

Foreign Policy Formation of Authoritarian States in Central Asia Since 1991 :

Non-Institutional Domestic Factors in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan*

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· **Keywords** : Central Asia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Foreign Policy Formation, Non-Institutional Domestic Factors, Sub-national Identity, Role of Ideology

[ABSTRACT]

Along with the institutional context, some key 'non-institutional' and 'domestic' factors should be taken into account when analyzing the foreign policy formation of the Central Asian states. This study examines the influence of non-institutional domestic factors over foreign policy formations and explores via comparative analysis how they have impacted the different paths in the foreign policies of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan since these states gained independence. This article focuses on three factors—the political leader's personality

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under the imperial presidency, sub-national identity, and the role of ideology—to reveal how these non-institutional variables have differentiated the two countries' foreign policies. This study finds that Presidents Nazarbayev and Karimov, as top decision makers, have been the core sources in foreign policy formations—their perceptions and sensitivities to situations and understanding of national interests have resulted in different diplomatic paths: 'multi-vectored and open' and 'preventive and conservative' diplomacy, respectively. Second, sub-national identity is, albeit informal and segmented, considered as influential in narrowing down each president's choices during foreign policy formation. The sub-national powers found in Kazakhstan were ethnically and regionally divided, while those in Uzbekistan were based on three regions and rigid. Third, in terms of ideology, 'de-Sovietization' has played a dominant role. While Uzbekistan had had to distance itself from Russia due to strong 'Uzbek nationalism', Kazakhstan with its considerable Russian population was not able to promote radical 'Kazakhization'.

I . Introduction

Since the collapse of the former Soviet Union (USSR), visible changes have swept through Central Asia.¹⁾ The region has had to adapt itself in order to survive in the highly globalized world system. Under the umbrella of the USSR during the Cold War, the republics of Central Asia neither had substantially any necessity nor capabilities to form and promote their own independent foreign policies, as the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), Supreme Soviet, CPSU politburo, and Council of Ministers functioned as the designers and promoters of Moscow's foreign policies.

1) Central Asia in this paper is confined to five former Soviet republics—Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

After having obtained their sovereignties, however, foreign policy formation has emerged as the most challenging and important task for every newly born Central Asian state, as each tries to seek its national interests and improve its international status.

The majority of existing studies concerned with the foreign policy of Central Asian states focus on Central Asia's international environment and structure, the strategies of neighboring world powers (i.e., Russia, China, the United States, India, etc.) toward Central Asia, and major regional organizations (Collective Treaty Security Organization [CSTO], Shanghai Cooperation Organization [SCO]) in which Central Asia states are involved.²⁾ However, since the 1970s, some studies have focused on the analysis of sub-national/domestic factors and decision-making process in analyzing a country's foreign policy,³⁾ suggesting that such factors do influence foreign policy formation. In this vein, this article explores the influence of domestic non-institutional factors on the foreign policy formation in Central Asian states. In particular, the article examines via comparative analysis the cases of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, which have taken quite different foreign policy paths despite having started under the same international condition (i.e., the collapse of the Soviet Union). Such differences are not likely to be explained sufficiently simply by highlighting each one's external conditions or by discussing legal-institutional aspects. Although mainstream foreign policy analysis generally takes up systems-level theories, this article is postulated on the assumption that an analysis

2) Ezeli Azarkan, "The Relations between Central Asian States and United States, China and Russian within the Framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization," *Alternatives: Turkish Journal of International Relations* 8-3 (2009), pp. 1-21; Kemal H. Karpat, "The Sociopolitical Environment Conditioning the Foreign Policy of the Central Asian States," in Adeed Dawisha and Karen Dawisha (eds.), *The Making of Foreign Policy in Russia and the New States of Eurasia* (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 1995); Bong Koo Kang, "Reorientation of Uzbekistan's Foreign Policy Towards the U.S. and Russia," *Slavic Studies* 22-1 (2007), pp. 47-75; Matteo Fumagalli, "Alignments and Realignments in Central Asia: The Rationale and Implications of Uzbekistan's Rapprochement with Russia," *International Political Science Review* 28-3 (2007), pp. 253-71.

3) Valerie Hudson, *Foreign Policy Analysis: Classic and Contemporary Theory* (Korean trans.) (Eulymunwhasa, 2007), p. 63.

of domestic-level variables is likely to better explain the different courses of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.

II . Theoretical Framework

Based on the assumption that domestic variables of an individual state influence foreign policy formation, this study examines how non-institutional domestic factors have influenced the foreign policy formations of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan in the post-Soviet era and uncovers the similarities and differences that have resulted in the contents of their foreign policies. Among previous studies, Trenin and Lo explored Russian foreign policy decision-making and mainly focused on domestic factors— institutional context, ideas and ideology, and national interest. They also discussed the importance of the president in foreign policy formation of Russia by analyzing the legal-institutional aspect.⁴⁾ Kazemi studied domestic resources of Uzbekistan’s foreign policy, with a focus on non-institutional domestic factors—policy orientations (pursuit of sovereignty, economic reforms, and domestic political stability) set by President Karimov.⁵⁾ In Korea, Park Sang Nam discussed how regional/local political powers in Central Asia influence foreign policy formation.⁶⁾

This study looks at three non-institutional domestic factors: the political leader’s personality under the “imperial presidency”⁷⁾ (president’s responses

4) Dmitri Trenin and Bobo Lo, *The Landscape of Russian Foreign Policy Decision-Making* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2005).

5) Leila Kazemi, “Domestic Sources of Uzbekistan’s Foreign Policy: 1991 to the Present,” *Journal of International Affairs* 56-2 (2003).

6) Sang Nam Park, “Regional Political Powers and Foreign Policy in the Central Asia,” *Sino-Soviet Studies* 32-3 (2008), pp. 141-66.

7) “Imperial presidency” is a term that became popular in the 1960s when historian Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. described the modern presidency of the United States as “imperial.” This term metaphorically means by ‘president’ who has excessive authority and competences under the presidential system. Here, the executive power is much stronger than legislative and judicial one. Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Imperial Presidency* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1973), p. x.

to threats and opportunities), sub-national identity, and the role of ideology (policy orientation) in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.⁸⁾

First, it is understood that the president is the key figure who represents his state and is a key actor in the formation of his/her country's foreign policy. When the Soviet Union collapsed, state-building became the most urgent task for the independent states in Central Asia. In each country, this has been led mostly by strong leadership of the president. Therefore, it is logical to examine each president by focusing on his perception and responses to situations during the formation of foreign policy. Second, sub-national identity cannot be ignored when considering Central Asian politics. Sub-national identities play a prominent role in the everyday lives of the people in Central Asia, where the populaces had no experience with the concept of modern 'sovereign state' until the collapse of the Soviet Union. After independence, the nature of sub-national powers based on 'region' and/or 'ethnicity' and each president's attempt to control them have consequences in contemporary foreign policy formation in both Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Third, Central Asian states have struggled to replace the Soviet ideology in order to distinguish themselves and establish their own principles and ideas. Consequently, new ideologies became major policy orientations of each state and have influenced the overall foreign policy formulation.

The theoretical base for each non-institutional domestic factor is as follows. First, in the cases of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan since their independence, the 'president' is considered the most influential factor in the formation and performance of foreign policy. Thus it is assumed that analyzing each president's perception and responses to specific conditions is likely to give clues to help us understand features of the foreign policy formation of each state. For instance, Perlmutter argues that, as long as the authority of a top policy decision maker in the domain of foreign policy

8) Some might raise the criticism that these three factors seem rather arbitrarily selected. However, these factors are among the key non-institutional domestic factors which have influenced and continue to influence Central Asia and the state-building processes still in progress.

and domestic politics is absolute, the top policy decision maker who substantially represents the whole nation-state should lead its foreign policy. Schlesinger, Jr. refers to the absolute authority of the top policy decision maker as “imperial presidency” and highlights the president’s absoluteness in foreign policy.⁹⁾ Perlmutter, Hurwitz, and Peffley also argue that the president is ultimately accountable for the results of the foreign policies as he is the representative of the nation. Therefore, it is logical that the president holds complete competence over foreign policy formation.¹⁰⁾ In addition, the top policy decision maker is generally the one who represents the state, is the chief of the executive and the defense domestically, and is the head of the party. In this regard, the top policy decision maker—either the president or prime minister—is likely to coordinate diplomacy, administration, politics, and defense and derive comprehensive decisions.¹¹⁾ Furthermore, George, Grindle, Thomas, and Hermann all individually point out that some historic diplomatic events and dramatic changes were initiated by such top policy decision makers.¹²⁾ By generalizing the above mentioned arguments, despite some criticisms against them, the analysis of

9) Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., “The Presidency and the Imperial Temptation,” in Charles W. Kegley, Jr. and Eugene R. Wittkopf (eds.), *The Domestic Sources of American Foreign Policy: Insights and Evidence* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1988), pp. 127-30.

