CHAPTER FOUR

Central Asian Statehood in Post-Colonial Perspective

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> The native is an oppressed person whose permanent dream is to become the persecutor.
>
> Franz Fanon (1963, 53)

Introduction

Post-colonialism constitutes a diverse body of thought which explicitly considers states as externally-dependent and internationalized yet self-proclaimed independent and nationalizing polities. Beginning from the 1950s, the influential contributions of Bhabha (1994), Fanon (1952, 1963), Said (1978, 1994) and Spivak (1988) in many disciplines of the humanities and social sciences, as well as prominent and more recent works which combine post-colonial perspectives with penetrating empirical study in Asia and the Middle East (Chatterjee 1997; Goswami 2004; Scott 1990, 1998; Wedeen 1999) all indicate that the arrival of post-colonialism in Central Asian studies is long over-due. Moreover, at first glance Franz Fanon's take on the post-colonial experience quoted above seems a reasonably valid, if polemical, caricature of the acquisition of national sovereignty by Central Asian republics. Given the evident relevance of this approach it is remarkable that it has taken quite so long for a post-colonial response to the transition and democratization literature to emerge in Central Asian studies. Only recently has this lacuna been overcome with significant contributions from Adams (2005; 2008), Dave (2007), Edgar (2006), Kandiyotti (2002; 2007) Khalid (2006; 2007) and Northrop (2004) amongst others.

This chapter investigates the emergent academic debate in Central Asian studies on post-coloniality and post-colonialism in Central Asia. It argues that there are grounds for post-colonial comparisons between Central Asian and other post-colonial states whilst emphasizing the contextual particularities of experiences in the region and the limits of the post-colonialist lens. The first section briefly discusses the absence of post-colonial thought in Central Asia, making the case for greater mutual engagement between Post-Colonial and Central Asian studies. Secondly, the paper goes on to outline some of the features of post-colonial histories of Central Asia, arguing with an emerging consensus in the literature that the Soviet Union should be understood as a modernizing multinational state with a Euro-centric imperial aspect. This reading of Soviet statehood has certain implications for how we understand the independent Central Asian states today. Thirdly, the chapter goes on to outline some conceptual tools of post-colonial theory—including hybridity, subalternity, and orientalism—and consider their evident applicability to Central Asian states. Finally, rather than seek to clarify a single post-colonial statehood in Central Asia, the chapter goes on to briefly discuss two examples of the utilization of post-colonial thought in Central Asian studies. It considers how a number of scholars have engaged the gender

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dimensions of states from a post-colonial perspective before going on to consider the approach of Bhavna Dave to questions of nationalism, ethnicity and state-building in Kazakhstan.

The absence of post-colonialism
The relative lack of engagement between Post-colonial and Central Asian studies until recent years warrants some reflection. Three prominent explanations for the absence stand out. Firstly, it is not universally accepted when or to what extent Central Asia was, is or will be historically post-colonial. The incorporation of the Central Asian polities of the late-nineteenth century into a revolutionary state with a contiguous territory after 1917 would seem to be, in some eyes, the beginnings of its post-colonial transition, albeit one that lacked the defining moment of national independence. However, it was as a re-colonized part of the Soviet Union that the region was viewed from the West as post-colonial thought emerged in the second half of the twentieth century. Since 1991, other "posts" of the region have been more prominent, particularly those of post-socialism and post-Sovietism. This is especially true for those of us who draw the boundaries of our region of study, in research practice and linguistic skills if not conceptually, to the exclusion of the wider regions of historical Central Eurasia. Thus, as explored below, the post-coloniality of post-Soviet Central Asia is open to question.

Secondly, there is a lack of engagement with post-colonial theory in Central Asia itself. Post-colonial theory, as Gilroy notes, "is built upon debates over the legitimacy of colonial power" (2007, 656) and thus derives a great deal from the experience of decolonization and national-liberation movements. It is in this sense that Adams describes post-colonialism as a "contextually situated discourse generated by the responses (both resistant and collaborative) of formerly colonized peoples to the institutional legacies of and ongoing relationship with the colonizer" (Adams 2008, 4). Yet we must add that post-colonialism's thought and critique, unlike post-coloniality, is not itself wedded to the period after the formal end to imperial power but emerges amidst imperial power itself (Macey 2000, 304). That contextually situated critiques were still-born or co-opted in the late Tsarist period (if one considers Jadidism in these terms) and little more than nascent during perestroika explains the relative lack of post-colonial thought in post-Soviet Central Asia.

