

Transformation Processes Of Political Systems Of Central Asian Countries: Concepts And Approaches

Jasur Salomov

**doctoral student of the Institute of History
Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan
salomovjasur@gmail.com**

Resume: It is generally accepted among the scientific community that Central Asia in the historical dimension is at the initial stage of its renewal and progress. From this point of view, researchers have always been interested in what the state the countries of the region are building. It should be noted that a comprehensive study of the emerging political system of Central Asian countries is not only a practical issue, but also a theoretical one. And in this sense, it is put forward among the priority problems that await their scientific interpretation and analysis. In this article the approaches and concepts of the scientific community regarding the formation of statehood in the Central Asian republics, the features of the transition period, as well as the prerequisites for the formation of political systems are considered. At the same time, a brief analysis of the processes of formation and development of the political system of the Republic of Uzbekistan was carried out.

Key words: Central Asia, region, Republic of Uzbekistan, political system, transformation, power, concept, process.

For a long time, the civilizational unity of Central Asia was considered as a common place in most scientific works and political assessments.. Almost all modern leaders of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan, especially during regional summits, highlight the common history and languages, origin and traditions, culture and economy¹. And today, these countries, after gaining independence, are literally immersed in the deepest transformational processes.

Modern political, historical sciences successfully use the term “transformation” in relation to certain political, socio-economic changes (processes) in the state. It should be noted that the political process can be based on two methods of change - *transformation and modification*, which differ markedly from each other. For example, political leaders and government may change, but the state system remains unchanged. This kind of political change can be described as a modification. Along with this, there is another way of political change - transformation, i.e. reconfigurations entailing a change of basic designs. For example, a change in

¹Искаков И. Специфика политических институтов и процессов в Центральной Азии. 2011. № 13 (108). Выпуск 19. С.
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the political system, which leads to the transformation of institutions of power, and, ultimately, to a new modified quality of the political system².

The restructuring of the political system of the USSR at the end of the 80s of the last century, interrupted by its collapse, gave a kind of impetus to political reconstruction of many Soviet states, including the republics of Central Asia. Based on this we shall note that the Central Asian countries can be attributed to such a category of groups that in a very short historical period went through both of the above-mentioned political processes.

The interest in studying these events in the region is also enhanced by the fact that a feature of the current era is that states are more and more entangled in a complex system of institutional relations that connect it with civil society and ensure an ever-growing democratization of official power.. This necessitates a comprehensive social and legal study of both the essence of power itself and its interconnections with civil society, political parties and movements, with all institutions ensuring harmony and stability of all elements of the political system³.

The constant focus on the political renewal processes of the Central Asian republics led to the formation of holistic concepts based on the analysis and forecast of the democratization of the political system and transformation as a whole. So, for example, the concept of “completion of transit” in the countries of the region belongs to B.Rumer, according to which, “the countries of the region have completed the transit phase of their development and have formed political regimes with a stable system of economic and socio-political relations in the region..In the future, it is unlikely that they will radically change or transform under the influence of internal and external factors, and even with a shift of power⁴”.

. Another important concept is the visions of the German scientist W.Halbach, in which an attempt is made to affirm the opinion that Central Asia is no longer a “post-Soviet space”⁵. That is, his conclusions boil down to the fact that the Central Asian region was so far removed from its Soviet past that the changes became irreversible. However, we can only partially agree with this, since in some countries of the region political processes, including the institutional

² *Ветренко И.А.* Игровые практики в политическом процессе: монография. Омск, 2009. С.48.

³ *Жумаев Р.* Проблемы формирования и укрепления политической системы Республики Узбекистан: Дисс. док.полит. наук. Ташкент, 1996. С. 5.

⁴ *Rumer B.* Central Asia: 15 Yaers After // Central Asia's Affairs (Almaty, Kaz ISS). 2005. N 1 P. 2–12; Central Asia at the end of Transition / ed. By B. Rumer. Armonk. New York–London: M.E. Sharpe, 2005. XIII+449 pp.12-15

⁵ *Halbach U.* Das nachsowjetische Zentralasien. Eine region mit politischer Sprengkraft. Jahrbuch Internationale Politik 1999–2000. Munchen: Oldenburg Verlag, 2001. S. 277–289.

development of the political system, are still taking place according to the scenarios that took place during the Soviet period.

In contrast to this concept, one can cite another one, in which scientists remained at the point of view that Central Asian societies are still closely connected with their Soviet origin⁶. Thus, the opinion that the countries of the region by the mid-2000s have already completed the transit stage has been expressed quite loudly, but not all researchers support this view.

