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CHAPTER 1

Theoretical Implications of and Methodological Approaches to Studying Social Capital in Uzbekistan

Timur Dadabaev, Yutaka Tsujinaka, and Murod Ismailov

Since the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, there have been drastic changes to all aspects of Central Asian societies, from relations within states to local communities, families and individual lives. In recent years, regional and foreign researchers have produced a substantial body of literature describing political and economic aspects of these changes and their

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consequences. However, there is no clear picture of how the majority of people evaluate their present situations or the processes taking place both within and around their societies.

As some scholars rightly note, "it is remarkable how little social data is available concerning the entire Asian region as a whole". This is true of post-Soviet Central Asia in particular (Inoguchi 2004: 6–7). This lack of social data and information on public perspectives perhaps indicates a need for a more imaginative approach, one that takes into account the local realities, needs, aspirations and hopes, as well as the traditional social institutions and methods that may help to address new and global demands.

This book employs the term 'social capital', which is meant to refer to a rather broad definition of civil society inclusive of various social associations, public organizations, traditional communities and various grassroots associations; however, "perceptions of what civil society is, what it can achieve and how it should be encouraged vary considerably amongst policy makers, academics and practitioners both inside and outside of region" (Giffen et al. n.d., 4). As they also correctly note, these "problems of definition have been compounded by a lack of understanding of the nature of society in these Central Asian countries and at times a tendency to simplify the complex social interactions and practices that have evolved in the region over centuries, as a result of shifting patterns of power and control" (Giffen et al. n.d., 5). The case of Uzbekistan is no exception to such misunderstanding and lack of conceptualization.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, a discourse regarding democratization and democracy (or the lack thereof) has dominated debates about the political development of Uzbekistan. With each re-election of President Karimov, critics emphasized the lack of civil society organizations and social capital capable of producing a civil society and generating 'genuine' democracy. Those opposing such perceptions emphasized that Uzbekistan, as well as the other republics, is in the process of constructing its civil society and that there is a solid foundation of social capital in its society, which supports the government in its post-Soviet nation building. The government has argued that democratic decision making is an established practice and that the mindsets of those involved in politics will evolve over time to eventually reach the standards of developed nations. However, both of these perspectives seem to miss the process of social capital construction in Uzbekistan, arguing either that such capital already exists or that such capital is non-existent.

The main objective of this book is to take a first step toward understanding how such social capital is being constructed in Central Asia using the society of Uzbekistan as a case study.

The following questions are addressed in this book: first, what are the key issues and concepts that need to be taken into account in learning about social capital in Uzbekistan? What are the challenges and problems associated with the conceptualization of social capital formation? What are the dominant discourses both in terms of theory and in its application to Uzbekistan's society? Second, which public associations exist in Uzbekistan? What are their functions and how do they interact with governmental institutions? Third, can social capital formation in Uzbekistan be compared to other countries? Can democracy be nurtured through the process of social capital construction observed in Uzbekistan?

We consider these sets of questions in several chapters as described in the section below. Although this book attempts to answer these questions in various analytical settings, the primary aim of this book is to problematize various issues and notions and to raise awareness of various local implications related to the concept of social capital in the Uzbek context. The main thrust of this book is to demonstrate the complexity of understanding the notion of social capital in post-Soviet Uzbek society and to detail the challenges and pressures facing the Uzbek people during this transition. Views on post-Soviet political transitions to democracy in the international community have often been based largely on hypothetical assumptions and speculation. Opposing such approaches, we wish to demonstrate that successful transition to democracy and rule of law cannot be accomplished unless the concerns, fears, frustrations and local understandings of the desired political system are heard, registered and carefully considered/interpreted.

EVOLUTION OF THE CONCEPT OF SOCIAL CAPITAL

Social capital is a relatively new concept that first emerged in the second half of the twentieth century following researchers' search for answers about the sources of social bonding and human interaction. The initial appearance of the term 'social capital' in the literature is associated with Loury's 1977 study, which highlighted the social relationships created when people attempt to effectively utilize their individual resources (1977). Loury applied the term 'social capital' to describe the pool of resources that is present within families and in community-based structures that eventually strengthen the mental development of children and affect their sociability. Loury's understanding of the concept is similar to that of Ben-Porath (1980), whose research has focused on the functions of these exchange systems. He referred to this as the 'F-connection', a complex system of relationships among families, friends, and firms.

One of the main reasons for social capital's popularity among sociologists is its applicability to a multiplicity of research fields. Although its initial application was in the field of education, its theorization was solidified in sociology, and the concept has grown into a multidisciplinary area identified in political and economic activity and social welfare. In politics, its effects have been in facilitating the political participation of citizens and in improving the performance of institutions. In the economic sphere, social capital has become useful in encouraging overall development and collaboration between rational actors, including economic agents, whereas in social welfare, the impact of social capital has been seen in increasing social bonds and community-based interaction (Castiglione et al. 2008).

To provide a clearer picture of the contemporary debates around the concept of social capital, this section of the current book examines a body of literature suggesting a typology of explanations of human action (Parsons 2010). Parsons originally suggested four logics of explanation, which he named for the elements' causal mechanisms: structural, institutional, ideational and psychological.

Parsons' matrix of explanations is influenced by two logical distinctions: the first logical distinction is that structural and institutional claims are logics of *position*, while the ideational claim is a logic of *interpretation*. A logic-of-position claim explains by detailing the landscape around someone to reveal an obstacle course of material or man-made constraints and incentives channeling human beings toward certain actions. This logic implies the existence of micro foundations of objective rationality. For example, when social actors react constantly to external constraints, it is possible that external constraints play an important role in explaining their actions. On the other hand, there is a logic-of-interpretation claim, which explains by showing that someone arrives at an action only through one interpretation of what is possible or desirable. For instance, ideational claims do so by assessing how certain groups of people have historically searched for ways of interpreting the things around them.