This relative absence of post-colonial politics is paralleled by a lack of post-colonial writing in the region. A body of thought largely developed by academics from other post-colonial regions (most prominently India) is perhaps of dubious worth in a region where established scholars of the Academies of Science have been unable or unwilling to engage with such theory. By contrast, these scholars often combine slightly revised versions of concepts derived from Soviet academe with polemical ethno-nationalisms which occasionally lambast the former imperial power (for example, Masov 1991; see discussion of his later work in Laurelle 2008). Equally, whilst some post-Soviet political analysts, such as the Tajikistani Ibrohim Usmonov, have sought to derive national-patriarchal theories of the state from pre-Soviet Jadid scholars in order to implicitly critique today's regimes, they have often done so in terms rooted in the Soviet era (Usmonov 2005; see discussion in

Heathershaw 2009, 68-69). As Dave notes, "state-authorized academic analysis and history texts are embedded in Soviet categories and thus remain fully 'derivative' in Partha Chatterjee's terms" (2007, 23; see also Chatterjee 1997). Such scholars are not so much agents of post-colonialist thought as the very disaffected subjects of the post-colonial experience anticipated in such thought. Indeed it is the very lack of post-colonial theorizing in the Central Asian context which may indicate both the region's particular and acute post-coloniality as well as the relevance of post-colonialist categories such as "subaltern" and "hybridity" to the region (see also Moore 2001, 117-118). The significance of the presence of such derivative academic discourses in the region will be discussed further below.

Thirdly, and at least as importantly, is the failure of post-colonial studies itself to engage with the former Soviet Union. This is a major anomaly for a field which defines itself in terms of its "vast spatial unity" and is prepared to recognize the multiple and overlapping colonialisms else where (Macey 2000, 304-305). For example, in North America, Anglophone European settlers, Native Americans, and contemporary Francophone populations all have been claimed as post-colonial peoples. It is this particular lacuna that was finally addressed by David Chioni Moore's (2001) question: "Is the Post- in Postcolonial the Post- in Post-Soviet?" Moore's answer is very much in the affirmative, noting first, "how extraordinarily postcolonial the societies of the former Soviet Union are, and, second, how extraordinarily little attention is paid to this fact" (2001, 114). One explanation for post-colonialism's silence is found in the spatial imaginaries of the Cold War period where the categorization of First, Second and Third worlds became popular with the communist Second World deemed by some on the political Left as providing the alternative model to the domination of the First World and the underdevelopment (at the hands of the First World) of the Third (Moore 2001, 117). A second reason posited is the idea of *adjacence*—the contiguous Russian empire was not or, at least, was less imperial because of its common Asianess or Eurasianess with its conquered territories. Moore finds this interpretation in Said's *Culture and Imperialism* where this adjacence is seen as somehow diluting Russia's imperialism vis-à-vis that of Britain and France (Moore 2001, 119; Said 1993, 10).

None of these three explanations provide an adequate reason not to investigate the Central Asian states in the post-colonial context as has been increasingly acknowledged by scholars in the field. Thus, Dave's (2007) excellent work is germinal in drawing on post-colonial thought to produce a research monograph in contemporary Central Asian studies. More common has been the way in which some Central Asianists have drawn implicitly on post-colonialist thinking or adopted corollary categories of thought. Concepts of hybridity and notions of sub-alterneity have, appropriately, made their way into Central Asian Studies by the back door in terms such as "strong-weak states" (McMann 2004) and "inbetweeness" (Bhaba 1994; Heathershaw 2009, 103-109). Others, considering these inconsistencies in normative terms, make post-colonial comparison between Central Asian and African states and see cause for alarm in the extent and implications of "a crisis of the state in its most fundamental sense" witnessed most acutely in the civil wars affecting

Tajikistan, Georgia, and Moldova (Beissinger and Young 2002, 466). The post-colonial state is characterized by such inconsistencies and post-colonial analysis is replete with such conceptualizations. Yet, these apparent contradictions are better seen not as conceptual barriers to be overcome via a quantitative measurement of the degree of strength and weakness but as dynamics which are entirely consistent with the ambivalences of the post-colonial state. Thus state crisis may not be killed of by what Beissinger and Young call "the imperative of stabilization" (2002, 480), but this crisis may give birth to the very stability in that it constitutes the reformation of Soviet-era political culture and hybrid institutions. It is this quite derivative process, I would argue, which has characterized Tajikistan's post-conflict and post-colonial "peacebuilding" (Heathershaw 2009). As such, evidence is accumulating that a more historical, comparative and theoretically enriched understanding of the post-colonial state is long overdue in Central Asian studies.

Anti-colonial and post-Colonial Central Asia
To think of Central Asian states as post-colonial is to premise one's analysis on a disputed statement of fact. Emphasizing Central Asia's post-coloniality is to say more than that at many times the region has been subject to empire, and may still be subject to it in generations to come (see Laura Adams' (2008, 4-6) interesting discussion of the question of "When is *post*colonialism?"). Rather it posits further descriptive and explanatory claims about the when and the how of post-Soviet Central Asia.

