

## THE STATE AND CIVIL SOCIETY IN CENTRAL ASIA

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### INTRODUCTION

As research into the Central Asian republics of the former Soviet Union has taken on momentum, various aspects of an encompassing approach tend to crystallise. When considered together, they yield a picture whose central theme is the degree to which these states really govern themselves. Urgent reforms in various spheres are portrayed as necessary. However, the respective states seem too weak to realise them for the state machinery is colonised by interpersonal networks with vested interests. Whether one calls them 'clientelistic' or 'patronage networks' (Olcott, 1993; Khazanov, 1994), 'clan-like organisations' (Gleason, 1993), 'tribalism' (Abdulvakhidov, 1994), or simply 'clan' (Vaisman, 1995), they are charged with being an impediment to reform. As the political leadership is accounted for on the basis of clientelism, 'cul-de-sac' becomes the appropriate term to describe the venture the Central Asian republics tend to undertake.

This article proposes an alternative line of inquiry. It will argue that the above outlined approach tends to consider the state-civil society relationship as one of a zero-sum game. Informed by the idea of the state and civil society being sharply opposed to each other, it tends to conceive politics through a weak state/strong civil society, strong state/weak civil society formulation. As will be argued below, state-civil society relations tend to be much more complex and require a multidimensional conceptualisation. Pervasive clientelism in Central Asia, on the other hand, was the mechanism through which local national cultures were reasserted, a process which culminated in independence. In this sense, political processes in Central Asia have parallels with the globalization process which comprises both universalising and localising tendencies. Thus, while clientelism requires us to consider the nature of the public/private dichotomy, reassertion of national cultures and identities requires that consideration to be made within a global context. After a brief evaluation of the recent discussion on Central Asia, I will focus on Turkmenistan. Although similar clientelistic networks seem to dominate the landscape, in contrast to other Central Asia republics, Turkmenistan signals the crystallisation of a strong state. It will be concluded that democratisation is the main issue in Central Asia and might be achieved through the bridge between the state and civil society already established by clientelistic networks.

### CLIENTELISM IN CENTRAL ASIA

The Soviet system was predicated on an idea that does not recognise the private as distinct from the public (Vorozheikina, 1994). Moreover, the state which was seen as the embodiment of the public good was merged with society (Kaminski, 1991). While the emergent whole negated the individual, interestingly enough, interpersonal, especially patron-client, relations turned out to be the main force in sociopolitical life in an environment of an ineffective system of economic management and the resulting state of constant resource shortages. Keeping up with the standards and demands of the central planners made it necessary for enterprises and other economic actors to develop patron-client relationships in order to get preference in the allocation of resources, raw materials and equipment. Since the state/party was merged with the economic domain, such relationships also played a crucial role in the selection of party administrative personnel and gaining a foothold in the hierarchical nomenclature. Because the state was the only supplier of consumer goods, clientelistic relationships disseminated from the state machinery to the everyday life of the population. Clientelistic ties were organised vertically around points of access to the state system of distribution. Thus clientelistic exchange became the only way of individual and social survival (Vorozheikina, 1994).

It seems that it was the process of clientelistic networking which was responsible for the reactivating of the local identities. As Gleason (1993: 354) argues:

“These personal networks are manifested in clan-type relations... (They)... involve the creation and maintenance of communication hierarchies which are separate from the formal and official lines of communication. Under such circumstances, common language, tradition and cultural practices become the basic currency of social communication advancement.”

Although Gleason specifically argues for the case of Uzbekistan, his conclusion can, to this or that degree, be generalised to other Central Asian republics as Rywkin (1990) would lead us to do. Thus, once the local cultures became the basic currency through which economic, social, and administrative transactions took place. Although Gorbachov's reform policies aimed to regain control, he encountered strong local reaction in all Central Asian republics, sometimes taking the form of street riots, eventually leading to independence (Critchlow 1991; Nissman, 1993; Olcott, 1993).