Similarly, one important step toward developing a stronger theory of social capital is identifying the forms of social capital and the relationships among them. Ahn and Ostrom (2008) claim that social capital reflects a way of conceptualizing how the ***institutional and structural aspects*** of groups of all sizes in a society interact and influence individual incentives and behavior, which in turn can facilitate economic and political change. As part of a threefold framework, Anh and Ostrom identified ***institutions, networks and trustworthiness*** as three basic forms of social capital, as they "serve as independent inputs to economic and political processes and outcomes" (Ahn and Ostrom 2008: 73).

In the paragraphs that follow, we shall elaborate on some of these explanations.

The concept of 'structure' has been crucial within the social sciences. From a broad perspective, scholars in the social sciences regularly appeal to the 'structure-agency dichotomy', which emphasizes the extent to which an actor's (i.e., an agent's) choices are dictated by external forces and environments (Giddens 1979; Wendt 1987). From this viewpoint, structure could be relevant to various phenomena that people use to explain particular actions, i.e., to everything that shapes human actions.

According to Parsons' structural explanation of human action, behavior is a function of an individual's position when confronted with external, objective physical structures, such as geography, power and natural resources. In other words, humans' actions vary as their positions within a given physical landscape change. Explaining action as a direct function of exogenous constraints implies that subjective, non-physical (i.e., cultural or psychological) factors do not have major effects on human actions. This also implies the prevalence of "inter-subjectively rational rules for individual decision-making" (Parsons 2010: 64).

With regard to social capital, the identification of a structure often becomes possible by examining certain patterns of transactions between social actors. The structure then could emerge as social networks consisting of repeated patterns of transactions (Granovetter 1973; Axelrod 1981), which implies that the recurrence of the situation rather than the inherent motivation of the players is the key enabler of trust and cooperation. Even a trusting player located in a network realizes that it is in his interest to reciprocate and continue a stable relationship instead of exploiting it. Thus, the reciprocal course of action would create favorable conditions in the future, which are potentially greater than the immediate sense of gratification following exploitation. Networks with the potential for reliable transactions between actors facilitate cooperative behavior between them (Ahn and Ostrom 2008).

In the study of social capital, one can trace a number of works that focus on the structural conditions for human collaboration, interaction and reciprocity.

The French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu developed his views on social capital in the 1970s and early 1980s while exploring the questions of how society is reproduced and how the upper middle social classes hold their positions. In his seminal work, *Distinction*, which was published in 1984, Bourdieu claims that answering such complex questions requires a combination of economic and cultural resources (1984). The latter is significant because cultural signifiers are often used by certain classes to cement their place within the social hierarchy. In Bourdieu's understanding, social capital is one of the three critical resources existing in society. He claims, "capital presents itself under three fundamental species (each with its own subtype), namely, economic capital, cultural capital, and social capital" (Bourdieu, in Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 118–119). When functioning within this threefold system, these resources become socially effective.

Despite the fact that Bourdieu has defined social capital as "the sum of resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition" (ibid., 119), the most significant element of Bourdieu's concept of social capital is associated with the power function, i.e., the social relations that increase the ability of a person or social groups to promote their interests. In other words, social capital becomes a resource in the social struggles that are implemented in different social domains.

What makes this definition different from other concepts that generally consider social capital a supportive tool is that Bourdieu uses it to highlight the realities of inequality in society. Bourdieu's definition develops the image of social capital as another tool in the arsenal of the middle and upper social classes, which is utilized to ensure that 'strangers' do not enter their circles (Bourdieu 1986, 1992). This approach provides important evidence that social capital can also be exclusionary.

Social capital, when seen as a tool in advancing the interests of the privileged, rests on two pillars: the first pillar is a resource associated with group membership and social networks. The amount of social capital attained by an actor is derived from the scope of the network of connections with high mobilizing capacity (Bourdieu 1986: 249). This means that social capital should be viewed not only from the position of the individuals who enjoy its benefits but also as a collective phenomenon. The second pillar of social capital rests on mutual recognition. Through the process of social interaction, mutual recognition acquires a *symbolic character* and transforms into symbolic capital. In order for social capital to become effective, objective differences among social groups and classes need to become symbolic differences.

At the end of the 1980s, American sociologist James Coleman suggested a broader view of social capital that did not consider it an instrument of powerful elites but rather focused on its positive impact on all communities, including powerless and unprivileged groups. Unlike previous descriptions of the term as part of the continuous self-reproduction of elites, Coleman highlights the practicality of social capital because of its role as a possible solution for sidelined actors. Coleman also underlines its importance in educating children and creating stronger bonds within families of any social class.

Coleman understands social capital and its generation through both sociological and economic lenses. As he suggests, "the economic stream flies in the face of empirical reality: persons' actions are shaped, redirected, constrained by the social context; norms, interpersonal trust, social networks, and social organization are important in the functioning not only of the society but also of the economy". In other words, Coleman took on the economic idea of a rational individual engaging in deliberate action, but applied it to "account not only for the actions of individuals in particular contexts but also for the development of social organization" (1988: 96). For Coleman, "individuals do not act independently, goals are not independently arrived at, and interests are not wholly selfish".

Similar to Bourdieu, Coleman's model has at least four resources (types of capital), which societal actors can use, such as human capital, physical capital, or economic capital. Social capital is not necessarily 'owned' by the individual but arises as a resource that is available to them.

For Coleman, social capital has many manifestations, and therefore, its definition depends on the function it performs. It is not a single entity but a variety of entities with two characteristics in common: they all consist of some aspect of a **social structure**, and they facilitate certain **actions of individuals within the structure**. Like other forms of capital, social capital is productive, making possible the achievement of certain ends that would not be attainable in its absence (Coleman 1990: 302). Social capital consists of valuable aspects of the social structure, the function of which is to help actors realize their interests.

