

THE SUB-NATIONAL ROOTS OF AUTHORITARIANISM: NEOPATRIMONIALISM AND TERRITORIAL ADMINISTRATION IN UZBEKISTAN

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Abstract: This article examines how neopatrimonial relationships within the state's territorial administration support the rise and institutionalization of authoritarian rule. Using the case of Uzbekistan, it explores how neopatrimonialism within the state infrastructure halts political and economic reform, undermines the rule of law, and diminishes social welfare provision to the public. This case provides important lessons for other post-Communist countries: permitting neopatrimonial relationships to flourish within the territorial administration may provide useful sources of support by binding provincial elites to the regime, but over the long-term they further entrench authoritarianism and sow seeds of instability.

Uzbekistan is something of a contradiction. It is highly centralized in its decision-making, brutally repressive, and quintessentially autocratic. The regime exercises high levels of control over society, politics, the media, and key parts of the economy, all of which requires significant

state power. In these areas, the central government enjoys discretion in making decisions as well as a capacity to see them implemented. Beneath the veneer of strength and stability, however, lies a weak state pervaded by corruption and powerful vested interests. In fact, a broad array of neopatrimonial practices—misuse of public office, bribery, corruption, patronage—permeate the state apparatus and have led to an “impasse” in effecting governance.¹ This is particularly true within the country’s territorial administration, where politics often reside outside the purview of the central leadership.

Compared to other post-Communist countries, Uzbekistan is one of the most corrupt. Transparency International, for example, ranks Uzbekistan 177th out of 183 countries in public sector corruption.² Uzbekistan is also the lowest democratic performer in the region across standard indices of political reform, rule of law and public service provision. Freedom House regularly lists Uzbekistan among the “worst of the worst” worldwide, with far lower scores than other post-Communist states in various categories of democratic governance.³ Uzbekistan’s relatively low levels of democratization are, therefore, correlated with its relatively high levels of neopatrimonialism. This article explores some of the causal linkages between neopatrimonialism and authoritarianism within Uzbekistan’s territorial administration.

Most studies of authoritarianism in Uzbekistan, though, overlook or discount the importance of the country’s institutional weaknesses at the sub-national levels. Instead, academic and policy experts tend to focus on the strengths of the state as a source of authoritarian rule: the concentrated powers of the presidency, the rise of “power ministries” within the coercive apparatus, and the regime’s monopolistic economic controls. But the roots of authoritarianism lie at the base of its weak state apparatus, embedded in neopatrimonial relationships within its territorial infrastructure. As the “means of administration,” the state infrastructure is the backbone of the state not only in the center, but extends deep into a country’s sub-national politics down to the provincial and local levels.⁴ It has already

¹ Alisher Ilkhamov. 2011. “Neopatrimonialism, Patronage and Factionalism in Post-Soviet Uzbekistan,” In Daniel Bach and Mamoudou Gazibo, eds., *Neopatrimonialism in Africa and Beyond*. London: Routledge, 186-196.

² Transparency International. 2011. *Corruption Perceptions Index 2011*. Washington D.C.: Transparency International. Every other post-Communist country ranks well above Uzbekistan, except for Turkmenistan, which tied Uzbekistan for 177th place.

³ These categories include “National Democratic Governance,” “Local Democratic Governance,” “Judicial Framework and Independence,” and “Corruption.” Of all post-Communist countries, only Turkmenistan shares this dubious honor. See Freedom House. 2011. *Worst of the Worst: The World’s Most Repressive Societies*. Washington, D.C.: Freedom House.

⁴ Throughout this article, whether discussing the Soviet or post-Soviet period, the term “center” refers to the central government in Tashkent, not Moscow.

been demonstrated that in many states critical matters of state power and policy are decided by the nature of state-society relations at these levels.⁵ In this article, I am extending this focus on sub-national state capabilities to examine the effects of territorial politics on authoritarianism.

How, then, does neopatrimonialism within a country's territorial administration affect the development of authoritarian rule? Using the case of Uzbekistan, this article explores three ways: by halting political and economic reform, by undermining the development of a rule of law, and by diminishing social welfare provision to the public. In examining the effects of sub-national state development on the political regime in Uzbekistan, it elucidates the intractable and surprisingly durable local-level underpinnings of authoritarianism that are often overlooked in broad-based—and overly optimistic—analyses of the region's prospects for democratic transition.⁶

Neopatrimonialism, Territorial Infrastructure, and Authoritarianism

For many democratizing countries, neopatrimonialism not only occupies the center of the state building process but also decisively shapes the nature of their political regime.⁷ In this section, I draw on the comparative study of states and regimes to elaborate on the central features of neopatrimonialism in territorial infrastructures and identify how those neopatrimonial practices might support authoritarian rule. While all states confront challenges in seeing their decisions fully executed, Uzbekistan illustrates a fundamental quality of many of the world's contemporary weak states: low infrastructural power. Many regimes (and their leaders) may enjoy unusually high levels of autonomy and discretion in how they make decisions, but they lack infrastructural power—that is, the logistical capacity to *implement* them consistently across localities.⁸ Like Uzbekistan, weak states face intractable social forces and thickets of neopatrimonial relations

⁵ Joel S. Migdal, Vivienne Shue and Atul Kohli, eds. 1994. *State Power and Social Forces*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

⁶ For more on overly optimistic assessments of the region, see Eric McGlinchey. 2011. *Chaos, Violence, Dynasty: Politics and Islam in Central Asia*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press. For a broader critique, see Thomas Carothers. 2002. "The End of the Transition Paradigm." *Journal of Democracy* 13, 1: 5-21.

⁷ Michael Bratton and Nicholas Van de Walle. 1994. "Neopatrimonial Regimes and Political Transitions in Africa." *World Politics* 46: 4 (July): 453-489; H.E. Chehabi and Juan J. Linz. 1998. "A Theory of Sultanism 1: A Type of Nondemocratic Rule." In H.E. Chehabi and Juan J. Linz, eds., *Sultanistic Regimes*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 3-25.

⁸ Michael Mann. 1986. *Sources of Social Power, Vol. I*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Hillel Soifer and Matthias vom Hau. 2008. "Unpacking the Strength of the State: The Utility of State Infrastructural Power." *Studies in Comparative International Development* 43, 3-4 (November): 219-230.

at the provincial and local levels that prevent regimes from carrying out what Crawford Young has termed “imperatives of state” in many regions of the country (e.g., ensuring internal security, consistent revenue flows, long-term wealth accumulation, etc.).⁹ As I demonstrate below, weak infrastructural power supports and sustains authoritarianism in specific ways.

