

CHAPTER 3

NATIONS AND POST-
COLONIALISM IN CENTRAL
ASIA: TWENTY YEARS LATER¹

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The collapse of the USSR and the appearance instead of some 15 new states, not counting several territories declaring themselves to be states, has raised the inevitable question of how this space might now be reconfigured for analytical purposes. Should it, as used to be the case, be considered as an indivisible whole (as post-Soviet countries for example, or as Eurasia²)? Or would it be better divided into separate parts, each correlated with other, wider delineations (North/South, West/East, the Christian/Islamic worlds etc.)? Both solutions have their reasons and goals, and, naturally, their pros and cons. In the first case, there is the risk of ascribing certain unique and uniform features to this space, while ignoring on the one hand its internal complexity and on the other its interaction with the rest of the world. In the second case, the opposite danger arises: of ignoring shared historical experiences and essentializing the borders, first and foremost the cultural borders, between the various communities that inhabit the space in question. Evidently, then, any strategy for

analysis must be developed around the possibility of combining and aligning these two perspectives.

This chapter is an attempt to blitz through an overview of contemporary processes in Central Asian countries, along with a critical look at the analytical categories used to describe these processes. Of course, Central Asia is itself a somewhat arbitrary frame for scrutiny: it could be narrowed by splintering the territory into smaller parts (for instance Ferghana, the Pamirs, the Caspian Area, and so on) or, on the contrary, it could be expanded and reconfigured, resulting in different outlines to be analysed (for example the Muslim regions of the USSR). This chapter, nonetheless, assumes Central Asia to be a place that, for the greater number of readers, is already defined and already endowed with a whole range of features, even if only in their imagination.³ It is familiar in the guise of an administratively-outlined territory comprising the five former Asiatic republics of the USSR, which at one time formed a distinctive Soviet 'other', being simultaneously exotic and backward. This place, being different, was—and still is—frequently absent from any discussion of the Russian Empire, the USSR and the post-Soviet period; only a few rare voices carry from 'over there'. Central Asia remains a (post-)Soviet backwater, on which the attention of scholars and lay people rests only infrequently, and then not for long.⁴ This absence is another peculiarity which makes it possible to talk of an imagined unity within the region, at least from the point of view of those who continue to experience their own Europeaness and centrality in relation to it.

This chapter will centre its attention on three categories commonly applied to the new Central Asian states: nation, post-coloniality and post-Sovietness. It will consider the following: the ways in which these three categories are used to help describe modern Central Asian society (or societies); which schemas, classifications, and models are applied to it (or them); and the similarities, dissimilarities, new questions and further lines of inquiry which may arise.

Nations and Their Fragments?

The collapse of the USSR and the entire subsequent period are often perceived as the long-awaited triumph of the idea of the nation; a triumph which all preceding history (or all of the twentieth century, at least) had been preparing for, which sustained and intensified the consolidation of strong national states, national ideologies and national identities. Indeed, in Central Asian countries, the following phenomena have been observed: the creation of national mythologies and rituals; the rewriting of textbooks and the recasting of museum exhibits in the spirit of national histories; the strengthening of (or, at any rate, attempts to strengthen) the role of national languages; acute anxiety regarding demographic and cultural threats posed by foreign ethnic minorities etc.⁵ Conflicts and contradictions can likewise be seen within Central Asian countries and between them, which take place under the banner of national interests (or the interests of the titular nations), while in bitter clashes in the media and on the internet nationally-charged accusations and insults, along with promises of victory and *revanche*, are hurled in the name of the nation.

This chapter aims not so much to undermine this perception as to show various facets of the process in which nation-states are consolidated. This process should not be seen as developing at its own accord, nor as teleologically preordained, but as the sum of the effects from varied and, at times, chaotic events and actions. These effects interlink with, structure and intensify one another, they are relayed into other spheres, and they shape not only the way in which one set of events or another are remembered, but also the way in which they are explained.