In addition to Bourdieu's symbolic structuralist and Coleman's economic structuralist views of social capital, a relatively recent theory of a network-based social capital is also worth mentioning. Nan Lin (2001a) has developed an approach that uncovers the dual nature of capital in the fabric of social relationships. Lin's understanding of capital comes from viewing it as both a concept and a theory. As a concept, social capital resembles an investment in certain resources that have value in a particular social setting. From the theoretical perspective, social capital presumes a process during which certain types of resources are continuously collected and reproduced to yield returns. Lin seems to respond to Arrow's criticism that the factors often associated with social capital do not exhibit the 'qualities of capital' (Arrow 1999).

Similar to the manner in which classical Marxist theory outlines capital as a surplus value created in a production process or in which human capital theory views capital as an investment in certain human resources, such as skills and knowledge, that ultimately generate economic returns (Becker 1993), Lin's approach to social capital theory conceptualizes production as a process by which surplus value is generated through investment in social relations (Lin 2008).

To be precise, social capital is defined as "*resources embedded in one's social networks, resources that can be accessed or mobilised through ties in the networks*" (Lin 2008). Through such social networks, people can have access to or make use of other actors' resources, including their assets, power and reputation. Lin's approach seeks to identify a combination of sources and outcomes of social capital.

Lin has previously examined the sources of social capital in detail. Specifically, Lin suggested three main sources of social capital, which he also refers to as exogenous variables: (1) structural sources, i.e., a person's desire to advance a position in the hierarchical structure of social stratification; (2) network locations, namely, an actor's location in closed or open networks; and (3) motivation for action, including instrumental (to gain power, wealth or reputation) or expressive (to maintain cohesion, solidarity or prosperity) actions. In other words, the purpose of instrumental action is to obtain additional or new resources (e.g., obtaining a better job, building a school), whereas the purpose of expressive action is to maintain and preserve existing resources (e.g., to preserve one's marriage, to keep the neighborhood safe).

Overall, in Lin's theoretical approach, social capital is understood in terms of its capacity—the pool of resources embedded in one's social networks, and the expectation is that the richer or greater the capacity, the better the return. Thus, the description entails a linkage between accessed social capital and its expected return. In another approach, social capital is defined in terms of its actual use in production, and the expectation is that the better the capital used, the better the return. This description focuses on mobilized social capital. Accessed social capital estimates the degree of access to such resources or the extent to which a potential pool of resources capable of generating return is available to the actors in a network. As is described in the following chapters, such characteristics can also illustrate Mahalla's functions and popularity in Uzbekistan.

Lin makes it clear that while social capital is dependent on social networks, the two terms cannot be used interchangeably. The approach assumes that networks provide the necessary conditions for access to and use of embedded resources. Without networks, it would be impossible to capture these embedded resources. Thus, networks and network features by themselves are not identical to resources. The value of Lin's approach is that it **specifies the conditions under which certain network features (density, openness or closure)** lead to the capture of specific resources that generate certain kinds of returns.

Therefore, the network-based theory of social capital seeks to identify some important patterns of social relations. Admittedly, such patterns can vary in terms of the intensity and reciprocity of relations among the ties. In his early works, Lin described (1986) three layers of social relations that differentiate such intensity and reciprocity. The *innermost layer* is characterized by intimate relations that share sentiments, provide mutual support and maintain strong ties in a dense network (*binding* relations). The *intermediary layer* is characterized by ties that generally share information and resources, but not all members necessarily interact directly with one another or maintain equally strong and reciprocal relations with everyone else (*bonding* relations). *The outer layer* is characterized by shared membership and identity, although the members may or may not interact among themselves. These relations, which are mediated through the collectivity, provide members with a sense of *belongingness.*

In assessing whether *binding* or *bonding* social relations provide sufficient social capital, two contingent factors need to be taken into account: (1) the purpose of the action and (2) the richness of embedded resources. According to Lin, because expressive purposes where additional resources are not of priority, binding and bonding relations are needed. For instrumental purposes requiring additional and better resources, binding and bonding relations may not be sufficient. The assessment of social capital may require extending one's reach beyond one's inner circles—bridging weaker or non-redundant ties (Lin 2008).

Lin's approach provides a clearer conceptualization of expressive or instrumental actions and explains the layers of relations in social networks and embedded resources, clarifying the ideas of 'bonding' and 'bridging' social capital (e.g., Putnam 2000: 22–24 also Putnam 1993, 2000). Social capital, as seen through the lens of network theory, cannot bind or bridge. In fact, it is the social networks that are capable of binding, bonding or bridging. This theory's key message is that the relative advantage that such networks afford to social capital (access to or mobilization of resources) depends on the purpose of the action. For expressive actions, which seek solidarity with and preservation of individuals or collectivities, binding relations or dense networks benefit the sharing and mobilization of resources. For instrumental actions, which seek to gain needed resources, bridging relations or networks with linkages to the outer layers of the networks offers different or better resources.

Institutional claims explain what people do as a function of their positions within man-made organizations and rules and within the path-dependent process implied by man-made constraints (Parsons 2010). It is natural that in situations in which collective action is necessary, human beings always seek to create a wide range of rules. *Institutions* are 'any form of constraint that human beings devise to shape human interaction' (North, 1990); *institutional regimes* can be seen as "sets of implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures around which actors' expectations converge in a given area …" (Krasner 1983: 2). In general, "institutions could be defined as commonly understood, agreed upon, and enforced prescriptions used by groups of individuals in multiple forms of organisations, ranging in scale from the household to international regimes" (Ahn and Ostrom 2008: 84). Thus, it is essential to limit institutionalists to claims that (as with structural claims) invoke objective rationality but (unlike structural claims) emphasize man-made constraints and path-dependence (Parsons 2010).

