

The Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan: A Case Study in Economic Liberalization, Intraelite Cleavage, and Political Opposition

BARBARA JUNISBAI AND AZAMAT JUNISBAI

Abstract: This article departs from recent scholarship on Central Asia, which emphasizes the role of clans and regional identity in driving political outcomes. In Kazakhstan, elite cleavages based on rival economic interests (as opposed to clan or other traditional divisions) are the most significant sources of pressure for democratic political reform. Using the Democratic Choice opposition movement as a case study, the authors discuss the relationship between economic liberalization and elite cleavages and the role of elite cleavages in generating democratic challenges to authoritarian rule.

Key words: Central Asia, elites, intraelite cleavage, Kazakhstan, neopatrimonialism, political change

Why the Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan Matters

The collapse of the Soviet Union created fifteen independent states with distinct trajectories of political development. Although early observers hoped that the Soviet Union's demise equaled a victory for democracy, many of these states—perhaps most notably the Central Asian republics—have failed to live up to vaunted Western ideals. In fact, the absence of significant challenges to the authoritarian status quo by viable democratic opposition movements is the defining characteristic of the political climate in Central Asia. Numerous social, historical, and structural factors have been cited to explain the political continuities during the region's postcommunist transition, including the hegemony of informal clan politics, endurance of Soviet legacies, and lack of prior experience with either statehood or democracy, among others. Yet, inspired by the Rose Revolution in Georgia, the Orange Revolution in Ukraine, and the sudden collapse of

Barbara Junisbai and Azamat Junisbai are PhD students at Indiana University. From 2000 to 2003, they worked for USAID's Central Asian Regional Mission in Almaty, Kazakhstan.

the Akaev regime in Kyrgyzstan in March 2005, political activists in Central Asia hope that political change can be affected in even the least politically reformed and most authoritarian of the former Soviet states.

Given the renewed sense of hope on the part of Central Asia's political opposition, the questions guiding this article are: What is the most plausible force for genuine democratization in the region? What segment of society, if any, is capable of mounting a viable democratic challenge to the ruling authoritarian regimes? Using Kazakhstan as a case study, we contend that intralite cleavages fueled by the fragmenting economic interests of the newly minted national bourgeoisie represent the most promising source of pressure for meaningful systemic reform. President Nazarbaev's greatest achievement—Kazakhstan's ambitious economic liberalization carried out since independence—appears to have had an unintended side effect. Under conditions of rapid economic transformation, the tried and true Soviet solution to maintaining the political status quo—the monolithic national elite—began to shatter as the elite actors' economic interests diversified and ultimately came into conflict.

The hope for democracy in Central Asia is not that the masses will revolt, nor is it that the heads of government will come to view democracy as good in itself. Neither will democracy simply arise once these countries reach some specified level of economic development. Rather, with economic liberalization, escalating competition among elites for their share of the economic pie and their growing instrumental commitment to the rule of law seem to be the source of genuine political change. As the basis for this interpretation of events, we analyzed the emergence in fall 2001 of the Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan (DCK; in Russian: *Demokraticeskii Vybor Kazakhstana*, or DVK; in Kazakh: *Kazakstan Demokratyalyk Tangdauy*, or KDT), which represented a dramatic departure from the predominant pattern of political life in Central Asia. The DCK exemplified a new stage in the evolution of post-Soviet Central Asian opposition movements brought on by the emergence of a new economic cleavage within the country's previously homogenous elite. In an unprecedented move, the "who's who" of Kazakhstan's business and economic elite issued a joint statement announcing their commitment to the rule of law and democratization and declaring that Kazakhstan's stalled political reforms represented the most significant threat to the future of the country, economic development, and national security.

The DCK is a new form of political opposition that has not yet been witnessed in the other Central Asian republics. The unexpected fall of the Kyrgyz government, itself a shock to the leaders of the country's opposition, was an outcome of the actions of impoverished rural citizens rather than the product of coordinated political strategy. The extensive looting that ensued and the relative inability of the opposition to control it, as well as the opposition leaders' jockeying for position in the immediate aftermath, revealed that they rode, rather than led, the wave of mass frustration. Although these events undoubtedly provide an historic opportunity for profound political transformation in Kyrgyzstan, it remains to be seen whether those who came to power will be committed to systemic change beyond the mere reshuffling of patronage networks. Even in Tajikistan, where sharp polit-

ical contestation has existed at times, the political challengers identified themselves with and arose out of competition between regional groupings, rather than a split among economic elites vying for autonomy in the business sphere. Although Tajikistan's civil war was the result of a constellation of divisions, including region- and ideology-based ones, the chances for political and economic change proved limited because "there ha[d] not yet developed a powerful new entrepreneurial class, separate from the old ruling elite, which might conceivably press for political changes to favor itself."¹

Modernization, Elites, Clientelism, and Clans

Unlike recent scholarship on Central Asia, which emphasizes how clan and regional identities shape political outcomes,² we draw on a different set of the political science literature—the relationship between modernization and democratization and the role of elites and inraelite cleavages in democratic transitions—to analyze the emergence of the DCK. We have found that explanations focusing on the underlying clan structure of Central Asian politics cannot account for the emergence of the DCK or the platform it espoused. In fact, the DCK presents a challenge to the idea that kin-based and territorial affiliation forms the primary boundary between groups in Kazakhstan's political environment. Although it is true that politics in Kazakhstan are primarily informal in nature—making it difficult for the outsider to observe and chart what really matters in behind-the-scenes decision-making process—competition between elite groupings, as described in the literature on neopatrimonial regimes, better explains the case of the DCK than do treatments that characterize Kazakhstan's politics as primarily based around lineage or regional identity. The viability of clan-based explanations in the case of polyethnic Kazakhstan is further diminished by the presence of a sizable Russian population (30 percent according to the 1999 census) concentrated in urban areas and in the north of the country.

As this case study demonstrates, an important political byproduct of economic reform in Kazakhstan is the transformation of the country's elite from a monolithic group with more or less homogenous interests to one of inraelite cleavage, which some scholars have suggested is a critical step in creating the necessary underlying conditions for political transition. The DCK is significant because it reveals in concrete terms how economic liberalization undertaken in a clientelistic political system can spur demands for democratic reform among the elite. In our estimation, the significance of the post-Soviet economic transformation from a condition of elite continuity to one of inraelite cleavage, as evidenced by the emergence of the DCK, is paramount. As Higley, Kullberg, and Pakulski have found, "very high degrees of elite continuity have gone hand-in-hand with post-communist regimes that hide the substance of authoritarianism behind a veneer of democratic forms."³ Given the central role of elite actors in pressing for political change, meaningful reform is almost impossible under conditions in which the composition and interests of the post-Communist elite remain unaltered.

