Institutional Change and Political Continuity in Post-Soviet Central Asia

The establishment of electoral systems in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan presents both a complex set of empirical puzzles and a theoretical challenge. Why did three states with similar cultural, historical, and structural legacies establish different electoral systems? How did these distinct outcomes result from strikingly similar institutional design processes? Explaining these puzzles requires understanding not only the outcome of institutional design but also the intricacies of the process that led to this outcome. Moreover, the transitional context in which these three states designed new electoral rules necessitates an approach that explicitly links process and outcome in a dynamic setting. This book provides such an approach. It depicts institutional design as a transitional bargaining game in which the dynamic interaction between the structural-historical and immediate-strategic contexts directly shapes actors’ perceptions of shifts in their relative power, and hence, their bargaining strategies. Thus, it both builds on the key insights of the dominant approaches to explaining institutional origin and change and transcends these approaches by moving beyond the structure versus agency debate.

Pauline Jones Luong is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Political Science at Yale University.
Institutional Change and Political Continuity in Post-Soviet Central Asia

POWER, PERCEPTIONS, AND PACTS

PAULINE JONES LUONG

Yale University
In Memory of
Mark Saroyan
Contents

Tables and Figures xi
Note on Transliteration xiv
Acronyms xv
Acknowledgments xvii

1  THE CONTINUITY OF CHANGE: OLD FORMULAS AND NEW INSTITUTIONS 1
2  EXPLAINING INSTITUTIONAL DESIGN IN TRANSITIONAL STATES: BEYOND STRUCTURE VERSUS AGENCY 25
3  SOURCES OF CONTINUITY: THE SOVIET LEGACY IN CENTRAL ASIA 51
4  SOURCES OF CHANGE: THE TRANSITIONAL CONTEXT IN CENTRAL ASIA 102
5  ESTABLISHING AN ELECTORAL SYSTEM IN KYRGYZSTAN: RISE OF THE REGIONS 156
6  ESTABLISHING AN ELECTORAL SYSTEM IN UZBEKISTAN: REVENGE OF THE CENTER 189
7  ESTABLISHING AN ELECTORAL SYSTEM IN KAZAKHSTAN: THE CENTER’S RISE AND THE REGIONS’ REVENGE 213
8  INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE THROUGH CONTINUITY: SHIFTING POWER AND PROSPECTS FOR DEMOCRACY 253
## Contents

- **Appendix I**  *Sample Interview Questions*  
  280
- **Appendix II**  *Career Patterns of Regional Leaders in Soviet and Post-Soviet Central Asia*  
  283
- **References**  
  295
- **Index**  
  309
Tables and Figures

Tables

1.1 Variation in the design of electoral systems in Central Asia ........................... page 9
1.2 Political liberalization and regime type in Central Asia ................................. 16
1.3 Selected regions (oblasti) in each country ....................................................... 22
2.1 General predictions of the model ................................................................. 36
3.1 Salience of regional political identities among Central Asian leaders and activists 57
3.2 The administrative-territorial structure of Kyrgyzstan .................................. 77
3.3 First party secretaries of the Kirghiz SSR, 1937–1991 ................................... 79
3.4 Tenure of first party secretaries in Kyrgyzstan, 1950s–1990s ......................... 80
3.5 The administrative-territorial structure of Uzbekistan ................................ 85
3.6 First party secretaries of the Uzbek SSR, 1924–1991 ................................... 89
3.7 Tenure of obkom first secretaries in Uzbekistan, 1950s–1990s ....................... 89
3.8 Ethnic composition of Kazakhstan by oblast .................................................. 95
3.9 Tenure of obkom first secretaries in Kazakhstan, 1950s–1990s ....................... 99
4.1 Perceptions of change in relative power in Kyrgyzstan ................................... 107
4.2 Perceptions of change in relative power in Uzbekistan ................................... 122
4.3 Perceptions of change in relative power in Kazakhstan ................................. 138
5.1 The TBG's predictions in Kyrgyzstan ............................................................. 158
5.2 Salience of regional identities in Kyrgyzstan .................................................. 160
5.3 Preferences of relevant actors over electoral rules by issue in Kyrgyzstan ........ 162
Tables and Figures

