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'ISLAM' Vs 'NATIONALISM' in Central Asia:
A Case Study of "UZBEKISTAN"

By

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A Case Study of “UZBEKISTAN”**

A dissertation submitted to Taxila Institute of Asian
Civilizations, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad,
Pakistan in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

By

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CERTIFICATE

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Dedicated

to

Prof. Laeeq Babree (late)

[May God bless him]

**{who extended me valuable guidance}
{ in the early days of my research }**

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my individual research and it has not been submitted concurrently to any other university for any other degree.

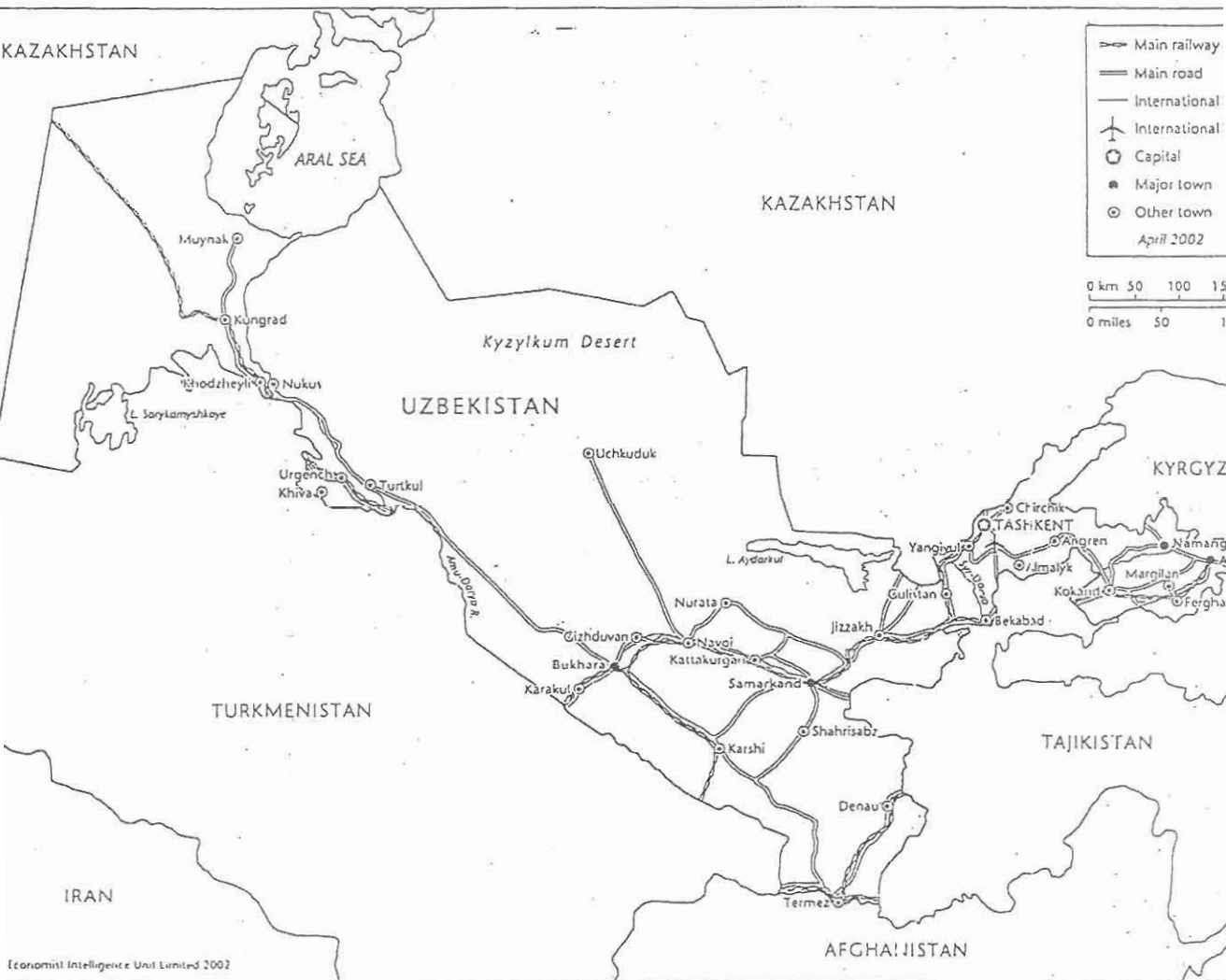
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Chapter I INTRODUCTION

1.1 Identification of Problem

President Boris Yeltsin of Russia, Mr. Kravchuk of Ukraine and Mr. Stanislav Shushkevich of Belarus signed an agreement in a dacha (country-house) in the Belovezhskaya forest of Belarus on December 08, 1991 declaring the Soviet law invalid on their territories and Soviet writ obsolete. Within two weeks, the Soviet Union created by Lenin in 1922 ceased to exist and was replaced by Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) on 21 December, 1991 in Almaty. The land-locked Central Asia, spread from the Caspian coast to the Chinese border and its frontiers touching the snow-covered Siberia in the north and Afghanistan and Iran in the south was to cope with the rising tide of 'Nationalism' and 'Islam' in addition to scores of problems including economic dislocation, weak political structures, ethnic tension and even warfare as in Tajikistan following the dismemberment of Soviet Union. These republics gained statehood and independence at a time when religious and nationalist self-assertion was stirring the Muslim countries where Muslims were a sizeable minority. Moscow's inability to come to terms with nationalism in the Soviet Union facilitated the Soviet collapse and emergence of Central Asian Republics (CARs). In fact, both 'Nationalism' and 'Islam' in Central Asia were in 'competition' as well as in 'compatibility' with each other as the rise of 'nationalism' in the newly independent republics coincided with the 'religious revivalism'. No nationalist party in Central Asia is without its programme to promote Islamic values and cultures, as part of its wider nationalist agenda. The more the communist system preached Soviet universalism, the more pressing became the demands of Islamic revivalism and cultural particularism amongst the myriad of ethnic groups in Central Asia. As Muslims embark upon 21st Century, the problem of multiple identities and in particular of 'Nationalism' and 'Islam' in the form of communitarian internationalism continued to confront them in general and to those of the CARs in particular following more than a decade of gaining independence from Soviet Union.

Uzbeks - the most numerous, the most assertive and the most influential people of the region occupy the Islamic heartland, the political nerve centre and the economic hub of Central Asia. Periodic revolts against the Russians continued as Uzbek anger grew at the desecration of Islam, the seizure of their best land by Russian settlers and the worsening economic situation.¹ Islam has penetrated tribal societies relatively late compared to the urban civilization of Uzbekistan. On the eastern border of Uzbekistan are the Tajiks who were the first to accept and practice Islam as Arabs brought it to Central Asia in 7th and 8th centuries.

The major achievement of **Islam**, other than cultural, commercial and scientific is in terms of 'identity' because before Islam nomadic or sedentary identities were strong. Uzbekistan has a strong sense of national identity and the national self-confidence that comes with numbers, size and historical importance in the region. It possesses most of the great cities of classical Central Asian civilization. The Uzbek language is by far the best developed Turkic literary language of the region based as it is on the older literary Chagatai language. Uzbeks have their friction with local Russians but realize that over the longer run, they are dealing from a position of strength. They possess more trained cadres able to take over from Russian specialists in the republic than does any other republic. Its economy is the second largest in Central Asia after Kazakhstan.

When Tsarist Empire fell in 1917, the Bolsheviks established their control over north Tajikistan which was incorporated into Turkistan's Soviet Socialist Republic. In 1920, Khiva and Bokhara were declared Peoples Republics and forced to sign 'treaties of alliance' with Soviet Russia. The Bolsheviks made no attempt to understand the complex clan tribal basis of **Islam** or **Nationalism** of the society and tried to destroy all forms of traditional Islamic social and cultural identities, loyalties and institutions and replace them with the new Soviet ones in order to make members of Muslim society loyal to Soviet ideology and state. Although in 1917, people of Central Asia were discovering Nationalism, it was in 1924, when Joseph Stalin implemented his 'territorial delimitation' policy that new national consciousness among Soviet Muslims evolved. The sense of territorial, ethno-linguistic national identity was further intensified by Soviet policy of industrialization, urbanization,

enhancement of education and literacy and communication which stimulated emergence of variety of professional and elite groups. Furthermore, the governments of the newly established republics possessed all the basic means necessary to generate and spread the idea of nationalism. As a result, this gave rise to self-interested bureaucracies, desiring to live according to one's own customs, traditions, ideology, religion and to utilize one's resources. This desire was curtailed for many decades due to authoritarian communist rule. But with the elimination of communist iron curtain and the emergence of independent republics in Central Asia, both forces of Islam and Nationalism were bound to re-emerge and also to come in conflict with each other as neither of the two forces were weak but were in fact, equally powerful. Hence, in the present thesis, an effort is made to study these two divergent pulls and to see which of the two is likely to dominate the society in Central Asia, selecting Uzbekistan as a case study.

1.2 Significance of the Study

The significance of the study of 'Nationalism' and 'Islam' is quite evident from the fact that 'Nationalism' has been and is a force to be reckoned with ever since the French Revolution of 1789 which gave birth to 'loyalty and devotion to the nation or to the 'nation-state' and has been a dominant force in international relations. During 19th and 20th centuries, 'nationalism' played a major role in re-drawing the map of Europe on national lines, led to a number of conflicts among nations and states and finally to the two World Wars. On the other hand, at the very time of its inception, 'Islam' was faced with the challenge of 'asabiyah', the moving spirit of the pre-Islamic social order. 'Asabiyah' was an idea which greatly resembled 'nationalism' since it signified boundless and unconditional loyalty to the tribe or clan. The two bore striking resemblance in so far as while 'asabiyah' denotes supreme loyalty to the tribe, 'nationalism' denotes supreme loyalty to the nation. Significantly enough, the motto of the sixth century Arabs was: "Help your brother [clansman]: right or wrong". Could anything be closer to the motto of the nationalists in the present century: "My nation: right or wrong"? 'Islam' strongly denounced tribal 'asabiyah' in the strongest terms. Whoever fights for or invites people to 'asabiyah', according to the Prophet (peace be upon him), is "not from me" (See Muslim, "Imarah", 57). Rather than

the tribe, Islam itself became the main rallying-point, the major unifying force, the primary basis of communal cohesion. Thus, Muslims were held by the Qur'an to be nothing but brothers to one another (49:10) and were declared by the Prophet (peace be upon him) to be "one hand" against all others (Abu Da'ud, "Jihad", 147). Islam cultivated in the Muslims an attitude of mind that would make them transcend rather than destroy tribes or clans. What Islam in fact sought to do, was to destroy 'asabiyah' which might be roughly translated as tribal chauvinism.²

Hence, it is not for the first time that 'Islam' has come in conflict with the multiple identities or competing nationalistic loyalties or 'nationalism'. At present, however diverse in reality, the existence of 'Islam' as a world-wide religion and ideological force embracing one-fifth of the world's population and its continued vitality and power in a Muslim World stretching from Africa to South-east Asia, will continue to raise the spectre of an Islamic threat.³ In the opening sentence of the Communist Manifesto, Marx and Engels had dramatically started off by saying: "A spectre is haunting Europe - the spectre of Communism". With a slight change, Zafar Ishaq Ansari said: "A spectre is haunting the West --- the spectre of Islam".⁴ With another modification, it could be said: "A spectre is haunting the communists-turned nationalists in Central Asia - the spectre of **Islam**". For a Western world long accustomed to a global vision and a foreign policy predicated upon super power rivalry for global influence if not dominance - a US-Soviet conflict often portrayed as a struggle between good and evil, capitalism and communism - it is all too tempting to identify another global ideological menace to the 'threat vacuum' created by the demise of communism. As Western leaders attempt to forge the New World Order, transnational Islam may increasingly come to be regarded as the new global monolithic enemy of the West.⁵ Today, the world is still divided into East and West, but with a new East: 'Islam' has replaced 'communism'. Whereas before one spoke of a clash of ideologies, today this has been elevated to a clash of civilizations. "Clash" because the suspicion, hostility, even conflict that marked East-West relations in the old world order have survived in the new. Samuel Huntington's theory of 'Clash of Civilizations' published in Foreign Affairs in 1993 did not introduce the concept; the West had been searching for a substitute "enemy" ever since it became obvious

the Soviet bear was on its last legs. He was the first to articulate and define the new enmity. In particular, he was the first to unite diverse militancies in the Muslim world (Algeria, Bosnia, Palestine, Lebanon, Kashmir) and present them as part of the same whole: Islam. The Islamic civilization that Huntington portrayed was one with a long tradition of bloodshed and warfare, dating back 1300 years. It was different from and fundamentally opposed to the West, and hence – according to Huntington – posed a massive threat to it. But the “clash of civilizations” was not dismissed. On the contrary, it found a receptive and appreciative audience. Within the United States, the many vested interests associated with the defence industry seized on the Islamic threat as justification for America to remain armed to the teeth. Outside the US, innumerable governments facing militant Islamic opposition quickly realized that by presenting their conflict as part of the wider “clash of civilizations”, they could garner international sympathy (or at least mute criticism of their human rights abuse). Russia, Israel, India and until recently Serbia, all claim to be engaged in the struggle to hold back Islamic fundamentalist hordes.⁶ ‘To some Americans, searching for a new enemy against whom to test their mettle and power, after the death of communism, Islam is the preferred antagonist. But, to declare Islam, an enemy of the United States is to declare a second Cold War that is unlikely to end in the same resounding victory as the First.’⁷ Daniel Pipes says: “In a world, it is a battle between secularist and fundamentalist Muslims - to be more precise, a competition between two of the great countries of the Middle East, Turkey and Iran. It’s likely to be a long, and difficult fight”.⁸ The terrorist attacks on World Trade Centre in New York and Pentagon in Washington on September, the 11th, 2001 provided a pretext to US President George W. Bush to launch strikes against a Muslim Saudi billionaire – Osama Bin Laden, his Al-Qaida network and their perpetrators Taliban regime in Afghanistan declaring his ‘war on terrorism’ as “crusade”. Later President Bush, British Prime Minister Tony Blair and others apologetically stated that this war is directed against *terrorism* and not against ‘**Islam**’ and extended it to Iraq. Likewise, when Islamic Republic of Pakistan had to decide to side with international coalition against terrorism led by United States or fanatic Muslim Taliban regime in Afghanistan who were perpetrators of a Saudi Muslim – Osama Bin Laden and his Al-Qaida network, it took a decision to side with international coalition

purely on 'national interest' and not on the basis of 'Islam' or as a Muslim state.

In Central Asia, there is a growing sense that existing politico-economic and social system has failed and there is a quest for identity and greater authenticity. While an educated Uzbek or Kazakh might fail to observe many of the formal rituals such as prayer, 'Islam' is still his religion and the defining circle of his cultural world. He knows that Islam has given him a distinct identity and made him what he was. Islam, therefore, provides a self-sufficient ideology for State and Society, a valid alternative to secular 'nationalism', socialism or capitalism. Islam offered a sense of fraternity and cultural identity that off-sets the psychological dislocation and cultural threat of their new environment. The whole of the Muslim world is today sandwiched between two dimensions: 'loyalty to the nation-state and the Islamic revivalism'. The newly independent CARs, therefore, could not behave differently from the onslaught of the wave of 'nationalism' and the resurgence of 'Islam' sweeping across the globe. Moreover, with the demise of communism from the intellectual and political scene of Central Asia, the significance of the Islamic and Western liberal traditions viz. 'nationalism' are undoubtedly to have a boost in the future set up of the region. The decision of CARs to join *international coalition against terrorism* led by United States was on the basis of '**nationalism**' and not of '**Islam**'.

As far as **Uzbekistan** is concerned, it has a population of 26 million and **Uzbeks** form substantial minorities in all the other four republics. It contains all the most famous historical cities i.e. Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva and Kokand. Samarkand, founded in 5th century BC by Sogdian King, Afrasiab, was made capital by Amir Timur - a Sufi and a follower of Naqshbandi Order whose style of architecture was in turn to influence the entire Muslim world. His grandson Ulugh Beg turned Bokhara and Samarkand into seat of learning in decorative arts, architecture, poetry, philosophy, painting and astronomy. Samarkand became a major centre of Islamic learning, matching Baghdad and Cairo. Bokhara, an ancient Silk Road city and one of the Islamic world's famous centres of learning is witnessing a return of academic life, 75 years after its religious colleges called *madrassahs* were shut down when communism came to Central Asia. Historically, Bokhara's *madrassahs* provided education at all levels,

from elementary through university, to students from across Central Asia. Its educational institutions are renowned in the Islamic world as far back as the Middle Ages for instruction in astronomy, mathematics, medicine and of course, religion. Medieval Bokhara contained 360 mosques and 113 *madrassahs* and followed Mecca Al-Mukarramah as the second place of Islamic learning for Muslims. Even in 1900, there were 103 active *madrassahs* in Bokhara attended by some 10,000 students. The reopened 16th century Mir Arab *madrassah* has a glorious tradition of Islamic education completely independent of Russian and Soviet philosophies. It is training young men and women in religious education of Sunni Islam, the country's dominant sect. Mir Arab *madrassah* is also to teach in faculties like geography, mathematics and foreign languages. The reopening of Mir Arab *madrassah* is a product of grass-root revival of Islam that has been gaining strength in Central Asia since the practice of religion was decriminalized during the *perestroika* reforms of 1980s. Abu Abdullah Mohamed Bin Ismail Al-Bokhari (194-256 Al-Hijra) compiled the Hadith (Al-Bokhari) which is considered by Muslims as the most authentic version of Holy Prophet (PBUH)'s sayings. The other three most outstanding compilers of Hadith also belonged to Central Asia. Mohamed Bin Al-Hajaj El-Kosheri (best known as Imam Muslim), born in Khorasan [which denotes a country with its capital at Merv (presently in Turkmenistan)] compiled 'Muslim', Mohamed Bin Essa El-Tirmazi, born in a village on the banks of Balkh river (209-279 Al-Hijra) compiled 'Al-Tirmazi' and Abou Abdel Rehman Ahmed El-Nisai, born in a city Nisaa in Khorasan (215-300 Al-Hijra) compiled 'El-Nisai'.

The *Jadids* or Young Bokharians saw Turkey as a model for a modern Muslim state. For Muslims everywhere, colonialism, whether under British or Russian masters was a period of great frustration and humiliation which was interpreted by *Jadid* reformers as a failure of Muslims to keep up with their times and allowing themselves to fall prey to their ossified power structures and Mullahs. Much of this early *Jadid* thinking is once again coming to the forefront in Uzbek politics as both major opposition parties viz. Birlik, the strongest nationalist party and Erk (the split away faction of Birlik) having a more moderate stance on national question and prepared to work with the regime, advocate similar Islamic and Pan-Turkic reforms to combat the remains of communism. The Islamic

opposition has made equally dramatic strides since 1989 although pro-government Islamic hierarchy or Official Islam (as it is called) face severe challenges from *Wahabi* Movement, the Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP) which enjoys considerable support in Farghana valley and the Samarkand region. In August 1990, Uzbek intellectuals set up a rival Muslim party to the IRP, the Islamic Democratic Party which demands the imposition of *Sharia* through non-violent Islamic revolution and is willing to work with the regime. The Islamic fundamentalists who condemn popular *Sufi* tradition in Central Asia have little influence in the capital Tashkent or in the vast southern regions of Uzbekistan where Sufism and Uzbek nationalism are much stronger forces. The larger Uzbek population and their social cohesion has led to many smaller ethnic groups becoming extremely frightened of a recharged Uzbek nationalism. The rising tide of Islamic militancy and Uzbek nationalism is the most serious challenge to the government. Islamic fundamentalists have planned armed struggle to overthrow the government while urbanized Uzbek nationalists, unclear of their aims, are united in a common hatred against the government. The political opposition that has developed in **Uzbekistan** since 1989 is, therefore, perhaps the most sophisticated and the strongest in Central Asia. The **Uzbek** government, caught between the nationalists and the Islamic fundamentalists is attempting to cajole and repress both sides at the same time.

After more than a century of Russian and Soviet control, Central Asians are returning to their Islamic roots. This Islamic revival has, however, threatened to divide the newly independent societies as they try to forge national identities out of their Islamic and Soviet heritages. As many poorer Central Asians in towns like Bokhara again embrace Islamic values, their governments - headed in most cases by communists-turned-nationalists are determined to keep their societies secular. Officials as well as professionals are extremely wary of Islamic fundamentalism. The revival of Islamic values is testing the abilities of CARs to keep their state education system secular and is forcing students and scholars to make difficult personal choices. For Soviet modeled academic systems, the return of Islam raises questions ranging from a university's responsibility to teach religion to the place of women in academe. Immediately after becoming independent, Uzbek universities were swept by a wave of religious activity. Students set up Islamic Clubs and began observing

dietary laws. Some Uzbek women donned the veil while activists demanded the formation of Islamic Studies departments.

In US-led campaign against terrorism in Afghanistan, **Uzbekistan** has allowed American warplanes to use its Khanabad military airbase for search, rescue and humanitarian operations while Kyrgyzstan accommodates US aircraft at its main civil airport 'Manas' and Tajikistan agreed to let Western Forces to use its airbases. US President George W. Bush has endorsed Uzbek President Islam Karimov's view that Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) is a terrorist organization of global reach. IMU has also contributed to Tajikistan's civil strife. These developments are going to have a great impact on the movement of nationalism and Islam in Uzbekistan and elsewhere in Central Asia.

1.3 Methodology

The methodology applied for the analysis of the divergent forces of '**Nationalism**' and '**Islam**' in Central Asia is interpretative. A wide range of printed literature on the subject is readily available which helped identify, understand and predict the future shape of events which took the course of history in CARs of 55 million inhabitants, stretched from the Caspian Sea to Xinjiang in the Peoples Republic of China and identifying in different contexts and on different levels as Tekke, Lagay or Manght (some of the ethnic groups and tribes); Uzbeks, Kyrgyz, Turkmen and as Turks (with the exception of Tajiks), besides as Central Asians and above all as Muslims but quite distinct and different from Iranians, Saudis, Egyptians, Turks and Pakistanis.

During the course of study, the phenomenon of '**Nationalism**' which has definitely become dominant in the wake of the emergence of new independent states of Central Asia has been thoroughly surveyed with its possible effects on the region, socio-religious and political forces, ruling elite and the decision-makers. On the other hand, '**Islam**' which had gone underground during the Tsarist and Soviet periods, classified with Unofficial Islam and *Sufi* Orders, has surfaced in the new environment of the independent republics and is playing its full role as a religion as well as a political

and ideological force. In short, an attempt has been made to present a comparative study of the divergent pulls of 'Nationalism' and 'Islam' in an academic and intellectual manner, selecting Uzbekistan as a case study.

Notes

1. Ahmed Rashid, The Resurgence of Central Asia, Islam or Nationalism, (London: ZED Books, 1994), p.80.
- 2 & 4 See the 'Foreword' in Tahir Amin, Nationalism and Internationalism in Liberalism, Marxism and Islam, (Islamabad: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1991), pp. 7-29.
3. Strobe Talbot, "Living with Saddam" Time, 25 February, 1991, p. 19
5. John L. Esposito, The Islamic Threat – Myth or Reality, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 4-5.
6. Dr. Iffat S Malik, "Civilisational clash or dialogue" The News, 07 February, 2001, p. 6
7. Patrick J. Buchanan, "Islam - an Enemy of the United States ?" Sunday News, New Hampshire: November 25, 1990.
8. Daniel Pipes, The National Interest, Spring 1994, No. 35.

Chapter II THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 History of 'Nationalism' : An Overview

Most scholars date 'Nationalism' to the late 18th century. Prior to French Revolution, there were only fleeting expressions of a national sentiment and vague intimation of the central ideas of nationalism, with its emphasis on the autonomy of cultural distinctive nations. Nation is purely a modern construct. Some date it to 19th century while the others to early 20th century when the masses were finally nationalized and women enfranchised. The central theme of the history of 20th Century was that industrial and scientific societies, hitherto largely confined to what may loosely be called the North Atlantic World, spread to the rest of the globe. The transformation of the rest of the world had almost completed by the end of the century and the disruption of the traditional agrarian societies had been largely accomplished. Nevertheless, there were neither nations nor nationalism in pre-modern era. Mass citizen-nations could only emerge in an era of industrialism and democracy. The formation of nations in the 19th and 20th centuries has been profoundly influenced by England, France and Spain and to a lesser extent Holland and Sweden. This is usually attributed to their possessions of military and economic power during the period of the formation of nations in Western Europe.

The history of '**nationalism**' can, therefore, broadly be divided into four periods:

- **First**, beginning with the French Revolution in 1789 which in fact, first gave rise to the concept of '**nationalism**' and has been an extremely potent force in human history since then till the 2nd World War. As R. R. Palmer put it in 1973, "The wars of Kings was over; the wars of peoples has begun" because with the emergence of modern international system with the Peace of Westphalia, the conflicts of western world were mainly among Kings, Princes and absolute and constitutional monarchies attempting to expand their mercantilist economic strength and the territories.

- **Second**, taking its shape since the end of 2nd World War to the early 1970s leading to the de-colonization and independence of most of the developing countries. During this period, it was also visualized that the hold of 'nationalism' would greatly weaken with the passage of time and the nations would eventually move towards some kind of a loosely knit international community, transcending their territorial boundaries. The formation of European Union was a step in this direction but ultimately 'nationalism' and nation-states kept their grip firm over the events,
- **Third**, stretching from 1970s to the close of 1980s which could be regarded as the period for the rise of ethno-national movements throughout the world like LTTE (Liberation of Tamil Tigers Eelam) in SriLanka, Khalistan, Nagaland, Mizos and others in India, Uighurs in Xinkiang province of China, Quebec in Canada, Waloons in Belgium and MQM (Mutahidda Qaumi Movement) in Pakistan etc.
- **Fourth**, from the time of the break up of the Soviet empire to the year 2000. During this period, a wave of democratization struck the world from the continents of Europe to Asia, resulting in the flurry of emergence of a number of independent nation-states including the five CARs, where 'nationalism' is locked into a serious battle with 'Islamic revivalism'.
- **Fifth**, from the year 2001 to-date, when a unilateralist approach was adopted, mainly by United States with its invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq which was attempted to be emulated by other states like North Korea, Iran and India to advance their certain specific national objectives.

The process of economic modernization and social change throughout the world is separating people from long-standing local identities weakening the nation-state as a source of identity. The dominant theme in the current literature on 'nationalism' is that humanity is naturally divided into nation-states and, given the

persistence of the state system, nationalism is now a systemic and self-reproducing system. Nationalism is a form of politics whose origins lie in the western liberal culture which has come to dominate the world in the wake of the emergence of contemporary western international system. It is neither natural nor an ever-lasting doctrine. It is merely a coincidence that “nationalism” - the ideology of the western educated middle class became popular, the world over due to a number of factors but its sway is being seriously challenged by a variety of communitarian internationalisms in different parts of the world. Taking one case of such communitarian internationalism is ‘Islamic revivalism’. It is recognized now by both Liberal and Marxist observers that the resurgence of Islam is the most significant transnational phenomenon of the contemporary Muslim World.¹

2.2 Western Thought on ‘Nationalism’ and ‘Islam’

A survey of current literature of ‘nationalism’ and ‘Islam’ reveals that nationalism operates on many levels and may be regarded as a form of culture as much as a species of political ideology and social movement. The term has been used in several ways and signifies as under:

- i. the whole process of forming and maintaining “nations” or nation-states,
- ii. a consciousness of belonging to the ‘nation’ together with sentiments and aspirations for its security and prosperity
- iii. a language and symbolism of the ‘nation’ and its role
- iv. an ideology including a cultural doctrine of nations and the ‘national will’ and prescriptions for the realization of national aspirations and the ‘national will’
- v. a social and political movement to achieve the goals of the nation and realize its national will.

Among the Arabs and Pakistanis, the vast majority saw themselves as Muslims rather than Arabs or Pakistanis despite the vociferous campaigns of the small group of nationalists among them.²

Hans Kohn, a famous historian and most prolific writer on 'nationalism' defines the phenomenon as a 'state of mind, permeating the large majority of a people and claiming to permeate all its members; it recognizes the 'nation-state' as the ideal form of political organization and nationality as the source of all creative energy and of economic well being'.³ He believed that the very growth of 'nationalism' all over the world, with its awakening of the masses to participation in political and cultural life, had prepared the way for closer cultural contacts among all the civilizations of mankind which would simultaneously separate and unite them. **Kohn** justified imperialism as the middle link in a chain that began with European nationalism and ended with its Asian counterpart. Nationalism united the members of the European nations into political states and then impelled each state to prove its greatness by extending its political and economic domination to foreign peoples. This imperialism in turn inflamed the nationalism of the oppressed people.⁴

Carleton Hayes considers 'nationalism' as an artificial construct as compared to patriotism which, in his view, is a natural sentiment. Defining **nationalism**, he says: 'the cultural basis of nationality are a common language and common historical traditions. When these by some process of education, become the objects of popular emotional patriotism, the result is nationalism'.⁵ He further says: '...international rivalries and wars have become progressively more frequent, more general and more destructive, in measure as nationalism has evolved from its humanitarian prototype, through Jacobin, traditionalist and liberal phases, into its...integral form'.⁶

Both **Kohn** and **Hayes** agree that 'nationalism' is primarily an ideology which has an appeal on account of its simplicity and naturalness and can substitute for 'religion'.

Another Western writer, **A. J. Toynbee** considers 'nationalism' a negative force which has appeared as a result of the rise of new social forces in the domains of democracy and industrialism, if looked in the background of a parochial state. He says: 'the impact of democracy in the form of nationalism, coupled in many some new fangled ideology, had made the warfare more bitter, and impetus given by industrialism and technology had provided the combatants with increasingly destructive weapons'.⁷ On the question

of Islamic resurgence, Toynbee says: 'as for the Islamic society, we may perhaps discern an ideological premonition of a universal state in the Pan-Islamic movement'.⁸

E.H Carr identifies three periods in the modern evolution of nationalism and its impact on the changing character of international relations: the first period, in his view, consists of the pre-French revolution era. This is the period when the nations tended to be identified with their sovereigns. The second period, in **Carr's** opinion, extends from the French revolution to 1914. "Nation" in this period was identified with the 'middle classes'. The third period, which extends from 1914 to 1945, is characterized by the catastrophic growth of nationalism and the bankruptcy of internationalism. Carr attributes the growth of nationalism to three causes: (1) the rise of new social strata to effective national membership; (2) the replacement of a single world economy by multiple national economies; and (3) an increase in the number of nations.⁹

Hayes, Toynbee and Carr are of the view that the negative consequences of 'nationalism' for international relations, inevitably lead to hatred for others, rivalries and wars and that transformation of 'nationalism' from its humanitarian to its fascist and imperialist types is a logical consequence rooted within the doctrine of 'nationalism' itself. The most startling and the latest example is that of the United States which following the events of 9/11 has embarked upon the most destructive and dangerous path to safeguard its 'nationalism', national interest, dignity and honour. This is a course in the pursuit of which Washington has utterly disregarded and completely ruined the 'nationalism', national interest, dignity and honour of other nations like Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, Syria, Saudi Arabia, North Korea and even Pakistan which is its allied and most trusted ally in its fight against international terrorism. While acknowledging its vital role in its 'fight against terror', the United States has never endorsed Pakistan's concept of distinguishing between 'terrorism' and 'fight for the genuine right of self-determination, particularly the one being waged in Indian-held Kashmir which represents Pakistan's most vital national interest, its national dignity and honour. Furthermore, US-led coalition troops violates Pakistan's air and land borders at will in pursuit of what they call 'militants and terrorist' whereas Pakistan is effectively pursuing

the same goal at the cost of its 'national interest'. Hayes, Toynbee and Carr, all the three look at the disintegration of the civilization as the central tendency and hold 'nationalism' and its variations responsible for it. To them, 'nationalism' was born as a result of the religious void and the rise of democracy and industrialism.

Mark N. Katz says, although the Soviet Union no longer exists, the successor states have inherited a grim legacy of empire including the intractable border disputes, a variety of secessionist movements, and the associated problems that have given rise to ethnically exclusivist forms of 'nationalism' in the non-Russian former republics. Nor is this negative nationalism likely to be gentled by democratization, at least in the near future. This kind of nationalism results in people, whether from the ethnic majority or a member of a minority nationality, identifying primarily with their ethnic group, and only secondarily - if at all - with other citizens of their country in a bond of common interest. Democracy under these circumstances may only serve to ratify the "tyranny of the majority". This means that the former republics are likely to have confrontational relations with minority groups within their borders and with each other, for a long time to come.¹⁰

The famous anthropologist **Kevin Avruch** says: "traditions ... and 'nation' ... are recent and modern because they are continually caught up in processes of social and cultural constructions. They are invented and re-invented, produced and re-produced according to complex, inter-active and temporarily shifting contingencies of material conditions and historical practice. They are products of struggle and conflict of material interests and of competing conceptions of authenticity and identity. They are rooted in structures of inequality. The apparently requisite patina of antiquity is somehow connected ... to the need for authentic identity".¹¹

The western modernist writer, **K. W. Deutsch** argues that modernization and nationalism go hand in hand. The concept of social mobilization is central to his understanding of nationals. Social mobilization is the process by which major clusters of old social, economic and psychological commitments are eroded or broken and people become available for new patterns of socialization. Nationalism, then fulfils an emotional need of the individual, though,

he allows that 'militarism' or another 'ideology' may as well serve the same function.¹² This, in fact, is the situation which, at present is prevailing in Central Asia and is ripe for both '**Nationalism**' and '**Islam**'.

Ernest Gellner defines '**nationalism**' as primarily "a political principle which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent. National sentiment is the feeling of the anger aroused by the violation of the principle, or the feeling of satisfaction aroused by its fulfillment".¹³ He considers 'Islam' as an indigenous 'literacy-sustained tradition' and noting its inherent flexibility and potential fitness with the modernization process. He further says that under modern conditions, its capacity to be a more abstract faith, presiding over an anonymous community of equal believers could reassert itself.¹⁴

A.D. Smith says 'of all the collective identities e.g. race, class, religion, gender etc. which human beings share today, national identity is perhaps the most fundamental and inclusive. Not only has 'nationalism' the ideological movement penetrated every corner of the globe; the world is divided, first and foremost, into nation-states - states claiming to be nations - and national identity everywhere underpins the recurrent drive for popular sovereignty and democracy.¹⁵ A. D. Smith assumes that 'nationalism' is a transitional phenomenon, which will come to an end when modernization is completed. Pointing to contemporary resurgence of 'nationalism' in Europe and America, he argues that there is no strong and necessary connection between the course of nationalism and trajectory of industrialization. His basic argument is that nationalism is here to stay, as long as the world state system continues to exist.¹⁶ He further says that "...the study of nationalism needs to be re-oriented to take account not only of the new forces associated with the French and Industrial Revolutions, but also of the retention of older ties and sentiments often long antedating the modern era".¹⁷ He defines 'nationalism' as 'an ideological movement for the attainment and maintenance of self-government and independence on behalf of a group, some of whose members conceive it to constitute an actual or potential nation'. He says fundamentally, nationalism fuses three ideals: collective self-determination of the people, the expression of national character and individuality, and finally the vertical division of

the world into unique nations, each contributing its special genius to the common fund of humanity.¹⁸ He distinguishes 'nationalism' from fascism, racism, populism and imperialism. Fascism is different because it has different objectives and different social base, therefore, a 'unique' phenomenon of inter-war years. Imperialism, racism and populism are derogation, even a contradiction of the main tenets of nationalism.¹⁹ But he does not distinguish 'nationalism' from 'Islam' at all and completely ignores it. On the vital question of the continuing force of 'nationalism', he says that the real point is that the persistence of nationalism, even after its initial political demands have been met and even after modernization is attained, is a function of the international system itself. Nationalism may initially have helped to create that system; now it is, in turn, maintained by that system, much as the industrial machine, now maintains the capitalism that did so much to promote industrialism.²⁰

In his definition, **Kedourie** says nationalism is a doctrine invented in Europe at the beginning of 19th century. It pretends to supply a criterion for the determination of the unit of population proper to enjoy a government exclusively its own, for the legitimate exercise of power in the state and for the right organization of a society of states. Briefly, the doctrine holds that humanity is naturally divided into nations, that nations are known by certain characteristics which can be ascertained, and that the only legitimate type of government is national self-government.²¹

2.3 Communist Thought on 'Nationalism' and 'Islam'

Marxism cherishes classless world society as the ultimate goal. It emphasizes class struggle as natural and inevitable. It recognizes ethnic groups as nations and believes in socialist democracy as opposed to the bourgeois democracy cherished liberalism.²² The Marxist tradition is internationalist in its nature as it views the phenomenon of nationalism to overcome its challenge to the emerging proletarian internationalism envisioned by its founding fathers - Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels who did not have a well defined concept of nationalism. They said natural differences and antagonisms between peoples are daily more and more vanishing, owing to the development of the bourgeoisie, to freedom of commerce, to the world market, to uniformity in the mode of

production and in the conditions of life corresponding thereto.²³ They viewed nationalism as the ideology of the capitalist class, part of the superstructure, but a historically necessary pre-requisite for the establishment of the capitalist order. It served the functional purpose of integrative various localities under the nation at one particular historical stage. In their view, the co-relation of state and nation had its origins in the 15th century during the transition from feudalism to capitalism.²⁴ Nationalism was considered as of an instrumental value in furthering the objective creating a post national socialist community. In my view, the concept of 'nationalism' as expounded by its founding fathers died its natural death with the disintegration of Soviet Union and re-definition or transformation of the concept by the Chinese.

In her view, **Rosa Luxemburg** says 'nationalism' was merely a cloak which, translated into foreign policy, covered imperialistic desires and rivalries.

Stalin defines 'nation' as a historically constituted stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture.²⁵ For Stalin, both religion and nationalism were enemy ideologies, and both would be undercut by the division of Central Asia into smaller units, the placing of religion under extremely tight state control, and savage repression of clergy and the faithfuls.

Lenin believed that 'Nationalism' was the universal character of the early stage of capitalism and will disappear with the maturing of capitalism but his concept seems to have been negated with the passage of time.

Tom Nairn, a writer in the dialectal *Marxist* tradition, believes that the theory of 'Nationalism' represents *Marxism's* "great historical failure". Nationalism is a crucial and fairly central feature of the modern capitalist development of world history. Time-bound like other systems of speculation, *Marxism* did not possess the power to foresee this development or the eventual, overall shape which capitalist history would assume. In explaining the persistence of 'nationalism', **Nairn** believes the cost could be great; the cost would be "Marxism" itself.²⁶

2.4 Islamic Thought on 'Nationalism' and 'Islam'

Islam represents an ethical, ideological and cultural phenomenon. It is a belief system, a code of conduct based on a hierarchy of values, norms, standards, laws and institutions. It represents a way of life, a world system and a social movement for historical change. It also represents a historical tradition spread over the last 14 centuries, if not more. It is also a global phenomenon. Despite its Arab origin, Islam is not tied to any geographic entity, Arab or otherwise. It is universal not only in its message but also in its very physical existence. The world of Islam is neither Eastern nor Western, Oriental or Occidental, Northern or Southern. It is Universal. Islam cannot be described as the ideology or social system of those areas where Muslims presently rule. Islam is primarily a belief system, a religion, a social order and a universal movement. There is a Muslim presence in all parts of the world.

On the other hand, '**Nationalism**', a western concept represents a geographical entity as well as a politico-economic system which remains geographically specific. **Nationalism** continues to represent the ethos as well as the interests of western hemisphere of the world, Europe and the Americans in particular. At the conceptual level, the concept of Nationalism represents the hallmark of the West's value system which has articulated itself in the form of economic, political and cultural institutions and traditions very much characterized by the historical ethos of Europe and America. The general feeling, by and large, has been that Western Civilization has been and remains the civilization of the people of Europe and America. Despite its global outreach, its ethno-geographic character remains undiluted. **Nationalism**, a product of Europe's historical experience found its way to the Muslim World and gained many adherents and advocates in its ethnic and religious forms. During the 20th century, with the collapse of Ottoman Empire, and the gradual withering of the colonial system, Muslim people achieved the status of nation-hood one after the other. The new phase of Muslim self-assertion marked the beginning of an ideological controversy among the Muslim intellectuals which is still continuing. It is centered around the basic contradiction between Nationalism as a time-bound set of

principles related to the qualities and needs of particular group of human beings and Islam as an eternal universalist message, drawing no distinction between its adherents except on the criterion of their piety.²⁷

Nicola A. Ziadeh says the advent of **Islam** created a new community called '*Ummah*'. The holy book Quran completely revealed during the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) laid down, not only the foundations of faith but also legislated for the new Ummah. He says, thus Islam was a complete 'way of life, which provided for their conscience, their behavior and their legal existence. The Ummah came to exist as a religious as well as a legalist group. He says this Ummah became a 'state' early in its history i.e. A.D. 622 - the year of the Hijra is probably very significant. The 'state' grew in time and space and came to cover a large area of the then known world. He says the Ummah created by Islam is universal and recognizes no frontiers, short of Land of **Islam** and aspires to include all lands outside it. This ultimately leads to the existence of a Muslim state. According to him, the universality of Islam is both an act of faith and a political aspiration and since it does not recognize frontiers based on anything but Dar al-Islam, it is opposed to 'nationalism' which admits frontiers on the grounds of national characters. 'Nationalism' accords 'citizens' equal status while Islam denies equality to non-Muslims as compared to Muslims. In this context, he says 'nationalism' could exist only in a state whose citizens are all Muslims and could so behave.²⁸ Nicola A. Ziadeh, however, seems to have not understood the underlying idea, the real concept and philosophy of 'Islam' which contrary to him, accords equal rights to Muslims and non-Muslims alike and to all those who decide and prefer to live in the Muslim state.

An Islamic philosopher, **Jamal al-Din al-Afghani** advocated that the Muslims should combine '**Nationalism**' and Pan-Islamism in order to fight imperialism. In his view, Pan-Islamism meant pan-humanism as Islam's message was universal and intended for the whole of mankind. He says: "**Islam** is non-territorial in its character, and its aim is to furnish a model for the final combination of humanity by drawing its adherents from a variety of mutually repellent races, and then transforming this atomic aggregate into a people possessing self-consciousness of their own.²⁹ He considers

modern 'nationalism' as an offshoot of liberalism. He rejects it as an alien idea and a rival principle to the religion. 'Nationalism', he says takes the place of religion serving the functional purpose of new ideology. He exhorted Muslims that ethnic, racial, and territorial differences have limited utility and are recognized in Islam for identification purposes only. Islam is neither nationalism nor imperialism, but a community, a "league of nations", where recognition of artificial boundaries and racial distinctions are for facility of reference only, not for restricting the social horizons of its members.³⁰

Another great Muslim philosopher and thinker, **Dr. Muhammad Iqbal** says that it is not the unity of language or country or the identity of economic interests that constitutes the basic principle of our nationality. It is because we all believe in a certain view of the universe ...that we are members of the society founded by the Prophet of Islam. Islam abhors all material limitations, and bases its nationality on purely abstract idea objectified in a potentially expansive group of concrete personalities. It is not dependent for its life principle on the character and genius of a particular people. In its essence, it is non-temporal, non spatial.³¹

A post-modernist thinker, **Sayyed Abul Aa'la Maudoodi** says '**Nationalism**' is contradictory to '**Islam**', because it divides man from man on the basis of nationality. 'Nationalism' simply means that the nationalist should give preference to his nationality over all other nationalities. Even if a man is not an aggressive nationalist, **nationalism** at least demands that culturally, economically, politically and legally he should differentiate between national and non-national; secure the maximum advantages for his nation; protect with tenacity the historical traditions and traditional prejudices and breed in him the sentiment of national pride.³² The early modernization writers (Iqbal, Afghani and others) argued that nationalism was an alien idea to Islam, a product of the European culture which had come to dominate the Muslim world after the colonial rule. They temporarily borrowed the idea to overthrow the yoke of imperialism. The later modernization theorists (**Jinnah, Kemal Ataturk, Nasser**) accepted '**Nationalism**, both in letter and spirit and sought to create homogenized and integrated nation-states on the West-European pattern. The post modernization writers

(Maududi, Khomeini) did not accept 'nationalism', and argued that the goal of the tradition was to create an *Umma* (community). They emphasized that the existing states in the Muslim world were the product of Western culture and the greatest obstacles to Muslim unity.³³

The founder of the new state of Pakistan (which emerged on the map of the world in 1947 as an independent Muslim state), Quaid-e-Azam **Mohammad Ali Jinnah** defined 'nationalism' in his famous 'two-nation' theory saying that Hindus and Muslims are two distinct nations of the South Asian sub-continent in all respects. "The Hindus and Muslims belong to two different religious philosophies, social customs and literatures. They neither inter-marry nor inter-dine together and indeed they belong to two different civilizations which are based, mainly on conflicting ideas and conceptions. Their aspects on life and of life are different." Quaid-e-Azam in expounding the "two-nation" theory which was the basis of the demand for a separate Muslim homeland in India said: "Hinduism and Islam" represent two distinct and separate civilizations and, moreover, are as distinct from one another in origin, tradition and manner of life as are nations of Europe.³⁴ In his address to the Punjab Muslim Students Federation in Lahore on March 02, 1941, he said: "What is the use of merely saying that we are a nation? Nation does not live in the air. It lives on the land. It must govern land and must have territorial state and that is what we want to get. At another occasion, he said: "Notwithstanding a thousand years of close contact, nationalities which are as divergent today as ever, cannot at any time be expected to transform themselves into one nation merely by means of subjugating them to a democratic condition and holding them forcibly together by unnatural and artificial methods of British Parliamentary Statute.³⁵

In winding up our survey of 'theoretical framework' of our study entitled "**Nationalism Vs Islam**", we can conclude that in Western tradition, 'nationalism' is considered to be a natural doctrine and world community is sought through the prism of nation-states. They believe that humanity is naturally divided on the basis of race, language and colour and the nation-states must get together to conquer the forces of nature. On the other hand, 'Islam' considers believers to belong to one global community, the Ummah. In an Islamic society, a balance is struck between the role of the individual and the

community which is unlike in Western tradition which emphasizes its utmost attention on the individual.

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Chapter III HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

3.1 Central Asia

Central Asia, a land-locked region covering an area of about 4 million square kilometers and a population of 51 million, including 20.5 million Uzbeks, with more than 100 ethnic groups lies at the heart of Asian continent. It borders Iran and Afghanistan to the south, China to the east, Russia to the north and west. Main Central Asian steppe is bound by Caspian Sea in the west, Hindukush and Pamir in the south and Tienshan mountains in the east. The Amu Darya or Oxus originates in the Hindukush and falls in the Aral Sea after covering a distance of 2500 kilometers. The Syr Darya or Jaxartes originates in Tienshan and falls in Aral Sea after a journey of 2200 kilometers. Pamir is called the Third Pole because they were unknown. They are called 'Roof of the World'. In the centre of the region, lie two largest deserts, Karakum or 'desert of black sands' which covers 350,000 square kilometers of Turkmenistan and Kyzylkum or 'red sands' in Uzbekistan which covers 300,000 square kilometers. Bokhara Khanate was divided in 1930s by Stalin into Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan and Tashkent - a village was developed by Russians into a city and made capital of the whole of Central Asia. A Governor was posted there to govern the whole of Central Asia including the Ferghana valley of Uzbekistan. It is 300 kilometers long and 170 kilometers wide. With a population of 7 million, it is the most densely populated region in Central Asia. There was intensive cultivation of cotton and grain but because of lack of foresight on the part of Russians, many problems have been created such as water shortage, pollution, drying-up of lakes and seas, desertification and environmental miseries brought on by nuclear wastes.

Much of world's history originated in Central Asia as it is the birthplace of great warrior tribes who conquered Russia, Europe, India and China during the ancient times. To Greeks and Romans, the region beyond Oxus river was known as Transoxiana. To Arabs, it was 'the land between two rivers' i.e. Amu Darya and Syr Darya or Ma'wara' an-Nahar (what is beyond the river). The Chinese built the Great Wall to keep out the tribes of Mongols. For Russians, it has been a reminder of one of the most painful parts of their history as

they lived for centuries under Mongol rulers and their successors, the Tatars. With the discovery of sea route to India, the importance of the Silk Route (which was land connection between China and Europe) the main trade declined and Central Asia almost slipped into oblivion.

