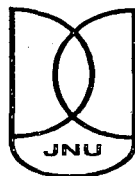


# Tajiks in Uzbekistan : A Study in Inter-Ethnic Relation

Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University  
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**MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY**

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**DECLARATION**

Certified that the dissertation entitled, 'TAJIKS IN UZBEKISTAN : A STUDY IN INTER-ETHNIC RELATION', submitted by MANISH KUMAR is in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY of this university. This dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this or any other University. This is his own work.

We recommend that this dissertation may be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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Supervisor

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Chairperson

*For*

*Pappa & Didi*

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Finally, the responsibility for any errors or omissions in the work is mine alone.

- **Manish Kumar**

## INTRODUCTION

The contemporary discourse on humankind, society, and the future has gathered a new set of words and symbols, metaphors, and patterns. Many of these are highly charged and emotive. Because of new modes of awareness, several concepts and notions have been invested with new meanings and values. The diverse manifestations of ethnicity and associated phenomena are a case in point.

Although humankind is getting used to the concept of homogenisation, to the notion of a "global village" and to the ideology of "one planet, one humanity", the sudden outburst of ethnic phenomena has been profoundly experienced all over the globe. Nation-states that were seeking larger unities - a European community with soft frontiers, for example - are dismayed by what has been happening around them. They have pockets of discontent that can blow up anytime. The former Soviet Union and the East European states that apparently solved the problems of nationalities and ethnic minorities are still hot beds of ethnic strife. Despite substantial organisational effort to bring about African Unity, tribal ethnicities have proved too strong to be contained. North, Central and South

America have their own ethnic problems with simmering discontent that reaches boiling point occasionally. The rise of ethnic consciousness and, along with it, the demand of self-determination, present formidable challenge to almost all the existing multi-ethnic nation-states of the world.

Ethnicity is a salient feature of numerous societies throughout the world. Yet, there is no complete agreement on how the subject should be defined. In original Greek usage, 'ethnos' means people. So the reference point is the people and their cultural identities. According to its dictionary meaning the word 'ethnic' is to be associated only with the races of humankind, but ethnic identity subsumes much more; and often any combination on range of factors can constitute the criteria for such identify and its action base.

One of earliest definitions, perhaps the most useful, is of Max Weber. According to him "an ethnic group is one whose members entertain a subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities or physical type or of customs or both, or because of memories of colonization or migration."<sup>1</sup> Weber adds insightfully, "it does not matter whether or not an

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<sup>1</sup> Max Weber, "What is an Ethnic Group" in M. Guibernan and John Rex, *The ethnicity Reader : Nationalism, Multiculturalism and Migration*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1997, p.18

objective blood relationship exist".<sup>2</sup> His definition has both subjective and objective characteristics of an ethnic group with an emphasis on the former.

Anthony Smith lists six characteristics of an ethnic group: a collective name, a common myth of descent, a shared history, a distinctive shared culture, an association with a specific territory and a sense of solidarity<sup>3</sup>. T.K. Oommen, on the other hand, argues that Smith's characterisation fits the concept of a nation as well, and goes on to give his own definition - "An ethnic group is a cultural collectivity that is outside its ancestral territory - actual (e.g. European Jews) or imagined (eg. gypsies). This conceptualization confines an ethnic group only to those without a territory. And if and when an ethnic identity coincides with a territory, it becomes a nation."<sup>4</sup>

Paul Brass differs from writers who consider ethnicity and nationalism to be reflections of primordial identities and who have searched the past to find evidence of existence of ethnic identities and nationalism throughout recorded history. He argues "Ethnicity and nationalism are not 'given', but are social and political constructions. They are creations of elites, who draw upon, distort and sometimes fabricate materials from the culture

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<sup>2</sup>     ibid., p.19.

<sup>3</sup>     Anthony D. Smith, *Ethnic Origin of Nations*, Basil Blackwell Pub., New York, 1986, p. 24.

<sup>4</sup>     Ibid., p. 36



of the groups they wish to represent in order to protect their well-being or existence or to gain political and economic advantage for their group as well as for themselves."<sup>5</sup> According to him, the existence of "specific types of interactions between leadership of centralizing states and elites from non-dominant ethnic groups" are necessary for ethnic and nationalist assertion to arise.<sup>6</sup> This is in line with Wilmsen's contention that "ethnicity arises only in the exercise of power. It has no singular construction; there must always be two, usually more ethnicities to be defined against each other" in the contest of a wider political field.<sup>7</sup>

While Oommen disagrees with Smith's definition, their common point is on the given nature of the culture. The difference being that territory is absent in Oommen's conception of an ethnic group. Brass, although disagrees with the primordialist view, does not discount a cultural basis for ethnicity and nationalism. The creations of the identity by elites still works upon a cultural identity. Wilmsen's contention is that ethnic identification can never be explanatory, it is necessarily a constituted

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<sup>5</sup> Paul R. Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and comparison*, Sage Pub., New Delhi, 1991, p. 11.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*, p.8

<sup>7</sup> Edwin N. Wilmsen, "Introduction: Premises of Power in Ethnic Politics," in Edwin N. Wilmsen and P. McAllister (eds.), *The Politics of Differences : Ethnic Premises in a World of Power*, The Univ. of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1996, p.4.

phenomenon<sup>8</sup>. However, it does not delegitimise the importance of the cultural identity used in the 'constituted phenomenon'. Brass, infact, underscores it while accepting that ethnicity consists of the 'subjective', symbolic or emblematic use of any aspect of culture in order to differentiate itself from other groups.<sup>9</sup>

The point is that whichever approach one follows, the cultural identity of a group stand unaffected. Despite definitional disagreements, a number of characteristics are generally recognized as hallmarks of ethnicity; not all of them will be present in every case, but many will be. These characteristics include: similar geographic origin, language, religion, tools, tradition, folklore, music and residential patterns. Also typical are: special political concerns, particularly with regard to a homeland, institutions to serve the group, and consciousness of kind or sense of distinctiveness from others.<sup>10</sup>

The concepts of 'ethnic group' and 'nation' are so close that it is used interchangeably or one may prefer one or the other to suit his agenda or bias. It also depends on what is understood by the term 'nation'. Walker

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<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*, p.6

<sup>9</sup> Paul R. Brass, *op.cit.*, p.19.

<sup>10</sup> Encyclopedia of Sociology, vol. II.

Connor argues that all that is necessary to constitute a nation is the self-consciousness of an ethnic group of itself as a nation, the only difference between nation and ethnic group then being the subjective self-identification.<sup>11</sup> Ironically, this is precisely the same definition Paul Brass gives for an ethnic group - a group of people that uses cultural symbols to differentiate itself as a subjectively self-conscious community.<sup>12</sup>

Anthony Smith posits a more sophisticated connection between ethnicity and national identity. The terms are linked by degree of politicization. In his scheme, there are no emergent properties of national self-identity, only those expressed as a response to an elite's use of symbols as political tools.<sup>13</sup> Ethnic elites use symbols of their shared ethnicity to manipulate the 'masses' into a sense of nationalism which results in their common identification as a nation.<sup>14</sup> Ernest Gellner likewise view nations instrumentally, as the artefacts of nationalism.<sup>15</sup> Benedict Anderson suggests a similarly constructed understanding of nations.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Walker Connor, *Ethnonationalism : the quest for understanding*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1994, p.93-94

<sup>12</sup> Paul R. Brass, op.cit., p-19.

<sup>13</sup> Anthony D. Smith, op.cit., p.

<sup>14</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780; programme, myth, reality*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1990, p-10.

<sup>15</sup> Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY, 1983, p. 61-62.

Unfortunately, the terms ethnic group and nation still remain somewhat oblique. For an ethnic identity, mixture of both subjective and objective elements is necessary. These characteristics are also usually attributed to being constituent part of a nation. It can be said that a nation is an ethnic group, which has come to believe that it is a nation and has consciously made the transition on the basis of some organising principle. Membership in that nation is expressed as nationality, which possesses some form of allegiance to the nation, which is distinct from its political aspirations embodied in nationalism. This allegiance is evident in the transmission of the national identity.

Nationalism is the political aspiration of a nation, expressed in the desire for self-determination usually on their designed homeland. Granting sovereignty to a nation via the formation of a state, which is the most powerful 'human collectivity', the only legitimate user of coercive force and the sole arbiter of its domestic activities. The state and its physical aspects, borders, are not necessarily related to the nations which inhabit that territory and the two are rarely coterminous. When the homeland of a nation and the borders of a state do coincide then it is called a nation- state.

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<sup>16</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, Verso Pub, New York, 1991, p - 47-65.

Otherwise, as is more often the case, national homelands or the territory inhabited by an ethnic group cross state borders and the resulting states are multi-national or multi-ethnic.

The cross-cutting of national and state territories may lead to conflicts between the nationalities or ethnic groups. Because of the inherent power of the state, each of the nations strives to control the power as then one's national customs and preferences are not subject to the whim of some other, unsympathetic nation. The power of the state to select its own national language, religion, laws on prosperity, morality, property etc. can make the domination of state power by one nation an intolerable situation for the others. The desire of a nation to live under the language, laws and customs with which it is familiar drives nations into conflict when a different set is fixed by state for the territory that they consider a homeland. For this reason, multi-nation or multi-ethnic states are prone to dissension as each of the groups strives to control the power, to become autonomous within the state, or to secede from the state. This phenomenon is visible at present in almost all regions of the world.

In the case of Central Asia, the most urgent questions which emerge from the critical confusion is how the newly emerging politics would

set about creating convincing identities for themselves and their citizens. What new tension would arise out of the choice of symbols and myths, and which old ones would be exacerbated, or alternatively suppressed? Which of the heady mix of religion, language, ethnicity and homeland would come to the fore? The elusive, ever-shifting nature of the answers to these questions has become dismayingly plain in the years since 1991. And yet the more complex the picture, the greater the urgency of the task of understanding it. The break-up of the Soviet Union has brought the world to look again at Central Asia, with new perspective and new questions. The currently accepted definition of Central Asia encompasses the five newly independent republics of the former Soviet Union - namely, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Geographically, Kazakhstan belongs more to northwest Asia, whereas, Afghanistan and parts of northeastern Iran are part of Central Asia. The cultural geography of the region also does not completely correspond to the current definition of Central Asia. The southern republics are more part of the Irano-Islamic culture of their southern neighbors than are Kazakhs and Kyrgyzs. These issues are not merely of an esoteric interest, they have practical and contemporary implications for Central Asia's political and cultural evolution.

In the post-Soviet Central Asia the relations among various ethnic groups have once again become crucially important. All the five republics of the region are multi-ethnic states. The issue of minority ethnic groups has become a matter for continuing controversy. Since 1991, ethnic harmony has been seen as the most fundamental condition for political stability in the Central Asian states. In the last few years, governments of the Central Asian states have all wrestled with problems of ethnic conflicts and ethnic harmony. Policies of various Central Asian states towards ethnic minorities have also attracted worldwide attention towards this region.

To make recent events and controversies comprehensible we must turn to earlier historical developments. At the beginning of documented history of population of Central Asia and the steppe were the Iranians, that is, peoples speaking Iranian (more precisely, eastern Iranian) languages. From the ninth century the nomad Turks began to enter Transoxiana and to acquire power even within the sedentary societies of the Central Asia. The interaction between the two lifestyles and population - nomad and sedentary, Turkic and Iranian - dominated the history of Central Asia well into the nineteenth-century. This relationship has been central in the development of the major ethnic groups in Central Asia particularly the Iranian /Tajiks and the Turkic/ Uzbeks. This relationship has been

characterized most frequently as one of mutual hostility, with the sedentary agriculturalist or urban dweller bearing the brunt of periodic nomadic incursions from the steppe, that often ended in the conquest, forcible domination and even destruction of sedentary civilization.<sup>17</sup>

Historically, the people of Central Asia recognized "Us-them" boundaries on the basis of the life styles. The primary difference delineating Central Asia has been nomadic versus settled lifestyles.<sup>18</sup> The literature on Central Asian Identity strenuously denies the existence of a national identity before the Soviet period.<sup>19</sup> Even if one accepts this proposition, it can't be concluded that the entire Central Asian mass population accepted the idea of a common national identity. It is true that the group consciousness of the Central Asians were at elementary level before Soviet period and none were 'nation' per se. But they were able to maintain their distinctiveness and were aware of "Self-Other" on linguistic, religious, cultural, historical and territorial lines.

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<sup>17</sup> Maria Eva Subtelny, "The Symbiosis of Turk and Tajik" in Beatrice F. Manz (ed), *Central Asia in Historical Perspective*, The John M. Olin Critical Issues series, west view Press, Boulder, 1994, p. 46.

<sup>18</sup> Keely Lange, "Do Borders Make A Nation ? Regional Studies, 15 (4), Antum, 1997, p-83.

<sup>19</sup> Martha Brill Olcott, "Central Asia's Post-Empire Politics", *Orbis*, Spring 1992, p. 253-268.



