



Central Asian States: Thirty Years of Independence

Abstract: *It has been three decades when five states of Central Asian region acquired their independence from former Soviet Union. Since 1991 Central Asian states are engaged in state and nation building process. These states in-order to be the part of world community are working on their national identities, democratic system and relations with other states. This article tries to examine the progress of central Asian states in the domain of building of national identity, democracy and foreign policy. It has been argued that all Central Asian states are making progress in national identity and foreign policy domain; however, democracy has yet to be developed in the region.*

Key Words: Central Asia, Nation Identity, Democracy, Foreign Policy

Introduction

Five states of Central Asian region, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, have entered in the fourth decade of their independence. This region is strategically located due to its proximity with Russia, China, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran. Central Asia is known for strong national identity with regional states and cultural ties, rich natural resources, shared history, Silk Road connectivity, natural beauty along with geographically land locked, environmental disasters, water disputes, human rights violation and growing threat of terrorism. All Central Asian states are struggling to connect themselves with international community and at the same time struggling to maintain their sovereignty, political stability and economic development.

After independence head of the Communist parties of respective state became the ruling elite and hold the command of the state affairs. This is due to the fact that none of the Central Asian regional state or people of these states opted for independence; rather they supported and favored attachment with the Soviet Union. Thus, these states do not have liberation history or independence movement, with no founding father and future goals to achieve and states to build. This leads to dilemma of nation building. To romanticize and materialize new situation, after independence, all Central Asian states have variables of history, culture, language, economic development, democracy and religion to rely on.

The main focus of this research is to analyze the performance of Central Asian states, after thirty years of independence, on the parameters of nation building,

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democracy and foreign policy. This work is divided into three sections. First section is about national identity building in Central Asia. Here nation building is taken in term of share national identity among the citizens of particular state. In this article deliberately state building has been avoided. Second section is about Democracy in Central Asian States, third Section discusses the Foreign Policy of Central Asian States with Russia, China and the United States and finally the concluding remarks.

Nation Building in Central Asia

Here nation building is taken in a sense of "...process of developing a shared sense of identity or community among the various groups making up the population of a particular state"(Dinnen, 2006). The aim of nation building is to provide legitimacy, unity, political stability, shared culture and values and sense of belonging to its citizens. The process of nation building in Central Asian states started with the disintegration of Soviet Union in 1991. However, the embryonic form of nation building, in modern sense, started during the Soviet period. It was Joseph Stalin who assigned a territory, ethnic understanding, language and government/ administrative structure with national symbols like flag, language, ethnicity, and area to all Central Asian republics(Massansalvador, n.d.). During Soviet era national identity started taking its firm roots. Former Soviet Union provided the national consciousness to the Central Asian people. People identified themselves as Kazakh, Tajik or Uzbek. This is in sharp contrast to existing traditional identities of religion or ethnicity. With this Soviets also provided state institutions to the people of Central Asia and this further consolidated the concept of national identity. Central Asian states were provided language, flag, political elites, administrative setup, modern education system, and industries along with concept of belonging to a

particular identity that was, Kazakhstan (1936), Kirghizia (1924), Tajikistan (1924), Turkmenia (1925) and Uzbekistan (1914). In Central Asia nation and state building goes hand in hand.

After independence the new phase of national identity in Central Asia is linked with the concept of nation state. After disintegration of Soviet Union, Central Asian States rushed to fit themselves in a new situation. Old communist party elites became the national leaders and started building national narrative as required for building nation. To build nation, Central Asian States relied on rewriting of history, culture and religion to give a desire look to the newly emerged nations. Further to be a part of contemporary nation state system, Central Asian states worked on constitution, parliament, democracy, economy and establishing of modern state institutions.

Kazakhstan like other Central Asian states took state and nation building side by side. In order to avoid any ethnic or religious conflict, the first step taken by Kazakhstan is to provide concept of unity and belonging to the people of Kazakhstan and that was done by providing new constitution (1993) to the country, which enshrine rights and protection of citizens of Kazakhstan. Kazakh language, values, traditions, customs and history has been promoted and endorsed. Historical monuments are preserved and national heroes are selected carefully(Narottum, 2006). However religion, Islam, is not used as a tool for unity or identity rather politicization of Islam and radicalism has been severely under scrutiny by the state(Kamrava, 2020).