One common feature of neopatrimonialism is that public officials occupying government positions control access points to wealth (licenses, contracts, public sector jobs), which they distribute to supporters (often in return for bribes, kickbacks, favors, etc.). This is widespread throughout Uzbekistan’s territorial apparatus. While provincial and district governors in Uzbekistan do not gain “proprietary officeholding” rights (e.g., recognized property rights over their positions) as in medieval Europe,¹⁰ their distribution of state assets enables them to build up patronage bases, making them difficult to remove and quite powerful.¹¹ Another feature of neopatrimonial orders that is found in Uzbekistan is the presence of local elites in society who use their social standing or command over local economic activities to exercise influence over local government offices and across their locality. An equivalent of “local strongmen” that emerged during the Soviet period (mostly as factory directors and collective farm chairs) remains an important set of actors in Uzbekistan today.¹² Still another feature, where state infrastructures are underfunded or in decline and where opportunities for an emerging private sector exist to fill this gap, is a business elite, which can take over public functions of state and run them for its own profit. There are signs of such an emerging business class in Uzbekistan (primarily among traders and small business owners), though limited economic reform has constricted its development.¹³ In sum, when I say that Uzbekistan’s territorial infrastructure is that of a weak state characterized by neopatrimonial practices, I am referring to one (or more) of these features.

⁹ Crawford Young. 1994. *The African Colonial State in Comparative Perspective*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

¹⁰ Thomas Ertman. 1997. *Birth of the Leviathan: Building States and Regimes in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

¹¹ Alisher Ilkhamov. 2003. “The Limits of Centralization: Regional Challenges in Uzbekistan.” In Pauline Jones Luong, ed., *The Transformation of Central Asia: States and Societies from Soviet Rule to Independence*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 159-181. For a comparative reference, see Richard Joseph. 1987. *Democracy and Prebendal Politics in Nigeria: The Rise and Fall of the Second Republic*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

¹² Joel S. Migdal. 1988. *Strong Societies and Weak States: State-Society Relations and State Capabilities in the Third World*. Princeton: Princeton University Press; Lawrence P. Markowitz. 2008. “Local elites, procurators, and extraction in rural Uzbekistan.” *Central Asian Survey* 27, 1 (March): 1-14.

¹³ Leigh Payne. 1994. *Brazilian Industrialists and Democratic Change*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press; Scott Radnitz, 2010. *Weapons of the Wealthy: Predatory Regimes and Elite-Led Protests in Central Asia*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

How does neopatrimonialism within a state's territorial infrastructure actually work to perpetuate and deepen authoritarian rule? There are many ways in which this occurs, and, of course, neopatrimonialism not only affects how policies are implemented on the periphery but it also constrains the central government's ability to break away from authoritarian rule.¹⁴ Here I examine three specific ways, which are relevant to the long-term sustenance of authoritarianism more broadly across weak states.

First, neopatrimonialism can stymie or halt political and economic reform. In countries with highly unequal distributions of immobile capital, significant obstacles hinder democratization and perpetuate authoritarian rule. In particular, land reforms that promise to redistribute property and access to resources are blocked by rural elites who have captured local and national institutions.¹⁵ At the same time, political and economic reforms may encourage popular mobilization, instability, and conflict that rulers seek to avoid. Because it is in their interest to preserve the status quo, rural elites use their influence in national institutions to block or shape reform initiatives and, if those reform initiatives pass, use their influence over local infrastructures to undermine their implementation.¹⁶

Second, neopatrimonial relations within the state infrastructure weaken the development of judicial institutions and the rule of law in society. As Stephen Holmes has written, effective political authority within these institutions ensures protections of individual rights through the enforcement of laws.¹⁷ This is essential not only for preserving political, civil and social rights, but also property rights in society that institutions act to protect from an extractive state. Without norms of public services within these key offices, the state will fail to gain the trust and cooperation of the public.¹⁸ This is especially salient in rule of law institutions within the territorial apparatus, which all-too-often operate beyond the purview of critical media, opposition groups, and international organizations.

Third, neopatrimonialism can undermine social welfare provision by

¹⁴ For more on how territorial politics can influence the range of choices at the center, see Catherine Boone. 2004. *The Political Topographies of the African State: Territorial Politics and Institutional Choice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

¹⁵ Carles Boix. 2003. *Democracy and Redistribution*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson. 2006. *The Economic Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

¹⁶ On the former, see Pauline Jones Luong. 2002. *Institutional Change and Political Continuity in Post-Soviet Central Asia: Power, Perceptions, and Pacts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; On the latter, see Jessica Allina-Pisano. 2008. *The Post-Soviet Potemkin Village: Politics and Property Rights in the Black Earth*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

¹⁷ Stephen Holmes. 1997. "What Russia Teaches Us Now: How Weak States Threaten Freedom," *American Prospect* 33 (July-August): 30-39.

¹⁸ Margaret Levi. 1997. *Consent, Dissent, and Patriotism*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

the state. The provision of public services is an essential aspect of political accountability in the post-Communist context, where citizens have been accustomed to receiving (though meager and halting) a wide range of social services from the state. Failure to provide those services and/or attempts to reduce them through programs of liberalization has frequently met with social protest.¹⁹ This is also true in Central Asia, but regimes' failure to maintain basic social welfare provision is not due to liberalizing reforms, but limits on state capabilities to deliver the services promised. As recent studies of states' infrastructural capacity have shown, the absence of highly capable, well-resourced regional administrations can lead to ineffective provision of public services, such as basic utilities (gas, electricity, well-maintained roads), health care services, and schools. Moreover, local authorities that have greater capacity to provide public services are more likely to create new public goods to provide to their citizens.²⁰ In short, the corrosive effect of neopatrimonialism on the capacity of Uzbekistan's territorial infrastructure to maintain a basic level of social welfare provision to society is another way that the character of state infrastructure reinforces authoritarian rule.

The comparative study of the state, therefore, provides some guidance in assessing the impact of neopatrimonial politics on authoritarianism in Uzbekistan. Using a range of primary print sources and interviews of local elites, this article elaborates many of the mutually reinforcing relationships between neopatrimonialism and the nature of Uzbekistan's political regime. In the remainder of the article, I outline the Soviet and post-Soviet features of neopatrimonialism within Uzbekistan's territorial administration, examine its effects on three aspects of authoritarian rule—stalled political and economic reform, weakened rule of law, and declining social welfare provision—and conclude with an overview of the broader implications of neopatrimonialism for Uzbekistan.