Largely due to the aforementioned reasons, the created institutions and regimes play an important role in debates about social capital: institutions ensure the flow of information in order to increase the likelihood of a mutually responsive human interaction.

CONTEMPORARY DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL CAPITAL EMBEDDED IN TRUST, NORMS AND CIVIC NETWORKS

The contemporary development of the concept of social capital owes much of its triumph and complexity to Robert Putnam, an American sociologist who studied civil and political engagement in several regions of Italy, producing some important postulations about the concept.

The key issue in Putnam's initial works is voluntary cooperation, which is easily achieved in a community possessing a stock of social capital in a variety of forms, including *trust, norms of reciprocity and networks of civic engagement* (1993: 165). Indeed, this approach puts an important emphasis on trust and trustworthiness, which allow concerned participants and stakeholders of any social interaction to accomplish much more than is possible when those qualities are lacking. As a former student of game theory, Putnam and his analysis of social capital seem to have been inspired by the puzzles that the prisoner's dilemma game and the like were designed to solve (1993: 164). Putnam's approach holds that it is necessary not only to trust others to act cooperatively, but also to be confident that one is trusted by others (Putnam 1993: 164). Ideally, each participant would benefit if everyone cooperated, but when there is no genuinely shared commitment, each party has an incentive to defect and become a free rider.

Putnam's understanding of trust and trustworthiness is illustrated by the example of rotating credit associations, which can be found in various cultural and geographical settings. These are informal organizations in which the stakeholders agree to make a periodic financial contribution, which is then given to each member on a rotational basis. Such informal financial institutions do not depend on local or national legal frameworks or government guarantees; instead, they rest on "a reputation for honesty and reliability as an important asset for any would-be participant" (1993: 168). Such a reputation and credibility are derived from "perfect information" about previous participation in a similar rotating credit association. Even when information about a player's intent is imperfect, the uncertainty and risk of defection by one or several participants is mitigated not only by limiting the number of players but also by, importantly, imposing strong norms (with associated sanctions) and continuing individual commitment to a dense network of mutual engagement stretching beyond this particular rotating credit association. In this regard, Putnam mentions, “in a small, highly personalized community, such as an Ibo village in Nigeria, the threat of ostracism from the socioeconomic system is a powerful, credible sanction” (1993: 166). This example shows that the rotating credit association’s social and trust-building functions extend beyond a merely economic logic. A key function of such institutions is to strengthen the sense of unity and communal cohesion.

The transformation of personal trust into social trust is crucial to understanding Putnam’s approach to social capital. In particular, ordinary trust in individual(s) by individuals and vice versa results from what Putnam calls “norms of reciprocity” and “networks of civic engagement”.

Both of these ingredients of social capital are outcomes of socialization (for trustworthy players) and threats of sanctions (for potential free riders). Putnam provides a useful example of an average American who opts to rake leaves from his trees that have landed in a neighbor’s yard instead of spending Saturday afternoon watching an entertainment show on TV. For an average citizen, what determines this decision is neither pure altruism nor goodwill but an unwritten norm of keeping the neighborhood clean, which is continuously reiterated to new residents before and after they settle into the neighborhood. Because non-compliance with this norm is a costly endeavor with ‘naming and shaming’ repercussions at neighborhood events, a citizen has little choice but to obey this norm. In the same vein, this individual is confident that his neighbor will almost certainly do the same.

Putnam refers to such a mode of interaction as ‘generalized’ (or ‘diffuse’) reciprocity characterized by a lasting relationship of exchange—proportional or disproportional—which rests on legitimate expectations that a resource or benefit shared at a certain time will be repaid in the future. Generalized reciprocity is a “highly productive component” of social capital, and it is seen in contrast to the so-called ‘balanced reciprocity’, which refers to an instantaneous exchange of items of equivalent value between business associates or company employees (Putnam 1993: 172). Thus, a norm of generalized reciprocity is not only an important ingredient for generating trust and trustworthiness but is also symptomatic of an existing network of social exchange.

Another important dichotomy that comes up in Putnam’s approach to the study of social capital is the distinction between ‘horizontal’ and ‘vertical’ networks of interpersonal communication and exchange, irrespective of their formal and informal as well as their sociopolitical (e.g., democratic/autocratic, feudal/capitalist) characteristics. Horizontal networks are designed to accommodate the interests and expectations of participants who have equal status and power, whereas vertical networks constitute an asymmetric relationship between unequal players in which one party enjoys more power and a privileged status compared with another party (Putnam 1993: 173–175).

In the contemporary world, there are numerous examples of networks exhibiting both horizontal and vertical features (e.g., a soccer team with a captain), but the nurturing of a healthy reservoir of social capital is more likely under horizontal designs in which players tend to possess equal status and voice. By contrast, and irrespective of density and significance to the members, a vertically assembled network of civic engagement experiences difficulty maintaining social trust and cooperative spiritedness for a number of reasons: on the one hand, information about participants' intentions and willingness to stick to established norms is not credible due to the advantages that one party enjoys over another. On the other hand, in a patron-client format of interactions, the interpersonal exchange is vertical, and the obligations are asymmetric.

Putnam's approach places a strong emphasis on several forms of civic engagement networks that involve horizontal interaction: neighborhood associations, sports clubs, interest- and hobby-based gatherings, and the like. Such formal and informal civil networks of horizontal interaction (unlike, e.g., political parties and hierarchical industrial associations) facilitate equal conditions, which enable citizens to cooperate for their mutual benefit rather than defect. Such a mode of interaction is an important prerequisite for nurturing healthy social capital for at least four reasons. First, horizontal networks of civic engagement provide a panacea for opportunism and defection because the defector ends up paying a high price in any individual transaction. Second, such networks of civic engagement can be sustained for a long time. They reflect strong norms of reciprocity, which are translated into the establishment of a reputation for keeping promises and obeying the "rules of the game" equally among all participants. Third, these networks improve communication between members, thus updating information about individuals' credibility and trustworthiness. Fourth, horizontal networks of civic engagement always carry with them the baggage of previous cooperation, and such memories and existing cultural platforms serve as templates for future encounters (Putnam 1993: 173–174).

