

Perspectives

The Complexity of Central Eurasia

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Up until now, "Perspectives" has presented in each issue of *CESR* a single essay regarding Central Eurasia within the global sociology of knowledge, offering a particular view conditioned by the evolution and construction of disciplinary and transdisciplinary knowledge. In the current issue of *CESR*, "Perspectives" presents instead a series of shorter essays. Several of them were submitted as commentaries on longer published essays, and readers are encouraged to continue this practice. Such comments will receive consideration for publication in "Perspectives," and it is hoped that this practice will give rise to further exchange and debate.

All of the "perspectives" offered in the present issues of *CESR* address questions about how to situate Central Eurasia in time and space, and how that situation changes through time and over space. This essay introduces the four that follow, and establishes a context that seeks to integrate them conceptually, by outlining a perhaps unorthodox but systematic international relations approach to current study of the region.

In their essays below, Doulatbek Khidirbekughli and Alexander Lehrman both emphasize historical and cultural continuities that justify considering the region as a unity. Khidirbekughli's "Mysterious Eurasia," offering remarks on John Schoeberlein's (2002)¹ presidential essay in *CESR*, emphasizes the *longue durée* while consistently underlining the region's historical nature as an intermediary among cultures and peoples, and indeed empires. He tends to regard Central Asia as the most "central" part of Central Eurasia, geographically limited to the five contemporary Central Asia states with those contiguous cross-border regions sharing a culture or a language. Alexander Lehrman's "The Distinctive

Factors of Central Eurasia," commenting on Gregory Gleason's (2003) presidential essay in *CESR*, argues that the living legacy of the Russian language is today a substratum providing a broader Central Eurasia with unity in spite of contemporary changes, which have not effaced the recent Slavophone inheritance or its significance.

The essays by Amineh and by Pomfret focus on the region's future rather than the past. Such a vantage point yields a different conceptual perspective; and that perspective differs today from what it would have been a decade and a half ago. Since the end of the Cold War, global international relations are more clearly a "complex system," a self-organizing network rather than a top-down hierarchy (Bar-Yam 1997). Superpowers (or at least one), great powers, and regional powers still exist, but middle-level phenomena have become important drivers in a world that now self-organizes from bottom up.

Before the USSR disintegrated in the early 1990s, the late Turkish President Turgut Özal's strategic vision provided a bridge between the concepts of "Southwest Asia" and Central Asia. The concept of "Southwest Asia" emerged as a focus in US strategic thought after the 1979 Iranian revolution. To Southwest Asia there is being added the so-called "Northern Tier," not just in strategic thinking but as a result of events on the ground. This process creates a new and larger geopolitical entity that extends from Turkey in a crescent east-northeast through Kazakhstan (Barylski 1994; Bininachvili 1993). The Caucasus, which historically has been part of an extended Middle East, is regaining its role as a crossroads among continents. Central Asia is recognizing its cultural links with Southwest Asia while it puzzles out its relations with Russia.

One way to see Central Eurasia is to employ seven scales of analysis, even if one focuses on only a few of them at a time. The first and finest scale of

¹ References can be found at the end of the *Perspectives* section — Eds.

analysis is the national scale — i.e., state level — of analysis where each of the Central Asian countries may be taken separately. (This scale of analysis subsumes a yet finer scale, that which analyzes subnational differentiations such as the contrast between northern and southern Kazakhstan.) Second, there is the regional scale of Central Asia itself, which takes the five former Soviet republics as a whole and also considers their transnational cultural and demographic interrelationships. Third, the “macro-region” of Greater Central Asia includes “political” Central Asia (i.e., the five former Soviet republics) plus their cultural and economic connections with such neighboring regions as western China, southern Russia (including southern Siberia), northern Afghanistan, and northeastern Iran.