The Nation-building process of Central Asia started during Soviet period. Soviet period provided the social space for nation-building on the ethno-regional scale. Thus, in federalising what became Soviet Union, Lenin in effect bequeathed to the ethno-republics the institutional space to carry out "nationalising" policies. This was affirmed in the practice of encouraging the upward mobility of natives within their own national homelands through affirmative action policies (*Khorenizatsiia*) that contributed to the indegenisation of the local political leadership and to the growth or consolidation of an indigenous intelligentsia through preferential access to higher education and to membership of the local Communist Party.<sup>20</sup> Because of Union republic status, each of the republics was provided with a degree of institutional protection that enabled their native language and cultures to flourish. Not only did such a form of institutionalised nation-building facilitate the preservation and reproduction of established niches for incumbents drawn from indigenous cultures, it also enabled nationality division to remain integral part and reference point of native public life and an organisational basis for reinforcing local national identities. Indeed, in some instances, notably in Central Asia, by federalising

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<sup>20</sup> Graham Smith, Vivien Law, Andrew Wilson, Annette Bohr and Edward All worth, *Nation-building in the Post-Soviet B'orderlands : The politics of National identities*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1998, p-6.

ethnic homelands into ethno-republics, the Soviet state actually created nations whose sense of nation-ness had previously barely existed.<sup>21</sup>

Moreover, this form of nation-building also encouraged republican nation-builders to think of the republic as the identity marker of their homeland. Where the centrally marked federal map did not coincide with national boundaries, where ethnic minorities either found themselves on the wrong side of an ethnic border or found their ancestral homeland incorporated into another ethno-republic in such cases nation-building became highly problematic following the collapse of the Soviet Union.

One such case is the Tajiks of Uzbekistan, who now find themselves in a territory, which is dominated and ruled by a hostile Uzbeks. This work attempts to study the relationship between the two ethnic-groups: Uzbeks and Tajiks, in Uzbekistan. In order to study the Tajiks in Uzbekistan, attempts have been made to analyse the history and ethnogenesis of Tajiks and its relationship with Uzbeks from past to present. The study also gives an emphasis on the Soviet period and its policies toward its nationalities, especially Tajiks. Lastly, it takes up the issues and challenges that affect the Tajik minority in present-day Uzbekistan.

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<sup>21</sup> Shirin, Akiner, "Melting Pot, Selad Bowl - Cauldron? Manipulation and Mobilisation of Ethnic and religious Identities in Central Asia," *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 20 (2) 1997, p. 362-98.

## WHO ARE TAJIKS

*'Tatsiz türk bolmas bashsiz börk bolmas'*

- An Old Turkic Proverb

(Just as there is no cap without a head there is no Turk without an Iranian)

[One of the most hotly debated issues today in the ethnic and cultural politics of Central Asian republics of the former Soviet Union is the thorny and sensitive problem of the historical origins of its constituent nationalities. This problem, which first became acute during the period of 'glasnost', is at the root of various ethnic and national disputes which are expressed chiefly in terms of conflicting claims to a cultural heritage and even to a given territory. Such problems are spread over to various regions of the former USSR.

In Central Asia proper, the most striking example of national-territorial conflicts is that between two Muslims nationalities - Uzbeks and Tajiks, the titular nationalities of the republics of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, who today represent the largest Turkic-speaking and Iranian-Speaking groups, respectively, in Central Asia.]

The Tajiks exemplify the complexity of the Central Asian heritage since, unlike the other large ethnic groups that now inhabit the area, they are Iranian-speakers, not Turkic. They represent the development of one of the early layers of Central Asian Civilisation, predating the advent of the Turks.<sup>1</sup> The history of the Tajiks is particularly bound up with that of Uzbeks, for the two are not only geographically contiguous, but have often been governed by the same rulers and subject to the same invasions.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, a look at the history of Uzbeks tells us that it is closely related to that of the sister Tajik peoples. Their lives and histories are interwind with each other, and have contributed enormously to world civilization.

The aim of this chapter is to describe the historical background of the Tajik and the millennium-long relationship between Turkic and Iranian peoples in Central Asia. It will also examine the nature of the historical relationship between Turkic and Iranian peoples in terms of the relationship between Nomadic and Sedentary societies and its impact on ethnolinguistic and ethnogenetic development of Tajiks and Uzbeks.

The original population of ancient Central Asia and of the steppe region was of the same Iranian stock as the Persian.<sup>3</sup> The Iranian people have been settled in Central Asia since ancient times, predating the Turks by at

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1. Shirin Akiner, *Islamic Peoples of the Soviet Union*, Kegan Paul International, London, 1983, p.302.

2. Ibid., p.302.

least a millennium.<sup>4</sup> During the seventh to sixth century B.C., the territory to the north of the Oxus River (Amu-Darya), which forms the present Tajik and Uzbek republics, was already occupied by East Iranian peoples; the Bactrians, the Sogdians and the nomadic Sakas.<sup>5</sup> In the sixth century B.C., the early independent states of Bactria and Sogdiana were incorporated into the Persian Empire by Cyrus the Great, the founder of the Achaemenian state,<sup>6</sup> 'the first world monarchy known to history'.<sup>7</sup> At this time the town of Marakanda (Modern Samarkand) in Sogdiana was already an important trading centre.<sup>8</sup>

From the fall of the Achaemenids in the fourth century B.C., until the Arab conquered at the beginning of the eighth century A.D., Central Asia was subject to a variety of non-Iranian influences. The first of these was Alexander the great' invasion in the fourth century BC. After his death and the subsequent dismemberment of his empire it formed part of the Graeco-Bactrian state. Khorezm had ceased to be a Persian province at the time of Alexander's invasion. But, the Sogdians were still under Persian rule and fought against Alexander.<sup>9</sup> At the turn of the millennium the Graeco-

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3. Devendra Kaushik, *Central Asia in Modern Times*, Progress Pub., Moscow, 1970, p.15.

4. John Payne, "Tadzhiks", in Graham Smith, (ed.) *Nationalities Question in Soviet Union*, Longman, London, 1990, p.259.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 259.

6. *Ibid.*, p.259.

7. Devendra Kausik, *op.cit.*, p.15.

8. John Payne, *op.cit.*, p.259.

9. Devendra Kaushik, *op.cit.*, p.15.

Bactrian state was over run by invading Scythian (Saka-Massagete) tribes.<sup>10</sup> They in turn were driven southwards (eventually into India) by the Greater Yueh-Chih, a people whom the Greek geographer Strabo (first century B.C.) identified with Tokharians.<sup>11</sup> They took possession of the area known as Bactria so completely that it was thereafter called Tokharistan.<sup>12</sup> One of the Tokharian clans, led by Kweishuang, gained ascendancy over the others and in doing so laid the foundation of Kushan empire, for some two centuries the foremost power in Central Asia (first century to third century). The Kushan period was one of cultural and economic expansion of Central Asia. The Kushan state which at the height of its power included much of the territory of Afghanistan and Northern India as well as Bactria and Sogdiana.

Kushan power began to decline at the end of the Third century A.D. the influence of Persia once again briefly asserted itself as the Sassanid dynasty seized control over Bactria.<sup>13</sup> However, the attempts of the Sassanids to maintain control over their Central Asian territories were thwarted by yet more nomadic incursions from the north, those of the Ephthalites and other Hunnish tribe in the mid-fifth century A.D. It is possible that these Huns were of Turkic origin.<sup>14</sup> They did not rule for long. The first indisputably Turkic penetration into Central Asia was between 563-567 A.D., when the Ephthalites were conquered by the Turks from Semirechye and annexed to

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<sup>10</sup>. Shirin Akiner, *op.cit.*, p.303.

<sup>11</sup>. *Ibid.*, p.303.

<sup>12</sup>. *Ibid.*

the great Khanate stretching from Manchuria to the Black sea. By the end of the Sixth Century A.D. the Khanate separated into two parts, the western part of which was conquered by Muslim Arabs.<sup>15</sup>

[ The Arabs penetrated into Central Asia in the beginning of the eighth century under Ibn-Muslim, the Governor of the Khorasan. ] They carried sword and fire all over the region and destroyed wonderful cultural treasures. The act of vandalism of the Arabs have been described with great indignation by Al-Biruni. According to him the Arab commander Ibn-Muslim killed all scholars who knew the history and language of Khorezm, making it impossible to learn history of pre-Islamic period.<sup>16</sup>

[ The Arab rule was marked by great oppression. By the time of Arab conquest of Central Asia, the original territory of Bactria and Sogdiana seems to have been divided into a number of small kingdoms. Despite the admixture of non-Iranian populations, eastern Iranian languages were still predominant : Sogdian served as the lingua franca of the 'Silk Route' from Samarkand into northern China. ]<sup>17</sup> However, the uniting of the Iranian world under the Arab caliphate led to the gradual displacement of the original eastern Iranian languages by Persian. Persian, which by contrast belongs to the western Iranian language group, was the main language of the Sassanid

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<sup>13</sup> John Payne, *op.cit*, p.259.

<sup>14</sup> Shirin Akiner, *op.cit.*, p.303.

<sup>15</sup> Devendra Kaushik, *op.cit*, p.16.

Empire in Iran and northern Afghanistan.<sup>18</sup> Persian subsequently served as an important instrument of Arab propaganda and Arab power was based largely on autonomous Persian - speaking ruling dynasties.

The Arabs spread Islam in Central Asia by force. In this conversion process they found a great advantage in forging the union of indigenous people with a common outlook. Along with Islam, they spread the Arabic language, too, which became the language of administration, literature and science. The people, however, continued to speak the local Iranian and Turkic dialects'.<sup>19</sup>

During Ninth and Tenth century A.D. there arose the Samanid dynasty (874-999 A.D.) which united Iran with Central Asia. Its capital was Bukhara. The Samanid state incorporated Maverannahr, Khorezm, Syr-Darya region and part of Turkmenistan. Iran and Afghanistan played a great role in the ethnic and cultural history of the region. During the period of Samanid rule the Tajik-Persian language became widespread and extensive literature in Persian was developed. It was at this point of history that great poets like Rudaki and Firdausi wrote their monumental works.

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<sup>16</sup>.Ibid., p.16.

<sup>17</sup>John Payne, op.cit., p.260.

<sup>18</sup>.Ibid., p.26.

<sup>19</sup>.Devendra Kaushik, op.cit., p.16.



The Eleventh to the Sixteenth centuries in Central Asia were periods marked by successive invasions of the Turks and Mongols. It started with the establishment of the Karakhanid dynasty by Bogra Khan on the territory of Kashgar and Semirechye. The period of Karakhanid rule in Central Asia was of great importance for the ethnic and cultural history of the region. At this time, a union of ethnic groups of eastern Turkestan and Central Asia took place resulting in mutual cultural interaction.<sup>20</sup>

Though the original inhabitants of most of Central Asia were Iranian-speakers of the eastern group, the successive wave of Turkic immigrants caused a 'Turkification' of the region which was so pervasive that even the Mongol invaders (Thirteenth century) were affected by it.<sup>21</sup> By the fourteenth century, both the Ulus of Dzhuchi (also known as Golden Horde) and Ulus of Chagatai were Turkic states and Timur himself, though of Mongol descent, spoke a form of Turkish.

The break-down of the Golden Horde with incursions of the Uzbek tribes from the Kipchak steppe (Dasti Kipchak) in the early sixteenth century put the final seal on the Turkification of Transoxiana. During this period, the originally Iranian speaking population to a large extent assumed the language of their Turkic overlords and neighbours.<sup>22</sup> The only peoples to

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<sup>20</sup>.Ibid., p.19.

<sup>21</sup>.Shirin Akiner, op.cit., p.303.

<sup>22</sup>. John payne, opcit., p.261.

escape this process were the Pamiri peoples in the high valleys of the western Pamirs, who remained speakers of East Iranian language (as the early inhabitants of the area had been) and the forebears of the Tajiks who were speakers of a west Iranian language very close to Persian.<sup>23</sup> However, Persian retained its status as a literary language. In addition, Persian survived as the language of significant minorities in Bukhara and Samarkand.

As far as the question regarding the identity of Tajiks, as a distinct ethnic group, is concerned, it is possible that Tajik formed a distinctive ethnic group as early as the eighth century A.D.<sup>24</sup> They were the first among the peoples of Central Asia to do so.<sup>25</sup> Their language had already developed within the Samanid State. But apart from their language their main distinguishing feature was that they were sedentary, unlike the nomadic Turks and Mongols. The name by which they have come to be known has undergone several shifts of meaning, indicative, perhaps, of the tenuousness of their national identity in the early stage.

The name 'Tajik' which is currently used for the Persian-speaking population in Central Asia, is based on an Arabic tribal name 'Taiy'. This name was widely used by other peoples to describe Arabs : for example, the

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<sup>23</sup> Shirin Akiner, op.cit., p.303.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p.303.

<sup>25</sup> Devendra Kaushik, op.cit., p.18.

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Arabs were known by this name to Chinese as early as the 1st century A.D.<sup>26</sup> In the Sogdian use 'Tazik' was used as a name for the Arab invaders of Central Asia, and then by extension applied at the end of the tenth or beginning of the eleventh century to the Islamicised, Persian-speaking population. A further widening brought it to mean anyone who had accepted Islam, i.e. a Muslim.<sup>27</sup> For Russians in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the implication was wider still : simply 'a trader from central Asia'. This connection with trade and an essentially urban way of life was so strong that until the early twentieth century, the Tajiks were often known by the alternative term 'Sart', a word used for the Sedentary population of Central Asia. 'Tajik' also had a pejorative connotation in Turkic usage. The worst insult that could be hurled at a Turk was that his character resembled that of a Tajik (Tajik-mizaj), the implication being that he was cowardly and disloyal.<sup>28</sup>

The history of Tajiks particularly overlaps with that of Uzbeks, for they not only resided in the same region but have often been ruled by the same rulers and were subject to the same invasions. It is important here to understand the relationship between the two.