Somewhat related to the question of horizontal and vertical networks is a distinction between 'bonding' (exclusive) and 'bridging' (inclusive) social capital. In *Bowling Alone*, Putnam describes bonding social capital in inward-looking organizations, highlighting select identities and uniform groups. Organizations facilitating such bonding social capital may include ethnicity- or religion-based groups with restricted memberships. By contrast, most organizations that produce social capital do so by incorporating individuals from a wide range of backgrounds and identities but who share interests and values. Putnam calls this bridging social capital (Putnam 2000: 22).

There seems to be no definite answer to the question of which of these two forms generates 'better' or 'healthier' social capital. What is notable is that both of these dimensions can have a positive impact on how society and its members communicate, set and achieve goals. Additionally, both bonding and bridging organizations can execute a number of tasks peculiar to the nature of their constituents; for example, bonding groups are good at helping marginalized and less capable members of the community, whereas bridging networks can spread information more effectively and mobilize external resources when needed. However, in a broader societal setting, bridging networks seem to match the idea of a horizontal network of civic engagement, not least because of their ability to support broader identities and reciprocity. In Putnam's own words, social capital should not be divided into obviously dichotomous bonding and bridging categories; rather, these should be viewed as intermediary categories that help us compare various forms of social capital (Putnam 2000: 23).

Putnam's recent research on civic participation has implications for the quality of American democracy (2005) and provides some important insights into the growing sense of disintegrating social bonds among US citizens. Given that "civic connections make people healthy, wealthy and wise" (Putnam 2005: 287), the falling number of memberships in voluntary groups and associations may, in Putnam's view, have a negative impact on social and political developments in the years to come. One key indicator is particularly important in the context of generating positive social capital: patterns of relationships within neighborhoods. Neighborhoods with high levels of social capital will usually have a number of distinguishing features, including safer streets, friendlier neighbors and cleaner public places. The lack of social capital in a particular neighborhood increases the risk of social disorganization, which has accompanied many urban communities "where population turnover was high, neighbors anonymous, ethnic groups uneasily mixed, local organizations rare, and disadvantaged youths trapped in 'subcultures' cut off from the adult world" (Putnam 2005: 307). It is not without reason that in Putnam's view, higher levels of social capital translate into lower levels of domestic crime. In this regard, social capital is as significant as community development, poverty, urbanization and the ethnic factor as an indicator of homicide prevalence. In the meantime, as the analysis of the number of murders per capita in the US states committed between 1980 and 1995 shows, "social capital is more important than a state's education level, rate of single-parent households, and income inequality" (Putnam 2005: 308–309). In general, in communities with lower levels of social capital, the effects of underdevelopment, joblessness and family breakdown are magnified, whereas societal cohesion is significantly weakened.

Thus far, Putnam's approach has focused largely on the socializing or civic dimension of the concept. In fact, the implications of Putnam's theory of social capital are much broader and stretch beyond the realm of civic interactions. First, they have important effects on a country's political development and democracy enhancement. The major questions that arise from this analysis relate to whether Uzbekistan has its own social capital construction. It also relates to the whether social capital construction depends on social, economic and cultural conditions. Because these questions are fundamental to understanding whether social capital can be developed and sustained in a non-democratic setting, we shall elaborate on the aspects of political participation in the following sections and subsequent chapters of this book.

Is There an Uzbek Model of Social Capital Construction?

It is too early to draw conclusions about the outcomes of structural, economic and political reforms taking place in Uzbekistan. Prediction is not the aim of this study. Throughout this book, we enquire how people in Uzbekistan relate to each other, what kind of associations they use to achieve their goals and how their associations and communities relate to the state authorities. While we attempt to link the theoretical assumptions to the realities of the Uzbek case, we also attempt to initiate a discussion about whether the Uzbek case can contribute to the theoretical assumptions related to social capital. In this regard, the following points should be emphasized.

First, the theoretical debate and evolution of the concept of social capital is closely related to the empirical and theoretical development of post-Soviet Central Asian nations, including Uzbekistan. Interestingly, the government and all political actors in Uzbekistan continuously emphasize the importance of public participation in governing the country. Although largely remaining at the level of rhetoric, ordinary people are widely referred to as the primary source of power and the legitimizing force for most of decision making in the country. Safeguarding local communal life, traditions and values in the process of modernizing Uzbek society is announced as the most sacred goal of most political decisions. The political elite therefore appears to accept the notion of social capital as an important element of building a nation.

Second, in Uzbekistan, society represents a combination of various social and psychological communities. While the communities in question are diverse, they now coexist in the same social space. The drastic economic and political reforms undertaken in this society have often divided people in various ways, manifested mainly along ethnic, regional and local lines.

The strengthening of the divisions mentioned above is due to the increasing social and economic burdens of population growth and economic reforms. While the state institutions still maintain major social welfare programs, the capacity of the state to provide a comprehensive package of social protection measures is limited. This situation increasingly forces the population to turn to traditional methods of safeguarding their lifestyles and the welfare of local neighborhood communities, immediate families and wider kinship ties. In modern Uzbekistan, the family and the neighborhood community are now the most effective shock-absorbing social units.