Firstly, the descriptive claim is that post-colonial Central Asian states were part of a Soviet empire until the declarations of independence in late-August and early-September 1991.[1] Central Asia's coloniality went largely unquestioned in the Western academy until the post-Soviet era. For many analysts it was received wisdom that the USSR was an empire which in the South took the form of a European power dominating an Asiatic, Muslim subject people (see Myer 2002). This perception continued into the early-1990s as leading analysts interpreted the transition through Soviet rule in terms of the descriptors "pre-colonial" and "post-colonial" (Akiner 1993). Others have found cause to use the post-colonial label not as an "objective criteria" but as social constructs. Some commentators explain that:

> In the post-colonial context, what therefore becomes important is how the borderland states and their peoples envisage the Soviet experience within such discursive worlds in which meaningful action takes place on the basis of perceptions, values and culturally formed expectations. Thus the borderland post-Soviet states can be considered as post-colonial in the sense that they are constructed and labeled as such by their nation-builders. (Smith et al. 1997, 8)

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[1] For a discussion of this debate in the Central Asian context see Khalid (2006, 2007); for arguments for the Soviet Union as postcolonial or decolonizing polity in Central Asia see Pianciola and Sartori (2007) and Teichman (2007); for arguments for Soviet Central Asia as colonial see Northrop (2004); Beissigner (2008) gives a nice summary of the recent shifts in this debate across the wider region.

Some contemporary historians of the region have reasserted the coloniality of Soviet Central Asia. This is most notable perhaps in the work of Douglas Northrop who in *Veiled Empire* (2004) charts conflicts over the early-Soviet unveiling of women known as the *hujum* as a campaign of colonial government versus anti-colonial resistance.

However, the equation of post-Soviet and post-colonial in either objectivist or social constructivist terms is contentious for a number of reasons, not least because the Soviet Union claimed itself to be postcolonial. Policies of *korenizatsiya* were explicitly aimed at instituting a multi-national, post-imperial modernizing state in generating competing dynamics of differentiated provisions for natives and homogenization of all peoples under a single, unified system. Khalid has argued that, in particular, early Soviet Central Asia cannot be regarded as colonial but rather the degree of micro-management it practiced makes it more akin to a "modern mobilizational state" which "aimed at the *conquest* of difference" (2006, 232-223, 238). Moreover, "the state actively intervened in society and created new cadres that helped carry out its work" (Khalid 2006, 250). As such, comparisons between the USSR and modernizing states such as Kemalist Turkey, Iran before the revolution and Afghanistan before its wars are instructive (Khalid 2006; Edgar 2006). That these states used a great deal of physical violence on their subject peoples does not necessarily indicate imperialism. Khalid concludes that,

> Both the Soviet and the Kemalist states had at their disposal the baggage, common to modern European thought, of evolution, of backwardness and progress, of ethnic classification of peoples, and, indeed, of orientalism. But it matters a great deal whether the baggage is deployed to exclude people from politics or to force their entry into it, whether it is used to assert inequalities or to preach world revolution. (Khalid 2006, 251)

Such criticism of the application of post-colonialism to Central Asia refocuses our mind on the Soviet state as a centre of domination for modernization as well as, perhaps, colonization. Indeed, a number of scholars have pointed out that it is not necessary to conceptualize and analyze the Soviet Union as either an empire or a modernizing state but that it contained elements of both forms in its particular polity. The notions of "affirmative action empire" (Martin), "empire of nations" (Hirsch) and "empire-state" (Beissinger) capture this ambiguity. Beissinger (2006) argues that we can label the Soviet Union as an empire in that it bears a Wittgensteinian "family resemblance" to other empires. This is not simply that in certain times (1920s and 1930s) and places (especially the Baltic states) of the Union was Soviet power considered imperial, but also that the formation of nationalities was at least partially an imperial imposition. Beissinger notes: "for the concept of empire to have any analytical utility in the Soviet context, we need to properly situate the 'national' within the 'imperial', to rescue empire from nation" (Beissinger 2006, 298).

The dual role of empire and nation-state is perhaps most clearly shown in its contradictory role in the creation of national identities and in establishing an institutional basis for its own dismemberment in 1991. "Empires," Adrianne Edgar summarizes, "tend to promote and consolidate differences,

while nation-states seek to foster homogeneity and cohesiveness; the Soviet state, which created separate ethnoterritorial republics within a centralized socialist polity did both" (Edgar 2006, 255). It is in this sense that, in Verdery's claim, "the Soviet empire was more self-consciously invasive and ambitious than West European empires" (Verdery 2001, 16). In this inconsistent state subjective factors become particularly important and the perception of the foreignness of the Soviet empire, despite its explicit campaign to break this down, remained and perhaps grew stronger. Thus, Edgar argues, similarities between Central Asia and colonized places are made manifest "in the *response* to Soviet policies, not in the policies themselves" (Edgar 2006, 272).

