

Cultural Foundations of Autocracy and Their Amendment: What Can Higher Education Institutions Do?

Iulian Oneașcă*

Abstract: *The paper examines the foundations of the societies in Central Asia (CA) and their impact on politics, recalls similarities with Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), attempting to make recommendations for the societies' advancement. Firstly, I analyse the connections between cultural heritage and politics, introducing two pillar concepts, the societies' cultural and institutional foundations. They are discussed with a view to understanding and revealing the model of society ingrained in politics and materialised in CA societies. Then, I examine the social capital and the exercise of power, illustrate beneficial associations and trade-offs between culture(s) and politics. Shortages are exposed and opportunities and circumstances for conflicts revealed. I substantiate the contradictory impacts of the international arena; I tackle synergies and discuss means to combine influences between politics and cultures. Finally, I incorporate findings into policy terms. The rudiments of a working system to foster progress in CA are seen in developments of both individuals and their governance systems. Recommendations are made with regard to how Higher Education Institutions can dodge flawed cultural influences and amend autocracy. The issues of CA societies are addressed with a strong policy focus, making policy recommendations and aiming at rising debates.*

Keywords: *Central Asia, Model of Society, Politics, Change, Higher Education Institutions*

1. Autocracy

Politicians and researchers alike use various terms to describe the forms of state governance in Central Asia (CA), depending on their perspective. Despite nuances, there is a general agreement that Central Asian governances concentrate and centralize too much power, as compared to the western values. The systems may rely on conventional institutions or may just appear to do so. Their functioning, however, is problematic, expressing the will of one person. The consequence is that the peoples' fundamental freedoms are threatened and the societies' progress is constrained. At the same time, potential challengers cannot emerge democratically and a political alternative is generally denied.

* **Iulian Oneașcă** is an expert in social reforms and policies. His field of interest includes politics as well. Training in macro-economy and social related issues in Europe and experience gathered in internationally funded projects, complement his degree in economics. He worked over 15 years within international teams of experts with prestigious institutions, such as: International Labour Office, Society for Technical Co-operation (GTZ - GmbH), Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation and Romanian central administration. Since 2006, he works with the European Institute of Romania. Social models and EU processes, particularly in South-Eastern Europe, capture his attention and find expression in his works. E-mail: iulian.oneasca@ier.ro

Authoritarian ruling in Central Asia is a living reality, deeply rooted in history. Its forms of manifestation varied over time, from the traditional khan and aksakal¹, to Soviet papasha and back. No Uncle Sam type of ruling is at horizon yet. The transition from a totalitarian regime towards a form of western democracy, adapted to Asian social order, takes time.

The elite's domination is widespread in Central Asia and proves to be a persistent phenomenon. It is owed to limited social development and fragmentation of societies. The late states formation and inland borders also contributed. With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan obtained their independence for the first time in history (Krumm, 2007). By that time, systems based on clan patronage, kinship and social cult of the aksakal were adjusted and found their place in structures of national nomenclature (Morozova, 2004). The communist system that relied on local cadre and traditions saw to it. The transition process that followed the Soviet collapse didn't advance democracy as expected. Implementation of some reforms created political and legislative gaps and weakened the system. The newly shaped conditions favoured a tighter control over the economy and society. Politicians and former elites during the soviet period increased their powers and revalorised traditions. Whether they were seeking legitimacy or just trusting the old ways, is of no consequence.