During Arab rule, there was flowering of Islamic learning, philosophy and mysticism. The Physicians such as Ibne Sina, Mathematicians such as Al-Beruni belonged to Central Asia.

Russia made its opening move eastward in 1552 when Ivan the Terrible captured Kazan from Tatars. Ivan built Saint Basil's Cathedral in Moscow's Red Square to commemorate the victory and topped its domes with onion shapes to symbolize the severed heads of turbaned Tatars. In one century by 1650, the Russians had reached the Pacific, subduing the Siberian Khanate along the way. Over the next two centuries, the Muslim tribes in Central Asia were rolled back by the Slavs. By the time Russia could claim complete control of the Caucasus, it had also moved steadily south-eastward into present-day Kazakhstan. The Kazakhs were the first to be subdued through a series of treaties with their chiefs between 1731 and 1740. As with Siberia, the pressure to conquer Central Asia was a mixture of imperial policy, ambition to rule the entire continent east of Moscow and unrelenting economic pressure from merchants, bankers and industrialists. Hence, military campaigns started: Tashkent was captured in 1865 and Samarkand in 1868. Bokhara became a Russian protectorate. Khiva was captured in 1873 and Kokand in 1876. The Russian advance in Central Asia led to the 'Great Game' between Russia and England. Sensing the coming tension, Russia legitimized its presence in Central Asia by signing 'peace treaties'. Britain also made similar moves. In 1887, Russia began a long series of demarcations of the Afghan border with the British to ensure that Afghanistan remained a 'buffer zone' between the two imperial powers. The British hawks advocated the extension of railway to the Afghan border while their Russian counterparts wanted it to be extended to Herat. Russian conquest of Central Asia was completed in 1881 when they defeated Turkmens at Goek Tepe and captured Merv four years after. Merv being the most ancient capital of Muslims in Central Asia was the last prize Russians secured in 1885.

At the time of 1917 Revolution, Central Asia consisted of three political divisions – Russian Turkistan, the Khanate of Khiva and the Emirate of Bokhara. While the province of Turkistan was created for administrative convenience, the two native states preserved the local cultural tradition. On the whole, even as a Tsarist imperial colony, Central Asia could not be Russified. It kept its mediaeval Islamic cultural character all along and the people were still linked by a wider Muslim bond of relationship. This position needed a transformation in the eyes of the Marxist revolutionaries who desired to create a national cohesion within Russian state by abolishing all mediaeval linkages. Hence, they took advantage of the internal divisions: in the case of Central Asia, breaking down such cultural unity that had existed through history, by creating ethno-national states among peoples to whom the concept of ‘nationality’ was hardly known and understood. Hence, the partition of Central Asia was carried out and completed by the end of 1924. The capital which was Bokhara and seat of Islamic learning, education and culture was shifted to an unknown small town of ‘Tashkent’. The use of Arabic script which was the only means of communication in Central Asia before 1917 was forcibly ended in favour of a Latin script in 1922 and then Cyrillic after 1935. It was hoped that the new Soviet cultural uniformity would destroy the age-old Islamic bond and Central Asia would be reborn into a new world of modern relationship as visualized by the Communists. Accordingly, Central Asia was divided into five national areas: the more advanced and the more populous people - the Uzbeks and Turkmens were formed into Soviet Socialist Republics, the smaller and less advanced into Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republics (the Tajiks) or Autonomous Oblasts (the Kyrgyz and Karakalpaks). It is this partition which underlies the evolution of modern states in Central Asia under the names of Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan. For the first time, people such as Kyrgyz obtained their statehood. Similarly, the Tajiks could have their own national state. The new states have been on a new concept of nationality while together they joined into a monolithic politico-economic structure deriving all the dictates from Moscow. It was a forced integration into a new Soviet state that could be understood in western terminology.¹

Joseph Stalin's decision to turn Central Asia into five separate republics created five nationalities out of the region's more loosely defined ethnic groupings, and by doing so, re-shaped the history of the region. The Soviet economic practice was to use these five republics as suppliers of raw materials and that is the reason that these states were in rudimentary stage when statehood was rudely and unexpectedly thrust upon them in December 1991. Central Asia was reborn into a new world of scientific thought in which religion did not put a limit to any length of human imagination but it only served to ameliorate the moral and spiritual life of man. It was this later aspect which had preserved the cultural identity of Central Asia and in boosting the national culture, the Central Asian man has re-discovered his own past and well understood that it is the amalgam of his own living cultures with the new trends of the modern world. This survival of the national culture is seen as continuation of the Islamic way of life that has received a new boost in the 1980s and 1990s after the relaxation of the stricter measures in the time of Gorbachev. This has led to the revival of some Islamic institutions but not at the cost of the erosion of the new learning and education that have gripped the whole people of Central Asia. Islam appears to Central Asian man as a force for moral regeneration in the modern world rather than a backward step to play down into the hands of the Mullahs. Today, Central Asia has marched ahead into the new world of science and technology due to Lenin and Stalin. The Islamic revival is at most to have good friendly relations with Muslim countries and particularly with the neighbors, the contact with whom may open new doors to outside world. But it would be wrong to take them as representative of new fundamentalism in Central Asia. That stage is now far left behind. The people of Central Asia are now awake to a new age of science, in which Islam has a different meaning and is fully understood as a prop to national growth. The present Central Asia has a new message to give to the Muslim world in properly understanding Islam and how to profit from it for regenerating modern man to a new world of science. It is this understanding which will keep them nearer to the thought process of the Russians and even of the western countries.

During the first fifteen years of the Soviet regime, Pan-Turkic identity gained the upper hand and was accepted as the basis of Tatar nationalism by the Tatar national communists, such as Sultan Galiev and his comrades. However, Tatar National Communism was

physically liquidated during the bloody purges of 1930s. The national consciousness, although influenced by religion, became more political in so far as it gave to the locals a sense of separateness from their foreign Russian rulers. Now a '**Nationalism**' based on essentially democratic values gradually replaced the older loyalties to religion. It acknowledged the need to liberalize and modernize the Muslim way of life, while demanding more autonomy for Muslims in political, economic and cultural affairs. Again the permeation of western ideas produced a more radical '**Nationalism**' demanding more than educational reforms, cultural autonomy and representative Government. Hence, there arose a left-wing '*Jadidism*' which opposed the feudal and clerical system, advocated modern science and culture and defended the interests of popular masses. The '*Jadid* movement' affected the Khanate of Khiva and Emirate of Bokhara, where traditional Islam had fortified itself and continued to exercise its influence among the ruling junta.

The historic transformation of Central Asia during October Revolution of 1917 swept the Turkestani nationalism, if there was any, and simultaneously it led to the end of Khiva and Bokhara Governments, which had to a great extent maintained the old Islamic institutions and their Ulama agents. When the war created new difficulties and new miseries, the intellectuals and educated sought to get over them by establishing the Kokand Provisional Government and Alash Orda but though these could face the immediate problems, they had no solution for the ultimate issue of 'nationalism'. The question arises whether there was a Turkestani nationalism. According to Mohammed Chokaev, there was a 'relative growth of national consciousness since the period of independent Khanates. Although on the eve of October Revolution, 'Turkestani nationalism' was dominant and even explosive force, yet actually Turkestani nationals consisted of a liberally minded bourgeois leadership including some communist sympathizers - both looking to Moscow for support and resentful native population who were politically naive but by experience bitterly anti-Russian. Hence, what was thought of 'Turkestani nationalism' was a vague dream of undefined territory, ill-integrated tribes and clans, Russian capitalist economy and poor industrial growth. The only binding force for the entire region was 'Islam' that was more religious than political as there was no unified state under this name. Hence, it was easy for Bolsheviks to partition

national states. Even this creation took a long time to complete and in this creation all the old opposition and governments were ruthlessly leveled. The old leadership was either removed or made to conform to the new national concepts of Lenin and Stalin.

Several international conferences were held in different cities of Central Asia in which art, architecture, literature, philosophy, science, social and economic developments of the region were thoroughly examined. Hereafter, the whole face of the cultural scene in Central Asia was transformed. This was a great cultural build-up, in which both Russians and Central Asians cooperated but it created different historical impressions. For the Russians, it was more academic, historical and archaeological but for the Central Asians, it was a revival of national culture in the context of the new political states that provided a new base for the growth of respective nationalism. These new developments followed the creation of ethno-linguistic national states by the Soviets whose primary aim was to destroy the old religio-cultural links and pave the way for the promotion of 'Soviet man. Unfortunately, such a 'man' was never born, not even in the Russian Federation, but it did lead to the rise of local patriotism, local national spirit, a determination to fight for local rights and to build the national state on the basis of their own cultural experience.

As **Islam** gave a new socio-religious system to Central Asia after the conquest of the Arabs, the Turks, among all the nomads, provided the main base of socio-ethnic population in the region and the Mongol conquest under Chengiz Khan introduced a new politico-economic order that sustained the political system hereafter and led to the emergence of modern states in Central Asia which is now well settled in its agro-industrial life. Islam as a part of national culture or vice versa, is a great inspirer to build the national life in future.²

Under **Khrushchev** in 1955, attacks against **Islam** intensified. Veil-burning was given wide publicity and 'Union of Godless' was revived in 1958 which shut down the few Islamic schools and mosques still open. During **Gorbachev** rule, *perestroika* never effectively came to Central Asia except in the shape of small, intellectual groups. The exceptions were Kazakhstan where a strong anti-nuclear movement developed. On 17-18 December, 1986, there

were demonstrations in Almaty which were certainly nationalistic rather than religious. In May 1988, there were riots in Ashgabat over unemployment. In February 1990, dozens of people were killed in Dushanbe and elsewhere over re-settlement of Armenian refugees. In June 1989, dozens of people were killed in Ferghana valley in **Uzbekistan** over 'land and housing' issues between **Uzbeks** and Meskhetian Turks. In June 1990, riots broke out between **Uzbeks** and Kyrgyz over 'land' in Kyrgyz city of Osh claiming dozens of lives. In May, 2005, violence was set off by a trial in the eastern **Uzbek** city of Andijan, of 23 businessmen charged with, being Islamic radicals and members of Akramiya, an offshoot of the outlawed extremist organization Hiz-ut-Tahrir which is accused of terror attacks in **Uzbekistan** in 2004 that killed more than 50 people. All the accused businessmen, however, denied charges levelled against them. On May 12th (2005), a large group of defendants' supporters attacked a police station and a military garrison, seized weapons and stormed the prison, freeing the accused (businessmen) and all other inmates. They then went on to capture the regional government building and tried to seize the local office of the National Security Service but were driven back. After the takeover of the government building, a crowd of upto 20,000 people gathered in the central square of Andijan on May 13th (2005), where they stood all day. "They did not want a caliphate, they wanted bread and democracy", says Bahadir Namazov of Ozod Dehqonlar. Towards the evening, troops moved in and opened fire, shooting indiscriminately at unarmed demonstrators, striking numerous women and children. According to reports, many were shot in the back of the head. The authorities conceded on May 17th (2005) – a day before a visit to Andijan organized for foreign ambassadors – that 169 were killed, including 32 troops and 137 "terrorists". Meanwhile, Ozod Dehqonlar maintained that apart from 542 dead in Andijan, 203 more people were killed by troops in Pakhtabad, another city in the Ferghana valley, when they were trying to flee to safety across the Uzbek-Kyrgyz border.³ In Kyrgyzstan, communists ran out of ideas and promoted Askar Akaev, a communist professor to become President. However, following the regime changes in 'Rose Revolution' in Georgia in 2003 and 'Orange Revolution' in Ukraine in 2004, Kyrgyzstan became the third Soviet state to overthrow the leadership of President Askar Akayev in 'Tulip Revolution' on 24th March, 2005. Opposition leader Felix Kulov was freed from jail earlier in the day by opposition protestors after they seized the main

government building in the capital Bishkek and took control of the national television station. Thousands of protestors, cheered on by residents, took to the streets to demand Akayev resign after 14 years in office and annul what they said were fraudulent parliamentary election results. The Kyrgyz Parliament, meanwhile, appointed opposition deputy Ishenbai Kadyrbekov as new Parliamentary Speaker and acting President. Earlier in the week, the opposition took control of two key towns in Kyrgyzstan's poorer south, scene of bloody ethnic conflict in the dying days of the Soviet Union, where resentment was strong against the better off 'North'. Thousands of protestors were repelled in their first bid to enter the heavily defended White House – the seat of Government. But, on their second attempt, security forces moved out of the way and let them in. At least 30 people were reported injured in the clashes with pro-Akayev supporters in Bishkek, a city of 8,00,000.⁴

On December 8, 1991, when the three Slavic republics of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus agreed, on their own initiative, to dissolve the USSR, the Central Asian response was to convene in Ashgabat, three days later, with the purpose of less of creating a 'Turkestani response' than of pressuring the original Slavic signatories into expanding to become the wider post-Soviet creature that has evolved into the CIS. They had three choices: they could form a regional grouping of their own, such as a Central Asian Community or Turkestan Confederation or work out their terms of independence individually or could push for inclusion into the newly set up of Slavic CIS, to which they preferred of all the three options available.

In January, 1993, Presidents of **Uzbekistan**, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan and the Chairman of Tajikistan's parliament met in Tashkent and concluded their discussion of common concerns with what they saw to be a momentous declaration. It was a statement of unity, an explicit declaration that the five states now shared a common fate in what one Russian newspaper called a 'Central Asian Commonwealth'.⁵ The broader purpose of this meeting, at which the existence of Central Asia was formally declared, was to seek a regional solution to growing trade problems by creating a smaller Central Asian version of the single economic space that the CIS was failing to become. Invoking their peoples' shared nomadic history, the Presidents of Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and

Kyrgyzstan began to emphasize their common interests. More substantively, the three republics began to take such steps as creating a regional banking school, lifting custom restrictions along their shared borders, and, to Russia's apparent surprise, signing a trilateral pact of military cooperation.⁶ In October 1993, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan signed an agreement on the 'Concept of Military Security of the CIS member states'. This document considers "as a major source of potential military threat for member states of the CIS, the instability of the social, economic, military and political situation in a number of regions, the existence of potent military potentials in certain states which exceed their defence needs, the proliferation of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction".⁷

In February 1995, at a CIS Summit, a declaration of member states of the 'Collective Security Agreement and a Concept of Collective Security' was adopted. This concept which, of course, was not meant to apply only to Central Asian region (and Turkmenistan had not signed the original Collective Security Agreement), defines major sources of military danger and factors which might contribute to military dangers evolving into a direct military threat. An Agreement on strengthening confidence-building measures in the military area, signed on 26 April, 1996 by Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan⁸ was of particular significance in enhancing stability and developing good neighbourly relations between them.

The five republics containing just under 20 % of the land area and population of the former USSR, have long seemed to be a logical geographical unit. They also shared demographic features. Largely dependent upon labour-intensive agriculture, the peoples of these states have much larger families, and at much younger ages, than do people elsewhere in the former Soviet Union. The titular people of all five states are of Muslim heritage and four of them are Turkic-speaking, descendants of nomads who had begun to push into the region from the east in 10th Century. The Tajiks, of Persian heritage, are the odd group out linguistically, but long periods of shared history have left their culture and traditions more similar to those of their Turkic neighbours than to those of any of the other Soviet peoples. The official language was Tajik (Persian) and hence,

all the bureaucracy was Tajik. However, the new states require a national consensus about their place in the region whether they belong to Russia, Slavic states, Asia, Muslim world, the Turkic world or each state is fated to find its own destiny - a destiny quite distinct from that of its neighbours. The states' choices among all these possible and viable identities will reveal a great deal about the kind of course they will set for themselves. They will also indicate the political values nourished by the elite and the broader population, as well as whether the leadership is in tune with those values. Today, the Central Asian States seem quite uncertain about these identity questions, partly because identity includes ethnicity which is a very contentious issue. This is the first time in history that any of these nationalities (Kyrgyz, Tajik, Uzbek, Turkmen, Kazakh) have been able to formulate state policies almost exclusively in their interests. The definition of 'nationality' is also a problem because, after all, there are two definitions of, for instance, of Kyrgyz: a native speaker of Kyrgyz who identifies him or herself as Kyrgyz and a citizen of Kyrgyzstan of any ethnic background. The first, the linguistic-cultural definition, will receive dominant attention in the nation building process of the next decade: given the suppression of nationalism under the Soviet system. Yet that tendency militates against the creation of a more liberal and tolerant society in which all citizens of the state should, in principle be accorded equal rights. But even a liberal Uzbek or Tajik society will feel an obligation to devote special attention and resources to the preservation and advancement of its native culture. The heady forces of 'nationalism' seem likely to predominate in the near future - even at the expense of building a liberal society. Realistically we will likely witness a long and gradual process towards the ethnic homogenization of each state - not necessarily to the good but hopefully at least peaceful.

The five nations also share a limited ability to deal with the problems they faced. The economic transformation of the region faced impediments both because of Soviet economic practices which had scattered lines of supply and sale all across what now had become fifteen separate states and because of geographical chance, which had so placed all five states that goods going into or out of any of them have at minimum to cross either China, Russia or Iran before reaching the open waters of international trade. Soviet favouritism towards Russians and other Europeans in education and promotion also left

these five states with almost no professionals trained in such essential fields as diplomacy, international law and international finance. Indeed, there was a great shortage of people with simple knowledge of major European languages because for most of the Central Asians, Russian had been their major language. Regarding the philosophical and ideological aspects of economic policy, all CARs had decided in early days to pursue essentially market-based economies. They differed, however, on the pace of reforms. A number of factors have thus far prevented significant reforms as well as improvement in economic performance and living standards. In fact, the downward spiral of Central Asian economies has continued since independence, in major part because of the disastrous legacy of economic planning of Soviet-era. The result of Soviet centralism for the CARs has been excessive specialization and thus dependence on one or two commodities or products. Moreover, lack of an adequate infrastructure, beyond that linking the region to Russia (notably in the areas of transportation, pipelines, and communications) complicates the Central Asians' task of economic reforms and reducing dependence on Russia. These handicaps, however, are to a great extent compensated for by the natural riches of most CARs. Especially favoured are the energy-rich countries viz. Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan while Uzbekistan and Tajikistan are also rich in mineral resources including gold and uranium. Provided that financial and technological resources are available, the CARs have begun a process of economic development and diversification. In fact, it is the potential energy reserves of Central Asia that give the region long term global importance. Big oil finds were the focus of discussion at the International Conference of Geologists in Sydney, Australia, in August, 1992. David Falvey of Australia's Bureau of Mineral Resources Exploration Research Agency, stated: 'For the hundreds of billions of barrels, the CIS is the place'. In May, 1992, Chevron Corporation announced a \$ 20 billion joint venture with Kazakhstan to exploit one of the world's biggest oil fields in the Tengiz area which currently produces 60 thousand barrels a day and has the potential of 7 million barrels a day within a decade.⁹ as against Saudi's OPEC quota of 7.9 million barrels a day. The CARs have, however, embraced their status as independent nations with enthusiasm, exploring independent development and economic relations, developing individual foreign-policy identities and joining just about every international body that offered any of them membership. They became

members of the United Nations, the Council on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) and Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC) besides seeking membership in the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and in the Common Market, NATO or the Partnership for Peace.

In Almaty, **Uzbekistan**, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan decided as early as 8th July, 1994 to create a closer economic and military union which was partly an attempt to strengthen the ex-Soviet region's bargaining power with Russia and partly a move to pool economic resources in a crisis in an area blessed with oil and gas resources, wheat and cotton surpluses, nuclear arsenal and considerable conventional weapons. After creating the new block, Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev said at a news conference that the three republics would forge common defence strategies and re-equip hardware in one country with spare parts from another. A new Central Asian Bank for Cooperation and Development, capitalized at an initial of \$ 9 million was set up to attract foreign investment.

It is widely believed that the West has conceded Central Asia as the legitimate sphere of influence for Russia. Snubbed by the West and disappointed in terms of inflow of investment, CARs were left with no choice than to turn to ECO which was the only block ready to help them particularly in the important area of communication and transport. CARs, therefore, visualized a bright future in Muslim states of South Asia who could provide them an outlet and a route for economic contacts with the outside world. Hence, at the initiative of President Niyazov of Turkmenistan, the leaders of CARs and ECO met at Ashqabad in 1992 and declared their intention to cooperate with each other to exploit their resources. Six months later, five CARs, Azerbaijan and Afghanistan were formally admitted into the fold of ECO at a special ministerial meeting held in Islamabad in November 1992. Another aspect of CARs joining ECO is their attempt to pressurize and blackmail Russia so that an equitable relationship could be built with the latter. Whatever the motives, Pakistan, Iran and Turkey could provide CARs with sea route towards the Indian Ocean, Persian Gulf and Mediterranean respectively. This would not only help them escape from the economic and political

stranglehold of Russia but also help them realize the dream of integration and unity eventually. Once the economic independence is established, the political independence will follow. At the Tashkent summit of CARs held in January 1993 when the region's name from "Kazakhstan and Middle East" was changed to "Central Asia", President Nazarbayev proposed an economic union on the pattern of ASEAN with a common newspaper, airline and TV station as well as price coordination on basic goods and energy. Russian President Yeltsin denounced the idea at the CIS Minsk Summit held later in the same month saying: "We cannot allow a situation where a Central Asian block led by Kazakhstan goes off on its own". Following the introduction of national currencies in 1993, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan created a formal customs union. Populous, relatively well endowed and well developed and set in the heart of Central Asia, Uzbekistan can afford greater independence of action than Kazakhstan which not only shares a vast border with Russia but also a large number of people (35 %) who feel at least some loyalty to the giant northern neighbour - Russia. Geography and demography alike dictate that Kazakhstan and Russia will remain bound together, like it or not. Hence, Kazakhstan has joined a customs union with Russia and Belarus, while Uzbekistan is still haggling over terms with Moscow. Similarly, Uzbekistan refuses to share with Russia responsibility for supervising their non-CIS borders, while Kazakhstan has entered into a close military alliance with Russia. Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have even fewer choices; they must work with outside powers or cease to exist: they are too small, too remote and too poor to do otherwise.¹⁰

The communists believed that they had eliminated at least three major challenges that Islam presented to them: the Jihads launched by Basmachis, the modernist Islamic trends of *Jadids* and last vestiges of Pan-Turkism. Moreover, the national communism of Sultan Galiev had never been allowed to take root and the challenge posed by the populist Sufi brotherhoods had been undermined. The Soviet leadership proved wrong. As water seeks its own level, likewise movement of ideas and technologies cannot be stopped by man-made barriers. The ideas of Basmachis re-surfaced in Afghanistan in 1980s and 1990s while those of *Jadids* returned in the shape of new nationalist-Islamic parties in Uzbekistan and the wider movements of Pan-Islamism and Pan-Turkism were to become lasting trends, the latter even taken up by former communist leaders.

Moreover, it was Sufi brotherhoods that kept religious rituals, prayers and Muslim's inner life intact, distinct and separate from the communist system.

The high degree ethnic mixture and ethnic overlap of ethnic borders complicate Central Asian state-building. For example, the only way approximately one million Tajik population within Uzbekistan, or roughly the same number of Uzbek population in Tajikistan will find fulfillment of national and cultural aspirations is as political-cultural entities inside a federated Uzbekistan or Tajikistan. At the least, it denotes the broad parts of the common cultural heritage of Central Asia before Tsarist Russia assumed control, and well before the Soviet authorities invented new "nationalities" such as Uzbek, Kyrgyz, or Turkmen out of tribal names. While the imposed Soviet system could not ensure ethnic harmony except by force, federal relationships freely arrived at by constituent nationalities within a larger framework would have a much better chance of avoiding ethnic rivalry and explosion. In short, Central Asia faces daunting problems of how to create *identity* and translate it into concrete political form and policies. The nationalist elements so far are either weakly developed (as in the states with a nomad tradition - Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan) or else have been suppressed as in Tajikistan and **Uzbekistan**. On 12th May, 2005, the popular up[rising in the eastern city of Andijan was ruthlessly crushed by **Uzbek** forces under the personal command of President Islam Karimov. It is so far unclear whether they will remain devoted to the Soviet-period construct of individual CARs or will be attracted to some broader concept. In a sense, then, we have not yet seen the 'true face' of Central Asia which will only emerge after nationalist elements come to the fore and are more exposed. The problem of *Islamism* is part and parcel of this same issue as for the growth of political **Islam** hinges not only on ideology, but on the political character of the regimes now in power. The beginning has already been made with the regime change of President Askar Akayev of Kyrgyzstan in 'Tulip Revolutionj' on 24th March, 2005 that followed the "Rose Revolution" of Georgia in 2003 and "Orange Revolution" of Ukraine in 2004.

Put simply, there is no reason to believe that Central Asia should not be subject to the same forces of political **Islam** that have

affected the rest of the Muslim world. Political Islam flourishes under certain conditions: political repression; economic hardship and social grievance; regimes beholden to non-Muslim states to help maintain power; state suppression of Islamist political activity; and repression of all alternative political movements that might also express economic, political, and cultural grievances - thereby giving the Islamists a de facto monopoly on opposition and the sole voice of cultural-religious legitimacy. While traditional culture is a factor in the spread of political Islam, the type and effectiveness of governance is perhaps the key determinant in the future power of the Islamist movement in Central Asia. Russian intervention to help stave off the growth of Islamist power is likely to be highly counter-productive and repressive regimes that benefit from such Russian intervention are likely to lose their legitimacy at an accelerated rate.

3.2 UZBEKISTAN

i. Geography

Uzbekistan lies along the famous ancient Silk Route of Europe and the Far East. In the middle of Central Asia, the landlocked republic which covers an area of 4,47,400 square kilometer is slightly smaller than France. It borders Kazakhstan to the north, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to the east, Afghanistan to the south and Turkmenistan to the south-west. Part of the northern border between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan includes the inland Aral Sea. Almost three-fifth of its land consists of steppe, desert and semi-arid terrain and the remainder, fertile valleys that skirt two major rivers - the *Amu Darya* and *Syr Darya*. In terms of administrative structure, **Uzbekistan** consists of 12 provinces, 123 cities and 157 agricultural counties.

ii. History

The region was overrun by the Mongols under Chengez Khan in the 13th century. With the break up of the empire in 14th century, a native empire emerged centred around Bokhara. In the 15th century, feudal Muslim states weredrawn up around the cities of Bokhara, Khiva and Kokand. Trade with Russia developed in 16th and 17th centuries.

In October 1917, the Tashkent Soviet assumed authority and in the following years established its power throughout Turkistan. The semi-independent Khanates of Khiva and Bokhara were first transformed into Peoples Republics in 1920 and then into Soviet Socialist Republics (SSR) in 1923-24 and finally merged into the Uzbek SSR and other republics. Uzbek SSR was set up on 27 October, 1924 from lands comprising a large part of Samarkand region, the southern part on Syr Darya, western Farghana, the western plains of Bokhara, the Karakalpak ASSR and the Uzbek regions of Khawerzim. In 1963, 40,000 square kilometers were transferred from Kazakhstan.

Bolsheviks gained control of the region only after crushing considerable local resistance. The **Uzbeks** SSR initially included as an autonomous sub-unit, which is now Tajikistan, but was split off to form a separate republic of Tajikistan in 1929. Stalin's collectivization and purges resulted in thousands of deaths in **Uzbekistan** – most mosques were closed or destroyed. Large number of Russians and other European groups migrated into the **Uzbek** SSR during and immediately after the 2nd World War and hundreds of thousands of others, such as Meshketian Turks, were deported there on Stalin's orders. Russians rather than **Uzbeks** dominated the **Uzbek** SSR until the 1960s when Mr. Sharaf Rashidov rose to power. Under Mr. Rashidov, who ruled from 1961 until 1982, the **Uzbek** Communist leadership was given considerable autonomy in return for faithfully following Moscow's party line. In 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev became Soviet leader and launched a programme of reforms that included curbing corruption which had become widespread under Mr. Rashidov. The **Uzbek** Communist Party (UCP) leadership opposed Mr. Gorbachev's reforms, making it a particular target of dismissals. Mr. Rashidov was posthumously disgraced. The **Uzbek** leadership was also shaken by its inability to stem the rising domestic discontent that accompanied Mr. Gorbachev's policy of *glasnost* (openness). In 1989 and 1990, there were violent clashes between various ethnic groups in the Ferghana valley. In 1989, Mr. Islam Karimov was appointed UCP leader. Mr. Karimov initially opposed the break-up of Soviet Union but after the failed coup in Moscow in August, 1991, he declared **Uzbekistan** independent. He thereby appropriated the nationalist agenda of the secular opposition parties, Erk (freedom) and Birlik (unity), thus eroding their support base. In December, 1991,

Mr. Karimov became President in a fraudulent election against the leader of Erk, Mr. Muhammad Solikh. The secular opposition, mainly nationalist in outlook, was then systematically crushed in 1992-93. Many dissidents, including Mr. Solikh were exiled, alongwith leaders of Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU). Mr. Solikh was tried in *absentia* in a show trial in 1999 and condemned to 15 years in prison. In November, 2001, Mr. Solikh was arrested while visiting Czech Republic on the basis of an **Uzbek** arrest warrant but was released following considerable international protests.

By the time of parliamentary and presidential elections in 1999 and 2000 respectively, the consolidation of Mr. Karimov's power was complete and he stood unchallenged. Opposition parties were forbidden to stand in the 1999 parliamentary election and in the 2000 presidential election, the only challenger for the presidency, Mr. Abdullhafiz Jalolov declared that he himself was voting for Mr. Karimov. In January, 2002, Mr. Karimov held a referendum to approve his request that a second chamber, representing **Uzbekistan's** regions be added to parliament. This referendum also extended the presidential term of office from five to seven years.

iii. Climate

Uzbekistan with rainfall generally low and the climate largely desert continental is a major agricultural producer. Cotton is the most important crop, accounting for about 40 percent of the gross value of agricultural production. It is the world's fourth largest producer of cotton and third largest exporter. It was also the largest producer of fruits and vegetables in the former Soviet Union. Agricultural production has increased rapidly in recent years - by expanding the irrigated area at the expense of reducing the volume of the Aral Sea and creating serious environmental problems.

iv. Population

Uzbekistan has the largest population of the four CARs and was the third most populous republic in the former Soviet Union. Of its 25.1 million people (2001), 60.6% live in rural areas, 50.6% is female and about half the population is under 19 years of age. The majority of the population (71.4% is Uzbek while the rest comprises

8.4% Russian, 4.7% Tajiks, 4.1% Kazakh, 3.2% Tatar and 2.1% Karakalpak)¹¹ and Koreans, Persians and Turks - about 1% each. The population growth rate is about 2.4 % per annum and is declining. According to the government's data, the annual average population growth rate was recorded 2.5% in the 1980s and 1.9% in 1990-99. It further slowed down to 1% in 2001. The slower rate of population growth is attributable to falling birth rate and large-scale emigration by ethnic minorities. (Between 1990 and 1999, there was net emigration of 845,000 people, most of them Russian-speaking). The population density is 56.2 persons per square kilometre. The population is increasingly young and rural. In 1999, 41.4% of the population was aged under 16 and 62.4% of the population lived in rural areas. Over 41 % population is urban while 49.3 % is at working age. About 35 % of the labour force is employed in agriculture, 16.4 % in industry & construction, 25 % in social sector and some 24.9 % in non-material production activities i.e. religious and non-profit activities. In 1999, average family size was 5.5 persons but rural families are on average one-third larger than urban families.

As per the 1989 Soviet census/Uzbek government, the ethnic composition of the population in 1989 and 1996 was as under:

Ethnicity	1989 (% of total)	1996 (% of total)
Uzbek	71.1	75.8
Russian	8.3	6.0
Tajik	4.7	4.8
Kazakh	4.1	4.1
Tatar	3.3	1.6
Kyrgyz	0.9	0.9
Jewish	0.5	0.1
German	0.2	0.1
Other	6.9	6.6

The size of ethnic minorities and the scale of emigration are sensitive subjects. The government wants to balance its emphasis on Uzbek nationhood with policies that will slow the exodus of non-Uzbeks. The position is complicated by the fact that in the past many people, especially Tajiks, came under pressure to declare themselves as Uzbeks. As a result, the number of Tajiks indicated in official statistics is probably understated. Most Tajiks live in Samarkand and Bokhara whereas the Kazakh minority is found mostly in the Tashkent region. Officially, the **Uzbek** make up about 76% of the population. Russian-speaking (which encompasses non-indigenous, non-Muslim groups including Russians, Ukrainians, Germans and Koreans) tend to live in Tashkent and other major cities but their numbers have declined through emigration.

Uzbekistan has well developed human resources. The Farghana valley is the most densely populated regions in Central Asia. The religious workers have risen from 3 thousand in 1990 to 15 thousand in 1994. As per UNDP's Human Development Report of 2000 on Uzbekistan, the region-wise population was as under:

Region	Population density (people per sq. km)	Urban (%)	Rural (%)
Andijan	522.0	30.2	69.8
Bokhara	35.3	31.2	68.8
Ferghana	399.4	29.3	70.7
Jizzakh	46.2	30.6	69.4
Kashkadarya	75.9	25.5	74.5
Karakalpakstan	9.0	48.4	51.6
Khorezm	217.4	23.9	76.1
Navoi	7.1	40.5	59.5
Namangan	260.8	37.6	62.4
Samakand	159.5	27.2	72.8

Surkhandarya	86.6	20.0	80.0
Syrdarya	150.2	32.3	67.7
Tashkent (city)	-	100.0	0.0
Total (Average)	54.8	37.6	62.4

v. Education

Uzbekistan's education system is a legacy of the Soviet era but standards have fallen since independence. A lack of resources has left the system poorly organized and unable to cope with rapid population growth. Scientific and technical education has suffered without support from Russia and demand from industry. In the unlikely event of large-scale foreign investment being enticed to the country, foreign firms would soon encounter shortages of qualified staff.

According to official statistics, **Uzbekistan's** population is well-educated, with the official illiteracy rate at barely 1%. However, government's spending on education declined from 12% of GDP in 1992 to 7% in 2001. Universal pre-school education was an important component of the Soviet education system, yet in 1999, only 16% of children of pre-school age were attending kindergarten, a rapid fall from 31% in 1992. In rural areas, the ratio was just 9.5%, compared with 31% for pre-school urban children. In 1999, one-half of those aged between 06 and 23 were enrolled in education, down from 59% in 1993. Pre-school and primary school education have suffered more than secondary and tertiary education. Although the number of students in tertiary education has fallen, the government has maintained student subsidies, fearing a repeat of the riots of January 1992 in which students were protesting against price rises. In 1999, just 19% of 19-year olds were in full-time education, down from 31% in 1992.

vi. Health

In **Uzbekistan**, the standard of healthcare has been adversely affected by the emigration of Russian-speaking doctors,

lower funding and continued inefficiencies. Spending on healthcare fell from 4.8% of GDP in 1992 to 2.6% of GDP in 2001. Healthcare is publicly financed and is supposed to be free but the Soviet era practice of using bribery to obtain faster treatment has become more common as resources have dwindled. Employment in healthcare grew to 567 thousand persons in 2000, representing 6.3% of total employment.

Uzbekistan is trying to reduce costs by scaling back on expensive in-patient care. The number of hospital beds per head dropped by 38% between 1993 and 1999. Primary healthcare, particularly in rural areas is receiving more attention as less emphasis is put on hospital medicine. Infant mortality is falling from an average of 47 per 1000 live-births in 1971-80 to 19 per 1000 in 2000. Contraception is more widely used than in the past, reducing maternal deaths by extending the gap between pregnancies. The maternal death rate in child birth dropped from 30.1 per one hundred thousand live-births in 1992 to 9.6 in 1998 but then was reported to have risen to 34.5 in 2000 which could be explained by statistical error as mortality among children under 05 is falling. Life expectancy rose by one year between 1990 to 1997, reaching 70.3 years where it has since remained. There is one Physician for 280 persons and one Nurse for 90 persons.

vi. Constitution, Parliament, Government & Judiciary

Uzbekistan adopted a new constitution on 08 December, 1991 which states that it is a pluralist democracy and establishes basic principles on civil rights and the division of powers between the executive, legislative and judiciary branches of the Government. Several components of the Constitution indicate the enabling institutional structure to support economic reforms in the country. The constitution enshrines democracy, press freedom, freedom of conscience and religion and the rule of law. In practice, Uzbekistan is an authoritarian state where the government, parliament and the judiciary exist only to serve the President.

Uzbekistan's Parliament - Ali Majlis (Supreme Council) is constitutionally the highest body of state but plays only a limited political role. It has been elected on multi-party basis for the first time.

The generally recognized democratic standards as freedom of will, freedom of speech, conscience and religions are becoming firmly established in the society. Uzbekistan's Parliament has 250 seats. Parliamentary elections have been held in diminishing rounds since 1994 by an electorate of 11 million. The PDP commands overwhelming majority with National Progress Party having very negligible seats in the Parliament.

Uzbekistan consists of 12 provinces and the autonomous republic of Karakalpakstan. Karakalpakstan's constitutional right of secession is illusory – it is simply an administrative region with greater cultural rights. The provinces have little power as decision-making is highly centralized. Nevertheless, because Uzbekistan is a relatively recent creation, political clans founded on provincial affiliations are strong. An example of their power was witnessed in 2000 when it emerged that provincial administrations were preventing foodstuffs from leaving the areas under their control. To strengthen central power over the regions, President Islam Karimov has created a system of provincial Governors, with the President alone responsible for appointing and removing the Governor or *Hakim*. Each Governor has considerable power and the equivalent position in Karakalpakstan is the President of the autonomous republic. Mr. Karimov regularly dismisses provincial Governors, often humiliating them in televised sessions of the provincial councils. Nevertheless, he has to combine these coercive measures with others designed to ensure the support of regional bosses. As a concession to provincial interest groups – all of which are ultimately loyal to the regime but seek autonomy generally for personal economic gain – the government has added a second chamber to Parliament, based on provincial representation in 2004.

Uzbekistan has been recognized by more than 150 countries of the world, 74 of them have established diplomatic relations while more than 30 countries have opened full-fledged embassies including the United States, Japan, Germany, Great Britain, France, China and Pakistan. Tashkent has set up diplomatic missions in more than 20 countries.

Upon independence in 1991, the then First Secretary of UCP and the leader of PDP, Mr. Islam Karimov was elected for a five-year term in the Presidential elections held on 29 December, 1991 against a single opponent with over 80% of the vote. In 1995, Mr. Karimov won a referendum that allowed him to stay in office until 2000. His only opponent in the January 2000 Presidential elections was the Head of the ruling PDP, Mr. Abdulhafiz Jalolov, whose campaign emphasized loyalty to Mr. Karimov. According to Uzbekistan's constitution, no person can be President for more than two terms. Mr. Karimov's extensive powers to get through constitutional amendments is relatively easy. This became evident in February 2002, when the presidential term was extended from five to seven years, a ruling that has been applied to the current term.

The Prime Minister and his Cabinet are largely powerless, as all major decisions come from the President's office. The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Abdulaziz Komilov has a high profile by Uzbek ministerial standards but his autonomy from Mr. Karimov is minimal nonetheless.

The judiciary is subordinate to the government since it is appointed by the executive.

The National Security Service (SNB), the successor to the KGB, reports directly to the President. The SNB is one of the most powerful and effective secret police forces of the former Soviet era since there are few curbs on its activities. Its main functions are to press dissent, harass the Muslim clergy and keep the expatriate population – including foreign financial officials and diplomats – under close surveillance. The other arm of the security service is the Police force of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the function of which is to monitor and control the activities of ordinary citizens.

viii. Defence Forces

Uzbekistan inherited considerable military infrastructure from the former Soviet Union. On this basis, it has built up its armed

forces, now 75,000-man strong. A scheme to increase troop numbers to 100,000 was dropped in 1999 because of budgetary constraints. Instead, the armed forces are to be reduced in two stages: conscription will be phased out and the forces gradually made fully professional. There are no official figures on defence spending but Mr. Karimov has stated that Uzbekistan spends 8% of its budget – around 2% of GDP – on defence and security.

The military balance of **Uzbekistan** in 2001-2002 as per International Institute for Strategic Studies was as under:

Force	Personnel	Equipment
Army	50,000	350 tanks, 604 armoured fighting vehicles/armoured personnel carriers, 347 artillery pieces
Air Force	Between 10,000 and 15000	135 combat aircraft, 129 combat helicopters (attack, assault & reconnaissance)
Interior Ministry troops	17,000 to 19,000	unknown
National Guards	1,000	Unknown (acts as residential Guards)
In storage	-	2,000 tanks, 1200 armoured fighting vehicles, 750 artillery pieces (mostly inoperable)

To create a locally staffed military, **Uzbekistan** has been forced rapidly to promote ethnic **Uzbek** officers from the Soviet armed forces, many of them with little military experience. Ethnic **Uzbeks**

rarely become Soviet officers and many conscripts were put into *stroibat* (construction battalion), where they received little military training. Of the Soviet officers based in Uzbekistan in 1991, only 6% were ethnic Uzbeks but the new officer corps is of poor quality and the army's combat readiness is suspect. The most important forces are the National Security Service (SNB), the interior ministry troops and the National Guards. These forces are geared towards domestic repression and preventing coups. The interior ministry troops include Border Guards, an elite formation that has been under the control of a separate government office since 1999.

ix. Natural Resources

Uzbekistan's industrial production centers on the processing of agriculture-based raw materials. The machinery sector (northern part) includes many products that are linked to agriculture as production inputs such as cotton harvesters and textile machinery and within the chemical manufacturing branch, fertilizer.

Uzbekistan is rich in natural resources - primarily in gold, oil, natural gas, coal, silver and copper. It is the world's seventh largest producer of gold, the third largest producer of natural gas in the former Soviet Union and is among the world's ten largest natural gas suppliers. Its annual gold production of about 65 tons is about a third of what the former Soviet Union used to produce. It has the biggest silver deposits in the world. Proven oil reserves were 600 million barrels at the end of 2000, according to BP Amoco – just 0.1% of world oil reserves. Oil reserves are sufficient for domestic demand, but massive investment in exploration, production and pipeline construction would be required for large-scale exports to become possible and even then Uzbekistan would be only a marginal producer. Gas reserves are more significant at 1.87 trillion cubic meters at the end of 2000. According to BP, Uzbekistan has the 14th largest gas reserves in the world, representing 1.3% of the world total. There are substantial gold deposits and workable deposits of silver, copper, lead, zinc, tungsten, coal and uranium.

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Rapid population growth and expansion of cotton monoculture during the Soviet period resulted in large volumes of water being diverted from *Amu Darya* and *Syr Darya* (the Oxus and the Jaxartes rivers), the two largest rivers in Central Asia, containing 90% of the region's water resources. The Soviet authorities devised large and complex schemes in which immense dam projects were to provide upstream republics (Tajikistan and Kyrgyz republics) with hydro-electric power in the winter months while enough water flowed down in the summer to support the agricultural sectors of **Uzbekistan**, Turkmenistan and southern Kazakhstan. The differing needs of the upstream and downstream republics were irrelevant during the Soviet period, but after independence, the cost of running dam and water-flow monitoring systems was excessive for the Tajiks and the Kyrgyz. The two upstream republics have, therefore, sought to extract payment for the water used by Kazakhstan and **Uzbekistan**. This has become a source of tension between the Central Asian states and Uzbekistan's periodic disconnecting of gas supplies to the Kyrgyz republic is in part a retaliation for the Kyrgyz republic retaining water in reservoirs over the summer months which dries up the cotton fields of **Uzbekistan**'s Ferghana valley.

Irrigation across Central Asia is extremely wasteful of water so that many **Uzbek** fields suffer from too much, not too little, water. Along with the dilapidation of drainage technology, this produces a rising water table that prevents harmful chemicals from being washed away so that fields become unstable. Since independence, with the breakdown of centrally planned economy, there has been little investment in irrigation system. In 2000, some regions, particularly the downstream autonomous republic of Karakalpakstan, suffered their worst drought in decades, causing a steep fall in cotton and grain production. Other regions suffered shortages of drinking water. There seems at present little prospect that the Central Asian states will succeed in reducing drastically their use of water and renovating their hydro-systems. None will be willing to do so if it feels that it is losing out to the others. Burgeoning populations will be competing for dwindling or fixed water resources

over the coming decades. The water issue is, therefore, set to become a central problem in inter-state relations and one that Uzbekistan which has a large population and armed forces, control over much of the course of the *Amu Darya* and *Syr Darya* (rivers) and borders with all the other riparian states will be in a good position to exploit.

x. Transport and Communications

Uzbekistan is land-locked with goods having to cross at least two other countries to reach a port. In 1999, **Uzbekistan** had, 3380 km of railways (excluding industrial lines) and 81,600 km of main roads. Most infrastructure is poorly maintained owing to a lack of funding. The national airline, Uzbek Havo Yo'llari (**Uzbekistan Airways**) established on 28th January, 1992 flies within the former Soviet Union and carried its first flight to London (UK) and then to Karachi (Pakistan), Delhi (India), Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia), Tel Aviv (Israel) and Beijing (China) the same year. **Uzbekistan Airways** added new international routes year after year to Frankfurt (Germany) and Bangkok (Thailand) in 1993, Athens (Greece), Manchester (UK), and Seoul (Republic of Korea) in 1994, trans-continental route Tashkent-New York (16 hours) and Bahrain in 1995, Baku (Azerbaijan) in 1997, Paris (France) and Dhaka (Bangladesh) in 1998, Tashkent-Kiev-New York in 1999 (joint operation with Ukrainian Airline), Rome (Italy), Birmingham (UK) and Amritdar (India) in 2000 and Tashkent-Osaka (Japan) in 2001. In this way, **Uzbekistan Airways** has become one of the biggest and stable airline companies in Euro-Asian continent and competes with the biggest airline companies of the world. It has more than 20 international routes which extend from United States and Western Europe to Japan, Malaysia, Pakistan, India and Bangladesh. The number of passengers using **Uzbekistan Airways** is more than two million.

Uzbekistan Airways established its own tourism business by renovating all the major airports of the tourism centres of **Uzbekistan** and recreating the historical *Great Silk Road*. One such place is Termiz which is not only one of the most ancient cities of the world but also an entire era of cultural development through the Bactrian and Kushan empires. One of the great Islamic monuments – the tomb of al-Termizi is located in the semi-circle of Buddhist and later Muslim hermit cells. Termizi lived and developed his great

Islamic learning here among Budhists and Muslims. The tomb and mausoleum of al-Termizibecame like the holy Islamic sacred place of Mecca al-Mukarrama (pilgrimage place of Muslims in Saudi Arabia) during the Societ Zarist periods. The Termizi Tour is also conducted as a “Religious Tour” in cooperation with specialists from Tashkent Islamic University – a very interesting option for Muslimsfrom all over the world. Besides, traditional tours to the historical cities of **Uzbekistan** on the *Great Silk Road* such as Bukhara, Samarkand and Khiva, **Uzbekistan** Airways has begun tours to such l4essor known places as arghilan where *silk* is produced and Kokand with its magnificent archetectural monument – Khudoyar-khana palace.

Since **Uzbekistan** has no access to sea or biggest train routes of the world, **Uzbekistan** Airways is a main source of earning hard cash, much needed by the country. It is also a main source of expanding and strengthening political, econbomic and cultural links with the rest of the world.

Uzbekistan’s telecommunications system is dilapidated and telephone density is low. The government has an ambitious programme which began in 1994 and is scheduled to end in 2010 to install digital exchanges for all lines and have a telephone density of 13 lines per 100 inhabitants by 2010. However, progress has been uneven. According to World Bank data, between 1995 and 2000, telephone density rose in urban areas from 22.7 to 24.8 telephone mainlines per 100 inhabitants but for the country as a whole it fell from 6.8 lines per 100 inhabitants in 1995 to 6.7 in 2000.

xi. Media

Media is state-controlled and heavily censored as in the Soviet period and indeed more so than during the period of *prestroiika* (restructuring) and *glasnost* (openness). The number of daily newspapers fell from four in 1995 to three in 2000 compared to an average for Europe and Central Asia of 102.