The Features of Neopatrimonialism in Uzbekistan

In the wake of the Russian Revolution, the construction of Soviet power in the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR) has centered heavily on collectivization. Having been completed by the late 1930s, collectivization brought several long-term consequences in the republic. First, it concentrated significant resources under farm chairs, reshaping the problem of political control around collectivized agricultural units, their managers,

¹⁹ Debra Javeline, 2003. *Protest and the Politics of Blame: The Russian Response to Unpaid Wages*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press; Linda Cook, 2007. *Postcommunist Welfare States: Reform Politics in Russia and Eastern Europe*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

²⁰ Daniel Ziblatt, 2008. "Why Some Cities Provide More Public Goods than Others: A Subnational Comparison of the Provision of Public Goods in German Cities in 1912." *Studies in Comparative International Development* 43: 3/4 (October): 273–289.

and local political elites. Second, mechanisms of control, as in other Soviet republics, shifted markedly over time, giving rise to neopatrimonial orders within Uzbekistan's territorial apparatus. Initially, centrally-enforced rapid turnovers prevented farm chairs and local politicians from extending their tenures and solidifying their local bases.²¹ In the years following World War II, however, there was far more stability among collective farm chairs, providing them with opportunities to develop economic power bases autonomous from the state. A number of veterans from the war returned home to fill leadership positions on collective farms, the most powerful of them holding their positions well into the Brezhnev era.²²

Those provinces within Uzbekistan that enjoyed significant concentrations of economic resources, therefore, were able to foster the development of patron-client ties linking local enterprise and farm managers with the provincial (*obkom*) secretariat. One indication of those patronage relations is the protection and favoritism that *obkom* first secretaries provided to district (*raikom*) first secretaries in making their appointments. As Figure 1 shows, in the last 30 years of the Soviet period, *raikom* first secretaries were frequently reappointed to the same position in another district. There is a relatively even proliferation of local patronage ties across provinces, with lateral *raikom* first secretary transfers in Andizhan, Samarkand, Namangan, Surkhandarya and Khorezm ranging from 23-25 percent of the time, and in Ferghana Province lateral movements were nearly 33 percent of all turnovers. While some regions' provincial elite had a denser client base than others, patronage politics prevailed in most provincial apparatuses by the late-Soviet period.

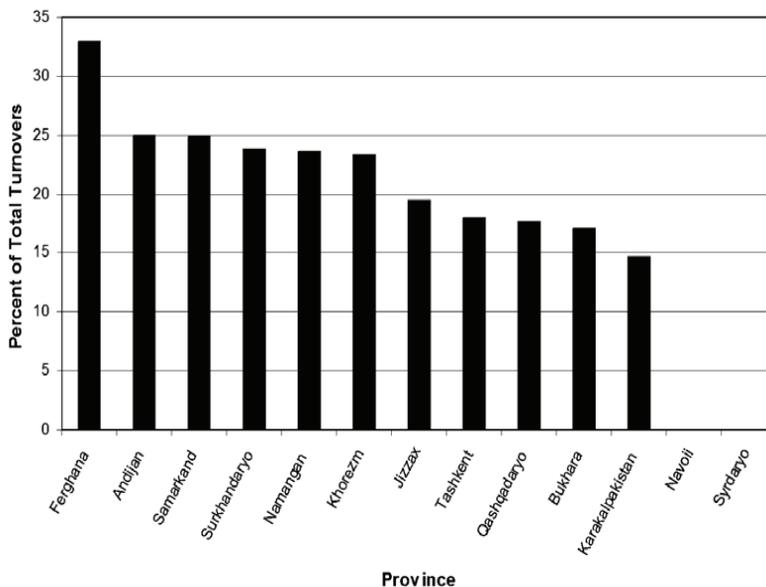
Moreover, the nomenklatura system encouraged patronage relations to congeal around Ferghana, Samarkand and Tashkent. A critical step within a politician's rise is a diploma from party education institutions, especially the Tashkent High Party School. By 1967, 590 *gorkom* and *raikom* secretaries and *raispolkom* chairs passed through inter-republic programs of study. The same year, however, the School created six-month "inter-oblast' courses" in Tashkent, Ferghana, and Samarkand, and in its first year, approximately 900 staff members of district party and soviets were trained at the three sites.²³ Both inter-republic courses (which trained

²¹ In 1934, 2,330 collective farm chairs were replaced across 67 districts in the republic. Of that total 359 farm chairs were changed two or three times, and several four or five times. The number of replaced brigade leaders within collective farms was around 4,000 during the same year. R. Kh. Aminova. 1981. *Pobeda kolkhoznogo stroia v Uzbekistane (1933-41)*. Tashkent: FAN, 147. For more on the political implications of these measures, using the case of Tajikistan, see Teresa Rakowska-Harmstone. 1970. *Russia and Nationalism in Central Asia: The Case of Tadzhikistan*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press.

²² Author's database and collection of biographies of collective farm chairs.

²³ M.G. Vakhobova. 1970. *Torzhestvo Leninskogo kooperativnogo plana v Uzbekistane*. Tashkent: Uzbekistan, 331.

Figure 1: Lateral movements of raikom first secretaries, Uzbekistan, 1960-91



Source: Calculated from author's database of political elites, compiled from district and provincial newspapers and republic-wide periodicals.

elites from other republics as well) and inter-regional courses were sites at which contacts could be established and relationships formed.²⁴ It is noteworthy that neither of Moscow's reformist Communist Party of Uzbekistan's (CPUz) first secretaries in the 1980s, Inamzhan Usmanhodzhaev (1983-88) and Rafiq Nishanov (1988-89), attended the School. While the School's graduates constituted a pool of important nomenklatura elites, few moved into positions of *obkom* first secretary during the Soviet period. However, upon his appointment as CPUz First Secretary (and then President of Uzbekistan), Islam Karimov has relied more heavily on the School's graduates, appointing 10 of them as heads of the republic's regional administration in the early 1990s.

Compared to the Soviet period, the average percentage of regional governor cadres appointed to positions outside their patronage bases

²⁴ A related concept that draws implicitly on networks is Bayart's concept of a "reciprocal assimilation of elites," through which African political and societal elites forged social ties that came to constitute a trans-regional social foundation of state power. Such social interactions among elites facilitated the proliferation of patronage ties by establishing personal relationships alongside professional ones, Jean-Francois Bayart. 1993. *The State in Africa: The Politics of the Belly*. London and New York: Longman, 150-180.

since 1991 has dropped from 54 percent (between 1961-91) to 15 percent (1992-2002). Moreover, from 1993-95, the central leadership was unable to appoint *any* of its regional governors from outside their own regional patronage bases. This has not, however, marked a uniform decline in state power. As we will review in the next section, beginning in 1998, the center attempted to reassert its authority by appointing several regional governors from Tashkent. That effort, however, appears to have been abandoned by 2002.²⁵

The round of appointments and reappointments that immediately followed the break-up of the Soviet Union indicates the center's intention to maintain the status quo by keeping its control over those regions where it was already established. It did so in regions that had been historically weak (i.e., not characterized with well-developed patronage relations and powerful local strongmen).²⁶ In February 1992 the center appointed only two governors—Kayum K. Khalmirzaev and Erkin Tursunov—to positions outside their regional patronage bases. Moreover, these were regions to which cadres from other localities usually had been appointed during the Soviet period.²⁷ In fact, regional governor selections in 1992 and 1993 indicate the center's loss of political control in three ways.