5.4 Final outcome of electoral rules by issue in Kyrgyzstan 186
6.1 The TBG’s predictions in Uzbekistan 191
6.2 Salience of regional identities in Uzbekistan 194
6.3 Preferences of relevant actors over electoral rules by issue in Uzbekistan 196
6.4 Key differences between draft and final versions of Uzbekistan’s electoral law 208
6.5 Number of seats per region in Uzbekistan 209
6.6 Final outcome of electoral rules by issue in Uzbekistan 211
7.1 The TBG’s predictions in Kazakhstan 215
7.2 Salience of regional identities in Kazakhstan 217
7.3 Preferences of relevant actors over electoral rules by issue in Kazakhstan 220
7.4 Final outcome of electoral rules by issue in Kazakhstan 221
8.1 Structural approaches to institutional origin and change: predictions versus actual findings 259
8.2 GNP per capita in Central Asia 260
8.3 Change in GDP in Central Asia by country, 1989–1999 262
8.4 Average annual inflation rates in Central Asia, 1989–1999 263
8.5 Agency-based approaches to institutional origin and change: predictions versus actual findings 264
8.6 Degree of elite turnover in Central Asia 266
8.7 Objective measures of relative bargaining power in Central Asia 268
8.8 The TBG’s predicted and actual outcomes in Central Asia 271

Figures

Map of Central Asia xxi
2.1 Transitional bargaining game 32
3.1 Soviet administrative-territorial divisions 66
3.2 Kyrgyz tribes 75
3.3 Uzbek regions 84
Tables and Figures

5.1 Basic strategies in Kyrgyzstan’s bargaining game 168
6.1 Basic strategies in Uzbekistan’s bargaining game 198
7.1 Basic strategies in Kazakhstan’s first bargaining game 226
7.2 Basic strategies in Kazakhstan’s second bargaining game 227
Note on Transliteration

I have translated Russian words according to the Library of Congress system. When words are used frequently, such as oblast and Semireche, I have left out the diacritical marks in the body of the text and in tables for the reader's comfort. The spelling of geographical names and places in Central Asia roughly corresponds to the Russified version used under Soviet rule, but has been modified to take into account newer versions that have recently become standard usage. All translations from foreign language sources into English are my own.
### Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ALC</td>
<td>American Legal Consortium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AO</td>
<td>Autonomous Oblast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASSR</td>
<td>Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEC</td>
<td>Central Electoral Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPD</td>
<td>Congress of People's Deputies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DDK</td>
<td>Democratic Movement of Kyrgyzstan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEC</td>
<td>District Electoral Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erk</td>
<td>Erkin Kyrgyzstan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FBIS</td>
<td>Foreign Broadcast Information Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FLAS</td>
<td>Foreign Language Area Studies Fellowship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GNP</td>
<td>gross national product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HDI</td>
<td>Human Development Index</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HI</td>
<td>Historical Institutionalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IFES</td>
<td>International Foundation for Electoral Systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMF</td>
<td>International Monetary Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IREX</td>
<td>International Research and Exchange Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KPK</td>
<td>Communist Party of Kazakhstan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KPKR</td>
<td>Communist Party of the Kyrgyz Republic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KPSS</td>
<td>Communist Party of the Soviet Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KPUz</td>
<td>Communist Party of Uzbekistan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LiCEP</td>
<td>Laboratory in Comparative Ethic Politics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NDI</td>
<td>National Democratic Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NDPU</td>
<td>People’s Democratic Party of Uzbekistan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>nongovernmental organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NKK</td>
<td>Peoples’ Congress of Kazakhstan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSF</td>
<td>National Science Foundation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PR</td>
<td>proportional representation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Acronyms

