

Blood, Chaos, and Dynasty:
Islam and Patronage Politics in Central Asia

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Chapter 1: Introduction

February 26, 2010 Version

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Alisher Saipov left his office just before sunset. On a normal day, he would be back at his laptop, drinking coffee to the ping of instant messages well into the early morning. Familiar to western readers for his reporting with *Radio Free Europe*, *Fergana.ru* and *Voice of America*, Saipov was now turning his attention to the local audience. His new paper, *Siyosat*, was a hit among the Uzbek-speaking population in his hometown, Osh, Kyrgyzstan. News-starved residents across the border, in the nearby Uzbek cities of Andijan, Namangan and Fergana, also patiently awaited their copies of the Friday weekly. They are still waiting. Saipov was shot on the night of October 24, 2007. His murderers remain at large.

Saipov's life captures the fleeting promise and the enduring challenge post-Soviet Central Asia presents. The promise is that the Saipovs of Central Asia, along with well-intentioned western counterparts, work tirelessly to reform autocratic rule. The challenge that Central Asia presents is that western democracy promotion has yielded little substantive political reform while, at the same time, citizen activism has at best been met with government indifference and, at worst, with disappearances, torture and death. Central Asian patronage politics has not budged.

Just the opposite, patronage politics remains entrenched in Central Asia. Autocrats—from the presidency to the village administrator—continue to rule at every level of government. Each autocrat presides over his fiefdom and, in return for control over this fiefdom, economic rents,

that is, licenses to exploit, flow from the top to the bottom while kickbacks from these rents flow from the bottom back to the top. Before 1991, political scientists called this system communism or Soviet socialism. Today we call it patrimonialism or neopatrimonialism—depending on whether the patrimonial state in question indeed possesses the “professional military, technocratic administrative staff, and all of the other elements of a comparatively modernized industrial society” to merit the “neo” label.¹ During the Soviet period local autocrats controlled collective farms. Today local autocrats control what are *de facto* collective farms as well as natural resources, local bazaars, the drug and sex trades, gambling and construction. Despite grand democratization experiments, nothing has changed. If anything, for many Central Asians things have gotten worse.

Paradoxically, neither have the fortunes of the average Central Asian autocrat improved all that much. Today the journey from boss to bust is short; higher level bosses regularly replace underlings and, on occasion, underlings band together to unseat the alpha autocrat. The disappointing irony of Central Asian autocracy—and in part the explanation for the persistence of this autocracy—is that it is considerably safer to challenge patronage rule the old fashioned way, by planning a putsch, than it is by publishing a newspaper. As such, it is the Saipovs of Central Asia, the human subjects of western democratization experiments who operate outside the patronage pack and challenge hierarchy through transparent means—through the media, through discussions following Friday prayer, through nongovernmental organizations—that find their lives and their dreams of a better future for their children cut short. Strip the Brezhnev patronage machine of centralized party control, add local activists emboldened by a newly

¹ Karen L. Remmer, “Neopatrimonialism: The Politics of Military Rule in Chile, 1973-1987,” *Comparative Politics* 21, no. 2 (January 1989): 165.

arrived global discourse of political and religious freedom, and you have the Central Asia of today. In short, you have a political mess or, as one observer put it, you have “Trashcanistan.”²

Critically though, and at the heart of this study, the degrees of this current political mess vary. Uzbekistan is a bloody mess. In May 2005 President Karimov’s troops shot on and killed hundreds of protestors in the Fergana Valley city of Andijan to ensure Uzbekistan would not play host to the next post-Soviet “color revolution.”³ Karimov got his wish. The Andijan protests did not topple Karimov from power. They did, however, produce an indelible color: red. “Blood was flowing on the ground,” eyewitness Mahbuba Zokirava recounted, going off-script during the October 2005 show trial of the alleged Andijan protest instigators.⁴ The blood of Andijan would continue to flow, and beyond the confines of Uzbekistan. In Osh, Kyrgyzstan Alisher Saipov, in addition to bearing witness to the Andijan massacre on the pages of *Siyosat*, organized safe haven for Andijan refugees. It was this activism, many fear, that pushed the Uzbek president’s agents in Kyrgyzstan to move from their steady campaign of intimidating Saipov to murder.⁵

In contrast to Karimov, Kyrgyz presidents are more likely to run than shoot. President Askar Akaev, facing thousands of angry demonstrators outside his “Whitehouse” in March 2005, fled to Moscow. Kyrgyzstan’s “Tulip Revolution,” though, did not substantively alter Kyrgyz

² Stephen Kotkin, “Trashcanistan: A Tour Through the Wreckage of the Soviet Empire,” *The New Republic* (April 15, 2002).

³ Color revolution, of course, is a misnomer. The only place where the Georgian, Ukrainian and Kyrgyz color revolutions continue to exist are in the pages of western political science journals. What Karimov most feared in May 2005 was not democratization, but rather, that some other autocrat would replace him.

⁴ Daniel Kimmage, “Uzbekistan: One Witness's Testimony Forces Courtroom Collision,” *Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty*, October 23, 2005.

⁵ Saipov confided, during my June 2007 visit to Osh, that plain clothes agents were constantly following him. He was sober about the risks he was assuming but hopeful that his links with the west might provide some measure of protection.

politics. The patronage machine sputters along, enriching its mechanic of the moment, President Kurmanbek “Bucks” Bakiev. The same societal upheaval that brought Bakiev to power will likely see him running from angry crowds in the not too distant future. Perhaps the next time, Kyrgyzstan watchers will get it right and label these leadership convulsions for what they are, popular putsches rather than democratic revolutions.

