

Two parallel stories: *pre-state* legacies and *nation-state* national narratives in Central Asia

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- The research explores **relationship between pre-nation-state legacies and nation-building projects in two CA states** (Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan).
- **Research Question:** How CA elites position themselves in regards to **pre-nation-state legacies** in their nation building projects? Do they refer to them in nation building?

Defining the concept:

- **Clan** is “unilineal descent-group ... a body of persons claiming common descent from an ancestor” (as cited in Glenn, 1999, p. 50). Also referred as patron-client relations, patronage politics, clientelism, patrimonialism, kin groups, traditional solidarity groups, sub-ethnic or sub-national identity.
- ***Why pre-state identities still preserved:***
- Tribe/clan identity on grass roots level fulfils “important functions ... filling the niches left by the states”, such as weak governance and state institutions (Omelicheva, 2015, p. xvi) .
- Kazakhstan is described as a weak democracy with a growing cult of personality. Whereas in Kyrgyzstan, very shortly after the independence referred by the West as “oasis of democracy” in a desert of authoritarianism (Omelicheva M. Y., 2015), family-based rule of two presidents led to two coups in 2005 and 2010.

Study findings

- **Kazakhstan:**
- Kazakh tribe legacies are not widely discussed on the public level as it is in the Kyrgyz context. Explanation to this could be that it is not a favorable tool for the political elite for nation building, therefore this issue remains under the surface and on grass-roots level only.
- Official presidential statements and nation building projects are not coined around the past: pre-state tribe identity, rather they are built around the future: 2025 National Strategic Plan, 2050 Development Strategy of Kazakhstan, fourth modernization, industrialization, etc.
- **Kyrgyzstan:**
- Modernism did not diminish pre-state legacies; rather it further developed under political party dimensions (Torogeldieva 2010).
- Kyrgyz clans struggle with each other to get access to state resources in national, regional and local levels. Political parties lack substantial clear ideology or program, but do have a narrow electorate around a certain region (clan or *uruu*) (Temirkoulov 2004)
- The balance between the southern and northern political elites historically has been important feature of domestic politics.
- In contrast to Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan tends to refer to the past. Pre-state tribe legacies in Kyrgyzstan are explicit in national flag of the country, Manas epic is elevated, political elites informally rely on tribe identity in political legitimization.