

TURKESTAN RISING

by Paul B. Henze

Imagine an American think-tank in operation in 1900. A generous benefactor has given it a grant to look into the future and contemplate the farfetched possibility that European colonial empires might become independent nations by the end of the 20th century. Looking at Asia, its researchers compare prospects for two large colonial regions—British India and Russian Turkestan. Which would then have appeared to be a better candidate for successful evolution into a modern nation-state?

Consider the case for India. Although a well-known geographic entity since ancient times, it was still regarded in 1900 as a subcontinent rather than a nation. British administrators serving under a London-appointed viceroy governed two-thirds of India, but there were also dozens of semi-independent states, some (such as Hyderabad and Kashmir) as large as European countries, others only dots on the map. Seven enclaves on India's long coastline remained under French or Portuguese dominion, the largest being the historic city-state of Goa.

Inhabiting the vast subcontinent was a myriad of peoples, living in radically different ways, worshiping different gods, and speaking different tongues. (The only common language, English, was understood by perhaps less than one percent of the population.) The Brahminic caste system that held sway in many parts of India further

aggravated social divisions, and periodic outbursts of violence were taken as inevitable.

To be sure, India enjoyed many benefits of the British imperium. A network of railways had been built. Dams and irrigation works were under construction. Roads and telegraph and postal services were expanding. And several major cities had a European veneer. But native rulers had different priorities from those of the British, spending most of their revenue on palaces and temples and very little on education or social services. Even in areas directly administered by Britain, the majority of the population remained illiterate, leading traditional lives as cultivators and craftsmen. This in itself would be no cause of instability, but the fact that millions of people passed their days as beggars or on the margin of extreme poverty hardly boded well for an emerging modern nation.

All in all, chances for India's evolution into a coherent nation-state would have been—and, indeed were—rated low. Most Britons believed that India, if given independence, would degenerate into chaos, perhaps even fall prey to the Russians, eager to extend their Central Asian conquests to warmer lands and open seas.

A think-tank at the beginning of this century would almost certainly have concluded that Turkestan—Russian Central Asia—offered brighter prospects for coherent nationhood than India. The people

were almost all Turkic. The Persian-speaking minority posed no problem, for Turkic and Persian cultures coexisted and mixed with minimal strain. The area suffered no population pressure or sharp social cleavages. Ninety-five percent of the population adhered to Sunni Islam. Tiny ethnic and religious minorities—Ismailis, Arabs, Jews, among others—occupied stable niches in society. Cotton production had already brought prosperity to the region, and the threat of famine was remote. After their conquest, the Russians expanded infrastructure rapidly. Promise of exploitable minerals and vast expanses of unused land offered unlimited prospects for further economic development. By the standards of the time, the Russian colonial administration based in Tashkent set a precedent for the rational integration of the whole area.

Of course, Turkestani independence would have been thought impossible without a fundamental change in the nature of the Russian Empire. That was even more difficult to foresee at the beginning of the 20th century than the freeing of India. Then suddenly in 1917 the tsars' control collapsed. But the opportunity was lost. Buffeted by political cross-currents and military intrigues that prevented them from developing a coherent vision of their own future, Central Asians were reabsorbed in Lenin's restored Russian Empire. While India, with all its diversity, evolved toward in-

dependent nationhood under Britain's guidance, the idea of a united, autonomous Turkestan all but disappeared.

Today, that idea enjoys new life, but it will be difficult to realize, perhaps more so for contemporary Central Asians than it would have been for their predecessors. So-



Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbaev and Boris Yeltsin at a December 1991 meeting of leaders of the former republics of the Soviet Union. Is Nazarbaev the man of Turkestan's future, its Atatürk?

viet policies have left awkward legacies for the five Central Asian states that became members of the United Nations in March 1992. The most obvious are political.

During the Brezhnev era (1964–82), Soviet rule in Central Asia evolved into an even more effective form of semi-feudal

colonialism than it had been in earlier decades. In return for docile acceptance of Kremlin priorities for performance in certain key areas—cotton production in the four southern republics, supply of grain and meat and acquiescence in nuclear testing in Kazakhstan—local chieftains were given wide autonomy. These leaders built up networks of privileged followers and kinsmen. As long as they did not flagrantly challenge the basic tenets of the communist system and kept opposition in check, they could operate profitable schemes, indulge in ostentatious construction projects, and even foster some aspects of local culture and religion. At the very least, this system created the illusion of stability; to some superficial observers, it even appeared to be an engine of progress. But *perestroika* and *glasnost* shattered such illusions.

