The Pen is Mightier than the Horde:

Why no large-scale conflict in Central Asia?

This dissertation is motivated by the observation that, in a condition of regime transition and weak statehood, the Caucasus saw widespread conflict but Central Asia, while experiencing numerous small conflicts, has not seen violence on that scale. When the Soviet Union collapsed, many predicted that suppressed ethnic tensions would precipitate mass violence and civil wars across the newly independent states. This was especially the case regarding the most underdeveloped and ethnically diverse regions, namely Central Asia and the Caucasus.[1] Some of these predictions were borne out in the Caucasus, in which four large-scale violent conflicts erupted, beginning in 1989. In Central Asia, however, with the exception of Tajikistan, which also experienced a bloody civil war, the region has seen no conflict on that scale. It has, however, experienced numerous smaller-scale conflicts that did not escalate. These have occurred both in the glasnost period and in the longer post independence period. Given the numerous demographic and social indicators often associated with instability prevalent in Central Asia, among them economic decline, ethnic diversity, rising fundamentalism, resource scarcity, population density, and repressive state policies, that these bouts of small-scale conflicts have occurred is not surprising. What may be surprising is that none of these have widened to into protracted violent conflicts covering large swaths of territory as in the Caucasus, not realizing the fears (at least up until now) of many analysts and international NGOs. Thus, this study will explain not the absence of conflict in Central Asia, but the lack of *escalation* of conflict.[2] I will look to local institutions to provide an explanation.

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[1] Rumer, Fuller; Olcott, Peimani, ICG, etc. Edward Shevardnadze called Central Asia "a crescent of conflict" and WHO and UNICEF worried, "a sudden and massive collapse of the existing systems that could set off a vicious spiral of hunger and disease and political and economic chaos", in Glenn, 142. [But is my claim that they were all alarmists, and that they shouldn't base predictions on statistics and generalizations, or that they were essentially right in being worried, but they missed something crucial that I can identify?]

[2] Only limited to Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and northern Tajikistan, where, arguably, the conflict indicators have been the highest but large-scale conflicts have not materialized. Results may be generalizeable to Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and beyond.

What to Study and When: Definitions

I am interested in understanding why conflicts in Central Asian have for the most part not turned into large-scale civil or mobilizational violence. This presents a problem of inference, in that the confirmation of my hypotheses is to a large extent dependent on a counterfactual—that certain small-scale conflicts would otherwise have escalated into larger ones, had it not been for some intervening factor. I will remain aware of this problem throughout, and will keep in mind as a null hypothesis the possibility that these conflicts should not otherwise have escalated. The burden of proof that some mechanism is responsible for non-escalation is on me, and dictates that I choose those cases where escalation was most likely. Additionally, not all conflicts, if allowed to continue without intervention, will become a "Rwanda" or a "Bosnia". There are many lesser, though still catastrophic, types of conflict that can result, such as riots, pogroms, and massacres, whose avoidance is still of theoretical and practical interest.

As a starting point, I seek to identify the events that failed to materialize—that is, those conflicts with the greatest potential to widen but that did not, in order to know where to focus my research. How should these events be defined? They could be narrowly and quantitatively defined in terms of a minimum number of deaths, say 10, which would make gathering data easier, but that would include single-event crimes that are not politically charged and therefore unlikely to escalate into inter-group violence; also it excludes cases where significant disharmony was present but did not lead to any deaths, but which may nonetheless have been of sufficient emotion and bad blood that they had the potential to escalate into large-scale violence. At the other extreme an event can be described qualitatively and broadly as any disagreement between at least any two individuals (any of which could hypothetically have spread), but this is problematic, not only because there are an infinite amount of these cases (making most impossible to identify), but because most of these were probably not of a serious enough nature to escalate. Taking these extremes into account, my definition will include purposely inflicted physical violence as a prerequisite, but that alone does not suffice; there must also be a political underpinning to the act. The act must occur between existing groups, be they villages, clans, ethnic groups, or against the state. "Everyday" crimes that occur

within groups and thus have no political ramifications will be excluded. And instead of the general term "conflict", this phenomenon, that for which the lack of escalation cries out for an explanation, might be termed *potentially politically significant conflicts.* [PPSCs?—that sucks] Or better, *politically inspired violent outbursts [PIVOs].*

Using these two dimensions—physical harm and intergroupness—to identify would-be escalators, poses at least four (?) problems: that I presume to know what has political ramifications (that is, which conflicts have the potential to escalate) and what does not; that I can define a priori what is a group and assert that intra-group conflicts are insignificant; and it biases my sample to those conflicts (inter-group and violent) that are likely to receive more attention from outside actors, who can exercise independent influence on the conflict and prevent its escalation (or if so desired, further its escalation); and defines conflicts tautologically, identifying them not from their inherent features but from their outcome, that is, using knowledge of their outcome as a basis for their selection. Is this acceptable? Since it's not a statistical study (unless I can gather accurate data), probably. I will identify cases that by most expectations should have (or would have) escalated, but did not, then search for mechanisms that explain this outcome.[3]

Two distinct types of *PIVOs* will be considered together. The first is oppositional conflict, or mobilization against the state. Though rare in Central Asia, there have been several cases of this, notably incursions by the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), a feeble secessionist drive by Kazakhs in northern Uzbekistan, and anti-government demonstrations in Kyrgyzstan in 2002. Due to perceived rising dissatisfaction with the economic and political situation, outside experts have anticipated more, especially in the "volatile" Fergana Valley. Why the IMU incursions did not gather large followings in any of the three Fergana states, why there have been no major groundswells in their favor, and in fact why Islam has not been a rallying point (up to now) for dissatisfied parties must be explained. More generally, why mobilized dissatisfaction has been lacking in a region that possesses no official institutions for registering grievances is a question that begs an explanation, and is a related matter to studying conflict escalation.

