

Concluding Remarks

Throughout the last decade international enthusiasm on the plausible democratization of Central Asia has gradually faded away. Transitions from communism have been generally studied as if democracy was inevitably forthcoming. Almost nobody expected that a different type of political system, that had long developed undercover, could emerge from the *defunct* corpse of the Soviet Union. Most international studies dealing with Central Asian transition have focused on formal social and political institutions that were created during the 1990s as a result of international pressure on the local regimes. However, the formal study of the political dynamics that take place within Central Asia has proved to be unable to explain the reasons why democracy is not foreseeable and why the authoritarian regimes are seemingly consolidating throughout the region. When analyzing the trajectories of the different Central Asian regimes one could easily assume that the once divergent non-democratic trajectories of these states are now converging into a new sort of Central Asian clan-based authoritarianism. Therefore, it seems that we need not only to stop looking at these states as if democracy could be a possible outcome, as Carothers suggested,¹ but rather we need to pay more attention on the informal dynamics that shape decision making processes in order to understand why democracy is not forthcoming and to try to assert which will be the path these regimes are going to embark in.

The case of Tajikistan rapidly showed that the conditions that were determining Central Asian transitions out from communism were to a certain extent different from those of other former communist countries where clan-based politics was absent. The

¹ Thomas Carothers, "The End of the Transition Paradigm," *Journal of Democracy* 13, no.1 (2002): 6-21.

analysis of pre-independent informal politics in Tajikistan helps to understand how these conditions affected its transitional path by pointing out to a considerable extent why Tajikistan slid into collapse. Consequently, evidence from Tajikistan and the other Central Asian cases accurately suggests that the formal matters of the region should be interpreted against a background of informal processes that undermine established formal political institutions.

This thesis has highlighted how the elements leading to the Tajik civil war were embedded in Soviet institutional design. It has advocated that, even though analysis of the Tajik political system suggested that political effervescence could have led to the emergence of a plural political party system, historical and institutional preconditions constrained political developments during the transitional period. As has been pointed out, clan-based politics create an informal regime which has a “corrosive effect on the formal regime.”² The impossibility to generate a transitional pact that resulted from the way in which Soviet institutional design created and shaped Tajik clans serves as an example of this ‘corrosive effect’.

Furthermore, this thesis main argument suggests that there was no transition at all in Tajikistan and that the chaotic scenario which resulted from this stagnation was an accident waiting to happen. By analyzing the formal and informal organizations in Tajikistan I hope to have provided for a better understanding on the elements that conditioned this Central Asian republic transition. A strong emphasis was applied to the creation and development of *sub rosa* network organizations during the Soviet era (as the informal structure) and their strong influence on the political arena (the formal structure).

² Kathleen Collins, *The Logic of Clan Politics in Central Asia: Its Impact on Regime Transition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

From the evidence presented in this thesis it could be argued that informal politics in Tajikistan pervade through pre-transition, transitional and post-transitional politics. In analyzing informal politics in Tajikistan I have suggested that they play an imperative role for the state's stability. I have furthered this idea as to develop a hypothesis that implies that the clanic dynamic was mainly responsible for the civil conflict. In this way I hope to have made a strong case for my main hypothesis that *in Tajikistan the transitional pact was not forthcoming due to the absence of a truly dominant clan and to the ruling elite assumption that while being backed by Moscow there was no need to negotiate with other regional networks. Moreover, as Tajikistan clans were mainly created and shaped by the Soviet distributive system there was no historical pattern on which to fall back to work out accommodation.* However, this thesis also showed that there is not a Central Asian *résistance* toward democratization; indeed what prevails is a strong claim made by the regional elites to remain in control of their holdings. In light of this, it seems that these authoritarian regimes are ready to undertake any direction in order to prevail.

This thesis has intended to shed light on the political developments since the end of the hegemonic clanic balance supported by Moscow. As we have seen, the reason for the elite's inability to generate a transitional accord that could have helped to avoid civil war has a twofold implication. However, a secondary central objective of this thesis has been to further the understanding of the events that followed the violent outbreak. In this sense, a deep analysis dealing with the current political situation has been presented based on the following storyline. In the early days of independence, the emergent clanism of Tajikistan lacked a hegemonic-dominant clan network, the result: factional struggle

around state's assets due to scarcity and mutually excluding political positions. As civil war lasted for many years, fatigue forced warring sides to lay a common ground that provided for peace settlement. The Kulyabi clan starts consolidating its hegemonic position. The supposed power-sharing reforms consolidated peace and, therefore, granted Rakhmonov with a unique opportunity to further extend the reach of its network and, at the same time, curtail opposition and impede other clan empowerment. Rakhmonov is looking to perpetuate its mandate based on the argument that 'he' is needed to maintain peace and attract foreign (Russian) investment. It is clear that democracy obstructs the Kulyabi attempt to further consolidate its hegemonic position. Nevertheless, as opposition is repressed and dispersed there is almost no obstacle for Rakhmonov to win the election for a third mandate. It remains to be seen if the government is going to allow the participation of opposition in the electoral process and if the possibility of an opposition bloc consolidates. Evidence presented in this thesis suggests that there is no alternative to opposition than to accommodate to Rakhmonov's authoritarian trend. The presidential figure, as Collins points out, depends on the arrangements made by its network.³ Therefore, pressures have been made on Rakhmonov to purge those areas of government were members of other networks that were integrated into government due to the power-sharing reform still retain a share of power. As Rakhmonov and its network have worked out an efficient way to consolidate and concentrate power, their enemies are nothing more than a memory. As this thesis claims, the problem in Tajikistan was that it lacked a dominant clan so a pact was not possible. Currently Rakhmonov has strengthened his clan to a hegemonic position and has the capacity to 'enforce' a pact. The hegemonic position in a clanic distribution provides for the creation of a 'Presultan'

