violence has flared up in such situations not only between populations and governments but also between states: in January 2014 a border dispute between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan led to many casualties on both

2 For an official Uzbek statement about cotton production see: http://www.gov.uz/en/helpinfo/agriculture/10020.

sides – again, the main trigger seemed to be the energy supply of a Tajik enclave situated in Kyrgyzstan:

"Tajik forces fired mortars at a water pump. Kyrgyz authorities fear this may be just the opener in a series of strikes on strategic water facilities along the disputed border with Tajikistan. As the population along the Kyrgyz-Tajik border grows the risk is greater than ever that a local dispute over resources could rapidly become an international crisis" (Dalbaeva 2014).

Apart from inter-state problems, energy supply and the poor infrastructural situation are other major possible causes of unrest in the Central Asian states. The International Crisis Group even offers Kyrgyzstan's poor economic situation as an explanation for the overthrow of President Bakiyev in 2010 (ICG 2011); I present the more specific conditions of the political Central Asian systems in section 6.3.

6.2.2. Poverty

Indeed, Tajikistan, was already the poorest Central Asian republic during Soviet times and therefore profited in a special way from inner-Soviet economic assistance. As such, since the break-up of the Soviet Union its economy has suffered disproportionately, as Borjian explains: "In many factories production has decreased dramatically or even ceased, owing to interruption in imports of raw materials and to fuel shortages" (Borjian 1997). Therefore, "the country remains the poorest in the former Soviet sphere" (ARDA: TJ). Due to NATO intervention in neighbouring Afghanistan, the country receives a significant number of international visitors as well as military and economic assistance (ARDA: TJ). Yet despite this Tajikistan still has the highest percentage of the population living under the poverty line (39.6%). It is followed by Kyrgyzstan (33.7%), Uzbekistan (17%) and Kazakhstan (5.3%). It is important to note, though, that these figures are estimates. Neither are the unemployment rates in the following table of great value since they are official rates, which are not reliable. In Uzbekistan, for example:

"[…] the government's statistical agency said the unemployment rate had fallen to under 4.8 per cent of the able-bodied population. The World Bank, meanwhile, puts the figure at between 20 and 30 per cent, varying across the country" (IWPR 2013a).

In order to have at least some indication of the economic situation in these countries, I present here the most reliable estimates.

Table 7: Poverty Benchmarks

	Kazakhstan	**Kyrgyzstan**	**Tajikistan**	**Uzbekistan**
Population below poverty line in %	5.3	33.7	39.6	17.0
Unemployment rate in %	5.3	8.6 (2011)	2.5 (officially; in reality much higher)	4.8 (officially) 20-30% (WTO)
Distribution of Family Income - GINI- Index (Social stratification)	28.9	33.4	32.6	36.8

Source: CIA World Factbook (2012)

For relative deprivation theory (which explains conflicts by deprivation deriving from unequal distribution), even more interesting than the percentage of people living under the poverty line is the Gini index. It measures the distribution of wealth with a value between 0 and 1, whereby 1 means a perfect unequal distribution. I will here have a look at the distribution of family income with an index elaborated by the CIA World Factbook based on the Gini Index. This index measures the degree of inequality in the distribution of family income in a country:

"If income were distributed with perfect equality, the Lorenz curve would coincide with the 45 degree line and the index would be zero; if income were distributed with perfect inequality, the Lorenz curve would coincide with the horizontal axis and the right vertical axis and the index would be 100" (CIA World Factbook 2012).

A clearer indicator than mere unemployment rates and the Gini Index, this Index of family income shows how Central Asian citizens are affected by the unequal distribution of economic resources. The index reveals that the income of families is most unequal in Uzbekistan, whose economy has stagnated in recent years, followed by Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan in this order. These findings coincide with my own impressions in the field. Whereas in Kazakhstan at least some trickle-down effect is observable in the cities of Astana and Almaty, in Uzbekistan – although it has the second highest GDP per capita – not much wealth seems to reach the general population. However, even in Kazakhstan, where the best distribution is observed, a great conflict potential lies in the problem of social stratification (Schoeberlein 2009: 106). Despite the impression that the Kazakh state is often able to buy off its people, here too there is a growing discontent among its citizens (interview with a member of OSCE in Almaty).

6.2.3. Migrant Labour

Many poor individuals emigrate to Russia from the Central Asian countries in search of work to improve their own and their family's economic situation. In Tajikistan, the remittances of migrant workers constitute almost half its GDP. Not only people from Tajikistan, but also many from Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan head for Russia, where "some stay only for seasonal work, while others settled down semi-permanently" (IWPR 2013a). Experts estimate that Uzbekistan "has lost 2 to 3 million [citizens] in recent years due to the growing trend of labor migration to neighboring countries, particularly Russia and Kazakhstan" (ARDA: UZ). For this reason, travel constraints have been implemented to prevent Uzbeks from seeking employment abroad – they need for example an exit visa, which is often issued selectively (Freedom House 2013d). Overall, 70 to 80% of all Kazakh, Kyrgyz and Tajik migrants move to Russia (UNECE 2012: 7). They often reside illegally and official figures might be much too low as is shown in Table 8. Moreover, since "the early 2000s, […] labor migration has been growing steadily" (Anichkova 2012). Occasionally, migrant workers are regarded as especially prone to extremist proselytizing efforts as they are cut off from their families and find themselves in difficult economic circumstances (Vinson 2013), however, to deal with this issue here goes beyond the scope of my study.