The centralized party control constituted, for decades, the main feedback mechanism and coercion tool in administration and economy. Its absence unleashed diverse deeds of corruption and favouritism, as it did in other ex-communist countries. As a consequence, public institutions and resources would occasionally be used by the people in power to reward families, clan members and ethnicities for their electoral support and obedience. The system would reduce any form of administrative appeal and combat political opposition. To a large extent democratic solutions would rarely promote change or alternation to power. Nevertheless, peoples' dissatisfaction gave birth to non-violent actions towards democracies in the ex-Soviet states, such as the Revolution of Roses in Georgia 2003, the Orange Revolution in Ukraine in 2004, and the Tulip Revolution or First Kyrgyz Revolution in 2005. All these succeeded to change the political leaderships through democratic processes and, essentially, to keep political systems on their way to democracy. Unfortunately, the expectations were too high and the coloured or flower movements generally disappointed the large masses and the political observers. Anyhow, considering the alternatives, appeal to mass protests and actions remains tempting and more likely to succeed under favourable circumstances. This is how countries in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) have gained their freedom. In CA, the elites would eventually have to accept democratisation. Until then, the clans' disputes would continue to decide the rulers.

Today's Central Asia appears more authoritarian than it was during the Soviet regime, according to researchers (McGlinchey, 2009). Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan have experienced some form of transition shock, which should have eroded the continuity of their autocracies. Still, cultural traditions are stronger than the incentives for change and the efforts of the international community towards political liberalisation do not bear desired fruit.

¹ Aksakal refers to the male elders, the old and wise of the community ("white beard" in Turkic languages: Wikipedia).

2. Societies in Central Asia

The organization of societies in Central Asia relies on ancient traditions. The region was inhabited by Turkic and Persian peoples, identified mostly by a certain lifestyle that embedded religious and ethnic specificities. Most of the Kazakhs, Kyrgyz and Turkmen were nomads, herding through mountains, steppes and sand deserts. The soviet regime took away their animals to enforce settlement. Other populations were Sarts, such as settled Turks and Tajiks, as they lived in urban or rural communities.

In the newly independent state formations of CA, rulers continued the soviet and local traditions, embracing their responsibilities as 'fathers' of the countries they ruled, towards their subjects or 'children'. The family and tribal or clan ties throughout communities are still strong and decide the hierarchies. The social status depends on the relationship among kinship members, which are regulated by the pecking order that results from age and gender. Many clans and enclosed societal formations fragment the entire community in opposing groups that resist formal authorities.

Such societies are likely to require the exercise of a strong authority (Aghion et al., 2008). It happened in the South European countries, where authoritarian nationalist regimes ruled between 1945 and 1980 (Navarro and Shi, 2001). Current consequences are the huge budgetary deficits and public debts manifested in Greece, Spain and Portugal.

Cultural traits embedded in society, such as religion, social ties, ethnical predispositions, or simply regional particularities, have contradictory effects on politics. Accordingly, imported programmes or resolutions, relying on unshared occidental values, do not necessarily work.

2.1 Historical foundations and their materialization in CA

Societies are composed of groups of individuals organised by race, ethnicity, tribe, cast, clan or class. Such characteristics, together with the rules that keep individuals together and shape their behaviour, differentiate societies and mark their evolutions. These are essential elements of the historical foundations of societies.

Populations in Central Asia share, to varying degrees, certain cultural traits and racial backgrounds. The main racial groups are Caucasoids and Mongoloids, generally mixed in the region. There are various Russians in the North of the region and Han ethnic groups of China, in the East. Turkic peoples are by far dominating in former Soviet countries of CA: they represent between 80% and 90% in three of the four republics, and 59% in Kazakhstan, where Russians made up 30% of the population in 1999 (The World Factbook, 2011). Karakalpak, Kazakhs, Kyrgyzs, Tatars, Turkmen, Uzbeks and Uyghur are just a few of the Turkic ethno-linguistic societies populating the area. Persian ethnics are specific to Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Iran.

Like in the Balkans, the state borders do not match the ethnic ones. Minorities in one state are well represented in another. This generates conditions for interethnic disputes. According to researchers, linkage to global civil society, through mother countries, facilitates ethnic mobilization; a potential outcome is that it may diffuse models of claim-making based on human rights ideas (Tsutsui 2004: 63). Human rights culture is not specific to this part of the world. Still, ethnic polarization and traditions are strong.

