CHAPTER-1

INTRODUCTION

The collapse of the Soviet Union was initially viewed with great optimism by many in the newly independent states and by the wider international community. In part reflecting this spirit, within academic circles, the study of the post-Soviet states was initially framed largely in terms of a ‘transition to democracy’. Indeed, for many authors the demise of the Soviet state was interpreted as part of a wider global shift towards democracy in the latter decades of the twentieth century. In the early years of independence within the Central Asian states themselves there was considerable optimism about the future of the new countries. At the same time, Western governments and international organizations devoted considerable resources to the development and consolidation of democratic politics and institutions in the region. By the late 1990s, however, it became clear that rather than participating in a broad movement towards democracy, the Central Asian states were witnessing authoritarian and totalitarian tendencies. These tendencies made the transition to democracy a much more difficult process.

The collapse of the Soviet Union has given way to the emergence of many challenges for Central Asians. Making democratic reforms has not been the only task to accomplish for these newly independent states. These states had to adapt to the collapse of the all-union economy and take reforms in the way of free market economy. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the communist ideology that guided the state virtually disappeared, and as a result an ideological vacuum emerged. Newly independent states came to embrace nationalism and engage in nation building to fill this ideological vacuum and to legitimize their regimes through diverse ways. This proved to be no easy task and necessitated taking steps like re-writing of their national histories to raise national consciousness. While
taking such steps, the Central Asian States have also tried to keep the discontent of the minorities living in their countries at a minimum to maintain stability in their countries. The post-Soviet democratization was to be difficult and tardy as the countries had no experience of building democratic politics. There were unrealistic expectations regarding political transition in post-Soviet states. The need to understand the process that is shaping the democratization drive in Central Asia led to undertaking of this study of political transition in Central Asia with focus on Kazakhstan. The democracy in Central Asia as a whole could not be taken up as sharp differences exist among the Central Asian States when it comes to the governments’ treatment of opposition, respect for civil and political rights, civil society development and tolerance towards minorities. Therefore it was not possible to provide a full and detailed examination of the status of democratic reform in each country of the region. Thus, only one country was opted for study i.e. Kazakhstan.

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Kazakhstan reluctantly declared independence at the end of 1991. The republic’s independence was neither the result of secessionist demand, nor an organized national liberation movement.¹ There were many reasons underlying this reluctance. Firstly, Kazakhstan was ethnically more heterogeneous among the Soviet Union republics. It includes intensive Russian population and the titular population was below the 50% ratio according to the last Soviet census. Moreover, the country has a large territory covering 2,727,300 km² areas which leads to her 9th rank in the world in size.² In contrast with the territory size the country has only 16.1 million inhabitants.³ Kazakhstan is neighbour to Russia with its longest border. The Russian population is mainly concentrated in the Northern parts of the country. Even though there is a trend of rising Kazakh population in the northern regions, Russians still constitute majority in most of the northern parts. Its boundaries were never intended to those of an independent state. Independence has shaped the nature of Kazakhstan politics and not always in ways that are supportive of democratic principles.⁴ There was hardly any previous exposure of Kazakhstan to democratic institutions. The only meaningful precursor of Kazakh democracy comes from pre-colonial times, when clan politics dictated that aksakals, the leaders of auls (the basic migratory unit) met when necessary to select biis (clan representatives), who in turn
elected sultans, who in turn approved khans. Although oligarchic, this system had the seeds of a representative form of government. But these types of appointments were not in tune with popularly elected legislative bodies. The democratization process is always governed by the ways in which societies are structured. The social fabric of the society of Kazakhstan is made up from an intermixture of family, clan, tribal, sub-ethnic and regional affiliations and loyalties. These networks of allegiance are strengthened by the lack of anonymity and impersonality enjoyed by the Western countries. Internal divisions within titular nationalities usually make little impact on everyday social and economic life, but play an important role in appointment to socially prestigious positions. In the Soviet days, family and clan networks acted as a buffer between the individual and the state, and also served as a social support system. However, in the post-Soviet days internal fragmentation can present a genuine threat to the viability of the community as a whole and reinforce barriers between people.

