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Building State Identity Through Antiterrorism Rhetoric in Post-Soviet Uzbekistan

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Abstract: This article analyzes how the post-Soviet leadership of Uzbekistan produced an anti-terrorism discourse in order to build a “secular Uzbek” identity. Ethnic and religious domains are discussed within the framework of traditionalism in the former case and official or unofficial Islam in the latter case. The Uzbek regime’s ethnocratic nature and its official or traditional version of Islam illustrate how Uzbek leadership has successfully employed and continued the Soviet framework by making unofficial Islam synonymous with terrorism. These all served well the regime’s survival by eliminating opposition in the country. Ethnic identity remained unchanged and was consolidated through antiterrorism rhetoric, the regime’s crackdown on foreign Islam, and political opposition in general.

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1. Introduction

Upon dissolution of the USSR, all successor nations and states to one degree or other faced the problem of political consolidation and legitimacy. The formation of collective identity on existing traditions, institutions, and customs to support the nation’s claim to sovereignty and uniqueness legitimized the state structure (Rokkan, 1969, p. 586). The approach taken in the post-Soviet space was different in each case, with the Baltic countries, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan at the more pluralistic and democratic end of the political spectrum, and with Russia, Belarus, and some Central Asian countries adopting a more statist approach. Re-establishing and strengthening a public structure in a given territory which was able to provide governmental goods and establish a bond between the governing and the governed became the priority in the newly established republics (Rokkan, 1969, p. 584). In some of these republics the narrative of antiterrorism held a significant place in reasserting secular identities inherited from the Soviet period. Uzbekistan is a classic case where the rhetoric of antiterrorism assisted the leadership of the country in building and consolidating its state identity.

Uzbekistan is an authoritarian regime with few signs of democracy that has been using state ideology to shape its vision of Uzbek society. The top-down ideological dispersion usually includes discourses on patriotism, “Uzbekness,” morality, and antiterrorism rhetoric. This essay will argue and

illustrate how the discursive productions of antiterrorism by the leadership of post-Soviet Uzbekistan have been utilized to build state identity.

Antiterrorism rhetoric has become an essential tool to shape secular Uzbek Muslims from the Soviet framework. An alternative to informal (political) Islam and religiosity has been an artificial or constructed ethnic identity that has been propagated through “traditionalism” and an institutionalized version of Uzbek Islam.

This paper unfolds by discussing state identity in Uzbekistan, terrorism, realities, and antiterrorism discourse in Uzbekistan. To understand how discursive productions of antiterrorism became integral in building state identity in contemporary Uzbekistan, the author will begin with what *state identity* in Uzbekistan is, and what it represents. As foreign or unofficial Islam is rejected, oppressed, and not included in the concept of Uzbek identity, it is placed outside of state identity (it is what state identity is not) by the leadership of the country. The treatment of foreign or political Islam as a terrorist threat leads the author to address what terrorism really means in Uzbekistan. In this vein, forging a state identity by demonstrating what it is not brings us to antiterrorism rhetoric, namely the ideological means used to distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable religious and ethnic identity.

In the first section, state identity includes ethnic and religious domains. It is imperative to understand the continuation of the Soviet framework that is aimed at fostering ethnic identity by alienating Islamic belongingness of the population in contemporary Uzbekistan. This in fact shows how ethnic identity is fostered through antiterrorism discourse and “traditionalism,” leading the Uzbek state to become increasingly ethnocratic in nature. Population data and the characteristics of other ethnic minorities substantiate the Uzbek state’s ethnocratic nature. Islamic identity is discussed in terms of “formal” and “informal” Islam. The post-Soviet leadership of Uzbekistan is the reason for this dividing line between “us” and “them.” The stance of the authorities is explained through the notion of “cultural Muslims” and secularism while “informal” Islam is elucidated through religiosity, political Islam (political opposition particularly), and Islamic militancy (terrorism in Uzbekistan).

The second section sheds light on the issue of terrorism to show how antiterrorism was weaponized and justified based on terrorist acts in Uzbekistan. Religiosity, political opposition through political Islam, and the activities of Islamic militants have been classified as “terrorism.” The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan’s terrorist acts in Uzbekistan, civil war in Tajikistan, and unrest in Andijon have been included to show how Uzbek elites exaggerated political narratives to unite the people against the external threat of terrorism. This, in fact, pushed people from Islam in general and left them with a secular ethnic identity.

Finally, the third section includes how antiterrorism rhetoric has been implemented through the state education system, TV broadcasting, public events, and *mahallas* (municipal neighborhood communities). Additionally, the section argues that antiterrorism became a two-way process where the elites have committed to building the ethnic identity of the populace by cracking down on the regime’s opponents and Islam in general.

2. State Identity in Uzbekistan

Identity is a complex issue in contemporary Uzbekistan. On one hand, there is a continuity of the Soviet framework of forging ethnic identities; on the other hand, the history of the Central Asian region shows intermingling of Turkic- and Persian-speaking tribes. Uzbekistan’s diversity can be directly attributed to the fact that the country inherited territories from the Khanate of Khiva in the West, the Khanate of Kokand in the East, and the Emirate of Bukhara between the Khanates. After the collapse of the USSR, the authorities of Uzbekistan followed the path of consolidating colonial identity, in other words “Uzbekness,” by picking certain elements of history. An attempt to balance modernization implemented during the Soviet era by keeping religion under tight control and

promoting pre-1917 “traditionalism” has succeeded. The former has been promoted through Uzbek national identity which is largely the product of Soviet ethnic engineering (Karagiannis, 2010, p. 58), while the latter reveals Uzbek Islam as “a way of reclaiming the national patrimony and of decolonization being deeply intertwined with powerful national myths” (Khalid, 2003, p. 586). It is clear that the ideological “Soviet” part was dismissed and filled with a mystical and glorious precolonial past, whereas the political Soviet framework has been utilized to consolidate state identity along the lines of Uzbek ethnicity.

In today’s Uzbekistan, state identity means to belong to “Uzbek” ethnicity and to the religion of “Islam.” Ethnic and religious identities are controversial. “Uzbekistani” usually refers to citizenship that can be viewed as an indicator of civic identity for all the other peoples of ethnicities and followers of religions who were born and raised in Uzbekistan. Along with imperial minorities, for example, in cities such as Samarkand and Karshi, there are unrecognized minorities referring to themselves as Persians, Arabs, Kurds, and Roma. These minorities communicate either in Uzbek or in Tajik. Uzbeks differentiate those minorities based on their appearances and traditions or religions (affiliations such as Shia and Sunni) they follow.

