

CENTRAL ASIANS AND THE STATE:

Nostalgia for the Soviet Era

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Executive Summary

This paper is a draft of a chapter for the edited volume *Everyday Life in Central Asia* to be published by Indiana University Press. The volume is intended for non-specialists, particularly undergraduates. To Westerners the fact that citizens of post-Soviet countries evaluate their current governments negatively as compared to the Soviet state might come as a surprise. After all, Westerners remember the Soviet state foremost as an instrument of oppressive rule. Yet, post-Soviet citizens, including residents of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan, are most likely to recall the greater responsiveness to their everyday needs. Of different demographic groups, ethnic minorities are most negative about the current government because they have experienced not only declining government responsiveness, but a worsening of their status in society. These conclusions are based on field and survey research in Central Asia.

Introduction

A farmer in Kazakhstan summed up life before and after the collapse of the Soviet Union: “We are freer now. Before the KGB [the secret police] monitored with whom we spoke. Freedom is freedom, but people need to live and we have not reached a good level yet.” The farmer’s comment suggests that the political freedom many people of the former Soviet Union have acquired does not compensate for the economic hardships they face. New governments have emerged from the Soviet state and introduced political and economic changes; however, these new governments have not necessarily improved everyday life, according to their citizens.

Citizens’ negative assessment of their current government relative to the Soviet one might come as a surprise to outsiders. Over the years foreign politicians, journalists, and scholars, particularly those in the West, have portrayed Soviet governance foremost as oppressive rule. The term “evil empire” became part of the Cold War political rhetoric in the U.S.; with greater openness, or *glasnost*, in the late Soviet era the Western media reported on revelations about the purges under Joseph Stalin; and, today, in the post-Soviet period, professors continue to introduce their students to the totalitarian model, which attributed to the Soviet Union a “terroristic” police, communications monopoly, and pervasive state ideology, among other features. Yet, citizens of post-Soviet countries do not remember only the limited political freedoms and episodic terror of the Soviet era. In fact, many cast the Soviet period in a positive light and even view Soviet rule as superior to current governance.

This disconnect between contemporary characterizations of Soviet rule results from different perspectives. Whereas Westerners tend to focus on how the Soviet government differed from their own, democratic ones, most post-Soviet citizens recall the role that the Soviet state

played in not their political lives, but their everyday lives. They remember the Soviet “nanny state” that met basic needs, and they only rarely recollect the Soviet “evil empire” that restricted freedom of speech, the practice of religion, free movement, and the expression of ethnic identity.

A tendency to accentuate the positive aspects of Soviet rule is evident even in post-Soviet Central Asia. At first glance this is surprising considering that ethnic Russians and other Slavs, not the local peoples, held the most powerful positions in the Soviet Central Asian republics. One would expect that governance by one’s own countrymen, which came with the disintegration of the Soviet Union and sovereignty for the Central Asian republics, would make Central Asians relatively more enthusiastic about their current governments and less nostalgic for the Soviet regime. One may also anticipate that Central Asians would harshly judge the Soviet government for wrecking havoc on the region’s environment. By essentially trying to make deserts into cotton fields, the Soviet regime contributed to water shortages, pesticide pollution, the shrinking of the Aral Sea, and the ensuing health problems.

This chapter explores how current governments play a role different from that of the Soviet state in the everyday lives of their citizens and why these governments come up short in the eyes of Central Asians. To illustrate these ideas I first draw on two of 101 in-depth interviews I conducted with residents of rural and urban Kazakhstan in the summer of 2001. The accounts of the farmer introduced above and a scientist in a large city of Kazakhstan depict the withdrawal of the state from everyday life and the problems that have ensued. Using survey data I then ask to what extent are these two individuals’ perceptions of declining state responsiveness common throughout Kazakhstan, as well as neighboring Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. In each country, colleagues and I surveyed a random sample of 1500 adults in late 2003. A detailed description of the field and survey research appears in the appendix.