The most important act of the new Parliament of Kazakhstan was the adoption of the Declaration of the State independence of Kazakh SSR (October 5, 1990) based on humane, democratic, legal state and proclaimed the state sovereignty of the Kazakh SSR. In accordance with the constitutional law of Kazakhstan, “About the State Sovereignty of the Republic of Kazakhstan” (dated December 16, 1991), the head of the state and the executive is declared as the President. The move for the creation of Presidential form of the government, that had started a year earlier, got the legal sanction. Nursultan Nazarbaev became the first President of independent Kazakhstan. When in 1989, he occupied the highest party post, he was not yet the universally recognized national leader, but the public consciousness had already formed his image as the supporter of reforms. Nazarbayev moved to consolidate his position by repairing his relationship with key Kazakh leaders, bringing the power structures under his control included manipulating the patronage networks built up in the state bureaucracy, military, security, and party apparatus. This manipulation of formal institutions was tried as a method of consolidation during the Soviet era and Nazarbayev continued to follow suit. After independence of Kazakhstan he got many powers in his capacity as Head of the state. Some important powers include the Presidential right of decree and to veto parliamentary legislation as well as the authority to appoint and
dismiss ministers and government officials and dissolve parliament. One of the most important Presidential powers though is that only the President can initiate amendments to the Constitution. Many of Nazarbaev’s implementations and expansions of executive power can be seen as direct attempts to maintain his own, personal powerful influence and presence.

Nazarbaev defends increase in Presidential power as a necessity to guide Kazakhstan into democracy. This approach to democratic reforms is strange. Nazarbaev’s approach reflects patterns that do not take towards democratic path.

**Review of the Existing Literature**

The current literature regarding on democracy in Kazakhstan tends to suggest two general explanations as to why the region has failed in ensuring transition to democracy in accordance with international standards. One explanation places the blame on the current leadership, specifically President Nursultan Nazarbaev of Kazakhstan. Most often this is the viewpoint of human rights organizations like Amnesty International; however, more politically oriented groups such as Freedom House, Eurasianet, and, to an extent, media and press organizations like the International Press Institute (IPI) and Radio Free Europe (RFE) can be said to share this viewpoint as well. Most human rights activist groups assert that the governments in Kazakhstan deny their citizens civil rights and inhibit democracy. It serves their purposes of maintaining control over the population. According to some scholars, these authoritarian “despots” – mostly remnants of the earlier Soviet regime – changed the names of their Communist political parties to make them palatable to the international community but not much have changed at ground level. Some scholars believe, therefore that Kazakhstan even after independence is the same as it was under Soviet rule so far as its democratic credentials are concerned. It is reasonable to accept this point of view in light of the strong tendencies towards authoritarianism in the country.

N. Alaolmolki in his book Life *after the Soviet Union* has pointed out that in response to criticism by American and Western European officials, President Nursultan Nazarbaev tried to justify the expansion of his power based on democratic,
pragmatic, and cultural considerations. He contended that strong presidential rule was the most effective way to promote reform unencumbered by resistance from “backward looking” forces or special interest groups. He also argued that the Central Asian countries lacked the tradition and culture of parliamentarianism. Although he made these points chiefly to justify his actions, the general evidence supports his view that these republics lack the background and experience for nation building on democratic lines. Alaolmolkirefers to former diplomat, Bahadir Abdurazakhov, stressing the differences between the Russian and Soviet colonization of Kazakhstan and the colonialism experienced in countries colonized by European nations. This is applicable to all the Central Asian states, not just Kazakhstan. Alaolmolkireports that Abdurazakhov says that it was brutal nature of the Central Asian colonizers that have made things difficult in the region, and that the region was never permitted to exercise the kind of self-rule found in European colonies. Thus Abdurazakhov asserts the lack of political freedom meant that the political leaders had no direct experience of democratic processes and procedures. The Communist Party had a monopoly of power, never sharing power with other groups, and this authoritarian tendency is still strong.