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<sup>26</sup>. John Paune, p.261.

p.49. also in Reference in Bartol'd, Sochineniia, vol.2(2),

The historical ancestors of the Uzbeks were the Khorezmians, Sogdians, Massagets and Sakas. The Nomadic Uzbeks came into Central Asia from the Kipchak steppe. They were Turkic-speaking Nomadic tribes who later on settled in the region. Because of the presence of the nomad Turks, the central theme in the medieval history of Central Asia was the relationship between two diametrically opposed cultures and modes of life - the sedentary and the pastoral nomadic. The sedentary people were represented/referred to as Sart (also Tajik) whereas the Uzbeks were nomads.

The relationship between the sedentary and nomadic people has been characterised most frequently as one of mutual hostility, often ending in the conquest, forcible domination, and even destruction of centers of sedentary civilization by nomadic cavalry forces led by military elite. There is, however, another aspect of this relationship between Sedentary and Nomad that, although less dramatic and more mundane than the one just described, more accurately reflects its true character over the long continuum. In as much as the difference between Nomad and Sedentary was based not just on mode of life, but also on mode of production, the two entered into close mutual contact through the exchange of products of their respective regimes of production.<sup>29</sup> In return for finished goods and agricultural produce, Nomad provided the town with the products of the animals they herded,

including milk, meat, wool and skins. The relationship between them has been characterized as 'symbiotic' (by Maria Eva Subtelny), since symbiosis refers to the intimate coexistence of two dissimilar groups in a situation of mutual benefit.<sup>30</sup> On account of its peculiar geography, this applied particularly to Central Asia, because the regions where pastoral nomadism predominated not only bordered settled regions (to the north and west, that is, the Kipchak steppe), but also alternated with them, especially in the Southwest, or Central Asia proper, where agriculture and pastoral nomadism were never in competition with each other.<sup>31</sup> In Central Asia, therefore, the economic ties between the agricultural oases and regions of pastoral nomadism were always very close, with a very well developed exchange.<sup>32</sup> It was, in fact, so close that the pastoral Nomadic and Sedentary agrarian sectors became integrated in to one economic complex or one 'Nomadic-Sedentary Continuum'.<sup>33</sup> But, the symbiosis of pastoral Nomads and Sedentary did not necessarily engender mutual love and respect. It was supported by an inherent tension between the two. The towns man and peasants viewed the Nomad with fear and suspicion because of the Nomad's military potential. At the same time, Nomads were held in contempt on account of his lack of knowledge and appreciation for urban civilization. On the other hand, the Nomad viewed the sedentary as cowardly and disloyal.

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29. Maria Eva Subtelny, op.cit, p.46. also for details, Fredrik Barth, *Process and Form in Social life*, Routedledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1981, p.188 and 192.

30. Ibid., p.46.

31. Joseph Fletcher, "The Mongols : Ecological and Social Perspective", in *Harward Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 46,1 (1986), pp.40-41.

32. Maria Eva Subtelny, op.cit. p.46.

These patterns of relationship was particularly true for Tajiks the sedentary and Uzbeks - the Nomad.

The close symbiotic relationship between Turkic and Iranian peoples in Central Asia not only exerted a profound influence on the political and socio-economic history of Central Asia, but it was also decisive in shaping the linguistic and ethnic make up of its population. It is clear that bilingualism - the result of what linguists call 'language contact' situations - was wide spread, and the phenomenon of 'mixed language' was not uncommon. The Ferghana group of Uzbek dialects are on the Turkic-Iranian language divide, especially around Namangan. Consequently there are in Uzbek a large number of words similar in meaning to Tajik items, and serving to reduce the polysemy of the Uzbek term. Thus the Tajik word 'Sel' (a heavy shower) is retained with Uzbek 'kin' which means both 'a downpour and stream. Tajik word forming elements also play a significant part in the Uzbek language, such suffixes being Tazik- zor, ston, don. Specialties in Uzbek and Tajik claim the presence of Tajik element in the vocabulary of Uzbek dating back to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries'.<sup>34</sup> The Iranian influence on Uzbek is reflected in the loss of sound harmony

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<sup>33</sup>. Joseph Fletcher, op.cit., p.40.

<sup>34</sup>. E.Glyn Lewis, *Multilingualism in the Soviet Union : Aspects of language policy and its implementation*, Mouton Pub, Hague, 1972, p.32.

and, so far as syntax is concerned, in the development of subordinating structures.<sup>35</sup>

Ethnic assimilation worked both ways, successive waves of Turkic-speaking nomads who entered into a symbiotic relationship with the sedentary Iranian population absorbed the indigenous Iranian population or assimilated to it, especially near and in urban centers. As a result of intermingling with the local agricultural people, the Turk adopted their economic mode of life and cultural habits and the local population who spoke the Iranian language, in turn, adopted the language of the Turk.

The closeness of the Uzbeks and the Tajiks is an amazing fact, the like of which is not observed else where Uzbek is one of the Turkic languages, whereas Tajik belongs to the South-west Iranian group of languages. Although their languages have different origins, in every other quarter they (The Uzbek and the Tajik) share similarities. Their way of life, traditional ceremonies, hospitalities and culinary arts are the same. They intermarry; they wear same cloths; their tests are complementary. It is not so easy to determine which of two maidens wearing satin waistcoats is Uzbek or Tajik, until she speaks in her own tounge, nor does it occurs to anyone to try. Likewise, it is noteworthy that their arts and music are in common,

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<sup>35</sup>. Ibid., p.33.

especially their 'Shashmakam'.<sup>36</sup> The melodies of the Tajiks and the Uzbeks are very much intermingled, and as difficult to distinguish as the maidens. The great Abdurrahman Jami, a Persian, in his treatise dedicated to music classified the Turk rhythmic pattern into four: 'Turki asli jedid, Turki asli kadim, Turki hafif, Turki sarilar'.<sup>37</sup> While the Persian-Tajik poet studied the Uzbek music, the Uzbek poet Alishir Navai wrote the *Furs Salotini*.<sup>38</sup> These examples display how the two people's histories, lines, and culture are so entirely combined. Though their languages are different, their similarities are truly amazing. Their common historical development strengthened these bonds of unity.

However, the fact that each group also preserved its distinctive cultural traits, on the basis of which the different national groups or different ethnic identities were formed, should not be ignored. There were some distinct characteristics that clearly distinguished Tajiks from Uzbeks. Apart from being sedentary, Tajiks were said to have a mind suited to the pen where as the Turks, who were Nomad, had the mind of sword-sharp intelligence. The nature of the Iranian-speaking people exhibited a passion for knowledge. They wrote history of their homeland and created discourses. They applied themselves to the affairs of state, in the palaces, served as scribes and artists. They distinguished themselves by producing books of advice (*Kabusnama*,

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<sup>36</sup>. This is a style of melodic tonality, contour, and pattern. Traditionally, each such 'key' and pattern, which number in dozens, is given a name.



Chahar makala and the like), which is naturally related to the secrets of their involvement.<sup>39</sup> The factor in keeping language in demand is invention, the constant activity of the enlightened pen in all fields of knowledge and literature. 'Hudaynamak, Shahrastanhoy Iran, Shahnama, Siyastnam, Gulistan' and many other books were given to this world by the endeavors of the men of pen.<sup>40</sup>

The sword-sharp minded Turks were not usually found in the cities, but mainly preferred to reside in the Kishlaks, summer pastures, and steppes. Thus, they were in the vanguard in battle, and the duty and the primacy of the sword fell on them. Thus the fame of the Turk troops. They were at the head of the state, and Turkistan was ruled by Turk dynasties from the fifth century. The majority of the Iranian rulers - Seljuks, Safavids, Halokuiy, Nadirshah Afshar and Kajors-were member of the Turk families.<sup>41</sup> For these reasons, in contrast to the Iranians, Turk did not become well acquainted with pen but followed the path of the sword. At the same time they also had a contemptuous view of the sedentary life. A Turkic proverb warns them : 'Just as a warrior's effectiveness suffers when his sword begins

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37. H.B.Paksoy, Central Asia Reader :The Rediscovery of History, M.E.SharpeInc. New York, 1994,p.14.

38. Ibid., p.14.

39. Ibid., p.14.

40. Hudaynamak and Shahrastanhoy Iran, these two books did not come down to us but we know them from the writings of Firdausi and Tabari. Siyastnama was written by Nizam-al-Mul in 1092. Also for details, *ibid.*, p.23.

41. *Ibid.*, p.14 and 23.

to rust, so does the flesh of a Turk begin to stink when he assumes the lifestyle of the sedentary Iranian.<sup>42</sup>

The peoples of Central Asia lived under the rule of the Khans of Uzbek dynasties for three centuries (sixteenth to mid-nineteenth century). Whereas Tajiks were never a dominant factor in the Kaleidoscopic changes of power that constituted the Central Asian politics, but under the overlordship of Uzbeks, small, semi-independent Tajik states were formed along the margin of the Uzbek land.<sup>43</sup> In the mid-nineteenth century Central Asia was incorporated into the Tsarist Russian Empire.

Though certain common elements such as language and culture already existed and incipient national consciousness had appeared, conditions prevailing under the rule of the Khans were not conducive to further national consolidation.<sup>44</sup> The domination of social life by the bigoted dogmas of Islam had a paralysing effect on the growth of national consciousness.<sup>45</sup> The unwary, enlightened people were misled by the religious propaganda of the mullah harping on the myth of the unity of all Mussulmans which was later to be exploited by the advocates of pan-Islamism.<sup>46</sup> Despite the unfavourable conditions of those times, the peoples of Central Asia had each developed a common language, way of life and a

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<sup>42</sup>. Maria Eva Subtelny, *op.cit.*, p.48.

<sup>43</sup>. Shirin Akiner, *op.cit.*, p.304.

<sup>44</sup>. Devendra Kaushik, *op.cit.*, p.26.

distinct culture. But their ethnic development to a higher stage was retarded by their economic, political and cultural backwardness.

The merger of the Khanates of Central Asia into more developed Russia played an 'objectively' progressive role in the ethnic development of the peoples of Central Asia. During this rule many schools, libraries, museums, hospitals and theatres were opened. A number of scientific societies were organised at the initiative of Russian scientists for the study of geography, anthropology, archaeology, astronomy and medicine. All this certainly made a contribution towards enriching the cultural life of Central Asia. These developments had a powerful impact on the local intelligentsia and resulted in a rapid intellectual awakening among the local people. The cultural awakening of the peoples of Central Asia under the impact of the advanced Russian culture provided a firm basis for the formation of a movement for popular enlightenment.<sup>47</sup> In the second half of the nineteenth century educationalists such as Abdusattar Khan, Ishak Khan, Mukimi, Zavki, Hamza Hakimzade (uzbek), Ahmad Danish Asiri, Sadriddin Aini (Tajik) and others, not only advocated a new advanced culture but also exposed bourgeois morality as well as the social order.<sup>48</sup> It may be pointed out that, notwithstanding many important changes in their economic and cultural life in the colonial period, as for example, the rise of new towns,

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<sup>45</sup>. Ibid., p.25.

<sup>46</sup>. Ibid., p.26.

<sup>47</sup>. Devendra Kaushik, op.cit., p.77.

construction of railways, emergence of capitalist relation in agriculture, rise of light industries, and a general intellectual awakening, the general picture was still one of dominant pre-capitalist relation, of cultural backwardness and ignorance and Islamic domination.<sup>49</sup>

To sum up, the history of Central Asia and its place in the world shows the wealth of influences which have gone into its formation, from pre-Islamic Iranian civilization, through the coming of Islam, then Turks and Mongols, to its incorporation into the Russian empire. All of these have left their mark, in the variety of population and lifestyles, in the shape of society and the conduct of politics. By the end of the nineteenth century, the millennium long symbiosis of the Turkic Nomad and the Sedentary Iranian in Central Asia had resulted in inter-mixing and overlapping of the different ethnic groups. As a result of this, in the present day environment of ethnic rivalry and competition between Uzbek and Tajik, both of them stake claims for territory and cultural symbols that had previously been the common property of both.

Though the process of identity-formation of Tajiks and Uzbeks was complete in past, these ethnic and national identities were still weak or non-existent<sup>50</sup> in the beginning of the twentieth century. However, each group

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48. Ibid., p.78.

49. Ibid., p.80.

50. Maria Eva Subtelny, op.cit., p.56.

had preserved its distinctive cultural ethnic traits. The theories of Pan-Turkism and Pan-Iranism deliberately minimise or ignore the presence of these distinctive elements. The concept of pan-Iranism is an unwarranted exaggeration of the influence and impact of Iranian art and architecture on their culture. Pan-Turkism, too, vainly attempts to unite arbitrarily the various Turkic-speaking peoples into a single unit disregarding the fact of their independent historical development.<sup>51</sup> Like wise, the assertion by some Western writers that the heterogeneity of the ethnic composition of the Central Asian peoples is merely a later invention of the Soviet regime to counteract Pan-Turkism, is a gross distortion of facts.<sup>52</sup>

One would agree that history is not a nemesis. It does shape some questions that nations ask, but not all; still less does it determine the answer. It will be interesting to observe how the new histories written in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan in particular, deal with the problems of ethnogenesis and cultural heritage. In the current nationalistic climate it would be wise to use history as a means of broadening or deepening people's understanding of the present world and their potential place within it. It would be unfortunate if history is used as a source of unresolved conflict and neurosis.

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<sup>51</sup>. Devendra Kaushik, *op.cit*, p.24-25.

<sup>52</sup>. *Ibid.*, p.25.