There are also visions according to which Central Asia is no longer perceived in terms of cultural, historical and economic parameters as a single whole, and the regional structure is formed according to two models: Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. However, it should be noted that today each state has its own characteristics in terms of state building. For example, in our opinion, the model of formation and functioning of the political system of Turkmenistan to a certain extent differs from the model built in Uzbekistan or Kazakhstan. These differences are observed in all respects - social, political, economic, etc. More precisely, in the Turkmen model, the state principle comes from the personality - the personality of the president without any real power of political societies. In addition, the situation is complicated by economic features, where preference is given to a closed or limited foreign economy. In other countries, along with the personality, the political weight of the other actors and institutions is still present, moreover, their role in the public and political life of the state is gradually (albeit at a slow pace) being modified.

In addition, today, each state in the region is trying to bring identical features to their political systems and societies. Accordingly, the concept regarding existence only two aforementioned models of political systems in Central Asia for all countries seems erroneous and unfounded. Probably it would be appropriate to note that the Uzbek and Kazakh models have demonstrated relative stability and efficiency compared to models of other republics.

Considering other approaches, we note that a very interesting division of the political systems of the countries of the region is carried out by E. Pavlov. According to his vision, the republics of Central Asia represent the “open” and “closed” systems. At the same time, the “open” political systems are united by the multiplicity of political actors and the dynamism of their structuring, while the common feature of the formation and functioning of “closed” political systems in Central Asian states is limiting the influence of globalization processes (the

⁶Лаумуллин М. Центральная Азия: основные подходы в современной политической науке // Центральная Азия и Кавказ. 2010. Вып. 1. Т. 13. С. 95.
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external environment) and a strict hierarchy of domestic political actors⁷. His analysis of the models of political systems implemented by the Central Asian states shows that the most effective is the modernization model, which allows combining the stability of the state and active participation in international integration.

The German scientist A. Warkotsch in his writings used a number of new and interesting terms to characterize the political system of the countries of the region. For example, the regime and process of democratization of a society in Kyrgyzstan is characterized by him as “democratura” (democracy + dictatorship), and in Turkmenistan as “neototalitarianism”. He also calls on the European Union to take more active and real actions to accelerate the democratic transformation of these countries⁸.

Not the last place in the conceptual constructions of Western analysts is the factor of Islam in the process of formation and development of political systems in the republics of Central Asia. In fact, none of the authors can ignore it. Discussions are held around the question of how deeply Islam influences the modern development of emerging states (nations) in Central Asia. The most competent authors came to the conclusion that Islam has become one of the most important elements in the formation of a new national identity of the Central Asian peoples. In addition, we should not forget that this factor also has a foreign policy dimension for these countries.

The issue of Islam in the region inevitably leads researchers to such a factor as Islamic fundamentalism or radical Islam.⁹ In particular, the concept proposed by A. Rashid under the title “Central Asian Front of the West” boils down to the fact that this region represents a new front against militant Islam, and the victory of the latter will mean instability not only regionally, but also globally. Realizing this trend very well, the republics are trying to conduct foreign and domestic political activity as far as possible from religion.

Some scholars who are not indifferent to the cultural and political fate of the peoples of the region are sounding the alarm about the threat of ideological islamization of subsequent generations. They strongly recommend to the governments of the region to speed up the construction of nation-states in the spirit of state patriotism.

⁷ Павлов Е.В. Трансформация политических систем республик Центральной Азии в условиях глобализации. Автореферат диссертации на соискание ученой степени кандидата политических наук. Бишкек. 2008. С.10

⁸ Warkotsch A. Die Zentralasiatische Politik der Europäischen Union: Interessen, Strukturen und Reformoptionen. Frankfurt a. M.: Peter Lang, 2006. С.253

⁹ Rashid A. Jihad. The rise of Militant Islam in Central Asia. New Haven–London: Yale University Press, 2003. XXIX+282 pp.

As we can see, there are many different scientific approaches, concepts, ideas, and evaluation research of the Central Asian countries of transit processes from a totalitarian to a democratic regime. Some of them contain a relatively objective analysis and forecast of current events, while others provide sharply critical conclusions and conclusions, without considering that:

- democratic transit implies a phased change in the configuration and nature of the interaction of leading political actors in the political field of the state;

- the transit process in the countries of the region is still not completed and cannot be completed in such a short period of time in historical terms, because, as noted above, the building up of the political system is impressively dynamic, especially at the stage of its formation;

- the process of democratic transit of political systems cannot take place under identical scenarios that took place in developed countries in the so-called Western style, which some scholars require;

- there are certain features inherent only to these countries and the region, affecting the process of formation and full functioning of the political system.

Thus, a comprehensive study abroad of the political, economic, social and cultural processes taking place in Central Asia, and the formation of holistic concepts confirms our idea of the continued high interest in the region.