RCI      Rational Choice Institutionalism
RFE/RL   Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty
ROK      Republic of Kazakhstan
RPK      Republican Party of Kazakhstan
RSFSR    Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic
SMD      single-member district
SNEK     People’s Unity of Kazakhstan
SSR      Soviet Socialist Republic
SSRC     Social Science Research Council
TACIS    Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States
TBG      transitional bargaining game
TEC      Territorial Electoral Commission
USAID    United States Agency for International Development
Acknowledgments

As I have not yet raised a child, I cannot say for certain whether it takes an entire village to do so. What I can say with full confidence is that it takes an entire network of colleagues, friends, and family to write a book. In fact, in the course of writing and revising a book manuscript, these categories often become blurred. Colleagues willing to read multiple drafts of one’s manuscript become friends. Friends subjected to multiple drafts of one’s manuscript become critics. Those that remain friends afterward become family. Friends and family who forgo your company for weeks, sometimes months, in the final stages of writing and revising want to become your colleagues so that they can see you more often.

This particular book is the product of a network that extends across several campuses and several countries. At the University of California at Berkeley, where I spent my undergraduate days, I was fortunate enough to have the guidance of professors like Samuel Haber, Norman Jacobsen, Gail Lapidus, Ira Lapidus, and especially William (Sandy) Muir. Each of these individuals shared with me their knowledge and insights on politics as well as history, and, more importantly, their love for learning and teaching. I was also befriended by several graduate students, including Kevin Smith and Mark Saroyan, who encouraged me to pursue my interests in political institutions, identity, and Soviet Central Asia. At Harvard University, I am indebted, first and foremost, to my dissertation advisor, Timothy Colton, whose support for my project was unwavering in the face of not insignificant obstacles. He is one of those colleagues who quickly blurs the distinction with that of friend because he makes a personal investment in each of his students’ lives and careers. Several other Harvard professors, including Robert Bates, Joel Hellman, Mark Saroyan, and Theda Skocpol, also inspired the dissertation on which this book is based, through
Acknowledgments

a combination of their own scholarship, consistent feedback, and thought-
ful discussions. I am especially grateful to Robert Bates and Theda Skocpol, who literally adopted my project in its infant stages and nurtured it into adulthood. They have also adopted me; long after leaving Harvard, I still seek out their advice and strive to emulate the quality and impact of their scholarship. Finally, my network would not be complete without my fellow graduate students and academy scholars at Harvard: Lucy Aitchison, Javier Corrales, Henry Hale, Debra Javeline, Mark Nagel, Daniel Posner, Ana Siljak, Richard Snyder, Brian Taylor, Kellee Tsai, Joshua Tucker, Carla Valle, and Steven Wilkinson. At Indiana University, I owe my ability to speak and especially read in Uzbek as well as my grounded knowledge of contemporary Central Asian society to William K. Fierman.

My network expanded as I took the project overseas to conduct fieldwork in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan. During this time, I had the companionship of several other U.S.-based scholars – primarily Cassandra Cavanaugh, Elizabeth (Liz) Constantine, and Erika Weinthal – without whom days would have been much harder and nights would have been much longer. Cassandra provided amazing logistical support as the International Research and Exchange Board (IREX) coordinator. Liz and her husband, Derek Johnson, literally gave me a “home away from home” in their tiny Tashkent apartment. Erika rearranged all of her travel plans so that we could travel together and keep each other both safe and sane. We are still doing this today and, I suspect, will continue to for many years to come. In Kazakhstan in particular, I could not have completed this project successfully without the assistance of John Karren at the National Democratic Institute (NDI) office in Almaty and his entire staff, as well as Gwen Hoffman at the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) office in Almaty. Both were instrumental in helping me obtain information and organize interviews. For my research in Kyrgyzstan, I am indebted to Cholpan Amanalieva. She not only painstakingly helped me arrange interviews with various regional leaders and political activists throughout the country and acquire necessary documents, she and her family shared with me a country that I grew to love and to which I am always eager to return. In Uzbekistan, the librarians at the Central Library in Tashkent and at the State Archives were extremely generous with their time and patience, as were the scholars at the Institute of History in the Academy of Sciences.