First, the center reappointed three regional governors who had already served several years in office, essentially giving them approval to continue to run their regions as they did during the Soviet period.²⁸ Second, it installed several new regional governors who ended up staying in office for the remainder of the 1990s.²⁹ All of these were promoted from within patronage relations of their respective regions, built powerful bases of support around them, and hence became difficult to remove. The influence of Kobiljon Obidov, for instance, was said to extend well into the center and enable him to determine whom the center assigns to key positions in the province (including that of Regional Procurator).³⁰ Third,

²⁵ Some might question whether the appointment of provincial governors outside their provincial patronage bases, on its own, indicates the imposition of central government authority. My analysis of individual provincial governors in Uzbekistan since 1991 strongly suggests that it is a roughly accurate indicator.

²⁶ Based on interviews and analysis of provincial governor appointments, I include in this group Syrdarya, Navoy, and to some degree Kashkadarya.

²⁷ For contrasting evidence on regional appointments, see Luong (*Institutional Change...*), who suggests that between 1991-93 eight regional governors were appointed from outside their region of origin. Her evidence, however, relies on previous position served as an indicator of regional origin. My data considers the full biography of each official.

²⁸ Demir Yagdarov (governor of Bukhara Region since 1988), Polat Abdurahmonov (governor of Samarkand Region since 1989), and Hakim Berdiev (governor of Surkhandarya Region since 1989).

²⁹ These included Mizamurod Ikramov (Tashkent Province 1993-2000), Kobiljon Obidov (Andijan Province 1993-2004), and Jora Noraliyev (Surkhandarya Province 1993-2000).

³⁰ Interview, former staff member of regional government, Andizhan Province, May 2003.

in provinces with historically weak regional patronage bases (Syrdarya and Navoy), central leaders appointed local cadres, effectively relinquishing more control to emerging regional patrons.³¹ Not surprisingly, they would be among the first to be replaced in 1995 and 1996 by governors from the center. Thus, immediate post-Soviet appointments created preconditions that enabled regional governors to strengthen their position vis-à-vis the center by promoting many of them from within their patronage bases.

From 1995-97, new appointments were charged with rectifying this poor performance, but four of the six regional governors were appointed to regions where they had built their careers, demonstrating the center's ambivalence towards aggressively attacking patronage bases in the regions. Minister of Justice Alisher Mardiev was sent to Samarkand where he had worked in procurator organs and district government offices his entire career; Shavkat Mirziyoev was returned to his home province of Jizzakh after a brief tenure as a district governor in Tashkent City; Nuhmanjon Mominov was promoted from within Ferghana after working in construction and district governor offices in the province his entire life; and Ozod Parmonov was finally put in charge of Kashkadarya, having built his career there in district governor offices and twice serving as second-in-command of the regional apparatus.

Despite burgeoning corruption in these and other regions, the center failed to appoint outsiders to replace those dismissed. In a January 2000 speech to Parliament, Karimov openly expressed his frustration with his inability to control state officials, noting specifically that cadre selection remains under local influences:

“...we need to perfect the system of selecting cadres, appointing them and renewing them... we should take the path of selecting the most suitable of the candidates for a position... The problem has never been solved easily. Usually at such times we always encounter subjectivity, cupidity, regionalism, tribalism, and many other evils characteristic of human beings. Unfortunately, it is very difficult to find ready ways to solve the problem....”³²

As a result, the central leadership initiated regional governor appointments designed to reduce local influences in three provinces—Kashkadarya, Samarkand, and Surkhandarya—by appointing cadres who had built their

³¹ Interview, former district governor and former deputy regional governor, Tashkent City, September 2002; Interview, lawyer, Navoi Province, 2003.

³² Eurasianet. 2000. “Uzbek President addresses parliament.” *Eurasianet*. January 24 (accessed May 5, 2003).

careers in Tashkent City. But this effort also quickly failed as each of these three positions was again returned to locally-based provincial elites.

Bakhtiyor Hamidov, appointed governor of Kashkadarya Province, was clearly from the central apparatus.³³ That he had unusual favor from the center can be seen in the extra funds made available to him through the regional budget. In contrast to his predecessors, who had received virtually no funds from the center (none at all between 1997-99), Hamidov's first budget year (2001) witnessed an increase in subsidies to 15.7 billion som—amounting to 23 percent of the region's annual expenditures. Hamidov, however, was viewed by many in the region as overly focused on extracting resources and paying too little attention to bringing in investment. Perhaps viewing his assignment to Kashkadarya as a demotion, he was reputedly highly predatory on local businesses and enterprises, which diminished his reception in the region.³⁴

At the start of 2003, central leaders were forced to replace Hamidov with local strongman Nuriddin Zayniev, who previously had been director of the Muborak Oil and Gas Lines Administration in the region. In this capacity, Zayniev oversaw the construction of a large chemical complex at the Shurtan gas-condensate field in Muborak district, which was funded by foreign loans estimated at a cost of US\$1 billion beginning in 1997. Although the complex was constructed through a foreign consortium of Swedish, Swiss and Japanese subsidiaries of Uzbekneftegaz (the government's gas and oil agency), nearly US\$400 million went to local contractors for construction.³⁵ Zayniev's appointment, especially in the wake of Hamidov's excesses, suggests that the central leadership has retracted its efforts to influence local politics in the region and has returned to ruling the region through its patronage structures.

Likewise, Erkin Roziev, appointed to run Samarkand Province, came from Tashkent. After completing undergraduate and graduate degrees and working in republican party positions in Tashkent city, Roziev served as mayor of Bekabad city in Tashkent Province (1990-93) and first deputy governor of Tashkent Province (1993-98). Upon his appointment as governor of Samarkand in 1998, he claimed to have been sent to clean up corruption in the region.³⁶ As we will discuss below, he pursued a frontal assault on local strongmen and patronage relations in the province. Less

³³ After many years heading republic-wide rural construction organizations, he had served as chair of the State Planning Committee (1991-94), minister of Finance (1994-97) and minister of Macroeconomics and Statistics (1997-2000). Author's collection of biographies.