The Kazakh state is neither as sputtering as Kyrgyzstan nor as bloody as Uzbekistan. Rather, Kazakhstan’s mess is contained to the presidential family. Dynasty, not demonstrators, is what keeps Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbaev awake at night. The President’s once anticipated successor and now exiled former son-in-law, Rakhat Aliev, provides an unflattering window into the first family’s dysfunction in his May 2009 tell-all, *Godfather – In – Law*. Dariga Nazarbaeva, who divorced Aliev in June 2007, has all but disappeared from the Kazakh press, a press she once controlled as director of *Khabar*, Kazakhstan’s largest news outlet. Timur Kulibaev, married to Nazarbaev daughter number two of three, appears to be the President’s new favorite. In May 2009 Kulibaev assumed chairmanship of the boards of Kazakhstan’s most lucrative energy companies—KazMunayGaz, Kazatomprom and Samruk-Energo.⁶ Kulibaev, though, is hedging his bets; Nazarbaev has yet a third son-in-law in reserve and, should Kulibaev suddenly find himself out of favor, he has a mistress and a mansion (the Duke of York’s former residence) waiting for him in Berkshire, England.⁷

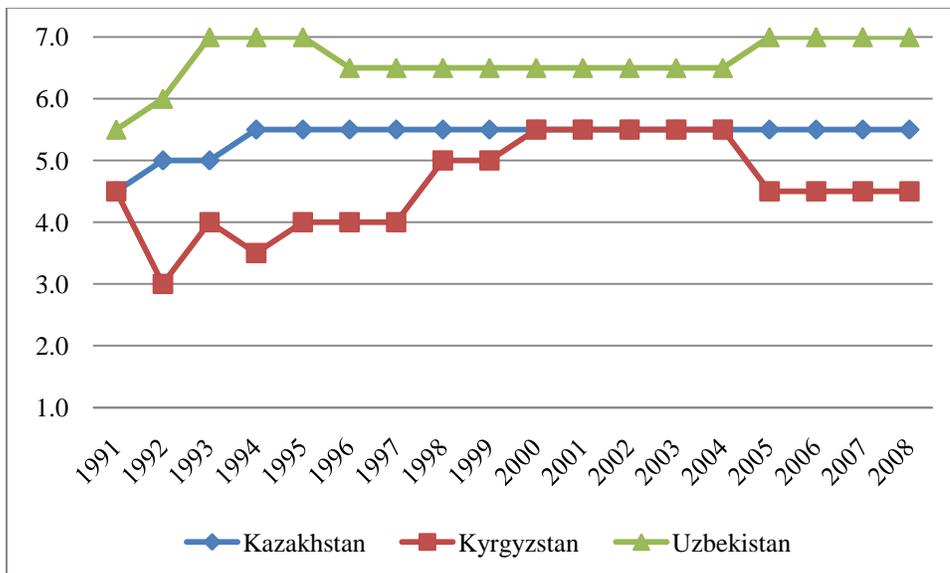
The *BCDs* of Central Asian patronage politics—blood, chaos and dynasty—this is the variation my study seeks to explain. In addition to this categorization of regime variation, indices such as Freedom House’s *Freedom in the World* and the World Bank’s *World*

⁶ “Kulibayev to Chair Boards of Directors in Three National Companies,” *Kazakh Oil & Gas Weekly*, May 25, 2009.

⁷ Daniel Foggo, “Royal’s £,” *The Sunday Times*, July 27, 2008; Geoffrey Levy and Richard Kay, “The Duke, the Dame and the Dictator,” *Daily Mail*, March 14, 2009.

Governance Indicators equally illustrate the markedly different paths the Uzbek, Kyrgyz and Kazakh autocracies have taken since the Soviet collapse. The *Freedom in the World* “freeness” scores are seven point composites that measure degrees of political rights and civil liberties. States at or above 5.5 on Freedom House’s seven point scale are “not free.” As such, regimes that flat line at the top of Freedom House’s seven point scale are the least free or, perhaps more appropriately phrased, the most bloody and repressive. States between 5.0 and 3.5 are “partly free.” And states below 3.0—terra incognita in Central Asia—are “free.” Graph 1 below provides a legend even though a legend is likely not needed to identify which line represents bloody Uzbekistan, chaotic Kyrgyzstan and dynastic Kazakhstan.

Graph 1: Freedom House Measures of Central Asian Regime Variation

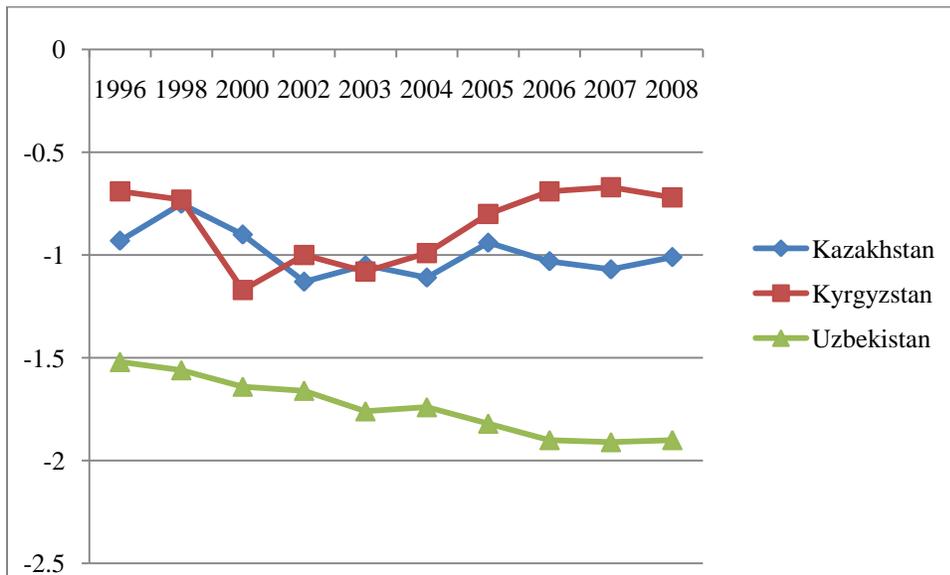


Uzbekistan unwaveringly ranks as the most autocratic of the Central Asian states. Indeed, since the Andijan massacre, the Karimov regime has distinguished itself by winning the most autocratic score the Freedom House scale allows. Kyrgyzstan, in contrast, bounces up and down the Freedom House scale, movement reflective of the chaos that is Kyrgyz patronage politics.

Kazakhstan is steady, neither as brutally repressive as Uzbekistan nor as jarringly unsettled as Kyrgyzstan. The ups and downs and bloody backstabbing in this polity is limited to the Nazarbaev family and, more specifically, who is next in line to Nursultan’s throne.