Certain of these effects are linked to the Soviet policy, begun in the 1920s, of constructing and shaping national republics, national cultures and national elites.⁶ The elites thus learned to speak Soviet in their national languages (not necessarily literally: Russian was also spoken nationally). Reference to nationality became an official means of gaining access to power, privileges, and bonuses, while sometimes it was a stigma, a tool for repression and discrimination. The events

of 1988–91, when regional elites began bargaining with the centre over their rights, did not—in Central Asia and Kazakhstan, at any rate—constitute a struggle for national liberation and a drive for independence. In fact, it was a continuation of the perennial negotiations between the centre and the republics over the redistribution of resources. The republics' leaders displayed complete loyalty to Moscow; the latter's decision to detach itself from Central Asia came as a surprise to them.

After 1991, when the Central Asian republics had been detached from Russia, new effects began to appear; measures and decisions that were sometimes arbitrary and sometimes unavoidable led to a new round of constructing national institutions, practices, identities and sentiments. Reference to the nation, it transpired, was convenient as a language of international law, as a means of transfer and comparison, as a language for communicating with other countries, international organizations, tourists, Western experts and politicians, for whom the nation is an understandable form of explanation. Reference to the nation also made it possible to talk of the past, the historical legacy, a golden age, authentic culture and continuity. This instilled primordial feelings in the population of the new states and attempted to smooth over dangerous contradictions and rifts within society.⁷ Reference to the nation was and remains a tool for mobilizing modernization, and for constructing and promoting plans for a bright future. In each of these fields the national narrative is constructed in its own way, and is presented from particular perspectives. It performs specific and, at times, particularly concrete functions, but all these fields combine when matters turn to the legitimization of authoritarian regimes (or regimes tending towards authoritarianism) in Central Asia, who consider and assert that they are acting on behalf of and for the good of the nation.

The understanding that nationalism is not a primordially assigned programme or groove to follow but, rather, is linked to concrete contexts, allows the diverse trajectories of nationalisms in the independent countries of Central Asia to be discerned. Despite all the similar and parallel features that have existed for centuries or that arose under the unifying policy of the Soviet centre, despite the

existence of multiple lines of interaction and mutual influence, of copying and of competition, there are significant differences between the national ideologies and state-building practices in the region. Simplifying greatly, it can be stated that Uzbek nationalism is concerned with strengthening the state; Tajik nationalism reaches out to its diasporas and struggles desperately with the alternative offered by Islam; Kyrgyz nationalism tries hard to support unity among the elite; Kazakh nationalism seeks a means of co-existence with the Russian-speaking community, while Turkmen nationalism is directed toward isolating the country from the outside world.⁸ All these themes are present in each country, of course (that same issue of Muslim identity is to the fore everywhere), but they vary in the acuity, scale and specifics of the problems they pose.

Again, without going into detail, the point is that the differences mentioned, and similar issues, have arisen and continue to deepen simply because the new Central Asian states have differing weight categories and living standards, which did not seem too significant within the USSR. It turns out some of them have bigger populations, others have greater reserves of oil and gas; certain countries have an influential Russian-speaking community, others share a border with China and Afghanistan, and so on. The presence of some or other resources and the ability of particular individuals and groups within the elite to exploit these resources govern how national interests are formulated, foreign policies are oriented, and the examples and templates proffered for emulation are selected. So it is no surprise that Central Asian nations and nationalisms are different; they differ in their internal organization and they differ in the way they see their past and their future.