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[3] The IV here is high risk factors and many *PIVOs*. The DV is non-escalation. Hypotheses for these mechanisms follow later.

[I guess I'm hedging, but I leave open the opportunity that the variable/s that explain lack of escalation may explain overall low mobilization.]

The other type of conflict does not involve the state directly, but rather occurs on the communal level, the main cleavage not necessarily being ethnicity, since it is not clear how salient and politicized ethnicity is in Central Asia—an empirical question—but any type of inter-group conflict not involving the state.[4] More relevant groups may be based on economic/patronage networks, clan, or tribe, which can run across or within ethnic groups. Even "interethnic" conflict in Central Asia does not begin as an ethnic conflict per se (if it ever is), but rather as a struggle over resources or access to resources, scapegoating of particular ethnic groups.[5]

Why study both of these types of conflict in a single dissertation? There are three reasons. The lack of escalation of both in the region is puzzling; the indicators that frighten outsiders have been linked with large-scale conflicts of both types in the past. Second, they are linked in theories of networks and civil society. People who are capable of one type are often prone to do the other. Dissatisfaction in one area (state or local) can easily be manifested in the other.[6] Third, empirically, people on the ground may not clearly distinguish conflict directed against the state from conflict directed against communal groups; one may be seen to represent the other, or the two may fused, as Soviet-inherited distributional networks link state officials (the patrons) to non-state actors (clients). Who exactly is "the state" and how grievances against it are expressed remains an open question. Additionally, as Beissinger points out, conflict that starts as one type can transform into a different type.

What's my time frame? Gorbachev's policies lessened both the extent and means of Soviet repression in the republics, and changed people's perceptions of power, beginning in about 1988. Once this loosening took place, numerous mobilizations and

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[4] The fact that this study does not presume to know the dominant politicized cleavages distinguishes this study from Varshney's, who only looks one (though important) cleavage in India, the Hindu-Muslim axis. Incidentally, this study also cannot focus on civic associations as Varshney's does, since civil society, by its usual definition, is nearly absent throughout all of Central Asia, due to Soviet totalitarian legacies and post-independence regimes that have feared independent centers of power from the state.

[5] The conflicts in Fergana (1989) and Osh (1990) appear to fit this mould.
Beissinger calls these two types of conflicts/*PIVOs* "nationalist rebellion" and "nationalist combat", respectively, but they are not useful terms to describe a region where "nation" may not be the dominant cleavage, e.g. in Tajikistan, 307.

[6] Cite?

intercommunal conflicts broke out in the republics. This change in coercive capacity of the state did not significantly change again upon the breakup of the USSR. Perceptions of coercive capacity vary from independent state to state, depending on whether the regime reconsolidated Soviet-style power or developed more tolerant policies toward opposition, and on how long this development took place. In any case, the moment of independence (September 1991) was not necessarily a break in terms of coercion and state strength in the republics, so there is no reason to divide that period conceptually from the Soviet period. Since the most salient change in state power took place upon the advent of glasnost, that point makes the most sense to consider as the beginning of the "post-Soviet" era, and the period I will cover in this dissertation.

Outbreak and Escalation of violence in Existing Theory

The outbreak of conflict should be kept theoretically distinct from its escalation. The results of collective action can be unpredictable, especially where violence is involved. Scholars have written about the transformative effect of violence. Once perpetrated, it tends to create a new dynamic of retribution and revenge, easily spiraling out of control. Yet this assertion is unsubstantiated, usually offered anecdotally or as common sense. While the cases of small acts feeding into larger conflagrations are notable, the much more common case of flare-ups being quickly extinguished is usually ignored. I seek to explain why conflicts do not cross that threshold.

Theories on the outbreak of violence in post-Soviet space tend to focus on enabling macroconditions and national-level institutions, most of them derived from conflicts in Yugoslavia and the south Caucasus; they tend to offer good explanations for elite actions, but do not account for why individuals on the micro-level decide to participate in violence acts. Focusing on the moment of state weakness or collapse, they account for mobilization through security dilemmas, the mass media, past resentment, national grievances, opportunity structures, or opportunities for recognition or resource capture by exploiting institutions of autonomy.[7] Yet they do not explain why followers

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[7] Posen, Michael Brown, Barbara Walter, Snyder, Peterson, Beissinger, Crawford, David Meyer, Svante Cornell, Bunce, Zuercher/Koehler.

respond to the provocations of ethnic entrepreneurs in some permissive situations but not others, to the point where they are willing to kill. Other non-Soviet general theories of violence tend to focus on the statistical indicators and are weak on mechanisms[8] and theories of anti-Soviet mobilization seek structural factors and search for general principles.[9]

A separate set of theories, mostly from anthropology and sociology (?) but increasingly used in political science addresses networks and collective action, and can be used to explain the missing part of institutional theories of conflict—why the people actually carrying out violence do so. Motivations for participation may include social considerations and cost/benefit calculations.[10] Other theories more specifically explain collective action following the onset of violence, including security dilemma logic, symbolic acts of desecration, hardening of identity, collaboration of the state, opportunities for elites to profit from perpetuation, access to weapons. Need more!!![11] This latter group of theories (fn 10 and 11) is more relevant for explaining escalation.