Foreign broadcasters have been taken off accessible medium-wave frequencies and foreign journalists have been harassed. Some regional television stations exist on a commercial footing,

broadcasting mainly foreign music programmes and films with little production of their own. According to World Bank, the number of television sets per 1000 people rose from 192 in 1995 to 276 in 2000 but growth is also likely to have been concentrated in urban areas.

xii. Economy:

Uzbekistan as also the other CARs had to begin from scratch in their development in the 1990s. In losing Moscow as the center of gravity, the CARs lost crucial subsidies for budgets, enterprises and households, inputs for regional industries, markets for their products, transportation routes, and communications with the outside world - much of which was filtered through the Soviet capital. According to World Bank estimates, the CARs' economies declined by 20-60 % of GDP as a result of these losses between 1990-1996. Within the following two years of independence, **Uzbekistan** and other republics received a fast lesson in what independence signified. In December 1991, Russia cut off trade with Kazakhstan and when **Uzbekistan** and Russia disagreed over cotton prices, the **Uzbeks** went into the winter of 1992 short of fuel and grain. Soviet-era attainments in health, education, infrastructure, and industrial development gradually eroded. As a result of this decline and deprivation, there had been a massive exodus of ethnic Russians and highly-skilled members of indigenous ethnic groups from Central Asia including **Uzbekistan**. New bilateral treaties were quickly negotiated which eased the crises, but the republic learned that it had to make its own way into the world. This was not an easy task considering that it did not have any foreign legations since Russia had seized the Soviet Union's foreign assets, saying that the price of receiving a share of them was to accept a share of the Soviet's foreign hard-currency debt. This was something that **Uzbekistan** and other republics felt they could not do. By 1993, each of the republics including **Uzbekistan** had signed treaties with Russia, renouncing their claims to the Soviet Union's legacy.

Domestically, **Uzbekistan** was suffering as well, with inflation rampant and economic productivity dropping rapidly. Hence, Tashkent's acute economic needs compelled it to turn to the international community. Olcott explains that with independence, the new state of **Uzbekistan** hoped to use its ethnic composition to attract

international investment and foreign support. She contends that in order to strike the best deals possible between its own national interest and those of a partner, the **Uzbeks** could play various 'ethnic cards' in the international arena. Among these 'ethnic cards' is their **Islamic** religion. Olcott has made a very interesting point since she is suggesting that internal economic forces could be responsible for pushing the republic towards **Islam**. Indeed the **Uzbek** elite, though committed to the development of secular society, hoped to use **Islam** to attract **Islamic** and other oil-rich Gulf states which were potential sources of aid and investment. 'Islamic card' has been played successfully by **Uzbekistan**, where the Muslim population is more devout and homogeneous, in pursuing contacts with the Gulf states. President Islam Karimov emphasized his devotion to **Islam** by taking his presidential oath on *Qur'an* and telling interviewers that he only ate *halal* meat that met Muslim standards. However, when Nabiev was ousted in neighbouring Tajikistan, Karimov saw the danger of religiously inspired political activism inspired by **Islamic** extremism and soon became hesitant to advance **Uzbekistan's** 'Islamic interests' abroad and began cracking down on suspected religious activity at home. Muslim societies are good sources of commercial investment, but the problem is that most of their foreign aid programmes are linked to projects designed to propagate faith and in the light of the dangers of **Islamic** extremism, Tashkent has been more eager to work with the rest of the world, nurturing relationships with countries like United States, Germany, France, Japan, China and South Korea and multilateral institutions where the big money is. Besides, it is inclined to develop economic relations with moderate Islamic countries like Malaysia, Indonesia, Turkey and Pakistan. In addition, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank have been quick to supply much-needed foreign exchange to the region. Thus, it is unlikely that economic exigencies will force the **Uzbekistan** to play its 'Islamic card' only.

At the time of independence in 1991, **Uzbekistan** lost massive Soviet subsidies, had a structural over dependence on cotton exports, needed to create jobs for a rapidly growing and poorly educated rural population and had a financial sector in desperate need of reforms. However, the main fears of President Islam Karimov were to lose political influence as well as control of economic and social changes. He, therefore, replaced the mild and ineffective reforms of

Gorbachev era with state-led economic development policies. As a result, **Uzbekistan** avoided restructuring and ended up with a high-inflation economy that lurched from crisis to crisis as the cotton crop sank to 20-year lows.

The failure to abide by reform pledges strained relations with the IMF which suspended **Uzbekistan's** only stand-by loan facility in 1996. An **Uzbek-IMF** joint working group to discuss economic reforms in 1997 failed to resolve the two sides' disagreements over the course of the economic policy. In 2001, the IMF decided not to replace its representatives in **Uzbekistan**, Christoph Rosenberg when his term ended in April. Mr. Rosenberg made it clear that the IMF's decision was a protest against the government's economic policy.

Through a mixture of currency and exchange rate controls, state orders for its two main export commodities, cotton and wheat, and the good fortune of being self-sufficient in energy, **Uzbekistan** has muddled along for several years. It has stagnated economically and politically, but defied expectations of collapse and refused to open up and deregulate its economy.

With pressure on Tashkent from Unites States and other international donors in 2002, **Uzbekistan** is now contemplating renewed IMF and World Bank programs and a new phase of the macro-economic reforms. Progress in economic reforms, an improvement in its economic performance, the removal of currency controls, and increased readiness to deal with regional issues in a cooperative manner accrue major benefits for **Uzbekistan**. However, there is also a serious risk of increased domestic social dislocation, deprivation, and destabilization from new reforms, which could have disastrous implications for **Uzbekistan's** neighbors.

Towards the end of 2001 and taking advantage of the international goodwill for **Uzbekistan** derived from its role in the "war against terrorism", the government approached the IMF. In January, 2002, the government adopted a programme of mild economic reforms as part of a Staff Monitored Programme (SMP)

with the IMF. Although the programme is committed under the SMP to overturning most of its economic policies, the fact that Mr. Karimov opted for an IMF staff monitored economic plan rather than a full IMF agreement underlined his continued hesitancy about economic reforms. A full IMF agreement that included a loan would have forced **Uzbekistan** to keep to its pledges, whereas the failure to do so under an SMP has no financial consequences. Despite these signs of wariness on the part of the government, the IMF's decision to sign the SMP was probably influenced by pressure from **Uzbekistan's** bilateral lenders and donors, particularly the United States. Other sources of international aid to **Uzbekistan** were also increased after the outbreak of the war, with the message that the chance for economic reforms should be taken. The government's commitment to reform is questionable, however, given that pursuing the policies outlined in the SMP would undermine **Uzbekistan's** current economic model. The government's main policy objective since 1992 has been the promotion of import-substituting industrialisation (ISI) which is designed to reduce import costs by building up a protected domestic industrial sector. ISI has been funded with foreign debt. Since ISI industries do not produce high-quality goods, most of their output is sold domestically or in soft-currency markets, so that foreign debt is serviced with the proceeds from cotton and gold exports which account for about 40% of **Uzbekistan's** export earnings. The value of the gross transfer from exporters to importers as a result of these policies was estimated by the IMF at 16% of GDP in 1999. ISI is, therefore, incompatible with **Uzbekistan's** SMP commitments, given that these involve liberalizing trade and unifying the exchange rate – thereby removing the barriers by which ISI has been sustained. Further undermining **Uzbekistan's** prospects for reforms is the fact that ISI has resulted in the creation of a large, inefficient, heavily indebted and inward-oriented industrial sector which are controlled by vested interests who are opposed to any reform or liberalization.

According to the UK-based Economics Intelligence Unit, the main economic indicators in the years 2001-2002 were as follows:

Contents	2001	2002
Real GDP Growth (%)	4.5	3.5 (2003-2004)
Consumer Price Inflation (%)av	27.4	27.6
Current Account Balance (US \$ m)av	- 49	-
Official Exchange Rate (Som = US \$)	423.31	769.50
Population (m)	25.2	25.37
GNP/capita (%)	-	3.1

The comparative economic indicators with other countries of the region in 2001 were as under:

Economic Indicators	Kazakhstan	Russia	Turkey	Ukraine	Uzbekistan
GDP (% real annual change)	13.0	5.0	- 8.0	9.0	4.5
Nominal GDP (US\$ bn at PPP)	67a	780	424a	128a	47a
Consumer prices (% annual change: av)	8.5	21.6	54.4	12.0	27.2a
Current Account balance (US \$ m)	- 1,739a	34,236a	3,957a	1,125a	- 49a
Goods: exports fob (US\$ m)	9,750a	103,042	32,967a	17,100a	2,768a
Goods: imports fob (US\$ m)	- 9,024a	-53,390	- 38,937a	- 16,890a	- 2,534a

Uzbekistan is one of the poorest republics of the former Soviet Union with a per capita income preliminary estimate of US \$ 860 in 1992 and US \$ 970 in 1993¹². Since 1980, it has been experiencing 0.2% growth of per capita income during the period 1980-1993 while in 1999, it grew by 2.9 %. However, its GDP grew by 2.2% per annum during this period. Over the time, inflation has accelerated. The average annual inflation during 1980-1993 was 24.5% while in June, 2002, it was just over 24%. The change in Consumer Price Index (CPI) increased from 17.9 % in 1998 to 27.6 % in 2002. During the same period, change in food price index increased from 12.6 % in 1998 to 28 % in 2002.¹³

Uzbekistan had Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of US \$ 20.425 billion in 1993. About 23 % of GDP is contributed by the agriculture sector while 36 % comes from industrial production. The largest share towards GDP i.e. 41 % was contributed by the services sector. The GDP growth rate was only 2.2 % per annum during 1988-1993 as compared to 6.3 % during 1970-1980. Hence, the economic growth had significantly decreased during this period for which the major reason was USSR's crisis. The growth in agriculture sector was only 0.2 % per annum during 1980-1993 while in industry, it was 4.3 %, in manufacturing sector 5.6 % and in service sector 5.1 % during the same period.¹⁴ During 1993, Gross Domestic Investment constituted 29 % of the GDP and Gross Domestic Savings were 34 % of GDP which was a very respectable performance. The annual real GDP growth in 2003-04 was 3.5%, supported by a moderate strengthening in industrial sector growth and a pick-up in growth in the agriculture sector. The trade surplus fell in 2003-04 as import expenditure picked up. This contributed to a widening of the current account deficit to an annual average of 3.5% of GDP in 2003-04.

Uzbekistan is facing severe economic problems ever since it was separated from the former Soviet Union and became an independent republic. Its exports in 1993 amounted to US \$ 1.466 billion and increased to US \$ 2.9 billion in 2002 while imports were US \$ 2.81 billion in 1993 and reduced to US \$ 2.7 billion in 2002. Its balance of payment has, however, turned negative recently. It has become dependent upon food imports which constitute 42 % of its overall imports whereas 38 % of the imports pertain to primary commodities and only 20 % relate to manufactured goods. Its exports consist of manufactured goods (41 %) and fuel, mineral & metals (10 %). The other exports pertain to primary goods and non-traditional ones.

Uzbekistan has a typical monoculture economy, significant contribution made by agriculture, particularly cotton. This situation has been further aggravated by the country's excessive dependence on Russia as its main trading partner and source of financial and technological assistance and investment. Its other major trading partners are industrialized countries who have more than 70 % share in its trade. However, 30 % of its trade is with developing

countries. Among the Asian partners are India and Republic of Korea which have a trade share of over 68 %. The Asian trade, however, amounts to only 15 % of the overall trade of the country.

Uzbekistan is getting into the foreign indebtedness due to the poor performance of the economy. Its foreign loans amounted to US \$ 739 million in 1993 which kept on increasing since then and rose to US \$ 4627 million in 2001. The country needs over US \$ 700 millions annually to stabilize its economy. Besides, long run structural reforms are needed to cope with service economic problems. It had a fiscal deficit of about 11 % of GDP in 1992 which could not be sustainable given low economic growth, balance of payment deficit and hyperinflation. However, structural reforms are being implemented to improve the economy.

Uzbekistan, from the very outset, had to independently solve the most acute problems inherited by a hypertrophied and one-sided economy with deformities in the utilization of natural and mineral resources, development and distribution of productive forces, price formulation, population consumption structure and identifying mechanisms and forms of transforming administrative planning relations into market economic relations, look for optimum ways for integrating the system of world economic ties and establishing inter-state relations.

Uzbekistan's President Islam Karimov outlined five key principles which form the basis of realization of radical economic reforms during the transition period.¹⁵ They are:

First, economy should prevail over politics and constitute its inner content, to be more precise, the economy and problems of its further development form the core of the current policy,

Second, the state should play the role of a chief reformer during the complicated transition period. It should initiate the process of reform in the interests of the nation, identify priorities of economic progress and elaborate and consistently implement a policy of radical transformations in economy, social sphere and public and political life of the sovereign state,

Third, the entire process of renovation and progress should be based on a legal foundation. Only then tangible results of economic transformations may be expected and made irreversible when they are founded on adjusted and practically applicable laws.

Fourth, considering the real demographic situation and the existing living standard of the population, transition to market relations should be associated with the implementation of preventive moves for the social protection of the people. Only a strong and efficient mechanism of social protection and guarantees may secure dynamic advancement towards market economy with simultaneous maintenance of socio-political stability, and

Fifth, the establishment of new economic market relations should be introduced with careful consideration and stage-by-stage approach.

It is extremely vital to change the mentality of the people and break dominating stereotypes. Failure to convince people of the need for renovation and transformation of society, failure to change driving forces and human values, motivation of labour and behaviour mean to doom reforms to failure.

A qualitative new stage in the implementation of economic reforms began with the introduction of national currency 'Som' on July 01, 1994 which made it possible to completely abolish rationing of food products and introduce free prices without any shock effect.

Uzbekistan was one of the first to recognize the right of private ownership and create equal conditions for all forms of ownership. Juridical and organizational pre-requisites have been created and effective mechanism of privatization of state property and transformation of state enterprises into other forms of proprietorship have been practically elaborated and approved. Privatization of housing was the initial step. More than one million apartments, earlier controlled by the state or 95 percent of state housing stock have been turned into personal property of citizens in the course of privatization. The number of private enterprises were about 20 thousand by early

1995. More than 250 thousand people are engaged in individual labour and about 0.4 million people are employed in the non-state sector of economy which constitutes almost half of all employed in social production. The number of *Dehkan* farms increased by 1.9 times in 1994. The total area under crop cultivation by *Dehkan* farms increased by 2.7 times in 1994 as compared to 1993. The production of potato grew by three times and that of potato, vegetables and melon by 3.3 times, milk by 2.1 times and eggs by 1.3 times. All farms were granted tax-holiday on their profits and value added tax and exempted from other taxes for two years after establishment of *Dehkan* farms.

A significant step in the initial stage of economic reforms was allotment of land under kitchen gardens, assignment of new, mostly irrigated lands under farmsteads and fruit and vegetable gardens through expansion of personal holdings of the population. The allotment of land to the people played a decisive role in the solution of the most urgent and acute problems during the first and most crucial years of reforms. It accrued the following benefits:

- i. It helped to attract excess unemployed section of the population, primarily women and youth, residing mostly in rural areas, to social productive labour and thus relieve tension in the field of growing threat of mass unemployment.
- ii. It helped to increase real income of the population and strengthen social guarantees for many rural residents through issuing service record books to those engaged in production of farm output by agreements and granting them right to old-age pension.
- iii. It eased the acute problem of supply of essential food products to the population. Families allotted with land, met their own needs in vegetables, fruit and live-stock products. In addition, they expanded sales of their produce at urban markets and thus contributed their share to the solution of the problem of food supplies.
- iv. It considerably expanded the scale of individual housing construction which contributed in lessening the burden of

the state in providing housing facilities and led to improvement of utility, communal and living conditions of the people.

- v. It helped to build socio-political and economic stability in the newly independent republic.

The adoption of effective anti-inflation measures enabled to cut down by half, the average monthly inflation rate in the second half of 1994, that is from 31.7 percent to 15.1 percent. Official data indicate that annual inflation was just over 24% in June, 2002 – the lowest rate for two years following monthly deflation of 3.9 % in that month, owing to a seasonal fall in food prices and an increase in the production of consumer goods. However, the average annual inflation rate in 2002 was 27.6 %. Monthly inflation was expected to have risen since then, influenced partly by the pension and public-sector wage increases that came into effect in August, 2002. A shortage of consumer goods and foodstuffs, owing to high import tariffs, will also have pushed inflation upwards. Hence, the average annual inflation in 2002 was 27.6 %, little changed from 2001. The average annual inflation in 2003 was 26.5%. Rising services charges, as the Government reduces the level of subsidies to households and insufficiently tight monetary policy will also contribute to higher inflation. Lower import prices, combined with a more substantial decrease in global energy prices resulted in a slowdown in inflation in 2004, to an annual average of 23.5%.

With good prospects of sustainable development after transition, **Uzbekistan** is financing its development needs from foreign aid. The Government is implementing a comprehensive reform programme which may help it to strengthen its economy, access to bilateral, multilateral and trade credits in the short to medium terms. Financing from commercial banks and access to international capital markets will take about a decade to develop. According to careful estimates, **Uzbek** exports grew at 3 percent per year and imports at 1.5 percent in the years 1993-1997. These growth rates are significantly important given the prevailing situation. Because of the convergence to world prices and exchange rate valuation adjustment, its economy is likely to emerge to competitive economy. Imports of capital goods for developing the oil fields and

sustaining significant exports of natural gas is particularly important in terms of improving balance of payment. In the year 1998-2002, growth rate in exports was 3.3 % and imports during the same period were 4 %.

Uzbekistan could also maintain significant cotton exports through increased productivity, if efforts are made to improve grading capabilities and deliveries. However, external financing requirements will remain a need to overcome the existing crisis. It is estimated that financing needs, to be met by direct foreign investments as well as gross loan disbursements are US \$ 600 to US \$ 700 million a year. Mobilizing the desired capital inflow will require a major effort by the Government. In this process, there is a need to attract foreign investment. Foreign investors are showing interest in mining, agro-processing, textiles and commercial vehicle manufacturing. Despite a significant growth of exports, the import growth needed to be kept within limits. Debt servicing as a share of total exports reached 11% by 1999 and thereafter when economy grew and exports expanded, it reduced to 8% by 2002.

Uzbekistan's creditworthiness in the medium and long term depends on successful implementation of the reform programme, the development of the country's natural gas potential and recently discovered oil fields, on the timely increase of various commodity exports, as well as on external factors, such as the price of its raw material exports. Weak policies or implementation and an inability to realize the export potential, could jeopardize creditworthiness and stagnate the country. On the other hand, effective reform policies combined with exploitation of natural resources may permit the country towards sustained growth.

The Government had achieved a measure of macroeconomic stability in 1998, with inflation having been reduced to under 30 % (from a four-digit level in 1994), the budget deficit to 2% of GDP, the current account deficit to less than 2% of GDP and real GDP having grown for three consecutive years. In 2002, the inflation was further reduced to 27.6 %, the budget deficit to 1.1 % of GDP and real GDP to 3.5 %. Several economic factors have contributed to Uzbekistan relatively good macroeconomic performance during the first seven years of transition. These include

the relatively low level of initial industrialization, the programme of self-sufficiency in energy products, the production of cotton fibre and the re-orientation of exports to hard currency markets. Now it is critical to deepen the market-oriented reforms to sustain and improve upon this macroeconomic performance. International evidence suggests that greater progress in implementing market-oriented reforms leads to superior macroeconomic performance over the medium to long term, even though it may entail some short-term macroeconomic costs. The importance of market-oriented reforms in concert with essential institutional strengthening is also highlighted by the recent global financial crisis. The narrow export base, declining exports, high-cost import-substitution industries and stagnant foreign capital flows have accentuated the vulnerabilities of the economy to exogenous shocks. The evidence is clear: in 1998, exports declined by almost 20%, imports fell by more than 25% and the external public debt stock increased by 25%. Furthermore, net official international reserves are down to less than US \$ 1 billion, the supply of foreign exchange is declining, the black market exchange rate premium is over 250% and increasing and there are expansionary pressures in the budget from the large public investment programme implicitly financed through imports at overvalued exchange rates. In addition, the current policy framework is undermining growth in those economic activities that could not only mitigate these risks but also become the engine of growth in Uzbekistan – such as agriculture and agro-processing, new small-and-medium-scale businesses, exports and services.

a. Energy

In the 1990s, the dissolution of the Soviet Union coincided with the re-discovery of the energy resources of the Caspian Sea, attracting a range of international oil companies including American majors to the region. Eventually, the Caspian Basin became a point of tension in U.S.-Russian relations.

The following table is an indicator of **Uzbekistan's** Mineral and Energy products in 1991:

Production	Uzbekistan	Kazakhstan	CARs and Russia	Percentage
Gold (metric tons)	70	-	250	28 %
Oil (million tons)	2.8 (3.3 in 1993)	9.2	516.2	0.5 %
Natural Gas (billion cubic meters)	41.9	2.2	640.6	6.5 %
Coal (million tons)	6	31.5	395.4	1.5 %

The government's policy of import substitution has made **Uzbekistan** largely self-sufficient in energy and has been a major boost to growth. Oil production has increased by 167% since independence, from 2.8 million tons – equivalent of 56,000 barrels/day in 1991 to 7.5 million tons (150,000 barrels/day) in 2000 although production fell in 2001. Oil imports have been eliminated. This has been achieved without foreign direct investment (FDI) and through compulsory credit allocation, as well as large amounts of government-guaranteed foreign debt. Gas production rose from 41.9 billion cubic meters in 1991 to 56.4 billion cubic meters in 2000, a rise of 34.6%, with production flat in 2001. Most gas exported to former Soviet markets which tend to pay late, if at all.

Energy Balance – 2001

(million tons – oil equivalent)

Energy Source	Oil	Gas	Electricity	Coal	Total
Primary production	7.3	48.2	1.7	1.0	58.2
Imports	0.0	-	1.7	0.2	1.9
Exports	- 0.5	- 2.7	- 1.4	0.0	- 4.6
Primary supply	6.8	45.5	2.0	1.2	55.5
Losses & transfers	- 1.8	- 14.4	- 2.7	-0.9	- 19.4
Net transformation	-	-	4.2	-	4.2
Final consumption	5.0	31.5	3.5	0.3	40.3

The energy section is highly inefficient as Soviet era practices of controlling energy prices remain in force. Although gas prices are being slowly adjusted and the differential between consumers and producers is narrowing, industrial users of gas still pay at least twice as much per unit consumed as households. Households receive a discount on the long-term cost-recovery price for gas in Uzbekistan of around US \$ 20 per 1000 cubic meters. The incentive for smuggling oil and refined oil products out of Uzbekistan is large as the prices are often very low when converted at the black-market exchange rate. Despite Uzbekistan's self-sufficiency in energy, petrol is in short supply, forcing drivers to buy smuggled imported petrol from private roadside traders at a premium to the official price.

b. Agriculture

Agriculture accounts for one-third of GDP and employs about 40 % of the labour force. In 2000, it generated 30.4 % of GDP, and employed 35% of the workforce. Agriculture can provide a basis for sustained growth and improvement in living standards but is unlikely to do so unless a number of key reforms are undertaken. Among the most important are the elimination of the remaining state orders on cotton and wheat, the liberalization of input and output prices, the freedom of choice to farmers with respect to the cropping patterns, input purchases and output sales, access to financial services provided by private competitive banks and other institutions and security of land tenure with rights to conduct transactions in land. In addition, domestic prices for agricultural output and inputs should reflect international prices at market-determined exchange rates. Improvements in market incentives in agriculture will need to go hand in hand with an export-oriented development strategy. The current strategy of import-substitution biases incentives against the export sector and is inconsistent with promoting exports. The adoption of an export-oriented strategy is critical to Uzbekistan's growth prospects. Export-oriented sectors both in agriculture and industry will also stimulate the growth of small and medium private enterprises which are relatively labour-intensive and promote employment and growth.

c. Cotton

Uzbekistan is the world's fifth largest producer and second largest exporter of cotton, although cotton's share of export earnings had fallen consistently. The country's main export – cotton fibre is processed from the cotton crop in the preceding year. In 1991, the first year of independence, cotton fibre accounted for 54% of exports. After peaking at 60.5% in 1992, cotton's share of exports declined to an average of 44% in 1993-98. In 1999, according to the World Bank's Economist Intelligence Unit's estimates, the lower export price and the poor crop of 1998 pushed cotton's share of exports down further to 27% and these adverse trends have since held, making the cotton production taken by the *goszakaz* (obligatory sales to government agencies at fixed price) fell from 100% in 1991 to 30%

in 2000. In practice, this makes no difference to cotton farmers as cotton is bought from them by state-owned monopoly purchasers that set their own prices – that is, the farmers have no market power. The remaining 70% of crop is bought from farmers who meet their state-set production targets at prices that are about 20% higher than the *goszakas* price. The government has told the IMF that this will no longer be the case, but the government's record of meeting its reform commitments is poor.

d. **Self-sufficiency in food**

As part of government's policy of import substitution, it is attempting to achieve self-sufficiency in food and some of the land originally reserved for cotton is now being used for food production. The area sown to grain was increased from 974,000 hectares in 1990 to a peak of 1.82 million hectares in 1997 – an increase of 88.9% - in an attempt to produce 4.5 million tons of grain needed to eliminate imports. The target has not been reached, necessitating grain imports and leading to a reduction in the area given over to grain to 1.6 million hectares in 2000. An extra 100,000 hectares of land was shifted from cotton to grain production in 2000 in order to save money on grain imports. However, 1 ton of cotton in 2000 was worth around US\$ 1,100 in export revenue (net of transportation costs). With cotton and grain yields similar, at around 2 tons per hectare, this was equivalent to saving US\$ 400 per hectare instead of earning US\$ 2,200 per hectare.

e. **Gold**

Gold is the country's second largest export, accounting for 10-20% of export earnings. According to IMF, gold has become a significant export earner since 1993, rising from 19.4% of exports in that year to a peak of 25.6% in 1996 as the government sold gold reserves to obtain the hard currency needed to pay for grain imports. In 1998, the government cut gold exports to 9.6% of total exports in value terms in response to falling gold prices and the lower current-account deficit.

Most gold is mined at the giant Muruntau goldmine in Navoi province, a sparsely population desert region where uranium is also mined. It is owned by Navoi Mining and Metallurgical Combine (NGMK), a Soviet era, state-owned mining firm that the government refuses to privatise or reform. The industry sources estimate that Uzbekistan mined 80 tons of gold in 1999 – a figure for which there is no independent confirmation. The steep drop in the price of gold since 1997 has hit gold exports and discouraged foreign companies from investing in a sector where cost overruns are commonplace. Nevertheless, the sector has attracted some foreign direct investment (FDI). Newmont Mining of USA has a joint venture with NGMK to extract gold from the massive 242 million-ton pile of tailings left beside the mine from the Soviet era. The scheme which has funding from the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), now produces more than 10 tons of gold each year.

Gold Production

Production	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Tons	63.6	60.0	63.2	70.0	80.0
% change on previous year	- 1.2	- 5.7	5.2	10.8	14.3

f. Coal, Oil & Gas and Manufacturing:

Coal is mined in the Angren Valley in the Tashkent region, one of the most industrially developed areas of **Uzbekistan**. Oil and Gas deposits have been found throughout the country.

In the Soviet era, industrial and mining activities were largely controlled from Moscow. Some agricultural-processing equipment was made in Uzbekistan but it was low value-added. Tashkent also hosts a factory that assembles Russian and Ukrainian aircraft but it has relatively few sales. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, industry experienced sharply lower demand from

former Soviet markets. However, the government has been unwilling either to privatise or close plants. There are a number of “strategic” sectors that are not subject to privatisation: the mining of precious metals and gems; oil & gas production and processing; defence; aerospace and communications. The government is generally unwilling to give foreign companies a majority holding in joint ventures and the legal regime for investors lacks transparency. Many foreign partners complain about the slow pace of decision-making as well as bureaucratic interference and persistent government surveillance. Under a decree of 1998, the government has the power to block strategic decisions made by majority foreign shareholders in local firms if the government deems that they are not in Uzbekistan’s interests.

g. Construction:

Construction is a low priority for the government. Officially reported investment in 1995-99 went into dwellings compared with 6.1% in agriculture, 26% in manufacturing and 15% in transport and communication sectors. The sector’s share in GDP at factory cost fell from 10.6% in 1990 to 6% in 2000. Funds are being ploughed into upgrading the country’s airports but for the most part, there are few of the high-profile, prestige projects that are seen elsewhere in Central Asia. Around 676,000 people were employed in the sector in 2000, down from 710,000 in 1990, although the 2000 figures is an improvement on 1999.

h. Industry

Overall, industry accounted for 13.8% of GDP in 2000 and 12.7% of the workforce. Most industrial production is low value-added and has not weathered well the breakdown of the command economy. In order to prevent the sector’s collapse the government has used protectionist policies and state-guaranteed loans with the aim of building up production of import substitutes. These policies have so far failed to encourage the development of a broad industrial base and growth depends instead on a few important foreign investments in

large-scale manufacturing plants. A car factory in Andijan assembles Daewoo (South Korea) cars from imported components and an aircraft factory assembles Russian and Ukrainian aircraft. Much of the rest industry makes agricultural machinery and is engaged in limited agro-processing activities.

The government wants to industrialise rapidly and is, therefore, funnelling credit towards traditional heavy industry – such as steel – rather than towards the labour intensive agro-industry. Moreover, the government has also pursued a policy of import-substituting industrialisation (ISI) so that most industrial development is geared towards supplying the domestic market and has no export orientation. However, this policy mix has thus far proved insufficient. Whereas ISI saved Uzbekistan US\$ 70 million in import expenditure in 1996 – according to President Islam Karimov – this does not look like much against the US\$ 2.5 billion that the government claims to have invested in priority sectors during the same year. In addition, the potential benefits of ISI in terms of the current account have been neutralised by the level of foreign debt incurred to finance the programme.

The newest industry in **Uzbekistan** is automotive assembly. Daewoo of Republic of Korea founded UzDaewoo Auto, a joint venture with the state-owned *Uzavtosanaot* to assemble cars at Asaka in the Ferghana valley. Production started in 1996 and investment was planned to reach US\$ 658 million over the long term. Content is sourced from Russia and the Republic of Korea, with Uzbekistan supplying the labour. According to Daewoo, total local content is only 25%. However, few locals can afford to buy Daewoo vehicles, despite the availability of subsidised loans from the state-owned Asaka Bank and the industry is highly vulnerable to the Russian economic cycle. As a result, car production in 2000 was just 31,000 down by 46.7% on the previous year. Daewoo increased its stake in the joint venture from 51% to 70% in 1998 but then went bankrupt in November, 2000. The government is trying to keep the joint venture open by borrowing through government-guaranteed debt to provide the necessary investment.

To implement its industrial development programme, the government imposed a system of hard-currency rationing, diverting foreign exchange to priority ISI imports and the servicing of ISI-related loans. Firms have to apply to the government for access to hard currency, a process that is not only inefficient but also offers substantial opportunities for corruption. The system is reinforced by the use of multiple change rates. In January, 1997, the government formally introduced four government-set exchange rates. The official rates were kept artificially strong so as to subsidise imports of capital goods for ISI and to suppress imported inflation. By further restricting access to hard currency, the introduction of the multiple exchange-rate system increased the illegal trade in currency that had existed since the Soviet period. Consequently, the (technically illegal) black-market exchange rate has weakened rapidly since the Som-coupon replaced the Rouble in November, 1993. By April, 2000, the spread between the official exchange rate and the black-market rate had widened to 405%, having been above 50% since September, 1996. In May, 2000, the government devalued the official rate to the level of commercial bank exchange rate used for inter-bank transactions - a 35% nominal depreciation that unified the two main reference rates but which thereby also removed an important subsidy to the banking sector. The attempt to close the gap between the official and black-market rates failed to slow down the continued depreciation of the latter and the government was forced to devalue the inter-bank rate in June and November, 2000 – in effect, a step backwards from exchange-rate unification. Improved relations with the IMF in the aftermath of September, 2001 (9/11), led the government to restate its commitment to currency convertibility and to attempt exchange-rate unification once more. In November, 2001, a new exchange-rate regime was introduced by which a “free” exchange rate set in the over-the-counter market was to be the main reference rate for all transactions. This constituted a devaluation of the official exchange rate to the level of the inter-bank rate which then ran in parallel, with a spread of under 1%. However, the spread between the two main reference rates and the black-market exchange rate remains above 100%.

In accordance with its gradualist approach to economic reforms, the Government of **Uzbekistan** has followed a cautious and gradual approach to financial sector reform. Until recently, the focus has been on creating an adequate legal and regulatory framework for

financial discipline and developing the sector's technical and institutional capacity. The legal foundation has been largely developed, prudential regulations and banking supervision strengthened and electronic payments system introduced and internationally-accepted accounting standards for banks adopted. The Tashkent Stock Exchange and National Depository were established in 1994. Over 90% of the banking assets are accounted for by the 5 largest banks, with a single bank – National Bank of Uzbekistan – accounting for the overwhelming share of them. Other policy restrictions also impede the emergence of a market-oriented banking sector. Banks continue to act as tax collectors and tax inspectors. While some of these policy restrictions may have helped insulate Uzbekistan's domestic financial market from the negative implications of the global financial crises, they have also undermined the ability of the system to mobilize and allocate savings efficiently, necessary conditions for achieving rapid and sustainable economic development.

The Government's programme of privatization is central to the reform of state enterprises. This has proceeded along a three-phased process. In the first phase, the programme of privatization of small-sized enterprises was largely completed in 1995 though small-sized enterprise restructuring has faced obstacles primarily due to an adverse domestic market environment in particular, since the introduction of foreign exchange restrictions in 1996. The second phase involved medium-sized enterprise privatization for which the Government opted for an innovative route of Privatization Investment Funds (PIFs) to avoid the perceived problems of mass privatization programmes which may fail to provide efficiency enhancements. However, frequent and adverse changes to the legal and regulatory environment have undermined the confidence of market participants and prospects for improved corporate governance. Limited outside ownership, deficiencies in the enabling market environment and lack of transparency on the use of privatization proceeds raise questions about the quality of the privatization programme. The principal concern is that although the management of the corporatized and privatized enterprises is *de jure* independent of the state, the prevailing ownership patterns and the current regulatory regime leave wide scope for direct administrative interventions by the state. The efficiency gains from privatization will accrue only if the privatized

enterprises are allowed to be restructured financially, in the choice of product mix and in internal governance structures. The third phase of large-sized enterprise privatization is only just beginning. The Government decision to involve foreign investors and to open up strategic sectors of the economy – such as oil and gas – which were erstwhile closed to foreign participation, are positive steps. However, the current domestic economic environment will limit the potential for foreign investment inflows and for successful enterprise restructuring and performance.

An initial institutional perspective on the performance of the central government along three dimensions – aggregate fiscal discipline, the strategic prioritization of expenditures across programmes and projects and technical efficiency in the mobilization and use of budgeted resources – reveals serious inadequacies. The good governance – a key objective of the Government – is being undermined by the opportunities for corruption inherent in the system of licensing, controls, regulation and extensive state involvement in the micro-management of the economy. While better monitoring and sanctions of recalcitrant behaviour – as demonstrated recently by the Government with a series of sanctions of high level officials on charges of corruption – are necessary to fight corruption, the primary mechanism for reducing corruption lies in addressing the fundamental sources which provide for the opportunities for such activity.

Social policy issues are being addressed by the Government as a priority. The Government has successfully introduced innovative schemes such as the *mahalla* system which are playing a key role in the social protection system. The *mahalla* system is particularly unique in empowering local communities to decide upon the allocation of benefits, combining a rules-based process with discretionary allocation, being responsive to changing family needs and having low ‘inclusion error’ in targeting. On pensions, an inter-ministerial working group has developed important proposals for pension reform which, if adopted, would put the existing pay-as-you-go system on a sustainable footing in the long-term, allow for cautious introduction of further reforms which would more closely link contributions and pension benefits and better protect the poor and vulnerable. Average life expectancy of over 70 years, infant mortality

of 30 per 1000 live births, maternal mortality of 12 per 100,000 births, literacy rates of almost 100%, high enrolments and little gender differentials in schooling are good and compare quite favourably with other countries with comparable income levels. However, 1995 household survey data from three regions suggest high and variable poverty and significant differences in living standards between rural and urban areas; other co-relates of living standards also indicate inter-regional disparities in living standards. While the impressive social indicators were in large part inherited from the former Soviet Union, the further development of the human potential is a key priority of the Government in both health and education.

Social and Structural Policy Review about Uzbekistan conducted by World Bank¹⁶ says that to promote sustainable economic growth and improvement in living standards, the Government urgently needs to re-assess its current policies in the problem areas identified and develop a comprehensive, coherent and internally consistent programme for economic liberalization. Key policy reforms are needed particularly in agriculture, trade and exchange rate regime and fiscal management. These are the areas where the greatest economic gains are to be achieved and which provide the win-win policies conducive to economic growth and improvement in living standards. These key reforms will also need to be supported by complementary policies, particularly with respect to liberalizing the financial sector, privatizing state enterprises, maintaining tight fiscal and monetary policies, strengthening the social safety net, improving governance and further strengthening health and education sectors. The pace and sequencing of these reforms can be chosen to suit the political and social imperatives faced by the Government but it is important that the direction and the path are clearly laid out and that the internal inconsistencies and constraints in implementation are removed.

The economy is substantially demonetised as a result of high inflation, negative real interest rates and regulations preventing enterprises from withdrawing too much cash from the bank.

Monetary policy since independence has been designed primarily to channel credit towards priority economic sectors and to prevent the development of informal credit markets and tax evasion.

Som was finally made convertible in October, 2003. But banks still make it difficult in practice to obtain foreign exchange which keeps the black market healthy. Small-scale foreign trade, on which many **Uzbeks** depend for their shopping, remains strangled by Government restrictions imposed over the past two years. Significant privatization has, so far, not been forthcoming, and there are worries that state assets, whenever they are sold, will be grabbed by apparatchiks. When it comes to banks, which have been doling out money on government orders and clamping down on cash withdrawals, reform is little more than wishful thinking. As Jean Lemierre, the head of EBRD (European Bank for Reconstruction and Development), put it, “the situation is not good, even if there is perhaps some progress”. As of December, 2003, the EBRD had \$ 660 invested in Uzbekistan, just under half in loans to the government. It would be hard explaining why it should get any more.¹⁷

xiv. Religion

The religion of majority of **Uzbeks** is ‘**Islam**’ and 88% adherents practice *Snnfi Hanafite* school. **Islam** is not just a creed or a system of theological beliefs but a way of life. **Islam** is a perfect religion that touches every aspect of human life. It prescribes a general canon of behaviour for the social, political, economic, cultural, private and public, the foreign and domestic. But **Islam** is not a religion that exists only in the hearts of the believers - it is in the fabric of the civilization as well.

Although **Uzbekistan** is more uniformly religious than any other republic in Central Asia, **Islam** in **Uzbekistan** is commonly divided horizontally and vertically. The horizontal division splits **Islam** into *Shiaism* and *Sunnism*, with further sub-divisions into *orders* and *sects*. The vertical division, stemming from the Soviet period, classifies **Islam** into ‘official’ and ‘unofficial’.

i. Horizontal division:

The majority of the Muslims in **Uzbekistan** are *Sunni* Muslims. Predominantly, the *Sunni* Muslims of **Uzbekistan** are from the *Hanafite* school, but some adhere to *Sufi* brotherhoods. The *Hanafite* school, founded by Abu Hanifah al Numan in Kufa, was established in Bukhara in the early 9th century. The *Hanafite* school is noted for its liberal religious orientation, which allowed the pre-**Islamic** traditions of the native people to be incorporated into **Islam**. Several *Hanafite* principles provide flexibility and more freedom in practicing **Islam** for believers in **Uzbekistan**. The first principle postulates that if a Muslim wholeheartedly believes in Allah and the prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) but is neglectful towards religious duties, he/she is still a Muslim but a sinful one. Due to this flexibility, **Islam** in **Uzbekistan** has become a religion of rites performed universally. The five pillars of **Islam** are, by and large neglected ... **Uzbeks** are ignorant about elementary **Islamic** teachings, unable to read even a simple prayer. Second, the *Hanafite* teachings place strong emphasis on the expediency and the usefulness of **Islam**, thus refraining from an interpretation of **Islam** based on absolute obedience, a characteristic associated with fundamentalist practice of **Islam**. Muslims are allowed to conduct the prayer in languages other than Arabic, and to choose the selection of the Qur'an, they wish to read. Third, the *Hanafite* school holds a very tolerant position towards the issues of criminal and civil punishment, divorce and alms-giving. The fourth maxim says that socio-economic necessity supersedes the need for **Islamic** orthodoxy. In other words, realizing the inevitability of socio-economic changes, especially if the religion itself is to survive, the *Hanafite* philosophy advocates the postponement or alteration of the conduct of religious affairs to accommodate the needs of the believers. The final principle asserts that difference of opinion in the Muslim community is a token of divine mercy. As can be seen at present, the non-binding and liberal character of the *Hanafite* school facilitated its rapid spread among the majority of the Muslims of **Uzbekistan**. In addition, these features of the liberal form of **Islam** have affected the political beliefs of the population of **Uzbekistan**. There are small communities of Twelver *Shiism* in Bukhara and Samarkand, which have their origins back in the beginning of the *Abbasid* rule in Central Asia. The *Shias* believe that Ali ibn Abu Talib, the 4th caliph, was the legitimate heir of the

Prophet Muhammad (Peace be Upon Him), whereas *Sunnis* first submit to Abu Bakr as the 1st Caliph, Umer ibn al-Khattab as the 2nd Caliph, Usman al-Ghani as the 3rd Caliph and then Ali ibn-e-Abu Talib as the 4th Caliph and legitimate ruler of the Muslim community.

Sufism, a mystical doctrine that aims at achieving personal union with God, has played a very important role in the **Islamization** of Central Asia. *Sufis* were the first Muslim missionaries in the region and had influenced political affairs since the 12th century. Under the Soviet regime, *Sufism* preserved **Islamic** traditions and became very active after the revolution in Iran. In order to avoid confusion, it should be noted that some scholars classify *Sufism* in **Uzbekistan** in terms of the vertical division of unofficial **Islam**. Although the *Sufis* represented unofficial **Islam** under the Soviet regime, they did not oppose the representatives of official **Islam** who co-operated with the Soviet-**Uzbek** authorities. It is true that the *Sufi* orders used to function underground during the Soviet period, thus preserving **Islamic** traditions among the rural population of **Uzbekistan**. However, the *Sufi* brotherhoods have been recently incorporated into the official **Islam** and the majority of them function openly today. At present, there are two active *Sufi-Sunni* brotherhoods in **Uzbekistan**: the *Naqshbandiya* and the *Qadiriya Orders*. The *Qadiriya Order*, having a well-defined hierarchical structure, are particularly strong in the Ferghana valley, now a center of popular **Islam**. The most popular *Sufi* fraternity in **Uzbekistan**, the *Naqshbandiya Order*, was founded by Muhammad ibn Muhammad Bahaudin Naqshband (1317-89) in Bukhara. Analyzing its historical role in the **Islamization** of the native people, Ludmila Polonskaya states that: At first, the *Naqshbandiya* brotherhood was urban and Iranian, but later it absorbed many traditions of Turki nomads and contributed to their **Islamization**, promoting a synthesis of Iranian and Turki, farmers' and nomads' cultures. At present, the *Naqshbandiya Order* exerts significant influence in the Ferghana valley and Bukhara. Its prevailing success can be explained by a variety of reasons: first, the *Naqshbandiya Order* is extremely adaptable to changing social and political conditions; secondly, it is linguistically accessible to everyone, since it has Turkic and Persian roots. Finally, this *Sufi* order constitutes 'doctrinal liberalism' that excludes fanaticism and radicalism. Another important feature of the *Naqshbandiya* brotherhood is its highly decentralized structure with

multiple centers under the independent religious authority. Since the demise of the Soviet Union, the *Sufi* orders have enjoyed more freedom in their religious activities. The local authorities are very careful in dealing with the *Sufis*. On one hand, they realize that the popularity, influence and widespread structure of the *Sufi* orders can be of use in gaining popularity and propagating the official policy of the government. On the other hand, the *Sufi* sects' code of secrecy and sophisticated organizational framework has the potential to mobilize Muslims and build a 'political infrastructure'. Bearing these factors in mind, the government seeks to build friendly relations and place the *Sufi* orders within the frames of official **Islam**, which will provide greater control over the *Sufis*' activities. However, due to its liberalism, the *Naqshbandiya Order* has enjoyed special attention from the government; the **Islamic** complex at the shrine of Bahaudin Naqshband in Bukhara was refurbished, and the anniversary of Naqshbandi's birthday was grandiosely celebrated in 1992. The new *Mufti* of **Uzbekistan**, Mukhtarkhan Abdulayev, was the *Imam* of the Naqshbandi mosque near Bukhara. It has been argued that he was elected for his *Sufi* background, which assisted in boosting President Karimov's popularity since 1992.

Recent political developments in **Uzbekistan** have shown that the threat of **Islamic** fundamentalism, though unorganized, should not be underestimated -- particularly that of a particular community what is called *Wahabis*. The *Wahabi* movement in **Uzbekistan** has been receiving sizable financial support from the Saudi Arabian movement, *Ahl-e-Sunnah*. *Wahabism* is well known for its puritanical views, denounces the conceptualization of the four main schools of *Sunni Islam*: the *Hanafi*, the *Maliki*, the *Shafi'i* and the *Hambali*. The *Wahabis* consider the Qur'an and *Hadith* [Sayings of the Holy Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him)] as the only authoritative source for the conduct of the Muslim *Umma's* behaviour. The *Wahabi* movement is particularly strong in the Ferghana valley region and is rapidly gaining strength. It enjoys considerable prestige among different strata of the population - from elite literary circles in Tashkent to teenagers in schools. The latter are especially impressed by the *Wahabis*' contempt of money, their rejection of remuneration for the religious rites they perform, and by their nationalist fervour. The *Wahabis*, due to their ideological and political

beliefs, condemn other moderate fundamentalist groups like the **Islamic** Revival Party (IRP). An important *Wahabi* leader said, “the IRP wants to be in the Parliament. We have no desire to be in Parliament. We want a revolution.” Moreover, they condemn *Shias* and other minority sects in **Islam**. Many scholars argue that the *Wahabi* insistence on a narrow and highly sectarian view of **Islam** will bring them up against not only the government, but also other **Islamic** groups in the future.

ii. Vertical division:

The vertical division distinguishes the religion of **Islam** into ‘official’ and ‘unofficial’. This division, which emerged as a result of Soviet anti-**Islamic** policy, is more complicated than the horizontal. Official **Islam** is a state-instituted system, which includes **Islam** in the framework of the society. Presently, official **Islam** is represented by the Spiritual Board of the Muslims of Ma’varan Nahr.

In legal terms, religious groups or organizations can register and function officially if they meet the parameters set by the law “On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations in **Uzbekistan**” from May 1998. After independence, the ruling elite sought to maintain control over the religious establishments of official **Islam** by the constant monitoring of, and interference with the religious affairs of the clergy. In response to this policy, a large number of Muslims gathered in front of the **Uzbek** Council of Ministers in Tashkent on February 3, 1989 and demanded the resignation of the Soviet-appointed Mufti, Shamsuddin Babakhanov and the nomination of Muhammad Sadiq Muhammad Yusuf, Director of the Tashkent Al-Bukhari **Islamic** Institute. This demonstration was a political act, through which the people demanded a voice in the decisions affecting the religious life of their communities.