10) Amos Perlmutter, “The Presidential Political Center and Foreign Policy,” *World Politics* 27-1 (1974), pp. 87-106; Jon Hurwitz and Mark Peffley, “The Means and Ends of Foreign Policy as Determinants of Presidential Support,” *American Journal of Political Science* 31-2 (1987), p. 240.

11) Carnes Lord, *The Presidency and the Management of National Security* (New York: Free Press, 1988), p. 32.

12) Alexander L. George, “Domestic Constraints on Regime Change in U.S. Foreign Policy: The Need for Policy Legitimation,” in G. John Ilkenberry (ed.), *American Foreign Policy: Theoretical Essays* (Boston: Scott, Foresman and Co., 1989), pp. 583-608; Meriles S. Grindle and John W. Thomas, “Policy Makers, Policy Choices, and Policy Outcomes: The Political Economy of Reform in Developing Countries,” *Policy Sciences* 22 (1989), pp. 221-28; Charles Hermann, “New Foreign Policy Problems and Old Bureaucratic Organizations,” in Charles W. Kegley, Jr. and Eugene R. Wittkopf (eds.), *The Domestic Sources of American Foreign Policy: Insights and Evidence* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1988), p. 258; Charles F. Hermann, “Changing Course: When Governments Choose to Redirect Foreign Policy,” *International Studies Quarterly* 34 (1990), pp. 3-21. Re-cited from Jong Yun Bae, *New Understanding on the Foreign Policy of Korea: Foreign Policy Decision-Making and Bureaucracy* (Seoul: KSI, 2006).

‘president’ in Central Asia bears implications regarding foreign policy formation since the authority and competence of these ‘presidents’ under “imperial presidency” are far above any other legal-institutional actors, hence they have been hardly checked or refrained by other institutions.

This article also focuses on the political peculiarities of the newly independent Central Asian states. During the early years of independence in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, state-building was considered the most urgent task and it has been led by the strong leadership of the president. Today, the president plays the most decisive and pivotal role in foreign policy formation in both countries where strong presidential system has been established. The authority and competence of the president is often described as “never-surpassed” in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.¹³⁾ In this circumstance, it is reasonable that the ‘personal characteristics’ such as perception and sensitivity to external affairs, value-belief system, and decision style of these presidents are likely to have an influence on foreign policy formations. By this very regard, Margaret G. Hermann focuses on the ‘personal characteristics’ of policymakers and their effects on foreign policy behaviors.¹⁴⁾ In particular, she argues that top policymakers like a political leader of a state are likely to exert more influence over foreign policy formation, decisions, and actions, hence his/her personal characteristics such as belief, sensitivity to situation, and perception should be treated as the key element affecting and shaping foreign policy and diplomatic behavior.¹⁵⁾ Therefore, this study emphasizes the role and influence of two presidents—President Nursultan A. Nazarbayev of

13) Борисова Е. А. Казахстан: президент и внешняя политика (Kazakhstan: President and Foreign Policy). —Москва: Natalis, 2005.

14) Margaret G. Hermann, “Effects of Personal Characteristics of Political Leaders on Foreign Policy,” in Maurice A. East, Barbara G. Salmore and Charles F. Hermann (eds.), *Why Nation Acts: Theoretical Perspectives for Comparative Foreign Policy Studies* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publication, 1978), pp. 49-68.

15) Many scholars have discussed the extent to which a political leader’s personal characteristics influence public policy including foreign policy. Among them, Rosenau (1972) argues that personal characteristics of foreign policy decision makers are only of minor importance in determining foreign policy. On the other hand, Shapiro and Bonham (1973), and Stassen (1972) underscore that personal characteristics are more

Kazakhstan and President Islam A. Karimov of Uzbekistan—by taking into account their personal characteristics.

Second, this article focuses on the ‘sub-national identity’ of each state. If ‘national identity’ generally refers to the depiction of a country as a whole, encompassing its culture, traditions, language, and politics, ‘sub-national identity’, on the other hand, covers religions, ethnic groups, tribes, clans, cultures, gender, and regions. In short, sub-national identity refers to that at a level ‘below’ the national level.¹⁶⁾ In this article, sub-national identity is particularly confined to ‘regional’ and ‘ethnic’ identities.

Many previous examinations of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan foreign policy tended to highlight either the role of natural resources in their international relations or the ideologies of Islam Karimov and Nursultan Nazarbayev.¹⁷⁾ Although these factors are important to understanding each state’s foreign policy, in Central Asian politics, the crucial role of the domestic political environment, more specifically, the non-institutional political powers based on various sub-national identities, should not be ignored. Regarding studies on sub-national identities of Central Asia,

important than any other single factor in determining foreign policy. For details, refer to James N. Rosenau, “Review of Dag Hammarskold’s United Nations and the New Nations in the United Nations, 1960-1967,” *American Historical Review* 77 (1972), p. 1916; Michael J. Shapiro and Matthew G. Bonham, “Cognitive Processes and Foreign Decision-Making,” *International Studies Quarterly* 17 (1973), pp. 147-74; Glen H. Stassen, “Individual Preference versus Role-constraint in Policy-Making: Senatorial Response to Secretaries Acheson and Dulles,” *World Politics* 25 (1972), pp. 96-119.

16) Samuel P. Huntington in “Who Are We?” classified the terms of identity as ‘trans’ or ‘supra’ national, ‘national’, ‘sub-national’, and ‘dual-national’ levels and pointed out in contemporary America national identity is losing its influence while Americans have put more emphasis on their trans-, sub-, dual identities in recent years. For details, see Samuel P. Huntington, *Who Are We: The Challenges to America’s National Identity* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004).

17) For instance, Martha Brill Olcott explains that Kazakhstan’s large energy reserves make it a strategically important state. Martha Brill Olcott, *Kazakhstan: Unfulfilled Promise* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2002), pp. 3-4; James P. Dorian, “Central Asia: A Major Emerging Energy Player in the 21st Century,” *Energy Policy* 34-5 (March 2006); Martha Brill Olcott, *Central Asia’s New States: Independence, Foreign Policy, and Regional Security* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute for Peace Press, 1996).

Collins and Schatz both argue that pre-Soviet clans—which are defined differently depending on the author and country under analysis—are of greatest importance to post-Soviet politics in Central Asia.¹⁸⁾ On the other hand, Luong pointed out that regional powers particularly influence ongoing domestic and external politics in Central Asia.¹⁹⁾ This article concentrates on sub-national identities particularly based on ‘region’ and/or ‘ethnicity’ to understand how they play a determining role in shaping and directing the foreign policies of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. This factor is a traditional sub-identity, surviving both from the suppression of Soviet policy and the current presidents; both presidents tried to eliminate the traditional power bases in order to prevent the rise of political elite based on traditional identities and to reinforce centralization.²⁰⁾ By experiencing them, however, the region/ethnicity factor in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan appears to be an influential factor, especially around independence, as Central Asians display a strong attachment to traditional identities.

Third, this article explores discourse on the possible pervasive role of ideology (policy orientation) in Central Asia since the collapse of the Soviet Union. The author of this study was inspired to employ this particular non-institutional domestic factor based a study by Trenin and Lo about Russian foreign policy decision making.²¹⁾ As is well-known, Russia experienced a vacuum of ideology during the early 1990s due to the sudden collapse of the Soviet Union and the retreat of socialism. The experience of the whole of Central Asia was similar to that of Russia. Therefore, there appeared an urgent need for the Central Asian states right after independence to replace the Soviet ideology in order to distinguish

18) Kathleen Collins, *Clan Politics and Regime Transition in Central Asia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Edward Schatz, *Modern Clan Politics: The Power of “Blood” in Kazakhstan and Beyond* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004).

19) Pauline Jones Luong, *Institutional Change and Political Continuity in Post-Soviet Central Asia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 1-25.

20) Jae Young Lee, Jae Nam Go, Sang Nam Park, and Ji Eun Lee, *Political Elite and Power Structure of Kazakhstan* (KIEP, 2009), pp. 24-25.