Existence of small numbers of significant-sized groups of ethnicities may also give rise to conflict, according to researches (Kaufmann, 2010).

Interethnic conflicts occurred in CA. In 2009, Uyghurs have fought with Hans in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region in China. They are a Turkic ethnic group also spread in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan. In the southern regions of Kyrgyzstan, another conflict on ethnic grounds overthrew President Kurmanbek Bakiyev in mid 2010. There were other similar events.

A systemic separation based on ethnicity and clan is a counterproductive line of development. Fostering of polarisation can be avoided. Cooperation and involvement of other members of the society, as well as free access to alternative sources of information, increase the probability of decentralization and limit clique formation (Hassanpour, 2008). The same, intergovernmental networks suppress ethnic mobilization as they enhance state power and authority (Tsutsui 2004: 63). It has been proven during the communist regimes that generally managed to avoid such developments, especially in Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union.

The elites in Central Asia behave similarly to those in Western Balkans. From a western perspective, they seem to emphasize the ethnic and clan differentiations and perpetuate potential conflicts in order to prolong their grasp on societies. Yet, they may actually do what they are expected to, according to traditions. The countries in the Western Balkans have addressed similar tendencies, supported by the west. Could CA states follow suit?

2.2 Modern foundations and their materialization in CA

The diversity of cultures and traditions has generated both the Western law, with its modern formalism, and other different legal solutions to achieve social order. The cultural inheritance impregnates the legal system and thus is easier embedded, in its evolution, in society, politics and economics. That is why traditional legal systems are marked by an ideology, religious or political view on the organization of social and economic life (Zweigert and Kötz, 1998).

Legal systems were propagated and transplanted directly, in the occupied territories, or indirectly, in the spheres of influence generated by powerful state formations or ideologies. Principal vectors of transformation were religion, culture, and more recently, the exercise of power and economy. Each legal system is based on specific institution building, which was transmitted and implanted into new territories. As a result, systems of governance have been impregnated with a specific logic of action and organization, which has left its mark on the evolution of the society. Legal traditions and governance may be considered as modern foundations of societies. They emerged and evolved with the modern states, shaping societies.

Legal traditions originated in powerful state formations and civilizations, and spread in their neighbouring or occupied territories and spheres of influence. Most researchers identify two basic sources as the basis of legal traditions: Common law and Civil law (La Porta et al., 2008). The first provides a strong protection of property and contractual rights, which explains its wide distribution in international trade, and greater independence from the executive and legislature. The second, Civil law, has the oldest traditions and is most widespread in the world. It has its origins in Roman law, adopted and disseminated by

the Catholic Church, and then adjusted and expanded under the French Revolution and Napoleon. The Civil code legal tradition has developed many forms of expression, the main ones being: French, German, Scandinavian and Socialist (La Porta et al. 2008).

The legal origins of a state have a bearing on its various regulations. According to the Legal Origins Theory (La Porta et al., 2008), legal traditions of a state may even impact its economic performance. La Porta (2008) argues that the tradition of continental civil law is associated with tighter regulation and greater government interference than the common law. This gives rise to adverse effects on the markets, such as corruption, higher underground economy and unemployment. On the other hand, the common law has greater independence than civil law. It is perceived as promoting better enforcement of contracts and giving greater security to property rights. Still, access to justice and fair trial are not necessarily better in the continental law as compared to the Anglo-Saxon legal system.

The socialist legal tradition was born in post-revolutionary Russia, under the ideology of the Soviet regime, on the foundations of the civil code. Its concept originates in the movement of legal positivism that perceived law as an articulation of the will of the legislators, highest interpreters of justice (David and Brierley, 1985). The socialist legal system was entrenched in all Soviet republics and transferred to territories left under Soviet influence after the World War II. Mongolia and China embraced the system as well. The collapse of communism and the transition processes that followed it reinstated the previous French and German legal systems in both CEE and CA countries. The returns to initial legal systems, though voluntary, were dictated by the embedded cultures and traditions that proved stronger than the communist implanted social order. "Legal origins — broadly interpreted as highly persistent systems of social control, (...) have significant consequences for the legal and regulatory framework of the society" (La Porta et al., 2008:326).