Two Approaches: indigenous institutions and inhibited escalation

In searching for a theory of lack of conflict escalation, the proximate and background causes must be separated. Conceived differently, one explanation may identify a particular pattern of intervention or natural mechanism that comes into effect once a conflict has started, while another identifies the underlying economic and social conditions within which the proximate causes of the perpetuation of conflict (ethnic entrepreneurs, pervasive fear among the masses, pernicious rumors) are likely to be stifled or weakened. Both may contribute to an understanding of why conflicts don't spread. Following North, the first will be defined as *institutions*, the second as *institutional setting*. To complicate matters further, an explanation may encompass both of these concepts—a specific institution may be allowed to function only under particular structural conditions.

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[8] Gurr and Harff, *Ethnic Conflict in World Politics*, Collier and Hoeffler, Fearon/Laitin (rough terrain), NGOs, SVE
[9] Hale, Herrera, Beissinger, Treisman
[10] Granovetter, Laitin, Kuran, A, Tarrow/McAdam/Tilly, DeNardo, Hechter
[11] Hardin, Kaufmann, Schelling, Ignatieff, Lake/Rothchild?, Varshney, Brass

Approach 1, Institutions and networks—good or bad

First, networks…This is used to describe the social coordination among a group of people with common interests, be they economic, from Soviet patronage networks, or by blood relation. As the previous set of theories addressed, these can be activated for collective action for conflictual or peaceful purposes. Within networks it will be necessary to identify relevant actors, both generally (i.e. leaders and followers) and specifically (Jizzakh oblast hakim, Uzgen kolkhoz workers). An institution, by contrast, consists of the rules and norms by which groups of people arranged into networks abide. North defines it as "trained patterns of interaction…" or "the rules of the game". Because of its informal nature, an institution cannot always be *named* but can always be *described*. For example, a network can be a *mahalla* or a patron-client relationship. A named institution may include blood feuds, *hashar* (mutual assistance), and also the *mahalla*. An unnamed (but potentially namable) institution could be habitual interaction among ethnic groups; procedures of exchange or trade; or a meeting of elders of adjoining villages every third Sunday to play chess, get drunk, and discuss manure allocation; self-policing of various types.

A study of conflict escalation or suppression necessarily takes an institutional perspective, that is, looks both at actors and their environment to understand how the latter constrains the former, while the former shapes the latter. It asks first describes what networks exist and how they can be used for collective action. What is the basic social unit of everyday life? Do social and economic relations span across villages or administrative regions or are they localized? Who commands loyal followings—elected officials or unofficial community leaders? Are women involved in making decisions and do they have access to information? Are economic networks interethnic? Are state officials included in unofficial or illegal activities of social or economic networks? Then it asks what the rules governing those networks are (i.e. what institutions are in place.) Do they operate according to traditional value systems? Do local elders have the authority or legitimacy to meddle in local conflicts? Is there a norm against theft or physical violence in settling disputes? Is there an internalized and accepted non-violent

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outlet for conflict? It is important to focus on the Central Asian social context while also comparing institutions from areas where conflict escalated, in order to identify variables/institutions present in one but absent in the other.

<div align="center">Contextual examples of Institutions that Inhibit Conflict Escalation</div>

Several examples from I. Zartman's book, *Traditional Cures for Modern Conflicts*, give a sense of the range of networks and local institutions for conflict resolution in Africa. The Buem people from the Ghana-Togo border often conflict with other groups over scarce resources or the perception that another tribe presents a threat. When a war begins, "prestigious men from within any of the two fighting groups, or from a different territory, can be called upon to seek resolution through mediation and conciliation."[12] Individuals seen as incorrigible criminals are ritually ostracized, which includes deprivation from all village support and pressure on relatives not to associate with the individual, giving the family an incentive to pre-emptively correct his behavior.(43) The Oromo of Ethiopia use a complex twelve-step process of investigation, punishment, and reconciliation to deal with conflict, undergirded by elections and regular succession of those mediating the conflict, in order to avoid nepotism and corruption.[13] In a third (non-African) case of an Arab-Israeli village, simmering conflict between thousands of Christian Arabs and Druze was resolved by the mediation of an ad hoc group of respected regional leaders who possessed no clan ties to the disputing parties. They shuttled between the two communities, achieving resolution by appealing to values such as dignity, shame, unity, and religious-based tolerance, resolving the conflict circumventing state institutions (the Israeli legal system).[14]

The Soviet State had its own institutions of stifling conflict. The Soviet leviathan prided itself on its maintenance of the appearance of ethnic harmony, using both bribes and coercion to provide the necessary stability that was required to support the frail and tenuous command economy. As Barnett Rubin eloquently describes,

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[12] Ben K. Fred-Mensah, "Bases of traditional Conflict Management among the Buems of the Ghana-Togo border", in Zartman, ed. (London: Lynne Riener, 2000), 41.
[13] Hamdesa Tusa, "Indigenous processes of Conflict Resolution in Oromo Society," in Zartman, 86.
[14] Mohammed Abu-Nimer, "Contrasts in Conflict Management in Cleveland and Palestine," in Zartman, 144-150.

> "..social control was exerted with relatively little overt violence. The
> population was incorporated into institutions (mainly schools and
> workplace) where it was subject to pervasive surveillance. In addition,
> people received extremely secure if modest compensation along with
> housing, medical care, and other benefits. In return, the state demanded
> public obedience and compliance, and the rather rare violations of these
> could be punished with long prison terms."[15]

The latent threat of physical violence provided the necessary deterrent to activities that
would undermine the myth of Soviet omnipotence. Only when Gorbachev's reforms
weakened this deterrent did the calculation change in some places for a critical mass of
dissatisfied actors.