21) The authors also advanced their perspectives examining political leaders, ideas and ideology, and external factors in order to identify features of the current Russian foreign policy and its landscape. Trenin and Lo (2005), pp. 14-16.

themselves from the USSR and design their own foreign policies in accordance to their policy orientations.²²⁾ In this article, key policy orientations playing the dominant role in the foreign policy formation of each state will be analyzed.

III. Non-Institutional Domestic Factors of Foreign Policy Formation in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan

1. Political Leader's Personality under the Imperial Presidency: President's Responses to Threats and Opportunities

A variety of arguments describe the extent to which a leader can affect what governments do in their relations with other nations.²³⁾ However, many agree that leaders certainly play a substantial role in shaping foreign affairs. The two current presidents of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan—Nursultan Nazarbayev and Islam Karimov—are no exception. They can even be considered “imperial presidents” since their influence over politics are

22) For reference, other possible non-institutional elements might include the regime style, political culture of the society, national identity, relations with other states, national attribute of society, role of religions, the role of civil society, interest groups, clan politics, implications of kinship, and tribes regarding Central Asia.

23) The extent of the influence of a political leader's personal characteristics in the formation of foreign policy is controversial. Singer (1961) argues that individual actors are limited by social forces in the impact they can have on events. Holsti (1973) argues that leaders who have different personal characteristics behave similarly when they place themselves in common situations. Verba (1969) argues that foreign policy decisions are made in complex bureaucracies, and thus organizational constraints limit the effect of individual characteristics. Refer to Hermann (1978), p. 50. For more details, see Ole R. Holsti, “Foreign Policy Decision-makers Viewed Psychologically: A Sketchy Survey of ‘Cognitive Process’ Approaches,” a paper presented at the Conference on the Successes and Failures of Scientific International Relations Research, June 25-28, 1973, California; James D. Singer, “The Level of Analysis Problem in International Relations,” *World Politics* 13 (1961), pp. 77-92; Sydney Verba, “Assumptions of Rationality and Non-Rationality in Models of the International System,” in James N. Rosenau (ed.), *International Politics and Foreign Policy* (New York: Free Press, 1969), pp. 217-31.

considered so great. How did they develop “imperial status” and under what conditions? There are several reasons for this. First, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have successfully developed strong presidential systems, with the power of the executive much stronger than that of the legislature or judiciary. The president in both states is the most powerful person in the executive, with executive power holding tight control over the legislative and judicial powers. While separation of powers is envisioned in each country’s constitution, such is nominal: in each, the parliament is dominated by the pro-president party; hence, its confirmation of the president’s appointments of key posts (for instance, members of the judiciary) is a mere formality. Therefore, it is clear that constitutional competences and authorities of both presidents are very high while no substantial division of power and no checks and balances of presidential power are guaranteed. In this circumstance, it is assumed that the personal characteristics of political leaders (i.e., presidents) have more of an impact on foreign policy behavior *if* the political leaders are high-level policymakers such as heads of state.²⁴⁾ More specifically, Hermann argues that personal characteristics would have more impact on policy in situations 1) that force the political leader to define or interpret them, 2) in which the political leader is likely to participate in the decision-making process, and 3) in which the political leader has wide latitude in the decision making. These are quite logical since as a person moves higher in the organizational hierarchy, one can expect far fewer organizational and role constraints placed on him/her.²⁵⁾ In contemporary Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, the above-mentioned situations apply perfectly.

Second, the general characteristics of leadership types (and the resulting

24) Before advancing the argument, the notion of personal characteristics should be defined. In *Why Nation Acts*, Hermann defines that “personal characteristics” refer to an individual’s biographical statistics, training, work experiences, personality traits, beliefs and attitudes, and values. In other words, personal characteristics are all aspects of an individual qua individual.” Also, a political leader’s personal characteristics should be dealt with at both general (across situations and roles) and specific (for political situations and roles) level. Hermann (1978), p. 64.

25) *Ibid.*, pp. 51-52.

styles of government) in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan closely follow three regional historical influences: the early Islamic Emperors, the Mongolian Khans, and the Russian Tsars (and later Soviet leaders).²⁶⁾ It was, in fact, due to the long existing historical influences of leadership in the region and not just the suddenness of the transition that compelled leaders to install governments based on systems with which they were familiar.²⁷⁾ Based on these historical factors, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan both have developed strong presidential system backed by the imperial leaderships of each president and have maintained successfully their political and social stabilities despite some differences. Top-down decision making and hierarchical features are outstanding in the region.

Third, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan are characterized as information-control societies. Most of the mass media in these two countries are pro-president or government operated. Therefore, information is likely to be shaped, collected, and manipulated by the government and the president is provided unlimited access to information. Overall, the president plays 'imperial' influences over most external policy formation, not to mention domestic policy. This is why they are called "imperial president"—they operate virtually under 'authoritarian' regimes in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Based on this understanding, we shall explore the personal characteristics, decision-making and leadership styles briefly of the two presidents and examine via cases how their perception and responses to domestic and external threats and opportunities impact foreign policy formation.

President Nursultan Nazarbayev was elected president of Kazakhstan by the Supreme Soviet on April 24, 1990. On December 1, 1991, with Kazakhstan being on the verge of independence, he was elected by Kazakh citizens with 95 percent of the vote. He was most recently re-elected in 2005 with a landslide victory (91 percent of the vote). Overall, Nazarbayev

26) Sean M. Cox, "Historical Influences and a Modern Alternative for Leadership Models in Central Asia," *Doğuş Üniversitesi Dergisi* (Istanbul: Dogus Universitesi Yayinlari) 6-14 (2002), p. 18.

27) *Ibid.*

has been president for almost two decades. According to some, Nazarbayev is known as a “pragmatic technocrat,” having served in many high-level posts during the Soviet period.²⁸⁾ Thus, it is considered that such experiences were likely to afford Nazarbayev the chance to listen and learn from others, to pick up ideas and make them his own.²⁹⁾ Nazarbayev has also proven to be an astute politician who has prevented ethnic tensions from threatening the integrity of Kazakhstan and has protected the country’s sovereignty by cooperating with Russia on some issues and quietly circumventing it on others.³⁰⁾

In foreign policy, Nazarbayev particularly stresses pro-Russian policy, open economy, and international reputation. There are some reasons for this. First, Kazakhstan was the last Central Asian state to declare its independence from the Soviet Union. Due to the country’s Russian population as majority and past economic subordination to the USSR, the then ruling elite in Kazakhstan were reluctant to separate from Russia. Under the circumstances, Nazarbayev became the first president of Kazakhstan and the situation forced him to correctly perceive the necessities and set the

28) Nazarbayev has a long career as a technocrat. He has served as a secretary of the Kazakh Central Committee in 1979, in the Soviet Party’s Central Auditing Commission from 1981 to 1986, as a chairman in the Kazakh SSR’s Council of Ministers in 1984, and in the CPSU Central Committee in March 1986, as the new Congress of People’s Deputies, as the Kazakh Party’s first secretary in 1989. From February 1990 he also was chairman of the Kazakh Supreme Soviet, which elected him the Kazakh SSR’s president in April of that year, which culminated in his election as president of Kazakhstan in 1991. Official Site of the President of Republic of Kazakhstan, at <[http://www.akorda.kz/www/www_akorda_kz.nsf/sections?OpenForm &id_doc=126435E85EC1159F462572340019E5C4&lang=en&L1=L4&L2=L4-30](http://www.akorda.kz/www/www_akorda_kz.nsf/sections?OpenForm&id_doc=126435E85EC1159F462572340019E5C4&lang=en&L1=L4&L2=L4-30)> (searched date: 18 September 2008).

29) After independence, he moved swiftly to launch radical economic reforms that have allowed Kazakhstan to prosper. Temasek, Singapore’s sovereign wealth fund, was the inspiration for Samruk, the state holding company for Kazakhstan’s industrial monopolies. Chile provided the model for the pension system, while the oil fund, a store of windfall oil profits, is copied from Norway. “Managing to Be Friends of Everyone,” *Financial Times* (30 June 2008), at <http://us.ft.com/ftgateway/superpage.ft?news_id=fto063020081922557699&page=1> (searched date: 18 September 2008).

