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Perspectives

Afghanistan is Not the Balkans: Ethnicity and Its Political Consequences from a Central Eurasian Perspective

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The remarkable growth in membership of the Central Eurasian Studies Society since its inception illustrates the need it fills among students of the region. But how can an area that is so vast geographically and diverse culturally provide a useful construct for debate and study? There are certainly disagreements (and seemingly endless ones) over exactly where to draw the region's boundaries, which peoples to include in its purview and how to integrate the different national historical traditions found within it. But despite these difficulties, treating Central Eurasia as a region offers new and refreshing perspectives that make the problems of definition and integration well worth the challenge.

As long as the various parts of Central Eurasia were seen as the periphery for other core areas (Russia, the Islamic Middle East, China, or South Asia), the integration and interconnections within Central Eurasia itself were neglected. In particular the region was seen as a passive victim of outside forces but not a generator of innovations or power. This view may well reflect the stark historical trajectory of the last 200 to 300 years, when Chinese, Russian and British imperial expansion severed the long-standing cultural and economic ties that bound the region together. But for most of its history Central Eurasia was a positive force to be reckoned with, most notably when the Mongol Empire spanned most of Asia. It served as a vital and profitable route for overland trade and the diffusion of religions, and it had a lively urban as well as nomadic cultural tradition. The recent re-emergence of independent states in the region and changing world economics may mark a return to this older pattern, which Andre Gunder Frank labeled the "centrality of central Asia" (1992, 1998).

A Comparative Perspective: Ethnicity and Nationalism

An example of how the perspective from Central Eurasia can throw a different light on broader problems concerns the role of ethnicity and nationalism. Because there are so many different ethnic groups with very complex histories in the region, and because the Soviet Union used ethnic models to justify drawing the administrative boundaries that gave rise to independent states with its collapse, there has been a natural focus on these issues. Similarly, in the wake of the fall of the Taliban regime in neighboring Afghanistan in 2001, a debate arose among analysts and scholars of Afghanistan as to whether the country even had a future as a unified state (Kinzer 2001). Some argued that any attempt to maintain a unified Afghanistan was doomed to failure because ethnic groups there would naturally use their bases of regional power to break up any unitary state. They predicted that Afghanistan would soon divide as the various ethnic groups would either form a number of new independent mini-states or combine with existing transborder co-ethnic polities (Uzbekistan, Pakistan, etc.).

This argument had particular resonance because the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia and the genocidal ethnic strife in Central Africa were fresh on the minds of the international community. And in the former Yugoslavia there seemed no end to the chain of demands for ever smaller ethnic states or the willingness of small regional ethnic groups to sabotage any plans that called for multiethnic states. Since a large number of the expatriates arriving to assist in Afghanistan's reconstruction had experience in the Balkans, they were particularly attuned to such potential problems. There was also a general belief that ethnic divisions were more intractable than other divisions (political,

religious, class, geographic, etc.) that might impede the recreation of a centralized state.

No one, however, had informed the Afghans of this inevitability. It was true that the war against the Soviet Union (1978-1989) and the ensuing civil war (1989-2001) had empowered regional ethnic groups in Afghanistan to an extent not seen since Amir Abdur Rahman had crushed their autonomy at the end of the 19th century. It was also true that ethnic lines had become sharper during the 25 years of war. But it was striking that not a single Afghan political or military leader ever threatened to secede from Afghanistan to form an independent state or expressed any interest in joining with co-ethnic neighboring states, not even as a negotiating tactic. Instead, even the very powerful regional warlords cooperated in the *Loya Jirga*, the national assembly that created the provisional Afghan central government. These military leaders, and the more democratically selected delegates, all asserted that some kind of working central government was an absolute necessity for a country of which they all (regardless of ethnic divisions and old grudges) saw themselves a part. This process was reinforced with the adoption of a new constitution in January 2004, which established a formal framework for a unitary government without regional divisions, and a successful presidential election in October 2004.

What explained the lack of movement toward ethnic disintegration in a country where all the elements for such a division are present? The answer lies both in the nature of ethnicity in Central Eurasia and the pragmatic outlook of Afghan leaders who, like poker players at a card game, are more interested in dividing the pot than they are in dividing the table at which they sit.

The Nature of Ethnicity in former Soviet Central Asia

Ethnicity is often assumed to be the natural partner of nationalism and the nation state. The 19th century unification of Germany and Italy both were rooted in the belief that people who share the same race, language and culture are natural political units. Such a political ideology undermined and then destroyed the old multiethnic Hapsburg Empire in Eastern Europe as Czechs, Slovaks, Hungarians, and Southern Slavs all argued for the right to self-determination; their claims were granted after the First World War. Similarly the multiethnic Ottoman Empire in the Middle East fell victim to a rising Arab and Turkish nationalism that had been growing well before its formal dissolution into national states by the European powers. Even the new Marxist Soviet Union, which posited class as the only true divider of peoples, felt impelled to create ethnically based national and union republics within the Soviet state. The largest and most numerous of these were in Central Asia.

Ethnicity in Central Asia before the 20th century, however, had taken a different historical trajectory. In particular, the nationalist element was completely lacking. Here states had always been multiethnic and the belief that the rulers of the state must be drawn from its majority population was an alien idea. Indeed such multiethnic empires and khanates were normally ruled by dominant minorities who had established their right to rule by force. For close to a millennium rulers were mainly drawn from invading tribal and nomadic Turco-Mongol peoples. However, such rulers did not have a monopoly on high government positions because they depended on literate Persian-speaking administrators who had better command of the complex issues of governance like taxation and economic policy. Indeed, so closely integrated were the two that a proverb arose that "a Turk without a Persian is like a head without a hat." Similarly, regardless of historical origin or language spoken, the population of the irrigated river valleys and the cities tended to have no distinct ethnic identity. In Transoxiana, for example, Turkic- and Persian-speaking peasant and urban populations were rarely defined in ethnic terms but rather by the localities in which they lived or by such a term as Sart, which was devoid of specific ethnic content. These labels were descriptive rather than organizational and individuals saw themselves as filling multiple and cross-cutting roles. How they defined themselves to others (or to themselves) depended more on the context of the question than on any rule based system.

If there was a notion of self-rule and ethnic group consciousness, it was best developed among the tribal peoples of the region. But they were generally illiterate and inhabited the marginal mountain, desert and steppe regions and so had little political impact. In addition, while tribal identity might have been strongly developed, it was hamstrung by internal subdivisions that made overall unity difficult or impossible to achieve. For example, the famous 17th century Pashtun warrior and poet Khushal Khan Khattak revolted against the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb along today's Pakistan/Afghanistan border in defense of tribal

autonomy, but spent almost as much time (and devoted as many poems) to his blood feuds with rival Pashtun clans. When the Pashtun dynasty finally did come to power in Afghanistan in the mid-18th century it depended heavily on non-Pashtun Qizilbash soldiers and a Persian-speaking bureaucracy to maintain itself in power.

In Central Asia the concept of ethnic nationalism did not emerge from the bottom up but was imposed from the top down by the Soviet government in the areas under its control. This was done by dividing Central Asia's three geographically based and multiethnic khanates (Khiva, Bukhara and Kokand) into five arbitrary ethnic republics (Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan). The new ethnic republics were an attempt both to destroy the old khanate identities that had deep historical roots and to pre-empt the nascent political movements that had earlier proclaimed the unity of Central Asia either in terms of pan-Turkism or the greater Islamic community. After 1949 the People's Republic of China followed the same practice in its own territories of Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia and Tibet.

The Soviets attempted to create distinct ethnic identities in these new republics by having people choose a single ethnic identity by which they would be classified henceforth and by rewriting the history of the region in ethnic terms. This never really took root because such a redefinition did not excite the cultural or historical imagination of the region's peoples the way it did in Eastern Europe. It was particularly problematic in the most populous Central Asian state, Uzbekistan, where most of the population had previously identified itself non-ethnically by locality or clan and where the old urban centers of Bukhara and Samarqand were Persian-speaking. Kazakhstan too had problems because the titular ethnic group did not even constitute a majority, after the settlement there in the late 19th and early 20th centuries of so many Russians and Ukrainians. The Kokand Khanate's rich Ferghana Valley was distributed piecemeal among Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, dividing a population that had long had a geographical unity. There it was hard to convince similar people living in the western part of the valley in Uzbekistan that they were a completely different nationality from their neighbors upriver in the east in Tajikistan or Kyrgyzstan. But until the Soviet Union collapsed such divisions were almost completely theoretical, except as part of the state administration. They had little impact on the bulk of the population, which remained organized around local solidarity groups based on a variety of criteria. As Fredrik Barth (1994) has noted, when ethnicity is created by a state administrative fiat, people may quickly move to fill niches that are to their advantage (or fall victim to persecution if such redefinition is negative), but such creations are nonetheless artificial and lack the cultural power to move people to action. While the older terms of identification such as Sart may have been replaced by Tajik or Uzbek, such new labels were still descriptive and local populations remained wedded to their local solidarity groups in terms of political organization. Thus it was striking that in both the Soviet and post-Soviet periods political rivalry was less between differently defined ethnic groups than between regional rivals within the same administrative categories (Roy 2000: 96-100, 109-115).

After independence, as national borders became barriers to movement, their arbitrary nature became all too clear. The new Central Asian states found it difficult to instill an ethnic national identity except among the Turkmen and Kyrgyz who already had a common identity and formed an overwhelming majority in their new states. Uzbekistan was able to define its diverse population as primarily "Uzbek" only by moving to geographical criteria in which all the peoples (past and present) who ever lived in Uzbekistan's territory are viewed as a single group. Thus the pre-Uzbek 15th century Turkic conqueror Timur became their national historical founder, relegating the founder of the original Shaybanid Uzbek state to the margins of their history. Similarly, the famous Persian-speaking poets and philosophers of Samarqand and Bukhara were grafted into the historic tree of Uzbek culture. The Kazakhs faced a dilemma of giving ethnicity priority in national identity in a state where Slavs constituted close to an equal proportion of the population. And while Tajikistan found it relatively easy to apply a common Tajik ethnicity among its majority Iranian language speakers, it has found it impossible to get them to think of themselves as a national unit, a situation that led to a vicious civil war in which regional interests trumped ethnic labels.

For these reasons Olivier Roy (2000) argued that using ethnicity as the key analytical category in Central Asia was misleading. In his detailed ethnographic study of politics and nationality in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, Roy found that broad scale ethnic labels merely created an administrative framework in which more locally rooted and flexibly defined solidarity groups (*qawm*s) formed factions

that operated with much more cohesiveness. He admitted that his focus on qawms rather than on larger ethnic labels was derived in part from the legacy of his previous ethnographic experience in Afghanistan, where such groups have always been seen as key social actors in the public arena. While not all observers may accept his characterizations, his use of an Afghan framework throws a very different light on the structure of ethnicity and politics. It also may help to explain why ethnic division is not likely to break up the Afghan state.

Ethnicity and Pragmatism in Afghanistan

Although ethnicity was never a legal category in Afghanistan as it was in Soviet Central Asia, it did play a political role. The most important ethnic groups in Afghanistan are the Pashtuns, Tajiks, Uzbeks, Turkmens and Hazaras, although a number of smaller ethnic groups have regionally important roles (most notably the Nuristanis and Baluches). However, the range of diversity at the local level, where social organization is based on smaller kinship groups or regional communities, reduced the utility of the major national ethnic labels as clear units of political analysis. These therefore tended to be used more to explain the gross outlines of Afghan politics to the outside world rather than to mobilize Afghans themselves.

The country's Pashtuns, about 40 percent of the population, historically inhabit the area south of the Hindu Kush. Some were resettled (or deported) north to increase Pashtun representation in border areas. The imposition of the so-called "Durand Line" divided the Pashtuns between British India and Afghanistan in the late 19th century, and so an equal or larger number also reside in Pakistan. The Pashtuns are tribally organized, all claiming descent from a common ancestor, but they are divided into a large number of clans and lineages. In Afghanistan the largest division is between the Ghilzai Pashtuns, straddling the Pakistan border, and the Durrani Pashtuns based around Kandahar. Although the Ghilzais have historically been the larger group, the Durranis have been politically dominant since the country's founding in 1747. They maintained an exclusive hold on political leadership through a royal dynasty that was only displaced by the Communist coup of 1978. Even at that time, however, power remained in the hands of the Ghilzai Pashtun faction of the Afghan Communist Party until the Soviet invasion. No faction was able to achieve dominance from the fall of the old Communist regime led by Najibullah (a Pashtun) in 1992 to the Taliban's taking of power in 1995. In 2001 the choice of Hamid Karzai as the leader of the provisional government of Afghanistan and his formal election to the presidency in 2004 under the new constitution has returned the old Durrani elite to the level of influence that they had lost 25 years earlier.

With a few isolated exceptions, Pashtuns are exclusively Sunni Muslims. In rural areas, however, there is a melding of their tribal law (the Pashtunwali) with religious belief so that interpretations of religious law and tribal code are often seen as inseparable. Local charismatic religious leaders, known as *pirs*, played important roles in politics historically because they and their disciples crossed tribal lines and could act as counterweights to the landowning tribal khans. Under the Taliban (1995-2001), Pashtun religious leaders actually ruled the Afghan state for the only time in its history, but leadership was drawn from the ranks of local village mullahs rather than the better educated clerics or lineages of Sufi pirs.

The Tajiks, Persian-speaking Sunni Muslims, make up the second most important population, constituting around 30 percent of the population. They do not have a tribal organization, but identify themselves by locality. They make up the bulk of Kabul's urban population and dominate the mountainous regions of the northeast where their co-ethnics reside in Tajikistan and parts of Uzbekistan. Persian speakers also dominate western Afghanistan (where they are often called Farsiwan rather than Tajik), but they historically had closer cultural and economic links to Iran. The Afghan Tajiks were particularly important as a group because Persian was both the lingua franca of Afghanistan and the language of government. Pashtuns who settled in cities like Kabul usually became highly Persianized and succeeding generations often lost the ability to speak Pashto. (This was particularly true of the royal Durrani Muhammadzai lineage in the capital.) If the Pashtuns dominated most of the military and political leadership positions, it was the Tajiks who ran the bureaucracy. As a more urbanized and literate population, they were also more strongly represented in the ranks of the orthodox clergy, that is, those who received state stipends or held state positions. Beginning with the war against the Soviet Union's occupation and more decisively during the succeeding Afghan civil war, the Tajiks came to dominate the northeast and established their own local administration under the leadership of Ahmad Shah Masud in the Panjshir Valley. In the west,

Ismail Khan came to rule Herat and the northwest between 1992 and 1995, during the period between the fall of the Communists and the arrival of the Taliban. Despite the assassination of Masud, the Tajiks of the northeast were the most powerful faction in Kabul after the defeat of the Taliban, because of their close alliance with the United States under the banner of the Northern Alliance. Ismail Khan also returned to rule Herat after the Taliban's defeat, although he was removed from this position in 2004.

Uzbeks and Turkmen, Turkic groups who were extensions of ethnic groups that now dominate the adjacent Central Asian states of Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, predominate in northwestern Afghanistan. Together they probably constitute about ten percent of Afghanistan's population. The Turkmen, like the Pashtuns, are tribally organized and maintain elaborate genealogies that divide them into a series of named clans. The Uzbeks, by contrast, have a weaker tribal organization with less political significance. Both groups are Sunni Muslims but were influenced by the Sufi orders of Central Asia such as the Naqshbandiyah. Before the Soviet war these Turkic populations had little visibility nationally. But following the establishment of an Uzbek militia under the command of General Abdul Rashid Dostam in the 1980s, they became a major power in the northern areas around Mazar-i-Sharif. By artful side-switching Dostam retained that power under successive regimes, until he was betrayed by subordinates who made common cause with the Taliban; the latter took control of the northwest in 1998 (after a disastrous defeat there a year earlier). Dostam returned to power as an American ally in 2001 and remains in control of the region as its military commander.

The Hazaras are the major Shia population in Afghanistan, comprising about 15 percent of the population. They live in the mountains of central Afghanistan and in urban enclaves in major cities, particularly Kabul and Mazar-i-Sharif. Although Persian speakers, they claim descent from the Mongol armies that invaded the region in the 13th century. They traditionally had hostile relations with the Pashtuns and faced considerable discrimination from Pashtun dominated governments. Iran developed close ties to the Hazaras during the Soviet occupation and has retained considerable influence among some groups there. They formed their own powerful militia group and had regained complete autonomy in the Hazarajat (Hazara-dominated territory in central Afghanistan) until it was overrun by the Taliban in 1998. As enemies of the Taliban they welcomed that movement's destruction by the United States and regained control of their region in 2001. The Hazaras are now equal players in the country's regional politics. The new constitution explicitly recognizes the validity of their Shia traditions of Islamic law.

The Soviet war broke down the old ethnic hierarchy in which Pashtuns were most favored, followed by Persian-speaking Tajiks, while Turks (Uzbeks and Turkmen) were ignored and Shia Hazaras were discriminated against. At the fall of the Communist regime in 1992, each controlled its own region, was well armed and capable of resisting other ethnic groups that attempted to encroach territorially. Because the old Communist stronghold of Kabul sat on the fault line among these ethnic groups, it suffered major destruction as each of these regional groups or their allies attempted to control the capital in the ensuing civil war. This led to a political and military stalemate. In 1995 the Taliban, a new movement that threatened this regional-ethnic status quo, arose in southern Afghanistan. Organized on the basis of a conservative religious ideology rather than by tribe or ethnic group, the Taliban quickly came to dominate the Pashtun southern and eastern regions of the country. One reason for their success was that although the movement was religious, its membership was overwhelmingly Pashtun and many Pashtuns saw it as a vehicle for restoring their dominance in the country as a whole. The movement was also aided militarily by Pakistan (whose government wanted to see the restoration of Pashtun domination as a way for Pakistan to control Afghanistan) and financially by the so-called Afghan Arabs, such as Osama bin Laden (who needed a cooperative regime to give them shelter). Over the course of three years they gained control of the entire country, with the exception of the northeast.

But the Taliban never won a decisive battle as they came to power. Instead, when their movement was on the rise, local power brokers decided to defect to them because they appeared to be winners or because they could provide better pay. But as they rose, so they fell. When the United States intervened against the Taliban for its support of Osama bin Laden in the wake of the 9/11 attacks, their support vanished in a matter of weeks, once the same local commanders deemed them losers. The whole of the non-Pashtun north and west fell within days of their loss of the city of Mazar-i-Sharif. And when the Taliban retreated from Kabul the Pashtun areas of the south and east also deserted them. Control of the

regions returned once again to the ethnic-based leadership of local commanders.

A Unitary Afghan State

Although the fall of the Taliban restored the power of regional leaders and left a vacuum at the national level, there was no move by any ethnic group to fight over the establishment of a new government or to break away from it. (And this in a country where ethnic and regional cleavages had become sharper through ten years of civil war that had pitted ethnic groups against one another.) The main reason for the absence of ethnic contest was that no central state structure existed in Afghanistan to fight over, so the occupation of the capital or seizing its empty offices could not give any group a decisive advantage. The post-Taliban negotiations therefore centered on recreating a national state, not controlling the assets or political strength of an existing one. That all parties agreed there should be a central government and a unitary state might at first seem surprising. In other parts of the world such disarray at the center would have been used as an opportunity for regions and ethnic groups to declare their independence (à la the former Yugoslavia) or propose some grand alliance with their co-ethnic neighbors to create some "Greater Tajikistan/Uzbekistan/Turkmenistan/ Pashtunistan."

The first reason for the lack of interest in independence was rooted in the old Central Eurasian view that decoupled ethnicity and nationalism. The concept of ethnic nationalism that drove the dissolution of Yugoslavia did not have a cultural counterpart in Afghanistan. Afghans saw their multiethnic state as the norm and not some historic deviation that demanded redress. The question was who would be politically dominant in such a multiethnic system, not whether that system was legitimate. They also knew very well that gross ethnic labels like Pashtun or Tajik hid the myriad divisions within such groups that would make their formal unity difficult or impossible to achieve. In addition, such gross ethnic labels lacked the potential to mobilize people whose first loyalty was to their own qawm.

The second reason was that each ethnic group felt secure, if not happy. The pre-1978 ethnic hierarchy that gave Pashtuns an almost monopolistic control of the Afghan state had been destroyed. During the anti-Soviet war and subsequent civil war all of the country's other ethnic groups, formerly subordinate to the Pashtuns, became armed and militarized. The Pashtuns themselves began to realize that they could not restore the status quo ante even if they wanted to. All the factions engaged in the negotiations now control their own region so firmly at the local level that they do not fear being displaced by a new central government that would need their cooperation to function.

The third reason was geopolitical. Afghan regional leaders recognized that if they broke apart they could be much more easily dominated or even attacked by their neighbors. But as a country the size of France, they could hold their own. This would allow a region such as Herat to have very close ties to Iran, but know that it could rely on a central government to keep Iran's influence limited. The same would apply for relations with Uzbekistan and most importantly with Pakistan, the country that Afghans most suspect as a troublemaker. That no region proposed amalgamation with a neighboring state is equally practical. The last thing any neighboring country wants is a piece of unruly Afghanistan and its troublesome people. The last thing any Afghans want is to be a subordinate part of someone else's state. Besides, you cannot smuggle if there is no border and Afghans have done very well moving goods across international boundaries for which they have no respect.

Finally, for the Afghan regional leaders, joining in the creation of the new central government was an arranged marriage, not a love match. Ethnic nationalism is fundamentally a romantic concept that attempts to give people a common conception of themselves as a single group with common dreams, histories and aspirations. Most nationalists view ethnicity as primordial, something that one is born with and cannot change. Afghan ethnicity, by contrast, is explicitly circumstantialist. There is no immutable history or commonality that cannot be jettisoned for self-interest. Afghan ethnic groups often cooperate with other groups whom they do not like and even against whom they have previously fought. They also divide against their own co-ethnics when their interests diverge. People are well aware that in the long history of Afghanistan no enemies (or friends) are ever permanent. Although the 2004 constitution steps around the question of regional autonomy, it is notable that representatives from all regions and ethnic groups unanimously approved it because it created a platform they can live with. And Afghan factions well understand that the resources of the international community can only be effectively tapped if there is a national government to deal with the outside world, even if only to cash

the checks and redistribute the money. This cannot be done effectively at the local level, and ethnic mini-states are likely to get only mini-grants or nothing at all.

A Central Eurasian Model

Ethnicity in Afghanistan is a pre-nationalist type in which ethnic groups have economic and political interests but no ideology. The ethnic groups in Afghanistan do not believe that sovereignty alone will solve their problems; thus, conflict at the national state level is easier to resolve, in part because no party seeks to break up the national state. Beliefs that Afghanistan would devolve into ethnic warfare missed the point: armies may be mobilized in Afghanistan to fight as ethnic groups, but they do not fight for the ethnic group. They fight for themselves as much smaller regional and kin groups whose scope for alliance and compromise is much greater. At the local level much fighting appears ethnic because this is how the factions are organized, but they are fighting over control of resources (political, economic, military), not an ethnic ideology. Because a unitary Afghan state serves a greater national interest for all the country's regions without having the power to demand much of them, it is a popular idea. And after 25 years of warfare there is also the hope that by giving more power to the central government future civil wars can be prevented.

Such a view of ethnicity and politics is quite different from that found in the Balkans, yet it is the Balkan model that still pervades most analyses of the region. I would argue that this is an obstacle to understanding the politics of Central Eurasia. In particular, it has led us to look to ethnicity as the major source of conflict in an area where the struggle for political power and material resources are much more salient than any ethno-nationalist ideology. This is true even in the states that were created by Soviet ethnic policies. Rather than apply exogenous models of ethnicity to the region, it is time for scholars to use empirical cases and historical examples that better capture current developments there. Such "Central Eurasian models" will better reflect the dynamics of the situation in the region and provide a broader perspective on societies that have historically been multilingual and multiethnic.

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Research Reports

Selected Papers from the 2004 CESS Conference

Editors' Note: With this issue, we introduce a new feature of the Research Reports section: papers presented at the annual conference of CESS. These papers were solicited by CESR editors based on recommendations by panel discussants. The selected conference papers do not replace CESR's traditional Reports on Research Findings and Conditions (see pp. 35-47), which we still highly encourage you to submit.

Irregular Labor Migration from Central Asia to the United States

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This study examines irregular labor migration from Central Asia to the United States. The focus of this research is on unskilled labor migrants who are either smuggled into the US or work illegally, having arrived on tourist or other types of visas. The study's purposes are to investigate the factors contributing to the decision of growing numbers of temporary labor migrants from Central Asia to migrate and to propose a comprehensive theoretical model explaining post-Soviet unskilled labor migration. This objective can only be achieved after completing field research and obtaining first-hand empirical data via in-depth interviews with labor migrants. In this report I present preliminary findings from the descriptive part of my study, which examines how irregular labor migrants from Central Asia obtain US visas, how they find employment in the US, who facilitates the process, and what their experiences are.

There is a vast body of literature on international migration, especially on migration to the United States. Labor migration from the former Soviet republics has rarely been studied. Existing literature focuses exclusively on permanent immigration of former Soviet citizens of Jewish origin to the United States, Canada, Germany, and Israel (Lewin-Epstein et al. 2003, Aroian et al. 2003, Weinberg 2001, Hasson 1996), as well as on repatriation of ex-Soviet citizens of German ancestry to Germany (Munz and Ohliger 2003, Dennis and Kolinsky 2004, Rotte 2000, Hofmann 1994, Steinbach 2001). I address this research gap by studying illegal migration from Central Asia to the New York metropolitan area.

This research forms the basis of dissertation research that I will conduct in the New York metropolitan area in the fall of 2005. Information presented in this report is based on available literature, a review of press articles and interviews with a few labor migrants, as well as diplomats and consular officers who worked in Central Asia.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the consequent elimination of the state regulation of population movement, migration into, out of, and within Central Asia has become an acute and continuous process (Abazov 1999: 237). In addition to permanent external migration, people from Central Asia began to migrate to other countries for temporary labor, shuttle trade and other kinds of commercial migration. Russia is the most popular destination country for such labor migrants. The US is a highly desirable destination both for permanent immigrants and for temporary labor migrants. By most conservative estimates, over 1,000 Central Asians are working in the New York metropolitan area. Other destination cities in the US are usually large metropolitan areas such as Chicago, Los Angeles, Washington, and Seattle.

This study is guided by the theories of international migration that attempt to explain movements of people. Scholars of international migration agree that "there is no single, coherent theory of international migration, only a fragmented set of theories that have developed largely in

isolation from one another…" (Massey et al. 1993: 432). I will assume a broader perspective by integrating several theories into a comprehensive model that explains labor migration from the ex-Soviet republics of Central Asia.