In Uzbekistan transition period is under the rule of President Islam Karimov. Like other Central Asian states, Karimov started building Uzbekistan national identity on the basis of past Islam, de sovietization, culture, past heroes and history. Islamic symbols like crescent and color (green) is

used in flag. Holy shrines are rejuvenated and repaired. New mosques were opened and existing one were repaired. Timur is identified as national hero; this is done with the aim to build national identity of the country and to cherish the historical achievements of Uzbekistan. In Uzbekistan although Islam is considered as part of culture and tradition but radical Islam in the form of Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan always haunted the process of nation building in Uzbekistan(Ünal, [2018](#)).

Nation building process in Turkmenistan is somewhat different from other countries of the region. After independence Turkmenistan used the term national revival rather than nation building. To avoid common Turkic history, Turkmenistan nation identity is based on tribal identity and unity of five major tribes. This is done on purpose to highlight Turkmen's separate identity with rest of Turkic origin nations. The main source for national revival and identity is a book *Ruhnama* as it is considered as the main source of Turkmen nation. It is believed that Turkmenistan has its own national identity which was tarnished under Soviet rule(Dr et al., n.d.).

After independence Kyrgyzstan faces political crisis. Like other Central Asian states, Kyrgyzstan didn't have national symbols to rely; with clear differences between north and south of Kyrgyzstan(Laruelle, [2012](#)). For building the nation state in Kyrgyzstan, the administration of Bishkek altered the nation state language. The aim behind this alteration is the improvement of the language policy in order to protect the Kyrgyz people identity, for uniting the ethnic groups and for developing the national culture(KAYA, [2021](#)). Kyrgyzstan declared the "Freedom of the Religion". As a result of this Islam becomes prominent widely. Many madrassas, mosques were constructed and the religious organizations

founded. Movements related to Muslims Missionary spread across the nation and the other Muslim nations allowed the Kyrgyzstani students in their countries. This "Re-Islamization" occurred in nation building context. At this time officials considered Islam to be the significant nation building source. As a national culture component religious ceremonies and rituals were promoted(Toktogulova, [2020](#)).

Tajikistan after its independence faced civil war until 1997. After this war there's a need to develop new national consciousness. Administration of Tajikistan in order to develop unity and national cohesion, took some initiatives like celebrating 1100th centenary of Samanid state and announcement of the 2006 as "*Year of Aryan Civilization*". Educational system plays a significant role in national consciousness shaping. Tajikistan becomes more "Ancient" since its independence, which implies an autochthonous position(Blakkisrud & Nozimova, [2010](#)). Nation building in Tajikistan is connected with its ancient history of statehood that is traced from Peshdadi and Kayani, Bactria and Sughd, Emirate of Bukhara, Soviet Tajikistan and independent Tajikistan, with ancient language and history, thus Tajiks are the indigenous people of Central Asia(*THE LEADER OF THE NATION'S CONTRIBUTION TO STRENGTHENING THE IDENTITY OF TAJIKS*, n.d.).

Thus all Central Asian states started the process of national identity with:

- Emphasis on their specific past heritage and culture
- Importance to their language, culture and religion
- National building is linked with state building institutions.

Democracy in Central Asian States

After independence Central Asian states had to adjust themselves according to the

emergent situation where they need international acceptance and to follow internationally accepted principles of democracy. This western based system of democracy is based on the principles of parliament, election, political parties, rule of law, citizens' rights and liberties, check and balance and constitution. According to Mapped: The State of Global Democracy 2022, all Central Asian states are under the category of authoritarian rule. This index divided the countries into full democracies, flawed democracies, hybrid regimes and authoritarian regimes (Mapped: The State of Global Democracy in 2022, n.d.). Authoritarian regimes are nations where:

- Political pluralism is nonexistent or limited
- The population is ruled by absolute monarchies or dictatorships
- Infringements and abuses of civil liberties are common
- Elections are not fair or free (if they occur at all)
- Media is state-owned or controlled directly or indirectly by the ruling regime

- The judiciary system is not independent
- Criticism of the government is censored (Mapped: The State of Global Democracy in 2022, n.d.).

All Central Asian States did established institutions required for democratic system of government; however, they are unable to accept and implement the democratic principles in letter and spirit.