Ethnic tensions between native populations and peoples who had moved into Central Asia turned volatile as economic conditions deteriorated, unchecked either by Gorbachev's reforms or his program of openness. The rapid growth rate of the indigenous population created intractable problems, especially in urban areas where unemployment became serious. Acute salination affected much of the southern republics' best agricultural land as irrigation was expanded to increase cotton production. Overuse of pesticides and fertilizers poisoned domestic water sources and was linked with alarmingly high rates of cancer. The Aral Sea shrank and marine life died. In mining and industrial areas pollution spread. Large expanses of Kazakhstan were rendered radioactive by nuclear testing.

Gorbachev was incapable of comprehending the depth of the economic disaster

or ethnic nationalism and frustrated his own intentions by encouraging Russians in Central Asian communist parties to play a greater role. Massive riots broke out in Alma-Ata in December 1986 when he made a Russian the First Party Secretary of Kazakhstan, a position that Kazakh Dinmukhamed Kunaev had occupied for more than 27 years. Some reform-minded Kazakhs maintained that the riots had been encouraged by Kunaev himself, but there was more to them than that. The unrest in Kazakhstan was repeated in some form in every Central Asian republic before the end of the decade. In each instance the specific causes were different, but the common denominator was the same: critical economic problems and social and ethnic tensions exacerbated by oppression and bureaucratic neglect.

After the Alma-Ata riots, more and more Central Asians felt free to register their discontent. The native-language press became bolder. Writer Oljas Sulemeynov founded the Nevada-Semipalatinsk anti-nuclear movement. And growing numbers of Central Asians openly espoused the Islamic faith of their forefathers, many of them championing it as the basis for a reconstituted social and political order. Nevertheless, compared to many other parts of the Soviet Union, political change came slowly. Democrats and reformers displayed limited organizing skill, and protest movements were largely confined to intellectuals. Most of the mildly reformist local communists that Gorbachev favored were insecure about their own positions and were often outmaneuvered by their own conservative *nomenklatura* col-

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leagues.

As the collapse of communism accelerated in other parts of the Soviet Empire, and especially in Russia itself after Boris Yeltsin took the lead, the Central Asian republics lagged behind. The most politically astute of all the new Central Asian leaders, Nursultan Nazarbaev in Kazakhstan, allied himself with Yeltsin as Gorbachev faltered and fell, but neither he nor his colleagues in the four other republics welcomed the demise of the Soviet Union.

In fact, with only one exception, the Central Asian leaders supported or at least hesitated to condemn the August 1991 reactionary coup in Moscow. The exception was the Kyrgyz leader, Askar Akaev, a scientist who had skillfully outmaneuvered the republic's conservative communist establishment in late 1990 and early 1991 to consolidate his own position. His commitment to full democracy was, and has remained, unequivocal. The other republics remained in the hands of erstwhile communists who donned democratic garb. Facing the inevitable, they all had their parliaments declare independence after the coup failed. When Yeltsin took the lead in forming the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) to succeed the Soviet Union, the Central Asian leaders promptly joined.

But in truth the leaders of all the Central Asian states (including Kyrgyzstan) would rather have seen the old Soviet Union last a little longer—that, or at least evolve into a more coherent successor than the CIS is likely to be, if it manages to survive at all. The problem of making the transition to a free-market system weighs heavily upon the men who long depended



High-school students in Kazakhstan learn Arabic. Abandoning Cyrillic as the script of their Turkic dialects, Central Asians will have to decide whether to adopt the Arabic or the Latin alphabet.

upon Moscow's subsidies and familiar sources of food, fuel, and consumer goods. A Western businessman who advises Tajikistan on trade and privatization offered a blunt assessment of the current situation: "There are at least 15 things Moscow used to do for these republics. It was a totally paternalistic system. Moscow is gone now and they lack bureaucrats who know how to issue a regulation, fill out a bill of lading, or transfer money. They have to try to learn everything at once."