All continental European countries as well as the ex-Soviet Central Asian states, have legal systems based on the Napoleonic civil code. Its French form of expression is wider spread than the others in Central and Eastern Europe and CA. German influence is materialised in China, while Pakistan and India are under the influence of the British common law traditions.

The civil code legal origins in CA operated on two main traditional sources, customary law and religious law, eventually incorporated by the socialist legal system. Customary law is rooted in social relationships and structures, kinships, clans and their rules. Aksakal institutions, under different forms, have been recuperated and function in Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan; in a Muslim dominated region, the Islamic law, Sharia, has faded after seventy years of secular indoctrination (Morozova, Irina, 2004). Still, ideas of Muslim law have been revived.

The common foundations of the legal systems explain, in part, the resemblance of states' governance systems and policies. Central Asian countries share similar traits: they have common roots and traditions, seventy years of Soviet history and the resultant regional infrastructure (Krumm, 2007). After the Soviet collapse, the countries have gone through major processes to transpose Western democratic institutions and laws into their systems. And they are still trying to do so, achieving distinct, albeit somewhat modest, results.

3. Social capital

Societies are made up of individuals and characterized by patterns of their relationships, embedded ideologies and philosophies or religious beliefs. Social capital is a by-product of cultures. Fukuyama describes it as an *instantiated informal norm that promotes cooperation between two or more individuals* (Fukuyama, 1999). Trust, networks, civil society, and the like are plain manifestations of social capital.

The cultural factor plays a fundamental role in mobilising society's resources and generating cooperation and trust. Societies with muffled social capital accept easier authoritarian leaderships and sacrifices, as do the individuals that are poorer. Such things generate distrust, which continues to cause more demand for ruling (Aghion et al, 2008). Distrust feeds the support for further control, particularly in transforming or conflicting societies. At the family level, the evolution is similar and the authority is reproduced with each generation, perpetuating the youngsters' dependency and renewing the tradition.

Societies in CA are close to the traditional ones, composed of large numbers of discrete social units like clans or tribes. The horizontal networks of individuals and groups, whether cultural, economic or political, are weak. The progress towards modern societies would require a larger radius of trust, overlapping social groups and, accordingly, more complex identities of individuals, resulting from multiple memberships. This would favour communication within and between segments of society and the outer world, transfer of information, development and eventually integration into the world community.

Horizontal association and free initiative have been undermined during the soviet regime in CA, much like in other CEE countries in communist times. The totalitarian regime's most salient characteristic was the destruction of the space between the individual and the state, by and large occupied by civil society (McFaul et al., 2004). As a consequence, individuals' ability to cooperate with one another and their entrepreneurial spirit have been degraded, favouring vertical ties with state and party, as well as central initiatives.

Along with public institutions and their policies, the elites, other domestic or international forces, act as collective agents of change in CA. They influence, shape and build social capital.

4. Political power – culture and exercise

Society affairs are regulated and (re)oriented by specific institutions, holding the political power. Decision-making, agenda-setting and preference-shaping are just a few of the traits of the political power.

In the Western World the power is shared by executive, judicial, and legislative bodies that check and balance one another. Many states are following suit. Asia's normative order and legal tradition do not embrace representative governance, let alone liberal democracy (Denison, 2003). Centralisation is still robust. In most countries, elites and personalities are making the difference, stepping up the societies' progress or delaying it. What Asians and Westerners are sharing, however, is the appreciation of certain aspects of administrative and legal accountability (Warkotsch, 2008). They are associated with social order and traditions.

Culture and governance are brought together as elements of continuity and perpetuation of a joint development. In modern societies, governments control development resources and generate growth. At the same time, they share the burden of peoples' living standards. Hence they are crowded with potential conflicts of interest.