The State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Statistics (2017) reports changes in the ethnic structure since 1991. For example, Uzbeks accounted for 72.8%, Karakalpaks 2.1%, Russians 7.7%, Tajiks 4.8%, Kazakhs 4.1%, Tatars 2.0%, and Ukrainians 0.7%, in 1991. As of 1 January 2017, Uzbeks constituted 83.8%, Karakalpaks 2.2%, Russians 2.3%, Tajiks 4.8%, Kazakhs 2.5%, Tatars 0.6%, and Ukrainians 0.2%. Russian-speaking minorities such as Russians, Ukrainians, and Tatars emigrated, and cities became more homogenous as rural Uzbeks moved to urban areas; however, the percentages of Karakalpaks and Tajiks show little sign of change over 25 years. Such data illustrate how “the regime has also acted to ‘nationalize’ the state and make it more Uzbek” (Khalid, 2003, p. 587; Cummings, 2012, p. 112). A decades-old policy of persuading Tajiks to designate themselves as Uzbeks on their passports was another piece of Soviet heritage employed to make Uzbekistan more “Uzbek” (Anderson, 1997, p. 144). The ethnocracy of the state can be observed through the emigration of Russian speakers and especially in the closure of Tajik schools or of the Tajik Philology department at Samarkand State University. Tajik citizens of Uzbekistan face cultural repression and ethnic discrimination, especially in terms of the suppression of the Tajik language (Adams, 2013, p. 119).

In this paper, state identity in Uzbekistan should be confined to “Uzbek” ethnicity as an encompassing term that may sporadically include Tajiks or Karakalpaks due to an obvious distortion in demographics data and due to the ethnocratic nature of the regime. Unsurprisingly, it would be easier to use religious identity as an encompassing term, as Uzbeks, Tajiks, and Karakalpaks are “generally” Muslims.

The great majority of Uzbeks are Muslims. There exist Uzbeks who converted to Christianity or other religions but only a few. Uzbekistan is a Muslim-majority country and Islamic identification is strictly confined to the Islam of the Sunni Hanafi school and the sanitized celebration of Uzbekistan’s Sufi tradition, which is primarily promoted as an element of Uzbek national culture (Rasanayagam, 2006, p. 223). According to Sally Cummings (2012, p. 100), Central Asian Islam is often described as tolerant and adaptable. Since 1991, authorities have especially instrumentalized religious tolerance and adaptability in order to construct religious and ethnic identities based on a government agenda. The Uzbek state decides what it means to be a good Muslim and Uzbek. In this vein, Islam is categorized as “local,” “formal,” or “good” Islam in contradiction to “foreign” (alien), “informal,” or “bad” Islam.

J. Rasanayagam distinguishes between “official” and “unofficial” trends of Islam. The former reflects local traditions under the dictates of Uzbek Soviet elites while the latter is usually identified with “fundamentalist,” “Wahhabi,” “Islamist,” and possibly other “revivalist” or “extremist” movements that are alien to Uzbek tradition (2006, p. 224). Official Islam is usually portrayed as

religion fused with “Uzbek” traditions, which in essence were produced through the logic of official state discourse in Uzbekistan (Rasanayagam, 2014, p. 1). Embracing Islamic identity outside the formal version, which is usually imposed by the authorities, poses a grave threat to be labelled as “extremists,” “Wahhabis,” etc.

The “Uzbek path” to development, Uzbekistan’s model of democratization, was couched in ethnic terms as proceeding from “the national-historical way of life of the people” and their “folk traditions,” said Islam Karimov, the former president of Uzbekistan, in his speeches of 1992 and 1993 (Omelicheva, 2016, p. 493). To some, being Uzbek serves to support newer forms of chauvinism in the name of ethnic pride; and the results seem only to serve increasing isolation, decreased economic opportunities, and outright antagonism among other Central Asian Republics (Zanca, 2004, p. 101-102). It comes as no surprise that unofficial Islamic identity becomes a window to manifest one’s opposition and perhaps a source of Muslim unity, which has been an illusion throughout the modern history of the region.

Susceptibility to various interpretations increases, and “Wahhabi” or “extremist” scapegoating becomes a norm when the dividing line (between what is permitted and what is not) is not certain and pretty much illusory. It is indeed dangerous when “the wrong kind of Islam is defined very broadly”: It is used to oppress political opponents as in Karimov’s regime (Khalid, 2003, p. 588). For example, in the Ferghana Valley, where the population is more prone to Islamic religiosity than elsewhere, any manifestation of social discontent has been expressed as a religious movement, unlike in Bukhara and Samarkand (Khalmukhamedov, 1998, p. 77). Not surprisingly, the Uzbek regime’s ideology and the whole state apparatus that enforces this ideology derive from the Soviet era. This regime craves for a generation that treats religion primarily as a “marker” representing the notion of “cultural Muslims” (Rasanayagam, 2014, p. 4). “Cultural Muslims” have little to do with the Koran, and the very notion of representing this type of secular society once again justifies that the regime has decided to stick to a forced Soviet secularism to impose “secular” Islam in Uzbekistan.

3. Terrorism in Uzbekistan and the Realities on the Ground

Uzbekistan’s national online database of state laws and regulations, LexUz, defines terrorism as an act aiming to destroy the physical and material well-being of persons and destabilize the socioeconomic situation within the country, challenging its sovereignty. Additionally, any false information instigating armed conflicts that have political, religious, ideological, and other goals is treated as terrorism (LexUz Online, 2000). In Uzbekistan, a hotly debated aspect of terrorism is the issue of “Radical Islam” or “Islamic militancy” deriving from religious fanaticism or extremism. This characterization fits into carrying out violent acts to reach political goals driven by religious fundamentalism. The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, the organization’s militant activities in Ferghana valley, and its engagement with Afghan Talibans and Al Qaeda, fit the definition of terrorism. Unfortunately, there are two types of terrorism in Uzbekistan today, one committed sporadically in the name of Islam, and the other carried out on a daily basis by state authorities (Zanca, 2005, pp. 71-72).

Sporadic bombings took place around the year 2000 with unrest in Andijon in 2005. The latter faced a strong international condemnation. Unsurprisingly, all these events were labelled as terrorist acts with few details per se. It is true that an Islamic threat existed and was in fact strongly weaponized in domestic politics of Uzbekistan due to the civil war in Tajikistan. However, it would be irresponsible to ignore the politically precarious situation formed in Uzbekistan by 2005. The struggle for power and resources among regional elites and clans helped to shape the activities of all political movements, not only Islamist ones (Naumkin, 2005, p. 87). Patronage networks and criminal groups could also have been behind the curtains to force Karimov to make concessions. Meanwhile, the government propaganda worked hard to oppress political opponents. After a failed assassination

attempt on Karimov in 1999, a Soviet-style crackdown continued on not only violent groups but non-violent ones such as Hizb-ut-Tahrir (Moore, 2007, p. 315).

