



## INSIDE THE PYRAMID Is Central Asian authoritarianism stable?

*A Workshop Series organised by  
CRCEES [University of Glasgow] & CAP [George Washington University]*

**P**atrimonial, patronal, clientelistic: Central Asia's authoritarian power is often classified in these terms. The proliferation of analytical rubrics and conceptual lenses to delve into regional developments confirms that, if anything, Central Asian politics is profoundly complex. The regional conformation of power does however remain relatively stable. Regime durability, in most cases, is supported by the intricate connexion of domestic patronal networks with international alliances; sophisticated propaganda machines have also sustained local élites in their drive to conceal disastrous socio-economic policies. To all intents and purposes, a calculated combination of softer authoritarian strategies and more repressive governance methods has allowed the Central Asian leaders to reduce internal political processes and mechanisms to regimes' monopolies.

Incumbency continues to dominate politics in the region, as confirmed by the long tenures of first-generation leaders in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, and of Emomali Rahmon in post-conflict Tajikistan. The outcome of the Turkmen transition in 2006-2007, on the other hand, suggested that the persistence of authoritarian governance is likely to survive eventual leadership changes. Ultimately, it is a picture of apparent stability that informs how international observers have understood, digested, and framed the interconnection between power and politics in post-Soviet Central Asia.

These two workshops aim to challenge directly this characterisation, by discussing a specific set of factors, processes, and actors that are eroding – silently yet not insignificantly – the stability that is proverbially enshrined within Central Asia's authoritarian governance. While the weak nature of Central Asia's statehood has been appropriately questioned in the current scholarly debate, this workshop series intends to challenge the myth of Central Asia's regime infrangibility. An accurately designed work of regime diagnostic does therefore sit at the analytical core of these workshops; succession prognosis is not, except indirectly.

Four specific issues have been selected by the organisers to identify and discuss the key elements underpinning the stability of the regimes that rule Central Asia 25 years after the achievement of independence. Specifically:

- The International Environment
- Economics
- Nation-building
- Élite fragmentation

The first two facets will be discussed at the Glasgow workshop (December 2015), while the Washington DC seminar (April 2016) will in turn focus on the latter set of factors.

\*\*\*

## WORKSHOP 1 – UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW

15 December 2015  
Melville Room, Gilbert Scott Building

- 9.00 Arrival & Coffee
- 9.15 Opening Remarks Richard Berry [Director, CRCEES]
- 9.30 Concept Paper Luca Anceschi [University of Glasgow]
- 9.45 Panel 1 – THE ECONOMIC FACET OF REGIME INSECURITY  
Chair: Marlene Laurelle [Director, Central Asia Program, George Washington University]  
*Oil Wealth & Regime Survival in Kazakhstan* Wojciech Ostrowski [University of Westminster]  
*Central Asia's economic crisis - A threat to stability?* Alex Nice [Economic Intelligence Unit]
- 11.00 Coffee Break
- 11.30 Panel 2 – SOVEREIGNTY, GOVERNANCE, INSTABILITY  
Chair: David Smith [Professor of Baltic Politics & History, University of Glasgow]  
*Central Asia's Global Authoritarian Spaces: Politics Outside of a Region*  
Alexander Cooley [Director, Harriman Institute, Columbia University]  
*Central Asia's Evolving Sovereignty & its Impact on Power-Maintenance Strategies*  
Filippo Costa Buranelli [King's College, University of London]
- 13.00 Lunch
- 14.00 Panel 3 – EXTERNAL DYNAMICS OF INTERNAL INSECURITY  
*Border Control in Tajikistan and Turkmenistan: Destabilising Central Asia's Frontier*  
Bruce Pannier [Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty]  
*China's Security Role in Central Asia: Growing Regime Support?*  
Sarah Lain [Royal United Service Institute]  
*Assessing Russia's Role in Central Asia's Political Regimes. Which Influences, which Limits?*  
Marlene Laruelle [CAP, George Washington University]
- 15.45 Tea Break
- 16.15 Roundtable –REGIME SECURITY IN AN ERA OF AGEING LEADERSHIP & REGIONAL CHANGE  
Chair: Luca Anceschi [University of Glasgow]
- 17.15 Conclusion