The reflection of **Islamic revival** and the growing peoples’ power in the state policy towards Islam can be seen not only in the election of the new Mufti, but also in the election of seven religious leaders as People’s Deputies to the national Parliament. Gradually, state policy has shifted from confrontation to co-operation as a pattern in dealing with **Islam**. The coalition of religious clergy and the government was exemplified in the ‘peace-making’ efforts of

the Mufti Muhammad Sadiq Muhammad Yusuf in restoring peace and order following ethnic turmoil in Ferghana in 1989. In his public statements, he emphasized that “danger to inter-faith and inter-ethnic harmony could come not from the ‘mainstream’ **Islam**, but from the splinter groups”. To prevent the radicalization of these ‘splinter groups’ activities, official **Islam** has undertaken to co-opt the members of the **Islamic** opposition, even offering them high religious posts. Despite the coalition between state policy and mainstream **Islam**, the official clergy continues to challenge the ever-increasing involvement of government in religious affairs. Some observers have claimed that such a close alliance of the official clergy and the state, reminiscent of subservience of the former to the Communist government, has accelerated the growth of unofficial **Islam**’s popularity among the people. Expressing himself on this issue, Graham Fuller suggested that the institutions of ‘established’ **Islam** in Central Asia - long dominated by the Communist state - do not enjoy prestige and respect of the people as a result of their too cosy relationship with the state. Unofficial **Islam** or **Islamic** movements then inevitably fill in the vacuum, gain adherence and legitimacy among the people, and can often impose powerful demands upon the state itself and threaten its legitimacy. It would be sensible for the **Uzbek** authorities to provide more freedom to the official clerical establishments to enable the latter to compete with a strong and diverse unofficial Islam. Since the number of religious and political parties has mushroomed in the political arena in **Uzbekistan**, the government’s legitimacy has significantly suffered. The reason being that the political opposition parties, being constantly harassed by the government, have tried to find unifying grounds with unofficial **Islamic** groups against the common enemy. Although an alliance between the national democrats and unofficial religious groups is improbable due to differences in their methods of ousting the current government, the real danger to the state is ‘hidden’ in the **Islamic** slogans, which are expressed to achieve political objectives.

In the 1990s, a clamp-down on **Islamic** groups in response to acts of terrorism and militant activities led to the closure of mosques, a ban on political opposition movements, and arrests of practicing Muslims. This forced groups to go underground and an increase in support for insurgencies and extremism.

Notes

1. Ahmad Hasan Dani, New Light on Central Asia, (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 1993), pp. 75-76.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 60, 77-83.
3. “Economist” May 21st -27th 2005.
4. “The News” Islamabad, 25th March, 2005
5. Rossiiskaya gazette, 05 January, 1993.
6. Nezvisimaya gazette, 08 February, 1994; Izvestiya, 02 February 2, 1994, “Trilateral Central Asian Military Pact Signed” FBIS, CEUR, (14 February, 1994), p. 1, from Turan (Baku), (19 February, 1994).
7. Vestnik voennoy informatsii, No. 11, p. Y., (November 1992).
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9. Wilson de Silva, “Western firms seek oil finds to rival Middle East”
10. Martha Brill Olcott, “Central Asia: The Calculus of Independence” Current History, Vol. 94, No. 594, (October, 1995).
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13. Asian Development Bank (ADB) Annual Report – 2003.
14. World Development Report (1995) (World Bank)
15. See Islam Karimov, UZBEKISTAN - along the road of deepening economic reform, (Lahore: Gora Publishers, 1995).
16. Uzbekistan: Social and Structural Policy Review – An Economic Report (World Bank)
17. See The Economist – March, 2004 (Page 32).

Chapter IV CONFLICT AMONG MULTIPLE IDENTITIES

4.1 Nation-building vs Islamic revivalism (Soviet period)

i. Nation-building

After the difficult years of 1920s, bloody purges of 1930s and the upheavals of World War-II in 1940s, Central Asia entered into a period of relatively tranquillity which ushered in a patrimonial era.¹

The concept of patrimonial authority was bolstered by the virtual sanctification, in the current vernacular literature, of medieval charismatic leaders like Amir Taimur and Babur in **Uzbekistan**. In recent times, rehabilitation of communist and other figures like Faizulla Khojaev and Akmal Akramov became “scions of the **Uzbek** people” once again and their selected works were published. This period of relative tranquillity gave birth to ‘nationalism’ in **Uzbekistan**. The intelligentsia was able to assert ‘national interest’ in a way that invited repression in the tenure of Stalin. Soviet influence was still dominant but three decades between Stalin and Gorbachev paved the way for the surge of ‘nationalism’ under *glasnost*.

In post-Khrushchev **Uzbekistan**, Soviet main concern was expansion of cotton production which was met by First Secretary, Sharaf Rashidov in his one-man dictatorship spread over a quarter of a century, countenanced by many abuses but also opened the way for **Uzbek** intellectuals to publish works glorifying *Uzbek nationalism* - foretaste of what was to come under *perestroika*.

Besides, these writings of **Uzbek** intelligentsia, **Islam** was another powerful factor which swept the republic by a new tide of self-assertiveness and particularism. Following the removal of Khrushchev in 1964, evolution of **Uzbek** society in the 1960s was characterized by a current of de-Russification in areas such as language, cadre and history. Efforts were made to expunge Russian vocabulary from **Uzbek** language, reversing the earlier trend and preferential treatment began to the use of **Uzbek** communication. **Uzbek** historians, in particular emphasized the ancient roots of the

communities and their cultural **Islamic** tradition while down-grading the Russian contribution. While **Uzbek** writers sought sources of national legitimacy in the memory of distant struggles against invaders, they simultaneously invoked the earlier history of the Soviet period to legitimize the quest for greater autonomy from the Centre. They referred persistently to the Soviet constitutional provision of sovereignty for the union republics as more than just a paper concept, making frequent allusions to the 'right of secession'.

The post-Brezhnev era was marked by wide-spread purges, dismissals and expulsions from Party, arrests and executions in greater scope and intensity and closely related to ethnic issues. This led to the concern in Moscow of growing 'nationalism' in general and among the elites in particular. This was demonstrated in All Union Party Congresses in the form of "ideological short-comings" towards the end of 1986. The concept of *Miras* was particularly attacked on the basis of 'idealization of the past'. The literary and historical works including a novel about a 16th century Ferghana native Babur who founded Mughal Empire on South Asian sub-continent came under fire and its author, a leading **Uzbek** establishment writer Pirmqul Qadirov was accused of re-writing history to sow nostalgia for the patriarchal system and present **Islam** almost as the guardian of national culture.² The most significant attack on 'nationalism' among the intelligentsia, however, was the criticism of late Professor Ibrahim Muminov, a former Vice President of Uzbek Academy of Sciences who was closely involved with the *Miras* movement, particularly through his editorship of numerous volumes of the **Uzbek-Soviet** Encyclopaedia published in Tashkent in the 1970s, Rashidov's heyday.³

With *perestroika*, the nationalities became more clearly aware of economic exploitation and environmental damage to their homelands caused by Moscow. In **Uzbekistan**, the 'cotton affair' and the purge which ensued heightened resentment of Moscow's high-handed politics, especially among the elites who bore the brunt of Moscow's wrath. The elites fought back against the Centre and used communication system, especially the media in their own language to press economic and social issues in ways that went straight to the ethnic sensitivities of their co-nationals. *Glasnost* was a sword that cut both ways. Just as Moscow loyalists used local media to foment mass

indignation at the misdeeds of the local elites, so too did the elites and used their continuing access to the same media to press their own cause. Ironically, Moscow's campaign against the **Uzbek** elites served in the long run to weaken, not to strengthen its grip on **Uzbekistan**. Moscow not only under-cut the elements on which it had always relied for support but its campaign against those elements converted them into a powerful enemy, actually giving the elites greater legitimacy in the eyes of the **Uzbek** rank-and-file. Ironically, it was 'cotton' which caused the trouble in the first place that provided the elites with the opportunity to turn the tables in **Uzbekistan**.

By the time of Brezhnev's death in 1982, the tragic economic and environmental consequences of decades of unbridled cotton expansion were being felt ever more acutely. Under Gorbachev's policy of *glasnost*, it became possible, as never before, to document and publicize them in mass media. As new revelations burst forth nearly every day, once stealthy mutterings about the 'cotton monoculture' grew into an open chorus of angry complaint. The drive to increase cotton production led those responsible to throw caution to the wind. Their recklessness was later to play directly into the hands of those elements in the local societies who sought to stir resentment against Moscow. The most dramatic effect of reckless cotton expansion was in its catastrophic impact on the region's water resources.

In **Uzbekistan**, there is apt to be no rain at all during the actual growing season and the annual precipitation in places was as little as four inches and no where more than 14 inches, whereas for a season's growth, 'cotton' needs more than 30 inches of rain. Moscow's demands for 'cotton' and food needs of the expanding population had stretched water resources to the limit. By 1990, resentment of the 'monoculture' had become a potent political weapon in the hands of the local elites who were clamouring for control of much of the cotton harvest, which they hoped to sell directly abroad for hard currency that would flow into the exchequers of **Uzbekistan**. As part of the drive to expand cotton acreage at all costs, hard pressed officials even took away the small private plots which peasants had been allowed to farm after collectivization. Deprived of their principal source of food, the peasants resorted to desperate measures to feed their families. Massive unemployment was

another problem traced to the monoculture and is cited as a factor in 1989 Ferghana valley riots. Another factor for these ethnic riots was the industrial pollution caused by the wastes of alien presences that fouled atmosphere and poisoned land and water.

Moscow press charged that in the countryside where majority of natives live, males spent much of their time on social activities centred around **Islam** and allegedly leaving it to women and children to meet production quotas on state and collective farms. The higher growth rate put strain on the resources of **Uzbekistan**. On top of injury to the **Uzbeks'** morale caused by economic environmental consequences of the monoculture, they were further affronted by attempts of Moscow by telling them to slow their population growth. It was viewed as tantamount to desecration of the inviolable child-bearing tradition of *Uzbeks' Muslims*. This merely added a new irritant to relations between **Uzbekistan** and Moscow -one that lent itself to political exploitation by nationalist forces at home. In sum, the cotton monoculture, intended originally to serve the interests of the Centre, provided the **Uzbek** elites with a potent political and psychological weapon for use against that very Centre.

Uzbek environmental complaints took on an ethnic dimension. Although depredations to the environment had taken place with the tacit acquiescence of **Uzbek** officials, it was clear to average **Uzbeks** that the real culprits were the Central Planners in Moscow. Looking back, **Uzbeks** recalled that even in the early days of Russian rule, before the Soviet period, most irrigation projects had been failures, causing harm to the population; at times, the failures created large tracts of swampland and spread fever. When it became known in 1989 that, on top of everything else, **Uzbek** territory was being used by the Centre as a dump for toxic wastes, some of them nuclear, transported in from other parts of the Soviet Union, local media stressed Russia proper as a point of origin. Until mid-1980s, **Uzbek** people who had known for years of their republic's environmental problems had little opportunity to raise the issue publicly, given censorship of the media and the charges of subversion that were sure to follow an incautious utterance. With *glasnost* and the wave of disclosures that followed Chernobyl explosion on 26th April, 1986, persons became vocal. These circumstances grist for the political mill

of **Uzbek** nationalists in their struggle to garner public support against the Centre's hegemony.

The Aral sea is a staggering example of the water crisis. It was once the world's fourth largest inland body of water - larger in area than Lake Michigan. The Aral basin had been producer of 95 per cent of all Soviet cotton.⁴ With its tributary rivers diverted to irrigation, Soviet scientists predicted in 1987 that at the existing rate of evaporation - 40 cubic kilometers per year - the sea-bed would be essentially dry by the year 2010. Already the drying had created where once were waves, a new desert tract larger than Massachusetts. The Aral fishing fleet, which used to produce more than a tenth of the entire Soviet catch and helped save Russians cities from starvation during the famines of the 1920s, was now rusting at its moorings, half covered with sand and dozens of miles from the nearest water. The plight of Aral became known throughout **Uzbekistan** in January 1987 when an emotional eyewitness article was published in an intellectual weekly entitled "The Sea That is Fleeing Its Shores" accompanied by dramatic photographs of sand dunes surrounding the rusting fishing fleet. Later that year, basic facts about the Aral were made public record in two consecutive issues of the monthly organ of the **Uzbek** Academy of Sciences. One article was written by a team of scholars headed by the historian S. K. Kamalov, Chairman of the Karakalpak branch of the **Uzbek** Academy and the second by D. S. Yadgarov, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of Karakalpak Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic. The Kamalov team referred to the Aral's plight as "an unprecedented fact of anthropogenic impact on nature", one that was "unique, without analogy in its scale" and "the work of man's hand, of his stormy economic activity". The team calculated that, if the Aral was to dry completely, it would be replaced by 60 thousand square kilometers of desert and did not hesitate to place the blame on "extensive irrigation of agriculture, one-sided reclamation of new lands, and far-fetched decisions in general and, the mistakes of scholars who approved the corresponding measures after only superficial study. An **Uzbek** Television programme, "We Ache for the Fate of the Aral" described the "menacing deterioration of the epidemiological situation and the rise in infection with life threatening diseases among the inhabitants of Karakal, Patkia, Khawarzim and adjacent oblasts. According to Soviet scientists, the climatic influence of the Aral in its pristine state had been considerable. Its effects on

atmosphere extended 200 or 250 kilometers beyond its perimeter and on the moisture-content of the air, 350 or 400 kilometers. At its original size, the Aral absorbed solar energy equivalent to seven billion metric tons of conventional fuel annually, moderating the extreme heat of the Central Asian summer. It fed its energy back into the atmosphere in colder weather to produce a warming effect. The shrinking of the sea has raised summer temperatures, increased the dryness of the air and shortened the frost-free season. This posed the threat to cotton-growing in the entire lower basin of the *Amu Darya* which used to account for more than one million metric tons of raw cotton annually, since it was only the presence of Aral that made it possible to raise cotton at such northerly altitudes. Scientists predicted that cotton production in the Aral region may in future be completely wiped out by ecological changes occurring there. The salinity of the Aral tripled in less than 30 years due to evaporation of its water and increased pollution of its water resources. In the face of such alarming disclosures, people in the area led by prominent **Uzbek** intellectuals, made "Saving the Aral" the object of a campaign. A "Save the Aral" committee was set up in Tashkent headed by the well-known **Uzbek** writer Pirmat Shermuhamedov. The Aral issue was, therefore, made as a theme of 'nationalism' and nation-building in **Uzbekistan**.

The nationalists raised the issue among the masses, quoting disastrous consequences of reckless cotton expansion imposed by Moscow in order to fulfil its plan quotas. Increased infant mortality in the Aral region, colder winters and hotter summers, clouds of salt and sand carried by wind erosion from the dried-up seabed, were other factors, traced directly to the Central Government's plundering and mismanagement of the region's water resources by the nationalists. In the eyes of the **Uzbeks**, the Aral crisis was directly damaging to the prestige of Mikhail Gorbachev because he was the man who decided to deny the people 'relief' from the water crisis by cancelling a project to divert water from Siberian rivers to Central Asia. (The project was well into the planning stage and seemed to be on its way for execution when it was abandoned in August 1986).

On top of **Uzbekistan's** other environmental ills, fear of nuclear contamination entered the scene with disclosures of an alleged nuclear dump near Tashkent for radio-active wastes produced in other parts of the Soviet Union in late 1989. The Moscow region was cited

- iii. popular resentment against those Russians who were perceived as monopolizing the better jobs in **Uzbekistan**

Throughout the Soviet period, intellectuals of Central Asia in general and those of **Uzbeks** in particular considered themselves as the heirs of a great indigenous cultural tradition, stemming from the days of such Muslim Greats as Avicenna or Babur. Even under the repressive reign of Stalin and his successors, they quietly resisted attempts to brand their intellectual progenitors as reactionary, their minds and creative output inferior to those of such representatives of the Russian “elder brother” as Mikhail Lomonosov or Alexander Pushkin. A specimen of **Uzbek** intellectuals resistance to cultural Russification was the 14-volume Uzbek-Soviet Encyclopaedia, published at the depth of ‘stagnation’ period during Brezhnev era. The encyclopaedia carried a series of biographies of **Uzbek** cultural figures belonging to pre-Soviet and pre-Russian periods, complete with Arabic rendering of their names as well as numerous articles on local topics, originated from the **Uzbek** cultural establishment. These were striking anomalies from the standpoint of Communist ideology as Avicenna was covered on more pages of encyclopaedia than Karl Marx. Kremlin woke up from a deep sleep and **Uzbek** intellectuals transgressions came under violent attack at the 1986 Moscow Party Congress, presided over by Mikhail Gorbachev. The communist ideological conservatives launched a scathing attack on the glorification of local culture vehemently and made a respected **Uzbek** writer Primqul Qadirov, a special target who was author of a novel, portraying Babur favourably. Local elites were desperately looking for something that could build popular imagination and mobilize the masses. **Uzbek** encyclopaedia and Qadirov’s vehement criticism by Moscow were the issues which fuelled the fire.

In a multi-ethnic society, language is a prime determinant of socio-economic status and a dominant role to play whether it may be the French in Quebec province of Canada, ‘English’ in British India or present-day United States where minorities are struggling hard to have their languages granted equal status to that of the official one. In the Soviet Union, nationalities were subjected to unrelenting

pressures of Russification, first under Stalin and then under his successors Khrushchev and Brezhnev. Language policy was based on the assumption that the Soviet state was heading towards Soviet homogeneity and consequently 'Russian' is going to be the only national language. Central Asia had no national language as such and a variety of dialects, mostly Turkic or Persian were spoken prior to 1924 when republics of **Uzbekistan**, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan were carved out of former Tsarist Turkistan and the mother languages of their principal inhabitants viz., **Uzbek**, Tajik, Turkmen, Kazakh and Kyrgyz were codified. (Persian was the official and common language of Central Asia prior to Russian as was the case in the South Asian sub-continent. Russians wanted to replace Persian with Russian). This, in fact, back-fired and gave rise to respective nationalistic feelings.

In **Uzbekistan**, national language emerged as an effective vehicle for opposition to Russification and became a potent force in nation-building and consolidating 'nationalism'. A barometer of the excited state of **Uzbek** national sentiment was the public discussion held in the summer of 1989 on a draft of legislation purporting to make **Uzbek** 'state language' of **Uzbekistan**.⁵ Introduction of the bill was an obvious attempt to defuse **Uzbek** nationalist agitation against Russification and linguistic discrimination but it worked in the opposite direction. Tempers were practically inflamed by the suspicion that the bill was conceived not to redress grievances but as a cunning means to calm down nationalist agitation with high sounding phrases while offering very little in the way of genuine concessions that might trouble the status quo. **Uzbeks** charged that the bill's publication and the ensuing discussion were timed to coincide with the absence on summer vacation of university students who were in the forefront of agitation over the language issue.⁶ A group of 25 members of USSR Writers' Union in **Uzbekistan** published a letter proposing a revised text making use of '**Uzbek**' compulsory in public life within one year. Poet Jamal Kamal summed up the position of **Uzbeks** by saying 'Every citizen living in **Uzbekistan**, regardless of nationality, must know and understand the **Uzbek** language.'⁷ **Uzbeks** expressed interest in the situation in Canada where provincial government of French-speaking Quebec had responded to the linguistic expansionism of English by essentially banning the use of that language in public life.

In 1989, **Uzbek** activists, encouraged by *perestroika*, were joining other non-Russian nationalists in pressing for legal mechanisms that would reverse the trend against their languages. **Uzbeks** were mindful that their language movement was part of a historic process involving other Soviet people in the Baltic republics, the Caucasus and Moldova.

In the stagnation period of Brezhnev and Rashidov, the Soviet linguistic policy in **Uzbekistan** had used the slogan of 'bi-lingualism' as a screen for preferential teaching of Russian as a stepping-stone to the ultimate goal of rapprochement of nationalities. At a special meeting of literary people in Tashkent on 15 July, 1989, the speakers overwhelmingly rejected the 'bi-lingualism' of the bill as incompatible with their insistence that in **Uzbekistan**, the dominant language must be **Uzbek**. They scoffed at the bill's first article providing for '**Uzbek**' to be the 'state language' of the republic, saying that this has contradicted throughout, by the remainder of the text and by the title of the bill itself: "Law of **Uzbek SSR** on Languages" (i.e. not just one '**Uzbek**' language). Speaker after speaker attacked the premise of the bill that Russian might be used optionally as an alternative to '**Uzbek**'. The proceedings were rounded off by demands that the bill's references to the 'Old **Uzbek**' language (written in Arabic) be strengthened. A Russian engineer, on the other hand, criticised reform attempts on the basis that the region's overwhelming problem was economic and that "introduction of **Uzbek** as the state language can be economically desirable only if **Uzbekistan** leaves the USSR". The bill became law towards the end of 1989 but both **Uzbeks** and Russians were dissatisfied by the final text, for their own reasons. The fundamental difference in viewpoint between Russians and **Uzbeks**, living side-by-side in the republic was no doubt exacerbated by the existing vacuum in leadership.⁸ However, the effect of the confrontation resulted in elevation of the status of **Uzbeks** in public life. The real change was in the new climate of 'nationalism' engendered by the debate. Courses being taught at institutions of higher education in **Uzbekistan** were switched from Russian to **Uzbek** without waiting for legislation to take effect.⁹ That was the reality that, more than any written document and barring a cataclysm, was the determinant for the future.

Even before the debate on the language law, the elites had begun to press their attack in another linguistic area i.e. ‘non-native names’ which had been attached to **Uzbek** cities, towns, villages, streets and other geographic locations throughout the Soviet period. With the more open expression of opinion afforded by *glasnost*, it became apparent that this colonial practice had long rankled **Uzbek** identity and national pride. The anatomy of the drive against Russia and Soviet toponymy was interesting as a close-up of **Uzbek nationalism** at work. **Uzbeks** chafed for decades under the non-native Russian or revolutionary names that were given to the towns and streets. In the more liberal atmosphere of *perestroika*, there began to be demands to obliterate Russian place names like ‘Pravda, Pushkin and Krasoguardeysk’ from the map. **Uzbek** initiative was not limited to the actions of intellectuals only but had broader grass-root appeal. **Uzbek** proposals for toponymic reforms were in keeping with the creeping process of ‘decolonization’ which the German historian Gerhard Simon detected beneath the surface of Soviet society even before *perestroika*.¹⁰

A well-known **Uzbek** poetess and Party member Gulchehra Nurullaeva called for an end to in-migration of Russians and non-indigenous workers.¹¹ She summed up anti-Russian feelings in **Uzbekistan** as under:

- i. Russians had never troubled to learn **Uzbek** language and therefore, could not understand the people, mistaking **Uzbek** kindness for subservience.
- ii. There were historical reasons for enmity, from the criminals and a haven for Russian privilege seekers.
- iii. There was tendency to blame Russians for all of the ills of the **Uzbek** people.

There is perhaps no better barometer of change in the political climate of **Uzbekistan** than the shift in Russian migration patterns. The traditional influx of Russians to take job in administration and industry has slowed to the point where it is more than offset by the flight of Russians from their republic. **Uzbek** natives were particularly galled by the fact that industry in the Soviet period has been an essentially European preserve. Native participation

was largely limited to menial jobs, such as sweeping the factory floor. When Stalin came to power, he soon abandoned Lenin's policy of training native specialists to man the economy. Instead, outsiders mainly Russians were dispatched to **Uzbekistan** to build and staff factories from the post of Director down to production line. World War-II further increased the outside presence as whole factories and their workers were evacuated to Central Asia from areas near the front, many of them to remain there after the war. Expressing dissatisfaction with their presence was taboo until well after the advent of '*glasnost*'. It was only in 1989, after Islam Karimov replaced unpopular Rafik Nishanov as Head of the **Uzbek** Communist Party that the first cautious complaints began to articulate in public.

Generations of **Uzbeks** had been brought up on Russocentric-Stalinist version of history which portrayed the non-Russian nationalities as backward peoples who had received support and enlightenment from the Russian 'elder brother'. For decades, the **Uzbeks** chafed under this re-writing of their history, which had been continued with little modification under Stalin's successors Khrushchev and Brezhnev. They felt themselves demeaned by their portrayal in official Soviet historiography as primitives dependent for their culture on others whom they regarded as the real primitives. They were made particularly resentful of this by their own perception of their 'nation' as the heir of a highly Asian civilization which had spawned intellectual greats long before Moscow was even a rude forest settlement.¹² As long as Stalinism held sway, those who challenged the official historiography were apt to be labelled 'nationalists' which was tantamount to a criminal charge. Patriotic **Uzbek** scholars had to limit themselves for the most part to such oblique devices as promoting the *miras* or national cultural heritage but always without questioning the supposed superiority of Russian civilization. In October 1986, a plenum of the **Uzbek** Party Central Committee which was devoted to ideological questions, sharply rapped **Uzbek** intellectuals for 'nationalism' and idealizing the **Uzbek** past through glorification of such 'despotic' historical figures as Amir Taimur or Babur. Despite such reverses, it ultimately became possible with '*glasnost*' to undo the Stalinist re-writing of **Uzbek** national history and to take a more objective view of relations with Russia. The broad opportunities offered by '*glasnost*' made it possible for the **Uzbeks** to assess the consequences of the Soviet 'experiment' in their

homeland with unprecedented candour. The resultant articulation of bitter grievances against Moscow's economic and environmental policies and against the Russian presence itself, was an important factor in mobilizing a collective determination to press for greater autonomy.

In the beginning, the resistance was quiet, as the elites avoided direct confrontation with a political power that still seemed all but invincible. Stealth was the order of the day but later defiance became more open. Mikhail Gorbachev virtually declared war on the **Uzbek** elites at the 27th Congress of the Communist Party of Soviet Union in February 1986. However, it led to progressively hardening of '**Uzbeks**' resistance to Central Authority. This evoked 'no' response from the Centre or only a feeble one which was an evidence to either a weakened 'ability' or a demoralized 'will' of the Centre to display the 'ruthlessness' towards **Uzbeks** that characterized in most of the Soviet period.

In June 1989, when dozens of people were killed in Farghana valley over land and housing issues between **Uzbeks** and Meskhetian Turks, Central Asians represented slight edge on **Uzbek** Party Central Committee Bureau (7 seats to 6 for Slavs). This was a phenomenon of transitional importance, since it was already shifting from the Party to the Government as symbolized by the Party First Secretary Karimov's designation in 1990 to be the President of **Uzbekistan**. Similarly, staffing of **Uzbek** Presidential Council appointed by Karimov in his new status, the same year, was overwhelmingly **Uzbek**.¹³ The forces of change won over the defenders of status quo, because many **Uzbeks** recognized that their nation's well-being depended on frank confrontation with the past.

As **Uzbekistan**'s declarations of economic and political sovereignty in 1990 gave new impetus to the campaign to make history more objective, political evolution had reached the point where intellectuals could take a new and more jaundiced look at the very underpinnings of Soviet rule. A pivotal event in the establishment of Soviet regime, the overthrow in February 1918 of the autonomous Muslim government of Central Asia whose seat was in the Kokand city of Ferghana valley was now being subjected to a searching reappraisal. In a republic where ideology still counted for

something even though no longer dominated by Marxism-Leninism, this revision of history was an important key to official attitudes towards the Centre. The political framework for a review of historical treatment of the Kokand government was reflected in the high level declarations like the one made in late November 1990 by **Uzbek** President Islam Karimov in which he saw the future of the Soviet Union as one of the confederation, an 'association of independent states'.¹⁴

In an interview with an influential **Uzbek** language newspaper the dismissed Chairman of the **Uzbek** Supreme Court, Sadiqjan Yigitaliev¹⁵ narrated a four-year reign of terror in **Uzbekistan**, featuring prosecutorial persecution, judicial malfeasance and ethnic feuding. He charged that a number of people were still being unjustly imprisoned in connection with the 'cotton affair'. He cited Communist Party Central Committee, USSR Supreme Court and law enforcement officials assigned to republic on orders from Centre as the main players of the drama. He charged that during his tenure as Chairman of the Supreme Court (January 1985 - January 1989), the leadership positions in **Uzbekistan** were occupied by 'prosecutors of the enemies of progress'. He named a 'troika' of three Russians including Vladimir P. Anishchev, the Party Second Secretary, Valentin P. Ogarok, the First Deputy Chairman of the Presidium of the republican Supreme Soviet, who controlled the Government of **Uzbekistan**. Publication of this interview in an influential **Uzbek** daily in early 1990 was an indicator of the radical change in **Uzbekistan's** political climate. All of those whom he named as adversaries were apparently shifted to jobs outside the republic. None of the 'troika' remained in office and was replaced by Russians who came from other posts within the republic. The new leadership headed by First Secretary (now President) Islam A. Karimov, while professing loyalty to the Soviet Federation, was proving to be much more outspoken than its predecessors in pressing for true sovereignty and redress of **Uzbek** grievances against the Centre. No grievance was more sensitive than the widespread feeling among **Uzbeks** that corruption and the 'cotton affair, had been used by Moscow as a pretext to persecute them on ethnic grounds.

From Baltic to Central Asia, no more emotional issue of 'nationalism' arose in the '*perestroika*' period than that of

mistreatment of non-Russian recruits in the multi-ethnic Soviet army. Suspicion that army recruits, especially those from the Ferghana valley were being murdered while serving in other parts of the Soviet Union lengthened the list of **Uzbek** ethnic grievances. A demonstration was held in Tashkent on October 01, 1989 by Birlik to protest these killings. **Uzbeks'** hostility to Moscow had been fed by a widespread feeling that they had been unjustly stigmatized as a 'nation' by Soviet officials and the Central Media, beginning with the misdeeds of corrupt officials who were charged in the 'cotton affair'. In this matter, public pressure on local officials weighed as never in **Uzbek** politics - a further sign of a new power configuration in the republic. The issue of 'recruits deaths', perhaps more than any other **Uzbek** grievance, was grist for the mill of the **Uzbek** elites, now spear-headed by militant informal groups like Birlik. Thus the deaths of **Uzbek** recruits helped in the campaign of nation-building and to move **Uzbekistan** a step closer to the genuine sovereignty.

ii. Islamic revivalism

When communism came to Central Asian oases after 1917, it was largely as a foreign import imposed by local Russians by force of arms. The region had been an integral part of the world of Muslim civilization ever since the 7th Century when not long after the death of Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace be Upon Him), the Arabs - bearers of a rapidly expanding **Islam**, crossed the *Amu Darya* from the south and introduced their religion to the region. After the 16th Century, European explorers and traders developed water routes to Asia and Africa, that eclipsed the Caravan routes and the decline of economic prosperity left the territory relatively in isolation. Paradoxically, in the face of this adversity, the prestige of its centres of **Islamic** learning grew within the Muslim world, precisely because their remoteness kept them away from exposure to Western influence.

The Russian conquest of Central Asia shocked the believers, partly because it demonstrated their vulnerability to an infidel power. Russian economic and technological innovation opened the area to social changes which combined to fragment the **Islamic** community. These developments also opened the region to new influences from outside, notably the tide of reforms sweeping other

Muslim people of the Russian empire and other Muslim societies in the world, particularly Turkey and Iran.

Central Asian intellectuals participated in the *Jadid* movement of Muslim reformers, particularly Uzbeks who believed that only by modernizing; Muslims could compete with Russians and other Europeans and sought to transform the exclusively religious base of Muslim education by introducing secular subjects. However, *Jadids* were confronted with the dilemma of choosing to support the new regime, with its atheistic ideology or joining their old enemies - the '**Basmachi**' resistance led by conservative Muslims. Hence, many of them chose to collaborate with the new regime, despite its espousal of 'atheism' which was repugnant to them. Their reason was the feeling that there was no viable political alternative, given the nature of the resistance movement and the hope that they would be able to exploit the power of the new system for the ultimate advance of their own nationalistic purposes.

The sum and substance of current Islamic revivalism is represented by the Muslims' urge to set their own house in order and to build their own societies and states, that is where they hold power, in the light of their own beliefs, values and ideals. There is general tendency in Central Asia that their attitude to Islam is closer to that which obtains in modern Turkey because the entire population here, whether Turkic or Tajik, lay stress on the revival of their national culture. The ideological pull towards Islam is a far cry for two reasons: firstly, it has so far not given any political shape to the existing Muslim countries; and secondly, the CARs have been too much open to Russian type of western influence, that they would not like to retrace their steps backward in history, particularly when it is realized that for them Islam is identical with their national culture.¹⁶

The process of '**Islamic revivalism**' was inadvertently set in motion by the last President of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev, and his well-publicized policy of *glasnost* in the late 1980s.¹⁷ Although the immediate reaction to *glasnost* varied from republic to republic, the overall pattern reflected more heavily the ethnic and nationalistic sentiments than religious aspirations.¹⁸ Rapidly, however, religious concerns over the lack of public prayer accommodations and Islamic education began to be heard frequently

in all Muslim republics. For example, Muslim leaders in Tajikistan called for 'holy war' against the central authority, vowing to fight till victory, the oppressive rule of Kremlin masters.

Three factors could define the essential dynamics of 'Islamic revivalism' in Uzbekistan:

- 1) The Islamic tradition of the **Uzbek** inhabitants is not of largely associated with the Shi'ite Islam as in Iran.
- 2) A qualitative distinction should be drawn between the government's preferred role for Islam and that of the masses religious preference in the republics. (This varies greatly from republic to republic with the **Uzbek** government most willing to use force against the **Islamic** forces in order to impose its preferred position as was done in Ferghana valley in 1989 and the eastern city of Andijan in May, 2005.
- 3) The strength or weakness of the democratic drive in **Uzbekistan** can significantly alter the balance of force within the republic.

Central Asia is a land of perpetual struggle between the nomad and the settled, the two together having contributed to the formation of Central Asian Civilization. It also absorbed elements from Iranian Zoroastrianism, Nestorian Christianity, Post-Alexandrian Hellenism, Gandharan Buddhism and Chinese cultural trends that flowed along the Silk Road. The Irani-Tajiki was a development of the post-Arab conquest of this region, when a new Tajiki Persian literature flourished along with those artistic and scientific ideas that survived the Arab conquest of Iran, Khorasan and Central Asia. It absorbed the Arab-Islamic elements but gave a new identity to the Irani-Tajiki, integrated the Turko-Tajiki population, and gave birth to a new Sufistic Islamic Order that probably combined many ideas of popular religion of the past and above all, it led to the creation of new artistic and architectural tradition and finally to the production of scientific knowledge based on freedom of thought and expression.¹⁹

The '**Unofficial Islam**' characterized by *Sufi Orders* was much more dynamic than 'Official Islam' in the Tsarist as well as

Soviet periods. It was beyond the control of Muslim Spiritual Directorates and consequently of the Soviet authorities. 'Official Islam' during the Soviet era, unable to satisfy the religious needs of the population was supplemented and in some cases replaced by the 'Sufi Orders'. "Qadiriya Order" was founded by Sheikh Abdul Qadir Jilani in Baghdad in 12th Century and "Naqshbandia Order" in Bokhara by Sheikh Bahauddin Naqshband in 14th Century. The adepts performed by necessary religious rites, ran their own clandestine mosques which were many times more numerous than the official working mosques. The activities of the Sufis were often centered around various holy places, the tombs of the mystical or real saints (after Sufi leaders) who died fighting the Russians. The holy places which were perhaps in thousands served as substitutes for the shut down mosques and as meeting places where adepts performed the '*Zikar*' and were taught prayers, Arabic language and the rudiments of Islamic theology during the Soviet era. Simple believers paid visits to these holy places in Bokhara, thus fulfilling a sacred duty as an alternate to performing Haj (pilgrimage) to Mecca Al-Mukarrama which was banned by Soviets for many decades. These tombs, therefore, provided a forum of which the Sufi brotherhood could avail themselves to influence the Muslim masses during religious festivals and other holy events. Most Muslim cemeteries were established near a holy place and the guardians of the cemeteries were often adepts of a '*Tariqa*'. The '*Tariqa*' exercised a deep influence on public opinion and was responsible for the high proportion of practicing believers of Muslims of Central Asia. Despite efforts by the Soviet authorities, the official Islamic leadership always refused to condemn 'Unofficial Islam' as heretical or unorthodox. The few '*Fatwas*' (religious decrees) published by the Muftis against various Sufi practices (visits to the holy shrines, collection of *Zakat* by the Sufi brotherhoods, performance of *Zikar*) remained moderate and vague and proved the unwillingness of the Directorates to treat a breach with an organization that personified the popular aspect of Islam. Hence, the following levels of adherence to Islam by Muslims of Central Asia could be distinguished:

- i) The fundamentalist or orthodox 'Unofficial Islam' which refused all compromises, stayed hidden from Russian eyes and was frequently attacked in the Soviet press. It was known to the official Islamic clergy and

co-existed fairly peacefully with the official Soviet **Islamic** organization.

- ii) The '**Official Islam**' represented by the reorganized clergy cooperating with the regime under the same political modus operandi as the Russian Orthodox Church. However, unlike later, the Muslim hierarchy managed to stay away from actions directed against '**Unofficial Islam**'.
- iii) The Islam of the population at large, deficient in observing basic affirmation of faith.
- iv) The **Islam** of modernized Muslim elites, much less visible from the outside and governed by national pride based on a national-religious feeling, rather than the observance of rituals. Family local traditions played a role at least more limited than in other groups.
- v) Total denial of Islamic heritage was practically unheard of among Muslims of Central Asia which in fact, amounted to a rejection of one's own national past so tightly inter-woven with the Islamic way of life.

What distinguished **Uzbekistan** from the rest of Soviet Union was the role of **Islam** in its history and culture, both past and present. For a true Muslim, religious doctrine ordains the most minute aspects of daily life. For those who are less religious, **Islam** is still pervasive in ethnic customs and life-styles: even before '*perestroika*' loosened restrictions on religion. It was a matter of common knowledge that Communist Party officials - the professed 'atheists' used to participate actively in religious life-cycle rituals such as weddings, funerals or circumcisions and other observances.

Mannan Ramiz, an **Uzbek** intellectual who himself professed loyalty to the new Communist regime, recalled incidents that had occurred in Tashkent. He says it became known that a group of Communists had been holding secret evening gatherings and meetings during which all kinds of futile things were said. He quoted the participants as saying, for example:

"Communists who damage themselves by saying they are against religion, have capitulated to the Russians.

Here in the conditions of Turkestan, there is no need for a Communism like the Communism in Russia that denies religion. Instead, we must create a Communism that is completely compatible with the Islamic religion".²⁰

By the end of 1920s, most mosques had been closed and their buildings converted for use as anti-religious museums, warehouses or for other public purposes. The property of the *Waqfs* had likewise been confiscated. The Muslim clergy had been decimated by arrests and executions and women had been forced to remove their veils. The Press and Communist agitators were conducting campaigns to discredit **Islam** and its believers. Under these conditions, worship was all but driven underground.

During World War-II, Stalin's temporary change in course had eased the pressures against **Islam**, as it had for other religions in an all-out effort to rally people for the war effort. After the war, persecution of religion was resumed. Following the death of Stalin, the terror had subsided but his successors maintained a policy of 'militant atheism' with continuing harassment of **Islam's** practitioners. However, **Islam** maintained a firm grip. This was brought out with revealing clarity in the 1970s under Brezhnev, when introduction of modern survey-research techniques to study the USSR's Muslim societies documented a startling incidence of continuing belief and practice at all levels. A scholar in **Uzbekistan**, T. S. Saidbaev published a book²¹ of findings which left little doubt that Islamic observance was still widespread, especially in the case of 'life-cycle rituals' like circumcision, marriage and funerals. The *Sharia* was respected by many in the case of prescribed fasting and feasting and of taboos on social behaviour such as the marriage of Muslim women to non-Muslim men. As an example of Islam's influence at all levels of society, Saidbaev noted that in the USSR, the incidence of 'religiosity' was considerably greater among Muslims than Christians.

In the initial *perestroika* period, residual fear of **Islam** remained a pre-occupation of officialdom even after many other ideological shibboleths had been abandoned. Gorbachev himself publicly excoriated the religion in his early period in office, especially

where Party members were found to be participating in religious observances. In November 1986, he made a harsh speech during a stopover in Tashkent in which he complained about Party members' taking part in Islamic activities.²² As a result of Gorbachev's intervention, 53 members were expelled from Uzbek Party, during a six-month period, for organizing religious rituals and taking part in them.²³ In 1987, there were numerous imprisonments of Soviet Muslims for religious activities.²⁴

Nationalist movements in European part of former Soviet Union did gain considerable momentum during the *perestroika*, (however) 'nationalism' in Central Asia did not take strong institutional form.²⁵ Towards the closing years of the last decade, the nationalist sentiment began to take some expression in the form of social protests, foods riots and even attacks against the Russians.

Soon after his victory over Germans, Stalin re-imposed his repressive policies. Later, in Khrushchev and Brezhnev eras, Soviet policy towards Russification i.e. assimilation of non-Russians into a single Soviet nationality continued. However, the post-Stalin period gave birth to a paradoxical development that a republic-based nationalism emerged. In Brezhnev period, a new permissiveness towards Islam was introduced i.e. if a person worked well at his job, then religion was a "matter of individual consciousness".²⁶

Beginning in 1989, the leadership abruptly reversed its official hostility towards Islam and switched to the tacit catering to it through its official representatives. The purpose was clear i.e. by conceding the legitimacy of a religion with roots deep in the society, it sought to enhance its own legitimacy in the eyes of believers. Religious policy had undergone a dramatic shift viz. anti-religious propaganda disappeared from the media and was replaced by active encouragement by the secular authorities to Islamic communities in matters like building and restoration of mosques. Most striking was the new prominence in public life of the Islamic clergy. A case in point was that of the Mufti of Tashkent, Muhammad Sadiq Muhammad Yusuf who became a deputy to USSR Supreme Soviet and began to appear prominently on Television and in the press as an authoritative commentator on social programmes which he interpreted from standpoint of Islamic doctrine. If the new tolerance of Islam was

motivated in part by the secular authorities' quest for popular support, the policy was also traceable to a desire to build a backfire against the spreading influence of Islamic fundamentalists and other maverick Muslim tendencies operating outside the official framework.

There were signs of new religious ferment on other fronts. In a major development in 1989, Muslims of Uzbekistan launched a campaign to depose Shamsidin Babakhanov ibn Zeyudin - a holdover from the Brezhnev period who was accused of womanizing and drinking alcohol. He was the Head Mufti of the Muslim Religious Board of Central Asia in Tashkent (which replaced Bokhara) and was established as one of the four 'spiritual directorates' in 1941 to oversee the religious affairs of the Union. The membership and recruitment policies of the Board were tightly controlled by the Central Authority which included the appointment of Mufti of Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan as well as Kazi of Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. The campaign was apparently master-minded by an organization named 'Islam and Democracy' whose declared objective was to cleanse Islam in the Soviet Union. Accused of violating Islamic codes of behaviour and conduct, Babakhanov was forced to resign.²⁷ The new Mufti Mamayusupov became much more active than his predecessor, especially in secular aspects of life. Soon after becoming Mufti, he was elected together with other clergymen to the new USSR Congress of Peoples Deputies in spring 1989. His willingness to assume a political role in his new capacity quickly became apparent when he accompanied a group of Uzbek leaders headed by First Secretary Nishanov, flown hastily from the Congress in June 1989 to deal with the bloody massacres of the Meshketian-Turkic minority in the Ferghana valley when more than 100 people were killed and many homes and much other property were destroyed in rioting led by **Uzbeks**.

The Ferghana tragedy was a watershed in **Uzbek** politics. It happened to coincide with the conservative and Moscow-leaning Nishanov's departure from the Uzbek scene to take his post in Moscow. His successor, Islam Karimov proved much more sensitive to local **Uzbek** concerns, and especially to the underlying roots of social unrest. Even before the unsettling events of Ferghana valley, greater tolerance of **Islam** by President Karimov was evident from a decrease in **Uzbek** media attacks on religion. In the face of

catastrophic economic and social problems, coupled with a loosening of political control, the 'anti-religious' campaign had clearly slipped to a lower priority. By the end of 1988, with *glasnost* shedding light on the enormity of the region's economic and environmental problems, greater tolerance for Islam was in the wind. Party members were no longer being chastised for participation in Muslim funeral rites. At the same time, there had been an accompanying change in Mikhail Gorbachev's own attitude on the subject. Beginning at about the same time, the media began to publish interviews with Muslim religious figures that went beyond the old strictures on religious expression. Coincidentally, with the Ferghana violence, the **Uzbek** Party journal *Kommunist Uzbekistana* printed an article advocating cooperation between 'communism' and '**Islam**'. The author pointed to '*Islamic* commandments' which correspond to 'Communist morality' and called for joint action against 'alcoholism, drug addiction, prostitution, bribery, fraud, embezzlement and other disgusting ills of the society' which would be condemned by any religion. He went an astonishing step further to call for creation of mixed state and religious commissions which would work together on such problems as 'morality, freedom of observance of religious denominations, human rights etc'.²⁸ The new tolerance of **Islam** was given an additional seal of official approval in the December 1989 election platform of the Uzbek Communist Party.

4.2 Nation-state vs Islamic Movement (Post-Soviet period)

i. Security dilemma

In December 1991, when the Soviet Union had disintegrated, 15 sovereign and independent countries had emerged in its place. Five of them viz. Kazakhstan, Kirgystan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and **Uzbekistan** were in Central Asia. They had quickly joined the newly created, Slav-dominated Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), thereby implying a discernible dilemma in their deportment as sovereign countries. The fear of being left out in isolation by Russia and the desire to assert national independence had driven these newly born infant republics to a conflicting course of post-Soviet development. Politically, trying to carve out a pluralistic, democratic niche in the long run, the CARs had landed up in a real

dilemma. In reality, many of them had turned to Russia for help. Their desire for secular democracy was buffeted by rising waves of **Islamic movement**, more in **Uzbekistan** and Turkmenistan, and less in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. The case of war-torn Tajikistan was a wee bit more complex. By the advent of 1996, mighty opposition parties such as Birlik and the Islamic Renaissance Party were all proscribed. Leaders burlesqued the opposition, and claimed to have achieved political stability on the ruins of it, and the saga of tumult continued.

On the economic front, recession wreaked havoc. Transition from Soviet socialism to market capitalism had brought new challenges and painful experiences. The economic linkages with Russia had remained a persistent problem to overcome vis-a-vis emerging prospects of cooperation with other countries. As a result, economic potentials lay shorn of management capability. In the security spheres, dilemmas were still more apparent. Membership in the CIS had not deterred these countries to seek alternative avenues of alliances. Thus, CARs became members of the CSCE, NATO partnership for peace and at the same time, trying to forge regional economic and military alliances for collective security such as ECO and a treaty, signed in Tashkent on 15 May, 1992 by Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and **Uzbekistan**.

Similarly, foreign policy was a virgin field. CARs had emerged with no past experience in conducting international diplomacy. The spectrum was too broad to bewilder a novice. It included propositions such as Pan-Islamic, Pan-Turkic, Pro-Russian, Pro-CIS, Pro-Western, Pro-Chinese and Pro-non-aligned. The desire to pursue an independent course of diplomacy had finally prevailed in the mindset of Central Asian leaders. After more than a decade of endeavour, what we see today are the emerging contours of an open-door policy with regard to all countries, strictly managed by the state, in favour of their '**national interest**'.

The Russian government "clearly sees the borders of the CARs as the outer limits of its own security frontier". As a result, despite their independence, the CARs faced a dilemma as to how to

maintain good relationship with Russia, and at the same time, exercise their sovereignty without being controlled and supervised by the former super-power. Hence, given a choice, they wanted to treat Russia like any other foreign country. However, this was neither feasible nor pragmatic. The leadership in the CARs was aware of the fact that their national self-interest required special relationship with Russia. This was why, soon after the Soviet sunset, CARs had begun to follow a definite pattern in emerging inter-state relationship by joining the CIS, which had implied that priority-wise, Russia remained at the top along with other CIS countries. In the realm of security and strategic cooperation, there was no other substantive alternative to Russia before the CARs. Eleven million Russians living in the CARs provided much needed technical capability for economic development. Seven decades of close economic, military and strategic tie-ups with the former Soviet Union, and Russia in particular, had offered market for the CARs. Equally significant was the dependence of CARs on Russia to have access to export of oil, gas and other goods through established Russian rail-roads to the West and to Far Eastern markets.

At the same time, the CARs wanted to reduce their dependence on Russia by entering into defence agreements with other countries and by attracting western capital and technology for developing their economies. The leadership in the CARs was indeed concerned about Yeltsin's meddling in their internal affairs under the pretext of safeguarding the interests of ethnic Russian population in CARs and about growing Russian radical **nationalist** party of Vladimir Zhirinovskiy. Hence, the CARs could neither afford to antagonize Russia; nor embrace it. Thus, while formulating their policies and developing relations with the countries in their southern fringe, the CARs had to draw a delicate balance between them and Russia since interests of both sides were closely intertwined in so far as Turkey, Iran and other southern neighbours were concerned. The volatile situation in Afghanistan after September 11, 2001 had provided added input to the already complex regional scenario for Russia to act gingerly on its southern underbelly.