Religiously motivated militant activities are viewed as an ultimate result of following “foreign” or “bad” Islam. The government does not distinguish between radicalization and terrorism in Uzbekistan, and often devout Muslims are labelled as extremists and are associated specifically with non-local types of Islamic practice. In this manner, the state convinces its people that these “extremists” are in essence people who have become outsiders, rejecting their native Islam (Zanca, 2005, p. 74).

Islam in Uzbekistan is shaped under a national project, becoming a passive body subjugated to the state apparatus. This in fact illustrates how political Islam has been marginalized and classified as a threat. Claims that Islam was the sole reason for pre-1917 decay and backwardness in Uzbek history are included in school curricula to educate a new generation of Uzbeks who would serve the regime within the framework of “traditionalism.” The fight against terrorism has been used to forge Uzbek national identity and it served to unite the nation against outside destructive forces, but it has put on hold the development of political Islam and political opposition in general. The regime’s actions and long-lasting terrorism threat in state discourse made it clear that religion has no place in political life (Anderson, 1997, p. 159).

4. Antiterrorism Discourse in Uzbekistan

The terrorist acts that took place in Uzbekistan served as a justification for the government crackdown on “informal” Islam followed by antiterrorism rhetoric with a great emphasis on threat. The context of fear-mongering related to political Islam, extremism, and terrorism has shaped the morality and identity just to avoid possible instabilities (Koch, 2018, p. 19). Karimov’s works were not only an expression of an ideology of national independence; they were a chronology of how state ideology has played out in practice, how the state rhetoric that shapes Uzbekistan was itself shaped by the events of his rule (Kendzior, 2014, p. 229).

It is true that antiterrorism rhetoric began to work because the fear the authorities perpetrated through unfair imprisonment of political dissidents created a culture where one would refrain from practicing Islam to avoid being detained or oppressed. People resist in social conditions of inequality, injustice, and oppression because resistance and subversion are connected with the domains of moral and personal judgments (Turiel, 2003, p. 122).

Punitive measures and repressive policies alone were not enough to eradicate “Islamic extremism” and state authorities decided to use municipal neighborhood communities—the *mahallas*—to control residential areas (Naumkin, 2005, p. 110). The decision to establish Tashkent Islamic University in 1999 was to control the flow of Islamic knowledge within the limits of a state narrative. The institutionalization of “Uzbek Islam” was brought to another level and the university was charged with developing scholars and specialists who would perpetuate the official posture of the regime regarding the proper place of Islam in Uzbek society (Hanks, 2016, p. 505). The engagement of the state in funding a university and opening up mosques and religious centers shows how concerned the authorities were to produce their version of “Uzbek Muslims.” The *Mahallas* and the cadres from Tashkent Islamic University serve to promote Uzbek Islam and they can be viewed as enforcement mechanisms of antiterrorism rhetoric in the daily life of citizens.

This strategy of surveillance through *mahallas* and Islamic University is a bit different from the Soviet eradication technique used against Islam. For example, in Karimov’s regime more *medresses* (Islamic schools) were allowed to function than was the case under Soviet control; however, the number remains relatively small, and students are carefully screened for tendencies towards “extremism” (Khalid, 2003, p. 582). In the state agenda, a modernized identity has to be free of religiousness as Islam is now being perceived as a part of the civilizational and cultural heritage of

a nation imagined as an ethnic entity (Khalid, 2003, p. 582). On one hand, the regime needed to develop sufficient Islamic credentials to legitimize its rule; but on the other hand, it had no intention of allowing Islamic activism to challenge the state (Anderson, 1997, p. 155).

In essence, Uzbekistan discourages religiousness deliberately by driving the Islamic identity of the populace into the framework of an artificially created Uzbek belongingness. This nationwide anti-Islam agenda is fulfilled under the banner of antiterrorism, to protect secularism and the population from being radicalized. Religious knowledge is not required and in most cases disapproved, and signs of religiosity such as praying are viewed with a strong suspicion. For instance, the education system itself remains resolutely secular, with no religious instruction whatsoever (Khalid, 2003, p. 585). Conversely, there are courses aimed at dissuading the young generation from being radicalized in schools and universities. For example, if a course on Religious Extremism (*Diniy Ekstremizm*) should serve for steering students away from the danger of “foreign Islam” and its militant aspects (foreign Islam is treated as violent and militant in nature), then courses such as Foundation to Morality (*Ma’naviyat asoslari*), National Ideology (*Milliy g’oya*), and the Ideology of National Independence (*Milliy Istiqlol g’oyasi*) should make the young generation more Uzbek, with few or no signs of religiousness. By the same token, if there is a will to become a practicing Muslim, then the “official,” “formal” version of Islam has to be followed. Antiterrorism rhetoric itself promotes the idea that Uzbeks are Muslims, but that Islamic identity should be perceived as a marker only. This usually happens in highly secularized and modernized societies where religious identity becomes a marker only, replacing or standing in line with an ethnic or national identity.

On the official website of the Ministry of Higher and Secondary Specialized Education of Uzbekistan, one can read the summaries of social gatherings dedicated to encouraging young generations to abstain from joining Islamic militia movements abroad (see the bibliography for the links). Additionally, such gatherings are usually accompanied by documentaries (see the references for the video link) where the family members of terrorists are held accountable for the bad upbringing they provided. Parents and relatives of terrorists are usually blamed and remain under social condemnation before their neighbors and other *mahalla* members. Terrorists who left Uzbekistan to fight in conflict zones are labelled as state enemies. If observed carefully, besides the content of hatred and disgrace towards the terrorists and their family members, the language and the way the situation is discussed and presented on TV broadcasting serves as a one-way channeling to justify the state’s righteousness.

Organizing essay contests among students on topics such as “We stand against terrorism,” (*Biz terrorizmga qarshimiz*), and “How do I understand the threat of religious extremism and terrorism?” (*Men diniy ekstremizm va terrorizm tahdidini qanday tushunaman?*) is another vivid example of an antiterrorism agenda persistent in educational institutions (see the bibliography for the links).

5. Conclusion

The post-Soviet leadership of Uzbekistan is carrying out a policy identical with Soviet policy regarding Islam, with minor changes. The leadership used “formal” Islam to legitimize its authority. However, any signs outside Uzbek Islam are prosecuted. The regime sees itself constantly challenged by those who follow foreign Islam, no matter if it is peaceful or violent. Foreign Islam is dangerous not only because it can radicalize the youth; it confronts the very “traditionalism” that prepares young generations to be loyal to the regime.

Antiterrorism rhetoric has been an effective propaganda tool to persuade the young generation of their unique Uzbek identity, portraying them as “secular” or “cultural” Muslims. The limits and the dividing line have been clarified by the ruling elite of the regime. In Uzbekistan, Uzbek chauvinism is encouraged, but practicing Islam is treated with paranoia and often persecuted.

