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Political stability through welfare reforms : a comparative study of Central Asia and Western Europe

Urinboyev, Rustamjon; Svensson, Måns

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LUND UNIVERSITY

PO Box 117
221 00 Lund
+46 46-222 00 00

Title: Political Stability through Welfare Reforms: A Comparative Study of Central Asia and Western Europe

Rustamjon Urinboyev & Måns Svensson

Abstract

The central purpose of this study is to analyse political stability issues from the public administration and policy perspective. Armed with this objective, the special emphasis will be placed upon the types and nature of the policy options (alternatives) that governments have at their disposal. There are generally two policy options available for the governments to cope with political instabilities: the first option is to use coercive (repressive) means of political stability; and the second option is to utilize non-coercive means of political stability.

Consequently, one of the most common explanations within academic and policy communities is that democratic regimes are less likely to opt for coercive measures than non-democratic regimes. However, this explanation fails to capture a number of critical variables that influence the choice of policy. Also, it lacks the possibility to describe and understand peaceful transitions from non-democratic to democratic societies. The choice of policy strategy is very much affected by larger social and political constraints and contexts. In this respect, we argue that when non-coercive measures fail or do not adequately address political instability, governments largely opt for coercive measures, and conversely, governments begin to introduce non-coercive measures if the coercive measures become unreliable and insufficient for political stability. Hence, this paper is an attempt to analyse what effect, if any, does the choice of coercive or non-coercive governance have on the nature and direction of public administration reforms in general, and political stability in particular. In this paper, police and military are regarded as coercive means of political stability whereas the welfare (social protection) reforms are understood as non-coercive means of political stability.

Comparative case study method will be employed to test the central argument of the paper. Armed with this method, we try to identify the identical paradigmatic shifts regarding the political stability strategies by historicizing the public policy and administration developments in the Western Europe and post-Soviet Central Asia. At least two examples of political stability project come to mind when considering how the coercive and non-coercive measures were used to promote political stability: Sweden during the transition from agricultural to industrial society and Uzbekistan after the collapse of Soviet Union. In this regard, cases of Sweden and Uzbekistan will be chosen to examine the central argument. In undertaking this task, the paper uses two main theories of policy development: the Linear model, characterized by objective analysis of options and the separation of policy from implementation; and the "chaos" theory, which argues that policy and policy implementation are best understood as a "chaos of purposes and accidents".

Findings of the paper will provide vantage point to better understand the nuances and complexities in choosing political stability strategies. Based on the findings of the paper, we will offer possible remedies for policy shortcomings associated with political stability challenges in Western Europe and Central Asia.