It is easy to understand why most of the new leaders fear competition from religious conservatives and politically inexperienced intellectuals. As communists, they were brought up to scorn such people. Their conditioned reflex is to suppress them, though they are now usually constrained to resort to roundabout methods. Islam Karimov, the Uzbek leader who has limited the autonomy of the Central Asian Muslim Board and kept the progressive *Birlik* (Unity) Party from fielding a candidate against him in the December 29, 1991 presidential election, was nevertheless sworn in on a copy of the Koran. As leaders of independent countries, they all profess a commitment to multi-party democracy,

free-market economics, and protection of human rights, but their capacity to transform themselves into genuine democrats remains to be proven.

In many of the former communist countries of Eastern Europe as well as in some parts of the ex-Soviet Union, the first generation of new leaders who were pulled and pushed to reform their economies and move toward democracy were discredited and exhausted in the process. They have already been replaced by a second generation. Most second-generation leaders are former communists too, but they have developed a less qualified commitment to change, do not carry the burden of past tactical mistakes, and have convinced a significant proportion of their populations that they sympathize with their aspirations more fully than their predecessors did. The same kind of political evolution seems likely in Central Asia. It has so far occurred only in Kyrgyzstan. Tajikistan has been torn by competition between assertive communist survivors and reform-minded rivals. As of this writing, an uneasy accord has been established between President Rakhmon Nabiyev's old-guard communists and the Muslim-dominated opposition, possibly the strongest Islamic revivalist movement in Central Asia. Leaders in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan still display many of the characteristics they acquired as party *apparatchiki*.

While his embrace of democracy is far more equivocal than Akaev's, Kazakhstan's President Nazarbaev may prove to be Central Asia's most successful political survivor. He displays the dominant characteristics of his countrymen, who, despite Stalin's best efforts to decimate them during the collectivization campaign of the 1930s, have endured as a fiercely proud, assertive people whose hatred of communism runs deep.

Kazakhstan, a third the size of the continental United States, with vast agricultural lands and mineral resources but only 18 million people, outranks all the Central Asian republics in economic potential. Nazarbaev has encouraged privatization and has engaged a Korean-American, Chan Young Bang, as economic adviser. He has not based his political or economic position on preservation of any aspect of the Soviet system. He has cast himself as a convincing proponent of a dynamic, modern, economically strong country commanding respect in the world. And he has cleverly exploited Western concern about Kazakhstan's large nuclear arsenal (more than 1,000 missile warheads) in order to raise his country's visibility and influence in the international arena.

Nazarbaev harbors no doubts that Kazakhs themselves will remain first among equals in independent Kazakhstan, but he is realistic about the ethnic mix to which he has fallen heir: as many Slavs as Kazakhs, almost one million Germans (many of whom were forcibly resettled from the Volga to Kazakhstan during World War II), and at least 25 other nationalities, including Greeks, Turks, Kurds, Uigurs, Koreans, and Dungans (ethnic Chinese Muslims). While such a mix could be the recipe for permanent crisis, Nazarbaev has so far handled ethnic issues astutely. He countered Russian talk of territorial adjustments by reminding Moscow that Kazakhs in the southern Urals and Siberia might like to be reunited with their homeland too. At the same time he has cooperated with Yeltsin on political and economic issues and stressed the importance of broad future relations with Russia. Despite his background as a communist, Nazarbaev comes the closest of any current Central Asian leader to showing the kind of determination and political skill of the man Central Asian leaders could well aspire to emulate: Mustafa Ke-

**CENTRAL ASIAN PEOPLES
(1989 Soviet Census)**

Nationality	In the Five Central Asian Republics	Elsewhere in Former USSR	Abroad (estimate)
Uzbeks (incl. Karakalpaks)	16,937,000	173,000	1,700,000
Kazakhs	7,476,000	662,000	1,200,000
Tajiks	4,163,000	54,000	6,000,000
Kyrgyz	2,482,000	49,000	170,000
Turkmen	2,673,000	45,000	3,200,000
Other Muslims	2,133,000		
Russians	9,566,000		

**Total Population
(1989 Soviet Census)**

Uzbekistan	19,808,000	Total indigenous nationalities in five republics:	33,731,000
Kazakhstan	16,463,000	Total Central Asian nationalities in ex-USSR:	34,714,000
Kyrgyzstan	4,258,000	Total Muslims in five republics:	35,864,000
Tajikistan	5,090,000		
Turkmenistan	3,512,000	Approximate total of Central Asian nationalities outside borders of the former Soviet Union:	12,270,000
TOTAL	49,131,000		