A long-lasting threat of terrorism and terrorist acts have been used to tighten the screws and increase the surveillance over the population to persecute political and religious opponents of the regime. At this point, it is of little interest who were the masterminds of the terrorist acts in Uzbekistan. The antiterrorism discourses have contributed to uprooting the opposition, especially when the terrorist acts were thought to result partly from a power struggle among regional clans.

To conclude, the dissemination of antiterrorism rhetoric in every sphere of public life in *mahallas*, mosques, schools, universities, on TV broadcastings, and through performative acts such as essay contests, shows that discursive productions of antiterrorism are indeed integral to the building of state identity in Uzbekistan.

Utkur graduated from the Erasmus Mundus International Master's Program in Central East European, Russian, and Eurasian Studies. His research focus is primarily on ethnic and religious identities, Muslims and anthropology of Islam in Tsarist and Soviet Central Asia. He is also interested in ethnopolitics and nationalism in post-Soviet Eurasia with an emphasis on ethnic conflicts and secessionist movements.

Utkur's postgraduate thesis synthesized perspectives from western and nativist scholarships on Jadidism in Turkestan. The main argument of the thesis was that overstating the Jadids' role and contribution, crediting Jadid literature as anti-colonial resistance or liberation literature, should not invent a "liberation movement" which was not there.

Utkur was an intern at the European Centre for Minority Issues (the Conflict and Security research cluster) in Flensburg, Germany, and at the China and Central Asia Studies Centre at KIMEP University in Almaty, Kazakhstan. He is the head of the International Programs Office and an Intercultural Communication Instructor at the Silk Road International University of Tourism in Samarkand, Uzbekistan.

6. Summary

English: This article encompasses the overall state of Islam and religious/ethnic identity of Uzbeks in the first 25 years after the collapse of the USSR in independent Uzbekistan. It shows how the state leadership utilized antiterrorism narratives to legitimize its oppressive policies to uproot the political opposition which ultimately led to the establishment of an authoritarian regime.

Russian: Статья разбирает общее состояние ислама и религиозно-этническую идентичность узбеков в первые 25 лет после распада СССР в независимом Узбекистане. Она показывает, как руководство государства использовало антитеррористические нарративы для легитимации своей репрессивной политики с целью искоренить политическую оппозицию, что в конечном итоге привело к установлению авторитарного режима.

Kazakh: Бұл мақалада тәуелсіз Өзбекстанда КСРО ыдырағаннан кейінгі алғашқы 25 жылдағы өзбектердің исламның жалпы жағдайы мен діни / этникалық сәйкестігі туралы айтылады. Мақалада мемлекет басшылығы саяси оппозицияны жою мақсатында өзінің репрессиялық саясатын заңдастыру үшін антитеррорлық нарративтерді қалай қолданғаны, нәтижесінде авторитарлық режимнің орнауына әкелгені көрсетілген.

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Can Western-Style University Management Be Applied to Kazakhstan? A Participant-Observer Case Study of KIMEP University

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Abstract: A historical section of the present paper describes a North American, liberal arts, or “community of scholars” model of education delivery, often called the Humboldt model. This model is radically different from that in universities of the former-socialist countries. It is suggested that the attendant features of “dignified profession” and “distributed leadership” characteristic in North American universities could offer useful insights for the organizational functioning of universities in Kazakhstan.

An empirical section describes foundational elements in a participant-observer case study of KIMEP University. Then the paper provides three examples of organizational functioning observed there by the author.

JEL Classifications: I23, M11

Keywords: University Management, Community of Scholars Model, Dignified Profession, Distributed Leadership, Participant-Observer Case Study

1. Introduction and History

An important challenge faced by modern universities is the need to respond quickly to environmental demands posed by the state, society, and market (Goodman, Kariya, & Taylor, 2018). This requires the internal motivation and participation of faculty, and quickness of institutional response to environmental conditions (Peters, 2010; Furco, 2010). Instead, however, many ministries of education around the world have responded with increased bureaucratic oversight and a so-called “audit culture” for measurement of the performance of HEIs (higher education institutions).

Based in part on the author’s personal experience at KIMEP university in post-socialist Kazakhstan, the main argument of this paper is that the concepts of “dignified profession” (described later) and “distributed leadership” (voluntary, ground-level participation), as occur in Western “community of scholars” universities, could help the responsive functioning of universities in Kazakhstan.

A keen insight regarding the design of education systems is that these reflect the kinds of societies they are called upon to serve (De Witt, 1961). In other words, education systems are primarily products of history, institutions, and culture. Therefore, despite the outwardly similar appearance of education systems—arranged into hierarchies and areas—the foundational philosophies and inner workings of education systems are very diverse.

Because Tsarist and Soviet rulers were more concerned with the control of territories and populations than with democracy and development of civil society, this resulted in heavily bureaucratized administrative structures and conservative cultural mind-sets (see Silova, 2011; Silova, 2010). All countries of the post-Soviet bloc to varying degrees now face the problem of adapting rule-

bound, hierarchical, and slow-moving HEIs to the modern era. To its credit, the Kazakhstan Ministry of Education and Science (MES) has moved to decentralize some education financing to the local level (Bridges & Sagantayeva, 2014); while state policymakers have concluded that a higher education system based on greater institutional autonomy, similar to the United States and some European countries, offers promise for improving educational quality (Sagintayeva, Hartley, Zhakypova, & Apergenova, 2017). The need for institutional autonomy follows from the increasing tendency for higher education to be more competency-driven and output-driven; and from the related fact that the student body (often foreign or having many members with prior professional experience) is more diverse. That is, institutions must have sufficient flexibility to arrange their programs so as to meet the diversity and complexity of the student body (Plessius and Ravesteyn 2010). However, teacher and faculty associations in Kazakhstan have low engagement with outside stakeholders (OECD, 2018) and have generally underperformed in engaging with local communities (Soltys, 2015) and have not been sufficiently encouraged by the MES to provide policy input (Soltys & Bizhanova, 2020). Consequently, faculty in Kazakhstan have not been as successful as North American faculty in supporting or adjusting ministry policies; and Kazakhstani universities have not been as successful in building links to employers and civic stakeholders.

Habits of “command and control” remain hard to break, and excessive state oversight continues with several drawbacks. First, the system of teaching and testing is still focused too much on “what to teach” instead of “how to learn” (Yakovets & Dzhadrina, 2014), and assessment is not always seen as a formative reflection on practice or study (Winter, Rimini, Soltanbekova, & Tynbayeva, 2014). Second, the MES emphasizes accountability for inputs without giving credit for value added. Further, instructions from the distant capital are not always appropriate within the conditions of specific schools and classrooms which do not fit notions preconceived at the center and are inappropriate for diverse student cohorts. Therefore monitoring and measuring by the MES are sometimes conceptually misguided—the wrong things are measured or are measured incorrectly, with the result that policies miss their targets (Yedgenov, 2019).

