

The Diversification of Power in Central Asian Neopatrimonial States: Analyzing Heterogeneity through the lens of the State-building framework.

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Abstract: After two decades of post-Soviet political experience the ‘transition paradigm’ has received justified criticism as democracy is not on the road map of most of political elites and the continuum from authoritarianism to liberal democracy does not capture the transformations that are taking place in the region (Carothers 2002, Jones Luong 2004, Cummings 2012, Susan Stewart et. al. 2012). Hence, in the last years there has been a theoretical reshuffling by going in depth with the different subtypes of authoritarianism (Møller and Skaaning 2010) and by emphasizing the relevance of informal institutions in states categorized as neopatrimonial (Wilson 2005, Hale 2006 and 2011, Ilkhamov 2007, Collins 2009, Fisun 2007, Isaacs 2010, Guliyev 2011, Kononenko and Moshes 2011, Ruiz Ramas 2012).

When analyzing the heterogeneity of neopatrimonial trajectories, most of the efforts to establish a durable typology combine the state authority structure in a neopatrimonial state (from rational-legal bureaucratic rationalization to patrimonial domination) with the level of political competition (liberalization and participation) in a given regime, that is, as some of the authors have coined, a mix between Dahlian and Weberian perspectives (Erdmann and Engel 2007, Von Soest 2010, Fisun 2007, Guliyev 2012). However, amongst Central Asia countries, while only Kyrgyzstan has experienced variations in the authoritarian - liberal democracy axis, the competition for state authority-making and sharing, as well as the challenges from regions to the center have maintained quite intense. Being State-building an uncompleted process across Central Asia, each country has its own dynamics and contentions in the competition for authority-making, that is, for the real allocation of power.

Therefore, keeping the emphasis on informal institutions this paper promotes a shift to the less cultivated State-building framework. A move previously encouraged by Grzymala-Busse and Jones Luong (2002), Ganev (2005), or Cummings (2012). To analyze heterogeneity in neopatrimonial states we will distinguish three levels of diversification of power as an aggregate of two main features: the state decision-making structure at central government institutions and the level of territorial fragmentation of power. That is, the two key phases of the authority-making in a state formation process: decision-making authority and the degree of enforcement of these decisions across the state. To sum up, to examine authority-making requires focusing on the functioning of central government decision-making structures, but also on the implementation process of their rules outcomes in the local and regional tiers of the state. However, regarding the latter, to analyze the diversification of power we will concentrate on those implementation impasses that as a result of them provoke an ‘authority migration’ to local agents and institutions. Following this framework, the paper will provide and analysis of the evolution of the diversification of power of each Central Asian country.

Keywords: Neopatrimonialism, Central Asia, State Building, Diversification of Power.

*The full text of this paper has been sent to the workshop's coordinator.*