Table 8: Numbers of Migrant Workers Abroad

	Kazakhstan	Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan	Uzbekistan
Remittances of migrant workers				
% of GDP (Anichkova 2012)	-	27-29 %	49%	10-13 %
Estimations of numbers of migrant workers by different sources				
Official figures (2004 – 2008) (Anichkova 2012)	-	300,000	-	250,000
Estimations by Anichkova (Anichkova 2012)	-	800,000	1.5 million	3 million
Najot human rights group (see IWPR 2013a)	-	-	-	5 million

The Central Asian states are members of different international economic organizations. Kyrgyzstan was the first Central Asian country to join the WTO in 1998; the others walled off their domestic markets until recently (Schulze 2010: 66). Tajikistan was the second country to join in March 2013. While Uzbekistan applied for membership to the World Trade Organization in 1994, and Kazakhstan in 1996, neither have yet become members (WTO 2013). Other international economic organizations include the Eurasian Economic Community (EURASEC) which was founded in 2001 by Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan in order to decrease duties among member countries.

6.2.4. International Trading Partners

It is important to note Central Asian states' international trading partners because some of them also play an important role in the security sector. As we see in Table 9 China, with around 20%, is the biggest export partner of

both Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan on the other hand export less than 10% to their Chinese neighbour, but import a lot more products from there – around 55% of Kyrgyz imports and 42% of Tajik imports come from China. While Russia does supply "Kyrgyzstan with petrol products duty free" (Rickleton 2013b), a much higher percentage of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan's imports come from Russia than their smaller neighbour. China is therefore Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan's second most important import partner after Russia.

Kazakhstan seems to be the most important trading partner for its Central Asian neighbours (probably primarily with oil), whereas Turkey is the most significant export partner to Tajikistan and to a lesser degree is important as an import partner to Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. Iran has become a key contractor of assisted infrastructure projects in Tajikistan, for example of Sangtuda-2 hydropower plant (Freedom House 2013c). China also plays an important role in Central Asia in the domain of infrastructure building.

Table 9: International Trading Partners

	Kazakhstan	**Kyrgyzstan**	**Tajikistan**	**Uzbekistan**
Membership in WTO (WTO)	no	yes	yes	no
Membership EURASEC (EURASEC)	yes	yes	yes	no
Exports Partners (CIA World Factbook 2012)	China 21% Russia 9.9% France 9.3%, Germany 6.9% Italy 5% Canada 4.8% Ukraine 4.7% Romania 4.1%	Uzbekistan 28.8% Kazakhstan 22% Russia 14.6% China 7% UAE 6.3% Afghanistan 5.7%	Turkey 30.5% China 9.6% Iran 7.7% Afghanistan 6.5% Kazakhstan 4.9% Russia 4.3%	China 18.5% Kazakhstan 14.6% Turkey 13.8% Russia 12.8% Ukraine 12.5% Bangladesh 8.9%

Imports Partners (CIA World Factbook 2012)	Russia 31.6% China 26.6% Germany 6% Ukraine 4.4%	China 55.9% Russia 17.7% Kazakhstan 6.4%	China 42.3% Russia 16.2% Kazakhstan 10.1% Turkey 5.7% Iran 4.2%	Russia 20.6% China 16.5% South Ko-rea 16.3% Kazakhstan 12.8% Germany 4.6% Turkey 4.2%

6.2.5. Social Infrastructure: Health and Education

I am interested in the infrastructure the states are able to provide and maintain owing to the major contribution this makes to the living standards of ordinary people, a factor that theories such as relative deprivation refer to, and which will be considered in the simulation as context-legitimacy.

Health expenditures range from 4.3% in Kazakhstan to 6.2% in Kyrgyzstan. Countries with a smaller GDP therefore spend a proportionally higher amount on health services. There are fewer physicians in the poorer countries of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, which have only a little over 2 physicians per 1,000 people, while Kazakhstan has both the highest physician density (3.88 per 1,000) and the highest hospital bed density at 7.6 per 1,000. However, the other countries, which have about one bed for 200 people, have the same rate as countries with developed economies such as Switzerland.

The high hospital bed density might be a consequence of the Soviet health system. However, the entire infrastructure was inherited from the Soviets and since independence the health and education sectors have suffered in all Central Asian countries (ICG 2011).[3]

3 For further reading on health services see McKee, Martin; Healy, Judith, Falkingham, Jane (ed.) (2002): *Health Care in Central Asia*. European Observatory on Health Care Systems. World Trade Organization. Buckingham: Open University Press. Availalbe at: http://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0007/98386/E74484.pdf (2.2.2014).

"The quality of education and healthcare has plummeted with the end of the social safety net. In some countries, notably Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, these sectors have almost ceased to exist" (ICG 2011).

In the educational domain, Kyrgyzstan stands alone with an expenditure of 5.8% of GDP, whereas Kazakhstan shows a percentage of 3.1 and Tajikistan 3.9. No data is available for Uzbekistan. The school life expectancy in all countries amounts to 12 years, except for in Kazakhstan, where it lies three years above this average.