³ Kathleen Collins, *The Logic of Clan Politics in Central Asia*.

that justifies his presence and modifies the ‘constitutional’ structure through referenda, a vital tool for the perpetuation of clan politics. Hence, the probability for Rakhmonov to stay in the Presidency for the years to come is high; and, that is supportive evidence to claim that a new hegemonic balance has consolidated in Tajikistan.

The main objective for writing this thesis was to understand why Democracy has had several backslidings in the recent years. The intention was to provide evidence to promote the idea that it is necessary to analyze this kind of cases through a different, perhaps new, perspective. It is time to stop harboring hopes on the world’s democratization. It is time to accept that democracy, in the case on Tajikistan and Central Asia, is the least probable outcome. Clans are intrinsically unable to insert themselves into the formal political establishment that has been created in Central Asia. It is time to wonder about how the corrosive effect highlighted by Collins will shape Central Asian institutions and what type of regime will emerge. Meanwhile, the name of the game is *klannovayapolitika*.

This thesis is relevant in that it fills the vacant left by Collins when analyzing the causes of the Tajik state breakdown. By providing evidence on the different origin of the Tajik clanic structure and by contrasting it with other Central Asian kin-based clans, this thesis has collaborated to fade away the fear that Tajikistan’s neighbors could possibly break into a civil conflict of the magnitude of that lived in Tajikistan. However, this thesis stresses the importance of analyzing other Central Asian transitional pacts and their durability. Further research on how economic hardship is affecting Tajik ordinary citizens’ perception on the government is needed as this could potentially become a source of civil contention and disorder. This first rapprochement research has dealt with

several issues and it has analyzed different elements of the Tajiki society and culture from a wide perspective. Nevertheless, I intend to further focus my research on Tajikistan and Central Asia for this is a case that allows us to rethink what we assume we know about the implementation of democratic systems. Moreover, Central Asia provides for general lessons on democracy and could be utilized as a laboratory for transition and political system theories. By acknowledging the geostrategic importance of this region and the main conditions that determine its political development a much more coherent analysis of international relations in the area could be produced.

Analyzing clan politics in a context where the imperial hegemony that created such relations is gone leads us to find other similar cases out of the post-communist sphere. The analysis on clan dynamics presented in this thesis could partially help to understand some of the basic elements constraining factional struggle in cases such as that of Iraq and Rwanda. By comparing these cases to that of Tajikistan one could try to construe the possibilities for a democratic development in a fragmented social context where sides regard them as mutually excluding. The current situation in Iraq is quite similar to that of Tajikistan's prelude to conflict in that the historical dominant faction was not the result of a natural social-political development, thus favoring the perception of an unfair distribution of power supported by an external agent. The natural factional evolution in both cases tends to exclude the former ruling elite from the new distributive system (Sunnis in Iraq and Khujandis in Tajikistan are minorities). Once the hegemonic sight of the external coercive power is over, the most powerful, though subordinated faction is inspired to challenge the position of the usurper. This was the case of Rwanda when Belgium abandoned the country: the oppressed population that belonged to the

major ethnies looked for payback. The case of Iraq represents a different case for democracy due to the presence of several international interests, however, after the 'legislative' elections were dominated by the Shi'a majority, the former powerful faction has not relinquished its position. Moreover, violent skirmishes have taken place between Muslims of both confessions. Based on the experience of Tajikistan, and due to the mid-term plausible exclusion of the former ruling side, it is accurate to claim that Iraq's Sunnis will never come to terms and, therefore, this nation is currently at the edge of civil confrontation. These three cases offer overwhelming examples of the crisis of decolonization and post-colonialism; and are excellent pieces of study for post-imperial politics.

It is necessary to confess that this thesis has been constructed in a rather different fashion. The common methodological process was inverted due to the lack of scholarship and information concerning Tajikistan's current political developments. This means that this research was not initiated by postulating a tentative hypothesis, rather it was formulated later in the process. This different methodological process can cause confusion to the reader. I assume the entire responsibility for this limitation. The lack of deeper analysis on the economic distortions caused by the fall of communism is a shortcoming of this thesis. Further investigation on regional and international security issues is suggested and the lack of sufficient analysis on these subjects can also be considered as a shortcoming. I hope to have provided for an interesting and useful basic analysis on Tajik transitional path and its implications. Finally, it is worth mentioning that I have the intention to translate this thesis into Spanish in order to provide for literature on this international relations topic in the Castilian tongue.