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GLOBAL SECURITY WATCH

CENTRAL ASIA

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IMU	Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan
IOM	United Nations International Office for Migration
IRP	Islamic Renaissance Party
IRPT	Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan
KCTS	Kazakhstan Caspian Transportation System
MIRT	Movement for Islamic Revival in Tajikistan
NACC	North Atlantic Cooperation Council
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	non-governmental organization
NSB	National Security Bureau (Uzbekistan)
OSCE	Organization for Cooperation and Security in Europe
PRC	People's Republic of China
RATS	Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure
REMAP	Regional Electricity Market Assistance Project
SARA	State Agency for Religious Affairs (Kyrgyzstan)
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
SSR	Soviet Socialist Republic
TAP	Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan gas pipeline
TCP	trans-Caspian pipeline
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
UNODC	United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
UTO	United Tajik Opposition
WTO	World Trade Organization

CHAPTER 1

Historical and Contemporary Introduction to Military, Security, and Strategic Issues in Central Asia

Central Asia lies at the nexus of three great culture regions: Asia, the Middle East, and Europe. This geographical position has profoundly guided the region's historical development, as various peoples, ideas, goods, and technologies have flowed into Central Asia from the surrounding areas for at least the past 3,000 years. Located at the crossroads of the Eurasian landmass, the historical narrative of Central Asia is one of successive waves of invasion from various points of the compass, interspersed by periods of trade, cultural exchange, and intellectual and artistic advancement. The various Central Asian peoples were influenced by predominantly Persian and Turkic civilization in ancient times, with occasional contact from South Asia and China, and finally a strong Russian cultural patina was imposed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The result is a historical and social mélange of modern and traditional that provides a unique dynamism to the region.

Civilization in Central Asia is quite ancient. There is evidence that a settlement existed at the modern site of the city of Samarkand as long as 5,000 years ago, and other locations in the region, primarily along the rivers, also feature sites that may be dated to several thousand years before the modern era. From an early date, a cultural dichotomy developed in Central Asia based on geographical location and lifestyle—this was the division between the settled, agrarian populations, typically clustered along streams; and the pastoralists, who followed a nomadic existence by either herding their animals across the vast plains in search of grazing land, or like the ancestors of the modern Kyrgyz, employed a system of transhumance between lowland pastures and those higher up the slopes. The relationship between these two cultures was at times cooperative and at other points hostile and

destructive. The cities established by the agriculturalists were alluring concentrations of goods and food that frequently attracted raids from local nomadic tribes, or became the first targets of external armies entering Central Asia on a quest for wealth, for an expansion of empire, or for religious conquest. The polarity in culture represented by the contrasting ways of life between the nomadic and sedentary would persist until well into the twentieth century.

The first Central Asiatic people discussed extensively in a Western source are the Scythians and Sakas, two related groups whose social customs and history are covered by the Greek historian Herodotus in the fifth century B.C.[1] These nomads were very much like the peoples who would follow them out of the Eurasian steppes over the centuries: master horsemen, often aggressive and brutal toward the settled peoples they encountered, but also capable of superb artistic achievement. The Scythians and Sakas, for example, were reported to fashion drinking cups from the skulls of their enemies, yet also made exquisite and detailed gold ornaments and costumes.[2] Kazakhstan's "Golden Man," a Saka warrior found in 1969, was buried with a spectacular golden headdress and a jacket embroidered with numerous golden ornaments. Many *kurgans*, or grave sites, of the Saka people and related groups remain scattered across the Central Asian landscape, a reminder of both the antiquity and the complexity of their society.[3]

By around 400 B.C. a series of city-states, centered on Samarkand, had arisen in the basins of the Amu Darya, Zeravshan, and Syr Darya rivers, in what today is central Uzbekistan. Collectively known as Sogdiana, the inhabitants were an Iranian-speaking people who primarily followed Zoroastrianism, and whose territory served as a province of the Achaemenid Empire. Lying between the eastern margin of this great Persian empire and an expanding Chinese civilization to the east, the Sogdian city-states derived their wealth from agriculture and trade. The forces of Alexander the Great took Maracanda (Samarkand) in 329 B.C., bringing for the first time a strong Western influence to the region, and for a brief while linking Greece, Persia, and Central Asia together into a single political and economic space.[4] Greek control of Central Asia would be short-lived, but the connections established with Western civilization persisted and the influence of Greek culture in the region held for several more centuries. Moreover, in the century or so before the birth of Christianity, the Central Asian oasis states built ties to the massive Chinese state lying to the east. Despite periodic invasions of nomadic armies from the east, Central Asia's role as a great crossroads for economic and cultural exchange was dawning.

By the time the Roman Empire had reached its greatest extent, the Sogdian traders of Transoxiana, or the land beyond the Oxus River (the Greek name for the Amu Darya), had developed a lucrative trade network between China in the east and the Roman and Parthian empires lying to the west and south. This was the famous Silk Road, which carried not only that valuable fabric, but also many other commodities. The many cultural elements which diffused in multiple

directions along the various branches of the Silk Road were perhaps more important than the economic goods transported along the route.[5] Buddhism very likely entered Chinese society from south Asia in this manner, and by the fifth century A.D. Nestorian Christianity had taken root in many of the settlements of Central Asia. Nestorian believers would eventually establish communities as far away as central China. The Sogdians, who were mostly followers of Zoroaster, were accepting and tolerant of these faiths and many others. Cultural exchange also took place in the form of linguistic diffusion, with Sogdian serving as a general *lingua franca*, and Persian and Chinese becoming disseminated via the trade routes as well. Periodic invasions, mostly from the east, did little to damage this vast commercial network, as conquerors had nothing to gain by destroying the cities and system that provided the very riches that attracted them.[6] Even the depredations of the western branch of the Huns in the first century did little to disrupt the emerging trade relationships cultivated by the Sogdian merchants, whose cities of Bukhara, Samarkand, Talas, and many others grew rich from their near monopoly. For nearly a millennium the city-states of Central Asia, either independently or as part of a larger imperial state, would control the world's first global trading route.

In the centuries following the collapse of the western portion of the Roman Empire, Turkic peoples migrated into Central Asia from southern Siberia and Mongolia. By 600 A.D., a Turkic state extended across the heart of Eurasia, stretching from north-central China to the Aral Sea, a distance of about 3,000 miles. The Sogdian cities lying between the Aral Sea and the Tien Shan mountains were vassals of this empire, and the Persian Sassanid Empire met the western boundary of the Turkic state in what is today Turkmenistan. In the century between 600 and 700 A.D., the fall of the Sassanid Empire would herald the arrival of a new force on the western boundary of Transoxiana, a religious movement that would completely transform the cultural landscape of Central Asia—Islam.

