

NORMATIVE SUASION AND POLITICAL CHANGE IN CENTRAL ASIA

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Abstract

This article examines the adequacy of the EU's tool-kit and overall strategy for socializing Central Asia into human rights and democracy. First, the analysis will show that several interrelated conditions, above all cultural idiosyncrasies, properties of interaction between socializees and socializing agents, as well as the nature of the political system, are not sufficiently allowed for by the EU's policy approach. This renders the prospects for moving the region towards a democratic trajectory bleak. Second, building on identified problems in the EU's socialization efforts, the paper presents policy recommendations, above all a concentration on certain aspects of human rights and government accountability that should help to improve the EU's democratizing impact.

Keywords: European Union, Central Asia, democratization, normative suasion

Introduction

In Central Asia, conformance with democracy principles has deteriorated since the late 1990s. None of the five Central Asian states has fulfilled the democratic aspirations that were held by their citizens some fifteen years ago, not to mention the aspirations held by the international community. In most states, presidents, individuals who come from the upper echelons of the communist establishment, have gained wide powers to rule by decree. Parliaments and courts are weak and are routinely ignored. Opposition has been circumscribed, co-opted, and/or repressed. Almost all elections have had dubious legitimacy and the emergence of independent mass media has been hindered; in short, substantive democracy is either absent or falls short of the mark.¹ Accordingly, talk of democratization in Central Asia represents the “triumph of hope over experience”². Of course, within each of these states political conditions vary. Thus, it might be more accurate to divide the region into a more semi-authoritarian north-eastern tier and an authoritarian or even dictatorial governed south-western tier; the former consisting of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan the latter of Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan.

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¹ Freedom House, “Freedom in the World 2007. The Annual Survey of Political Rights and Civil Liberties” (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006).

² Blank, Stephen, “Democratic Prospects in Central Asia”, in: *World Affairs*, vol. 166:3 (2004), pp. 133-147, at p. 133.

Building on the international socialization mechanism of normative suasion, this article offers some preliminary thoughts on major obstacles of European Union (EU) democracy promotion in Central Asia. Though the article chooses an EU perspective, most of the identified difficulties are faced by any other Western actor active in promoting democracy in the region. Simply put, socialization can be defined as the “induction of new members [...] into the ways of behaviour that are preferred in a society”.³ As far as this article is concerned ‘preferred behaviour’ is understood as compliance with human rights and democracy standards. The literature on international socialization usually distinguishes two mechanisms for the projection of liberal democratic norms onto a target country: strategic calculation and normative suasion. While strategic calculation uses a rational, cost-benefit approach to explain international socialization⁴, normative suasion works differently. The parties engaged in the socialization process present arguments and try to persuade and convince each other; in the end, the socializees accept the new norms as ‘the right thing to do’ and not because of material or social incentives promised by socializing agents from the West.⁵

This article examines major impediments for the EU’s democratization efforts in Central Asia through the normative suasion mechanism. The reason for choosing normative suasion over strategic calculation as the framework of analysis is that this approach much better depicts the difficulties of Western-led democratization in the region. The analysis proceeds as follows. The section following this introduction outlines the theoretical framework by introducing the normative suasion mechanism. The third section briefly examines the EU’s current socialization tool-kit. The fourth part then looks at the major impediments for setting off a trajectory of liberal democracy through normative suasion. Finally, the fifth part offers some ideas on how to improve the EU’s current socialization approach to the region.

The Theoretical Framework: Normative Suasion

Drawing on Habermasian social theory as well as on insights from social psychology, normative suasion claims that socializees do not so much calculate cost and benefits when considering democratic change. Rather, they engage in argumentation with the socializers, with the latter trying to persuade and convince the socializees of their interests and preferences as ‘correct’ interpretations of the world.⁶ The establishment of these interpretations is the result of socialization processes involving the dissemination of a particular set of conceptual categories and behavioural dispositions (in Bourdieu’s terminology, a *habitus*)⁷, which shape the ways in which people think about and act in the world.⁸ Thanks to the ‘power of the better argument’, the socializees are persuaded by the legitimacy of the validity of the socializers’ claims and change their identity and interests accordingly. In contrast to strategic calculation and its logic of consequences, this approach implies a switch to one of appropriateness in terms of ‘doing the

³ Barnes, James F., Skidmore, Marx J. and Tripp, Marshall C., “The World of Politics: A Concise Introduction”, (New York: St. Martins Press, 1980), p. 35.