If elite continuity is correlated with political continuity, under what conditions might elites and their interests undergo the kinds of division necessary to provoke

demands for political change? Dahl suggests that, by creating an advanced market economy, an authoritarian government pursuing economic liberalization may unwittingly “stimulate demands for democratization among elites and the broader public.”⁴ In this scenario, the government can no longer resort to its usual practice of coercion and exclusion to suppress political demands because the costs have become too high to impose upon a “mobilized, informed, and self-confident public.” Numerous scholars have both built upon and challenged the idea, echoed in the scenario that Dahl presents, that the cultural and social changes that accompany economic development both drive and complement democratization.⁵ In general, the modernization school holds that the moderating influence of expanded access to higher education, the development of a large middle class, and citizens’ membership in cross-cutting associations combine to bring about an environment conducive to democracy. Even based on this simplified outline, however, it is evident that the modernization theory is overly deterministic and leaves little (if any) room for the role of actors to bring about political change.

In contrast, scholars stressing the human agents behind regime breakdown and transition look to a country’s elites—rather than general economic, social, and cultural transformations—whose decisions and actions are the primary forces behind political change. As O’Donnell and Schmitter argue, “there is no transition whose beginning is not the consequence—direct or indirect—of important divisions within the authoritarian regime itself, principally along the fluctuating cleavage between hard-liners and soft-liners.”⁶ Likewise, as Higley and Burton find, “democratic transitions and breakdowns can best be understood by studying basic continuities and changes in the internal relations of national elites.”⁷

Yet, a serious problem with the agency approach to understanding transitions is its tendency to take the relative power, preferences, and agenda of the actors as a given and its failure to address the factors that shape the actors’ preferences and capabilities in the first place.⁸ Key actors are defined in terms of their orientation toward regime change (for example, hard-liners versus soft-liners; moderates versus extremists) rather than by interests rooted in particular economic structures and conditions. Similarly, we argue that the DCK’s membership composition and political platform are best understood in terms of the realities of Kazakhstan’s patrimonial political system,⁹ its economic transformation, and the relative position of the DCK’s founders within these overarching structures. In light of the particularities found in patrimonial regimes like that of Kazakhstan, the nature of elite divisions cannot be neatly summed up by the hard/soft-liner dichotomy that O’Donnell and Schmitter emphasize. On the contrary, in patrimonial systems the primary cleavage is found between those with privileged access to the ruling group’s inner circle and those elites kept outside of it. Bratton and Van de Walle (1994) present a very different picture of the most salient form of cleavage in Africa’s neopatrimonial regimes, which is in many ways an apt depiction of Kazakhstani politics:

The conventional distinction between hard-liners and soft-liners does not capture the essential fault line within a neopatrimonial elite. Instead of fracturing ideologically over whether to liberalize [the political system], neopatrimonial elites are

more likely to take sides on pragmatic grounds in struggles over spoils. Their political positions come to be defined according to whether they are *insiders or outsiders in relation to the patronage system*. (emphasis added)¹⁰

In important ways, however, the emergence of the DCK and the form of opposition politics it represents are quite different from that suggested by Bratton and Van de Walle's description of African neopatrimonial regimes. First, in African neopatrimonialism, those in bureaucratic posts are "there less to perform public service than to acquire personal wealth and status."¹¹ Although this is generally true in Kazakhstan, President Nazarbaev has also taken great efforts to place qualified, well-educated, and motivated technocrats in key posts. Significantly, many of these talented young people working in the government joined to form the DCK.

Second, Bratton and Van de Walle find that ideology plays little or no role in the emergence of elite splits. Those who leave the government and join the ranks of the opposition are guided solely by self-interest and share no ideological or political goals beyond their

desire for access to the spoils that those in the privileged inner circle have hoarded for themselves. The DCK's founders, however, were driven both by self-interest and ideology, a characteristic that distinguished this new kind of political opposition from other forms of opposition in the region.

"The DCK's founders, however, were driven both by self-interest and ideology, a characteristic that distinguished this new kind of political opposition from other forms of opposition in the region."

A Short History of Elite Challenges to the Nazarbaev Regime

Before turning to our discussion of the DCK, a short summary of independent Kazakhstan's political opposition is in order. As in other former Soviet republics, the early opposition had its roots in *glasnost*, the period of political and cultural opening under Gorbachev, and was made up of well-known intellectuals (such as writer Olzhas Suleimenov, who formed the Nevada-Semipalatinsk antinuclear movement in 1989 and the Party People's Congress of Kazakhstan in 1991) and Kazakh nationalists (who formed the Azat and Zheltoksan movements). Organized around specific issues, such as closure of the nuclear testing range in Semipalatinsk or the advancement of Kazakh language and culture, none was able to secure political power due to their limited financial resources and the widespread popularity of then First Secretary Nursultan Nazarbaev.

As Nazarbaev's well-documented consolidation of political and economic power continued, a new set of opposition figures emerged, including Akezhan Kazhegeldin, who, during his three-year tenure as the country's prime minister (1994–1997), had gained political prominence. In October 1998, after a reported falling out with President Nazarbaev, Kazhegeldin announced the formation of the Republican People's Party (RNPK) and his decision to run in the 1999 presidential

elections. Soon thereafter, the government declared his candidacy void due to an administrative conviction for participating in an unsanctioned public gathering. Kazhegeldin has since faced numerous charges (including tax evasion, money laundering, and abuse of office), was convicted in absentia, and now lives abroad in self-imposed exile. Despite his considerable success in garnering support in the West, after he fled Kazakhstan to escape criminal prosecution, neither of the two opposition movements he established—RNPK and the Forum of Democratic Forces—has had much impact on Kazakhstan’s political development.

The Azamat movement, led by well-known ex-minister Petr Svoik and Kazakhstan’s former Ambassador to China, Murat Auezov, also was part of the second wave. Azamat was registered as an official party in 1999, but did not reregister in 2003, a prerequisite for participation in the 2004 parliamentary elections. In 2003, Auezov accepted a government-funded position as the head of the National Library. In late 2001, Svoik joined forces with the Republican People’s Party and the People’s Congress to form the United Democratic Party, whose slogan is “Kazakhstan without Nazarbaev.” Neither party, however, participated in the 2004 elections. Because both Azamat and the United Democratic Party have been plagued by a lack of funding, neither has been a viable force capable of opposing Nazarbaev. In fact, neither the first nor second generation of political opposition could surmount the general problem of disorganization and lack of resources.