Fourth is the “meta-regional” scale of Central Eurasia, a still broader construct. Although “Central Eurasia” is sometimes used as a shorthand designation of the former Soviet territory, it is perhaps more apposite to adopt the definition from the CESS website, that it “include[s] Turkic, Mongolian, Iranian, Caucasian, Tibetan and other peoples[, and] 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 collapse of the Soviet Union did not assure the consolidation this crescent-shaped “meta-region” containing the Caucasus and Central Asia as an acknowledged new region in geopolitics or energy geo-economics. Expert opinion is that this required three things: international financial and industrial interest in the impressive natural resources in the region, the political will of the only remaining superpower, and the free and rapid exchange of information possible only through the Internet and other electronic telecommunications. These three conditions have all taken hold in a decade.

In a broader historical and cultural sense, Central Eurasia (like Greater Central Asia) includes portions of Russia and China. However, the latter are fully integrated at a fifth, “mega-regional” scale of analysis, including not only Russia and China but also the whole of South and Southwest Asia, from India and Pakistan through Iraq and Turkey, to which we may refer simply as Eurasia. A sixth scale of analysis is Greater Eurasia, from Spain to Sakhalin and Spitzbergen to Singapore, including the European Union and its family of institutions

(Cutler 2003). Finally, the seventh scale of analysis is the global scale, which adds the United States, American transnational corporations with a global reach, and worldwide international organizations having especially an economic, industrial or financial vocation.

It is not necessary to treat all these scales of analysis together, although it is useful to employ the first and the seventh together so as to anchor any discussion. These “scales” of analysis differ, both in conception and in application, from what are traditionally considered to be “levels” of analysis in international relations. This difference means that they are not stacked upon each other in a mechanistic manner, even though it is convenient to discuss them sequentially for expository purposes. The levels are not strictly hierarchical, meaning that they also are not “nested.” Rather, as in any “complex system” — i.e., a system where the behavior of the whole is not predictable from analysis of its components and where properties of the system emerge from one scale into another — these scales of analysis overlap; and what one sees depends upon where one stands.

The foregoing sketch illustrates one way to make connections among different levels of analysis in a manner more nuanced than traditional geopolitical analysis. In “Towards Rethinking Geopolitics,” Mehdi Parvizi Amineh introduces a new approach to the topic, called “critical geopolitics,” which challenges the “orthodox geopolitics” usually associated with realist and neorealist theories of international relations. In particular, he highlights the role of non-state actors, such as international financial institutions (IFIs), in both the conceptual and the material construction of the region. Richard Pomfret’s essay on “The Specific and the General in Economic Policy Analysis and Advice” concludes with some more extended reflections on IFIs in particular. His remarks may be read as a commentary on Morgan Y. Liu’s (2003) “Detours from Utopia on the Silk Road: Ethical Dilemmas of Neo-liberal Triumphalism” previously published in this space, addressing specific results of liberal economic intervention in Central Eurasia.

Readers are encouraged to submit to “Perspectives” shorter essays and commentaries such as those published here, as well as longer sociology-of-knowledge reviews.

Mysterious Eurasia: Thoughts in Response to Dr. Schoeberlein

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Ten thousand years ago, ancestors of the Turkic tribes inhabited Central Eurasia. These Turkic Eurasian tribes migrated in all directions. During this great migration of peoples, they influenced the cultures of the European peoples, including Western Christianity, as well as the cultures of the Mongol and Chinese civilizations in the East, where the Paleo-Asian and Proto-Mongolian peoples emerged from the mixture of alien (proto-Turkic) and autochthonous (local Mongol). Some of these subsequently crossed the Bering Strait, forming the stock from which some Native American peoples descended. In Western Eurasia contact between Turkic and Germanic peoples came with the fall of the Roman Empire as the Huns settled in Europe.

Dr. Schoeberlein (2002) was correct to state that "in North America, the entire northern tier of Central Eurasia has been claimed by a society whose name and orientation feature 'Slavic Studies' for the simple reason that this territory has been under Russian domination. Scholars who are interested precisely in that Russian domination may find a home in Slavic studies, but others in both Slavic studies and Central Eurasian studies find the connections too tenuous to be meaningful." Only specialists in North America, Europe, and Islamic countries really have knowledge of this region, which in the popular mind is still identified as part of Russia.