⁴ For an overview on strategic calculation see Schimmelfennig, Frank, “Strategic Calculation and International Socialization”, in: *International Organization*, vol. 59:4, 2005, pp. 827-860.

⁵ Checkel, Jeffrey T., “International Socialization and Socialization in Europe. Introduction and Framework”, *International Organization*, vol. 59:4, 2005, pp. 801-26., at p. 812.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 812.

⁷ Bourdieu, Pierre, “Language and Symbolic Power” (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991).

⁸ Gheciu, Alexandra, “Security Institutions as Agents of Socialization. NATO and the ‘New Europe’”, *International Organization*, vol. 59:4, 2005, pp. 973-12, at p. 980.

right thing'. Accordingly, the process of rule transfer and rule adoption is characterized by arguing about the legitimacy of rules and appropriateness of behaviour (rather than bargaining about incentives and rewards), persuasion (rather than coercion), and 'complex' learning (rather than behavioural adaptation).⁹ Because behaviour can be re-changed once incentive structures change and rewards are paid, socialization through suasion is likely to be more enduring than socialization through strategic calculation, as actors have begun to truly internalize new values.¹⁰ It is important to note that the chances for the process of normative suasion to be successful are higher when certain conditions are fulfilled.¹¹ Such scope conditions include not only that educational practices have to be carried out consistently, over a reasonably long period of time. The socializing agency also should not lecture or demand but, instead, act out principles of serious deliberative argument. Moreover, socialization is more likely to be successful if the target has few prior, ingrained beliefs that are inconsistent with the overall socialization message.

The EU's Suasion Tool-Kit

In November 1991, the Development Council in its landmark Resolution on 'Human Rights, Democracy and Development' explicitly linked democracy, human rights and development and made the promotion of human rights and democracy both an objective and a condition of development assistance.¹² The Maastricht treaty widened this approach and made the development and consolidating of democracy not only an objective of development cooperation but also of the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) in general. They are now considered to be complementary and fundamental to other EU foreign and security policy goals, as reinforced in major EU statements and strategy documents.¹³ As far as normative *suasion* is concerned, various forms of political and human rights dialogues build the cornerstone to achieve the above objectives. Until recently the Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (PCAs) - which build the legal framework for the EU's relations with the Central Asian states - were the only platform for political dialogue.¹⁴ Pursuant to the PCAs, political dialogue rests mainly with the Cooperation Council which meets annually at ministerial level and at senior civil servant level in an annual Cooperation Committee, with the latter preparing Cooperation Council meetings.¹⁵ While the EU's *Regional Strategy Paper 2002-06* only envisaged strengthen dialogue more generally on regional and technical cooperation, basically through existing PCA consultation mechanism, a more promising source for dialogue on democracy and human rights rests on the

⁹ Risse, T. and Sikkink, K., "The Socialization of International Human Rights Norms into Domestic Practices", in: Thomas Risse, Stephen C. Ropp, and Kathryn Sikkink (eds.), "The Power of Human Rights. International Norms and Domestic Change" (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 6-11.

¹⁰ Checkel, fn. 5, p. 813.

¹¹ See, for example, Checkel, fn. 5, p. 813 and Ghenciu, fn. 8, p. 982.

¹² European Commission, "Human Rights, Democracy and Development Cooperation Policy", SEC(91) 61 final, March 1999.

¹³ For example, highlighted in the *European Consensus on Development* or the *European Security Strategy*.