Table 10: Infrastructural Benchmarks

	Kazakhstan	**Kyrgyzstan**	**Tajikistan**	**Uzbekistan**
Health				
Health Expenditures in % of GDP	4.3	6.2	6.0	5.3
Physicians per 1,000 population	3.88	2.3	2.01	2.62
Hospital bed density per 1,000 population	7.6	5.06	5.2	4.6
Education				
Education expenditures in % of GDP	3.1	5.8	3.9	No data
School life expectancy in years	15	12	12	12

Source: CIA World Factbook (2012)

In a nutshell, the Human Development index measures health, education and living standards at an aggregate level. The indicators which the index includes are life expectancy at birth (for measuring health), mean years and expected years of schooling (for education) and gross national income per capita (for living standards). Predictably, Kazakhstan shows the highest level of human development. This country was able to improve its social, educational and health systems owing to its income from the energy sector (Schulze 2010: 33). It is followed by Uzbekistan with Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan receiving the lowest measures. Nevertheless, we should keep in mind that "a country's overall index can conceal the fact that different groups within the country have very different levels of human development" (HDI). In particular, Uzbekistan gets a better rating than Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan because of its higher GDP, though this is very unequally distributed. Therefore this measurement should be used cautiously in this case. I will therefore combine HDI with the Gini-Index of family income when developing my own indicator for the context-legitimacy of the Central Asian states in section 11.2.2.

Table 11: Human Development Index

	Kazakhstan	**Kyrgyzstan**	**Tajikistan**	**Uzbekistan**
Human Development Index (HDI) [4]	0.754	0.622	0.622	0.654

According to the International Crisis Group, the poor infrastructural situation is a possible source of unrest and could even serve to bolster Islam:

"The rapid deterioration of infrastructure will deepen poverty and alienation from the state. The disappearance of basic services will provide Islamic radicals, already a

4 "The first *Human Development Report* introduced a new way of measuring development by combining indicators of life expectancy, educational attainment and income into a composite human development index, the HDI." See http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/hdi/.

serious force in many Central Asian states, with further ammunition against regional leaders and openings to establish influential support networks" (ICG 2011).

I agree with this assessment of ICG. As I showed in *part I* of this study, Islamists take up social and economic problems in their political debates.

6.3. POLITICAL SYSTEM AND GOVERNMENT BODIES

I will now take a closer look at the government bodies and political institutions of the independent Central Asian states.

6.3.1. Political Systems and Presidents

All Central Asian states started in the early 1990s with a presidential system. Since the second regime change in 2009 and the coming into force of the new constitution in 2010 making it a parliamentary republic, Kyrgyzstan has been the only exception. In all Central Asian countries the president is elected directly by the people. Initially, the former first secretaries of the Communist Party in the Central Asian republics became the presidents of the newly independent republics. Since there was no other elite in these countries than the one established by the Soviets this is not surprising (Khazanov 2005: 21). The first presidents in Central Asia were Nursultan Nazarbaev in Kazakhstan, Askar Akaev in Kyrgyzstan, Rahmon Nabiev in Tajikistan and Islam Karimov in Uzbekistan.

Nazarbaev and Karimov are still in power today. The last presidential elections they won were held in 2011 Kazakhstan and in 2007 in Uzbekistan yet neither Nazarbaev, nor Karimov have ever won an election that was regarded as free by international observers. Both presidents are accused of fabricating the election results and amending the constitutions to prolong their terms of presidency. In the 2007 Kazakh constitution, for example, the following was introduced into Article 42 (5): "One and the same person may not be elected the President of the Republic more than two times in a row. *The present restriction shall not extend to the First President of the Republic of Kazakhstan* [accentuation by the author]". During the early presidential elections held in Kazakhstan in 2011, positive and

negative incentives for voters were given to ensure a high level of participation in the elections and to secure the re-election of Nazarbaev:

"Early voters and 18-year-olds casting their ballot for the first time were rewarded with household goods such as food blenders and electric kettles, according to the Associated Press. […] There were several reports that students were forced to vote by threats of expulsion from university" (BBC 2011a)

Surprisingly, the governmental attempts which present Nazarbaev as the 'father of the nation' have been successful. I met students in Almaty who were totally loyal to the president. They praised him for his efforts to improve the situation of the people and unquestioningly participated in the cult of personality surrounding him.[5] The next presidential elections in Kazakhstan are scheduled for 2015 (Freedom House 2013d).

Compared to Kazakhstan, neither do reports on the election of Uzbek president Karimov read any more optimistically:

"[…] a 1995 referendum extended his first term by five years. In 2000 Karimov won a second term with nearly 92 percent of the vote, but another referendum two years later extended that presidential stretch from five years to seven" (RFE/RL 2007).

In summary, the authoritarian presidents of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan not only amend their countries' constitutions arbitrarily in order to consolidate their power but they also try to 'democratically' legitimate their power with high voter turnouts and other means. To this effect, for example, the Uzbek constitution was amended in 2011, giving more power to the parliament and political parties. President Islam Karimov introduced these changes with the aim of "further deepening democratisation and constructing a civil society" (OSW 2011). However, the public reaction to this was either scepticism or unawareness of the change (IWPR 2011). And analysts agree with this opinion: "These amendments do not limit the prerogatives of the President, who retains full authority over the country […]" (OSW 2011). I can

5 For example, they put their hands in Nazarbaev's golden handprint in Baiterek Tower during a visit in Astana – an act seeming totally absurd to a western observer.

conclude therefore, that despite their strong legal positions, these presidents regard a certain amount of 'legitimacy' as instrumental to staying in power.