30) Kazakhstan Leadership, at <[http://www.nationsencyclopedia.com/World-Leaders-2003/ Kazakhstan-LEADERSHIP.html](http://www.nationsencyclopedia.com/World-Leaders-2003/Kazakhstan-LEADERSHIP.html)> (searched date: 28 September 2008).

policy orientation so as not to provoke Russia. Nazarbayev himself seemed to understand that Kazakhstan in the early years of independence was very vulnerable to threats both from inside and outside. Although he was required to establish the Kazakh nation-state, which was the pervasive theme swayed in Central Asia in 1990s, domestic stability and economic growth were treated as top priorities for the then newly elected government. Therefore, Nazarbayev kept close relations with Russia—a policy orientation totally contrary to that of President Karimov of Uzbekistan, as shall be discussed later. Intimate relations with Russia contributed to strengthening Nazarbayev's influence, thus maintaining his government and stabilizing the society that boasts a considerable Russian ethnic group.³¹⁾ Here, perception and sensitivity of Nazarbayev to given situations had considerably contributed to characterizing the Kazakh foreign policy as 'pro-Russian'.

Second, Nazarbayev has targeted economic development as one of the most urgent missions for him and his nation. After independence, he needed legitimacy as president to govern what was a chaotic Kazakhstan. He believed that rapid economic growth and improving living conditions would guarantee his legitimacy. He recognized that raising various economic indexes would improve his chances of longevity as president. Taking Kazakhstan's lack of manufacturing infrastructure into account, the Nazarbayev government adopted an 'open economy' policy to achieve economic development quickly. Particularly, oil and gas exploration has become the country's so-called 'FDI blackhole' and it explicitly has contributed to the visible and quick economic growth of Kazakhstan since 2000 by recording an average growth of almost 10 percent. Even though the 2008 global economic crisis hit the Kazakhstan economy severely, Nazarbayev has quickly adopted new economic strategy to strengthen

31) In Kazakhstan, Russian ethnicity accounted for 42 percent of the total population right after the country obtained independence. Thus de-linkage with Russia might lead to instability in Kazakhstan. Jae Young Lee and Sang Nam Park (eds.), *Emerging Central Asia and the Korean Countermeasures* (Seoul: Korea Institute of Economy and Policy [KIEP], 2007), p. 23.

domestic manufacturing industry and restructure troubled banks. Open economy policy and integration into world markets are likely to be supported by Nazarbayev since the current industrial structure is still excessively dependent on energy resources and foreign direct investment. For now, this seems Nazarbayev's only exit to get Kazakhstan out from the crisis and accelerate economic growth again.

Third, president Nazarbayev has particularly made efforts to advertise Kazakhstan through various regional and international activities. As the head of state, the leadership of Nazarbayev has been directly focused on raising the country's international status. Having promoted "Eurasian Strategy," embracing Asia and Europe at the same time, he has played a decisive role in initiating the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA) and obtained chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation (OSCE) in 2010. Kazakhstan actively participates in the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) by broadening diplomatic relations worldwide with Islamic countries. Also, the 7th Asian Winter Games in 2011 will be held in Almaty, Kazakhstan. With active participation in international events, Kazakhstan aims to become a corridor to connect the East and the West in the 21st century, restoring past glory. The greatest beneficiary of the results of the series of foreign policies so far is President Nazarbayev himself: he considers foreign policy as an instrument to acknowledge Kazakhstan and his name to the world. By doing that, he has been seeking to advertise himself as the legitimate leader of Kazakhstan and furthermore to be accepted as a responsible leader in establishing relations with the West.³²⁾

However, Nazarbayev's government faces some challenges. Many leading Western critics criticize that President Nazarbayev is an authoritarian leader. As witnessed in South Korea under the authoritarian leaderships of the 1970s and 80s, Nazarbayev has also sought to reinforce his presidential

32) About dynamics among national interests, N. A. Nazarbayev's ambitions, and domestic factors in the formation of foreign policy in Kazakhstan, refer to Bukkvoll Tor, "Astana's Privatised Independence: Private and National Interests in the Foreign Policy of Nursultan Nazarbayev," *Nationalities Papers* 32-3 (September 2004), pp. 631-50.

power by advocating economic development as top priority while putting political reforms and democratization aside. Despite social and political problems, however, Nazarbayev won the last presidential election and still enjoys wide popularity from within his nation. This has largely resulted in the achievement of an average economic growth of 10 percent during the 2000s thanks to the open oil and gas policy. Therefore, despite their president's authoritarian leadership, most Kazakh people do not feel the need for radical change or revolution in the political leadership. The expectation for potential economic development still makes the Kazakh people advocate the current leadership.

In Uzbekistan, where the presidential system has been firmly established since independence, the personal characteristics of the head of state, especially the leadership style of the president, provides very useful insight into understanding the foreign policy formation from the non-institutional dimension. There exists a dearth of information about President Islam Karimov of Uzbekistan. However, according to Uzbek media reports, he is strong-willed, self-confident, and courageous in defending the honor and dignity of the Uzbek people. When he headed the Central Committee of the Communist Party from 1989 until independence, others tried to blacken his name, producing lawlessness and persecution.³³⁾ However, he successfully has led his people to independence without victimization or bloodshed, establishing a sovereign state and ensuring not a revolutionary but evolutionary way of national development under the principle "Never destroy the old house before you build a new one."³⁴⁾ Karimov also has espoused a number of key philosophical foundations by publishing several books and has emphasized the role of strong government. For instance, his political philosophy—"from the strong state to the strong civil society"—became a theoretical basis for the strategy of independent Uzbekistan.³⁵⁾

Regarding the role of Uzbekistan in the international system, he has

33) Gregory Gleason, "Interstate Cooperation in Central Asia from the CIS to the Shanghai Forum", *Europe-Asia Studies* 53-7 (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 578-83.

34) Islam A. Karimov, "Epoch-making leader," *Korean Herald* (27 March 2006), at <<http://www.turkishweekly.net/news.php?id=28724>> (searched date: 27 September 2008).

emphasized that international organizations through cooperation with Uzbekistan can contribute to consolidating stability in Asia.³⁶⁾ Regarding foreign investment policy, one episode suggests that Karimov has a unique way of impressing potential investors. When he traveled to Paris in October 1993, for example, he carried with him suitcases of gold and deposited them in the vaults of Credit Commercial de France on the Champs-Élysées. He told French industrialists: “This gold will serve as a financial guarantee for those who want to invest in our country.” When the late French president Mitterrand visited Uzbekistan in April 1994, most of these industrialists were in his delegation, including the CEOs of Elf, Total, GdF, Bouygues, and others. Karimov had done the same in November 1993 during a visit to London; he deposited his suitcases of gold at the Rothschild Bank and told about 100 businessmen at the Confederation of British Industry “there is plenty of this pure metal in my country” where, Karimov said, an investment code guarantees “the most favorable conditions” for investors. To show who runs things in his country, he added: “I will be dealing directly with you ... Who comes first, gets the best services.”³⁷⁾ With such charisma, since Uzbekistan obtained its sovereignty, Karimov has dominated Uzbek politics and developed the political system based on a strong presidency.

The general feature of foreign policy promoted by the Karimov administration is characterized as “preventive” and “conservative” diplomacy, especially during the early years of independence.³⁸⁾ Shortly afterward, Karimov

35) Press-release On the meeting of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov with journalists, at <<http://www.uzbekconsulny.org/news/631/>>

36) Oumirserik Kasenov, “Central Asia: National, Regional and Global Aspects of Security,” K. M. Asaf and Abul Barakat (eds.), *Central Asia: Internal and External Dynamics* (Islamabad: Institute of Regional Studies, 1997), p. 47.

37) “Uzbekistan - Islam Karimov, APS Diplomat Operations in Oil Diplomacy” (21 October 2001), at <http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_hb6512/is_ai_n28867453?tag=artBody;col1> (searched date: 26 October 2008).

38) According to chapter 4 of the Constitution of Republic of Uzbekistan, The Republic of Uzbekistan shall have full rights in international relations. Its foreign policy shall be based on the principles of sovereign equality of the states, non-use of force or threat of its use, inviolability of frontiers, peaceful settlement of disputes, non-interference in the

sought to consolidate his leadership and stabilize the country. First, when Uzbekistan obtained independence, there existed pervasive fears that tensions would be escalated due to international terrorism, extremism, and pursuit of weapons of mass destruction.³⁹⁾ Therefore, Karimov directed the country toward prevention of such threats and elimination of conflict situations.⁴⁰⁾ Priority in foreign policy has been to reinforce stability inside and outside of Uzbekistan and to maintain balance among powers such as the United States, Russia, and China.⁴¹⁾ Such a recognition of security threats are reflected in Karimov's foreign policy formation process and consequences. For example, Karimov's intolerance of internal political opponents has caused problems in his relations with Western states, while his aggressive pursuit of Islamist opponents has led to incursions into

internal affairs of other states, and other universally recognized norms of international law. Also, the Republic may form alliances, join or withdraw from unions and other inter-state organizations proceeding from the ultimate interests of the state and the people, their well-being and security (17-modda). *O'zbekiston Respublikasi Konstitutsiyasi*: o'n ikkinchi chaqiriq O'zbekiston Respublikasi Oliy kengashining o'n birinchi sessiyasida 1992-yil 8-dekabrda qabul qilingan, (Tashkent: O'zbekiston, 2008), p. 6. Regarding foreign policy of Uzbekistan, see Bong Koo Kang, "The Reorientation of Uzbekistan's Foreign Policy toward the U.S. and Russia," *Slavic Studies* 22-1 (2007), pp. 47-75; Васькин И. Основные направления внешней политики Узбекистана (Main direction of foreign policy of Uzbekistan) (Tashkent: Uzbekiston, 1999).