Everyday Life: Then and Now

Sit down with a resident of Kazakhstan at his or her kitchen table and the conversation quickly turns to the everyday problems the new government does not address. Or, more abstractly, people complain about the reduced role of the state in their lives. Led by the Communist Party, the Soviet state provided low quality, but broad, social services to the population. With the birth of a child, families received supplemental income to care for the infant. The state provided free day care, education, and recreation for the child, and upon graduation the child, now an adult, received a job assignment from the state. Through her state job, the individual not only earned income, but also acquired housing, received health care, took part in free vacations, and had access to credit for consumer purchases.

By contrast post-Soviet states provide few, if any, of these benefits. Post-Soviet governments that have undertaken market reforms have intentionally reduced the role of the state in the economy. Typically these states provide free elementary and secondary education but few of the other services. The state no longer serves as the primary employer, landlord, health care provider, entertainer, and banker, devolving these roles to private entities instead. Post-Soviet governments that have not pursued market reform, as well as many of those which have, have reduced state services because of shortages of funds. With the demise of the Soviet Union, many newly independent countries lost subsidies from Moscow and had difficulty producing goods for export to world markets. As a result, government coffers quickly depleted. Frustration over the reduced role of the state is common among men and women, in villages and in cities, although rural residents and urban dwellers face different problems.

Almaz, A Farmer

The farmer, who we will call Almaz to protect his privacy, was in his mid-70s at the time of the interview and lived in a village in southern Kazakhstan. His standard of living and economic security have fallen precipitously because the government no longer supports the state farm where he worked since he was a young man. Like most rural residents of the former Soviet Union, Almaz had once worked on a farm controlled by the state, a *sovkhoz* or *kolkhoz*. The governments that emerged from the Soviet Union have tended to close or privatize these farms or allow them to go under. As a result many people have lost their jobs and many services are no longer available.

The sovkhoz where Almaz worked was founded in the mid-1930s and focused primarily on breeding livestock. The Soviet state provided all the inputs for the sovkhoz, including fuel, fodder, and vaccinations, and purchased its products. With the disintegration of the Soviet Union, it became more difficult to obtain the many inputs that came from other former republics. The economies of Soviet regions were highly specialized so that often it was possible to obtain a good from only one location.

Independence for the 15 Soviet republics introduced new borders, currencies, and paperwork hampering the movement of goods. These new obstacles to trade also made it difficult for the sovkhoz to sell the livestock it bred to buyers in other former republics. Sales further decreased because guaranteed state purchases also evaporated. Moreover, the sovkhoz had to cope with an end to state subsidies—a result of the government’s plan to move to a market economy and reaction to the general economic crisis facing the country.

In the burgeoning market economy, the sovkhos faced the added challenge of paying freed, skyrocketing prices for energy. Eventually the government disbanded the state farm by auctioning it off to the workers. Yet, the farm had little value, as equipment and animals were dispersed to pay off debts for fodder, fuel, and salaries. Most employees who received animals in lieu of salary sold the livestock in order to meet immediate financial needs.

The obvious impact of the demise of the sovkhos, the main employer in the village, was that most people lost their jobs. This was a severe shock to people as the Soviet state had guaranteed employment for citizens, finding them jobs and rarely firing them. The sovkhos, where Almaz had worked as a livestock tender and then an accountant, once employed 780 individuals. The new collective farm has only 11 employees. Almaz left the sovkhos in 1998 because he, like many workers, was not receiving his salary. Unlike most former employees who today work odd jobs and practice subsistence farming, Almaz managed to develop a commercial wheat farm that supports him and his wife and his three children's families. He received a tractor from the state farm in lieu of his salary, and he has used his pension and savings to rent land from the collective and purchase inputs.

Almaz's relative financial success highlights another significant change in people's lives—increasing socioeconomic inequality. Whereas the Soviet state minimized wage differentials and limited personal investments, the new government of Kazakhstan has adopted market principles that have resulted in significant inequalities. As Almaz noted, “Before 99 percent lived equally now some people are millionaires while others cannot stand on their feet...All five fingers are the same but they all live differently.” Due in part to this growing inequality, resentful villagers have accused Almaz of using his former position at the sovkhos to his advantage in building his business.