The World Bank’s *World Governance Indicators* (WGI) are equally suggestive of Central Asia’s *BCDs*. The WGI’s *voice and accountability* measure gauges “the extent to which a country’s citizens are able to participate in selecting their government.”⁸ The measure ranges from a low of -2.5 to a high of +2.5 and here too, as Graph 2 illustrates, we find a frighteningly autocratic Uzbekistan, a consistently autocratic though not excessively heavy-handed Kazakhstan and an inconsistently autocratic Kyrgyzstan.⁹

Graph 2: World Governance Indicators – Voice and Accountability, 1996-2008



⁸ Daniel Kaufmann, Aart Kraay, and Massimo Mastruzzi, “Governance Matters VII: Aggregate And Individual Governance Indicators 1996-2007,” *Research Working Papers* (2008): 7.

⁹ WGI measures, which the World Bank has been aggregating since 1996, are standardized with a sample mean (WGI covered 212 countries in 2008) of zero and a standard deviation of one. Thus, for example, Uzbekistan, which scored -1.9 in 2008, is nearly two standard deviations below the average voice and accountability score of all countries surveyed in 2008. In other words, 97 percent of all other states surveyed in 2008 allowed more freedoms to their citizens than did the Uzbek government.

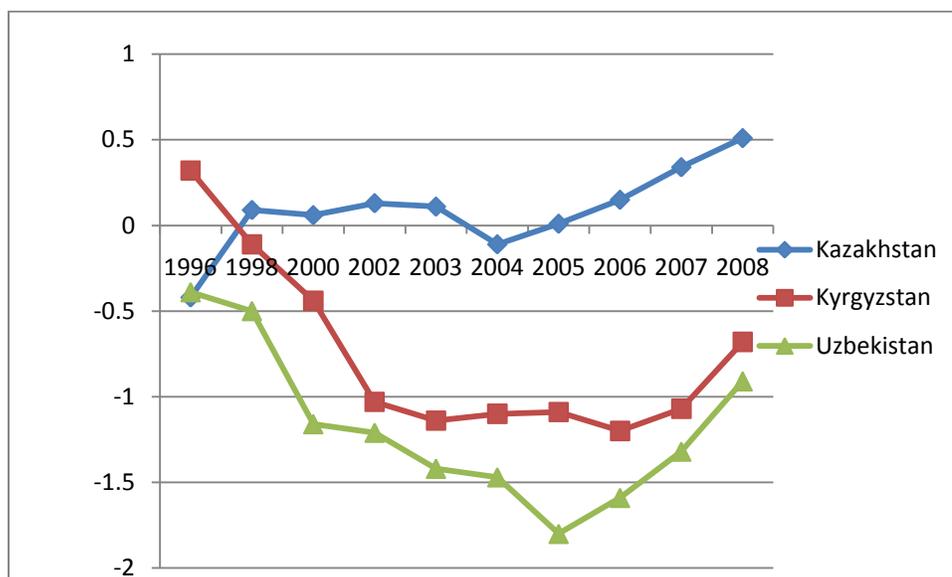
The Karimov regime's bloody repression, importantly, exacts more than a considerable human cost. State violence has prompted an equally violent response from within Uzbek society. Uzbekistan is the only Central Asian country subject to frequent terror attacks and militant insurgency. Most notably the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), a militant paramilitary group that distinguished itself by landing on the US Department of State terror watch list in September 2000, bombed the Uzbek capital, Tashkent, in February 1999 and July 2004. Though most in Uzbekistan do not share the IMU's Islamist agenda, the relative ease with which the IMU moves from safe havens in Afghanistan across the border into Uzbekistan suggests that a considerable portion of the Uzbek population may see armed resistance an attractive alternative to the passive acceptance of state repression. Moreover, the Andijan protests suggest that this resistance is moving beyond tacit support for the IMU. Andijan was prompted by an armed jailbreak, an effort to release 23 prominent Muslim leaders and businessmen whom the Karimov government had imprisoned. And Andijan is by no means the only Uzbek city whose jails are filled with influential and independent Muslim businessmen. Should the Uzbek government continue jailing local elites for alleged Islamist leanings, Karimov will encourage the very militancy he purports to be fighting.

The World Governance's *political stability* measure captures this potential for armed insurrection in Uzbekistan. As Graph 3 illustrates, the WGI indicator, which gauges "perceptions of the likelihood that the government will be destabilized or overthrown by unconstitutional or violent means," consistently locates the stability of the Karimov regime below that of the Kyrgyz and Kazakh states.¹⁰ Kyrgyz patronage politics, though it may be chaotic, at least is not violent. And the predictability of the Nazarbaev family, as multinationals

¹⁰ Kaufmann, Kraay, and Mastruzzi, "Governance Matters VII: Aggregate And Individual Governance Indicators 1996-2007," 7.

like Chevron and ExxonMobil can attest, makes the stability of Kazakh politics very attractive indeed.

Graph 3: World Governance Indicators – Political Stability, 1996-2008



This comparative Kazakh equanimity stands in sharp contrast to tumultuous state-society relations in Kyrgyzstan and the often violent state-society relations in Uzbekistan. Protests specifically targeted at the Kazakh executive are rare and fleeting. The largest anti-Nazarbaev protest occurred on December 8, 1996, when approximately 3,500 gathered in Almaty to demonstrate against worsening economic conditions.¹¹ This protest lasted three hours. Sustained, large scale protests in Kyrgyzstan, in contrast, are regular affairs. In addition to the 10,000 strong March 2005 protest that ousted president Akaev, Kyrgyz have gathered to protest the executive’s manipulation and re-writing of the constitution (2007), executive manipulation of parliamentary and presidential elections (1995 and 2000), and executive embezzlement of gold reserves (1993). Protests likely would be frequent and sustained in Uzbekistan as well, if not for

¹¹ Andre Grabot, “3,500 demonstrate against Kazakh president,” *Agence France Presse*, December 8, 1996.

the Karimov government's harrowing coercive capacity. Given this Uzbek ability to repress, dissent here has assumed ephemeral and explosive forms—the Tashkent government ministry bombings in 1999 and 2004, overturned and torched police cars in Kokand in November 2004 following the government's imposition of new tax codes on retail sales in city bazaars, and the Adijan jailbreak in May 2005.¹²

Blood, chaos and dynasty, this is the state of affairs two decades after the Soviet collapse in 1991. I started this study in graduate school hoping mine would be a story of Central Asian transition. This transition has not come; rather, autocracy and patronage politics remains. Yet life is not universally miserable in Central Asia. For most, Kazakhstan's dynastic politics can be watched with detachment. Kyrgyzstan's chaotic leadership convulsions can be endured. It is the steady and oppressive repression of Uzbekistan that is most worrisome. To the extent scholars can uncover the causal forces that produce blood, chaos and dynasty and, in so doing, assist activists in prodding the Uzbek state in the direction of its more benign neighbors, then this incremental change alone will be a greater achievement than the unrealized hopes the democratization literature has thus far offered for Central Asians. Moreover, at a more immediate level, if international scholars and policy makers are to further the safety of their Central Asian partners, we must concede that the transitions and democratization lenses are ill-suited for understanding post-Soviet Central Asian autocracy.