The following theories are relevant in the context of labor migration from Central Asia. The *macro theory of neoclassical economics* is the oldest and best-known theory; it argues that international migration is caused by differences in the supply of and demand for labor in sending and receiving countries (Harris and Todaro 1970). The *micro theory of neoclassical economics* states that individuals are rational actors and decide to migrate after a cost-benefit analysis that projects a positive net return from migration (Todaro and Maruszko 1987). *New economics of migration* asserts that migration decisions are made by families or households and not by individual actors. Families, under this theory, attempt to maximize income and minimize risks resulting from market failures in unstable economies to improve their income relative to the rest of the community (Stark 1991). Moreover, this theory expects that migrants move to generate capital for specific purchases, such as housing or land, or to establish small businesses, and not to earn higher net incomes (Massey and Espinosa 1997; Taylor et al. 1996). *Network theory* posits that migrant networks in origin and destination countries increase the likelihood of international migration because they facilitate the integration of migrants in the labor market of the destination country, lower the costs and risks of migration and provide a support network for newly arrived migrants.

As economies in Central Asian countries deteriorate and unemployment rates soar, more and more individuals choose to migrate abroad for work. According to a poll conducted by Uzbek researchers L. Maksakova and V. Chupik (BBC 2003), among migrants leaving Uzbekistan 70 percent were migrating to support their families. Another ten percent were leaving specifically to earn money to make major purchases, such as apartments, houses and cars; to set up their own businesses; or to pay for college education or medical treatment. These migrant objectives are also true for other Central Asian migrant-sending countries such as Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The macro theory of neoclassical economics would be applicable in the case of labor migration from Central Asia to the United States, as unemployment rates grow resulting in surplus of labor supply.

There does not seem to be a significant number of labor migrants from Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. This is most likely due to the continuous economic development and oil boom in the former, and restrictions imposed by the Turkmen government on travel outside the country in the latter.

Migrants turn to migration to buy a house or apartment, to start a small business, support their immediate and extended families, pay for their own living expenses, finance their children's college education and/or to marry them off. Since weddings and related traditional ceremonies can be quite costly in Central Asia, it is not surprising that one of the parents or a groom would resort to migration as the only way to be able to pay for the wedding and/or dowry. Consistent with the micro theory of neoclassical economics, Central Asian migrants weigh the cost of migration against expected revenue and decide to migrate if they project a positive net return from migration.

Enormous wage differentials make migration to the United States, even if illegal and expensive, a very attractive option. A majority of the migrants use the services of so-called migration facilitators or human smugglers, who organize the migration process and coach them on answering questions during the US embassy visa interviews.

Migrants typically list on their visa application one of the following reasons for wanting to visit the United States: visiting friends or family who are legal residents in the US; business trip (businessmen and entrepreneurs); business trip as part of a government or NGO delegation; exchange trip sponsored by religious groups that have a presence in Central Asia; participation in a professional conference held in the United States; enrollment in a language class or in a university or other academic institution; visiting graves of relatives; or participation in a folk festival, etc.

It is hard to estimate how many Central Asian labor migrants there are in the United States. The US Embassy in Uzbekistan estimates that one third of Uzbek citizens who receive tourist visas to the US do not return,[1] which suggests that they are likely to have entered the illegal labor market.

Migrants report having paid anywhere from $4,000 to $10,000 to migrant traffickers for their

[1] Interview with a former Consular Officer at the US Embassy in Uzbekistan, September 22, 2004.

passage to the US. It is noteworthy that smuggling fees only increase, further enriching traffickers, as the US government imposes tougher restrictions on travel to the United States, as was the case after 9/11. Most of the migrants do not have this amount up front and have to borrow the "passage fee" from friends and relatives or even loan sharks. Once employed in the United States, migrants typically pay off the debt within a year. Considering that sometimes both the nuclear and extended family pitch in to come up with the passage fee and then benefit from migrant remittances, new economics of migration theory might hold true for the case of Central Asian migrants. Further interviews would be required to test this theory.

When migrants arrive at their destination, they often contact other migrants for help in finding employment and accommodation. The role of migrant networks seems consistent with the network theory: migrant networks increase the likelihood of migration, because such networks make the integration of migrants in the US labor market easier.

There are also employment agencies that specialize in matching the migrants with potential employers, typically in the service industry. If the migrant is subsequently employed, the agency charges the migrant one or two weeks' wages for its services. Migrant workers also find jobs responding to advertisements in Russian-language community newspapers.

Migrants from Central Asia usually work in positions as domestic servants (women are hired as nannies, maids, caretakers of older people, etc.), sales personnel in shops, dishwashers, cooks or waiters in restaurants, chamber maids in hotels, or day laborers (e.g., one-day assignments in construction sites or to mow lawns). They are also employed in sweat shops and in the construction industry. Most migrants, especially those in domestic service, have to work 15-17 hours a day with one or two days off per month. Some employers allow migrants to take one day off each week. Typically the days off are unpaid, and migrants would have to find a place to spend the night. There is a whole network of informal "hotels" run by Russian-speaking immigrants, where a migrant can get a bed in a shared room for $10-$15 per night.[2] The newly arrived migrants would also live in a similar housing arrangement until they secure employment.

Female migrants in domestic service reported that their responsibilities included cleaning the house, cooking meals for the family, cleaning the dishes, taking care of the children, taking them to and from school, doing laundry and ironing, and other household chores. Sometimes such workers would have to take care of two households — the weekend and weekday homes of their employers.

Migrants reported earning between $1,000 and $2,000 per month. After paying their expenses, they usually send a portion or all of their earnings to their families back in Central Asia. Sometimes remittances from migrants abroad are the only means for their families to cover living expenses. Migrant remittances are also used to purchase property for migrants and/or their families, to finance their children's or other relatives' educations, to start a small business, to pay for weddings, etc. This trend seems to attest to the new economics of migration theory that asserts that migrants move to generate capital for specific purchases, such as housing or land, or for establishment of small businesses.

The economic impact of labor migration for sending countries is very significant. In Tajikistan alone, migrant remittances are estimated to be $200-230 million a year, representing a third of Tajikistan's GDP (Olimova and Bosc 2003: 94). In Kyrgyzstan, property prices have doubled in the last year. Real estate specialists attribute such a price hike to remittances, sent from migrants abroad, that are invested in property.[3]

Preliminary findings of the descriptive part of my research shed light on the main reasons for labor migration from Central Asia, how irregular migrants obtain US visas and find employment once in the US, who facilitates the process, and what their experiences are. The main phase of my research will consist of in-depth semi-structured interviews with migrants to examine all reasons for temporary labor migration out of Central Asia.

Labor migration has become a tool for adapting to the new economic and social challenges that resulted from the collapse of the Soviet Union. In transition countries of Central Asia, where economies are worsening and well paid jobs are

[2] Personal communication with a Kyrgyz labor migrant, September 19, 2003.

[3] Personal communication with three real estate agents in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, August 2004.

scarce, labor migration helps to absorb and ease social discontent (Olimova and Bosc 2003: 8). In this sense, labor migration out of Central Asia contributes to stability in the region. To some extent it makes up for failed government reforms and provides an alternative means for economic stability in migrant families.

The purpose of my research is to develop a comprehensive theoretical model explaining the growing phenomenon of irregular labor migration from Central Asia to the United States. While this task can only be completed after conducting in-depth interviews with a large sample of labor migrants, preliminary findings suggest that such a model would include assertions of the macro and micro theories of neoclassical economics, the new economics of migration theory, and the network theory of migration. If other factors explanatory of migration decisions will arise in the course of the field research, they will be incorporated into the final model.

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Missionary Encounters in Kyrgyzstan: Challenging the National Ideal

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> "Why do you pretend to be a Muslim?" asked a Soviet anti-religious lecturer, […] a young member of the Kirghiz Komsomol. The answer was: "Because I am a Kirghiz." [Dialogue quoted in Lemercier-Quelquejay (1984: 22).]

This short dialogue between an anti-religious lecturer and a Komsomol member was used by Lemercier-Quelquejay to illustrate the tight connection between ethno-national and religious identities in Central Asia in the 1980s. Because of this tight connection, she continued, it was not uncommon that devoted Communists and atheists would also stress that they were Muslim (1984: 22). At the time, this observation was surprising because it contradicted received wisdom concerning the place of religion in an "atheist" society. Since then it has become clear that the ties between religious and ethnic identity were to a significant degree actually fostered by Soviet national and cultural politics. Though the Soviet regime delegitimized religion, it simultaneously encoded religious identities through its nationality policies. As many authors have argued, the creation of the Central Asian "nations" was facilitated and given legitimacy by the mobilization of local "Muslim" cultures (e.g., Shahrani 1984, Karpat 1993). Conversely, it may also be said that Islam continued to be an important frame of reference, precisely because of this pairing of religious and national cultures.

The relaxation of laws against religious expression in the late 1980s and the sudden independence of Kyrgyzstan led to a renewed interest in cultural and religious roots. It could have been expected that as a result connections between Kyrgyz and Muslim identity would intensify. Instead, the Muslim-Kyrgyz composite has become more vulnerable in the post-atheist era. In fact, the challenge posed by the anti-religious lecturer who asked "why do you *pretend* to be a Muslim?" has returned with renewed force. The new interrogators are no longer atheists (who have ceased to exist), but Christian and Muslim "believers." Both Islamic purists and Evangelical Christians speak of the Kyrgyz as "people who *call* themselves Muslim" but "in fact" are only superficially so. Moreover, both groups view the pairing of religious and ethnic identity as unfortunate, because in their view faith should transcend ethnic or national categories. This is where similarities between both groups end. Islamic purists interpret the identification of Islam with "traditional" Kyrgyz culture as a perversion of Islam. As a consequence, it is people's customs and practices that have to be changed so that people can become "true Muslims." Protestant Evangelical Christians, by contrast, challenge not culture but religion, claiming that Islam is not only wrong, but also distorts Kyrgyz culture. Instead, they propose a Christianity that they see as culturally consistent with Kyrgyz ways of life.

My research focused on Evangelical Christian challenges to the ethno-religious composite in Kyrgyzstan. The topic is particularly relevant because of the large influx of Evangelical missionaries to the country in recent years. According to official sources there are now about 1,000 missionaries active in Kyrgyzstan, 700 of

whom are Protestant Christians (Mamaiusupov 2003: 305-6). This sudden and large influx needs to be seen in light of increasing Evangelical attention to Muslim and post-socialist countries since the early 1990s. As Kyrgyzstan meets both criteria, and is seen as one of the most liberal post-socialist Muslim countries, it has developed into a sort of missionary hotspot.

Initially the successes of this missionary effort seemed very modest. In the mid-1990s the number of Kyrgyz converts was only around 500. But since then a rapidly increasing number of Kyrgyz have converted. Rough estimations of Kyrgyz converts to Christianity range from 10,000 to 50,000 (Iarkov 2002: 84). My own estimate — based on interviews and church visits — is that there are around 25,000 Kyrgyz Protestant Christians. Because these Christian Kyrgyz are not distributed evenly over the country's territory, but rather live concentrated in the north and especially in urban areas, conversion has in certain areas become a phenomenon that is both socially visible and threatening. In particular, the expansion of Protestant churches challenges common ideas about ethnicity and culture.

Challenging Identity, Employing Culture

The decentralized and diversified nature of Protestant Christianity means that no overall missionary strategy exists in Kyrgyzstan. Missionaries arrive from countries as different as the United States, South Korea, and Germany. They include Presbyterians, Mennonites, Pentecostals, and others, who differ in their theology and missionary approach. I will not attempt here to sketch the differences among these denominations, but rather focus on what I see as a growing trans-denominational effort to promote a "Kyrgyz church." Missionaries who have embraced this goal typically see the "ethnic barrier" as the main obstacle to conversion of the Kyrgyz. In the words of a German pastor:

> Negative attitudes of the Kyrgyz towards Christianity should in most cases not be attributed to people's Islamic conviction, but to their quest for national identity. At the religious level they connect their national identity with Islam and traditional beliefs. A change towards another religion will thus be seen as betrayal of the nation. [Therefore] it is crucial that a Kyrgyz stays a Kyrgyz after his conversion (Zweininger 2002).

What is at issue here are the ties between faith, religion, and culture, which the Evangelists aim to untangle and reassemble. Roughly speaking, their strategy can be reduced to three major steps, which I provisionally termed "De-Russifying Christianity," "De-Islamizing Kyrgyz Culture," and "Kyrgyzifying Christianity."

De-Russification basically addresses the commonly held idea among Kyrgyz that "Jesus is a Russian God." Indeed, most Kyrgyz equate Christianity with Russian Orthodoxy, which they associate with images of people worshipping icons and crossing themselves, and of bearded priests uttering incomprehensible religious formulas. All this, a secular Kyrgyz acquaintance confided to me, "is barbaric to us." To Evangelical missionaries, eliminating associations with Russianness is not only a crucial step in overcoming the "ethnic barrier," it also allows them to exhibit differences between Evangelical and Orthodox Christianity. Part of this effort comes naturally, as the services of Protestant congregations show none of the Orthodox symbols and signs. Moreover, the absence of *visual* religious symbols enables Evangelicals to claim that they are not just proposing a different "religion," but rather are a "gathering of believers" who have overcome religion. While the visual characteristics of Evangelical churches and services may be sufficiently different from "Russian Christianity," this is not the case with Christian *language*. Thus, missionaries have taken active steps to make the difference clear. For example, new Christian literature is often written in "Central Asian Russian," which is standard Russian except that Christian names and terms are replaced with Arabic and Turkic equivalents. For example, the name for Jesus, which most Kyrgyz knew as "the Russian God" *Isus Khristos*, became *Isa* or *Isa Mashaiak* [Jesus the Savior]. Likewise, since both the Kyrgyz word for church [*tsirkö*] and its Russian root *tserkov'* indicate an Orthodox church, the word "church" is preferably avoided; the term favored instead is *jiïn* [meeting].

A second step is to de-Islamize Kyrgyz culture. It is telling that Evangelical Christians rarely speak of Kyrgyz people as Muslims except to prove to their donors that they are working among the largest group of so-called "unreached people." More often, they characterize Kyrgyz people as *having* a "Muslim tradition" or "Muslim customs." Or they insist that it is all about Islamic *identity*, an identity in opposition to Russians. In other words, though the Evangelicals are more subtle than the previously mentioned anti-religious lecturer, they too basically

ask the Kyrgyz why they "pretend to be" Muslim. From an Evangelical perspective there is a twofold logic to this question. First, the question conveys their idea that Kyrgyz are not "real" Muslims and thus allows for a directed dialogue in which the missionary can make his objections — *but* you drink alcohol, *but* you don't pray *namaz*, etc. As such the question intends to remove the respondent from Islam. Second, the question suggests that there is only one "true Islam," which according to many Evangelicals is dogmatic by nature. In essence, by stressing a fundamentalist core to Islam — with which very few Kyrgyz identify — Evangelicals are able to dwell on the differences between Islam and Kyrgyz culture.

This brings us to the last step — Kyrgyzifying Christianity. Repeatedly I heard missionaries say that it is a common misunderstanding to see "Christianity as a Western religion." Instead, they insisted, Christianity is an Eastern religion, and therefore by nature more in line with "Eastern cultures" than with European or American ones. An American missionary told me that the Bible had captivated him since he read it for the first time, but that translating its messages to contemporary North American life was often challenging. He continued, "But when I came here it was amazing. For these people reading the Bible had to be like reading about their own forefathers, about their own culture!" A lot of effort has been made to foster a Kyrgyz image. The setup in several churches, for example, is arranged to stress Kyrgyzness. Everyone, including the pastor, sits on *shyrdaks* on the floor; the elderly receive seats of honor whereas young people sit near the door. The songs are in Kyrgyz and are accompanied by music on traditional Kyrgyz musical instruments. Likewise at Christian cultural events I attended, "typical" Kyrgyz dishes were served, people dressed up in "traditional" dresses, and the events were adorned with Kyrgyz music and dance ensembles.

Responses

The attractions of this cultural "contextualization" may be clear. The cultural displays evoke sentiments of familiarity and even belonging, which is one reason why these techniques are successfully adopted by many Kyrgyz evangelizers. Besides enabling Evangelical Christians to attract potential converts, this cultural "contextualization" also provides Kyrgyz Christians with a positive self-image and a vocabulary that allows them to respond to negative reactions from other Kyrgyz. As one converted Kyrgyz said: "I am Kyrgyz, and my customs all stayed the same. We didn't change our nationality … instead of having religion we now believe. That is all [*vmesto religii my seichas verim. Eto vse*]." The "contextualization" efforts are also clearly intended to show the Christians' deep respect for Kyrgyz culture. As a missionary worded it during a Christian cultural festival, "I know that missionaries have often been accused of destroying culture. But if you look here, I would say that we are doing the exact opposite."

This active involvement in culture forces us, however, to ask whose definition of culture is being used in Evangelical activities and what are the implications of such uses of culture. Often, "culture" was reduced to a highly selective rendering of "national" symbols and signs which simplified and objectified far more complex webs of meaning and practice. In other words, Evangelicals treated "culture" as a set of free floating images and signs that could be easily attached to new sets of morals and beliefs. Discomfort with this partly explains the negative reactions of my Muslim Kyrgyz acquaintances when I showed them pictures taken at Christian celebrations. They were astounded that the Kyrgyz-looking figures were Christians. According to some, this "misuse of Kyrgyz culture" was even worse than becoming a Russian — an Orthodox Christian. Likewise, the national media have been highly critical of what they see as the manipulative and deceptive techniques of Evangelical Christians. In particular, the media criticize the use of Islamic vocabulary and Kyrgyz traditions by missionaries as an attempt to hide Christianity in Islamic guise and thus deceive people into conversion.

The impact of the missionary influx to Kyrgyzstan is not restricted to the growing number of Kyrgyz converts to Christianity, but has a wider impact on the religious landscape. I would once again like to refer to the dialogue that introduced this paper. When the young Komsomol member answered that he was a Muslim because he was Kyrgyz, he basically gave the only possible answer. Nowadays, the same question, even after removing the normative push — and simply asking, "are you Muslim?" — provokes very different reactions. Most secular Kyrgyz would like the answer to be as it once was: "yes, because I am Kyrgyz." But such answers are now given less often and with less confidence than before. Instead the answers tend to become either more assertive — "yes, because Islam is the true faith," or more apologetic, "yes, I am

Muslim," followed by a qualification, "but I am not actively involved." The fight for the souls of the Kyrgyz has only begun and will have unmistakable impact on the way people in Kyrgyzstan see themselves and express ideas of culture and nationality.

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Banquets, Grant-Eaters and the Red Intelligentsia in Post-Soviet Georgia

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In many societies banquets are powerful tools for expressing, attributing and manipulating national identity. Additionally, they often function as social markers of individual passages like birth, baptism and marriage. Banquets are ruled by etiquette and force participants to subordinate themselves to a collective code of behavior.

In post-Soviet Georgia, the *supra*, a highly formalized banquet, is a core element of national culture and a crucial part of both festivities and daily life. The supra is structured by toasts and ruled by a toastmaster [*tamada*]. The toasts follow a generally uniform, yet not entirely fixed, structure. Certain topics are obligatory, such as toasts to the family and the deceased, and a certain pattern is prescribed, such as following a toast to the deceased by proposing a toast to life, often presented as a toast to children. In addition to this, toasts to attributed identity (e.g., family, gender) are most commonly proposed before toasts to acquired identity (e.g., profession, hobbies) (Chatwin 1997).

Some toasts reinforce national values (especially the toast to the motherland, but also more subtly expressed in toasts to culture, song, and history), gender identity (particularly the obligatory toast to women), family values, and peer group identity. Generally the toasts should express honor to the addressee or the topic in hand and should not contain any colloquial expressions, let alone swearwords, gossip, or criticism. The language used is itself characterized by the use of certain formulas (e.g., *gaumarjos* ["May victory be with you!"] at the end of each toast) and a high, grammatically complex, level of speaking (note especially the frequent use of the third subjunctive).

A good toastmaster is generally defined as a person with an extensive knowledge of history, poems, songs and traditions. He (or, in very rare cases, she) should not merely repeat formulas — that would be considered a bad performance. It is very important that the toastmaster is able to improvise and propose toasts in an original, personalized way. Thus, the topics of the main toasts and the general

structure are given, but the transmitted factors, or "tradition," have to be acquired and integrated into personal, intentional behavior to complete the performance and make it successful. Consequently, a "correct" performance of the supra is not based on a faithful reproduction of an "authentic" or "true" procedure, but on the willingness and ability of the performers to integrate the formulas into their personal habitus.

At a Georgian banquet it is impossible to drink alcohol without relating it to a toast. Sipping wine is a deadly sin. The ritual consumption of wine and its connection to food bears obvious parallels in the Christian Holy Communion. But wine in the context of the Georgian banquet is not exclusively associated with the blood of Christ. As many Georgians believe that Georgia is the birthplace of wine, and as there are many traces in Georgian culture that indicate the prior importance of wine for Georgian identity, wine becomes a metaphor for Georgian blood, and those who share wine at a supra become virtual kinsmen.

The rules of etiquette at the supra are very strict and function as a formalized system for distributing honor. Everybody should be included in this process of distribution, but a certain hierarchy based on social structure is reinforced. Who is addressed by the tamada, when and how, who speaks after whom and for how long, who drinks when and how much — all these facts can be considered to be part of a performance of status. Boys show that they have become men when they stand up during a toast to women or the deceased, while women and children remain seated. Men who have stopped actively participating in the process of drinking and toasting are most likely no longer considered the head of their family.[1] Generally, toasting encompasses both competition and solidarity.

Both in Georgian scholarly and popular discourse, the supra is considered to be an essential part of the Georgian tradition, too old to be dated accurately. Historical sources would suggest, however, that the supra in its current form is a product of the 19th century, closely related to the rise of the national movement. Western travelogues from the 15th-18th century (such as Contarini 1873, Busbec 1926 [1589], Chardin 1668 and Lamberti 1664) indicate the long and vivid history of ritualized drinking, but the Georgian words for toastmaster and toast cannot be found in these sources, nor can the description of cultural practices comparable to these concepts. Additionally, according to the travelogues, wine was frequently drunk without any ritual framing.

These observations are backed by Georgian literature and historiography. Since the "Golden Age" in the 11th-13th century the description of feasts has been a common topic in Georgian sources, but no hint of toasting or toastmastership can be found. Even in the 19th century the poet Ak'ak'i C'ereteli (1989: 25) noticed in his writings that "the ancestors" did not propose toasts at a table and would be ashamed if they witnessed the present-day phenomenon. In the famous and extensive dictionary from the 18th century by Sulxan Saba Orbeliani (1991), the words for toastmaster and toast are absent, an omission that would be difficult to explain if the Georgian banquet at that time were structurally the same as today's. Consequently, the Georgian banquet is an example of an "invented tradition" (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983) and fulfills the function of creating and reinforcing national identity.

The Georgian word for toast first appears in a cycle of poems by the Georgian aristocrat Grigol Orbeliani (1800-1883), often considered to be one of the "fathers" of the national movement (e.g., Suny 1994: 125).[2] The poems are written in the form of toasts and remember national heroes and their deeds. This genre quickly became popular at banquets. Remembering the past as a toast became a form of national education after the Russian annexation of Georgia in 1801 and the consequent suppression of national sovereignty. In this context the verbal evocation of the past becomes a patriotic mission at the table.

There is another closely related explanation as to why the supra spread so quickly and extensively in 19th century Georgia. Unlike former occupiers of Georgia, the Russians shared the same religion as Georgians. Consequently, religion could no longer be a distinguishing factor between "us" and "them." The "othering" of the Georgian nation had to be based on something else — folk culture. Despite its

[1] In some cases I could relate the refusal to drink wine at a supra by men in their fifties to the loss of a prestigious job after Georgia acquired independence.

[2] The Georgian literature journalist Levan Bregadze argues that Orbeliani copied the style of the Russian author Zhukovskii in his poem. This would present the possibility that the Georgians adopted the art of toasting from Russian aristocratic circles (who themselves imported this practice from Britain).

aristocratic origin, the supra, as a distinct way of feasting and as a manifestation of "Georgian" hospitality, soon became a symbol of cultural otherness.

In Soviet times the supra continued to be a sign of national identity and aroused suspicion from the authorities. In a law adopted in 1975 in Soviet Georgia, large banquets associated with crucial events like births, marriages, or deaths, were dismissed as a public display of a traditional attitude opposed to the ideal of the *Homo Sovieticus*. The supra became a "harmful custom."[3] Additionally, for ethnic Georgians it was a privileged place for creating networks, reinforcing alliances and trading information — important factors for coping with Soviet life.

Those Georgian intellectuals who considered defending Georgian culture to be their main task, but were well established in the Soviet academic or administrative systems, saw the supra as an important means of education. Historians like Shota Meskhia presented a completely different version of Georgian history at a supra than the one he taught at the university. For "orthodox nationalism" the supra was a "true academy," as a popular saying from this time states. The representatives of "unorthodox nationalism" used the socially acceptable form of the supra to disguise their meetings.[4]

In post-Soviet Georgia the supra lost its function as a permanent reassurance of cultural authenticity — at least inside the Republic of Georgia. For the many Georgians who left Georgia in recent years, due to political and economic instability, the supra continues to be a marker of national identity. In the setting of a diaspora, the table is a central place for socializing with fellow Georgians, and the rules of the supra often serve as a way of explaining Georgian culture to foreigners. Special dishes like *tqemali* sauce represent the "taste" of Georgia and can be missed, just like home.

For the last few years the age and origins of the supra have been hotly and publicly debated subjects in Georgia. This discussion was initiated by a local NGO publication in 2000 (Nodia 2000). In this publication, two authors from non-academic fields stated in separate articles that the supra originated as late as the 19th century. Another author in the same publication described the supra as a sublimated expression of male homosexuality. As a response to this publication a couple of anthropologists and historians from official academic institutions dismissed the three authors as incompetent amateurs (e.g., Gociridze 2001).

The public debate over the supra reflects the emergence of a new intellectual elite consisting of young, well educated people who prefer to work for NGOs instead of choosing an academic career. As these people are dependent on money from Western institutions, they are sometimes referred to as "grant-eaters." The mostly older representatives of the academic system are called the "red intelligentsia" in return, in order to stress their ties to the Soviet past.

One of the most popular arguments of the "red intelligentsia" against the "grant-eaters" is that the latter are trying to destroy the national culture in order to integrate Georgia into a global market. In this context, denying the "ancient tradition" of the supra is seen as a conscious attempt to extract one of the roots of Georgian culture. Against this background, the discourse on the supra has a strong normative power. Any attitude on this topic invariably leads to an association with the old or the new elite. Whoever wins the fight for prestige and influence in present-day Georgia will significantly shape the representation of national identity. For the "red intelligentsia," the supra will remain a favorite means of symbolizing cultural distinctness. For the "grant-eaters," the supra will become a synonym for cultural backwardness, and be replaced by Western-style parties or banquets *à la fourchette*.