Pervasive clientelism, the mechanism through which local national identities were reactivated and reasserted, tends now to be seen as problematic by students of Central Asia. While undemocratic governments in the region are accounted for on the basis of a dominating clientelistic network and while political processes and events are explained on the basis of a struggle among various networks, clientelism is seen as an impediment to economic and political reform and to social integration. In a recently appeared article on agrarian reform in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, Spoor (1995) tends to fully display the basic premises of this approach. On the basis of numerical data, he convincingly argues that most of the changes in the agrarian sector in both countries represent formal, rather than real, changes. Certainly, continues Spoor, lack of decisiveness and effectiveness in designing policies, which stems from the bias in the minds of most policy makers inherited from socialist economic management, has a role in this. However, the main burden is on the interpersonal networks. What is more, failure of the steps already taken in the direction of privatisation and restructuring financial markets and support services is seen as resulting from corrupt practices of the nomenclature intimately related to vested interests. Thus Spoor concludes that more state action is necessary for the success of reforms and for this purpose, the state-civil society relations should be put into perspective. In Kyrgyzstan, he continues, where some democratic progress has been realised in the political arena, failure in agrarian transition is more dramatic than in Uzbekistan where the heavy-handed government of the former communist Islam Kerimov has been maintained and an attack on the local nomenclature has been launched to limit their influence. So he comes to suggest that real transformations in the political and economic domains should be observed in terms of state formation which, according to him, cannot be captured by such widely used stereotypes as ‘fast reformer’, ‘slow reformer’, ‘democratic reforms’ and ‘old system under a neo-communist regime’. In other words, according to him, an autonomous, strong state should be constituted before the democratisation process.

## THE PUBLIC AND THE PRIVATE

Beyond questioning the possibility of purging the state machinery of clientelistic relations in Uzbekistan, where Kerimov's leadership seems to rest on such relations and thus are the real nature of Kerimov's power, I would rather start my argument at the conceptual level. The above delineated line of reasoning presupposes a stark opposition between civil society and what is called a strong state. An outmoded conception of the public/private dichotomy constitutes the core of this conceptualisation. Thus the public is confined to the state machinery and the private is equated with civil society. The state stands for bureaucratic universalistic principles, whereas the realm of civil society comprises the private, particularistic, most often, interpersonal relations.

Within this context patron-client relations as particularistic and interpersonal find their natural location within the confines of civil society which differs, by clear boundaries, from the state which has a logic of its own, stipulating impersonality and universalistic principles. Be that as it may, patron-client relations can be conceived as a mode, among others, of constructing trust between individuals (Eisenstadt and Roniger, 1984). Trust, along with high risk, as Giddens (1990) argues, lies at the core of modern society. From this perspective, the problem of public/private differentiation is seen as one of the extension of trust from the narrow context of local interpersonal relations to the broader macro-societal level. Moreover, as the recent globalization theory convincingly asserts that formation of the modern nationally constituted society and the perception of national societies as natural entities should be analysed within a global context (Robertson, 1992; Arnason, 1990), the

public/private differentiation requires us to consider it in a continuum ranging from the interpersonal to the global. As a result, analysis of the public/private differentiation and, therefore, the state-society relation, entails a conceptual framework which incorporates such notions as modernity, culture, the nation-state and globalization.

A significant attempt to design such a framework comes from Arnason (1990). Briefly stated, he argues that hitherto constructed theories of both modernity and nationalism display reductionist tendencies. Theories of modernity, on the one hand, do not put into perspective the place of the nation/nationalism within, and its contribution to, modernity. On the other hand, theories of nationalism tend to see the coincidence of the cultural (national) unit with the political one as an epiphenomenon of industrialisation; they tend to underestimate the autonomy of both culture and politics. Thus he comes to propose the outline of a non-reductionist approach. On this view, national integration is qualified in relation to globalization as a framework of differentiation. The differentiating impact of globalization strengthens or reactivates national identities or projects, on the one hand, and the national level integration complements, conditions and counteracts the global one, on the other. Furthermore, nationalism is seen as cultural interpretation of political power, of sovereignty. Although culture is subject to strategies of manipulation and mobilisation, it also conditions and limits the organisation of the political. In this sense, cultural traditions find their own way to flourish within the nation state and are articulated to modernity. Thus, variety of cultural traditions is reflected in the differentiating impact of globalization. A non-reductionist approach to modernity, continues Arnason, presupposes, along with cultural variety, plurality of dynamics of modernisation and plurality of distinct world systems belonging to distinct domains such as politics and economy. Nationalism as a response to the globalizing process imposes a new unity on these diverging dynamics by internalising the global horizon.