Nationalism is not a framework into which all people are inserted willy-nilly, but rather a particular combination of pre-meditated or spontaneous actions and their effects. Such an approach allows the various actors involved or not involved in producing such effects to be discerned. It becomes clear that there is no single dominant nationalism; rather, there are differing versions positioned in relationships of constant mutual debate and competition. For example, the group currently in power in Uzbekistan pays no

attention whatsoever to the needs and challenges facing Uzbek minorities abroad, whereas a section of the establishment in Tashkent does hear the voices of their fellow nationals and lets them know that it is not indifferent to what they are saying. In exactly the same way, while one part of the local elite in Tajikistan expects a response from Tajik diasporas living in neighbouring countries, another part appeals for the focus to be on state-building within the ascribed borders. It is easy to imagine that these elite groups will replace each other in power, and will re-arrange their political emphases anew.

Alongside (and within) the political and intellectual elite in Central Asian countries there exist many different social classes and communities, each with their own interests and strategies. Sometimes these interests fit into national projects and strengthen them, while sometimes they do not—in the latter case other effects arise, offering alternatives to nationalism. Among these can be counted, for example, the formation of influential regional elite groups, which exist in every country in the region.⁹ In Tajikistan in the 1990s, competition between such groups led to actual civil war; the periodic revolutions in Kyrgyzstan also have at their root a conflict of regional identities. Another alternative to nationalism, which has been gathering strength, albeit unevenly, throughout the post-Soviet period is presented by various Islamic/Islamist projects.¹⁰ Some of these entirely abjure any national distinctions, seeing them as contrary to Islam and dictated by Russia or the West. Yet another alternative might be mentioned: women's movements, which formulate a particular view of nationalism.¹¹ And, finally, separate mention must be made of large-scale migration from some Central Asian countries into other states, for temporary employment and for permanent settlement.¹² It is not only that, for considerable periods of time, migrants are not subjected to the influence of nationalist propaganda, but also that they form new social networks, identities, and customs in their destinations. Complex trans-national communities are formed, in which the role of culture, history and language is considered anew.

When taking an overview of all these alternative or additional effects, which for the past 20 years have gradually been

strengthening, spreading and combining into new projects and tendencies, it could be concluded that nationalism as a dominant official rhetoric is not capable of reducing so many private and collective interests and strategies to a common denominator. Moreover, the increasing tendency of the nation to fragment further along various fault-lines comes into view: rich regions and poor, the city (suburbs) and the village, Islamists, women, migrants, minorities etc. This does not mean that the nation has failed as a community or identity. It does, however, indicate that the process of national construction continues: reacting to new conditions, changing trajectory, and continually finding itself in competition with other identities.

From 'Empire' to Empire?

If the theme of nation and nationalism has appeared in the rhetoric of every Central Asian politician, and, correspondingly, in academic and specialist analyses of contemporary Central Asia throughout the last 20 years, and if the attention paid to it has not dimmed but rather increased, then the theme of post-coloniality as characteristic of post-Soviet societies in the region has developed only gradually and ambiguously.¹³

The question of post-coloniality usually arises in conjunction with other questions: was the USSR a colonial empire and, correspondingly, had society in Central Asia and Kazakhstan at that time been colonized? Academic opinion on this point is divided. Some of them do label the USSR an empire; in fact, specifically a colonial empire, in which entire peoples and regions found themselves in a subordinate position with fewer rights and governed by typically colonial methods.¹⁴ Others argue that the Soviet Union was an atypical empire or perhaps not an empire at all, but rather, for example, a mobilizing, modernizing state, which does not alter the issue of subordination and resistance, but does allow it to be examined in other ways than just on the basis of the cultural differences between the oppressors and the oppressed.¹⁵ In this case, academic discussion is of somewhat less interest than the attitude of Central Asian

politicians, elites and publics to the question. The way in which people see themselves in their recent past suggests there may be important traits in present-day memory, identity and policy which require individual examination.

Criticism of the USSR is an important and inescapable element of modern national narratives in the region. The idea that the nation has taken the place of the previous unjust system, liberating people from it and overcoming its inadequacies, lies at the heart of the political apparatus of the new states. Their current status—i.e. the explanation of the new countries' origins and the basis of their claims to independence—cannot be legitimized without a rejection of the Soviet past. However, criticism of the USSR takes different forms in different Central Asian countries, each with its own peculiarities, and differing in its intensity.