### Chapter III

## NATIONALITY POLICY AND DEVELOPMENT OF TAJIK IDENTITY IN FORMER USSR

A long and tumultuous history of ethnic movement of Central Asia is shrouded in mystery, whose legacy is still felt today and continues to affect its political life and the character of its internal as well as external relations. From the ancient time this region has been a crossroad for major ethnic migrations and a meeting place of the ancient world's great civilizations - Persian, Greek, Indian, Chinese and Islamic. From the ethnic and cultural perspective, Central Asia resembles a richly woven carpet with many colours and shades. Unlike Europe, by the time of its Sovietization, Central Asia had remained largely untouched by modern political ideas such as nationalism and constitutionalism. Thus by the time of the conquest of the region by the Bolsheviks, a collective consciousness approximating notions of modern national identities were almost absent and if at all it was these, it was confined to a very small groups of the intelligentsia.

Debates inside and outside Central Asia have called into question the reasonableness of the Nationality Policy, National delimitation, cultural and language policies of Soviet era. The aim of this chapter is to analyse nationality policy of the Soviet era and its implication on the nationalities of Soviet Union especially Tajik. This chapter also attempts to

describe the process of development and consolidation of Tajik identity and its manifestation during the period of perestroika and glasnost.

The victory of the October Revolution in Central Asia had a great significance for the further development of the identities of the numerous ethnic groups. After the October Revolution, political, economic and cultural developments in Central Asia occupied the attention of the Soviet government. In order to eliminate the existing inequality among nationalities in the Soviet Union, Lenin envisaged a new nationality policy. Lenin recognized the fact that in societies where the focus of identity and loyalty had not even gone beyond that of family, clan, and region, developing a sense of national identity and purpose would be a first and perhaps necessary step on the way to building socialism and fastening a sense of socialist internationalism.<sup>1</sup> Thus, Soviet nationality policy was aimed to develop national identity on the road of transformation from a backward and feudal to a socialist system.

The major tenets of the nationality policy can be outlined from the Declaration of the Rights of the people of Russia (November 15, 1917) in which the Soviet government, under Lenin's leadership, pledged to make the following principles the basis of its nationalities policy :

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<sup>1</sup> Shirin T. Hunter, *Central Asia since Independence*, (Washington Paper's; 168) Praeger Press, West Port (USA), 1996, p.9.

- I. The Equality and Sovereignty of the peoples of Russia.
- II. Right of the peoples of Russia to self-determination even to the point of separation and the formation of an independent state.
- III. Annulment of all national and religious privileges and restrictions.
- IV. Free development of national minorities and ethnographic groups inhabiting the territory of Russia.<sup>2</sup>

The Tenth and Twelfth Party Congress held in 1921 and 1923 respectively went beyond the legal and constitutional equality of nations to the levelling up of the wide gap in economic and cultural levels of nationalities. The Tenth Congress defined the elimination of actual inequality between the nations as the main task of the Party on the national question.<sup>3</sup> It urged the party to help the toiling masses of non-Russian peoples to catch up successfully with the Central regions of Russia.<sup>4</sup> It called upon the party to adopt the following measures :

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<sup>2</sup> Devendra Kaushik; *Central Asia in Modern Times* Progress Pub., Moscow, 1970, p. 131. also see, V. I. Lenin, collected works, vol.26, pp.14-15.

<sup>3</sup> Devendra Kaushik; *Socialism in Central Asia : A Study in the Transformation of Socio-Ethnic Relation in Soviet Central Asia*, Allied Pub. Pvt. Ltd., Delhi, 1976, p.23.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in, *ibid*, p.23.



I. To develop and strengthen the sovereign national statehood in forms corresponding to conditions and ways of life of these peoples.

II. To develop and strengthen courts, economic, administrative and other organs of power composed of local people fully familiar with the customs and psychology of local population.

III. To develop the press, school, theater, and general educational and cultural institutions in the native languages of the people.

IV. To establish and develop a broad network of general and professional-technical courses in native languages for rapidly preparing the indigenous cadres of qualified Soviet and Party Workers in all spheres and before all in education.<sup>5</sup>

Similarly, the Twelfth Congress in 1923 advanced a three-fold task before the party, viz.,

I. a declaration in the first place of an all out struggle against the remnants of Great Russian Chauvinism.

II. a struggle for the abolition of actual inequality between nationalities by raising the cultural and economic levels of the backward peoples.

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<sup>5</sup> ibid., p.23.

III. a struggle against the nationalist survivals among the formerly oppressed people.<sup>6</sup>

In 1924 national delimitation was carried out in Central Asia. As a result, national Soviet Socialist Republics were formed. National delimitation radically restructured local boundaries, erasing Soviet Turkestan and the ancient states of Bukhara and Khiva. The Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic within the Uzbek-SSR; the Kazakh areas of Central Asia became united in what was then called the Kirgiz Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic within the RSFSR, Karakalpakia entered the Kirgiz ASSR as an autonomous oblast; and the Kirgiz formed an Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic within the RSFSR under the name of the Kara-Kirgiz ASSR.

The Tajik ASSR was raised to Union Republic status in 1929. The Kirgiz autonomous oblast was converted into the Kirgiz ASSR in 1929 and in 1936, it was raised to the level of a Union Republic. The Kazakh ASSR was also raised to a Union Republic in 1936. The Kara-Kalpak oblast

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<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*, p.23.

was made the Kara-Kolpak ASSR within the RSFSR in 1932 and in 1936 it was incorporated into the Uzbek SSR as an Autonomous Republic.<sup>7</sup>

The national-territorial delimitation plan which envisaged the creation in Central Asia of separate national republic for each nationality of the region in place of the then existing multi-national Turkestan, Bukhara and Khiva has been the object of criticism in many quarters. Many writers have seen behind this plan 'the evil design and intention' of the Soviet authorities to split artificially the otherwise "nationally and linguistically homogeneous" overwhelming majority of people belonging to the "Turkic" nationality.<sup>8</sup> Thus, Mustafa Chokayev, one-time President of the Kokand "autonomous" government, called this scheme a plan for the "division of Turkestan into tribal states invented by the Bolsheviks as "a counterweight to the effort made by the Muslim Communists" to achieve the unification of all the Turkic tribes around the nucleus of Soviet Turkestan.<sup>9</sup> In the same manner, Irog P. Lipovsky writes "the original division of Central Asia into national territories was not based on ethnic, cultural, linguistic, or religious factor, but rather on the political and ideological motivation of the Communist Party's Central organs. The latter feared that Pan-Turkism and

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<sup>7</sup> ibid., p.101-106.

<sup>8</sup> Devendra Kaushik, op.cit., note 2., p.203.

<sup>9</sup> Quoted in, ibid, p.203. For details see, Mustafa Chakeyev, "Turkestan and the Soviet Regime", in *Journal of Royal Central Asian Society*, London, vol.XVII, 1931, p.414. Also Devendra Kaushik, op.cit., note 3., p.101.

Pan-Islamism could challenge Marxist-Lennist ideology, and stand in the way of Joseph Stalin's hegemonic ambitions in the region.<sup>10</sup> Prince Lobanov-Rostovsky, a Russian emigre scholar, stated that the delimitation was merely the Bolshevik reply to the basmachi uprising.<sup>11</sup> - others see in the plan of national delimitation a manifestation of the old imperialistic principle of divide and rule.<sup>12</sup> Hugh Seton - Watson sees in the national delimitation a "clear purpose" to manufacture "number of different nations; which could be kept apart from each other, played off against each other, and linked individually with the Russian nation". This was done according to him, to remove, "any danger of a common front of the Central Asian Moslems".<sup>13</sup> Recently, Shirin T. Hunter wrote, "the borders among the various republics were delineated with the purpose of creating conditions that would facilitate Russian manipulation and intervention whenever the need arose".<sup>14</sup>

A discussion on these criticism exceeds the scope of this work. Suffice it to say that these criticism ignore the complexity of national problem in

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<sup>10</sup> Igor P. Lipovsky, "Central Asia : In Search of A New Political Identity", *Middle East Journal*, 50(2); Spring 1996; p.218.

<sup>11</sup> Quoted in Devendra Kaushik, op.cit., note 3., p.101. also in op.cit. note. 2, p.203., For detail, Lobanov-Rostovsky, "The Muslim Republics in Central Asia", in *Journal of the Royal Institute of International Affairs*, 7 (1928), p.249-50.

<sup>12</sup> Quoted in ibid., p.101., also Devendra Kaushik, op.cit., note-2, p.203.

<sup>13</sup> Quoted in ibid., p.101. Also Devendra Kaushik, op.cit., note-2, p.204. For detail, Hugh Seton-Watson, *The New Imerialism*, Third Impression, London, 1964, p.48.

<sup>14</sup> Shireen T. Hunter, *Central Asia since Independence*, Praeger Pub, West Post (USA), 1996, p.9.

Central Asia. They also ignore the socio-economic condition of the bulk of population, which was poor and illiterate. They also, importantly, failed to recognize the fact that the identity consciousness was limited to family or clan level.

The complexity of the national problem in Central Asia makes it important to discuss the problem, practice and impact of the nationality policy and National-Delimitation. The determination of national frontiers was not a very easy task in Central Asia. In organising national state formation special consideration was given to territories where national groups lived in a compact mass. But besides the national factor, such factors as the mode of life and economic integrity of the territory organised into national republics or autonomous oblast were also taken into consideration.<sup>15</sup> In his work *Critical Remarks on the National Question* (1913), Lenin had, while pointing out the need for a division of territory as far as possible according to the national composition of the population, at the same time remarked that though the national composition of the population was one of the most important economic factors, it was by no means the only and the most important factor among others.<sup>16</sup> The definition of a nation, which Stalin formulated, was to be characterized by a common language,

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<sup>15</sup> Devendra Kaushik, *op.cit*, note-2, p.211.

<sup>16</sup> Quoted in, *ibid.*, p.211. For detail see, V. I. Lenin, *Collected works*, Vol.20., p.50.

territory, psychological make up and historical experience.<sup>17</sup> These formulations of Lenin and Stalin clearly mirrored while carrying out national delimitation in Central Asia.

The new ideas of identity and political organization flourished only within a very small section of intelligentsia. The concept of nation was applied to a society in which ethnic identity was understood quite differently. For most of the population, identity, if they thought about it, was connected peripherally if at all to language, and much more directly to a specific function within a plural society.<sup>18</sup> The ethnolinguistic situation was extremely confused and complex. In some areas, such as present-day southern Uzbekistan and southern Tajikistan, Uzbeks and Tajiks had become so intermixed that it was difficult to distinguish between them. There was no strong sense of ethnic or national identity and inhabitants often did not know themselves who they were ethnically, identifying themselves only by their tribal name, the name of their town ("Bukharti" etc.), or simply a "Muslim". In view of the difficulties involved, the 'solutions' arrived at could never have been entirely satisfactory.

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<sup>17</sup> Richard Pipe, *The Formation of the Soviet Union*, revised edition, Mass, Cambridge, 1964, p.21.-41.

<sup>18</sup> Beatrice F. Manz (ed), *Central Asia in Historical Perspective*, West View Press, Boulder, 1994, p.15.

There was no way to divide the region of Central Asia neatly into separate ethnically homogeneous units, even more so when ethnicity was defined in the new terms of territory and language. The problem was not only the intermixing of ethnic groups, but the fact that the various criteria used to define ethnicity pointed in different ways-common historical experience did not correspond with common language or lifestyle, nor "psychological make-up" with territory. To put together the entire Turco-Iranian eastern region, the steppe and Turkestan Guberniias, would have united the speakers of eastern Turkic language and dialects, but would also have joined together populations and regions diverse in economy and development, and territories which had only rarely and briefly formed part of the political entity.<sup>19</sup>

What the Soviet finally did, as Donald Carlisle has shown, was to reinstate many political borders of the past, while providing them with new names.<sup>20</sup> The republic of Uzbekistan centered on the former Bukharan Emirate, but now also possessed territories - Tashkent, Kokand, Khiva - which had been part of different states but had been populated or ruled by an Uzbek elite. The mountainous eastern sections of Bukhara, with Khojand, whose partially Tajik population and more importantly, economic strength,

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<sup>19</sup> *ibid.*, p.16.

<sup>20</sup> Donalds Carlisle, 'Soviet Uzbekistan : State and Nation is Historial Perspective, Beatrice F. Manz (ed.), op. cit.,p.103-126.

gave greater weight to the republic of Tajikistan.<sup>21</sup> If one looks at the formation of the Soviet republics from an historical stand-point, one can say that many of the borders drawn and distinctions made among peoples followed historical precedents. It must be noted here that the national delimitation did not create homogeneous nations. The new republics in Central Asia were as multi-ethnic as the old Khannates. But, what was new with the Soviets was the meaning of these borders, and of the identities which they now enclosed and sought to represent.

The creation of national republics in Central Asia raised a host of issues which have remained alive to the present day. One of the serious issues was the incorporation of Samarkand and Bukhara, the heart of Central Asia's Iranian Civilization, in Uzbekistan. A sizeable proportion of the total number of Tajik (36.9 percent according to the 1926 census) remained outside the Tajik ASSR, primarily in the neighbouring regions of the Uzbek SSR, including Samarkand, Bukhara and Khodzhent. In October 1929, the district of Khodzhent was transferred to the Tajik ASSR. At the sametime some Uzbek populated areas fell under Tajikistan. This confusion led to turmoil in relationship between the two ethnic groups and the two republics of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. This issue will be discussed at the end of this chapter. For now we move on to the aims and other aspects of the nationality policy.