Scholars from Islamic countries consider Central Eurasia as a part of Muslim history and culture. Islam dominated in Central Eurasia from the ninth through the 19th centuries. Central Eurasia thereafter fell under Russian domination and European culture. Central Eurasian languages are based either on Turkic or on Persian roots, with more recent Russian overlays, adaptations, and vocabulary transfers. Divided between Islamic and post-Soviet studies, the study of Central Eurasia should be considered as a separate and independent field.

"Eurasianism" was a traditional Russian construction that included the precepts of Russian colonial policy and great power nationalism. Tsarist and Bolshevik Russia used such an ideology as a

basis for empire, combining Western colonialism with Asian despotism inherited from traditions going back to Chinggis Khan.

The Soviet Russian conception of "Middle Asia" (*Sredniaia Aziia*) included only the former Soviet republics between the Tian Shan-Pamir Mountains and the Caspian Sea, but "Central Asia" (*Tsentral'naia Aziia*) meant "Inner Asia," namely the territory of Mongolian Republic and contiguous Inner Mongolia, including the Gobi Desert. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, geographers in the post-Soviet space adopted the Western nomenclature and speak of "Central Asia" instead of "Middle Asia." Mongolia thus became construed as a part of East Asia; but Mongolia and Inner Mongolia are populated by non-Han peoples. Meanwhile, scholars of China, Japan and Korea study Mongolia, Tibet, and (at least part of) Turkistan under the rubric of "(East) Asian Studies."

As the empire of Chinggis Khan was divided after his death, his grandchildren and descendants became rulers of countries and peoples speaking diverse languages. To the sedentary peoples he invaded, Chinggis Khan was a despot but the Kazakh Khanate inherited nomadic traditions and structures. Its way of life included certain democratic elements, such as resistance to abuse of power in peacetime, coupled with the acceptance in wartime of "tyranny," much like Cincinnatus of Ancient Roman history. While the khan was not a crown prince, only the descendants of Chinggis Khan might be kings. The Qurultay selected the potential candidate for election. Over time, the chief of the tribe became only a nominal representative of the tribe or the clans or communes within it. His functions were under the control of the council of aqsqaqs (elders). This democratic aspect of Asian nomadism in fact distinguishes it from the more widely disseminated concept of Asian state despotism, characterized by China, India, the countries of Indochina and the Islamic world.

The term "Central Eurasia" could be thought superficial and stereotypical. Dr. Schoeberlein remarked that the definition of Central Eurasia is anything but dogmatic. Eurasia is populated by

Tungusic and Turkic peoples of Siberia, by Uralic peoples of the Volga Basin, by Caucasian Muslim and Caucasian Christian peoples, by Muslim peoples of Eastern Europe and of Central Asia. It includes Slavic peoples living in the Caucasus, Central Asia, and Siberia as well as the indigenous population. But Central Eurasia is fundamentally Central Asia, with other regions and subregions adjoined. The territory of Central Asia is an historical space of interaction of nomadic and settled peoples, in contact with both Islam and Christianity, and likewise with both Asian and European cultures. It seems to me that the territory of the former Soviet Union, with extension into western China and the greater Middle East, is a "full" Eurasia.

In general, we must understand that Eurasia is a composite of two basic cultures and layers. Central Eurasia occupies a central place in the system of interactions between Western and Eastern civilizations. The September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks imposed upon CESS an "urgent responsibility to communicate its knowledge to the world," to communicate to Western mass publics and leaders how Central Eurasia differs from Russia, East Asia, and the Islamic World. This is a principal obligation of CESS in the world today: to promote the study, in their full depth and breadth, of the historical, political, socio-economic, ethno-psychological, and cultural aspects of this great region. We must combine knowledge of the past and present to ascertain the future of the region.

The Distinctive Factors of Central Eurasia: A Response to Professor Gleason

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Central Eurasia possesses a unique combination of linguistic and cultural factors that make it a distinct area. The geographic, historical, and socioeconomic circumstances of these factors are quite well known and do not need to be reiterated here. The importance of linguistic factors, however, is typically overlooked and deserves to be pointed out.