**Ethnic Composition by Republic
(1989 Soviet Census, in thousands)**

	Uzbeks	Kazakhs	Tajiks	Kyrgyz	Turkmen	Other Muslims	Russians
Uzbekistan	14,535	808	932	175	123	923	1,652
Kazakhstan	334	6,532	26	14	4	768	6,226
Kyrgyzstan	551	37	34	2,228	1	212	917
Tajikistan	1,197	11	3,168	64	21	95	387
Turkmenistan	320	88	3	1	2,524	135	334
Total in ex-USSR	17,110	8,138	4,217	2,531	2,718	20,088	145,072

mal Atatürk, founder of the modern Turkish nation.

Questions about leadership lead to questions about the republics themselves. Do they have the capacity to evolve into successful independent states?

Central Asian boundaries, like those of most African states that gained independence during the 1960s, were imposed by colonialism. They are artificial. This is true not only of the borders Moscow drew to separate the ethnically defined republics. It is also true of the international borders of the region—those with Iran and Afghani-

stan to the south, with Chinese-controlled territory to the east, and with Russia to the north. Everywhere people with the same religion, customs, and language live on both sides. Well over half a million Kazakhs live in the southern Urals, in Russia. More than one million live in Xinjiang (Chinese Turkestan).

Whatever its shortcomings, there is no better data on the ethnic composition of Central Asia than the 1989 Soviet census. Of a total population of 49,131,000, the native peoples in the five republics totaled almost 34 million at that time, of whom

half—17 million—were Uzbeks. Kazakhs, the next largest Central Asian nationality, totaled almost seven-and-a-half million. Over two million Muslims of non-Central Asian origin (primarily Caucasians and Tatars) were also counted in 1989. Muslims thus accounted for approximately three-quarters of the entire population. (In the four southern republics they accounted for more than 86 percent.) Since all Muslim nationalities have high birthrates, the total Muslim population of Central Asia may well pass 40 million in 1992.

Nine-and-a-half million Russians lived in the five Central Asian republics in 1989, three-quarters of them in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. Their numbers have fallen during the past three years, as out-migration has accelerated, especially from Uzbekistan. If jobs and housing were not hard to find in Russia itself, Russians would be leaving Central Asia faster. None of the local governments, however, has pressured Russians to leave, and there has been no sustained popular agitation for the departure of Russians and other non-indigenous peoples. Ethnic clashes in Central Asia, which have occurred in all the republics since the late 1980s, have usually been between native Muslims and other Muslims, who were forcibly settled in the region or came to work (Caucasians in the oil industry, for example). Riots in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan were sparked in early 1990 by rumors that Armenians fleeing from Azerbaijan would be resettled in Central Asia.

These disorders have alarmed Russians and other Europeans, but both Nazarbaev and Akaev have urged Russians to stay, meanwhile cautioning their people not to create an atmosphere in which all non-Muslims will feel compelled to leave. Somewhat over eight million Russians probably remain in all of Central Asia today. No matter what policies the governments pursue, more Russians will leave.

And even if they did not, high Central Asian birthrates make it likely that Europeans will decline proportionately and their political and economic position will erode. All of these trends lead to a clear conclusion: The future of Central Asia is and will remain in the hands of Central Asians. But how will they cooperate?

Though it encouraged some nationalist particularism, the Soviet divide-and-rule approach never succeeded in obliterating pan-Turkestan awareness. In spite of the gerrymandering that divided the Fergana Valley among three republics (with extensions shaped like U.S. congressional districts), people always crossed borders and intermingled. Every day in the *Buyuk Bozor* (main public market) in Tashkent, sellers bring fresh produce from Osh in Kyrgyzstan, from Khojent in Tajikistan, and from Chimkent in Kazakhstan.

Ethnicity has often been nothing more than a Soviet-imposed fiction. When people who had long been called Sarts had to declare themselves Uzbeks or Tajiks in the 1920s, there were instances of brothers in the same family choosing different "nationalities." Such families had spoken both Turkic and Persian for generations. They identified primarily with their town or district and regarded themselves simply as Muslims and Turkestanis. Modern concepts of ethnicity were irrelevant to their lives.