Since independence all five states of Central Asia claim that they follow democratic principles, rule of law, political pluralism, civil liberties and neo-liberal values. However, there are various reports that showed that none of the Central Asian states provide those rights to their citizens which are clearly written in their country's constitution. All leaders enjoy special kind of immunity, privileges and protections. Regularly held elections aimed to legitimize their authoritarian rule and practices. Political parties and religious organization are banned on the plea of terrorism and extremism.

Ranking of Central Asian States

Freedom House Report

Country	Freedom Status	Political Rights (40)	Civil Liberties (60)	Total (100)
Kazakhstan	Not Free	5	18	23
Kyrgyzstan	Not Free	4	23	27
Tajikistan	Not Free	0	8	8
Turkmenistan	Not Free	0	2	2
Uzbekistan	Not Free	2	9	11

Source: Countries and Territories. Freedom House Report. 2022.

<https://freedomhouse.org/countries/freedom-world/scores>

From 1990 till 2019, Kazakhstan was ruled by one-man President Nursultan Nazarbayev as supreme leader. Soviet era constitution 1978 was replaced in 1992 and this constitution has, judiciary, legislature and strong executive branches. The

amendments of 2017 and 2022 have reduced the powers of executive but still the ruling elites enjoyed unlimited powers and privileges. All this turned Kazakhstan under authoritarian rule. Constitution did provide basic rights to its citizens, which are hardly

provided to its citizens. Elections in Kazakhstan are not free and fair, opposition parties are beleaguered and citizens didn't enjoy their basic rights. Opposition parties do not have freedom to campaign democratically. Kazakhstan presidential election 2019 acting president secured 71% votes, OSCE observers considered elections as flawed, same observations were made for parliamentary elections, opposition parties have been marginalized and opposition leaders have to face criminal charges. Nursultan Nazarbayev under the constitution enjoys lifetime immunity from prosecution for his offenses. Although he is no longer a president but still, he has "... the right to address parliament or, should he wish, attend government meetings on matters of major importance and even sessions of the constitutional council(*Kazakhstan*, n.d.). Kazakhstan is criticized for human rights violation. Corruption is rampant and widespread, however high officials and ruling elites, their family and friends cannot be charged. There is no religious freedom in Kazakhstan. Such kind of situation existed in all central Asian states' elections are rigged, ruling party candidate secure majority votes with weak opposition parties.

Kyrgyzstan is considered as most democratic country of the region. After independence, Soviet Union constitution of 1978 was replaced with a new constitution in 1993 and adopted presidential system. However the first president Askar Akayev like all other Central Asian ruler became authoritative and ruled for fifteen years 1990-2005. President Askar Akayev, Kurmanbek Bakiyev and Sooronbayjeenbekov were forced to resign in 2005, 2010 and 2020 respectively. Power of president has increased and any criticisms on such measures are treated as threat to national security. Participation and role of opposition is reduced and all elections are considered as fraud and rigged. Presidential elections held in 2021 were considered rigged and

misuse of state resources and administration and 2020 parliamentary election results were changed(*Kyrgyzstan*, n.d.). New laws are passed to have a check over opposition parties' members, journalists, NGOs and civil society. Role and power of Kyrgyz parliament and political parties has been limited by 2021 constitution of the country, whereas the power and role of president has been enhanced. According to Freedom House Report 2022, '...Kyrgyzstani politics are subject to the influence of organized crime and economic oligarchies. Political affairs are generally controlled by a small group of elites who head competing patronage networks'(*Kyrgyzstan*, n.d.).

In Tajikistan President Emomali Rakhmanov ruled since 1992. All presidential elections were won by sitting president. Religious and opposition parties were banned and declared terrorist. President and his family enjoy immunity, privilege and power. Family members and friends hold key public positions. There are severe human rights violations in Tajikistan. Media is not free; opposition is harassed and civil society is absent(*Tajikistan*, n.d.).

Turkmenistan is criticized for human rights violations. Like other Central Asian states, the first president Saparmurat Atayevich Niyazov was President for life and he ruled from 1991 till his death 2006 and President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov 2007-2022 promoted his son for presidency. President has vast powers and parliament is a rubber stamp assembly. All held elections were criticized as rigged and fraud. State controlled elections. Democratic Party of Turkmenistan (former Communist Party) since 1991 is in power. Corruption is rampant, nepotism is the practice and bribery is common. Media is not free, journalists face harassment and restriction from government, there is no political pluralism in reality and no academic freedom(*Turkmenistan*, n.d.).