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<sup>21</sup> Beatrice F. Manz, *op.cit.*, p.16.



The Soviet Union's nation-building strategy were to develop cultures, languages and histories for the different nationalities. In the initial period the regime professed its toleration and encouragement of ethnic traditions. There was a special ministry for minority affairs. The Soviet regime demonstrated its flexibility with respect to cultural and regional particularism by supporting, sometimes very liberally, minority art and writing schools, theaters, drama companies and publishing companies.<sup>22</sup>

In 1920s and 1930s, the Communist Party went all out to promote the use of the local national language and of national cadres in the republics. This policy, known as *Khorenizatsiia* - seeking roots in the native populations - led to the dramatic expansion of publication and education in the national language.<sup>23</sup> Many nationalities were given literary languages and alphabets for the first time.

The development of national cultures and native languages were secured as rights of the nationalities as the Article 36 of the Soviet Constitution States :

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<sup>22</sup> Dan N. Jacobs and Theresa M. Hill, "Soviet Ethnic Policy in 1980s : Theoretical Consistency and Political Reality", in Joseph L. Novgee (ed), *Soviet Politics : Russia After Brezhnev*, Praeger Pub, New York, 1985, p.159.

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*, p.161.

"Citizen of the USSR of different race and nationalities have equal rights. Exercise of these rights is ensured by a policy of all-round development and drawing together of all the nations and nationalities of the USSR, by educating citizens in the spirit of Soviet patriotism and socialist internationalism, and by the possibility to use their native language and the languages of other peoples of the USSR. Any direct or indirect limitation of the rights of citizens or establishment of direct or indirect privileges on grounds of race or nationality, or any advocacy of racial or national exclusiveness, hostility or contempt, are punishable by law".

Notwithstanding repeated professions of tolerance and numerous examples of support for ethnic particularism in the early period of Soviet Union, the Stalin era experienced some aberration. In the areas of drama, literature and the arts, Stalin imposed the principles of "national in form, socialist in content". This meant the Great Russians always had to be presented as friendly, generous, brave and just, protectors of the poor and downtrodden. Non- Russians were free to embrace their traditional art forms, but no matter what the form, the content had to be in accord with socialist idea. For example, the costuming in a play might accurately depict what Tajik wore in the fourteenth century, but the ideas displayed had to present the Stalin-Bolshevik-Great Russian amalgam that had been developed in Russia after 1917. What Stalin desired was the emergence of a single culture and a single common language, a culture that was the

embodiment of the Great Russian heritage.<sup>24</sup> In order to realize his vision, Stalin orchestrated a campaign against the historical, intellectual and cultural tradition of national groups and carried out purges.

One of the great ironies of Stalinist nationality policy in operation was that, though it seemed to place great emphasis on the subordination of and suppression of minority peoples and cultures, some of Stalin's key policies tended to have just the opposite effect. The concept of "national in form, socialist in content", while designed to curtail nationalist aspirations, in its "national in form" component actually served to keep national consciousness among various non-Russian nationalities alive, who now had their own republics, partly committees and native elites.

The Tajiks national identity began developing in 1940s with gradual elimination of illiteracy. A number of serious problems had to be overcome which included the opposition of the mullahs to the development of a secular education system, shortage of teachers, buildings and text books. In addition, a major difficulty was presented by the divergence of the spoken Tajik dialects from Persian classic literary, both in grammar (the dialects had developed a number of new grammatical forms, with the northern dialects in particular being influenced by the Uzbek language, and in vocabulary (the classical language contained a large proportion of Arabic words). The censuses of 1926 and 1956 clearly show the success of the

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<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*, p.160.

literary programme in Central Asia. According to these censuses, the literacy rate of the Tajiks in 1926 was 2.2% it increased enormously to 52.3% in 1959.<sup>25</sup> Corresponding to this rise in literacy there has been a considerable development in publishing in the national languages. Where as in 1913 only 107 of the 859 newspapers were published in the national languages, in 1940 there were ten times as many newspapers, of which 25% were in the national languages',<sup>26</sup> In 1964 this development had reached the point where, for example in Tajikistan over 3.5 million books were printed and 24 newspapers were published with a total annual circulation of 65 million copies.<sup>27</sup>

It is doubtful, however, whether the non-Russian national languages could have advanced as they have done, or have become so instrumental in promoting the cultural development of the nationalities but for the important policies undertaken in the Soviet Union. Another consideration which, at least temporarily, favoured the teaching of national languages, is their alleged usefulness in facilitating the acquisition of Russian as a second language. This argument is encountered in most bilingual countries at the commencement of any campaign to promote the

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<sup>25</sup> E.Glyn Lewis, *Multilingualism in the Soviet Union : Aspects of Language Policy and its implication*, Mouton Pub, Hague, 1972, p. 57.

<sup>26</sup> *ibid.* p. 58.

<sup>27</sup> *ibid.*, p. 58.

teaching of minority language. Whether the argument is tenable is beside the point: the fact is that it has been used by educationists in USSR. It is claimed that well organised teaching of the national languages promote a deeper mastery of the Russian Language and consequently all the subjects of the curriculum taught through the Russian language.<sup>28</sup>

Until 1930 Tajik had Arabic script, which was changed to Latin script in 1930 that continued till 1940, and thereafter, it was changed Cyrillic script.<sup>29</sup> The decision to use a Latin alphabet rather than to continue with Arabic was politically motivated in the main - to help ensure the separation of some soviet languages and nations from their Arabic or other non-indigenous associations.<sup>30</sup> This political motivation and direction of aspects of Language planning have been aimed to attain three objectives - the reinforcement and acceleration of the tendency towards information within communities, and thus to extend the area of social mobilization. Simultaneously with this has been the attempt to insulate as far as possible those languages which might have association outside the USSR, as well as to accentuate the differences between languages and communities within the USSR.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>        *ibid.*, p. 59.

<sup>29</sup>        Shirin Akiner, *Islamic Peoples of the Soviet Union*, Kegan Paul International, London, 1983, p. 313.

<sup>30</sup>        E. Glyn Lewis, *op.cit.*, p. - 284.

<sup>31</sup>        *ibid.*, p. 284.

At one time educated Uzbeks and Tajiks questioned the need for the Tajik literary language since both groups were trained in Uzbek and Persian. Representative Turkic groups outside the USSR do not recognize the separation of the two languages or the independent existence of the Tajiks. They tend to regard Uzbeks and Tajiks to be far more united than divergent groups. Not did the Tajiks regarded themselves or their languages as specifically national units. They saw themselves first and foremost as tied to the Iranian heritage and to a Central Asian Community. Even within Tajikstan there were considerable differences. The Tajiks of the plain who spoke Farsi, the Persian dialect which became the standard Tajik Language, had little contact with other groups, and the adaptation of Farsi was engineered to ensure that there was as little contact as possible with other, non-Tajik groups in Central Asia. Language planning was directed as to ensure that the Tajiks were first of all separated as far as possible from Iranian groups outside the USSR, and second to consolidate a 'nation' different from others who might have identified themselves with the Tajiks inside the USSR.<sup>32</sup> The intention of Language planning generally in the Soviet Union has been to extend directly the influence of Russian.<sup>33</sup> This

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<sup>32</sup> *ibid.*, p. 285.

<sup>33</sup> *ibid.*, p. 285.

explain the decision to change the newly created alphabet in Latin form to Cyrillic.

The drive towards the elimination of illiteracy was accompanied by the development of a system of education. The number of schools rose from 382 in 1928-29 to 2,628 in 1940-41 in Tajikistan.<sup>34</sup> The majority of schools in the Tajik SSR were Tajik-medium Schools. Outside the Tajik SSR, in 1958 Tajik also was used as a medium of instruction in Uzbek SSR, the Kazakh SSR and Kirghiz SSR along with the titular language.<sup>35</sup> In 1948, the Lenin Tajik State University was opened in Dushanbe, where there were departments of Tajik Philology and Arabic and Persian Language and Literature. The Tajik branch of the USSR Academy of Sciences, originally established in 1932, was formed into the Tajik Academy of Science in 1951.<sup>36</sup>

There were radio and television broadcasts in Tajik language in Tajik and Uzbek SSRs. There were Tajik newspapers published in Uzbek SSR and Tajik SSR. From 1912 to 1913 two Persian-Uzbek papers were published in 'Bukhara-isharif' ('Bukhara the Noble) and 'Turan'.<sup>37</sup> In 1919 a

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<sup>34</sup> John Payne, *op.cit.*, p. 263.

<sup>35</sup> Shirin Akinar, *op.cit.*, p. 311

<sup>36</sup> John Payne, *op. cit.*, p. 265.

<sup>37</sup> Shirin Akiner, *op. cit.*, p. 312.

weekly Persian paper appeared in Samarkand.<sup>38</sup> There were many other Tajik newspapers which appeared in 1920s and 1930s, e.g. 'Tadzhikistan' Soveti (Soviet Tajikistan), 'Komsomoli Tadzhikistan' (Tajik Komsomol), 'Pioneri Todzhikistan', (Tajik Pioneer), Maori & wa madaniyat' (Education and Culture) etc. The first journal in Tajik was Shubi inkolob (Flame of Revolution), which was published in April 1919. It was followed by several others including 'Kommunisti Todzhikiston' (communist of Tajikistan), Maktabi Soveti (Soviet School) 'Sadoi Shark' (Voice of the East); Zanoni Todzhikistan' (Tajik Woman) etc.<sup>39</sup> Apart from these, books and pamphlets were published in Tajik in Tajik SSR as well as Uzbek SSR.

Although Stalin's death ended the purges, the post-Stalin years brought a new set of issues and problems. While Khrushchev dismantled some of the Stalinist apparatus, he proposed a doubtful future for national cultures.<sup>40</sup> The emphasis in the new Party Programme of 1961 was obviously on unity and rapprochement of nations in USSR. This was, however, not to be achieved by resort to measures aimed at quickening the process artificially. The fusion of nations which was a distant goal was to be achieved through a long process of drawing together of nations on the basis

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<sup>38</sup> *ibid.*, p. 132.

<sup>39</sup> *ibid.*, p. 312.

<sup>40</sup> Beatrice F. Manz, *op. cit.*, p. 18.



of their all-round development.<sup>41</sup> But, a certain trend in practice towards hastening the elimination of national barriers through political and administrative measures could be noticed during the Khrushchev period.<sup>42</sup> The leadership under Brezhnev overlooked widespread corruption and interfered relatively little in Central Asian affairs below the highest level.<sup>43</sup> Along with this, the Central government quietly dropped Khrushchev's prediction of international fusion. The new Soviet stand on this subject was thus formulated by Brezhnev : "The further drawing together of the nations and nationalities of our country is an objective process. The Party is against hastening the process ; there is no need for that, since it is determined by the entire course of our Soviet Life."<sup>44</sup> At 60th Anniversary of USSR, Brezhnev's successor Nuri Andropov, candidly acknowledged that Soviet achievement in the sphere of nationalities question does by no means signify that all the problems generated by the very fact of the life and work of numerous nationalities in a single state have vanished".<sup>45</sup> Andropov drew attention to new complexities of national relations in USSR which he said can be understood from the fact that the objective process of economic and cultural

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<sup>41</sup> Devendra Kaushik, "The Nationalities Question in the USSR - The Current Phase," in R.R. Sharma (ed) *The USSR in Transition : Issues and Themes (1922-1982)*, Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, N. Delhi, 1985, p. 202.

<sup>42</sup> *ibid.*, p. 203.

<sup>43</sup> L. Hajda and M. Beissinger, *The Nationalities Factor in Soviet Politics and Society*, Westview Press, Boulder, 1990, p. 309.

<sup>44</sup> Quoted in Devendra Kaushik, *op.cit.*, Note 43, p. 203.

<sup>45</sup> Quoted in, *ibid.*, p. 204.

progress of nations and nationalities which is inevitably accompanied by growth of their national self-awareness and national pride in the successes achieved, at times also result in a tendency towards national arrogance and exclusiveness in certain sections.<sup>46</sup>

As the advent of perestroika and glasnost, under Gorbachev, made possible the more frank discussion of problems and possible solutions, educated Tajiks showed considerable interest in how other Soviet republics grappled with change. The most striking feature in the Gorbachev era was undoubtedly by the open expression, under the policy of 'glasnost' of Tajik nationalist sentiments. However, this sentiment did not result in the kind of popular demand for political independence or even for total secession from the USSR, that we have seen develop in such republics as Lithuania and Moldavia. During this period, Central Asia witnessed assertion and revival of various cultures and identities. The overemphasis on the distinctiveness of nationalities sometime led to some bloody riots. As far as Tajiks were concerned, they too started asserting and reviving their culture, tradition, heritage and icons. The two most important elements in process was, firstly Tajiks began to emphasize their Iranian heritage. Secondly, The Tajik language.

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<sup>46</sup> *ibid.*, p. 204.

In this period, **Naw Ruz** (the ancient Persian new Years celebrations) was declared as a state holiday in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan. Although this kind of move had a broader connotations for the cultural traditions of the Turco-Persian borderlands, this has special significance for educated Tajiks concerned about reasserting their Persian heritage. Similarly, in 1989 and 1990, Tajikistan's cultural establishment voiced repeated eulogies to Barbad, a Middle-Persian bard (active around 600 AD), said to be the founder of Persian music, and who lived before the Arab-Islamic conquest of Iran and Central Asia. The message which ordinary Tajiks were intended to derive from this is that Barbad, though he lived before any Persian - speakers were ever called Tajiks, was a great contributor to the Tajik poetic and musical heritage and an artist of international significance, whose influence extended from Greece to India.<sup>47</sup> This has been part of a larger trend among the Tajik elite of praising the achievement of Pre-Islamic Iranian civilization as part of the Tajik's rightful heritage and a source of pride.