Beatrice F. Manz in his edited book *Central Asia in Historical Perspective* offers number perspectives on the development of Central Asia over a long period, both within the broader world of the Middle East and the Eurasia Steppe, and within the Russian and Soviet empires. The book begins with a brief historical introduction covering the creation of structures and identities from the Middle ages through the Soviet period. The subsequent chapters in the first section examine historical development in Central Asia and analyse some of the influences which were important in shaping its society and politics. One of the most crucial events in the history of Central Asia was the creation of the Mongol Empire which is discussed in the first chapter by Morris Rossabi. Rossabi describes the impact of Mongol rule on Central Asia and traces several social and political patterns which can be connected to the influence of the Mongols and of subsequent nomad empires. The importance of nomadism in the history of Central Asia is further explored by Maria Subtelny, which shows the centrality of nomad-sedentary relations in the development of the major ethnic groups in Central Asia. Central Asia’s position on the frontier between nomad and sedentary
worlds was one decisive factor in its development and another was its inclusion in the Islamic realm. John Voll has addressed Central Asia’s place within Islam, arguing, in contradiction to many commonly held interpretations, that Central Asia remained firmly within the Central Islamic World until at least the nineteenth century, and that Russian and Soviet rule never truly severed this relation. From the nineteenth century on, the Central Asia also belonged to another defined sphere, as Muslims within the Russian Empire. This is the subject of Edward Lazzerini’s article. He examines particularly the dominant political force among the Muslims, namely the Tatars, using them to describe the evolution of Russian attitudes towards Turkic Muslims, and examines the role that the Tatars played in shaping Central Asia’s experience of Russian rule. Both Voll and Lazzerini discuss two important intellectual movements of the Islamic world in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, pan-Islamic and pan-Turkism.

The second section of the book describes the further development of ethnic relationships within the Soviet period. Donald Carlisle has analysed the national delimitation of 1924 in relation to local and central politics and has suggested that the outcome was determined less by ethnographic considerations than by political processes, in which Central Asian politicians played a significant part. Muriel Atkin explores the impact that Soviet policies and continuing underdevelopment have on ethnic identities and relationship in Central Asia. He argues that ethnic and national loyalties were important during the Soviet period. The last chapter of this section assesses the political role of Islamic identity in contemporary Kazakhstan. Reef Altoma concludes that despite widespread interest in Islam and frequent references to it in political discussions, leaders and other political actors follow a primarily secular agenda.

The final issue addressed in this edited book is the influence of Russian rule in Central Asia. Edward Allworth’s chapter approaches this question from a cultural standpoint, analysing the effect of unequal social relationships, Russian feeling of Superiority and the imposition of Russian language and cultural attributes. Bakhtior Lslamov examines the relationship from an economic perspective, giving an analysis of Soviet tax and development policies from the Central Asian point of view. He argues that the close interconnections created during the Soviet period and the interchanges of taxes and grants were less favourable to Central Asia than usually
believed. Both Allworth and Islamov assert that Soviet influence was, on balance, harmful to Central Asia which brought forth resentment.

Ram Rahul in his book *Central Asia; An outline history* reveals certain aspects of the history of Central Asia. He is of the opinion that Cyrus of Iran and Alexandra of Macedonia made crucial impact on the history of ancient Central Asia. He describes how the tradition of dynasty culture started in Central Asia. He also contends that throughout history that Central Asian states did not experience any type of democratic governance.

Anna Matveeva’s article “Democratization, Legitimacy and Political Change in Central Asia” analysis the factors which influence the formation of political regimes and the challenges the regimes had to address after independence. It assesses the policy response adopted by these regimes and the extent to which government acquired legitimacy as a result of these responses. It also focuses on what their sources of legitimacy mean for democratization and for the direction of political change. This article concludes with some reflections on the nature of new challenges, which emerged out of political development in the 1990s, and the capacity of the regimes to cope with them.

Dmitri Furman in his article “The Regime of Kazakhstan” shows the logic behind the development and functioning of the political regime of post-Soviet Kazakhstan. He also endeavors to compare the regime in Kazakhstan with that in Russia. Only by comparing post-Soviet regimes can one understand what in their evolution was determined by a common genesis that is, by being inherently “Post-Soviet”. The author opines that we can classify all post-Soviet states according to their most important political characteristics: rotation of power, freedom for opposition and free and fair elections. With these criteria in mind, we can identify one group of post-Soviet countries where, within the framework of a democratic system, power has shifted several times.