Third, the government of Uzbekistan from the early days of independence announced several principles of political reform. Among these principles, the notion of an Uzbek model of political development has been consistently appealed to as the main blueprint for its modernization. One of the main principles of such a process of political modernization was the de-ideologization of society, that is, the building of pragmatic communities that unite around common goals of prosperity rather than around a certain political program or ideology. This was followed by a second principle, that the ‘economy comes first’, which is in line with the logic of de-ideologization. The third principle stated that it was the primary responsibility of the government to lead the process of reform. This was prompted by the post-Soviet realities of Uzbekistan when government institutions were among the only institutions possessing the resources and will to initiate growth-generating programs in the country. The logic has been that for private entrepreneurs, the burden of sustaining economic growth and administering social programs was a heavy burden that only the state was capable of bearing. This meant that for the transitional period, the state was the institution that guaranteed the social welfare of the population. In line with this logic, the state would take responsibility for a certain degree of development and later release this responsibility to the social organizations that would emerge because of economic growth and the appearance of a middle class. The fourth principle supported the previous ones, as it declared the importance of gradual and systematic reform as opposed to radical liberalization (Karimov 1993: 146–147). Finally, the principle of the predominance of law over private interests has been also declared. As can be seen from these principles, the formation and construction of social capital in Uzbekistan has been structured by these conditions. Accordingly, the government in Uzbekistan assumed the so-called 'developmental' functions, defining priority sectors for investments, offering tax exemptions for companies working in those priority sectors and maintaining production levels through governmental investments and subsidies. Agriculture was nominally liberalized, but it largely remained under governmental control, maintaining the state-owned land, the previous structures of agricultural enterprises and the dominant crop, cotton. It remains the government's assumption that political stability, heavy-handedly maintained by the government, will attract foreign investment and produce economic growth, which will eventually lead to drastic improvement in the living standards of the population and produce a middle class capable of leading economic and political reforms to replace current state functions. Such a shift from a "strong state to a strong civil society", as described in the chapter *Domestic Discourse of Social capital and Civil Society* of this book, is considered part of the Uzbek model of social capital construction whose results remain to be seen.

Fourth, in such conditions, the state is still perceived by the people as the most legitimate organization for meeting their needs. Fundamental respect for the state as a legitimate representative institution is maintained in the minds of the people and is rooted in the Soviet-era political traditions and mindset in which the government was expected to provide an adequate living standard while the people did not challenge its authority. Although the degree of trust in and the capacity of the state differ from the Soviet era, a comparable social contract seems to exist in modern Uzbekistan. However, as described in the following chapters of this book (relating to community life and social capital), the nature of this social contract is gradually shifting. People tend to start using various adaptive strategies to ensure that their interests are not overlooked by the state.

Economic growth in the country is still seen as the most important objective, as it leads to higher incomes and a more developed political system. However, the public belief that economic growth is the only way to move toward democratization may be fading. In other words, the pattern of public thinking—that a strong developmental state, represented by a strong executive power, can lead to rapid economic growth and then to democratic reforms—may be weakening, as shown by the public frustration with both governmental economic policies and the state of democracy in the country in various public opinion polls. Although not directly addressed in the polls, such public support for wider social participation may be seen as an indication, however tentative, of a public preference for a more open economic system as a possible path to a higher level of economic growth. However, what is obvious is that the reserves of the public confidence that the government was granted after independence have critically shrunk, and people are increasingly impatient with the stalling of economic reforms and a slow improvement of living standards.

Another important issue addressed in this book is that of the mahalla community. Governmental discourse assigns the mahalla, which is considered the epicenter of social capital formation at the local level, a prominent place. The government emphasizes the aspects of self-organization and self-support embedded in the mahalla for which the government provides institutional, legal and financial support. Combined with governmental leadership, indigenous institutions such as the mahalla are considered to constitute the Uzbek model of social capital construction in the process of its political modernization. This book attempts to analyze mahalla from various theoretical and empirical angles in order to understand its nature and suggest a relationship between the mahalla and the notion of social capital.

The Mahalla: Civil Society, Social Capital or Just a State Institution?

There are divided perspectives regarding the role of local communities in Central Asian societies. Certain studies of local communities in Central Asia, particularly of the mahalla, treat these organizations as institutions that represent the local populace in interactions with local governments. Similar studies focus on the identity-related contributions of these communities, emphasizing the mutual assistance and inclusiveness that are found in these organizations and the social meeting spaces that they represent. In a social context, these investigations often regard these communities as institutions that are composed of the local population and serve the purpose of defending the rights of this population in disputes with various governmental and non-governmental institutions. Therefore, this type of study conceptualizes the mahalla as a unit of civil society (Jalilov 1995, 1999a, b, 2000a, b, 2001a, b; G'ulomov 2003; Rakhimov 2005 etc.).

An opposing camp of scholars emphasizes the notion that although the mahalla and other similar communities are frequently composed of the local populace and do serve certain local residents, this ostensible role merely disguises the true nature of these communities. In reality, they are the institutions operationalized or made 'official' by the state to promote the governmental agenda (Kandiyoti 2007). These studies emphasize that the policy of official mahallas and similar institutions not only enhances the top-down nature of decision-making structures in Central Asian nations but also reduces the burdens of the state by relieving the national government of certain social responsibilities under the pretext that social protections should be provided through local community initiatives. Thus, governments may claim to provide social protections, whilst providing these in a manner that minimizes their investments in these protections. According to researchers who have contributed to this stream of research, another goal of governmental policies toward mahallas and similar communities is to rebuff international criticism regarding the undemocratic nature of state structures and decision-making procedures in Central Asian countries.

Although both of the aforementioned understandings of mahallas shed light on certain aspects of the existence and function of these local communities, neither perspective completely elucidates the nature of the relationships among the mahallas, their residents and the state. In particular, both perspectives polarize the role of mahallas by imposing a binary structure in which these communities are considered either victims or agents of state policy. The current book suggests that both of these approaches to understanding the place and the role of local communities, particularly of Uzbek mahallas, represent extreme interpretations that are incomplete and require clarification.