A key commonality that these opposition movements share is that, during their emergence, Kazakhstan’s elite base had not yet undergone the process of division and conflict that later arose as a result of diversifying economic interests. In addition to their lack of independent economic resources, opposition leaders such as Suleimenov and Auezov proved unable to extract themselves from the social and political milieu that they shared with others from their generation of intellectuals. Until the advent of an economic split, elites of this generation were more or less homogenous. Their political movements, therefore, did not represent intraelite competition, which, in our view, is critical to the development of a competitive party system.

Table 1 highlights the support bases, resources, and platforms of the opposition up to the present. The DCK, Ak Zhol, and the For A Just Kazakhstan opposition coalition will be discussed later.

Formation of the Democratic Choice Movement

In November 2001, a decade after the Republic of Kazakhstan declared independence, the increasingly authoritarian rule of President Nazarbaev experienced its most significant political challenge to date. Leading representatives of the country’s business and political elite announced the establishment of the DCK, calling for decentralization of political authority (via the direct election of regional governors) and a strong legislature and independent judiciary to balance the power concentrated in the presidency.

The government’s response to the new political movement was swift. In an early speech, then Prime Minister Tokaev condemned the DCK and demanded the resignation of “all those who disagree with the government’s policy and wish

TABLE 1. Chronology of Kazakhstan's Opposition

Party/movement name	Year established	Primary composition	Available resources	Political platform
Azat	1991	Ethnic Kazakhs, high-school-level education, urban and <i>oblasts</i> with Kazakhstan majority	Limited funding, poorly organized	Kazakh nationalism, cultural and linguistic
People's Congress Azamat	1991	Intellectuals	Lacks financial support, patrons	Centrist alternative to nationalist, socialist
Republican People's Party of Kazakhstan (RNPK)	1996	Marginal, membership limited to urban centers	Lacks financial support, patrons	Prodemocracy, anti-Nazarbaev
DCK	1998	Intellectuals and dissidents	Kazhegeldin's income, independent financial base outside Kazakhstan, Western support	Prodemocracy, anti-Nazarbaev
Ak Zhol Party	2001	Technocrats, business people, oligarchs	Substantial wealth of founders and supporters	Rule of law, economic reform, democratization, radical opposition
For A Just Kazakhstan	2002	Moderate DCK members	Substantial wealth of founders and supporters	Critical of government policy, constructive opposition (originally hoped for reform within government)
	2004	Coalition of opposition parties	Experience and resources of numerous parties and opposition figures	Joint effort to pool resources, launch single platform and candidate for December 2006 presidential election; inspired by Ukraine

to be involved in political movements,” labeling DCK founders “nonprofessionals” and “homebred schemers” who are “pretending to be concerned about democracy.” Tokaev also suggested that the DCK would bring “chaos and political lawlessness” to the country.¹² Within weeks, DCK members holding government posts were replaced through presidential decree, and criminal charges alleging tax evasion and misuse of office were filed against the movement’s two most outspoken leaders, Galymzhan Zhakiyanov and Mukhtar Ablyazov. Unknown “hooligans” emptied their rifles into the transmitter of a television station sympathetic to the new movement, and firebombs detonated in the offices of a newspaper related to one of the movement’s founders.

As a result of this pressure, some of the DCK’s original signatories withdrew public support; others renounced their participation; and a group of DCK members announced the creation of a more moderate faction within the movement, the Ak Zhol political party (see table 1). Zhakiyanov and Ablyazov were jailed on criminal charges. Foreign observers, including the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), described their widely publicized trials as politically motivated.

What set the DCK apart from prior attempts at organized political opposition in Kazakhstan was the members’ experience in the political system, the civil service, and key business sectors. Unlike earlier opposition figures, who had come from the ranks of the intelligentsia, key DCK founders had independent resources with which to finance their political activities. Some had previously held or were holding governmental posts at the time they formed the movement. Others had benefited from privatization, in which a small number of financial partnerships gained control of profitable and strategic industries. Founders included Zhakiyanov, governor of Pavlodar *oblast’* (province); Oraz Jandosov, deputy prime minister; Zhannat Yertlesova, deputy defense minister; Kairat Kelimbetov, deputy finance minister; Ablyazov, former energy minister, head of the Astana-Holding investment group, and one of the wealthiest people in Kazakhstan; Nurzhan Subkhanberdin, head of the largest bank in Central Asia, Kazkommertz Bank; and Erzhan Tatishev, head of Turan Alem Bank. Both banks’ international financial ratings, incidentally, are among the highest in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

In his unofficial memoirs, DCK founding member Ablyazov recounts the events leading up to the consolidation of rival business groupings into an anti-Nazarbaev alliance in the fall of 2001.¹³ Presidential son-in-law Rahat Aliev used his position as deputy head of the Committee for National Security (KNB) to take over some of Ablyazov’s businesses, including Turan Alem Bank and a large chunk of his media holdings. In late October, a number of the country’s successful entrepreneurs published an open letter in the press urging the president to stop the unchecked actions of certain law enforcement agencies, a euphemism for Aliev himself. Ablyazov explained how political figures that had previously been aligned with or worked under Nazarbaev were drawn into the conflict due to their dislike of Aliev, whose audacity and ruthlessness they had personally experienced during his consolidation of power. There was widespread fear among political actors that Aliev would

become the country's next president. As a result, an eclectic grouping of Kazakhstan's elites united against a common enemy.

On November 17, there was an auction to sell the state's share of the Halyk Savings Bank. Powerful interests, such as Kazkommertz Bank and Ablyazov's investment group, had been publicly contending for a controlling stake in the bank. When the Mangistaumunaigas financial group, a latecomer to the bid, emerged as the auction's winner, the other contenders were suspicious, particularly since the group was reported to have close ties to Aliev.¹⁴

Public statements made by Nazarbaev and Aliev on the day of the auction hint at the brewing battle between elite groupings. In a televised speech, Nazarbaev made oblique reference to the struggle between his family and the *mladoturki* (young Turks). "When it comes to our relatives and children," he explained:

They are talked about as if they are not Kazakh citizens like everyone else. They enjoy the same rights as others. They can run businesses; they can head state services. Certainly, if the president's relatives violate the law and the Kazakh constitution, Themis, the goddess of justice—that is, the law—should step in. That is why all insinuations around this issue are absolutely groundless.¹⁵