It seems that Arnason's framework may lend itself to the analysis of the public/private differentiation. The notion of society-wide extension of trust can be conceived in terms of nationalism. To put it more clearly, the reproduction, in the broader social domain, of the sense of security which is implicated in the local interpersonal relations can be considered in terms of the process in which the dialectic of coupling of the state and culture is negotiated. Thus the nation-state/nationalism contributes to modernity by constructing a larger domain of trust. Globalization certainly has its role in this process and will be returned to later. Focusing on the extension of trust here, it can be argued that it comprises two interrelated but distinguishable aspects (Eisenstadt and Roniger, 1984). The first is related to various mechanisms such as public goods, public distribution of private goods and various unconditionalities and entitlements. In other words, this aspect, more or less, coincides with the conventional meaning of politics. The other aspect is rather related to such notions as citizenship, societal identity and basic premises of social order. Following McGovan (1991), the first aspect, for convenience, can be called here procedures, while the latter norms. Norms and procedures are conflated in such a way that each presupposes the other: agents can change or reproduce the procedures with respect to norms, or norms can be changed or reproduced through procedures (McGovan, 1991). It is in this way that culture feeds into political undertakings. Norms inform political action. However, this does not mean that norms govern action; instead, they establish the parameters within which daily transaction, including disagreement, among the members of society is meaningful and, for that matter, possible. It is within this context that the boundaries of the public can be reconsidered. Those views which see the public as confined to the state apparatus tend to neglect norms and their pervasiveness. As we consider the various formal and informal networks in which norms are implicated and upheld, then we have a broader sense of publicness.

To sum up, so far it has been argued that the constitution of modern national society is closely related to the extension of trust. This, in turn, is related to the state's negotiation with culture, which nationalism entails. Extension of trust, in this sense, comes to mean the creation of a public sphere where nation-wide range of meaning and action is possible. Thus the public sphere is a joint product of the state and civil society.

Meaning and trust, whether local or national, are closely related to familiarity. Familiarity helps actors derive a feeling of security by freeing them from continuously rationalising their practices (Giddens, 1984). Thus, trust is a consequence of the familiarity individuals have with routine practices. In this sense, trust is inherently institutional. Because institutions exist in their practices

(McGovan, 1991), reproduction of the feeling of security and the taken for granted repetition of practices occur within institutions. This has several implications. First of all, since the public sphere is a product of the state-civil society interaction, elements of both intermesh in it as an institutional site. Thus political parties, interest associations, and various kinds of informal networks become the institutional arena where state-civil society interaction occurs. This also means that the terms of the coupling of the state and culture is not an end state but rather it is an open-ended dialogue; it constitutes a matrix through which further joint transformation of both occurs.

Second, formation of public opinion, the motor force of such transformation, occurs within the public sphere. Since the public sphere bears the mark of state and civil society, public opinion reflects the state-civil society interaction. This explains why public opinion exerts pressure on the state. The state shares in shaping public opinion or, at least, opinion is formed with reference to the state.

Last, but not least, the sense of security that institutionalised practices tend to embody indicates how difficult it is for mere political discourses to achieve political change if they do not have practical appeal. In other words, if trust is related to familiarity with existing institutions and to the meaning attributed to them, then the success of any discourse depends on its articulation to, and congruity with, the familiar practices and meanings. As will be discussed below, the success of the present political power in Turkmenistan seems to stem from practical as well as cultural appeal.