Contrary to Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, the first presidents of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have not been able to stay in power since independence. This is the case in Kyrgyzstan although Kyrgyz President Askar Akaev extended presidential powers at the beginning of 1996 and gradually restricted the political space from the mid-1990s onwards (Anderson 1999: 23). However, in 2005, nationwide demonstrations led to the Tulip Revolution which resulted in his dismissal and brought Kurmanbek Bakiyev to power. He soon became as autocratic as his predecessor and dissolved the parliament in 2007 (Pannier 2007a). He "manipulated the parliament to accrue new powers for himself" and was re-elected in flawed elections in 2009 (ARDA: KG). Under his rule opposition politicians and independent journalists were "arrested, prosecuted, attacked and even killed" (Levy 2009). In spring 2010 nationwide protests broke out again. Bakiyev was overthrown and an interim government was proclaimed under the leadership of Roza Otunbayeva in 2010. She called for new elections and finally, Almazbek Atambayev was elected as new president in 2011. It is interesting to note that despite these violent overthrows, Kyrgyzstan is often cited as the 'democratic beacon' in the region (Kilner 2012).

"Kyrgyzstan has maintained the image as the most democratic of the Central Asian states because of the participation of genuine opposition parties in government, a strong civil society, and the lack of a ruling party" (Pannier 2007a).

These preconditions finally led to the 2011 competitive presidential elections which were "Central Asia's first voluntary transfer of power, with interim president Roza Otunbayeva standing down as scheduled" (Freedom House 2012b). Whether the political overthrows have functioned as a kind of check on political power, interfering just before a president with autocratic aspirations became too powerful, is a matter for debate. Yet Anderson might still be right to conclude that although Kyrgyzstan is not a liberal democracy, it "retains a considerable degree of social pluralism and a more open political space than any of its Central Asian neighbours" (Anderson 1999: 23). Whether Kyrgyzstan indeed deserves special status in regard of its religious policies, as well, will be discussed in 9.2.

As for Tajikistan, in September 1991, shortly before independence, Rahmon Nabiev (himself first secretary of the Communist party of the Republic in the early 1980s but removed after a scandal) became the first elected president and was confirmed in the November 1991 election. The opposition regarded the election as rigged and a conflict between Nabievs supporters and a coalition consisting of the IRPT and democrats broke out which finally led to the civil war in spring 1992. In September 1992 Nabiev was forced to resign by Communist hard-liners and "was replaced by Emomali Rakhmonov, a senior member of the Communist Party" (Freedom House 2013c). In December of the same year, the Kulyab-Leninabad-Hissar clans, led by Rahmon, defeated the Islamists and Democrats (Naumkin 2005: 202). The Islamists subsequently fled to Afghanistan, where they allied themselves with the Northern Front of Ahmad Shah Massoud. The United Tajik Opposition (UTO) now opposed the new government and the IRPT was outlawed in spring 1993. Only with the peace accord in 1997 did it regain legality: "Former IRPT fighters were incorporated in to the army and law enforcement structures and the IRPT itself was legitimized and participated in the general election of 2000" (Taarnby 2012: 16). Additionally to the integration of IRPT fighters in the regular army, the peace accord promised the IRPT 30% of the parliamentary seats. Despite this, Rahmon has steadily expanded his power at the expense of the opposition over the last few years. In November 2013, Rahmon was confirmed in office again and a 2003 constitutional referendum allows him to remain there until 2020 (Freedom House 2013c). Given that the IRPT is still legal I discuss whether this has an impact on religious freedom in Tajikistan in section 9.2.

Table 12: Political Systems and Presidents

	Kazakhstan	**Kyrgyzstan**	**Tajikistan**	**Uzbekistan**
Political System	Presidential Republic	Parliamentary Republic (since 2010)	Presidential Republic	Presidential Republic
Sysetm of Presidential Election	direct election	direct election	direct election	direct election

Presidential elections[6]	1999 2005 2011 Next : 2016	2000 2005 2009 2011	1999 2006 2013	1999/2000[7] 2005 2007 Next: 2014
President In office	Nursultan Nazarbaev: since 1990	Almazbek Atambayev: since 2011[8]	Emomali Rahmon: since 1992	Islam Karimov: since 1990

If we discuss the political systems of the Central Asian countries, it is easy to conclude that they do not meet western standards of democracy. However, I do not want to put political legitimacy in Central Asia on a level with free and fair elections. As we learnt in section 1.1.2, legitimacy can have diverse sources, as Weber explained. When western ovservers describe Central Asian presidents simply as autocratic rulers, they forget that in addition to democratic criterions of legitimacy they could meet other forms of legitimacy:

- *Rational-legal legitimacy*: the public's trust that the government will provide stability (especially in Tajikistan) and economic development (especially in Kazakhstan) is a rational consideration that can lead to the legitimacy of the government.
- *Traditional legitimacy*: tribalism and Soviet history can be understood as a habituation of the influence of clans in politics as well as of authoritarianism and a cult of personality that legitimizes the strong positions of the presidents in all Central Asian countries.
- *Charismatic legitimacy*: the belief that a 'strong man' is needed to lead the nation is essential in all Central Asian states. In this context, it is clear why, for example, the succession of the president will pose a problem in each respective country (see ICG 2013).