¹⁴ The EU has signed PCAs with all five Central Asian republics. With Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan they were signed in 1995 and entered into force for ten years in 1999. Due to the Tajik civil war, PCA negotiations with Dushanbe began only in 2003; ratification is still pending in some EU member states. Though the Commission signed a PCA with Turkmenistan in 1998, human rights violations prevented ratification in the European Parliament (EP) and most EU member states. PCA texts can be found online at URL (consulted February 2008):

http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/ceeca/pca/index.htm

¹⁵ Cutler, Robert M., "The European Union Reaches Out to The Caucasus and Central Asia", in: *Eurasianet Q&A*, May, 1 2001, URL (consulted February 2008):

<http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/qanda/articles/eav050101.shtml>.

EU's new Central Asia Strategy, adopted by the European Council in June 2007.¹⁶ This document calls for both a 'regular' regional political dialogue at foreign minister level with the EU Troika and a bilateral human rights dialogue with each of the Central Asian states.¹⁷ The creation, in July 2005, of the post of European Union Special Representative (EUSR) for Central Asia is a further component of the EU's capacity for dialogue. Though not explicitly mentioned in the EUSR mandate, among his duties is also "to develop appropriate contacts and cooperation with the main interested actors in the region"¹⁸.

Impediments to Successful Socialization through Normative Suasion

As far as the condition of consistent, long-term interaction is concerned, the aspect of socialisation through dialogue is only somewhat embodied in the EU's various cooperation schemes. The PCAs are documents of some 60 pages, but there is only a brief section (one page) that relates to political dialogue. The rest of the document deals with functional aspects of economic cooperation and the pursuit of structural and legal changes that might foster it. MacFarlane is right; this brevity is somewhat odd, given that political issues are given pride of place in the PCAs declaration of principles.¹⁹ Moreover, the goals of the political dialogue are outlined only in very vague terms (Art. 4): "A regular political dialogue [...] shall support the political and economic changes underway [...] and contribute to the establishment of new forms of cooperation". Only the Uzbek PCA adds that "The political dialogue [...] shall foresee that the Parties endeavour to cooperate on matters pertaining to the observance of the principles of democracy, and the respect, protection and promotion of human rights, particularly those of persons belonging to minorities and shall hold consultations, if necessary, on relevant matters". In addition, the Cooperation Council only meets annually; therefore, high ranking dialogue is anything but intensive. By way of comparison, the Euro-Mediterranean Committee for the Barcelona Process, composed of senior (foreign ministry) officials of the EU and the Mediterranean Partners, meets on average every two to three months. When their PCAs were signed in 1995, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan were keen to advance cooperation, but their enthusiasm was not reciprocated. This is especially true for the more senior official levels in Europe. It has always been a struggle to find high-level EU officials to attend Cooperation Council meetings, while the Central Asia delegation would easily be composed of the Prime Minister or the Foreign Minister.²⁰ Regarding the properties of interaction, Cooperation Council talks are usually conducted in a reserved, high-hat manner; sensitive subjects are seldom discussed in detail.²¹ In addition, communication between the EU and the Central Asian

¹⁶ Human rights dialogue is a feature of the CFSP that has been highlighted in recent years, notably after the EU's adoption of 'Guidelines on Human Rights Dialogues' (December 2001), pledging to raise the issue of human rights and democracy in all meetings with third countries, URL (consulted May 2008): http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/human_rights/doc/ghd12_01.htm.

¹⁷ European Council, *The EU and Central Asia: Strategy for a New Partnership* (Adopted on 21-22 June 2007), p. 3, URL (consulted May 2008): <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/07/st10/st10113.en07.pdf>.

¹⁸ Council Joint Action 2005/588/CFSP of 28 July, 2005 appointing a Special Representative of the European Union for Central Asia.

¹⁹ MacFarlane, Neil, "European Strategy toward Kazakhstan", in Robert Legvold (ed.), "Thinking Strategically. The Major Powers, Kazakhstan, and the Central Asian Nexus" (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003), p. 149.

²⁰ International Crisis Group, *Central Asia: What Role for the European Union?*, Asia Report, No. 113 (2006), p. 12, URL (consulted September 2007):

http://www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/asia/central_asia/113_central_asia_what_role_for_the_eu.pdf, p. 18.