The determining role of shared language and culture, particularly literature, has been systematically underestimated in contemporary theory which has privileged secondary (economic, social, and political) factors. Yet shared language, and the shared culture based on the transmitted texts in that language, clearly play the generative role in forming the population's expectations and attitudes that ultimately determine the speakers' choices, with important consequences, both short- and long-term.

The most obvious examples include the recent "Anglophone" go-it-alone military alliance in Iraq — a continuation of the virtually unchanged close cooperation among the English-speaking populations of the globe for over a century. There is also the continuing struggle of the French-speaking world, led by France, to assert its independence from the "Anglophone" world in every domain. And there is the relatively cohesive "Arab world" which has defined itself unabashedly along the linguocultural

lines, with the Quran as the main transmitted value-imparting text, in reaction against the successful incursions of the "Francophone" and "Anglophone" entities. These recent examples, and more could be listed, clearly demonstrate that the forces of attraction and repulsion work along the linguocultural lines.

Central Eurasia is no exception. If we wish to find the distinctive features of Central Eurasia and attempt to discover the "power" lines along which this area's development is likely to proceed, we need to understand its linguocultural situation and the tendencies inherent in that situation. Contrary to Professor Gleason's assertion (2003: 3) that "no single language is spoken everywhere in the [Central Eurasian] region", there is indeed such a language. The existence of such a language also stands contrary to the ideological aspirations of certain currently ascendant groups in the area. Those aspirations, reflecting a strong reaction against a dominant factor, are probative of this factor's enduring power.

This factor, this language is Russian. The populations of Bashkortostan and Tatarstan, constituent parts of Russia for several hundred years, are of course primarily Russian-speaking and thoroughly bilingual. The peoples of most of the

independent states in the area — Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan — are to a considerable extent conversant with Russian. Some of the artists, performers, and writers native to those parts achieved wide fame in the larger Russian-speaking urban areas of the former Soviet Union, thanks precisely to their work in and through the medium of Russian (e.g., Rasul Gamzatov, Fazil Iskander, Chingiz Aitmatov, Mukhtar Auevov). These countries' professional elites have a perfect command of Russian, their higher education having been conducted almost entirely in that language. The same applies to a predominant number of professionals in Mongolia, though not to the population at large. Even in Afghanistan, to an extent much larger than currently admitted, there is a significant number of Russian-educated professionals. The areas not affected by the dominance of Russian during the Soviet period include, of course, Iran and, to a lesser extent, Xinjiang, although the latter deserves special study in view of Chinese Turkistan's complicated contacts with the largely Russian-speaking Kazakhstan. Russian has deeply affected many of the languages of the area: their writing systems remain Cyrillic-based, with the exception of Azeri that switched recently to Latin and of course Armenian and Georgian which have long preserved their epichoric alphabets. All of the languages, particularly the Turkic ones, have borrowed their technical and sociocultural vocabularies from Russian, often complete with the Russian norms of pronunciation.

The authority of Russian, whose character has been changed by the bankruptcy of the Marxist-Leninist ideology and its transmitted texts, continues to be enhanced by a steady flow of prestigious scientific and technological texts. Classical Russian texts also have enduring importance, and are often markedly respectful of the values of the autochthonous peoples (particularly certain works by Pushkin, Lermontov, and Tolstoy). The Russian-language works by Central Eurasian writers deeply rooted in the classical Russian tradition also remain highly valued.

When Russian became a linguocultural determinant in the area, three other determinants had already been at work. Most of the people living in Central Eurasia are Turkic-speaking: Tatars, Bashkorts, Azeris, Turkmens, Kyrgyz, Kazakhs, Uyghurs, and Uzbeks all share a common Turkic language heritage. This of course includes not just the fundamental lexicon and grammar but also texts, idioms, proverbs, and even portions of oral epics, such as the *Alpamish*, which derive from a linguistically transmitted common Turkic heritage.