To address this issue, this book suggests that the neighborhood represents one of the few effective traditional organizations that create a common identity for members of different ethnic and religious groups based on the principle of shared residence. In addition, Uzbekistan confronts issues such as environmental hazards and economic hardships that cannot be addressed without identifying public dissatisfaction and establishing public consent within the smaller communities such as the mahalla. However, throughout the history of the existence of these communities, political authorities have often attempted to manipulate these institutions to enhance their legitimacy in the eyes of the population and other governments.

The Soviet practice of utilizing the institutions of civil society for state purposes has largely been retained in the post-Soviet period. Thus, as demonstrated by this book, the impact of this practice in the post-Soviet environment is similar to its role during the Soviet era. In this way, the mahalla can be considered to be in the structure (referred to by such scholars as Shlapentokh with respect to Soviet society) when the mahalla is placed among other civil society institutions that are often coerced by state structures to perform functions and duties that do not necessarily serve the interests of community members but instead facilitate the task of administrating residential issues for governmental institutions. In this sense, although the mahalla remains a structure of civil society, its relationship to state institutions is significant. It can also be considered to be a platform for negotiating various interests (state, community, personal etc.) as is analyzed in the following chapters.

UZBEKNESS (*'UZBEKCHILIK'*)—A SOCIAL CAPITAL OR SPOILER?

Another aspect of social capital construction in the Uzbek context is the sense of unity in the society, which is largely predetermined by how people relate to each other and how much people trust each other as well as whether they see their society as a space in which they coexist and which they share. In the context of Uzbekistan, one notion reflecting unity among Uzbeks is that of 'Uzbekness' or '*Uzbekchilik*'.

This notion is comparable to units of identification present among other ethnic groups and draws borders of community and belonging. However, it is poorly defined, subject to interpretation and contested. It mainly refers to the unwritten rules and patterns of behavior in the society. Adherence to these patterns often is the criteria for judging the degree to which an Uzbek member of the community really belongs, versus a belonging that is purely nominal. These rules and standards cover all aspects of life and are applied to various everyday situations. They start with a conservative dress code for men and women, ending with sets of understandings of how one is to behave during feasts, births and deaths as well as in everyday communication. They also include strong tendencies to favor collective interests as opposed to individual interests, and to voice strong support for authority, especially that entrusted to men rather than women. Due to these features, some observers rush to conclude that conservative Uzbek values are irreconcilable with the notions of democracy and human rights. Such conclusions also tend to be used to explain why Uzbek society has never experienced liberal Western-style democracy.

However, these conclusions are premature because such judgments miss other aspects of these values. For instance, the sense of belonging—of 'Uzbekness'—can also be considered to be of a community-consolidating and thus of a community-empowering nature. In socialist societies, mutual trust and help were taken for granted and widely considered a natural expression of shared humanity. Therefore, for many people, change in the society (collapse of the Socialist ideology and system), after which everybody had to face their own problems with minimum government assistance, was a large shock to society. Opinion polls show that years of economic reform and transition to a qualitatively different economic and social system negatively influenced intra-societal trust in Uzbekistan. New conditions of economic hardship, transition to a market economy and liberalization of society have increased reliance on an extended family and neighborhood community relative to the Soviet era.

Therefore, there are two sides to Uzbekness. On the one hand, it emphasizes collective decision making and unconditional respect for authority as symbols of obedience. On the other hand, it suggests functional importance and self-support as symbols of community empowerment. To a certain extent, this notion of Uzbekness needs to be considered a neutral social capital construction process, which cannot be linked to either democracy or authoritarianism. Rather, it is a form of self-identification, which only suggests that there are indigenous tools to unite people behind certain norms and values. The goals of such unity can have both democratizing and controlling effects depending on the political authority's intentions in manipulating this social capital potential.

A first glance, the standards of Uzbekness seem to be clearly defined and strictly followed. However, for the most part, they are socially constructed and constantly reworked. Times of economic hardship and transformation have had a very deep impact on these 'standards' and the notion of what it means to be Uzbek.

Arguments of This Book

This introductory chapter reviewes the broader theoretical implications of and methodological approaches to studying social capital in Uzbekistan. This chapter also outlines some theoretical approaches to social capital and its applications in a post-Soviet setting. Although this field of inquiry has seen continuous efforts, mainly by Western scholars, this chapter explains the need to revisit the existing frameworks and adjust them to the present realities in order to understand the successes and failures of civil society development through the lens of neoliberal institutionalism and 'transitology'. In particular, based on the deficiencies of a neoliberal paradigm of post-Soviet society research, this chapter argues for a theoretical framework that pays greater attention to the resilience of pre-Soviet traditional institutions of social capital and their contemporary significance.

This chapter touches on issues such as the 'hybrid nature' of self-governance, institutional reform and traditional value systems. Most of the assumptions made in this chapter are ultimately meant to pose the question of whether and how the analytical settings of this book will enhance knowledge about the social construction process in Uzbekistan and in the region in general. In addition, this chapter highlights the weaknesses of current approaches to social capital. In particular, it attempts to demonstrate that current studies predominantly focus on the notions of social capital and civil society as features of democratic societies, and they ignore the fact that undemocratic and democratizing societies also have social capital and various forms of civil society institutions.