Steven Sabol’s book *Russian Colonization and the Genesis of Kazakh National Consciousness* is divided into two parts. The first part surveys the historical foundation of the Kazakh national movement within the colonial context to determine the socio-political lineages of the early twentieth century Kazakh intelligentsia. The author
examines Kazakh nomadism and culture, Russian colonisation and administration, and the genesis of the Kazakh intelligentsia in the nineteenth and the early twentieth century. Sabol argued that only through an understanding of this period can the historian of modernisation, which is the story of the Kazakh intelligentsia, appreciate the resilience of community customs and institutions, whether nomadic or sedentary. In the second part of the book, the author examines the social, political and nationalist views of three of the most influential members of the Kazakh intelligentsia: Alikhan Bokeikhanov, Akhmet Baitursynov and Mukhamedzhan Seralin. He contended that certainly other Kazakh intelligentsia wielded considerable influence upon the nascent Kazakh socio-political movement, but these three individuals best represent the myriad of views articulated and multiple activities undertaken ‘to awaken’ the Kazakh nation from what they believed was a pernicious national slumber. An individual case studies, these three men embodied the political, educational, and literary objectives of the Kazakh intelligentsia, whose members were held together not by common social origin and status, but by a strong sense of injustice and alienation from an uncompromising autocratic authority. These three had played critical roles in organising the Kazakh intelligentsia, chiefly through publishing but also in the political arena, prior to the 1917 Russian revolution.

Ram Rahul’s *March of Central Asia* is the chronicle of transition of Central Asia from the ancient time to the present. It narrates conditions and circumstances of Central Asia, its episodes, encounters and the routes taken by its society and its patterns since ages. Central Asia has marched down the pathway of history since antiquity. The march of pre-history Central Asia is obscure. This obscurity lifted with Cyrus the Great (B.C. 557-530) of Iran, who opened Central Asia to history, and the world.

Kathleen Collins in her article “The Political Role of Clans in Central Asia” evaluates the socio-political strength and relevance of clan identities at the social level, in comparison with ethno-national and religious identities and the inner working of clan networks, their socio-economic base, functions and the collective identity they provide. The author argues that clan identity remains powerful in Central Asia. Clan identities are firmly rooted in both the informal (village) and formalized (Kolkhoz)
socio-economic structures; it was neither destroyed nor subsumed by the Soviet campaign to create republic based ethno-national identities.

Shahram Akbarzadeh in his article “The Political Shape of Central Asia”\textsuperscript{17} discusses the post-Soviet politics of Central Asia. He begins with a look at societal factors that could have a bearing on the future shape of the Central Asian States. He then proceeds to inquire into the mentality of the elite groups. Their methods of governance are mostly unchanged by the political upheavals that have left them in charge of independent states. He concludes this article with an inquiry into technique that is employed to present state organs as corresponding to native tradition. Structural reforms of government bodies and the image that evoke are seen as having significant implications for the legitimacy of these states.

Yilmaz Bingoi in the article “Nationalism and Democracy in Post-Communist Central Asia”\textsuperscript{18} evaluates misconception regarding the relationship between nationalism and democracy in the post-Soviet Central Asia. The article puts forward two arguments. First, contrary to the argument by some political scientists that nationalism is compatible with and indeed is the same as democracy, the author argues that there is a significant degree of tradeoff between nationalism and democracy. Second, the author is of the view that it is indeed nationalism and not liberal democracy that is the real successor to communism at least in the Central Asian states. The article provides evidence indicating the pervasiveness of ethnic nationalism and deficiency of liberal democracy in post-Soviet Central Asia.