Almaz has lost the economic security he had been accustomed to for the previous seven decades, and his relations with some villagers have deteriorated. Although he and his family are better off than many in the village, they have, nonetheless, also witnessed a steep decline in their standard of living. Quality of life has worsened because the *sovkhos* and village government no longer provide services to the community. Drawing the edge of his hand across his forehead to indicate abundance, Almaz said, “We lived well in the *sovkhos*,” but today “Everything is ruined here.” In the Soviet era, the state funded the village school and hospital, and profits from the *sovkhos* went to other services, such as free home repairs, subsidized day care, and a village club that housed a library and offered free concerts. The *sovkhos* sent young residents to study in the republican capital Almaty, paying for their education and hiring them when they completed their studies. The farm also contributed to the costs of residents’ gas and water and subsidized villagers’ vacations.

Today, the village offers few services and those it does provide are expensive. Primary education is no longer free. While the government continues to pay the salaries of teachers at the village school, parents pay for textbooks, provide coal for heating, and contribute building materials for renovations. The hospital now charges for all services and can no longer care for patients overnight or transport them by ambulance. Moreover, patients must obtain all medicines on their own. Almaz reflected on coping with discontinued medical services: “Now when my head hurts I know what medicine to take here at home. If it hurts badly, I go to [the county seat]. Before I would call the doctor and he would come to my house...now I tell my family, my grandchildren, ‘Try not to get sick, try not to get a cold.’”

The collective farm does not offer services as the sovkhos once did. The day care center closed, and the village club is now a private disco that charges admission. The farm cannot afford to send youth to study or guarantee them employment once they have graduated. Almaz's grandson has to work as a bank guard in Almaty and study through an evening program even though his family is one of the wealthiest in the village. Private firms provide electricity and gas at higher rates. Furthermore, the gas company has turned off the gas to the entire village because some people have not paid and it is not profitable to supply gas to only some residents. With the economic deterioration in the village, all but one of the stores closed.

Anara, A Scientist

Like Almaz, Anara, a 59 year old woman living in a northern city with her daughter, has faced greater economic uncertainty and declining state services since Kazakhstan became independent. As an urban resident, however, Anara has more possibilities for earning income and has a wider selection of services, as well as goods. As her daughter clarified, "Everything is in stores. Now the problem is money." While urban residents no longer face Soviet-era deficits in goods, they do have difficulty earning sufficient income. In cities, unlike in villages, jobs are available, but finding high-paying, stable work in one's field of expertise is difficult.

Anara had a career as a chemist until 1997 when she retired. Late in her career she and her fellow scientists began to use their laboratory's technical equipment for commercial barter. In collaboration with a metallurgical plant, they developed inputs for Chinese firms in return for consumer goods. Anara obtained clothing, a television, and a videocassette recorder through these transactions. Anara and her colleagues' involvement in the market was not unusual, as declining salaries for scientists forced many of them into trade. This group of researchers was

fortunate to be able to profit from its scientific knowledge. Many intellectuals have had to completely abandon their laboratories and books for the daily grind of selling macaroni and slippers in the local bazaars.

As a pensioner, Anara has also experienced economic insecurities. Delayed and unpaid pensions have been a problem throughout Central Asia and most of the former Soviet Union. As the disruption of Soviet trade ties and political corruption depleted government coffers, officials often failed to pay people their pensions. This has been quite a shock to citizens of the former Soviet Union, who remembered their parents' steady and relatively generous retirement benefits. Today Anara periodically receives her pension one month late. In the early 1990s, prior to the government's reform of the pension system and growing oil revenues in Kazakhstan, the situation was worse, with people waiting three months for their pensions. People who retired earlier in the 1990s also had much of their pensions eaten by inflation because these payments were not indexed to the inflation rate. Anara's pension has not suffered as much from inflation; nonetheless, her pension does not go far. She receives 8,000 tenge per month and uses all but 2,000 of it to pay utilities for her apartment.

For urban residents the end to free and subsidized utilities are a daily reminder of the reduction in state services. Utilities are no longer guaranteed but depend on a person's ability to pay for-profit companies for service. Fearing that they would not be able to pay their bills, Anara's neighbors began to refuse to let the electric companies' representatives into their apartment, forcing the firm to move its meters to the hallways. Anara recounted how the electric company has confiscated personal property and cut wires to apartments of residents who have not paid. Anara and her daughter do not fear having the wires to their apartment cut. As her

daughter explained, she and her mother have made utilities a high priority, outranking other items, such as certain foods. “We just decide to pay the bills on time. Then no apples or no oranges.”