Uzbekistan is also in the queue of authoritarian rule. First president, Islam Karimov, ruled from 1989 till his death 2016. None of the election, either of president or parliament, is considered as free and fair. Opposition political parties are only five in number and these are also known as friendly opposition. Genuine opposition parties are denied of registration and faced harassment and torture. Members are either arrested or are in forced in exile. Like other Central Asian states, corruption, nepotism and bribe is common in Uzbekistan also. Media is not free and journalists face criminal charges and strict laws are passed to keep an eye over the use of social media. There is no religious freedom in

Uzbekistan(Uzbekistan, n.d.). Since their independence, all Central Asian states exhibit the following practice:

1. All Central Asian states have authoritative rulers in power. Ruling elites, their family and friends enjoyed life time immunity and power.
2. All Central Asian States provide citizen rights in constitution only.
3. Opposition parties didn't have genuine representation in parliament
4. Freedom of media is limited and restricted.
5. All political systems are under the control of ruling elites.
6. Corruption is rampant

Corruption Perception Index 2021

Country	Rank (out of 180 Countries)
Kazakhstan	102
Kyrgyzstan	144
Tajikistan	150
Turkmenistan	169
Uzbekistan	140

Source: CPI 2021 for Eastern Europe & Central Asia: Democratic Hopes in the Shadow of Growing Authoritarianism Transparency International <https://www.transparency.org/en/news/cpi-2021-eastern-europe-central-asia-democratic-hopes-growing-authoritarianism>

Foreign Policy

Independence to Central Asian States takes hold of the opportunity to act as independent actors in international political system. For the first time Central Asian States come across a situation to orient themselves with world of nation state system, diplomacy, and national interest and foreign policy options. None of the Central Asian leaders are well- versed in handling foreign affairs and its peculiarities with no institutions to support. Further their foreign policy, in initial phase, revolved around security, economy, to avoid to become a client state and Russia, while they have to balance the relations with China (immediate neighbor), US (the sole super power), and Russia (the ex-boss).

Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan because of its size and resources attracted the energy dependent neighbors and world energy companies towards itself. Kazakhstan, land borders are in connection with the five nations and also maintain its foreign policy with the regional states like India, Iran and United States. Kazakhstan because of its location and resources faced trilateral foreign policy at its independence time and known as "Multi Vector Foreign Policy". Nazarbayev during September 2013 restated that the aim of Multi -Vector Policy is to develop the friendly relation with the other countries. This again addressed through new concepts of foreign policy adopted during 2014. This concept states

that foreign policy of Kazakhstan is based upon multi vector principles, mutual benefit, pragmatism and national interests. *Russia* is the most dominant Kazakhstan companion due to political, economic, linguistic, ethnic, geographical, religious and demographic factors. Russians are living in Kazakhstan as their own citizens and Kazakhs are living in Russia in order to develop the good relations. On 22 October 1992, Diplomatic Relations between Russian Federation and Kazakhstan were developed. Above 300 agreements and treaties have been contracted between the two nations. Peak leveled political discussions took place in 2012. Kazakhstan and Russian cooperation also occurred within the limits of Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and some other incorporation like CICMA, SCO and CSTO.

Kazakhstan shares the prehistoric ties with the *China*. These two nations are closed geographically and have mutual interests in security spheres along with economic and political cooperation. After the Kazakhstan independence both the China and Kazakhs established common interest in developing good and stable relations and the diplomatic relations between both the nations were developed during January 1992. Nazarbayev (Kazakh President) official visit was made to China during October 1993. This visit started the regular meetings between these nations at head of the state level. Collaboration in gas and oil sector was developed with the company of China being actively involved in gas and oil sector of Kazakh region. Transport link between both Kazakhstan and China is growing constantly because of trade growth and economic cooperation increases.