In their efforts to shape up new pattern of relationship with countries lying in the immediate southern fringe, Central Asian

leaders had expressed widespread apprehensions about protection of their **national interests**. Since all countries act in self-defence and **self-interest**, it was but natural to presume that CARs were driven by the imperatives of their own '**national interest**'.

Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan had formed a "United Battalion" to bolster their security arrangement. In May, 1995, after a meeting in Chimkent, the Presidents of these three republics had announced that "contingent of the new "United Battalion" would comprise mainly of natives of Central Asia, who were well acquainted with the local conditions and the local situation. They would be called upon to prevent possible local conflicts in these republics, and thus, promote regional stability and security." The idea was exactly echoed at the 50th session of the UN General Assembly on 29 September, 1995, when the Kazakh Foreign Minister, Qasmyzhomart Toqayev, had proposed to create "under the UN auspices, an armed contingent of the three CARs. In his opinion, "this would promote security in Central Asia - a region notorious and famous by the presence of hot-beds of tensions." The region remained indeed in ferment. The spillover effects of the civil war in Tajikistan, the then Taliban regime and post-Taliban Afghanistan had complicated the prevailing security scenario. While efforts at obtaining a security arrangement were afoot on the national, inter-regional and intra-regional levels, often with and sometimes without Russia, the alarming conflict-ridden situation in Tajikistan and Afghanistan had dimmed any future prospects of regional security. Most strikingly, the traditional **Uzbek**-Tajik animosity blown up beyond all proportions accentuated by direct US involvement in Afghanistan renders the region incessantly bellicose, and the most likely scenario continue to be low intensity conflict for many years to come.

The CARs had realized that no amount of weaponry from any of the **Islamic** neighbouring countries could ensure and match the security umbrella provided by the Russians. While making continuous efforts to raise national armies, the countries of the region had been exploring all possibilities of safeguarding their own national security interests. The subsequent developments had revealed that they had leaned more toward Russia than elsewhere for meeting their security

challenges. On 16 March 1992, the **Uzbek** Parliament had passed a resolution calling back **Uzbek** servicemen to **Uzbekistan**. Two years later, in March 1994, **Uzbekistan** and Russia had signed in Moscow a mutual military cooperation pact for five years, article 11 of which clearly implied that “servicemen in the armed forces of one party had the right to transfer to the armed forces of the other party to continue their services.” This virtually meant that soldiers of Russia could serve in the **Uzbek** army and vice versa. Subsequently, **Uzbekistan** unilaterally annulled the security treaty with Russia, and following the 9/11 had dramatically changed its stance to be a partner in the fight against terror along with others.

ii. Nation-state

A review of major trends in Central Asian studies in early 1990s reveals the predominance of **realist** frameworks in the interpretation and analysis of change in the region. Most of the primary research has been concentrated on the **realist**, state-centric and geo-political theory. This has reactivated the ‘geo-political school of thought’, abandoned for more than half a century.

Uzbekistan as a ‘**nation-state**’ has been viewed through the mirror of this theory, given its geo-strategic location and abundant natural and energy resources. It was Uzbekistan’s physical location, nestled between Russia, China, Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan and its abundant natural resources including gold, cotton and assorted heavy materials, that attracted the most attention. Central Asia was overwhelmingly viewed as the new playground for ‘*Great Power rivalry*’ over energy routes and pipelines.²⁹

In the **realist** discourse, the phenomena of ‘**nationalism**’ and that of ‘**Islam**’ play important roles. Modernization, political development, nation-building and ethnicity are important characters of this theory. Most of the security studies and international relations’ theories have been based on a structured picture of the real world which is terrorised and the sovereign states exist in the condition of international anarchy. The primary aim of all the big and small states including the only *super power* is to enhance and protect their security, integrity and independence from a variety of actors including the non-state actors.

The end of cold-war along with the decline of inter-state warfare and rise of ethnic conflict has led the **realists** to extend this competitive image of states to more amorphous social categories such as ‘ethnicities’ and ‘nations.’ Moreover, international relations theory is used to explain ‘**nationalism**’³⁰. Consequently, the discourse on ‘**nationalism**’ has been enduringly and firmly entrenched within the field of Central Asian studies. One reason for this enduring pre-occupation with ‘**nationalism**’ is that, for the longest time, scholars have looked on Central Asia primarily from the perspective of historical Russian/Soviet ideological and imperial interventionism. Consequently, dominant trends in Central Asian study have been, to a large extent shaped by data drawn from Russian and Soviet sources. Methodologically also, scholarship on Central Asia has been traditionally dominated by Russian/Soviet studies that have been largely Euro-centric. The combination of these traditional methodological and theoretical approaches has also shaped the contemporary academic discussion by centralising the debate regarding the relative success or failure of the process of Soviet-led ‘modernization’ of Central Asia.³¹ Consequently, along with the concept of ‘modernization’ and the related theories of political development – the twin arguments regarding ‘**nationalism**’ and ‘**nation-building**’ have become central to the **realist** discourse on Central Asia.

One primary outcome of this approach has been the predominance of the ‘nationalities’ question. Ultimately, all analysis of Central Asian politics is reduced to assumptions about the nature and impact of ‘ethnicity’. ‘Ethnicity’ has been an all-purpose tool of Central Asian research and analysis.³² There has been a virtual ‘ethnisation’ of identity. The **realist** scholars have elevated ‘ethnicity’ as a leading theoretical model of practice and understanding of **Uzbekistan** and Central Asia, rather than simply another empirical element of support for various political and societal forces.

The structural features that are highlighted by **realist** scholars, as probable causes of ethnic conflict include, the historical artificiality of Central Asian borders, state systems, the internal strength or weaknesses of states and ethnic heterogeneity of

populations, as well as state policies of discrimination or inclusion of ethnic minorities.³³ This approach to Central Asian studies has also shaped this overly simplistic representation of **Uzbekistan** as an artificial construct or a relic of Soviet nationality policies, ripe for discord and disintegration.

By mid-1990s, the ethnic discourse lost some of its following, as most of the Central Asian states including **Uzbekistan** were largely, able to maintain a certain level of social stability. This same period saw the ascendancy of the **Liberal** interpretations of the reform process unfolding in Central Asia with its twin concepts of 'post-communism' and '**transition**'. The '**transition** school' brought together the concepts of constitution building and democratic institutionalism and prioritized them.³⁴ These concepts became essential to the reform agendas of Western countries and international institutions supporting the process of change unfolding in the Central Asian states.

A new body of work grouped under the term "post-communism" was increasingly applied to all studies and investigations aimed at understanding contemporary political developments within the 27 sovereign states that emerged from communist rule in 1989-91 (Mandelbaum, 1996, Grey, 1997). In this region which stretched from central Germany to the Pacific coast of Russia, the common denominator tying the various states together was their shared historical experience of 'communism'. According to Michael Mandelbaum, "the term 'post-communism' is the backward-looking. It implies to a world defined by what it used to be but no longer is".³⁵

'**Communism**' is largely seen as a political system that was 'totalitarian' i.e. aiming to control every aspect of Soviet life.³⁶ The instrument of control was the all powerful, vertically organized, self-perpetuating 'Communist Party'.³⁷ The party sought to prevent any collective activity outside its control. All important social transactions were supposed to be vertical, between the party and the society rather than horizontal, that is, independent of the regime. Private economic activity, organized religion, interest groups, clubs, associations of all kinds – all elements of what has come to be called a civil society – were suppressed.³⁸

Yet the experience of '**communism**' was vastly different for different states. The countries under communist rule stretching from Berlin to Vladivostok differed from each other in many significant ways. One major problem with the 'post-communism' theory is that it attempts to apply a single matrix to their history, without taking into account the various socio-economic, cultural, political and historical peculiarities. But the greatest weakness of the 'post-communism' framework is that 'post-communism' is forward looking, as well as backward looking. The term not only describes the history of these 27 states but, in fact, foretells their future. It connotes both a clear direction and a fixed destination. To be a 'post-communist' state in the new World Order means much more than simply sharing a Soviet legacy, it presages a future closely intertwined with the West. It presumes a goal towards which the 27 countries are moving and that goal is figuratively the West. The 'post-communist' states are presumed to have embarked on a journey from 'totalitarianism' to 'democratic politics' and 'free market economies'.³⁹

The presumption of a common destination is also captured in another term, that is often used in the discussion of 'post-communism'. And the term is '**transition**'. In a nutshell, the term implies that the socio-economic and political upheaval that is underway in the 'post-communist' countries, has a clear direction and a purpose. It is seen as a '**transition**' Westward. The idea of the 'post-communist' '**transition**' is grounded in contemporary history. The global conflict between 'communism' and the 'West' that dominated the four-decades after World War II, is seen as an ideological struggle waged between two differing political and economic systems. The end of the cold war is seen as a clear victory for the West and all that the 'Western way of life' stood for.

The **Western** liberal system was seen to have prevailed because '**democracy**' secured popular allegiance, something the dictatorship of the 'Communist Party' for all its claims to represent the real interest of those it governed, failed to do so. Market economics also achieved prosperity in the West in a way that the planned Communist economies despite their claim of being a more

scientific method of channelling resources and producing goods, did not come up to that level.

Most importantly, according to the proponents of this 'school of thought', the 'post-communist' Eurasian states themselves have seemingly embraced the idea of a 'West-ward **transition**'. It is maintained that since independence in 1989-91, all 'post-communist' states have professed their commitment to the idea of 'political democracy' and the establishment of a 'market economy'. Across the great spectrum of these newly independent states, the governments have allowed to form political parties, held elections, established stock markets and privatised state-controlled assets.

It is an undeniable fact that the 'post-communist' states share a common history of significant duration and of a defining character. But the greatest weakness of this idea of '**transition**' lies in the assumption that the legacies of the communist period will ultimately drive their politics in certain fixed directions. By the end of 1990s, the analysis of contemporary political developments within many of these states, revealed the fact that the '**transition**' towards Western-liberalism and market-economy that all 'post-communist' states were supposed to be undergoing, was absent from a great number of these countries. This remains especially relevant to the case of the Central Asian states. These states, despite sharing a communist legacy with the other 'post-communist' states, remain vastly different, not only in their experience of the 70 years of 'communism' but also in the likely directions they are moving to, in the post-independence period. They are clearly not making a '**transition**' to any Western-inspired democratic and pluralistic system of government. Even the economic reform process has been slow and a full conversion to market forces remains a far off dream. The '**transition**' in Central Asia is actually producing a group of authoritarian, non-democratic, nationalist, populist regimes. Free enterprise is permitted only when it is state-regulated and free parliamentary debate, the process of nation-building is only allowed as long as it is about unimportant issues. Leaders of these autocratic and non-pluralistic regimes, especially those in Central Asia and Trans-Caucasus, also avoid market-reform because they expect income differentiation and other features of capitalism to foment social tension and provoke public defiance.⁴⁰

The failure of democracy to meaningfully take root in the Central Asian states has led the academia to challenge the **liberal** reform oriented as well as **realist**, geo-strategic theoretical models. Since the late 1990s, '**constructivist**' interpretations are increasingly applied to the analysis of the dynamics of change in the field of Central Asian studies. The '**constructivist**' approaches do not view the phenomenon of 'modernity' and its concomitant by-product, the modern state, as the primary independent variable, which has influenced the process of nation-building and 'nationalism' and realist issues of 'identity' in the CARs.

Whereas '**realism**' and '**liberalism**' tend to focus on material factors such as 'power' or 'trade', '**constructivists**' regard the interests and identities of states as highly malleable product of specific historical process. They pay close attention to the discourses in the society because discourse reflects the prevailing shapes of beliefs and interests and establishes accepted norms of behaviour. Consequently, **constructivism** is especially attentive to the sources of change and this approach has largely replaced Marxism as the pre-eminent radical perspective on international affairs.⁴¹

Constructivist approaches applied to the case of 'nationalism' in Central Asia, has led to a re-examination of the mainsprings of Central Asian 'nationalism'. In the **constructivist** discourse, there is a departure from the **realist** focus on the role of the Soviet colonization and the Soviet state in creating the contours of Central Asian 'nationalism'. Instead the **constructivists** focus on the fluidity and the multiplicity of identities and their function in nation formation, as well as their influence on the internal political practices and the conduct of foreign policy.⁴²

Constructivists move away from the **realist** conceptions of 'nations' and 'states' possessing single identities from which interests and behaviour follow. **Constructivism** proposes that political actors are capable of employing various identities, constituted both historically and by elites. And these identities, in turn influence their attitudes and actions in domestic and international arena.⁴³

Under this approach, the **realist** conceptions of ‘national interest’ and ‘national security’ are also essentially tied to this question of identities. The perceived interests of states are clearly connected to the self-perceptions of these states. Instead of taking the ‘state’ for granted and assuming that it simply seeks to survive, **constructivists** regard the interests and identities of states as a highly malleable product of specific historical processes.⁴⁴ The whole question of self-understanding, goals and aspirations, fears and anxieties must be investigated prior to an analysis of just the security requirements of the states.⁴⁵ The move away by scholars from a more primordial understanding of ‘nations’ to a **constructivist** view of ‘nations’ as ‘imagined communities’ (Benedict Anderson 1991), opens up the possibility to locate the potential for conflict in particular constructions of ‘nations’ in certain national narratives and styles of discourse. While these debates reflect the diversity of contemporary scholarship on international relations, there are also obvious signs of convergence. Most **realist** recognize that domestic variables such as ‘nationalism’ militarism, ethnicity and identity are important; **liberals** acknowledge that power is central to international behaviour; and some **constructivists** admit that ideas will have a greater impact if backed by powerful states and reinforced by enduring material forces.⁴⁶ The boundaries of each paradigm are somewhat permeable and there is ample opportunity for intellectual overlap.

The post-communist state of **Uzbekistan** is seen to be vigorously involved in nation-building enterprise which seems to be directly inspired by the nation-building strategies evolved during the Soviet era. The newly independent state of **Uzbekistan** is, in effect, reinforcing Soviet methods in order to give itself authenticity. **Uzbekistan** is also working within the same strategic concerns which were operative in the national delimitation of Central Asia and the Soviet nationality policy. This strategic constraint mainly entailed the rejection of all Pan-Islamist and Pan-Turkic movements (Kazemzadeh, 1999). Paradoxically, to a great extent it was the Soviet imperial management that while attempting to create a supra-ethnic multi-cultural empire, produced at the same time, the general political, legal, institutional and cultural framework for contemporary ethno-national mapping and identities (Beissinger, 1997).

Since its independence, **Uzbek** state has been pre-occupied with the task of forging a **nation-state** while it faces trans-national challenges to its security. The dominant threats to **Uzbek** national security do not arise from other hostile neighbouring states but rather from various trans-national movements emanating from weak and in certain cases, failed *nation-state systems* that characterise the region. The total disintegration and destruction of the state and society in neighbouring Afghanistan and instability and civil war in Tajikistan have created power vacuums, which have been filled in by various forces having ethnic complexion. The US-led global 'war on terror' is another trans-national challenge which has greatly impacted on the building of **nation-state** in **Uzbekistan**. These trans-national movements of men, material and ideas create complex security challenges for the post-independent state of **Uzbekistan**. The newly born nation-state, instead of being an independent variable, shaping the on-going process of nation-building, is, in fact, a dependable variable which is itself constantly shaped and modelled according to the dominant discourses within the society as well as the challenges thrown up by the international security environment. The **Uzbek** state, therefore, acts and is acted upon by the socio-cultural, political and economic forces, not only within the contemporary **Uzbek** society but also in the prevailing international system and environment, surrounding the new infant nation-state.

The experiment of 'post-communist' **nation-state** of **Uzbekistan** is a unique and interesting case of nation-building at a time when *nationhood* is an increasingly troubled notion in the world. The increasing force of trans-national currents are challenging the ideas of homogeneity and homeland within national borders. **Uzbekistan** is basing in the self-delight of its independent *nationhood*. The **Uzbek** government has set out to build an essentially mono-ethnic territorial **nation-state**, its rhetoric about pluralism notwithstanding.

It is ironic that the same communist leadership in **Uzbekistan** that reluctantly accepted the dissolution of the Soviet Union is now presenting itself as the champion of a restored **Uzbek** nation. President Islam Karimov, then head of the Soviet government in **Uzbekistan**, was glaringly silent during August, 1991 coup in Moscow, but quickly changed his posture when it became clear that

the end of Soviet Union was inevitable, and that recasting his authority around **Uzbek 'nationalism'** was to his advantage. President Islam Karimov's spin on himself as a true 'nationalist' seems to be uncritically accepted by most **Uzbeks**, particularly in the capital Tashkent and Ferghana valley who have expressed strong support for his ideas, the course of his leadership and the government system carved out by him.

A key part of President Islam Karimov's nation-building project is the re-writing of a national past, free from Russo-Soviet biases. **Uzbeks** are portrayed as an ancient civilization at par with the Silk Route trading partners of China, India, Persia and Greece. The Central Asian literary and scientific celebrities like Al-Bairuni, Navai and Ibn-e-Sina are claimed as exclusively **Uzbek**. Streets and shops are re-named after these national heroes and their statues are appearing in public places. The central icon of **Uzbek** nation-building campaign is the 15th century Turkic conqueror and ruler Timur (known in the West as Tamerlane). Timur's majestic figure on a 'war-horse' occupies a square at the centre of Tashkent, displacing the visage of Karl Marx. Scores of books on Timur and **Uzbek** history have been published in recent years. The 560th anniversary of Timur was celebrated in October, 2003 – another expensive, high-profile bash with concerts, new plays and opera on the Timur theme. The ruthless pursuit of **Uzbeks** as a 'nation', troubles the non-Uzbeks in and around **Uzbekistan**. So does the **Uzbek** state's mono-ethnic vision of nation and patriotism. By exalting the **Uzbek** national subject, the state perilously excludes the non-Uzbek others living in the republic. The most obvious indicator of alienation is the mass emigration of Russians, Ukrainians, Germans and Jews, following the independence, who had lived in **Uzbekistan** for several generations. This is a great loss to **Uzbekistan** in terms of brain-drain of valuable skill, needed for the development of the republic. A more subtle exclusion by **Uzbek nationalism** involves Tajiks of **Uzbekistan** who have more affinities with **Uzbeks** in culture, race and even language than an essentialist **Uzbek nationalism** would admit. Tajiks of Bokhara in particular, have not only maintained an ambiguous *identity* between themselves and **Uzbeks** but are not bothered, in the least by this ambiguity. They know both languages and speak them very fluently. They are officially designated as "Uzbeks" in their passports but speak 'Tajik' at homes. Although the Tajiks of Bokhara are

currently at ease with their dual identities but as the **Uzbek** state continues to press its narrow vision of **Uzbek** citizenry, these Tajiks may feel increasingly disenfranchised in the new **Uzbekistan** and channel their identification more towards neighbouring Tajikistan.

Uzbekistan's borders, inherited from Soviet territorial administration are as problematic as the ethnic distinctions inherited from Soviet nationalist policy. The political and economic viability of these borders are in greatest jeopardy in the Ferghana valley (a fertile, populous ecological zone and the republic's most important agricultural and industrial region) peculiarly divided between Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. If one travels from **Uzbek** capital to the Ferghana valley, he/she has to cross borders, five times into and from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. These borders are heavily policed by all the three republics because of differential economic and political conditions in each republic and encourage an illegal flow of refugees, migrants and consumer goods, not to mention a huge drug traffic. At a time when Europe is moving towards a unified market, economic growth is being stifled in Central Asia's potentially most vigorous region when there are customs checks every ten kilometers on the main road. The inter-republic borders in Ferghana valley are also problematic because they cut off ethnic groups from their supposed homelands in the most densely populated region of Central Asia. Mostly **Uzbeks** live in Tajikistan part of the valley, many Kyrgyz live in Uzbekistan part and Kyrgyzstan's two major cities in the valley have majority **Uzbek** populations. Ethnic conflicts over scarce water and arable land has already taken place in the valley, most notably in a bloody conflict between Kyrgyz and **Uzbeks** in 1990.

The current **Uzbek** government has, therefore, inherited more of a Soviet legacy than it may be ready to admit. It got stuck with a Soviet conception of **Uzbek** nationality even as it got stuck with Soviet borders of **Uzbek** territory. However, the government is vigorously building a **nation-state** on the basis of both.

Hence, the **nation-state** of 'post-communist' **Uzbekistan** is both 'forward looking' as well as 'backward looking'. It has begun a journey on a path from absolute autocratic and totalitarianism to somewhat 'democratic' and 'free market economy'. Following

independence, **Uzbekistan** has, time and again, professed its commitment to the ideas of 'political democracy' and 'free market economy'. However, the legacies of the Soviet era are working to direct the policies of the newly born **nation-state** in a particular autocratic and totalitarian path. In this endeavour, it is coming in conflict with the 'nationalist' and **Islamic** forces. Hence, the *transition* towards Western liberalism and 'free market economy' has been nascent which needs to be geared up. **Uzbekistan** as an independent nation-state has definitely not made an appreciable progress towards Western inspired democratic and pluralistic system of government. Since the *transition* has not made progress as desired, a group of authoritarian, non-democratic, and communist-turned-nationalist elite is emerging. Under acute pressure from the West, 'free-market economy' has been permitted to the extent of strict state controls. The elite fears that the 'free market economy' will result in income differentiation and other features of capitalism which will create social tension and promote public defiance. Hence, the elite in the post-independent **Uzbekistan** is forced to combine the Soviet era policies with the present international system and the regional and global security environment around it.

In the emerging scenario, the new **Great Game** has come into play between various major and regional powers on the battlefield of Central Asia of which **Uzbekistan** has occupied the central place and is bound to play an important and crucial role.

iii. Islamic Movement

In 8th century, 'Islam' found its way into the region by the practicing Muslim merchants in search of goods and markets. As such, 'Islam' made its lasting imprint not as a creed with organized political objectives but simply as a way of life. This, in combination with strong ethnic loyalties and tribal lifestyle in the past are the factors influencing the present **Islamic** orientation of the region. In fact, the profundity of the Islamic imprint co-relates negatively with the prevalence of tribalism in various republics. For instance, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan had been the most tribal and consequently the least Islamic in orientation.

The general proclivity towards '**Islam**' varies considerably from republic to republic with **Uzbekistan** as the most religiously fervent, followed closely by Tajikistan. In contrast, Kazakhstan is the least religiously inclined, followed by Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan. With an estimated population of a little over 50 million, the CARs' inhabitants are predominately Sunni Muslims of the *Hanafite* School, noted for its theological emphasis on both moderation in action and orthodox interpretation of *Sunnah* - the tradition of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).⁴⁷ There are also Sunni Muslims who adhere to Sufism (mostly Uzbek and Turkmen), a small *Shi'ite* community of the *Isma'ili* order - the belief of some Pamiri people in the mountainous region of north-eastern Tajikistan, known as Gorno-Badakhshan.

The observance of **Islamic** rituals has been more lax in the CARs - a clear manifestation of the mild Islamic tendencies in the region. Surveys conducted in the late 1970s demonstrate that daily prayer, one of the main pillars of Islam, had not been widely observed. Soviet estimates put only 30% while non-Soviet estimates range between 20 to 40% of the adult population which regularly performed the daily ritual. Fasting too has been observed by only 50% of the adult urban population and that too for only three days rather than a month.⁴⁸ It appears that the less difficult and time consuming rituals such as circumcision, marriage, divorce, burial of the dead as well as the dietary prohibitions have been widely practiced even under Soviet iron curtain. It is noteworthy that the observance of Islamic dress code for women which had been banned under 'communism' has not yet made a marked comeback. To what extent the observance of Islamic rituals may be used as a litmus test for measuring the vigour of **Islamic revivalism** is a matter of great controversy; even more so, when such a criterion is used to assess the growth of radical **Islam** which incorporates elements of fundamentalism, predicated on strict adherence. However, there is every indication which points to the emergence of a moderate Islamic trend, particularly following the collapse of Taliban regime in Afghanistan which practiced the extremist version of **Islam** calling it as 'purist'.

In the CARs, the leaders have adopted a variety of political strategies aimed at safeguarding the secular nature of their governments.

In Tajikistan, a constitutional amendment prevents the establishment of a theocracy and there are rural-urban differences with the rural population more resolute in their Islamic belief than the urban equivalent.⁴⁹ Nearly 50 % of the republic's 5.3 million inhabitants reside in villages and small towns with easy access to the capital city of Dushanbe. The rural factor may in the long run have no bearing on the speed for the vigor of 'Islamic revival' outside Tajikistan.

In Kazakhstan, the government has employed a reconciliatory policy towards the clerical leaders, hoping to avert further radicalization of the Islamic forces.

In Turkmenistan, the secular nature was stated by its Foreign Minister Avdi Kuliyeu in an interview with Pravda: 'We are not going to elevate someone's ideology to the state level, even Islamic [ideology], which has its roots in our country. Turkmenistan is neither Islamic nor Soviet, but a secular and democratic state'.

In a similar vein, the former President of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan Askar Akayev, has repeatedly pointed out that he did not accept **Islamic** fundamentalism, but supported the on-going religious revival in the republic.

On 29th June, 1990, the Supreme Soviet adopted a declaration of sovereignty which demonstrated that the **Uzbek** leadership seemed increasingly ready to abandon 'authoritarianism', if not, at least the conventional ideology of **Communism**. **Uzbek** history and tradition were becoming the ideological standards. This opened the door as never before to an **Islamic movement**. In August 1991, it declared its independence as the 'Republic of **Uzbekistan**' which was confirmed by a referendum in December 1991 and it became a member of Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the same month.

After independence, **Islam's** participation in politics seemed quite unexpected to many people. It was not easy at first glance to find a place in the political make-up of Soviet society that could be taken by **Islamists**. The total domination of the Communist

Party, the absence of political freedom and the general passiveness had created a political culture which rendered it unlikely that **Islamic** groups would pursue serious political activity. However, the threat of *fundamentalist Islam* in the political sphere was seen clearly in the Tajik Civil War.

There is one important reason why **Islam** could become radical. **Islam** can grow as a vehicle of protest against Central Asian regimes, when they are oppressive and incapable of meeting economic and social needs. Fuller explains that there is no reason that Central Asia should be immune from the pattern of **Islamic** political trends and movements that we see in other Muslim countries where the **Islamists** have often become the primary vehicle of organized opposition against the illegitimate or failing regime. **Islam** could emerge as a political force in case of the existing regimes' economic and political failure; such failure would discredit the governing elites' ideology, and thus create an opportunity for an **Islamic** regime to emerge as the only alternative. In my opinion, this is a possible scenario given the authoritarian nature of the Central Asian leadership. For a short time after independence, the communist-cum-nationalist rulers limitedly allowed the **Islamic movement**, nudging their subjects towards the path of enlightenment. Today the state, fearful of possible **Islamic** extremism, is resisting **Islamic** activity outside the officially sanctioned framework (as exemplified by the *Muftiate*). If such moderate Muslim movements are denied the right to take part in politics, the region may become susceptible to extremism or militancy as **Islam** offers an attractive ideology for an oppressed populace. But if **Islamic** political participation is encouraged, extremist elements will not have a place in Central Asian politics. It is evident that the largely secular elites of Central Asia are in a sticky situation. On one hand, they have to develop **Islamic** credentials in order to reinforce their legitimacy, but on the other hand, they have no intention of allowing **Islamic** activism to challenge their own position. As a result, as Martha Olcott has pointed out, these regimes have come to recognize that in practice the **Islamic movement** has taken two shapes:

- i. one that they can live with and
- ii. the other which they reject entirely.

The authorities do not feel threatened with the **revival** of **Islam** as long as it is limited to the rediscovery of ancient culture and a greater participation in religious rituals. Furthermore, the basic orientation of the elites is toward building secular and modernist republics. So even though **Islam** is being reinvigorated in Central Asia, the impact and influence of **Islam** will be modified by the prevailing secularism of Central Asian elite who tend to 'look everywhere and anywhere for guidance and assistance in solving their severe problem of development'. Nonetheless, wary of the potency of religion, the leaders of the republics have taken measures to ensure control over religious institutions and to prevent the politicization of **Islam**.

Islam is by far the dominant faith in **Uzbekistan**, and of all of Central Asia, it is perhaps this republic that has the strongest religious traditions. After independence, the government's leadership appeared to view official **Islam** as a useful tool in building national identity and solidifying and legitimating its monopoly on power. On the day of his inauguration as the first President of independent **Uzbekistan**, Mr. Islam Karimov, former Secretary of the **Uzbek Communist Party**, made reference to **Islam** in his speech and even held Qur'an in one hand and the country's constitution on the other. However, the lines of control between the government and official **Islam** during the Soviet era changed little in post-Soviet **Uzbekistan**. By 1992, the Muslim Board was decentralized with the establishment in each republic of a Muslim regulatory board. The Muslim Board of **Uzbekistan** assumed the same functions that the Soviet era board had performed. Nonetheless, some Muslims in **Uzbekistan** established their own mosques beyond the government's purview, selected their own *Imams* and adopted **Islamic** practice as congregations. This was viewed by the Karimov government as an innovation as "threatening", both in the light of the violence that had wrecked Tajikistan and Afghanistan and no doubt, because **Islam** remained one of the few potential forces for alternative political organization in **Uzbekistan**. In view of the threat of politicized **Islam**, the government began to take repressive measures by eliminating the **Islamic Renaissance Party** in 1992 with Article 57 of the constitution that prohibits the establishment of political parties with national or religious features. It then proceeded with a vigorous campaign against 'unofficial' **Islam**, reiterating its commitment to preserving secularism. In late 1994, the government began a major crackdown against independent Muslims,

primarily in the capital 'Tashkent' and other major cities of the Ferghana valley. This involved arbitrary arrests, 'disappearances' of **Muslim** leaders, the detention of bearded men and the harassment of women wearing veils, symbols of religious piety. The crackdown intensified in 1997 after the murders of police officers in Namangan, which the government immediately blamed on the *Wahhabis*. As a result of the murders, authorities arbitrarily detained or arrested hundreds of men in Namangan and Andijan. The sweep then spread to other cities in the Ferghana Valley in January 1998 and continued till March. In 1998, the campaign went so far as to order the Institute of Oriental Studies to close its **Islamic** studies department and even expelled some Muslim students having beards or wearing 'veils' in 1999. There were a series of bomb explosions in Tashkent in February 1999, (allegedly planted by **Islamic** militants) that killed 16 people. Also the armed group of militants led by **Uzbek** field commander, Juma Namangani, is widely held responsible for the politically-motivated kidnapping of four Kyrgyz officials inside Kyrgyzstan. In May, 2005, **Uzbek** government used brutal force to crush a popular uprising in the eastern city of Andijan.

The **Uzbek** government has been advocating a liberal stance towards religion in general, and **Islam** in particular, which allows for religious freedom, yet prohibits religious extremism. The government has placed a *de facto* ban on all nationalist opposition parties as well as **Islamic** parties and groups, making their activities virtually illegal.

Threatened by the civil war in Tajikistan and encouraged by Western states particularly after 9/11, the **Uzbek** government increased its authoritarian drive against fundamentalism. The official clergy supported government's campaign against **Islamic** fundamentalism. In his official speech, then-Mufti Muhammad Sadiq Muhammad Yusuf stated:

"There were attempts to form a Moslem party...The official clergy object to it. We consider that **Islam** by itself is a party which has existed for over 1400 years already".

The **Uzbek** state, instead of supporting moderate **Islam** and legalizing **Islamic** parties, have driven political **Islam** further to the wall, affording **Islamic** militants a 'reason' to accuse the rulers of being crypto-communists and unbelievers.

Graham Fuller suggests that only tolerance of the emergence of other legitimate opposition parties will diminish the **Islamic** monopoly on opposition politics. Another consequence of banning **Islamic** parties and movements is that such authoritarian policies, almost invariably, strengthen the legitimacy of the fundamentalists, while at the same time adversely affecting the legitimacy of the government. A number of factors could contribute to the growth of **Islamic** fundamentalism. Economic and financial instability, combined with widespread corruption and strangling bureaucratic regulations, is a source of tension. Additionally, the poverty of the majority, as opposed to the wealth of the minority of 'new **Uzbeks**', and the absence of a middle class improves the odds in favour of **Islamic** fundamentalism.

On the other hand, the developments in Tajikistan and the Taliban factor have highlighted the risks of militant **Islam**. For instance, the Ferghana valley, with the highest level of **Islamic** activism in Central Asia, has also the highest population density in Central Asia and one of the lowest economic standards. Recognizing the explosive atmosphere in the valley, efforts to industrialize the region and raise the standard of living have been undertaken by the government. **Islamic** fundamentalism is most popular among students, rural dwellers, young men who have recently come to the towns from the countryside, representatives of the traditionalist intelligentsia, and middle or lower sections of the clergy. There are major impediments to the radical **Islamization** of **Uzbekistan**. The liberal *Hanafite* tradition of *Sunni* Muslims, which co-exists with a secular state, has a strong hold. The tolerant **Islam** of *Sufi* sects is also widely adhered to, particularly in rural areas. The unwillingness of numerous ethnic minorities to join radical movements led by the ethnic majority makes it difficult for **Islamists** to unify the population under the **Islamic** banner and overcome ethnic clashes.

Widespread regionalism in **Uzbekistan** would pose a similar impediment to mass mobilization for *Jihad*. High literacy levels, the continuing impact of Slavic and now Western cultural influences, the growth of a free-market economy and the chaos that Tajikistan and Afghanistan have descended into under **Islamic** regimes will remain important factors in dissuading people from joining such movements.

Uzbekistan has perhaps been most aggressive in all the CARs in claiming direct connections to the past. In the **Uzbek** view, the medieval warlord Timur, also known as Tamerlane, is no longer a Mongol-Turkic figure but a father of the **Uzbek** nationality. "Tamerlane spent his lifetime fighting against **Uzbeks**, whom he considered arch enemies. If only he knew that he was going to be given a new ethnic origin he would not have wasted his time," **Uzbekistan** has held celebrations in honor of the medieval warlord Timur, as well as honouring the great Persian thinkers Bokhari and Ferghani.

The most significant event in the cultural and spiritual life of **Uzbekistan** since the mid-1980s is the return of **Islam** to its proper place in society. At last it can be stated that liberty of conscience and religion has become a reality. There are several factors which served as a catalyst for **Islamic movement** and greatly influenced the political, social and cultural spheres of the **Uzbek** people.

The **first** factor was triggered by the spill-over effects of Khomeini's revolution in Iran and the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. Iranian ideologues launched widespread propaganda on **Islamic** fundamentalism through mass media, and incited turmoil in the area by arousing religious passions. This strategy succeeded in provoking a series of anti-Soviet demonstrations and riots in Dushanbe, Almaty and **Tashkent**. It should be noted that although not all disturbances had a religious basis, **Islamic** ideology played a role in fomenting them. This widespread turmoil generated fears amongst scholars that the 1979 Iranian **Islamic** revolution could 'set a pattern' for **Uzbekistan**, where Muslims form the majority of the population.

Afghan *Mujahideen* had an even greater influence in promoting **Islamic movement** in the region in terms of propagating the militant ideology of **Islam**. Attempting to identify the success of the Afghan propaganda over the Iranian, the cross border smuggling of religious and political literature by Afghan *Mujahideen* and their agents into Soviet Central Asia has been facilitated by the common ethnic and religious background of the people inhabiting the Tajik and Afghan border areas.

The **second** determinant had its roots as early as 1988, under Gorbachev's new religious policy. One of the first fruits of this policy was the celebration of the millennium of **Christianity** in Russia. The **Orthodox Church** began claiming the role of spiritual leadership and some priests became political figures, attempting to explain the idea of *perestroika* in terms of the words and the will of God. Rorlich, revealing the contradiction in the essence of Soviet religious policy, stressed that during this period the Soviet press highlighted the organic link between Russian culture and Orthodoxy and extolled the virtues of the religion [**Christianity**] which gave Russia a special place among the nations of the world...; Meanwhile, Muslims still had to request passes to visit the tombs of their own saints. Such questions as "Why are only **Christians** allowed to practice their religion and traditions? Are Muslims and **Islam** less important?" were frequently asked by the Muslim intelligentsia and clergy of **Uzbekistan**. This perception of inequality generated a series of religious protests: for instance, in December 1988 spontaneous demonstrations by **Uzbek** students broke out in Tashkent. Finally, the native elite, regardless of the official policy of the Communist Party, started to inspire the **Islamic movement**. Shirin Akiner described the motives of this official encouragement as "in large part a political gesture, an astute move to establish new credentials rooted in local culture and not, therefore, dependent on Moscow." After the demise of the Soviet Union, the ruling elite, with the help of religious

functionaries, saved their positions in the government, replacing Soviet ideology with **Islam**. Apparently, it was not only political self-interest which persuaded them to embrace **Islam**, but also the inevitable fact that tradition and religion would have to be encouraged in order to escape political extremes.

Before analyzing the effects of **Islamic movement** on the political and social life of **Uzbekistan**, it is worthwhile to define its main features. The debate over the features of this phenomenon divides scholars into two opposite views. The **first**, such as Husain and Taheri, argue that **Islamic movement** was not politically but culturally oriented. Husain maintains that the **Islamic** renaissance in **Uzbekistan** is neither 'exclusively fundamentalist', nor 'predominantly political', but primarily cultural. Taheri's analysis, lending support to Husain's opinion, established that the **Islamic revival** [in **Uzbekistan**]... is not a monolithic movement with a set of clearly stated political objectives. It has no central organization or even a set of organizations capable of using it as a political weapon or as a means of exerting pressure. The opposite opinion was expressed by Haynes and Rashid. Jeff Haynes' argument, supported by Rashid, is based on two important issues: *first*, **Islamic** organizations with political objectives do exist in **Uzbekistan** (some officially and some unofficially); and *second*, radical **Islam** in **Uzbekistan** offers an alternative governmental structure to that of the current 'reformed' government. Bearing in mind these opposite views, reality appears to lie somewhere in between -- **Islamic movement** in **Uzbekistan** initially emerged as a cultural episode in the development of the country and then was transformed into a religious, political and social phenomenon that now plays a very significant role in the present and future of the country.

The first steps of the new government after the first direct presidential elections in **Uzbekistan**, held on December 29, 1991 consisted of conciliatory gestures towards Muslims, including returning mosques and *madrasas* to their original Muslim practitioners, changing the old communist names of the streets and towns to traditional Muslim ones and finally, renaming some administrative positions as they used to be prior to the Russian conquest. In 1994, out of 7800 mosques in Central Asia, nearly half

were officially functioning in **Uzbekistan**, and 380 *madrasas* were operating in the country since independence. Moreover, Qur'an and other instructional material became widely available in **Uzbekistan** and the government went further in partially sponsoring the annual pilgrimage to Mecca Al-Mukarrama. During the first years of independence, the official policy of President Islam Karimov was focused on changing the Soviet **atheist** mentality of the population and propagating the spiritual wealth of the **Uzbek** nation. President Islam Karimov felt that 'spiritual poverty' was of equal, if not greater concern in relation to the material poverty in rural areas. The history of **Uzbekistan** was reconsidered, its rich Muslim heritage glorified, and nationalist heroes, purged during the Soviet period, rehabilitated. New courses, such as 'Spiritual Heritage of **Uzbekistan**' and '**Uzbekistan's** Own Way to Independence and Progress,' were included in the curriculum of schools and higher educational establishments. President Islam Karimov, explaining this policy, stated:

"From the first days of our independence, the state policy faced the significant task to revive that tremendous, precious spiritual and cultural heritage, which has been built by our ancestors".

It could be argued that in order to succeed in this policy, President Islam Karimov made a loose political alliance with **Uzbekistan's** official Muslim religious leader, Muhammad Sadiq Muhammad Yusuf.

James Critchlow claims that **Uzbek** history and traditions were becoming the ideological standards, which opened the door as never before to an **Islamic movement**.

Shirin Akiner criticized the official policy of the government on the grounds that the chief beneficiary was the republican government, which was adroit enough to use **Islam** to strengthen their own positions and to pave the way for an eventual transformation from Communist Party functionaries to nationalist leaders.

Warikoo, providing support for Akiner's criticism, stressed that Karimov's attitude reflected the general tendency among the ruling elite in Central Asia to cover up their own failures by blaming Soviet policy.

The above criticism, defining Karimov's attempts to encourage **Islam** as self-interested and politically driven undertakings, is perhaps too harsh. President Karimov realized that independence could not be achieved if the people were not aware of their true history and of the detrimental Soviet legacy. This educational policy was responsible for 98.2 percent of the voters endorsing **Uzbekistan's** independence in December 1991 referendum.

With regard to the legal aspects of the state's strategy towards **Islam**, it can be argued that legislation and constitutional provisions were designed to define parameters of religious activities, the violations of which would give the government legal sanction to level criminal charges against individuals and religious organizations. The overall policy of the **Uzbek** authorities towards **Islam** has sought to provide freedom for its growth as a religion, encouraging the building of mosques and the establishment of religious schools and training colleges, but to resist any manifestation of a political voice for **Islam**. In fact, it was not the state that dictated spiritual and religious drive, but the unstable social, political and economic situation in **Uzbekistan** which made it necessary to seek spiritual support in religion to compensate for all the shortages in real life. It also seems to be natural that **Islam**, a key feature of Central Asian civilization since the 8th century, should re-emerge vigorously once freed from official repression.

In December 1997, the *Wahhabis* began using force in an attempt to establish an **Islamic** state in the country. The same year, the *Wahabi* sect was officially blamed for the murder of four policemen in Namangan (Ferghana Valley). A few days later a group of masked men killed a highly placed official of the GAI (the automotive inspection committee) and decapitated him. The government suspected the *Wahabis* of the killings, and sent troops from elite security units to keep peace in the region. In addition to the militant response to the *Wahabi* threat, the **Uzbek** Parliament enacted a new 'law on religious freedom and organizations' in May 1998. The law

creates extremely restrictive regulations for the registration of religious organizations, bans religious activities and education outside the 'official' **Islam** and prohibits the activities of foreign missionaries in **Uzbekistan**. Abdumannob Polat, Chairman of the Human Rights Society of **Uzbekistan**, claimed that a large number of religious leaders were arrested or fled the country. Furthermore, at least a hundred and twenty people imprisoned in the Ferghana Valley were jailed on what are likely fabricated charges of narcotics and weapons possession. The situation has become worse after a terrorist act on February 16 in Tashkent which killed sixteen and wounded more than hundred people. In his speech in the Parliament, President Islam Karimov highlighted two factors, which caused this tragic event:

Firstly, some extremist forces beyond the borders of our country, using the sacred values of **Islam**, attempt to turn **Uzbekistan** from the path of democratic and secular development and

Secondly, there are some forces that feel hostility towards our independent policy and try their best to dominate and dictate their own policies to **Uzbekistan**.

Meanwhile, President Islam Karimov has introduced a strategy of development in the 14th session of Oliy Majlis, which includes the liberalization of political and economic life in the country, further spiritual renovation of the society, the creation of a clever human resources policy, a progressive increase in material prosperity of the people, improvement of the social protection of the population, and finally, reform of the national army, frontier and internal forces to maintain peace in the country. It can be seen from this strategy that the government seeks to eliminate all possible grounds for the successful development of radical **Islam** in **Uzbekistan**.

By 1997, the number of mosques had increased from 80 to 5000. In conjunction with this, *madrasahs* or **Islamic** schools opened, offering courses in Arabic, *Shariah* law and **Islamic** history. They also provide clerical training for young Muslims who wish to make **Islam** into a career. And although the vulnerability to **Islam** of the different peoples of Central Asia varies from republic to republic,

the observance of **Islamic** rituals has generally been on the rise: Central Asian Muslims invariably observe circumcision of new-borns and the tradition of providing a kalym (bride price) to the bride's family. They also perform important acts of faith, such as fasting, pilgrimages to Mecca El-Mukarramah, participation in Friday prayers and mosque attendance, which have all increased dramatically. Whilst the republics have a desire to connect more fully with the traditional practices and culture of the **Islamic** past, their religious awareness does not necessarily translate into radical and political behaviour.

In fact, some important factors suggest that **Islam** will not take a revolutionary form in Central Asia:

First, 98 % of Central Asia's Muslims are of *Sunni Hanafite* School of law, not *Shi'ite* Muslims which is pre-dominantly in Iran. This immediately works to the disadvantage of the most radical **Islamic** clergy in the region i. e. Iran, and to the advantage of more conservative elements.

Second, we must take into account the fact that the **revival of Islamic consciousness** came in a variety of forms. Unfortunately, many people neglect the diversity of **Islam** and espouse the politicized form as the absolute version. This is certainly not the case, especially if we look at the huge **revival** in *Sufism*, the mystical strand of **Islam**. *Sufism* has traditionally been one of the most tolerant forms of religion, incorporating *Buddhist*, *Shaman* and *Christian* tenets and it has helped mould tolerance towards all religions. *Sufis* do not believe in political parties and have no desire to preach a political cause and focus instead, on the ritual and tradition.

Other Muslim devotees continued to follow a primarily secular path, adopting the Muslim appellation and identity without corresponding religious practice. Others observed holidays, rituals and Friday prayer, but altered little else in their lifestyle. Some, particularly the youth, chose a stricter form of religious practice: they undertook religious education and adopted religious dress and other

obligations prescribed by a conservative interpretation of **Islam**. Still, others saw **Islam** as the basis for an alternative political system. The differences in **Islamic** adherence speak of the absence of true religious solidarity in the region. The **Islamic** bond in Central Asia is highly exaggerated whilst sectarian, tribal, ethnic, linguistic and national differences have been underestimated. But these disparities are not necessarily a barrier to united **Islamic** activity, they can significantly decelerate, or even hinder the development of a radical **Islamic movement** that, similar to other political ideologies, requires a high degree of national unity and support if it is to succeed in capturing power.

The position of *religious freedom* in **Uzbekistan** as documented by United States' State Department in its 2003 Annual Report is as under:

"The government of **Uzbekistan** has essentially carried on the policy towards religion that it inherited from the Soviet Union. It is a policy based on a simple, uncompromising premise: that which is not controlled is forbidden. **Uzbekistan** is a primarily Muslim country, in which the government seeks to supervise religious *worship and belief, by overseeing the Islamic hierarchy*, the content of Imams' sermons, and the substance of their religious materials. Throughout the year, the Uzbek government has continued to persecute and detain those who practice **Islam** outside of this government-controlled system.

Over 6,000 such people remain in prison in **Uzbekistan**. That is a huge number in such a small country - imagine if over 60,000 Americans were imprisoned for practicing their faith, and you will have some sense of the impact this persecution has had on **Uzbek** society.

Those who are imprisoned for practicing their faith outside state-controls are often subject to the most horrific forms of torture: electric shock, asphyxiation with gas masks or plastic bags, injections of psychotropic drugs, beatings with batons or metal rods, hanging from

the ceiling by the wrists or ankles, rape and sodomy. As in Saddam Hussein's Iraq, relatives of those imprisoned have been detained and tortured in front of their loved ones. Often such torture is used to punish prisoners for attempting to worship inside prison.

For example, at the end of September 2003, guards at Navoi prison 64/29 beat "Sherzod S." (a pseudonym) on the soles of his feet until he lost consciousness as a punishment for **praying**. When he regained consciousness, the authorities sent him to a punishment cell, warned him not to make a complaint, and tried to force him to bow in **prayer** to the deputy head of the prison. In a separate incident in September, the head of the operations section of the prison apparently ordered that all water containers be taken from the religious prisoners and burnt. The prisoners understood this to be a means of stopping them from carrying out their daily ablutions, a ritual that many Muslims believe they must carry out before performing **prayers**.

On April 26, 2003 a guard at Karshi prison 64/49 put "Bakhrom B." (a pseudonym) into a punishment cell and savagely beat him as punishment for **praying**. Bakhrom's father told Human Rights Watch that he later complained to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture about the incident. Apparently in response to this complaint, on September 12, the prison authorities called Bakhrom to meet with the deputy head of the prison and a procurator. They forced him to sign a statement saying that he had not been beaten. Since then he has been subjected to further violent treatment.

In November 2002, religious prisoners were punished for **fasting** during *Ramadan*. Keston News Service reported on November 19, 2002, that one hundred and fifty prisoners in Karshi prison 64/61 were put into punishment cells for observing the **fast**.