In Kazakhstan, as in much of the former Soviet Union, the state has also withdrawn from the landlord business. In the Soviet era, urban residents received housing from the state based largely on their position in the workforce, and the state was responsible for repairs. Kazakhstan privatized apartments, so today Anara owns and maintains hers. She no longer receives free government maintenance but must make repairs herself or pay the government or a private firm to do so. She has opted for a maintenance contract, costing 326 tenge a month, from the communal services committee, which is run by the government.

Anara could not afford utilities and repairs to her apartment, not to mention food and clothes, were it not for her daughter’s salary. Her daughter, in her twenties, works as an English-language instructor at a private language institute. Unlike government organizations, the institute pays its instructors on time and also provides pay advances, when needed. As an urban resident, Anara’s daughter had the option of studying English and finding work as a language instructor. Other lucrative career options in the fields of law and business are also more readily available in the cities than the countryside.

Despite these benefits of urban living, Anara and her daughter still struggle economically. They earn enough for food, clothes, and utilities, but they cannot buy extras, such as new, warmer winter coats. They also have not been able to save money. There are unexpected expenses, like medicine for Anara’s mother, and they have lost money in banks, causing them to abandon such institutions. Instead, Anara has invested money in a private financial scheme, which sounds suspiciously like a pyramid scheme. She sells certificates to friends and

acquaintances and after selling a certain amount she will supposedly receive more back than she contributed. She has a friend who received money already, and, she explained, she has confidence in the program. As the state has reduced its monopoly over banking functions, citizens of Kazakhstan have increasingly faced challenges in trying to save and invest money.

Government Responsiveness: Then and Now

As a result of the withdrawal of the state from their everyday lives, residents of Kazakhstan, as well as Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, consider their current governments less responsive than the Soviet state. In each of the countries, 1500 adult respondents were asked to react to the statements “The Soviet government responded to citizens’ needs” and “The [current] government responds to citizens’ needs.” Across the three countries a considerably larger percentage of people agreed with the statement about the Soviet government than with the statement about the current government. And, conversely, a substantially larger percentage of respondents disagreed with the statement about the current government than with the statement about the Soviet government. (See Table 1.)

| TABLE 1. THE GOVERNMENT RESPONDED/RESPONDS TO CITIZENS’ NEEDS. | | | | | | | | | |
|---|-------------------|----------------|-------------------|-------------------|----------------|-------------------|-------------------|----------------|-------------------|
| COUNTRY DIFFERENCES | | | | | | | | | |
| (percentage of respondents; 1500 per country) | | | | | | | | | |
| | Kazakhstan | | | Kyrgyzstan | | | Uzbekistan | | |
| | <u>Soviet</u> | <u>Current</u> | <u>Difference</u> | <u>Soviet</u> | <u>Current</u> | <u>Difference</u> | <u>Soviet</u> | <u>Current</u> | <u>Difference</u> |
| Strongly Agree/Agree | 49.7 | 9.1 | 40.6 | 70.3 | 16.9 | 53.4 | 48.1 | 28.1 | 20 |
| Somewhat A/Somewhat D | 32.7 | 36.7 | -4 | 16.7 | 33.7 | -17 | 22.1 | 28.9 | -6.8 |
| Disagree/Strongly Disagree | 9.9 | 47.6 | -37.7 | 6.3 | 42.9 | -36.6 | 6.9 | 28.5 | -21.6 |
| Difficult to Answer | 6.6 | 5.7 | NA | 6.3 | 6.3 | NA | 21.4 | 13.9 | NA |
| Decline to Answer | 1.0 | .9 | NA | .5 | .2 | NA | 1.5 | .7 | NA |
| TOTAL (rounded) | 100 | 100 | NA | 100 | 100 | NA | 100 | 100 | NA |

Although considerably fewer respondents in each country assess their current government as responsive relative to the Soviet state, there is variation across the three countries. The difference in opinions about the Soviet and current periods is smallest in Uzbekistan. This is likely due to the government's attempt to maintain Soviet-style welfare services. It is possible that the lack of a public discourse about declining standards of living also reduces the difference. Uzbekistan's more authoritarian system makes public criticism of the government riskier; however, officials are open to complaints about everyday life. Also, there is a "kitchen table" discourse about economic difficulties, which would prime people for assessing government responsiveness across eras.

