

Politics and History in Central Asia

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Timur Dadabaev • Murod Ismailov • Yutaka Tsujinaka
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Social Capital Construction and Governance in Central Asia

Communities and NGOs in post-Soviet Uzbekistan

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PREFACE

The primary aim of this book is to contribute to the understanding of the processes taking place in Uzbekistan in terms of social capital formation in the years after the collapse of the Soviet Union. It should be noted that this book focuses on the years President Islam Karimov, who passed away in September 2016, was in power. Therefore, the coverage and analysis of this book primarily aims to elucidate the model of social capital construction attempted by the Uzbek government in the years of Islam Karimov's rein in power.

After years of political reforms following the collapse of the Soviet Union, there is still no consensus on how to evaluate Karimov's years in power. On the one hand, Karimov has been praised both within Uzbekistan and internationally for his ability to preserve inter-ethnic peace and stability in the chaotic conditions of the post-independence years in Uzbekistan. He successfully stopped extremist Islamic ideas from spreading into Uzbekistan. On the other hand, however, Uzbekistan is still in the process of establishing its stable and sustainable system of governance. Similar to all post-Soviet Central Asian republics, this process is not yet completed in Uzbekistan. Consequently, there is much speculation about possible prospects for development, especially in the post-Karimov era. However, analysis concerning the future of Uzbekistan is problematic and premature unless the current processes in the country develop to include both official political discourse and empirical data, and the views of the population and patterns of public thinking are properly analyzed.

The aim of this book is to launch the process of analyzing Uzbekistan's government development over the years of its independence by analyzing

grand narrative of Karimov's model of social capital construction emphasizing its strength and challenges.

Although this book raises various questions regarding local governance units, their relations with the state and nature of public opinion, none of the answers provided in this book are final and non-debatable. Rather, this book represents an attempt to launch the process of considering these issues and engaging in an analysis of the empirical evidence and theoretical assumptions in an academic setting. This book is also an attempt to move away from the dichotomous way of depicting many Central Asian societies and developments, painting them either into 'white' (democratic, liberal, 'correct') or 'black' (non-democratic, non-liberal, 'alien') colors. On the contrary, the authors in this book subscribe to the view that the evaluation of the current situation in Uzbekistan needs to be carried out in a balanced way in order to recognize the achievements of this country as well as to understand the challenges it faces. In this way, we aim to promote a dialogue between and among scholars of various points of view, in an inclusive way that offers a platform for a constructive fact-based discussion.

After the book manuscript had been submitted to the publisher and when this book was in production, Uzbekistan suffered the loss of its first President. Consequently, elections were held and Shavkat Mirziyev was elected President. The newly elected President launched further reforms by emphasizing the importance of dialogue between the state and the population and thus recognizing the gap in this area in previous years. Although this book was written and submitted to the publisher in the years of Islam Karimov's presidency, the importance of understanding the narrative of social capital formation of Karimov's presidency years contributes to understanding future attempts of the newly elected President Mirziyev to reform and improve the system of governance in the post-Karimov years.

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