Probably the harshest stance in this regard has been adopted by those in power in Uzbekistan, which consequently is pursuing a policy of de-Sovietization. Almost immediately following the collapse of the USSR, the president of Uzbekistan, Islam Karimov, promulgated the notion of *mustakillik* (i.e. independence) as the main goal towards which throughout history Uzbek society had been ever striving, and which it had finally achieved in 1991. Under the banner of this ideology, places have been rebuilt and/or renamed en masse, sites redolent symbolically of the Soviet era have been destroyed, while Soviet films, Soviet literature, Soviet textbooks and Soviet music have all been squeezed from view. This Uzbek policy of remembrance regarding the Soviet era is based on people's consciousness of trauma; a clear example of this is the Museum in Memory of the Victims of Repression.¹⁶ The ideology of independence combines memory of the suffering caused by the colonial policies of the tsarist era with memory of Stalinist repressions and other hardships of the Soviet epoch to form one general sense of trauma. Although the colonialism of the Russian imperial period and the totalitarianism of the USSR period are treated separately in public rhetoric, in actuality no distinction is drawn between them: Soviet repressions are seen as the logical progression of the repressions of the Russian imperial era. This lack of

distinction allows two political aims to be met: on the one hand, it multiplies the effect of criticism of the USSR by conflating it with criticism of the Romanov empire; on the other, it imbues arguments against Soviet totalitarianism with an anticolonial character and, consequently, shifts the emphasis from issues around human rights to questions of cultural difference.

Why should Uzbekistan in particular be leading the de-Sovietization drive? There are two factors: one subjective and one structural. Taking the second one first, Uzbekistan was considered by Moscow to be the main republic in the region: its representatives occasionally held positions in the Central Committee Politburo, and regional branches of Soviet ministries were located in Tashkent. But this meant that here was the place where connections between the centre and the Soviet periphery, the points of contact between them, were most direct, and the pressure was strongest.¹⁷ The subjective factor is a continuation of the structural one, namely the so-called Cotton Scandal which Andropov exploited in the 1980s in the attempt to disavow earlier agreements between the Kremlin and the republic and to place matters in the region under harsher control, by demonstrating to all of local society that the centre's former power had not waned. This campaign of widespread criminal investigation into corruption was a painful blow to the pride of the Uzbek elite. To a great extent, this affair shaped the elite's anti-Kremlin/anti-Soviet mood, which made itself felt when the USSR unexpectedly collapsed.

In the other Central Asian countries, efforts are likewise under way to dismantle the symbolic constructions of the Russian and Soviet legacies. Moreover, after 20 years, this process is not only slowing down but, on the contrary, appears to be gradually gathering steam. However, in pursuing this, their rulers and elites are not, in contrast to the Uzbeks, striving to make criticism of the USSR evoke trauma, to make the latter appear exclusively negative, nor to force out fondly-remembered Soviet books, films and music.

Attention should be turned to one important feature shared by all Central Asian countries: there is not a single one in which the authorities or a majority of the public are prepared to label the Soviet period colonial, or the former Soviet republics colonies. Not even in

Uzbekistan, although this is where the ideological narrative about gaining independence came closest of all to classical forms of decolonialization narratives. Uzbek authorities restrict themselves to dropping obvious hints about the Soviet period being a continuation of the colonial period of the Russian Empire, although they cannot bring themselves to draw the logical conclusion of this comparison by declaring the USSR to be a colonial empire and present-day Uzbekistan to be post-colonial.

This fact may be explained by returning to what was mentioned earlier: the fact that Central Asian society is not homogeneous, but divided into a multiplicity of classes, groups, strata and communities, each with their own interests. The intensifying fragmentation of Central Asian societies explains the absence of any consensus regarding the Soviet past, the wide array of opinions and assessments, and the continuation, at times indeed the escalation, of the discussion.