#### DOMINANT DISCOURSE IN TURKMENISTAN

Bearing these conceptual points in mind, let us turn to Central Asia. In Turkmenistan, the present conspicuous political stability, the leverage the government seems to have and the enormous power president Saparmurad Niyazov-Turkmenbashi-seems to enjoy indicate the formation of a strong state (for the recent developments in Turkmenistan, see Frischenschlager, 1995).

As an independent state, Turkmenistan came into existence in 1991, following a referendum held on 27 October. On December 16th, 1991 the Communist Party was renamed the Democratic Party of Turkmenistan and the then president, Niyazov, was elected as leader. In May 1992, a new constitution was adopted by the parliament and it was approved by a direct popular vote on 21 June 1992. The new constitution confers great authority on the president. The president is the head of state, the chief executive and top state authority. The president appoints the ministers and presides over the cabinet. The president also has authority to make laws though they are subject to the approval of parliament and he can dissolve the parliament, if he deems it necessary. Moreover, he appoints local governors and the presidents of higher courts. The legislative power is shared by the parliament and Halk Maslahatı (The Popular Council). Halk Maslahatı is composed of local administrators, members of the cabinet, members of parliament, presidents of higher courts and people's representatives elected for this purpose. It observes the conformity of constitutional amendments to the purported aims and has authority to call referenda. It also makes recommendations concerning the economic, social, and political progress of the country.

Although a number of opposition movements exist in Turkmenistan, they are not influential enough to challenge the establishment. As Frischenschlager (1995) and Anderson (1995) argue, Turkmenistan is the most stable county in the whole region. It seems that the crystallisation of a strong state in Turkmenistan owes much to the successful instalment of trust. This can be observed in the popular confidence of Turkmens in their economic and social prospects. A recently conducted public opinion survey indicates that a great majority of Turkmen society believe that their standards of living will improve in the forthcoming five years. The same survey also reveals that the score obtained in Turkmenistan ranks highest among the Central Asian republics (TC Kültür Bakanlığı, 1995). Such a view as to the bright economic prospect of Turkmenistan is constantly repeated in the political discourse radiating from the state and represented in President Niyazov's slogan "ten years to prosperity" (1994). Moreover, my personal observations suggest that Turkmens seem to adopt various views as to the internal stability and peace put forward by the discourse and that they tend to articulate these views when discussing politics. The apparent success of the discourse entails a careful consideration. It would inform us about the way the state and culture interact and the practical appeal of this process. As will be argued below, it seems that it is this practical aspect where clientelistic solidarity networks play a significant role.

The discourse tries to base a certain kind of political structuring on the sociocultural environment by imposing both a relationship between national unity and political independence, on the one hand, and between these and the prevailing political leader on the other. Because the discourse is radiated through various publications, newspapers, television programmes and speeches of the political leaders, it is best represented in such publications as Niyazov (1994), Gurban (1992), Balliev and Kakabaev (1995), Hocaniyaz (1992), Gurbanov and Allanazarov (1994), and Öraev and Hanov (1993).

One frequently comes across in the discourse such phrases as *halk bolmak*, *il bolmak* (to be a people). This is related to a segmentary social structure. As is well known, before the Soviet regime, Turkmens were tribal (Vambery, 1867). Among the main tribal segments, Teke, Yomut, Tchoudor, Göklen, Sarıgh, Salor, and Ersari can be counted. Tribal links are still significant among Turkmens (Nissman, 1993).

By *Türkmen halkı* (Turkmen people), or *Türkmen halk boldu*, *il boldu* (Turkmens have become a people), it is meant in the discourse that a unity, a solidarity has been provided among the various tribes of this segmentary society. However, the very concept of *halk bolmak*, when used in relation to a different social formation, gains a new meaning rejecting political pluralism. In other words, considering political pluralism and segmentary structure at the same level, the discourse does not make any distinction between the two (the very fact that the name of the greatest opposition movement is *awzbirlik* [solidarity] implies that political pluralism does not do harm to national unity).