The Chirchik City Court added three years to the sentence of Tolib Khaidarov after he had refused prison

authorities' demands that he abandon his religious beliefs. The case was decided in a closed court hearing on August 8, 2003. Khaidarov had no defense counsel and no witnesses for the defense were presented. Khaidarov was a religious prisoner, accused of non-violent activities (anti-constitutional activities, article 159, and belonging to an illegal religious organization, article 216). He was due to be released under the terms of his sentence on July 17, 2003. Prior to his expected release, prison authorities demanded that he reject his previous religious beliefs. He replied, "I don't reject **Islam**." He was subsequently told that he was being charged with breaching internal prison rules. The allegations included that he got up too early in the morning and that he brought food out of the breakfast hall. On this basis, he was sentenced to an additional three years. He claims that the case was fabricated against him because of his refusal to reject his faith.

The **Uzbek** authorities not only punish religious prisoners for their faith, but other prisoners who chose to associate with them. On September 19, 2003, guards at Navoi prison 64/29 beat four prisoners in front of many observers on the way out of the dining hall at lunch time because they had spoken to religious prisoners during lunch.

On May 15, Orif Eshanov died in pre-trial custody in the city of Karshi, apparently from torture after being detained by the National Security Service some days earlier on suspicion of belonging to a banned **Islamic** organization. Although there has been coordinated and sustained international pressure to conduct an independent investigation into the circumstances surrounding Ershanov's death, the authorities have thus far refused to do so.

In the first six months of 2003, Human Rights Watch's Tashkent office documented ninety-three convictions or new arrests of Muslims for the peaceful expression of their religious beliefs. From June to August, Human Rights Watch followed seven trials against thirty men

and six women, all charged with non-violent offences connected to their practice of **Islam** outside of government controls. In all of these trials, defendants alleged in court that law enforcement authorities had tortured them in pre-trial detention. The judges in all cases failed to adequately investigate the claims and convicted the defendants on the basis of evidence allegedly gained through the use of torture. Sentences ranged from one two-year suspended sentence to fifteen years of imprisonment. The arrests and convictions continue, with dozens of independent Muslims on trial just this week for their religious beliefs and practices.

Many of these religious prisoners in **Uzbekistan** are accused of belonging to a banned **Islamic** organization known as *Hizb-ut-Tahrir*. This organization espouses extreme views that are anti-thetical to human rights. It is anti-Semitic, anti-woman, and profoundly anti-American. Nevertheless, it has not advocated or committed acts of violence. Its members are persecuted in **Uzbekistan** for their beliefs, not for their actions.

Moreover, not all religious prisoners in **Uzbekistan** are members of *Hizb-ut-Tahrir*. Some thousands are simply independent Muslims not affiliated with any organization, who are persecuted for nothing more than practicing their faith by praying at home or studying privately, or being affiliated with *Imams* not registered or out of favor with the government. Hundreds of people have been imprisoned and tortured, for example, simply for having attended the mosque of *Imam* Nazarov, a registered state *Imam* who refused to praise **Uzbek** President Karimov in his sermons or to inform on members of his congregation to the **Uzbek** security police, and who has been missing since 1998.

These policies are not just cruel, but dangerous. They deny the **Uzbek** people any lawful means to practice their faith outside a co-opted, politicized, Soviet style **Islamic** establishment. They have shut down the space in which a genuinely moderate, independent **Islam** can exist in

Uzbekistan. They have driven Muslims who don't want to go to a state mosque and praise the President nowhere to go - except to fringe organizations, like *Hizb-ut-Tahrir*, which flourish in the shadows. They potentially strengthen the very forces they are ostensibly designed to weaken.

In the past year, the State Department has urged the **Uzbek** authorities to take a number of reasonable steps to address these problems - by holding torturers accountable, introducing the right of *habeas corpus* and other legal protections for detainees, and implementing legal reforms that would decriminalize independent religious observance. In response, the **Uzbek** government has taken no meaningful steps forward. Despite the good relationship, the United States has tried to establish with **Uzbekistan**, and the provision of military and economic assistance to the **Uzbek** government, it has refused to budge on these U.S. concerns.

Minority religions are also subjected to government harassment in **Uzbekistan**. According to the State Department report, a number of **Christian** churches have been denied registration in **Uzbekistan**. Throughout the past year, the Keston News Service and Forum published information about the following incidents that took place in 2003: On seven occasions **Christian** groups were prevented from gathering due to police raids; three members of **Christian** groups were fined for their religious activities; two **Christian** groups were denied registration; seven **Christians** were imprisoned, six for leading or attending religious gatherings at private homes and one for "inciting religious hatred."

Hence, the future of a forceful and predominant **Islamic movement** in **Uzbekistan** in the near foreseeable future could be safely and categorically repudiated and ruled out.

4.3 Islamic and other identities

Uzbekistan follows *Sunni-Hanifite Islam* with a small *Wahabi* community in Ferghana valley where women who choose to go under the **Islamic** veil can do so freely. The republic is the most religiously fervent but at the same time, the **Uzbek** government is also most willing to use force against the **Islamic** zealots in order to impose their preferred position. A *de facto* ban has been placed on all opposition parties including the Islamic parties, making their activities virtually illegal.

Although constitution allows for a multi-party system, other legislation makes the formation of a genuinely independent party almost impossible.

The main political party is the former Communist Party (CP), re-named as Peoples Democratic Party (PDM) in October 1991. However, the PDP plays little role in politics because of the dominant influence of President Islam Karimov in January 2000 Presidential elections.

The other political parties registered with the government are:

- Vatan Taraqioti Party (Homeland Progress) Party
- Fidokarlar (Self-sacrificers) National Democratic Party
- Adolat (Justice) Social Democratic Party of Uzbekistan (not to be confused with the banned Islamic movement Adolat).
- Milly Tiklanish (National Revival Democratic) Party
- Khalq Birligi (Peoples Unity) party

Vatan Taraqioti and Fidokarlar merged in 2000. However, none of these two political parties plays any political role and none represents the interests of any social grouping. Any differences between them are largely based on superficial cultural issues, since raising political concerns is out of bounds.

The largest opposition party is Uzbek Popular Front – Birlik, headed by Mr. Abdurahim Pulatov (exiled) which stand for democratic and secular **Uzbek nationalism**. The party supports

Western-style democracy, the restoration of **Uzbek** national heritage and a social and educational role for **Islam** but opposes the creation of an **Islamic state**. It also calls for limiting the powers of the President.

The other opposition party was formed by groups that split from Birlik - the Democratic Party – Erk (freedom) is headed by Mr. Muhammad Solikh (exiled). The programme of Erk is very similar to that of Birlik, though its orientation is more Western.

The **Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU)**, a hard-line *Islamic* fundamentalist party, announced its existence in April, 1989 and became the government's prime target. IMU consists of an alliance of **Islamic** militants from **Uzbekistan** and other Central Asian countries whose goal is to overthrow the current government of **Uzbekistan** for the purpose of creating an **Islamic** radical state in the republic. To this end, its current leader, Taher Abduhalilovich Yuldashev, has declared *Jihad* against the Government of **Uzbekistan**. The IMU was founded by two young **Islamic** radicals: Taher Yuldashev, a *mullah* in the underground **Uzbek** Islamist radical movement and the late Jumaboi Ahmadzhanovich Khojaev. Khojaev was also known as Juma Namangani, and served in Afghanistan as a Soviet paratrooper during the 1980s. In December 1991, both men led a take-over of the Communist Party headquarters in the city of Namangan after the Mayor refused to give them land to build a mosque.

The IMU moved its base of operations from **Uzbekistan** to Afghanistan in 1997 with the assistance of the then Taliban regime. Members of the IMU received *Jihad* training in Afghanistan, and some were trained in camps run by *Al-Qa'ida*. The IMU carried out a series of car-bomb attacks in **Uzbek** capital, Tashkent in February 1999 that killed 16 people. It is also considered responsible for carrying out kidnappings of Western visitors in 1999 and 2000. In August 1999, the IMU took a group of four Japanese geologists and eight Kyrgyz soldiers as 'hostage'. A year later, the IMU kidnapped four American mountain climbers who were visiting **Uzbekistan** but escaped their captors. The IMU's former leader, Khojaev, fought in the Tajikistan's civil war and subsequently left to join *Al-Qa'ida* in Afghanistan. The United States designated the IMU as a Foreign

Terrorist Organization under U.S. law. The IMU's infrastructure in Afghanistan was destroyed in 2001 as a result of the U.S. war in Afghanistan. Khojaev was killed during an air strike in Afghanistan in November 2001. The remaining members of the group were incorporated into *Al-Qa'ida* and reportedly moved to take refuge in the tribal areas along the Afghan-Pakistan border. Other IMU militants continue to operate in the Ferghana Valley that is located at the nexus of the borders of **Uzbekistan**, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. Tahir Yuldashev is reported to have been wounded in an operation launched by Pakistan's armed forces in its tribal area of South Waziristan in March, 2004.

Another is the **Islamic** Renaissance Party which is a local branch of a party founded originally in Republic of Chechnya under Russian Federation to protect Muslim interests but it has not won registration from the Government, given its religious orientation.

'The Republican Party Organization is actively in favour of freedom of religion and the legal rights of believers and for cooperation with religious organizations ... Believers are entitled to all opportunities for participation in the public political and cultural life of the Republic'.⁵⁰

Islamic Democratic Party which seems to have evolved from the '**Islam** and Democracy' organization founded in 1988, is a fundamentalist party. It primarily draws support from the Tashkent area and was set up by Uzbek intellectuals in August 1990. The Islamic Democratic Party demands the imposition of *Sharia* with eventual transformation to an **Islamic** state. However, it wants to fulfil its aims through a non-violent **Islamic** revolution in **Uzbekistan**.

The radical parties in **Uzbekistan** are the **Islamic** Revival Party, Islam Lashkari and the Adolat (Justice) organization. The political objective of these parties is to establish an **Islamic** state through any means. These parties are most popular in the Ferghana valley and Samarkand. They were accused of extremism and have been subsequently banned.

The 'People's Front of **Uzbekistan**' - a radical **Islamic** organization also operates, out of Tashkent. Little has been publicized as to the organization's objectives apart from the fact that it supports the creation of an **Islamic** state. **The Uzbek** government feels that the students' enthusiasm for **Islam** at the state universities has begun to wane. But **Uzbekistan's** religious revivalism remains strong in the countryside and continues to worry many academics and professionals. President Islam Karimov acknowledges that "there is a rise of the spiritual role of our forefathers' religion - **Islam** in the life of man and his family. Morality and charity harmoniously combines secularism of our state and freedom of conscience.⁵¹

There are other small **Islamic** groups operating in the republic like *Islom Lashkarlari* (Soldiers of Islam) and *Hizb-but-Tahrir Al-Islami*, (Islamic Liberation Party). *Hizb-ut-Tahrir Al-Islami*, (HTI) was founded as a political party in Jordan in 1952 by the radical Palestinian Islamist ideologue, Sheikh Taqi Al-Din Al-Nabhani. Al-Nabhani preached his own brand of militant **Islam** in which he called for a top-down revolution against the ruling Muslim regimes. Al-Nabhani asserted that the first action that Muslims should take is to emulate the Companions of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) as related in the Qur'an and to immediately establish a Caliphate. The Caliph would in turn, select an Amir who would officially declare jihad and lead the Muslims' fight against the infidels throughout the world. HTI's ultimate goal is to create a Pan-Islamic state that will rule over the entire world. Following a foiled coup by HTI against King Hussein of Jordan in 1968, the party was banned in that country. At present, some several thousand members of HTI exist in **Uzbekistan**. Regardless of whether the attacks were carried out by IMU or others, the goal of the **Islamic** radical militants who carried out the attacks is clear. Their intent is to demonstrate that **Uzbekistan**, a Muslim country and an integral part of the international coalition against terrorism should be weakened and destabilized. These attacks are the "armed propaganda" of movements that mirror *Al-Qa'ida's* ideological goals. *Hizb-ut-Tahrir al-Islami* does not engage in terrorism, violence or armed struggle and is an Islamic intellectual and political entity that seeks to change people's thoughts through intellectual discussion and debate. By the advent of 1996, mighty opposition parties such as Birlik and the Islamic Renaissance Party were all proscribed. Leaders were burlesqued the opposition and

claimed to have achieved political stability on the ruins of it but the saga of turmoil continued.

Oliy Majlis elections (December 05-19, 1999)

(Turn out: 100%)

Party	No. of Deputies
Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)	48
Fidokarlar (Sef-sacrificers) National Democratic	34
Vatan Taraqioti (Homeland Progress) Party	20
Adolat (Justice) Social Democratic Party	11
Milly Tiklanish (National Revival Democratic) Party	10
Elected by Local Government (vetted in advance by authorities)	110
Independents	17
Total:	250

The disappearance of secular opposition has contributed to the spread of **Islamic** extremism in **Uzbekistan** and the government now identifies **Islamic** activism as the main threat to political stability. After independence, most mosques that had been closed during Soviet rule were allowed to re-open but were placed under tight government control. As radical *Islamism* spread in Central Asia – a civil war that broke out in neighbouring Tajikistan between the Soviet era leadership and **Islamic** radicals and the Taliban, a fundamentalist **Islamic** movement came to power in Afghanistan – the **Uzbek** government viewed anyone trying to practice **Islam** outside the officially sanctioned structures with great suspicion and clamped down on independent **Islamic** movements. Following the killing of some local policemen in the strongly **Islamic** Ferghana valley in November-December, 1997, the government began a wave of arrests of Muslims. A number of **Islamic** suspects confessed to the killing in a series of televised show trials in 1998 but the evidence was inconclusive. The situation worsened in February, 1999 when a series of car bombs exploded in the capital, Tashkent, killing 15 people. The attack was an attempt on President Islam Karimov’s life who survived

and blamed a host of suspects including the exiled Erk Party, local *Islamists* and foreign groups. Although nobody claimed responsibility for the attacks but the **Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan** (IMU) was included in the list of suspects accused of the bombings by the government - a list that also included virtually all the secular opposition. In late July, 1999, the IMU attempted to launch an incursion in Uzbekistan. Around 650 armed IMU fighters were intercepted as they tried to cut across the Kyrgyz republic to invade eastern Uzbekistan. The IMU fighters took four Japanese geologists and a number of Kyrgyz nationals as hostage, although they were later freed. Attempts to eradicate IMU failed and they were allowed to flee into Tajikistan in October, 1999 after taking heavy casualties. The IMU were then reported to have left for Afghanistan under pressure from the Tajik government. There were also reports that the IMU had support from the then Taliban regime in Afghanistan and the extremist **Islamic** organization *al-Qaida*. However, on 7th August, 2000, about 100 members of IMU re-entered Uzbekistan via Tajikistan and seized two villages close to Uzbek-Tajik border. This and other attacks were defeated by the Uzbek armed forces only after considerable difficulty, leading to the dismissal of the Minister of Defence. The IMU did not pose a serious threat to the government but it successfully dominated the political agenda and forced the government to devote considerable attention and resources to internal security matters. So keen was the government to deprive the IMU of its support base in Afghanistan that it reversed its initial hostility to the then Taliban regime in Afghanistan and started a diplomatic dialogue with them in September, 2000. However, the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States led to a reversal of fortunes for the government and the IMU. Uzbekistan aligned itself with the United States and the IMU was defeated during the course of US-led campaign in Afghanistan.

On 29th March, 2004, suicide bomb explosions took place in the **Uzbekistan's** capital, Tashkent and in the historic city of Bokhara, killing 24 people.⁵² According to Human Rights Watch (HRW), **Uzbek** authorities arbitrarily detained and harassed dozens of independent Muslim women which indicated a broadening of government's crackdown on non-violent Muslims following a spate of violence in the republic. On 12th May, 2005, violence erupted by the trial of 23 businessmen in the eastern city of Andijan, charged with

being **Islamic** radicals and members of *Akramiya*, an offshoot of the outlawed *Hizb-ut-Tahrir al-Islami* which they all denied. The uprising was brutally crushed by President Islam Karimov under his personal command. The calls by international community including European Union and UN Secretary General, Mr. Kofi Annan to hold an international inquiry to find out the facts were on deaf ears as President Karimov refused to listen or oblige.

The compatibility between ‘**Islam**’ and ‘**Nationalism**’ is manifest from the fact that **Islamic** and **nationalist** parties are operating in concert with each other in **Uzbekistan** as well as in other republics of Central Asia. Depending upon the local political developments, popular parties have born under different names. The aim of these parties is to further the cause of national regeneration and development of their language, culture and other local needs. In some states, religious parties have also arisen under different names and their aim is to reassert moral regeneration of the people and reintroduction of moral and spiritual values as prescribed by Islam but even these leaders do not like to give up the benefits and amenities accrued from the socio-economic system as bequeathed by the old communists. Towards the close of Gorbachev era, nationalist parties or movements had begun to grow and exert their influence on the people; e.g. Alash Orda and Azad parties in Kazakhstan; Rastokhez in Tajikistan; “Kyrgyzstan” party in the Republic of Kyrgyzstan; Birlik movement and Erk party in Uzbekistan.

The rise of these parties or movements were not just for the assertion of political right but for cultural freedom and economic independence. We also find the development of two new tendencies in this region: the first is the foundation of democratic parties, such as the one in Tajikistan, and the second is the revival of Islamic religious fervor in all the republics, and in some of them leading to the public organization of Islamic Revivalist Parties, such as Hizb-i-Nuzhat-i-Islami in Tajikistan.

The case of Tajikistan is still different, where the local language is Tajiki (Persian), which brings the people of the republic close to Iran and the Dari-speaking people of Afghanistan. In fact, northern part of Afghanistan is largely populated by Tajiks. This close

proximity of the Tajiks in the next door country of Afghanistan where recent war has created an entirely different atmosphere, has not been without great influence in Tajikistan. It is because of this influence that most of the political parties are diametrically opposed to the Communists and are committed to establish complete independence and freedom of action in Tajikistan, even breaking relations with the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) if it is necessary or possible. It is because of the great influence from the Mujahideen struggle in Afghanistan that **Islamic** revivalist trends have gained wider popularity in Tajikistan and these trends bear the same fighting features as are noted in the attitude of the Mujahids⁵³.

Over the past years, the CARs have become the birthplace of a multiplicity of political parties with a wide range of ideological predilections and strategic objectives. Some have been organized primarily on ethnic and inter-republican themes incorporating the ideal of Pan-Turkism, such as Turkistan Party in Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan (1991). Some advocate the large-scale land distribution as in Kyrgyzstan while still others are concerned with the substance and method of governance. Most of the Islamic as well as democratic parties belong to this later category of political organizations, more capable than others of influencing the future course of events in the republics.

Hence, the newly established parties in Central Asia are of modern manifestations and of a traditional **Islamic** response. Two types of Islamic parties have been active on the political scene since the late 1980s:

The **first** are the republican parties which vary in their ideological orientation, command a relatively small following and possess weak organizational and mobilization capabilities. For example, the Kyrgyz Democratic Wing supports the on-going **Islamic revivalism** within the liberal framework proposed by the then President of the Republic, Mr. Askar Akayev. The party has been pressing for the renovation and construction of mosques and *Madrassahs* in Kyrgyzstan.

The **second** type of Islamic parties are the inter-republican which enjoy a relatively larger following. Islamic Revival Party (IRP) also referred to as the Islamic Rebirth or Renaissance Party has branches in all the republics except in Kyrgyzstan. Founded in mid-1990 in the city of Astrakhan, the IRP's objective was 'the revival of the ideals of Islam'.⁵⁴ While its branches enjoy a considerable degree of structural autonomy, they share a number of functional and contextual characteristics:

First, and most obvious, is the over-riding objective of creating an **Islamic** republic which has placed the Parties on an inevitable collision course with the governments of CARs.

Second, all parties have successfully capitalized on the deteriorating economic conditions to delegitimize the governments of the CARs. In Tajikistan and Kazakhstan, unemployment and housing shortages have been on the agenda of the Muslim activists. In **Uzbekistan**, for instance, higher wages and lower food prices have been demanded by the Muslim demonstrators in the highly religious Ferghana valley and its centre of fundamentalist activities, the city of Namangan. In the eastern city of Andijan, demonstrations were held, demanding 'democracy, work and normal life'.

Third, so far the IRP has been conducting its activities in conjunction with the democratic parties, particularly in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. This alliance has proven to be mutually beneficial to both parties.⁵⁵

Fourth, although militant tendencies exist among some IRP factions, the Party as a whole does not seem to favour a militant approach for achieving its objectives. Rather, the electoral route to power or power sharing has been declared the preferred method by the leadership.

Apart from the above Islamic parties, a number of smaller Islamic groups with militant tendencies have been operating in the CARs. In Tajikistan, for instance, some fundamentalists have refused to join the IRP because they do not believe that the Party is

Islamic enough. The supporters of these groups are primarily young and educated from urban areas who have been 'brought up on the new teachings of **Islam**'. They have also been exposed to contemporary Islamic literature from abroad. Similar attitudes have been reported with respect to some Muslim factions in Uzbekistan.

The compatibility between '**Nationalism**' and '**Islam**' is indicative of the fact that the **Islamic** parties have been generally operating in alliance with the democratic forces and draw an inspiration from neighbouring Turkey which is a living model of compatibility between **Islam** and democracy. What has made this alliance possible has more to do with the existence of a common opponent, i.e. the governments of the CARs than any substantive ideological concordance between the two sides.⁵⁶

An increasingly important role played by **Islam** is its function as a component of **Central Asian identity** in an area that is desperately searching for an identity. While **Islam** is not a significant factor in the politics of the republics, it will be quite useful in dealing with Russia, since **Islam** along with their Turkish heritage, is what distinguishes the republics from Russia.

Islam, as *Graham Fuller* puts it, is an element of '**nationalism**' itself. In my opinion, Fuller's interpretation is quite correct because the **Islamic renaissance** and **national rebirth** are closely intertwined in each state. **Islam** in the republics is largely a means of national self-identification, an instrument of spiritual liberation from Moscow, from the excessive influence of the communist system and Slavic culture - expressions of foreign colonial domination. It is likely, therefore, that as **nationalist** movements build **identity** and grow vis-a-vis Russia in the forthcoming years, the **Islamist** factor will increasingly play a part in any confrontation. '**Islam**' and '**nationalism**', rather than acting as opposing forces, will mutually stimulate each other: the **Islamic consciousness** will help shape Central Asia's **national** and regional **identities** and vice versa. However, **Islam**, as an expression of national self-consciousness, is and will remain innocuous and far from revolutionary.

Issues of ideology, religion and ethnicity are complicated in **Uzbekistan** by the presence of regional differences in the nature of state-society relations based on regional as opposed to national or ethnic identification. Regardless of the Soviet policy of changing **Uzbekistan**'s Arabic script to Latin and then to Cyrillic, 'Russifying' Muslim culture and implementing widespread **atheist** propaganda, **Islamic identity** in **Uzbekistan** survived and was reinforced after the collapse of the Soviet Union. One of the reasons for the survival of **Islamic identity** is the above-mentioned confusion of religious and national feelings. It has been observed that the lack of religious education and religious knowledge on account of Soviet policy has caused a dangerous situation, where the majority of **Uzbeks** are ignorant about elementary **Islamic** teachings. This situation can be, and often is, taken advantage of in the political scene through the ease with which religious views can be imposed on the broad masses and manipulated in the necessary directions.

Another group identity which is closely related to and often confused with '**Islam**' is the 'Turkic' one. The **Turkic identity** or *Pan-Turkism* is of great importance to followers of *Jadidism* and **Uzbek** intellectuals. The doctrine of *Pan-Turkism* is based on linguistic and historical links. Recently, many followers of this centripetal concept are looking for the ways of establishing and reinforcing links amongst **Turkic**-language speaking peoples, including Central Asians, Tatars, Azerbaijani and even Turkish people. This seemingly cultural doctrine bears very significant geopolitical implications, both advantageous and disadvantageous, for the foreign policy issues of the republic of **Uzbekistan**. The '**Turkestani**' or '**Central Asian**' identity is closely linked with the **Islamic** and **Turkic** one. The **Turkestani identity** covers the peoples of Central Asia, Afghanistan and western China. Different from Pan-Turkism, the 'Central Asian' category is based on geographical affiliation, rather than a cultural and linguistic link and includes the Persian-speaking Tajiks, leaving out Tatars and Azerbaijanis. It is necessary to **point out that Central Asian identity as well as the Islamic and Turkic** ones must be seen against the background of mass inter-ethnic disturbances in Central Asia. In these riots, members of one Muslim (and often Turkic-speaking) ethnic group have clashed with members of another Muslim Turkic-speaking group (for instance, the 1989 clashes between **Uzbeks** and Meskhetian Turks in

the Ferghana Valley and the bloodshed between **Uzbeks** and Kyrgyz in 1990 in Kyrgyzstan). Most of these identities, when linked with **Islamic** identities, may cause centrifugal or centripetal proclivity in the nation-building process in **Uzbekistan**, and the outcome depends mainly on the political and social atmosphere and on the strategy adopted by the government.

Notes

1. Max Weber described patrimonialism as a decentralized form of patrimonial society in which the ruler's retainers held sway over territories allocated to them, in a relationship of mutual dependence with the ruler. In a patrimonial system, office-holders are there primarily to perform services for the ruler, not as professional specialists. See Max Weber, *Wirtschaft and Gesellschaft*, Tübingen [J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck)] 1925, pp. 682-83, 693.
2. Pravda Vostoka, 05 October, 1986, Yulduzli Tunlar (Starry Nights)
3. See Nationalism and Policy toward the Nationalities in the Soviet Union, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991).
4. James Critchlow, Nationalism in Uzbekistan - A Soviet Republic's Road to Sovereignty, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), p.119
5. Pravda Vostoka, 18 June, 1989.
6. OAS, 14 July, 1989.
7. OAS, 21 July, 1989.
8. See Critchlow, Uzbekistan: The Paralysis of Political Power, Report on the USSR, (28 July, 1989), p.32.
9. Pravda Vostoka, 16 July, 1989.
10. Gerhard Simon, Nationalism and Policy toward the Nationalities on the Soviet Union, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991).
11. Mushtum, No. 20, 1989, pp. 10-11.
12. James Critchlow, Nationalism in Uzbekistan - A Soviet Republic Road to Sovereignty, (Boulder, Colorado, USA: Westview Press, 1991), p. 119
13. Pravda Vostoka, 02 October, 1990.
14. TASS, 23 November, 1990.
15. OAS, 23 February, 1990.
16. Dani (1993), pp. 53, 56.

17. Martha B. Olcott, "Gorbachev's national dilemma", Journal of International Affairs, Vol 42, No. 2, (Spring 1989), p. 399.
18. R. Sakwa, Gorbachev and His Reforms, 1985-1990, (New York : Prentice Hall, 1990), pp. 247-248.
19. Dani (1993), p. 59.
20. Manan Ramiz, From Fact to Fantasy (Samarkand-Tashkent; [Uzbekistan], State Publishing House, 1928), p. 81.
21. T. S. Saidbaev, Islam I obshchestvo, (Moscow: 1978).
22. Pravda Vostoka, November 25, 1986
23. Pravda Vostoka, August 12, 1987
24. See Critchlow in Ramet, Religion and Nationalism, pp. 196-7.
25. Graham Fuller, "The Emergence of Central Asia" Foreign Policy (Spring 1990), p. 49-67.
26. T. S. Saidbaev, Islam-i-obshchestvo, Moscow (Nauka) 1978, 0.226.
27. New York Times, 6, 8 February, 1989.
28. N. Usmanov, "Useful Points of Collaboration" (Kommunist Uzbekistan, June 1989), pp. 47-48.
29. See Ali Bannuaziz and Myron Weiner Eds. *The New Geopolitics of Central Asia and its Borderlands* (London: I.B.Tauris, 1994), Charles Undeland and Nicholas Platt, *The Central Asian Republics – Fragments of an Empire, Magnets of Wealth* (New York: Asia Society, 1994), Graham Fuller, *Central Asia: The New Geopolitics* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 1992).
30. See Shirin T. Hunter, *Central Asia Since Independence*, the Washington Papers No. 168 (Westport CT: Praeger, 1996), Ahmed Rashid, *The Resurgence of Central Asia: Islam or Nationalism* (London: I.B. Taurus, 1998).
31. See William Fierman Eds. *Soviet Central Asia: The Failed Transformation* (Boulder, Colorado: West View Press, 1991) and Touraj Atabaki and John O' Kane Eds. *Post Soviet Central Asia* (London: I.B. Taurus, 1998).

32. See Martha Brill Olcott, *Central Asia's New States: Independence, Foreign Policy and Regional Security* (Washington D.C: Institute of Peace Press, 1996; Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott, Eds. *Conflict, Cleavage and Change in Central Asia and Caucasus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997; Nancy Lubin, *Calming the Ferghana Valley; development and dialogue in the heart of Central Asia* (New York: Century Foundation Press, 1999), Rajan Memon and Handrik Spruyt, "Possibilities for conflict and conflict resolution in post Soviet Central Asia" in Jack Snyder and Barnett R. Rubin, eds. *Post Soviet Political Order: conflict and State building* (London: Routledge, 1998).
33. Posen "Security Dilemmas and Ethnic Conflict", p.27-47, *International Security*, Vol. 18, No.4, Spring 1994, Jack Snyder, "Nationalism and the crises of the post Soviet State", *Survival*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (Spring, 1993).
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36. Ibid.
37. Robert D. Grey, *Democratic theory and Post-Communist Change* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1997) p.6-7.
38. Karl Deutch, "Soviet mobilization and Political Development" in M. Eckstein and D.E. Apter (Eds), *Comparative Politics and Reader* (London: OXFORD Press, 1963), P 582-603.
39. Anthony Bichel, "The Third Wave: The Democratic Invision of Central Asia" *ICARP Original Publications* 1997, P.1, Robert Grey, *Democratic Theory and Post-Communist Change*, p.15.
40. Charles Gati, "If not democracy what ? Leaders, Laggards and Losers in the Post Communist World", in Michael Mandelbaum Ed. *Post Communism:Four Perspectives* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations Inc.) 1996
41. Stephen M. Waltz "International Relations: One World, Many Theories" in *Foreign Policy*, Spring, 1998, pp 6-7

42. See John Glen, *The Soviet Legacy in Central Asia* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999) and Oliver Roy, *The New Central Asia: The Creation of Nations* (New York: New York University, Press, 2000).
43. Ronald Grigor Suny "Provisional Stabilities" *International Security*, Vol. 24, No. 3, Winter 1999/2000, P.1
44. Stephen M. Walt, "International Relations: One World, Many Theories" p. 7.
45. Sunny, "Provisional stabilities" p.144
46. Michael C. Desch, "Culture Clash" Assessing the importance of Ideas in Security Studies" *International Security*, summer 1998, Vol. 23, No. 1, p. 142.
47. See J. Schacht, *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967).
48. M. Rywkin, *Moscow's Muslim Challenge: Soviet Central Asia*, (London: M. E. Sharp, 1982), p.89.
49. Muriel Atkin, *The subtlest battle: Islam in the Soviet Tajikistan*, (Foreign Policy Research Institute, 1989), p.14.
50. *Pravda Vostoka*, 07 December, 1989.
51. Islam Karimov, *UZBEKISTAN along the road of deepening*
52. Nawa-i-Waqt, Rawalpindi/Islamabad, Pakistan, 30 March, 2004.
53. Dani (1993), pp. 80, 127.
54. *Soviet Muslims Brief*, Vol. 6, No. 3, (Sept.-Oct. 1990) pp. 4-5.
55. Although the post-1992 political developments in Tajikistan has considerably limited the scope and altered the nature of the collaboration between the democratic and Islamic forces, continuous efforts are being made by the leadership, both inside and outside the country, to keep the coalition alive.
56. Mehrdad Haghayeghi, "Islamic Revival in the Central Asian Republics" *Central Asian Survey*, [1994], 13(2), p. 255. economic reform, (Lahore: Gora Publishers, 1995), p.132.

Chapter V TRANSNATIONAL INFLUENCES

Central Asia is a new geopolitical creation which has an important strategic role to play in the years to come. It is in the middle of three super civilisations - the **Islamic**, the Christian and the Buddhist and is seen by many experts as one of the most vulnerable areas of instability between them. It can become a natural, historically formed buffer zone as well as form the hub of **Islamic** extremism. Being placed in the middle of the Eurasian continent, it is also one of the most convenient routes of transit. It is rich in minerals, especially hydrocarbons. As a consumer market, it still remains to be exploited. All these factors lead to increasing interest in CARs by various countries.

Despite their rich cultural heritages, none of the CARs had any recent experience of 'nationhood' and 'statehood' prior to the Soviet era. In fact, their territorial boundaries and cultural and political identities are the products of the Soviet-era nation-building, with all the negative baggage that implies. In addition to posing a serious challenge to themselves, this ideological void accelerated competition between a variety of international and regional actors to fill it. Already by early 1991, when the process of the Soviet Union's disintegration had accelerated, four different ideologies appeared as the main candidates to fill the void created by the discrediting of '**communism**'. These were:

- a) Turkic nationalist and Pan-Turkish ideologies,
- b) Variants of **Islam**-based ideology, ranging from that practiced in Saudi Arabia to that found in Pakistan and Iran and
- c) Western-style democracy,

Not all of these ideologies were equally popular with all segments of the population in all the CARs. On the contrary, their appeal differed greatly from republic to republic and from one category of people to another. In fact, all of these ideas had some adherents in all of the republics.

Nevertheless, broadly speaking, various **Islamic** ideas were especially popular in the rural areas of **Uzbekistan**. Turkic nationalist ideas were also strong in the newly born republic. All of the various groups that emerged following the introduction of *glasnost* and *perestroika* - including those that were **Islam**-oriented - paid lip service to the notion of 'democracy'. But Western-style liberal democracy was the ideology, least understood by both, CARs leaders and people. Nor should this be surprising, since nothing in the historical, national and cultural experience of these countries had prepared them to be receptive to such ideas. The underlying political culture of the region had basically remained what it was centuries ago - clannish and tribal. In this culture, the focus of loyalty is family, clan, and region and only lower in the order of priorities does this loyalty extend to larger entities such as 'state' or 'nation'. Similarly, in these systems, personalities and personal loyalties play an important role. Moreover, the long period of communist rule, rather than altering the underlying tribal culture, had in many respects strengthened its fundamental features. For example, various communist-era bureaucratic and other networks were built on the basis of the traditional family, clan, and regional divisions and loyalties. The communist system had also further strengthened the region's traditional propensity to the cult of personality.

In addition, Central Asia had remained largely - though not entirely - untouched by Western liberal ideologies which had influenced the intellectual elites of neighboring and other Muslim countries from the second half of the 19th century onward and which had generated cultural and political reform movements. The most important Central Asian reform movement in the early 20th century, the *Jadid movement*, was too limited and short-lived to leave any lasting impact, although its memory still inspires some intellectuals because its origin was in modern Turkey. Two other factors created a none-too-hospitable environment for the flourishing of democratic forms of government. These were the fragmented nature of most of the CAR societies and the vagaries of regional and international politics. Most CARs have large ethnic minorities, sometimes, with long traditions of cultural and political rivalry and territorial disputes. In the past, these disputes had been kept at bay only through pervasive communist repression. With the relative opening up under *glasnost* and *perestroika*, many of these pent-up frustrations and conflicts came

to the fore and led to several inter-ethnic clashes. Continued repression, no doubt, is no answer to these problems but rather is likely to exacerbate them. Nevertheless, existing leaders have used these problems as excuses to slow down - and in some cases to stop completely - even the limited and timid 'democratization' that took place from 1989 onwards.

Before the events of September 11, 2001, there was a growing realization that the accumulation of challenges in Central Asia - especially given the escalating crisis in Afghanistan - demanded attention. But despite these concerns and community involvement and engagement in the region, Central Asia was low down in the priorities of the United States and other governments. Even for Japan, as the leading bilateral donor in Central Asia, its pre-eminence was largely the result of the disinterest of others rather than a major priority on the part of the government in Tokyo. In the 1990s, there was no real vision for the region in the world capitals, and no sense of their interaction with issues of global consequence. This changed with the terrorist attacks on the United States on 9/11 and the realization that civil war and acute state failure in Afghanistan had facilitated them.

Within the region, the fate of **Uzbekistan** was of particular concern. **Uzbekistan** is the most strategically located of the CARs, with the largest population and the most significant military capabilities and resources, but it has also been a source of regional tension and a logjam for regional development.

The internal political dynamics in Central Asia are conditioned by the pressures exerted from the Middle East and South Asia. China, India and Russia are all out to grab the tremendous economic potential of the region while Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan are trying to woo CARs, each projecting a different brand and model of **Islam**.

From an ideological point of view, four forces are at work in **Uzbekistan**:

First, the force of radical **Islam** synonymous with Iran which has combined the elements of fundamentalism and anti-Western imperialism.

Second, the force of conservative **Islam** with no anti-Western tenets as represented by Saudi Arabia, mostly in some of the urban centres and Ferghana valley.

Third, the force with Turkish secular version.

Fourth, Pakistan's modernized, progressive and democratic character with its 'enlightened moderation' policy and with the tacit approval of the West and United States.

The extent to which these outside Muslim and other countries would be successful in garnering influence in **Uzbekistan**, depends on the following variables:

- the manner and degree in which the Slavic republics will associate with their non-Slavic affiliates in the CIS. (The likelihood is that the process of internal reform will preoccupy the Slavic republics and will thereby open the way for the states to the South to gain influence. Inter-Slavic rivalry will also limit their ability to reach beyond their borders. This opens the prospects for external Muslim states to raise their standing).
- The way external states will gain influence will depend on economic, socio-cultural and religious factors in **Uzbekistan**.

The desire to pursue an independent course of diplomacy had finally prevailed in the mindset of **Uzbek** leaders. What we see today are the emerging contours of an open-door policy with regard to all countries, strictly managed by the state, in favour of its national self-interest.

Here a modest attempt is made at analyzing the factors that impel independent **Uzbekistan** to evolve its relations with immediate neighbours, policy dilemmas facing them and conflicting interests they are confronted with.

5.1 Iranian influence

For centuries, Central Asia, as a part of greater Khorasan, was one of the two pillars of the **Islamic** civilization, the other being Baghdad.¹ Iranian philosophers and poets as Farabi, Avicenna and Roudaki were born in the areas that are now part of Central Asia.

The break up of the Soviet Union confronted **Iran** with a volatile security environment to the north as overnight, the number of its neighbours increased from one to three on land and from one to four on the Caspian Sea. The situation, however, provided Iran a golden opportunity to accelerate and intensify its activities in the CARs. At the economic level, **Iran** looks to the region as an important market for Iranian-made consumer goods. Oil and transportation provide additional economic basis for a closer relationship between CARs and **Iran**. The landlocked republics look to **Iran** as a natural linkage and gateway to the high seas. Iran's relatively well-developed oil industry can provide technical assistance to these republics.²

On the religious level, it may seek to encourage the spread of Iranian brand of Islam along its northern borders but is unlikely to let this significantly affect its need for economic growth and trade. It is also fully aware of Russia's actual and potential power in the CIS and is careful not to pursue policies that could jeopardize its relationship with Moscow.³

Iran, therefore, remains at the crossroads between Central Asia, the Caucasus and the four neighbouring geographical regions which assures Iran's status as a major regional power and a crucial partner in any security arrangement in the region. Since the death of Ayatollah Khomeini and the leadership of President Akbar Hashmi Rafsanjani and President Muhammad Khatimi, **Iran** has been moving towards renewed ties with the West but following the election of hardliner Tehran Mayor, Mr. Mahmood Ahmadinejad as Iranian President in the run off polls on 24th June, 2005, **Iran** is likely to

adopt a hard stance towards United States. **Iran** is, therefore, poised to assert itself either in the Persian Gulf region where it would be opposed by the United States and the oil rich Gulf Arab states or into **Central Asia**. Because of **Iran**'s need for international investment to rebuild its economy, it is not pursuing a policy direction that antagonizes the West or the United States.. This made the Central Asian policy option less costly and therefore, more attractive and it can do it without significantly jeopardizing its mending relations with the West because of the relatively low level of strategic importance of **Central Asia** to the West and United States as compared to the oil rich moderate, *Sunni* Muslim states of the Gulf.

Since independence, Iran's policy toward Central Asia has focussed on achieving two principal objectives:

First and foremost has been the promotion of cultural and historical ties in an effort to help Central Asians rediscover their **Islamic** heritage. In 1992, Iran's Foreign Minister, Ali Akbar Velayati articulated this goal by stating that,

“**Iran** shares the **Islamic** heritage with her neighbouring countries and in view of the recent urge for independence, it has to fill the existing cultural and economic vacuum. Hence all countries that seek Iran's assistance in the realms of culture and economics, will be welcomed”.

Accordingly, immediately after independence, Iran sent missionaries to Central Asia and distributed religious books, including Persian translations. It also provided direct or indirect financial assistance to reopen *madrassahs* and to rebuild *mosques*. However, *Sh'ite* Iran's contributions to Central Asia have been relatively insignificant especially when compared to the *Sunni* states like Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. Egypt has contributed to the area by announcing an ambitious programme to spend \$ 50 million on the construction of ten **Islamic** centres in the region and Pakistan has set aside space in its theological schools for Central Asian students. The secular leadership of the republics has been

more forthcoming towards aid from *Sunni* countries as opposed to Iran, a country they still regard with deep suspicion and mistrust. The fact is that despite formal speeches about the common cultural heritage of **Islam** and Persian, Iran lacks real leverage in Central Asia. The ‘*Shi’itization*’ of Iran in the 16th century led to a cultural divide with Central Asia where the *Sunni Islam* and the *Sufi Orders* with major differences in the way the *Shia’te* and *Sunni* sects have taken firm roots. Any movement that flourished in Central Asia whether fundamentalist or reformist had nothing to do with Iran. The Islamic leaders, officials as well as opponents, were either trained in Arab countries (like Tajik Turajonzoda in Jordan) or in the South Asiann subcontinent through missionary movements such as *Jama’at-ul-Tabligh* or political organizations like Pakistan’s *Jama’at-ul-Islami*. The weakness of the **Islamic** leverage in the region is very clear and undoubtedly Iran’s policy towards Central Asia has been shaped by such realities. Consequently, Tehran has refrained from advocating the spread of a militant form of **Islam** in the region because it recognizes the profound ideological differences between it and the CARs and is well aware of the *atheist* upbringing and secular outlook of many of the region’s leaders. Any attempt to do so could be counter-productive and is bound to exacerbate **Iran’s** diplomatic isolation. Recently, Iran has proposed joining forces with Central Asian security agencies to combat terrorism, crime and corruption in the region that is often instigated by militant Muslim rebels. A much more important factor in limiting **Iran’s** initiatives in Central Asia is Tehran’s anxiety not to antagonize the Russians with whom they have developed economic, military and political relations. If **Iran** were to change its moderate policy in Central Asia, Russia would not tolerate it which has multilateral and bilateral co-operation treaties in culture, economics, military and security matters with these states. Russia, the Russian language and the Russian minorities in these republics are important factors and will remain so. This is quite obvious in Kazakhstan

where there is a huge Slavic population. But even in Tajikistan (where the Russians are less than five per cent of the total population), Moscow has decided to take a stand by safeguarding the country against the advances of **Islamists** from the Middle East: an enterprise in which it has the full support of the United States. Russia will continue to be a powerful force as far as Central Asia is concerned. With Russia's presence in the region, **Iran**, Afghanistan and even secular Turkey will find that their influence in the region is limited.

Iran's second policy objective is the development of mutually beneficial economic relations with the republics, including expansion of land transportation links and oil and gas pipelines. Iranian officials have described their vision of the region's future as one in which Iran would serve as a bridge between the landlocked CARs and international markets beyond the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman. They believe that Iran has the infrastructure of highways, pipelines, ports, railroads and trucks that can be utilized to provide Central Asia access to the sea. Iran offers Central Asia relatively short and direct transport routes to the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean, making it easier for the republics to break out of their geographic confinement and attenuate their dependence on Russia. The most immediate transport issue is how to export oil and gas from the region. Iran has been negotiating with Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan about the use of oil and gas from their countries in Iran's north, in order to save Iran the cost of pumping oil and gas from its fields, miles away on the Persian Gulf coast. Iran would then be able to export more oil from its Persian Gulf fields, which are convenient to world shipping routes. Imports to **Iran** of a limited amount of Kazakhstan oil have begun under an agreement in which Iran is to compensate Kazakhstan by exporting oil on its behalf in the Gulf. Construction of pipeline systems has also begun on a pipeline to bring Turkmenistan oil into Iran. This demonstrates that whilst **Iran** has been

conservative in playing the ideological card in the region, it has been far more assertive in expanding mutually beneficial, economic ties with the republics.

This is not to say that **Iran's** foreign policy does not possess a Pan-Islamic element. **Iranian** constitution's **Article 11** is certainly Pan-Islamic and declares that: "In accordance with the holy Qur'anic verse, 'This your community is a single community, and I am your Lord, so worship Me' {21:92}, all Muslims form a single nation and the government of the **Islamic** Republic of Iran has the duty of formulating its general policies with a view to cultivating the friendship and unity of all Muslim people, and it must constantly strive to bring about the political, economic, and cultural unity of the **Islamic** world. **Article 152** states that **Iran's** foreign policy is based on 'the defence of the rights of all Muslims' and **Article 154** implicitly sanctifies exporting the revolution by stating that Iran supports the 'just struggles of the oppressed against the oppressors in every corner of the globe'.

Iran's relationship with Tajikistan has been beneficial for the Tajiks. Most of the exchanges between the two republics have been based on historical, cultural and linguistic affinity. For example, Tajikistan held an Iranian film festival, an exhibition of Iranian arts and two exhibits of Iranian publications. Dushanbe was the site of international conferences on Persian culture and the Tajik language. In early 1990s, Iranian books and magazines became increasingly available in Tajikistan, and Dushanbe television carried programmes from Iran. **Tehran** also expressed support when the Tajik Supreme Soviet decided to change the Cyrillic script of the Tajik language to Arabic in 1995. On a humanitarian level, Iran was one of the few countries to provide aid to the people of Tajikistan during the civil war. Also, Iran is at least partially, if not mostly, responsible for bringing the two warring factions to the negotiating table where they later signed a peace accord. Thus, based on Iran's activity in

Central Asia since 1992, it is safe to assume that Iran will not pose a regional threat to the republics in the near future. It is simply not in Tehran's best interest to export revolution or to destabilize the region. While Iran's interest in the area has been magnified in the media, the country's record proves that its policy has been one of moderation.

Iran attempted to extend its influence in CARs by its four trump cards:

- i. Islam,
- ii. petro-dollars,
- iii. a common ethnic, cultural and linguistic
- iv. an extensive shared border with Turkmenistan.

Iran has brought about a revolution in introducing a new land communication route to CARs by opening a 85-million dollar, 170-kilometer long historic Mashhad-Sarakhs-Tejan rail link on 13 May, 1996 giving its users a number of options for maritime outlets. It gives access to CARs and China to the Gulf through Iran and to the Mediterranean through Turkey, completing the new 'Silk Route' between China and Turkey. This rail link between **Iran** and Tajikistan, in fact, revives two ancient *Caravan* routes which began in western China and followed either a northerly or southerly course to traverse the Tien Shan range and deserts and which carried a rich trade among the Arab states, **Iran** and Europe on the one hand and China on the other. With the construction of Zahidan-Kirman railway line and its subsequent connection with Port Chahbahar on the Indian Ocean, the CARs would have direct railway access to Pakistan, India and South-east Asian countries. The colourful inaugural ceremony was witnessed by Pakistan's President Farooq Ahmad Khan Leghari alongwith other Heads of ECO countries, Presidents of Georgia and Armenia and representatives of 50 countries. The new sector which reduces the distance between Bandar Abbas port and Sarakhs, shortening traffic load on the Bandar Abbas-Tehran road is to initially handle 500,000 passenger and two million tons of cargo annually. In the next phase, it is to handle one million passengers and eight million tons of cargo. When fully operational, the new railway track will yield an annual revenue of 280 million dollars. Iran and Turkmenistan have

also set up a Sarakhs free trade zone to facilitate transportation of goods in and out of this centre giving access to international markets. The rail track is a first step towards bringing the 300-million-strong ECO market and it would also link the vast China market to the ECO market and serve as a new route of transportation to Russia and the rest of Europe.⁴ The ECO airline was also officially launched on 13 May, 1996 with the landing of a plane at Almas international airport in the border town of Khorasan province. The agreement for launching of the ECO airline, a joint venture of 10-member organization was reached at 3rd ECO Summit in Islamabad (Pakistan) on 14 March, 1995.⁵ The building of an oil pipeline from Ashgabat to the Persian Gulf is also on the anvil.