<div align="center">Then in Central Asia: what are the named institutions?</div>

Central Asian networks and institutions (at least those that can be named) can be
roughly differentiated into traditional, Soviet, and post-Soviet types, although of course
there has been significant continuity across eras, and in some cases the invention of
homologous institutions designed to mimic "traditional" ones can be seen. The first type
is "traditional". Zartman offers a useful and generalizeable definition of tradition that
will be used for this analysis: procedures that "have been practiced for an extended period
and have evolved in [Central Asian] societies rather than being the product of external
importation."[16] The basic structure of Central Asian society has historically been the clan,
which (to varying degrees) were subsumed by tribal structures. Tribal affiliation (which
was retained longer in nomadic Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan) is based on the (real or
imagined) lineage of a common ancestor, while clan membership can additionally be
obtained through marriage or proximity.[17] The *mahalla* is an urban institution, a close-
knit neighborhood centered around a mosque, its members sharing kinship or profession.
It serves the function of providing social and economic protection to needy members, and

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[15] Rubin, "Russian Hegemony and State Breakdown in the Periphery: Causes and Consequences of the civil war in Tajikistan", in Rubin, Snyder, 1998, 139.
[16] Zartman, 7.
[17] Collins, Schoeberlein

resembled extended families in their shared interest in conformity of behavior and upbringing of children.[18] Also, the division into ok-suyak and kora-suyak, the latter bestowing political and religious legitimacy on its possessor and the two never intermixing, has remained from nomadic history to contemporary times.[19]The institutions of *avlod* and *qavm* overlap with and cross-cut *mahallas*, tribes, and clans.

The Soviet administration created new political boundaries between and within republics, and in the process developed new institutions. While local traditional life was largely unaffected, new economic and social relationships were created, while old ones were strengthened. Soviet agricultural policy moved people onto collective farms, where the resources for subsistence came from Moscow by way of Communist Party (indigenous and Russian) officials. This new patron-client relationship did not drastically change daily life because that the boundaries of kolkhozes and the new administrative division of raion kept existing clans largely intact and reinforced existing networks in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan.[20] In Tajikistan, regional divisions were also strengthened by the administrative divisions, and Tajik elites cultivated strong ties to Moscow as the republic subsisted on subsidies from the center for nearly half its budget.[21]

In the post-Soviet era, it is difficult to identify new networks and institutions, much less to label patterns of interaction as "traditional" or "Soviet". Suffice it to say that clans seem to have remained dominant in post-Soviet Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, regions and clans are primary in the politics of Kyrgyzstan, the state has reinforced Soviet institutions and increasingly penetrated local institutions in Uzbekistan, where some unforeseen Islamic-oriented networks have also arisen, and in Tajikistan regional identity still prevails while "traditional" institutions are being strengthened by the state and outside organizations.[22] "New" institutions may originate exogenously from NGOs

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[18] Demian Vaisman, "Regionalism and Clan Loyalty in the Political Life of Uzbekistan", in Ro'I, 106; Sievers; Liu; Abramson
[19] Abashin, "Holy descendents in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan"
[20] Roy 2000, Glenn, Allworth, Jones Luong,
[21] Rubin in Rubin/Snyder; Roy.
[22] Schatz, ICG reports

or from the state, as adaptive means of coping, or for articulating opposition against the government.[23]

Of special interest in Central Asia are "self-policing" mechanisms, a concept introduced to political science by Fearon and Laitin, but followed up with little empirical research. These mechanisms are likely to be found among tight-knit groups and those where traditional values of loyalty, shame, and respect for elders are still intact. As mentioned above, most literature on Central Asia indicates that Soviet authority did not break up traditional networks of family or village, but actually strengthened them. Given this fact and the weakness of the new states that took the Soviet Union's place and their continued inability to penetrate society (though varying widely between states), local-level institutions and their internal rules may explain more than national-level variables or inter-ethnic rivalries.[24]

Approach 2: Dynamics of Conflict Escalation

A second and complementary approach to understanding conflict escalation pays attention not to the role networks and institutions per se, but to the context in which they function, especially once violence has broken out. But first, in order to answer why some conflicts escalate and some do not, it is necessary to define the term. Escalation should be defined in terms of space and time. In this analysis, conflicts that do not widen in space are said to be *localized*. They are contained in the village/city/neighborhood in which they begin. Why do local conflicts sometimes spread beyond their initial sources? Instrumentalist literature points toward politicians' manipulation of localized violent events for the purposes of votes or other self-serving motives, which then leads to the conflict extending to other areas. One mechanism for this is a "master narrative", which leads non-political violent acts to be viewed as part of a greater ongoing struggle, making the conflict relevant to members of the groups in other locales and heightening tension throughout the greater region.[25] Another mechanism may be structural—certain geographic features may facilitate communication or make it easier to wage a guerilla

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[23] McMann; ICG on Hizb al-Tahrir; Sievers; EU/Tacis self-governance report
[24] Fearon, Laitin, 1996.
[25] Varshney, Brass

war.[26] Other theories point to ethnic similarity, commitment problems, action-reaction cycles, and tipping mechanisms as responsible for geographical conflict escalation.[27]

The second relevant dimension is duration. An initial violent event can have no greater consequences, or it can lead to sustained mobilization or vicious circle of retribution. Why do conflicts continue? Either the initial perpetrator did not achieve its aims with the first strike, or the victim of the first act seeks recompense for its loss, which can lead to a vicious circle of revenge and retribution.[game tree?] Whereas a well-endowed state may be able to stifle conflict early on (assuming it is willing to make a bloody example of the instigators), this becomes more difficult as the conflict continues over time and spreads throughout space. Weak states may be unable to intervene from the beginning. The two Palestinian *intifadas* began from small precipitating events—a traffic accident and Ariel Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. Both of those events triggered an initial outburst that spread to a much wider area and where fighting continued/has continued for two-three years. This is not to imply that the continuation or spreading of conflict is "natural"—an automatic response of aggrieved or frustrated people—as many assume in the Palestinian case. Conflict can be manipulated from behind the scenes. But this begs the question, if provocateurs are potentially present everywhere, what accounts for a receptive audience in some cases but not others? And why does mediation or de-escalation occur in some cases before the conflict reaches an unmanageable point?[28] [Can also be defined by number of participants, no?]