Conflict opportunities and circumstances are present in CA: societies are fragmented, vertically structured and have a history of disputes. There are diverse ethnicities, language speaking groups or clans that compete for power and economic advantages. Other concerns are raised by the unequal distribution of water, gas, and oil resources in the region. Zones of military engagement in Afghanistan and Iraq, and proclivity for militarization are also worrying. As a consequence, trade is constrained, economic development threatened and society endangered. Moreover, authoritarian ruling is likely to increase tensions, instead of leaning towards resolution of potential conflicts.

Clans struggle led to civil war in Tajikistan in early 90s; Islam Karimov, President of Uzbekistan for more than two decades, allegedly fought the members of the Samarkand, Tashkent and Bukhara clans trying to remove them from his administration. An opposing clan appears to be an ongoing threat to the rule of the President of Turkmenistan S. Niyazov. In Kazakhstan, the people around the president, relatives and clan members, supposedly own or control the most profitable activities or strategic economic branches.

The source of potential conflicts is important for framing the issues of governance. Despite the authority's shortages, the economic progress registered in Kazakhstan, the wealthiest of the CA countries, and the democratic advance in Kyrgyzstan, are keeping the spirits up.

The international arena is contradictory and its capacity to act as an agent of change for the CA is inconsistent. The former Soviet countries in CA are caught between world powers.

On the one hand, in the proximity of CA, are the Russian Federation and China that do not share the western logic in delivering the public goods. They have communist backgrounds and global ambitions. Russia is the successor and beneficiary of the former Soviet Union, while China is the world's future leading economy. Both are used to authoritarian ruling and are guided by specific traditions and strong domestic agendas.

On the other hand, the international institutions, the United States of America and the European Union promote specific values. They are fostering western democracy and human rights and support the long term development of CA societies.

The factors of influence, grouped in regional or international bodies, are cooperating. Their approach of CA is however nuanced. Russia and China have a more utilitarian line, due to their proximity and regional closer perspectives. Conversely, USA and EU are more active in addressing international issues, in promoting norms and aid for development.

They all meet on the international play ground, in institutions and organisations.