He also warned the country's business elite: "I have always supported business and continue to do so. . . . However, this does not mean that businessmen can write to the newspapers and evade taxes while they breach tax legislation and other Kazakh laws." In much harsher wording, Aliev issued his own warning. On national television with the president at his side, he stated that "the head of state, President Nazarbaev, instructed us to combat all the scum which prevents healthy forces in society from working and breathing freely,"¹⁶ despite the fact that Nazarbaev had removed him from his own post at the NKB the day before. On November 18, as a result of the combined effect of Aliev's actions against Ablyazov, Nazarbaev's decision to publicly support his son-in-law, and the Halyk Bank auction, there was a press conference to announce the founding of the DCK.¹⁷

Soon thereafter, proregime critics of the DCK issued scathing statements in the press arguing that the DCK's language of democracy was a means rather than an end. The deputy head of the propresidential Otan party, for example, characterized the DCK as "the consolidation of well-known personalities . . . including the biggest Kazakh oligarchs" who, rather than out of true desire to "step up democratic transformations" in the country, were seeking "to protect their vital interests."¹⁸ Although such statements were certainly crafted to undermine the DCK's stature in the eyes of the Kazakhstani public, they were not entirely without merit. Self-interest was indeed a key motivating force behind the movement's formation.

A Political Agenda Based on Economic Self-interest

Explanations of how economic liberalization can serve as a potential catalyst for regime change do not directly address why elites choose to challenge the regime by promoting democratic reforms. This is a critical normative question for Kazakhstan's average citizen, who is often cynical about the true (selfish, instrumental) motives behind so-called democratic opposition movements. Can individuals acting in their self-interest bring about collective good? Must those

who espouse democratic reforms necessarily be motivated purely by a normative commitment to democracy?

The DCK's founders understood that the greatest threat to their economic well-being was the power of the ruling family to arbitrarily decide the fate of entrepreneurs and political players alike. Emboldened by their financial power, the founders sought access to political power and decision making commensurate with their economic standing. As successful entrepreneurs and experienced civil servants and political office holders, they believed that their valuable input would improve government policy, as well as ensure that it reflected their interests. These factors explain, at least in part, why they embarked upon such a risky project. They, in

“The DCK’s driving force to create a competitive political system was the desire to ensure that fair, transparent, and impartial laws would apply to everyone.”

effect, expected to use political channels to ensure that their business interests were protected from arbitrary seizure by individuals in the president's inner circle who had the freedom to do as they wished in a corrupt and, by many accounts lawless, environment.

They also felt that they were unfairly prevented from participating in the privatization of

Kazakhstan's largest and most lucrative sectors, such as oil, gas, and metallurgy. In the country's all-important oil industry, for example, only foreign investors and those in the inner circle were allowed to partake. As a result, the country's "most valuable resources were apportioned among . . . Nazarbayev's key political supporters and clans through insider deals,"¹⁹ a fact that embittered the elites who had been kept out of the process. One of the DCK's cofounders and one of the country's wealthiest and most successful entrepreneurs, Bulat Abilov, has repeatedly stated that his foray into opposition politics dates back to his unsuccessful attempt to participate in the privatization of Karmet—an enormous metallurgical complex in Karaganda inherited by Kazakhstan after the dissolution of the USSR. Abilov's open letter to President Nazarbaev lays bare the economic underpinnings of intraelite cleavages in modern Kazakhstan:

The family-clan driven economy, built with your participation and supervision hinders not only the development of business but the entire Kazakhstani society. . . . It is because of your policies that our nation's wealth, its best industrial enterprises, were unfairly transferred to so called "investors" with shadowy biographies! Your model of the economy brought prosperity not to all Kazakhstan's citizens but rather to a handful of people in your inner circle.²⁰

Thus, the DCK's driving force to create a competitive political system was the desire to ensure that fair, transparent, and impartial laws would apply to everyone—including the president's family and associates—irrespective of position in the patrimonial hierarchy. One can certainly argue that the business elites' wealth was a result not of modernization but of their political connections during early privatiza-

tion schemes. Yet, this does not diminish their recognition that the rule of law, a central part of their political platform, was necessary to protect their business interests, just as the current lack of institutionalized rules by which all parties agree to abide would continue to threaten those interests.

One important clarification is necessary. In the Soviet patronage system that Kazakhstan inherited, political involvement was viewed primarily as a source of money and privilege for those involved and their families.²¹ All founding members of the DCK, however, were already part and parcel of Kazakhstan's business and political elite and, in this sense, had much to lose from their public challenge to Nazarbaev's regime. Unlike the traditional conception of political involvement as providing access to economic privilege, the DCK represented a different formulation of the pursuit of self-interest. The movement's leaders did not seek political power to gain access to government coffers or to the spoils in a narrow sense of access to bribes and kickbacks. It could be argued that they had already greatly benefited from previous access to these spoils and connections. Rather, they sought to restructure the political game in such a way that fair, more transparent rules would govern to protect their business interests and curtail the presidential family's ability to monopolize the country's banking and business sectors. Thus, the DCK confirmed the pattern of intraelite conflict found in African neopatrimonial regimes, in which ". . . splits are governed more by considerations of self-interest than of ideology."²²

Clearly, economic self-interest (augmented by the opposition's belief that Nazarbaev, his inner circle, and the corruption and arbitrary use of unchecked power in their hands served as obstacles to the country's political and economic development) played a central role in the formation of the DCK. There are very few references to democratic goals and ideals in Ablyazov's account of what took place behind the scenes as the president's inner circle and the business elite found themselves at odds with one another. Ablyazov's recollection of his conversations with President Nazarbaev highlights the underlying economic struggle and the desire for an equal playing field in which the economic elite could conduct their business. In one instance, Nazarbaev asked Ablyazov, "What do you want? Oil? Airlines? Assistance with your overseas operations?" Ablyazov replied that he was ready to embark upon new business endeavors, but only as long as they afforded him one thing: equal footing with others, including those in the president's privileged inner circle. He wrote, "I could have no illusions about free handouts when they were trying to take away what I had earned with my own hard work."²³

Although economic self-interest was a driving force, it does not account for every member's motivation to join the movement. In this sense, the motivations guiding the DCK's founding members differ from and are more nuanced than Bratton and Van de Walle's depiction of intraelite cleavage within neopatrimonial regimes suggests. Other founders, drawn from the ranks of the civil service, were not primarily concerned with protecting their economic investments. These included Deputy Prime Minister Jandosov, Deputy Defense Minister Yertlesova, and Deputy Finance Minister Kelimbetov, who were hopeful that the

new movement would be able to formulate a reform platform that would, in turn, find resonance among the population at large. Many young reformers working within the system under the government of Prime Minister Tokaev had become disillusioned with the slow pace of reform. They were certain, perhaps naively so, that they could convince Nazarbaev that Tokaev needed to be replaced by someone with commitment to economic and political reform and who was capable of heading a strong government that could stand on its own, apart from the office of the president.