Kazakhstan’s Tsarist and Soviet experience contrasts sharply with that of North America, and Western countries more generally. The early American and Canadian settlements in the New World were offshoots of Britain, which was itself the most democratic country in Europe at the time of North American colonization. In their frontier settlements, North American citizens were lightly governed and had an exceptionally broad opportunity to manage their affairs at the community level, with minimal deference to higher authority (Tocqueville, 1835).

Originally, North American education had a large religious component, and was provided voluntarily by religious congregations. The essential point here is that education was “owned” by local communities; which, in addition, hired and paid for their own teachers. In Canada, the constitutional protection of the Catholic and Protestant religions and French and English languages was deemed to be a key requirement for civil rights—the more so that religion and language were considered to be inalienable possessions of the individual. Protection of these rights necessarily had to be implemented in the schools; therefore, foundational notions of local ownership and civil rights became closely linked to education systems design. As communities became more secularized, and as the economy became more sophisticated and education more expensive, provincial and state governments took on the main role, now almost exclusive role, of financing (see Soltys, 2004). But the tradition of local ownership of education and trust in local teachers still survives in the culture of North America.

Canada and the United States are unusual in that they do not have national ministries of education. Responsibility for education falls constitutionally to the Canadian provinces and American states, but their ministries of education have no rights and functions concerning pedagogical content in HEIs. Indeed, a ministry role in pedagogical content would be seen as an infringement on academic

freedom and freedom of speech. Further, the traditional method of financing of public universities is block grants—with minimal conditions attached. The universities spend these grants as they see fit; although, to be sure, with reference to the universities’ public charters and to some general government priorities, such as major capital investments. In Canada, the role of provincial ministries of education at the university level is restricted preponderantly just to providing finances and articulation of broad social priorities.

How are such extensively decentralized universities possible? Can they be efficient? How are they held accountable to society, pedagogically and financially? The short answer is that decentralization and accountability are readily possible within a rule-of-law country, within which institutions are transparent from the inside and outside. That is, if a university fails to operate fairly or effectively, a person or group at any institutional level may seek redress through internal mechanisms such as grievance committees; or by recourse to external mechanisms such as the news media, and, if necessary, to the laws of the country. Because Canada and the United States have active civil societies, governments need to monitor universities only very lightly.

Historically in North America, both school teaching and university teaching were considered high-status professions and were well paid. Over time, first local teachers and then university faculty acquired five features of what is called a “dignified profession.” These features (Harris-Van Keuren, 2011) are:

- The profession is full time. This implies adequate financial security for the individual.
- The profession has training schools within a university setting. This affirms that its members have special knowledge and competencies not possessed by others, and that state agencies defer to this knowledge and these competencies.
- The profession has its own association. This enables practitioners to obtain social and political allies, and to work for their own benefit while also benefiting the broader society.
- The profession has legal protection, including the right to set its own standards of competence and to exclude outsiders who do not meet these standards. Therefore a state agency does not set standards for academics’ qualifications and does not conduct attestations.
- The profession has a code of ethics, by which the profession is licensed to regulate and police the conduct of its members. A state agency does not conduct the disciplining of the profession’s members, for the profession is entrusted to do this itself.

In a North American or Western-style university it is taken for granted that teachers and faculty constitute a dignified profession that possesses all these attributes. Western universities are both teaching and research institutions; many faculty members are world-rank and some are Nobel Prize winners. The inadvisability of having ministry of education bureaucrats, sometimes inexperienced, telling such faculty what and how to teach is obvious. Faculty must have the freedom and practical means to follow up on new ideas from any source in the world, without having to wait for ministry officials to “codify” knowledge (Peters, 2010) and approve instructional content.

2. Foundational Elements of KIMEP

Being a Western-style liberal arts institution (consistent with the Bologna Process, for which Kazakhstan has signed), KIMEP was always characterized by a high level of collegiality and internal democracy. The desire for faculty participation in decision-making and institutional processes was

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complemented by the need to adjust to local environmental conditions. With high school matriculation occurring in the 11th grade, incoming students tended to be immature and lacked some prerequisite knowledge and writing skills, and also needed to be weaned from habits of memorization. Instruction is exclusively in English, which is the students' third or fourth language. Therefore, KIMEP had to put on remedial courses, provide a student advising system, and make targeted adjustments to pedagogy which only faculty in the classrooms could implement. Thus not only intrinsic institutional values but also necessity caused KIMEP to be a highly faculty-centered and participatory institution. KIMEP prides itself on its internal transparency; and participation in committees extends to students at all levels of administration up to the Academic Council, where student representatives have voting rights. The participation of students has helped improve policy-making in the Council, while enhancing the legitimacy of KIMEP with both its internal and external constituencies.

KIMEP management's philosophy under 1992 founder and president Chan Young Bang was to offer tenure after one year of probation to new faculty, on the grounds that tenure encourages continuity in work and loyalty to the institution, as expressed in the University's Code of Practice. Because tenure was legally disallowed, new hires were formally limited to four-year contracts, but the attendant practice was for faculty to be rehired automatically, thus constituting an informal tenure. De facto tenure and the participatory, collegial atmosphere mean that faculty are treated as a "dignified profession"; and because they have job security—subject, of course, to adequate performance—faculty have the incentive to improve their courses and invest in their own upgrading. Faculty are hired and promoted on the basis of transparent rules of merit, and have recourse to ethical treatment as upheld in the Code of Practice. They have the professional freedom to teach and grade students as they see fit. Within the context of KIMEP the liberal idea of tenure has operated as intended, because faculty are highly motivated and efficient in their work, as three examples of faculty participation will show in the following section of this paper. There is strong institutional memory and familiarity with pedagogical requirements and procedures, making for ease and quickness in adapting to new demands.

3. Three Examples of Faculty Participation and Distributed Leadership at KIMEP

At KIMEP University many committees work in such areas as program development, international relations, quality assurance, strategy, faculty and student retention, and others; which give interested faculty scope for participation at all levels. The author observed at first hand the efficacy of a collegial and distributed leadership model of institutional functioning. KIMEP's ability to make internal improvements and react to environmental changes quickly under this model can be shown through several examples.