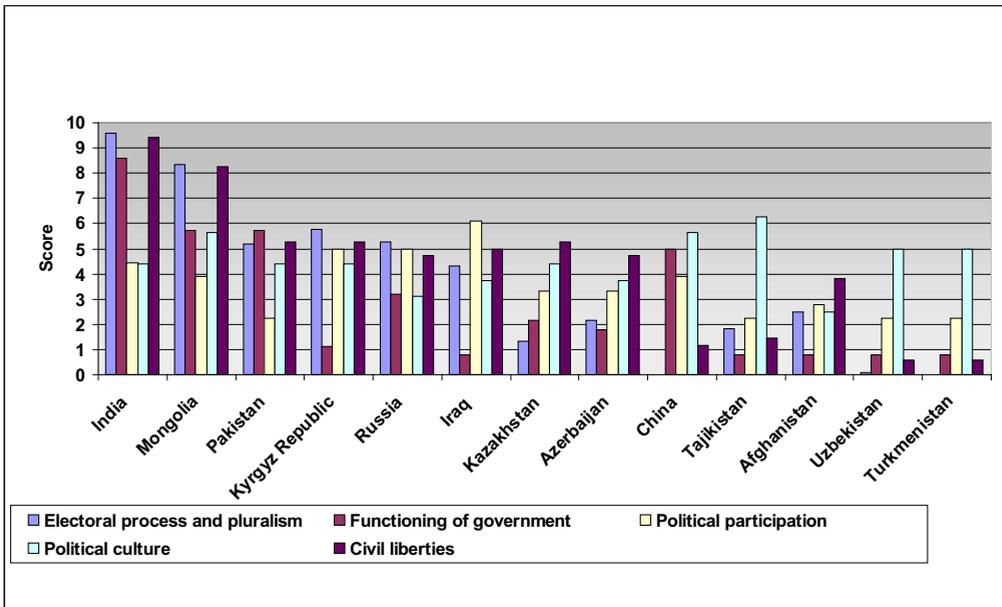
4.1. Democracy and governance

Central Asia's specificity and its strong orientation towards authoritarianism are clearly stated by different sources. Among these, the Index of Democracy 2011, developed by the Economist Intelligence Unit, investigates 167 countries and places them in four categories, according to the rank: full democracies; flawed democracies; hybrid regimes;

and authoritarian regimes. Japan and South Korea are the only Asian full democracies, ranking 21st and 22nd among other 25 countries, of which 16 are European. Democracy is definitely not an Asian tradition.

In the extended CA there are two flawed democracies: India and Mongolia, the 39th and the 69th, respectively. In the hybrid regime category fall, in order, Pakistan, Kyrgyzstan and Iraq ranked between 105 and 112. Authoritarian regimes are specific to this part of the world. Russia ranks 117th, while Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan and China are ranked between 137 and 141, followed by Tajikistan, 151th and Afghanistan, 152th. The lowest ranks in the region are held by Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, the 164th, respectively the 165th (EIU, 2012). It is worth mentioning that the Index of Democracy is based on five categories. The lowest scores have been registered at the category *Electoral process and pluralism*, by China and Turkmenistan, 0 points, and Uzbekistan 0.08, followed by *Civil liberties*, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan with 0.59, and China with 1.18, and *Functioning of government*, awarding 0.43 points to Iraq and 0.79 to each of the following: Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. The other two components of the Index of Democracy, *Political participation* and *Political culture*, are relatively better scored in authoritarian regimes, as opposed to hybrid regimes where *Electoral process and Civil liberties* are generally honoured (Chart 1).

Chart 1. Democracy in Central Asia



Source of data: Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), 2012

Coexistence on the world market of varied systems of ruling, in the form of the subsumed contribution of the entire society (electoral process and pluralism, political culture and participation) and the expected benefits, economic and social impacts at the

individual level (civil liberties, functioning of government), is the result of developments in specific conditions. Differentiation reflects experiences, traditions and predispositions, in the context of diverse social values and cultures with deep historical roots.

The various democratic standards or practices have economic consequences. These can be found, on the one hand, in limiting and constraining the economic growth rate in states with strong democracies, as a result of inertial tendencies to protect and improve the individual status quo, while competing on the global market, and, on the other hand, in enduring social costs, potential individual suffering and trauma in the authoritarian regimes, amid the exercise of less democratic decision making. Trade-offs occur in both cases and are dealt with according to the societal culture. The prospects, scale and consistency of the economic progress do not match up to time horizon and social expectations. Choices are made and adopted knowingly, in states with a relatively high level of development, or, with the innocent support of the less informed and many, in the authoritarian or deficient cohesion states.

The CA countries inherited social capital and institutional legacies from the Soviet era and before. These have held back democratic consolidation. Unlike the CEE countries, the ones in CA didn't have a pre-Soviet democratic experience, nor did they have the required support in the proximity. Therefore, the post-communist transformation of CA on the road to democracy takes more time. This is not the kind of development to be accomplished in two decades.

Then why are global actors pushing for democracy so hard in CA? Why is democracy so important? After all, the performance of the economic environment and society's wealth have more direct impact on people's daily lives than free elections (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005:23). For instance, Singapore and Hong Kong in Southeast Asia, hybrid regimes according to the Economist Intelligence Unit, are outranking all democracies of the world on the ease of doing business (Doing Business 2011). They have high living standards and growth rates that most countries, full democracies included, can only dream of. And yet Freedom House ranks them *partly free*. It appears that political rights and civil liberties, important western values, do not necessarily have a positive impact on the speed of economic development. More than that, up to a point, the above examples question whether democracy may be needed for the people to enjoy quality of government, as stated by key researches (Quality of Government Institute, 2010). Most of the peoples' fundamental needs can be satisfied outside democracy. But in order for someone to become everything that one is capable of becoming, as Maslow termed the need for self-actualization (Wikipedia, 2012), people may require democracy. Freedom cannot be ensured otherwise in civilization.