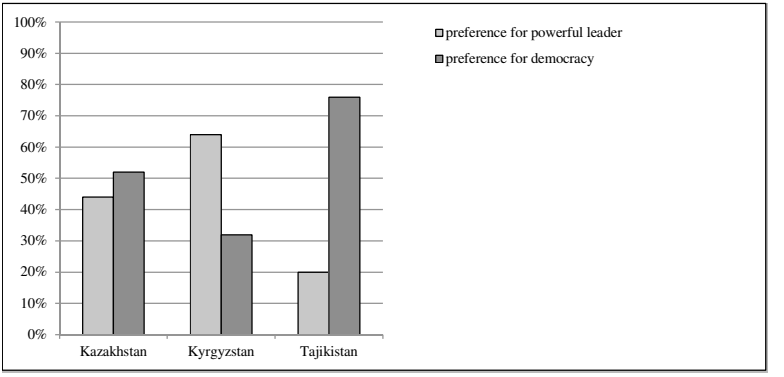
6 According to http://www.electionguide.org/.

7 1999 first round and 2000 second round.

8 Previous Kyrgyz Presidents since independence were: Askar Akayev (October 1990 - March 2005), Kurmanbek Bakiyev (July 2005 - April 2010), Roza Otunbayeva (head of interim government: April 2010 – Nov. 2011).

As we can see in the following table, a clear preference for democracy over a powerful leader is only expressed in Tajikistan. In Kazakhstan there is more or less equal support for both views while in Kyrgyzstan the majority of people would prefer a strong leader over democracy. This might be a temporary phenomenon; the events in Osh and the considerable turmoil during recent years might explain the more conservative public opinion here. However, it is revealing that the country which has by far the best international reputation with regards to democratic values is the one with the lowest percentage of people who prefer a democracy over a powerful leader. (There are no data available for Uzbekistan.)

Figure 10: Preference for Democracy or a Powerful Leader



Source: PEW 2013

6.3.2. Parliaments and Govermental Parties

All Central Asian parliaments are bicameral, except in Kyrgyzstan, where a unicameral parliament is in power. In Kyrgyzstan, constitutional reforms took place between 1993 and 1995 which replaced the unicameral parliament with a bicameral one. However, this was reversed in 2005 to 2006, when a new constitutional reform weakened parliament's position and reintroduced the unicameral parliament (Murzakulova and Schoeberlein 2010: 158). The Uzbek parliament had been unicameral as well until 2005 when it became bicameral. As Ilgizar Sobirov, Chairman of the Senate of the Republic of Uzbekistan, explains, the parliamentary reforms laid the foundations of civil society in the country, supported the division of power

and helped the transformation towards a market economy (Sobirov 2005). However, a quick look at the parties represented in the Uzbek parliament calls such claims into question. Indeed, whether the four parties represented in the legislative chamber are able to "observe the universal principles of rule of law" and democracy, as Sobirov declares (Sobirov 2005) is more than disputable due to their loyalty towards Karimov. The same is the case in Kazakhstan, where during the legislative election (Majilis) in January 2012, for example, "even the presidential administration has stated that both of the minor parties that entered the Majilis are pro-Nazarbayev parties." (Nichol 2013a: 4). Moreover, at the time of the presidential elections in Kazakhstan, "all of the presidential candidates proclaimed that they wanted Nazarbayev to win" (Nichol 2013a: 3).

Among the Central Asian parliaments, the number of parties varies from three to five. Yet in Kazakhstan, "the election law prohibits political parties based upon ethnicity, gender, or religious affiliation" (StateDept a: 5). Similarly, in Uzbekistan, "the government prohibits religious groups from forming political parties and social movements" (StateDept 2012d: 2). The same is true for Kyrgyzstan, although here the story is slightly different since parliamentary seats are more or less equally distributed among the parties. Moreover, Murzakulova and Schoeberlein scrutinized the Kyrgyz ideological space very thoroughly and came to the conclusion that it,

> "[…] is characterised by a diversity of positions as well as actors. This is in contrast to what existed during Soviet times, when ideology was produced and disseminated by a set of central institutions under the control of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union" (Murzakulova and Schoeberlein 2010: 148).

Despite these positive findings, political parties based on religion are prohibited even in Kyrgyzstan. As the state department makes clear: "the constitution prohibits the establishment of religious political parties and the pursuit of political goals by religious groups" (StateDept 2012b: 2). Indeed, Kyrgyz political parties mainly represent the regional provenance rather than the ideological differences of their members.

As has already been mentioned, Tajikistan is the only Central Asian country with a legal political party based on Islam which is represented in the parliament. This might lead one to assume that a broader spectrum of ideas are represented than in the other Central Asian parliaments. However, in

Tajikistan the parliamentary power also belongs invariably to the presidential party: the IRPT gained only two seats during the last parliamentary elections in 2010, a result that the party members contest.

Table 13: Structure and Composition of Parliaments

	Kazakhstan	**Kyrgyzstan**	**Tajikistan**	**Uzbekistan**
Structure of Parliament	Bicameral	Unicameral	Bicameral	Bicameral (since 2005, previously unicameral)
Name of Parliament	Parlament	Jogorku Kenesh	Majlisi Oli	Oliy Majlis
Chamber names	Mazhilis (House of Representatives) Senate (Senate)		Majlisi namoyandogon (House of Representatives); Majlisi milli (National Assembly)	Qonunchilik palatasi (Legislative Chamber); Senat (Senate)
Number of Parties in Parliament	3	5	5	4

Source: PARLINE (2013)

The following parties are (with the number of seats in brackets) part of the first chamber of the parliament (PARLINE 2013):

Kazakhstan:
- People's Democratic Party *Nur Otan* (83)
- Democratic Party of Kazakhstan *Ak Zhol* (8)
- Communist People's Party of Kazakhstan (7)

Kyrgyzstan:
- Ata-Jurt (28)
- Social Democratic Party (26)
- Ar-Namys (25)
- Respublika (23)
- Ata-Merken (18)

