

ALTERNATIVES

Turkish Journal Of International Relations

Volume 1 Number 1 Spring 2002

Richard Pomfret. Central Asia Turns South? Trade Relations in Transition. The Royal Institute of International Affairs. Chatham House: London, 1999. 46 pages. \$14,95 pbk. ISBN 1862030847.

The Central Asian Republics, once a part of the former USSR and independent since 1991, have started to seek new trading partners and new markets. However, the first years of their independence have been very hard mainly because of the economic problems they are having. There are infrastructure problems and not enough investment capital or experienced entrepreneurs, which mean that these countries are less able to be competitive in world markets.

The short book being reviewed here, written by Richard Pomfret, contains five chapters. The first chapter presents a general outline of the trade relations of the Central Asian republics and offers basic economic data about the Central Asian countries in the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) which includes Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan, who founded the ECO in 1985, and also includes since 1992 Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan . The ECO succeeds the Regional Cooperation for Development Organization, and much as the former organization did it promotes economic, technical, and cultural cooperation.

The second chapter discusses the infrastructure in place in Central Asia that is so important in determining the trade and development that occurs in the region. As Pomfret points out, the transportation and telecommunications infrastructure between the Central Asian republics and their southern neighbors is generally poor. This part of the book also presents the important debates going on related to the oil and gas pipelines that are being planned for.

The third chapter focuses on the trade potential and trade policies of the Central Asian countries. As the author points out, of the ECO countries only Turkey and the Kyrgyz Republic are members of the World Trade Organization (WTO) although Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have WTO observer status and are applying for membership. (Iran also became a member of the WTO in 2001) Pomfret concludes that the trading potential of the Central Asian republics is less than that of the three largest economies of the ECO, Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan, who have long been market economies involved in world trade unlike the Central Asian countries that are in the process of changing over from central planning. As for Afghanistan and Tajikistan, in both countries civil wars have been going on for a long time limiting their trade potential. This chapter also emphasizes the trading arrangements in the region. As is pointed out, for the Central Asian republics, membership in the ECO is the most important cooperative economic effort following upon its cooperation with the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Its importance is due to the fact that the population of the ECO countries is 325 million people spread over 8 million square kilometers. Pomfret goes on to argue that ECO membership for these countries also means that there are few obstacles to intra-regional trade since the ECO provides a forum for the discussion of any regional conflicts that occur so that peaceful cooperation can be maintained

while agreements signed in 1995 have specified the establishment of an ECO Trade and Development Bank to be based in Istanbul, an ECO Reinsurance Company based in Pakistan along with a shipping company and an airline. Although implementation of these agreements has not yet occurred, the ECO members have committed themselves to founding these four regional institutions.

In the fourth chapter, the patterns of trade of Central Asian countries are examined since independence. Stated in this chapter are the facts that trade with non-CIS countries is only changing gradually and that the leading trading partners of the Central Asian countries are outside of the region and include such partners as European countries and the countries in North America and in East Asia. As Pomfret indicates, these findings suggest that the future of the ECO is not yet determined since how trade relations among the members will develop in the future is not clear.

Thus, the last chapter studies the possibilities and prospects for greater integration between the Central Asia countries and their southern neighbors. Stated in this chapter are figures indicating that in recent years trade between the Central Asian countries themselves and between them and the CIS has been reduced indicating a trade gap. The question is how the gap can be filled. Although Pomfret does feel that the ECO is potentially important and likely to play a positive role in the region, at the end of the book, he puts in an ECO trade matrix for 1996 that shows that in that year exports valued at \$ 3.753 million were sent from ECO countries to other ECO countries while imports among them were valued at \$ 5.030 million. These were figures that demonstrated limited growth. Thus, it was concluded that the gap caused by reduced trade between the Central Asian countries themselves and between them and the CIS might be filled by increased trade with EU countries and the countries in North America and East Asia.

Pomfret's short book poses the question of whether Central Asian countries are turning south and then offers some clues as to why cooperation in this direction did not develop. However, some important reasons are not discussed. One is that there is extensive competition between Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan which serves to hinder integration. There are also political differences among the countries in the region that negatively influence cooperative developments. For instance, before the September 11 attack, the countries that founded the ECO were supporting different groups in Afghanistan. Turkey and Iran were supporting the Northern Alliance while Pakistan was recognizing the Taliban government. After the September 11 attack, the ECO itself was unable to provide a peace-keeping force in Afghanistan despite on of its aims being that of securing peace in the region. Nevertheless, the book is an important source of information about the Economic Cooperation Organization.

Mehmet Dikkaya
Fatih University, Department of Economics

R. J. Barry Jones, Peter M. Jones, Ken Dark and Joel Peters. Introduction to International Relations. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001. 207 pages. 35.00 pounds hbk., 12.99 pounds pbk.

The author gives a new approach to international relations rather than a traditional one in that; the traditional approaches turned upon the central notion of the state, where the book concentrates on the contemporary developments that threatens the central role of the state in world affairs and explore their consequences.

The first three chapters of the book are devoted to the three 'levels of analysis', and the author gives a broad explanation about how the international relations have been studied traditionally through these levels for more than three centuries.

In the following chapters, the author gives a broad explanation on the international or inter-state system, sources, characteristic structures and the formation of the system under the influence of 'balance of power' concept, during and after the Cold War. Modern technologies of transport, communication and information management facilitated the world-wide financial, economic and even social integration. Thus, as a result of this integration, a new stage has been reached in global social integration and the emergence of a new global culture. So the globalization process became inevitable and irresistible. The optimistic view of globalization identifies a wide range of benefits in its economic, political and social manifestations. But a range of observers from neo-Marxists to sceptical economic Realists believe that the globalization confront the societies with substantial problems and carry as a consequence, serious dangers of economic, environmental, social and political danger.

Although globalization seems as the only direction to which the world system go, some prominent developments also point towards an increasingly regionalised world system either in economic or political manner. The author gives the forms of regionalization as macro, meso and micro levels and emphasises the causes, motives, major motors and problems and solutions of regionalisation.

In the last chapter, the author discusses the 'fragmentation in world affairs'. Pessimistic observers identify a clear pattern of social fregmentation within the world's advanced industrial societies. The possible weakening of effective international governance by the community of states and their representatives both reflects and is a partial cause of the political and social fregmentation that has characterized the last decade of the 20th century and the first years of the 21st. The book also discusses the contemporary forms of fregmentation as political, economic, social and intellectual. The sources, problems and the solutions to the problems broght by fregmentation are also discussed at the end of the chapter. As a conclusion, the book gives the students some of the major approaches to international relations, past and present and introduces some of the central ideas with which the subject has been studied during the 20th century and some of the developments in the 21st. At the end of each chapter the selected bibliographies are very useful for the students.

Altogether, the authors have produced a valuable work. Everyone interested in international relations will want to have this book by his side.

Hasan Ali Yurtsever
Department of Mathematics, Fatih University