Differing assessments of the Soviet past in Central Asian countries are linked, for example, to the presence of a Russian-speaking section of the population. Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan have large Russian-speaking communities, including Russian-speaking ethnic Kazakhs and Kyrgyz, and so the powers-that-be have no interest in letting the issue of trauma caused by the process of de-Sovietization become a source of internal social tension.

One of the reasons behind this unwillingness to be remembered in the role of the colonized lies in the fact that a large proportion of the contemporary Central Asian elites have a Soviet biography of careers and successes. All the modern attributes of statehood—borders, institutions, imagery—likewise were formulated in the Soviet era and bear the stamp of Soviet construction. To publicly label these roots colonial would mean to call into question the legitimacy of their social and symbolic capital and, consequently, also their present-day political status, which the elites fear doing.

In addition, the elites have been compelled to take account of public opinion within their countries. A survey conducted in 2009 in former Soviet republics by the agency *Evrasiiskii Monitor* (Eurasian Monitor) uncovered a wide range of opinions about Soviet history

and, moreover, in so doing, revealed that, of the entire post-Soviet space, it was in these same Central Asian countries that the highest percentages of people expressing positive opinions about the main Soviet leadership (including such people as Stalin, Zhukov and Brejnev) and positive perceptions of the October Revolution in 1917 were found, while attitudes towards collectivization and repression were less negative than, say, in the Baltic States or Georgia.¹⁸ It is possible to argue over the methodology of these surveys, or over the interpretation of their results, but it seems impossible to argue with the general conclusion that within, or alongside, official memory there exist many other memories which are not simply the products of state-sponsored policies on remembrance. For many sections of society, nostalgia for the Soviet era is a peculiar means of criticizing the present state of affairs. The decline in the economic and social spheres, instability, the increasing gap between rich and poor, the appearance and exacerbation of new ways in which power is wielded—all these are factors which, in the minds of many people, make the previous Soviet forms of hegemony appear less pressing, while the achievements of the past, which in 1991 seemed unimpressive and debatable, appear to be a now-unattainable ideal. It may have been in name only, but all the same, the support offered in a form of ‘positive discrimination’ in the Soviet Union for women, for people living in backward regions and for cultural minorities leaves many people with a feeling of gratitude, set against the increasing pressure on these sections of society today.

Finally, after the Soviet Union collapsed, the previous unequal relationships between the Soviet republics and the centre, in the shape of Russia (Moscow) were replaced by new relationships of dependence, both regional and global. So in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, themes of anti-colonialism and anti-Sovietism generally are sidelined, in part because the elites of these countries now consider their main historical rival to be Uzbekistan, which in their opinion is now seeking to don the mantle of the new dominant centre. The elites of these countries therefore prefer to mobilize historical disputes in terms of a real or imagined ‘Uzbek peril’ rather than hark back to the Russian or Soviet eras. The active penetration of

Central Asia by world powers (the USA, China, European countries etc.) and by a variety of international organizations has been accompanied by the development of a new subordination, by intervention in the internal affairs of the region, and by the spread of unfamiliar cultural trends. Under these conditions, Central Asian countries are rapidly being transformed into global outsiders, which in the best-case scenario will supply the leading powers with raw material and labour, while acquiring in return yet greater dependency due to foreign credits, investments, and political benevolence, not to mention the threat of military invasion should the rules laid down by these same world powers be flouted.¹⁹ This rapid marginalization sparks fears of a current or future subjugation to new geo-political leaders, which in turn strengthens the reluctance to wield the label (post)coloniality.

So Just When Will the Post-Soviet Period End?

The issue of the post-coloniality of current Central Asian societies is likewise linked to the extent to which the Soviet legacy and Soviet features have been preserved over 20 years of independence, and the extent to which these shape the specificity of the processes in Central Asian countries in comparison with, say, other countries of the Near and Middle East which are similar to them in terms of religion, culture and language.