Tajikistan
- People's Democratic Party of Tajikistan (PDPT) (55)
- Communist Party of Tajikistan (CPT) (2)
- Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan (IRPT) (2)
- Agrarian Party of Tajikistan (2)
- Party of Economic Reforms of Tajikistan (2)

Uzbekistan
- Liberal Democratic Party (UzLiDeP) (20)
- People's Democratic Party of Uzbekistan (10)
- Democratic Party of Uzbekistan *Milliy ti-klanish* (6)
- Social Democratic Party of Uzbekistan *Adolat* (3)

6.3.3. Freedom and Democracy Indices

To get an overview of how the Central Asian regimes are governed, it is useful to have a look at freedom indices and classifications elaborated by different non-governmental organizations. With these indices it is possible to begin to compare the different ways in which these governments deal with civil liberties, political rights, political participation and elections in general. Later on, I will scrutinize each country's specific attitudes, laws and law enforcement strategies towards religious organizations and individuals.

Although the description of Kyrgyzstan as a 'Central Asian democracy' is greatly exaggerated, democracy and freedom indices distinguish this country from its neighbours. The Freedom House Index measures civil liberties and political rights on a scale from 1 to 7 with 1 meaning perfectly

free. It assesses Kyrgyzstan as at least partly free,[9] giving it 5 points for both political rights and civil liberties. By comparison, Kazakhstan also gets 5 points for civil liberties but only 6 points for political rights while Tajikistan is rated 6 in both categories. Uzbekistan receives the worst possible rating with 7 for both political rights and civil liberties, which has made it one of the nine most repressive regimes in the world for a number of years (Freedom House 2013e: 6). The situation in Kazakhstan and Tajikistan has deteriorated over the last year in the following way: (Freedom 2013: 2):

- "Kazakhstan received a downward trend arrow due to the banning of several media outlets following a violent crackdown on labor unrest" (Freedom House 2013e).
- "Tajikistan's civil liberties rating declined from 5 to 6 due to a ban on students attending international seminars and a military operation in Gorno-Badakhshan that resulted in scores of deaths, extrajudicial killings, and a media crackdown" (Freedom House 2013e).

Whereas Kazakhstan was for many years regarded as rather democratic in comparison with Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, recent events show how heavy-handed the country's government can be (I will go into further details on this when discussing the countries' religious policies). In the case of Tajikistan, some analysts suggest that among other factors, western assistance in the security sector is responsible for President Rahmon's undemocratic consolidation of power (Matveeva 2005).

The Democracy Index of The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) is based on the assumption that "Freedom is an essential component of democracy, but not sufficient" (EIU 2013: 26). It not only takes into consider-

9 A *Free* country is one where there is broad scope for open political competition, a climate of respect for civil liberties, significant independent civic life, and independent media. *Partly Free* countries are characterized by some restrictions on political rights and civil liberties, often in a context of corruption, weak rule of law, ethnic strife, or civil war. A *Not Free* country is one where basic political rights are absent, and basic civil liberties are widely and systematically denied. See: www.freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/Map%20of%20Freedom%202013%2C%20final.pdf.

ation the electoral process and pluralism, but also civil liberties, the efficiency of governments, political participation and the political culture of a country (EIU 2013: 26). As with the Freedom House Index, the Democracy Index also ranks Kyrgyzstan as the most democratic of the Central Asian states, describing it as a "hybrid" between autocracy and democracy whereas its Central Asian neighbours are all clearly "authoritarian". Furthermore, according to this index, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan are again almost on an equal footing while Uzbekistan is again regarded as the country with the worst situation with regards to freedom and democracy. This index also considers potential sources of instability in Central Asia, such as the "young and restless population," especially in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan (EIU 2013: 22). As for Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, whose presidents have been able to cling to power since the early 1990s, and are now more than 70 years old, the EIU sees succession as a possible threat to stability: "No clear successors have been lined up, which increases the potential for intra-elite in-fighting, and possibly public unrest when the incumbent dies or becomes incapacitated" (EIU 2013: 22). This opinion is shared by other analysts, such as the International Crisis Group (ICG) (ICG 2013).

The Human Security Report considers procedures for political participation and freedom in the election of the chief executive. It describes Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan as 'anocracies', which is a term describing neither fully democratic nor fully autocratic states, as well as states "in transition from one to the other" (Human Security Report, 2006: 54ff, Notes on Terminology). Conversely, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan are described as 'autocracies'. All four countries lack "well-established procedures for political participation" and a freely elected chief executive necessary to be considered democracies.

Table 14: Freedom and Democracy Indices

	Kazakhstan	**Kyrgyzstan**	**Tajikistan**	**Uzbekistan**
Freedom House Index (2013) (1 – 7; 1 = free)				
Freedom Status	Not Free	Partly Free	Not Free	Not Free
Political Rights	6	5	6	7
Civil Liberties	5	5	6	7
Regime Type				
Democracy Index (EIU 2013) (0-10; 10 = democratic)	Authoritarian 2.95	Hybrid 4.69	Authoritarian 2.51	Authoritarian 1.72
Human Security Report 2012	Autocracy	Anocracy	Anocracy	Autocracy
Freedom of the press				
Country ranking by Reporter ohne Grenzen (2013)	160/179	106/179	123/179	164/179
Corruption				
Assessment by Freedom house (2013)	Corruption is widespread	Corruption is pervasive	Corruption is pervasive	Corruption is pervasive

Country ranking by Transparency International (2012)	133/176	154/176	157/176	170/176

All four countries are extremely corrupt as Transparency International's country rankings show and how Freedom House explains: In Kazakhstan, corruption is "widespread" and in the other three countries "pervasive" (Transparency International 2012).

