

Preface

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When examining the ebb and flow of events in the region called Central Asia, one is struck by the magnitude of the impact that this area has had throughout history. Yet in spite of this record, very little is known about this part of the world today. Central Asia always has found itself wedged between Europe and Asia, and as such, has been at the crossroads of relations between the two. In physical terms, this can be seen graphically in the trade routes of the Great Silk Road. In philosophical terms, it is an area where Western beliefs met and mingled with Eastern ways, often resulting in unusual and unique hybrids of thought and culture. Nor has the area's significance been limited to that of providing a meeting place for other cultures. For over 100 years, between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries, the armies of Genghis Khan and later Tamerlane spread from Central Asia to conquer and exert their influence over an area larger than the conquests of Alexander, Rome or Hitler. The repercussions of these conquests can still be seen today and serve as a reminder of the impact the region has had, and may again have, on world events.

Great though this influence may have been, history dictated that after Central Asia's zenith, there followed a period of decline. During this time, the region seemed to slip from the world stage, surpassed in importance by other areas, such as the newly discovered Americas. Though the reasons for this decline are many and varied, the end result was that the region seemed to fall from the attention of most scholars, political leaders and the public in general. That the region still held importance for its residents goes without saying; that it continues to be important to the major regional actors bordering the area will be shown. Still, little was known or written about Central Asia after the time of Tamerlane, other than that it was a far off and mysterious part of the world that few people traveled to or cared about. This remained the case throughout most of the twentieth century, until events following the breakup of the Soviet Union brought the region into new prominence and focus.

Many events can be pointed to as affecting the status of the region; however, three stand out beyond all others as having an impact both on the peoples of Central Asia and, in turn, their relations with the rest of world. The breakup of the Russian/Soviet Empire, just as with the fall of other great empires, sent shockwaves through the area and beyond. The opportunity for the region to rule itself, as opposed to being ruled by others, has meant significant changes in the politics, economy and social fabric found there. Yet as important as these changes have been, they would have little meaning or impact on the rest of the world were it not for the second major event associated with Central Asia: the discovery of potentially extensive reserves of gas and oil. Although the size of these stores is debated and in truth has yet to be determined, they are significant enough to warrant global attention and interest as an alternative fuel source in a world concerned with the dwindling stocks of hydrocarbons. These reserves hold the promise of economic development and prosperity, but as has been seen elsewhere in the world, this promise can be a two-edged sword with as many downsides as benefits. Finally, in the aftermath of September 11, the potential of terrorism both originating from and affecting the region need hardly be elaborated. For all these and other reasons, the world is showing renewed interest in Central Asia.

The genesis of this book is a response to that interest. While many works dealing with Central Asia appeared between 1991 and 1995, taking advantage of the fact that for the first time outside observers had relatively easy access to the region, far fewer texts have appeared since then. As often happens, general interest migrated to other parts of the world, leaving the area to be covered by a small community of specialists. Yet events continued to occur and changes continued to take place, so that ten years after independence, it seemed essential to “take stock” of what has transpired during this period, as well as to look at future prospects. To accomplish this, we have assembled a collection of scholars and regional specialists who are closely associated with Central Asia and whose works cover a broad range of problems facing the region. Rather than focus on a country-by-country analysis, each author was asked to write about a specific topic and how it played out in at least two of the countries of the region. They were further asked to project the potential significance of their observations for the region over the next 15 years and how the “lessons learned” to date might be applied in the future.

For the purposes of this book, the changes that have taken place in Central Asia have been grouped into three general categories, political, economic and security. The specific subjects included in each category re-

flect major problems or areas of concern. Although the list of these topics is in no way all-inclusive, it does reflect a general consensus of the specialists gathered here as to the key issues that must be addressed when discussing the region overall. Each of these topics has an impact that goes beyond individual country borders, and while some may affect certain countries more than others, all have consequences for the region as a whole. Because of this, the traditional approach which would look at each country individually has been eschewed in favor of an approach that focuses on problems that are regional in nature, and thus must be addressed in a regional context. In some cases, the authors compare how different countries have addressed the same problem; in others, the issues are transboundary in nature and the authors examine regional solutions. Although it is hoped that this work will appeal to a wide audience, three groups in particular may benefit from its approach: policy makers who need a general background on the issues associated with the region; regional specialists who are seeking information on specific issues that challenge the region; and technical specialists who wish to see how their areas of interest affect the region as a whole. Finally, the views of the authors reflected here represent a wide range of opinions that are often at odds with one another. No attempt has been made to resolve these differences, and they are presented to the reader for her or him to evaluate and make their own determination as to the weight they want to assign each. Out of a diversity of ideas and differences of opinion, better solutions to the problems the area faces hopefully can be found and better policies formulated to implement these solutions.