At the same time, the world is crowded with international norms and standards that institutions and globalising processes continue to spread and improve. USA and EU, the world's models of democracy, account for 80% of such standards that are founded more and more on human rights. In the long run, states would have to accept and implement necessary reforms, in order to keep the pace with the world. For the time being, many countries are faced with unmet collective immediate needs. Good government and economic development can address these issues. Accountability, whether democratic or tradition based, is the key to it.

History shows that rulers' accountability does not always correlate with levels of democratic political representation (Wong, 2008). The incentives for actions that benefit societies are not always sufficient in democracies, nor are the governing performances guaranteed. The democratic system can only narrow some of the arbitrary decisions, limit the losses and improve the logic, but malfunctions cannot be eliminated.

Social order and traditions are present, in different forms, all over the world. Based on these, countries can advance their systems of government. For democracy to prevail, the world would require 'government of the people, by the people and for the people', as Abraham Lincoln said in his Gettysburg Address of 1863. Until then, the world societies would continue to be fragmented. The multiple standards, moral and behavioural, exist and the world is still contradictory, but democratising.

5. Discussions and policy guidance

Long term solutions are embedded in society and therefore, to a large extent, predictable. Development has to address both individuals and their divided societies. Until individuals become sufficiently knowledgeable and responsible to elect the best candidates for communities' leadership, the societies had better adapt to being managed by dilettantes, as such a perspective is unavoidable. Therefore, advancing political liberties and developing systemic checks on executive power, as Milton saw the peoples' quest for liberty (Mill, 2001:6), have to produce a change of behaviour.

In following society's goals, the trade-off between time horizon and costs, social ones included, should be subject to debates and subsequent political decisions. Ownership of solutions and of implementation processes provides necessary incentives. Short term views, especially those imposed through authoritarian decision-making, do not necessarily pass the time criteria and are annulled, sooner or later, by powerful events prompted by conflicting elements within society. However, the costs and time losses are socially registered. The societies need to work together and learn how to develop trust and cooperation that must form the basis for any sustainable partnership.

Politics based on positive traditions, progressive attitudes of clans and tribes in the rural societies of CA, are likely to set basis for polyarchy and dilute autocracy. International support and constructive attitudes, such as the German policy of unconditional dialogue, as well as networking and peer-pressure among the countries in CA, are ways to foster cooperation and acquire transfer of good practices. Diverse ethnicity, contradictory faiths, inclination to authority and ex-socialist paths are common in CEE and CA countries. Both regions can benefit from exchanges.

A working system to foster progress in CA must rely on two main sources of stability and progress:

- Society's long-term memory rooted in decades and centuries of existence that no political setting or ephemeral parliament can fundamentally change for good. Cultural heritage, faiths, ethnicity, tribal ties and legal system are ingrained in the model of society. Therefore, the resulting politics and institutional set up favour privileged relations between authorities and people, providing strong incentives for its preservation;

- Constitutional and political checks and balances provide necessary systemic programming for guiding the authorities to act in the general interest of the many (Davis and Trebilcock, 2008). A balanced set of institutions, acting coherently, creates conditions for predictable actions and policies, limiting arbitrary behaviour and decision making. Constitutional separation of powers proves insufficient under the civil code legal traditions; unless an independent judiciary is able to inflict the envisaged distribution of powers and to preserve respect for its rulings.