Explaining Variations in Central Asian Patronage Politics

Three factors, (1) Moscow's engagement or lack of engagement in mediating Central Asian leadership crises during the *perestroika* period, (2) differing economic resources available to the

¹² "Uzbekistan: Thousands Protest Trade Restrictions at Uzbek Market," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, November 2, 2004.

Central Asian leaders and (3) the differing degrees of Islamic revivalism, shape the diverging outcomes of Uzbek, Kyrgyz and Kazakh patronage politics. After first defining what Central Asian patronage politics is, I turn to each of these causalities in turn.

Defining Patronage Politics

Central Asian patronage politics closely resembles what Africanists identify as “neopatrimonialism.” Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan are *neopatrimonial* in that, in contrast to the patrimonial state of the past, they exhibit, albeit in varying degrees, the characteristics of modern state bureaucracies—professional militaries, a trained and technocratic administrative staff, and industrialized economies. And, like many of their African counterparts, Central Asian states are patrimonial in that: (1) executive authority is achieved through “personal patronage, rather than through ideology or law,” (2) the relationship between executive and appointee, or patron and client, is one “of loyalty and dependence,” and (3) money, or access to economic rents, is what encourages appointees or clients to “mobilize political support and refer all decisions upward as a mark of deference to patrons.”¹³ This last point of patronage politics, that it is money as well licenses to exploit, deserves particular emphasis. Patronage politics does not only entail an executive handsomely paying his appointees. Though guaranteeing high salaries certainly is one way to maintain effective rule, an executive can also provide appointees positions of authority through which they can enrich themselves. Will Reno, drawing a parallel between Mobutu’s Congo and Brezhnev’s Soviet Union, describes this practice of distributing offices:

The structure of power relations, the nature of resources available to different groups and the social capital upon which they can draw also shape the options available to rulers. Even in the seemingly centralized USSR, for example, Brezhnev found that his own son-

¹³ Michael Bratton and Nicholas Van de Walle, “Neopatrimonial Regimes and Political Transitions in Africa,” *World Politics* 46, no. 4 (July 1994): 458.

in-law had become a partner of Sharif Rashidovich Rashidov, the First Secretary of the Uzbek Communist Party, in the latter's grand scheme to fake cotton production statistics. Together they and the republic's Communist Party elite skimmed off billions of dollars from official accounts and used the money to build palaces for themselves and to enter new illicit trades.¹⁴

Critically, Mobutu engaged in one other practice that Brezhnev, in contrast to his predecessors, avoided—mass repression. Patronage politics need not be sustained by economics alone. As H.E. Chehabi and Juan J. Linz explain, an executive can provide a “mixture of fear and rewards to his collaborators” so as to further loyalty.¹⁵ Chehabi and Linz label these states as “sultanistic,” differentiating them from neopatrimonial regimes that rely primarily on economic incentives alone. This is an important distinction and one that captures crucial variation, for example, between the Karimov regime's violence and the more benign forms of patronage politics in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.

Although my conceptualization of patronage politics draws heavily from the literature on neopatrimonialism, I should note that the insights I ultimately seek differ markedly from the primary thrust of this neopatrimonialism literature. Chehabi and Linz, for example, offer as their central takeaway: “the main conclusion to be drawn from a comparative analysis of sultanistic regimes is that, if overthrown, they are more likely to be replaced by a revolutionary or an authoritarian regime than by a democracy.”¹⁶ Similarly, Bratton and Van de Walle conclude their study of neopatrimonialism in Africa: “Finally, if our logic is correct, the prospects for democracy are better in transitions from regime types other than neopatrimonial ones.”¹⁷

Chehabi and Linz and Bratton and Van de Walle are likely correct. Their singular focus on

¹⁴ William Reno, “Congo: From State Collapse to 'Absolutism', to State Failure,” *Third World Quarterly* 27, no. 1 (2006): 51.

¹⁵ H. E. Chehabi and Juan José Linz, *Sultanistic Regimes* (JHU Press, 1998), 7.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 46.

¹⁷ Bratton and Van de Walle, “Neopatrimonial Regimes and Political Transitions in Africa,” 487.

democratic transition, and the comparative politics literature's equally pronounced gravitation to democratization narratives, distracts our attention and, subsequently, our causal analysis away from substantive variations in autocratic governance. As brash as this may sound, this study suggests our focus should not be prospects for democratization in Central Asia. There are no immediate prospects for democracy in Central Asia. Rather, what I seek to uncover are the causal variables that produce variations in patronage politics, what I have termed the blood, chaos and dynasty of Central Asia. It is to these variables, to varying patterns of Moscow's intervention in Central Asia during the *perestroika* period, to Central Asian states' varying economic endowments, and to these states' varying degrees of Islamic revivalism, I now turn.

Variations in Patronage Politics—Moscow and Central Asian Leadership Crises

Though largely overlooked in analyses of post-Soviet Central Asian politics, General Secretary Gorbachev's decision to choreograph Kazakh and Uzbek executive change in the late 1980s and his later decision not to intervene in Kyrgyzstan's June 1990 leadership crisis has had profound effects on elite unity in these three countries. More specifically, Gorbachev's decision to mediate crises in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan but not in Kyrgyzstan led to the perpetuation of a united Kazakh and Uzbek political elite and to the fragmentation of Kyrgyz politics. These crises, paradoxically, were the products of Gorbachev's own attempts at political and economic reform. Thus, Gorbachev's December 1986 replacement of the corrupt, but ethnically Kazakh First Secretary, Dinmukhamed Kunaev, with the ethnic Russian, Gennady Kolbin, sparked violent street protests in the republic's capital, Alma-Ata. Gorbachev's plans to decrease the strains on the Uzbek economy through family planning and out-migration to Siberia sparked violent ethnic riots between Meskhetian Turks and Uzbeks and an immediate crisis of leadership

in Tashkent in June 1989. And the attempted implementation of Gorbachev's land reform policies led to deadly ethnic riots between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks in Osh, Kyrgyzstan and a leadership crisis in Bishkek.