On the outer fringes of Central Asia, among peoples of nomadic culture, tribal awareness was and remains stronger. This is also true of the mountain peoples of the Pamir region (eastern Tajikistan), where old Iranian dialects change from one valley to the next. Ethnic awareness is much weaker than tribal affiliations among the Kyrgyz, the Turkmen, and the Kazakhs. The Kazakhs, perhaps more than the other Central Asian people, display many of the pre-

requisites of nationhood, but the differences among Kazakhs and Uzbeks and Kyrgyz and Uzbeks become fuzzy along their borders with Uzbekistan.

Language-engineering and alphabet-juggling—encouraged by Moscow to stress the differences rather than the similarities among the Turkic dialects of Central Asia—never went far enough to make most Turkic speakers unintelligible to each other. Variations in the kinds of Turkic spoken in Central Asia are no greater than the differences between Provençal and the French of Paris, between the Italian of Sicily and that of Lombardy, or between *Bayrisch* and the various kinds of *Plattdeutsch* of northern Germany. If the region had followed a more normal course of evolution in the 20th century, the Turkestani literary language in wide use in the early 20th century—Chagatay—would probably have evolved into a dominant standard throughout the region, with local variations surviving as dialects or sub-languages.

Is it too late for this evolution to resume? A region-wide TV broadcast in basic Turkish, launched this past April by Ankara with the enthusiastic support of the Central Asian republics, will help. So would the adoption of the Latin alphabet, especially if it is used in its modern Turkish form with sounds represented by identical letters in all the existing literary languages. But while Turkey has been sending in Latin-alphabet typewriters and computers, Iran has been offering enticements for the return to the Arabic script, and the Tajiks are shifting to it. On one thing most Central Asians are in agreement: The Cyrillic forced on them in 1939 should be abandoned.

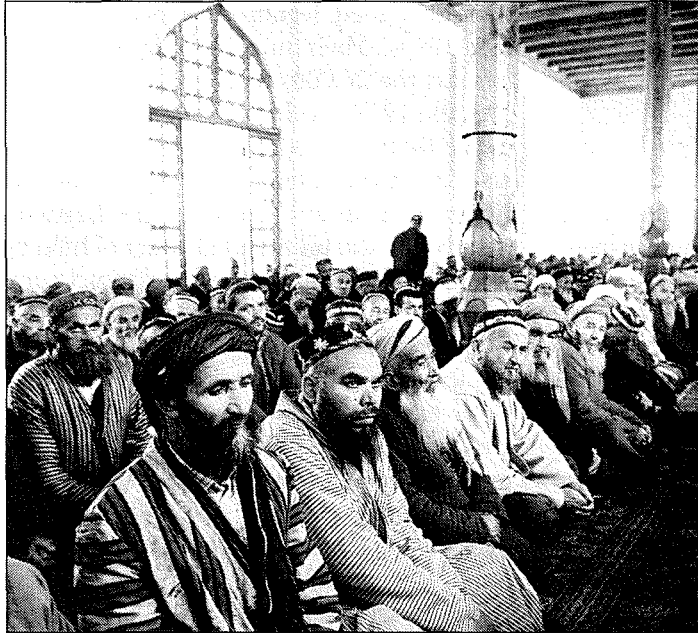
Islam, which places small value on tribalism or ethnicity, is another major unifying force, and there has been an enormous religious resurgence throughout Central Asia. Thousands of mosques have

been reopened, legalized, or built since the late 1980s. Their number may eventually surpass the 26,000 said to have existed before the 1917 revolution. The Muslim Religious Board of Central Asia and Kazakhstan, created by Stalin in 1943 as a wartime liberalization-and-control mechanism, clearly had the unintended effect of helping maintain a regional sense of religious community. (And Sufi brotherhoods, working underground, did their part as well in keeping the faith alive.)

Even before the collapse of the Soviet Union, Central Asian Muslims showed growing reluctance to accept Moscow-managed religion. Demonstrations in Tashkent during the first week of February 1989 led to the downfall of Mufti Shamsuddin Babakhanov, head of the Muslim Religious Board. The Babakhanov family had become, since the 1940s, a kind of religious feudal dynasty. The deposed Mufti had assumed office in 1982, succeeding his father, Ziauddin, who in 1957 had succeeded *his* father, Ishan ibn Abdulmejid, Stalin's original choice for the job. Like some native party lords, Shamsuddin was accused of corruption and high-living. He was replaced in March 1989 by Muhammadsadyk Mamayusupov, head of the prestigious Imam al-Bukhari Islamic Institute in Tashkent and a popular figure, though still a member of the official Islamic religious establishment.