39) For understanding how Islamic threats have been reflected in the Uzbek foreign policy formation, refer to Elena Mogilevski, "Threats of Islamic Extremism and Formulation of Uzbekistan's Foreign Policy," at <<http://coombs.anu.edu.au/SpecialProj/ASAA/biennial-conference/2004/Mogilevski-E-ASAA2004.pdf>> (searched date: 10 December 2009).

40) "Objectives of Uzbekistan's Foreign Policy Course," http://mfa.uz/eng/inter_cooper/foreign_policy/ (searched date: 12 August 2008). For further reading on security issues of Uzbekistan, refer to Alisher I. Fayziyev, *O'zbekistonda milliy xavfsizlikni ta'minlashning geosiyosiy jihatlari. O'zbekiston Respublikasi milliy xavfsizlik muammolari va barqaror rivojlanish sharoitlari mavjudagi to'rtinchi ilmiy-amaliy konferentsiya masalalari. 4-jild*, (Tashkent: 2004).

41) About the role and status of Uzbekistan in the Central Asian region, refer to Т. Б. Андрианова, *Геополитические теории XX века: социально-философские исследования (Theory of Geopolitics of 20th century: social-philosophical study)*, (Москва, 1996); К. Гаджиев, *Геополитическое будущее России (Geopolitical Future of Russia)*, (Москва, 1997).

Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Neighbors are thus wary of trusting Karimov. It was not until after the 9/11 terrorist attacks occurred in New York and Washington that the Uzbek government finally decided to allow the U.S. military base to stay Uzbek territory—the first case of a U.S. military base being permitted in the Central Asian region since the Cold War.

Since then, Uzbekistan has kept ties with the United States until the Andijan unrest⁴²⁾ in 2005 was suppressed by force by the government, resulting in bloodshed. The Andijan crisis was a turning point for the Uzbek foreign policy path because Uzbekistan since then began to reinforce its relationship with Russia while distancing itself from the United States. Coincidentally, this tragedy occurred after a series of “color revolutions” against the corrupted and incapable governments of Georgia (2003), Ukraine (2004), and Kyrgyzstan (2004). Therefore, it can be evaluated that the tragedy was the result of the overall calculation of Karimov who perceived such civilian unrests in neighboring countries as a threat to his leadership and felt a necessity to find a suitable partner state that would support his reaction to the crisis—and his legitimacy. Since the United States blamed—albeit in a passive manner—Karimov and demanded open international investigation of the crisis, while Russia supported officially Karimov and defined the Andijan unrest as a rebellion manipulated by an Islamist group, it was not surprising to see Karimov to turn to Russia as a partner rather than to the United States.

42) There were more than “1,000 innocent civilian casualties” recorded although the official announcement of Uzbekistan was around “100 armed Islamists and with some civilians.” While the Uzbek government officially blamed the Islamic radicals seeking to copy Kyrgyzstan’s “color revolution,” there is some evidence to cast the events as a dramatic explosion of regional opposition to President Karimov and the center. Burnashev and Chernykh recently argued that post-Andijan shuffling in the power ministries suggests the Andijan events were part of regional political struggles. Shortly after the crisis, in 2006, the former *hokim* of Andijan *viloyat* was arrested on the charge of being responsible for planning the uprising and this explicitly supports the above argument. See Rustam Burnashev and Irina Chernykh, “Changes in Uzbekistan’s Military Policy after the Andijan Events,” *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly* 5-1 (2007), pp. 67-73, at <http://www.silkroadstudies.org/new/docs/CEF/Quarterly/February_2007/Burnashev_Chernykh.pdf> (searched date: 30 April 2007).

Meanwhile, Karimov has sought to keep regional stability, and thus Uzbekistan has joined regional organizations like the SCO. That is, Karimov's foreign policy has been designed around the priority of maintaining domestic stability and insuring no threat to his leadership either from inside or outside. Bearing the two goals in mind, Karimov has managed so far to maintain consistency in terms of "goal seeking," although his path for doing so has been inconsistent. In this regard, one can derive that the president's personal characteristics plus the internal and external conditions surrounding Karimov have influenced the foreign policy formation process in Uzbekistan. Particularly, Uzbekistan's geographic proximity to regional hotspots in Tajikistan, Afghanistan, and Iran has resulted in, to some extent, the Karimov leadership's considerable sensitivity to security issues like Islamic terrorism and separatism.

The existence and influence of the imperial presidents is substantially powerful across each respective country and their existence directly relates with the stable future of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. As seen above, the most important foreign policies were substantially influenced by those presidents and reflected in their foreign policy formations. The following comment of Central Asian scholar Dosym Satpayev, a Kazakh political scientist, clearly shows how he perceives their imperial presidents and what they mean for each country: "Stability in our countries lies only with presidents: Islam Karimov in Uzbekistan, and Nursultan Nazarbayev in Kazakhstan."⁴³ In the same vein, Annette Bohr pointed out that "President Karimov has become the driving force behind every aspect of policy formation in independent Uzbekistan."⁴⁴ Therefore, as long as security issues (for Uzbekistan) and economic development (for Kazakhstan) have been closely related to leadership consolidation of the two imperial presidents, their personal decision-making style, sensitivity and responses

43) "Who Will Succeed Central Asia's Dominant Leaders?" National Public Radio (6 March 2007), at <<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=7716670>> (searched date: 7 April 2010).

44) Annette Bohr, *Uzbekistan: Politics and Foreign Policy* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1998), p. 5.

to situations they face are likely to be the most important determinants of foreign policy formations. One might argue that so far the foreign policies of each state are the results of “choosing from the given options” and not from the president’s personal responses. Nevertheless, one cannot deny that each imperial president is tightly supported by his country’s respective constitutional authority, making it more probable that each president’s understanding and responses are more likely to be treated significantly in foreign policy formation than any other factors.

2. Sub-national Identity

In Central Asia, various sub-national identities based on clans, tribes, regions, ethnics and religions have existed for ages. They are considered as important factors that differentiate Central Asian politics from one region to the next. The studies of Schatz and Collins both focus on pre-Soviet sub-national identity—clans and their importance in domestic politics.⁴⁵⁾ Luong’s study highlights the influence of region-based identity to contemporary politics of Central Asia and argues that the dynamics between regional powers and the central authority influence the domestic politics of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan.⁴⁶⁾ In this article, however, I study the correlation of the existence and nature of sub-national identities (powers) and extend their impacts to foreign policy formations in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan since their independence.

Before the Soviet ruled Central Asia, politics in this region was dominated by sub-national identities mostly based on clans, tribes, region, and religion. Central Asia had never experienced a modern nation-state until 1991. Thus historically, traditional communities have played the role

45) Edward Schatz and Kathleen Collins argue that pre-Soviet identities are the most important to understanding domestic political competition. See Edward Schatz, *Modern Clan Politics: The Power of “Blood” in Kazakhstan and Beyond* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004); Kathleen Collins, *Clan Politics and Regime Transition in Central Asia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

46) Pauline Jones Luong, *Institutional Change and Political Continuity in Post-Soviet Central Asia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 1-25.

of state and have shaped the identity of Central Asians in political, social, and cultural aspects. However, Soviet policies replaced those sub-national identities and powers with regional (by *oblast*) political identities, and thus the pre-Soviet traditional power bases were weakened and the Soviet rule over Central Asians could be reinforced. However, during this process, the newly born sub-national identity (regional powers) monopolized regional resources (i.e., water, energy, cotton) and a good number of economic barons emerged.⁴⁷⁾ When Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan obtained independence, the sub-national identities became the most important dividing lines in domestic politics against the central authority. Therefore both states—in varying degrees—experienced difficulties in state-building and unifying internally segmented nations. The political elites were divided by regions and/or ethnicities and people acknowledged their sub-national powers as more legitimate and influential than the newly emerged central authority. Moreover, it is well known that Nazarbayev and Karimov could be elected as their countries first presidents as a result of consent and support of then existing sub-national powers.⁴⁸⁾ Therefore, the influence of sub-national identities on shaping national policies appeared significantly and their interests were often taken into account in the foreign policy formations via each president's decisions.