An **Islamic** state with cultural and geographic ties with the region, Iran was, therefore, bound to play a prominent regional role. It extended some US \$ 700 million in aid to CARs. As Turks set up Black Sea Economic Organization, Iran set up Association of Persian Languages in February 1992 with Tajikistan and Afghan Mujahideen. Tehran also sponsored Caspian Sea Organization comprising Russia, Iran, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan - a move that elicited dry comment by Turkish President Turgut Ozal that 'this was organization too many'.

Tehran's overtures towards CARs received an early welcome from Tajikistan and Turkmenistan where most of the Islamic Republic's influence seem to be concentrated. Tajikistan's recent quest for cultural and religious revival began in the 1986-87 period. By 1989, the Persian language had been declared the national language of the republic. Arabic, the language of the scripture (Holy Quran), was also to be taught at schools. Despite some early efforts for speedy introduction of the two languages, no systematic attempt was made to implement these cultural policies in Tajikistan. In January 1992, an agreement was reached with Iran to assist the Tajik Government in its endeavor to replace the Cyrillic alphabet with Persian. As part of a cultural and scientific protocol, Iran agreed to publish two million text-books for use in secondary schools; establish a cultural centre; and set up a technical university in Tajikistan. **Iran** has been making available contemporary **Islamic** literature through a bookstore, set up in the Tajik capital, Dushanbe. Shortly, thereafter, Iranian teachers were sent to Tajikistan to facilitate the process. A

group of Tajik students was also permitted to receive university education in Iran. In addition, both countries agreed to cooperate in television and radio reporting and broadcasts, for which permanent posts were to be created. Iran had apparently secured satellite time to broadcast Persian and Arabic programmes directly into the CARs.⁶ This is perhaps the most potent cultural instrument used to influence the republic. There is growing feeling among some Tajik leaders that the United States is deliberate in its attempts to prevent Iran and Tajikistan from becoming closer. The Head of the Democratic Party of Tajikistan, Mr. Shodmon Yusufov, for instance, has expressed disappointment in the manner in which US Secretary James Baker had made American economic assistance contingent upon the Tajikistan's willingness to refrain from having meaningful ties with the Islamic Republic of **Iran**. The United States policy in this regard may be proven counter-productive, as it could induce the two countries to be drawn ever closer.⁷

Iran's benign image had, however, suffered because of its involvement in Tajikistan as acute policy divisions on approach towards CARs persisted between Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati who believes in a cautious responsible policy direction while the Revolutionary Guards wanted to extend full-fledged support to radical **Islamic** groups.

Tehran has expanded cultural relations with Turkmenistan, the only CAR bordering Iran. Turkmenistan's President, Saparmurad Niyazov was the first CAR leader to pay a visit to Tehran, actively seeking Iran's cooperation. A number of memoranda were signed between the two countries since October 1991 which emphasized expansion of cultural and communication ties including exchange of teachers and students and screening of television programmes in the two countries. Turkmenistan also launched a cultural revival campaign which called for teaching of Persian and Arabic languages in the public school system. It is noteworthy that the Turkmen language itself belongs to south-western group of languages, believed to be closer to the Azeri-Turkish spoken in **Iran** than other Turkic languages of Central Asia.⁸ It is, of course, even closer or essentially identical to the Turkmen-dialect spoken in the Gurgan province of **Iran**. This represented an Iranian strategy of

cultural involvement similar to that of Tajikistan. Neither of the memoranda, however, contain implicit or explicit religious overtones.

Kazakhstan has also been cautiously courting **Iran** since November 1991. On 01 April, 1992, Kazakhstan Television aired a programme entitled 'The Face of Iran', celebrating the establishment of Iran. In a similar move, and as a preventative measure against religious extremism in the republic, President Nursultan Nazarbayev has been instrumental in facilitating the formation of a separate Islamic jurisprudence exclusively for Kazakhstan, hitherto under the spiritual supervision of the Muslim Religious Board of Central Asia. Kazakhstan signed an accord with Iran in Almaty on 10 August, 1996 to export at least two million tonnes of its crude oil through Iran annually. A protocol for the export of Kazak crude oil through Iran was signed during a visit to Tehran by Kazakh President Nazarbayev in May, 1996.⁹

The **Uzbek** government has sent students to study in Iran and the Middle East.

Segments of the Iranian leadership have come to view Turkey as seeking to defeat the forces of **Islamic revivalism**.¹⁰ At present, Iran's goal is simply to gain a presence and to counter the religious activities of Turkey and Saudi Arabia. On the other hand, Russia supports Iran in its overtures towards CARs to offset Turkish influence in the region.

Iran is, therefore, poised to play a dominant role in CARs because of its access to the sea, its role as a communication hub, its influence in Afghanistan and its oil wealth and oil technology. It has also expressed its willingness to extend transit facilities to Pakistan to reach Central Asia.

5.2 Turkish influence

Turkey remains the primary cultural magnet for Central Asia as the most important and advanced Turkic-state in the world. The demise of the Soviet Union and developments in the Balkans have opened up new opportunities for Turkey to assert herself as a regional power which upholds the Western ideals of secularism,

democracy and free market economy. Turkey is projecting herself as an “island of stability” in the “Devil’s triangle” formed by disintegrating Balkans in the West, turbulent Caucasus and Central Asia in the North and East and the tense Middle East in the South. Turkey is pursuing a multi-dimensional active foreign policy, to prove her enhanced importance to the West.¹¹ Ankara welcomed the disappearance of the military threat posed by the former Soviet Union and its Warsaw Pact allies since the end of the Second World War but at the same time, it is apprehensive of losing its strategic importance to the West in the post-Cold War era. Turkey having experience in developing agro-chemical and pharmaceutical industry has long considered itself as the natural bridge between Western finance and expertise and the developing economies of Central Asia. The opening of a rail link between Iran and Turkmenistan on May 13, 1996 also connects Turkey with CARs giving the landlocked Muslim republics access to the Mediterranean.

Although **Turkey’s** influence is limited by its own modest economic and industrial resources, but a strengthening of nationalist forces in Central Asia are likely to benefit it. For this reason, Turkey can be expected to play a stronger role in support of democratization in the region in the expectation that it will lead to greater Turkish influence as nationalists have a chance to gain power. The future course of **Islamic revival** in the CARs is, therefore, to be influenced by the typical force of **Islam** exerted through Ankara which has its common religious and cultural heritage with four of the five republics having a Turkic-dialect besides Azerbaijan and their people and leaders coming from Turkic-stock looking to Turkey for political inspiration and economic aid.

Turkey - being marked as a political and economic model and by constitution a secular state is preaching the familiar principle of separation of ‘church’ and ‘state’ in CARs. Turkish intellectuals proudly boast that from Balkans to China, a Turk could travel freely meeting his own people and communicating in Turkish. Upon achieving independence, CARs looked at modern Turkey as a *role model* for its fundamental principles of **nationalism** which was lacking in Marxism-Leninism; secularism, a sine qua non for the preservation of their own power; control of the economy and republicanism which ensured against a return to the absolute forms of

rule practiced by Central Asian Khanates of Bokhara, Kokand and Khiva. Furthermore, Turkish economic system comprising principles of a mixed economy and means to attract foreign capital to accelerate the development of a capitalist economy, provides the model for *transition* to capitalism of the socialist economies of CARs.

Seen in this light, **Islam** is not considered a way of life, dictating the norms of public behaviour but a private endeavor with permissible public expressions. Turkey's opposition to the replacement of Cyrillic alphabet with Arabic and its advocacy for Latin script stems from its desire to increase its cultural influence in the region and to undermine the appeal of fundamentalist **Islam**.

The revival of cultural, moral and political **Islam** is, however, on the upsurge in Turkey. The Islamic Welfare Party (WP) emerged as the largest party in Turkish elections in December 1995 winning 150 seats in the parliament. The Islamic Welfare Party joined True Path Party in coalition to form the first **Islamic** government in Turkey in 73 years. Mr. Necmettin Erbakan told bi-annual party congress in Ankara on 13 October, 1996 which unanimously re-elected him as Chairman of Islamic Welfare Party that his government remained faithful to the secular principles of the Turkish republic despite accusations, particularly by left-wing circles, that his party hankered after establishing Islamic rule. He said "Turkey is not Iran and our Welfare Party rules Turkey according to our country's constitution ... we are a secular government".¹² Turkish Parliament rejected by 275 to 256 votes a bid by the secularist opposition to force a confidence vote in Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan over his Islamist foreign policy.¹³ **Islamic** Welfare Party is critical of the policy of promoting the Latin script in the new Turkic republics which like Turkey are predominantly *Sunni* and follow *Hanifite* school of **Islam** and had expressed its support for the replacement of Cyrillic script with Arabic. At the same time, Turkey's Armed Forces Chief of Staff, General Ismail Hakki Karadayi warned against any attempt to change Turkey's secular democracy and drag the country into "medieval obscurity", He insisted there must be no deviation from the Kemalist principles of secularism. Turkish army which has constitutionally mandated role as the custodian of Turkey's "secularism" could not tolerate the government of an **Islamic** party any longer. It imposed restrictions on wearing Islamic dress etc. which

forced Erbakan to resign on 18th June, 1997. The WP was banned and Erbakan was debarred from politics for five years. In 1998, WP members formed the Virtue Party (VP) which was led by Mr. Recai Kutan. However, all Kemalist principles: republicanism, **nationalism**, populism, statism, secularism and revolution boiled down to manifest opposition to the traditional Turkish identity of which **Islam** was a part. The pro-**Islamic** Justice and Development Party (AKP), therefore, won 34.2% of the vote, bagging 350 seats in the 540-seat parliament., although its leader Recep Tayyip Erdogan did not associate his party with radical **Islam**. He was sentenced to 10-month jail by Turkey's staunchly secular court on reading the following poem in public:

“The mosques are our barracks, the domes our helmets,
the minarets our bayonets and the faithful our soldiers...”

Turkey's potential as an important player in Central Asia and the Caucasus stemmed mainly from the common ethnic, linguistic and religious ties between the Turks in Turkey and the nearly 50 million Turkic people who live in Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, **Uzbekistan**, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan and constituted 85 per cent of the former Soviet Union's Muslim population.¹⁴ With 200 million strong Turks stretched from Balkans to China, the idea of Pan-Turkism has suddenly surfaced. Since the time of Kemal Ataturk, modern Turkey founded by him in 1923 has been looking Westward while Pan-Turkism was kept alive by 'nationalists' and **Islamic** fundamentalist groups. Turkey's membership of NATO, its role as a base of US military during the Gulf War and its self-avowed 'secularism' made it the pre-eminent favorite of Western powers to lead in CARs. United States' strategy of promoting the 'Turkish model' was based largely on its fear of spread of **Islamic** fundamentalism in the region supported by Iran. Washington's apprehensions are not unfounded as there is growing interest in **Islam** by Turkic republics and Tajikistan which is the only republic in all the CARs to switch over from Cyrillic to Arabic script. NATO Secretary General Woerner said in Moscow in February 1992 that the phenomenon of a strong **Islamic** fundamentalists in CARs compels NATO to look to Ankara to redress the balance in the region. In February 1992, US President George W. Bush referred to Turkey as the model of a democratic and secular state which could be emulated

by CARs and American diplomats encouraged CAR politicians and bureaucrats to travel to Ankara to see a modern Turkey at work.

Turkey found itself in an entirely new set of circumstances following the developments across the region that held a promise of fulfilling the Turkish policy-makers' two-fold goals of reasserting Turkey's importance for the West in the post-Cold War era and reviving the grandeur of the Turks. It was a turning point in Ankara's regional role and policies which forced it to adopt an active foreign policy towards CARs and abandon the concept of a modern Turkish republic defined by its founding father Kemal Ataturk as the "Turkish national identity exclusively with reference to the Turks living within the confines of country's territorial boundaries". Hence, **Turkey** took the initiative and became the first country to recognize the independence of the CARs and to express willingness for active cooperation in all fields.

Turkey offered its successful experience of economic reforms under Turgut Ozal. The pre-Ozal Turkey in the early eighties was largely totalitarian, its economy was state controlled and polity was dictatorial. Ozal had proved that within a decade, one could reform a totalitarian society into a democratic one. To achieve success, Ozal had combined 50 percent privatization with 30 percent state controlled and 20 percent open door policy - a mixed pattern of economy that had given a boost to his country's economic growth. However, when **Uzbekistan**, put up 50 percent of its factories for privatization, there were no takers.

Negotiations for the establishment of political, economic and cultural ties with the CARs began as early as September 1991 by President Turgut Ozal who invited all five CAR Presidents and Azerbaijan to Ankara where he spoke of Pan-Turkic world. Ankara's programme regarding economic and technical aid to the Turkic republics was largely planned and implemented by a newly established Turkish International Cooperation Agency (TICA) loosely based on the model of the US Agency for International Development. In 1992, Turkey granted the five Turkic republics about US \$ 1 billion in aid¹⁵ mostly allocated to loans, credits and investment guarantees, with some earmarked for technical aid and supplies. Turkish Government gave scholarships to about 1000 students from each of

the Turkic republics to study in Turkish universities. Ankara has also initiated training programmes for **Uzbeks**, Turkmen and others for specialization in various governmental institutions such as foreign service and central banking, emerging private sector enterprises and the military.¹⁶ Some 480 Islamic scholars attended Turkish *madrassahs* for study. According to officials of Turkish Religious Affairs, there are about 200,000 Turkic-speaking students from Bulgaria, Caucasus and Central Asia.

A major cultural and educational project undertaken by Turkey is the establishment of the Euro-Asia television network system that broadcasts from Ankara to Central Asia via satellite.¹⁷ To reach the new audiences in the Turkic republics, the Turkish Government completed this project in record-breaking time and in the spring of 1992 began broadcasting to Central Asia and Azerbaijan over 400 hours weekly of entertainment programmes, news films (both educational and for entertainment) in simplified Turkish. As in the case of Turkey's initiative in support of the Latin script, the Euro-Asia television project is intended to contribute to expanding Turkey's cultural influence in the Turkic republics, especially through fostering greater familiarity among the Uzbeks, Turkmen and others with the Turkish spoken in Turkey.

Turkey's leader Suleiman Demirel visited all the five CARs in April 1992 and at a summit in Ankara in October 1992, President Ozal appealed the Turkic republics to "make 21st century that of Turks".

Much of **Turkey's** cultural and religious effort has been concentrated in Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, though ties have been extended to other republics. Although predominately Muslims, Kazakhs have traditionally demonstrated a tolerant attitude towards the practice of their religion. (Kazakhs were nomads and continued their nomadic life while the agriculture was done by 35 % Russians in Kazakhstan. Consequently, the process of Islamic revival has been less vigorous in Kazakhstan than any other CARs with the exception of perhaps Kyrgyzstan. Nevertheless, President Nazarbayev has sought Turkey's assistance to get an early start in charting a plausible religious and cultural course for the republic. In his first visit to Turkey in September 1991, President Nazarbayev concluded a

number of accords including a Television link-up. Turkey has also provided assistance in the educational field to Kazakhstan. An association entitled 'Golden Generation' has been set up by the Kazakh Ministry of Education to fund private educational institutions. Kazakh college students have been admitted to study at the Turkish Universities while some 40,000 Kazakhs live in Turkey. A more significant development has been the promise to fund and assist religious education in Kazakhstan. As a Sunni country, Turkey's clerical assets can be effectively utilized not only in Kazakhstan but also in other republics as well. A group of Turkish clergy led by the well-known Islamic jurist Halif Atlay toured Kazakhstan cities and villages to prepare the ground work for future training of Kazakh clergy by their Turkish counterparts. To accommodate the religious drive, the Kazakh Government has been forthcoming with regard to the renovation of old mosques and construction of new ones in the republic whereas during the Soviet era, there were only three mosques throughout republic.

Turkey has also been engaged in similar activities in Turkmenistan. Under a protocol signed on 04 February, 1992, Turkey provided two million dollar educational assistance towards the purchase of printing and laboratory equipment and to facilitate the establishment of a language centre in Ashqabat and continuation of education in Turkey by a group of Turkmen High School students in 1993. Later, a total of 2000 graduate and post-graduate Turkmen received training in Turkey in the fields of Turkish and English languages, medicine, agriculture, law, banking, sports and culture. A group of 140 students also received **Islamic** training in **Turkey** to become Muslim clerics. Furthermore, Turkey has expressed interest in helping Turkmenistan to convert to the Latin alphabet.

Turkey has also extended its services to Kyrgyzstan and is meeting all its needs to adopt Latin alphabet and supply the necessary equipment. Ankara has provided 200 typewriters for government offices in Kyrgyzstran. A Turkish training centre was also established in Bishkek.

Turkey's involvement in Tajikistan has, however, been rather limited since the two countries do not share a common linguistic heritage. Nevertheless, Tajikistan has expressed interest in

cooperation with Ankara in the fields of education, science and culture.

Turkey has extended similar assistance to satisfy **Uzbekistan's** cultural and educational needs for equipment and training in early March 1992. In seeking to keep 'state' and 'church' separate, **Tashkent** looks to Turkey as a model. Turkey is a successful society which is Muslim and has a secular government and cultural ties to Europe over a long period of history. The **Uzbek** government has given scholarships to students to study in Turkey where the language has common roots with **Uzbek**. A Turkish company has already set up a cotton yarn factory with a capacity of 60,000 tons. An agreement has been negotiated with **Tashkent** for a natural gas plant at a cost of US \$ 3.5 billion with Turkey to provide other international partners. The Tekfen contracting company of Turkey has completed the preliminary work on pumping oil to Sivas (Turkey) and from there to Vienna at an estimated cost of US \$ 3.5 billion and US \$ 7 billion - all the way to Vienna.

To take care of Russia's annoyance in her close ties with CARs, **Turkey** negotiated with 9 countries (Turkey, Russia, Azerbaijan, Ukraine, Bulgaria, Romania, Armenia, Georgia and Moldova) neighbouring the Black Sea, the formation of a Black Sea Economic Organization in June 1992. It was also intended to create a new regional economic block that would facilitate closer political ties and re-assert Ankara's regional importance.

In the beginning, CARs had been quite receptive to **Turkey's** initiatives in all fields of activities as Turkish model was attractive for the CAR leaders, especially because of its emphasis on creating secular state institutions in a predominantly Muslim society. They also used Turkish card to demonstrate to Moscow that they have a powerful foreign patron at their back. But several factors forced CAR leaders to re-think their close ties with Ankara. Turkey is not physically contiguous with the region except for a tiny part of Azerbaijan's Nakhchevan (9 kilometers) and lacks in providing a land route to CARs which desperately need sea-port facilities for imports and exports. Ankara's perception of its role as an 'elder brother' of the Turkic peoples of Central Asia was another negative factor in view of their bitter experiences under Soviet rule. Many CAR leaders doubt

the ability of **Turkey** to deliver the economic and other benefits to them as Turkish investment in industry was not forthcoming, Turkish TV programmes were unpopular and **Islamic** fundamentalists floated the idea of Turkey being a stalking horse for Americans who want to deprive CARs of their Islamic heritage.

Hence, CAR leaders realize that what might be in **Turkey** or West's interests, may not necessarily be in the best interests of CARs. As a result, the Turkish model remained a distant daydream, and gradually fizzled out in the ongoing muddle in the region. The Soviet management style, dearth of capital, lack of initiative within the region and a host of other problems had subsequently deterred many aspiring entrepreneurs not to talk of the *Turkish* model.

Of late, CARs have begun to examine the relative merits of other models of development such as China, Indonesia and Pakistan whose political and economic systems they consider better suited to their goals.

5.3 Saudi influence

Saudi Arabia is projecting an image similar, in many ways, to the CAR's pre-Communist past, when religion and politics defined and complemented each other. It cultivates positive ideas about the West as do the CARs. The *Wahabi* movement was growing very strong in **Saudi Arabia** and the South Asian sub-continent. Their disciples were going to Central Asia for reviving **Islam** as against Russian influence and the movement had its roots and was quite strong in the most religiously fervent Ferghana valley.

Saudi Arabia shipped millions of Qur'ans, donated large sums of money for the construction of religious establishments and invited prominent Muslim clergy from CARs to undertake pilgrimages to Mecca El-Mukarramah and Medina El-Munawwara, free of charge.

Saudi Arabia's King Fahd invited hundreds of prominent **Uzbeks** since 1991 to perform Haj at Saudi government's expense whereas in the past, hardly three persons were allowed to go

for pilgrimage. It raised the CARs' quota of pilgrims to over 15 thousand in 1993. Prince Saud al-Faisal visited Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan in February 1992 to make a preliminary assessment of the republics' religious, political and economic situation. Saudi Arabia has spurred an estimated one billion dollars into Central Asia and pledged seven million dollars to the religious board in Tashkent for Islamic studies. It is paying salaries of 300 religious school teachers in Dushanbe without any written agreement and has donated at least two Arabic language computers to Tajikistan's chief cleric. The Saudi Arabia-based **Islamic** Bank has provided 300,000 dollars loan to build new religious school dormitories.¹⁸

Saudi Arabia's religious services have so far been limited to the promotion of the Arabic language, pilgrimage and renovation of historic mosques in the region. The dispatch of Saudi teachers to the region has been aimed at to enhance the understanding of the tenets of Islam and Qur'an. A million copies of the Holy Qur'an were sent to the CARs as a gesture of goodwill by the Saudi King. Funding for religious education has also been forthcoming from Saudi Arabia which also runs a scholarship programme for religious education of CARs in the kingdom. Saudi Arabia has been funding the Islamic groups, mosques and *madrassahs*. The Saudi effort has been to win back the people of the region to Islam rather than cultivating economic or trade ties with CARs. They are promoting their brand of **Islam - Wahabism** of which CARs are quite suspicious. However, it does not seem to have any political ambitions in the region.

5.4 Indian influence

India has ancient socio-cultural, economic and historical links with Central Asia. In the 1st century B.C., both regions were part of a single state under the famous Kushan dynasty. The migration of tribes to India has been, mainly from and through the trans-Oxus region (Amu Darya basin) and the Khawarzim area - right from the early epochs of the pagan Aryan, Yue-chi, Saka tribes to the medieval period which witnessed the Turanian *Qaflas* (travelling trade groups) of Muslim **Uzbek**, Turkmen, Tajik, Mughal and Pashtun tribes, moving to the fertile plains of India. The famous **Silk Route** across the Pamirs and the fabled 'golden road' to Samarkand still conjures

memories of primordial commercial transactions, romance and adventure among the states of Central Asia and South Asia.

The subject of Indo-Central Asian relations is not a new one. Close bonds of history have always linked the two, with this region being accepted as India's "extended neighbourhood". It is pertinent to underline that the centuries old relationship between the two regions had evolved through cultural interaction. Several facets of the cultures, civilisations and intellectual histories of the two regions suggest that they evolved not in isolation, but through reciprocal cultural enrichment. In modern times, however, the importance of Central Asia to India is not merely civilisational and historical, but also geopolitical and economic. Central Asia is of great strategic importance to India. There is enormous scope for pragmatic and profitable engagement between the two. The focus of relationship between the CARs and India can be defined by the importance of Central Asia for peace and stability in our region.

The emergence of predominantly Muslim but, in fact, multi-ethnic and multi-religious CARs has added a new strategic dimension to the geo-politics of the whole of Asia and more so, for the countries located in its immediate neighbourhood. Central Asia lies at the strategic junction between two nuclear powers, Russia and China, and at the interface between Russia and the **Islamic** world. It shares borders with Afghanistan, which is a major source of spreading religious extremism in the region. India has a vital interest in the security and political stability of this region. Obviously given the Kashmir tangle, India cannot be walled off from the political developments which take place in the Central Asian region. Any advance by **Islamic** extremist groups in the CARs could invigorate similar elements active in Indian-held Kashmir. For reasons dictated by geography, India's strategic concerns are tied up with the regions bordering its north and northwest. Pakistan in its northwest is a hostile country to India. For India, the Kashmir issue pertains not to four million Muslims living in Indian-held Kashmir valley alone, but to the peace and security of 130 million Muslims elsewhere in India. Therefore, the geo-strategic importance of CARs is immense for India and under no circumstance can **India** ignore this region. On the other hand, instability in Afghanistan has also adversely influenced peace and security in this region. Should the destabilising pattern of local conflicts as manifested in Afghanistan and some of the CARs,

especially Tajikistan continues unabated, the security environment of Southern Asia, already under severe stress, is likely to become more explosive. In the light of the aforementioned, India's long-term strategic interests in forging closer cooperation with the CARs is quite obvious.

Another point that needs to be highlighted is the fact that today the Central Asian region has become an area of immense importance to Europe, United States, China, and Iran. The US is trying to undermine Russian and Iranian gains as China has committed billions of dollars for the development of Central Asian oilfields to fulfil its future energy demands. Europe wants to extend its influence by means of NATO expansion eastwards and through the Partnership for Peace (PFP) programme. All this is likely to bring in high-stake power politics in Central Asia and the new '*Great Game*'. This obviously has implications and India must consider whether these developments are desirable or not. The question that concerns India is that any external influence in CARs will have serious implications, direct or indirect for the countries of the region. Related to the geostrategic significance of CARs is the problem of religious extremism, terrorism or what CARs call *political Islam* and problem of drugs and arms trafficking.

Soon after its independence in 1947, **India** cultivated close ties with former Soviet Union and became its largest trade partner. It was also an ally of Soviet Union during the '*Cold War*' era and hence, had the advantage of being known to former CARs and the region. Indian goods became known in the republics like **Uzbekistan**. Following disintegration of Soviet Union and emergence of independent CARs, India's normal trade and military relationship was disrupted as the new independent Islamic republics had acquired greater latitude in striking relations with various states of the world. Hence, it became more problematic for India because a number of new players i.e. Iran, Turkey, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia became active in wooing CARs.

India re-doubled its efforts, particularly in key republics like **Uzbekistan** and Kazakhstan. It despatched a delegation to **Uzbekistan** and Kazakhstan in January-February 1992 as part of an unofficial goodwill mission sponsored by Government of **India** to explore the avenues of cooperation in different fields. **India** has tried

to excel its secular democratic structure of government, free market economy and past links. The result was that **Uzbek** President Islam Karimov and Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev paid their first visits abroad to **India** in August 1991 and February 1992 respectively. India signed a number of cooperation agreements with CARs. It concluded a trade agreement with **Uzbekistan** worth US \$ 75 million. A big Indian company is involved in building a chain of hotels in **Uzbekistan**. India has also set up embassies and consulates in these republics.

History illustrates the value of Central Asia as a transit route for the continent. Throughout history Central Asians lived in mutual economic symmetrical with neighbouring **India**, China, Iran and Europe. Today these old ties are once again being strengthened, since trade and economic relations between India and CARs remain the most unsatisfactory aspect of an otherwise potentially beneficial relationship. The ground situation portrays a very low level of trade, limited number of joint ventures and no worthwhile investment in Central Asia by Indian business and industry, though there are small government credit lines. Indian manufacturing and investment companies are very apprehensive about entering the new, unfamiliar markets of Central Asia. This is due to the rather daunting conditions prevalent in this region. One of the main impediments is the non-availability of hard currency and lack of conversion facility service. The communication links are also problematic and at present the region is connected only through air links. While three of the five Central Asian countries are well connected with India today, with Tajikistan being the only country without an air link with India, there is a lack of satisfactory surface routes, banking channels, etc. which hamper expanding trade with Central Asian countries.

Nevertheless, potential for comparative economic advantages for the two regions is vast. Central Asia is a huge consumer market, hungry for a range of goods and services, which India can provide. Both India and Central Asia have economic complementarity in terms of resources, manpower and markets. These diverse resources can be pooled for a broader regional cooperation in Asia and to realise the potential of both the regions fully. For India economic cooperation is possible through joint ventures in banking, insurance, agriculture, information technology, and the

pharmaceutical industry. Certain Indian commodities, for example, tea and drugs, pharmaceuticals and fine chemicals have established a foothold in the Central Asian market. India has to strive hard to increase its exports to Central Asia in order to maximise mutual benefits through bilateral trade cooperation. This region with a 55 million consumer market has huge potential waiting to be tapped. The Government of India is making an effort to create the right kind of atmosphere for companies to enter this market. It has been striving to improve the connectivity. Land route options through Iran and Turkmenistan are also being explored. There are already existing rail and road lines in Turkmenistan and Iran, except for a few short stretches, between Mashad and Sarakhs on the Iranian side and Tredzen and Sarakhs on the Turkmen side. **India's** softening of bilateral relation with Pakistan and further warming up ties in future, can open avenues of land route to CARs.

The tri-partite agreement on international transit of goods between Turkmenistan, **India** and Iran signed in February 22, 1997 at Tehran is still critical. This would enable the movement of goods from Indian ports to Bandar Abbas in Iran and then on to the Central Asian region by road and rail. India and Russia are developing a new transit route through Iran. New Delhi, Moscow and Teheran signed an agreement in St. Petersburg on 12th September, 2000 for sending Indian cargo to Russia through a "north-south corridor". According to the arrangement, Indian goods will be sent from Mumbai or Okha to the Iranian hub of Bandar Abbas via the strait of Hormuz in the Persian Gulf, from where the containers will be re-loaded on trucks or railway wagons and dispatched to the Iranian port of Anzali on the Caspian sea. After trans-shipment at Anzali, goods will be loaded on ships and taken to the Russian port of Astrakhan. Astrakhan in the past has been the spring-board for expanding Tsarist Russia's influence towards Central Asia. The land route from Astrakhan to the Russian mainland is straight-forward as containers from here can be sent either to Moscow or to St. Petersburg. Cargo can further head for European destinations such as Helsinki and Hamburg because of the availability of a well-developed road and rail network. There are several bottlenecks yet to be cleared before the corridor could become viable. This new corridor could boost Indian trade with CARs as well as Central Europe. Another transit route which has been widely discussed is an agreement with China for the

use of its road to Kyrgyzstan through the Xinjiang province. **India** could use this road by constructing a link road in Ladakh joining the Tibet-Xinjiang road. Ladakh is already linked by road with Himachal Pradesh.

In the year 2000, it was decided to set up a few pilot projects in Central Asian countries every year. Right now, a tool-room center in Turkmenistan by HMT, has been set up and also technical cooperation programmes have begun. The idea behind this is that India will be setting up a '*Center of Excellence*' there. They have a polytechnic institute where theoretical education is imparted. But the tool-room immediately adds a practical edge to the whole thing. Not only the students, budding entrepreneurs, people who want to set up their own business can also benefit from the Indian tool-room center. Likewise, every year, one project in one Central Asian country will be set up. This is going to be an on-going series. A technical cooperation programme has also begun. Technically advanced Central Asian countries are beneficiaries of these programmes. They are also very serious about utilising the technical training slots that are offered, under this programme.

When we talk of expanding economic cooperation with Central Asia, trade is not the only thing. The Central Asian countries have decided that they would follow a policy of value addition in their own countries. They are afraid that resources from their countries are being taken out in the form of primary commodities export and that does not really help Central Asia very much. So, their emphasis is that people should come in with investment and add value to what they have in their countries. If one takes into account these policy preferences of the Central Asian countries, then **India's** main emphasis should be on manufacturing and industrial activities. Commercial farming is another important area where India and CARs can cooperate. The prospects in infrastructure building and construction activities have long term possibilities. Such involvement would be mutually beneficial. In **Central Asia**, there is an infrastructure building spree in many of the countries. One prime example is that of Asthana in Kazakhstan where a whole lot of construction activities are going on. They are inventing a new city. It is once again a good opportunity for companies who are specialised in infrastructure and construction. This sector is the key to the Central Asian market.

In terms of economic cooperation, Kazakhstan is also very important for **India**. Six Indian firms/companies are accredited with Kazakhstan and nine joint ventures are registered. Once the transport corridor is established, there is great scope for oil exploration and energy market. In August 1999, a memorandum of understanding was signed for the construction of project plan with modern technology for use of coal waste. At the same time, joint venture for feasibility study of the project was carried out and a business venture agreement with the firm Larsen & Toubro was signed in November 1999. In Delhi, a memorandum of understanding for cooperation in the development of small enterprises and creation of new work place was signed. Currently small business industries in the Republic of Kazakhstan, and creation of an entrepreneurial development center in Asthana are under way. **India** is making attempts to sort out transport problems between Mumbai and Asthana as 350 containers pass annually through Indian ports for import and export purposes.

The experience of **India** in decontaminating and purifying water is very valuable for Tajikistan, because it is a specially acute problem for it. Another area is the rational use of hydro-electric power and construction of a mini hydro-power plant. Tajikistan can also use Indian experience and technology in processing building material such as *marble, granite and other stones*. Besides, semi-conductor industry could be established by using raw materials emanating from Tajikistan. Thus, it can be said that **India** and Central Asia both have a mutually profitable trade potential.

An important area for India in CARs is the oil and gas sector. This is because energy security is a basic requirement today. This region is thought to contain key global reserves. A good current estimate is that the Caspian region holds 4 to 7 % of global reserves. Compared to the Middle East, where around 65 % of global reserves are to be found, Caspian reserves are therefore marginal. According to an estimate given by Central Asian sources, the confirmed oil deposits are between 13 to 15 billion barrels, which is 2.7 % of all the confirmed deposits in the world. Natural gas confirmed deposits in Central Asia, are around 270 to 360 trillion cubic feet, which constitute around 7 % of world deposits. There is also a view that the actual reserves of oil in the Central Asian region are in the range of 60 to 140 billion barrels. Despite these variations in estimates of oil and

gas reserves, one thing is very clear that the region has substantial percentage of oil and gas deposits. The main oil and gas deposits in CARs are in Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and **Uzbekistan**, whereas Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have enormous hydro-electric resources. In Tajikistan, each sq. km. of the territory has up to 2 million kw hours of hydro-electric resources and this is a very high figure. The average for the CIS countries is just 150 to 200 kw hour per sq km. Therefore, the cheap hydro-electric energy available in this region can be of use to India if it can reach through viable routes. India has already overtaken UK as the sixth largest consumer of energy and by the first half of the century, it is projected to be among the top five consumers of energy. Accessing the oil and gas from Central Asia remains the major difficulty. In July 2000, Iran and India invited Russia's state-owned gas company, Gazprom, to build an offshore pipeline to transfer natural gas from Iran to India. Gazprom holds a 30 per cent share in the development of one of Iran's largest gas fields. According to Gazprom deputy chairman Valery Remizov, Russia will step up development of the field and create a joint venture with Iran to transfer and market gas to **India**. With the warming up of relations with Pakistan, **India** can import gas from Iran, Turkmenistan or Qatar with Islamabad is negotiating terms.

The above points clearly underline the imperatives for deeper cooperation between India and CARs. India's approach to Central Asia is positive engagement with the region. Therefore, economic diplomacy would remain India's basic policy thrust towards the region. India needs no clash but a compatibility of interests with the new republics.

The Central Asians are seeking help and assistance from India in a variety of fields including education, management, science & technology and social sciences. The Kazakh Friendship Society runs an India Club called 'Shanti' which under its charming and energetic Secretary, Madam Zaitoon Masuma is training amateur artists in Indian dances, music and arts. They also seek the services of dance guru (master) to teach dance techniques to the youngsters. Indian movies and videos have evoked much interest at the popular level. The President of **Uzbekistan** Union of Writers in Tashkent (which is more than 60 years old and has over 700 members) Mr. Jamal Kamal acknowledges India's inspirational role in classical and modern literature and its impact on **Uzbek** literary tradition. A

measure of their fondness for India is reflected from the fact that an authentic translation of Ramayan in the **Uzbek** language was done a long time ago. The poetry of Mirza Bedil and Ghalib is widely known in **Uzbekistan**.¹⁹ Indian Prime Minister Narasimha Rao paid a visit to Kazakhstan in May 1993 and signed a number of economic and cultural agreements. India is ideally placed to fulfil growing demand of consumer, pharmaceutical and light engineering goods to CARs.

Tajik Prime Minister Abdul Malik visited **India** in February 1993 and signed six agreements in areas such as economy, trade, commerce, banking, culture and sports. Following Indian Defence Minister George Fernandes' visit to Tajikistan, India set up a military base 'Farkhor' region in May, 2002 with a view to enhance its influence in CARs.

India also signed a number of agreements for economic and technical cooperation in a number of fields with Turkmenistan, the poorest of all CARs. **India** also donated medicines worth one billion rupees to Turkmenistan.¹⁹

Kyrgyzstan has promised to sell uranium to **India** subject to stipulations of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Both countries are keen to have bilateral trade on the basis of freely convertible currencies. The two countries will, moreover, accord the most-favoured-nation treatment to each other in trade, economic and scientific matters. Kyrgyzstan has signed six accords with the Government of India which will extend assistance to the republic in international banking, agricultural marketing, ware housing and other allied operations.

New Delhi, Tehran and Kabul signed two memoranda of understanding on 05 January, 2003 including a deal to establish a trade and transport link between India and Afghanistan through Iran. According to US think tank Stratfor, the new shipping route to Afghanistan (North-South corridor) serves New Delhi's regional strategic goals, giving **India** greater access and stronger ties to CARs, Russian Federation and the Caucasus via Iran. This will also serve another broader strategic objective of New Delhi of encirclement and isolation of Pakistan. Ultimately, New Delhi's expanding economic ties slowly are facilitating India's underlying goal of becoming

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regional super-power as stronger ties in Central Asia provide New Delhi a buffer against China and help India further surround Pakistan and ties with Iran offer India strategic option on Pakistan's western flank while at the same time opening potential for new energy sources for India.²¹

5.5 Israeli influence

The Jewish community of Bokhara in **Uzbekistan** dates back 2,000 years and the Jews have lived with the **Uzbeks** and other nations in central Asia in peace and tranquility for years. In the Middle Ages, the **Uzbek** King Amir Timur brought the grave and grave-stone of the prophet Daniel from Iran to Samarkand, "the pearl city" of **Uzbekistan**, as a gesture of honour to the Jews. During World War II, the Soviets gave sanctuary to over 200,000 Jews' refugees fleeing the Nazi Germans - a haven in the **Uzbek** homeland. Many Jews joined the Soviet forces fighting the Nazis. Forty thousand Jews living in **Uzbekistan**, are businessmen and professionals. Some Jews serve in the government departments as well. The oldest **Uzbek** Jewish community is in Bokhara, Samarkand and the capital city of Tashkent. They are larger and more organized communities with day schools and some community centers.

Israel swiftly recognized CARs with a view to grab the vast economic opportunities and to pre-empt moves by other neighbouring Islamic countries, particularly Iran. The then Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres expounding on the threat of **Islamic** fundamentalism, in an interview said: "...Khomeinism was like a new Communism". Furthermore, there is a sizeable Jewish population in CARs which demands Israel's close relationship with these republics.

Uzbekistan stood with **Israel** as the only United Nations member to vote with the United States 100 % on controversial issues.

Israel is offering technical & scientific expertise, much needed capital and state-of-the-art technology. Israel has established its technical prowess in horticulture, agriculture, flora culture and daily farming to CARs. Israel has set up 4 projects (two in cotton and two in tomato production) with a total of US \$ 35 million in Kazakhstan which has been an attractive place for Israel because of its

immense resources, nuclear power and multi-ethnic nature. In fact, it has been a magnet for Israeli businessmen and technologists. For example, Israel was one of the first countries with which Kazakhstan established a direct dial telephone link - primarily to establish business and commercial links.²²

5.6 Chinese influence

With the collapse of Soviet Union and liberation of southern Soviet republics, Xinjiang remains the last majority Muslim territory in Central Asia still under communism. The five CARs are geographically close neighbours to China which has a common border with Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. For them, Urumchi and Kashgar in western China are important markets and a critical rail-link to the East. Besides, an access to the port of Lianyungang, north of Shanghai could reduce Almaty's dependence on ports in north-eastern Russia. The Chinese north-western region of Xinjiang, bordering mostly with Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan has majority of Muslims comprising Uighurs, Kazakh, Kyrgyz and Hui nationalities making up 2 % of the population. About 10 out of 14 million people are of Turkic stock and speak languages similar to modern Turkey.

China has put a particular priority on relations with Central Asia to foster the development and stabilization of its vast western province, Xinjiang. Beijing also sees the region as a potential market, a source of energy and other natural resources, and as a communications bridge to Iran and the Middle East.

China immediately recognized the five CARs, soon after their independence in 1991 and established diplomatic relations. Beijing's policy towards newly independent CARs is based on its following famous Five Principles of peaceful co-existence:

- i. mutual respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty,
- ii. mutual non-aggression,
- iii. non-interference in each other's internal affairs,
- iv. equality and mutual benefit, and
- v. peaceful co-existence.

Chinese Premier Li Peng paid a visit to CARs in April 1994 and President Jiang Zemin in July 1996 who in a speech said:

“more than 2000 years ago, the world famous Silk Road was not only a road of trade and civilization but also a road of friendship and cooperation as well”.²³

Over the years, leaders of both sides have frequently visited each other, political relations have strengthened and cooperation in the spheres of economy, science and technology, culture and diplomacy has enhanced. Trade has expanded rapidly and China has very quickly become one of the most important trade partners of each of CARs. For example, trade between China and Kyrgyzstan in 1994 was more than 100 million US dollars and in 1995 - over 230 million US dollars whereas percentage of trade between the two countries rose from 1-2 % in 1990 to 28 % in 1996. Thus China became the second largest trade partner of Kyrgyzstan after Russia.²⁴

Sino-Kazakhstan Boundary Treaty has already been formulated and ratified. A treaty called ‘Agreement on Mutual Military Confidence-Building Measures’ was signed in Shanghai on 26th April, 1996 by **China**, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan aimed at de-militarising their border - a political flash-point for conflict. It is Asia’s first accord of its kind that binds the five nations to build up military confidence along nearly 8000-kilometer long former Sino-Russian border and provides for annual exchanges of data on military activities in areas near the border such as troop exercises or deployments. President Jiang Zemin of China said:

“By strengthening mutual confidence in the military field in border areas, the treaty will work to maintain (peace in) countries”.²⁵

Approximately 1.5 million Kazakhs live over the border in western China.²⁶ Given the colonialist character of Beijing’s policies towards the Turkic population in Xinjiang province, these Kazakhs are disturbed by what they perceive as a Chinese attempt to destroy their culture and absorb them into the vast Han population - the traditional Chinese response to foreign elements. The Kazakhs in

China see their own ethnic fate as closely linked to that of the Uighur Turks, who number some 12 million people in Xinjiang and are engaged in a struggle for greater autonomy. Muslims are demanding more religious freedom and a greater share of region's rich mineral deposits whereas Uighur groups based in the United States and other countries are pushing for an independent state of East Turkistan. Exiled Chinese journalist, Liu Binyan, in an interview with Far Eastern Economic Review says, :Nationalism and Han chauvinism are now the only effective instruments in the ideological arsenal of the Chinese Communist Party. Any disruption in the relationship with foreign countries or among ethnic minorities can be used to stir 'patriotic' sentiments of the people to support the communist authorities.²⁷

The nationalistic sentiments in all the former Soviet Union in general and the CARs in particular are bound to influence their brethren in China. The Chinese authorities are determined to suppress all non-Han nationalist expression in China, especially among Muslims, whom they view as particularly resistant to assimilation. They fear that Islamic fundamentalism in neighbouring CARs is fueling the separatist aspirations of ethnic Uighur Muslims in Xinjiang. In early 1996, the authorities launched a major religious crack-down in the region, targeting underground schools and mosques that promote separatist sentiments. Xinjiang Daily in a lengthy commentary on 02 December, 1996 said that separatism and underground religious groups are posing a two-pronged threat to stability in the Muslim-majority Chinese region of Xinjiang. The Paper accused Muslim fundamentalists in the far north-western region of forcibly converting people to **Islam**. It said the greatest threats to stability in Xinjiang are separatism and illegal religious activities and that the struggle against Muslim separatists went beyond ethnic and religious divides. The newspaper said in guaranteeing freedom of religion, we must also ensure the freedom not to believe. We will never allow the practice of forcing people to convert to religion.²⁸ Xinjiang Daily also quoted the Party Chief of Muslim majority Xinjiang, Wang Lequan as saying "we must oppose separatism and illegal religious activities in a clear and comprehensive manner, striking hard and effectively against our enemies". According to Muslim Uighur groups living in exile in neighbouring Kazakhstan, some 57,000 people have been arrested in Xinjiang since April in

1996 as part of a national and anti-crime campaign that has also targetted separatists.²⁹

5.7 Russian influence

Russian Federation is geographically bound to Central Asia and is an adjacent great power and a dominant force by virtue of its size, population, economy, natural resources and military strength. Moscow continues to maintain its forces in all the Central Asian States.³⁰

The newly independent CARs including **Uzbekistan** consider the presence of Russian forces on its soil as a shield against radical uprisings in future. Kazakhstan has already concluded military cooperation pact with Moscow to set up joint Kazakh-Russian military forces. The largest contingent of Russian forces is actively involved in Tajikistan. According to Russian estimates, the equipment for one kilometer of border costs around one billion Rubles. Russia is to take a decision whether to guard the 1300-kilometer long Tajik-Afghan border or to leave Tajikistan and start construction of a new 6200-kilometer long Russian-Kazakh border.

Russia is unlikely to forego its traditional influence in a region of 27 % Russian population, having infrastructural trade and communication links with Moscow and economically dependent on it. The possibility of rise of revolutionary **Islam** and ethnic extremism are other factors which concern Moscow. Russia is the last bastion capable of stopping the spread of **Islamic** fundamentalism.³¹

Soon after the disappearance of Soviet Union, the Russian Federation replaced it with Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) on 21st December, 1991. Since then, it has been playing a managerial role in the security of Central Asia. Russia considers the loss of Kazakhstan and the whole of Central Asia as a threat to Russian state security.³² Russia cannot permit the reinforcement of China's position in Central Asia which in its view could extend its influence through economic pressure, the presence of nuclear weapons and ethnic infiltration and hence, could pose the most dangerous threat to Moscow. Russia will also not allow the Iranians and the Aghans to convert the republics to adopt their radical models

of **Islam**. Russia's intervention in the Tajik conflict was principally motivated by its foreign policy objective of containing the spread of Afghan and Iranian models into Tajikistan and **Uzbekistan**. According to Barylski, the Russian Federation made the struggle against **Islamic** fundamentalism as part of its general foreign policy objective and the foundation for improved relations with the more conservative political elite of the Middle East and the Persian Gulf. This strategy was announced at a press conference at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs held on the eve of a final push to place a reliable government in power in Tajikistan and in a general statement on Middle East policy issued in January 1993. Official statements made a distinction between **Islam** as a positive force in societal renewal and *radical Islam* that promoted conflict. This illustrates that one of Russia's top priorities is preventing the spread of intervention in the political affairs of the republics as Russia still very much endeavours to maintain dominance over the region.

Russia continues to re-assert itself in the region both for economic and strategic reasons to retain Central Asia as its sphere of influence. Externally, Russia wants to demonstrate to the world that Central Asia falls exclusively in the sphere of Russian interests and it will not allow any rival powers to emerge. Internally, this conception aims at convincing the newly independent states of Central Asia (as well as public opinion in Russia) that there is an external threat from other regional powers and that only Russia is capable of protecting them against absorption by the powers.³³

Today, **Russia's** paramount concern is also one of security. Russia's own territory has been threatened by the spillover from Afghanistan through Central Asia of **Islamic** militancy, terrorism, and drug trafficking. Indeed, from the beginning of his presidency in January 2000, Russia's President, Vladimir Putin, pushed the idea of a concerted campaign against terrorism with American as well as European leaders. He was one of the first to raise the alarm about terrorist training camps in Afghanistan, and to warn of linkages between these camps and well-financed terrorist networks operating in Europe and Eurasia. In addition, Russia actively supported the Northern Alliance in its struggle with the then Taliban regime in Afghanistan. In December 2000, Moscow joined

The volatile situation in Afghanistan after September 11, 2001 had provided added input to the already complex regional scenario for Russia to act gingerly on its southern underbelly.