³⁴ Interview, journalist, Tashkent, March 2003; Interview, lawyers, Kashkadarya Region, July 2003.

³⁵ Uzbekistan. 1997. *Central Asia Monitor* 2: 17-18.

³⁶ Lawrence R. Robertson and Roger D. Kangas. 2002. "Central Power and Regional and Local Governments in Uzbekistan," In Kempton, Daniel R. and Terry D. Clark, eds. *Unity or Separation, Center-Periphery Relations in the Former Soviet Union*. Westport: Praeger, 277.

than three years later, however, Karimov removed him from office, and “criticized the region’s senior officials for their corrupt activities and poor performance.”³⁷ A young and energetic governor from Jizzakh Province, Shavkat Mirziyoev, replaced him.

A long-time favorite of the president,³⁸ Mirziyoev enjoyed the highest subsidies from the center as governor of Jizzakh Province (1996-2001), despite the fact that GDP per capita in the region had steadily declined under his leadership from 94.3 percent (1995) to 72.5 percent (1998) of the national average.³⁹ Moreover, upon being promoted to governor of Samarkand Region, subsidies to that region increased from 9.0 billion som in 2000 to 21.1 billion som in 2001—an unprecedented increase of 235 percent. While Mirziyoev had distinguished himself in the center’s eyes for his ability “to get jobs done,” he had also privately earned the nickname “Tyson” (after boxer Mike Tyson) among his subordinates for reputedly aggressive methods of enforcing his directives.⁴⁰ His promotion suggested a return to ruling through the region’s patronage base.

In a similar fashion, Bakhtiyor Olimjonov, formerly minister of agriculture (1999-2000), was appointed governor of Surkhandarya Region to clean up the region, succeeding Jora Noraliev. Noraliev possessed a very restricted professional background, based entirely in his native Jorqurgan District.⁴¹ After seven years in office, he was dismissed for failing to meet cotton and grain targets or implement economic reforms, and for permitting “nepotism, cronyism, and bribery” to fester in the region.⁴²

His replacement from Tashkent, however, proved ineffective in maintaining control over the province’s borders with Afghanistan and Tajikistan, which had become points of conflict during his tenure. This, as well as impending U.S. military action in Afghanistan after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, led to a greater recognition of the strategic importance of Surkhandarya. Olimjonov was replaced in February 2002 by Toshmirzo Qodirov, who as provincial procurator had reportedly arrested

³⁷ Eurasianet. 2001. “Uzbek Leader: Corrupt Officials ‘My Enemies’.” *Eurasianet*. September 13 (accessed May 5, 2003).

³⁸ Interview, journalist, Tashkent, March 2003.

³⁹ Based on data compiled from issues of *Human Development Report Uzbekistan* (1998; 2000).

⁴⁰ Interviews, Jizzakh Province, June 2003.

⁴¹ After working as a school director (1961-71), then as an instructor in Jorkurgan *Raikom* (1971-74), he graduated from Tashkent High Party School. After graduation, he managed two collective farms in Jorkurgan District (1976-88), became *raikom* secretary and then first secretary/district governor (1988-93). Having spent only two years of his life outside his home district, Noraliev was appointed governor of Surkhandarya Province (1993-2000). Author’s collection of biographies.

⁴² Eurasianet. 2000. “Uzbek Head Sacks Regional Governor: ‘Nepotism, Cronyism, Bribery’ Rife.” *Eurasianet*. March 23 (accessed May 5, 2003).

several farm chairs and brigade leaders, earning him a reputation for using heavy-handed coercion.⁴³

The Effects of Neopatrimonialism on Uzbekistan's Authoritarianism

Over the last 20 years, neopatrimonial practices within Uzbekistan's territorial infrastructure have remained a durable feature of the country's political landscape. While typically recognized as a source of Uzbekistan's stagnant political economy, I argue below that neopatrimonialism has reinforced authoritarian rule as well—halting political and economic reform, weakening rule of law institutions, and draining social welfare provision.

Halted Political and Economic Reform

Economic reforms were initiated gradually in the early 1990s, in particular lifting restrictions on trade and foreign exchange flows, which led to a conditional loan (a Stand-by Arrangement, SBA) from the International Monetary Fund in December 1995. While restrictions on export licensing and export quotas were reduced, however, the agricultural sector remained largely untouched, as the government still exercised tight controls over those goods important to the regime (cotton, grain, gold). Moreover, payments under the SBA were suspended in 1996 when the government delayed agricultural reforms due to declining revenues in gold and cotton exports.⁴⁴ Continued revenues from these commodities ensured a steady flow of profits from those in the central ministries on down to the territorial administration. As a report by International Crisis Group aptly summarized,

“lack of reform led to sclerosis in the system, high levels of corruption went unchecked, and key income-producing sectors of the economy were taken over by vested interest groups with powerful positions in government... [leaving in place] an elite that is only rhetorically interested in reform and largely happy with a status quo that provides it with significant incomes and no necessity to share wealth with the broader population.”⁴⁵

⁴³ Author's interviews with residents and village and neighborhood (*mahalla*) leaders in Surkhandarya in August 2001 revealed a shared sense (as well as several specific examples) of the consistent use of arbitrary imprisonment of both citizens and low-level state officials.

⁴⁴ Paula Blackmon. 2011. *In the Shadow of Russia: Reform in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan*. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 35-37.

⁴⁵ International Crisis Group. 2004. *The Failure of Reform in Uzbekistan: Ways Forward for*

Economic and political reform was again delayed in 2002, leading to the suspension of a loan package from the International Monetary Fund.

Maintaining a state monopoly over cotton and grain production was essential for farm managers, factory directors, and provincial administrators, who used their control over production facilities to divert inputs and crop yields into the black market. For example, the two major chemical factories in Ferghana Province—Azot Factory and Kimyo Factory—were known to sell low quality or useless fertilizers and pesticides to farms and then sell the high quality part of their production illegally.⁴⁶ In Samarkand, the provincial governor was legally mandated to extract 50 percent of the cotton and grain produced, but in 2001 collected 100 percent of the crop (and subsequent years continued to collect well above the 50 percent permitted). This excess crop was sold to unknown parties for an untraceable profit.⁴⁷ Alongside whatever could be squeezed from agricultural production, significant rents are accrued through bribes paid in return for appointment to state offices in the territorial administration and to positions running profitable state-owned local industries (especially those selling construction materials or food products for domestic consumption).⁴⁸ In addition to appointing farm managers in the district, the governor of Kuvasoy District (in Ferghana Province), for instance, appoints the directors of local cement, glass, brick and fruit canning factories—providing lucrative sources of income.⁴⁹ The exchange of bribes for appointments within Uzbekistan's state apparatus is ubiquitous and the only dispute among those within its territorial administration concerns the amounts that are paid.⁵⁰

This was particularly true in following through with land privatization. As Pomfret summarizes, “the need to retain control over the rents from the cotton sector meant that the biggest gap between claims of establishing a market economy and the reality of public policy was in the area of land reform.”⁵¹ By 2002, the regime had begun to experiment with full privatization schemes in four selected districts across the country. These experiments aside, a few independent farms were leased in each district across the country's provinces. But privatization threatened the rents

the International Community. Brussels: Central Asia Report No. 76, 1.