Tajiks also use their Persian and Iranian links in a combative or at least a competitive sense in opposition to perceived offense against their national dignity by others. Within the Soviet Union the target was the Russified Soviet establishment, with its long standing rhetoric that the Tajiks and other Central Asians are "formerly backward peoples", who owed all

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<sup>47</sup> Muriel Atkin, "Tajiks and the Persian World," in Beatrice F. Manz, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

their progress to the Soviet power, in which whatever was Russian was routinely treated as the equivalent of what was progressive.

Another target is the Turkic peoples of Central Asia, especially the Uzbeks, whom Tajiks accuse of decades of discrimination against Tajiks.<sup>48</sup> The Tajik's antagonism towards the Uzbeks is even more deeply felt and more vehemently expressed than their resentment of the Russians. By claiming both the eastern Iranian and Persian Legacies, the Tajik nationalists presented their people as the only authentically indigenous Central Asians and the region's only truly civilized people. In this thinking, the Turkic peoples are considered outside conquerors, destroyers and oppressors while the Tajiks and their ancestors are the one who made great contributions to world civilizations.<sup>49</sup>

Tajik nationalist played on the same theme to uphold their own importance within the Persian speaking world. The concern in this case is defence against the inclination of Persian-speakers in Iran to regard Tajik as mere provincials, while asserting that the focal point of Persian culture is the Iranian plateau. Part of the Tajik's response is to invoke the ancient achievements of the Iranian peoples of Central Asia, especially the

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<sup>48</sup> *ibid.*, p. 139.

<sup>49</sup> *ibid.* p. 139.

Soghdians and to call many Persian-Language writers of the past Tajiks rather than Persians. Thus, Firdausi, author of "Shah-namah", a native of Tus, in northeastern Iran, is called a Tajik. So are the poets Nizami, who was born in now the Azerbaijan, Sa'di and Hafiz of Shiraz in South Western Iran, and Khusrow, Bidal and Iqbal of the Indian subcontinent.<sup>50</sup> The other element to which Tajik nationalist were attracted was the language. The increasing dominance of the Russian Language and the consequential decline in the status of Tajik, is catalogued in an important article in the local press (19 February 1989) by four leading Tajik intellectuals : M. Shukurov, R. Amonov, Sh. Rustanov and A. Sayfullaev.<sup>51</sup> The complaint made was that standards of literacy in Tajik were generally low, that Tajik was becoming restricted in its sphere of usage to the home and to Tajik-Language schools, and that there may even eventually be a danger of total language loss. The view that Tajik should be made single state language was officially accepted. A special commission set up by the Presidium of the Tajik Supreme Soviet recommended that corresponding "Law on Language" should be drafted and this was ratified by the Supreme Soviet in July 1989.

During the period of perestroika and Glasnost cultural grievances and rivalries erupted into open and inter-ethnic tensions and clashes increased. The national delimitation of 1924, was one of such issues

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<sup>50</sup> *ibid.* p. 139.

<sup>51</sup> John Payre, *op.cit.*, p. 268.

which fueled this process Samarkand and Bukhara became the focal point of the Uzbek-Tajik conflict. On this issue Kakhar Makhkamov, the First Secretary of Tajik Communist Central Committee, in the first Congress of People's Deputies (25 May to 10 June 1989) said, " In Tajikistan we still encounter the results of the incompetent demarcation of the boundaries between the republics of Central Asia. The errors made long ago are still felt now."<sup>52</sup> Some Central Asian leaders with active mediation of Moscow, tried to alleviate the discontent of a sizeable number of Tajiks living in regions of Bukhara and Samarkand in Uzbekistan.<sup>53</sup> Members of Tajik intelligentsia, who are mainly decedents of emigres from Bukhara and Samarkand, actually made demands that Bukhara and Samarkand be returned to Tajik Control.<sup>54</sup> The Tajik demand for Samarkand and Bukhara were legitimized in the face of an unraveling truth of population figures. In the first ever census of the Russian empire in 1897, in the cities of Samarkand oblast, Tajik dominated the figure with 60.58 percent of male and 66.58 percent of female population while Uzbek comprised only 13.59 percent males and 13.55 percent females. <sup>55</sup> The fact that Samarkand remained the capital of

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<sup>52</sup> Oleg Glebov and John Crowfoot (eds), *The Soviet Empire : Its Nations speak out*, Harwood academic Pub., Chur (switzerland), 1989, p. 141.

<sup>53</sup> Igor P. Lipovsky, op.cit., 219.

<sup>54</sup> Maria Eva Subtedly, "The Symbiosis of Turk and Tajik", in Beatrice F. Manz op.cit., p. 55.

<sup>55</sup> Cited in P.L. Dash, 'Ethno-Nationalism in Uzbekistan, in K. Warikoo (ed), *Central Asia : Emerging New Order*, Har-Anand Pub., Delhi, 1995, p. 108.

Uzbekistan upto 1930 made it an eyesore for the Tajiks. The Tajiks felt then and eversince that they are a people of less important nationality compared to the Uzbeks.<sup>56</sup>

Tajik nationalists, who tried to formulate what national identity means, do not want to be submerged in the much larger population of Persian- speakers beyond the Soviet border. However, they wanted at least to borrow selectively from that wider sphere in order to strengthen and redefine their identify.

In the Soviet period, the redefinition process concentrated on cultural issues. The process of national Self-definition that begins with culture and expands to other spheres has been one of the patterns followed by various peoples historically and in the present, including among several Soviet nationalities. In the case of Soviet Union, the government's willingness to allow officially recognized nationalities at least the outward trappings of cultural autonomy helps explain the initial emphasis on that sphere in the process.

An important point to note is that much of the discussion by the Tajik intelleengentia and political figures about their place in the Iranian world reflects a sense of weakness and vulnerability. In contrast to much of the

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<sup>56</sup> *ibid.*, p. 108-109.

contemporary Uzbek nationalist rhetoric, which often conveys a sense of pride based on strength, the discussion among Tajiks has a tone of alarm about it - that the Tajiks are in danger of losing their very identity, in large part because their ties to the Persian world are weak.<sup>57</sup>

In conclusion, the Soviet period brought major changes in the lives of the Central Asia population. The people of Central Asia, who in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, customarily identified themselves according to supranational or subnational categories, came to be categorized by nationality and that political and cultural institutions of the region, based on the above category was a Soviet innovation. The creation of the formally federal system promoted the growth and consolidation of national consciousness in the non-Russian republics. During Gorbachev era, throughout the Soviet Union, the spirit of glasnost made it easier for the nationalities to articulate their grievances, whether through official channels or through public literature and demonstrations.

After the disintegration of Soviet Union authoritarianism and the lack of debate has prevented the development of any broad-based consensus on the cultural and ideological underpinning of Central Asian societies and polities. Once again the question of nationality, socioeconomic

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<sup>57</sup> Muriel Atkin, *op. cit.*, p. 130.



and political philosophies and their implication for minority nationalities in the newly independent states of Central Asia have come up and is likely to continue in the near future.

## THE TAJIKS IN UZBEKISTAN

Unlike the Baltic experience, none of the Central Asian republics witnessed grass-root movement for independence prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union. The Soviet collapse forced independence upon Central Asia. Once the Soviet disintegration was accepted as *fait accompli*, the elite proved themselves devoted Champions of national independence. In Uzbekistan, the Uzbek elite has had considerable success in adapting itself to the new conditions. The elite drew on all its Soviet skills to influence public Opinion to legitimize its rule, now cloaked in a nationalistic veil. Nationalism and its philosophical underpinnings are compelling for the Uzbek elite. The elite seeks to justify its post-Soviet existence in the discourse of national sovereignty. Uzbek scholars are busy rewriting their own history and attempting to define and assert an Uzbek identity they can be proud of. The independent existence of the Uzbek "nation-State" is secured by cultivating national patriotism for the Land of Uzbeks (Uzbekistan) or *Vatan* (motherland)

Notwithstanding the fanfare surrounding independence, the government of Uzbekistan has some difficulties in coping with the political and

economic challenges that transition presented. One of the major challenges comes from the minority ethnic groups residing in Uzbekistan. A more serious and potentially explosive issue is the status of Tajik minority in Uzbekistan. The Stalinist demarcation of Central Asia had left large Tajik-speaking Communities in Bukhara, Samarkand, Ferghana and Namangan. The two cities of Bukhara and Samarkand occupied, and still do, a special place in the hearts of the Tajik intelligentsia. The golden age of Persian literature was closely associated with these cities. Many of the Persian-speaking poets, astronomers, and Islamic theologians lived and worked there, giving Samarkand and Bukhara a halo of glory. The Tajik intelligentsia challenged the notion that Samarkand and Bukhara are Uzbek cities, and by implication questioned the borders. Tajik's claim on Samarkand and Bukhara as their cultural capital is contested by the Uzbek state, even going so far as to maintain that Tajiks are not indigenous inhabitants of Central Asia, but immigrants from Iran.<sup>1</sup>

This Chapter attempts to discuss Uzbekistan's policy towards its Tajik minority and outline the nature of relationship between the Uzbek titular group and Tajiks. An analysis of identity-politics will be taken up to show how it has been used to justify authoritarianism in Uzbekistan. This Chapter also briefly discusses Uzbekistan's domestic and other considerations for its

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1 Quoted in, Maria Eva Subtelny, "The symbiosis of Turk and Tajik", in Beatrice F. Manz (ed), *Central Asia in Historical Perspective*, The John M. Olin Critical Issues Series, West view Press, Boulder, 1994.

involvement in Tajik civil war and show its impact on Uzbek-Tajik relationship in Uzbekistan.

Since independence, an ethnocentric nationalism and the much narrower sense of identity, such as Uzbekness and Kyrgyzzness, have become strong forces in Central Asia. This phenomenon is reflected in a widespread trend toward nativization of culture and administration throughout Central Asia. For example, the native tongue of the titular nationalities of various republics has become the official language of state, and a sufficient level of fluency has become a major requirement for access to government jobs. Uzbekistan has gone farthest in this direction in trying to "Uzbekize" and assimilate other minorities, especially the Tajiks.

Uzbekistan has sought to establish identities for both the state and its titular group. Writing specifically on Uzbekistan, Schoeberkin-Engel declares that these can be achieved through the creation of a government-sponsored identity, "compelling both to its own population and the world at large... New states are keen to promote themselves as having a deep history and important presence in the world... The government of Uzbekistan seems to partake of the

notion that Uzbekistan can achieve the stature of a great nation if the number of Uzbeks is large and if they have a strong sense of their identity.<sup>2</sup>

In the course of revival of Uzbek identity the Uzbeks have taken up the task of rewriting and redefining history. The regime appears keen to fan popular fascination with 'Uzbek' history. It is claimed "the forefathers of today's Uzbeks ruled over two-thirds of the known world seven centuries before Christ."<sup>3</sup> There is an attempt to equate the history of the Turks with that of the Uzbeks without addressing the question as to whether the modern Uzbek and the Uzbek language today is to be completely equated with a general Turkish history and the Turkish language. This is being used as to claim that the forefathers of the modern Uzbeks were among the "World's oldest civilised people".

An important component of this discourse is the extension of the Turk's role in the development of Islamic and world civilization. An Uzbek nationalist and pan-Turkist writer Necib Asim Claims that they (Turks)

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2 Quoted in, Stuart Horsman, "Uzbekistan's involvement in Tajik Civil War 1992-97: domestic consideration," *Central Asian survey*, 1999, 18 (1), P.4), also j Schoeberlein-Engel, "The Prospect for Uzbek national Identity," *Central Asian Monitor*, No2, 1996, p.12.

3 Quoted in, Anita Sengupta, "Soviet Politics In Uzbekistan. Extinct or Extant," in Shams-Ud-Din (ed), *Nationalism in Russia And Central Asian Republics: Unfinished Democratic Revolution*, Lancers Books, new Delhi, 1999, P.279. also. Tahir Qahhar, "Uzbek Literature," *World Literature Today*, summer 1996, P.112. (translated from Uzbek by William Dirks).

preserved the Persian language and culture and rescued Islam.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, Bursali Talir claims that most of the great Islamic scientists and poets, who are wrongly known as Arab or Persian, were really Turks. He maintains that even those who were really Persian or Arabs should be considered Turk because they had become Turkified "Turklekmis."<sup>5</sup> He adds that the Turks are "among the founder of modern civilization." These appeals are supported very strongly in Uzbekistan. There are theorists who promote the idea of "greater Uzbekistan",<sup>6</sup> which calls for a reunification of the now Tajik lands to Uzbekistan.<sup>7</sup> "Similarly the idea of "Greater Turkestan" also receives support from the Uzbeks and the Uzbekistan government. Even President Karimov has often referred to the nation and expressed support for the historic Turkestan. However, the pan-Turkist's vision of the Uzbek's history is beyond the bounds of credibility. Their view of the Turk's role in preserving Iranian culture and Persian language is not only incorrect, but also cruelly ironic. This view also has current relevance in Central Asia, given the state of Uzbek-Tajik relations, some analysts have

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4 Shireen T. Hunter, *op.cit.*, p.27.

5 David Kushner, *The rise of Turkish Nationalism*, Frank Cass Pub., London, 1977, p.36.

6 *ibid*, p.36.