Yet segmentation per se does not bear a negative meaning within the environment in which it emerges. Because of this, to justify itself, the discourse identifies independence with 'becoming a people' on the basis of the proposition that the Soviet Regime had based itself on the segmentation of its societies and that in order to maintain itself, it supported segmentation. It is argued that the nature of the system was causing patronage politics. It was this kind of politics which led to segmentation within nations on the basis of patronage cliques and to a gap between leaders and the nation due to a lack of confidence resulting from this. At this point, the alleged relationship between 'being a people' and independence is exemplified by referring to the cases of Georgia, Azerbaijan and Tajikistan and the subsequent Russian intervention. The argument continued that since segmentation causes a gap between the nation and its leader, in order to become an independent nation, a system which is not pluralist but having only one leader is needed (Gurban, 1992). The qualities of the leader are found in the Turkmen culture: Serdar. Who that Serdar is, is known in his carrying people from trouble to happiness, from slavery to independence, from dividedness to unity without blood and war: Saparmurad Niyazov.

As argued above, if a discourse is in a solidarity relationship with local power relations and its metaphors and values are in currency among individuals, then it is effective. The above shortly summarised discourse frequently takes a religious stance. One frequently comes across such phrases as "God has sent us our Serdar" or "spiritual force of Islam Turkmens have". As Gellner (1982) argues in nomadic tribal societies, Islam takes on a different form; loyalty to the saint, rather than the substance, is more important. In a segmentary society, the role of religion is to organise relations among tribal segments and to provide the society with cohesion. Accordingly, in such societies, religious loyalty should be to those saints who are within that society but not belonging to any segment of it. This explains the existence in Central Asia, in the past and present, of those who are claimed to be descended from the Prophet or from the Caliphs. Therefore, the religious character of the dominant discourse in Turkmenistan should be considered as expressing the pretensions of religious notables and as a desideratum to enter into a solidarity relationship with local power relations. Local power relations should not only be interpreted within the framework of religious loyalty, but also in that of *aksakallık* (tribal notables, literally white beard) as an institution. In nomadic tribal societies in general and in Turkmen society in particular, consultation and co-decision were the backbone of sociopolitical life and those who are called *Aksakal* or *Yayılu* (aged) were salient in this process.

Accordingly, local notables are occupying a significant place both in the discourse and in everyday life. That Niyazov is frequently seen with mullahs in his travels and on television programmes and that *Halk Maslahatı* is in the constitution, both indicate the wish and attempts of the political power

to co-opt local notables and to base itself on them. According to the constitution, Halk Maslahatı is the highest representative organ in Turkmenistan (Turkmenistan'ın Konstitusiyası, 1993). Interestingly enough, the term Halk Maslahatı is used in the discourse interchangeably with the term Yauluların Maslahatı which means assembly of the tribal notables. It convenes at least once a year.

It appears that Halk Maslahatı is a way of extending local interpersonal trust into a broader range by recognising existing local relations and making them public. As argued before, mere discourse cannot overcome the feeling of security that familiarity produces. Accordingly, the state in Turkmenistan tends to come to terms with the institutionalised practices in civil society and with the cultural norms on which they are based. The discourse argues that the state begins with Yaulus and Turkmens never do anything without consultation. Thus Halk Maslahatı, which convenes each time in a different province, entails face to face interaction and articulates itself to the familiarity of local interpersonal relations. It is claimed that Halk Maslahatı rejects all kinds of red tape and that this is congruent with the true Turkmen custom (Balliev and Kakabaev, 1995). What is more, it is argued that local administrators (read as local notables or as members of Halk Maslahatı) will enrich themselves to the extent to which they serve the interest of the state and, for that matter, of the Turkmen people (Balliev and Kakabaev, 1995). Thus the place of local power holders is secured. This is buttressed by other aspects of the discourse as well. It is emphasised that the Halk Maslahatı confirms the status Yaulus. The true Turkmen custom entails respect to Yaulus; they are always consulted by the ruler. Yet, they don't rule. Ruling belongs to their son: Serdar (Hocanyaz, 1992).