6.3.4. Nations and Ethnicity, Clans and Tribes in Politics

When the former Soviet republics suddenly became independent 'nation states', they had to forge some kind of national ideology (see Murzakulova and Schoeberlein 2010; also Cummings 2010, Pelkmans 2006). Due to the fact that the break-up of the Soviet Union also meant the falling away of the previously very prominent communist ideology, the new states had to find another ideological reference system. The ideological nation-building subsequently combined the Soviet understanding of the nation with pre-Soviet traditions. On the one hand they relied on ancient traditions and social structures and on the other hand on religious history to ideologically hold their countries together. Even during Soviet times, political institutions were influenced by pre-Soviet traditions and customs. After independence this influence became even more apparent due to the nation-building process.

When the Central Asian territories became Soviet Republics, they suddenly became constrained to a fixed territory where beforehand fluid boundaries existed (Petric 2011). The name-giving titular-nations at once conceived of their history as

"[…] a series of distinct developments independent of and without respect to developments in other ethno-national groups even though these populations lived for centuries in a shared social space without thinking of themselves as living in separate worlds" (Petric 2011: 167).

One example of this is the aforementioned depiction of Timur as an Uzbek ancestor although he was actually a Turkish speaking Mongol. The Central Asian governments appeal "to the legacy of ancient and medieval Central Eurasian empires and khanates, the succession to which the present states pretend to be […]" (Morozova 2004: 16). The contemporary Uzbek state is built on the territory of the Emirate of Bukhara and the Khorezm and Khiva Khanates. Thus, what is now understood as a nation often has no common history. Similarly, the Kazakh people, "a mix of Turkic and Mongol nomadic tribes who migrated into the region in the 13th century, were rarely united as a single nation" (ARDA: KZ). Although the artificiality of these nations is often stressed in the literature, I will not judge here whether the Central Asian nations are more or less 'authentic' than other nations. What concerns me more is the fact that the territorial fixation of the Central Asian regions took place when they became Soviet Republics.

In addition to historical and territorial factors, the ethno-national boundaries established between the new countries were to a great degree the product of the national politics under Stalin (Petric 2011). Since then, because of differences in the ethnic composition of the republics, different policies have been developed concerning the titular nation. Uzbeks, for example, "usually occupy contiguous areas and share a common pre-Soviet history and regional identity" (Finke 2011: 68). Finke argues that in Uzbekistan "the titular group" therefore "seems sufficient to ensure an unambiguous sense of national identity" (Finke 2011: 68). In Kazakhstan, by contrast, the titular nation did not even constitute 50% of the overall population when the Republic became independent. As a consequence, the government implemented a program to bring ethnic Kazakhs living in neighbouring countries 'back' to Kazakhstan. Incentives were given to reward those who complied with the state social engineering plan. This resulted in some Kazakh villages in Uzbekistan being left totally empty when their inhabitants all moved to Kazakhstan.

It is a commonality of those states with a smaller percentage of the titular nation to "appeal to the rich multi-ethnic heritage of the Soviet Union" (Finke 2011: 68). Despite its attempts to increase numbers of those with eponymous ethnicity, this is especially true for Kazakhstan:

"In contrast to its counterparts to the south, the Kazakhstani leadership did not try to battle Sovietism, but absorbed it. […] the leadership used exactly this [ethnic] diver-

sity as a basis for state identity. In this new myth, the regime acts as a guarantor of the preservation of multi-ethnic diversity, and actively promotes the idea of 'Kazakhstan – our common home' in the public sphere" (Matveeva 2010: 22).

Language-politics can exemplify this: in Kazkahstan and Kyrgyzstan Russian still enjoys the status of an official language. In Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, where around 90% of the population ethnically belong to the titular nation, only the language of the titular nation has official status – in Uzbekistan the kyrillic alphabet was even exchanged for the latin alphabet in 1995.

When I speak of Soviet institutions and traditional customs that have an impact on the contemporary nation-states, it is important to note that some pre-Soviet features which are evident today were also relevant during Soviet times. One of these features is the clan or tribal structure of Central Asian societies (I use here tribe and clan as umbrella terms, although sometimes traditional structures are rather structures of regional origin, as I show). Although this was not intended by Soviet politics, we know today that clan structures survived the Soviet era, as Ostrowski makes clear: "It has been argued that the Soviet project did not eradicate these traditional social structures, but rather forced them to adapt to the formal institutions" (Ostrowski 2010: 18).[10] In fact, far from eradicating clan structures, the dissolution of the Soviet Union has dramatically increased their role in society, politics and among the elite in all Central Asian states (Matveeva 1999: 26).