7 Anita Sengupta, *op.cit.*, p.280.

linked Uzbekistan's anti-Tajik policies to the Serb's policy of ethnic cleansing in Bosnia.<sup>8</sup>

Another important aspect of the ethnocentric identity revivalism is the revival of the legendary personalities. The Uzbek government identifies legendary personalities of Mavernnahr as the forebears of Uzbek identity. According to the Uzbek regime, Uzbek national pride is rooted in the great military scientific and cultural exploits of such men as Amir Timor, his grandson Ulugbek, Alishir Navoi, and from the recent past Sharaf Radidov, Uzbek Communist Party First Secretary (1959-86). In his first international address to the United Nations General Assembly, President Karimov recalled the contributions that our people (Uzbeks?) have made to world civilization, naming "Velikii Timur" (The Great Timur) and Ulugbek along with Al-Bukhari, Bahoutdin Nagshband, and Ibn Sina to substantiate his claim.<sup>9</sup> But Tajik nationalists have contested identity of many of these legends as Uzbeks. They have accused the Uzbeks of "Cultural imperialism" and "national arrogance" for claiming such figures for themselves.<sup>10</sup>

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8 Mural Akchurin, "Tajikistan: Another Bosnia in the Making," *Central Asia Monitor*, No 3, 1993 P.9. also, Shireen T. Hunter, Op. Cit., p.28.

9 Shahram Akbarzadeh, "Nation-building in Uzbekistan", *Central Asian Survey*, 15 (1), 1996, p.28.

10 Maria Eva Subtelny, op.cit., p.55.

In December 1994 Present Karimov decreed, well in advance, the grand celebration of 650th anniversary of Amir Timur's birth. The state film industry was commissioned to produce a film on Timur Lane. A number of monuments were erected in Tashkent, Shahri Sabz (Timur's birthplace) and Samarkand (his seat of power). The Ministry of Culture, jointly with the Academy of Science of Uzbekistan opened a museum on Amir Timur in Tashkent. The centre's revival of Timur, the fifteenth Century (Pre-Uzbek) empire-builder, has focused upon the benefits of authoritarianism and also provided justification of the present regime. As kangas notes, Timur's rehabilitation "is no accident [for] he unified the peoples of the region [and] instilled a sense of order during a time of Chaos.<sup>11</sup> According to Starr the re-interpretation of Uzbekistan's historical significance is central to this elevation in which the Timurids are inextricably linked with the Uzbek nation, making Uzbeks feel they share a tradition of statehood that, though interrupted, has no parallel in the region... and shapes Uzbeks attitudes towards surrounding powers.<sup>12</sup> Intervention in Tajikistan is a component in this conceptualization of Uzbekness. The deliberate linking of the Temurid period with present-day

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11 Quoted in, Stuart Horsman, op.cit., p.41.

12 F. Starr, "Making Eurasia Stable"; *Foreign Affairs*, Vol.75, No.1, 1996, p.83.



Uzbekistan seeks to prove false all assertions that Uzbek nation is an artificial construct of the Soviet period.

In an environment, where the regime and the titular majority are busy rewriting their own history and attempting to define and assert their identity, minority populations are generally the principal victims of such movement. Tajiks of Uzbekistan are no exception. Currently, the Tajiks of Uzbekistan appear no more willing to trade-in their identity. At the same time, the official policy in Uzbekistan towards the Tajik minority has created a very high degree of social tension.<sup>13</sup>

The national delimitation of 1924 granted Uzbekistan the lion's share of territory in Central Asia, relegating Tajiks to the eastern backwaters of the former Bukharan Khanate. There were many Tajik-dominated areas left in Uzbekistan. Many have debated the question regarding the number of Tajiks. There are different opinions in this regard. The official census of 1926 shows that there were 350603 Tajiks (not including Tajik ASSR/SSR) in Uzbekistan SSR.<sup>14</sup> The Tajiks in Uzbekistan amounted to 6.6 percent of the total population of

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13 Graham Smith, Vivien Law, Andrew Wilson and Edward Allworth, *Nation-Building in the Post-Soviet Borderlands: Politics of National identities*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1998, p.146.

14 Shirin Akiner, *Islamic Peoples of the Soviet Union*, Kegan Paul International, London, 1983, p.306.

Uzbekistan. This was reduced to 3.8 percent of total Population of Uzbekistan in 1959 in the official census amounting 311366 of Tajik<sup>15</sup>. In 1915, the Tajiks of Samarkand outnumbered the Uzbeks, as concluded by Ivan Zurabin in his ethnostatistical figures, in 1920 in Samarkand the Tajiks accounted for 54.4 percent and Uzbek for only 4 percent of the population of the city.<sup>16</sup> After the national delimitation the census conducted in 1926 showed that in Samarkand there were 10,716 Tajiks and 43,304 Uzbeks.<sup>17</sup> The drastic changes in the census figures were due to the fact that, Tajiks were pressured in various ways to register themselves as Uzbeks in the 1926 Uzbek census.<sup>18</sup> By the 1979 census, as a result of outmigration and assimilation, Tajiks had been reduced to 4 percent of the total population of the Uzbek republic.<sup>19</sup>

In 1993, Tajiks officially accounted for only 4.8 percent of Uzbekistan's population, (1107000 of Tajiks), a figure repeated uncritically by most western scholars, journalists and travel-writers alike, the actual proportion

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15 *ibid.*, p.277.

16 Quoted in, R.L. Dash, "Ethno-Nationalism in Uzbekistan", in K.Warikoo (ed), *Central Asia: Emerging New Order*, Har-Anand Publication, New Delhi, 1995, p.108.

17 *ibid.*, p.108.

18 Maria Eva Subtelny, *op.cit.*, p.54.

19 Martha Brill Olcott, "Central Asia: The Reformers Challenge a Traditional Society", in L. Hajda and B. Beissinger (ed.), *The Nationalities Factor in Soviet Politics and Society*, John M. Olin Critical Issues Series, West View Press, Boulder, 1990, op.262.

of Tajik-speakers is undoubtedly much larger<sup>20</sup>. Tajiks around the country, meanwhile, insist that the figure is more like 25.30 percent, with Tajiks accounting for perhaps 70 percent of population of Samarkand, Uzbekistan's second largest city and former capital and as much as 90 percent of the total population in Bukhara.<sup>21</sup> The mountainous areas to the northeast of Tashkent past the Chowok reservoir are predominately Tajik, so are parts of Ferghana Valley, Zhizakh province, Surkhan Darya and Kashka Darya. Some scholars at Samarkand State University estimate the total Tajik population of Uzbekistan at six to seven million, double or more the Tajik population of the Republic of Tajikistan.<sup>22</sup> Shireen T. Hunter believes that although the Tajiks opposition figure of six to seven million Tajiks in Uzbekistan is an exaggeration, three to four million is closer to reality."<sup>23</sup>

However, it has been a difficult task to determine with any degree of certainty the number of individuals who consider themselves member of the Tajik ethnic group in Uzbekistan. There seems no reliable way to verify the figures given above. This difficulty arose due to three factors. Firstly, many

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20 Graham Smith, Viven Law, Andrew Wilson, Annette Bohr and Edward Allworth, Op.cit., p.153.

21 Richard Foltz, "Tajiks of Uzbekistan", *Central Asian Survey*, 1996, 15(2), p.213-216.

22 *ibid.*

23 Shireen T. Hunter, *Central Asia Since Independence*, The Washington Papers, Praeger Pub, West post, 1996,p.98.

original Tajik speakers were linguistically turkicised long ago.<sup>24</sup> Secondly, Tajiks were routinely identified as Uzbeks simply because they lived in Uzbekistan.<sup>25</sup> Thirdly, many Tajiks registered themselves as Uzbeks. The popular Uzbek saying, " *Turk a Tajik bir kishi*" (Turk and Tajik are one), underscore traditional prejudice against the Tajik and his claim to a separate identity.<sup>26</sup> In the Uzbek view, Tajiks are simply Persian-speaking Uzbeks<sup>27</sup>

Constitutions of all the Central Asian Countries, include sections on individuals, civil and political rights and guarantee their social and economic rights, such as the right to work and access to health care, education, housing and vacations. These remnants of the socialist era were included partly to assuage the populations' fear that economic liberalization would undermine their social and economic safety nets. All Central Asian constitutions guarantee equality of rights and freedoms for their citizens, irrespective of race, nationality, religion, sex, language or social origin. But they differ in how they treat questions of language, minority rights, and citizenship.

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24 Graham Smith, Vivien law, Andrew Wilson, Annetle Bohr and Edward Allworth, op.cit., p.213.

25 Shirin T. Hunter, op. cit., p.98.

26 Maria Eva Subtelny, op. cit., p.54.

27 *ibid.*, p.54.

In the few years since independence, the 'national question' has assumed an entirely new character in Uzbekistan. The decree on Uzbekistan citizenship adopted on July 28, 1992, granted citizenship to all persons living on the territory, without regard to national origin, social status, race, sex, education, language or political view.<sup>28</sup> But Karimov's policy since independence has been to encourage the groundswell of popular support for the celebration of Uzbek national identity. Uzbekistan's constitution stresses that country's official language is Uzbek, but does not refer to any minority languages - particularly the rights of its substantial number of Tajik speakers.<sup>29</sup> In September 1992, the General Director of the Uzbek National Information Agency announced that the agency, beginning from January 1, 1993, would produce information only in Uzbek language.<sup>30</sup>

Among the Tajiks of Uzbekistan a Stubborn clinging to language as a source of identity and community can be observed on a widespread level despite state propaganda. The Faculty of Tajik philology at Samarkand State

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28 Gregory Gleason, "Uzbekistan: the politics of national independence", in Ian Bremmer and Ray Taras (eds.), *New States New Politics: Building the Post-Soviet Nations*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1997, p.583.

29 Shireen T. Hunter, op. cit., p-47.

30 Gregory Gleason, op.cit., p.583.

University remains an active centre for the study of classical Persian literature, publishing scholarly articles in Tajik and occasionally sponsoring conferences.<sup>31</sup> Tajik-language primary schools remain open in some areas of the country till recent years. Tajiks often favored sending their children to Tajik-language schools at primary level. In Tashkent, where Tajik-speakers are numerous but scattered and low-profile, the twice-weekly Tajik newspaper *Ovozi Tajik* is all but impossible to find and Tajik-language books are not seen in any bookstore<sup>32</sup> In predominantly Tajik-speaking Samarkand, *Ovozi Samarqand* (also twice-weekly) is some what more visible and a number of bookstores have a Tajik section: there is even an all-Tajik bookstore next to the *Bibi Khanum* mosque.<sup>33</sup> *Ovozi Samarqand*, which had a regular column on Persian-Tajik language, culture and history, was reduced to official mouth-piece. Many dismiss *Ovozi Samarqand* as "too full of patriotism" to be worth reading.<sup>34</sup> Although the Tajik television channel was terminated several years ago, one of the local Samarkand television stations does run Tajik programs for twenty to thirty minutes several nights a week, but these are usually just music clips.<sup>35</sup> As far as music is concerned, there is not a single cassette-manufacturing unit,

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31 Richard Foltz, op.cit., p-213-216.

32 ibid., p.213-216

33 ibid., p.215

34 ibid., p.215

which produces Tajik cassettes. Tajik youth listen with enthusiasm to Tajik and Iranian singers on imported cassettes from Iran and Tajikistan. The Uzbek government has not been showing any concern towards the development of culture and language of minority Tajiks in Uzbekistan.

However, Since 1991 Tajik activists have been pressing for greater cultural autonomy and an official status for Tajik language. These movements have been systematically suppressed. The "Samarkand" Social and Cultural Organization of Tajiks and Tajik-speaking Peoples was one of several associations that was not allowed to re-register under the 1993 decree requiring all public organization to re-register or face suspension.<sup>36</sup> A distinct assault on Tajik culture has been a general approach of the Government. The closing down the Samarkand's fledgling Tajik-language pedagogical institute and other Tajik Organizations and low visibility of Tajik publications even in the predominantly Tajik areas attest to the official policy of the Uzbek government towards its Tajik population today.

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35 *ibid.*,

36 Graham Smith, Vivien Law, Andrew Wilson, Annette Bohr and Edward Allworth, *op. cit.*, p.282 also, Richard Foltz, Uzbekistan's Tajiks. A Case of Repressed Identity?, *Central Asia Monitor*, no.6, 1996.

Uzbekistan's constitutional and other laws include clauses in which certain rights are qualified with vague language left open to varied interpretations. Article 10 of the Constitution states that only the Parliament and the President can speak on behalf of the people and that no other part of society, political party, or individual can do so. Similarly, Article 20 qualifies the exercise of basic rights and liberties by stating that their exercise "must not violate the legitimate interest, rights and liberties of other persons, the state and society". However, it does not clarify what is meant by "legitimate interest" of the state, thus enabling the government to interpret them in any way it wants.<sup>37</sup> For example, the Tajik minority is closely watched and controlled by the state. The government also keeps a watch on the Tajik activities, like meetings, or informal gatherings and their localities. Very often Tajik activists are harassed and detained on false charges. The Amnesty International Reports on Uzbekistan reported that in December 1998, police in Samarkand detained Mikhail Ardrinor, Chairman of the Independent Human Rights Organisation of Uzbekistan, for twenty hours, badly beaten, and forcibly returned to Tashkent. He had travelled to Samarkand with Jamol Mirsaidov, a member of the Independent Human Rights Organisation and leader of the Tajik minority in Uzbekistan, to attend constituent meeting of the National Culture Centre of ethnic Tajiks. Jomol Mirsaidov was also detained and sentenced to ten days

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37 Shireen T. Hunter, *Op. cit.*, p.60.



administrative arrest. It was alleged that the two men were detained in order to prevent the constituent meeting of the National Culture Centre of ethnic Tajiks from taking place.