⁴⁶ Author's interview with economic specialist, Ferghana Province, April 2003.

⁴⁷ Author's interview, lawyer, Samarkand Province, July 2003.

⁴⁸ Author's interview with provincial administrator, Ferghana Province, April 2003.

⁴⁹ Author's interview with district governor staff, Kuvasoy District, Fergana Province, April 2003.

⁵⁰ According to one estimate, the post of a district prosecutor and district governor cost around US\$40,000–\$50,000, while the directorship of a large provincial state company reached \$1 million. Author's interview with provincial administrator, Ferghana Province, April 2003.

⁵¹ Richard Pomfret. 2006. *The Central Asian Economies Since Independence*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 33.

available to local officials. In the districts where full privatization schemes were enacted, directives passed down from the Council of Ministers were carried out by provincial and district governors, who either established commissions to review applications for land or directed the process themselves.⁵² When privatization was put on hold, no formal decree was made, but in provinces such as Samarkand, a verbal decision was disseminated from the provincial governor's office that effectively stopped and even reversed land privatization.⁵³ The farm chairs (renamed *shirkat hojalig'i raislar*) readily consented since this enabled them to better meet their plan targets. Overall cotton production continued to anchor a command economy in which a system of rents benefitted the few elites at the top who signed off on cotton exports and (to a lesser extent) elites at the provincial and district levels, with few profits trickling down to the farms themselves.

For those in the executive—the presidency and its central ministries—the state monopoly over cotton and grain production is a labor-repressive agricultural system that simultaneously mobilized a large percentage of the population as rural labor and extracted crop yields that, when sold in the international marketplace, generated substantial state revenues and concentrated wealth. For those in the territorial administration—provincial and district governors—this system was partly a source of direct rents and partly a source of significant top-down influence that gave them control over other sectors of the regional economy and over the state offices that controlled those sectors. As a result, the preservation of state controls over Uzbekistan's agricultural sector is essential not only for ruling elites who divert profits from cotton exports abroad, but also for sustaining a well-developed neopatrimonial order among provincial and district elites within the country's territorial infrastructure.⁵⁴ Even though incentives existed for political and economic reforms of the agricultural sector—especially cotton production, which requires a staggering US\$500 million reinvested each year to keep it running⁵⁵—initial forays into land privatization and free market liberalization were confronted with deep-seated obstacles within the territorial apparatus.

⁵² These privatization schemes merely leased land to individuals for 50 years, and the state still maintained controls over the percentage of cotton or grain each lessor was to cultivate. Author's interviews with the district governors of two of the selected districts, Yozyovon District (Ferghana Province) in April 2003 and Payariq District (Samarkand District) in June 2003.

⁵³ Author's interview, lawyer, Samarkand Province, July 2003.

⁵⁴ For more on farm restructuring and the systems of controls on agricultural production, see Alisher Ilkhamov. 2000. "Divided Economy: Kolkhozes vs. Peasant Subsistence Farms in Uzbekistan," *Central Asia Monitor* 4; Alisher Ilkhamov. 1998. "Shirkats," "Dekhqon Farmers and Others: Farm Restructuring in Uzbekistan." *Central Asian Survey* 17: 4: 539-560.

⁵⁵ Author's interview, TACIS team leader, Tashkent, April 2003.

Weakened Rule of Law Institutions

The role of law enforcement institutions has become increasingly prominent in Uzbekistan since the early 1990s. As part of the state-building process, key government offices—procurator’s office, police, internal security, and the tax inspectorate—have become better funded, given broader scope in their activities, and gained certain social status within the country. But they have also been allowed to misuse their powers without real checks from other parts of the state, leading to the proliferation of corruption, bribery, extortion, and other problems. By the early 2000s, press reports were noting that the enhanced powers given to these offices had resulted in less accountability over their staff. As one journalist wrote of the procurator’s office,

“At present the country’s Procurator’s Office has extremely wide functions of a repressive nature. A procurator in Uzbekistan has the right to supervise the implementation of laws, to launch criminal proceedings, to conduct investigations, issue an arrest warrant, arrange prosecution on behalf of the state at trials, and has the right to protest if the procurator finds the verdict unsubstantiated or too lenient...”⁵⁶

As described above, moreover, these “wide functions of a repressive nature” have also diminished the efficacy and autonomy of Uzbekistan’s court system, as procurators wield considerable influence over various stages of the judicial process. Before Uzbekistan adopted *habeas corpus* in 2008, for instance, police could detain individuals up to three days without reason, up to six days if declared a “suspect,” and even longer if deemed a “witness” in a case, but it is only through an order from a procurator that an arrest warrant can be issued.⁵⁷ Despite its adoption, moreover, *habeas corpus* is rarely properly implemented.⁵⁸ Consequently, procurators are in a position to use an arrest warrant as an instrument of extortion once someone has been detained.⁵⁹

Procurators serve on every court as judges, which means that all participants in the court process (even plaintiffs) have their documents examined by them. This deters most people from using the judicial

⁵⁶ Yezhkov, Sergei, “Faktor ustrasheniia,” *Pravda Vostoka*, October 2, 2002, 2.

⁵⁷ American Bar Association Central and Eastern European Law Initiative. 2003. *Judicial Reform Index for Uzbekistan*. Washington, DC: ABA/CEELI, 14.

⁵⁸ Human Rights Watch. 2011. “No One Left to Witness: Torture, the Failure of Habeas Corpus, and the Silencing of Lawyers in Uzbekistan,” <http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/uzbekistan1211webwcover.pdf> (accessed July 9, 2012).