Since joining the faculty at Yale, my network has continued to grow – both on and off campus. Several of my colleagues have taken an interest
Acknowledgments

in the book and invested their time and energy in reading and commenting on various chapters as I revised them. They include Arun Agrawal, Cathy Cohen, Geoffrey Garrett, Henry Hale, Stephen Hanson, Stephen Holmes, Ellen Lust-Okar, Ian Shapiro, Richard Snyder, Valerie Sperling, Norma Thompson, and Celeste Wallander. Chapter 3 in particular benefited from my discussions with several members of the Laboratory in Comparative Ethnic Politics (LiCEP), including Kanchan Chandra, Karen Feree, David Laitin, Ian Lustick, Daniel Posner, Smita Singh, and Steven Wilkinson. Some truly dedicated colleagues (and trusted friends) have read the manuscript in its entirety – Anna Grzymala-Busse, Kelly McMann, M. Victoria (Vicky) Murrillo, and Erika Weinthal. I am especially grateful to Vicky Murrillo and Erika Weinthal for their unparalleled combination of tough criticism, good humor, and emotional support. Finally, a list of acknowledgments would not be complete without the two graduate students who provided exemplary research assistance in the final stages – Jana Kunicova and Maria Zaitseva.

My network again expanded with the help of Cambridge University Press, where I have had the good fortune of working with two outstanding editors. Lewis Bateman took a personal interest in my book from the start and has been a sincere pleasure to work with to the finish. Margaret Levi was an ardent supporter of the book throughout the review process as well as one of its most important critics. She continued to offer many insightful comments and useful suggestions as I revised the book, and thus, made a substantive impact on the final product. In this regard, I am also grateful to the anonymous reviewers.

I would be remiss not to acknowledge the financial help that was made available to me through various resources. These include the National Science Foundation (NSF), which provided funding for my first three years of graduate school; the Foreign Language Area Studies Fellowship (FLAS) that enabled me to spend a summer at the University of Washington, six months in Uzbekistan, and a year at Indiana University studying Uzbek; the IREX Fellowship, which funded my research in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan; the Social Science Research Council (SSRC), which provided me with the necessary financial support to write up the dissertation; and finally, the Harvard Academy for International and Area Studies and Ira Kukin, whose generous support enabled me to spend a year sculpting my dissertation into a book manuscript at Harvard University.

Finally, I end with the network with which I began – my family. Throughout this project, the only constant has been the love and support
Acknowledgments

of my family. My parents, Robert W. Jones and Antoinette J. Jones, my aunt, Carmen Hynds, my sisters, Carlene Jones, Loreen Nessi, and Maureen (Mo) Jones, and my brother, Keith Jones, have always provided me with a great source of strength and encouragement. Most importantly, my greatest debt is to my best friend and life partner, Minh A. Luong. I find it impossible to imagine a more supportive husband, thoughtful critic, and skilled masseur than I have in him.

This book is dedicated to Mark Saroyan, an individual who has taught me more about scholarship, research, teaching and academic integrity in the five years I knew him than I have learned in all my years at Berkeley, Harvard, and Yale combined. It is not an exaggeration to say that this project would never have gotten started – and would have been fundamentally different – if it were not for Mark’s inspiration and dedication. Despite his physical absence in the final stages, from inception to completion, Mark has always been with this project. His acknowledgment of the importance of culture and identity in understanding political behavior, his love for language, and his emphasis on systematic and rigorous empirical research informed by theory are resonant in the pages to follow. To him, I am eternally grateful for the path I have taken and the career upon which I have embarked.