²¹ Gumpfenberg, Marie C., „Usbekistan. FES-Studie zur länderbezogenen Konfliktanalyse“, 2002, p. 39, URL (consulted March 2005): <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/iez/01934.pdf>; Schmitz, Andrea, „Interessen, Instrumente,

governments is far from being consistent. The EU is a multi-level system of governance with complex decision-making structures and different levels of authority. As regards the latter, member-states and the Commission often have different interests and policy priorities. According to an EU diplomat stationed in Central Asia, relations between the EU delegations and member-state missions are sometimes tense, with occasional “sparring over turf, particularly on political issues: They make their own demarches, which are very confusing for our partners, who don’t know who is speaking for the EU. It gives the impression that Europe is a very amorphous entity and not united.”²²

Probably the most important impediments to successful socialization via normative suasion are Central Asia’s socio-cultural idiosyncrasies. It is more likely to be successful in the socialization process if the target society has only a few prior beliefs and cultural traits that are inconsistent with the socialization message; i.e. the parties involved act within the framework of a Habermasian ‘common lifeworld’,²³ consisting of collective interpretations of the world and a common system of rules perceived as legitimate.²⁴ Although present in all Central Asian countries, Uzbekistan is probably the best showcase to illustrate the most important aspects of ‘Central Asianness’: authoritarianism and personalism.²⁵ Authoritarianism is especially apparent among the settled Uzbek peoples. Some scholars have sought explanations for this by noting that the functions of regimentation and centralization required by the nature of the irrigated oasis society produced an effect on public psychology. Karl Wittfogel argued that unlike the individualistic political culture in many water-rich agrarian societies, semi-arid agricultural societies often require a high level of centralized decision-making, resulting in the formation of a ‘managerial state’. Furthermore, Uzbek authoritarianism is not merely a political value, but an ensconced social value. An everyday example is the great importance associated with ‘hurmat’, the idea of ‘obedience’ and ‘respect’. In present day Central Asia, the origins of hurmat are not hard to find. Hurmat starts in the family, where social relations are characterized by great respect for older family members and the dominance of male heads of households.²⁶ In part, the authoritarian hierarchies of political life are merely a natural extension of corresponding structures of the family.

Einflussgrenzen. Die Europäische Union und Zentralasien“, *Osteuropa*, Vol. 57, No 8-9 (2007), pp. 327-338, at p. 337.

²² International Crisis Group, fn. 20, p. 19.

²³ Risse and Sikking, fn. 9, pp. 10-11.

²⁴ There has been much debate about whether Islamic and Western values are inherently in conflict, and especially whether Islam is inherently hostile to democracy. Some scholars argue, that the absence of recognition in Islamic thought for the legitimacy of an independent political and public sphere separate from the sacred realm of God’s dominion, as well as the supposed predominance in Islam of a corporatist spirit make Islamic societies inhospitable places for the emergence of democracy (see, for example, Lipset, S. M., “The Centrality of Political Culture”, in Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner (eds.) “The Global Resurgence of Democracy” (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996); Gellner, Ernest “Conditions of Liberty: Civil Society and Its Rival” (New York: Penguin, 1994); Fish, Steven M., “Islam and Authoritarianism”, in: *World Politics*, vol. 55:1, 2002, pp. 4-37; Bernard, Lewis “Islam and Liberal Democracy. A Historical Overview”, in: *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 7:2, 1996, pp. 52-63. For a different perspective see Seleny, Anna, “Tradition, Modernity, and Democracy: The Many Promises of Islam”, in: *Perspectives on Politics*, vol. 4:3, 2006, pp. 481-94). It is also noteworthy here that in Central Asia – to a large extent as a consequence of Soviet-style modernization – there is only a weak correlation between religion and political attitudes and/or values.