The existence of such a legacy is suggested *a priori* by the term post-Soviet, which remains as popular and resilient as ever. It contains a diverse set of distinguishing features. Firstly, the term indicates certain very specific political, economic and social transformations that the region underwent in the 20th century, not so much under the influence of internal developmental processes as of the social engineering policies carried out by the USSR's centre. In every country, specific political, economic and social infrastructures were created, as were institutions and practices for wielding power; to a great extent these have been preserved and have shaped the modern structure of the state. For example, the current presidential machines, which concentrate within themselves the main levers of control and

management, copy the machinery of the central committees of the Communist Party. Great weight is given to ideology, and to the symbols and rituals of statehood, while parliaments and the principle of the separation of powers are little more than ornamental. The security services play a major role in internal politics. An array of countries in the region have retained Soviet institutions such as academies of science, creative unions, state-controlled trade unions, and youth organizations. The economy is characterized by monopolies, and is based on the extensive exploitation of natural resources, while new economic projects are frequently, it transpires, the continuations of projects originally under development in the Soviet era. In the social sphere, as before, pensions and welfare payments survive (even if tiny in size), as do, formally at least, free education and healthcare: the rudiments of a socially-minded state, such as the USSR claimed itself to be. The authorities and the elite position themselves culturally as secular regimes.²⁰ Lastly, as many historians have commented, their very national identities were formed in the Soviet period, as a result of the national demarcation of the 1920s.²¹ Similar traces of Sovietness can be found in literally every sphere of state life.

The second distinguishing feature is that the term post-Soviet suggests specific daily routines and identities that were instilled in the population in the Soviet period, regardless of their religious or national affiliation. Of most relevance here is the major role of the Russian language—practically all the Central Asian elite speak Russian to this day. Many daily habits of interaction have been preserved, especially in urban areas, as have ways of spending free time, preparing food, and marking public holidays such as International Women's Day on 8 March, New Year, and Victory Day. People retain memories of Soviet leaders, Soviet living conditions, Soviet films etc. Many social ties (mixed families and friendships) endure that were initially formed in that period.

Thirdly, the very prefix 'post' states that the Soviet period is over and Central Asia is in a condition of gradual drift along a trajectory that was set in the preceding era. As a rule, this drift is seen as a crisis,

a process of degradation, and a continuing collapse without any clear new route towards progress.

Reference to post-Sovietness is a frequently encountered and very important explanatory model, but it does have its weaker moments. One such is the insistence on the unique nature of the Soviet experience. However, a comparison of this with the experience of many other countries shows that Soviet development can be understood as just one version of the general processes of development that European countries, and others too, underwent in the previous century. These processes include an accelerated, authoritarian model of modernization (implementing new technology in the economy, industrialization, the spread of mass education etc.); the socialization of the state (the appearance of state pensions, public-sector housing, a mass consumer culture etc); ultra-ideological political regimes; the collapse of empires and the creation of nation-states.²² 1991, then, can be seen as a continuation of or, perhaps, as a new stage in these processes of integration into the global system of distribution of power and division of labour that were already under way, thanks to Soviet policies, throughout the 20th century.

Another drawback of the term 'post-Soviet' is the fact that it to a great extent ignores the changes and problems that have accumulated in Central Asian countries following the breakdown of the USSR. It is obvious that over that time each of these countries has managed to pursue its own particular path, and so quite distinct differences between Central Asian states can now be seen that, as was argued earlier, were much less obvious in Soviet times. Societies in the region have taken on new traits, for example mass labour migration, which had never previously existed in this form. The influence of such novelties as the internet, mobile telecommunications and much more, has started to be felt in the social realm, which also creates a completely new—un-Soviet—reality. A generation has grown up which neither remembers nor pines for Sovietness, and which does not know the Russian language well; a generation whose habits and identities—for example, Islamist—have nothing in common with the Soviet era. In the countries of the region today, a new transport

infrastructure is being built which is directed towards Iran, Afghanistan, and especially towards China, and which is already partially complete. Resources, people, money, and ideas actively circulate along these routes. The currents of internal movement in Central Asia have changed in intensity—in some places increasing (for instance, the shift of the capital of Kazakhstan from Almaty to Astana, formerly Tselinograd) while in others decreasing (for example, at the borders between Uzbekistan and its neighbours). It is possible to spend as much time describing this kind of change as listing examples of the Soviet legacy.