Iranic linguocultural heritage is the second important determinant. This stratum is directly represented by the languages and cultures of Iran (Persian), Tajikistan (Tajik), and Afghanistan (Dari), to all of whom the highly prestigious Classical Persian literature and its language belong. These, however, have exerted a great influence on the Turkic-language civilizations of the region. Only Mongolia has remained outside of the Iranic sphere of influence. It has also remained unaffected by the third important determinant: Arabic.

The influence of Arabic, the language and the texts of the Islamic civilization, is well-known and can hardly be overestimated. The loanwords from Arabic in the Iranic and Turkic languages of the region constitute from 50 to 60 percent of their vocabularies. Arabic contributed greatly to all areas of culture now inseparable from the basically Iranic and Turkic societies, beginning with the writing systems and calendars of the area. It was only in the 20th century that the Arabic writing system and calendar were replaced with the Russian-derived ones for the Turkic and Iranic languages of Central Asia.

I hope that these remarks have made it quite clear that there is a unique combination of determinants characterizing Central Eurasia precisely and objectively and in a fashion that is truly meaningful. Geographic, political, and economic factors are the venue, the ways, and the means, but the linguocultural factors are the content — the explanatory narrative and the “mission statement” — of the people sharing them.

Towards Rethinking Geopolitics

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The term "geopolitics" has various meanings, for example: it may be taken as synonymous to political geography or politics in its spatial dimension. For the realist school of international relations it means rivalry among great-power states. It can mean the geographic dimension of the foreign policy of a single state. In strategic terms it may signify the struggle for control of a certain geographic area. Also, the term "geopolitics" is sometimes used as a synonym for international politics stressing political and military behavior in a specific context.

The main ideas of traditional or "orthodox" geopolitics are related to the realist and neo-realist schools of international relations, based upon the Westphalian conception of the international system. According to this view, the nation state is paramount and international relations are best understood through a balance-of-power approach among states struggling for influence and dominance in world politics. This geopolitical discourse emerged in the 19th century (Kjellen 1897; Ratzel 1897; Mahan 1890) and developed in the first half of the 20th (Mackinder 1904, 1919; Haushofer 1932; Spykman 1942). However, both the end of the Cold War and globalization (internationalization of trade, transnationalization of production and finance, and the internationalization of functions of the state) have forced social scientists to rethink the meaning of geopolitics.

A new approach to geopolitics, called critical geopolitics, has been trying to create a synthesis between the traditional understanding of geopolitics ("orthodox geopolitics") and the "geo-economics" of the world political economy. Critical geopolitics developed in the 1970s when some researchers began to reject a narrow concern with "national security" as the defining feature of geopolitics and sought a wider context of social and human development, encompassing such concerns as poverty, violence, and environmental degradation. Based on neo-Marxist political economy and "world-system" theory, scholars started to incorporate not only the geographic but also the economic dimensions of global politics into the conceptualization of geopolitics (especially Taylor 1993). Under the influence of critical theory and post-structuralist theory, the concept of "critical

geopolitics" has been introduced into geopolitical discourse (Agnew and Corbridge 1995).

"Critical geopolitics" does not constitute the world as a fixed hierarchy of states, cores and peripheries, spheres of influence, flashpoints, buffer zones and strategic relations. Rejecting state-centric reasoning, it favors a more nuanced vision of world politics as a system dominated not only by political states but also by economic and technological developments that are capable of threatening the well-being of the citizens of those states. The critical geopolitics approach holds that geographic arrangements are social constructions that may change over time with changing human economic demography. It holds that the relevant actors for analysis of the political-geographic world include not only states but also international and nongovernmental institutions, as well as transnational movements and transgovernmental interest groups. Critical geopolitics also disagrees with the assumption of objectivity self-imputed by world-system theories as well as by orthodox geopolitics. Rather, the critical-geopolitics school holds that any geopolitical approach to world politics carries conceptual and methodological assumptions that cannot help but animate and influence analysis. Writers on critical geopolitics therefore call for a methodological and conceptual re-evaluation of political geography.