Critically, despite these shared causes, the consequences of these crises differed markedly. Gorbachev and the Communist party resolved ethnic protests and leadership crises in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. The General Secretary quieted the 1986 Alma-Ata protests by shifting de facto control of Kazakh politics away from the disliked Kolbin to the ethnic Kazakh Chairman of the Council of Ministers, Nursultan Nazarbaev. Gorbachev similarly precluded elite instability in the wake of Uzbekistan's 1989 ethnic riots by removing his Uzbek family planner, Rafiq Nishonov, from power and replacing the former First Secretary with the self-proclaimed Uzbek "traditionalist" Islam Karimov.¹⁸ Yet, in June 1990, when ethnic riots in Kyrgyzstan brought down First Secretary Masaliev, Gorbachev left it to the local political elite to select their new leader. The Kyrgyz elite fractured and, absent Moscow's external choreographing of a leadership succession, settled on Askar Akaev as a compromise candidate. Akaev's winning attribute, revealingly, was his perceived weakness. Kyrgyz politics, in short, was unsettled even before the Soviet collapse. In Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, in contrast, Moscow's choreographing of Karimov and Nazarbaev's rise to power enabled these two leaders to enter the post-Soviet period with a united and executive-oriented single party.

Chapter 2 presents a formal model to illustrate how these diverging *perestroika* legacies continue to shape executive stability and longevity in these three states. One can readily understand the insights of this formal model, though, by imagining Central Asian presidents as

¹⁸ Karimov was quick to differentiate himself from his predecessor by calling for a "resurrection of Uzbek traditions." D. Makarov, "Chem vyshe kreslo, tem dal'she ot liudei". Islam Karimov: "tverdyi' poriadok pri polnoi' e'konomicheskoi' svobode", *Argumenty i fakty*, April 11, 1991, <http://dlib.eastview.com/browse/doc/8781330>.

pilots flying very different types of planes. All three presidents require the help of a copilot and a navigator. The Uzbek and Kazakh presidents, however, are in command of Boeing 747s in which the passenger cabins are filled with 500 well-trained reserve navigators and copilots. The Kyrgyz president, in contrast, is flying a 6-seater. Should members of Karimov or Nazarbaev's crew become problematic, they can be tossed from the plane and easily replaced with one of the 500 trained aviators in the passenger cabin. The Kyrgyz president, though, enjoys no such luxury; if he throws too many from the plane, he too will perish. To make things even more challenging for the Kyrgyz president, a disgruntled copilot or navigator can readily conspire with the three passengers in the cabin. That is, it may well be the Kyrgyz president who is tossed from the plane.

The reader may recognize the above stylization of Central Asian politics as an illustration of the collective action problem. Critically, I should stress that mine is not deductive reasoning divorced from comparative historical analysis. To make any sense, the microlevel insights of the collective action dynamic I illustrate above must be contextualized within an historical analysis that uncovers where these differing airplanes – or differing elite institutions – come from in the first place. Building on the brief sketch above, chapter 3 provides further discussion of the *perestroika* period ethnic riots, the concomitant leadership crises, and the elite institutions that resulted from Gorbachev's decision either to manage or not manage executive successions in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.

Variations in Patronage Politics—Economic Resources

The economic logic of variations in post-Soviet Central Asian patronage politics can be readily grasped. Abundant oil wealth maintains the gears of the Kazakh patronage machine.

Indeed, this oil wealth is so extensive and so concentrated in the hands of the Nazarbaev family, that the Kazakh state need not, in contrast to the lesser-endowed Uzbek and Kyrgyz states, appear predatory to its citizens.¹⁹ That is, Nazarbaev can actually pay—and pay well—state employees. Take, for example, the case of teacher salaries. In Kazakhstan, the average public teacher’s salary in 2009 was \$300 a month.²⁰ In contrast Kyrgyz teachers, according to a statement from the Kyrgyz Finance Ministry in 2008, have received no or only partial pay since 2003.²¹ Uzbek teachers arguably have it even worse; in addition to poor pay, they are forced to join their students in the fields for the cotton harvest every September, an effort that, ultimately, serves to further the Uzbek state’s repressive capacity. Repeat this pattern in other sectors of the state bureaucracy—code inspectors, village administrators, regional governors, judges and police—and it is not difficult to imagine which civil servants will be loyal, which will defect for greener pastures and which the state will coerce into compliance.

Coercive patronage politics, though it has thus far maintained Karimov’s hold on power, forces the regime into a delicate and likely unsustainable balancing act. State control of the cotton as well as the gold industries allows Karimov, if not the ability to buy loyalty, then the ability to coerce some degree of deference to centralized authority. Thus, Uzbek bureaucrats who become dissatisfied with the rent-seeking opportunities their offices provide and, as a result, diffident to state directives, can be eliminated through court trials, imprisonments and disappearances. Coercion and the threat of coercion, however, are not always effective. Indeed,

¹⁹ By predatory states I have in mind Evans’s definition: those that “extract at the expense of society... (and) lack the ability to prevent individual incumbents from pursuing their own goals.” Peter B. Evans, *Embedded autonomy* (Princeton University Press, 1995), 12.

²⁰ “The Kazakh Government Is Lacking Funds to Raise Wages of Social Workers and State Officials on January 1,” *Kazakhstan General Newswire*, October 19, 2009, lexisnexis.com.

²¹ “Kyrgyz Teachers Sue Government over Debt for Long Service,” *Kyrgyz Channel 5 TV / BBC Monitoring*, February 6, 2008, lexisnexis.com.

as the discussion in chapter 4 of the 1991 Namangan uprising and the 2005 Andijan protests illustrates, coercion may encourage the very challenges to centralized rule that repressive tactics are designed to prevent.