On the whole, an analysis of the positions and assessments of the aforementioned and other foreign scholars regarding modern transit processes and the functioning of the political system in the Central Asian republics allows us to conclude that they focus mainly on issues such as authoritarianism, corruption of authorities, clash of clans, the existence of administrative team management, ethnic issues, and threats of religious fundamentalism and extremism. A remarkable point for us is that many works devoted to this subject, despite their professionalism, are only descriptive in which a pessimistic forecast prevails. At the same time, most of the works do not recognize or mention positive changes in the socio-political life of the countries of the region, and also do not take into account the socio-political specifics of the region itself and its recent totalitarian past.

Perhaps a one-sided approach to the study of Central Asia as an integral part of the world community remains due to the unformed professional dialogue between the scientific communities of the West and the investigated region, which requires the development of appropriate conditions for full integration. This, of course, will open the way to an even greater

exchange of views and reliable information, which will contribute to the emergence of a concrete and truthful idea about the “Central Asian Five”.

The relevance of studying the political system of the Republic of Uzbekistan

Today, the issues of studying the processes of formation and development of the political system of the countries of the Central Asian space, in particular the Republic of Uzbekistan, are in the center of attention of specialists from all over the world. This is primarily due to the fact that, from a historical point of view, Uzbekistan is in the process of establishing its statehood. As noted above, any country that has gained its independence is involved in the most complex internal political processes associated with the formation of the state structure and civil society. In this regard, it is extremely important to study the dynamics of the development of the political system of a state as a whole.

Uzbekistan, as one of the most developed states in Central Asia, was able to build such a model of the political system that most effectively and painlessly led the country out of the political and socio-economic crisis caused by the collapse of the Soviet Union. It is also important that Uzbekistan renounced various kinds of experiments in relation to the activities of political institutions and the formation of the political elite. For example, in Kyrgyzstan they are still unsuccessfully trying to establish a European-style parliamentary republic that would conduct consolidated activities with the president. Unfortunately, this path markedly complicated the mechanism for promoting regulatory documents, led to increased lobbyism and inconsistency in the ranks of factions of political parties in Kyrgyzstan. Accordingly, there were no guarantees that a similar trend would not be present in Uzbek society. Therefore, a more restrained, perhaps even a classic version of the presidential republic with elements of authoritarianism was chosen in Uzbekistan.

Many experts came to the conclusion that almost all the states of the region, respectively Uzbekistan, built “presidential” regimes, that is, political systems with an emphasis on overly personalized power. We can only partially agree with this conclusion. Indeed, in some countries of Central Asia there is a practice of “personalizing” the heads of state (for example, in Kazakhstan - “Elbasy”, in Tajikistan - “Peshvoimillat”, in Turkmenistan the previous president has the form of appeal - “Turkmenbashi”, the current president - “Arcadag”), as well as the maximum empowerment to manage domestic and foreign policies with the dubious prospect of further decentralization (Turkmenistan, Tajikistan).

In Uzbekistan, they have always opposed such initiatives, considering them extremely inappropriate. Regarding the processes associated with the decentralization of power in the republic, it is noteworthy that, in fact, for some time, the governance of the country was concentrated in the hands of only a few institutions of power. The gradual transition of powers from “top to bottom” began in the 2000s, when the transition to a bicameral parliament was carried out, the legal infrastructure of local governments was strengthened, and the powers of the Cabinet of Ministers and regional administrations were expanded. That is, the president was now authorized to provide only the coordinated functioning and interaction of state authorities.

At the same time, it is necessary to add that the concentration of power in the hands of the president in the early stages of state building, in our opinion, is the most necessary condition for developing a unified national policy and to avoid political tension in the power structures. In the conditions of Uzbekistan, has strengthened the mechanism for the enforcement of laws and other government decisions, accelerate the adjustment processes in the political, interethnic and other areas. In this respect, the Uzbek practice of state building proves the veracity of our judgments.

Summarizing the above, we note that the relevance of the study of the processes of democratic transformation of the political system of the Republic of Uzbekistan is due to several reasons:

firstly, today in Uzbekistan and abroad, issues of the functioning of some elements and subjects of the political system of the republic are widely considered, however, there is a need for fundamental work on the study of theoretical and methodological aspects of the concept of a political system and a comprehensive analysis of the formation of a political system;

secondly, an institutional study of the political system of the Republic of Uzbekistan will make it possible to draw a conclusion about the effectiveness of its activities in the political, social and economic life of the country;

thirdly, the comparative analysis of the activity and the organizational and legal structure of the political system of the Republic of Uzbekistan with states that are similar and not similar in their political regime and type is of great interest both for the domestic researcher and for the entire world scientific community;

fourthly, after the change of power that took place in Uzbekistan in 2016, international research centers focused on large-scale reforms initiated by the new leadership, a number of significant works were published, which highlighted the problems and prospects of the socio-political, financial and economic life of Uzbek society in the new conditions. Accordingly, these

works also arouse the interest of researchers, through which it will be possible to compare approaches to assessing the activities of the two governments.