This leads to the second, explanatory claim that the end of that Soviet empire in Central Asia was brought about by a post-colonial dialectic where "the contradictions inherent in colonialism produced conditions that allowed for the eventual destruction of colonialism" (Adams 2008, 2; see also Bhabha 1994). This contradiction was the propagation of a discourse of emancipation under a structure of domination. The point here is that, leaving aside the difficult historical question of quite how domineering the centre was, in that the USSR ought to be considered both empire and modernizing state we are faced with a parallel dynamic, if not dialectic, that it is the forces unleashed by modernization that brought the Soviet state-empire to its knees. As Edgar claims, "the active Soviet promotion of linguistic and territorial nations in Central Asia heightened the perception of Moscow's rule as 'foreign'" (Edgar 2006, 256). Yet in the Central Asian region in particular we are led to question the validity of the post-colonial dialectic. Voluminous scholarship on this question has shown that in the fall of the Soviet Union there are other political factors worthy of consideration, from intra-elite competition to international relations, in addition to nationalist mobilization. Moreover, as Beissinger has shown this nationalist mobilization was often "diffuse, local and religious in character" (ref), rather than anti-colonial nationalist, in its various centers of activity before and during the tumultuous events of 1991. By this time the Soviet Union may have been perceived less as imperial and more as incomplete. As Adams plainly asserts, "the perception of Moscow as an 'alien' power no doubt decreased over time" (2008, 4).

Some significant caveats must thus be placed on the description of Soviet Central Asia as colonial. Yet rather than seek to square this circle it may be better, once again, to accept that the Soviet Union was more or less foreign or domestic over different spaces, times and media. This might help explain the ambivalence in the region with regard to the "struggle" for independence and contemporary elites projects of "nation-building". In post-colonial places with strong decolonization movements, such as India or perhaps Latvia, the othering of the imperial centre was perhaps less tempered by a sense of Soviet identity. Accordingly, policies strategies which have emerged in these places since 1991 can properly be considered anti-colonial. In Central Asia by contrast, the nationalist movements which emerged in the republics such as *Rastokhez* in Tajikistan and *Birlik* in Uzbekistan were barely established once independence came and had little impact after this time. Moreover it is doubtful whether they ever acquired any popular purchase

beyond fleeting moments of popular protest, being dominated as they were by intellectual and cultural elites as well as students.

However, if one casts the net wider it is apparent that anti-colonial sentiment was very much part of the late-Soviet period and its popular salience may have been greater than appears at first sight. Novels such as renowned Kyrgyz author Chingiz Aitmatov's *I dol'she veka dlit'sia den* (*The Day Lasts More than a Hundred Years*, 1980) are explicitly post-colonial with its conception of "mankurt" who loses his memory and kills his own mother having forgotten who she really was. That this novel and other Soviet-era texts have been drawn into political discourse by post-Soviet elites ought to highlight the significance of post-colonial threads of discourse. Karagulova and Megoran (2006) show, for example, how in its dying days the government of Askar Akaev mobilized the idea of *mankurt* to speak against foreign domination, this time by Western agencies who had increasingly become disaffected with the Kyrgyzstani government. Although this strategy may have not prevented the slow seepage of the Akaev government's legitimacy—one contributing factor in its downfall of March 2005—the broader point that this post-colonial current remains in the post-Soviet era is worthy of further attention.

Similar trends are discussed by Adams in her account of how post-Soviet Uzbek theatre inverts the image of the Russian "elder brother" in positing the superiority of Uzbek culture over Russian in new anti-colonial plays showing in state and independent theatres whilst still conveying this polemic through a theatrical medium which was introduced to the region during the Russian colonial period and used as a device for modernization in the Soviet era (Adams 2005). Political researchers would do well to consider how anti-colonial texts conceived the Soviet state and how such sentiments imagine the power of the state today, at once resisting and co-opting the colonial legacy. Aitmatov's mixture of the surreal, as evinced by his moonscapes, and totalitarian—"that the Soviet state wanted Central Asians to forget who they were in order to subjugate them" (Adams 2008, 4)—provides a model of a statist imaginary where the centre of power is both dispassionately distant and fantastically almighty. Subordinate discourses of contemporary Central Asian apparently invoke similar themes (Heathershaw 2009, 72-79), although post-colonial theorists caution us against essentializing their character (Spivak 1988).

Anti-colonial and post-colonial discourses can also be found in more familiar territory if one looks hard enough. In Tajikistan, a clearer strain of anti-colonialism can be found amongst activists of the Islamic Revival Party (IRP) which was born in anti-Soviet struggle but remains a diminished but influential movement today. The demands of IRP's activists from its founding in the late-1980s for greater freedom of religion should not be seen as an acceptance of the public-private space dichotomy presupposed by the European secular state model. Rather these demands were and continue to be articulated by some in the party against a strict notion of the secular state pushed by governmental officials and members of Tajikistan's secularist elite. Muhammadshariff Himatzoda, one of two parliamentary deputies in the party, describes the party's members as "Muslim-citizens" of Tajikistan

(Himmatzoda 2003a), a term used to imply that confessional and national identities go hand-in-hand. Himmatzoda presses for an increased role of Islam in politics and questions the separation of church and state as a Western idea inappropriate for Islamic societies. He openly objects to those who interpret Article 8 of the constitution as excluding all expressions of religion from the secular state (2003a). The party's other parliamentary deputy and its official leader Muhiddin Kabiri, however, tends to avoid these questions which remain unacceptable to both national and international elites. His writings and public comments have particularly accentuated the differences between the IRP and radical groups such as Hizb ut-Tahrir (Kabiri 2003a), and emphasized cooperation with international organizations (Kabiri 2003b). His is arguably a derivative discourse articulated strategically to curry favour amongst foreign diplomats and donors and is pitted against the derivative discourses of statehood found amongst the Tajikistani elite (Heathershaw 2009, 105-106).