[3] See the decision of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Georgia, dated November 15, 1975, on "Measures to increase the fight against harmful traditions and customs," in Gerber 1997: 261.

[4] The concept of "orthodox" and "unorthodox nationalism" is used and has been popularized by Suny in his monograph, *The Making of the Georgian Nation* (1994: 307).

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Mongols, Kazakhs, and Mongolian Territorial Identity: Competing Trajectories of Nationalization

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While Mongolia's emergence from the Soviet sphere of influence was expected to entail a recasting of history, identity and statehood, the nature of this recasting was largely uncertain in the early 1990s. Among the foremost questions concerning ethnic Kazakhs, the state's second largest ethnic community,[1] were "what form of nationalization would be enacted in the wake of the Marxist-Leninist decline and would ethnic Kazakhs still have a place in a truly independent Mongolia?"[2] An effort

[1] According to the Mongolian National Statistical Office (2001a: 50), in 1989 Kazakhs represented 5.9 percent of the total Mongolian population. In 1999 this percentage had dropped to 4.3, but the Kazakhs remained the second largest ethnic community.

[2] The terms post-communist and post-socialist are problematic because of the retention of power by the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party, which currently holds 72 of 76 seats on the Great Khuraltai and from which current President Natsagiyn Bagabandi draws his political power. The term post-Marxist-Leninist implies an altered, potentially more nationalistic, socialist approach to governance in the "independence period" (i.e., Mongolia's existence after its extrication from the Soviet sphere).

to answer these questions requires the exploration of the complex negotiation of discourses that has taken place over the last 14 years.

This short paper explores discourses shaping the relationship between somewhat essentialized nomadic cultural traits, Mongolia's socioeconomic development strategies and the current trajectory of nationalization. As I shall demonstrate, the interaction of perspectives on these issues is potentially volatile and draws from the long and complex ethno-cultural history of the steppe region. In the final section, I suggest that Khalka (majority elites) attempts to construct hegemony over all other ethnic Mongols have a direct impact on the status of Kazakhs in Mongolia.

This effort to elucidate the dynamic negotiation of identity and homeland conceptions among cultural elites and various components of the Mongolian citizenry takes the form of a discourse analysis. I rely primarily on interview data and a review of in-country literature and media (government documents, newspapers, poetry, film, and academic writing). Fieldwork was carried out in 2001 and 2002 within the capital city of Ulaan Baatar, the province [*aimag*] of Bayan Olgi and a variety of locales of Mongolian-Kazakh concentration.

Democracy, Civic Nationalism, and Territorial Citizenship

It is not a simple matter to answer the question "Who is a Mongol," let alone "Who is a Mongolian?" Taking the form of anti-Chinese feelings, the Oirat/Khalka divide, the East/West distinction, and the "othering" of the Inner (Chinese) Mongols, oppositional social structures have been in place for decades, if not centuries, in "Outer Mongolia." It was, however, the collapse of the Marxist-Leninist powerbase that catalyzed a new national reimagining, with the potential to radically alter the status of "Mongol" and non-Mongol groups both within and outside the state.

Pan-Mongolism could have emerged and redefined *all* ethnically Mongol peoples as part of the national structure of contemporary Mongolia. Such a conception would likely have problematized relations between Mongolia and its more powerful neighbors,[3] as well as alienated the country's Kazakh community. The Turkic-speaking, Muslim, and highly geographically concentrated Kazakh community was extremely vulnerable to being recast within "othering" discourses. No longer did this group represent a proto-national exile-community, prevented from returning to its historic homeland by Soviet restrictions on transborder movement. Instead, through the emergence of an independent Kazakhstan, it had been transformed into a nationalizing diaspora comprising over 80 percent of the population of a Mongolian province (Bayan Ogli) in close proximity to the group's ethno-national kin-state.

But overt "othering" discourses and pan-Mongol conceptions of Mongolness have not manifested themselves. Quite the contrary, residence within the borders of Mongolia, as of 1990, has served to define Mongolian civic-national identity. Inner Mongols of China, and Buryats and Kalmyks in Russia have remained marginalized, while despite their religious and linguistic distinctiveness, Kazakhs who reside within Mongolian territorial limits have been vested with a legitimate claim to "belonging." Kazakhs have *not* been incontrovertibly or seamlessly integrated into the civic conception of the Mongolian nation, but aggressive "pan-Mongolism" was essentially "taken off the table."

Application of this territorial principle to the nationalization of Mongolia suggests that the majority of both Mongol and Mongolian-Kazakh elites envisioned a relatively free choice of residence and citizenship for Mongolia's Kazakh community (i.e., remain in Mongolia as equal citizens or voluntarily migrate to Kazakhstan). An effort to institutionalize principles of democracy within Mongolia's new constitution was genuinely undertaken by the country's elites following the fall of the Soviet supported/directed regime (Sanders 1993). Such an effort was couched within an essentialist discourse holding nomadic cultural heritage to be inherently democratic.

Nomadism and Modernization

One can point to a relatively successful marriage of "East and West," "modern and traditional" in the construction of Mongolian political ideals, but this hybridity has proven far more complicated in the arena of economic and cultural development. The

[3] The "Russian as colonizer" constituted an obvious base against which Mongolian elites could "push off" in an effort to propel their nationalization project along a new trajectory, but such exclusion would have alienated a much needed regional ally.

very nomadic heritage credited with providing the basis for the success of democratization in Mongolia since 1990 is regarded by some factions within the state as antithetical to economic advancement.

At the core of a rather heated and multifaceted negotiation of development strategies is a question of the viability of nomadism in the modern world. The debate can be broadly characterized as consisting of those who espouse placing nomadism at the core of the new nationalization process, and those viewing such a socioeconomic model as archaic and incompatible with the state's future in the modern international system (Batbayar 2002: 327).

Writers such as the Member of Parliament M. Zenee (1992) and the poet M. O. Dashbalbar (1995, 1996) represent the culturally conservative faction in this highly polarized debate. With clear aspirations of preserving the purity of Mongolia's eco-cultural heritage, they equate modernization with westernization and declare these processes to be incompatible with the basic characteristics of the "Mongolian" nation.

For these writers, and elites like them, removing pastoral nomadic heritage as the centerpiece of discourses framing the new nation would "ring the death knell" for Mongolian culture. My use of the word "Mongolian" in this case is significant because both Kazakhs and those Oirat groups portrayed at times as being only marginally related to the Mongol ethnic group[4] are included in this conception of cultural heritage as fellow "felt tent dwellers" [*tuurgatan*]. An ethnic core is, therefore, far less prevalent than a cultural core in this particular manifestation of a primordialist national discourse. Having set the limits of Mongolian nationalization within the borders of the state, the "other" against which this aspect of identity is to be defined is not necessarily ethno-national in nature.[5] It is rather the "rest of the world" or, put another way, globalization's attempts to infringe upon the nomadic space that constitutes the oppositional structure against which traditionalists seek to define the Mongolian nation.

Cultural Hybridity and the Hegemony of Modernization

According to Ch. Sharavtseren, "the Mongols divide the world into those who live within earth walls and those who dwell within felt walls. From the nomads' point of view the sedentary lifestyle still appears rather miserable" (2002: 7). This being said, urbanization, which boomed in the immediate aftermath of the Soviet collapse only to see a steady reversal during the economic crisis of the early 1990s, appears to have regained momentum since 1995 (Diener 2003: 179).

The dwindling of government supplies to remote counties [*soums*], the possibility of urban jobs, and the opportunity to access the new global culture from which Mongolia had been "walled-off" during the Soviet era are responsible for this large-scale movement of people to the city. Young people, whose vision of the future differs greatly from that of their parents, compose the most prominent component of this migration wave. It is this generational divide that has led to an increasingly prevalent discourse debating the viability of hybridizing nomadic values and modernization.

This cleavage has taken on a political dimension, as parties like the Mongolian National Democratic Party (MNDP) and the Mongolian Socialist Democratic Parity (MSDP) provide vehicles for the ascension to power of what Zenee describes as "people with un-Mongolian bodies and mentalities, thieves, liars, hooligans, criminals, border-crossers, alcoholics, and prostitutes" (Zenee 1996: 4).[6] This negative characterization reflects the fear that modernity is hegemonic, constituting a proverbial threshold that once breached will override traditional culture and render it "quaint," "archaic," and by consequence "obsolete" (Zenee 1992). The process of marginalizing traditional culture in the lives of the population is seen as already underway and embodied by efforts to hybridize modern technology within centuries-old cultural and material practices.

"Modernizers" present the counter argument to nomadization. This faction of Mongolian political elite accepts modernity's hegemony and encourages

[4] Here I refer to the portrayal of various western Mongol tribes as Mongolized Turks. See Uradyn Bulag's discussion of ethno-genesis (1998: 90-97; 1994).

[5] A renewed fear of Chinese aggression and the desire for distinction from Russia, as a former colonizer, are lesser, but still prevalent, elements in this discourse.

[6] Tumursukh argues this condemnation is far less abstract than it may seem (2001: 132-134). The younger men and women running for parliament from the MNDP and MSDP coalition have regularly been cast as modernizing puppets of foreign powers and examples of "political prostitution."

a strictly nominal hybridity of modernization with traditional Mongolian values. Bat-Erdeniin Batbayar argues the debate between modernity and nomadism is moot in that the purity of Mongolian society has already been irreparably corrupted by 70 years of Soviet influence. To retain nomadic cultural paradigms as the core of the nation-making process is to make the country a living museum (1996: 3-5). Elites within this faction regard modernization as essential to Mongolia's integration into the competitive world market of the 21st century.[7]

It is thought that the construction of cities along the yet to be completed 2,400-kilometer east-west highway (the Millennium Road), envisioned as the prime future artery for trade, will impel the urbanization of more than 90 percent of the state's population over the next 30 years (Batbayar 2002: 328; Enkhbayar 2002: 5). The revival of single family herds, occurring since the fall of socialism, would be reversed through the incorporation of large farms employing as little as ten percent of the country's population (Bayartsaikhan 2002: 5). Reminiscent of Soviet efforts at modernization in the 1960s and 1980s, a direct assault on the traditional eco-cultural paradigm of the Mongolian people once again looms on the horizon.

Kazakh Inclusion and Khalka Hegemony in Mongolia

In the spirit of utilizing the past to reset the trajectory of the national future, a "Mongol renaissance" was launched in the early 1990s (Campi 1991; Sabloff 2001). The reification of genealogies, revival of the cult of Chinggis Khan, rebirth of shamanism, and return to traditional herding practices — all of which had been repressed under socialist rule — were expected to appeal universally across the Mongol ethnic spectrum and generate a rebirth of "pre-socialist unity."[8] The demographic predominance of the Khalka, constituting 81.5 percent of the total citizenry of Mongolia, provided the ethnic core of this process (Bulag 1994, 1998; Tumursukh 2001).[9]

Of particular interest in this reimagining of the Mongolian nation is the idea that by virtue of their long habitation of "Mongolian territory," history of cooperation with "Mongols," shared suffering under the reigns of Stalin and Choibalsan, and cultural/genealogical overlaps with the Mongols, the Mongolian-Kazakhs have been afforded greater legitimacy in their claims to membership in the new Mongolian nation than even ethnic "Mongol" peoples living beyond the state's borders. As noted above, a territorial principle has served as the criterion for inclusion within the nationalization process.[10] The question remains however, why? The answer to this question may ironically be found in the concept of Khalka hegemony and its innate resistance to "pan-Mongolism."

"Pan-Mongolism," or the incorporation of all ethnically Mongol peoples into the "Mongolian nation," is seen as negative in two senses. First, extension of the Mongolian identity to all Mongols could dramatically improve the political power of the "Western Mongols" through the infusion of Buryats, Tuvans, Kalmyks, and other groups currently living in Russia. Second, while one can argue that the inclusion of the predominately Khalka Inner Mongols in the Mongolian nation would actually increase Khalka hegemony, the almost pathological fear of the Chinese demographic dilution of Mongolia eliminates any possibility of this occurring.

This political motive of nationalizing only those already within the territory of "Outer" Mongolia supports constructivist theories of nationhood asserting that criteria of belonging relate most directly to parochial concerns of a particular "elite."[11] Khalka hegemony has proven rather non-threatening for the Kazakhs because they have no desire to be considered Mongols and, at least those

[7] In an interview, Mongolia's Prime Minister Nambariin Enkhbayar stated, "it is not my desire to destroy the original Mongolian identity, but in order to survive we have to stop being nomads" (quoted in Murphy 2001: 31).

[8] An attempt to replace Cyrillic with the traditional Mongol script (*tod*) was also part of this Mongol renaissance but was abandoned in the early 1990s.

[9] Evidence of this ethnic core within the nationalization process is available in the increasingly prominent use of the term "Mongol" in reference to the Khalka, while other "Mongol" groups are referred to by their ethnonym (Uriangkhai, Durvut, etc.) or grouped into a category of "Western Mongols" or Oirats.

[10] A 1995 law on citizenship states that every person who was a citizen of Mongolia on and after 11 July 1921 and has not relinquished their citizenship will be considered a citizen of Mongolia (*Mongol Messenger* 1995).

[11] The constructivist approach to nationalism is perhaps best articulated in Benedict Anderson (1991).

remaining within the semi-autonomous province of Bayan Olgi, appear rather accepting of a "second among equals" status within Mongolian society (Diener 2003: 210-71).

Conclusion

It is within this contested sociopolitical landscape that Mongolian-Kazakhs currently seek to reconcile their ethnic identity (which links them to an independent Kazakhstan) and their attachments to place and patterns of sociocultural behavior that have sustained them within Mongolian society for multiple generations. With over 80 percent of Mongolia's Kazakhs residing in Bayan Olgi Province, ethnic purity is retained within a "ghetto or enclave demarcated by boundaries so sharp that they enabled the [Mongolian] nation to acknowledge the apparently singular and clearly fenced-off 'other' within itself" (Tololyan 1991: 6).

Such "fencing off" can be viewed in two ways. First, the territorial articulation of Kazakh ethnicity has the capacity to reaffirm the privileged position of Mongols in Mongolia and may even serve the hegemonic aims of the Khalka by providing an ally in the western, predominantly Oirat, region of the country.[12] Second, in contrast, this "fencing off" of difference may result in greater marginalization of Mongolian-Kazakhs in Bayan Olgi. They are not "Mongol," but have found points of access to the Mongolian nation; they are not Kazakhstani, but are well aware of their Kazakh identity. Is this community deterritorialized? Are they devoid of a national homeland? By examining both the process of nationalization within Mongolia and the export of Kazakh nationalism from Kazakhstan, further research may be able to address these questions.

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[12] Peter Finke argues that "the exceptional treatment of the Kazakh minority may have had its origin in the political events in western Mongolia in the first half of the century when the Xalxa (Khalka) government feared a west-Mongolian separatist movement. The favoring of the newly immigrated Kazakhs could make them loyal subjects and as such a buffer against the Oirats" (Finke 1999: 119).

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Power, Influence and Stability: The Unified Energy Systems of Russia in the Southern Tier FSU

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Energy remains a key component of Russia's relations with its southern former Soviet neighboring states. In electricity exports, oil and gas imports and exports, and ownership of the associated infrastructure, energy serves as a tool of Russia's foreign policy and as an important market for Russian companies. Although it has long been in vogue in energy and energy policy circles to worry about Russian energy behavior in its "near abroad," it is increasingly inappropriate to speak of the energy sector as if it is unitary, and to conflate interests of the Russian energy corporations and the Russian state. This paper will focus on the lesser-known electricity sector. Some "natural monopolies," such as the gas giant Gazprom, remain very close to the government and are used by the government directly to further foreign policy goals. The Russian Joint-Stock Company-Unified Energy Systems of Russia (RAO-UESR), is far more likely to pursue its own market interests, even when those are at odds with Russian state interests.

In fall 2003, a RAO-UESR press release announced that, under its leadership, all of the former Soviet republics were now operating on a parallel grid. Parallel grid operation for the entire former Soviet space is particularly notable because it was never achieved during the Soviet era (Unified Energy System of Russia 2003a). Such a grid increases the quality and reliability of electricity, by ensuring that shortfall in one area can be supplied by

[1] The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the National Defense University, the Department of Defense, or the US Government.

another area, and that surplus electricity in one area can be exported rather than wasted.

RAO-UESR has been explicit about its plans to further expand its operations throughout the CIS (Financial Times Information 2003). Anatoly Chubais is CEO of the company and chairman of the CIS Electric Energy Council, founded in 1992. All eight of the Central Asian and Caucasus states are among the 11 council members. Through this body the decisions were made to synchronize all the southern-tier grids. RAO-UESR has offices in Tbilisi and Astana, and exports electricity to Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Moldova, and Ukraine (Unified Energy System of Russia 2003b). It has bought or is negotiating to buy holdings in generation and/or transmission in five of the southern tier countries. RAO-UESR completed significant purchases in the Caucasus in 2003 and in Central Asia in 2004. Subsequent sections of this paper will examine each region, the participation of RAO-UESR, and the state and market interests at stake.

The Caucasus States

Located at the far edge of the Soviet grid, the Caucasus electricity system was designed to meet the needs of the region as a whole, not the needs of each constituent member. Armenia and Georgia have substantial generation capacity relative to their population size, but no significant indigenous energy resources, while Azerbaijan has energy resources, but limited generation capacity. Independence and subsequent conflicts (especially in Nagorno-Karabakh and Abkhazia) compelled each of the three states to try to function independently. None was able to rationalize its system. High levels of debt, poor transmission capability, gross inefficiencies in generation and transmission, and the inability to recover costs have plagued all three states. Energy experts raised the idea many times of reintegrating the regional utility network to rationalize electricity provision once again.

In 2003, RAO-UESR completed significant debt-for-equity purchases, acquiring 75 percent of Tbilisi's electricity network (Energy Information Administration 2003). In Armenia, through a combination of buying out the American company AES and exchanging debt for equity, RAO-UESR acquired approximately 50 percent of Armenia's generating capacity. RAO-UESR also acquired a five-year license to operate the nuclear power plant, Medzamor-2. In Azerbaijan in 2003, RAO-UESR restored and commissioned a 330 kV high-voltage line connecting Russia, Daghestan and Azerbaijan (Unified Energy System of Russia 2003b), and signed a contract for transmission of Azerbaijani electricity to Turkey.

RAO-UESR appears to have two corporate goals in the region. The first is to make the troubled electricity sectors of these states successful (and thereby convert some bad debt into good equity), and the second is to stabilize the grid so that the company can supply Turkey and northern Iran with electricity — making the Caucasus no longer the end of the grid, but a bridge to less troubled markets.

RAO-UESR has a record of success in improving the sector in the transition economies, increasing payments, and moving states away from barter into cash payments. The Caucasus states had significant payments problems. Worst of the three has been Georgia, partly because the plant in Abkhazia continues to supply power to residents, and Moscow continues to present the Georgian government with the bill for fuel in spite of Abkhazia's inaccessibility to the Georgian government. RAO-UESR appears to be making significant progress overall — reportedly, payments in Georgia improved 40 percent in the first year (Prime-Tass 2004).

Regarding the use of the Caucasus as an electricity transit route, RAO-UESR announced a contract with Turkey for supply of 2 to 2.5 million kWh daily in March 2001. This supply was to come via Georgia, with Georgia receiving 33 percent of all electricity transported across its territory as payment. Electricity exports began on March 20, 2001 (Unified Energy System of Russia 2001). Even prior to purchases in the Caucasus, RAO-UESR had expressed a hope that supply would increase to 100-110 million kWh per month. This electricity is expected to come in part from Armenia, transiting across Georgia, and in part from Azerbaijan.

Caucasus States' Interests and Perceptions

Critics in Armenia and Georgia have worried about the potentially hidden hand of the Russian state. The opposition in Armenia asserts that RAO-UESR does not operate in accordance with international corporate standards, and has access to too many state secrets while it manages the nuclear power plant. In Georgia, the sale of AES assets to RAO-UESR occurred so suddenly that some suspected the Shevardnadze government had been taken by

surprise. Many Georgians suspected that control of the electricity grid could enable Russia to further strengthen the breakaway republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The new Saakashvili government came to office expressing skepticism about the RAO-UESR deal, but the first winter of Russian-owned electricity services passed with a notable improvement in the quality of service. According to a 2004 survey of Tbilisi residents, 87 percent believed that power supply has significantly improved (Prime-Tass 2004). By spring 2004, Georgian Premier Zurab Zhvania was asserting that the working relationship with RAO-UESR was mutually beneficial (Financial Times Information 2004a).

In retrospect, the RAO-UESR takeovers appear advantageous for all the involved parties. At the outset, however, the potential impact on interests of the Caucasus states appeared very different. Armenia was eager to have supply commitments from Russia because of its hostile borders and paucity of energy resources. In addition, the Medzamor nuclear power plant, seen as vital to national energy security, was under pressure from otherwise generous donors. It was widely believed that Russian management would both calm Western fears about the plant and help Armenia lobby more effectively on Medzamor's behalf.

In Georgia, the advantages were far less clear. Given the tense climate of Russian-Georgian relations, many were nervous about inviting a Russian company in to take over the failing sector. RAO-UESR won majority shares in much of the electricity sector in Armenia largely because the American company, AES, had such a negative experience there that no other Western buyers were interested.

In Azerbaijan, increased independence from Russia in energy has been an explicit goal of both Aliyev administrations. Azerbaijan already imports most of its natural gas from Russia, and its oil export routes run principally through Russia. Since Azerbaijan has sufficient resources that its energy sector is not debt-ridden, it was not vulnerable to a RAO-UESR purchase. The sector, however, remains in significant disrepair.

The Central Asian States

Like the Caucasus, Central Asia represented a far end of the Soviet grid. The northern portion of Kazakhstan's grid, based on coal, was designed to export electricity to Siberia and to the industrial towns of Kazakhstan. The Central Asian Soviet grid (comprised of southern Kazakhstan and the four remaining states) was geared towards the more agricultural southern regions, designed to integrate the seasonal hydroelectric resources of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan with Kazakh thermal resources and the considerable gas reserves of Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. There was not interstate armed conflict in Central Asia, but these states also attempted to create national grids when the Soviet Union fell apart. As a result, energy shocks reverberated through even the energy-rich states, exacerbated by each country pursuing distinct (and in many instances incompatible) national energy policies.

As in the Caucasus, the idea of reintegrating the regional utility network was considered repeatedly, but the Central Asian states were persistently unable to resolve the problems. The United Central Asia Power System grid continued to connect the five states, but the states' pricing systems were incompatible, and the grid suffered from surplus in the spring and summer coupled with shortfalls in the winter and fall.

Parallel operations with RAO-UESR have been in place in Central Asia since July 20, 2000,[2] but 2004 marked its most significant advances in the region. In September 2004, RAO-UESR concluded an agreement to acquire a 50 percent share in Kazakhstan's Ekibastuz power plant, partly in a debt-for-equity swap (Gleason 2004). RAO-UESR continues negotiating for additional stakes in generation and transmission, including the 500 kV Ekibastuz-Omsk power transmission line. In August 2004, RAO-UESR began negotiating for some new assets in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan as well: offering debt-for-equity swaps, the company has proposed finishing major hydro stations in Kambar-Ata (Kyrgyzstan) and Sangtuda (Tajikistan) that were begun in the Soviet era but then abandoned at independence (Gleason 2004).

Central Asian States' Interests and Perceptions

The RAO-UESR Ekibastuz purchase is very recent, so it is impossible to assess its impact, but local resistance almost prevented the agreement. The agreement had already been finalized in May 2004,

[2] Kazakhstan began parallel operations with UES at this date, bringing the entire region with it, since all the Central Asian states were already synchronized by way of the United Central Asia Power System.

but in summer 2004 the Eurasian Industrial Association of Kazakhstan and Russian Aluminum attempted to buy the plant. This group sought to block RAO-UESR partly because they were concerned about rate increases. RAO-UESR is likely to apply what it has learned in the Caucasus to push Kazakhstan into a more market-based tariff system. RAO-UESR also has an interest in improvement of transmission in Kazakhstan, especially in ensuring that the northern and southern grids are properly linked. This project, however, has attracted funding from EBRD and from the Kazakh Development Bank (Financial Times Information 2004b), so Kazakhstan will probably resolve it without RAO-UESR.

Both Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are enthusiastic about the prospects of generating more hydroelectricity and thereby reducing their payments to neighboring states for fossil fuels. However, RAO-UESR may find the cost of doing business higher than they originally anticipated. In September 2004, President Khatami of Iran offered $250 million to purchase a controlling block of shares in Tajikistan's Sangtuda Hydrostation No. 1, substantially more than RAO-UESR's original offer (Financial Times Information, 2004c). Following meetings with the Iranian President, President Rahmonov of Tajikistan suggested that Iran, RAO-UESR and Tajikistan will each invest in shares, with Iran as the majority shareholder (Financial Times Information 2004c). RAO-UESR had originally hoped to purchase controlling shares in a debt-for-equity swap. It remains to be seen if RAO-UESR will accept the new proposal.

In Kyrgyzstan, RAO-UESR participation is welcomed. Kyrgyz export of electricity to Russia in 2004 exceeded one billion kWh (Unified Energy System of Russia 2004), and this has generated much-needed revenues for Kyrgyzstan, as well as generating jobs and reducing the tensions associated with the water-for-electricity swaps of past years. Under the water-electricity swaps, Kazakhstan was compelled to accept — and pay for — spring and summer electricity from Kyrgyzstan which it did not want, since it has a surplus of generation capacity, most of which is in private hands.[3] Because RAO-UESR now incorporates Kyrgyzstan into a much larger grid, the problems of seasonal surplus have been resolved. Kyrgyzstan has found RAO-UESR to be a reliable customer, so there is little domestic objection to an increased presence.

Russian State Interests and RAO-UESR Corporate Interests

The RAO-UESR interests in the Caucasus are fairly straightforward: 1) to export power to desirable markets including Turkey and Iran; 2) to obtain some value for otherwise bad debt in debt-for-equity swaps; 3) to reduce disputes over debt and theft of power (essential for transit); and 4) to position itself better for an eventual link to a larger European grid (through Turkey).

RAO-UESR interests in Central Asia are similar: 1) to export power to new markets to the south and east, including Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan and China; 2) to capture some returns on energy debt; 3) to capture cheap hydroelectricity for the Russian market; and 4) to stabilize and fully integrate the Central Asian grid.