5.8 American influence

In spite of the construction in 2002 of bases in Central Asia to support the military campaign in Afghanistan, the primary **United States'** interest in Central Asia is not *strategic*. Central Asia's importance to the United States is not as a bulwark against regional powers such as Russia, China, or even Iran. It is also not as much to protect American commercial concerns in the exploitation of Caspian energy resources. The primary American interest is in the field of *security* i.e. the prevention of "Afghanization" and Iranization of Central Asia and the spawning of more terrorist groups with transnational reach that can threaten the stability of all the interlocking regions and strike the United States.

Hence, **United States'** focus in Central Asia is to maintain strong security ties with the CARs - building on military-to-military contacts, established in the late 1990s - and on securing long-term access agreements to regional bases and military facilities, which can be used to respond to current and future security threats in Afghanistan.

The primary objective of **American** aid to the newly independent CARs is encouragement of the private sector. In the financial year 1995, Washington set aside \$23 million for this purpose plus \$10.5 million for Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and **Uzbekistan** to engage in economic restructuring. Technical aid and training programs to support a free market economy and develop the private sector, focus on such ventures as agriculture, small- and medium-scale enterprises, communications, and banking. (Nichol, 1996, 13) Countries ready to carry out reforms had priority in receiving these funds. The following *table* shows the total US aid given to the CARs in 1996 and 1997:

COUNTRY	1966 (US \$ MILLION)	1977 (US \$ MILLION)
Kazakhstan	29.9	39
Uzbekistan	18.1	20
Kyrgyzstan	17.6	20
Tajikistan	3	5
Turkmenistan	3.3	5
TOTAL	72.4	89

The U.S. Exim bank provided short-term funds and guarantees to Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan needed for purchase of food and medical equipment. Furthermore, the U.S. Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) signed separate agreements with all the five CARs. (Nichol, 1996: 14)

However, the primary goal of United States must also be to enhance Central Asia's development not just its military role. Like Afghanistan, if CARs are to transform themselves from potential breeding grounds for transnational terrorists to viable and stable states, they must liberalize economically, make progress on free market economy and democratize themselves politically.

The United States' other security concern is *radical Islam* in the region, especially as a force whose spread would be accelerated by victories in Central Asia. This may be more unlikely than it appears, given the actual political culture in Central Asia and the importance of ethnic **nationalism**. In addition, the diffusion of *Sufism* as the main dynamic form taken by **Islam** is not conducive to revolutionary ideology. The very first movement which made the West and United States uneasy about Central Asia, occurred in 1988 when **Uzbek** students used **Islamic** terms as slogans during a sudden demonstration in Taskhent. After this demonstration, new developments regarding **Islam** in the other CARs was evaluated in American political and academic circles as the diffusion of *radical Islam* to various degrees.

United States' third security concern in Central Asia is civil wars and potential border conflicts. In places where there is

instability, as in Tajikistan, the situation obstructs the development of democracy and the free market economy which the **United States** strongly advocates.

Finally, **U.S.** policy is concerned with the safety of oil and gas pipelines in the region and ensuring free access to the oilfields there. The most important pipeline route in Central Asia would transport oil from the giant Tengiz oil field in Kazakhstan, developed by the U.S.-based Chevron Corporation, towards Europe and the Mediterranean. According to a specialist, "The US should support a pipeline route through the territory of Georgia and Turkey that will bring oil from Eurasia to a Mediterranean port such as Ceyhan in Turkey which is an important **US** ally.

Hence, Central Asia now poses a particular set of challenges for American policy, not least because the United States had no history of engagement with the region until the 1990s and thus suffers from a serious lack of expertise in government but as well as in the academia.

The **American** influence in CARs had been very modest because of its very limited interests viz. economic (mostly oil and gas), **Islamic** fundamentalism and ethnic extremism, nuclear proliferation and the ripple effect on states like Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan and China.

In the **American** strategy, Russia with its size, population, capabilities, world influence, residual armed might and nuclear arsenal remains the primary and dominant state of interest, followed by Turkey with its secularist state structure, free market economy, level of development and geographical proximity and a relatively democratic, modernist Islamic Republic of Pakistan (which has 62% blood of Central Asia) as the long-range connections and levers to Central Asia.

In ten years, two thousand **Uzbeks** have graduated from American universities. These people will lead the republic threatened by hegemonism from Russia and China, subversion from Iran, and **Islamic** terrorist groups.

Developments of 9/11 have given a justification to the United States to put foot-hold in the region. In US-led campaign against terrorism in Afghanistan, **Uzbekistan** has allowed American warplanes to use its Khanabad military airbase for search, rescue and humanitarian operations while Kyrgyzstan accommodates US aircraft at its main civil airport 'Manas' and Tajikistan agreed to let Western Forces to use its airbases. US President George W. Bush has endorsed **Uzbek** President Islam Karimov's view that Islamic Movement of **Uzbekistan** (IMU) is a terrorist organization of global reach.

A nine-member bipartisan U.S. Senate delegation visited **Uzbekistan** in January, 2002. The delegation told journalists in the capital Tashkent, Uzbekistan, after meeting President Islam Karimov and **Uzbek** Defence Minister Kodir Ghulomov, that the delegation wanted to thank President Karimov and the people of **Uzbekistan** for the early and tangible support they gave to the coalition fighting the war against terrorism. "The ability to base American troops in **Uzbekistan** was critical to the successes that we've all had thus far in the war against terrorism, and we wanted to come and express our gratitude to the government and people of this country for that support -- which we will not forget," he said. The delegation had a "frank and encouraging" discussion on human rights and democratization with President Karimov, and he was not defensive on this issue and said that the country and the government has to work on it. The meeting with President Karimov presented "a very good idea of the complexities in the region," and that the senators would carry back the message that the United States "must continue to be involved in the region in general, and in this nation in particular." On future profile of the U.S. military presence in Central Asia, the delegation expected the longer term U.S. presence to be more economic and social than military -- "a longer term program to raise up the quality of life and the extent of freedom for the people in this very, very important region."

An 11-member U.S. House of Representatives bipartisan delegation met **Uzbek** President Islam Karimov, Foreign Minister Abdulaziz Kamilov, and Defence Minister Kodir Ghulomov in Tashkent on 23rd August, 2002 and said their discussions covered a range of topics including the war on terrorism and political and social

issues -- "everything from education to human rights, economic development, economic assistance [and] the process by which we gain and move towards a stable regime and stable government in rebuilding Afghanistan."

The head of the bipartisan delegation, Representative Peter Hoekstra in a press conference said that we are committed to continued economic and political reforms in **Uzbekistan**. We very much look forward to building an enhanced relationship with the government and people of **Uzbekistan**." It was clear from the discussions that the United States and **Uzbekistan** "have many common goals in this region of the world," and that he and the other American lawmakers tried to assure **Uzbek** leaders "that we do have those common goals." A key part of the trip was to "more fully comprehend the complexity of the issues, talk about potential solutions, and form the personal relationships that can lead us through some very difficult times."

Dealing with the enormous changes throughout the world of communications, the **Uzbek** telecommunication sector is evolving to a new phase. The **Uzbek** Government considers the further exposure of its telecommunication system will help achieve Western standards and practices. Aiming to promote the privatization process of Uzbektelecom, the National Telecom operator and obtain information about the latest trends in the telecommunication sphere the **Uzbek** delegation, led by Dr. Fathulla Abdullaev, General Director of Uzbek Agency for Post and Telecommunications participated SUPECOMM' 2001, the premiere telecom event held in Atlanta, June 4-7, 2001. Dr. Abdullaev, the **Uzbek** Minister of Communications, was the first Uzbek high ranking official to ever visit the SUPERCOMM trade show. Tashkent strongly supports the idea of having local companies and Government entities' exposure to the U.S. market by providing a unique opportunity to review and analyze the tremendous horizons of building constructive business relationships with American companies. The International Buyer Program (IBP) is one of the most interesting and successful commercial service (CS) programs, which allows domestic companies to take part in a number of CS certified trade shows throughout United States. Realizing the importance of the Information and Communication technology sector, Tashkent had been actively recruiting **Uzbek** IT and telecom companies for IBP events covering

this industry field and has participated in SUPERCOMM, Atlanta (1999, 2001), COMDEX, Las Vegas (1999, 2000), National Association of Broadcasters, Las Vegas (2000, 2001) and Personal Communication Industry Association, Chicago (2000) The first Uzbekistan's delegation visited SUPERCOMM show in June 1999, showing more than 20 small and medium Uzbek companies the U.S. market for telecommunications. As a result of this show, several U.S. companies such as CPDI, GLA, Inter-packet are involved in the telecom projects in **Uzbekistan**. 12 **Uzbek** companies, including Internet Service Providers, paging, mobile and other telecommunication companies took part in the SUPERCOMM' 2001 trade event. Dr. Fathulla Abdullaev, the Uzbek Minister of Communications expressed Tashkent's willingness in establishing closer ties with the U.S. partners and proposing a deeper involvement in the process of the privatization of Uzbektelecom, the Uzbekistan national telecom operator. Despite the fact that the Uzbek Minister was primarily interested in finding a strategic investor for the Uzbektelecom structure, he was open for business discussions with small and medium U.S. firms participating at the show. The discussions covered VoIP, ISP, prepaid telephony systems, privatization and other topics. Dr. Abdullaev mentioned that the **Uzbek** Government considers further liberalization of the Internet activities in **Uzbekistan** and emphasized that several large ISPs were granted permission for expansion of their external channels. Besides, Mr. Anatoly Abbassov, General Director of Globalnet, one of the first ISP in **Uzbekistan**, mentioned that participation in such events not only enriches the contact base but also provides a unique opportunity to thoroughly review the future trends of the world's telecommunication development.

5.9 Pakistani influence

Following independence, *Pakistanis* were fascinated by the region because of their historical links. They also saw the re-activation of historic links with Central Asia to compensate in some way for the psychological loss of East Pakistan. *Sufism* inherited from Central Asia thrives in Pakistan's rural areas while the city of Peshawar was a centre of trade and goods for CAR Khanates prior to communist era.

After end of cold war, **Pakistan** has sought to revive its fortunes in the West by selling its new geo-strategic importance as the gateway to Central Asia. By air, Islamabad is closer to Tashkent than to Karachi. Dushanbe is only at an hour's flight from Islamabad. By road through Afghanistan, the distance from Dushanbe to Karachi on Arabian Sea is 2022 kilometers as compared to the Iranian port of Bandar Abbas and Abadan on the Gulf at some 3400 kilometers, Vladivostok - 9500 kilometers and Rostov Na-Don on the Black Sea - 4200 kilometers away. Estimates of other routes put the distance between CARs and Arabian Sea (Pakistan) at barely 2000 kilometers³⁴ and between Tajik capital Dushanbe and Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province's city of Peshawar only 650 kilometers. There are several other routes from Pakistan to CARs. The shortest trade route is via the Karakoram Highway from Rawalpindi and Gilgit through Khunjab Pass and the Chinese Turkestan town of Kashghar to the Kazakhstan capital of Almaty (2200 kilometers). The distance between Karachi and Almaty is 3708 kilometers. Pakistan, China, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan have ratified a transit and trade agreement using the Karakoram Highway which was signed in March 1995. In November 1996, the first Pakistani trade Caravan paid a successful return visit on the entire route, boosting economic prospects between land-locked CARs and Pakistan. Pakistan initially spent a sum of US \$ 500 million to improve its section of Karakoram Highway (broadening and strengthening the bridges to accommodate heavy trucks) and an amount of US \$ 20 million annually for normal and routine maintenance of the highway. Bishkek-Naryn-Turgat section of 539-kilometer jeep track in Kyrgyzstan is reasonable but needs improvement for which Islamic Bank provided US \$ 173 million for the purpose.

The major communication routes, however, lie through Afghanistan - one running from Peshawar through Jalalabad and Termez on the Oxus to Tajikistan; the other from Quetta and Chaman through Kandhar and Herat over the Oxus into Central Asia. A fourth possible route runs from Chitral across the Wakhan corridor into Tajikistan and a fifth goes via Iran, from Quetta through Koh-i-Taftan and Zahidan to Asghabat in Turkmenistan. Pakistan also intends to construct four highways in Afghanistan and one in **Uzbekistan** to improve its links with Central Asia and is in the process of building the Indus Highway on the West Bank of the Indus River which will

reduce the distance between Peshawar and Karachi by 400 kilometers. Pakistan had provided to the then Taliban rulers who at that time controlled two-third of Afghanistan, machinery and equipment worth more than a million US dollars for the repair of Chaman-Torghundy road linking Afghanistan with Central Asia and cash assistance of around US \$ 2.5 million to help expedite the completion of the project.³⁵ The distance between Tashkent and Karachi via Indus Highway is 2852 kilometers. Termez-Kabul-Torkham is the shortest route between **Uzbekistan** and Pakistan but due to political reasons, **Uzbeks** prefer development of Termez-Mazar-i-Sharif-Herat-Kandhar-Chaman route. The distance between Tashkent and Karachi via Kabul-Lahore-Hyderabad is 3209 kilometers and via Herat-Kandhar-Quetta is 2983 kilometers. It is also developing a double railway track from Peshawar to Karachi and a new Sea-port at Gwadar in Baluchistan and additional facilities at the Karachi Port to handle cargo for Central Asia.³⁶ The distance between Tashkent and Gwader via Khuzdar is 3276 kilometers. The shortest rail-link between Pakistan and CARs is Termez-Kabul-Jalalabad-Torkham-Landhi Khana (670 kilometers) but it involves difficult terrain and may not be possible. The rail-link of Torghundi-Herat-Kandhar-Chaman is 900 kilometers while another rail-link suggested by **Uzbekistan** is Termez-Mazar-i-Sharif-Sherbergan-Herat-Kandhar-Chaman which is 1750 kilometers. Pakistan, therefore, desires to market its short route to the sea and provide services such as transport, banking, insurance, training programmes, expertise and international contacts in textile industry. However, peace in Afghanistan is the pre-condition.

For **Pakistan's** booming textile industry, Central Asia provided the hopes of a thriving market. Attracted by the prospects of such an emerging Central Asia, Pakistan entered into buying 50 percent stake in many textile and jute factories for modernization of production, and in some cases for setting up joint ventures. It had fairly succeeded in trade in CARs.

The importance attached to **Pakistan** viz-a-viz. Central Asia by United States is reflected by an official document which says:

“With regard to Pakistan, a constructive US-Pakistan military relationship will be an important element in our strategy to promote stable security conditions in Southwest and Central Asia. We should, therefore, endeavor to rebuild our military relationship given acceptable resolution of our nuclear concern”.³⁷

While the business elite looked for markets in a politically stable CARs, Jamat-e-Islami - a religio-political party wants to bring Islamic revolution in CARs and helps IRP leaders in **Uzbekistan** and Tajikistan to establish links with Arab and Islamic groups.

The then **Pakistan's** Prime Minister Mohammad Nawaz Sharif, while inaugurating ECO Foreign Ministers Conference in Islamabad on 30th November, 1992 exhaustively elaborated common objectives for relationship with CARs.

Pakistan was the second country after Turkey to extend diplomatic recognition to all the former Soviet Muslim Turkish Republics. Islamabad recognized Azerbaijan soon after the OIC admitted it as a member and the other five CARs shortly before the Almaty declaration of 21st December, 1991. Pakistan has established missions in each of CARs. The National Bank of Pakistan which got licence to open its branch in **Tashkent** is the first foreign bank to start operations in **Uzbekistan**. In Kazakhstan, National Bank of Pakistan is also functioning.

The then **Pakistan's** Minister of State for Economic Affairs, Sardar Aseff Ahmed Ali visited capitals of the six CARs besides Moscow in 1991 (Nov. 24 to Dec. 15). Memoranda of understanding were signed with the CARs for bilateral cooperation. Pakistan extended a credit of US \$ 30 million to **Uzbekistan**, US \$ 20 million to Kazakhstan and US \$ 10 million each to other CARs. Besides, Pakistan extended a credit of US \$ 51.9 million to Kazakhstan for purchase of a small size cement plant. Under an agreement, Heavy Mechanical Complex, Taxila has supplied a dry process cement plant to Kazakhstan. Another area of cooperation between Kazakhstan and Pakistan is nuclear wherein Almaty has the

nuclear weapons and Islamabad, the expertise. President Nazarbayev has stated that Kazakhstan will retain its strategic nuclear arsenal as long as Russia does. The shorter range nuclear systems on Kazakh soil had previously been withdrawn. On 20th December, 1991, Kazakhstan test-fired a SS-19 inter-continental ballistic missile which landed in Kamchatka. A consultant to the Kazakh President's Office, Dr. Burkut Ayaganov has urged Kazakhstan to become a nuclear armed state.³⁸ Strategic nuclear weapons give Kazakhstan a strong bargaining position. According to estimates, in January 1992, Kazakhstan was in possession of 1400 strategic nuclear weapons or 5% of the previous Soviet total.³⁹ Kazakhstan has on its soil silo-based missiles at Derzhavinsk and Zhangiz-Tobzhur, a missile test range at Tyuratam, a nuclear test site and an early warning radar site at Sary Shagan.⁴⁰ The degree of the expertise of Kazakhs in the nuclear weapons area is likely to be limited. This will increasingly be so as the ethnic Russians leave. This may lead Kazakhstan to seek the assistance of Pakistan which through its indigenous nuclear programme may be better suited to assist Kazakhstan in utilizing such facilities. At the end of a visit to Pakistan by a delegation of Supreme Council of Kazakhstan, a memorandum of understanding was signed on 28 November, 1994 between Kazakh Chairman of the Supreme Council, Abish Kekilbaev and Pakistan's then Speaker of National Assembly Syed Yousuf Reza Gilani for inter-parliamentary cooperation to promote friendly and mutually beneficial links between the two countries.

Scholarships/training facilities in areas of banking, diplomacy, business management and other areas of financial and trade activity have been offered to all these Muslim republics and a Central Asian fund of 25 million Rupees was set up to meet their training requirements. Pakistan had extensive discussions on possible rail and road links through Afghanistan and Islamabad seeks a quick resolution of the Afghan conflict, recognizing the importance of establishing ties with the region. The Presidents Karimov, Niyaziov and Nazarbayev whom Sardar Aseff Ahmad Ali met, all expressed strong support for these projects.

In March 1994, President Emomali Rakhmanov of Tajikistan, which is the closest neighbour of Pakistan among all the CARs, visited Islamabad and held wide ranging talks with the then

President Sardar Farooq Ahmad Leghari and the then Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto. On Ragun power station, it was agreed that two countries would further explore the possibility of implementing various projects. Tajikistan which ranked second in the former Soviet Union in terms of absolute hydro-energy resources, agreed to supply 4000 MW of electricity to Pakistan, which provided US \$ 500 million for the two power generation projects and the cost of transmission line between **Pakistan** and Tajikistan. Under a barter trade agreement, Pakistan undertook to supply tea, wheat, rice and meat, in return for provision of cotton and aluminum by Tajikistan. Under the special technical assistance programme to Central Asia, **Pakistan** has already trained 48 Tajik nationals in the fields of English language, diplomacy, banking and management. **Pakistan** extended a US \$ 20 million credit to Tajikistan for importing goods manufactured in Pakistan including food items and other commodities of necessity like ready-made garments, leather goods, textile, make-up and other manufactured items requested by Tajikistan. The two sides are anxious to increase bilateral trade and to further improve cooperation in the fields of tourism, civil aviation, hydro-electric power generation and industrial production.

Pakistan hosted third round of inter-Tajik peace talks under UN auspices in Islamabad for almost two weeks in 1994 (October-November) which resulted in agreement of the two sides on 01 November, 1994 to extend the cease-fire accord by three months - a development to which the UN special envoy Pririz Ballon referred to as "getting an elephant through a small ring". The Tajik opposition leader Akbar Turjande was appreciative of the decisive role and support of Pakistan in bridging the differences between the two Tajik sides. Tajik President Emomoali Rakhmonov and Tajik Opposition Leader Syed Abdul Nouri signed a landmark peace accord in Moscow on 23rd December, 1996, ending four-year bitter civil war in the country. The two sides agreed to set up a 'national reconciliation commission', bringing opposition figures into all levels of government, prepare for a possible referendum on the constitution and possible parliamentary elections during a transition period.⁴¹

During a visit to **Pakistan** by the then Kyrgyz President Askar Akayev, the two countries agreed on 11th December, 1994 to jointly oppose religious intolerance and fundamentalism and

cooperate in their fight against terrorism and international drug trade. Both the countries agreed to extend 'most favoured nation' (MFN), treatment to each other and set up a joint commission to boost bilateral trade, economic, scientific, educational and cultural cooperation. They also agreed to promote cooperation in the areas of education, culture, art, tourism, sports and exchanges of information. The then President Akayev and the then Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto also chaired the signing of six cooperation agreements to provide a broad framework for development of mutual ties. In a meeting in Islamabad on 19th January, 2005 between **Pakistan's** Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz and the then Kyrgyz President, Mr. Askar Akaev, the two countries agreed to enhance trade by expanding their road network and work together to make ECO more vibrant. The two countries also signed three agreements to enhance cooperation, avoidance of double taxation and cooperation and mutual assistance in matters related to customs. Later, Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz told reporters "we will once again recreate linkage of travel and trade between the two countries through the **Silk Road**". He said **Pakistan** will use the link through Karakoram Highway (KKH), linking China and Central Asian states with the ports at Karachi and Gawader. Two countries also agreed to ease visa facility for the diplomats, officials, businessmen and students of the two countries. The then President Akaev said his country is hosting the largest international coalition air base in the region to provide humanitarian aid to Afghans while also striking at the bases of al-Qaida.⁴²

Pakistan donated fireworks worth Rupees one million for the National Day celebrations of Turkmenistan on 27th October, 1993. Under an agreement signed in Asghabat, Pakistan purchased 30,000 tons of prime quality of cotton from Turkmenistan at an FOB price of US \$ 1500 per metric ton while another agreement of 1000 tons of the longest staple Parvyi cotton was also signed. In all, 182,353 bales of 375 Lbs were contracted with Turkmenistan. On 15 May, 1996, a trilateral Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Turkmenistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan, for a parallel oil pipeline was also signed. Pakistan has also concluded an agreement for the supply of gas on large scale from Turkmenistan by pipelines laid through Iran. Already, there is an existing oil pipeline coming from Siberia through Kazakhstan and **Uzbekistan** to Charjev in Turkmenistan with a capacity of 10 million tons a year. Pakistan,

presently imports 7 million tons a year. The commercial proposal is that it should be expanded so that it can utilize the surplus reserves in Russian Siberia, Kazakhstan, **Uzbekistan** and Turkmenistan so that apart from fulfilling the needs of Afghanistan and Pakistan, the remaining amount could be exported to the Far East through a port in Pakistan. The initiation of such projects in Afghanistan will have a significant knock on effect for peace in Afghanistan. Turkmenistan has expressed its great importance to expanding cooperation in the fields of communication and information as well as in publishing, radio broadcast, television programmes and other spheres. In October-November, 1994, Pakistan despatched its first trade Caravan of 30 truck-loads of wheat, sugar, rice, cloth, medicines, surgical implements and X-ray machines as a goodwill gesture for Turkmenistan and **Uzbekistan** in an attempt to explore the land route for trade with CARs. Receiving the gift in Ashqabad, Turkmenistan's Deputy Premier and Commerce Minister Saparov conveyed his thanks to Pakistan for establishing trade relations with CARs and said his government has already agreed, in principle, to adopt the Herat-Chaman route for bilateral trade and hoped that the responsibility of safe transit trade and highway exports, as accepted by the Provincial Governors of Afghanistan, would facilitate commercial activities between Pakistan and Central Asia. The then Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, during her visit to Turkmenistan in October 1994 informed President Saparmurat Niyazov that Pakistan has begun to expand its trade and commerce links with Turkmenistan through the purchase of cotton. The deal had come as a surprise to the international merchants of cotton who were expecting no chances of an inter-governmental transaction between Pakistan and Turkmenistan due to overall global shortage of cotton. The visit of Pakistan's Premier was reciprocated by Turkmenistan's President in August 1994 by participating in the independence day celebrations of Pakistan in Islamabad. He signed with Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto a 'treaty of cooperation' to expand and strengthen the existing friendly relations between the two countries. The two sides agreed to give the highest priority to evaluate the feasibility of establishing linkages through road, rail, air, maritime, telecommunications, electricity transmission, natural gas and oil transmission through pipelines. Both the countries agreed to take all necessary measures for facilitating the development of long term and stable trade and economic relations, create favourable conditions for their promotion and contribute to the exchange of

knowledge and expertise in economy, science and technology and the development of cooperation between different public organizations, business structures, parliaments and trade unions. Pakistan has imparted training to pilots and cadets from Turkmenistan. Under US \$ 8 billion worth projects for oil and gas pipelines from Turkmenistan to Pakistan, Ashqabad earmarked the Daulatabad field situated about 100 miles away from Afghanistan border which has about 45 trillion cubic feet of gas reserves.

The then Prime Minister of **Pakistan**, Benazir Bhutto had quickly understood the importance of **Uzbekistan** and had singled it out for joint diplomatic interplay. In her perception, **Uzbekistan** had figured as a famous centre of oriental culture and learning, a pivotal place beyond Hindukush, Khyber and the Himalayas in Russia's southern underbelly. This was a state that bordered with all other Central Asian countries. It had an international border too. With nearly 25 million population, it was the most populous of Central Asian countries in the CIS. It has an authoritarian President with a vision who had ensured relative political stability for his country's economic progress. On his part, **Uzbek** President Islam Karimov, had realized the importance of Pakistan. Through a 13-kilometer rail link via the Wakkhan corridor, **Uzbekistan** could have access to the port of Karachi. Thus, the trilateral **Uzbek-Afghan-Pakistan** rail project idea was born that has driven **Uzbekistan** and Pakistan closer to reach other. President Islam Karimov expressed his readiness to build a road from Temriz to Herat at **Uzbekistan's** expense. The **Uzbek** President is keen that this road should go on to Kandhar and onward to Quetta.

Uzbekistan and **Pakistan** agreed to cooperate in anti-terrorism and narcotics control moves. **Pakistan** has developed internet facility for **Uzbekistan**, free of cost. **Pakistan** and **Uzbekistan** signed an agreement on 8th July, 1992 for the establishment of a satellite communication link, construction of highways, joint production of telecommunications equipment and the manufacture in **Pakistan** of rolling stock for Central Asian Railways. The two countries are also in agreement to set up joint ventures in agriculture, mining, industrial manufacturing, water resources, power generation, irrigation and land reclamation etc. Sardar Aseff Ahmad

Ali who later took over as Foreign Minister of Pakistan paid an eight-day official visit to **Uzbekistan**, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan in January 1994. **Pakistan** is the first country to conclude air service agreement with **Uzbekistan**. Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) now operates to Tashkent and Almaty. **Uzbek** and Tajik Airlines operate twice/once weekly from Tashkent and Dushanbe to Karachi respectively. During a visit to **Uzbekistan**, by **Pakistan's** President General Pervez Musharraf on 6th March, 2005, the two countries signed a couple of agreements to fight terrorism and vowed to intensify their efforts against the menace, affecting them, augmenting ties in the field of culture and to enhance bilateral trade and economic cooperation. **Uzbek** President Islam Karimov said his country looks forward to having access to world markets through Pakistani sea-ports of Karachi and Gawader.⁴³

Enormous activity had taken place in the promotion of Pakistani-Central Asian ties since December, 1991 when CARs became independent. There was a lot of euphoria in Pakistan with the widespread expectations in some circles that the ruptured bonds of religion and culture with the region would be restored. However, most of these expectations were short-lived as the new CARs including **Uzbekistan** pursued a pragmatic course of action in the arena of external relations and decided to diversify their foreign policy options particularly with the Western countries, China, Japan and Republic of Korea than giving preference to the Muslim countries of the southern flank viz. Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran. Despite the edge enjoyed by Pakistan on forging close relations with CARs, compared to India, three important factors proved to be an impediment in the realization of the expected new era of friendship and cooperation with **Central Asia**:

First, soon after the independence of the CARs, the growth and rise of extremist and *Jehadi* elements in Pakistan created a lot of suspicion and to some extent hostility about Pakistan in these countries. Reports of various **Islamic** extremist groups from **Pakistan** sneaking into Kyrgyzstan and **Uzbekistan** resulted in a backward trend in **Pakistan-Central Asian** ties. When **Pakistan's** President General Pervez Musharraf visited Tashkent on 6th March, 2005, **Uzbek** President Islam

Kaarimov said that the **Uzbek** people “know that people who carried out bloody acts in **Uzbekistan** are now hiding in **Pakistan**, and the efforts by President Musharraf’s government show real bravery”. It is true that after 9/11, **Pakistan** and various Central Asian countries, particularly **Uzbekistan**, coordinated their efforts to effectively deal with the menace of terrorism, but damage had already been done during the 1990s because of the activities of the various **Islamic** extremist groups having links in **Pakistan** to destabilize the secular regimes in **Central Asia**.

Second, Pakistan’s road to **Central Asia** is still not smooth because of the fluid situation in Afghanistan, particularly in terms of the fragile political order, the activities of Taliban remnants against coalition and Afghan state forces and the role of warlords. When the CARs secured independence from Moscow, there was a feeling in Pakistan for better trad, commercial and cultural relations with their northern neighbours. But hopes for better Pakistani-Central Asian ties were shattered because of civil war and violence in Afghanistan. As long as Afghanistan remained in a state of chaos, it is difficult for **Pakistan** to develop communication, trade and commercial linkages with the Central Asian countries. Therefore, **Pakistan** is handicapped because of geography and instable situation in Afghanistan as the lack of its direct access to any Central Asian country puts Islamabad in a difficult situation. The narrow Wakhan corridor, which is part of Afghanistan, denies **Pakistan** direct geographical linkage with Tajikistan. Otherwise, had **Pakistan** been in control of that corridor, its geographical predicament in **Central Asia** would not have existed. The question of gas and oil pipeline from **Central Asia** to **Pakistan** or electricity from Kyrgyzstan would have become a practical possibility had the situation in Afghanistan remained normal.

Third, regardless of the “image problem” which **Pakistan** has faced in **Central Asia** or the geographical fact, **Pakistan-Central Asian** ties would have strengthened if the agreements, accords, treaties or memorandum of understanding (MoUs) signed between **Pakistan** and Central Asian states since 1992 would have been implemented. But the bureaucratic hurdles in the implementation of most of the bilateral agreements with Central Asian states resulted in stalemate and stagnation in Pakistani-Central Asian relations. Had this not been the case the joint commission between **Pakistan** and **Uzbekistan** would have remained operational and not reactivated on the occasion of President Musharraf’s visit to that central Asian state.

More important, a better “image” of **Pakistan** needs to be created in the Central Asian countries so that the people and governments of that region do not feel suspicious or threatened with regard to their South Asian neighbour. For **Pakistan**, Central Asia may be a land of opportunities, but this type of thinking may remain wishful unless a better understanding between **Pakistan** and **Central Asia** is developed and meaningful interaction at the cultural, economic, educational and business level takes place. Similarly, **Pakistan** provides numerous opportunities to the landlocked Central Asian countries, thus paving the way for a mutually beneficial relationship between the two.

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Chapter VI C O N C L U S I O N

Independence in **Central Asia** had made it plain that during the years of militant 'atheism' in Soviet period, 'Islam' survived as a cultural-religious phenomenon. The ideological void created by the collapse of Marxism-Leninism, nurtured the **Islamic** consciousness and enhanced prospects for the **Islamic renaissance** on the region's political map, given the **Islamic** revolution in Iran and Taliban's **Islamic** puritanical regime in Afghanistan. Yet so far, while the cultural aspects of **Islam** have been on the rise in **Central Asia**, its political manifestations remained relatively limited in scope. In fact, the '**Islamic revival**' in the region has been largely limited to the rediscovery of culture, history and national identity. What is more, given the religious and ethnic disparities in the republics, it is highly unlikely that **radical Islam** could grow as a movement. Even if **Islam** did become a 'threat', the measures taken by the Central Asian leadership ensure that it should not become a 'potent force'. **Central Asia** can also rest assured that external forces will not attempt to export revolution. Iran, the champion of the **Islamic** cause, has been remarkably non-adventurist and non-adversarial in the region. But even if an external power did try to spread fundamentalism, it would not succeed since Russia, still the dominant force in the region, has reiterated its commitment to protecting the republics against **Islamic** fundamentalism - the Tajik crisis is a case in point. Therefore, given the *moderate nature* of **Islam** in the region, it is safe to assume that **Islam** will not become a contending force in **Central Asia**, at least in the near future and particularly after 9/11.

The hold of **Islam** on **Uzbek** society makes the religion a social and political tool with colossal potential. As claimed by the **Uzbek** party ideologue, Khatam Abdurahimov, this potential was successfully used by party officials to retain power and the secret of their success was to play the '**nationalist**' card by mixing religious and nationalist themes hoping to capture the popular imagination.

In other words, the government celebrated **Islam's** cultural heritage but sought to control the political manifestations of **Islam**, manipulating **Islam** to their political needs. The nature of **Islam** in **Central Asia** lends itself to this problem. Concerned with growing '**nationalism**', Graham Fuller hypothesized that the two

concepts 'Islam' and 'nationalism' tend to be self-reinforcing, enabling Islam to serve as a vehicle for 'nationalist' expression as well, especially against non-Muslim populations such as Slavs. 'Nationalism' in Uzbekistan emerged during the Soviet period, mainly because of Soviet linguistic and cultural policy, along with the carving up of Central Asia into five republics by Stalin in 1924. The architect of the 'national delimitation' further complicated the ethnic picture by his policy of deportation of the 'politically unreliable' and resettlement of minority groups of the region. There is no doubt that such territorial division of ethnic groups has increased the feelings of ethnic exclusivity between the dominant and subordinate ethnic groups within the country. Often the native peoples' perception that being an Uzbek is synonymous with being a Muslim leads to the confusion of Islamic identity with that of 'nationality'.

Islam is not only a religion but also a part of personal identity: one cannot simply call oneself an Uzbek or a Tajik and, at the same time, reject Islam. This, not only strengthens the Islamic tradition but makes it part and parcel of the ethnic one. Even at the cultural level, the two identities are inseparably inter-twined, so that Islamic customs are viewed as 'national' and national traditions are viewed as Islamic practices. In this respect, national rebirth or evolving 'nationalism' is indissolubly linked with religious renaissance or 'Islamic revival', and it is difficult to say which element dominates or will dominate in Uzbekistan in future.

Most scholars agree that Islam has become one of the major characteristics of Central Asia, but their opinions on whether Islam will take the radical or the moderate form differ. Some argue that due to the long-term Slavic experience in the region, the people have become 'secular' and, even though they consider themselves Muslims, do not want Islam to be involved in politics. Others believe that Islamic fundamentalism is inevitable in Uzbekistan due to a combination of political, economic and social determinants.

According to Haynes's findings, there are four types of Muslims:

- i. nominal,
- ii. traditionalist,
- iii. mainstream and
- iv. radical.

The **nominal** Muslim is defined as such because he is born to Muslim parents and believes in the convergence of **Islamic** and national self-identity in **Uzbekistan**.

The **traditionalist** Muslim is concerned with the observance of the five Pillars of **Islam** and is not involved in political activities.

The **mainstream** Muslim, or '**Islamic** liberal', perceives **Islam** as "broad and flexible enough to be able to accommodate itself effectively to the changing requirements of time and peace."

The **radical** Muslim is the one who is puritical, orthodox and conservative in approach and believes in radical, militant and revolutionary means to bring about **Islamization**.

The official politicization of **Islam** has caused several side effects. It has created strict borders between the ideology of 'state-sponsored' **Islam**, followed by the majority of the nominal and the traditionalist Muslims, and the fundamentalist ideology of **Islam**, supported by those disappointed in official **Islam**, '**Islamic** reformers', traditionalist and radical Muslims.

The refusal of the government to introduce **Islamic** education in government schools has, for example, resulted in the spread of unofficial schools. The lack of freedom to achieve their radical objectives through the ballot has made the Muslim radicals attempt to achieve them by force. In addition, the radical Muslims have proliferated due to the vacuum created by the lack of leadership from the official **Islamic** hierarchy.

The radical Muslims, according to Ayubi, observe the three Ds: **Islam** as a *dunya* (way of life), *din* (religion) and *dawla* (an **Islamic** state). In **Uzbekistan**, in an attempt to achieve a *dawla*, the fundamentalists have been bifurcated into the moderates and the radicals. The moderates advocate a return to the purity of **Islam** and want people to live according to **Islamic** norms.

However, detailed survey of different developments in CARs in general and **Uzbekistan** in particular, speak of resurgence on **nationalistic** lines with an eye to a march towards modern world rather than a reversion to religious emotionalism. Religion as a part of national culture adds new strength but can hardly replace the new tendencies of emergence. The secular ethnicity is the key determinant of self-image and identity of the new sovereign state of **Uzbekistan**.

At the popular level, however, the local populations view themselves as **Muslims**, but more on a cultural and religious level; **Islam**'s political expression is not so evident. At present, **Islamic** movements in the region are neither organized nor advocating the ideology of **Islamic** fundamentalism and **Islam** as a political ideology. More or less **Islam** is a call for re-awakening and re-rooting to the **Islamic** culture and civilization that had been suppressed for a long period by the Communist rulers. The essential character of the new independent regime in **Uzbekistan** has remained the same - autocratic, authoritarian and dominated by oligarchies. The only new dimension is the re-surfacing of old tribal and clan rivalries.

None of CARs have allowed formation of **Islamic** parties. Even secular-oriented groups have faced enormous difficulty in keeping themselves afloat. The important thing is how **Islam** as an alternative ideology of political organization would destabilize the existing authoritarian power structures in **Central Asia**.

It will, however, be a mistake on the part of Central Asian elites to control **Islamic revivalism** or any other form of political dissent by establishing autocratic rule. **Islam** in **Central Asia** will continue to exert greater and greater influence on the life of the **Central Asian Muslims** as it has been doing in the past. The **Communist** regime forbade many rituals to be followed openly by the Muslims, replaced the *Sharia* laws by their own legal system and

Arabic script with *Cyrillic* and tried to secularize the education and life-style of at least, in the urban population in **Central Asia**. Ordinary folks retained their **Islamic identity** and traditional ways of life while their local rulers became Russified.¹

The **Communists** regarded religion as the source of resistance and thus a threat to their political stability. Like other aspects of national life, **Islam** was also brought under the control of state. While the **Communists** succeeded in diverting the highly placed **Central Asian Muslims** from the influence of religion, the people of the rural areas remained attached to all the rituals and practices of **Islam**. Even in the cities, the social and cultural attitude of the **Muslims** did not completely change. It is the mystical orientation of **Islam** and its cultural expression that give it a distinctive character in this region.² Therefore, **Islam in Central Asia** needs to be understood in its both historical context as well as in modern forms of political organization.

Today, the urban population in **Central Asia** is undergoing a *revival of Islamic spirit* in their daily life, practices and even thinking and vision as seen in recent art expression. In the republics, such as Tajikistan, there is a growing tendency of fusion of the rural religious survival with the recent urban transformation from the **Communist** time. This tendency is seen also in **Uzbekistan** where poets and artists are already focusing on **Islamic** heritage and art forms and even *Arabic* and *Qura'nic* writings. This tendency of **Islamization** appears to grow and influence the life-style of **Central Asian man** in the years to come. The evidence for such a change can be given from the fact that in **Central Asia**, the *adab of dastarkhwan* has continued to play dominant role in the social life of the **Muslims**, and secondly, all **Islamic** rituals have assumed a new meaning in the eyes of the people. And finally, the **Central Asian** family structure has not been affected at all by West-European influences. The **Central Asian man** will continue to remain **Central Asian** in future and their life will be influenced more and more by **Islamic** moral code.

The ongoing **Islamic revival** in CARs has not been monolithic phenomenon with uniform inter-republican socio-political manifestations. Quite the contrary, the republican proclivity towards

Islam varies considerably from republic to republic with Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan, having the weakest and **Uzbekistan** and Tajikistan, having the strongest tendencies. In fact, **Uzbekistan** is viewed by other CARs to possess a greater **Islamic flavour** than among any other republic. However, the **revivalist movement** in the region as a whole has so far been politically moderate in scope and intensity. It has been moderate because violence as a method of political struggle has been ruled out by the **Islamic** forces except in Tajikistan and no widespread anti-Western sentiments had been expressed by such forces. In Tajikistan also, the civil war and violence had been arrested by bringing the warring parties to negotiating table under the auspices of the United Nations in Tehran, Islamabad and Moscow where Tajik President Emomali Rakhmomedov and Tajik Opposition Leader Syed Abdul Nouri signed a landmark peace accord in the presence of Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin on 23rd December, 1996 to end a four-year bitter civil strife and to set up a 'national reconciliation commission'.³

However, a number of factors may easily alter the moderate character of this **Islamic** drive, among which the two seem to rank prominently:

First, and perhaps the most significant, is the economic situation in the region. Much like the rest of the former Soviet Union, the CARs have been faced with a massive economic decline caused by the re-structuring campaign and the disintegration of the Soviet central government, hitherto responsible for the distribution of goods and selective services. Food and fuel scarcity have reached epidemic proportions in the region which may further politicize the population and strengthen the **Islamic** tendencies particularly in places where the problems are most severe.

Second factor is intimately related to the nature of political rule in the republics.

The President of **Uzbekistan**, Mr. Islam Karimov (as also the other leaders of other CARs) is communist-turned-nationalist and have little ideological legitimacy in the eyes of the public at large. Indeed, the trend in all CARs including, of course, **Uzbekistan** since

independence has been towards the concentration of power in the chief executive and the growing cult of personality.

Islam has, of course, grown in **Uzbekistan** which is not surprising, given its long repression under **communism** and the presence of historic centres of **Islam** in the republic. Yet, there is no reason to assume that **Islamic** fundamentalism will take over other forces in the state, at least in the near future, because enhanced **Islamic activism** is not synonymous with **Islamic** fundamentalism. Its resurgence is, however, manifest in the following:

- i. sharp decline of economic conditions,
- ii. unpopular and repressive government policies,
- iii. an ugly confrontation with Russians,
- iv. less democratization and
- v. curbing of political expression.

The most significant split in Central Asian **Islam** is, that divides the Muslim elites, on the one hand, with their adherence to the intellectual rational heritage of the turn-of-the-century *Jadid* reformers and on the other hand, the masses for whom **Islam** is a populist movement with emotional and superstitious overtures, one that might some day rally them against the secular authority of the elites. The Central Asian 'strong men' of the past have tended to be secular and not religious. Yet one cannot rule out the possibility that a grass-roots socio-economic revolution could pave the way for fundamentalist **Islamic** movements backed by other countries to seize power. In **Uzbekistan**, the secular elites are the best bulwark against such drastic revolutionary change.

Central Asian leaders have also used the threat of **Islamic** fundamentalism to justify their autocratic rule and political repression and in some cases to settle age-old ethnic and cultural scores. This is what **Uzbekistan** has done through its intervention in Tajikistan's political troubles. In addition to using the threat of ethnic strike, unrest and religious extremism, Central Asian leaders have used an economic rationale for their increasingly autocratic style of government. They have, in fact, been arguing that economic development and reforms require an extended period of political stability that, according to them, would be difficult to achieve with

excessive political liberalization. President Nursultan Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan has expressed the dominant philosophy among the Central Asian leaders by saying: “the road to democracy may have to pass through a period of enlightened authoritarianism”. The striking point about this view is, its total lack of novelty.

Indeed, the same economic arguments had been used by the so-called modernized dictators of the Third World during the 1960s and 1970s to justify their repressive policies. The risk in this policy, as demonstrated in many Third World countries is that it delays the process of political maturation that is needed to cope with the inevitably disruptive consequences of economic development.

Regional politics have given rise to conflicts of interest and rivalries between key players such as Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, India and Israel and of course, Russia. The rivalries between these states to gain influence in the region, along with the tools they have used in pursuing their goals (such as excessive ‘**nationalism**’ or ‘**religious extremism**’), have further intensified the risks of inter-ethnic and sectarian conflict and hence the danger of political instability. These risks, in turn, have been used by Central Asian Governments as excuses to stop any move towards democratization. Western concerns about the spread of **Islamic** fundamentalism have also contributed to the defeat of democratization efforts and the return of Russian hegemony. Indeed, the West, too, has come to see both the existing governments and the return of Russian hegemony as constituting the lesser of several evils. Russia, in turn, has skillfully manipulated the West’s fear of **Islamic** fundamentalism to frustrate efforts to move towards a more representative form of Government in **Central Asia**. The best example of Russian strategy was the defeat of ‘**nationalist**’ and **Islamic** forces in Tajikistan, which triggered a civil war and led to the revival of the old **Communist** Party.

The idea of a single **Islamic** state in **Central Asia** presupposes some form of theocratic state that is unacceptable to the **communist** leadership of CARs. The present leadership of CARs regard the **Muslim** fundamentalists as their most dangerous adversaries and make no attempt to conceal their frank hostility towards their plans to set up **Islamic** state in each of CARs. Russia

and Turkey, both oppose the idea who have important position and influence in the region respectively. And the union of all CARs into a single **Islamic** state is not less than utopian. Only in Tajikistan, **Islamic** forces are strong enough to make a claim for power but there too, they cannot hold it for a substantive length of time.

Similarly, the idea of a Pan-Turkic state is just unrealistic. The 74-year changes of Soviet Union in CARs have already destroyed the Pan-Turkic consciousness. A euphoria which gripped the Turkish politicians and some Central Asian **nationalists** after the first free contacts between them has died down with hard realities and passage of time.

In short, in the small span of time since the independence, the CARs have not succeeded in finding a viable philosophical framework for social and political organization. Furthermore, attempts at '**democratization**', which could have helped restore trust in the leadership have been slow, haphazard, and at time outright disingenuous. The bloody conflict in Tajikistan may be repeated elsewhere if economic problems are not dealt with promptly.

The New World Order, if it is to ensure regional peace and stability, must foster democratic movements even if it means substantive power-sharing with the **Islamic** forces. So long as democratic electoral methods are chosen, and democratic principles respected, the **Islamic** forces should be allowed to participate in building the political and economic future of their region. The Western implicit or explicit support for the existing and largely delegitimized leadership in the CARs will undoubtedly have an adverse effect on the perception of not only the **Islamic** forces but also the nascent democratic forces in the republics. The West must, therefore, assess the present situation not only on the basis of well-advertised democratic promises but on actual democratic practices. Any other alternative may transform **Islam** into yet another 'ism' more divisive and powerful in essence than the '**Cold War Communism**'. So far the government mechanism has seen very little change. Even after the presence of multi-party system, the state organ continues the old dictatorial form in many of the republics including **Uzbekistan**. Such an organ is bound to change with the extension of democratic process in the republics. The new trends are already

visible in Tajikistan, with the regime change in Kyrgyzstan and popular uprisings in **Uzbekistan** and **Azerbaijan**.

At present, **Islamic** political forces are seen at a low level and in some of the republics they are not even allowed to work. This position is certainly going to change but how far they would be able to oust the present secular trends will depend upon the peaceful development of the society. The new transformation will certainly be dictated by the economic compulsions and such economic demands will find broad representation in the representative governments. The structural mechanism of the state appears to retain its secular colour. It is another matter that the intense religious practices of the Central Asian man may lead to new philosophical creations that would affect new thinking of the Muslims throughout this region.

The world has radically changed after 9/11. The US-led war on terror has also put the **Islamic** forces, world over on the defensive. The fruits of this unprecedented development are being reaped by the communist-turned-nationalist elites of CARs including **Uzbekistan**. The most radical and powerful “**Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan**” has been declared terrorist organization by United States, Great Britain and other European countries, giving boost to the autocratic, totalitarian and nationalist rule of **Uzbek** President Islam Karimov.

In the long perspective, these states have a great role to play in linking the heart of Asia with the future developments in Europe. They have a great stake for their social and economic well-being by maintaining close contact with the progressive forces in Europe just as modern Turkey is doing. Central Asia is bound to forge ahead in the years to come. However, at present, it is too early to predict which final future course will it adopt from amongst the forces of ‘**Nationalism**’ and ‘**Islam**’. The post 9/11 developments are indicative of resurgence of the **nationalist** forces in all the CARs and particularly in **Uzbekistan** in short term but **Islamic** forces seem to have brighter prospects in the long run.

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