Furthermore, the diversity of backgrounds and identities of the players suggests that kinship ties and related forms of mutual obligation played no role in the evolution of conflict and cooperation that ensued.²⁴ A quick review of DCK members' clan affiliation and regions of origin provides a good sense of their heterogeneity and the limited role of these types of identities in guiding their interests. Ablyazov, a native of Almaty, is from the greater *zhuz* (horde); Zhakiyanov (from Semipalatinsk), Abilov (from Karaganda), and Baimenov (from Zhezkazgan) are from the middle *zhuz*; and Jandosov (from Almaty) is half Jewish, half Kazakh.²⁵ Apart from their experience working in the government, the one characteristic they all have in common is that they are well educated and received their degrees from universities in Moscow. Rather than traditional social cleavages and forms of group identity, we found strong evidence that diversifying economic interests, intraelite splits, and the irreconcilable antagonism between the goals of those in the president's inner circle and those of the outer circle of elites informed the participants' actions and the strategies they pursued.²⁶

In the case of the DCK, the opposition's key interests and political agenda is more fully understood in the context of—and in opposition to—the existing clientelistic or patrimonial system rather than the expression of competition between clans or other traditional forms of social cleavage. Although many of the DCK's founders had managed to amass large personal fortunes, “the young Turks were not permitted to compete with those in the inner circle” made up of Nazarbaev's family and close associates.²⁷ Members of the president's family reportedly control many of the country's largest businesses and banks, such as Elitstroi (construction company), Dastarkhan (restaurant chain), Khabar (national television channel), and Nurbank. The president's daughter, Dariga Nazarbaeva, controls a number of print and broadcast media outlets in partnership with Aliev, her husband, who at different times occupied high-level positions in the special services, tax police, and customs. Another presidential son-in-law, Timur Kulibaev, is influential in the oil, gas, and banking sectors. In the late 1990s, as Nazarbaev's family attempted to dominate the media, oil, and banking sectors at the expense of other powerful industrial groupings in the country, “Kazakhstan's emerging tycoons grew uncomfortable over their decreasing ability to safeguard their interests.”²⁸

This new economic cleavage within Kazakhstan's elite was the direct, if unintended, result of Nazarbaev's economic liberalization policy.²⁹ Kazakhstan's economy is widely recognized as the most market-oriented and reformed of the Central Asian republics and has achieved a level of macroeconomic development that far surpasses that of any other country in the region. Although Kyrgyzstan's

President Akaev also determinedly pursued economic reform, the Kyrgyz economy has not been able to reap the benefits in the way that Kazakhstan has. For one, Kyrgyzstan's domestic economy is miniscule in comparison with that of Kazakhstan, and despite (some argue because of) early entrance into the World Trade Organization, the economy remains sluggish and largely undifferentiated. Importantly, Kazakhstan has vast oil reserves that allow the government to lure foreign investment in a way that Kyrgyzstan cannot, and Nazarbaev's economic policy is now focused on developing domestic manufacturing and other value-added industry to diversify the economy. Although poverty and unemployment, especially in rural areas, are high in both countries, even casual observers (both Western and local) notice the very tangible difference between the wealth accumulated in Kazakhstan's capital, Astana, and financial center, Almaty, and the far less developed local economies in Kyrgyzstan's major cities, Bishkek and Osh.

Perhaps attesting to the country's progress in liberalizing the economy, in March 2002, the United States accorded Kazakhstan the greatly sought-after status of a full-market economy. No other Central Asian republic has achieved that level of economic development; indeed, Kazakhstan became the first country in the CIS recognized in this manner by the U.S. government. Later that year, in October 2002, Kazakhstan became the first country in the CIS to reach investment-grade status when Moody's upgraded Kazakhstan's rating to Baa3. These two indicators demonstrate, to some degree, the sharp contrast between the nature and scope of Kazakhstan's economy with that of the other Central Asian republics. Tajikistan's economy is still recovering from the 1992–97 civil war; Uzbekistan has only recently acquiesced to the International Monetary Fund's demands to allow full currency convertibility and remains slow to enact other necessary reforms; Turkmenistan's economy is by all accounts dominated (and stifled) by President Niyazov; and Kyrgyzstan, despite extensive reforms on paper, has not been able to expand its economy to the degree that such reforms promised.

Given Kazakhstan's substantial economic progress—even if much of it is oil-driven—in comparison with the rest of the region, we find Dahl's emphasis on economic conditions to be a useful tool for understanding the potential driving force behind political change in a region characterized primarily by political continuity from Soviet to superpresidential rule. The economic rift is an important new socioeconomic cleavage in Kazakhstan that did not exist at the outset of independence. In fact, it can be argued that it was precisely the lack of cleavage that prevented the development of a successful challenge to the political inheritors of the Soviet regime. As Elster, Offe, and Preuss have posited, in the absence of cleavage and “crystallized political agency,” there is no “fertile ground for the formation of representative collective actors” that could serve as an alternative to the status quo.³⁰

Upon Kazakhstan's independence, the lack of crystallized political agency meant that Nazarbaev, elected by parliament to head the country, emerged unchallenged as the country's first president, switching titles from First Secretary of the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic to President of the Independent Republic of Kazakhstan. Likewise, the new country's political leadership was composed of the former communist party nomenclatura.³¹ Thus, instead of political transition,

it may be better to speak of political continuity in Kazakhstan. Because independence did not entail a break with former bases of political power, there were no incentives for established elites to challenge the status quo. Among other factors, this resulted in the development of a single-party patronage system, personalized rule, and concentration of power in the presidency.

Within this overall political environment, the privatization process worked to inadvertently fracture Kazakhstan's once homogeneous elite and "provided opportunities for unsanctioned individuals and groups to become political claimants."³² Although privatization and economic liberalization disproportionately benefited the old Communist Party elites and those in Nazarbaev's inner circle, these twin processes also created a new and increasingly independent generation of economic elite who saw the current patrimonial system of reward and punishment as the primary threat to their private economic interests and, by extension, to the economy at large. Thus, the emergence of the DCK is the direct result of conflicting economic interests among elites, which have been transferred to the political arena. As a prominent Kazakh political analyst notes, the DCK's appearance demonstrates that "there is no longer the former monolithic order which for many years existed within the economic/political system."³³

Recent Political Developments in the Region

Much has happened since the DCK announced its founding in late 2001, and the overall political climate has not improved since the completion of the original draft of this article in December 2003. In 2004, Kazakhstan held parliamentary elections, the results of which were condemned by international observers and Kazakhstan's political opposition. In January 2005, a court ruled in favor of a suit filed by the Almaty prosecutor's office against the DCK, ordering the party to be "liquidated." Then, in April 2005, parliament passed a law prohibiting demonstrations in the period prior to and following elections. Given that the presidential elections are scheduled for 2006, this law is clearly intended to thwart the opposition's planned attempts to force political change if the election does not.