These interests are not necessarily antagonistic to Russian state interests. For example, the link to European, southern or Asian grids serves Russian state interests of increasing the importance of Russia to these markets, and diversifying and increasing the portion of value-added energy exports.

RAO-UESR electricity successes in the southern tier may also make it possible to continue to subsidize electricity consumption in Russia, where energy reforms are needed but politically very costly. The European Union has agreed to drop objections to Russia's membership in the WTO when Russian domestic energy charges are high enough to pay the actual cost of the service.[4] The difficult task of domestic price reform in Russia will be made substantially easier if RAO-UESR can attract more hydro (the lowest-cost source for electricity) into its electricity supply.

Finally, having Russian companies on the ground — even companies not historically close to the Kremlin — may provide some opportunity for the Kremlin to project power. Iran's bid for ownership in Tajik hydro demonstrates that other

[3] Water is typically not monetized. In an effort to make the swaps successful, Kyrgyzstan was promised a payment for the storage of the water, and full payment for the associated electricity, when it spilled water for Kazakh, Uzbek and Turkmen irrigation in the spring and summer.

[4] The EU shifted from seeking world market prices to accepting cost-replacement in return for Russia's agreement to sign the Kyoto Protocol.

states have an interest in the same markets and the influence that may come with them.

In some ways, however, RAO-UESR's goals for the region may be at odds with Russian state goals. By converting non-performing markets into commercially successful ones, RAO-UESR reduces the extent to which Russia can leverage energy debt for cooperation in other areas such as troop placements. By transforming the status of these states from end-of-the-grid to strategically significant transit states, RAO-UESR gives them a measure of influence over Russia's profits and increases their leverage significantly. Successful, functioning electricity transmission in the Caucasus and Central Asia is now essential for Russian electricity imports and exports.

Finally, RAO-UESR is perfecting mechanisms in the Caucasus (and beginning to implement mechanisms in Central Asia) that increase transparency, rationalize electricity consumption, and push governments out of the sector. Many of these potentially politically costly reforms have yet to take place in Russia, and Russia itself has not yet resolved the optimal relationship between electricity and the state.

Market-led Energy Relations in the Southern Tier: Some Observations

RAO-UESR is an undeniable force in the southern tier, and its involvement will probably continue to grow. Although some commentators have expressed alarm at its expansion (Gleason 2004), both the company's performance and its ability to provide key public goods suggest that it is not spreading Russian state influence at the expense of the southern tier states. As an electricity giant, RAO-UESR can do something the sovereign states of the southern tier cannot do without it: rationalize the grids, so that types of power (hydro, thermal and nuclear) are more optimally balanced, seasonal surplus is managed and finds a market, peak power loads are met, and the frequency of the grid remains stable. Reintegration has improved the quality of power dramatically. Many leaders of the electricity sectors in these states — veterans of the all-Soviet grid — have been key proponents of RAO-UESR's reunification of the sector.

RAO-UESR's relative independence from the Russian government has reassured the southern tier states, but the company's distance from the Kremlin may yet prove to be a liability. Relations between RAO-UESR and the Russian government are problematic. The corporation has been pressing for liberalization of import and export of electricity and has been active in suits that seek to protect ownership rights of smaller electricity firms. The German-based company, "E.ON Engineering" just concluded an agreement with Gazprom to move into power generation in pursuit of European markets (Troika Dialog 2004), and Gazprom has recently purchased approximately ten percent of RAO-UESR (Faulconbridge 2004). These agreements suggest that RAO-UESR may either be increasingly influenced by less transparent parastatal companies, or may be under threat of takeover. The Russian government has mooted the possibility of restructuring RAO-UESR repeatedly, and may yet compel RAO-UESR to be dramatically restructured. If this happens, it is not clear what the impact would be for the southern tier.

Even if RAO-UESR is restructured, however, the countries most likely to suffer may not be its established client states. In a year's time, RAO-UESR's impact on the electricity sector in Armenia and Georgia has been noticeable, and may be difficult to reverse. By dramatically improving the sector's performance for its client states while simultaneously making the sector profitable, RAO-UESR has already contributed irrevocably to the security of these states. In the early transition years, the World Bank tried to convince the post-Soviet states that the way to achieve "energy security" was to pay their bills on time, rather than to pursue autarkic energy policies. It will most likely continue to be true that the health of the sector, more than the nationhood of the corporate shareholder, determines the energy security of the state.

The states in which electricity will continue to be a poorly performing sector are precisely those which have succeeded in keeping RAO-UESR out: Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Each lacks the modernizing technologies that could make their electricity sector more efficient and the market restructuring which could make their sector more rational. Although all southern tier states would be rightly concerned to see fundamental changes in RAO-UESR, it is possible that the states most at risk of Russian "electricity imperialism" in the future might be those whose autarkic approach has led them to keep RAO-UESR out of their markets, and has caused them to remain at the end of extensive grids, rather than in the middle. Energy security for FSU states under less independent corporate leadership than RAO-UESR may well reside in both profitability and location.

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Institutional Reforms in Kyrgyzstan

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Since independence in 1991 Kyrgyzstan has been undergoing major institutional reforms emphasizing sustainable development, democratization and effective governance. This paper looks at potential effects of these reforms on the existing governance institutions through the lenses of past experiences and current trends.[2] Some of the assumptions underlying Kyrgyzstan's current development strategy are questioned and, with due credit to its achievements, its limitations are suggested. The preliminary implications drawn from these observations may also apply to its Central Asian neighbors and other countries experiencing similar governance problems and reforms.

Background

Kyrgyzstan launched a structural adjustment program in the early 1990s following the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) "big-bang" strategy, which involved simultaneously initiating and implementing macroeconomic stabilization,

[1] The author thanks professor Gerald Caiden of the University of Southern California and Jamilya Ukudeeva and Virginia Martin of CESR for their useful comments.

[2] A detailed analysis of some of the current institutional reforms in Kyrgyzstan will comprise the next step in this research.

price and market reforms, enterprise restructuring and privatization, and institutional reorganization. However, increased levels of corruption, inequality and poverty, among other unintended consequences of these policies, undermined the prospects of economic development, and prompted donors to shift ground to stress the need for effective institutions to promote sustainable economic and social development (IMF 2000, World Bank [WB] 2002). Kyrgyzstan's current development strategy, as outlined in the national Comprehensive Development Framework (CDF),[3] targets reducing poverty in the country through strengthening government institutions and emphasizing public administration reforms, in order to provide a more favorable environment for private sector development to generate jobs and income.

Lessons from Past Institutional Reforms

Effective government institutions are essential for reducing poverty, but the approach taken to strengthen those institutions in Kyrgyzstan could be questioned in light of past experiences of other countries. The first wave of institution-building reforms in the international development agenda was initiated for decolonized states in the early 1960s. The reforms showed that in these countries it was much easier to adopt laws and formal organizational structures than to institutionalize corresponding behavior, and formal administrative structures often served as façades while the actual behavior remained a latent function of other institutions (Riggs 1964). Reforms in Kyrgyzstan repeat this warning. Both the targets and outcomes stated in the official development policy documents are largely limited to regulative instruments with little regard to institutionalization. For example, the government has adopted extensive legislation against corruption; however, there is little evidence of its enforcement, but more of its growth and state capture (Cokgezen 2004, Transparency International [TI] 2003, Gray et al. 2004[4]).

The next wave of institutional reforms that reappeared in the 1980s was about adjusting governance institutions to new realities, including the increased role of the private sector and civil society organizations (Grindle 1997). In most Third World countries the efforts to strengthen their administrative capacities by adopting Western trends rarely benefited the public, which was overall excluded from the process. Administratively most things got worse, as these reforms strengthened, rather than transformed, the pre-existing administrative cultures with all their "bureaupathologies" and reinforced the pursuit of self-interest by bureaucratic elites (Caiden 1991: 244-247).

Decentralization, the fad of this wave, for example, did not deliver the promised empowerment to the people and more responsive administrative structures in most of the developing world, primarily because of mismatched financial authority and functional responsibility (McCarney 2000: 188). Decentralization programs in Kyrgyzstan also have not escaped these problems (Dukenbaev 2004). Moreover, scholars warn that in this context decentralization could even hinder establishment of the rule of law by contributing to corruption and strengthening the autonomy of regional elites (Jones Luong 2004a). The primary challenges to those reforms included political corruption and the absence in legislatures of moral authority and competence and their inability to undertake effective oversight of the bureaucracies (Baaklini 2002, Jreisat 2002). Unfortunately, all these factors are rather descriptive of Kyrgyzstan's current situation (International Crisis Group [ICG] 2001, Cooley 1999).

Current Institutional Realities

Despite the deliberate attempts to blur the boundaries between state and society (Jones Luong 2004b), the government laws have not penetrated deep enough in Kyrgyzstan to replace informal institutions that also evolved over time. During the Soviet era, the central government created the *kolkhoz* (collective farm), giving it economic and administrative roles. The government used the kolkhoz as an interface between the state and predominantly rural communities, while at the same time fostering the retention of the traditional social system based on kinship networks of families, where

[3]CDF is the World Bank's framework — a "holistic long-term strategy" based on the principles of cooperation and transparency — that puts "countries in the driver's seat" in owning and directing development, to strengthen governments' effectiveness in poverty reduction and to secure better coordination between stakeholders in the development process (World Bank 2004).

[4] In Gray et al.'s study for the World Bank Kyrgyzstan is ranked highest in the perception of administrative corruption, defined as "illicit and non-transparent provision of private benefits to public officials" to influence how the established rules are implemented (2004: 10).

kolkhoz notables re-emerged in place of former tribal chiefs (Roy 2000: xii). Overall, officials exercised both formal and informal authority over the people, but depended on and were accountable to Moscow.

Independence did not significantly change these elements of governance: the state retained much of the same external orientation but little responsiveness to the general public. Newly found external mentors (international development agencies) replaced Moscow with respect to funding, but less in terms of accountability (Cooley 1999). The formal governance framework — the constitution of the country — has been rewritten (and then changed a few times), resulting in significant concentration of formal authority in the executive's hands. But even this imbalanced formal structure does not fully account for the actual governance institutions and processes. It was not through the formal institutions alone that elites established their regulative and monitoring capacities; it is still the regional tendency that the ruling elites continue their efforts to "control and co-opt society" (Jones Luong 2004b: 274-275) through formal and informal means.

Hence, the prospects for building effective institutions through the current strategy, which primarily relies on formal institutions and the executive branch, are bleak. The reforms neglect the informal aspects of governance, and are carried out by state agencies, which themselves have not fully internalized formal institutions and remain detached from the public. The eroding legitimacy of formal institutions due to increasingly authoritarian governance, systemic corruption and public discontent with harsh socioeconomic conditions, reinforces these drawbacks (ICG 2001).

Meanwhile, institutional reforms actually seem to benefit officialdom more than the public, given the persistence of weak government accountability and a legislative process mostly closed to public. In addition, passing laws is good news to donors to whom the government feels somewhat accountable. Formal institutions also help to legalize private interests and to expand the authority of officials, as is illustrated by the constitutional and legislative initiatives of the executive branch.

In these conditions reforms instead could amplify the existing "formalism," i.e., increase the "incongruence between formally prescribed institutions and actual, informal behavior" (Riggs 1964: 21). The government is continuously expanding its formal authority, but not necessarily its effective power through these reforms. The state apparatus is subordinated to the executive, which is rather ineffective when it comes to preventing dysfunctional administrative practices.[5] A vicious circle resists reforms: the public largely refrains from cooperating with the government over law enforcement, which enables more misuse of formal institutions, and this results in increasing formalism and public distrust towards the government. This system confirms the formula of corruption defined as a function of monopoly, discretion, and lack of accountability (Klitgaard 1988: 75). Kyrgyzstan, unsurprisingly, thus emerges on top of the list of the most corrupt governments (Gray et al. 2004, TI 2003).

Perspectives on Governance Problems

In the era of globalization, some scholars maintain that "the traditional concept of government as a controlling and regulating organization for society" has become outmoded, and that "governance without government" is becoming more common in industrial democracies under pressures from international capital markets, supranational organizations, a growing private sector, civil society groups and individuals (Peters and Pierre 1998). The major global and regional organizations are also abandoning the illusion of the omnipotence of governments, and adopting the broader notion of governance that includes active participation of non-governmental forces where government is seen more as a responsive facilitator (UNPAN 2000, OECD 2001).

In the Central Asian context, in contrast, governance seems to be increasingly about bargains among elites that largely exclude non-state forces. Ironically, although formal institutions of government are losing moral legitimacy, other social forces, particularly thriving non-governmental organizations (NGOs), have not become significant players in governance (McMann 2004, Weinthal 2004). This problem could be explained in part by

[5] In McMann's words, Kyrgyzstan, similar to its other Central Asian neighbors, is a "paradoxically strong-weak state" (2004: 214) — strong because of the state's monopoly of formal authority, political power, administrative institutions and economic resources, including foreign aid (Cooley 1999), and weak because formal institutions are losing popular (moral) legitimacy, which they misuse in pursuit of private interests.

the blurred boundaries between state and society and the monopoly of the "public" property by political-economic elites (Jones Luong 2004b: 274-275), which limit the resources for development of civil society groups largely to donor assistance.

The Kyrgyz government can find many excuses for continuing its gate-keeping practices. Among them could be the position of international donors on the meaning of governance, where the weighty World Bank's government-centered approach prevails. The World Bank's operational manual states that its main purpose is to support government development programs, and "the Bank should *not* carry out activities with NGOs without government's knowledge and consent" (WB 2000, italics added). In addition, in the absence of other effective mechanisms for securing government accountability for the public, given the regional tendency for Central Asian leaders to "have little interest in legitimating their authority beyond a small group of elites" (Jones Luong 2004b: 280), the Kyrgyz government may feel more comfortable filtering in the loyal and excluding the critical voices (such as the so-called "opposition NGOs") from the governance process.

Conclusion

The current process of institution-building overlooks the complexity of key governance institutions in Kyrgyzstan in the same way as the initial macroeconomic policies had done. They oversimplify the task of overhauling and transforming time-honored institutions and building new ones, expecting that an institutional vacuum would be filled once the newly adopted laws and policies are implemented, and that government would fix itself through these reforms.

Development agencies put the unaccountable government in "the driver's seat," enabling it to expand its authority. But the reality of governance in Kyrgyzstan is that there was and still remains no neutral administrative apparatus (Dukenbaev and Tanyrykov n.d.) and no accountable political system (ICG 2001) to insure that government institutions serve the public and that reforms are directed at institutional problems. Instead, government institutions serve the elites and suffer from excessive formalism. Actual governance is exercised through hybrid institutions, viewed here as an evolving mixture of intertwined formal and informal institutions embedded in past and current political-administrative and cultural systems. Trying to promote government effectiveness without accounting for these actual institutions and processes, and having little concern for *how* those formal institutions are to be institutionalized, the current development strategy may do more harm than good by furthering the existing power imbalance.

Ironically, this approach misses the important lesson from the half-century experience of international development: that the main distinction between the more effective democratic states and the rest is that the former are able to bring their administrative machines under effective control of responsible and representative political institutions, whereas in the latter the administrative machines often serve the ruling elites (Riggs 1996). Hence, institutional reforms in Kyrgyzstan need to promote internal government accountability.

Perhaps shifting emphasis from directly assisting the government to fostering grassroots initiatives and capacities could generate more functional internal pressures on government and officials, and more balanced governance. External support to government in the form of both direct aid and technical assistance projects can reinforce its dysfunctional elements (Cooley 1999). On the other hand, a shift in development strategy towards a more indirect approach may result in institutions that are more sustainable, enforceable and participatory, and a governance process and structure that is more balanced and effective. As seen from the experiences of other countries, when underlying governance problems such as accountability of state actors, institutionalization, legitimacy, and law enforcement are not addressed, the institution-building reforms may undermine the purposes of development.

Implications for Research

If the current institution-building approach to development in Kyrgyzstan is misguided, as argued above, it could be partly explained by the absence of comprehensive research on actual governance institutions in transitioning countries; donor strategies are thus based on prescriptive ideas and concepts rather removed from the reality of these societies (Jreisat 2002, Riggs 1964). While formal institutions have greater relevance in industrialized democracies, the focus of scholars and practitioners exclusively on formal institutions in the context of transitional societies with a high degree of formalism cannot provide sufficient understanding of the problem; it fails to account for the significant

share of actual behavior that does not fall under formal constraints (Riggs 1964, Helmke and Levitsky 2003, North 1994). Rather, it is more "likely to create a world in which there is both more law and less order" (Ellickson 1998: 286).

Some researchers have suggested that effective formal institutions are often those that were able to coalesce with pre-existing informal institutions in an accommodating and complementary mode (Helmke and Levitsky 2003). However, only a few scholars have looked at the changing nature, process and outcomes of dynamic interactions between formal and informal elements of key governance institutions in Central Asia. In particular, while reforms affect and are affected by both formal and informal elements of institutions, these "feedback loops," especially those concerning non-formal aspects, have enjoyed little attention among scholars even in other world regions (Ellickson 1991: 282; see also Kubicek 2000), and even less among policy makers. Those rare works addressing these concerns in the social realm suggest that certain government practices and policies are among the factors contributing to the reinforcement of discriminatory practices through informal and hybrid institutions.[6]

Comparative interdisciplinary research integrating anthropological and sociological approaches with a more holistic stance could be instrumental in addressing the limitations of disciplinary fragmentation and the dominant methodologies in policy studies (Riggs 1964, Kubicek 2000). For example, Scott's conceptual framework of institutions indicates that current institution-building reforms clearly overemphasize the *regulative* pillar and overlook *normative* and *cultural-cognitive* aspects of institutions (2001). The latter could be areas for research on pressing governance problems.

[6] Werner's (2004) research on changing informal norms of marriage in Kazakhstan concluded that nationalist policies, corruption, and economic conditions contributed to increased non-consensual bride-kidnapping. Kamp (2004), through her study of *mahallas* (neighborhood communities) in Uzbekistan, provides another example of such insightful work that calls attention to the changing functions of previously informal institutions. Kamp observes that although formally more empowered through the devolution policy, *mahallas* have become means for the government to exercise greater social control over individuals' lives, thereby supporting authoritarianism in a context where competitive procedures and open information flows are absent.

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Reports on Research Findings

The Keir *Mi^{c}raj*: Islamic Storytelling and the Picturing of Tales

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In the Fall of 2002, I began my dissertation research on "The Prophet Muhammad's Ascension [*Mi^{c}raj*] in Islamic Art and Literature, 14th-17th Centuries" in museums and libraries in the United States, Europe, Egypt, Iran, and Turkey. I am interested in the various junctures between texts and images related to the Prophet's biography and, in particular, his miraculous ascension to the Heavens on the back of Buraq, his winged, human-headed horse, guided by the Angel Gabriel. My research addresses issues of iconography, the development of fully illustrated narratives of the ascension (so-called *Mi^{c}rajnama*s [Books of Ascension]),[2] the use of the ascension as a spiritual catalyst in illustrated Sufi poetry (al-^{c}Azma 1973: 93-104, 1982), and the impact of literary tropes on visual language and vice versa. As a result of materials that I have discovered over the past two years, new points of interest have emerged.

Two concerns that have come to light revolve around orality and storytelling, the supple and unwritten documents of collective memory and resilient forces behind various arenas of cultural and visual production. Many of the paintings and texts of the Prophet's mi^{c}raj vary to such an extent that, despite many efforts by Muslim thinkers and writers to codify the story and delineate its exact narrative elements, a great variety of ascension narratives nonetheless thrived within the spheres of Islamic storytelling, preaching, and the visual arts. Although oral stories and their variations from the premodern period rarely survive today, it appears that a fruitful way to begin discussing and reconstructing lost tales lies in examining the evidence provided by paintings and other visual materials.

[1] The author wishes to thank Edmund and Richard de Unger for permission to study and reproduce the Keir *Mi^{c}raj*, and Jamilya Ukudeeva and Virginia Martin at CESR for their helpful editorial suggestions. This article is based on a paper presented at the CESS Conference (Harvard, Oct. 3, 2003).

[2] For illustrated *Mi^{c}rajnamas*, see Ettinghausen 1957: 360-83; and Séguy 1977; for *Mi^{c}rajnama* texts, see Pavet de Courteille 1975; and Thackston 1994: 263-99.

Reconstructing oral narratives via pictorial evidence remains impeded by several methodological problems. Since we have no written records to corroborate lost oral stories, these always remain within the realm of the speculative. Hypotheses can be offered, suggestions put forth, but firm conclusions cannot be reached. Furthermore, pictures may represent not one particular tale, but a conflation of stories, not easily disentangled and reconstructed as separate and autonomous entities. Finally, paintings may serve various purposes depending on the occasion and the setting of the particular storytelling session, and, as a consequence, it is very difficult to suggest an accurate social context. Despite such obstacles, paintings can provide a link between oral customs and literary culture, as will be shown here.

A rare painting in the Keir Collection in London, England (Robinson 1976: III.103), represents the Prophet Muhammad on Buraq and accompanied by Gabriel as they fly above a monarch and his attendants (Figure 1[3]). The painting's double composition of the Prophet's ascension and a monarch in a frontal pose, its large-scale format (40 x 30 cm), and its red and orange hues on a pale gray background painted on vellum have no known parallels in the Islamic arts of the book. Not a single extant mi^{c}raj painting incorporates the depiction of an earthly ruler, nor does any ascension text seamlessly join — at both the literary and structural levels — a verbal encomium to the Prophet with a tribute to a living king. Moreover, although other oversize paintings survive in international collections (Atasoy 1972; Mahir 1999: 443-455), these tend to depict well-known Persian epic stories or enthroned Ottoman kings, and not an episode from the Prophet's biography. It seems that such oversize paintings must have served as tools in the practice of picture-recitation, i.e., the telling of stories with the help of images (Mair 1988).

The Keir Mi^{c}raj appears to issue from the artistic production of the Aqquyunlu [White Sheep] Turkmen, whose rule extended from their capital in Tabriz, in the province of Azerbaijan, from 1387 to 1502. The painting probably dates from the first half of the 15th century based on stylistic considerations, a dating that has found further support in a more recent analysis of the painting's pigments.[4] For these reasons, it is assumed that this painting emerges from the Perso-Turkic world of northwestern Iran, influenced by the oral practices and visual arts that flourished before and during the Timurid period.

Except for the gold flaming halos around the Prophet Muhammad's turban and Gabriel's crown, the pigments are not as deep and textured as those utilized in manuscript illustrations. The large swirls and swaths of oranges and reds hint that the painting was not meant for close inspection, but rather necessitated a certain optical distance from the canvas. The coarseness of the hues suggests that the image did not enjoy aristocratic patronage and in all likelihood represents a second-class product. Other 15th- and 16th-century paintings of a similar size and roughness of execution prove that they were not made for a ruler either, but were intended as visual props shown to audiences during the performance of numerous stories drawn from the *Shahnama (*Atasoy 1972: 271).

Because no remaining text corresponds to the Keir Mi^{c}raj, it seems probable that the painting depicts a now-lost medieval oral narrative that fuses visually a panegyric to the Lord of This World (the earthly monarch) and to the Lord of the Next (the Prophet Muhammad). Like this painting, most written Islamic narratives — including biographies of the Prophet Muhammad [*sirat al-nabi*], stories of other prophets [*qisas al-anbiya*], and histories of kings [*tarikh al-muluk*] — existed rather freely within the realms of popular oral and visual culture before finding a crystallization in the literary world. With that in mind, it is not so surprising to find the biographical and the historical appear as an agglutinate in the Keir Mi^{c}raj, rather than dichotomized according to categories we have come to expect.

In this premodern world of narratives and images drifting between the written and the oral spheres, the Keir Mi^{c}raj must have served as a multipurpose tool to narrate pictorially any number

[3] The Prophet Muhammad's Mi^{c}raj over a Monarch and Attendants, Keir Collection, London, England. Author's photograph. Richard de Unger at the Keir Collection has authorized the publication and reproduction of the Mi^{c}raj. Further publication of the Mi^{c}raj is prohibited. See a color reproduction of Figure 1 in the on-line version of this issue of CESR (4/1, Winter 2005).

[4] The pigments of the Keir Mi^{c}raj were analyzed by Dr. Wernher at the British Museum. B. Robinson (1976: 155-156) states that they are "definitely ancient." In a personal communication in March 2003, Dr. Edmund de Unger noted that the scientific examination of the pigments places the painting at ca. 1400 CE.

Figure 1. The Keir Miʿraj (Copyright © by the Keir Collection. Reproduced by permission).

of accounts, such as the miraculous tale of a king's conversion to Islam, a royal decision based on the approval of the Prophet as seen in a visionary dream, the relating of the Prophet's ascension as sponsored by a ruling body, and so forth. The use of the painting could be tailored to need as well: for example, it could illustrate a tale of admonishment or a story proving both the Prophet's and the monarch's ability to link Heaven with the earth, all the while providing entertainment by means of an engaging, graphic, and theologically-approved "show" [*tasannuf*] (Ibn al-Jawzi 1986: 221). In essence, the Keir Mi^{c}raj uses the Prophet's ascension as the acceptable means of entertainment, under whose auspices any number of stories linked to sovereignty could be extracted and depicted.

In the painting, Muhammad and the royal figure are linked intimately not only by the composition but also, more specifically, through the figures' gestures: Muhammad's right hand forms a fist as he holds Buraq's reins and his left index finger points straight down to the crown of the monarch below, who stands holding his girdle with both fists. Although there has been no study of gestures and their meanings in the visual arts of Islam akin to M. Baxandall's study of Renaissance religious and profane gestures and body positions (Baxandall 1972), certain motions and finger formations often were associated with corresponding emotions or values. For instance, the pointing of the index finger indicates a witnessing of faith [*angushti shihadat*] (Steingass 2000: 114) in the Persian tradition, while in Turkic folktales it denotes the *tahlil*, that is, the proclamation that there is only one God (Eberhard and Boratav 1953: 350-1). The making of a fist symbolizes the round world and thus serves as the symbol of the *mundus imaginalis* or, alternatively, as a sign denoting worldly concerns.[5] In the Keir Mi^{c}raj, we can hypothesize that the Prophet's hands indicate that his dominion (the fist) is harnessed by the witnessing and worshiping of a single God (the index finger) through his earthly representative (pointing down), the monarch, to whom the Prophet hands over the reign of power by visual contraposition. It is he, the consummate ruler standing in the center and staring straight out of the canvas, whom the viewer must confront, while the Prophet Muhammad points straight to him, further encouraging our own visual intuitions. The crisscrossing of the painting by vectors of symbolic movements connects the figures to one another.