Karimov's dilemma may, from his point of view, be preferable to the Kyrgyz alternative. Here, as in the Uzbek case, patronage politics is based largely on predation and rent-seeking. The average Kyrgyz teacher, for example, is not starving because he, like most state employees, receives "support" from the local population in return for services rendered. That said, should a new patron emerge who can offer incentives more attractive than the state's license to predate, bureaucrats will likely defect to this more economically powerful patron. Thus, Kyrgyz State University teachers leave their departments to join the faculty of the Soros-funded American University of Central Asia just as many local state appointees begin to work for local business elites rather than the central government. Moreover, the near complete absence of readily exploitable natural resources means that the Kyrgyz executive, in contrast to the Uzbek president, cannot as easily coerce compliance. As I demonstrate in chapter 5, ensuring that judges, prosecutors and police reliably serve the central government interests demands money and this is money the Kyrgyz executive often cannot muster.

Variations in Patronage Politics—Islamic Revivalism

Less intuitive than the resource-endowment logic of Central Asia's diverging blood, chaos and dynasty outcomes is how differing patterns of Islamic revivalism contribute to post-Soviet autocratic variation. Importantly, similar to the resource endowment logic, this identity-centered causality also exhibits strong economic dynamics. More specifically, this study finds Islamic networks and shared religious norms build interpersonal trust and, as a result, provide fertile

foundations for the growth of local businesses and charities. These local businesses and charities, in turn, provide the social welfare that the post-Soviet Central Asian state, and more specifically, the Kyrgyz and Uzbek states, no longer provide. This shifting of social welfare provision, finally, further erodes the central state's presence in the regions.

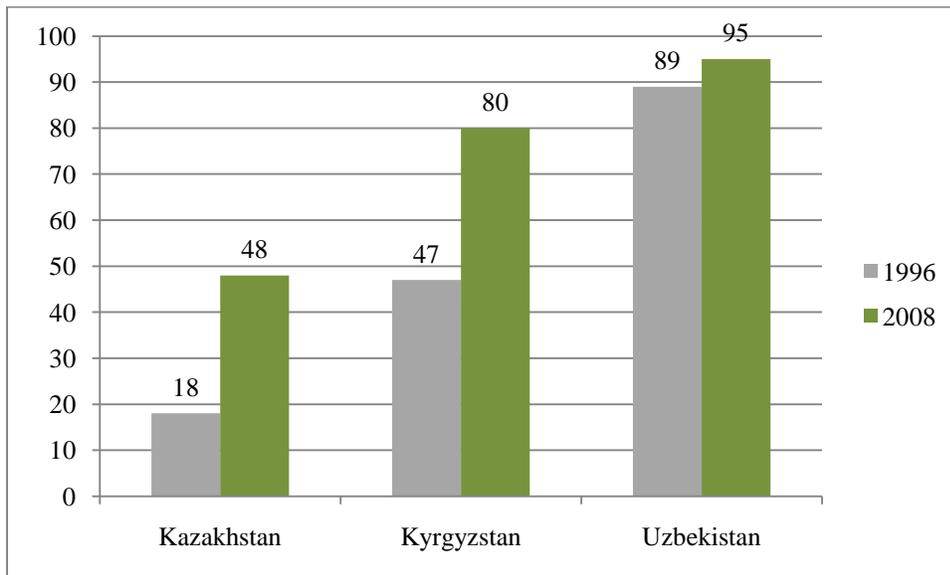
Present variations in Central Asian Islamic revivalism are, to a considerable degree, the results of past historical legacies. Islam's roots in Uzbekistan and in Kyrgyzstan's Fergana Valley span 1,000 years. In contrast, it was not until the 18th and 19th centuries that Islam saw wide adoption in what today is northern Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. At the same time, the ethnic and cultural reach of the Russian state was less pronounced in Uzbekistan than it was in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. Ethnic Russians, at the time of the 1989 Soviet census, constituted approximately thirty-six percent of the Kazakh and twenty percent of the Kyrgyz republic populations whereas ethnic Russians constituted only eight percent of the Uzbek citizenry in 1989. Given these societal endowments, we would anticipate that Islamic identification in the immediate post-Soviet years would be most pronounced in Uzbekistan and least prevalent in Kazakhstan. Finally, we would expect that Islamic identification within Kyrgyz society would lie somewhere in-between the high of Uzbekistan and the low of Kazakhstan.

Indeed, this is what we find. In surveys that the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) conducted in 1996, fewer than twenty percent of Kazakh respondents reported they were Muslim whereas approximately half of Kyrgyz and ninety percent of Uzbek respondents identified as Muslim.²² Kazakh identification with Islam has inched up in response to Russian emigration from Kazakhstan over the past decade. Still, respondent identification

²² Surveys conducted by the International Foundation for Electoral Systems. Summary statistics for these surveys (total respondents, respondent ethnicity and respondent region of residence) are available in appendix one of this chapter.

with Islam in Kazakhstan remains markedly less pronounced than identification with Islam is in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. In surveys colleagues and I conducted in 2008, the percentage of Kazakh respondents reporting they were Muslim remained less than fifty percent. Curiously, as Graph 4 illustrates, Islamic self-identification is now nearly pervasive among the Kyrgyz citizenry, rising from fifty percent in 1996 to slightly more than eighty percent today, and is all but universal in Uzbekistan, with ninety-five percent of Uzbek citizens reporting they were Muslim.

Graph 4: Percentage of Respondents Self-Identifying as Muslim in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan in 1996 and 2008



To a certain degree, here too in Kyrgyzstan and in Uzbekistan, Russian outmigration does account for some of this growth in Islamic self-identification. What is most remarkable, though, is the change within the titular Kyrgyz population. Thus, whereas fifty-five percent of ethnic Kyrgyz self-identified as Muslim in the 1996 IFES survey—just eight percentage points higher than the full Kyrgyz survey sample—in our 2008 survey ninety-eight percent of ethnic Kyrgyz self-identified as Muslim. In short, demographics and Muslim historical legacies alone, though they can explain much of the strong Islamic presence in Uzbekistan, cannot account for the

marked Islamic revivalism in Kyrgyzstan. What can account for this cascade to Islam, I argue, is economics.