USA was the top most country who recognized the independence of Kazakhstan and develops the diplomatic relations with the Kazakhs. Security remains to be at the leading point of US-Kazakhs relation. Non-Proliferation security cooperation remains

to be prior by the both nations. USA backed up Kazakhstan in removal of Weapons-Grade Materials, Nuclear Warheads and supporting infrastructure. Military of Kazakhstan participate in International Military Education and Training program and Foreign Military Financing in US, because of which US-Kazakh security cooperation remained to be most significant which was been proved through the participation of Kazakhstan in Nuclear Security Summits of year 2010 and year 2012. Kazakhstan remains to be the top most trading partner of US in the year 2013. Kazakhstan also followed collaboration with US within the International Organizations. These included United Nations, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Kazakhstan has been a dynamic NATO participant for the Peace Program. (Diyarbakırlıoğlu & Yiğit, 2014)

Kyrgyzstan

Foreign policy of Kyrgyzstan has been measured through its smaller size and through economic weakness as it is resource poor nation. For seeking relationship with rest of the world the president of Kyrgyzstan, Akayev, travelled across the globe since its independence. During the starting independence months of Kyrgyzstan, Akayev stressed upon attracting the world toward itself. Because of Akayev efforts the country becomes the foreign aid recipient in CIS.

Akayev visited *USA* along with many other nations. These visits results in the recognition of Kyrgyzstan by 120 nations and also formed diplomatic relations. In Bishkek the embassy of United States was established in 1992 and the embassy of Kyrgyzstan was established in US later on that year. US provided military, political and economic assistance to Kyrgyzstan. It also supported Kyrgyzstan membership in

international organizations. Kyrgyzstan also becomes the member of United Nations, the World Bank, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the IMF, Asian Development Bank, the EBRD, the Islamic Bank and Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO).

Kyrgyzstan relations with China are not much cordial due to China's territorial claim over Kyrgyzstan and this enmity was also depicted in the Epic of Manas. In 1999 China and Kyrgyzstan solved their boarder dispute. Kyrgyzstan also joined Shanghai Cooperation Organization. China becomes the Kyrgyzstan main non-CIS trading companion. In Naryn Free-Trade Zone attracted many business people in China. Trade with the Chinese in 1990's increases to such a level that Kyrgyzstan officials fear that it would result into economic domination by China. China is also investing in Kyrgyzstan infrastructure projects.

Kyrgyzstan desired the support from *Russia* in comparison to other nations. Kyrgyzstan remains to be dependent economically upon Russia. Akayev signed economic agreements during his Moscow visit in 1994. Russia also assured to spread to Kyrgyzstan for the oil and fuels purchases. During 1995 series of treaties were signed between Russian and Kyrgyzstan prime ministers for the bilateral coordination. Kyrgyzstan becomes Custom Union member which was established by Russia, Kazakhstan and Beralus in 1996. Kyrgyzstan in 1996 move towards making the Russian's as 2nd official language.

Tajikistan

Russia is considered to be the foremost security partner of Tajikistan. Russia provides equipment's and training to the armed forces of Tajikistan. Tajikistan heavily depends upon Russia for its GDP. The Treaty of friendship, cooperation and mutual assistance, between Russia and

Tajikistan, was signed in 1993. This treaty covers cooperation in the area of economy, politics, security and humanitarian assistance. Cordial relations existed between the two countries.

The relations of Tajikistan with the *USA* focus mainly upon security cooperation (Blakkisrud & Nozimova, 2010). United States was amongst the second nation who opens a legation in Dushanbe. At the time of civil war, medical and food aids were supplied to Tajikistan by the United States. In mid-1990's the policy of the United States focused upon providing support towards peace negotiations and also to encourage Tajikistan to initiate with IMF and some other organization close relations which helps in process of rebuilding (*Tajikistan - Foreign Relations*, n.d.).

Tajikistan maintains relation with *China* for economic and security cooperation. China provided training exercises and military hardware to the Tajiks Tajikistan also becomes the Shanghai Cooperation Organization member. China is largest trade partner of Tajikistan. Border dispute between the two countries was resolved through negotiation in 2011. China gave away more than 90% of its claimed territory to Tajikistan.

Turkmenistan

Constitution of Turkmenistan highlights the principles of "*Permanent Neutrality*" as an origin for its foreign policy. This neutrality interprets towards the foreign policy seclusion and also that the nation is disconnected from outside world (*IF10303.Pdf*, n.d.). Turkmenistan's main reason to be neutral is to stay out of international and regional disputes, politics and to concentrate on economic development. Although Turkmenistan adopted neutral foreign policy, however it developed cordial relations with China, Russia and US.