Though it is clear that clan structures have survived the Soviet era, Central Asian governments' policies toward the reintegration of these structures into politics differs and is sometimes contradictory. For example, despite the fact that Nazarbaev would likely be able to strengthen his power by relying on his own *zhuz* (tribe), which is the *Elder zhuz* (Ostrowski 2010: 17), the advisor to the President Yermukhamet Yertysbayev explains that Kazakhs should not think anymore in terms of "the categories of the Mongol-Tatar invasion era", and realize instead that they live in the twenty first century (TengriNews 2012). Although the Kazakh government does not officially appreciate the impact of tribal origins and group affinities in politics,

10 For example, the Kholkhozes often functioned along tribal lines (Ostrowski 2010: 18).

Nazarbaev's strength "lies in his ability to ensure that all three *zhuz* receive equal representation in the top levels of government" (Ostrowski 2010: 17). He takes on the role of an arbiter in case of inter *zhuz*-struggles and thereby helps consolidate his power (Ostrowski 2010: 17). But tribal affiliations are not just important in the realm of politics, as Morozova makes clear, "In Kazakhstan, strategic industries and the most profitable sectors of the economy belong to, or are controlled by members of the presidential family and their relatives" (Morozova 2004: 16). Clan allegiances therefore also impact the economy.

In Kyrgyzstan political parties emerged along tribal lines and the governmental overthrows had a lot to do with clan politics. Indeed, tribal affiliations are the unique source of Kyrgyz political loyalties, and are crucial for the distribution of key political posts: "Having an important role in distributing political power, tribal affiliations […] continue their dominancy over the political leaders in political processes of state-building" (TengriNews 2012). Because of the immense importance of regional origins and tribal heritage, since 2012 Kyrgyz officials have been obliged to reveal their tribal affinities (TengriNews 2012).

In Tajikistan the struggle between the clans led to the civil war (Morozova 2004: 16). Clans from Leninabad and Kulyab were both concerned that their positions would be contested by the success of the opposition Pamir and Garm regional clans. Additionally to this, a religious aspect was evident in the civil war, but the importance of the regional and clan origins is indisputable.

In regard of its understanding of ethnicity, Uzbekistan distinguishes itself from its neighbours, as it is "not so much based on primordial concepts of genealogies and blood relationships but linked with local and regional attachment to the nation state as the largest extension of the same principle" (Finke 2011: 71). In the very beginning, Karimov was a weak political figure due to his lack of relationships to the strong Tashkent and Ferghana clans. Instead, he was regarded as only half Uzbek and half Tajik; having a Slav wife also did little for his reputation (Naumkin 2005: 69). However, it seems that Karimov found a way to deal with what Petric describes as the factional patterns that pervade Uzbek society (Petric 2011: 171). When filling political positions, Karimov attaches importance to regional origins (Morozova 2004: 16; Petric 2011: 170). However, even in the imposition of political posts, some Soviet heritage can be found:

"During the Soviet era the running of a *kolkhoze* (a faction, or even a ministry) was entrusted to an Uzbek while the second-in-command was a 'European' (for example, Russian, Ukrainian) in charge of controlling the local official. Nowadays, this policy remains but the second-in-command is no longer a European: he is now a reliable member of the President's faction (*Sambuh*)" (Petric 2011: 171).

This strategy has no doubt played an important role in consolidating Karimov's power.

In addition to the regional origins, solidarity networks are, according to Petric, key entities in Uzbek politics, functioning not only on the local, but also on the national level:

"The nominations for positions and the dismissal resemble the patterns of gift and counter-gift exchange since these actions are based on personal affiliations. In this society, a position within the administration is similar to a gift exchange because it implies obligations for the beneficiary" (Petric 2011: 172).

The government makes cautious use not only of regional origins and traditions to ensure its control of the country, but also *mahalla* (community networks), which are used to promote its policies: "Open and free private discussion is limited by the mahalla committees, traditional neighborhood organizations that the government has turned into an official system for public surveillance and control" (Freedom House 2013d). This has a reinforcing effect on patriarchal and patronal structures in the Uzbek society in general (Khazanov 2005).

Other traditional norms, which have no direct political influence, are playing a growing role in the society, as Kehl-Bodrogi points out with reference to Uzbekistan: "religiously tinged norms and values, particularity with regard to gender relations and the family, are widely propagated in the mass media and supported by popular literature" (Kehl-Bodrogi 2006: 238). Similarly, in Kazakhstan the newly introduced post-indepedence nationalism has brought about more patriarchal traditions than during Soviet times (Wilson Center 2011). In southern Kazakhstan as well as in Kyrgyzstan, for example, bride kidnapping is once again becoming very common, after the practice had previously all but become obsolete during the communist era. As a result, Kyrgyzstan has introduced stricter punishments for bride kidnappers and in early 2014 such a regulation was also discussed in the Ka-

zakh parliament (EurasiaNet 2014). Indeed, the parliamentarian debate helps illustrate the conflicting views on the issue: "One outraged lawmaker urged the death penalty for the crime; another vehemently defended the abduction and forced marriage of young women as a national tradition" (EurasiaNet 2014).

As this example indicates, the politics of the Central Asian states differ in how they deal with such 'apolitical' traditions. Tajikistan, for example, has introduced a Law on Observing National Traditions and Rituals which,

> "Regulates private celebration and funeral services, including weddings, funerals, and Mavludi Payghambar (the Prophet Muhammad's birthday). The law limits the number of guests, eliminates engagement parties, and controls ceremonial gift presentations and other rituals. The religion law reiterates these principles, mandating that 'mass worship, religious traditions, and ceremonies should be carried out according to the procedure of holding meetings, rallies, demonstrations, and peaceful processions prescribed by law of the Republic of Tajikistan' " (StateDept 2012c: 4).

In Tajikistan, then, the law dictates how tradition and religion should be observed. Here we see how much Central Asian states interfere with folk Islam although they argue that they accept 'traditional' Islam and only oppose 'foreign Islam' in order to fight terrorism. I will go into further details of this issue in the next chapters.