This pictorial dynamism draws in the viewer, while the storyteller also uses precise and calculated gesticulation to cause a heightened sense of emotion in the audience members (Chelkowski 1989: 102). As a result, the Keir Mi^{c}raj constitutes one of the earliest examples of a *parda* [painting] used for transportable picture recitation, which continued into the Safavid period[6] and found its efflorescence during the Qajar period. It displays how the Prophet Muhammad's heavenly ascension was assimilated to more pressing political issues connected to rulership during the Aqquyunlu period. The Prophet's ascension materializes the themes in order to endow the otherwise "unorthodox" practice of picture recitation with religious legitimacy as invested through its earthly representative. The narrating of the Prophet's ascension and its fusion with a eulogy of a monarch provides a mechanism through which an otherwise questionable practice could thrive.

The Keir Mi^{c}raj provides the rare visual proof that some narratives of the Prophet's ascension existed within the same milieu as narratives concerned with royal figures, easily blending the sirat al-nabi genre with the tarikh al-muluk genre. Although the exact character of such interactions remains difficult to determine and analyze today, it appears that oral traditions at times displaced literary ones in the field of the visual arts. For that reason alone, paintings used for storytelling such as the Keir Mi^{c}raj offer evidence for the creative role of oral stories, and force the scholar to think beyond text-image or religious-profane dichotomies. This vacillation of oral tales provides a more nuanced way to approach cultural, literary, and art history, allowing for a multiplicity of interpretations. Such subtle, interlocking meanings — rather than the strict process of identification and reconstruction — have begun to shape my dissertation project on the Prophet Muhammad's ascension and to inform my research more generally. The remaining questions that need to be pursued include the identification of recorded oral tales in the Persian and Turkic traditions, the comparison between storytelling and

[5] Eberhard and Boratav (1953) further specify that the pointing of two fingers is a gesture reserved for the Prophet Muhammad and a Padishah, proving that strict limitations on "manual" expression existed in Turkic cultures.

[6] Olearius, in his diary of his travels in Persia, states that Shah ^{c}Abbas I went to coffeehouses with his guests to listen to tales narrated by storytellers that "gesticulate with a little stick like tricksters" (quoted in K. Yamamoto 2003: 21-2).

picture-making, and their common link to power, authority, and cultural practices.

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Central Asian Encounters of the Middle East: Nationalism, Islam, and Post-Coloniality in al-Azhar

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A dramatic resurgence in religious identification in Central Asia following the disintegration of the Soviet Union has been termed "Islamic renaissance" in regional scholarship. However, in the study of this "renaissance," much attention has been paid to the "political Islam" of radical Islamic movements,

which, although much feared by the national governments and the US, remain marginal in terms of their social base. At the same time, few scholars have looked into the ways in which Islamic knowledge and culture are being reestablished in the region. How is revived Islamic identity being accepted and negotiated in post-Soviet societies? What is the specificity of a post-Soviet Islamic identity and how does it interact with other social identifications? What does "Islamic renaissance" mean in people's everyday life? If we can describe this "Islamic renaissance" quantitatively in terms of the number of newly opened mosques and madrasas, as well as mosque attendance, how can we describe it as a social imaginary?

All these are the questions that I am engaged with in my larger research on Islamic revival in Kazakhstan. I began fieldwork among Kazakhstani students in al-Azhar assuming that these students would return home to become empowered agents of Islam. As higher Islamic education for Kazakhstanis is taking place largely outside the country, with hundreds of students going to Turkey, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia, an internationalization of Islamic discourse in Kazakhstan is inevitable, and outside influence on Islamic revival in the country cannot be underestimated.

Based on information from my interviewees and some embassies, there are somewhere between 900 and 1,000 students from the former Soviet Union, including Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Muslim regions of Russia, studying at the colleges and schools of al-Azhar.[1] All of these students have come to Egypt to pursue education in religion or Arab philology. The fact that thousands of students from around the world come to study at al-Azhar speaks of the high standing that al-Azhar enjoys in the Sunni Muslim world. At the same time, it is widely known that al-Azhar suffers from major inadequacies such as poor material-technical base, overcrowding, and deteriorating quality of teaching. Incoming students very soon become aware of these shortcomings, as well as of the low prestige that al-Azhar has at home as an institution for the underprivileged.

As a rule, because of their poor Arab language skills, students from the former Soviet Union do not go directly to the college, but start with '*adadiyya* (primary school), *thanawiyya* (high school), or even *dirasa khasa* (preparatory school). This means that to get a bachelor's degree from al-Azhar they should spend a total of six to nine years in the Azhari system.

The first group of 20 students from Kazakhstan came to al-Azhar in 1992. In accordance with an Egyptian-Kazakhstani intergovernmental agreement, al-Azhar would take about 20 Kazakh students annually, who would be provided with a place to stay in the Madinat-al-Booth, and receive free board and a monthly stipend of $25. Between 1992 and 1997, about 100 students from Kazakhstan came to study in al-Azhar within the Azhari quota. However, most of them (about 90) dropped out after two to three years. More recently, in 2001, the Spiritual Board of Muslims of Kazakhstan sent another 12 students to al-Azhar; only four of them are still pursuing their studies. I did not have the chance to talk to drop-out students; however, those who remained listed poor living conditions, the different system of education, language problems, and the harsh climate among the major reasons for dropping out. I also think that the prospect of spending six to nine years in Cairo may not have appealed to them. To be fair to al-Azhar, it should be mentioned that there were about as many drop-outs from Egyptian secular universities (particularly Cairo, Ayn Shams, Helwan, Tanta, Alexandria), where in the mid-1990s the Kazakhstan Ministry of Education also sent a large group of students.[2]

Although a significant percentage of Kazakhstani students in al-Azhar receive a scholarship from al-Azhar and free board at the Azhari Mission for Foreign Students, the majority of the students come to al-Azhar independently (i.e., beyond the quota). Education at al-Azhar is free, and several religious trusts and foundations from the Gulf, such as the Kuwaiti Baythat-ul-Baptin Foundation, provide students with a modest stipend. Also, a number of students from Russia and Kazakhstan cover living expenses in Cairo on their own.

[1] In modern day Egypt, al-Azhar is not just a university, but a whole system of religious education, which exists along with the secular education system. As such it includes not only colleges but also secondary and high schools all over the country, where people who lack access to secular education can study.

[2] A professor of Arabic at the Eurasian University in Kazakhstan told me that he was in the group of 140 students sent by the Kazakh Ministry of Education to Egypt in 1994. Only eight of them, he said, graduated.

As of today, three people from Kazakhstan have received a bachelor's degree from al-Azhar, the most recent having graduated in September 2004. All of them returned home. One is teaching at the Nur-Mubarak University[3] in Almaty and another is a regional level official at the Spiritual Board of Muslims.

Currently, about 140 students from Kazakhstan study within the Azhari system (this includes not only ethnic Kazakhs, but also Uyghurs, Dungans, and Uzbeks); about 20 of them are at the college level.[4] Between five and seven students are expected to graduate this year. I presume that the impact of Azhari students on Islamic revival and Islamic discourse in Kazakhstan will be felt as more and more students return home with a degree from al-Azhar.

One of the most interesting issues that has arisen in my research is the transformation of identity on an individual and group level that occurs when Central Asians travel to the Middle East. If we assume that they come to the Middle East with the manifest purpose to rediscover and reinforce their Islamic identity, what happens after people have studied and lived in the Middle East for a period of time?

As a theoretical framework for my interpretation of students' experiences I used anthropological literature on identity. At the simplest level identity formation is about how individuals and groups define themselves and their relations to others (Schwedler 2001: 2). Like individuals, groups strive to positively distinguish themselves from other groups (Seul 1999: 556). For Kazakhs in Kazakhstan, the "other" from which to distinguish themselves would usually be Russians who now constitute about 30 percent of the population. One should not discount the role of religion in this "othering" process. Although in a secular environment of Kazakhstan people might relate to Islam on a very symbolic and nominal level, Muslimness as such remains part and parcel of Kazakh identity, an essential attribute that makes the Kazakh distinctive from the Russian. However, in interaction with the Muslim "other" in Egypt, acculturation in Russian comes forth as a specific characteristic of Kazakhstani students, as well as of many other Muslim students from the former Soviet Union.[5]

The rest of this paper will discuss some results of fieldwork conducted in Cairo in winter and spring 2004. My interviews with Azhari students revealed that Kazakhstanis, while appreciating al-Azhar's Muslim cosmopolitan environment and the knowledge it provides, have been quite reluctant to borrow anything from the Arab culture apart from the language and religious texts. Most of the Kazakh students I talked to draw a distinct line between themselves and the Egyptian environment around them. The general attitude among students was that they have come to Cairo to learn the language skills and religious know-how that would confer certain "cultural capital" upon them back home. Although they regarded Egyptians as their co-religionists, they were eager to emphasize their difference from "Arabs."

Learning Religion but Keeping the Culture

Marat is one of the married Kazakh students in al-Azhar. He is 40 years old and when I interviewed him in February 2004 he was a fourth year graduating student at the Kuliyyat Usul-ud-Din.[6] He came to al-Azhar some eight years ago and received a scholarship from the Kuwaiti Baythat-ul-Baptin Foundation, which paid the rent, a monthly $40 stipend, and reimbursed him for an air ticket home once a year. Marat is a professional flute player. He lived in *Hai Thamin* [literally, the "Eighth Quarter," in Madinat Nasr, Cairo] with his wife, Reza, also a professional pianist, and two small children. Marat and Reza consider themselves to be the most educated and "advanced" among Kazakhstani students, as they were raised in the city of Aqmola (now Astana) and had a good education prior to coming to al-Azhar. Marat did not get along well with the cohort of the students (about 20 people) from rural regions of southern Kazakhstan who took on responsibility of "supervising" the Kazakh community. Perhaps here, the north-south division

[3] Nur-Mubarak University, named after presidents Nursultan Nazarbaev and Hosni Mubarak, was founded in 2001 by the Kazakhstani-Egyptian intergovernmental agreement. It is considered to be an affiliate of al-Azhar.

[4] Kazakh students are studying at the colleges of Usul-ud-Din, Shari'a wa Qanun, Da'wa, and Lughat-al-Arabiyyah.

[5] Most of the ethnic Kazakh students in al-Azhar are bilingual, but they speak Kazakh as their native language at home and among themselves.

[6] By the time of this publication, Marat had already graduated from al-Azhar and is back in Astana with his family.

within Kazakhstani society came into play.[7] Marat said southern student leaders (from the first wave of students sent to al-Azhar), who were designated by the Embassy to help incoming Azhari students and represent Kazakh students before sponsoring foundations, abuse this power by getting scholarships for their relatives (e.g., wives,[8] brothers, etc.) and do disservice to young students by preventing them from socializing within al-Azhar's cosmopolitan environment under the pretext that they might join some "radical" foreign groups.

Like wives of many students in al-Azhar, Marat's spouse Reza went to study Arabic and religion on her own and excelled in learning the whole Quran by heart. She has a certificate of *Hafiza* [woman who knows the Quran by heart] from a *markaz* [center of religious learning] and is very knowledgeable in interpreting religious issues. She was popular among Russian-speaking women who lived in her area and they often came to talk to her and seek her advice. However, despite her enthusiasm in learning Arabic and religion, Reza adopted quite a critical attitude towards Egyptian society. In our conversations she indicated that she was wary of some Egyptian customs. For instance, she said she did not like extensive kissing when greeting people and she thought of Egyptian hospitality as fake. She also said she was suffering from the low hygiene standards of the people who lived around her. In one of our women's meetings she and several other female students were expressing distaste for an Egyptian Aid-al-Idha custom when a whole family gathers to watch the act of slaughtering the sheep. They recalled how in Kazakhstan, the act of slaughtering is only men's business, performed in the backyard, while women or children never watch.

Turkish Islam versus Arab Islam

During fieldwork in al-Azhar, I unexpectedly came across the issue of Central Asian-Turkish Islamic connections, because many Kazakh students in al-Azhar are associated with the Turkish community there.

One of these students is Erkenar, 22, a third year Kazakhstani student in Kuliyyat Usul-ud-Din. He came to al-Azhar right after high school and, like Marat, received a scholarship from the Baythat-ul-Baptin Foundation. He must be very bright, as he finished 'adadiyya and thanawiyya in just two years. He can read Arabic, Turkish, and Ottoman Turkish. Erkenar lives with Turkish students and apparently is a Nurcu network member.[9] He said that he lives in an apartment with five Turks and one Kyrgyz. Talking about education in al-Azhar, he complained that students lack opportunities to talk to professors, ask questions, and critically discuss the material. He also said that unlike Cairo and Ayn Shams Universities, al-Azhar does not teach its students research skills. When we talked about Central Asian-Arab and Central Asian-Turkish Islamic connections, he said that Turkish Islam is more "modern" and better applicable to the situation in Central Asia.

Nurcu students in al-Azhar hold traditional gatherings [*suhbat*], where they discuss political, religious and social issues in the light of Said Nurci's and Fethullah Gülen's teachings. From my conversation with Kazakhstani students, I understood that the Nurcu take good care of their recruits. They move to live with the Turkish Nurcus, which usually means living in better conditions than they otherwise could afford on their stipends. It seems that the Nurcu organization tries to create an environment conducive to study and learning processes, and Nurcu students usually do well in the schools/universities. Reportedly, a couple of Kazakhs even left al-Azhar for study in Turkey.

Central Asians appear more inclined to borrow from Turkish culture and Turkish Islam, which can be partly explained by the cultural and linguistic affinities with the Turks and partly, perhaps, by a certain entanglement of Turkish Islam with

[7] There is a widely acknowledged division within Kazakhstan between the industrial, developed north and the traditional, agrarian south (the same situation is in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan). This perceived division, in my view, is not always true, as there are pockets of more and less developed places both in the north and the south.

[8] Most of the Kazakh students in al-Azhar who are over 25 are married.

[9] Nurcu is a Turkish-based transnational Islamic network, named after Said Nurci (1873-1960). Anchored in the idea that Islam is compatible with modernity, Nurcus assert that education and science should play a pivotal role in the revival of Islam. In Kazakhstan, Nurcu *cemaat* runs 28 high schools and the Suleyman Demirel University (Balcı 2003: 152, 157). Somewhere between 20 and 30 Azhari students from Kazakhstan identify with the Nurcu movement. According to accounts of students who were not Nurcu, Turks are very selective in whom they choose from Central Asian students and invite to live with them. Reportedly, they recruit the brightest and most promising students, which is reminiscent of Turkish (Nurcu) schools' recruitment practices in Kazakhstan.

secularism, which better suits secular conditions of Central Asia.

Gendered Perspective: In Search of a Moral Order

During my fieldwork in al-Azhar, I came to know two young single Kazakh women — Roza and Gulnar — who, after studying Islam in one of the newly opened Islamic universities in Kazakhstan and being active and practicing Muslims for a long time, decided to come to al-Azhar to learn Arabic and expand their knowledge of religion. By the time of my fieldwork in spring 2004, they had been enrolled in dirasa khasa for about a year. Their experience in Cairo is particularly interesting as it provides a gendered perspective.

I had many conversations with Gulnar and Roza on a wide range of issues such as religion, society, social relations, and marriage. As we had a common reference in "knowing" Egyptian and Kazakh societies, we spent some time discussing these societies in "comparative perspective." In one such discussion we talked about the growing gap between the rich and poor and escalating crime rates in Kazakhstan. Roza said that the high crime rate was a manifestation of a breakdown of social order and morality, and that justice and "moral order" would be achieved when people become more religious (Islamic). In response to my devil's advocate's question of why Egyptian society is filled with religion, but also with poverty and inequality, she answered that from an Islamic point of view the well-being of society is not measured by wealth only.

Although Roza and Gulnar now lived in what could be called an Islamic community, of course it was far from the ideal "moral order." From time to time, problems would arise which caused Roza to question the connection between the moral and the religious. When confronted with these problems Roza would "rationalize" that it is written in the Quran that there are so many *munafiqun* [hypocrites] among Muslims, who look and act like Muslims, but, in fact, they are not.

Renegotiating Identity

In interviews, I asked Azhari students what the term "Islamic renaissance" meant as applied to Kazakhstan. Most said that with the Soviet collapse a "spiritual vacuum" emerged, which is being filled with Islam. At the same time, they also disapprovingly admitted that nowadays it is not only Islam which is filling the "vacuum," but a whole range of other religions and sects. In this regard, most of them felt that the government is not doing enough to stop the onslaught of foreign missionaries from the West.[10] Some also expressed their religious concern in terms of a "conspiracy theory": that the whole country is being run by American and Jewish businesses, which are supposedly anti-Islamic by their very nature.

In conversations with female students, we again talked about a "spiritual vacuum" and "crisis of morality" in Kazakhstan. Once, I pointed to a certain contradiction in this reasoning saying, "If the vacuum has been the problem created with the collapse of the Soviet Union, does it mean that under the Soviets there was no vacuum, and there was spirituality?" Interestingly, women agreed that there was more spirituality under the Soviets than currently. Reza, for instance, said that "then people believed in the future, and the attitude of the people to one another was different."

So, to say the least, there is this strong ambiguity among Azhari students, especially among the women, in their attitude towards the Soviet past and Russian influence. On the negative side, there was atheistic propaganda and education, and reprisals against the clergy and pious Muslims. On the positive side, there were public services provided by the Soviet state, accessibility of quality education, medical care, and even Communist-propagated egalitarian ideology, which is becoming valued in the light of growing class stratification in Kazakhstan.

Conclusion

The translocal position of the Kazakhstani Azhari students helps to crystallize their individual quest for identity, which might be indicative of the same quest for identity on a wider social level. These students came to al-Azhar to reinforce their Muslimness, which in a sense can be interpreted as strengthening

[10] Kazakhstan has a very liberal law on religious associations, adopted in 1992, which allows all religious associations, after going through a somewhat simple registration procedure, to proselytize. Since then quite a competitive religious market has been created, with many so-called "sects" such as Jehovah's Witnesses, Hare Krishna, Baha'i, and Ahmadiyyah freely operating in Kazakhstan. This has caused strong anxiety among nationalists and "Islamists" about potential conversion of Kazakhs into other religions.

their opposition to "the other." However, in Cairo they find themselves in the midst of the new "other" — Arabs. To position themselves vis-à-vis this new "other" they have to renegotiate their relation with the Russian "other." Thus, experiences of Kazakhstani students in Cairo reveal the character of the post-colonial situation and discourse in Kazakhstan. In light of Chatterjee's thesis on how the post-colonial world imagines its modernity by reinventing the distinctness of its spiritual culture, while acknowledging the West's superiority in the domain of the material (Chatterjee 1996: 217), we can assume that Kazakh students' coming to al-Azhar to study Islam is an expression of their drive for ultimate "de-colonization of consciousness" from the remnants of Russianness, atheism, and communism. However, their experience in al-Azhar slows down these negative sentiments to an extent that students are fair enough to give the communist colonial project certain credit for spirituality.[11] While in Kazakhstan, Kazakh identity is usually constructed vis-à-vis Russian identity; in Cairo, it becomes clear to what extent Russianness has been internalized and, in fact, has become an integral part of post-Soviet Kazakh and post-Soviet Muslim identity.

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[11] This positive assessment of some aspects of the socialist past by the students of Islam might also be a manifestation of certain ideological affinity between Communism and Islam, noted by many scholars (Maxime Rodinson as quoted in Rywkin 1990: 87). Both Islam and Communism have a certain moral vision of society, the achievement of which requires restrictions on individual freedom. In this sense, both of them are anti-liberal.

Report on Research Conditions

Surveying Risk in Kazakh Agriculture: Experiences and Observations

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This report provides some observations about conditions for field research that emerged from two intensive periods of fieldwork in Kazakhstan in 2003 and 2004 conducted by the joint German-Kazakh research project, "Crop Insurance in Kazakhstan — Options for Building a Sound Institution Promoting Agricultural Production." This research is financed by the Volkswagenstiftung (Volkswagen Foundation) and carried out by the Institute of Agricultural Development in Central and Eastern Europe (IAMO) and the Agricultural University in Astana.[1] This report is confined to fieldwork conditions. Publications dealing with the substantive outcome of the project are available elsewhere (e.g., Bokusheva and Heidelbach 2004a, 2004b).

[1] The survey was conducted in cooperation with the Agricultural University in Astana. The conceptual planning of the survey and implementation of the questionnaire was done by IAMO.

Kazakhstan is a large country comprising 272 million hectares of land, 32 percent of which is used as farmland. The population is approximately 14.9 million people, 43 percent of whom live in rural areas. Agriculture has traditionally been one of the largest sectors in the economy (presently about eight percent of GDP), and currently employs 32 percent of the active population. Rural areas in Kazakhstan do not offer many business opportunities, rendering the agricultural sector the most important employer (National Statistical Agency of Kazakhstan 2003: *passim*). The rural population in Kazakhstan is not only plagued by a low average income; an additional burden is the high degree of risk and uncertainty to which agricultural population in particular is exposed (Knerr et al. 2001: 10). A harsh continental climate has a strong impact on yield variability, which, together with price and market risk, are the most serious risks for farmers. In addition, natural hazards such as drought and extremely high temperatures typically affect a large number of farms over wide areas in Kazakhstan simultaneously. Thus, production risk possesses a systemic component which results in a high correlation of yield losses across huge areas (systemic risk). This should be an explanation for the high variation in the level of national annual yields (IAMO 2002).

The objective of the project is to assess the effects of exposure to high risks on agricultural sector productivity and to define requirements for the development of economically viable and market-compatible crop insurance in Kazakhstan. Hypotheses and assumptions gained by analyzing secondary literature served as a basis for drafting and implementing empirical research in the field. The latter involves in-depth interviews with local key informants (staff from the Ministry of Agriculture, the regional administration and private insurance companies), interviews on the farm level and statistical data surveys.

Fieldwork was carried out in summer and autumn 2003 and in spring and summer 2004 in six selected provinces [*oblys, oblast'*]: Aqmola, North Kazakhstan and Qostanay in the north, Aqtöbe in the west, South Kazakhstan and East Kazakhstan. For our study purposes, i.e., a study of a large, geographically dispersed population (farms), it was convenient to use a multistage sample design. This is a type of design where in the first stage a sample of larger units is selected (the provinces in our case); then in a second stage, from each of the selected first stage units a sample of smaller units (districts [*audan, raion*] in our case) is chosen. The last step includes the selection of farm enterprises and individual farms in the district. A multistage design is particularly appropriate where a large-scale survey is to be conducted, and where for logistical and organizational reasons it is convenient for the sample to be grouped together in a more limited number of geographical areas, rather than being spread thinly and dispersed across the country (Poate and Daplyn 1993: 58-59). The selection of representative provinces was carried out in September 2003 in Astana by taking into account the criteria "importance of crop production in the regional economy," "percentage of active population working in agriculture," and "the relative importance of strategically important crops" (i.e., wheat, cotton, and oil-yielding crops like sunflowers and rapeseed). The provinces were selected to depict as exactly as possible the different geomorphological and agroclimatic conditions, and thereby also different agricultural specializations. The same holds for the selection of districts within the provinces. Between two and four districts per province were selected according to the criteria "natural yield potential" and "relative importance of crop production." Farms were selected by Simple Random Sample (SRS) (Poate and Daplyn 1993: 61-65).

Four points are worth making about the conditions for conducting field research of this kind. First, experience from 2003 showed that carrying out a random selection procedure for districts and farms does not produce satisfying results. Districts that were administratively reorganized and farms that changed legal form, ownership status, and crop area several times during the past years might be selected. Structural interruptions such as these could lead to spurious findings. As a result, more importance should have been attached to additional recommendations of the often very helpful provincial and district administrative staff. As the 2004 experience showed, fieldwork tasks in the district can be organized more efficiently when the input of the administration is taken seriously.

Second, staff and data resources in the departments of statistics and agriculture vary significantly across districts, and thereby the degree of necessary support for researchers also fluctuates. For our purposes, we need long time series (1960-2003) of yields and sown areas for the most important agricultural crops on a farm-level basis. But as a result of different organizational and structural reforms and changes, this data is scattered among different institutions, i.e., provincial and

district-level statistical and agricultural departments and archives. We are able to safely say that each district has its own rules. Thus, data collection resembles detailed detective work. Equally, access of foreigners to non-secret agricultural data is regulated and managed in different manners across provinces and districts. In the northern Kazakh city of Qostanay, it was more difficult to collect data than in other regions. This was, according to the head of the Province Department of Statistics, the result of "bad experiences with foreigners," i.e., misuse of confidential data.

A further lesson learned is that the quality of accounting data varies greatly across farms. While smaller private farms might not have any records at all for the past years, larger, well-performing farms sometimes have an army of accountants. However, only the main accountant has an overview of the data, and he usually is not obliged to pass on information to a third party without the agreement of the head of the respective enterprise. That makes it necessary to obtain an appointment with both persons. The last point shows the importance of hierarchy in Kazakh institutions. The dominant role of the head is inherent to the system and is an obstacle to both the functioning of the institutions themselves and the efficiency of interactions with their clients.

Finally, the efficiency of fieldwork is likewise limited by availability of regional telecommunications and by rural infrastructure. The exchange of data via electronic systems is often possible between state institutions, but limited between institutions and other entities — in our case, researchers. The state of the Kazakh telecommunication network is illustrated by UN statistics. Kazakhstan placed 134th out of 187 countries for internet users per inhabitant, 106th out of 204 countries for the number of main phone lines per inhabitant and 126th out of 191 countries for mobile phone subscriptions per inhabitant (UNCTAD 2003a). In a UN paper assessing the overall diffusion of information and communication technology Kazakhstan is ranked 166th out of 180 countries (UNCTAD 2003b: 45). Taking into account the bad state of many roads and the vast territory of districts, both a clear-cut plan and thorough organization of fieldwork by experienced researchers are essential to the successful and efficient collection of data.

Field research is always a complex process involving many contextual factors, discontinuities, negotiations, and compromises. Comprehending cultural and historical peculiarities of the research area, learning how local institutions function, and being willing to adapt personally to new circumstances that affect planning and negotiation strategies are key qualifications for conducting successful data surveys, especially in transition and developing countries.

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Reviews and Abstracts

Kathryn Anderson and Richard Pomfret, *Consequences of Creating a Market Economy.* Cornwall, England: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2003, x + 208 pp., illustrations, maps. ISBN 1843761696, $80.00 (cloth).

Reviewed by: **Sharon Eicher**, Assistant Professor of Economics, KIMEP [Kazakhstan Institute of Management, Economics, and Strategic Research], Almaty, Kazakhstan, eicher@kimep.kz

In a work that compares the transition economies of five Central Asian states, Anderson and Pomfret state that they will examine the characteristics of those who gained and lost in the transition in the context of differing policy environments and post-independence economic performance. This is a valiant and noble goal. However, achieving this comparison is made difficult by the availability of only one to three years' worth of household data for each country, different policy regimes occurring in different countries in different years, and the fact that transition was still in midstream when the Living Standards Measurement Studies (LSMS) data were collected. Nonetheless, the authors identify some trends, especially for Kyrgyzstan.

