

example of Freedom Sports Stadium, where women are prohibited from attending men's sports matches. Viewing the ban through the lens of political contestations, the author shows how political parties use the discourse of gender boundaries to proclaim their assertion of authority and political power. Examining the cases of parties that prohibit or allow women in sports arenas, the author demonstrates "how gender segregation has become an instrument in the pursuit of power, of the assertion of ultimate sovereignty" (p. 85). By patronizing and regulating women's bodies and their activities in public, including sports stadiums, different political entities, both internal and international, lay claims on authority and dominance over their political adversaries.

Chapter 5 concludes the book by not only revisiting some of the concerns in Chapter 1, but also further challenging the notion of gender segregation while problematizing the discourses of gender, statehood, and Islam. Viewing state-building intertwined with gendered processes of city and placemaking, the author points out the lack of a definitive blueprint used by the state in building the Islamic city, during which process the notions of gender and Islam are reinterpreted and renegotiated as arbitrated through the imperatives of power and politics. "By placing women at the center of city-building and state-making projects, women's issues have been further politicized, creating opportunities for political struggle at the very loci wherein gender boundaries are drawn" (p. 124).

Although the author downplays the role of Islam in the state's mode of regulation from *prohibition* to *provision*, *Women in Place* clearly presents a bold challenge to the conventional understanding of gender segregation. It is an excellent study that renders an alternative lens, allowing us to understand state policies concerning women's access to public spaces in post-revolutionary Iran. Nazanin Shahroki's persuasive critique not only debunks the "outdated" thinking about gender segregation, but also problematizes the way we understand the roles of the state, Islam, and "Islamic." In addition to being a refreshing alternative to the conventional discourse on gender-segregated spaces, *Women in Place* poses a significant challenge to the way the notions of gender, space, and the state have been traditionally viewed.

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Bhat, Mohd. Aslam. *The Sociology of Central Asian Youth: Choice, Restraint, Risk*. New York: Routledge, 2018. 160 pp. ISBN: 978-0367431808. DOI: 10.22679/avs.2021.6.2.010

Youth studies, although having gained importance in recent decades, does not enjoy its deserved attention outside the global south. Mohd. Aslam Bhat, a scholar of youth studies, political sociology, and social research, usefully writes a book about Central Asian youth, exploring their 'aspirations, anticipations and risks' within cultural, political, and sociological discourses

(p. xii). The book is based on Bhat's ethnographic research carried out in 2012 for a doctoral dissertation. By offering a close examination of everyday life episodes of Uzbekistani youth and relying on his extensive research on Central Asia, Bhat's main contribution to the debate is developed around the growing importance of the young population in 'structure and agency' relationships with the state that is not much prioritized by the latter. Most reflection is given to the transition of the youth into their adulthood. While the youth were considered 'undifferentiated and generally an unthinking mass' in Soviet Central Asia and 'are now barely thought of by policymakers,' Bhat strongly argues that the young generation should be the focus of policymaking in the region (p. 15).

A short prologue is followed by five main chapters. The first chapter – introduction – takes off with a broad discussion of theoretical concepts on social transformations and youth studies in general. The chapter is an elaborate examination of classical sociology, post-modern social theory, and the sociology of late or reflexive modernity as a framework for the study. It also places Uzbekistani youth at the heart of the journey. The second chapter gives a solid historical background of Central Asia, where 'social and historical continuities still persist and make for differently perceived ... transitions into adulthood' (p. 20). For a reader who is unfamiliar with the region, this gives a sound understanding of the debate that is further developed.

The third chapter takes a short glimpse into the overall youth culture in Uzbekistan paying special attention to 'how is the Soviet model of youth culture politics being reproduced and continued' in post-Soviet Central Asia (p. 55). With the help of the existing social and economic capital of their families, children of the elite class occupied places at top universities and landed good jobs, while their counterparts lived in poverty. Trying to highlight how socio-economic and familial background shapes the youth attitude to life, in chapter four Bhat divides the youth in Uzbekistan into three 'typological categories' – the privileged 'elite youth' who are considered to be more 'modern' and 'westernized' compared to their peers. They favor the existing system as they and their family benefit from it; the 'ambitious youth,' whose hope for a better life is via education; and the 'impoverished youth,' whose families are caught in a disadvantaged position during the transition period of independence. Bhat argues that the impoverished youth together with vulnerable, ambitious youth constitute what he refers to as 'at risk youth' who share a common unfavorable socio-economic background mostly 'due to misappropriation of State property via corruption, abolition of the welfare state and faulty socio-economic policies' (pp. 89-90).

In chapter five, Bhat elaborates on the struggles 'at risk youth' are facing. As the education system in the region is not efficient due to 'decentralisation, destabilisation, curriculum "over-loading," ...grade and credential corruption,' it negatively affects the transition of youth from school to work and to adulthood (p. 93). These all leave especially disadvantaged young people prone to exposure to (often risky) labor migration, illicit drug trafficking, dodgy marriage offers abroad (for girls), or religious radicalism. Moreover, Bhat particularly examines the role of consumerism and desire for western goods by the youth, who employ them both to be different from the rest of their peers and to self-express, but

also to not lag behind others. The way young people choose how to dress, use gadgets, decorate their rooms, and mix their mother tongue with Russian are forms of drawing their own identity, thus ‘youth identities in Central Asia are idiosyncratically local and uniquely ‘in between’, proffering a picture of transition and tension’ (p. 48).

Scholars from outside the region faultily assume life in the post-soviet Central Asian states is alike due to the shared history. Bhat similarly argues that ‘all ‘Central Asia’ is comparable to the notion of the ‘melting pot’ and in the original Soviet-era melting pot young people were brought up in an environment that shaped them according to the so-called Soviet ethos, failing to consider political, socio-economic, and cultural differences’ (p. 26). For example, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan are resource-rich countries while Tajikistan is not. Kyrgyzstan became an ‘island of democracy’ in the region during the first decade after independence as it enjoyed both deeper reforms in the market and pluralism in its politics. Although Bhat’s field research took place in Uzbekistan (Tashkent, Samarkand, Bukhara, and Fergana), he generalizes the findings, applying them to the ‘the scenario of youth in Central Asia at large’ (p. 26). Limiting the focus to Uzbekistan has straightened the overall inquiry, nevertheless, the application of what is only found in Uzbekistan to the region as a whole does not fit because of the apparent political, cultural, and economic diversity.

Despite its shortcomings, Bhat’s *Sociology of Central Asian Youth* offers a new beginning for the sociological research of Uzbekistan and Central Asia. The book is a great source and an interesting reading on youth, adolescence, and school-to-work transitions from the Central Asian perspective for scholars of the region and for those who are interested in Central Asian studies in general. Overall, the book leaves the reader wanting towards a deeper focus on Uzbekistan and its unique character.

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In his book, Filippo Menga makes a comprehensive analysis of the history of water usage in Central Asia, considering the ideological foundations of hydropolitics during and after the collapse of the Soviet Union. He provides an overview of the negotiations and decisions of the new Central Asian states (Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan) concerning the regulation of mutual water resources, with case studies of the Rogun Dam and Kambarata Dam. Russian conquest of Central Asia in the 1860s turned water regulation and the development of water supplement infrastructure into one of the main regional