With the end of the Cold War, Central Eurasia has become an important geo-strategic and geo-economic region in world politics. Many countries in the region are politically weak and economically dependent on Russia. The internal sovereignty of many governments is contested by grave economic, financial, social and political challenges. The critical-geopolitics school asserts that there are causal relationships between socio-economic underdevelopment on the one hand and, on the other hand, ethnic conflict, political unrest, and (for instance) Islamic fundamentalist terrorism.

Central Asia and the South Caucasus are located north of the great mountain chain that divides the Eurasian landmass as a pastoral corridor of flat and easily traversed steppe lands. In the past, the region functioned as the historical crossroads between Europe and Asia. The history of Central

Eurasia has been conditioned to a large extent by the westward movements of Central Eurasian peoples at least a far back into the past as 4000 BCE. For centuries external forces have made contact with and sometimes ruled over this region from different parts of the world. The main external forces in the early Islamic phase of Central Eurasian history from the eighth and ninth century onwards were the Abbasid Empire (750-1258) and the Mongol Empire (1141-1469). However, after 1400 the horse-mounted archer was increasingly outgunned by artillery, the musket and powder. Mobile societies of herdsmen were unable to support manufacturing required to cope with invaders. Invaded by Russians from the north, by Chinese from the east, by the Ottoman and Persian Empires from the west, the region was conquered by outsiders. Tsarist Russia colonized the region, which was subsequently taken into the realm of Soviet industrialization.

Features characterizing the Central Asia and Caucasus regions, if not the whole of Central Eurasia, thus include: the historic confrontation between nomadic horsemen and settled agriculturalists; the lands where Turkic, Iranian, Caucasian, Mongolian, Tungusic and Tibetan peoples have proliferated; the Inner Asian territories of Islam, Buddhism and Shamanism; and the emergence of the newly independent states from the disintegration of the Soviet Union. The strategic

importance of the Central Asia/South Caucasus region to the West is bound to increase substantially in the coming decades, not least due to the region's vast energy resources. Also it is a natural trade and transit link between Europe and Asia. Critical geopolitics holds normatively that all these actors would benefit from converting the region from a zone for geopolitical competition and confrontation to a zone of cooperation. Even under the assumptions of "orthodox geopolitics," the region's political stability and socio-economic development in this region would be crucial for global peace and security.

Critical geopolitics considers that the main actors in the contemporary international relations of Central Eurasia comprise several levels. The "inner circle" includes Russia, Iran, and Turkey. The "outer circle" includes (a) the more distant states China, India, Pakistan and also Afghanistan; and (b) the peripheral states Ukraine, Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, Israel, and Saudi Arabia. There are also actors external to the broader region, mainly the United States, European Union, Japan and East Asian states. Non-state actors such as ethno-religious movements, international organizations, transnational energy companies, and international crime syndicates are also significant to international relations.

The Specific and the General in Economic Policy Analysis and Advice

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In all social sciences there is a tension between seeking generalizations and acknowledging specific conditions. In the Eurasian context, this has been highlighted by the urgent need for well-founded policy advice after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The dichotomy is often sharpest between economists on the one hand, especially those related to the international financial institutions (or IFI, meaning the International Monetary Fund and World Bank), and, on the other hand, regional specialists. The area studies specialists criticize the economists' models and econometric analysis as based on general assumptions inappropriate to specific countries, while the economists are dismayed by ad hoc treatment of social structure, historical

specificity or personal characteristics of the leadership.

One reason why this dichotomy has been especially pronounced with respect to Central Eurasia was the low status of studies of this area in the high-income countries before 1992. While centers of excellence existed, their salience was far less than that of centers of Latin American studies in the United States or of African studies in Europe, or of (East) Asian studies in most OECD countries. After 1991 a large group of new independent countries in the Caucasus and Central Asia, as well as Mongolia, urgently sought advice on introducing and managing a market economy. For this they turned to individuals and to institutions with high technical reputations, the IFIs. The latter assumed

this role despite their lack of expertise in the region, and their limited experience with formerly centrally planned economies. At the same time, area specialists, unused to being involved in active policy debates, largely remained in their ivory towers.