⁵⁹ Interview, journalist, Tashkent, March 2003.

system, since inconsistencies or missing paperwork can result in new investigations.⁶⁰ Moreover, procurators strongly influence court decisions, since they can appeal any court decision and it is widely held that “judges whose decisions have been overturned on more than one occasion may be removed from office; consequently, judges rarely defy the recommendations of procurators.”⁶¹ While any citizen is allowed to appeal decisions by courts, moreover, this right is rarely used. By contrast, appeals are a frequent tool of procurators, and from 1998 to 2001, 70-80 percent of “unlawful” court decisions were appealed by procurators.⁶²

In many of Uzbekistan’s provinces and districts outside Tashkent, however, these enhanced law enforcement powers are deployed under the influence of district and provincial governors. In interviews conducted in 2002 and 2003, most district governors and most district procurators portrayed each of their roles as separate from that of the other. As one district governor explained, the procurator’s office “had no right” to interfere with the private affairs of individuals unless there is a transgression of the law.⁶³ In fact, across localities there is considerable variation in whether procurators actually extend their authority—through extra-legal or legal means—or whether they become subordinated to regional and district governors at the head of local patronage bases. In some regions, the procurator’s local offices have become incorporated into intra-regional patronage relations, with the unintended consequence of enhancing the power of regional and local elites. In other cases, they have been able to remain independent from regional governors and their clients; in these cases, without the buffer of patronage relations, procurators are often in contestation with local elites. While there are ongoing conflicts and struggles for influence between procurators/police and governors in many localities in Uzbekistan, the general trend within the territorial administration empowers governors over law enforcement authorities.⁶⁴

Whether working separately or in tandem, positions within law enforcement agencies in the territorial apparatus have become simultaneously sources of revenue through bribes and sources of influence. Procurator salaries, for instance, averaged US\$30-\$40 per month in 2003, but in many provinces they live in nice, two-story houses, drive luxury cars (such as Mercedes-Benzes), and own \$300 cell phones.⁶⁵ Although

⁶⁰ Interview, ABA/CEELI Rule of Law Liaison, Ferghana Province, May 2003.

⁶¹ U.S. Department of State. 2001. “Country reports on Human Rights Practices: Uzbekistan,” <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2001/eur/8366.htm>, 6-7 (accessed November 6, 2003).

⁶² Draft of manuscript on procuracy in Uzbekistan, written by procurator in Tashkent, no date.

⁶³ Interview, district governor, Ferghana Province, April 2003.

⁶⁴ For more on local procurator-governor conflicts, see Markowitz. 2008. “Local elites, prokurators and extraction in rural Uzbekistan.”

⁶⁵ Author’s interview, Lawyer A, Tashkent, August 2003.

the percentage of cases involving the procuracy in Economic Courts increased from 31.2 percent (1997) to 45.3 percent (2000),⁶⁶ they are often described as operating “above the law,” often brazenly misusing their powers of office. In Syrdarya Province, for example, the owner of a gas station—a Turkish-Uzbekistan joint venture—who was expected to pay monthly bribes of US\$2,000 apiece to the provincial governor, provincial procurator, and provincial tax inspector refused to pay and took the case to court. As his lawyer described, the abovementioned procurator joined the court and, alongside other judges on the court, adjudicated the case in which he himself was a named defendant.⁶⁷ Similarly, police inspectors specially assigned from Tashkent to investigate governors’ misuse of public office are wined and dined, receiving ample compensation for their travel expenses and inconveniences.⁶⁸ For business owners, local officials from the procuracy, police and state tax inspectorate are essential guests at weddings and other life-cycle events since their presence is important for “maintaining good relations.”⁶⁹

Together, the absorption of law enforcement functions into neopatrimonial relations diminished Uzbekistan’s overall rule of law in a variety of ways. It has eviscerated the court system as an institution to which the public can seek redress. The American Bar Association Central European and Eurasian Law Initiative’s (ABA CEELI) 2002 Judicial Reform Index for Uzbekistan, for example, rated judicial oversight of administrative practice as “negative” and found that “although the law essentially provides for judicial review of administrative decisions, the law is not frequently used, and the courts are reportedly hesitant to make decisions against the government.”⁷⁰ The same index for Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan rated judicial oversight of administrative practice in these countries as neutral (and as positive for countries such as Ukraine and Bulgaria). These practices have led to a widespread mixture of frustration and fear among the public that is directly aimed at law enforcement offices, making them frequent targets of protest. This was not only the case in the 2005 Andijan uprising, but also in the smaller protests that preceded it throughout the country.⁷¹ These practices also fostered a deep sense of

⁶⁶ Draft of manuscript on procuracy in Uzbekistan, written by procurator in Tashkent, no date.

⁶⁷ Author’s interview, Lawyer B, Tashkent, August 2003.

⁶⁸ In one case, an inspector investigating criminal activity by a district governor in Khorezm Province was comfortably entertained for over a week while his car was repaired – all expenses paid by the governor he was directed to investigate. Author’s interview, inspector, Tashkent, March 2003.

⁶⁹ Author’s interview, local bookkeeper for five area businesses, Ferghana Province, April 2003.

⁷⁰ American Bar Association Central and Eastern European Law Initiative. 2003. *Judicial Reform Index for Uzbekistan*. Washington, DC: ABA/CEELI, 26.

⁷¹ Cory Welt, 2005. “Uzbekistan: The Risks and Responsibilities of Democracy Promotion,”

despair and social malaise, not unlike the kind that permeated the Soviet Union during the late Brezhnev era. These ephemeral consequences are reflected in the poor ranking by international non-governmental organizations. Freedom House, ABA CEELI, and the National Democratic Institute have all placed Uzbekistan below most other states in the post-Communist region, with the exception of Turkmenistan and Belarus.

Diminished Social Welfare Provision

Lastly, the provision of basic services to the population—healthcare, education, energy, and transportation—is severely constrained and steadily worsening in Uzbekistan. Since the mid-1990s the failure of the regime to sustain a basic level of social welfare has undercut its legitimacy and contributed to the impasse between the population and local leaders. In particular, secrecy, lies, and misinformation from the regime about outbreaks of HIV, tuberculosis, and polio have fostered a lack of public trust toward state officials, which starts at the local and regional levels.⁷²

As an indicator of diminishing state support, Uzbekistan has experienced a decline in health expenditure (as a percent of GDP) from 4.5 percent in 1992 to 2.5 percent in 1999 and a decline in education expenditure (as a percent of GDP) from 10.2 percent to 7.8 percent for the same period.⁷³ The steady drop in both health and education expenditure over the 1990s illustrates how neopatrimonialism can undermine economic development, which in turn diminishes a country's fiscal capacity to sustain social welfare programs.⁷⁴ Moreover, investment in health and education facilities and the provision of gas and electricity are not priorities of provincial and district governors, who see their positions as sources of increasing private wealth rather than providing public services. Just as provincial officials seek to divert resources from agricultural production, they behave similarly when given access to inputs for social welfare programs.⁷⁵

As a result, there has been a rise in public anger toward the regime. In addition to the Andijan uprising in 2005—in which people protested their declining living conditions—there have been multiple protests in front of district and governor offices (and private homes) since the mid-1990s.⁷⁶

PONARS Policy Memo 365. Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies.