The book includes an introductory chapter, six chapters that reflect different aspects of transition in Central Asia, with the emphasis being placed on Kyrgyzstan, and a short conclusion. Chapters examine such topics as economic conditions before independence from the Soviet Union, the inflation shock that followed independence and policy responses in each of the Central Asian republics; Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and poverty trends from 1991 to 2000; Kyrgyzstan during the years 1993 and 1997; a cross-country comparison of expenditures per household for each of the Central Asian states; gender and labor in Kyrgyzstan; and small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) in Kyrgyzstan. Each chapter is footnoted with commentary regarding other authors' works and additional data. The book is nicely balanced by the inclusion of chapters on economic trends in the 1990s, poverty, consumption, gender and the economy, and small businesses. An additional chapter on rural-urban poverty dynamics and migration or privatization would have been useful.

The primary data source is the Living Standards Measurement Study (LSMS) series conducted by the World Bank.[1] Surveys include 1993, 1996, and 1997 for Kyrgyzstan, 1996 for Kazakhstan, 1997 for Uzbekistan, 1998 for Turkmenistan, and 1999 for Tajikistan. There was a second, pilot study for Uzbekistan in 1997. The authors managed to obtain 1997 LSMS data for Uzbekistan and 1998 data for Turkmenistan, which are not publicly available. The data are not in a time series, but they provide snapshots of income and household demographic variables during the transition period of the mid-to-late 1990s. The 1998 LSMS data for Kyrgyzstan have not been included in the revision of the original work before its publication in book form. There is very little comparison to data from the 1989 Soviet dataset. Other secondary sources include the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development's annual Transition Report publications (http://ebrd.com/pubs/tr/main.htm) and Branco Milanovic's 1998 World Bank study (Milanovic 1998). The LSMS data are the only available source of household information. The book's title seems somewhat premature, since the transition is still ongoing, even if GDP has recovered to its 1990 levels.

Pomfret and Anderson estimate a binary ("yes" or "no") model to predict whether a household will be poor, given different demographic variables. Probit and Logit Models were used in the statistical analyses. These estimate the probability of an event's occurrence, given other explanatory variables. I should note that the original articles were published in professional economics journals, and the authors did not revise their original work for a broad audience. This book assumes basic econometric knowledge, which not all readers may

[1] Development Economics Research Group (DECRG) of the World Bank. *Living Standards Measurement Study of the World Bank*, http://www.worldbank.org/lsms. The Living Standards Measurement Study series has focused on household data collection.

be able to follow. Fortunately, information is presented clearly in the tables.

Some of the results of this work are the following:

- The coefficient for income inequality rose during transition and was higher than previously reported in Milanovic.
- The poverty headcount rose from five to 24 percent in 1987/88 to 56 to 88 percent in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan in 1995.
- Using $2.15 per person, per day as the poverty line threshold, the percentage of those living in poverty ranged from 5.7 percent in Kazakhstan in 1996 to 65.4 percent in Tajikistan in 1999.
- In Kyrgyzstan, urban households with female heads or with children were more likely to be poor, while higher education reduced the probability of poverty. The negative impact of pensioners in the household was most significant in Bishkek.
- In comparing 1993 and 1996 data for Kyrgyzstan, Pomfret and Anderson found that households in Bishkek were wealthier while those in the mountains or the south were poorer, pensioners' incomes decreased only in the 1996 sample, and gender was not significant.
- In a cross-country comparison, the authors found that geography, number of children in the family, and education were the most significant variables to explain expenditure. The effects of education were strongest in the later (presumably more market oriented) survey.
- In Kyrgyzstan, the authors learned that the number of work hours increased between 1993 and 1997; men worked longer hours and received more pay, but the gender-based wage-gap decreased.
- Household composition influenced the decision to own a business, as did education, ethnicity, and having young, but not elderly, adults in the household.
- Cost factors (taxes and input costs) were more significant problems to business owners than corruption, bureaucracy or lack of credit.

It is unfortunate that most of the data are from the mid-1990s. In this respect, the book is dated. However, a view of what was happening during the reform process is also quite valuable. Analyses here indicate that some of the "stylized facts" about poverty in Central Asian transition economies may not hold up under scrutiny. Families with children are hurt the most economically, especially by the decrease in social spending. Working women may actually be doing better economically relative to working men. Pomfret and Anderson clearly show which geographical regions need development assistance and aid the most.

A minor, but somewhat disturbing, point is the manner in which comparisons of 1993 and 1996/97 were described. We can compare the LSMS data from Kyrgyzstan and show whether there was an improvement or worsening of conditions, but the authors write as if a continuous time series were present. Because of data limitations, analysis can only be discrete (using two points in time), rather than continuous (a series of observations are available over time), but the wording often suggests continuity. The editing of the book also leaves much to be desired. Paragraph indents are missed, the wrong year has been left in one graph, paragraphs are broken where they should not be, and bar graphs are quite difficult to read.

The emphasis of the book is Kyrgyzstan only because Kyrgyzstan has collected more than one complete LSMS dataset. Data limitations are a constant problem for economists working in transition economies. More data from Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan are needed to justify this book's claim to compare economic transition among five Central Asian states. Additional material could have been included, such as the newer LSMS data for Kyrgyzstan and data from other sources. Kazakhstan, for example, has very good statistical yearbooks published by the National Statistical Agency, and United Nations Development Program (UNDP) poverty studies for these countries also could have helped, although they do not contain household data as do the LSMS surveys.

The assumption in Western economics has always been that transition to a market economy will be costly in terms of welfare, but the benefits will be worth it — that competition will induce efficiency and a higher standard of living for all concerned. Much of the research conducted by the few economists who study the former Soviet Union has been on the "market" aspect of these social changes: stabilizing GDP, privatization statistics, investment

statistics, and creating financial and governance institutions. Little work has been done, outside of organizations such as the International Labor Organization and the UNDP, to show the internal dynamics of reform. Western economists generally do not often delve into households and firms to see how these changes are impacting individuals at ground zero. Pomfret and Anderson do so. In these regards, this book breaks new ground.

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Glenn R. Mack and Joseph Coleman Carter, *Crimean Chersonesos: City, Chora, Museum, and Environs*. Austin, Tex.: University of Texas Press for the National Preserve of Tauric Chersonesos and the Institute of Classical Archaeology, 2003, xix + 232 pp., maps, tables, bibliographies, index. ISBN 0970887922, $35.00 (pbk.).

Reviewed by: **Charles C. Kolb**, Senior Program Officer, Division of Preservation and Access, National Endowment for the Humanities, Washington, D.C., ckolb@neh.gov

The University of Texas-Austin's Institute of Classical Archaeology (ICA) has conducted significant archaeological research in Calabria and the Italian Metaponto. In 1992, shortly after Ukraine become an independent nation, the authorities there invited the ICA to collaborate in an archaeological project in the *chora* [agricultural lands] of Chersonesos, a settlement characterized as the "Slavic Pompeii" (although no modern city was ever built over it). ICA joined the National Preserve of Tauric Chersonesos (NPTC) in this research. The region, one of the most secret places of the Cold War, is adjacent to Sevastopol, which served as the homeport for the Black Sea Fleet since 1804. A NPTC-ICA partnership and 50-year plan is under way to explore and manage the region's archaeological resources. Chersonesos is included on the 2002 World Monuments Fund Watch List of 100 Most Endangered Sites and nominated as a UNESCO World Heritage site. The Crimea is, of course, legendary for recent historical events, such as the Crimean War, the Nazi invasion, and the Yalta Conference.

This volume is the initial major NPTC-ICA publication and a joint effort of their combined staffs, who did original research and wrote the text. The 28 collaborating authors are from Ukraine, the United States, Canada, Czechoslovakia, Germany, Italy, Poland, and Russia. There are 15 chapters, 15 maps, 324 figures (including 19 reconstructions and 13 plans), a chapter-by-chapter selected bibliography (564 items), general readings (55 entries), a detailed index, and "Crimean Chronology" (40,000 BCE to 2,000 CE). Most of the references are in Russian, Ukrainian, or English. The most recent extensive account of the region is Ellis Minns' 1913 work, *Scythians and Greeks: A Survey of Ancient History and Archaeology on the North Coast of the Euxine from the Danube to the Caucasus,* making a new volume essential to scholars.

The initial chapter documents Tauric Chersonesos and a subsequent contribution considers the Crimean Peninsula, with geographic and ecological data accompanied by Landsat images and splendid three-dimensional mapping. Four brief chapters characterize Greek, Roman, and medieval Chersonesos, and modern Crimea. A peninsular extension of the Russo-Ukrainian steppe, the Crimea is the location of the Heraklian Peninsula and Chersonesos (Khersones in Ukrainian), a settlement enduring nearly 2,000 years beginning with Tauric culture of the 10th to 8th centuries BCE, documented by Herodotus (*Histories* 4.99, 103) and Strabo (*Geography* 742). Chersonesos was one of several Crimean Greek colonies and trading posts [*apoikiai* and *emporia*] during the 5th century BCE. Chersonesos endured, becoming a Roman imperial port and military post against barbarian hordes, and took Rome's side against the Bospran Kingdom (1st century BCE), earning praise from Caesar. In the early medieval period (5th-9th centuries) Chersonesos, now called Cherson, was a Romaioi (Byzantine) *theme* [military administrative unit], trading center, and a metropolitan center of Eastern

Christianity. Medieval Cherson (9th-mid 13th centuries) was a major trading center, exchanging wood, wax, furs, amber, and slaves to the Mediterranean world in exchange for cloth, gold brocade, pepper, and Silk Road items, and it witnessed significant church construction. During its final years (second half of the 15th century), the city was depopulated. It contracted at the time of the Mongol Golden Horde and was bypassed by most Genoese and Venetian traders. Christianity expanded into Ukraine, Cherson's remaining population was mostly Greek and Romaioi, and the city was razed, presumably by steppe nomads.

Other cultures left conspicuous evidence of their presence at Chersonesos: Scythians (raiding from 300 BCE-250 CE), Sarmatians (50-200 CE), Goths (250-275), Huns (370 ff.), the Theodoro principality, Karaite Jews (4th century ff.), Khazars (Turkish nomads of the 6th-7th centuries who embraced Judaism and permitted Christian worship), Rus' (988 ff.), Mongols (1223 ff.), Genoese (1344), Crimean Tartars (1427), and Ottomans (1475 ff.). Cherson suffered a catastrophic fire (ca. 1250) and a new city was established at nearby Sevastopol, while the old city became a source of construction materials. Archaeological excavations at Chersonesos began as early as 1827 and a museum, the "Warehouse of Local Antiquities," was founded in 1892. A modern museum, located in a former monastery, contains outstanding collections of Greek polychrome grave monuments and medieval pottery (*sgraffito* and *Zeuxippos* ware).

Additional essays document the history of archaeological research, the museums, and chora. An intricate system of chora was established around 350 BCE and divided the 10,000 ha Heraklean Peninsula into farm lots with stone-paved roads, dividing walls, and farmhouses; 400 plots and other settlement pattern evidence are visible today. The section entitled, "Ancient City Monuments" (pp. 58-119, 89 figs.) embraces 34 separate essays grouped under three topics: Major Monuments (defensive walls, city gates, citadel, barracks, agora, main street, theater, mint, water systems), Daily Life (Early Hellenistic houses, house with winery, fishmonger's house, potters' quarters, amphorae and pottery workshops, necropolis) and Religious Architecture (basilicas and churches). Three chapters provide artifact illustrations while two contributions characterize Sevastopol and other cities. Among the remarkable artifacts are the late 4th century BCE "Civic Oath of Chersonesos" stele (p. 136), a rare, complete document of early democracy, and a footed glass bowl with golden decorated band that contains its original grave goods, six hens' eggs (p. 156). Early images reproduced from some of the 10,000 glass plate negatives are outstanding, as are the splendid color photos of architecture and artifacts.

This volume is part historical overview, part regional archaeological report, and part museum catalog, and there is something for a variety of interests — settlement analysis, craft production, diachronic sociocultural change, numismatics, and church history, among others. This remarkable general work designed for scholars and the public has a compelling and lively narrative style that engages the reader and is accompanied by extraordinary illustrations and bibliographies. This effort bodes well for future NPTC-ICA collaboration and the projected publications program. The goal of this book, to introduce a worldwide audience to this remarkable archaeological site and region, has been admirably attained.

Scott C. Levi, The Indian Diaspora in Central Asia and its Trade, 1550-1900. Brill's Inner Asian Library, 3. Leiden-Boston-Köln: Brill, 2002, xiv + 320 pp., maps, illustrations, appendices, bibliography, index. ISBN 9004123202, € 83, US $99.00.

Reviewed by: **Peter B. Golden**, Professor of History, Rutgers University, pgolden@andromeda.rutgers.edu

Commercial and cultural contacts between Central Asia and South Asia have an extensive yet still relatively unexplored history. Levi's book is not only a most welcome addition to this literature, it is a move towards "a less Eurocentric perspective" (p. 1), a "re-orienting" (Frank 1998) of our view of global historical themes. It also has much to say that is new and of importance to our understanding of the early modern and modern history of Central Eurasia.

At the very start, Levi tackles a major area of scholarly contention: the notion that Central Eurasia was plunged into a prolonged period of political decline and economic and intellectual stagnation as a consequence of the European takeover of the movement of goods between Asia and Europe. Decline occurred in some areas, but this was, he argues, in the natural course of affairs as other regions prospered in response to new and different economic stimuli (p. 21-23). Although not unaffected, the region was not peripheralized. Rather, the "indigenous Asian trade remained lively, and much larger in its totality" (p. 82). On the basis of its extensive trade with Mughal India, Levi contends that "Turan" (Western Turkistan, Transoxiana) was very much in the global commercial loop. What had changed were the goods and direction: it was now more north-south focused. Turan exported huge numbers of horses (as many as 100,000 annually in the latter half of the 17th century, the number declining only in the 18th and especially the 19th century with the British takeover; horses were also exported to Muscovy) in exchange for Indian textiles, indigo, medicinal herbs, jewelry, and cotton (pp. 49-50, 72-77). The slave trade dating back to the Ghaznavid era was also well known, including among its victims Kalmyks, Russians, Shia (Afghan and Persian) and of course Hindus, who may have constituted as much as 50 percent of the slave population of Bukhara and Samarqand (p. 67), where they toiled on plantation-like estates. This is a subject that has been little explored.

The major players in trade were Indian caste-based family firms (p. 210), which were mostly Hindu, with some Jains, Sikhs and Muslims. The venture capitalists of their day, termed in the sources "Multanīs" (Multan was an old trading center) and later "Shikarpurīs," they largely hailed from northwestern India and were, Levi argues, fundamentally one and the same grouping, the Shikarpurīs putting perhaps greater emphasis on the "movement of capital" (p. 117-118). Building on the enormous wealth of a monetized Indian economy (a process dating to the 13th century Delhi Sultanate, p. 220), and supported and encouraged by the pro-trade Mughal, Uzbek and Safavid governments (Indian trading diasporas were active in Iran as well), these men of commerce and finance brought both goods and capital to urban and rural Turan from ca. 1550 to the 1890s. Few villages seemed to lack Indian moneylenders (p. 149-150). Intrepid commercial agents, they constantly took the profits from one venture and invested them in others, while maintaining a geographically diversified business portfolio (p. 183). Well-schooled in trade and finance by their firms, they formed permanent communities with transient populations of men without their families. Individuals usually stayed for several years and then were rotated back to their homes and replaced by other members of the firm. At its height, there were perhaps some 35,000 members of this mobile community. Although strictly speaking not "People of the Book" (i.e., Jews or Christians), the Hindu Multanīs and Shikarpurīs were tolerated and given cultural autonomy "within the confines of their caravanserais" (p. 144). They were providers of "much-needed investment capital and other economic services" (p. 150). They did not seek integration with the host communities and consciously sought to maintain their "otherness" for both religio-cultural and commercial reasons. As resident aliens, they could "act in ways inconsistent with indigenous norms" (p. 176), especially with regard to money-lending and other interest-bearing schemes (interest could reach as high as 300%). Disliked as "usurers," they enjoyed the protection of the elite for whom they performed financial and managerial tasks (p. 177).

The British takeover of the shipment of Indian raw materials to Russian textile mills in the latter part of the 19th century, combined with the Russian conquest of Central Asia and ensuing colonial policy (largely the work of K. P. von Kaufman and his famous directive No. 8560) in the last quarter of that same century (examined in some detail by Levi), fatally undermined the more than 300 year old Indian trading diaspora of Turan. By the late 19th century more than two-thirds had returned to India. The Russian Revolution and Civil War completed the process. The census of 1926 showed only 37 Indians remaining in Central Asia.

The presence of Indian communities and trading diasporas in Central Eurasia is attested in antiquity. Scott Levi sees these ties beginning in the Kushan era (1st-3rd centuries CE) in Western Turkistan (Transoxiana), which he terms "Turan" (p. 90). However, Indian settlements in Eastern Turkistan (Xinjiang) date back to at least the 2nd century BCE, if not earlier. The kingdom of Kroraina (Chinese Shanshan and later Loulan, probably located on the northeastern shore of the Lobnor) was largely Indic. Indeed, the region was dotted with Indic tongues and writing systems (Vorob'eva-Desiatovskaia 1992, Tremblay 2001). These influences, most probably through East Iranian and Tokharian intermediaries, reached

Mongolia as well. The titulature and onomastics of the Türk Qaghanate (Eastern 552-630, 687-742 CE; Western 552-766 CE) contain terms of Sanskrit origin (e.g., the title ïshbara from Sanskrit ishvara "lord" [Clauson 1972: 257]). Sart, an ethnic term applied in modern times to settled Turkic- and Iranian-speaking populations in Central Eurasia came into Middle Turkic, where it denoted "merchant", probably via Soghdian (cf. Soghdian *sartapao* "caravan master," [De La Vaissière 2002: 141]), from Sanskrit (*sârtha* "caravan," *sârthavâka* "caravan leader"). In the pre-Islamic era, the Soghdians constituted a trading diaspora with some similarities to the later Indian communities discussed by Levi. Stephen Dale's path-breaking work (1994) deepened the chronological framework of studies (mainly British and Russian) of the Indian trading diaspora in Central Eurasia. Dale brought us into the 17th-18th centuries, highlighting the global connections of this community and the importance of the much-neglected Russian sources. Claude Markovits (2000), focusing on one grouping (from Sind), examined its global dimensions from the mid-18th to mid-20th centuries. Levi might have looked at some of these parallels.

This brief review cannot do justice to the wealth of detail and analysis provided by the author. Levi has shown that the Indian trading diaspora, although relatively small numerically, played a vital role in the economic and ultimately political history of the region. It is essential reading for anyone interested in that history.

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Caroline Humphrey and David Sneath, *The End of Nomadism? Society, State and the Environment in Inner Asia.* Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1999, xi + 342 pp., maps, tables, photographs, bibliography, index. ISBN 0822321076, $74.95 (cl.); 0822321408, $24.95 (pbk.).

Reviewed by: **Seth Singleton**, Professor Emeritus, Pacific University, Forest Grove, Ore., USA, seth_singleton@umit.maine.edu

This valuable book is the result of the Environmental and Cultural Conservation in Inner Asia Project, completed in 1995 with MacArthur Foundation funding. The purpose of the project was to find out what has actually been happening to the environment and the pastoral way of life in communities traditionally dependent on livestock herding in three countries, Russia, China, and Mongolia. The first and last chapters include a discussion of language, religion, and kinship, but the study does not focus on changes of language, religious belief, lifestyle, or custom. The method, an

admirable bit of social science, was to conduct detailed, on-the-ground studies in ten communities, located near each other but separated by national boundaries, and to compare the results. The easterly group of communities was located in eastern Mongolia, the Chita Province and Buryat Mongol Republic of the Russian Federation, and the Inner Mongolia region of the People's Republic of China. The other group was located far to the west, in western Mongolia, the Tuva Republic of Russia, and western Xinjiang. All of the communities but one are Mongol in language and culture; the exception is the majority Kazakh community of Handagat, in western Xinjiang.

The researchers investigated local government structures and policies, patterns of residence and kinship, movement of livestock and people from summer to winter (and in some cases fall and spring) pastures, and what the authors call "urbanism," carefully defined to mean not settlement in fixed, urban communities, but linkages of communications, goods, and services between urban centers and the pastoralists. The underlying independent variable in the study is state policies of the three countries. The dependent variables are the effects of the living conditions and livelihood of the herders and the sustainability of the pastoral environment. The findings for the ten communities are presented in detail, with dozens of essential maps, charts, and graphs.

The results imply that adaptation of traditional patterns of movement of livestock is best for the environment and for a sustainable pastoral way of life. "Nomadism" therefore should not end. However, this book is no romantic celebration of "traditional" culture. The Inner Asian pastoral way of life has never been static. In Russia, Soviet state structures, collective farm organization and mentality persist, but have lost their political support and ideological *raison d'être*. The Mongol herding communities of Chita and Buryatia have been left with fixed settlements, dependence on raised fodder rather than movement to natural pastures, and dependence on state-supplied consumer goods, fertilizers, transport, and spare parts — except that the state no longer supplies these goods, with dire results. Yet, as in other agricultural communities of Russia, there is no option to return to some previous way of life. The result is degraded pastures and a low and falling standard of living, but little incentive to risk privatization.

For Mongolia, the authors describe the prerevolutionary pattern of mobility of the herds belonging to nobles and monasteries, tended by serf herders, and note that the changes introduced in the 1923-91 communist era were not from individual private ownership to the state, but from one form of large-scale pastoral economy on behalf of ruling elites to another. The actual patterns of livestock mobility changed less than elsewhere. Consequently, the communities in Mongolia had better pastures and a more sustainable livestock economy than their Chinese or Russian neighbors. The real revolution in Mongolia has been privatization of the herds during the last decade. While explicitly rejecting nostalgia for collectivization, the authors doubt the economic viability of privatized herds in Mongolia. One effect has been an incentive to concentrate herds near Ulaan Baatar and other towns, which may degrade the nearby pastures.

The situation in China seemed the most stable of the three countries studied. As the authors point out, in the early 1990s Chinese market reforms had been in place for a decade, under unchallenged Party guidance, while Russia and Mongolia were in the midst of a revolutionary upheaval. The Chinese system combines a market economy with control by local officials: the officials allocate animals and pastures and set prices for products, but the herds are privatized to families. The goal for officials and families alike is to maximize economic return and consumption. In Inner Mongolia particularly, the authors describe communities engaged in a scramble for money regardless of the negative environmental consequences. The authors also find that in all three countries, the western communities (in Tuva, western Mongolia, and Xinjiang) have a healthier environment and less cultural stress. They do not speculate about the reasons.

The End of Nomadism? challenges several assumptions. The authors dispute the idea that nomadism is outmoded and that sedentary life is better or more economically productive, which clearly is not the case in Inner Asia. They equally challenge the romantic return to indigenous tradition. They recommend a high degree of "urbanism" — city-rural integration — in transport and communications, with the herder using truck and cell phone as he moves livestock to preserve sustainable pastures. They also challenge policies of privatization of nuclear family economic units as unsuitable and unproductive. However, they have little use for communist-era state and collective farms, which degraded pastures and forced herders

into a dispirited, static existence. Sustainable pastoralism will require active and effective local governance and leadership to improve infrastructure and prevent degradation of pastures. Just leaving "privatized" herders alone is not enough.

This volume combines exhaustive detail of interest to anthropologists and specialists in pastoral communities with information, descriptions, and conclusions of great value to anyone concerned with Inner Asia. It would be excellent to repeat the study today, ten years on, as post-Soviet patterns and practices have become more entrenched in Russia and Mongolia and as China has continued its explosive economic growth.

K. Warikoo and Dawa Norbu, eds., *Ethnicity and Politics in Central Asia*. Denver, Colo.: iAcademic Books, 2000 [1992], x + 291 pp. ISBN: 1588680363 (pbk.).

Reviewed by: **Shahram Akbarzadeh**, Senior Lecturer in Global Politics, School of Political and Social Inquiry, Monash University, Clayton, Victoria, Australia, shahram.akbarzadeh@arts.monash.edu.au

It feels strange to be reviewing a book that was originally published in 1992. This edited volume was reprinted in 2000, no doubt in response to the growing public curiosity about Central Asia and the healthy expansion of this field of study. But it is not clear why the publisher has made no effort to update this book with more recent and up-to-date data and analysis. In the preface, for example, the editors postulate the "possibility of a marriage [between] Islamic revivalism and Central Asian post-Communist nationalism" (p. x). This may have been a reasonable expectation at the time of the first publication, but in the immediate subsequent years that idea became commonplace among scholars of Central Asia. The behavior of the ruling regimes, with the obvious exception of Tajikistan in 1992-1993, and their active promotion of "official" Islam were widely interpreted by students of Central Asia as a transparent ploy to consolidate the state-building enterprise. The outdated preface highlights an endemic problem with this reproduction.

The book is divided into five sections that range from regional politics to Afghanistan under Soviet rule. The Central Asian section, which includes five chapters, is devoted to the Soviet experience. These chapters deal with Soviet nationalities policies and cultural revival, linguistic assertiveness, demographic and ethnic growth, and ethnic strife. Contributors explore the relationship between rapid demographic growth and the sense of national identity against the backdrop of the Soviet policy on nationalities. The consequent cultural assertiveness set the stage for the emergence of nationalist movements in the aftermath of the Soviet collapse. These developments have attracted a number of publications in the early part of the 1990s and this collection is firmly placed in that genre.

This collection offers a novel approach to studies of Central Asia in that it does not confine itself to the modern boundaries drawn by imperial powers. This is a holistic approach and covers Inner Asia, acknowledging the close historical ties between the inhabitants of Inner and Central Asia. This is perhaps the most significant contribution of this book, as so many recent publications tend to overlook historical links in the region. It is not clear, however, if this contribution to our conceptual-ization of Central and Inner Asia was intentional or a byproduct of the expertise of the contributing scholars who took part in the February 1990 seminar at the Jawaharlal Nehru University that preceded this book.

This collection was no doubt a significant publication in the early part of the 1990s. I am far less certain about the contribution its reproduction can make a decade later.