²⁵ Gleason, Gregory, “Asian Values and the Democratic Transition in Central Asia”, in: *Harvard Asia Quarterly*, vol. 5:1, 2001, URL (consulted March 2003): <http://www.asiaquarterly.com/content/view/91/40/>.

²⁶ Ibid.

Personalism is a feature which can be traced back to the feudal era of Khanates and Tsarist control.²⁷ While Westerners, steeped in liberal democratic traditions, tend to automatically distinguish between the post and the person who fills it, Central Asians find this distinction difficult to draw. Personalism is strongly connected with patrimonialism. Leaders create personality-based patron-client networks that consolidate power through the dispensing and withholding of political and material incentives to followers. To Westerners this may appear to be corruption, but to those engaged in the practice as serving the needs of their community. Those and other customs have been very persistent in Central Asia; they even permeated Soviet institutions due to the policy of ‘korenizatsiya’, the Soviet leadership’s reliance on local cadre members and their adherence to traditionalism. Just like in Soviet times, today traditionalism has created a two-level political culture: on the one hand an appearance of conformity with the ‘social project’ imposed by the upper authorities; on the other hand, a subversion of the project by practices of factionalism and clientism.²⁸

Patrimonial-authoritarian features can also be found in the societal organization of clans in the formerly nomadic countries of Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. Simply put, a clan is a network of allegiance, an informal organization comprising a network of individuals linked by kin-based bonds. They are governed by informal councils of patriarchs and elders, whereas an extensive network of poorer relatives and kinsmen, close friends, women etc. constitute the non-elite members. Elite and non-elite members feature a relationship of reciprocal dependency. Elites need the support of their networks to maintain their status, protect their group, and make gains within an overarching political or economic system. Non-elites need clan elders and patrons to assist them in improving their social status (e.g. finding a job, accessing education, getting loans) or even secure their survival in an economy of shortages.²⁹ The existence of clan-based societies has severe implications for the EU’s socialization efforts. Without trying to lay down an exhaustive set of obstacles for successful democratization in clan marked societies, two factors need to be mentioned.³⁰ First, clans undermine the EU’s aim of contestation through elections, the most basic element of democracy. In Central Asia, political leaders mobilize voters through hierarchical networks of clan patronage. According to prior arranged clan pacts, they put kinsmen or allied clan members in positions of power, for example, as regional or local governors (akims). In exchange for their appointment, the local officials wage support for the leader. First and foremost they put pressure on the clan elders or respected persons with influence in the local community to make their people vote in support of the official’s patron. Second, clans weaken the constitutional separation of powers and impede parliamentary and court independence. Parliaments are riddled with clan politics. Regardless of their party affiliation, clan cronies in the legislature support high-ranking members of government and win benefits in exchange. As Collins puts it, “their main objective as deputies is to direct state resources to the particularistic interests of their networks, not to pass legislation aimed at broader interests”³¹.

²⁷ The concept of the ‘patrimonial authority’ goes back to Max Weber’s political sociology and describes a form of despotism based on the “sanctity of age-old rules and powers”. Weber, Max, “Economy and Society. An Outline of Interpretative Sociology”, ed. by Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978) p. 226.

²⁸ Roy, Olivier, “The New Central Asia. The Creation of Nations” (New York: New York University Press, 2000), p. 85.

²⁹ Collins, Kathleen, “The Logic of Clan Politics. Evidence from the Central Asian Trajectories”, in: *World Politics*, vol. 56:2, 2004, pp. 224-61, at p. 231.

³⁰ For a more security related analysis of clan politics see Matveeva, Anna, “Democratization, Legitimacy and Political Change in Central Asia”, in: *International Affairs*, vol. 75:1, 1999, pp. 23-44, at p. 32-33.

³¹ Collins, fn. 29, p. 249.