⁷² International Crisis Group. 2011. "Central Asia: Decay and Decline." *Asia Report No. 201*. 20.

⁷³ Human Development Report, *Uzbekistan 1996* (Tashkent: UNDP 1996); Human Development Report, *Uzbekistan 2000* (Tashkent: UNDP 2000).

⁷⁴ For more on this dynamic, see Nicholas Van de Walle. 2001. *African Economies and the Politics of Permanent Crisis, 1979-1999*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

⁷⁵ Author's interview with provincial administrator, Ferghana Province, April 2003.

⁷⁶ Author's field notes from frequent trips to Uzbekistan since 1997.

More recently, the government has reportedly invested US\$1.2 billion in healthcare in 2010, but most of those funds went to facilities in the capital, and the regime continues to neglect rural healthcare delivery needs. Pay for medical personnel is so low that even doctors working in favored positions in Tashkent are forced to demand side payments for both medical care and medication.⁷⁷

Simultaneously, Uzbekistan (like other Central Asian states) has experienced a significant drop in its capacity to provide basic utilities to its population. In part, this is due to an eroding infrastructure that substantially hinders the delivery of natural gas or electricity. But it is also a consequence of a situation in which “authorities prioritize export sales over domestic consumers,” which in the case of natural gas, has led to intermittent supply in many areas outside Tashkent during the cold winter months.⁷⁸ A frequent refrain heard in Uzbekistan is that the country is rich in natural gas, but many people go without gas to cook or heat their homes because a few elites at the top maximize their rents from natural gas exports.

Moreover, electricity and natural gas constitute the main utilities of the country’s “communal economy,” which are provided to districts and then on to major farms each winter with the expectation that the farm or district government will pay for that energy from the profits of agricultural production that are earned the following fall. However, neopatrimonial practices within the territorial apparatus often provide protection and patronage from provincial officials—allowing districts and farms to go for years without making timely payments.⁷⁹ On one hand, the loss of revenue is substantial and further exacerbates the regime’s fiscal incapacity to provide for the basic energy needs of the country. On the other hand, any effort to collect the communal economy debt in a district disproportionately falls on the local farms and factories, generating resentment and anger toward an intrusive state that has already extracted most of the product—cotton, grain, etc. —of the local agricultural enterprise. Either way, the failure of the regime to provide adequately for the social welfare of the population continues to attenuate the connection between the mass public and the regime.

Conclusion

Since the Soviet period, Uzbekistan’s territorial administration has been characterized by high levels of neopatrimonialism, fusing formal and informal lines of political authority under provincial and district officials,

⁷⁷ Discussions with doctors in Tashkent, 1997, 2001, 2002, 2003, and 2008.

⁷⁸ International War and Peace Reporting. 2011. “Winter Gas Shortages in Uzbekistan,” *RCA Issue 641* (March).

⁷⁹ Markowitz. 2008.

and concentrating local economic power under factory and farm directors. In the post-Soviet period, those actors have lost some of their political clout and access to economic wealth as the regime of President Islam Karimov has attempted to centralize both under its control. But the regime in Tashkent still relies on political elites running the territorial administrative apparatus to extract high crop yields, maintain tight social control over local populations, and (to a lesser extent) promote long-term projects of economic growth. The balance between ruler and elite, therefore, is weighed on multiple scales within Uzbekistan's political economy and in many areas—bolstered by flourishing neopatrimonial relationships—the rural elite continues to command political and economic influence.

As demonstrated above, neopatrimonialism within Uzbekistan's territorial infrastructure has stymied economic and political reform, eroded the rule of law, and sapped social welfare programs. Vested interests in retaining monopolistic controls over agricultural production—coupled with the regime's high dependence on cotton for foreign export and grain for domestic consumption—have anchored a political economic structure that neither international institutions nor a progressive regime can easily dismiss. The inability of the government to seize opportunities to carry out reforms, such as after the September 11, 2001 attacks that brought unprecedented attention to the region, is partly a consequence of its territorial infrastructure and the neopatrimonialism that pervades it. As long as the country's cotton monopsony continues to benefit circles of elites, political and economic liberalization will face daunting challenges.

Efforts by the regime to develop a coercive capacity (to levels that far outpace its neighbors) have sustained authoritarianism in Uzbekistan, but in unexpected ways. Law enforcement organs have become more cohesive and assertive, but rather than challenge the system of economic and political privilege among regional elites, they uphold it to the detriment of the mass public. For many ordinary persons, the inability to seek justice against protected elites is far more proximate than the inability to form an independent political party. Widespread misuse of office by those within the procuracy, tax inspectorate, and police (and their undue influence over courts) has pushed people away from seeking redress from formal institutions, engendered widespread disenchantment with the local apparatus, and contributed to a growing sense of social malaise.

Finally, the decreasing fiscal capacity of the regime has led to diminished social welfare provision, especially in rural areas governed by its territorial apparatus. Declining investment in its healthcare, education, and energy infrastructure has translated into a deepening rift between the regime and the public as the latter's expectations of what the state should provide are consistently not met. Gas and electricity outages in rural areas, limited access to modern health care facilities, and narrowing

secondary educational opportunities are realities that define everyday life in Uzbekistan's provinces. Alongside an incapacity to reform and a weak rule of law, therefore, the provision of basic public goods is often sidelined in a system of provincial politics that enables neopatrimonialism to continue.

As an extreme case of neopatrimonialism, Uzbekistan provides important lessons for our study of other post-Communist countries grappling with authoritarian rule. Permitting neopatrimonial relationships to flourish within the territorial administration may provide useful sources of support as it binds provincial circles of elites to the regime. Over the long term, however, they further entrench authoritarianism—by halting political reform, weakening rule of law institutions, and diminishing social welfare programs—and unintentionally sow seeds of instability. In Uzbekistan, these sub-national developments not only dampened prospects for transition from authoritarianism, but have defined an everyday experience for people in the provinces in which “the state” means continued exploitation in a system of labor-repressive agriculture, provincial elites' false promises of land reform, subjugation to the misuse of power by venal law enforcement and judicial officials, and long winters with sporadic electricity and gas. Incremental state-building reforms addressing the corrosive effects of neopatrimonialism in the regions would not only remove obstacles to political and economic development that will undoubtedly arise in the future, but would provide relief to a large portion of the population. Failure to act on these challenges will keep the country on the verge of political crisis.