Kazakhstan's foreign policy since independence is characterized by the center's need to defeat domestic competitors based on various sub-national identities such as 'ethnicity' or/and 'regions'. It is noted that sub-national identities in Kazakhstan around independence were very complicated in their bases and not as rigid as those found in Uzbekistan. Ethnically, there were various ethnic groups aside from the Kazakh one and they dominated the majority in Kazakhstan in the early years. Plus, traditional regional powers originated from the Greater, the Middle, and the Small hordes dating back to the 17th century and Soviet regional (*oblast*) powers with accessibility to regional resources were competing with each others. The

47) Sang Nam Park, *Central Asia Today* (Seoul: Hanshin University Press, 2010), pp. 37-40.

48) *Ibid.* p. 37.

nature of sub-national identities in Kazakhstan was complicated and not rigid, and thus in the late 1990s Nazarbayev was able to relatively quickly gain control over them and concentrate power on himself.

Regional ethnic powers were particularly influential around the time of independence. A good number of Russian populations in northern Kazakhstan had strong cross-border economic links with Russia and still viewed Moscow as the center even after Kazakhstan obtained its sovereignty. Elite network ties there continued to run across the Russian border,⁴⁹⁾ politically and economically. Under such circumstances, distancing itself from Russia and provoking northern Kazakhstan regional powers was not a realistic option for the Nazarbayev leadership. This consequently led Kazakhstan to maintain intimate relationship with Russia since independence while trying to broaden its diplomatic scope.

Meanwhile, President Nazarbayev has sought to find alternatives to supplant those regional and ethnic elite networks by creating new ‘national elites’ who support his leadership. Instead, these new national elites give loyalty to Nazarbayev; Nazarbayev likewise “pays them back” by providing political umbrella and economic benefits. This is the way the patronage network in Kazakhstan is established and Nazarbayev’s leadership has further reinforced this mechanism.⁵⁰⁾ Furthermore, to provide sub-national powers with economic advantages, ‘open foreign economy policy’ was actively promoted under the Nazarbayev government: President Nazarbayev advocated an ‘open policy’, which induced the flow of huge foreign investments into Kazakhstan—and to his national elite, as well. Today, pre-existing sub-national powers based on ethnicity/regions appear to have lost their influence in politics compared to the new national elites. That consequently has allowed President Nazarbayev to implement a more strategic and consistent foreign policy without having to worry about potential threats *within* Kazakhstan.

The case of sub-national powers in Uzbekistan is quite different from the

49) Sally N. Cummings, *Kazakhstan: Centre-Periphery Relations* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2000), p. 26.

50) Sang Nam Park (2010), p. 148.

one of Kazakhstan. From the beginning of his tenure in office, President Karimov has sought opportunities to enhance his regime against regional elite networks as did Nazarbayev in Kazakhstan. The rigidity of regional division, however, was much more serious than in Kazakhstan, and such condition has caused Karimov to constantly fear regional threats. In his early addresses, Karimov made quite clear his concerns that clans and regionalism are major challenges for Uzbekistan.⁵¹⁾ Here, recognizing his fear of regional elites and strategy to reduce the salience of regionalism improves our understanding of Karimov's foreign policy decisions and their consequences. When Karimov sought foreign partnerships, priority was given to whether a partnership would advocate his regime. The state has constantly subordinated its foreign policy to the need for regime survival. Under such circumstance, while looking for reliable external support, he has avoided foreign policy decisions that could potentially undermine his power vis-à-vis regional elites.

Therefore, President Karimov has repeatedly aligned or re-aligned with outside partners like Russia, the United States, or China in order to strengthen his government based on which power provided support for the regime against the political rivalry among the Uzbek elites. This is why foreign policies of Uzbekistan are often described as sudden and drastic. In the late 1990s, President Karimov sought to de-link from Russia by withdrawing from the CSTO and joining the U.S. backed GUAM (i.e., Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Moldova). Since then, Karimov began to actively seek relations with the United States and finally joined the NATO PfP (Partnership for Peace). Also, Karimov permitted the U.S. military base to stay in Uzbekistan⁵²⁾ and the United States invested \$8 billion in Uzbek industry.⁵³⁾ Such relationship was a longtime wish of Karimov, who had been looking for a reliable external supporter instead of Russia, hoping

51) Islam Karimov, *O'zbekistan XXI Asr Bo'sag'asida: Xavfsizlikka Taxdid, Barqarorlik Shartlari va Taraqqiyot Kaflatlari* (Tashkent: O'zbekiston, 1997), pp. 102-105.

52) Christopher J. Chivers, "A Nation Challenged: 2nd Wave of Troops Arrives in Uzbekistan," *New York Times* (7 October 2001), p. 8.

53) Vladimir Georgiyev, "Uzbekistan Sells Itself Off to Washington for 8 Billion Dollars," *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, (19 October 2001), p. 1.

that alignment with the U.S. would help to strengthen his leadership against the regional powers. The strategic ties, however, did not last because mutual expectations were too high. The Uzbek government's harsh suppression of its people during the Andijan crisis in 2005⁵⁴⁾ brought criticism from the U.S. and the West, and this eventually led Karimov to turn to China and Russia (as evidenced by Kazakhstan's entry into the SCO), as neither China nor Russia was interested in the democratic development of Uzbekistan or its human rights record. The pressure for democracy became either too great or too annoying; regardless, Karimov recognized it as a threat to his regime. Naturally, Kazakhstan's relations with the United States began to radically cool down, and Karimov rapidly accelerated Uzbekistan's drift toward Russia and China since they uncritically backed the Uzbek government's characterization of the Andijan crisis.⁵⁵⁾

As discussed, understanding the sub-national identities and their different natures in each state is one key to understanding the foreign policy formation of each government and the heart of the difference between Uzbek and Kazakh foreign policies. The existence of regional and/or ethnic powers was a substantial threat to both regimes in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, particularly in the early years of their independence. Each regime continuously tried to undermine or eliminate those influential sub-national powers that threatened its leadership and to reinforce the central authority of the state. However, the different natures of sub-national powers found in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan brought out different responses from the two presidents, and consequently influenced their pursuit of different paths of foreign policy.

3. Role of Ideology (Policy Orientation)

54) The Uzbek government responded with brutal suppression in the Andijan crisis. Estimates of the death toll go beyond 1,000. Karimov's government has faced criticism from the West including the U.S. and the demand for an international investigation to be conducted.

55) Igor Torbakov, "Uzbek Violence Deepens Russia's Central Asia Dilemma," *Eurasianet* (17 May 2005), at <<http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav051705.shtml>> (searched date: 20 January 2007).

With the sudden collapse of the USSR, the newly born Central Asian states faced the challenges of state-building and reducing the influence of the former Soviet Union in the region. Particularly, the ‘de-ideologization’, which initially meant de-Communization, of the post-Soviet states including Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan was one of the most popular themes of the 1990s. Nevertheless, this does not mean that ideas or ideologies have become irrelevant. Instead of communism, various ideas and ideologies, supported by ‘objective’ understanding of ‘true’ national interests, were introduced into this region and filled the vacuum resulting from the Soviet collapse. The extended ideational options have allowed policymakers to form foreign policy more flexibly and effectively to the changing international environment, and pursue their own national interests.

It can be understood that while Kazakhstan has showed a “multi-vectored” approach⁵⁶⁾ in its foreign policy formation in an open and pragmatic manner, Uzbekistan has demonstrated “preventive” diplomacy with a conservative approach. However, both regimes have strongly pursued stabilization of domestic politics, reinforcement of the leadership, and achievement of visible economic development, and foreign policy has been an effective instrument for them to achieve such goals. In the following pages, I explore what ideologies and policy orientations have been dominant in each case, and how they affected the foreign policy formations in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, respectively.

For the newly independent Kazakhstan, establishing a sovereign state and unifying the nation were key tasks. Such was characterized as “Kazakhization”—building the Kazakh identity based on the Kazakh people and Kazakh language.⁵⁷⁾ However, “Kazakhization” met with difficulty

56) Hong Sub Lee, “Kazakhstan’s Foreign Policy: Searching for a ‘Multi-Vector Foreign Policy’,” *Slavic Studies* 23-2 (2008), pp. 87-107.