Post-colonialist perspectives on Central Asian states
The above discussion has highlighted sufficient empirical evidence for the post-coloniality of the Central Asian states. The subsequent question arises as to how statehood is approached from a post-colonialist perspective. Shedding greater light on the extent to which both anti- and post-colonial discourses extend beyond the cultural realm to the formal and informal political opposition of Central Asian states (that is the political parties and politicized "civil society organizations") requires more than the selection of illustrations. Some kind of comparative dimension with post-colonial states in Africa or elsewhere in Asia is surely important. In addition to inquiry with regard to the position of religion and ethno-linguistic identity at least two other dimensions of the post-colonial experience might be raised: gender and family relations and, secondly, political economy. Both of these dimensions bring the opportunity to more closely "weave together the culturalist and materialist strands of theorizing about postcolonialism in Central Eurasia" (Adams 2008, 6). Fortunately, thirty years of work in other regions provides us with a number of well-developed concepts which can be considered in the context of the Central Asian state. These are hybridity (along with its related notions of inbetweeness and derivative discourses), subalterneity and orientalism.

Hybrid state institutions and governmental practices are central to the study of the Central Asian state. Hybridity refers to new transcultural forms which emerge out of the colonial experience where new (often nationalist) goals are sought according to categories and criteria which are rooted in the colonial era. Whilst for Bhaba (1994) hybridity or "inbetween spaces" can allow for release from the strictures of inclusion/exclusion and public and hidden transcripts, in Central Asian studies hybridity has often been seen in quite conservative or normalizing terms by scholars who have implicitly or partially drawn on post-colonial work. Morgan Liu's notion of the postsocialist political imagination in 1990s Uzbekistan which "envisioned eventual economic and political liberalization within solidly Soviet assumptions about the role of the state" (2002, 192) is comparable to hybrid or "derivative" discourse. Equally, my own work on the inbetweeness of both international- and state-supported new political parties in post-conflict

Tajikistan indicates that they are bound by strictures of dependency either on international donors or national regimes (Heathershaw 2009b, forthcoming).

These two brief examples lead to two points of interest for us. Firstly, there is a need perhaps to engage more deliberately and explicitly with post-colonial thought in order to see the full range of positive and negative, direct and indirect effects of hybridity on the "strong-weak" Central Asian state (McMann 2004). Secondly, both examples indicate the complexity of the post-colonial experience in Central Asia where at least two extant "metropoles" can be imagined: the Soviet centre of Moscow and the capitalist metropolitan networks where power circulates around the donor capitals of New York, Washington, Berlin, Geneva, London, etc. International development assistance to build both political and civil society has a distinctly post-colonial character as it seeks to establish a new "standard of civilization" for the so-called "quasi-states" which emerged from the ends of European empires (Jackson 1990). Liu argues that "attempts to encourage 'grassrooots' initiatives may end up reinforcing such illiberal institutions as patriarchy and clientelism" (Liu 2003, 3-4).

My own research in Tajikistan (Heathershaw 2009a, ch.7) found that the hybrid community-based organizations incorporated both local government figures and formally non-governmental village elders in setting goals commensurable to the post-socialist political imagination described above. Often unbeknown to the international staff of NGOs, these individuals were typically networked either by blood, association or economic relations of patronage as pre-existing institutions were reformed and emboldened by international assistance. However, there was some evidence that in certain villages, such as the border settlement of Kizil Ketmen, these hybrid institutions, drawing as they did on multiple sources of capital and authority (donor, state, migrant) were able to institute more responsive forms of state-societal interaction (Heathershaw 2005). Whilst governance remained patriarchal in this setting it was undoubtedly more benign, more flexible and better resourced. This seemed to be shown by the hybrid international-local group's success of getting state officials linked to cotton farmers and financiers to agree to the redirection of an irrigation ditch away from the cotton fields to support village garden plots. The post-colonial hybridity is apparent here in the necessity to maintain multiple and contrasting representations of the villages to multiple audiences with neo-liberal and post-socialist (in the sense described above) agendas.