The Islamic conquest of Central Asia began in earnest in 706, when the Arab general Qutayba ibn Muslim pushed his forces across the Amu Darya to attack the outer reaches of the Sogdian city-state of Bukhara. Bukhara quickly submitted to the demands of the Muslim chief, one of which was the abandonment of Zoroastrianism and the complete conversion of the city's population. Khorezm, the district lying to the west in what is today eastern Turkmenistan and western Uzbekistan, and Samarkand, the strongest of the Sogdian city-states, both provided a more vigorous resistance to incorporation into the *Dar-ul-Islam*, or realm of Islam.[7] Samarkand managed to form an alliance with some principalities in the Fergana Valley, but the combined force was destroyed by the Muslim army, and Samarkand surrendered to Qutayba. In the meantime Khorezm had been brought to heel as well, although revolts against the Muslims in both that region and elsewhere continued to plague the new Islamic overlords for the next several decades. The new rulers set about remaking much of the urban landscape of the places they absorbed: Existing structures were destroyed, especially if they were utilized for

religious purposes, while mosques and medressehs were quickly erected to satisfy both the piety of the victors and the numbers of new converts. The transformation was extensive, and very little of pre-Islamic Bukhara, Samarkand, or other Central Asian cities remains today. By 900 A.D., the oasis centers of Central Asia had been fully incorporated into the Muslim world, although the nomadic peoples who lived on the vast steppes to the north and south of the Silk Road maintained their religious traditions, with only marginal influence from wandering Sufi adepts and other representatives of Islam.

The Arab drive to the east was finally halted in 751 A.D., when Muslim forces met a Tang Dynasty army on the banks of the Talas River in what is today Kyrgyzstan. The battle had three important historical outcomes. First, it halted for the time being the expansion of Islam eastward, although the Muslim army is generally agreed to have carried the day. Secondly, it halted a Chinese move to absorb the Fergana Valley and other parts of Central Asia. This westward extension of the Chinese border would have represented the deepest penetration of Chinese authority into Central Asia to that date, and Central Asia would have a radically different cultural history had such conditions ensued. The third crucial outcome of the battle was that the Muslim forces captured several Chinese fighters who knew the art of papermaking, a secret the Chinese had guarded for centuries. These artisans taught their Islamic captors the technique, and the ability to make paper diffused throughout the Muslim realm, eventually reaching Europe.[8]

A century after the Muslim penetration of Transoxiana, a new dynasty appeared in the region. The Samanid Empire was ruled by Persian-speaking emirs (princes), who were devoutly committed to the Islamic faith, and it was their zeal for proselytizing and converting that solidified Central Asia as part of the Muslim world. The previous faiths of Zoroastrianism, Nestorian Christianity, Buddhism, and others almost entirely disappeared under Samanid rule, and Sogdian gradually gave way to Persian as the dominant tongue in the oasis cities. The new language, a forerunner to modern Dari and Tajik, became the medium of the first great wave of literary genius to emerge in Central Asia. Two of the foremost poets of classical Persian, Rudaki and Firdawsi, both lived in the Samanid domain, although the latter would spend part of his life outside the region.[9] Moreover, early in the Samanid period the scholar al-Bukhari produced in Arabic a seminal collection of the hadith, a work that is still quoted and studied by Islamic scholars. Nominally subject to the Abbasid caliph in Baghdad, the Samanid emirs were in fact quite politically independent, and like their Sogdian forebears, promoted trade through their realm between East and West.

Bukhara was the Samanid capital, and at its greatest territorial extent, the Samanid state included Samarkand, Tashkent, and much of the Fergana Valley. The Samanid rulers pushed the influence of Islam somewhat further to the east, converting a number of Turkic peoples who had settled the region in the previous centuries. The region of southeastern Kazakhstan and northwestern Kyrgyzstan known today as the Semireche (seven rivers) region was brought into the Islamic

fold, when at the end of the ninth century a Samanid army captured Talas, near the site of the famous battle of almost a century and a half before. This opened the way for the spread of Sunni Islam to the peoples living there and to the southeast, a Turkic-speaking people known as the Karakhanids. Within a century they would not only adopt Islam, but would develop into a formidable military power that would permanently impose a Turkic dominance on the Persian remnants of the Samanid culture.

At the end of the first millennium, the Samanid Empire found itself sandwiched between two increasingly aggressive Turkic states. To the east stood the Karakhanid Turks, and to the south, centered in what is today Afghanistan, lay the Ghaznavid Empire, which stretched for a time deep into the Indian peninsula. In 999 A.D. a Karakhanid army captured Bukhara and ended the Samanid reign in Central Asia. The following century in Central Asia was one of general political and military chaos, as the Karakhanids and Ghaznavids waged war on one another, and ultimately both would give ground to yet another emergent Turkish culture, the Seljuks.[10] Surprisingly, despite the nearly constant political turmoil during the first century of the new millennium, Central Asia would again produce some of the greatest minds of the Muslim world, or for that matter, the entire world. Both Ibn Sina (Avicenna), the great polymath who specialized in medicine and philosophy, and his contemporary al-Biruni, who was a geographer, astronomer, and mathematician, appeared in the first decades of the century. Ibn Sina was originally from Bukhara, while al-Biruni hailed from Khorezm, today located in western Uzbekistan. Several decades after both men had passed, Mahmud Kashgari, a Karakhanid Turk who was living in Baghdad, wrote a Turkic-Arabic dictionary, considered a masterpiece of Islamic literature. That Central Asia produced thinkers of such caliber in a highly unsettled political landscape speaks volumes about the intellectual climate that had developed under the Samanids and their successors.

The Seljuks were a loose confederation of nomadic Turkic peoples living along the northern margins of the Samanid state. During the tenth century they converted to Islam and began to shift southward into the Persian province of Khurasan, the boundaries of which corresponded roughly with the modern country of Turkmenistan. Indeed, the Seljuks belonged to a branch of the Turkic peoples known as the Oghuz, who are considered the ancestors of the modern Turkmen people.[11] By the end of the eleventh century, this cluster of nomadic tribesmen had carved an empire that reached from Damascus and Baghdad to the Amu Darya in Central Asia. The Seljuk state encompassed most of modern Syria, Iran, Turkey, Afghanistan, and Turkmenistan, and by 1089 the Karakhanid ruler of Transoxiana had been reduced to the position of a Seljuk vassal. Although Turks, the Seljuk rulers supported the Persian cultures they conquered in Khorasan, Iran, and western Afghanistan, and became great patrons of the arts. Omar Khayyam, probably the best-known Islamic poet in Western society, lived and wrote as a subject of the Seljuk empire.

The last of the Seljuk sultans, Sanjar, died in 1157, but his empire was unraveling well before his demise. Several insurrections in Khorezm and Transoxiana plagued the last decade and a half of Sanjar's reign, and the latter region was lost entirely to a new power that arrived on the fringes of Central Asia around 1140. Historians label this group the Kara Khitay, and their appearance presaged a much more calamitous invasion that would occur nearly 80 years later, when the hordes of Genghis Khan would pour across the Silk Road all the way to Eastern Europe. The Kara Khitay were also nomadic and of Mongol stock, and appear to have been mostly Buddhist. Their army smashed Sanjar's Seljuk force outside of Samarkand in 1141, and most of Transoxiana was brought under their control. The Kara Khitay constructed a state that was mostly a loose grouping of vassal states, and they used some of the existing Karakhanid aristocracy to rule much of Transoxiana while they settled in the foothills of the Tien Shan in modern Kyrgyzstan. Although Buddhist, the Kara Khitay leadership apparently tolerated the Muslim faith of their new subjects, and there was no attempt to either convert the masses or to eradicate the Islamic landscape in favor of a Buddhist cultural topography.