The first example concerns program design, course selection, and implementation of changes in course content. It is faculty who are the most familiar with their academic fields, student cohorts, and special conditions in the classroom; so it makes sense for curriculum to be driven from the bottom of the university hierarchy. In this regard, perhaps the most conceptually and strategically challenging pedagogical issue has been the ongoing debate as to whether students are sovereign "customers" of higher education, as within a market paradigm, or whether they are charges of institutional professionals, as in the "patient-doctor" metaphor. Experience from meetings with Employer Advisory Boards confirms the general perception within society that education should be "practical." Employers would like to receive graduates with stronger practical skills; but in this regard one should note that practical skills are a type of "free good" for employers, who have an infinite demand for it. However, when questioned about what they consider to be the better qualities of KIMEP graduates,

employers express a very strong preference for “the whole person”; that is, graduates who are self-motivated and responsible, can think creatively, take initiative, solve problems, and communicate well. Employers concur that it is in fact these soft skills, programmed into KIMEP’s liberal arts curriculum and conveyed by a professional faculty style of teaching, that produce graduates who are distinguished thereby from graduates from many rival universities, which have a 75% employment rate after one year of graduation (Canning, 2017, p. 75) as compared to KIMEP’s 90% or higher within six months. In other words, students, parents, employers—and, it may be ventured to say, some officials from the ministry of education—do not necessarily understand education’s best interests. Actual graduate successes in employment show that KIMEP has been wise to defer to the professionalism and judgment of faculty and thus avoid the temptation of what is known as a narrow “vocationalism” or technocratism and excessive bureaucratic oversight. A careful statistical analysis of employment and income in the Canadian context by Allen (2004) makes a persuasive case for a strong social sciences component in education, because processes of scientific and economic innovation are quintessentially social and institutional. Thus innovations are expedited to the extent that knowledge of the social sciences improves institutional functioning. Similarly, Neuman (2005) asserts that the social sciences stimulate cognition and critical thinking in the natural sciences.

Further, the format and methodology of the Employer Advisory Board meetings are at the discretion of each department. A department’s course changes can be prompted by employers’ suggestions, by market surveys done by the university, expressed preferences of students, or on the initiative of a faculty member. In response to a request for a course or program change, a departmental curriculum committee discusses the change for appropriateness and submits a written proposal to the pertinent college program committee and dean. If the proposal is persuasive it is sent to the Academic Council. Two things are worthy of note here: first, the process is classroom- and faculty-driven; second, after the initial discussions, the process can be discharged within sometimes as little as a month, enabling quick reaction to environmental conditions.

The second example of faculty participation and efficacy of distributed leadership is the faculty merit review and salary scale process. Owing to its rapid growth, KIMEP initially had a hastily designed and imprecise merit review process that caused some dissatisfaction. Two faculty members convened a set of general faculty meetings, and consensus was reached on conceptually difficult and controversial issues of weighing different faculty contributions. Teaching and research with publishing are weighted the most heavily, followed by administrative work and extra-curricular activities such as help with student recruiting and community outreach. The teaching versus research duties differently affect senior faculty, who tend to have more publications, and junior faculty, who tend to have fewer. The issue of teaching versus research is ambiguous because faculty conducting these can be said to cross-subsidize each other. This occurs because junior faculty, who carry heavy teaching loads and do much extra-curricular work, in effect make it easier for research faculty to publish; while the publishing output of senior faculty redounds to the prestige of the whole institution, from which junior faculty also gain.

In the event, the initiative for the redesign of the merit review system came from the ground level; and the improved merit evaluation design was then approved by the Academic Council and implemented institution-wide. The merit review process was well conceptualized, because the faculty understood the real teaching functions and actual qualifications and time required for different tasks within the context of KIMEP. The openness of the process increased the perception of fairness, and grievances were reduced markedly. Internal efficiency was improved because the criteria for merit had been defined and operationalized to the extent possible, thus enabling incentives for certain activities, say teaching or research, to be redeployed easily in response to either internal or external demands. In sum, the faculty had designed the merit review system under which they agreed to be judged, and institutional functioning was made more efficient.

The third example of efficiency under the professional and distributed leadership model is accreditations. It was immediately obvious that such a large and multifaceted undertaking as application for accreditation could be implemented only with the willing participation of the faculty. Team leaders and teams were organized by volunteerism and consensus in order to work on particular sections of institutional Self Studies. Because the faculty involved knew the details that were required in academic program delivery and support services, the faculty's participation was very useful.

With a view towards accreditations, foreign Distinguished Professor John Dixon was hired in 2009 in order to help junior faculty strengthen their research and publishing. Shortly thereafter he became the dean of the college of social sciences and the general coordinator of the new international accreditations bids. Being a veteran of accreditations, Dixon recognized that empowered faculty were at the hub of internal institutional reforms, quality assurance, and bids for accreditation. It is pertinent to note that, as a dean, Dixon occupied an intermediate-level position within the university; thus he was close to faculty in the classroom but also able to speak to upper management.

Dixon was alert to faculty concerns over career growth, and brought a human touch to preparations for accreditation. He understood that a satisfactory composite performance and merit score is necessary for individual faculty members, and hence collectively for institutional accreditation. Concomitantly, for purposes of promotion (and also of salary range), publications are strongly desired by faculty. Inasmuch as publications are quantifiable and roughly rankable, they figure as the most important criterion for promotion. As mentioned, such a scheme puts junior faculty with heavy teaching loads at a disadvantage. Nonetheless, all accreditation agencies require faculty to have, if not significant publications, then to produce evidence of being research-active. Therefore, to allay fears among junior faculty, avoid resistance, and achieve active buy-in, Dixon arranged teaching reductions, put on research and publishing workshops, and increased the budget for research materials and conference travel.

The overall process of bidding for accreditations was instructional from several standpoints. First, the leading role was vested with Dixon, who was the consensual favorite of the faculty; and his style was to operate as a coach and mentor instead of boss. Second, his position enabled him to mediate between the concerns of faculty and upper management; and third, importantly, he was able to persuade management to make the necessary financial commitments and resource redeployments. In other words, management paid due regard for the concerns of the faculty. Accreditations were achieved across all departments almost flawlessly, demonstrating again the efficacy of professional autonomy and distributed leadership within the community of scholars model. This corroborates the view that "Authentic reform may depend [does depend] on the extent to which all teachers, students and ancillary staff feel a sense of ownership, belonging, and moral purpose as members of a learning community" (Frost, Fimyar, & Yakavets, 2014, p. 235).

4. Concluding Points

KIMEP entered the higher education area of Kazakhstan at a particular historical juncture, when this area was not highly competitive. The national government did not complicate matters much, and the current *declared* trend is for even less governmental intrusion. The rapid success of the KIMEP community of scholars model meant that this model was a good one for its time and place, and continued successes make it suitable currently as well.