From the development of diplomatic relation of Turkmenistan with *China*, bilateral relations and cooperation's continues to increase. Turkmenistan gives significant priority to China and prepared for developing further relations with China in the fields of trade, economy, and transport and in natural gas. Turkmenistan provides its support to China to protect its sovereignty. Turkmenistan also prepared for working with China for forming stronger cooperation between Turkmenistan's strategy and BRI for reviving Great Silk Road (*President Xi Jinping Meets with Turkmen President Serdar Berdymukhamedov*, n.d.). Turkmenistan is considered to be China's main natural gas trader and main international lender of Turkmenistan is China(*IF10303.Pdf*, n.d.).

Polymakers of Turkmenistan and *Russia* cooperated upon tensions resolution between the states adjoining Caspian Sea. Polymakers of Turkmenistan and *Russia* cooperated upon tensions resolution between the states adjoining Caspian Sea. Government of *Russia* announced to construct in the Kaspiysk, Dagestan. Both nations also worked together for stabilizing the Afghanistan. Security coordination between these nations remains to be informal. Robust security corporation establishment of *Russia* with the Turkmenistan strengthen the influence of Moscow in the Central Asia and also provides Kremlin a valuable partner in order to advance in the region the geopolitical agenda(Ramani, n.d.).

Although the energy resources and geography of Turkmenistan makes it a significant strategic partner of *USA*, but the ties between these nations were hindered through nation's unappealing investment in the climate and closed nature. Bilateral agreements between these two nations mainly focused upon regional security problems. US foreign support towards Turkmenistan remains to be limited and

mainly focused upon nonproliferation and border security promotion(*IF10303.Pdf*, n.d.).

Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan organized constructive, an open and mutually beneficial foreign policy which rests upon nation's national interest. Uzbekistan is concerned in increasing its cooperation with other nations for progress, peace and prosperity. Main aim of country's policy is the Central Asian region which aimed to ensure stability and peace in region. Uzbekistan Republic has developed the diplomatic relationship with above 130 nations, have 44 embassies in foreign nations, have joined above 100 international organizations and have accredited 55 consular and diplomatic missions in foreign nations.

Upon basis of several treaties the strengthening and developing of friendly relation with *Russia* results in meeting up the interest of both nations and this base serve to increase the region's security and stability. Significant task in the bilateral relation is agreements implementation.

Uzbekistan also concerned upon enhancing with *China* the strategic cooperation, which plays a significant role in resolving the global issues. The establishment of relation between these two nations rests upon several declarations and main aim behind the relation is for ensuring the fulfillment of proposals and initiatives.

Another significant foreign policy priority is the establishment of friendly relations with *USA*. Uzbekistan wants to further strengthen up the relation with US in trade, political, investment, economic, humanitarian, cultural and technological spheres for enhancing living standards. Bilateral cooperation significant areas are stability and peace promotion in region of Afghanistan and to fight in contrast to transnational threats(Kitsoft, n.d.). Uzbekistan also joined organizations like

SCO, UN, WTO, EBRD, EAEU, CIS and Turkic Council(*New Uzbekistan - A New Model of Foreign Policy | Uzbekistan, n.d.*).

Conclusion

After independence all Central Asian states started nation building process. They build their national identity on common history, common religion, common values and common future, along with the process of state building. It's a combination of past heritage, present politics and futuristic aspirations. Here nation building is linked with state building also. State institutions were built and new constitutions were written. All central Asian states are still in the process of consolidating national identities like language.

After three decades of independence, Central Asian states are still struggling to climb the ladder of democratic system. All five states of Central Asia did claim that they follow democratic principles, rule of law, political pluralism, civil liberties and neo-liberal values. However, there are various reports that showed that none of the Central Asian states provide those rights to their

citizens which are clearly written in their country's constitution. All leaders enjoy special kind of immunity, privileges and protections. Regularly held elections aimed to legitimize their authoritarian rule and practices. Political parties and religious organization are banned on the plea of terrorism and extremism.

Central Asia always remained the stage for Great Game among the major powers of the world. However, since their independence the Central Asian states are successful in mitigating the threat of new Great Game in the region. China is seen as an economic partner, Russia although is considered as security umbrella for the regional states, Russia is now looking to invest in its soft image in the region and US is looking after the democratic process of the region. Although China, Russia and US have their interests in Central Asia, but Central Asian states are smart enough to carve balanced foreign policy. All Central Asian states are member of major international and regional organizations; they establish bilateral cordial economic and security relations with China, Russia and USA.

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