57) The Concept of Formation of the State Identity of the Republic of Kazakhstan signed by Nazarbayev in May 1996, explicitly refers to Kazakhstan as the state of the Kazakh people par excellence. The immediate ramification of this policy is the declining representation of the non-titular nationalities in bureaucratic structures: from 50 percent in 1985 to 25 percent in 1994 (Kazakhstanskaia Pravda, May, 29, 1996); Саб

from the beginning since it evoked fear among the country's ethnically non-Kazakh population. Indeed, when Kazakhstan became independent, throughout the republic as a whole, Russians made up 36.4 percent of the population. Ukrainians, German, and other populations who shared Russian fears over "Kazakhization" totaled another approximately 10 percent.⁵⁸⁾ Moreover, Russia began to speak on behalf of the Russian population living in Kazakhstan.

For this reason, President Nazarbayev had no choice but to mind the concerns of the Russian population and other ethnic groups so as to maintain Kazakhstan's sovereignty and territorial integrity and also close ties with Russia. To promote a radical and extreme Kazakhization would be risky. Instead, Nazarbayev responded by offering rhetorical support for a non-ethnic state identity while simultaneously quietly promoting the interests of Kazakhs. He advocated a concept of civic identity uniting all citizens of Kazakhstan as Kazakhstani regardless of one's nationality.⁵⁹⁾ Thus, the ideology for common identity as Kazakh citizens compromising all national groups was eventually introduced in the Kazakh society. The voice advocating radical Kazakh nationalism and de-linkage from Russia was deterred *in public*, although pervasive *in private*, and close relationship with Russia was maintained under the mild-version of Kazakhization.

On the other hand, the core idea of the foreign policy can be identified as elevation of the status of Kazakhstan in the world and pursuit of "interest

ин И.С. "Этнический аспект современной социально-экономической ситуации в Казахстане: 1993-1995 гг. (Ethnic Aspect of Contemporary Social-Economic Situation in Kazakhstan), *Этнографическое обозрение*, (Москва, 1996), No. 5, С. 46. For further reading about new national identity of Kazakhstan, refer to Назарбаев Н.А. *Евразийский Союз: идеи, практика, перспективы* (The Eurasian Union: Ideas, Experience, Perspectives), (Москва: Фонд содействия развитию социальных и политических наук, 1997).

58) As of 2005, Kazakhs total around 60 percent and Russians comprise about 22 percent. Refer to Neil J, Melvin, "Russia and the Ethno-Politics of Kazakhstan," *The World Today* (London: Chatham House, 1993), p. 208.

59) Olcott Martha Brill, *Central Asia's New States: Independence, Foreign policy, and Regional Security* (New York: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1996), p. 60.

and balance” based on a multi-vectored approach.⁶⁰⁾ President Nazarbayev in his 2007 annual address to the people of Kazakhstan clearly defined the Kazakh priorities in this respect. He emphasized Kazakhstan’s role in the international community as a trusted partner and advocated cooperation with Russia, the United States, China, the EU, and Muslim countries.⁶¹⁾ At the same time, Kazakhstan has tried to participate in a number of international and regional organizations on the level of economic and political cooperation.⁶²⁾ Nowhere is Kazakhstan’s multi-vector foreign policy more apparent than in negotiations over extraction and export of Kazakhstan’s oil and natural gas reserves. Seeking its interests while maintaining balance among various actors and playing competitors for Kazakhstan’s favor off one another, it is likely to be evaluated that economic growth and increased international power and standing of Kazakhstan have been achieved with relative success in a short period.

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- 60) The priority of Kazakhstan’s foreign policy is identified as follows: 1) lifting its international profile and making sure of Kazakhstan’s position as a central figure in Central Asia; 2) promoting national economic development by introducing the market economy and ensuring export routes for her natural resources like oil and gas. Refer to Sang Nam Park, “International Relations of Central Asia,” *Eurasia Conference* (13 November 2007), p. 17.
- 61) Nursultan Nazarbayev, “Address of the President to the People of Kazakhstan,” (18 February 2005), at <http://www.akorda.kz/page.php?page_id=156&lang=2&article_id=80> (searched date: 18 January 2007); “Address of the President to the People of Kazakhstan of 2004,” at <http://www.akorda.kz/page.php?page_id=156&lang=2&article_id=383> (searched date: 18 January 2007); “Address of the President to the People of Kazakhstan,” (3 September 2001), at <http://www.akorda.kz/page.php?page_id=156&lang=2&article_id=376> (searched date: 18 January 2007).
- 62) Since independence, Kazakhstan has actively joined cooperation organizations such as Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC) and CIS Collective Security Treaty in order to strengthen ties with Commonwealth of Independent States. On the other hand, Astana has sought cooperative relations with the United States, China, and other Western states. Furthermore, Astana organizes the Conference on International and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA). With Turkey, Pakistan, and Iran, Kazakhstan has cooperated in economic sectors in the frame of Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO). Especially with China, Astana takes advantage of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), which is playing a decisive role in neutralizing religious extremism and separatism. Kazakhstan is participating in the development of the western part of China, having various economic cooperation schemes there. Lee and Park (eds.) (2007), pp. 25, 30-34.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that Kazakhstan appears to have failed to harmonize relations with inter-regional republics in Central Asia mainly due to its *rather* ambitious goal to be a leading state not only in the region but also in the entire Eurasian Continent.⁶³⁾

Meanwhile, the foreign policy formation of the Uzbek government has been conservative, preventive, and closed due to de-Sovietization, strong nationalism, and promotion of the closed “Uzbek Model of Development”. First, in Uzbekistan, right after obtaining independence, ‘de-Sovietization’ was a major political, economic, social and cultural concern. Due to the long control by the Soviet Union, Uzbekistan considered upholding its sovereignty as the most urgent and important issue and this consequently led to ‘de-colorization’ of the Soviet image and emphasis on promoting Uzbek features.⁶⁴⁾ Indeed, the government, economics, culture—the entire spectrum of policy arenas—were subsumed into the drive to “‘recover” Uzbekistan.⁶⁵⁾ ‘Russianization’ of Uzbekistan during the period of Soviet control meant that the history and language of Uzbekistan were heavily suppressed—i.e., “literally dead.”⁶⁶⁾ Thus, with the breakdown of the Soviet Union, Uzbekistan has without delay embarked upon liquidation of

63) Kazakhstan’s initiative for establishing the Conference on International and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA) in 1993 can be the best example to demonstrate such her ambition although the status and influence of CICA has been relatively weakened with the strengthened role of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) regarding regional security issues. Moreover, Kazakhstan has been showing its intention to create a united economic zone in Central Asia with confidence in her rapid economic growth over the last years. However, due to several reasons (different economic conditions and different national interests, disagreement over a leader state in the region and etc.), such attempt seems hard to be realized in the near future.

64) Ministry of Foreign Affairs, at <http://mfa.uz/eng/about_uzb/sights/> (searched date: 13 December 2008); State Emblem of Uzbekistan, at <<http://www.russian-gateway.com.au/uzbekistan>> (searched date: 13 December 2008); Rafis Abazov, “Foreign Policy Formation in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan: Perceptions & Expert assessments,” CERC Working Paper Series (Melbourne: Contemporary Europe Research Centre (CERC), 2000), pp. 18-23.

65) Gregory Gleason, *Uzbekistan* (Swiss Peace Foundation: Institute for Conflict Resolution, 1999), p. 1.

66) When Russians arrived in Central Asia, they saw the various ethnic and linguistic mosaic picture there. In order to rule this area effectively, therefore, Russian rulers

the Soviet legacy and made efforts to restore the Uzbek identity. Moreover, patriotism was actively employed in order to instill individual responsibility to fellow citizens and hence was expected to help stabilize society.