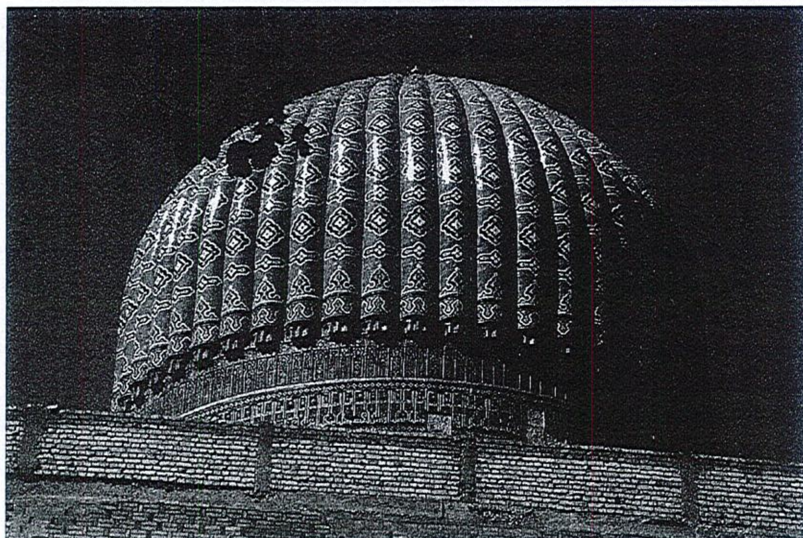
At the same time the Kara Khitay were establishing suzerainty over the eastern reaches of Central Asia, to the west of the Amu Darya the Khorezm shahs were busily expanding into the weakened margins of the Seljuk empire. The first decade of the 1200s witnessed the expansion of the Khorezm Empire into Afghanistan, which was almost entirely absorbed by 1215. In the east, the Khorezm leader, Ala al-Din Muhammad, attacked the Kara Khitay after initially securing an alliance with them against the Ghaznavid regime in Afghanistan, and by 1210 he had pried Transoxiana and most of the Fergana Valley away from them. Having secured his eastern flank, Muhammad set about conquering Persia and the Middle Eastern holdings of the old Seljuk realm, and by 1217 he had taken most of Persia. The following year the remnants of the Kara Khitay state, located mostly in the area just west and northwest of Lake Issyk Kul in modern Kyrgyzstan, fell victim to nomadic raiders from western China. These conquerors were almost immediately removed themselves by yet another group of mounted warriors pouring in from China—the Mongols.

The Mongol conquest of Central Asia represents one of the most catastrophic events in the region's history.[12] Perhaps the process might have been less violent and destructive had the local vassal of Muhammad, the Khorezm shah, not infuriated Genghis Khan by executing a group of diplomats and merchants sent to Otrar, a Silk Road city on the Syr Darya, in 1218. Historians puzzle over why this action was taken, but it is clear that neither Muhammad nor his underling in eastern Central Asia had any understanding of the nature of the new enemy they faced. Within a year the Mongol army had penetrated the eastern marches of the Khorezm Empire, sacked Otrar and several other cities, and put Muhammad's forces to flight. The path through Transoxiana now open, the Mongol army methodically attacked the region's major cities, pillaging and killing on an unprecedented scale.

The Mongol army first attacked Bukhara, sealing off the city and crushing the resistance in only a few days. After the fall of Bukhara, the Mongols sacked the city, put some of the local leadership to the sword, and may have set fire to part of the settlement, although the blaze may have been an accident. Regardless, the residents of Bukhara paid a heavy price for their failure to surrender immediately to the Mongol horsemen. Samarkand fared no better a few weeks later, falling to Mongol forces after only a few days. Many of the people of that ancient city were executed as a result, although artisans and many of the intelligentsia appear to have been spared. No major city in the region escaped the wrath of the Great Khan, but perhaps the most horrific destruction took place at Merv, an ancient Silk Road metropolis, located in what is today southeastern Turkmenistan. There the entire population was killed, a total of perhaps over a million people, according to some estimates.[13] Many of those butchered were not soldiers, but women and children. Some accounts from Muslim sources hold that the slaughter required several days of virtually continuous beheadings, carried out by Mongol warriors who were each assigned a quota of victims. Other cities in Central Asia, most notably Herat in modern Afghanistan, met similar fates at the hands of the new conquerors.

It took decades for Central Asia to recover from the Mongol onslaught. The region shortly fell under the rule of Genghis Khan's second son, Chagatay, and the dynasty he established in the heart of Central Asia ruled Transoxiana and a good-sized portion of the surrounding territory for over a century. Ironically, Mongol control of Central Asia and the surrounding regions eventually allowed for a freer cultural and economic exchange between East and West, and the various khanates that emerged from the conquest in theory, if not always in practice, represented segments of one continuous empire stretching from Europe to China. As the late Daniel J. Boorstin has noted, during the height of the Mongol empire, "the curtain was lifted" between Western and Eastern civilization.[14]

The "Pax Mongolica," the century and a half of relative peace and prosperity following the conquest, was abruptly broken in 1370 by the rise of a native world conqueror, Amir Timur, or as he is known in many Western sources, Tamerlane. With the emergence of Timur, Central Asia now produced its own great general, one to rival Alexander and Genghis Khan himself.[15] Timur chose Samarkand as his base, and in three decades he built an empire that stretched from India to Iraq, encompassing all of the heart of Asia and the Middle East. The Timurid Dynasty, as his legacy is known, barely lasted a century beyond his death, but he and his immediate successors left an indelible imprint on Central Asia. Shahrukh, his son, and Ulug Beg, his grandson, were great builders and patrons of the arts, and the latter was himself one of the world's foremost astronomers. The Timurid rulers who followed them in the second half of the fifteenth century continued the generous patronage of art and literature, and the Timurid period may be viewed as the zenith of Central Asian cultural achievement and learning.[16] The last Timurid prince, Babur, although driven from Central Asia, would



Dome of Guri Amir, final resting place of Amir Timur, in Samarkand. (Photo courtesy of Reuel Hanks)

establish the Mogul Dynasty in India, continuing the empire-building tradition of his forebears.

Those who displaced the Timurids in Transoxiana were a Turkic tribal confederation known as the Shaybanids, who were in fact the ancestors of the modern Uzbeks and Kazakhs, the two largest ethnic groups in Central Asia today. The tribes who would become Uzbeks became mostly sedentary and urbanized; those who would form the core of the Kazakh ethnicity remained nomadic, patrolling the expansive steppe lands between the southern Ural Mountains and the Tien Shan. In the 1700s the latter would face yet another devastating invasion from the east. In this case the invaders were the Kalmyks (also called the Jungars), a confederation of Buddhist Mongols who would create chaos and calamity among the Kazakh tribes for half a century.[17] The three great divisions of the Kazakhs, known as the Lesser Horde, Middle Horde, and Great Horde, were all threatened by the Kalmyks, but the latter two in particular. The disruptions brought about by the persistent raids of the Kalmyks opened the way for external powers to gain a foothold in Central Asia. Primary among the new players in the region was the Russian Empire, which had shown interest in expanding into Central Asia from the time of Peter the Great.

Thus, the nineteenth century would witness yet another penetration of Central Asia by an outside power. In this case the process of intrusion and conquest would be slow but inexorable and would come not from the east, but the northwest. For a number of centuries the Russian Empire had been pushing eastward and

southward across the Eurasian landmass, and the Russians and Central Asian peoples had actively traded with each other for almost as long. The destructive invasions of the Kalmyks in the 1700s had forced some of the Kazakhs to seek protection from the Russians, and this alliance provided the opportunity for the Russian Empire to gradually secure control of the steppe east of the Caspian Sea. In the latter years of the reign of Catherine the Great, the Russian military established a line of fortress towns reaching from the southern Ural Mountains to the Irtysh River in southern Siberia, garrisoned by Cossack troops. This "defensive" line would serve in coming decades as a front that would be steadily pushed southward, absorbing the traditional grazing lands of the Kazakhs.