Phool Badan in his book Dynamics of Political Development in Central Asia\textsuperscript{19} has made an attempt to study the dynamics of political development in Central Asia and traces the origins of development which is taking place in the region. The author deals with the social formation in all the Central Asian Republics prevalent before the October Revolution of 1917 and in the course of historical struggle and how the Central Asian Republics happened to come under the rule of Soviet Union. He also explains how the communist leadership sought to transform them by introducing assimilative policies. The author also focuses on Gorbachev’s policy of reform and the changes which took place in the former Soviet Union. The author discusses how Gorbachev assumed a style considerably different from those of his predecessors. The author has also examined the
constitutional development in the five Central Asian Republics. It analyses type of political system envisaged by the respective constitutions of these five republics. The democratic political process in all the Central Republics has also been discussed.

John Anderson in his article “Constitutional Development in Central Asia” touched the key constitutional development in the region. The author asserted that the constitutional development in Central Asia has conformed to a top down model, that is, the creation of new Constitution since 1992 has stemmed largely from the initiative of leaders rather than in response to popular demands. The author argues that the Constitutions of Central Asian Republics are not meaningful ‘power maps’ in so far as they fail to discuss a number of central features of Central Asian political systems. In particular they give little indications of the strength of President apparatus vis-à-vis the formal institutions of government and Parliament.

Martha Brill Olcott in her book Kazakhstan: Unfulfilled Promise discusses how, with time, Kazakhstan’s leaders have grown more confident in advancing the national cause of the Kazakh people and are doing so in a way that increasingly works to their own personal advantage. The author also describes how Kazakhstan’s leaders were convinced initially that their country’s state-building strategy had to be driven by its location, requiring Kazakhstan to demonstrate continuing sensitivity to Russia’s preference for the kind of state their country should become. The writer also examines the Kazakhstan’s government control over the country’s economic wealth in the initial years of independence. The writer also deals with the tensions that existed in the area of security relations. The author is of the opinion that Kazakhstan’s leadership has become less concerned with appeasing Russia and is no longer overly sensitive to the concern of the ethnic Russia’s living in Kazakhstan.

S.N. Cumming in his book, Kazakhstan: Power and the Elite, examines Kazakhstan’s national political elite and the broader institutional and historical environment. The author has used three principal approaches. First, it seeks to understand the formation of the political elite and the process by which its incumbent have been recruited. Second, it analyse the functioning of the elite, how the elite has managed to stay in power and how it has built authority and legitimacy. Third, it examines the behaviour of elite. He focuses on the political elite as a part of a system
arguing that the elite cannot be divorced from the broad historical and institutional environment in which it operates. The author asserts that institutions, identities and interests have all kept the elite in power and provided it with the means to influence key processes. The author is of the view that five main policy challenges have emerged in independent rule and have shaped the environment in which elite act, the consolidation of a new political post-communist regime; the domestic-international nexus and the promotion and management of identity. The writer argues that the last policy area is crucial because it provides the cultural and ideological context in which actors perform. The author assesses the social background of elites in an attempt to see whether certain groups dominate over others. He finds that social background of elite members is relevant less as a predictor of individual behavior than as an indicator of the social structure of social power. Nevertheless, he says that there is a strong correlation exists between one demographic attribute i.e. ethnicity and the ability to make it top. The overall predominance of male ethic Kazakhs does suggest that being a member of this group gives an individual a considerably better chance of becoming a member of the political elite than would being non-Kazakh.

Paul Kubicek in his article “Authoritarianism in Central Asia: Curse and Cure?” examines the development in the post-Soviet period in three states: Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. The writer argues that the movement towards Presidential rule has been accompanied by claim that a “vacuum of power” must be filled and that only decisive leadership from above can put these states on the ‘proper path’. The author explains that the regimes in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan serve a positive purpose, preserving order and discouraging expression of radical nationalism. The writer is of the view that success for democracy in these states is far from likely, and limited democratic experience shows that it can create ethnic tensions and threaten economic reform. There are problems associated with even the most benign form of authoritarianism. Being democratically described in its constitution, an examination of the existing literature regarding institutions in Kazakhstan will be helpful to see what has been established in Kazakhstan for transition towards democracy. Transition to democracy is not exactly an easy thing to measure, though, and democracy itself is not any easier to define. There are certain indicators, however, that have been established
through the previous work of political scientists and other scholars that can be useful in determining if a country is heading in a democratic direction. Two such scholars are Dahl and Huntington.