A second post-colonial concept of relevance is that of the subaltern. The essential position of the subaltern, nor how the category differs from that of subordinate, is not entirely clear. However, a burgeoning literature of Subaltern Studies has been established to explore both subaltern responses and autonomous tactics of scratching out a living in the post-colonial state. This may seem irrelevant to orthodox political scientists studying the state yet, from the perspective of post-colonialism, it is on the margins of the state that it is constructed and transformed. Subalterneity gets beyond the realm of the "hidden transcript" to explore the sites at which that alternative world breaks through and shapes public life (Scott 1990). This is perhaps particularly important in our reading of the history of the formation of republican

boundaries in the delimitation of borders in Soviet Central Asia. Recent research indicates that the responses and politically-driven compromises of native elites played an extremely important role in determining the ultimate delimitation of 1924 (Beissinger 2006). Moreover, Dave regards local communist elites as subaltern in that they "occupied a strategic position as intermediaries between the centre and their ethno-national constituencies, which allowed them to exert control over local distribution channels and serve as 'purveyors of patronage'" (Dave 2007, 95). It was perhaps the subaltenity, in this sense, of their positions which allowed many elites in the Central Asian republics to retain their positions after independence.

Finally, the work of the Palestinian literary critic Edward Said introduces the concept of orientalism, defined as the "systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage—and even produced—the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period" (Said 1978, 3). In his book *Orientalism* (1978)*,* Said sought to expose the power relations in knowledge production about and for the Middle East. The term refers to certain assumptions made about the Eastern "other" and, more importantly, to the processes of reduction, characterization and auto-surveillance which accompany orientalist inquiry. Whilst the extent to which Central Asia is seen through orientalist eyes is at least questionable, given its inclusion via Euro-centric spatial imaginaries into the post-socialist and post-Soviet worlds, there is no doubt that reductive moves and auto-surveillance are as much a part of Central Asian studies as they are any other field of academic study. Moreover, conceptions of the Central Asian states and socieities propagated by Western and Soviet specialists of the region both during and after the Soviet period have been marked by orientalist assumptions of, for example, the role of Islam or the nature of inter-ethnic relations (Myer 2003). Indeed one recent paper specifically challenges political and geopolitical analysis of Central Asia for its use of reductive categories of analysis and adoption of a geopolitical gaze which emphasizes the region's Asiatic identity (over local self-perceptions of being European or Eurasian), its obscurity and fractiousness (Heathershaw and Megoran 2008).

Rethinking the post-Soviet state through post-colonialism
Via these concepts, post-colonial thought provides a critique of dominant political science approaches and an explanation for the resistance it faces as a theoretical perspective from within the region. It offers more than simply anti-Orientalist deconstruction of prevailing "Western" approaches. Its conceptual tools provide a framework for thinking through statehood in its dynamics of continuity and change from the Soviet era. In doing so post-colonial thinkers highlight some familiar themes (e.g. nationalism) as well as some which are often over-looked in mainstream political science analysis (e.g. gender). As examples of the relevance of post-colonialism, this final section considers Bhavna Dave's groundbreaking use of it in her study of Kazakh politics before going on to consider the gender dimensions of the post-colonial state in Central Asia.

Bhavna Dave's *Kazakhstan: Ethnicity, Language, and Power* directly engages and refines post-colonial thought on the state in the Central Asian context. Dave, a UK-based Central Asianist of Indian origin, cognizant of the Subaltern Studies literature, is particularly well-placed to make this transposition and it seems that her identity facilitated certain insights. She records a personal encounter with one Kazakh nationalist academic who emphasized his post-colonial solidarity with her whilst couching this in terms sympathetic to the imperial quest. He expressed, "not a disapproval of colonial domination per se, but a feeling of disappointment by the failure of the Soviet state to deliver its promised goals" (Dave 2007, 2). Equally, she notes how comparison to African and Asian cases is "seen by elites and ordinary people as an affront, given the extent to which they have embraced and internalized the linear logic of Soviet developmental categories, ethno-racial stereotypes and obsession with becoming 'civilized'" (Dave 2007, 12). This is the ambivalence with which Central Asians confront their post-coloniality. It indicates how a post-colonial approach can both shed light on the subject matter of the Central Asian states (their derivative discourses, institutional hybridity and tactics to accommodate subalterns) whilst also accounting for the hostility of that state's subjects to this very way of thinking.

The merging of modernization, nationality, and post-coloniality is the primary aspect of post-Soviet Kazakhstan which she describes as "the most sovietized, that is, 'internationalist' of all Muslim nations" (Dave 2007, 2). Yet, at the same time her work highlights the differences between historical post-coloniality and theoretical post-colonialism in that, "the depiction of Soviet rule in Kazakhstan and Central Asia as predominantly colonial or imperial, and the portrayal of Central Asians as powerless subjects and recipients of Soviet modernity are both simplistic and inaccurate" (Dave 2007, 5). Rather her focus is on how statespersons have manipulated Soviet-style discourse and nationalist tropes. At the same time, the state of Kazakhstan is very much a product of adaptation of the hybrid institutions formed in the Soviet era when "the pervasiveness of patron-client networks, personal ties centered on kinship and regional solidarities were integral elements of a socialist system that displaced markets and all forms of exchange and competition" (Dave 2007, 25). This is the key to understanding Kazakhstan's unexpected and much-vaunted stability and "ethnic harmony" (Dave 2007, 139) as well as its exacerbation of patrimonialism (Dave 2007, 157) which might otherwise lead to instability due to the exclusion of certain groups. Whilst formally and increasingly "Kazakhified," in practice the state is inclusive in its patron-client networks across ethnic groups.