In the first decades of the nineteenth century, the Russians quite literally bought the loyalty of various Kazakh khans, or leaders, by bribing them and promising the protection of the Tsar in the event of another hostile invasion by the Kalmyks or some other enemy. Between 1800 and 1865 the majority of the Kazakh tribes acknowledged allegiance to the Russian crown, and Slavic settlers were moved onto "vacant" grasslands that Kazakh herders had used for centuries. Occasionally there were uprisings against the persistent incursions, but the Kazakhs were outgunned and lacked the organization and leadership necessary to mount a united and sustained resistance. The most serious challenge to Russian hegemony was brought by Kenesary Khan, a brilliant strategist and popular leader who fought the Russians to a standstill between 1837 and 1844, but eventually Kenesary too was reined in—his would be the last widespread revolt among the Kazakhs.

To the south of the Kazakh grazing lands lay three city-states: the Khanates of Khiva and Kokand, in the west and the east respectively, separated by the Emirate of Bukhara. All three had traded with the Russian Empire for centuries, especially merchants from Khiva, but the relationship had not been entirely peaceful and cooperative. The Central Asians occasionally raided Russian commercial caravans and also supported an active slave trade, using in many cases Russian captives taken from the towns and farms of the southern Russian steppe. The taking of Russian slaves had been a sore point especially between Russia and Khiva, and in 1839 the Russian military launched a punitive expedition with the goal of deposing the khan of Khiva, liberating Russian slaves, and replacing the khan with a ruler who would be loyal to the Tsar. This effort ended in complete failure, as harsh weather forced the column to retreat without ever reaching the city. Despite such setbacks and the distraction of the Crimean War in the early 1850s, the government in St. Petersburg continued to push its line of control southward across the steppe to the margin of the city-states. The desire for additional resources, ready markets for Russian goods, and concern over British activities in the region all drove Russian ambitions. The establishment of a garrison at Aralsk in 1848, deep in the heart of the Kazakh steppe, gave the Russians strategic control of the Syr Darya and put Russian troops at the very doorstep of both the Khivan Khanate and the Emirate of Bukhara.

The construction of the Russian fort at Verny (Almaty) in 1854 completed a line of such settlements across the southern Kazakh steppe lands, and serves as a historical benchmark in the Russian colonization of the Kazakhs.[18] From the 1820s, the Russian authorities had progressively forced the relocation of many of the Kazakh nomads, replacing them on the steppe with Slavic settlers. This policy led to periodic insurrections like that of Kensary Khan, but these did little to deter the influx of sedentary agriculturalists and the massive loss of Kazakh grazing lands. In the last two decades of the nineteenth century, hundreds of thousands of Slavs would pour onto the northern steppe in Central Asia, changing the ethnic landscape permanently, a phenomenon that would be repeated during the Soviet era.[19] But in the 1850s, the Russians found themselves competing for control of the southern portion of the Kazakh lands with the Kokand Khanate. The Khanate of Kokand had expanded its territory in the first part of the century, but in the 1850s had become weakened by internal strife and conflict with Bukhara. The Russian advance gradually plucked away sections of the Khanate in the 1850s, including the settlement of Bishkek, today the capital of Kyrgyzstan. Provocations by both sides, the continuing political instability in Kokand, and persistent Russian fears of British involvement in Central Asia set the stage for the Russian campaign of conquest of the three city-states of Central Asia.

The catalyst for the annexation of the oasis states by Imperial Russia was an extremely ill-advised attack in 1861 on the Russian outpost at Verny by troops from Kokand. This event convinced the Tsar to support those who advocated the military conquest of Kokand, and in 1863 Tsar Alexander II issued a decree ordering a campaign against the Khanate. The initial prize that the Russian generals in Central Asia sought was the city of Tashkent, and after an unsuccessful attempt to take the city in 1864, the commander of the Russian force, General Mikhail Chernaiev, again led an assault against Tashkent in June of 1865. After a five-day battle the walls of Tashkent were breached and fell to Russian forces. Although hailed as a hero in St. Petersburg, Chernaiev was recalled from Central Asia. The territories taken from Kokand were formed into the Governor Generalship of Turkestan and placed under the administration of General Konstantin von Kaufman, who quickly embarked on a campaign against the Emirate of Bukhara in 1868, taking Samarkand, and against Khiva in 1872, absorbing significant land from both into Turkestan. Both Bukhara and Khiva were forced to become Russian vassal states, and in 1875 what was left of the Kokand Khanate was absorbed into the Russian Empire. By 1880 nearly all of Central Asia was directly or indirectly under the control of the Russian Empire, and British concerns over the Tsar's ambitions toward South Asia had reached critical levels. As a result, the two empires agreed to establish Afghanistan as a buffer state between their colonies, an event that not only reduced tensions, but also confirmed Russia's colonization of Central Asia.

Thus, the Tsar found himself the sovereign of a vast new territory, much of which had been only loosely governed and administered since the time of the

Mongol conquest. The court in St. Petersburg was intent on quickly organizing and exploiting its new colonial holdings for several reasons. First, the threat of revolt by the indigenous Central Asians remained a threat to security, along with the potential of meddling by British agents. Secondly, the agricultural promise of the region was enormous, and the U.S. Civil War had resulted in a global shortage of cotton. The Russian administration aimed to rapidly expand the irrigated land in the southern reaches of Turkestan and plant thousands of new hectares of land in wheat in the more arid northern area, on the former grazing lands of the Kazakh hordes. The political geography employed focused on dividing the huge territory between southern Russia and Afghanistan into two large administrative units, which were then subdivided into smaller units, or *oblasts*. The land situated between southern Siberia and a line extending roughly from the northern end of the Caspian Sea, connecting to the northern shore of the Aral Sea and then to Lake Balkash in the east, was formed into the Governorate General of the Steppe, equivalent to the northern two thirds of modern Kazakhstan. In the south the Governorate General of Turkestan was created, which ultimately reached from the southern Caspian in the west to the border with China in the east, and included the rich irrigated land of Transoxiana and the Fergana Valley. Over the next century, this territory would become arguably the world's greatest cotton-producing region, and of vital economic importance to the empire.

One final piece of territory remained to be added to Russian colonial possessions in Central Asia—the stretch of land, mostly foreboding desert, that lay between Transoxiana and the southern margin of the Caspian Sea. This was the home of warlike, nomadic tribesmen known as the Turkmen. In 1869 the Russians had built the port city of Krasnovodsk on the eastern shore of the Caspian, a clear sign of their intentions to add this final piece of Central Asia to their holdings, and by doing so, gain a common border with Persia. The Turkmen, however, resisted fiercely. When a Russian army ventured into the region in 1879 and attacked the fortress city of Geok Tepe in the foothills of the Kopet Dag mountains, it was driven off in a crushing defeat. But the Russians returned with a larger and better-armed force two years later, and after several weeks, penetrated the city walls and destroyed Turkmen resistance.[20] The Russian conquest of Central Asia was complete.