Conventional wisdom says that in order to drag on, a conflict must divide into clear-cut groups and that these groups perceive the stakes as greater than the precipitating event itself. Even for a thirst for revenge to set in, the perpetrating group's initial act must be viewed as sufficiently loaded/threatening in order to provoke such an emotional response. An empirical question: when do prosaic conflicts over resources become viewed as ethnic/clan conflicts in CA, and why usually not? What prevents small issues

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[26] Laitin/Fearon on rough terrain, Sambanis, Lake/Rothchild
[27] examples from Lake/Rothchild, Laitin, Schelling, Lustick (Agent-based models)
[28] For some reason conflicts (if not decisively ended by victory of one side or outside intervention) seem to be brief (a few days) or protracted (many months) but not in between. Is there some critical threshold above which there is no turning back and the conflict truly becomes irreconcilable? Tishkov noticed this too, calls the latter "planned military actions with established front lines and organized paramilitary and military units," 141.

from being projected onto larger identity categories? Or, if issues are viewed through a lens of identity, why does this not lead to conflict? And then, assuming it does…

The collective action literature refers to thresholds, beyond which a previously ambivalent portion of the population decides to join a mass movement. Similarly, accounts of mass violence refer to increasing pressures for participation on uninvolved civilians, who are forced to partake in violence at a point where enough lives have been lost and other indignities suffered that a new system of values and behaviors sets in wholly different from the one that existed before. At this point the conflict may be nearly "unstoppable" until the parties exhaust themselves. The literature is not united on whether this point comes about suddenly, by a public and dramatic act, or gradually, by means of increasing numbers involved. In any case, theories of collective action and cascades/tipping mechanisms provide a useful way to conceive escalation of conflict and will be applied to the non-outcome in Central Asia.

<p align="center">Combining the Two Approaches: Escalation and Institutions</p>

Applying this framework to the Central Asian context, I will try to identify cases where the preconditions were most ripe for escalation, yet that outcome did not come to pass. Against a null hypothesis that the conflict never would have widened on its own anyway, I will try to identify local and informal institutions that interact *before* this hypothetical critical point of escalation to stifle the conflict, or that *raise the threshold* of this point, so it more difficult to reach, giving the authorities more time to intervene, for example. Evidence should indicate these institutions influence people's actions and calculations on the individual level, providing meat on the bones of any simplistic diagram of dynamics and a micro-level account of macro-level security dilemma or clan-pacting theories. People should say, "I and my neighbors were planning to buy kerosene and set Abdullayev's house on fire, but my mother warned me that our family would be shunned if they knew I was involved." Or, "The mahalla committee went to every house and urged people to stay home." Or, "Our agreement with the neighboring village of Aga-Baga—existing since ancient times—requires that we meet to discuss compensation for a man from our community who shot three people from the other."

Distillation of Relevant Variables from Case Studies and Central Asian Conflicts

Author: Brass

Case: India

Argument: Riots appear around times of elections. Politicians and the media construe a precipitating event, which at other times would be ignored, in the framework of a larger conflict—a "master narrative". The most common ones are ongoing Hindu-Muslim or Inter-caste conflicts. People respond to the master narratives. Riot committees act when given the proper cues, everyone plays their proper "roles". Riots become part of ordinary politics, not viewed as shocking.[29]

Background variables/necessary conditions: democracy and competitive elections, anonymity in cities, media

Author: Beissinger

Case: Soviet Union

Argument: Demonstrations reached increasing intensity as new demonstrations rode the "tides" of success of previous ones, in a transnational and transcultural phenomenon. One nationalism alters expectations of success for others. Within a four-year period of "thickened history" events acquired sense of momentum, transformed nature of political institutions, assumed characteristics of their own causal structure. Tidal forces became available for appropriation by elites, who grew in confidence with every success. These events gradually undermined the coercive power of the USSR. The outcome is inexplicable by purely structural conditions.

NCs: capacity to organize, media, weakness of central state

Author: Kuran

Case: Eastern Europe

Argument: Depending on distribution of people's thresholds for expressing opposition to government, mass movements can never develop, simply develop, or spread rapidly. An event can rapidly materialize by lowering thresholds and raising public

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[29] Paul Brass, *Theft of an Idol* (Princeton University Press, 1997).

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opposition. In Eastern Europe, lots of people consistently falsified opposition to the regime; only Gorbachev's signals to Eastern Europe allowed people to see that other people also felt similarly by lowering their revolutionary thresholds. Falsified preferences concealed bandwagons in formation. This is why the popular revolt and regime collapse happened so suddenly.[30]

NCs: some initial instigators, regimes that do not open fire, anonymity

Author: Laitin

Case: National revival movements in Spain, possible Baltics

"Vigilantes", who want to revive nationalist movements for selfish reasons, struggle with the fact that their own group does not support the movement. They then have an incentive to perpetrate a visible act of violence against the government, provoking it to respond disproportionately, killing and frightening the group associated with the terrorists, and thus increasing intra-group solidarity. A cycle of violence results as the state and this national group exchange blows, escalating into a full-scale national rebellion involving the once indifferent masses.[31]

NCs: vigilantes, state with little self-control

Other case studies needed on: Rwanda (Me Against My Brother), Bosnia (Susan Woodward), Kosovo (Tim Judah? Glenny?), Israel-Palestinian (?)