Contents

After an overview of the region by Daniel L. Burghart, Part I — Political Changes begins with a chapter on the international politics affecting the region. Written by Wayne Merry, a retired Foreign Service Officer with extensive experience in the former Soviet Union, the chapter provides a context for understanding the various external influences that can be seen in the region, as well as the reactions of the local political “apparatus” to these influences. In the next chapter, Gregory Gleason looks in greater detail at the current domestic political situation in the region, and the prospects for meaningful political reform. In the chapter on legal reform, Roger D. Kangas summarizes the steps that already have been taken in this area, a necessary precondition for meaningful reform in the areas of politics and the economy. This is followed by a discussion of human rights by Michael Ochs, a Congressional staff member who has followed these issues

for more than a decade. Human rights in Central Asia are arguably worse than anywhere else in the former Soviet Union, and must be improved if any of these states hope to be accepted into the community of nations. Sylvia W. Babus' chapter furthers the political track by discussing outside efforts at democracy building. With first hand experience in many of these programs, she provides a unique insight into "what works and what doesn't" on the ground. Finally, Tiffany Petros takes on the difficult task of assessing the role of Islam in defining the region and its future.

Part II — Economic Concerns begins with Theresa Sabonis-Helf's examination of the impact of hydrocarbon development on the economics and politics of the energy-rich countries of the region. Next, Daene C. McKinney, a noted hydrographic engineer, addresses the complex topic of water in Central Asia, detailing its economic, political, and security implications, as well as ongoing efforts to resolve disputes over the equitable distribution of water in a peaceful manner. Genevieve Grabman examines issues of public health, and using the example of Kyrgyzstan, postulates the role that reform of health care systems can play in improving the well-being of the region's most vital economic resource—its people. Kevin D. Jones does the same with regard to land privatization, probably one of the most difficult issues that all of the former Soviet Republics have had to face, given their socialist background and the state ownership of land associated with it. Economic development within the context of sustainable development is addressed by Alma Raissova and Aliya Sartbayeva-Peleo, two Central Asian scholars with extensive experience in this field. Although economic development has been a major goal of all of these states, these authors stress the need for such development to be moderated so as to achieve "sustainable development" goals. Closely related to these arguments, David S. McCauley enumerates the environmental challenges facing the region and also examines the efforts of international donors and the Central Asian states to meet these challenges. Finally, Kalkaman Suleimenov describes the steps being taken to rationalize the distribution of electricity in Kazakhstan and the surrounding area. As a regional government official, his piece is enlightening both in terms of the information it provides and as an example of how local officials are attempting to come to grips with the problems they have inherited from the old Soviet system.

In Part III — Security Issues, Emily E. Daughtry begins with a review of the Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) Program and its impact on Central Asia. CTR is often cited as the most effective program the U.S. Government has had with members of the former Soviet Union. She

documents the program's efforts in the region and shows how its successes to date can be built in the future. Next, Jennifer D.P. Moroney examines existing security frameworks in Central Asia and the likelihood that these frameworks, and the organizations which comprise them, can provide the stability the region needs as a precondition for future development. Nancy Lubin examines what is characterized as the greatest threat to Central Asian security—drug trafficking and its impact on both the political and social spheres of society. Closely tied to this is the illicit trade in human beings. Here Saltanat Sulaimanova brings a regional perspective to this problem, as well as to the larger issue of migration to and from the area. Finally, three chapters are dedicated to Central Asian relations with the three major world powers that have active interests in the region—China, Russia and the United States. Matthew Oresman provides a detailed account of China's interests in Central Asia, as well as the response of the Central Asian states to Chinese initiatives. Captain Robert Brannon summarizes Russia's interests and concerns and also outlines U.S.-Russian relations with regard to area. Finally, Olga Olikier looks at U.S. concerns in Central Asia and postulates how these concerns might be addressed in the future.

With the new millennium a new cycle of history is beginning, one in which it seems clear that Central Asia will play an increasingly significant role on the world stage. Though its importance may have ebbed and flowed with time and the circumstances in which the region has found itself, Central Asia continues to exist at the crossroads of East and West. Whereas the technologies used to traverse these crossroads and the nature of the journey may have changed, the geography and the people who occupy it remain the same. Those from the region who follow in the tracks of Tamerlane, will face many of the same challenges their ancestors did. However, they have at their disposal a broad new range of resources to help them address these challenges, including many provided by foreign sources. Their success in using these resources effectively will, in turn, determine the course they take, as they advance into the twenty-first century.