Traditionally Yuululuk (aksakallık) was rather an institution of representation, not a power relation. Indeed, the discourse makes reference to this function of representation by arguing that the qualities of Serdar depend upon the people that spawn him. Yet, our knowledge on the evolution of the institution of Aksakallık during the Soviet period is scant. Nevertheless it can be argued that the present political power in Turkmenistan is trying to base itself on, or create, local power relationships by co-opting local notables and to enter into an alliance with them. It is this kind of negotiation with culture and civil society which gives the political centre in Turkmenistan enormous power and leverage relative to other Central Asian countries.

However, our knowledge of the specific content and characteristics of the relations between local notables and local people is scant. Even whether there is a well-structured and accepted patron-client relationship or not cannot be certainly assessed by our present knowledge. Further study and observations are necessary to assess the nature of these local relations and the specific content of the link between the political centre and the local notables. Nevertheless it can be argued that the administrative structure inherited from Soviet rule has given an advantage to the prevalent regime in reaching the periphery, relative to possible opposition movements, and it seems that the present power holders are somewhat successful in co-opting local notables, which can be inferred from the political stability and from the power Serdar enjoys.

However, the strong state does not mean Leviathan. Rather, it represents the joint transformation and mutual interaction of the state and civil society; an open ended dialogue. As it appears, the most vulnerable aspect of the dominant discourse in this interaction is its effort to personalise the political order. Identification of the legal personality of the state with the person of Serdar poses some significant problems. One such problem arises in connecting the collectively owned natural resources to the legal personality of the state because there is no distinction formulated between Serdar and the state. In order to solve this problem, a complex link was established between natural resources such as oil and political independence. Referring to the Soviet system, it is argued that the elimination of private property and commercial exchange caused enslavement of individuals and nations by developing patronage politics. How this kind of politics, according to the discourse, hindered independence has been portrayed above. Accordingly, it is claimed that independence is related to private ownership and commercial exchange. However, natural resources collectively owned in the legal personality of the state need to be accounted for. For this purpose, it is claimed that they are not the private property of Serdar because decisions related to natural resources are taken with the help of Halk Maslahatı-Turkmen type of Democracy-(Hocanyaz, 1992). Once natural resources have been taken out of national commercial exchange through free distribution, for example, of gas and electricity, it is argued that both Turkmen democracy and national independence can be observed in international relations. If the freedom of

the Turkmen people can be observed in their freedom to enter into commercial relations with whoever they want, the independence of Turkmenistan can be observed in its freedom to enter such relations at the international level. This principle in international relations is called Açık Gapılar Siyaseti (open gates policy) and Garapsız Nebik Siyaseti (independent oil policy) in specifically oil relations (Niyazov, 1994; Hocaniyaz, 1992).

However, despite this, it appears that the problem is not fully dissolved. In major cities where people come across facilities such as cars, buildings, etc. allocated to state personnel, these facilities are usually conceived as private property and cause a negative reaction. In a protest meeting held in Ashkhabad 14 July 1995, I observed that with slogans demanding democracy, it was expressed that the present power holders are selling the country to the Americans. It is quite interesting to observe that the issue of internal democracy is connected to international relations in the same way as it is related in the discourse.

This last point leads us to consider the relationship between globalization and the nation-state. It indicates how public opinion about international relations is formed under the influence of this relationship.

## GLOBALIZATION

Theorists of globalization argue that the emergence and dissemination of the nation-state model is linked to the process of globalization (Waters, 1995; Arnason, 1990; Robertson, 1992). For them a certain level of increasing compression of the world led to the frequent encounter of cultures and polities. The problem of identity arising under such circumstances laid the ground for the emergence of the nation-state as a form of sociocultural integration. The state, as Tilly (1990) argues, caught between internal as well as external pressures resulting from inter-state competition, was forced to enter into negotiation with civil society. The relative strength of the emergent nation-state model, in mobilising societal resources, continues Tilly, accounts for the dissemination of the model. Thus globalization is a two-fold process comprising both universalistic and particularistic tendencies: the nation state becomes a universal phenomenon dividing the same universe into culturally bounded parts. And what Smith (1992) calls "Soviet civic nationalism" a "politico-cultural construct", in Suny's (1992) words, is not an exception to this.