Moreover, also members of the jurisdiction are pushed by their kinsmen to make critical decisions that favour and/or even keep their clan in power. In Kyrgyzstan, for example, the chair of the Constitutional Court, Cholpon Baekova, successfully pushed for a constitutional reform that allowed her kinsmen, former president Akayev, to run for another presidential term in 1998.³²

Policy Prescriptions

The above analysis has shown that the EU's 'socialization through dialogue' approach faces major obstacles, above all because of unfavourable properties of target/sender interaction and the lack of a shared normative framework between the EU and the Central Asian elites. So what do we do? Firstly, a most obvious policy prescription would be to increase the EU's capacity for political dialogue with Central Asia. In the very recent past there has already been some remarkable progress in this regard. It cannot be denied that following the adoption of the EU's Central Asia strategy in June 2007 dialogue has indeed intensified. Until late April 2008 the European Union foreign ministers' troika has set up three regional meetings with their Central Asian counterparts.³³ However, dialogue on the regional level is focusing on political cooperation in general, including areas like education, the rule of law and security; according to the EU issues of human rights and democracy will be raised bilaterally through the human rights dialogue.³⁴ With the exception of an EU-Uzbekistan Human Rights Dialogue which was established in the post-Andijan context, such dialogues do not yet exist.³⁵ In addition, even if EU officials are publicly enthusiastic about the institutionalization of a human rights dialogue, insiders of the human rights dialogue with Uzbekistan report that members of the Uzbek delegation – somewhat unsurprisingly – only developed an interest in such meetings just before the EU sanctions reviews.³⁶ The latter point leads to a second, more fundamental policy prescription: the socialization message itself. So, far the EU promoted a Western-style democracy in the region and gives only little attention to socio-cultural idiosyncrasies and the larger question of "what is actually possible" with regard to democracy in the region.

This article argues for a change in the EU's socialization message by concentrating on certain human rights dimensions and government accountability instead of democracy in the narrower sense. The reason for this is twofold. First, I have mentioned above that the success of dialogue within the normative suasion approach depends on whether projected norms are part of a collective interpretation of the world and therefore regarded as legitimate. When looking at the

³² Ibid, p. 249. The general importance of clans within the political process can also be gathered from the way of regime change in Kyrgyzstan in March 2005. Current president Bakiev did not try to mobilize support among party or parliament members. Instead, he largely relied on his southern clan affiliation and set out a convoy of buses carrying his kinsmen from the southern region of Osh to Bishkek to successfully push for a changeover of power.

³³ EU Press Release, "Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner to attend EU-Central Asia Ministerial Troika 9/10 April in Ashgabat", IP/08/541 (12 May 2008), URL (consulted May 2008): <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/08/541&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>.

³⁴ Council of the European Union/European Commission, "EU Annual Report on Human Rights 2007" (12 June 2008), URL (consulted: June 2008) http://consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/2007_5997-EN-EU_annual_report_on_human_rights_2007.pdf, p. 73.

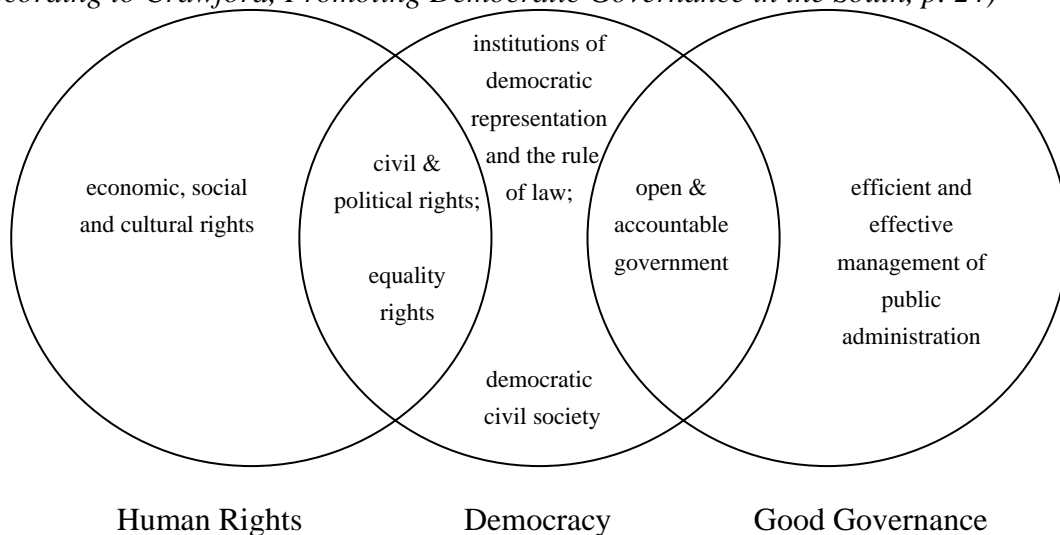
³⁵ Crawford, Gordon, "Human Rights and Democracy Promotion in Central Asia. From Lofty Principles to Lowly Self-Interests", in: *Perspectives on European Policy and Society*, vol. 9:2, 2008, pp. 172-191, at p. 178.