Muslims have continued to be assertive. An embryonic political movement, Islam and Democracy, held a conference of representatives from most of the republics in Alma-Ata following Babakhanov's fall. It defined its purpose as "the spiritual cleansing of people from immorality and preaching the democratic principles of the Koran." Whether this group has been absorbed into a larger movement, The Islamic Renaissance Party, is not clear.

Islamic Renaissance was founded at a



Worshippers in Tajikistan listen to the Friday sermon at their mosque. The religious resurgence in this former republic, while strong, does yet not augur the rise of a fundamentalist state.

conference in June 1990 in Astrakhan under Dagestani (North Caucasian) leadership and rapidly spread to Central Asia, where it seems to have wide appeal. The Muslim Board and republican leaders gave it a cool welcome. It was denied official registration in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan and was thus unable to compete in elections. It has not, however, been forcefully suppressed and appears to be continuing to gain adherents. Mamayusupov has maintained that it is "unnecessary," because Islam stands above politics. Government spokesmen have branded it as reactionary, but the allegations are reminiscent of those that the Soviets used to make about Islam in general. And while influences from abroad may be at work in the Islamic Renaissance, there is as yet little reason to believe that either Iran or Saudi Arabia dominates the movement. It is doubtful too that many Central Asian Muslims would embrace the extremism of the Iranian Shi'ites or the puritanism

of the Saudi Wahhabis; by all signs, they prefer the moderate blend of religion and secularism that prevails in Turkey.

There is no question that Soviet policies discouraged economic collaboration among the Central Asian republics. But geography imposed certain limits on Moscow's strategy. All the republics share the same rivers and most major lines of communication. With few exceptions, roads and railroads could not be built to fit the Soviet-imposed borders. As a result, Central Asia never lost its basic economic unity, and today economic imperatives compel even greater cooperation

among the five republics.

As early as June 1990, the presidents of the republics met in Alma-Ata on Nazarbaev's initiative to discuss preparations for a federation. They set up a Coordinating Council in August 1991. The Ashkhabad declaration of the five republics' leaders of December 13, 1991 on joining the CIS was prompted primarily by economic worries. Leaders and ministers had already been traveling to Turkey, Iran, Korea, China, Pakistan, Europe, and the United States in search of advice and new economic ties. In February 1992 the four southern republics joined the Economic Cooperation Organization sponsored by Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan, while Kazakhstan opted for observer status. And the acceptance of all five-republics into the International Monetary Fund on April 27 cleared the way for the development of bilateral and multilateral economic aid and investment programs such as the one resulting from Turkish Prime

Minister Demirel's late April visit.

To be sure, the political structure Stalin imposed on the region could prove to be a serious obstacle, particularly if republican leaders are unwilling to surrender their prerogatives and face the political risks of competing in a larger arena. Though serious inter-republican rivalry has not yet developed, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan could find themselves in competition for leadership. Despite Kazakhstan's commanding size, Uzbekistan, with its large population, controls the geographic and economic heart of the entire region and is heir to most of its history.

Western journalists and strategists love to speculate about competition between Turkey and Iran for domination in the new Central Asia, whatever political form it eventually takes. Ankara's economic dynamism, democracy, and non-fanatic adaptation of Islamic practices and values to modern life so far give Turkey the edge. The head of the Uzbek writers' union, Jamal Kamal, on his return from a late 1990 visit to Turkey, summed up Ankara's appeal: "Turkey has three times Uzbekistan's population, produces only a fifth as much cotton and a quarter as much silk, and yet its population lives 10 times better than ours." Presidents, prime ministers and cabinet ministers of all five republics have made visits to Turkey and hosted Turkish officials. Even Persian-speaking Tajikistan turned to Turkey for advice on economic reconstruction in the spring of 1991.