And so, while reference to post-Sovietness may, just as before, be suited to one sort of analytical procedure, it is entirely unsuited for others. The reality to be observed has a fractured, hybrid nature; it cannot be folded up neatly into some ready-made model based on the example of other countries or regions, and it does not provide a basis for the creation of a separate model exclusively for Central Asia. Societies in transition, failed states, the new periphery (or the new South), authoritarian regimes (Islamic or post-Soviet, according to taste) etc.: each of these frameworks suggests its own view and its own line of argument, referring to particular traits in Central Asian societies which from another angle are either invisible or only partially seen, in distorted forms. Any explicatory model selected will itself impose restrictions, create interference in perception, and demand that reality, which spreads in different directions, be brought into line.

It is particularly important that the various frameworks exist not only in the vision of specialists, but also in the consciousness, the calculations and the identity of the region's inhabitants themselves—both elites and non-elites. As soon as discussion of Central Asia begins to use words like nation, empire, colonialism, and Sovietness, the question immediately arises of how to distinguish between categories of analysis and categories of practice, i.e. how to separate strictly defined academic usage from the many contexts in which these words are produced and used every hour, every day. This distinction is in itself problematical, in so far as any academic analysis can be understood both from the point of view of its ideological and

political effects and from the point of view of the social and financial mechanisms which create expert knowledge. In particular, it should be noted that many models which are presented as neutral research transform into influential factors driving new divisions and distortions.²³ Categories of analysis are drawn from categories of practice and then, reprocessed, are returned to the realm of practice—this cycle continues endlessly, never ceasing. Whenever the next Marx declares that the task of a philosopher is to change the world, a new intermixing of categories takes place and the manipulation of their interchangeability begins.

Notes

- 1 The author is grateful to *La Maison des Sciences de l'Homme* for making it possible to work on the subject-matter of this article.
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- 3 Abashin, S., 'Thoughts about "Central Asia Within the Russian Empire"', *Ab Imperio*, 2008/4, pp. 456–71.
- 4 Remember that in 1989 this region's territory and population accounted for roughly one-sixth of the USSR's overall territory and population.
- 5 Smith, G., Law, V., Wilson, A., Bohr, A., Allworth, E. (eds), *Nation-Building in the Post-Soviet Borderlands. The Politics of National Identities*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998; Roy, O., *The New Central Asia: The Creation of Nations*, London: I.B.Tauris, 2000; Adams, L., *The Spectacular State: Culture and National Identity in Uzbekistan*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2010; Abashin, S., 'Nation-construction in post-Soviet Central Asia', in Bassin, M., Kelly, C. (eds), *Soviet and Post-Soviet Identities*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.
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- 8 Do not forget the Kara-Kalpak, Pamir, and likewise Uigur nationalisms, with their own particular interests and institutions that were established in the Soviet era; nor the existence of various diasporas—Russian, Caucasian, Korean etc.—who

- are undergoing their own search for identity (see Kosmarskaia, N., *'Deti imperii' v postsovetskoi Tsentral'noi Azii: adaptivnye praktiki i mental'nye sdvigi (russkie v Kirgizii, 1992–2002)* [*Children of the Empire' in Post-Soviet Central Asia: Adaptive Practices and Mental Shifts (Russians in Kyrgyzstan, 1992–2002)*], Moscow: Natalis, 2006.
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