³⁶ Ibid, p. 178. Graubner, Cornelius, "EU Strategy on Central Asia: Realpolitik after All", in: *Central Asia – Caucasus Analyst*, May 14, 2008, URL (consulted May 2008): <http://www.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/4859>.

political and social characteristics of tribal Central Asia we find that in most of the Inner Asian Khanates a normative order and legal tradition was in place that showed appreciation of certain aspects of administrative and legal accountability that is similar to our understanding of the notion.³⁷ A socialization message that builds on such a link is probably viewed less alien and therefore appreciated more than the tough sell of party competition or the separation of powers. Second, by concentrating dialogue on issues that don't directly challenge a regime's political survival (like, for example, arguing permanently for free and fair elections) EU representatives are likely to increase their trustworthiness for one side of the Central Asian elites. This in turn would increase dialogue effectiveness. In addition, an approach of supporting genuine democracy issues may have worked in Eastern Europe where authoritarian structures were already broken up and elite commitment to democratic reform was strong. In Central Asia, however, projects targeted at redistributing power are thwarted by the fact that power is still locked in place.

How can such an inevitably long-term strategy that does not directly address genuine democracy issues contribute to the democratization of the region? Of course, human rights and government accountability are necessary but not in themselves sufficient for democratic government. In the long run, however, they are likely to contribute to the break up of authoritarian regimes. At this point it is helpful to remember that democracy is an overarching concept to which the concepts of human rights and good governance are closely interrelated, though less so to each other. This can be illustrated diagrammatically as three intersecting circles, with democracy in the middle, and areas of overlap between democracy and human rights as well as between democracy and good governance left and right to the centre circle (see figure 1). It is assumed that those elements within the central circle amount to an overall objective of promoting democratization.³⁸

Figure 1: Conceptual Linkages of Human Rights, Democratization and Good Governance (according to Crawford, *Promoting Democratic Governance in the South*, p. 24)



³⁷ See also Geiss, Paul-Georg, "Pre-Tsarist and Tsarist Central Asia" (Routledge: London, 2003), pp. 238-254.

³⁸ Crawford, Gordon, "Promoting Democratic Governance in the South", in: *European Journal of Development Research*, vol. 12:1, 2000, pp. 23-57, at p. 24. See also Beetham, David and Boyle, Kevin, "Introducing Democracy: Eighty Questions and Answer" (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995).

The notion of good governance is subject to a number of definitions with either relatively narrow or broad interpretations. While a narrow type focuses on public administration, with the goal to increase the capacity and efficiency of executive institutions, a broader approach stresses the normative dimension of the openness, accountability and transparency of government institutions. Promoting a competent public administration may have little to do with democracy whereas the broader type tends to support the same values as democratic government.³⁹ Of course, strengthening certain lines of government openness and accountability (for example, increasing financial accountability through an independent auditor or introducing ethics statutes and codes of conduct for public officials that outline unacceptable practices) reduces a regime's room for political manoeuvre. However, those measures are significantly less challenging to regime survival than, for example, pushing for free and fair elections or the strengthening of opposition movements. This should increase the Central Asian governments' willingness to engage in dialogue.

