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Abstracts

ABSTRACTS

Identity and Space in Central Asia

Sebastian Stride

This article aims to provide an introduction to Central Asia from a geographic, historical and ethnolinguistic perspective. It demonstrates how the environment has conditioned the patterns of human settlement and, in particular, the relationship between semi-nomadic, pastoral populations and sedentary, agricultural populations. Logically, this human geography of Central Asia has had and continues to have a profound effect on notions of identity, which have little to do with those of the modern European concept of Nation-State. Thus, while the languages, ethnic groups and cultures of the current five former Soviet republics of Central Asia seem to have existed for centuries, in reality they were invented by the Soviet regime in the 1920's. Nevertheless, far from being rejected by the new independent countries, the Soviet categories have been ratified and are today considered unquestionable. It is, however, of fundamental importance that this fact be taken into account in an analysis of the region, because in many cases the current Central Asian regimes purposefully use notions such as Islamic fundamentalism, natural resources or economic liberalisation, which are very much in vogue at the present time, in order to mask problems which in reality are linked to identities and events from a distant past.

Political Regimes in Central Asia: Crisis of Legitimacy, Political Violence and Uncertain Prospects

Mohammad-Reza Djalili
Thierry Kellner

This article analyses the present-day transition and political context of each of the states that comprise the former Soviet region of Central Asia since their independence: the internal changes they have undergone, the creation of their own institutions and regional and international relations. This evolution, especially with regard to the

deficiencies in democracy and legitimacy of the majority of the current governments, based, in many cases, on personalist, authoritarian regimes, points to an uncertain future for a region in which, too frequently, its rulers have used all the means at their disposal (persecution of political opposition, disregard for human rights, constraint of the mass media and NGOs, etc.) to guarantee their continuance in power. This article also includes an analysis of the most recent events, such as the Andijan (Uzbekistan) massacre, the ‘revolution’ without changes in Kyrgyzstan, and the authoritarian drift of Turkmenistan, which leads to conclusions filled with uncertainties for future political scenarios.

Transition in Central Asia: Growth with Increasingly Greater Inequality?

Max Spoor

This article analyses the economic evolution of the former Soviet states of Central Asia since their independence, especially in regard to growth and in comparison with growing inequality. The following topics are considered: first of all, the initial conditions in which the economic transition of these countries began; secondly, the transformations of widely varying scope (different “routes of transition”) that these economies have experienced, from an almost *non-reform* (Turkmenistan) or a *gradual or partial reform* (Uzbekistan and Tajikistan), to a *large-scale reform* (Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan); and thirdly, the economic performance of the Central Asian states, which, with the exception of Uzbekistan, has been quite poor and has generated what we could call two kinds of “duality”: one which is generated by the expansion of extracting industries (oil, gas and metals), to the detriment of other sectors fundamental to the countries’ development, and another one originating from the growing unequal distribution of income among the population. While the first of these “dualities” cannot be maintained as a long-term development strategy, the second one could culminate in social agitation and instability, even in the medium term, which could contribute to the destabilisation of the already fragile and volatile region of Central Asia.

Hydrocarbon-Rich Territories in Central Asia: Producing Countries, Exporting Enclaves or Transit Countries?

Aurelia Mañé

This article aims to qualify the different analyses and currents of opinion that are circulating with respect to Central Asia’s capacity to become one of the main exporters of hydrocarbons in the next decade. For this, it first examines whether or not, in quantitative terms, the hydrocarbon-rich territories of Central Asia can become one of the main suppliers

on a world scale; secondly, it explains why the countries of Central Asia will play a necessarily different role on the international energy scene than that played by the OPEC countries; and, finally, it indicates what the relevance of this area could be in the organisation (structure) of the contemporary international energy scene. In this sense, it discusses not *producing countries*, but rather *countries of passage*.

Central Asia in a Changing World: From a Peripheral Region to an Area of Policy Generation and Application. Actors, Policy and Security

Nora Sainz Gsell

This work deals with Central Asia, beginning with an analysis of the characteristics of international insertion of the area as a whole and of the former Soviet republics that comprise it. In a general way, it aims to analyse the evolution of Central Asia from a peripheral region to an area that generates behaviours and receives the application of policies on the part of international actors. In the first part of the study, it mentions a series of particularities of the republics that have determined the relationships in the region (the Central Asian order) and those between the region and the outside world; it indicates geo-historical and economic-strategic aspects. In the second part, it examines the foreign policy of the republics in the post-Cold War era from the singularities of domestic policy. And, in the third part, it analyses, according to the aforementioned peculiarities, the policies that the area and each State has generated in international actors, both regional ones and global ones, and which have transformed the region from a peripheral one to a geopolitically emerging one.

The Hydraulic Option in Former Soviet Central Asia. Historical Perspective and Current Situation

Laura Vea

This paper deals with the situation of water resource management in the five Central Asian republics that formed part of the USSR. By way of introduction, it lists the characteristics of water as a resource and then analyses the uses and distribution of water in the region. For this, it outlines a brief historical approach which helps to understand, in all its magnitude, the current situation of ecological degradation and how it determines living conditions in the region. Likewise, it deals with the policies of intervention in water resource management of the Central Asian states and of international institutions, and it includes the description

of two specific case studies which form part of initiatives devoted to reversing a process which has led to the greatest ecological disaster on the planet, the most well-known aspect of which is the practical disappearance of the Aral Sea.

The Nuclear Imperative in Russia's Security Strategy

J. Oscar Alvarez Calzada

The process which culminated in the disappearance of the USSR was heavily influenced by that Soviet Union's inability to maintain the level of technology reached by the US in the arms race. Under the circumstances of deteriorating Russian power which have been developing since 1991, and given the precariousness that affects its armed forces, nuclear weapons have become the core element of the Russian Federation's national security strategy. This article explores the causes that have led to this nuclear imperative in Russia's security strategy; and secondly, it presents the most relevant, and worrying, consequence that this dependence has generated, which is the lowering of the threshold necessary for the use of nuclear weapons.