In his book *Polyarchy*,\(^4\) Dahl uses the term “polyarchy” as opposed to the term “democracy” for the main reason of differentiating between the “democracies” currently in general practice and the “true” or “ideal” democracy of theory. At the very least, polyarchy is a vital part of democracy and a country which practices polyarchy can be said to be democratic. According to Dahl, there are two main, but not sole, components to polyarchy: the extent of suffrage and the extent of permissible opposition. Dahl differentiates between the two components for a very interesting reason. He states, “the two processes – democratization and the development of public opposition – are not, in my view, identical”. One *can* exist without the other – and does in many cases – as they are “two somewhat different theoretical dimensions of democratization”. Further, both components (contestation and participation) are necessary in order for polyarchy to exist according to Dahl because “in the absence of the right to oppose, the right to “participate” is stripped of a very large part of the significance it has in a country where public contestation exists.” In order to have polyarchy, Dahl states that the people must be able “to formulate their own preferences”; “signify their preferences to their fellow citizens and the government by individual and collective action”; and “to have their preferences weighed equally in the conduct of the government, that is, weighted with no discrimination because of the content or source of the preference”. For these three conditions to be achieved, a government must provide eight requirements. Dahl’s list of eight requirements consists of: (1) freedom to form and join organizations; (2) freedom of expression; (3) right to vote; (4) eligibility for public office; (5) right of political leaders to compete for support and the right of political leaders to compete for votes; (6) alternative sources of information; (7) free and fair elections; and (8) institutions for making government policies depend on votes and other expressions of preference.

Samuel Huntington in his work *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*\(^5\) begins with Dahl’s typology and extends it further as he studies what he calls waves of democratization in the twentieth century. He continues Dahl’s
emphasis on the importance of truly competitive elections. “The central procedure of
democracy is the selection of leaders through competitive elections by the people.” Also,
similar to Dahl, Huntington bases his classification of a country as democratic if it
exhibits the type of openness in competitive elections that Dahl feels is essential to
democracy. Huntington considers contestation and participation essential as also civil
liberties such as the freedoms of speech, press, and assembly, which echo Dahl’s eight
requirements. “A system is undemocratic to the extent that no opposition is permitted in
elections, or that the opposition is curbed or harassed in what it can do, or that the
opposition newspapers are censored or closed down, or that votes are manipulated or
miscounted.”

In his another book *Democracy and its Critics* Robert Dahl outlines
parameters of democratic theory and practice, including the limits and possibilities of
democracy in the world in which we live and its likely course in the foreseeable future.
It also includes major problems posed by both the adversarial and sympathetic critics of
democracy. The author argues that democratic theory is not only a large enterprise-
normative, empirical, philosophical, sympathetic, critical, historical, utopian all at once
but complexity interconnected. The complex inter-connection means that we cannot
constitute a satisfactory democratic theory by starting off from an impregnable base and
marching straight down the road to our conclusion.

Carl Cohen’s book *Democracy* presents and defends a general theory of
democracy. He opines that democracy has become the foremost political ideal in the
entire word. Praised on every hand, equally by those otherwise in fundamental
philosophical disagreement, it is professed by some who understand it little and want it
less. As a consequence of careless rhetoric, intellectual confusion and even some
deliberate deception, the term “democracy” has been largely drained of its meaning.
Author is of the view that in exploring the philosophy of democracy, it is not
unreasonable to combine commitment and objectivity. In political affairs, strong feeling
of loyalty or aversion is natural and healthy. It is entirely possible to harbour such
feeling while undertaking a rational assessment of the government system that is the
object of affection and repugnance.
Giovanni Sartori in his book *Democratic Theory* attempts to define what democracy is and ought to be, dealing with the many issues involved in it. The central point of his argumentation focuses around liberal democracy in order to explain that “a democracy is a political system in which the people exercise power to the extent that they are able to change their governors but not to the extent of governing themselves”, or in other words, “a polyarchy of elected elites.” Although Sartori uses Dahl’s terminology for his definition, he still has his well-thought differences with respect to the father of pluralism, mainly, the point that even though one cannot point to the concrete persons who are ruling as an elite, that does not mean that these ruling does not exist. One shall not confuse the anonymity granted by a democratic system with a situation in which no one really is exercising power from a privileged position.