The Tsar's new Muslim subjects frequently chafed under Russian rule, however, and uprisings occasionally broke out in the latter nineteenth century.[21] The most serious of these erupted in 1898 in the Fergana Valley, originating in the old Silk Road city of Andijan. There, a local Islamic leader, Madali, declared a *jihad* on the Russian authorities and attacked the Russian soldiers stationed in Andijan with about 2,000 supporters. The attack took place along with assaults against Russian forces in the cities of Osh and Margilan as well, a circumstance that implies the revolt was not completely spontaneous and had been planned. However, the Muslim rebels were quite lightly armed in comparison to the

Russians and took heavy losses.[22] Madali was captured and subsequently executed, but the incident revealed to the Tsarist administration the discontent that many in the region felt toward both the government and the increasing numbers of Russian immigrants.

The Russian occupation of Central Asia sparked new movements among the local intelligentsia, many of whom were shocked at both the ease of the conquest and the obvious technological and social backwardness of their society. Some intellectuals sought mechanisms designed to modernize Central Asian culture. Calling themselves Jadids, a moniker that meant "new method," by the early years of the twentieth century they were urging local leaders to implement educational and social reform.[23] At the time, probably less than 10 percent of the native Central Asian population was literate, and among women the figure was even lower. Composed mostly of young writers and journalists, the reformers made little headway in changing the antiquated regimes in the remnants of the Bukharan and Khivan oasis states, which now were no more than quasi-independent satellite states of the Russian court. Some of the more prominent reformers, such as Abdurruaf Fitrat[24] and Munawwar Qari, would become quite active in revolutionary politics in the decades just before and after the Bolshevik Revolution.

The Russian Revolution of 1905 was welcomed by many of the native elite in Central Asia, who felt that the autocratic rule of the Tsar was stultifying both economically and intellectually. The failure of the revolt only intensified the discontent many felt toward the government and a sovereign who they viewed as alien as well as manipulative. Even many Central Asians who had visited Moscow, and in some cases had been educated in Russian-language schools, saw the Russian administration in this light. Reaction to World War I was initially largely ambivalent, as the draft among Muslim males in the region was not instituted immediately. However, when the Tsar's government did impose conscription in 1916, the Central Asians rose in a massive revolt—at one point the rebels had more than 20,000 troops in the field.

The 1916 rebellion was crushed by the end of the year with heavy losses among the Kazakhs and other Central Asian peoples. But few would have imagined that the region, and indeed the entire Russian Empire, was on the brink of a protracted period of political chaos and destruction. The next year, 1917, brought revolution to the entire empire, and in Central Asia, local Muslim activists competed with Bolsheviks and other revolutionaries for control. A Kazakh nationalist movement, *Alash Orda*, briefly governed portions of the Kazakh steppe before being suppressed by Bolshevik forces, but there was widespread opposition to the Bolshevik agenda, especially among the native Central Asians.[25] In the protectorates of Bukhara and Khiva, the revolution found support among some of the Jadids, who began calling themselves "Young Khivans" and "Young Bukharans," after the "Young Turks" of the Ottoman Empire. But anti-Bolshevik forces held most of Turkmenistan and sizable swaths of territory elsewhere in the region, and it was not until the arrival

of Bolshevik reinforcements under a capable general, Mikhail Frunze, that the Communists gained the upper hand. Frunze routed the poorly-organized units of the White Army in Central Asia, and after two years had solidified Bolshevik control.[26] In 1920, Soviet troops drove the old leadership from both Khiva and Bukhara, establishing "people's republics" in both cities. Many of the Muslim intelligentsia supported these moves, believing that the new Communist rulers would back their goal of national self-determination. But in fact, they had simply traded one master for another.[27]

The rise of Bolshevik power in Central Asia was not widely welcomed by much of the local population. The atheistic provisions of Marxism, and the fact that the Bolsheviks drew most of their support from Russian settlers, turned many Central Asians away from the revolution. A large number in the early 1920s joined an armed uprising known as the Basmachi revolt. The Basmachi resistance was most active in the Fergana Valley, and at the height of its influence had possibly 60,000 troops, although there was no supreme leadership and many of the Basmachi simply conducted raids on their own against Bolshevik targets.[28] Soviet historians claimed that this "antirevolutionary" group was composed mostly of Muslim officials, wealthy land owners, and other "enemies of the people," but in truth it was a diverse movement drawing fighters from many social classes, and in some parts of the region enjoyed broad support from the local population.

But by 1924 the Basmachi were losing ground to Soviet forces, which were better organized and armed and outnumbered the rebels. A softening of Soviet policies toward the national aspirations of the indigenous peoples of Central Asia, and the improving economic situation there, weakened popular support for the Basmachi, and many of them eventually fled to northern Afghanistan. It required another decade to completely eradicate their activities however, as some isolated units of the rebels apparently were still operating against the Soviet regime as late as the mid-1930s, and could not have done so without local support.

The advent of Soviet control of Central Asia would completely change the region's political geography and set the stage for the eventual emergence of nation-states based on ethno-linguistic identity. In 1920 officials of the Bolshevik Party in Russia had suggested that the region be organized on the basis of linguistic commonalities, but the exact nature of these groups was a source of considerable confusion. Russian and Soviet ethnographers, for example, confused the Kazakhs and the Kyrgyz, and in most cases literary languages had to be created for the groups identified. Many Central Asians did not identify themselves as Uzbeks, Kazakhs, Tajiks, or others, and many of the local elite favored the establishment of a single territorial unit for the entire region. The Tajiks, who spoke a language distinct from the Turkic languages of most others living in the region, were easily labeled as a separate group, but the Kazakhs and Kyrgyz, for example, were separated on the basis of rather fine, and some would argue imaginary, linguistic detail.

Some urbanized residents, collectively known as "Sarts," were multilingual and frequently did not identify with the ethnic categories supplied by the Soviet government. But beginning in 1924, the old Governorates General were systematically divided into Soviet Socialist Republics (SSRs) or smaller units based on "nationality." The Uzbek and Turkmen SSRs appeared first in 1924, the Tajik SSR in 1929, and the Kazakh and Kyrgyz SSRs in the 1930s.[29]

The late 1920s and 1930s was a catastrophic period for the people of Central Asia, primarily because of two Soviet policies that cost millions of lives. The first of these, and the most devastating, was the collectivization of agricultural land. The second was the drive by the regime of Josef Stalin to purge the Communist Party, and Soviet society as a whole, of "anti-Soviet elements." This latter movement resulted in the infamous show trials of the 1930s and the nearly wholesale extermination of the Central Asian elite, many of whom were former Jadids who had joined the Communist Party during or after the revolution.[30] The forced confiscation and collectivization of land was fiercely opposed across the whole of Central Asia, but the traditionally nomadic Kazakhs and Kyrgyz were especially resistant to having their animals appropriated by the newly formed collective farms. Instead of turning their livestock over to Soviet control, they slaughtered them en mass: The number of cattle and sheep on the Kazakh steppe in the early 1930s dropped from a combined total of more than 29 million head in 1929 to less than 4 million in 1933. This calamitous decline in livestock was accompanied by famine and disastrous losses among the Kazakhs themselves—perhaps as many as one and a half million Kazakh lives were lost in the 1930s, out of a total population of under five million reported in 1926.[31] In total in Central Asia, collectivization cost probably in excess of two million lives, but by 1935 almost all the productive land in the region was under the control of the Soviet government.