What was the outcome? Important elements of the early policy advice were clearly right. For example, many Soviet-trained economic policymakers blamed inflation on monopolies, but consistent emphasis and explanation by foreign economists helped to convince policymakers of the links between money creation and inflation, and between financial deficits and money creation. The hyperinflation of the early 1990s was only tamed after governments accepted this argument and gave priority to monetary stabilization.

In other areas, however, economists' advice based on general models was too simplistic. Large-scale privatization was not just a matter of creating property rights so that resource allocation could be efficient, as economists argued from the Coase Theorem. The way in which privatization occurred mattered, both directly in its impact on managerial quality and on equity and indirectly through feedback effects on the political system. Economists underestimated the potential for state capture, and that this might take diverse forms in different countries.

The one-size-fits-all recommendations of the IFIs have had mixed results. Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Mongolia were relatively willing pupils, but the economic outcomes differed markedly. Kyrgyzstan liberalized its economy quickly but with disappointing outcomes due to poor infrastructure, inappropriate institutions, and lack of resources. Kazakhstan was slower to liberalize but, despite a counterproductive alienation of state assets, had greater long-term success, which might be explained by higher initial income levels and human capital or by abundant resources. Mongolia, also resource-poor, has been more successful than Kyrgyzstan, apparently due to its more democratic and open political system than those in Central Asia.

The poor pupils of the IFIs have also had diverse outcomes. Uzbekistan's economic performance, in terms of GDP the best of all former Soviet republics, does not fit into the IFIs' model. Ascribing this success simply to "gradualism," as critics of the IFIs' "shock therapy" approach are wont to do, is not helpful. Turkmenistan has also been a gradualist, but with a significantly different policy setting and economic outcome. Uzbekistan

may have poor prospects because of failure to reform more thoroughly, but its economic performance during the 1990s cannot lightly be dismissed, and predictions of future prospects would be more convincing if we had a good explanation of past performance. For me, this has something to do with inherited administrative strength derived from Tashkent's central role in Soviet Central Asia, but there may be other explanations which deeper country-specific analysis might uncover.

How we assess the policy performance during the first post-Soviet decade depends in part on our evaluation of the general outcome. Critics of the IFIs' role emphasize the traumatic fall in living standards, deindustrialization and rising external debt. Things could, however, have been worse. Governance, including economic management, has been sufficiently good to avoid widespread bloodshed, except in Tajikistan. The whole of the former Soviet Union has had a terrible time economically and, given their starting points at the bottom of the heap, it is surprising that the Central Asian countries have done better than the average.

In the second post-independence decade, things are more complex. How to end hyperinflation, the principles of monetary and fiscal policy, or of price reform are all more straightforward and universal than managing an established market economy. Now, needs will change from broad-based policy advice to deeper analysis of the consequences of policy decisions or of other events or phenomena.

From the economists' side, the time should be ripe for fruitful interdisciplinary cooperation. One of the most exciting branches of economics in recent years has been the study of differences in economic growth rates, in which there has been a fruitful blending of theory and empirics. The consensus has moved beyond proximate explanations of growth to "deeper" explanations of why some countries, and not others, adopt policies conducive to economic growth, and why good policies work well in some settings but are ineffective elsewhere. While there is debate over the role of deterministic factors such as geography and resource abundance, there is a strong consensus that institutions matter. Institutions are, however, broadly defined and remain essentially a black box which economists need help in understanding.

In conclusion let me stress that this is not intended as a partisan approach to the *Methodenstreit* between area specialists and economists. Economists filled a policy void in the

1990s and much of that early advice was good, even if far from perfect. Area specialists may have had better understanding of Central Asia, but they failed to meet the challenge in the 1990s because much of their criticism of the economists' universal models was of little practical help to policymakers facing novel problems for which their training had not prepared them. In the second decade of transition, more sophisticated analysis of Eurasian economies is required and that will need the combined skills of good economists and knowledgeable regional specialists.

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