Compared to people in Uzbekistan, fewer residents of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan find their current governments measure up to the Soviet one. This difference likely reflects more extensive market reforms, including the dismantling and privatization of state services, in Kazakhstan and in Kyrgyzstan. Governments of both countries have also reduced services in reaction to fiscal constraints. Revenues from Kazakhstan's oil economy have enabled it to maintain benefits to a greater extent than Kyrgyzstan has, thus explaining why assessments of the government of Kazakhstan relative to the Soviet state, are favorable relative to opinion in Kyrgyzstan.

People's assessment of the Soviet state relies on their memories and, in the case of younger individuals, on the stories they have heard about the Soviet era. Both memories and stories include an element of nostalgia. People tend to think of the past as rosier than the present. Yet, these evaluations of the Soviet era influence how people assess their current situation and government. For this reason, "objectivity" and nostalgia are both useful elements in people's assessments.

Surprisingly within each country, unemployed people, women, and rural residents are generally not more negative about the current government than employed people, men, and urban dwellers. (See Table 2.) We would expect that a higher percentage of people who lack employment and face the challenge of finding a job would assess their current government negatively relative to the Soviet one, which provided an employment guarantee. Yet, in Kazakhstan there is almost no difference between the assessments of the unemployed and employed; in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan the differences are relatively small.

Women have suffered the brunt of economic decline and reforms. They have had to cope with reduced maternity and children's benefits and shuttered child care centers. They are also typically the first to be laid off because, despite decades of Soviet ideology about gender equality, their breadwinning is seen as secondary to men's. Having lost their jobs many have had to work in the local bazaars, reselling products they have purchased from others. Yet, women's assessment of the state in each country differs little from men's. Women's evaluation is no worse than men's for a number of reasons. First, many have come to enjoy their work in the bazaars, feeling proud that they have built businesses. Second, some who have lost their jobs have been happy to now stay at home with their children in contrast to the Soviet era when women were required to work outside their homes. Third, women consider not only their own position, but also their entire family's and even community's, when evaluating state responsiveness.

With fewer job opportunities available in villages, we would expect rural residents to feel that the government has done less to respond to their needs. However, in Kazakhstan rural and urban dwellers differ little in their assessments of the state. In Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan the

differences are larger, yet, interestingly, rural residents are slightly more likely to evaluate the state as being more responsive.