Whilst these research findings might be comparable to many other analyses of post-socialism, in drawing on post-colonial theory Dave's work becomes innovative. It is of interest here in that it provides the basis for an advance on orthodox political science approaches to the state. The book is situated in critiques not just of the sovietological approach but of both the once fashionable transition approach and its presently fashionable neo-institutionalist critique. Both of these approaches she sees as being neglectful of "the role of culture, historical framework and cognitive frames" (Dave 2007, 11) often in favour of rational choice individualism. She explicitly

criticizes Gryzmala-Busse and Jones-Luong's neo-institutionalism for its strict formal versus informal dichotomy where states and regimes are decoupled. By contrast she argues that state formation "has proceeded alongside the consolidation of the Soviet-erected regimes" (Dave 2007, 11). In that Central Asian elites subverted and accommodated Soviet institutions so too we see this adaptation for a form of regime-/state-building in the post-Soviet era. "What we are witnessing", she argues, "is not a mere dismantling or erosion of Soviet-era practices, institutions and mindsets but rather their ongoing adaptation and reconfiguration in a changed context" (Dave 2007, 28).

Dave's work is the nearest we have in Central Asian studies to a guidebook on how to apply post-colonialism to the study of the state in the region. Its first chapter in particular comes highly recommended. Here she identifies "four crucial insights of postcolonial and subaltern theory which help us to explore the effects of Soviet cognitive and institutionalizing frames on the post-Soviet nationalizing state" (Dave 2007, 23). Firstly, and simply, Dave argues for the importance of the colonial legacy which "introduced a new ontology of nation and statehood to apprehend the modern world" (2007, 23). Second, post-colonial comparison shows us that the formal acquisition of national sovereignty is only a "starting point" to create a "national imagination" where subaltern discourses offer fresh perspectives departing from derivative narratives (Dave 2007, 24). Third, we must study "the collaboration of native elites with the colonial order" (2007, 24) so as to discern how these categories are re-applied in the post-Soviet state. Finally, we must separate the elite and subaltern or popular domains to provide a less elitist approach to state formation which takes account of how the colonial and post-colonial Central Asian states were formed in their encounters on the margins with subalterns and non-titular national groups.

Dave's *Kazakhstan* is thus an excellent contribution to the field which deserves to be a germinal, even foundational, text for the study of post-colonial Central Asian statehood. It is, however, not without its oversights and one wonders what post-colonialist scholars who draw on post-modern epistemologies would think of the opposition posited between "symbolic" and "real" power (Dave 2007, 26). This risks recasting the dualist thinking characterizes the neo-instiutionalist distinction between formal and informal cited above. In fact the symbolic and material dimensions of power are surely intersubjective and co-constitutive in the Foucauldian sense (see Lukes 2003). Arguably this is clearly shown in Soviet nationalities policy. As Dave herself notes, "the ideological and symbolic recognition granted to the titular communist elites as representatives of their ethnic community allowed them to presume the consent of their ethnic constituencies and thus claim 'legitimacy'" (Dave 2007, 27). This power is surely no less real in that it enabled them to extract resources and further consolidate their power. A thoroughly post-colonial analysis examines hybridity and subalterneity in both their co-constituted symbolic and material dimensions.

By contrast, post-colonial thinkers have most often been criticized for their failure to engage in questions of economic relations and for privileging instead cultural questions of identity and subjectivity (Macey 2000). This may be partly explained by the roots of post-colonialism in literary studies. In the

Central Asian context this misstep has thankfully not been made. One very good example of how economic questions have been brought to the fore might be in the area of gender, particularly in the work of Deniz Kandiyotti, Dave's colleague at the School of Oriental and African Studies. The position of women acutely raises the inconsistency of Central Asia's post-colonial condition in the context of the rapid reversal of the apparent gains in women's rights claimed during the Soviet era. Whilst women's rights in the Soviet era provided a means "to substitute state control for patriarchal control of women" this is as much the work of a modernizing state as it is that of an empire (Edgar 2006, 263). Equally then the retreat of state control against a re-emergence of patriarchal control in the post-Soviet era is at least as much about relative demodernization as decolonization, especially in that has been disproportionately advanced in rural areas. Kandiyotti (2007) is thus led to challenge the portrayal of gender relations via postcolonialism (Northrop 2004) in positing what she calls the "Soviet paradox", which