Despite these developments, however, other events lend support to the basic argument presented in this article. Interestingly, numerous pundits, newspaper editors, and political figures within Kazakhstan have latched onto the idea that the economic rift within the elite is a primary source of new political demands. After the parliamentary elections, for example, Ak Zhol declared that it could no longer coexist with the government to pursue incremental reforms and argued that the presidential administration and local election officials deliberately falsified the election results and used its authority to increase votes for candidates running under the ruling presidential Otan party ticket. Whereas Ak Zhol had, since its inception, portrayed itself as the "constructive opposition" (that is, not outright critical of President Nazarbaev, encouraging political liberalization from within the existing system), the rhetoric of the party's chairmen following the elections suggests a change in strategy away from that of "constructive" to "radical opposition." In the context of Kazakhstan's politics, the radical opposition includes those who believe that the president and his administration are the primary obstacles to political reform and democratization.

Perhaps the most singular event that occurred in 2004 was the resignation of Otan party leader and parliamentary speaker Zharmakhan Tuyakbai in the aftermath of the elections. Publicly condemning local election officials for deliberately rigging the election results and stating that he could no longer represent a party that had won due to fraud, Tuyakbai joined the opposition and was elected the chair of the opposition coalition For A Just Kazakhstan. Gearing up for the 2006 presidential elections, the “radical opposition” (former DCK and RNP members and Ak Zhol) formed the coalition in early 2005 with the express purpose of presenting a unified political platform and nominating a viable single candidate for president (see table 1). Tuyakbai was officially declared the united opposition’s presidential candidate in March 2005. Many political analysts in Kazakhstan have concluded that Tuyakbai’s defection to the opposition, for whatever reason, signifies the continuation of internal conflict and division within the country’s political elite. Taken together, these developments suggest that Kazakhstan’s current political evolution is a direct result of ongoing intraelite competition, which was brought on by the twin processes of economic liberalization and interest diversification among the country’s elite.

“It appears that Akaev’s ouster had more to do with the country’s problems of dire poverty, lack of economic growth, and corruption and less to do with the opposition’s drive for democratization.”

Recent events in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, however, follow a different path. The rapid unfolding of Kyrgyzstan’s Tulip Revolution took the leaders of the political opposition by surprise, by their own admission.³⁴ Importantly, the spontaneous mass mobilization of discontent occurred independent of and outside of the control of opposition leaders. It appears that Akaev’s ouster had more to do with the country’s problems of dire poverty, lack of economic growth, and corruption and less to do with the opposition’s drive for democratization. As one participant in the violence, a taxi driver, explained, “[Bolot] Janusakov [deputy head of Akayev’s administration] was hiding in his office. We came in, [and] I beat him. How could we tolerate him? On our collective farm, there is no flour or sugar or oil, yet they have everything—food, lovers, everything.”³⁵ Similarly, a resident of Jalalabad in southern Kyrgyzstan explained that her participation in the protests against Akaev had more to do with poverty than with flawed polls: “Kyrgyz people by tradition are very respectful towards authorities, but even their patience has run out. We’ve been waiting for Akaev to do something for fifteen years. Okay, he is a good scientist, but he is not a good leader and good manager. He is not able to feed his nation.”³⁶

Thus, in important ways, the Kazakhstani and Kyrgyzstani oppositions are mirror opposites. Kazakhstan’s political opposition has a well-organized and independently wealthy leadership (that is, it does not rely on government patronage networks for access to income or protection) that is united, with a recognizable political

platform, and which has proposed alternative legislation and drafted a new constitution. Yet, popular political mobilization for a variety of reasons has proven challenging. Kyrgyzstan, on the other hand, has a number of disorganized and competing opposition camps built around the charismatic leaders that head them, and which have not articulated a program for wider political change beyond pressing for the interests of particular regions. Yet, these represent definite bases of popular support from which the opposition can draw and has drawn in the past.

Recent protests and government repression in Uzbekistan are also based on popular grievances against (at least) local authorities who have taken away land and have threatened people's ability to make a decent living. Contrary to the claims of President Karimov—or of Kyrgyzstan's acting Prime Minister Bakiev, for that matter—that the twenty-three men detained in Andijon were Islamic extremists, it appears more likely that they were tried because of their growing wealth and their refusal to cooperate with local authorities in sharing the wealth with government officials and police. More important, as in Kazakhstan but on a much smaller and more local scale, the Andijon trials were, according to some observers, the result of these entrepreneurs' threat to the monopoly of groups who are allied with the government.³⁷ Unlike Kazakhstan, however, Uzbekistan has yet to take real steps toward economic liberalization. As a result, national-level elites are still characterized by their Soviet-style homogeneity, and the scale of elite cleavages remains decidedly local. As in Kyrgyzstan, the protests that unfolded were popular and spontaneous in response to the harsh sentences handed down, rather than driven by an organized political opposition pressing for systemic democratic reform. Since the Uzbek opposition has been hounded by the government and had its activities severely curtailed, expressions of mass discontent will likely remain, as in neopatrimonial regimes in general, spontaneous and disorganized, without a well-defined political leadership.³⁸

Conclusion

In this article, we posed an important question: Given the general lack of political transformation in Central Asia, what segment of society, if any, is most likely to mount a viable democratic challenge to the region's authoritarian status quo? Using the Democratic Choice movement as a case study, we argued that in Kazakhstan, economic liberalization has created conditions favoring the formation of a new intraelite cleavage that had not previously existed in any of the Central Asian republics. In stark contrast to traditional forms of political organization and political interests along regional and clan lines, this new cleavage represents the diversification of economic interests among elite actors.

Of course, since the DCK was largely suppressed in a short period of time and was dissolved by a court order in early 2005, one might wonder why the movement matters at all. And in terms of our ability to extrapolate from this single case study and generate predictions about the future of change in Central Asia, we are limited by certain unfavorable realities, including the desire of the region's leaders to maintain as much control over power as they are able and the severe restrictions—both related to geography and policy—to economic reform and growth in the region.