KIMEP has impressive accomplishments in the employment placement of graduates, international academic exchanges, and national and international accreditations. It is important to note that the foundations for these accomplishments were achieved well prior to the importation of

the audit culture and accreditations. Accreditations and audit exercises were accretions to academic standards and faculty professionalism already in place, and these accreditations were therefore obtained easily. The community of scholars model on its own *created* quality, whereas accreditations and rankings are post hoc *assurances* of quality. The University certainly gives prominence to accreditations and rankings in its marketing strategy and public relations, but these are peripheral to its success. The academic attainments of KIMEP are in the first instance a testament to the virtuous behavior of faculty produced by respect for individual professionalism and distributed leadership.

Faculty have demonstrated a high degree of initiative internally and responsiveness to demands externally. The future of higher education at the nexus of internationalization, market, and state is uncertain worldwide. However, at least at the present stage of development of higher education in Kazakhstan and the post-socialist countries, it seems advisable to improve the internal workings of HEIs by using some elements of a decentralized and faculty-driven method of operation.

Experience shows that—in North America and KIMEP University at least—autonomous universities in which faculty possess dignified status and are allowed to exercise distributed leadership can relieve education ministries of the tasks of micro-management, and be effective pedagogically and financially at the same time. In other words, many ministry functions are best discharged by HEIs, and ministerial interventions are often not necessary.

One final point, which deserves more elaboration in a separate paper, is that the effective management of HEIs is not so much an administrative and managerial process as a social and cultural one. Trust in dignified faculty and distributed leadership are better principles for HEI functioning than detailed administrative oversight and bureaucratic coercion.

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5. Summary

English: High institutional autonomy allows North American universities to respond quickly to changing external or internal environmental demands. Faculty are considered to be a “dignified profession” and are entrusted to exercise “distributed leadership.”

Russian: Высокая институциональная автономия позволяет североамериканским университетам быстро реагировать на меняющиеся внешние или внутренние экологические требования. Преподаватели считаются «достойной профессией», и им доверено «распределенное руководство».

Kazakh: Жоғары институционалды автономия Солтүстік Америка университеттеріне сыртқы немесе ішкі экологиялық талаптардың өзгеруіне жедел жауап беруге мүмкіндік

береді. Мұғалімдер «лайықты мамандық» болып саналады және оларға «үлестірілген басшылық» сеніп тапсырылған.

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Walter Scheidel, *Escape from Rome: The Failure of Empire and the Road to Prosperity*, Princeton University Press, 2019

Book Review
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Why would a book on history with a fairly wide sweep interest readers of a journal specializing in business and economics, and how does it correspond to the journal's focus on Central Asia?

First of all, the reviewer himself is an economist rather than a historian. Second, the author confesses that in this particular field of study he more often finds himself in the company of economists and experts in economic history than historians. This is unsurprising because the central question of the book is one of paramount interest to economists: *What are the foundations of the industrial revolution and what are the driving forces that made Europeans early adapters and much of the rest of the world laggards?*

Essentially, Walter Scheidel's answer is that it was the early development of institutions that limited state power and that enabled the development of a mercantilist class, first in places such as Genoa and Venice and later in the Netherlands and England. This view on history has more recently been brought to the attention of the wider economics profession by Acemoglu's and Robinson's book *Why Nations Fail* which is—of course—in the first place an account of why some nations managed to succeed.

But the sweep of the book is much larger than this. The author argues that this development followed necessarily from the absence of empire in Western Europe after the demise of the Roman Empire and that the continued predominance of empire at the other end of the Eurasian landmass—which constitutes the first divergence—ultimately explains why Europe industrialized while China did not—the second divergence.

The pursuit of the question of why there was a history of successive empires in China while no empires of significant scale formed in post-Roman Europe—the first divergence—brings in the Central Asian dimension. In effect, the author argues that the determining factor of empire is its closeness to the steppe and the war technology—reliant on large-scale cavalry and horse-seated archers—that it supports.

Obviously a book that attempts to paint almost the entire history of the world since antiquity necessarily paints in broad strokes. Scheidel is an expert in Roman history and it shows in the details that he provides on the Roman Empire. But all the arguments that he brings together in the book rest on a solid foundation of literature. Arguably, the innovation of the book lies in putting together the pieces of the jigsaw to support its provocative thesis which identifies the major contribution of Rome to the development of the Latin world with its disappearance— an almost Monty Pythonesque twist on the common perception. Emphasizing this message, the closing chapter is appropriately entitled “What Have the Romans Ever Done for Us?”

So how can the reader assess—at least subjectively—the truth value of such an exercise? History consists of many junctures where paths may split and randomness may come into play. Certainly the ultimate test of a model would be that compared to alternative models it guarantees the highest probability of observing the finally realized outcome. But even this may be a fallacy when there is only one positive observation of “original industrialization.” At least, there is some variation in the observations of empire on which the model can be predicated. South Asia and the Middle East are still “accessible” from the steppe and provide observations of a succession of shorter-lived

empires. Far removed South-East Asia, on the other hand, provides another example of a place where no durable empire formed.

Beyond that, Scheidel bases his argument on two pillars: consideration of counterfactuals and comparison with alternative explanations of historical development. The counterfactuals come in a familiar form such as what would have happened if the Spanish armada had not been defeated by the elements of nature—probably not much in the long term where the Habsburg Empire would have struggled to keep England under control as much as it struggled to subdue the Netherlands. Or what would have been the outcome if primogeniture had kept Charlemagne's empire from disintegrating—same here, other factors gave the advantage to the aristocracy and the church. But Scheidel also considers exercises in redrawing geography, thus trying to bring China closer to America (the slave trade being seen as one of the great enablers of the industrial revolution).

In terms of model comparison, there might be no obvious single alternative candidate to explain the entire historical experience, yet a number of approaches to explain different aspects. Most notable contenders to explain industrialization are based on geography, be it closeness or remoteness from the tropics (see, e.g., Diamond, 2012) or the availability of coal. The book discusses in detail Allen's (2009) explanation in which trade increases the cost of labor which in turn drives the development of labor-substituting technology—itsself dependent on coal. Yet Scheidel argues that even these developments would unlikely have unfolded had it not been for the mercantilism and entrepreneurism which was driven by political fragmentation (see also the discussion in McCloskey et al, 2010).

One should maybe point out that ultimately the closeness to or remoteness from the steppe emphasized by Scheidel is itself a geographic argument. But maybe this is unsurprising because arguably geography is one of the few variables that are truly exogenous in a historical context.

Apart from the rather compellingly told overall story line, the book contains a wealth of information of relevance to economic history. One relevant question is about the determinants of the size of political units (see, e.g., Alessina and Spolaore, 1997). Another is the question of what determines the size of the public sector in the long run (Besley & Persson, 2009). From the latter, we know that major wars turned out to be milestones on the path to the welfare state, as it is easy to expand state capacity during emergencies and difficult to cut them back after the emergency has been overcome, in particular as those who fought the war will ask for a greater stake in the economy.