Turkey is already preparing to make a major contribution to Central Asian educational institutions and has offered to train thousands of Central Asians at its universities. They are going eagerly. On many levels, Turkey represents an attractive avenue to the outer world for Central Asians, for Turkey itself is open to the world and commands wide respect. Dependence on Iran

would bring none of these advantages. Nevertheless, good relations with Iran are recognized by most Central Asians as desirable. In the end, a modernizing, secular Central Asia will likely have more influence on Iran than Iran has on it.

All the Central Asian republics have been formally classified as European by being accepted into the Council on Security and Cooperation in Europe, but Central Asians also know that they are Asians. Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, in particular, have been eager to copy the successes of East Asia. South Korea has special appeal. Both presidents visited Seoul in late 1990 and laid the basis for cooperative relationships. All the republics admire Japanese technical prowess and hope for Japanese investment. Pakistan and India are close, and both are seen as trade partners and sources of experience that can be applied to developing Central Asia's resources. Europe is distant and the United States more so, but interest in good relations is high, as are expectations of aid and trade.

No Central Asian leader has advocated severing relations with Russia and the other states of the former Soviet Union. And while there is no longer any desire to prolong dependence on backward Soviet technology and administrative practices, Central Asians view Russia as a natural trading partner. Leaders of the five republics are all hard bargainers for terms of trade that will rectify the disadvantages they suffered under 70 years of Soviet colonialism. In March, Turkmenistan raised the price of natural gas supplied to Ukraine by 50 times. New patterns of trade relations as well as other forms of mutual interchange will be slow in stabilizing.

Time will also be required for building stable relations with kindred peoples in Iran, Afghanistan, and China, and such relationships will be affected by the political evolution of these countries. Uigurs, the ba-

sic population of Chinese Turkestan, also speak a Turkic language intelligible to Central Asians. They have been watching developments across the mountains to the west with keen interest while their Chinese masters look on with apprehension. China cannot keep Uigurs and other Muslims from listening to Central Asian broadcasts, reading newspapers that make their way across the border, or even, in some favorably situated areas, from watching the new Turkish-sponsored TV network. The economic liberalization and freeing of religion that China undertook after the death of Mao have given all China's energetic Muslims wide opportunities for initiative, but politics remains frozen.

Nazarbaev, meanwhile, has encouraged Kazakhs in Mongolia and China to come back to Kazakhstan, which has room for many more people, especially Kazakhs. Serious migration is likely only when Kazakhstan begins to experience sustained economic recovery. A railway link to the Chinese system, completed in 1991, provides the basis for trade and contact across a border that was long sealed.

After being closed for most of the 20th century, borders in Central Asia have become permeable and are likely to remain so. The long Afghan border on the south was opened by Moscow's 1979 invasion. Troops and war materiel flowed into Afghanistan, but people engaging in trade and religious and political proselytizing began moving in both directions. Afghanistan is home to more Tajiks than Tajikistan, and the Tajiks and Turkic peoples of Afghanistan were happy to renew links with relatives and tribal brothers in the Central Asian republics. Some observers speculate on a massive realignment

of borders and state structures in the region before the end of the 1990s. It cannot be ruled out, but international experience in the 20th century argues against it.

Journalists and armchair strategists also like to conjecture about a resumption of the Great Game of the latter half of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century. It seems unlikely. Britain is no longer a player in Asia. Russia is likely to be too preoccupied with the formidable challenge of recovery from communism to have time or money to invest in new forms of expansion. Who, then, would play in a new Great Game? Turkey and Iran? Saudi Arabia? Pakistan and India? India and China? The United States with some or all of these, or with a resurgent Russia? It seems hard to envision. Empires and 19th-century imperialism are not only out of style. They cannot stand the test of cost-benefit analysis. It is far more likely that the leaders of the now-independent republics will chart their own course.

Distasteful as they found Russian imperial domination to be, Central Asians also made gains as part of the Russian Empire in both its tsarist and communist forms. They became aware of their resources and potential. Some gained mobility, and many learned the value of education. By experiencing the pains of having their culture distorted and suppressed, they gained a deeper appreciation of the value of their heritage. But most Central Asians show no desire to return to the style of life that prevailed in 7th-century Arabia, or to the stagnation and decay that afflicted them before the Russian conquest, or even to the glories of the time of Tamerlane. However much they now enjoy rediscovering the greatness of Turkestan's past, they dream no less about the possibilities of its future.