Conferences and Lecture Series

The Eleventh Annual Central Eurasian Studies (CEUS) Conference

Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana, USA, April 3, 2004

Reported by: **Aaron Platt**, MA student, CEUS, aplatt@indiana.edu; **Chris Whitsel**, PhD student, Sociology and MA student, CEUS, cwhitsel@indiana.edu; and **Nicole Willock**, PhD student, CEUS/Religious Studies, Indiana University, Bloomington, Ind., USA

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For over half a century Indiana University (IU) at Bloomington has been the training ground for professors, independent scholars, and government and non-government employees in the field of Central Eurasian studies. Indebted to the life work of distinguished Professor Emeritus Denis Sinor, who most recent recently donated his estate to the IU Foundation (see IAUNRC newsletter Winter 2003: http://www.iub.edu/~iaunrc), the Department of Central Eurasian Studies (CEUS) has been home to a scholarly community dedicated to the continued expansion and growth of the field. Considering the history of the department, it is not surprising that Indiana University graduate students have played a pioneering role in the field. In 1994, two doctoral students, John Elverskog and Aleksandr Naymark, inaugurated what has become an annual event under the auspices of the department — the Central Eurasian Studies Conference. The conference quickly developed under the direction of its founders. In 1997 the Association of Central Eurasian Students (ACES) at Indiana University assumed responsibility for its organization and execution. On April 3, 2004, the CEUS conference took place for the 11th consecutive year.

Since its creation, the overall aim of the conference has been to establish a forum for presenting new research and for graduate students to gain experience in presenting papers before a scholarly audience in the field of Central Eurasian studies. For the purpose of the conference, Central Eurasia is defined as the vast area including or corresponding to present-day Mongolia, Western China (Xinjiang, Tibet), Central Asia (Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, as well as northern Afghanistan and historical Khorasan), Azerbaijan, Turkey, Hungary, Estonia, Finland, and other regions that include Finno-Ugric peoples.

As in previous years, the ACES conference committee created both regionally focused panels and also pan-regional panels tied together by a common theme or academic discipline. In the day-long conference in 2004, there were 13 panels, with regional panels on Estonia, Hungary, Mongolia, and Tibet and pan-regional panels on Archaeology of Central Asia, Education, Politics in Central Asia, Music and Culture in Azerbaijan and Turkey, Water Resources, Nationalism and Identity, History of Central Asia, Socio-Economic Issues, and Early Central Eurasian History.

The Education panel chaired by Heidi Ross addressed issues of modernity across a wide-ranging area from Turkey to Kazakhstan with an emphasis on challenges associated with the transition from the Soviet-era education system. Based on ethnographic data, Kevin Meskill examined state education policy in Turkey in light of competing power structures in the production of culture. Rahimjon U. Abdugafurov focused on the decentralization of financial management at Uzbek higher educational institutions based on the model of responsibility centered budgeting (RCB) which has been adopted at Indiana University. Through an overview of public policy reforms since 1991, Almaz Tolymbek analyzed the main challenges and concerns in higher educational policy in Kazakhstan. Chris Whitsel presented a look at current enrollment patterns and regional differences in schools in Tajikistan.

In the Archaeology panel, Jeffrey Lerner re-examined archaeological and historical data to revise the chronological assessment of the Ai Khanum site in Afghanistan, placing its date at the end of the

third century BCE to the beginning of the second century BCE. Applying a multidisciplinary approach, Bernardo Rondelli and Simone Mantelli of the Italo-Uzbek Archaeology Program presented an archeological map of the Zeravshan River Valley in order to reconstruct and give a diachronic study of the ancient populations of this part of the Silk Road. Barbara Carasetti and Maurizio Tosi used data from the GIS system to demonstrate the complex processes of settlement fluctuation in order to reconstruct the paleo-channel network of the Murghab Delta near Merv, Turkmenistan.

The Tibet panel was kicked off by Federica Venturi with a re-examination of the Old Tibetan document Pelliot Tibétain 1283, a travel itinerary of five Uyghur envoys. Elliot Sperling offered a re-evaluation of Khams history by presenting his latest research on the kings of Nang-chen using Tibetan and Chinese source material. Gedun Rabsal presented new findings concerning the content of the six missing books by Thonmi Sambhota. Nicole Willock combined narrative theory with her translation work on the 20th century scholar Tshetan Zhabsdrung to explore new theories on Tibetan autobiographies. Stacey VanVleet presented her fieldwork on Tibetans and Tibetan communities in Boulder, Colorado, tracing the interactions between convert and ethnic communities practicing Tibetan Buddhism.

Following a tradition started in 2001, the students of the Department of Central Eurasian Studies invited a distinguished scholar in the field as guest speaker for the plenary session. In 2004, we were honored to host Leonard van der Kuijp, Professor of Tibetan and Himalayan Studies and Chair of the Department of Sanskrit and Indian Studies at Harvard University. He captivated the audience with his presentation on the history of the Kālacakrā textual transmission in Tibet, an introduction to his paper entitled "The Kālacakrā and the Patronage of Tibetan Buddhism by the Mongol Imperial Family." The paper was published in the Central Eurasian Studies Lectures Series. Previous publications featured in this series include the full lectures by Peter B. Golden (2001), Thomas T. Allsen (2002) and Robert D. McChesney (2003). They are available for purchase by contacting the Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies. (http://www.iub.edu/~rifias).

Due to a limited number of reporters and the fact that many panels took place simultaneously, it is impossible to give a detailed analysis of the research presented at the ten other panels. But other highlights of the conference include debates on the drying up of the Aral Sea after presentations by Luke Potoski and Kuatbay Bektemirov on efficient water management, and analysis of new historical data by Christopher Atwood to revise the dates of Dayan Khan. Also noteworthy was a session immediately preceding the CEUS conference, the IU György Ránki Hungarian Chair Symposium "Imre Kertész in Perspective: Hungarian and Jewish Culture in the 20th Century." Research findings presented at this session were also included in the Hungarian and Estonian panels chaired by Mihály Szegedy-Maszák and Toivo Raun, respectively. Finally, Lynn Hooker combined media resources and her fieldwork in Romania and North America to present her research on authenticity and gypsiness of the Taenchaez movement. This brief report does not do justice to the wide range of scholarship presented at the conference; further information on the panels and presenters is available on our website.

As a part of the mission of the Association of Central Eurasian Students to create a conducive environment for scholarly exchange and networking, we hosted several receptions and an evening social event when composer Jon Liechty performed a piano recital of music by Azeri composers.

ACES looks forward to another successful CEUS conference on April 9, 2005, and we hope that you will be part of it. For further information on the CEUS conference and ACES, please see our website at http://www.iub.edu/~aces or contact us via e-mail at aces@indiana.edu.

Seminar on Islamic Education in the Soviet Union and the CIS

Ruhr-Universität Bochum, Bochum, Germany, May 13-16, 2004

Reported by: **Stéphane A. Dudoignon**, Research Fellow, Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, and Lecturer, École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris, France, dudoignon@aol.com

On May 13-16, 2004, an international conference entitled Islamic Education in the Soviet Union and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) was held in the House of History in Bochum, Germany. This event was organized by the Seminar for Oriental and Islamic Studies of Ruhr University of Bochum, culminating a two-year research project financed by the Volkswagen Foundation (Volkswagenstiftung), and led by Dr. Raoul Motika in close association with other German researchers and specialists on the CIS. The results of this two-year international collaboration will be published in the form of two distinct volumes: a collection of documents and statistics on the history of Islamic education, legal or "informal," in the USSR through the 20th century; and the proceedings of the Bochum conference itself. Russian editions of both volumes are also in the works.

The idea for the seminar came into being after a meeting in Baku in 2003. The 2004 event in Bochum did not consist simply of a perfunctory meeting of scholars, but distinguished itself from the usual colloquia and conferences by its comparative research, conducted over a period of two years, based on regular and coordinated field and archival work on the most varied Muslim-peopled regions and countries of the former Soviet Union. Among the regions and periods represented, Moscow and its suburbs was not forgotten, with a remarkable reflection by Guzel Sabirova on the attitudes toward Islam among various generations of migrants with Muslim backgrounds in the Russian capital, and on the primacy of ethical preoccupations in these attitudes. The Volga-Urals region was addressed by a particularly rich combination of research focused on Tatarstan: a rare and innovative attempt by a young historian, Ilnur Minnullin, at surveying the evolution of legal Islamic education in this republic throughout the 20th century; a study by Rafiq Muhametshin on current political aspects of the question of Islamic education in Kazan; a historical study by Dilara Usmanova on the place of Islamic education in the "Muslim" press of Russia in the 1900-30s and 1980-90s; and a comparative contribution by Raoul Motika on the actions of various Turkish organizations for the promotion of Islamic education in Tatarstan and in the Southern Caucasus.

Azerbaijan was the focus of three separate studies: the first by Altay Göyüşov on the Soviet policy toward (viz., against) Islamic education in Transcaucasia; the second by Elçin Askerov on the current problems — and geopolitical aspects — of Islamic education in Azerbaijan since the end of the Soviet period; and a pioneering sociological study by Kristina Hunner-Krayser on the decisive role of varied kinds of religious institutions for a typology of religiosity, with special attention to Azerbaijani youth. Although Chechnya was not represented, the Northern Caucasus was surveyed from west to east, with a captivating paper, enriched by original research in regional archives, by the young historian Naima Neflyasheva on Islamic education in the 1920s in the northwestern Caucasus (with special interest on the Adygei Republic). Furthermore, one of the most original and best informed contributions of the whole conference was a paper by Shamil Shikhaliev on Sufi education in Daghestan in the Soviet and federal periods (i.e., since 1991). Also notable was an important contribution by Vladimir Bobrovnikov, a leading specialist on Islam in the northeastern Caucasus, on Islamic education in the rural communities of Daghestan.

Besides the Volga-Urals region and the Caucasus, Central Asia was given special attention, with no less than five contributions on various countries and periods of its contemporary history. These can be divided into two different categories: papers based on official documentation and focusing on legal institutions, and papers interested in more "informal" if not clandestine aspects of the history of Islamic education in the region at various moments of the 20th century. In the first category can be placed a communication by Uygun Ghafurov on the history of legal education in Uzbekistan since the creation of the Spiritual Board of Central Asian Muslims in 1943. Such is also the case with the paper by Asylbek Izbairov on the peculiarities of Islamic education in Kazakhstan today; although this paper gives some attention to non-official and even to oppositional organizations such as the Hizb ut-Tahrir, it is based exclusively on official

documentation and police reports, as were several other contributions to the conference on current aspects of Islamic education. In the second category, we find papers as varied as a captivating attempt by Ashirbek Muminov (a leading historian of Islam in Central Asia, who may not need an introduction) at a typology of Islamic education in Uzbekistan from 1917 to 1943 that identified pre-Soviet traditional, Jadid, Soviet traditional, and clandestine (in the form of the *hujra*) varieties; and a study by the young researcher Manja Stefan on the Islamic religious education and socialization of children in Tajikistan since the end of the civil war.

The two-year Volkswagen Foundation-funded program led by Motika at Ruhr University involved specialists of the most varied backgrounds and disciplines: local political scientists of Islam accustomed to analyzing official or, more rarely, unofficial documentation on religious activity in the former USSR; "conflictologists" specializing in the politicization of religion since the end of the Soviet period; some mainly European specialists of social sciences and several historians of the 20th century. This conjuncture of competences allowed the program to provide its participants and future readers of its proceedings a rare opportunity for genuine geographical and chronological comparative studies. One could underline, for instance, the importance given to the cross-cultural analysis of the ways of thinking and practicing Islam over different generations in a same place (Sabirova), or the importance given to the comparison between urban and rural Islam (especially the contribution by Bobrovnikov), to say nothing of decisive studies on non-official aspects of Islamic teaching in the former Soviet Union through the 20th century (papers by Shikhaliev and Muminov).

In spite of the participation in the project of the most respected historians, the history of Islamic education in the short period of the 20th century still remains a "grey zone" on which the present conference only has begun to cast light (although that may be considered one of its key contributions to the development of the field). The collection of papers had foci on two periods usually privileged by researchers: the 1900-30s and the last 15 years of the 20th century. With the exception of the rarest contributions (e.g., that by Minnullin on Tatarstan, which unfortunately remains based on official documentation about legal institutions), the period from collectivization to perestroika remains a no man's land of modern history for the Central Eurasian societies and populations with Islamic background. With two very rare exceptions (papers by Muminov and Shikhaliev), too many studies on Islam and Islamic education during this period, whether written by specialists from the CIS or their Western colleagues, continue to be based on such documents as accounts by the *upolnomochennye* [authorities] of the Soviet period or more recent police reports. A possible explanation for this recurrent gap could be linked to the self-limitations of the *kulturgeschichtlich* [cultural-historical] approach that continues to dominate Western and former Soviet studies of contemporary Islamic societies and populations in the former USSR. It remains the case that the specific history of Islam in Central Eurasian lands during the short 20th century has probably to be an "anti-history," based on non-official documents and on a careful but extensive use of oral sources, so often neglected by historians. This anti-history largely remains to be written, and it could be the object of future international programs bringing together researchers from various Western countries and the CIS.

The Ruhr University conference on Islamic Education in the Soviet Union and the CIS and its associated two-year special project capped a decade of extensive research on the subject matter. During those ten years Professor Stefan Reichmuth, a leading personality of modern and contemporary Islamic studies external to the tiny circles of research on Central Eurasia, cheerfully led a young and particularly innovative research team. With the constant support of the Volkswagen Foundation, they produced an abundant and impressive assortment of now published doctoral theses and *Habilitationswerke* that have all become reference works in their fields, as well as numerous international projects that have deeply contributed to changing our global perceptions of past and contemporary Central Eurasian societies.

The present dispersion of most members of this research team puts a (provisional) end to one of the richest moments of the recent development of Central Eurasian studies in Europe. This may explain the particular sadness which could be felt among the participants when the time came to say goodbye — many worrying that a peculiar moment like the two-year project led by Raoul Motika may not be repeated in the years to come. Some, on the contrary, shared their resolution that, thanks to the strong personal links that were created over the past decade, such a fruitful experiment should continue in the future.

Central Eurasia in Amsterdam: Three Conference Reports

Reported by: **Babak Rezvani**, University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, brezvani@isfedu.org

The Georgian Political Environment after Saakshvili's Rose Revolution

Amsterdam, Netherlands, April 5, 2004

On March 28, 2004, parliamentary elections took place in Georgia. These elections were held after the so-called Rose Revolution, as a consequence of which the former president Shevardnadze was forced to resign. The party of the new president, Mikhail Saakashvili, won the elections by an overwhelming majority of votes. The Institute for the Public and Politics and the Alfred Mozer Foundation, which are attached to the Dutch Labor Party (PvdA), organized a meeting on April 5, 2004, to evaluate the results of these elections. The meeting's speakers were Bert Koenders, member of the Dutch Parliament and foreign affairs spokesman of the PvdA; Wanda Koster, Interkerkelijk vredesberaad [Inter-Church Peace Council], which oversees projects in the Southern Caucasus; and Frank van Beuningen, coordinator of Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) affairs at the Netherlands' Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The moderator was Matilda Nahabedian of the Alfred Mozer Foundation.

The discussion was concerned with recent political developments in Georgia, the role of civil society in Georgian politics, and Georgian international relations. During the elections in November 2003, allegedly large-scale election fraud led to rotation of power in Georgia. Compared to the earlier elections in November, the elections in March 2004 meant a huge step toward democracy. Although the members of the discussion were generally optimistic about the future of democracy in Georgia, they voiced specific concerns about the challenges that Georgia faces.

First, the enormous election victory of the National Movement-Democrats (formerly United National Movement) means that there is almost no political opposition. The international community has shown already its concerns about the lack of checks and balances that this election has caused in the new Georgian political environment. Moreover, in the future the election procedures should be improved, and there should be developed a better registration system of voters. Another point of concern, according to the speakers, was that there was no clear separation between the state apparatus and political parties!

Koenders discussed his concern that the current government of Georgia will evolve into an authoritarian government. This is likely, in his view, because there is almost no serious opposition party left. Koenders also argued that the European Union and international community should support the existence of a free media in Georgia. The media could function as a watchdog and this would be effective in reducing the risk that the Georgian government might evolve into an authoritarian regime. The Georgian voter expects from the government energetic and strict implementation of its policies in order to solve the problems in the country and fight corruption effectively.

In Shevardnadze's era a powerful civil society existed in Georgia. After the March elections many positions in the state apparatus were taken by former top functionaries of the NGOs. According to Koster this is an ambiguous development: it is positive that civil society has gained influence in the government, but this situation may cause civil society to lose its independence.

Much of the discussion concerned Georgia's international relations, particularly with Russia. Both van Beuningen and Koenders emphasized the so-called "nuisance role of Russia": Russia may make no positive contribution in resolving the conflicts and tensions in the region, but resolution is nevertheless unthinkable without the involvement of Russia. According to the speakers, economic reforms and democratization have always been subordinate to oil interests in Georgia, and the time has come to change this situation. Koenders stressed the role of the European Union and international community in supporting democratic reform in Georgia.

Despite the intended inclusiveness of this conference, not all issues received adequate attention. For example, the situations of ethnic minorities, Muslim Georgians, and the unrehabilitated Meskhetians were not addressed. These are important topics, especially given that one of the most common criticisms of the new government is its nationalistic Christian chauvinism.

Whether true or not, the issue is of crucial importance for both internal stability and Georgia's relations with its neighbors.

Georgia, Federal or Unitary State?

Free University, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, September 8, 2004

A conference on the territorial integration of Georgia was held on September 8, 2004, at the Free University in Amsterdam. The speakers were Dr. Charlotte Hille, Lecturer in International Relations at the University of Amsterdam; Dr. Viacheslav Chirikba, a research scholar in Caucasian Studies at the University of Leiden and the representative of the Abkhazian authority for the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization in the Hague; and Prof. Dr. Bruno Coppieters, Chair of Political Science at the Free University in Brussels. The discussion was led by Prof. Dr. George Hewitt, Professor of Caucasian Languages and head of the Department of the Languages and Cultures of the Near and Middle East at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London.

Hille said that despite the cease-fire in the South Ossetian-Georgian war, there is no guarantee of reintegration of South Ossetia with Georgia. Whether Saakashvili will be able to reintegrate South Ossetia with Georgia, and bring it under Georgian sovereignty remains in question. Much depends on negotiations and agreements between the South Ossetian president Kokoity and the Georgian president Saakashvili, but the political role of the Russian Federation in the settlement of this conflict should not be ignored and its regional interests should not neglected.

According to Coppieters, despite the fact that Georgia has never been a federal entity, it has a rich tradition in the discussion of "federalization." Chirikba agreed, remarking that Georgia has always had a rich regionalist tradition, and that the concept of a unitary state is something new to the Georgian political culture. Chirikba went on to elaborate on the historical background to the secessionist conflict in Abkhazia and the prospect of a settlement. Abkhazia seceded from Georgia as a result of the 1992-93 war. Although this secession occurred after Gamsakhurdia's presidency, his chauvinist policies effected this process in that non-Georgian ethnic groups believed that they were not welcomed in the newly independent Georgia. The ethnic minorities were called "guests" [*stumrebi*] on Georgian soil.

Chirikba objected to the designation of Abkhazia as a "self-proclaimed state"; all states are self-proclaimed, and the question is whether a state apparatus functions properly or not. According to Chirikba, this is the case in Abkhazia: Abkhazia's economy is stronger than that of many countries, including Georgia, and Abkhazia is able to provide security for all its "citizens," including the Mingrelians and Georgians. Chirikba insisted that a federalist approach to the question is not acceptable to Abkhazians: only full independence is acceptable, but the Georgian government refuses even to consider a confederative solution.

Everyone at the conference agreed on the role of Russia in this conflict: without Russia's consent this conflict is not likely to be solved. The fact that citizens of Abkhazia are all offered Russian passports obliges Russia, according to Chirikba, to be involved in this conflict in the sense that it protects its citizens.

According to some views expressed at this gathering, Abkhazia cannot become be a legitimate independent entity, because ethnic Abkhazians still constitute a minority in Abkhazia's population, even after the large-scale exodus of Georgians. According to Chirikba, in an independent Abkhazia all citizens regardless of their ethnic background will enjoy equal rights of citizenship.

Among other topics discussed at this gathering was the question of the potential for ethnic conflicts in both northern and southern Georgia. The participants had no clear answers, but they agreed that the settlement of these conflicts does not only depend on the conflicting parties, but also on the role and interests of neighboring countries, especially the Russian Federation.

Debate on Terrorism in Uzbekistan

Royal Institute of the Tropics, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, May 5, 2004

In the last week of March 2004, terror attacks in Tashkent, Uzbekistan reportedly killed 14 civilians, ten policemen, and 33 terrorists (among them seven women). Numerous others were injured. Also, on July 30, three near simultaneous explosions by suicide bombers targeted the US Embassy, the

Israeli Embassy and the headquarters of Uzbekistan's chief prosecutor, resulting in at least five deaths. On May 5, 2004, a debate surrounding the turmoil in Uzbekistan was organized by the Royal Institute of the Tropics (KIT), the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) and Asian Studies in Amsterdam (ASiA). According to the organizers, the recent terror attacks in Tashkent have raised fears of a potential onslaught of regional terrorism. Central Asian leaders fear suspected militants of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and those of Hizb ut-Tahrir (Liberation Party). The Hizb ut-Tahrir is calling for a world ruled according to the *Sharia*, or Islamic law; its ideology appears to be particularly popular in the Ferghana Valley, a densely populated territory extending into Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. In recent years, the leadership of all three countries have advocated harsh crackdowns on suspected Islamists. The Uzbek government, in particular, has shown little tolerance towards Islamists and Islamic movements and has jailed thousands of Islamist suspects, in addition to its secular oppositionists.

The Amsterdam debate on Uzbekistan brought forth more questions than answers: Do the recent attacks have anything to do with the postponed democratic processes or problems of economic development and prosperity, which Uzbekistan's president, Islam Karimov, had promised in 2002? What are the effects of the recent violence on the slow but ongoing democratization processes in the Central Asian region as a whole? Furthermore, what can be said about the identities and intentions of the terrorists? Were the attacks engineered or funded by groups outside of Uzbekistan, as Karimov has claimed? Were such events the first sign of the presence of al-Qaeda in former Soviet Central Asia? What are the implications of such attacks for the ongoing "war on terror"? And what role should the Dutch government play in alleviating international terrorism of the Islamist variety?

The debate was led by Prof. Dr. Wim Stokhof of the IIAS, Dr. Mirzohid Rahimov, Senior Researcher at the Institute of History of the Uzbek Academy of Sciences, and Prof. Dr. Touraj Atabaki of the University of Amsterdam, who discussed the history of the Islamic movement of Uzbekistan in its regional context.

According to Dr. Rahimov, the widely assumed stereotype of a Central Asian terrorist as being a poor and disenfranchised youth lacking a proper world perspective is invalid, as many of the terrorists involved in the Tashkent bombings are known to be from middle- and even upper-class families, with some possessing university education. Prof. Atabaki argued that the Tashkent bombings cannot be compared to the Madrid explosions of March 2004, which resulted in nearly 200 deaths and occurred on the eve of the Spanish elections. (Some analysts saw the bombings as having led to the downfall of the pro-Iraq-War Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar of the right-leaning Popular Party and to the victory of the newly elected Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero of the Socialist Party.) According to Atabaki, the motives and the strategies of the two events appear to be different. For example, whereas in the case of the Madrid wave of violence ordinary people were targeted with what appear to have been randomly placed bombs, explosions in Tashkent were specifically directed at government and foreign officials. Furthermore, though the ethnic Uzbek Islamist leader, Tohir Yöldoshev, has allegedly had ties with al-Qaeda and likely resides in the Taliban-supporting Pashtun region of southern Afghanistan and northern Pakistan, links of the Tashkent violence with al-Qaeda are still mere speculation. It is also not clear whether the terrorists in Tashkent were even members of the IMU or Hizb ut-Tahrir, as the Uzbek government has claimed.

In response to a question by a member of the audience as to whether various Islamic groups in the region will likely unite under a general Islamist umbrella, Atabaki responded that in his opinion such a possibility is remote, in that Islamism in Central Asia is to a large extent a function of ethnicity (and likely nationalism) rather than being purely ideological. In conclusion, many of the speakers present agreed that despite the recent violence the fears of an evolving global or regional Islamist terror movement are likely exaggerated.

Multilateral Organizations in the Caucasus and Central Asia

Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, Oslo, Norway, June 10-11, 2004

Reported by: **Indra Øverland**, Senior Research Fellow, Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, Oslo, Norway, ino@nupi.no

"Multilateral Organizations in the Caucasus and Central Asia" was the title of a conference held in Oslo in June 2004, one of the largest events focused on Central Asia and the Caucasus ever organized in the Nordic countries. It included ten panels, with 44 papers and over 100 participants (for further details, see http://www.nupi.no/conference/). There were presenters from four of the former Soviet republics in Central Asia and all three South Caucasus republics, as well as Estonia, Finland, France, Norway, Russia, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, the UK and the US. Among the participants were academics, diplomats, and aid workers, making it possible for the event to function as a forum for interaction and dialogue among various categories of actors.

Financial support was provided by the Norwegian Research Council and the International Association for the Promotion of Cooperation with Scientists from the New Independent States of the Former Soviet Union (INTAS). INTAS provided specific support for a workshop on multilateral organizations and migration issues in the region by covering travel and accommodation costs for 18 workshop participants, most of whom were from the South Caucasus and Central Asia. In INTAS jargon, this was a "strategic scientific workshop," meaning that it was designed to function as a launching pad for future grant proposals and research cooperation between academics from the West and the former Soviet Union. The workshop formed an integral part of the broader conference, with several participants moving back and forth between the panels of the workshop and the rest of the conference.

The strategic scientific workshop extended over both days of the conference, with four panels on different topics. Particularly noteworthy was the panel on Chechen internally displaced peoples and refugees. It succeeded in bringing together experts who had not met previously, and who were able to exchange information and establish contacts for future cooperation. Among these specialists were Julie Wilhelmsen, Norway's foremost expert on Chechnya, and Maia Tskhenkeli, who is particularly well-informed about the refugee situation in Georgia's Pankisi Valley. Trafficking in women and children was also a topic that received considerable attention and served as a link between the workshop and the main conference, which also included a panel on crime trafficking and corruption.

Two issues gave rise to particularly lively discussions: the first was that of the balancing act between outside pressure and cooperation in the functioning of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in Central Asia. In the opening keynote speech, Norway's Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Kim Traavik, attempted to strike a balance between pressure and cooperation in the approach of Western states and international organizations to governments in the Caucasus and Central Asia. On the one hand, he argued for pressure to improve human rights standards; on the other hand, he argued that such pressure should have certain limits, in order to ensure continued dialogue and cooperation without which little improvement can be expected. He drew fire from both sides, with parts of the audience questioning whether it is acceptable to compromise on human rights, and others disputing whether external pressure serves any function at all except alienation, in particular in Central Asia. The latter view was echoed in later discussions, where it was also argued that international organizations and outside pressure are able to exert greater influence in the South Caucasus than in Central Asia due to the aspirations of the former for membership in such organizations as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the European Union. The fact that the Deputy Minister was questioned could be taken as an indication that he had emphasized a diplomatic middle ground. His talk was also one of the most fascinating at the conference, in sharp contrast with those of academics who are specialists on the region.