It is natural then that such internal demand for restoring Uzbek identity has been reflected in the country's foreign policy and led to wariness of Russia's moves. That is why, in the foreign policy with Russia during the early 1990s, a political tendency in Uzbekistan to distance itself from the Russian sphere of influence was spread. Thus Uzbekistan showed a reluctant attitude toward the Russian-led CIS integration in Central Asia.⁶⁷⁾ In order to limit Russian influence in the region, Uzbekistan joined "every possible international structure that can serve as a counterweight to the CIS."⁶⁸⁾ When Russia tried to reinforce its position and influence over the CIS, President Karimov voiced strong opposition to such CIS centralization as well, saying that Uzbekistan's government would not hand over "even a particle" of its sovereignty to supranational CIS institutions.⁶⁹⁾ Nevertheless, a rupture of overall diplomatic relations with Russia did not occur and Uzbekistan's ties with Russia and the CIS in various areas of foreign policy were preserved due to Uzbekistan's economic and security needs and lack of alternatives.⁷⁰⁾

Over the last few years, Uzbekistan has been generally restoring the

prepared a special language policies for all the ethnic peoples. Russian language was selected as an official language. Although this language policy became the means of ethnic identity liquidation, Russian language played a great role for merging all the ethnic peoples and various languages in Central Asia together. For more details, refer to Harold Schiffman, "Language Policy in the Former Soviet Union," at <<http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/~haroldfs/540/handouts/ussr/soviet2.html>> (searched date: 13 December 2008); Mark Dickens, "Soviet Language Policy in Central Asia," at <<http://www.oxuscom.com/lang-policy.htm#policy>> (searched date: 13 December 2008).

67) Islam A. Karimov opposed "CIS centralization" and stated that we (Uzbek people) "would not hand over 'even a particle' of its sovereignty to supranational CIS institutions." Refer to Elmira Akhundova, "Aliyev and Karimov Have No Nostalgia for USSR or Aspiration for 'Quadripartite Pact'," *Literaturnaya Gazeta* (5 June 1996).

68) For example, Uzbekistan joined the Central Asia Community, Economic Cooperation Council, Partnership for Peace, etc. Refer to Kazemi (2003), p. 208.

69) Elmira Akhundova, "Foreign Minister Warns Against CIS Centralization," *ITAR-TASS* (26 August 1996).

cooperative mood with Russia. Particularly, there has been an increase of Russian investment into Uzbek oil and gas industry since 2005.⁷¹⁾ However, the friendly atmosphere has dampened somewhat since Uzbekistan withdrew its membership from EuraAsEC (Russia-led economic community) in October 2008. Nevertheless, it is necessary to underscore that there are political and economic implications for maintaining firm relations between the two states.

On the other hand, the government of Uzbekistan has actively sought for allies outside the CIS. In terms of foreign policy, while Uzbekistan tries to keep existing relations with its neighboring countries, it promotes to broaden its radius of diplomacy over the world.⁷²⁾ This has translated into seeking ties with states such as Turkey, Iran, Pakistan and a few Asian states like South Korea and Japan. At the same time, Uzbekistan's attempt to improve relations with the West, especially with the United States, has grown in significance. Uzbekistan has long sought to establish ties with the West. The 9/11 tragedy, in fact, sparked the rapid progress of Uzbek-U.S. relations, with the two becoming allies in the war against terrorism.⁷³⁾ In addition, Uzbekistan has sought to have constructive relations with China in political, military, and economic areas in the frame of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. In the last few years, it is generally viewed that Uzbekistan is making full use of foreign policy strategy strictly based on national interests.

70) Ian Bremmer and Ray Taras, (eds.), *New States, New Politics: Building the Post-Soviet Nation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 591.

71) This tendency is visibly salient in foreign investment to Uzbekistan's petroleum sector. Among 4 billion dollars invested to Uzbekistan, 40 percent consists of Russian sources. В. Черкашин. Мы нужны друг другу (We Need Each Other), *Нефть и газ Узбекистана*, (Москва, 2007), No. 9 (166), p. 32.

72) Islam A. Karimov, O'zbekiston XXI asr bo'sag' asida: xavfsizlikka tahdid, barqarorlik shartlari va taraqqiyot kafolotlari, (T.: O'zbekiston, 1997), p. 360; O'zbekiston XXI asrga intilmoqda, (T.: O'zbekiston, 2001), p. 86.

73) U.S. perceives Uzbekistan as "a bulwark against instability, Islamic fundamentalism and Russian hegemony." Liam Anderson and Michael Beck, "US Political Activism in Central Asia: The Case of Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan," in Gary K. Bertsch (ed.), *Crossroads and Conflict: Security and Foreign Policy in the Caucasus and Central Asia* (New York: Routledge, 2000), p. 75; recited in Kazemi (2003), p. 208.

In the economic sector, the term of “Uzbek Model of Development” was designed by the government. This Uzbek Model of Economic Development was a reform process for the nation’s economic stabilization.⁷⁴⁾ The main objectives of the model are to minimize shocks due to radical economic changes and to create conscious foundation for economic transition. In this connection, President Karimov in his latest book, *The Global Financial-Economic Crisis, Ways and Measures to Overcome it in the Conditions of Uzbekistan*, stated: “... the model of transition to a socially-oriented free market economy, which we have adopted and is based on the well-known five principles as de-ideologization, pragmatism of economic policy in the form of a priority of economy over politics, assigning the role to a state of a chief reformer, ensuring the rule of law, conducting a strong social policy and consistency in implementing reforms, from year to year of our onward advancement justifies its accuracy and consistency.”⁷⁵⁾ In other words, this Uzbek model seeks ‘gradual’ economic reform both from inside and outside and ‘steady’ social development. Karimov’s conservative transition strategy can be interpreted in the same context. Indeed, despite the global financial crisis and economic downturn which started in the second half of 2008, Uzbekistan was able to achieve in 2008 not only the stable functioning of its economy, but also ensure its high sustainable growth rates.⁷⁶⁾

74) Richard Pomfret, “The Uzbek Model of Economic Development: 1991-1999,” *Economics of Transition* 8-3 (2000), pp. 733-48.

75) Islam A. Karimov, *Jahon Moliyaviy-Iqtisodiy Inqirozi, O’zbekiston Sharaitida Uni Bartaraf Etishning Yo’llari va Choralari* (The Global Financial-Economic Crisis, Ways and Measures to Overcome It in the Conditions of Uzbekistan), (T.: O’zbekiston, 2009), pp. 30-31.

76) In 2008 the gross domestic product grew and accounted for 9 percent, the growth rates in industry made up 12.7 percent, including in production of consumer goods—17.7 percent—and the sphere of services grew by 21.3 percent. Furthermore, as a result of gradual implementation of the moderately strict monetary and credit policy, Uzbekistan has been able to contain inflation in the range of envisaged forecast parameters at the level of 7.8 percent in annual calculation. In order to prevent and neutralize the consequences of the global economic crisis, Uzbekistan has already embarked on elaborating the “Inqirozga qarshi choralar dasturi” (Anti-crisis action program) taking into account the concrete conditions and state of affairs. *Ibid.*, pp. 15-32.

IV. Conclusion

This article explored the foreign policy formation of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan since the collapse of the Soviet bloc and their de facto independence by comparatively analyzing three non-institutional domestic factors, revealing how such factors impacted the foreign policy formation of each state. As discussed, the political leader's personality under the imperial presidency—that is, the president's responses to threats and opportunities—along with sub-national identity and role of ideology (policy orientation) are shared factors found in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan and they have been reflected in their contemporary foreign policy formations. It was found that the Presidents Nazarbayev and Karimov have been the core sources of each country's respective foreign policy formations. As the top decision-makers, their perceptions and sensitivities to situations and understanding of national interests were key in the formation of foreign policy and resulted in different diplomatic paths—'multi-vectored and open' in the case of Kazakhstan, 'preventive and conservative' in the case of Uzbekistan. Sub-national identity was found to be influential in narrowing down each president's choices during foreign policy formation. The sub-national powers in Kazakhstan were found to be ethnically and regionally divided with complexity, while those in Uzbekistan were based on three regions and very rigid. In Uzbekistan, President Karimov had to keep a balance among those regional powers and needed to reflect their interests into national policies. Karimov's fear of them forced him to find a reliable external backer—i.e., the United States, Russia and China—to protect his regime, which have led to some erratic choices of partner over the years. On the other hand, President Nazarbayev was threatened by various pre-independent sub-national powers during the 1990s, but finally eliminated the threat thanks to their looseness and complexity. Since then, he has been able to promote a consistent foreign policy with support from the national elite loyal to him. In terms of the role of ideology, 'de-Sovietization' has been a dominant influence in the foreign policy formation under both presidential administrations, although

to varying degrees. While Uzbekistan distanced itself from Russia due to strong Uzbek nationalism, Kazakhstan with its considerable Russian population was not able to promote radical Kazakhization. In conclusion, while mainstream foreign policy analysis generally takes up systems-level theories, an analysis of domestic-level variables is better suited to explain the different courses of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan in their foreign policy formation.

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