Linking Networks and Collective Action in Central Asia: Rare Evidence

In Fergana and Osh one ethnic group specifically targeted another ethnic group. In Fergana in 1989, Uzbeks attacked Meskhetian Turks supposedly due to resentment over their relative economic success. In Osh in 1990, Kyrgyz massacred Uzbeks supposedly over a plan to redistribute scarce housing from Kyrgyz to members of more prosperous Uzbek minority.[32] In both cases the attacks were well-organized (though not

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[30] Timur Kuran, "Now out of Never," *World Politics* 44, October 1991.

[31] David Laitin, *Identity in Formation* (Cornell University: 1998), 341.

[32] Valery Tishkov, *Ethnicity, Nationalism, and Conflict in and After the Soviet Union* (Sage: London, 1997), "The Culture of Ethnic Violence: Osh Conflict": Abilabek Asankanov, "Ethnic Conflict in the Osh

necessarily pre-meditated). A small precipitating incident in both cases began the massacres, but then groups of (young men) organized to hunt down members of the victimized group, going to extreme measures to humiliate and offend the victims. It is said that the authorities were late in intervening, in the end local elders helped stop the violence. The attackers mobilized quickly by means of "clan" networks and the Osh conflict ended in part due to local intervention.[33]

In Aksy, Kyrgyzstan, when parliamentary deputy Beknazarov from Jalalabad Oblast was arrested for political reasons, massive protests ensued in his home region, pressuring Akaev to drop the charges. The protests, according to the ICG, amassed large numbers because of "social pressure on those who may have been less enthusiastic about joining the protests, yet they remained restrained because "close relations among the protestors and the strength of social and kinship ties also helped to ensure a strong sense of discipline within their ranks."[34] On propensity to join or not join Islamic movements, urban (mahalla) dwellers more or less likely to join movements? (IRIN)

Two institutions in particular maintain a large material and symbolic roles in Central Asian life, the mahalla (mostly urban) and the kolkhoz (rural), and will be the focus of my investigation. Both were strengthened by Soviet administrative policies and both outlived the USSR. All evidence indicates that they continue to be intact and cohesive today, though mahallas are monitored by the authorities in Uzbekistan. The mahalla, in its geographic layout and social structure, is designed to make it easy to observe the activities of one another. It is, in political science terms, a form of "bonding social capital", in which connections are based on ascription and are involuntary, making its networks strong, though oppressive.[35] The kolkhoz, which reinforced existing

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Region in summer 1990: Reasons and Lessons," www.iles.umn.edu/faculty/bashiri/Osh/Osh.html; Antonina Zaharova and Nick Megoran, "Osh Ten Years on: Positive Developments in Ethnic Relations" eurasianet.org, 9-18-2000.

[33] Collins, 181.

[34] ICG, Kyrgyzstan's Political Crisis: An Exit Strategy, 8/19/02, 15. They also remark that, "Given the close kinship ties in Kyrgyzstan, such protests—even just by relatives and fellow villagers—can easily gather hundreds of people," 17.

[35] Liu; Sievers, 92. Gellner calls this "tyranny of cousins": "An agrarian society might be able to avoid the tyranny of the state for, in view of the decentralized nature of the production structure, the low level of communication technology, and the relatively self-sufficient character of each segment, the power of the state would not be able to reach all segments of a traditional society. But that does not mean such a society would be 'civil', for instead of a 'tyranny of the state' it would experience a 'tyranny of cousins': 'It thrusts on to the individual an ascribed identity, which then may or may not be fulfilled, whereas a modern

solidarity groups or created new ones, supplied Moscow with abundant cotton, but also doubled as a subversive organization; when Islamic leaders were pursued by the authorities, these illegal mullahs could melt into the kolkhoz and were protected by their solidarity groups or. The community conspired by "converting" mosques into museums or warehouses, and pilgrims could still visit zyarats (tombs of sufi pirs) covertly.[36]

Obviously, strong networks have a large impact on collective action and networks are strong and autonomous from the state in Central Asia. The only question is, does the network provoke or restrain? What factors determine when it does one or the other? Does it depend on ethnicity, scarce resources, the state?

What distinguishes Central Asia for collective action/violence potential?

Macro-variables: no competitive elections; low media transmission; weak states in rural areas; repressive coercive apparatuses;

Micro-variables: anonymity low, even in cities; strong networks; pressures toward conformity; low civil society

Hypotheses

Why are Central Asian violent conflicts limited in space and duration?

1. (null hypothesis): Conflicts just "die out" from exhaustion. There was no reason to expect them to widen.

2. State keeps order through latent power; leviathan state that metes out justice for perpetrator.

3. Asymmetry; dominant group conducts massacre/pogrom to make a point, weaker group too weak to strike back.

4. Aversion to violence:

a. traditional culture: Islam or Central Asianness opposes war.

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conception of freedom includes the requirement that identities be chosen rather than ascribed."(42) Gellner, "The Importance of being Modular," in *Civil Society: Theory, History, Comparison*, ed. John Hall (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1995).

[36] Olivier Roy, *The New Central Asia*, (London: IB Tauris, 2000). 157; Yaacov Ro'I, "The Secularization of Islam and the USSR's Muslim Areas," in Yaacov Ro'I, ed., *Muslim Eurasia,* (London: Frank Cass, 1995), 5-20.

b. political culture: Due to life under Soviet totalitarianism, Central Asians too weak, disorganized to execute mass-scale collective action of any kind.