The second chapter outlines the problems and challenges associated with social research in Central Asian and Uzbek societies in a comparative perspective, detailing the challenges encountered in this process. This part first introduces the types of public polls conducted in Central Asia, classifying them into the various areas they target and the aims of the studies conducted. In the second part, it provides an account of the public opinion polling efforts in Japan, citing several projects conducted and outlining their differences compared with the polling conducted in Central Asia. This part analyzes not only ongoing or completed projects, such as the AsiaBarometer, but also those in which the Central Asian direction is in the initial stage of exploration, as exemplified by the Special Project for the Study of Civil Society. This does not only serve as a source of information but also offers specific examples of challenges faced by the scholars involved in this type of research. The third part highlights the challenges that scholars are normally faced with when attempting to poll Central Asian societies. An outline of these challenges is divided into the following two groups: conceptual and logistical. After providing an account of these challenges, the final part of this chapter concludes by summarizing the main ideas and offering potential areas for further public opinion polling in Central Asia. This chapter also explains the methodology behind data collected on civil society organizations in Uzbekistan. The survey itself was conducted between 2006 and 2007 in regard to two separate types of organizations: (1) neighborhood organizations and (2) nonprofit organizations (including NGOs). These surveys are parts of a larger project called the Cross-national Survey on Civil Society Organisations and Interests Groups operated by the University of Tsukuba. Along with Uzbekistan, similar surveys were conducted in 14 other countries: Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Estonia, Germany, India, Japan, the Philippines, Poland, Russia, South Korea, Thailand, Turkey, and the USA The generic name of the survey is the Japan Interest Group Study (JIGS).

Thus, in the second chapter we explain the data samples, the population from which we selected these samples, the related features and a few limitations of the JIGS survey in Uzbekistan. This second chapter goes beyond explaining the methodology for data collection and elaborates on the need for an empirical baseline analysis of social capital in non-democratic settings.

The third chapter elaborates on the domestic discourse of social capital and civil society in post-Soviet Uzbekistan. It focuses on the works by local academics and political leaders on civil society and its forms in Uzbekistan. The third chapter demonstrates that this field has received constant attention in both the official and scholarly literatures since the 1990s, and as the political elite strives to promote its own postulation of an evolutionary transition “from a strong state to a strong civil society”, interest in the subject among local intellectuals remains high.

The fact that the administrators and intellectuals are claiming their own models of civil society and social capital should not be underestimated, because without understanding how the local conception of civil society is formed in relation to history, culture and power relations, it is difficult to examine the real nature of the sociopolitical environment in Uzbekistan. The third chapter therefore highlights an alternative vision of civil society and social capital, which moves beyond Western-centric approaches to this matter. The aim of this chapter is to summarize some notable publications by local intellectuals in the Uzbek and Russian languages. Using the case study of Uzbekistan, this chapter also offers a model of how democratizing states are using social capital and civil society institutions to strengthen their legitimacy and increase the efficiency of their governance.

The fourth chapter then analyzes an indigenous institution that has been continuously referred to in the context of social capital construction: the neighborhood community or mahalla. While Central Asian local communities, such as the mahalla, have gained considerable footing in recent years, there is still no consensus on the role of these communities in the construction of the new states and societies of the region. The main thrust of this chapter is to suggest that the community represents one of the few effective traditional substitutes able to unite the representatives of various ethnic and religious groups through the creation of common identity based on a shared residence criterion. In addition, while Central Asia faces all possible evils, such as environmental hazards and economic shortcomings, these problems cannot be addressed without localizing public dissatisfaction and creating public consent within smaller communities like the mahalla. However, throughout the history of these communities, political authorities have often attempted to manipulate these institutions in order to enhance their legitimacy in the eyes of both their population and other governments.

The fifth chapter suggests that the institution of the mahalla in Uzbekistan is, to a great extent, an alternative concept when compared with the traditional Western notion of civil society. It is therefore not to be conceptualized as an autonomous body with administrative independence that functions as a resistant force to the government. In post-Soviet Uzbekistan, the mahalla is instead a tool for dialogue between the government and the public at large. This dialogue is often dominated by the government because of the instruments of pressure it possesses. Some scholars argue that this pattern of interactions between the mahalla community and the government is an indicator of the state's failure in its transition to democracy. However, Uzbekistan represents a non-Western state with a society of traditional values that is difficult to reconcile with the Western model of society–state interactions. Therefore, this case may present good empirical data to further develop theoretical assumptions and foundations for social capital research.

The sixth chapter highlights other institutions and organizations that are broadly referred to as civil society organizations. In particular, it examines the potential of civil society as an influential driver for environmental change in Uzbekistan and in promoting an inclusive approach, especially at the community level. One of the main arguments of the chapter is that effective efforts to ensure adequate and rational use of Uzbekistan's diminishing water resources both in urban and rural settings require a strengthening of environmentally conscious and water-oriented civil society. As is demonstrated here, the efficient consumption of water does require new systems of monitoring and advanced systems of irrigation, but human efforts at the local level may prove efficient and cost-effective substitutes to the policy of technical modernization.

The seventh chapter first reviews some of the streams of thought regarding the state of the non-governmental sector in Uzbekistan and based on a recent survey of NGOs, explores a number of aspects relating to the contribution, perceptions, connections and broader sociopolitical impact of Uzbekistan's NGOs. These aspects of NGO activity happen to be often overlooked by researchers who focus instead on the 'macro' factors relating to the activities of these organizations, such as political environment, legal impediments, and so on. However, without understanding the 'inner world' of non-governmental organizations in societies facing political and economic transformation, it is hard to examine the quality of social capital that they produce.

The final eighth chapter attempts to integrate knowledge about Uzbekistan into international perspective by offering a comparison of two 'Asian' countries and their grassroots organizations. This chapter's main argument is that, although the emphasis on 'social capital' in norms, reciprocity and civic networks is both logical and reasonable, the concept—due to its West-centric orientation—fails to explain why and how social capital could still be nurtured in societies with little or no tradition of 'Western-looking' democracy. This argument is one of many parts of a continuing debate about whether social capital should be associated with democratic governance and political participation, or vice versa.

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