Theorists of globalization tend to argue that the process of globalization has recently intensified. This involves a qualitative shift from "the global for itself" (Robertson, 1992). That is, a shift towards conscious attempts to shape the global field. Thus cultural representations of the global field and local responses following upon them become more important in determining the global landscape. Such local responses may include the regulation of national legal, administrative and economic fields in respect to such global actors as donors, investors and states. What is more, cultural similarities among nations tend to lead to similar responses to the global field and, thus, to the formation of supra-national alliances like the EU so as to make possible effective participation in the global arena. It will be argued below that such responses and the development of supra-national alliances are closely related to familiarity with the globe and to the feeling of security this familiarity creates.

What provides the feeling of security is meaningfulness or the ability to attach meaning to things and events. This requires their translation into the prevailing meaning system, into the prevailing cultural codes. In other words, they are meaningful insofar as one is familiar with them. As argued before, such familiarity depends upon construction of broader ranges of meaning which is achieved in and through the public sphere, where the broader symbolic realm and trust are compatible with the local trust and its symbolism. This public sphere as a corollary of the state-culture coupling, in turn, exists insofar as the two continue to interact and, for that matter, to transform jointly. This holds true for globalization, for participation in the global field. Again Turkmenistan is a case in point showing how nationalism, in Arnason's (1990) words, internalises the global horizon.

The above mentioned effort in the dominant discourse to draw a parallel between the definition of Turkmen's freedom as liberty to enter into commercial relations with each other, on the one hand, and, on the other, the definition of the political independence of Turkmenistan as its freedom at

the international level to enter into commercial relations, displays how familiarity is extended along long-range stable patterns beyond relations embedded in relatively narrow contexts. It displays how familiarity crystallises as the state and culture feed into it.

This can be observed in other aspects of the discourse as well. To begin with, in Balliev and Kakabaev (1995), a comparison is made between the face to face character of Halk Maslahatı and Niyazov's not using diplomatic jargon and his informal behaviour in dealing with his counterparts. Thus, a continuity is established between local meaning and practices and the new international environment, all in an attempt to render the latter meaningful. In other words, the global field is articulated, under the state's sway, the locally created feeling of security. Moreover, there has been an enormous increase in publications (Ataeva, 1993; Durdyev, 1991, 1992, 1993) about Turkmens living abroad. The discourse argues that they are proud of Turkmenistan as an independent state and that they will develop good relations with Turkmenistan. So far this can be considered as an emphasis on cultural similarities. What is more is that Niyazov is proclaimed as the "humanitarian president" of all Turkmens over the world (Balliev and Kakabaev, 1995). This, again, points out how culture and the stage together feed into familiarity.

To give another example, the membership of Turkmenistan as an equal and independent state in a number of international organisations is portrayed in contrast to the Soviet system which, it is claimed, caused an inferiority complex. This is followed by a description of how other nations are proud of national dress, custom and life styles. Thus a link is established between the new international environment and Turkmen life style and custom (see Niyazov, 1994).

Our claim is that neither the state nor culture alone is enough for participation in the global field. Unless both come to terms with each other in a broader range of meaning, neither culture nor politics alone at the international level can make sense. This holds true for the formation of international alliances. It seems that mere cultural closeness does not lead to co-operation unless closeness is made public and turned into trust through familiarity. This would explain Russia's influence in Central Asia despite its well-known intentions towards the region. It appears that Central Asians have a sense of confidence in their ability to manipulate Russia which stems from their familiarity with Russia and Russians.

