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Abstract

Prospects for Regional Integration in Central Asia

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In the aftermath of the collapse of the USSR, the former Soviet republics of Central Asia have been afflicted by the negative consequences of the transition to a much greater extent than the European successor states. After giving a short introductory outline of the common political, cultural, and economic factors that should facilitate their cooperative efforts, the article first describes the current economic position of Central Asia by discussing not only the requirements for regional integration, but also the prerequisites for the future transformation process in the individual Central Asian countries. The author then examines the ecological problems within this region that transcend national boundaries, and draws an outline of the steps towards regional integration that have been taken to date. This section will be followed by a discussion of the future prospects for regional integration in Central Asia as well as the immediate problems that must be solved as part of this integration process. Considering the past experiences, today's goal of effecting a process of integration that is decisive, yet progresses at its own pace by building on smaller, cooperative ventures, appears reasonable and appropriate for the conditions in Central Asia. Even if developments within Russia should make the implementation of a program for economic integration more difficult, there will be numerous opportunities for comprehensive, regional cooperation at the lower levels.