In Uzbekistan, the country with arguably the greatest economic potential, the Karimov government remains unwilling to liberalize the economy (although it has taken some small, symbolic steps) or to open up political competition and contestation. Despite recent developments in Kyrgyzstan, the long-term prospects for democratization remain uncertain, and Tajikistan is still the poorest and most economically backward of the CIS countries.

Nevertheless, the fact that the DCK arose at all with the political agenda that it espoused supports the hypothesis that economic reform yields a greater diversity of economic interests and brings new actors pressing for political changes in their own, self-interested favor onto the political scene. As many Central Asian political observers have noted, Kazakhstan's political opposition is the most developed in the region in terms of its organizational abilities and resources.³⁹ Armed with their own financial assets, direct experience with and knowledge of the government's decision-making processes, as well as public relations savvy, they have yet to translate these organizational advantages into the creation of a wide base of popular support. Sergei Duvanov, a well-known Kazakhstani journalist, recently bemoaned the opposition's inability to rouse public sentiment in its favor, noting that not only is Kazakhstan far from Ukraine in terms of its chances for mass support for widespread political change, but also that Kyrgyzstan's opposition has been more successful at garnering public support than have their counterparts in Kazakhstan. At the same time, Duvanov argues, as we do here, that as the initial elite split that the DCK signaled continues, and as more of the elite flock to the opposition and take their government experience with them, the opposition will grow more credible and stronger, and there will be greater chances for real political reform.

Whether the intraelite split that grew out of Kazakhstan's economic liberalization will spill over into the electorate remains unclear. The answer to that question likely depends on other critical components of Dahl's equation linking economic development to political change, namely: (1) whether the government has the resources and the strength to continue relying upon coercive measures to neutralize the political opposition and (2) whether the elites' political demands can stimulate similar sentiments among the broader public. Nazarbaev's ability to use oil revenues to co-opt potential opponents and to fund government activities, including the state's coercive organs, are major structural obstacles that cannot be ignored. The "patronage resources"⁴⁰ that oil represents may provide Nazarbaev with a source of armor, although it is not clear how much of this wealth will benefit the average citizen. Alternatively, oil wealth could certainly hurt the Nazarbaev regime as corruption and glaring inequality continue unabated.

Nazarbaev's policy of combining reform and repression—what Gleason describes as a "product of compromise"⁴¹—to limit the opposition's appeal among the masses provides an additional source of leverage that the Uzbek and Turkmen presidents, who have relied heavily on coercive measures, lack. Gaining popular support and encouraging greater political participation and activism among a population that by many accounts is passive is no small task, but it is an essential part of any effort to mount a successful political challenge. To this end, Duvanov's words

of counsel to the opposition are worth highlighting: "Victory is possible, but in comparison with Ukraine, it will require the opposition to work three times harder. And the Kazakhstani opposition has not yet begun to work . . . or does not want to. The understanding of this will come only once the orange-colored glasses are removed."⁴²

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors are grateful to Jack Bielasiak, William Fierman, Henry Hale, Rustem Kadyrzhanov, Brian Powell, and the anonymous *Demokratizatsiya* reviewers for helpful comments and suggestions on earlier drafts of this article.

NOTES

1. Muriel Atkins, "Thwarted Democratization in Tajikistan," in *Conflict, Cleavage, and Change in Central Asia and the Caucasus*, ed. Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott, 278 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

2. See Edward Schatz, *Modern Clan Politics: The Power of "Blood" in Kazakhstan and Beyond* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004); Kathleen Collins, "The Political Role of Clans in Central Asia," *Comparative Politics* 35 (2003): 137–52; Kathleen Collins, "The Logic of Clan Politics: Evidence from the Central Asian Trajectories," *World Politics*, 56, no. 2 (2004): 224–61; and Pauline Jones Luong, *Institutional Change and Political Continuity in Post-Soviet Central Asia: Power, Perceptions, and Pacts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). Arguing that informal politics, rather than formal institutions, matter most in Central Asia, Collins, for example, explains that the tenacity of clans is a major force working against democracy in Central Asia. Competition between clans over state resources is what drives politics in the region, and the kinship bonds that delineate clans from one another continue to persist, even in the face of government efforts to modernize the economy and society.

3. John Higley, Judith Kullberg, and Jan Pakulski, "The Persistence of Postcommunist Elites," *Journal of Democracy* 7, no. 2 (1996): 138.

4. Robert Dahl, "Development and Democratic Culture," in *Consolidating the Third Wave Democracies*, ed. Larry Diamond, Marc F. Plattner, Yun-han Chu, and Hung-mao Tien, 36 (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997).

5. See Seymour Martin Lipset, "Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy," *American Political Science Review* 53, no. 1 (1959): 69–103; Ross E. Burkhardt and Michael Lewis-Beck, "Comparative Democracy: The Economic Development Thesis," *American Political Science Review* 88, no. 4 (1994): 903–10; Adam Przeworski and Fernando Limongi, "Modernization: Theories and Facts," *World Politics* 49, no. 2 (1997): 155–83; Adam Przeworski, Michael Alvarez, Jose Antonio Cheibub, and Fernando Limongi, "What Makes Democracies Endure?" *Journal of Democracy* 7, no. 1 (1996): 39–55; and M. Steven Fish, "The Dynamics of Democratic Erosion," in *Postcommunism and the Theory of Democracy*, ed. Richard D. Anderson, Jr., M. Steven Fish, Stephen E. Hanson, and Philip G. Roeder, 54–95 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001).

6. Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 19.

7. John Higley and Michael Burton, "The Elite Variable in Democratic Transitions and Breakdowns," *American Sociological Review* 54 (1989): 17.

8. Stephan Haggard and Robert Kaufman, "The Political Economy of Democratic Transition," *Comparative Politics* 29, no. 3 (1997): 263–83.

9. Theories of patrimonialism have previously been applied to Central Asia. See, for example, Robert Kitschelt, "Formation of Party Cleavages in Post-Communist Democra-

cies: Theoretical Propositions,” *Party Politics* 1, no. 4 (1995): 447–72; and John T. Ishiyama, “Neopatrimonialism and the Prospects for Democratization in the Central Asian Republics” in *Power and Change in Central Asia*, ed. Sally Cummings (London: Routledge, 2001).

10. Michael Bratton and Nicholas Van de Walle, “Neopatrimonial Regimes and Political Transitions in Africa,” *World Politics* 46, no. 4 (1994): 463.

11. *Ibid.*, 458.

12. *Kazakh Commercial Television*, November 20, 2001.