| TABLE 2. THE GOVERNMENT RESPONDS TO CITIZENS' NEEDS. | | | | | | |
|---|-------------------|-----------------|-------------------|-----------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| DEMOGRAPHIC DIFFERENCES | | | | | | |
| (percentage of respondents; 1500 per country) | | | | | | |
| | Kazakhstan | | Kyrgyzstan | | Uzbekistan | |
| | <u>Unemployed</u> | <u>Employed</u> | <u>Unemployed</u> | <u>Employed</u> | <u>Unemployed</u> | <u>Employed</u> |
| Strongly Agree/Agree | 7.0 | 9.0 | 16.8 | 15.3 | 26.4 | 28.9 |
| Somewhat Agree/Somewhat Disagree | 37.1 | 38.4 | 37.8 | 34.0 | 26.0 | 29.5 |
| Disagree/Strongly Disagree | 50.3 | 46.6 | 38.3 | 44.9 | 36.0 | 28.1 |
| Difficult to Answer | 5.2 | 5.7 | 6.6 | 5.6 | 11.6 | 12.8 |
| Decline to Answer | .3 | .3 | .5 | .2 | .0 | .7 |
| TOTAL (Rounded) | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| | Kazakhstan | | Kyrgyzstan | | Uzbekistan | |
| | <u>Female</u> | <u>Male</u> | <u>Female</u> | <u>Male</u> | <u>Female</u> | <u>Male</u> |
| Strongly Agree/Agree | 9.6 | 8.4 | 15.1 | 19.2 | 26.3 | 30.1 |
| Somewhat Agree/Somewhat Disagree | 38.0 | 35.1 | 35.7 | 31.3 | 29.4 | 28.3 |
| Disagree/Strongly Disagree | 46.0 | 49.6 | 43.1 | 42.5 | 27.8 | 29.3 |
| Difficult to Answer | 5.4 | 6.2 | 6.0 | 6.6 | 15.4 | 12.1 |
| Decline to Answer | 1.0 | .7 | .0 | .4 | 1.1 | .3 |
| TOTAL (Rounded) | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| | Kazakhstan | | Kyrgyzstan | | Uzbekistan | |
| | <u>Rural</u> | <u>Urban</u> | <u>Rural</u> | <u>Urban</u> | <u>Rural</u> | <u>Urban</u> |
| Strongly Agree/Agree | 10.1 | 8.0 | 18.8 | 13.3 | 31.3 | 22.3 |
| Somewhat Agree/Somewhat Disagree | 32.8 | 40.5 | 33.7 | 33.7 | 25.9 | 34.1 |
| Disagree/Strongly Disagree | 48.9 | 46.3 | 40.2 | 48.0 | 26.6 | 31.7 |
| Difficult to Answer | 6.9 | 4.6 | 7.0 | 4.9 | 15.6 | 10.9 |
| Decline to Answer | 1.2 | .5 | .3 | 0 | .6 | .9 |
| TOTAL (Rounded) | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

The difference in urban-rural assessments in Kazakhstan versus Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan might reflect ethnicity patterns. In Kazakhstan rural residents include large numbers of non-titular peoples, particularly Slavs in the north; whereas, in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan rural residents are more likely titular peoples, with minorities residing mainly in cities.

Ethnic identity, in fact, has a significant influence on people's assessment of state responsiveness. Across the three countries, it is not unemployed people, women, or rural residents who are most negative about the state. Instead, members of the non-titular ethnicities are the demographic group that finds it least responsive. Whereas 51.0 percent of non-Kazakhs

disagree or strongly disagree with the statement that the state responds to citizens' needs, only 43.8 percent of Kazakhs disagree. Opinions diverge even more in other countries, with 50.9 and 37.7 percent for non-Kyrgyz and Kyrgyz and 36.9 and 26.4 percent for non-Uzbeks and Uzbeks. (See Table 3 below.)

| TABLE 3. THE GOVERNMENT RESPONDS TO CITIZENS' NEEDS. | | | | | | |
|---|-------------------|---------------|-------------------|---------------|-------------------|---------------|
| ETHNIC DIFFERENCES | | | | | | |
| (percentage of respondents; 1500 per country) | | | | | | |
| | KAZAKHSTAN | | KYRGYZSTAN | | UZBEKISTAN | |
| | <u>Kazakhs</u> | <u>Others</u> | <u>Kyrgyz</u> | <u>Others</u> | <u>Uzbeks</u> | <u>Others</u> |
| Strongly Agree/Agree | 10.1 | 8.1 | 21.4 | 10.0 | 29.0 | 24.1 |
| Somewhat Agree/Somewhat Disagree | 39.0 | 34.6 | 34.4 | 32.7 | 28.6 | 29.8 |
| Disagree/Strongly Disagree | 43.8 | 51.0 | 37.7 | 50.9 | 26.4 | 36.9 |
| Difficult to Answer | 5.9 | 5.6 | 6.3 | 6.3 | 15.3 | 8.1 |
| Decline to Answer | 1.1 | .6 | .2 | .2 | .7 | 1.0 |

Minority groups in each country are likely more negative about the current governments because they do not view sovereignty as a benefit. With the independence of the Central Asian republics, Russians and other Slavic peoples lost their privileged standing in these societies. Prior to the Soviet period, Russians moved to Central Asia seeking land and jobs building the railroad and mining natural resources. The Soviet government sent Russians and other Slavs to serve in government and industrial management positions.