The second notable debate followed John Schoeberlein's paper, "How Aid is Received: Diverse Views on the Impact of International Assistance." Drawing on rich ethnographic data, Schoeberlein, a professor of Central Eurasian studies at Harvard University, conveyed diverse views among locals on the activities of international organizations in Central Asia, paying particular attention to the OSCE's activities in Central Asia,

including its academy in Kyrgyzstan. Some of the views he cited were highly critical, such as the proposition that locals see such international organizations as vehicles for the enrichment of local elites and the employment of foreigners. This raised protests among some participants, who had observed the work of the OSCE and its academy at close range and were impressed with its efforts. The result was a lively debate about the performance and perceptions of the OSCE in Central Asia.

Due to the large number of papers and panels, the conference organizers plan to split forthcoming publications resulting from the paper presentations into several different publishing outlets: a special issue of the journal of the Nordic Institute for Asian Studies, *Asia Insights*, has already been published under the title *Multilateral Cooperation in Central Asia*. It includes eight papers from the conference and can be downloaded, free of charge, from http://www.nias.ku.dk/nytt/2004_2/NIASnytt2_2004.pdf. Additionally, the organizers intend to publish a book utilizing some of the most significant papers of the conference on international assistance to Central Asia. Other papers will be published in the conference proceedings series of the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs.

Several conference participants are currently discussing the possibility of submitting a project proposal to INTAS or another European funding body on the basis of the INTAS strategic scientific workshop. In addition, some participants are actively exploring the possibility of organizing another conference on foreign aid issues in the region. This may take place in Bratislava during September 2005 and be organized jointly by the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, the German Marshall Foundation and other institutions. One important focus for this conference will be the differences and end results between American and European approaches to international assistance to the southern tier former Soviet republics.

Workshop on Turkmenistan

The Oxford Society of Central Asia, Oxford, UK, June 18-19, 2004

Reported by: **Paul Bergne,** Senior Associate Member, Centre for Russian and Eurasian Studies, St. Antony's College, Oxford, UK, paul.bergne@sant.ox.ac.uk

The aim of The Oxford Centre for Central Asia (TOSCA), founded in 2003, is to bring students from Central Asia visiting Oxford University together with their colleagues from the UK and other countries, and to promote interest in the study of the history of and contemporary situation in the region and its neighboring states.

Since its foundation, TOSCA has organized a number of seminars, lectures, and other academic gatherings, the most recent of which was a two-day international workshop on Turkmenistan held on June 18 and 19, 2004, at St. Antony's College, Oxford. The decision to concentrate on Turkmenistan was taken after discussions with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) where it was felt that the relative ignorance about that country in official, media, business, and academic circles in the UK might be remedied by assembling a group of specialists to give presentations and exchange views about existing problems and challenges.

Conference organizers decided that the conference should encompass not only current political and economic issues, but also the historical, social, and cultural background against which Turkmenistan has developed its national identity and current policies. They wanted to place due emphasis on the progress made in the fields of agriculture, commercial law, and cultural cooperation between Turkmenistan and the UK. With regard to the last point, TOSCA was lucky to be able to persuade Professor Georgina Herrman to talk about the successful campaign of archaeological exploration in Merv where cooperation has been continuing for some ten years. The agricultural sector was well covered: first by Professor Zvi Lerman from Tel Aviv, who spoke on agrarian reform, and then through films of life and development in stock-raising on collective farms shown by Chris Lunch of

Insight.[1] These provided a diversion from the conventional lecture approach. Several scholars spoke on the challenges and achievements faced by a one-resource economy like Turkmenistan: Dr. Badykova of George Washington University discussed general economic problems, Atul Gupta of Burren Oil described the progress made in the hydrocarbons sector and Professor William Butler of London University covered the legal aspects of reform in the commercial environment.

Once the workshop program turned to the social and political situation in Turkmenistan, there was considerable criticism of the Turkmen government's record, specifically regarding treatment of the political opposition, violations of human rights, the eccentric and counter-productive manipulation of the educational system, and the implications of the personality cult of President Saparmurad Niyazov, "the Turkmenbashi." The presentation by Vitaly Ponomarev, the Central Asia Program Director of the Human Rights Center Memorial in Moscow, on "The Activities of the Turkmen Opposition from 1992 to the Present — Including the Attempted Coups d'Etat of 1994 and 2002," was especially well received.

The relative paucity of British scholars specializing in Turkmenistan meant that most of the contributors came from abroad. Fortunately, the Open Society Institute (OSI) gave generously to help cover the costs. The final program included speakers from Russia, Austria, Germany, France, the UK, the US, Norway and Israel. Unfortunately, despite energetic attempts, it proved impossible to persuade any independent speakers from Turkmenistan to participate. Few, if any, representatives of the Turkmen opposition are at liberty in their own country. The Turkmen government had even attempted to persuade the FCO to have the conference stopped. To their credit, the FCO resisted this, and even one of the presentations, on Turkmen foreign policy, was given by the British Ambassador to Turkmenistan. In retrospect, participants raised the question of how useful it would have been to have invited a representative of the Turkmen government to respond to the criticisms leveled. The experience of organizing similar meetings has shown, first, that local officials are reluctant to participate in the sort of critical debate usually heard at such gatherings and, second, that such confrontations rarely lead to any real meeting of minds.

TOSCA would like to thank the FCO, the OSI, the Committee for Central and Inner Asia of the British Academy, British Gas, and St. Antony's College and All-Souls College (the two exclusively post-graduate colleges of the University of Oxford). For those interested, texts and summaries of most of the presentations have been posted on the website of St. Antony's College at http://www.sant.ox.ac.uk/areastudies/turkprogramme.shtml.

[1] Insight is a UK/France-based organization that uses participatory video as a powerful research and development tool and an important means of influencing policy and decision makers. Insight has over 15 years of experience in facilitating projects at the grassroots level, working with communities, NGOs, and governmental organizations in Central Asia, Africa, China, and elsewhere. Examples of participatory videos can be viewed at http://www.insightshare.org.

Educational Resources and Developments

Using the Study of Eurasia in the Training of Military Professionals

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The Defence Academy is a national and international center of teaching and research excellence, offering primarily graduate-level training. The largest academic program at the Academy is the Advanced Command and Staff Course (ACSC), a residential, full-time course of study which takes place over 46 weeks. King's College London (KCL) accredits the ACSC, and students who successfully complete the program are awarded an MA in Defence Studies from KCL. The MA program is designed and taught by faculty of the Defence Studies Department of KCL, approximately 50 academics drawn from the social sciences and humanities. As a specialist in the political and military transformation of Eurasia, I began developing in 1997 an MA Option, titled "Conflict, Instability and Cooperation in the Former Soviet Union."

The students in the MA program are a diverse group of mid-career professionals, admitted upon passing a rigorous entrance exam in a defense-related subject. They include senior military officers from the UK and overseas and defense-oriented civilians such as civil servants and police officers who all go on to senior command postings within their own service. Some 80 percent of the entering students generally have an undergraduate degree, which is most likely to be in the hard sciences such as engineering and physics rather than in the social sciences or humanities. In addition, about 40 percent of the students are from overseas, including the former Soviet Union, Asia, and the Middle East, and they face the additional challenge of studying at the graduate level in English, which is often their second or third language.

For part of their program students study an MA Option of their choice with an expert from the KCL Defence Studies Department. The goal is to develop a range of skills, including critical analysis and intellectual creativity through an inter-disciplinary approach to scholarly study and research. Various teaching methods are used to facilitate these goals, among them student-led debates, in-depth case studies with formal student presentations, and crisis gaming. These provide the opportunity for students to develop a wide range of transferable skills and knowledge. Military officers require many of the skill sets of their civilian counterparts, but they also face unique challenges of command, requiring that they assimilate and analyze information quickly to make decisions, often in life and death situations. Key skills for military officers include time management, the use of initiative, and effective communication of ideas and information.

The MA Option which I offer, "Conflict, Instability and Cooperation in the Former Soviet Union," uses Eurasia as a fascinating case study to develop the range of transferable skills required for effective military officers. This Option runs once a year and has approximately 20 hours of contact time. Its goals are to broaden and deepen the students' understanding of the causes of conflict and instability, to consider why these have been so prevalent in certain parts of the former Soviet Union (FSU), and to examine what steps can be taken by the military, governments, and international organizations to facilitate conflict resolution and security. The students apply current models of conflict to analyze case studies drawn from individual conflict zones as well as areas of stability and determine why some newly independent states have experienced unrest and civil war while others have remained relatively peaceful. These case studies include: the conflict in Chechnya and its effect on stability in the Caucasus; the effect of the recent war in Afghanistan on stability and security in Central Asia; post-9/11 issues of Islam in Central Asia and the Newly Independent States; relations between Russia and Ukraine; Abkhazia's attempts to secede; and the ongoing war between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh.

Student feedback during the development of this MA Option suggested that background material in a subject quite new to most students should best be provided through a didactic approach to learning early in the course. Thus the course begins with a series of lectures covering the unique features of the USSR, the underlying contradictions that explain its collapse and which continue to affect the 15 Newly Independent States, the role of identity politics in accelerating that collapse, and the strengths and weaknesses of models of conflict for explaining conflict and stability in the FSU. The lectures are supplemented with videos and group discussion.

Each student is provided as well with an extensive reading list from which to prepare a 5,000-word essay on a specific study topic and thereby demonstrate some in-depth understanding of the literature. Feedback is provided both in written form and in individual conferences. Assigned topics include: Has the ongoing conflict in Chechnya fundamentally destabilized the whole of the North Caucasus region? Can the territorial dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh be resolved? In light of the ongoing struggle in Abkhazia, can Georgia ever be a stable and democratic state? Using Tajikistan as a case study, is Islamic fundamentalism a major cause of instability in Central Asia? Have recent events in Afghanistan fundamentally destabilized the whole of the Central Asian region? Is Uzbekistan an oasis of stability in Central Asia?

The other major component of the course is work in small groups on two detailed case studies, the ongoing dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan and the UK position on Tajikistan. These examples encourage students to consider the diversity of internal, regional and international pressures and constraints on the Newly Independent States in Eurasia.

The first of these cases addresses specifically the question: Can the territorial dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh be resolved? As a means to facilitate student understanding of this complex issue and to deepen the level of debate, I introduce the key themes to be discussed: the growing involvement of the US, Russia, Iran, and Turkey in resolving this regional conflict; the division between adherence to territorial integrity of existing sovereign states and the right of self-determination; and the effect of domestic political pressures and opportunities in shaping the parameters and possibilities of resolution. To assist the discussion of these issues each student was asked to read Svante E. Cornell, *Small Nations and Great Powers: A Study of Ethnopolitical Conflict in the Caucasus* (2001).

The students then form five groups, each of which is required to prepare a ten-minute presentation applying one of the five proposals discussed in Cornell's book, for resolving the territorial dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan.[1] The presentations take the form of addressing an official forum at the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the body responsible for coordinating conflict resolution. The possible solutions to be considered include: a return to the status quo ante within the region, with Azerbaijan retaining Nagorno-Karabakh and reclaiming the other territory it has lost to the Armenian Karabakhis; the secession of Nagorno-Karabakh, thereby accepting the Armenian Karabakhis' right to self-determination; renegotiation of Nagorno-Karabakh's autonomy within Azerbaijan; a territorial swap between Armenia and Azerbaijan involving the area around the Lachin Corridor and Zangezur; and joint sovereignty by Armenia and Azerbaijan over that key area.

This session proves to be particularly effective in developing skills such as marshalling evidence to draw up a detailed proposal, arguing the case for it, responding to questions, and then summarizing the strengths and weaknesses of the particular proposal. Student feedback indicated that this format worked well to strengthen students' mastery of complex subject matter. Each student benefited from the research and analysis of other student teams and acquired a greater degree of knowledge and understanding about Eurasia than would have been achieved individually.

The assignment for the second case study is to develop policy briefings on Tajikistan. Each of two student groups presents a thirty-minute briefing to the UK foreign minister (the role taken by the instructor). One group advocates closer UK relations and involvement in Tajikistan in light of UK and NATO participation in the peacekeeping force in neighboring Afghanistan. The second group advocates closer ties not with Tajikistan, but rather with Uzbekistan, the West's partner of choice in

[1] For details of these five proposals, see Cornell 2001: 125.

Central Asia. After each presentation, I ask each group to reconsider its position in light of new and emerging intelligence about an alleged bomb attack by al-Qaeda in London and the beginning of a backlash against Islamic groups in the UK.

This crisis game allows military officers to build up their knowledge and understanding of the dynamics in Eurasia and adapt to a new and changing strategic situation. Student feedback on this case study suggests that it could be developed further with crisis reports being fed to the students by me every ten minutes, building up a scenario where the source of the attack can be traced to either Tajikistan or Uzbekistan. Students would then be called upon to present crisis briefings as the scenario unfolded as well as a summation at the end of the class. To add an element of such rapid change in events would be an excellent test of the ability to analyze, conceptualize and assimilate information quickly to make timely and informed decisions in crisis situations. The study of Eurasia thus clearly can develop the transferable skills required by military officers in their diverse and demanding careers.

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A New Course in the Economics of Central Asia at the University of Washington

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In the spring quarter of 2004, the University of Washington offered an advanced undergraduate course, "The Economic Transition and Development of Central Asia." To the best of our knowledge, this is the first course in the US devoted strictly to economic description and analysis of the region. Originally envisioned as a research seminar, it drew an enrollment of 45, largely economics majors. Our experience as Fulbright Scholars teaching economics in Uzbekistan in 1996-1997 gave us the background to teach this course. Prof. Wright has long been involved in the activities of the Seattle-Tashkent Sister Cities Association and specializes in the economics and design of health programs. We benefited from the expertise of an economics graduate student originally from Kazakhstan and a guest lecture by a historian who used slides to provide a cultural overview. The course developed from our direct experience with the often shocking economic reality of the region, which we felt was compelling and important to share with colleagues and students.

Why offer such a specialized course? The answer lies in both the crucial geopolitical role of these new old nations and their unique experience, which casts in sharp relief many key policy debates swirling through the broader field of economic development. Located atop vast fields of oil, gas and other minerals and surrounded by instability, the region is a topic of keen interest to analysts and policy makers.

While endowed with key resources and a Soviet legacy of human capital, Central Asia confronts daunting challenges. At independence it was a generally poor and undeveloped region, caught in the same colossal economic depression that engulfed the rest of the former Soviet Union. The Central Asian countries are now simultaneously transforming the structure of their economies, easing the government out of the business of production and distribution, and creating completely new legal and institutional infrastructure to support a market-based economy. In addition to having to realign their trade from CIS members to world markets, they have to manage a series of shocks and instabilities. Apart from political (and Islamic) insurgencies, the region has been hit with drought and natural disasters, unanticipated shifts in prices of its primary export commodities, collapsing currencies of its trading partners, and pressure from international

organizations for a rapid and simultaneous transformation of the various economic, social, and political systems. A key question is whether these economies can grow fast enough to absorb a rapidly expanding young labor force — obviously crucial to political stability. An understanding of the important forces and constraints driving the policies of the leaders in the region will help the international community steer these countries in the right direction. Anything short of correctly understood conditions and implementation of sound economic policies will lead to further deterioration of social and economic stability.

The second reason for the course is Central Asia's challenge to economic analysis. Most of what has been written about the economies of the post-Soviet era is based on "transition economics," in which the experience of the East European bloc and Russia has stimulated a vigorous debate about the merits of "shock therapy" versus a gradualist approach. However, this eurocentric formulation ignores the central reality of Central Asia: these are largely low-income developing countries. The challenge is thus to integrate transition and development economics. Moreover, the region is a fascinating natural experiment where areas with similar institutional and social structures have followed very different paths. Kyrgyzstan followed international advice and was the first CIS nation admitted to the WTO, but now (by the IMF's assessment) has an unsustainable international debt burden. Uzbekistan, extraordinarily slow to reform, has consequently received comparably little foreign aid and investment. It has so ignored the "established" policy prescriptions emanating from Washington that the IMF permanently closed its Tashkent office. Yet until last year Uzbekistan's economy grew much faster than that of Kyrgyzstan. The often strident debate over globalization and the power of the "Washington Consensus" is perfectly mirrored in the region.

Given these complex but highly relevant issues, the course goals were: 1) to understand the recent history and current issues of Central Asian economies; 2) to use basic economic tools of analysis to probe the complexities of transitioning from socialism and accelerating economic development in the face of a region-wide depression; and 3) to develop the ability to view economic problems and policy from different national perspectives. We pursued these goals through analysis of the development process, institutional change and the implementation of policies regarding individual property rights and the privatization of state enterprises. How are Central Asian states meeting the simultaneous challenges of stabilization and liberalization, the latter, being necessary according to Western theory to sustain economic growth? What is the impact domestically of exposure to an uncertain and changing world economy? One of the important topics is the pitfalls of "oil-fired" development. The foreign exchange management, debt, and foreign trade policies of the countries in the region, especially in Uzbekistan, have raised concerns over a future economic collapse.

The course provided positive learning experiences for both students and instructors and also posed some challenges. On the plus side, students who had no previous knowledge of the region learned a great deal about it and were able then to debate important policy questions about the direction of economic change in Central Asia. Classroom activities included seven formally structured debates, each on a different current policy issue. Some debates were set up with "Tashkent" on one side and "IMF" on the other. Students learned that it was possible to make an intellectual defense of unconventional policies; the debate format provided a stimulating and enjoyable learning experience, and for many students was the best feature of the course.

Setting overly ambitious goals is common in new courses. We faced particular teaching challenges by including a broad spectrum of economic concepts and analytical tools, some of which were unknown to the few students from the university's School of International Studies (or in need of review by some economics majors). As with all such area studies courses, this one spanned a wide spectrum of fields: microeconomics, macroeconomics, economic development and growth, and institutional development. While it thus proved an excellent review for senior economics majors, particularly those with a prior course in international trade, other students had to scramble a bit. The students' lack of any prior knowledge about Central Asia was another challenge. Often there was too little time to discuss important topics. It would be relatively easy a second time to focus on a more manageable list of topics and also to streamline the rather imposing reading pack which was provided in the absence of any appropriate textbook.

Another way to enhance student interest and remove Central Asia from the realm of an abstract

academic subject would be to use multimedia and live video conferencing with teachers and students of economics and possibly also policy makers in the region. It should be possible to meet in real time with a class in Central Asia in order to discuss students' and instructors' views about their country's pressing economic issues. To promote such a possible exchange we have shared the syllabus and reading packet with the Tashkent State Economics University, and we hope to build on the framework that is already in place for exchanges between our university and its counterpart institutions in Central Asia.

The course could also benefit from more comparative discussion regarding, for example, how institutions and laws are different between Western countries and the countries formerly part of the Soviet Union. Such comparisons would enable students to move from that which is familiar to what for most of them is an alien culture of work and economic life in post-Soviet Central Asia. We anticipate making these and other modifications to the course when we teach it for a second time in the Winter 2005 term.

The course syllabus for the Spring 2004 term is available at http://www.econ.washington.edu/user/haideh/Ec406B-S04.pdf in PDF format.

Central Eurasian Scholars Network

The **Central Eurasian Studies Society** announces the establishment of a new resource which will greatly facilitate communication and assistance among scholars of Central Eurasia. CESS has started a new email listserv called the **Central Eurasian Scholars Network (CESN)**. The purpose of the network is to provide a forum for scholars to exchange information and requests with their peers. The network is moderated by CESS members and any interested members are encouraged to volunteer as moderators by sending an email to CESN-List-Owner@lists.fas.harvard.edu.

Note that this service is available only to members of the Central Eurasian Studies Society.

The scope of the Central Eurasian Scholars Network will include the following:

- Requests for research partners or colleagues to join a conference panel.
- Requests for peer assistance in grant writing.
- Requests for peer assistance in the preparation of academic publications or presentations.
- Requests for institutional collaboration.
- Requests for assistance locating scholarly resources.
- Announcements of grants and other opportunities that are specifically collaborative in nature and relate to Central Eurasian studies.

To join the network, if you are already a CESS member, just send a request to CESS@fas.harvard.edu. If you are not a CESS member, you can sign up for the CESN network when filling out the webform for CESS Membership Registration at: http://cess.fas.harvard.edu/CESS_Membership.html. If you do not have good web access, you may write to CESS@fas.harvard.edu to request the MS Word version of the Membership Form.

Basic Info about the Central Eurasian Scholars Network (CESN)

Purpose: Information exchange network to encourage collaboration among scholars of Central Eurasia. Open to members of the Central Eurasian Studies Society (CESS).

Current members: ca. 1,300 (open only to CESS members)
Established: July 2003
Posting: Moderated (see list guidelines for restrictions on the list webpage)
Chief Moderator: Laura Adams, CESS Membership Committee Chair
List webpage: **http://cess.fas.harvard.edu/CESS_CESN.html**

About the

Central Eurasian Studies Society

The CENTRAL EURASIAN STUDIES SOCIETY (CESS) is a private, non-political, non-profit, North America-based organization of scholars who are interested in the study of Central Eurasia, and its history, languages, cultures, and modern states and societies. We define the Central Eurasian region broadly to include Turkic, Mongolian, Iranian, Caucasian, Tibetan and other peoples. Geographically, Central Eurasia extends from the Black Sea region, the Crimea, and the Caucasus in the west, through the Middle Volga region, Central Asia and Afghanistan, and on to Siberia, Mongolia and Tibet in the east.

The CENTRAL EURASIAN STUDIES SOCIETY's purpose is to promote high standards of research and teaching, and to foster communication among scholars through meetings and publications. The Society works to facilitate interaction among senior, established scholars, junior scholars, graduate students, and independent scholars in North America and throughout the world. We hold an Annual Conference, and coordinate panels at various conferences relevant to Central Eurasian studies. The Society also works to promote the publication of peer-reviewed scholarship and other information essential to the building of the field.

The CENTRAL EURASIAN STUDIES SOCIETY is a not-for-profit organization incorporated in the state of Massachusetts, USA.

We invite anyone who shares these interests to become a member and participate in our activities.

To become a member of CESS or join the mailing list for occasional announcements concerning CESS activities, visit the website or contact the address below. Annual dues range from gratis to $30, depending on income. CESS publications, the Membership Directory, conference paper abstracts and other information are available online at: http://cess.fas.harvard.edu.

All inquiries may be directed to:

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Central Eurasian Studies Review

CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

CESR offers scholars, researchers, and educators engaged in the study of Central Eurasia a review of current research, recent publications, scholarly meetings, and new educational resources. We encourage contributions which reflect the regional and disciplinary breadth of the field.

Brief descriptions of each section follow. For more complete descriptions and submission instructions, please read the Information for Contributors on the CESR webpage: http://cess.fas.harvard.edu/CESR_contribution.html. **Contributors are urged to read CESR's format guidelines and transliteration tables carefully before submitting articles**.

Perspectives: state of the field pieces and interdisciplinary assessments of scholarship in Central Eurasian studies. The editors seek proposals for pieces that discuss and analyze the practices and changes in Central Eurasian studies in various national contexts, and pieces that compare developments and transformations in the construction of knowledge about Central Eurasia internationally. Length may vary. Contact Robert Cutler with proposed topics, rmc@alum.mit.edu.

Research Reports: 1) reports on findings and methods of on-going or recently completed research; or 2) conditions of doing research in Central Eurasian studies (up to 1,500 words). Contact: Jamilya Ukudeeva, jaukudee@cabrillo.edu.

Reviews and Abstracts: reviews (800-1,000 words) and abstracts (150-250 words) of books and other media (e.g., films, websites, CD ROM encyclopedias) of scholarship in all social science and humanities disciplines in Central Eurasian studies. Contact: Shoshana Keller, skeller@hamilton.edu

Conferences and Lecture Series: summary reports (500-1,000 words) of conferences and lecture series devoted to the field of Central Eurasian studies as well as reports about selected panels on Central Eurasian studies at conferences held by professional societies in the humanities or social sciences. Contact: Payam Foroughi, central-asia@utah.edu.

Educational Resources and Developments: materials which will help develop an informed public awareness of the Central Eurasian region, such as ideas on curriculum development; discussions of teaching methodology; descriptions of specific courses (with links to their syllabi); reviews of textbooks, films, electronic resources; discussion of public education undertakings. Contact: Daniel Waugh, dwaugh@u.washington.edu.

Deadlines for submissions: Summer issue — April 1; Winter issue — November 1.

Call for Paper and Roundtable Proposals

Sixth Annual Conference of the Central Eurasian Studies Society

September 29-October 2, 2005
Boston University, Boston, Mass., USA

The Central Eurasian Studies Society (CESS) will hold its Sixth Annual Conference at Boston University on September 29-October 2, 2005. Paper and roundtable proposals relating to all aspects of humanities and social science scholarship on Central Eurasia are welcome. The conference committee accepts only electronic proposal submissions. For full details about submissions and registration, please see the conference website:

http://cess.fas.harvard.edu/CESS_Conference.html

The geographic domain of Central Eurasia extends from the Black Sea and Iranian Plateau to Mongolia and Siberia, including the Caucasus, Crimea, Middle Volga, Afghanistan, Tibet, and Central and Inner Asia. Scholars and practitioners in all humanities and social science disciplines with an interest in Central Eurasia are encouraged to participate. The language of the conference is English.

Based on past CESS conferences, we expect the 2005 conference to be lively and well-attended by scholars from all over the world. The total number of people participating in panels will be limited to 400 and selection of papers will be very competitive.

Deadline for paper and roundtable submissions: Friday, April 1, 2005.

Notifications of acceptances and rejections: Wednesday, June 1, 2005.

Correspondence should be directed to:

CESS 2005 Annual Conference
c/o Harvard Program on Central Asia and the Caucasus
625 Massachusetts Ave., Room 262
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tel.: +1 / 617-496-2643
fax: +1 / 617-495-8319
e-mail: CESSconf@fas.harvard.edu

CESS Conference Committee Co-Chairs:

Dr. Laura Adams (Princeton University; lladams2@earthlink.net)
Prof. Thomas Barfield (Boston University; barfield@bu.edu)

For full information about CESS 2005 in Boston:

Main conference website: **http://cess.fas.harvard.edu/CESS_Conference.html**

Conference facilities, lodging and activities at Boston University: **http://www.bu.edu/cess**