The Soviet regime pursued a policy of economic and social modernization in the new Central Asian republics. Electrification was a major goal, and by the 1940s much of the region was connected to the national power grid. Industrialization was promoted on a grand scale, especially in the urban centers of northern and central Kazakhstan and the larger cities of the southern republics. This process was accelerated during World War II, when entire factories were relocated to the region and away from the "European" republics of the USSR, in order to prevent their being captured or destroyed by the invading Germans. The irrigation system was greatly expanded as well, sometimes on a massive level, such as the construction of the Kara Kum Canal.[32] Begun in 1954, the Kara Kum is the largest manmade water supply canal in the world, stretching for more than 1,300 kilometers across southern Turkmenistan, enabling a huge expansion of irrigated crop production. Cotton was the primary irrigated crop, but the acreage devoted to food crops also increased substantially. Literacy rates increased dramatically under the Soviet educational system, and large numbers of women were allowed access to educational opportunities for the first time in Central Asian history. But at the same time, Islam was severely repressed and the use of the indigenous languages discouraged in favor of Russian. Conformity to Soviet norms was required of anyone who wished to rise socially or economically, and obtaining a higher education without a solid knowledge of Russian was impossible. The economic modernization of Central Asia would also carry with it a high environmental price.

The death of Josef Stalin in 1953 heralded a new era of Soviet government, but although Nikita Khrushchev and those who followed him to the post of General Secretary of the Communist Party would not repeat the excesses of the Stalinist terror, their policies had a profound impact on Central Asia. An example is the "Virgin and Idle Lands" program articulated by Khrushchev in 1953. Khrushchev's goal was to boost agricultural output in the USSR, and toward that end he ordered that huge *sovkhozy* or state farms be established in the steppes of northern Kazakhstan, land that the Soviet leader viewed as under-utilized because it was still being used for grazing. By 1956 more than 74 million acres of additional farmland had been put to the plow.[33] The farms needed massive numbers of new workers, so Khrushchev encouraged the migration of hundreds of thousands of young Slavic volunteers to settle in northern Kazakhstan. In just the first two years of the program, 650,000 new arrivals settled in the northern oblasts of Kazakhstan. This had the effect of dividing the ethnic geography of Kazakhstan into a Slav-dominated north, and a Kazakh-dominated south and west, with the exception of the city of Alma Ata (Almaty) in the south, which maintained a large Russian population. The change was dramatic—the 1926 Soviet census indicated that 35 percent of Kazakhstan's population consisted of non-Muslim nationalities; the 1959 census showed that this share had risen to 65 percent, making the Kazakhs a minority in their own titular republic. The losses in the Kazakh population under Stalin and the Virgin and Idle Lands program were largely responsible for this shift.

Some Soviet development policies had catastrophic, long-term effects on the environment and people of Central Asia. A number of disaster zones now appear on the landscape of the region due to the carelessness and mismanagement of Soviet policies implemented in the decades after World War II. Of particular note are the nuclear "polygon" in eastern Kazakhstan and the collapse of the Aral Sea. In the 1950s, the Soviet administration chose the steppe lands of eastern Kazakhstan to develop and test their nuclear arsenal. The main test site was located only 100 miles due west of the city of Semipalatinsk (Semey), which lay directly in the fallout pattern carried by the winds eastward. In the 40 years between 1949 and 1989, more than 450 nuclear tests were conducted on this territory, more than 100 of them above ground.[34] The effects of this testing on the people living to the east of the site was, and continues to be, tragic. An environmental disaster on an even grander scale occurred with the Aral Sea, once the fourth-largest lake in the world (see Chapter 4, "Energy and Water in Central Asia"). Soviet planners,

driven to fulfill production quotas for cotton, siphoned off ever-increasing amounts of water from the rivers supplying the sea, to the point that the entire ecosystem collapsed. Today the Aral Sea is a dead body of water, and most of the marine life has vanished. Those living in its immediate vicinity suffer from a variety of maladies, including high rates of certain cancers, blood disorders, and many birth defects.

The last chapter in the saga of Soviet Central Asia began in 1985 with the ascension of Mikhail Gorbachev to the leadership of the Communist Party of the USSR. Gorbachev was hailed as a "new type of Soviet leader," one who would bring change to a country and political system that appeared to be rambling off the tracks. Gorbachev promised reform, and in the first few years of his administration he set about replacing many of the Communist Party leaders in Central Asia and elsewhere. The decision to replace the long-time Kazakh First Party Secretary, Dinmukhamed Kunaev, with Gennady Kolbin, a non-Kazakh, in December 1986 initiated violent protests in the Kazakh capital of Alma Ata that resulted in dozens of deaths.[35] Some commentators consider this open and angry defiance of Soviet authority to be the first serious crack in the facade of Soviet unity. In the Uzbek SSR a corruption scandal over the falsification of cotton production, first brought to light in the years just prior to Gorbachev's leap to power, led to widespread resentment of Moscow's authority among the Party elite.[36] Gorbachev's policies of *glasnost* (openness) and *perestroika* (restructuring) had cleared the way for direct criticism of the Soviet system and of Marxist-Leninist ideology. In the Central Asian republics of the USSR reception of the new policies was cautious, but by the end of the 1980s many had lost their fear of questioning not only the strategies of the authorities, but their motivations as well. Ironically, the ethno-national identities created in Central Asia by the Communist regime in the 1920s, had by the 1980s firmly taken root and Uzbeks, Kazakhs, and others came to see themselves as colonized and exploited peoples.

As the fabric of the USSR began to disintegrate in 1989 and 1990, the Central Asian republics slowly followed the lead of the Baltic states and others in pursuing autonomy, if not outright independence. Most of the Central Asian republics issued declarations of sovereignty in the year before the collapse of the Soviet Union, but it is fair to say that when the end came, the Central Asian leadership was the least prepared for sudden independence. Whereas in the Baltic states and even in Russia alternatives to the Communist Party had been allowed to form by the late 1980s, in Central Asia the Communist authorities retained a tight grip on power, while allowing a limited devolution of political power. Nevertheless, alternative political movements had appeared in several of the Central Asian republics, with many of their platforms focused on the environmental damage wrought by Soviet rule (such as Nevada-Semipalatinsk in Kazakhstan), or the issue of returning the native language to an equivalent status with Russian (as with Birlik in Uzbekistan). The Communist Party leaders in the region

reacted quite cautiously to the attempted coup of August 1991, and in fact most of the remaining Soviet republics declared independence before the Central Asian states did so. But as it became evident that the Soviet experiment had run its course, the Central Asian SSRs officially became sovereign countries. Kazakhstan was the last Soviet republic to declare independence from the Soviet Union, on December 16, 1991.