The Kyrgyz state has all but disappeared at the local level. Government run enterprises are closed, public schools are shuttered for lack of heat, supplies and teachers, and Kyrgyzstan's two largest cities, Bishkek and Osh, are in the dark four or five hours a day due to the state's inability to provide steady electricity.²³ In contrast in Kyrgyzstan's local religious and economic communities generators and businesses are humming. In place of the state, local organizations, most notably local Islamic organizations, are stepping in to meet growing welfare needs. Muslim mutual assistance groups build schools, establish neighborhood charities and form the core of vibrant business associations. And as these organizations expand, Kyrgyz are further drawn away from the state and toward alternative, Muslim elites. As long as the central state does not interfere in the everyday life of these local communities, Kyrgyz are little bothered by the accumulating failures of post-Soviet patronage politics. When the Kyrgyz executive overreaches, however, when it attempts to exert control beyond Bishkek and into the regions, it is rebuffed, and, in former President Akaev's case, unseated by popular protest.

In Uzbekistan, Islamic charities have similarly assumed roles once fulfilled by the state. Here, and perhaps not surprisingly given demographics and the longer historical presence of Islam in Uzbekistan, these Muslim charities emerged far more rapidly than they did in Kyrgyzstan. Karimov's Muslim challenge, as I illustrate in chapter 5, did not begin with Andijan in May 2005, but rather with Muslim charities' *de facto* takeover of the city of Namangan in November 1991. Moreover, in further contrast to Kyrgyzstan, the state-society relations within which these Muslim charities are embedded are considerably more contentious

²³ "Five-hour Power Outage a Day Planned in Kyrgyzstan from 1 October," *AKIpress* (September 29, 2009).

and violent under Karimov than they have been under either Akaev or Bakiev. Karimov, in contrast to his Kyrgyz counterparts, has the coercive capacity to counter the growing influence of local Muslim charities and elites. That such coercion is in Karimov's best interest is debatable. Karimov's appointees do appear, at times, to exhibit greater loyalty to local Muslim economic elites than to the central government – a reality that is understandably threatening to an autocratic ruler. At the same time, repression begets militancy. Karimov's 1991 anti-Islam campaign in Namangan gave rise to the paramilitary Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and Karimov's 2005 Andijan repression has reinvigorated this militant Islamist movement. Although the IMU's 1999 and 2004 Tashkent bombings did not hit their desired target, Karimov remains in the crosshairs of a militant movement he himself helped to foment.

How long Uzbek patronage politics will remain airborne is not clear. In May 2004, on a flight from Tashkent to Qarshi, my plane taxied past the wreckage of an Uzbek Air Yak-40. The jet had crashed three months earlier, yet the distressing jumble of engines and fuselage remained on the tarmac. Was this Karimov's way of conveying a message to his pilots: be wary or this too will be your future? Or was this a portent of Karimov's own fate? Has he, through relentless repression and violence, depleted his reserve of co-pilots and navigators to the extent that his own regime is about to collapse?

Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan we can predict with greater certainty. Nazarbaev has had little need to reach deep into his immense reserve of political elites; few defect because the rewards of defection are so low compared to what the Nazarbaev regime itself can offer. Kyrgyzstan's elite reserve is far smaller, far more fractured and far more likely to peel away from central government patronage in favor of local business elites, often local Muslim business elites. This leaves President Bakiev with two alternatives: either he can do his best to maintain the peace,

thereby maintaining his hand at the controls, or he can turn his back on the delicate balancing act required to secure a winning coalition among Kyrgyzstan's fractured political elite. Bakiev appears to have chosen the latter alternative, stripping state assets as fast as he can in anticipation that soon he too, like his predecessor, will be tossed from power. This all makes for a turbulent ride, but a ride that will not end in the same political wreckage that is likely to befall Uzbekistan.

Analysis To Come

Mine is not the first study of post-Soviet Central Asian politics. I have benefited greatly from first-generation comparativists who blazed paths intellectually and, no less important, institutionally in their study of post-Soviet regime change. That I break from these scholars and, rather than focusing on transition and democratization, explore those causal factors that produce substantive variations in patronage politics does not mean that I reject the many valuable insights these scholars offer. I explore these insights in greater detail, and offer my alternative approach to post-Soviet Central Asian regime change in chapter 2. Chapter 3 next turns to the Soviet patronage model and its evolution from Lenin to Gorbachev. Here I begin with the perennial challenge confronting Central Asia's would-be rulers: establishing centralized control in distant lands. A key insight that emerges from chapter 3's analysis of governance and attempted governance in Central Asia is that, while attempts at transformative rule—Stalin's attempt to create a "surrogate proletariat" through unveiling campaigns and Khrushchev's attempts to transform Central Asian agriculture through the "Virgin Lands" program—either fail or are prohibitively costly. In contrast, less interventionist policies of patronage politics and proxy rule, strategies Lenin and Brezhnev pursued, met with comparative success.

This pattern of success and failure held for Gorbachev as well. Gorbachev's attempts to transform Central Asia during the early *perestroika* years brought Moscow little increased leverage. Critically important for the future of Central Asia, though, Gorbachev's interventions—and in the Kyrgyz case, non interventions—did prompt the emergence of markedly different patterns of elite unity and disunity in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. *Perestroika* unsettled state and society relations in all three Soviet republics in the late 1980s and, tragically, the economic uncertainties that *perestroika* produced led to deadly ethnic riots in Kazakhstan (1986), Uzbekistan (1989) and Kyrgyzstan (1990). The Central Communist Party leadership cleaned up the mess it created in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, carefully choreographing Nazarbaev's and Karimov's replacement of *perestroika* figureheads and the return to indigenized Central Asian rule. Gorbachev and the Communist Party, for reasons that had little to do with Central Asia, did not step in to manage Kyrgyzstan's leadership crisis in 1990. This decision not to intervene led to the fragmentation of the Kyrgyz political elite, a legacy that continues to shape Kyrgyz governance today.