Scheidel's account of history supports this argument. More than this, he argues that the situation of competitive fragmentation that developed in Europe, where no nation state managed to rise to an unassailable position, resulted in constant warfare. While war in itself is destructive, the needs of warfare resulted in an increase in state capacity, thus enabling nations to compete with belligerent neighbors. But the stresses that war put on the populations also facilitated participatory institutions that recruited citizens to the cause of the nation state. Here, the limits of state power due to the need to placate the aristocracy, which characterized the European Middle Ages and severely limited development at the time, turned out to be blessings over the long run: As sovereigns with limited power vied for citizens' financial resources, they were able to create financial institutions tied to a credible promise not to expropriate them—unlike emperors who were unconstrained and ultimately unable to credibly constrain themselves. Credit instruments developed in the Netherlands and in England in the early modern period rather than in China. As an interesting aside, the much-praised early invention of paper money in China—as retold by Marco Polo and many introductory economics textbooks—occurred during the reign of the Southern Song, when the empire was split and the North was dominated by the Mongols. Most tellingly, this innovative monetary institution did not last.

In Europe, fragmentation offered citizens choices—the competitive pressures resulting from voting by feet has often been emphasized by economists in other contexts—and it is not least due to

the possibility of playing off different sovereigns against each other why Christopher Columbus managed to finance his history-changing expedition. Unable to build empire at home, European nation states instead built empire overseas—and colonialism is known to have been an enabler of early industrialization. Also here the contrast with China is striking—its unitary state system did not promote independent enterprise and it never became a major naval power as its main interest has always been to project its power towards the interior and the steppe.

In judging the book, there is the issue of Eurocentrism which the author himself addresses. Of course, the argument of the book is that the historical success in a particular part of the world is predicated on its geographic environment—remoteness from the steppe—and not on the party living there being white Christians, normally identified with “the West.” Also, it cannot be particularly glamorous for anyone to be identified with one of the constantly warring factions inhabiting this space, for centuries a source of enormous misery to its own peoples and those coming into involuntary contact. Yet many in the West will hope that those—borrowing the words of E. O. Wilson—“medieval institutions” that may be the ultimate cause of humanity’s “godlike technology” are still going to be up to the task in the next round of technological innovation (quoted in Ratcliffe, 2016).

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Book review

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This book by the Organization of Co-operation and Development (OECD) offers concrete recommendations for economic competitiveness in Central Asia. Since 2000, the economies of Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan have grown significantly, due to exported commodities and remittances, yet their reliance on natural resources and remittance has imposed risks from external shocks. According to OECD, “resource dependence implies a high degree of vulnerability to external shocks, particularly where government revenues rely heavily on export income” (p.23). The study emphasizes export diversification as a key to a more sustainable economic structure. The publication focuses on the business environment and reviews country case studies that resulted from several years of hand-in-hand work by the OECD and Central Asian governments.

The study underlines that one of the three major challenges concerning the business environment in Central Asia is the business internationalization of small and medium-sized enterprises. SMEs are the major targets of the book’s research. The OECD considered the latest data on SMEs’ contributions to employment, GDP, and exports. SMEs are concentrated in low-value sectors such as trade and agriculture; their exports are limited. Issues faced by most SMEs in internationalization include a lack of knowledge of foreign markets and inefficient promotion of exports. Chapter 3 discusses Uzbekistan’s improvement of export promotion for SMEs as well as Kyrgyzstan’s investment promotion.

Surveys and interviews conducted among SMEs in Uzbekistan discovered difficulties in exporting although the government wants to diversify exports. These SMEs know too little about foreign markets, and they have trouble reaching them. Recently, the government established institutions to strengthen exports, such as the SME Export Promotion Fund (EPF) and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Uzbekistan. But the actions carried out by these agencies, such as market studies and promotion, “are sometimes unclear, and their impact is not monitored, reported, or shared with businesses” (p.116). The OECD reviewed data from the World Trade Organization indicating that limited information about the working of foreign markets, as well as barriers to accessing export distribution channels and to contacting overseas customers, are the critical issues for SMEs. These enterprises also know too little about requirements in foreign markets regarding production standards and certification. Interviews in Uzbekistan showed that the lack of sector-specific expertise prevented SMEs from identifying target markets and occupying the niches.

By comparing Central Asian economies to successful Western countries, the OECD fashioned six recommendations. The first was to create a public-private dialogue to identify target markets. In Uzbekistan, the government should coordinate with export promotion agencies and private businesses, including those that have not exported yet.

The second recommendation is to develop advisory and training capacities and to support preferential access for SMEs. There has been no accurate business survey on the exact skills needed and barriers experienced when Uzbekistani SMEs export. In OECD countries, such surveys are usually carried out by the export promotion agency with the support of an independent survey

company. Following how France's export agency, Business France, identified companies' needs, the OECD suggests training in accordance with the deficiencies of Uzbekistan exporters.

The third recommendation is to attract more certification companies to the country. The interviews conducted by OECD with certification companies uncovered such challenges as currency convertibility and the gap between international and current standards. The OECD proposed that Uzbekistan's agency for promoting investment, UZINFOINVEST, help certification companies "comply with local regulations and standards, and benefit from tax and investment incentives" (p.122). OECD suggests that easier access to certification activities will increase the overall quality of Uzbekistan's products.

The fourth recommendation is to expand the number of representation offices abroad with local staff. Uzbekistan should add an office in China where there are no representatives yet. This makes sense since China is the key export partner for Uzbekistan. The action plan also points out that the EPF, not SMEs, should be responsible for network promotion.

The fifth recommendation is to cooperate with the business community to create an effective marketing strategy. This recommendation resembles the first one, which urged private-public consultations.

The last recommendation is to implement performance indicators. A monitor may measure the number of activities conducted rather than their effectiveness. For example, Business France established such indicators as total SME exports, the share of SMEs in total exports, and the number of SMEs accompanied by the French agency through collective events or individual support and through conducting company surveys.

Next, the book describes how Kyrgyzstan revamped investment promotion. In 2013, the OECD had recommended that the country increase investment in specific sectors and create an Investment Promotion Agency (IPA). Kyrgyzstan did create an IPA; but as in Uzbekistan, the agency would not monitor its own effectiveness in terms of outcomes. The OECD urges an action plan with a timetable and the means to monitor performance. The OECD's recommendations end with Turkey's successful integration of its Investment Support and Promotion Agency.

The OECD book identifies challenges faced by Central Asian countries to enhance their competitiveness. Its research objectives concentrate on supporting SMEs. The country case studies provide insight into problems with the use of primary and secondary data. Moreover, the work recommends actions based on the best practices of OECD countries. These models, placed at the end of each recommendation, are "screenshots" that other countries can adopt.

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