Institutional hypotheses:

5. Interdependence with/on other groups (resources, economy), together with the tight solidarity groups of Central Asia, which can be used for mobilization or restraint

6. State successfully penetrates society and local institutions, maintains stability through fear, obedience

7. Self-policing 1 (spontaneous active intervention by elders): tight solidarity groups, appeals to shame, honor, family

8. Self-policing 2: activation of instituted "traditional" or regulated countercyclical mediation or channeling of conflict into non-violent means

To be convincing, an explanation must involve both *institution* and *institutional setting* in which it acts.

Neither Intervening, nor a Variable, Discuss: What about the state?

Most of the institutions mentioned thus far are informal institutions. But the state, a formal institution by definition—defined as holding a legitimate monopoly on violence within its borders, extracting resources, and providing public goods—interacts with informal ones. Hypotheses 2 and 6 and indirectly 5 and 7 implicate the state. If evidence is found to support one of these hypotheses, it will necessarily lead to a wider discussion of the state's role in provoking or inhibiting conflict and by extension, the state's broader role in Central Asia.

Paradoxically, the Central Asian state may simultaneously provoke and inhibit (both anti-state and intercommunal) conflict, by on one hand increasing grievances and on the other, providing a deterrent and through its control of resources limit opportunities for conflict.[37] Grievances come from the government's bad economic management that

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[37] For a discussion of the balance of grievances and opportunities, see Collier/Hoeffler; Lohmann, "The Dynamics of Informational Cascades", World Politics 47 (October 1994), 42-101 …main proponent of grievance is Gurr, *Why Men Rebel,* of political opportunity structure, Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution*, 1978; Michael Taylor, *Rationality and Revolution* 1988.

increases unemployment, resource distribution policies that favor state elites or a particular regional or communal group, and heavy-handed repression of suspected regime opponents. At the same time, as a mono-party leviathan with no accountability to its citizens and little heed for international criticism of human right abuses, the state plays a direct role in deterring the escalation of conflict. Just as the Soviet Union deterred open expression of opposition by its citizens, the Karimov regime of Uzbekistan has constructed a state apparatus that specializes in security and is ever-present in "troublesome" areas. Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have a less visible security presence, but nonetheless provide a latent deterrent against instability. Even where not an overt presence on the street, the state may have a role in social control. In the background of self-policing mechanisms, the state may play an indirect role in suppressing conflict by supporting/co-opting local elites who advocate loyalty to the state, by monitoring activities of hakims and self-governing neighborhoods, backed up by latent threat of coercion, or simply through intimidation stemming from the demonstration effect. Yet unlike the USSR, these states do not provide a secure social safety net or ensure reasonably adequate material benefits for their citizens.

To add another but a vital layer of complexity, it cannot be assumed in any of CA's states that the central state and either local government or the national government's agents/civil servants/bureaucracy operate as a unitary whole. With some variation in CA countries, cases of rampant corruption, regional leaders whose patronage networks provide them with resources independent of the state, and accusations of state capture by one clan or regional group offer empirical evidence that the state should not be conceived as a unitary actor.[38] At the very least, the central government can be conceived as a unitary entity with own interests (though even this is debatable in a place like Tajikistan). But *local elected or appointed officials* or *agents of the state* (internal security) can be assumed to act either for their own personal interests, or as captives of societal groups. Thus the state's interests and capabilities must be taken into account in explaining lack of conflict escalation.

Methodology: strategy of comparison and cases

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[38] Jones Luong; Collins; Jean-Jacques Dethier, "Corruption on the CIS-7 Countries," WB. 1/03.

The best method to study the puzzling absence of a phenomenon when we would otherwise expect to see its presence is the case study of an outlier. In this method, one selects cases based on the high (or low) value of the dependent variable, and without variation on the dependent variable. Though unorthodox, the advantage of this method over a traditional comparative case study using the method of agreement or difference is that significant research has already been done on conflict zones, where theories have already been propounded on which independent variables correspond to that dependent variable. My comparative advantage lies in doing research in a region where those independent variables (weak state, poverty, resources, etc.) are present, yet the expected outcome (large-scale conflict) did not obtain. I then search for exceptional values on the independent variable present in my cases that are not present in other, well-researched, cases.[39] This necessitates using counterfactual theory to some extent, by means of empirical case studies and dynamic models, to predict what the "natural" course of events would have been, thus demonstrating the impact of institutions in preventing that outcome.[40]

At the same time, I will select for fieldwork cases with some variation in crucial independent variables in order to improve the generalizeability of the findings. I will select cases in each Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, according to three criteria: that all possess high values on conflict-correlating indicators; that they have seen a high number of localized anti-state and intercommunal conflict, but no escalation beyond a week or outside of an oblast (as a rule of thumb); and there is natural variation in terms of regime and state strength by virtue of their being in different countries. This allows me to do a case study of an outlier while also searching for similarities and differences between different outliers.

As a first cut, I will select the following oblasts to do my field research. They are: Fergana in Uzbekistan, Osh in Kyrgyzstan, and Sogdh in Tajikistan. While the boundaries of oblasts are not on the face of it important regarding conflict, selecting cases on this level of analysis has some advantages. The oblast is not so large as to prevent

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[39] King, Keohane, Verba, 147-49, 224-28, Van Evera, *Guide to Methods*.
[40] SVE, KKV, 88-89, Fearon.

conducting detailed ethnographic research as would be the case if my target were the national level, and not too small so as to limit the representativeness of cases, as would be a danger of limiting my study to merely three villages. In addition to the criteria mentioned above, these three oblasts vary in terms of ethnic diversity, while possessing similar economic structures and geographical characteristics. Within each oblast I will select communities (mahallas and kolkhozes) in which there has been significant conflict for conducting research. Depending on what data I can gather and how it supports or falsifies my hypotheses, I could then expand to other oblasts in somewhat less depth.