> resides in the combined and contradictory operations of a socialist paternalism that supported and legitimized women's presence in the public sphere (through education, work and political representation), with a command economy and nationalities policy that effectively stalled processes of transformation commonly associated with modernity. (Kandiyotti 2007, 602)

Thus, for Kandiyotti, there remains a deep ambivalence in the post-Soviet legacy as the state retreated from the provision of public goods. To categorize the aftermath of this shock as a return to "tradition" forsakes a number of attributes of the Soviet experience including that many so-called traditions were harnessed and adapted by the modernizing state as acceptable and harmless expressions of local culture. However, the way that traditional forms of social organization were reconstituted into the Soviet state unintentionally created the "localism" (*mestnichestvo*) which has characterized its breakdown (Humphreys 1998; Roy 2000). This process, Kandiyotti notes, cannot simply be interpreted as either anti-colonial resistance or the failure of modernization (2007, 616). Nevertheless, these new forms of state-societal arrangements for patriarchal control allow us to assess post-colonialist concepts which might shed light on their form. There is undoubtedly a hybrid or derivate character to post-Soviet change taking place via forces of de-/re-modernization of social infrastructure (through international aid) and de-territorialization and re-spatialisation of livelihoods (through seasonal labor migration).

Conclusions

For post-colonialism to become established as an important body of thought driving research on the state in Central Asia it must show in worth in empirical studies. It has begun to do this in the studies of nationalism and gender as well as in some excellent historical studies (Edgar 2004; Khalid 2006). There is clearly much scope for further combination of post-socialism and post-colonialism particularly in terms of the mutation and adaptation of Soviet-era economic relationships, networks and practices. Gas stands out as the obvious commodity worthy of study in this regard as the privileged position of (now

Russian national) state utilities has largely been maintained. Cotton has similarly been subject to post-colonial continuities and derivative practices with, for example, the continuance of an environmentally unsustainable mono-culture alongside an increased reliance on forced and child labor during the main harvest season. However, this system has been brought to crisis by exposure to international finance and the accumulation of debt on the global capital markets which has exposed the inadequacies of the system of futures companies across the key growing regions. It is surely the structural violence of the global market that characterizes (post-colonial) Central Asian economies as much as it is their hybridity, a characteristic which serves to exacerbate their economic vulnerability. In this sense the post-colonial condition is the context for "struggles over resources, legitimacy, and meaning" (Kandiyotti 2002, 295).

There is then some agreement between scholars who have recently adopted post-colonialism in the Central Asian context that its value and utility is determined by the way in which it is combined with other theoretical approaches, be they those of post-socialism (Verdery 2002) or analyses of capitalism that often take on a (post-)Marxist hue. It is in this sense that post-colonialism remains a vital resource in our analyses of Central Asian states as it provides for both comparison and contrast with other theoretical perspectives. To be sure, there are significant differences in form and degree of imperialism in comparison with other regions of post-coloniality, most particularly the neighboring Indian sub-continent. Yet the intellectual benefits of making such comparisons are more far-reaching as they suggest a contribution that Central Asia can make to the wider study of the post-colonial world. "We can no longer rejoice," Khalid notes, "in any kind of certainty over what a 'real' colonial empire ought to look like" (2007, 471).

It can be concluded then that the post-coloniality of Central Asian states is an integral dimension of their continuance today, almost twenty years after the fall of the USSR. This dimension must be seen alongside gendered, post-modern, post-socialist, international, globalizing and other aspects yet it remains a vital element of any analysis of state-ideas, -persons, effects and affects. Whether post-colonialism as a body of theory can tell us a great deal about elite domination and subordinate survival strategies in contemporary Central Asian states is, however, more controversial. Regarding certain research questions, concepts such as hybridity and inbetweenness, subalterneity and derivative discourse certainly have descriptive and explanatory leverage. That is, they get at aspects of the contemporary Central Asian state and provide a lens through which the failure of "transition" can be outlined. However, one will not find in post-colonialism well-formed causal theories of Central Asian stateness and state weakness. Any attempt to derive such a theory from the diverse body of post-colonial thought would be fanciful.

Perhaps the greatest contribution of a post-colonial perspective on Central Asian statehood is not in the concepts themselves but in the circumspection and vigorous critical orientation that characterizes it as a mode of inquiry. In that the subaltern cannot speak then perhaps we, as researchers, should be more cautious in attributing to him/her attitudes, opinions, personal

narratives and tactics. This warning is as much of relevance to the author's own work (Heathershaw 2009) as it is to other scholars from anthropologists to political scientists who extrapolate individual narratives and public opinions with regard to the Central Asian state. Moreover, claims about imminent failure or collapse of Central Asian states are oft-repeated but repeatedly prove to be poor predictions of political practice (in the case of Tajikistan see the Dadmehr (2005), Crosston (2007), ICG (2009)). Post-colonialism encourages us to rethink the premises of stateness that inform this Euro-centric analysis. It demands that we pay attention to the diverse modes of instituting, interpreting, practicing and embodying the post-colonial Central Asian state.

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