Two and a half decades ago, the study of Central Asia was sharply divided. Researchers based in the region had little access to the wider world of international scholarship and the general theoretical and region-specific research agendas that drove it. They were also highly constrained by Soviet ideology in the analytical frameworks they could employ and the assertions that they could make about their subject-matter. Meanwhile, scholars from outside the Soviet Bloc had very limited access to the region and their work was also often clearly guided by a Cold War agenda that sought to present the Soviet political system and its effects in a negative light. More than two decades have passed since this picture began to change in a dramatic way: the possibilities increased greatly for scholars in the region to engage with international scholarship and for Western scholars to have access to regional field and documentary research. Still, inertia in scholarly agendas has affected both sides of the divide, and only relatively recently can one see a more substantial bridging of the gap. This is most significantly reflected in the emergence of a generation of scholars who have extensive research experience on the ground in the region and who are strongly involved in an international milieu, either because they are trained in that context or because they have made strong efforts to build links between their own work and international, discipline-based scholarship. The dissolution of the parochial enclave that Sovietology once constituted, where an anti-Soviet political agenda motivated most research and where the political raison d’être overrode most discipline-based theoretical concerns, has been a great benefit. The emergence of new research institutions within the region has also been decisive - institutions which are not dominated by an older generation of scholars who are invested in old approaches or new agendas of promoting nation-building ideologies.

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