NOTES

1. An excellent discussion of the Scythians and their later relatives, the Sarmatians, may be found in A. I. Melyukova, "The Scythians and Sarmatians," in *The Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia*, edited by Denis Sinor, Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
2. For additional discussion of Scythian artistic achievement, see Rene Grousset, *The Empire of the Steppes: A History of Central Asia*, New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1970, pp. 11–15.
3. See A. I. Melyukova, "The Scythians and Sarmatians," in *The Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia*, edited by Denis Sinor, Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1990, *passim*.
4. Wilfrid Blunt, *The Golden Road to Samarkand*, New York: Viking Press, 1973.
5. An excellent account of the Silk Road is Frances Wood, *The Silk Road: Two Thousand Years in the Heart of Asia*, University of California Press, 2004.
6. A brief but engaging coverage of the Sogdians is offered in Richard Frye, *The Heritage of Central Asia*, Princeton, New Jersey: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1996, especially the chapter entitled "The Merchant World of the Sogdians."
7. Svat Soucek, *A History of Inner Asia*, Cambridge, England: University of Cambridge Press, 2000, 57–61.
8. Jonathan Bloom, *Paper Before Print: The History and Impact of Paper in the Islamic World*, New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2001.
9. Ira M. Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies*, Cambridge, England: University of Cambridge Press, 1988, 153–156; Svat Soucek, *A History of Inner Asia*, Cambridge, England: University of Cambridge Press, 2000, 72–75.
10. Ira M. Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies*, Cambridge, England: University of Cambridge Press, 1988, 141–146.
11. Svat Soucek, *A History of Inner Asia*, Cambridge, England: University of Cambridge Press, 2000, 93–96.
12. David Morgan, *The Mongols*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 1986, 73–83.
13. Svat Soucek, *A History of Inner Asia*, Cambridge, England: University of Cambridge Press, 2000, 114–116.
14. Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Discoverers*, New York: Random House, 1983, 124–128.
15. One of the most comprehensive studies of Amir Timur available in English is Beatrice Forbes Manz, *The Rise and Rule of Tamerlane*, Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
16. Thomas W. Lentz and Glenn D. Lowry, *Timur and the Princely Vision*, California: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1989.

17. The Kalmyks are typically referred to as Jungars in Central Asia. Some regions were almost entirely depopulated as a result of the battles between these nomadic peoples. The period is still known among the Kazakhs as the *Aktaban Shubyryndy*, literally, "fleeing the enemy down to the bone of the feet."

18. Geoffrey Wheeler, "Russian Conquest and Colonization of Central Asia," in *Russian Imperialism from Ivan the Great to the Revolution*, edited by Taras Hunczak. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1974.

19. George Demko, *The Russian Colonization of Kazakhstan 1896–1916*, Bloomington, Indiana: Mouton, 1969. Also see Neil Melvin, *Russians Beyond Russia: The Politics of National Identity*, London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1995, 103–105.

20. Helene Carrere d'Encausse, "Systematic Conquest, 1865 to 1884," in *Central Asia: 120 Years of Russian Rule*, edited by Edward Allworth, Chapel Hill, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1989, 147–148.

21. For a short discussion of the Tsar's approach to his Muslim subjects, see Daniel Brower, "Islam and Ethnicity: Russian Colonial Policy in Turkestan," in *Russia's Orient: Imperial Borderlands and Peoples, 1700–1917*, edited by Daniel R. Brower and Edward J. Lazzerini, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997. A much more extensive study is provided by Robert D. Crews, *For Prophet and Tsar*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2006.

22. Ann Sheehy, "The Andizhan Uprising of 1898 and Soviet Historiography," *Central Asian Review*, Vol. 14, No. 2, 139–150.

23. For more on the Jadidist movement in Central Asia, see Adeeb Khalid, *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform: Jadidism in Central Asia*, Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1998.

24. An excellent overview of the role Uzbek literary figures played in the years leading up to and after the Bolshevik Revolution in Central Asia may be found in Tahir Qahhar, "Uzbek Literature," *World Literature Today*, Vol. 70, No. 3.

25. Martha Brill Olcott, *The Kazakhs*, 2nd edition, Stanford, California: Hoover Institution Press, 1995, 133–156.

26. For most of the Soviet era, the capital of the Kyrgyzstan Soviet Socialist Republic was called Frunze. Mikhail Frunze himself was quite an interesting historical figure, and appeared to be a rising star in the Bolshevik Party when he died at the young age of 40 during surgery. Some historians hold that Josef Stalin, also an emerging young leader in the Party at that time, had Frunze secretly murdered.

27. Michael Rywkin, *Moscow's Muslim Challenge*, revised edition, Armonk, New York: M. E. Sharpe, Inc., 1990, 19–32.

28. One of the most detailed studies of the Basmachi available in English is Glenda Fraser's lengthy two-part article "Basmachi—I" and "Basmachi—II," which appeared in *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 6, Nos. 1 and 2. For an interesting perspective on how Bolshevik soldiers viewed the Basmachi, see Helene Aymen de Lageard, "The Revolt of the Basmachi According to Red Army Journals (1920–1922)," *Central Asia Survey*, Vol. 6, No. 3.

29. Helene Carrere d'Encausse, "The National Republics Lose Their Independence," in *Central Asia: 120 Years of Russian Rule*, edited by Edward Allworth, Chapel Hill, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1989, 256–257.

30. The benchmark work in English on these events is Robert Conquest's *The Great Terror: A Reassessment*, Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1990. See especially pages 356–359.

31. Additional statistical data and a detailed discussion of this tragedy may be found in the chapter entitled "Central Asia and the Kazakh Tragedy," in Robert Conquest, *The Harvest of Sorrow*, New York and Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1986.

32. Ann Sheehy, "Irrigation in the Amu Dar'ya Basin," *Central Asian Review*, Vol. 15, No. 4.

33. See the chapter "The Virgin Lands and the Creation of a Socialist Kazakhstan" in Martha Brill Olcott, *The Kazakhs*, 2nd edition, Stanford, California: Hoover Institution Press, 1995.

34. Joanna Lillis, "Kazakhstan: Astana Takes the Lead in Lobbying for Nuclear-Free World," *Eurasia Insight*, July 15, 2009. Available at: http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insightb/articles/eav071509.shtml.

35. Martha Brill Olcott, *The Kazakhs*, 2nd edition. Stanford, California: Hoover Institution Press, 1995, 252–253.

36. Igor Lipovsky, "The Central Asian Cotton Epic," *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 14, No. 4.

CHAPTER 7

Conclusion: *Quo Vadis,* Central Asia?

Central Asia's geopolitical significance has become increasingly evident since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. The region's potential as a secondary supplier of hydrocarbon fuels to global markets was obvious to most policy-makers in Washington, Beijing, and Moscow by the early 1990s. After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, relations between the Central Asian countries and the United States acquired a new dimension, as all five to some degree became partners in the "war on terror."[1] This relationship will be vital to American military interests as long as the United States remains dedicated to battling the Taliban in Afghanistan and to controlling the spread of Islamic extremism in general throughout the Muslim realm. Russia and China have essentially the same policy goals in this regard as the West, and therefore the potential for a considerable level of cooperation on the issue of eliminating Islamic extremism between the three great powers vying for geopolitical leverage in Central Asia remains high, although such cooperation to date has been quite limited.

On the other hand, some strategic goals of Russia, China, and the United States in Central Asia are diametrically opposed and prevent the geopolitical heavyweights from coordinating policy and strategy in the region. Under such circumstances, it is therefore likely that the Central Asian states will continue to find themselves courted by all three. Russia's main economic interest in the region lies in securing control of the hydrocarbon resources of the Caspian Basin and therefore neutralizing potential competitors who might challenge Russian supremacy as a gas supplier to the European market, as well as gaining influence over Kazakhstan's oil production by directing that supply through Russian pipelines. American strategic efforts in the region are directed at insuring that

Moscow does *not* monopolize Central Asia's energy resources and thus establish a virtual stranglehold on its European allies, as well as stabilizing the political environment through the development of civil society, democratic governance, and free markets. China's main interests lie in procuring a portion of the energy resources for the expanding Chinese economy and further developing markets in the Central Asian countries, while also insulating the western border region of Xinjiang against the destabilizing effects of Islamic radicalism and separatism.