Coordinated actions to build social capital, including measures to improve specific and general trust and civic engagement, have significant effects on well-being. Such outcomes, verified on national and international samples, are ahead of those emerging through economic ways (Helliwell, 2005). Accordingly, the traditional sources that inspire education should consider the costs and range of policies that give too much credit to economic incentives for human performances and rediscover the merits of social status and capital in well being.

5.1 Role of Higher Education Institutions

“Higher education is the central institution which legitimates the social order” (Trow, 2003). It feeds personal identity, forms skills and competences, and extends knowledge. Would that be enough for people to progress? As long as behaviour doesn’t change, people would nourish their morals with stronger capabilities. And this is not necessarily for the better.

Massification of higher education has been promoted widely over the last decades, particularly in the ex-communist states. It is a means to force the advancement of lagging regions, but also an expression of free initiative and development of private sector in former centralized economies.

Cultural and international rapprochement of Central Asia’s Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) has a beneficial impact on the formation of personalities and elites. Not only it opens the gates towards state of the art education, but it facilitates the understanding of the world’s highest values. Technology and communication support the spread of advanced knowledge. It is a faster way to bridge the dialogue between civilisations, inter-relate the human spirit and interrupt faulty practices and intolerant actions embedded in cultures. HEIs can contribute to dodging flawed cultural influences and building new competences needed in the Eurasian region.

Research is another field of particular importance that HEIs are supposed to address. There is an astonishing ignorance of space and context in considering the way the policy research is guided and operationalised at any scale (inspired by Timar and Enyedi, 2004). Mapping the social characteristics and behaviours, as well as their evolution, would allow a better understanding and reflection of different particularities of societies. Based on these, the likelihood to project adequate solutions is enhanced. Social space and time become solid references in approaching research and designing policies.

Appealing to extra-democratic logic to achieve society’s goals is not part of the CA’s culture. Therefore, institutional actions should not rely on a comprehensive top to bottom approach towards social progress. They may act independently and contribute to necessary reforms. Higher Education Institutions can play an important role in the

intercultural dialogue, at both campus and society level, in the Eurasian region, with an aim to:

1. Develop societies' social capital and change peoples' behaviour; it is important to encourage and improve communication between different factions of society, bringing people closer; this is especially relevant for future generations and their engagement with an agenda based on social cohesion;
2. Integrate HEIs in specific networks to stimulate institutional progress; it serves to keep the pace with educational standards and progresses made world wide; Kazakhstan offers good examples in this respect;
3. Develop competencies for teaching professionals to transmit knowledge, especially with regard to:
 - a. Society and life,
 - b. Cooperation and initiative,
 - c. Entrepreneurial spirit;There is a need for an early and thorough intervention in forming the members of CA societies; therefore the HEIs should provide teaching professionals with skills ignored or superficially regarded by previous regimes;
4. Form the elites to step up the needed reforms; national elites are the ones called to promote the society's progress; their knowledge and culture must embed regional views;
5. Spread national values and traditions according to the needs of progress; HEIs have the capacity, knowledge and audience to discern real values among traditions and filter the cultural heritage;
6. Facilitate people's access to new communication technologies and internet; HEIs should compensate for IT&C shortages since they have access to both sensitive segments of society, young people and women, and technology;
7. Appeal to Internet social networks - Facebook, Twitter, and Google blogger, to support the integration of the CA society into the world community; it is fast, inexpensive and may exploit the spread of local languages, Turkic or Persian, and the exercise of new ones.

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The world society is fragmented and needs to build genuine bridges in areas of cultural and civil society cooperation. Elites and civic organisations can work together to help foster dialogue and trust, overcome prejudices and negative stereotypes, and promote mutual respect.

In Europe, in order to re-imagine public investment to contribute to developing human, cultural and social capital, Culture Action Europe and the European Cultural Foundation have launched a campaign called *We Are More* (2010-2013), aiming to influence political negotiations on the next budget (2014-2020) at EU level. The European and world society could benefit more of its good governance and improved cooperation mechanisms.

For things to change significantly, worldwide, shouldn't we all be more?

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