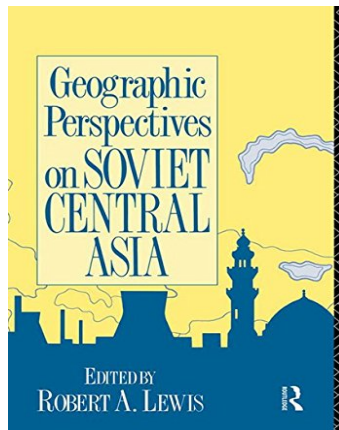


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In a unique survey, based on new census data, *Geographic Perspectives on Soviet Central Asia* highlights the region's geographic, economic and ecological problems since 1945.

Painting a grim picture, this book investigates how the combination of rapid population growth and declining per capita investment is causing economic conditions to slide in rural areas and encouraging an ecological catastrophe. The authors discuss the effects of low rural out-migration, and show that at current growth rates the rural working-age population will double with each generation. Unprecedented in a developed country, this is causing the region to become more rather than less rural. Soviet Central Asia is an area of low productivity, and the book considers the lack of support from Soviet central government to the region. Wishing to maximise their return to capital and labour, the government is concentrating its investment in the European West and directing insufficient funds for a growing workforce in Central Asia. Soviet Central Asia also faces grave ecological problems; the declining level of the Aral Sea, extensive soil salinization and water pollution, all largely due to past attempts at irrigation. The authors consider the effect of these disasters on the area, and look to future possibilities in this very important region of the world.