Russian and Chinese interests and influence in Central Asia in some instances work to weaken the modest level of influence the United States and Europe have in directing these states toward greater liberalization of their political, economic, and social systems. A key element of Western strategy is the fostering of economic integration not only among the five Central Asian economies, but across the heart of the Eurasian landmass from Delhi to Kiev, in what former Secretary of State Condoleeza Rice once characterized as an "arc of opportunity." However, in the absence of genuine democratic systems and institutions of civil society, long-term cooperation between the Central Asian governments remains a difficult if not unattainable objective, although it seems clear that both democratization and regional cooperation are the cornerstones of long-term stability and development for these emerging states. Indeed, coordination of policy across a wide range of issues, including battling the drug trade, managing water resources, developing transportation and communications infrastructure, and combating poverty and extremism, requires a multilateral approach to insure the interests and needs of all states are considered and addressed.

Unfortunately for those promoting democratization, present circumstances appear to favor the political status quo in Central Asia, at least in the short term. In those states where a transition of leadership has occurred since the early 1990s (Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan), representative, pluralistic systems of governance have not gained traction, resulting in either continued one man, one party rule (Turkmenistan), or chaotic coups against unpopular leaders (Kyrgyzstan). As long as Russian and Chinese strategic agendas exclude reforms in the effort to secure a stronger position vis-à-vis the West, Central Asia will remain a zone of either benign or malevolent dictatorship, where the personal rivalries and greed of leaders take precedence over the welfare of citizens. This system will be sustainable, and for the most part tolerable, in Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan where abundant natural resource wealth and relatively small populations will allow for economic development and rising per capita incomes coupled with limitations on political freedom. Kazakhstan in particular may enjoy relative stability for some time, due to its curious mixture of authoritarianism tempered by limited democratic reform.

In the poorer tier of states composed of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan, declining standards of living, pervasive corruption, and social stresses stoked by ethnic and regional conflicts may well lead to episodic violence and instability for a decade or longer. It is no coincidence that two presidents have been violently driven from office (and the country) in Kyrgyzstan in the past five years; that after more than a decade Tajikistan has failed to surmount the political and economic degradation of the destructive civil war of the 1990s; or that the Karimov regime in Uzbekistan continues to overtly employ fear, violence, and repression to remain in power. Nor is it by chance that over the past decade, millions of people have left all three countries in search of economic opportunity. The main export of both Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan has become migrant laborers, a clear indication of the dismal conditions many people face in both countries. In Uzbekistan, more than two million citizens, close to 12 percent of the working age population, have sought work in Russia and Kazakhstan in recent years, and only the country's substantial natural gas, gold, and cotton exports sustain its faltering economy.

Given the many challenges facing the region and its increasing geopolitical importance, some reasonable speculation on future directions seems in order. Kazakhstan has taken on a pivotal role in the region.[2] The country is now second only to Russia as a destination for migrant workers from Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan, and there is reason to expect this trend to continue, at least in the near term. Although the Kazakh economy showed virtually no growth during the global economic downturn of 2008 and 2009, this is a temporary decline, and it is likely that with the return of increasing global demand for energy annual economic growth in Kazakhstan will return to double-digit percentages. Both Russia and Kazakhstan face a future of domestic labor shortages, and the Kazakh economy may function to reduce poverty levels and social stresses in other Central Asian states by siphoning off, or at least diminishing, the ranks of unemployed in those countries. This complimentary dynamic in labor demand and supply in Central Asia may therefore serve to minimize, at least to some degree, regional volatility. Furthermore, Kazakhstan has recently emerged, again before the global recession, as a significant source of investment in its poorer neighbors. If this trend were to continue, Kazakh revenue could become an important secondary source of long-term investment in the region and offset the lack of external capital flow, especially from Western investors, that has plagued Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and to a lesser degree Kyrgyzstan. Of course, this scenario presumes that Kazakhstan itself will avoid any major political or economic upheavals, an assumption that is by no means guaranteed. Kazakhstan's assumption of the presidency of the OSCE for 2010, while in practical terms having little impact on the region's development, nevertheless carries a powerful symbolic message of the country's leadership role in the region.

But long-term stability and economic development in the region depend on genuine and dedicated cooperation among the five states. The most serious issues that must be resolved—including management of water resources, integrating energy and transportation systems, and pursuing a coordinated regional economic development plan—are unlikely to be seriously addressed by current leaders, with the exception of Nursultan Nazarbayev, who has called for a region-wide

economic union since the 1990s, and perhaps the new leadership in Kyrgyzstan.[3] Islam Karimov, Emomli Rakhmonov, and Gerbanguly Berdymukhamedov, the leaders of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan respectively, all maintain control through political patronage systems, and the personal relationships among this group suffer from suspicions and rivalries.[4] Moreover, the relationship between Karimov and Nazarbayev, Central Asia's most powerful politicians, has long been marred by personal jealousy, especially on the part of Karimov, who views himself as the region's most influential political figure and Central Asia's "natural leader." So long as these personal peccadilloes hamper cooperation between governments, there is little reason to expect that workable solutions based on unified regional strategies will be forthcoming. The present crop of rulers will continue to place their political ambitions and survival ahead of the long-term interests of their countries. Twenty years in the wake of Soviet collapse finds the region still struggling to cope with both the legacy and the leadership inherited from the communist era.

It is therefore vital that the United States and its allies remain engaged in the heart of Asia. Strategic interests will compel such engagement. Central Asia borders on regions and countries that present the most daunting challenges to American foreign policy since the end of the Cold War. Stabilizing Afghanistan, limiting the reach of Islamic extremism in the Muslim world, containing both the state-sponsored terrorism and nuclear ambitions of Iran, securing a reliable and independent supply of energy to Europe, and limiting Russia's hegemonic aspirations are all at the forefront of U.S. policy goals. The successful attainment of these objectives will hinge, to varying degrees, on the nature of American policy in the five Central Asian states. Central Asia is no longer *terra incognita* to American policy-makers,[5] but greater familiarity must be translated into a practical and effective approach to the region and its myriad challenges. The call for the democracies of the West to "perpetuate the prevailing geopolitical pluralism on the map of Eurasia,"[6] made now almost 15 years ago, still remains largely unheeded. The security and global status of the Central Asian states in the future will depend a great deal on whether cooperation or conflict is the hallmark of regional politics, and on the will of the West to remain engaged in a region that only 20 years ago was considered marginal to its interests.

NOTES

1. Even Turkmenistan, officially adopting a position of neutrality, allowed military flights to transit its territory and cooperated with NATO operations in other limited ways.
2. Gulnoza Saidazimova, "Kazakhstan Likely Leader in Regional Cooperation," *Eurasia Insight*, January 30, 2005. Available at: http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/pp013005.shtml.
3. As of this writing (April 2010), the political situation in Kyrgyzstan remains in flux. Rosa Otunbaeva, the leader of the opposition forces that ousted President Bakiyev, appears to have achieved political control over most of the country, although sporadic demonstrations against the new government continue to occur.
4. The relationship between Islam Karimov and Saparmurat Niyazov, before the latter's death (see Chapter 2), was notoriously frosty and volatile. Niyazov, among other things, accused Karimov of attempting to assassinate him.
5. Karl E. Meyer, *The Dust of Empire: The Race for Mastery of the Asian Heartland*, New York: The Centruy Foundation, 2004, 172.
6. Zbigniew Brzezinski, "A Geostrategy for Eurasia," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 76, No.5.