Other groups, Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan and Tajiks in Uzbekistan, became minorities in these countries because of the borders drawn by Soviet planners. With the demise of the Soviet Union, titular groups grew dominant in the governments and began to introduce policies and informal practices to advantage their own countrymen. As a result, ethnic minorities have found it more difficult to live in these countries. Whereas enthusiasm for sovereignty dampens titular groups' frustration with their current government, it does not reduce minorities' irritation but likely contributes to it.

Ethnic minorities may also judge the government of their country of residence, particularly its economic performance, against the government of their homeland. Compared to Russia, the Central Asian countries are not thriving, suggesting that Russians in Central Asia would be particularly discouraged. This is evidenced by the responses from Kyrgyzstan. Among Russians in Kyrgyzstan 56.2 percent disagree or strongly disagree with the idea that the state responds to citizens' needs, but only 39.3 of Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan hold the same view.

Prospects for Governance

With the demise of the Soviet welfare system, citizens of Central Asia and other post-Soviet states have had to take additional responsibility for their lives. No longer will the state support one from cradle to grave. This is especially true in market-oriented countries where individual responsibility is part of the new ideology. While citizens have adapted to the new conditions, they remember the role of the Soviet state in everyday life fondly and assess their current states' responsiveness as inadequate.

Ethnic minorities evaluate their states even less positively. They have experienced not only a reduction in welfare services, but also a drop in their own status in society. As a result, an improved economy is likely to have a weaker positive impact on ethnic minorities who are also suffering under the trauma of becoming second-class citizens in many ways. Yet, the ethnic divide is not great; many members of the titular group are disgruntled as well.

From the perspective of some inside and outside these countries, ensuring contentment with existing government is not the top priority. Instead, according to this perspective, these governments need to be replaced in order to provide better services and guarantee freedoms. The good news in this regard is that citizens have not grown passive, at least in their thinking. They

clearly have a sense of entitlement to good government. The fact that they have not abandoned the state completely but still seek assistance from the government is also a positive finding: outside of family, government officials are most frequently sought out for help with everyday problems. For only through contact with the state will citizens of the country initiate change in government, whether gradual or dramatic, to improve their everyday lives.

Appendix

In the spring and summer of 2001, I conducted 101 interviews in Kazakhstan. These interviews were with three sets of people: 1) average citizens who are coping with economic problems, 2) individuals who might be helping people survive economically, and 3) individuals who have background information about economic problems and assistance. I selected average citizens to interview based on their membership in a household or their status as unemployed individuals, entrepreneurs, or university students. There were Kazakhs and Russians in each of these groups. The second set was comprised of religious leaders, wealthy entrepreneurs, private employment agencies, representatives of foreign and local nongovernmental organizations, and government officials.

The first two sets of interviews took place in a northern city and its satellite towns, a southern province, and a village in that region. The third set of interviews was with social welfare consultants and government officials in the former national capital Almaty and the current capital Astana. The purpose of the interviews with average citizens in Kazakhstan was to inventory problems no longer resolved by the state, to catalog people's coping mechanisms, and to begin to understand how coping experiences shape attitudes toward and relationship with the state. For this reason, I did not select the individuals randomly. I chose to interview members of households to get a broad overview of problems no longer resolved by the state. To learn more about employment issues, I concentrated on interviewing entrepreneurs, unemployed individuals, and university students in their final year of study.

With the assistance of BRIF, a private research firm in Almaty, Kazakhstan, and in cooperation with Pauline Jones Luong, I conducted mass surveys in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan in late November and early December of 2003. The surveys were face-to-face

interviews lasting approximately an hour and in Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Russian, or Uzbek, depending on the respondent's preference. The sample for the mass survey in each country was a multistage stratified probability sample of the country. In each country the mass survey questionnaire was administered to 1500 individuals, age 18 and older. In each country, macroregions were defined—14 for Uzbekistan, 14 for Kazakhstan, and 8 for Kyrgyzstan, including the capital cities as macroregions. Strata were distributed among the macroregions based on each macroregion's proportion of the total population. Primary sampling units (PSUs) were administrative districts. PSUs were selected randomly using probability proportional to size. Within each PSU, households were randomly selected. One respondent was randomly chosen from each household. If a potential respondent declined to participate, another was selected randomly from the PSU.