Methodology: doing fieldwork

1. Start with ethnography—understand indigenous conflict resolution, reconstruct ground-level dynamics of escalation.
2. Seek general features across cases, ascertain role of state (one aspect that makes this political science, not anthropology)
3. Compare with cases of conflict escalation outside of region

The best methods for the first phase (ethnography), lasting approximately eight months, include participant-observation, interviews with community leaders, conflict participants, group interviews/focus groups. For the second phase (four months), once I extract important variables from the first phase, I will draft a survey[41] and possibly conduct a controlled experiment to test for generalizeability of the results throughout larger parts of Central Asia. The third phase does not involve doing fieldwork, but rather using secondary source material to check for relevance and applications to other conflicts throughout the world.

Ethnography

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[41] Mostly on social attitudes, providing the social basis for the functioning of local institutions: depending on what I find, it might include questions on attitudes and norms of people's obedience toward authority, authority figures' stated role regarding obligations to citizens, local authority's obedience to the state, village relations with the center, resource scarcity, overlapping of scarce resources and ethnicity, scapegoating of identity groups over scarcity, attitudes toward negotiation versus intimidation, fears about instability…to name a few possibilities.

a) Groups and Dynamics of conflict

 Who are the relevant actors? How many are there? How quickly do they mobilize?

Identify the following:

Pro conflict	anti-conflict
instigators	police/state
revenge-seekers	victims
followers	peacemakers
sympathizers	bystanders

What are the relevant groups? What is the relevant cleavage—village, clan, ethnicity, all three?

Is it organized or spontaneous? Who organizes it?

What resources do they have?

b) Institutional intervention

How does the conflict end? Does it end "naturally" of coercively?

Why do groups not mobilize? Do followers follow? Why or why not?

How do institutions and dynamics interact?

Generalizing

In the end, these institutions should not be specific to CA. I will try to test in Caucasus to show flexibility of concept. CA is simply a good case to test conflict-inhibiting institutions due to reasons elaborated above. Concentration in specific context allows discovery of subtle phenomenon not recognizable by large-n study alone. The theory will probably be especially applicable in developing/post-colonial countries with traditional societies and weak states.

Very tentative (and ideal) dissertation structure

1. Introduction/previous approaches to conflict escalation; summary of conflicts in CA since 1988; old theories and new hypotheses
2. tipping models and conflict escalation; application to relevant escalated conflicts
3. local institutions theory and in Central Asia specifically with history
4. **ethnography** of two/three typical villages, mechanisms of conflict mitigation, local institutions; detailed description of conflict
5. **survey**—village leaders, followers & resources, identity, and the state
6. **experiment** with the same types of people
7. institutions and conflict reduction, generalizing, policy recommendations

Preliminary Sample Questions for Interviews

To folk:

General, local matters

How has your ____ (insert name of mahalla or kolkhoz) changed since independence?

What does ____ need most?

What will it take for that to happen?

Who is the most influential person in ____?

Does Mr. [name of influential person] do a good job?

Is he respected by the youth of ___?

Is there a difference in how the younger generation relates to education/money?

Are your kids/grandkids likely to continue living in ___ for life?

Conflict

Have you been involved in a dispute with your neighbor/neighboring village/kolkhoz?

How did you resolve it?

Who manages conflicts in ___?

What is the procedure when youths from ___ make trouble? Does that change their behavior?

Who was responsible for the ____ conflict of 19__?

Were the people responsible punished?

What keeps it from happening again?

How many people from ___participated? And from the other ____?

Were mainly young/old people involved?

How did it end?

Do people talk about it often?

Did the national army act soon enough?

Are you afraid it will happen again?

Are you afraid the [other group] will start a new conflict?

What would you ideally have done to avoid conflict in the future?

State

Who matters more for your ___, [name of local leader] or President ___?

If something important happens in ___, do you think the government finds out about it?

How is the relationship between ___and the government? Between Mr. [influential] and the government?

Does the President care about regular people? Does he help ___?

Who provides your pension/unemployment/fertilizer/other resources?

When you need to borrow money/if you were to get in trouble, who would you turn to?

Would you ask your ____ leader/committee for help? Do they usually help people in that situation?

Who do you think is responsible for your decreased salary/standard of living/pension in the last 10 years— ___leaders or the government?

How do you think your government compares with Uzbek/Tajik/Kyrgyz/Russia in providing for its citizens? In preventing conflict?

How good are relations between people of ___ compared with those in other ___s?

Would Mr. [influential] make a good President?

To local elites/influentials:

Biography

Brief history of ___

Soviet vs. independent experience of/in ___

Radnitz, 7.9.03

Who makes the major decisions in ___?

How often do you meet with the leaders of the neighboring/rival ___?

With representatives of the central government? Do they listen to you (and your cohorts)?

How are relations with the central government?

Relations with neighboring ___s?

Who is to blame for ongoing conflicts?

What is the procedure when young rapscallions stir up trouble?

Who settles conflicts internally between members of ____?

And between ___ and ___ [the "rival" ___]?

Do you feel you are respected by your community?

What changes would you make in your ___ if you had complete freedom?

If you had a million dollars to use for the ___?

Does the government ever put pressure on you?

Does the government give you enough money?

Does the government give you enough autonomy?

Does the government ever go over your head?

What is the greatest threat to the future of ___?

To the future of your country? To the young generation?