Turkey, on the other hand, despite its great historical and cultural ties with the region and despite its sincerity, has not yet been able to fully realise its expectations. This observation corroborates the argument put forward here that such relations can not be achieved within foreign offices nor on the basis of cultural closeness alone. It requires what Waters (1995) calls "culturalization of politics" in the public sphere where the state and civil society intermesh. Results of the public opinion survey mentioned before (TC Kültür Bakanlığı, 1995) support this point. The highest affirmative score about Turkey's guidance on the question of transition to a market economy, which is Turkey's main aim in the region, is marked in Turkmenistan where the dialogue between the state and culture is more developed, relative to other Central Asian republics. Moreover, I observed that Turkish businessmen and workers in Turkmenistan are able to develop better relations with Turkmens relative to Turks in other Central Asian countries. Interestingly enough, President Niyazov advises Turkish businessmen to marry Turkmen women (Yeni Yüzyıl, 17 August, 1995). This again, shows how the cultural conception of kinship is extended as an idiom into a broader range of meaning under the state's sway.

So far our argument has parallels with what Waters (1995) calls culturalization of politics and economy, the corollary of globalization. He argues that globalization goes hand in hand with universalization of cultural particularism. It means ever increasing differentiation in consumption patterns, life styles, needs and interests not only between nations but within nations as well. The latter entails democracy. That is one of the reasons why democratisation is the main issue in Central Asia. What is more, a democratically organised state is the most efficient form of the state-culture interaction. Development of democracy requires the institutionalisation of the public sphere, for institutions are the sites where discursive interchange takes place (McGovan, 1991) and, for that matter, different practices and ideas may develop. Halk Maslahatı in Turkmenistan seems to be a nascent form of institutionalising a public sphere, no matter that it is clientelistic.



## CONCLUSION

It has been argued that crystallisation of the strong state depends upon the institutionalisation of the public sphere where the state-civil society interaction takes place. Such institutionalisation entails the state's negotiation with culture. This explains why the nation-state is relatively superior to other forms in mobilising societal resources. It has also been argued that sociopolitical change can only be initiated at the level of practice; mere discourse can not overcome the feeling of security that routine practices produce. That is why construction of the public sphere can be achieved within and through the prevailing institutions of civil society. Moreover, institutionalisation of the public sphere resulting from nationalist coupling of the state and culture goes hand in hand with globalization. Thus, the dissolution of the Soviet Union presents the Central Asian republics with such a double-sided process: nationalist differentiation may require a greater role for local cultures and practices, globalization needs the so-called strong state for the necessary political and economic reforms. These two seemingly diverse dynamics may interact in democracy. The case of Turkmenistan so far elaborated here corroborates this view. The strength of the state in Turkmenistan seems to stem from the state's negotiation with culture. Such negotiations occur in and through the public sphere. Institutionalisation of the public sphere is the first step towards democracy, even if its construction requires initiation within and through the institutions of civil society.<sup>1</sup>

It appears that two cautions are needed here. First, the emphasis on political structuring in Turkmenistan may seem to suggest that the prevalent regime in Turkmenistan is the appropriate form of government for the other Central Asian republics. Such is not the case. What is proposed here is to try to understand the nature of sociopolitical processes, instead of advising neo-liberalist conceptions of the state, the public and the private. Second, the emphasis on the congruity between the local (meaning, relations, trust, etc.) and the public may be misleading in that it may be seen as the reproduction of the Soviet conception which does not make a distinction between the public and the private. Again such is not the case. Rather, it is argued that what is public may change from culture to culture and from time to time (Benn and Gaus, 1983). The emphasis is not put on the nature of things but on the nature of the sphere. Indeed, democracy, as Heller (1991) argues, is the freedom to carry things into the public sphere and thus to make them subject to public concern. Therefore the public has its roots in the private. As Kaminski (1991: 265) puts it, for example, "in what sense is the institution of private property private?"

The relative weight of clientelistic relations in the political arena in Central Asia may be the first step to make them public institutions and subject them to public concern and debate.

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*1 Although here is not the place to discuss it, my use of the term 'civil society' to denote a segmentary society is not compatible with the dominant Western understanding and can be objected on many grounds. However, the recent literature on the subject tends to see the state and civil society as two sides of a coin, shaping and reshaping each other. That is, the character of civil society in communist countries is seen to be a recent organisational phenomenon shaped in reaction to the nature of the state in these countries.*