**Research Questions**

This study has made an effort to answer the following questions:

1. How far reality reflects the democratic system envisaged in Kazakhstan’s Constitution?
2. Do the Kazakhstani people approve of his leadership and how far does his regime possess legitimacy?
3. Whether the suppression of democracy in Kazakhstan is a function of its non-democratic history?
4. Whether the political institutions of Kazakhstan function independently and as per the spirit of its Constitution?
5. Is real multi-party system exists in Kazakhstan?
6. Whether the elections to the Parliament and the office of President are conducted in free and fair manner?
7. How far the citizens of Kazakhstan enjoy political and civil rights as enshrined in the Constitution?
8. What is the role of civil society and media in Kazakhstan?
9. Is Kazakhstan’s democracy de jure rather than de facto?
The main argument of this study is that the incumbent leadership in Kazakhstan has failed to take steps to establish democracy in the country in post-Soviet period. The changes that were introduced proved to be only decorative, they lacked substance. It is argued in this study that the President of the country, Nursultan Nazarbaev, has aimed at consolidating his own authority rather than establishing democracy and that his attempts to realize this aim resulted in the silencing of the opposition forces and curtailment of civil and political rights of the citizens. This thesis explores the reasons behind the stagnation in the transitions to democracy in Kazakhstan. According to its Constitution, Kazakhstan is a democratic country. In actuality, however, there is little evidence to support that it is democratic system. It lacks free press; freedom of association is suppressed; religious freedom is limited; and free speech is constrained as well. While the country holds popular elections, much of its electoral processes is under the control of the executive branch of government – calling into question Kazakhstan’s holding of “fair and competitive” elections.

Chapter-Scheme

This study is composed of five chapters. After the introduction, the chapter2 defines the concept of democracy as it is used in this study and provides the criteria to determine if a regime is democratic or not. While doing these, this chapter at the same time draws a framework of analysis of the present study because the definitions of democracy to be used in this study will determine which aspects of the political life in Kazakhstan should be examined in order to decide whether this country is democratic or not.

Chapters third provides historical background and argues that Kazakhstan has been exposed to undemocratic forms of governance in the history. In this chapter the pre-Cz arist, Czarist and Russian history of Kazakhstan is discussed. The study seeks to show that this type of system is managed through mechanism built on regional family and clan affiliation. Such system, therefore, have more difficulty in developing notion of identity and loyalty that could transcend such ties.
Chapters four applies the theoretical framework developed in the second chapter to Kazakhstan and discusses that to a large extent Kazakhstan has failed to satisfy the criteria introduced in second chapter for democratic governance. This Chapter elaborates on Nazarbaev government’s highly intolerant attitude towards the alternative political voices in the country including opposition, independent Civil Society organizations that are regarded undesirable by the regime and independent media channels in the country.

Chapter five is the concluding chapter. Besides summarising the nature of electoral process and civil and political rights of people in Kazakhstan, it presents the findings of the study and answers the questions raised. This thesis finds that Kazakhstan straying from its constitutional democratic starting points and failed to become full-fledged democracy.

Methodology

The methodology followed for this study is combination of historical, descriptive and analytical approach. The sources utilized in this study are mainly books and articles dealing with the subject. Moreover, internet archives of Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty, Eurasianet and Transitions Online have also been used while conducting this study. Human rights reports of U.S. Department of State, Freedom House, Amnesty International and Human Rights/Helsinki Watch have also proved to be important sources while examining the government’s violation of civil and political rights. The sources also include International Crises Group Reports, Summary of World Broadcast, the Current Digest and various government documents.
Notes and References

3http://www.eng.stat.kz/Pages/default.aspx
8Article 46 of the Constitution (see Appendix )
12Anna Matveeva,no.6, pp. 23-44.


19 Phool Badan, *Dynamics of Political Development in Central Asia* (New Delhi: Lancer Books, 2001)