The Uzbek, Kyrgyz and Kazakh case studies in chapters 4-6 explore how these inherited patterns of elite unity and disunity have fared in the post-Soviet context. More specifically, chapter 4 demonstrates how the incendiary combination of local Islamic charities and businesses and the state's harrowing coercive capacities has enabled the Karimov government to repress perceived Islamist threats, be these threats imagined or real. In contrast to Uzbekistan's repression, chapter 5 finds Kyrgyzstan's fragmented political elite has become even more fragmented and beset by chaos. Kyrgyzstan's scarce economic resources preclude the state's ability either to sustain effective patronage or coercion. Moreover, Kyrgyz bureaucrats and Kyrgyz society are increasingly turning away from the central state as local businesses and

charities, often local Muslim businesses and charities, offer far more economic sustenance than the Kyrgyz state can provide. Lastly, as chapter 6 shows, the Nazarbaev government enjoys the good fortune of having inherited a united political elite as well as immense oil resources with which it can maintain not only elite unity, but society's good will. At the same time, given the country's demographics and its comparative economic wellbeing, Islamic revivalism and the threat this revivalism presents to autocratic patronage politics is relatively muted in Kazakhstan. Muslim business elites certainly are present in Kazakhstan's regions. Nazarbaev though is more likely to reward rather than repress these elites, confident in the knowledge that his government's immense economic influence faces little threat from even the wealthiest of local businessmen.

Chapter 7 concludes by exploring the insights this study offers not only for our understanding of Central Asia and political transition, but also for how foreign governments and international organizations might more productively engage polities struggling with the pathologies of patronage politics. Thus far foreign engagement of Central Asian states, particularly western governments' and NGOs' engagement of Central Asian states, has failed to encourage political reform. Moreover, for the local Central Asian partners of western governments and NGOs, democracy promotion has often proven disastrous at the personal level. Alisher Saipov funded his reporting, prior to his murder, with a grant from the National Endowment for Democracy. Umida Niyazova, now fortunately abroad after enduring prison and a Stalin-like show trial in Uzbekistan, worked for Human Rights Watch. Ravshan Halmatov and Tulkun Karaev, two other Uzbek human rights activists now in exile, partnered with Freedom House and Karaev hosted the US Ambassador to Uzbekistan during the ambassador's trip to Qarshi in February 2002. Saipov, Niyazova, Halmatov and Karaev may all have pursued their activism with or without western financial and institutional support. Their strategies, that is the methods these activists applied in

pressing for political reform, very much do follow the deterministic logic embedded in the democratizations and transitions literatures. These literatures, though well-meaning, have proven not only inappropriate, but also deadly in the Central Asia case. As such, I close chapter 7 and this study with a plea for incrementalism. Uzbekistan will not become democratic in the next decade and neither, for that matter, will Kyrgyzstan or Kazakhstan. These regimes, importantly however, are not identical. If we can understand that which makes for a more peaceful and prosperous Kazakhstan and a peaceful if chaotic Kyrgyzstan, then perhaps western governments and NGOs can work with local activists to push the Uzbek state away from yet another decade of fear and repression.

A Note on Case Selection, Data and Methodology

Case Selection

Though I draw on research conducted in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, compelling studies of regime change could be made using other permutations of the five Central Asian regimes: Tajikistan has wavered between civil war, tenuous political reform and, most recently, authoritarian retrenchment; Kyrgyz patronage politics, like Tajik politics, is chaotic yet, thus far, comparatively peaceful; Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan have remained throughout the past decade steadfastly authoritarian, yet in Uzbekistan, this authoritarianism demands relentless repression while in Kazakhstan the patronage machine hums happily along much as it did during the long Brezhnev period; Turkmenistan, lastly, has moved from authoritarianism to a bizarre cult of personality and now back to authoritarianism. All of these countries are patronage-based autocracies. All share the legacy of Soviet rule. Yet each of these countries exhibits diverging patterns of patronage politics.

That I have not included Tajikistan and Turkmenistan in this comparative analysis has more to do with the nature of in-country field research in Central Asia than any concerns that these two countries are somehow inappropriate for the current comparative analysis. Indeed, I anticipate the reader will find that the causal logic I forward as driving variations in Uzbek, Kyrgyz and Kazakh patronage politics equally applies to the chaos of Tajik politics and the comparative stability of Turkmen autocratic rule. To do justice to the Tajik and Turkmen cases, however, I need more time in the field. For this study, I offer the findings based on a decade's work in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan.

Data

I use a mixture of both quantitative and qualitative data in my comparative analysis of Kazakh and Kyrgyz political change. Qualitative data come from semi-structured interviews and focus groups I conducted during several extended visits to Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan beginning in 1998. Qualitative data sources also include Central Asian and Soviet archives and periodicals. Survey data come from polls colleagues and I have conducted as part of an ongoing National Science Foundation-supported study that explores the effects of new information communication technologies on state and society in four of the five post-Soviet Central Asian states as well as from polls the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) and US Agency for International Development (USAID) conducted. Scholars can err both when applying qualitative and quantitative research methods. Researchers unfamiliar with local contexts may be swayed by the seeming precision quantitative analysis offers and, as a result, forward findings disconnected from reality. Equally, a researcher deeply immersed in the local community he or she is researching might fail to recognize that the community two towns over exhibits markedly differing perceptions of state and society relations. Pairing surveys with

extended field research, I hope, enables me to avoid some of the analytical pitfalls any comparative study must confront.

I did not avoid every pitfall. Police detained me in Bukhara, Uzbekistan, on suspicion of opiates possession. My alleged heroin possession and my fortunately brief detention remain mysteries to me. In Kara Suu, Kyrgyzstan, the local imam, reviewing those in attendance for Friday prayer, mistook me for a Chechen militant—a mistake that many in Central Asia regularly make. More troubling than these minor inconveniences, though, is the reality that colleagues with whom I have worked over the past decade have incurred considerable personal costs as a result of their activism. My collaboration with these colleagues was by no means the wellspring of their social activism. Nevertheless, the democratization discourse to which I and other researchers and policy makers are party emcglinhas influenced the strategies Central Asian activists pursue. It is time we acknowledge that, in the case of Central Asia, and likely more broadly, the democratization and transitions literatures are flawed in their imagined endpoints. Autocracy and patronage politics will remain in Central Asia for the foreseeable future. As such, rather than searching for the next color revolution, scholars and policy makers might productively shift their attention from the daydream of democracy to uncovering and encouraging processes that make autocracies more tolerable and less bloody.