13. Mukhtar Ablyazov, “Vospominaniya M. Ablyazova,” *EurasiaNet*, <http://eurasia.org.ru/cgi-bin/datacgi/database.cgi?file=News&report=SingleArticleRu&ArticleID=0003241> (accessed May 3, 2003).

14. Aldar Kusainov, “Kazakhstan’s Critical Choice,” *EurasiaNet*, January 13, 2003, http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/rights/articles/eav011303_pr.shtml (accessed September 2, 2003).

15. *Kazakh Commercial Television*.

16. *Kazakh Commercial Television*.

17. According to Ablyazov’s memoirs, the movement’s original planners, Ablyazov, Subkhanberdin, Yertlesova, and National Bank Chair Grigorii Marchenko, had set the announcement date for December 20, right after the tenth anniversary of Kazakhstan’s independence. As the conflict with Aliev escalated and they found that they could not count on President Nazarbaev’s support against Aliev, they were forced to hold the founding press conference sooner.

18. *Interfax-Kazakhstan News Agency*, “Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan to Lobby Tycoons’ Interests,” November 22, 2001.

19. Keith E. Henderson, “Halfway Home and a Long Way to Go: Russian and Kazakh Roads to Sectoral and Political Corruption,” *Demokratizatsiya* 8, no. 4 (2000): 493.

20. Bulat Abilov, “Zakon odin dlya vsekh,” *Kub.kz*, May 17, 2005, <http://www.kub.kz/article.php?sid=9270> (accessed May 2005).

21. Mark Beissinger, “State Building in the Shadow of an Empire-State,” in *The End of an Empire? The Transformation of the USSR in Comparative Perspective*, ed. by Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott, 157–85 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

22. Bratton and Van de Walle, “Neopatrimonial Regimes,” 464.

23. Ablyazov, “Vospominaniya M. Ablyazova.”

24. One could argue that kinship ties played an important part in President Nazarbaev’s decision to ally with his son-in-law, Aliev, against Ablyazov. According to Ablyazov, Nazarbaev explained his decision as such: “The president began to explain that he could not do anything else regarding Aliev because of the family . . . how could we ask that he cut off his own hand? ‘Mukhtar [Ablyazov’s first name], you also have children. You must understand me!’” Yet, this in itself does not completely support the notion that kinship ties were paramount in guiding the players’ actions. Earlier, Nazarbaev had asked Zhakiyanov, another DCK founder, to conduct an investigation against Aliev, who had been leaking and publishing private information about the president and his family on the Internet.

25. Rustem Kadyrzhanov, personal communication, December 31, 2004, and Ak Zhol Web site, <http://www.dpkakzhol.kz> (accessed December 5, 2004). According to Dr. Kadyrzhanov, for this generation of Moscow-educated elites, clan identity is not as salient as for previous generations. Some, like Jandosov, are not fluent in the Kazakh language, and because most are urbanized (*gorodskie*), traditional kinship ties are relatively weak.

26. An article critical of the DCK published in *Novoe Pokoleniye*, November 30, 2001, stresses the DCK founders’ diversity and their common interests: “The first thing that strikes you is how eclectic they are . . . they never associated with one another previously. Both Ablyazov (Temirbank) and Subkhanberdin (Kazkommertz Bank) head different financial-industrial groups. And even the former governor of Pavlodar *oblast’* Zhakiyanov mostly kept aloof before. You cannot help but feel that these gentlemen got together because they perceived a threat to their businesses.”

27. Martha Olcott, *Kazakhstan: Unfulfilled Promise* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2002), 116. See also Nurbolat Masanov, *The Political Elite of Kazakhstan: Changes of Kazakhstani Political Elite during the Period of Sovereignty* (Washington, DC: International Eurasian Institute for Economic and Political Research, 2000), http://icas.org/english/pubs/22_11_0.1htm.

28. Kusainov, "Kazakhstan's Critical Choice."

29. The emergence of the DCK and the potential for democratization that it represents indirectly lends support to Gregory Gleason's argument that "the prospects for democracy in Kazakhstan should be regarded as comparatively bright" (376). Gleason, however, explained Kazakhstan's democratic prospects in terms of the leadership's focus on compromise and moderation, as well as its model of "Asian liberalism." See Gregory Gleason, "Prospects of Kazakhstan's Asian Liberalism," *Demokratizatsiya* 8, no. 3 (1997): 376–85.

30. John Elster, Claus Offe, and Ulrich K. Preuss, *Institutional Design in Post-Communist Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 25.

31. Rustem Kadyrzhonov, "The Ruling Elite of Kazakhstan in the Transition Period," in *The New Elite in Post-Communist Eastern Europe*, ed. Vladimir Shlapentokh, Christopher Vanderpool, and Boris Doktorov, 145 (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1999).

32. Olcott, *Kazakhstan*, 89.

33. Dosym Satpaev, *Respublika*, December 27, 2001, 4.

34. In interviews, both Roza Otunbaeva, leader of the Ata Jurt party and the acting foreign minister, and Kurmanbek Bakiev, the acting president and prime minister, expressed surprise at how events unfolded.

35. "Massive Looting Engulfs Kyrgyz Capital after Government Ousted," *Agence France Presse*, March 24, 2005.

36. "Southerners Unhappy about More than Flawed Polls," *United Nations Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN)*, March 24, 2005, <http://www.irinnews.org/report.asp?ReportID=46299&SelectRegion=Asia&SelectCountry=KYRGYZSTAN> (accessed March 2005).

37. "Uzbekistan: From Businessmen to Prisoners to Refugees—Escaped Andijon Prisoners Tell Their Tale," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, May 21, 2005, <http://rferl.org/featuresarticle/2005/5/05998A78-9C9D-4B29-AE34-2083513D8850.html> (accessed May 2005).

38. Bratton and Van de Walle wrote that "most African leaders have demobilized voters and eradicated popular associations except those headed by hand-picked loyalists. Therefore, when political protest does erupt in neopatrimonial regimes, it is usually spontaneous, sporadic, disorganized, and unsustainable" ("Neopatrimonial Regimes," 462).

39. See Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's *Central Asia Report* 4, no. 44 (December 2, 2004) for a summary of Central Asian opposition figures' comments regarding the Kazakh opposition's strength during a conference held at Columbia University in November 2004.

40. Bratton and Van de Walle, "Neopatrimonial Regimes," 461.

41. Gleason, "Prospects," 378.

42. Sergei Duvanov, "Yesli snyat' oranzhevye ochki," *Zhuma Taims*, January 14, 2005, <http://www.kub.kz/article.php?sid=8039> (accessed January 2005).