A further promising focus for the EU's socialization efforts is the promotion of certain equality rights. Democracy is less based on voters than on citizens who are allowed to participate in their polity regardless of gender, religion, or ethnic identity. From a democracy promotion perspective, gender equality is a particular good starting point.⁴⁰ First, it can be argued that the repressiveness and unquestioned dominance of the male over women tend to replicate in broader society, creating a culture of domination, intolerance, and dependency in social and political life.⁴¹ Second, individuals who are more accustomed to such rigidly hierarchical relations in their personal lives may be less prone to resist patterns of authority in politics. Third, authors have shown that men hold attitudes that are more conducive to authoritarianism. While men tend to have a strong 'social dominance' orientation, women are generally less comfortable with hierarchy and inequality.⁴² Women also seem to be more successful in some aspects of building consensus which again is conducive to democratic development.⁴³ Of course, teaching Central Asia's patriarchal societies aspects of gender equality is no easy task. It is achievable only by directly engaging with local structures. Here, USAID funded programmes in the field of community development might help as a general blueprint for further EU action. USAID, in order to mitigate the potential for powerful elements (mostly elders or aksakals) to take over assistance projects, successfully advocated the use of participatory techniques, referred to as Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA).⁴⁴ PRA especially aims to facilitate the input of women and marginal groups to development projects.

³⁹ Crawford, fn. 38, p. 24.

⁴⁰ Especially in Uzbekistan regime legitimacy builds on combating radical Islamism and on ethnic traditions of the titular nation. The promotion of religious and ethnic equality rights would therefore be a difficult endeavour.

⁴¹ Fish, fn. 24, p. 30.

⁴² Pratto, Felicia, Stalworth, Lisa M. and Sidanius, Jim, "The Gender Gap: Differences in Political Attitudes and Social Dominance Orientation", in: *British Journal of Social Psychology*, vol. 36:1, 1997, pp. 49-68.

⁴³ McDermott, Rose and Cowden, Jonathan A., "The Effects of Uncertainty and Sex in a Crisis Simulation Game", in: *International Interactions*, vol. 27:4, 2001, pp.353-80.

⁴⁴ For further details on PRA and analysis on how Central Asian traditional institutions can help facilitate international donors' development programmes see Earle, Lucy (2005), "Community Development, 'Tradition' and the Civil Society Strengthening Agenda in Central Asia", in: *Central Asian Survey*, vol. 24:3, pp. 245-260.

Conclusion

This article presented some preliminary thoughts on the impediments for democratization in Central Asia from the perspective of the international socialization mechanism of normative suasion. The EU's 'socialization through dialogue' approach exhibits major weaknesses, above all unfavourable properties of target/sender interaction and the lack of a shared normative framework between socializee and sender. Dialogue – contrary to the EU's official rhetoric – is only partly embodied in the EU-Central Asian cooperation schemes; regarding the properties of interaction, meetings are usually conducted in a reserved, high-hat manner with communication from the various EU institutions being far from consistent. In addition, EU normative suasion efforts are exposed to traditional institutions that build on authoritarian/neo-patrimonial values which undermine the EU's socialization message.

So, what to do? The EU has already been trying to intensify its political dialogue with the Central Asian regimes by adding to it a separate human rights dimension. However, we have also learnt from the above analysis that the Central Asian counterparts are far from being enthusiastic about this. This does not come as a surprise given a socialization message that presses for the redistribution of power at the expense of the ruling elite. It was therefore argued to change the current socialization message towards a focus on certain dimension of government accountability and human rights. The reason for this is twofold. First, concentrating dialogue on issues that don't directly challenge the socializees' political survival is likely to increase the trustworthiness of EU representatives on the side of the Central Asian governments, thereby rendering the dialogue process more effective. Second, particular aspects of government accountability can look back on a normative and legal tradition in Central Asia. Incorporating familiar elements into the EU's socialization message enhances the chance of increased receptiveness among the socializees. Of course, such a strategy is inevitably long-term. However, there is good reason to believe that it is well suited to contribute more effectively to democratic ferment than the EU's current socialization approach.