Political groups and parties do not fare any better. The government's actions have led to elimination or marginalisation, as many have been banned under various pretexts or refused registration, which has prevented them from political activity.<sup>38</sup> Their leaders and activists have also been subjected to abuse, including imprisonment. Mean while, new parties have been formed as vehicles for the ambitions of the existing leadership. The Birlik and Erk parties and their leaders and members have been under pressure and attack, including beatings and arrests.<sup>39</sup> According to the Uzbekistan's Foreign Ministry paper, *Jolm*, opposition groups should not compete for power, as such behaviour would result in a situation similar to Tajikistan. Rather they should be "constructive and patriotic".<sup>40</sup> Domestic groups that fail to meet with these criteria are potrayed as extremist and associated with external enemies attempting to destabilize Uzbekistan who by making threats, spreading

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38 Birlik and Erk were unable to register, in 1993, because they lacked headquarters. The former's base was simply confiscated by the authorities, whilst the latter's was declared a fire hazard and closed, thus preventing registration.

39 Gregory Gleason, op. cit., p.586.

40 Quoted in, Stuart Horswman, "Uzbekistan's involvement in the Tajik Civil War 1992-97: Domestic Considerations," *Central Asian Survey*, 18(1), 1999, p.42

rumours... are seeking to sow the seeds of confrontation and strife and draw us into the orbit of Islamic Fundamentalism. <sup>41</sup>

The Samarkand movement, which is based in the city of Samarkand and whose goal is to protect the cultural and linguistic rights of Uzbekistan's Tajik population, is severely harassed. The Tajik minority is an especially vulnerable target because of its non-Turkic identity and Persian language. By 1994, the Tajik university in Samarkand and other Tajik language Schools were closed. Uzbek authority justified this action on the ground that inter-ethnic relation had deteriorated. <sup>42</sup> However, this policy fits very well with the general anti-Tajik and anti-Iranian policy of Uzbekistan and its effort to eliminate the Tajik culture through forced assimilation.<sup>43</sup> Some other parties, such as the pan-Turkist Birlik and Erk, share these anti-Tajik sentiments.

The anti-Tajik sentiments of Uzbekistan is not limited to its territory, it has even crossed its border. Uzbekistan's involvement in the Tajik civil war gave new life to the Uzbek-Tajik rivalry. The Uzbeks have justified their intervention in Tajikistan on two grounds. First, they argue that Tajikistan

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41 *ibid.*, p.42.

42 Shireen T. Hunter, *op. cit.*, p.60.

43 *ibid.*, p.61

had become subject to infiltration and destabilisation from across the border, notably by armed Afghan Muslim groups. They aided the Tajik government in its conflict with the Islamic-nationalist opposition in response to a request from a fellow CIS member facing an external threat and in the context of the CIS collective security framework. Second, the Uzbeks have argued that turmoil in Tajikistan, and especially the rise of muslim radicalism, threatens to spread to Uzbekistan and destabilise its political system. <sup>44</sup>

Uzbekistan was concerned about the rising profile of the Islamic Rebirth Party in neighbouring Tajikistan and its potential impact on its own Islamic movement. After Tajikistan's communist-dominated Parliament invalidated the resignation of President Rakhman Nabiev on November 16, 1992, thus ending the compromise reached between the government and the opposition, the Tajik opposition began to receive military assistance from Afghan groups. <sup>45</sup> According to the Tajik opposition, however, military confrontation was initially provoked by the government, which after the fall of the Nabiev government freed and armed known criminals and led them into attacks against the opposition.<sup>46</sup> Thus, security concern alone does not explain

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44 *ibid.*, p.96.

45 *ibid.*, p.97.

46 *ibid.*, p.97.

Uzbekistan's behaviour toward Tajikistan. Another important, little-noted factor is the threat that a reawakening of Tajik national and cultural consciousness could have posed to Uzbekistan's territorial integrity and regional ambitions.

During the period of perestroika, Tajik nationalist groups had raised the question of rectifying this historical injustice done by incorporation of Samarkand and Bukhara into Uzbekistan and had vowed to regain the cultural heart of Central Asia's Iranian civilization. An independent Tajikistan would thus have been a potential threat.

During roughly the same period (1992), after the fall of the Najibullah regime in Afghanistan, the fortunes of the Tajik-Afghan leader Ahmad Shah Masoud were on the rise. Meanwhile, after 70 years, Tajiks and other Iranian peoples had reestablished contacts and had undertaken some fledgling efforts to safeguard the Persian language and culture.

These developments had increased the possibility that, after nearly a thousand years, the Iranian world might once again become connected. If so, the Tajiks would no longer be Central Asia's marginalised minority but part of a much broader Iranian and Persian-speaking world. As such, they

would have been less vulnerable to intimidation, marginalisation and even total assimilation and loss of identity in a Turkic world, especially in Uzbekistan. But this development would have frustrated Uzbekistan's Project of recreating Turkistan and would have undermined its self-perception as the leader of an incipient Turkic world.<sup>47</sup>

Uzbekistan's government has frequently claimed link between domestic opposition and Tajikistani events and movements. President Karimov has regularly commented upon the Tajik nationalist and Islamic fundamentalist-organised plots, from the adjoining republic, to create communal conflict in the republic.<sup>48</sup> One Uzbek report claimed to have uncovered a Tajikistani-Islamic attempt to ferment Tajik-Uzbek enmities in Surkhan-Darya and Kashka-Darya provinces.<sup>49</sup>

The ability to associate Uzbekistan's Tajik community with instability in the neighboring republic is beneficial to the regime in justifying its repression and harassment of the Tajik Community. The increase in the official harassment of Samarkand based Tajik cultural organisation, has been linked to a

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47 *ibid.*, 98. also, "Uzbekistan seen Aspiring to Dominate Central Asia," FBIS/SOV-94-141, July 22, 1994, p.14.

48 Stuart Horsman, *Op. cit.*, p.42.

49 *Current Digest of Post Soviet Press*, Vol. XLV, No1, p.17.

combination of factors: the movement's expanding popular base in 1991; the aftermath of the January 1992 student demonstrations; and Tajikistan's descent into war.<sup>50</sup> The repression of the movement throughout 1992 was supported by accusations of political aspirations and irredentism. There is, however, no evidence to suggest that Uzbekistan's Tajik community has given assistance to either of the belligerent parties in Tajikistan, beyond humanitarian assistance.<sup>51</sup> At the same time, there is a bleak possibility of any support from Tajikistan to the Tajiks of Uzbekistan. Akiner argues that even if there are calls from within Tajikistan for the integration of Tajik populated territory in Uzbekistan, the former does not have "the human or material resources to maintain a successful challenge to its larger neighbour" and thus dismisses Karimov's fear of overspill from the Tajik conflict.<sup>52</sup>

However, the government of Uzbekistan looks at Tajik nationalism as a threat intertwined with that of Islamic fundamentalism. Both aspect of this perceived danger are probably exaggerated, although the current level of actual militant Tajik nationalism in Uzbekistan is difficult to gauge. An organisations which calls itself the National culture centre (NCC) of Tajiks and

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50 Stuart Horsman, *op. cit.*, p.43.

51 Current Digest of Post Soviet Press, Vol.XLV, No.1, p.7.

Tajik-speaking peoples, based in Samarkand, has been sending open letters to the United Nations, to Western embassies in Tashkent, and to the government of Uzbekistan complaining that official discrimination is being carried out in Uzbekistan against Tajiks.

In the post-Soviet transition period, the record of Uzbekistan has been very negative. Repression and harassment of the Tajik minority population and organisation are regular. During the period of perestroika, however, some Uzbeks had expressed regret that Timurlane had not finished off all of Central Asia's indigenous Iran/Persian-speakers.<sup>53</sup> Uzbeks could not permit any development that strengthened the Tajiks, as it would be contrary to the goal of completing Timurlane's task. It would not be an exaggeration if one calls Uzbekistan an authoritarian state. Large segments of population are deprived of their basic rights and freedoms, either for reasons of ethnic difference, such as Tajiks, or because of charges of Muslim fundamentalism. In fact, in a report published in September 1994, the New York-based Human Rights Watch said

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52 S. Akiner, "Conflict, stability and development in Central Asia," in C.J. Dicks (ed), *Instabilities in Post Communist Europe*, Carmichael Sweet Pub., Portsmouth, 1996, p.13.

53 Shireen T. Hunter, op. cit., p.98.

"there are so many violations of human rights that it's fair now to call Uzbekistan a criminal state".<sup>54</sup>

In conclusion, the current phase of ethnic identity assertion and ethnic conflict may lead Uzbekistan to a worsening situation. The regime should review its policy towards the discontented minority to avoid conflict. The great tragedy of post-Soviet Uzbekistan has been in failing to accept the inextricability of its demographic mix, and its negotiation of centuries-long heritage of rich multi-culturalism. Today, the best hope for a peaceful and prosperous future would seem to lie in an official acceptance of the republic's ethnic diversity and a shared pride in the culture and achievements of its component groups.

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54 *ibid*, p.61. also for details, "Uzbekistan viewed as a 'Criminal State', International Herald Tribune, September 24-25, 1994.



## CONCLUSION

In many parts of the former Soviet Union today, nationalism is a more powerful force than it has been for decades. For the larger nationalities in Central Asia its strength is without precedent. The current era of nation and identity assertion owe much to the Soviet policies and programmes. Unlike the modern European nation states, most of which attempted to represent a homogeneous population, Central Asia was, at the beginning of the twentieth Century, a heterogeneous society, divided into several different states, each including numerous politically active populations. The peoples of Central Asia have long known that there were differences among them in their origin, language, way of life, culture and so forth. The different groups making up the population had separate names and group identities, connected marginally with language and territory, and used not to promote separatism, but determine and maintain a place within a larger society. Based on this differentiated identities the Soviet policies tried to consolidate these groups into nations. It is true that nationally- defined political and cultural institutions in contemporary central Asia are contrivances of the Soviet regime, yet there were some incongruity in the process due to inherent demographic mix of the region.

In Uzbekistan, the state boundaries and ethnic composition lack correspondence. Hence the post-Soviet nation-building process has made the national question important. It has been observed that since independence the inability of the Uzbek elite to create alliance and provide side-payments to increase their own power has made it unattractive for non-titular ethnic group, especially Tajiks, to orient their allegiance toward the titular nationality. Lack of consensual politics and democratic set up have prevent the development of harmonious relationship among ethnic groups. Thus, the current problem is how to induce sub-national ethnic groups to recognize the legitimacy of a national state run by the titular nationality. The current policy towards the minorities under Karimov, shows no sign of rapprochement, on the contrary, the regime has gone farther in trying to "Uzbekize" and assimilate other minorities, especially the Tajiks.

Tajiks in Uzbekistan have experienced drastic changes in their live since the disintegration of Soviet Union. In the period under the Soviets, Tajiks were provided with many opportunities to participate and develop in the cultural, social, and political life of Uzbekistan. Tajik had schools where the medium of instruction was Tajik. But now Tajik anguage schools have been closed down. There are cases of Tajiks being discriminated against in the admission to higher educational institutions. They face similar difficulty in

finding jobs. Tajik language radio and television programmes to which they were used to during Soviet period, have been closed. Tajik's participation in the political sphere has been intentionally minimised and Tajiks of Uzbekistan are undergoing a difficult time which they had not faced during the Soviet period. In the current phase of nation-building, there is conscious effort to eliminate the Tajik culture through forced assimilation.

During Soviet period, any discrimination on the Tajiks was resolved through mediations from Moscow. There are instances where the leadership of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan had drawn each others attention to the problems. Also, Central Asian leaders, with active mediation of Moscow, tried to alleviate the discontent of Tajiks in regions of Bukhara and Samarkand in Uzbekistan. These deliberation had effects on the governments which were obliged to carry out reforms or improve the condition of the minority groups. After independence, such deliberations are not possible as Tajikistan itself is undergoing a bad phase of transition. Now the Tajik community in Uzbekistan is left alone to tackle the problems posed by an authoritarian regime.

A hasty look at the post-Soviet Uzbekistan it could leave a false impression that liberal democracy is in practice here but a careful examination will reveals that it is not. In Uzbekistan, the pre-conditions for democracy are

absent. On the contrary, the ethnic cleavages and cultural divergences are quite deep, and both civil society and the private sector are still weak. At the same time, the regime's policies, in recent time, have been not very conducive for development of democracy. The political ideology that has replaced communism can at best be described as "Secular authoritarianism", with a dose of free market philosophy. The growing authoritarian tendency has been accompanied by the cult of personality as indicated in the referendum on March 26, 1995, to extend the president Karimov's term of office until year 2000. It may be noted here that a relative stability has been achieved in post-Soviet period but at the price of growing authoritarianism and drift towards personal rule, both of which have stunted the growth of political institutions and political maturing of Uzbek society. Economic problems and hardships, with all they entail in terms of potential instability, have further strengthened the tendency towards authoritarianism and the stifling of public debate. Because of these policies, ethnic, cultural and other differences and grievances have been pushed underground and silenced, rather than being mitigated and resolved, Uzbek government's policies towards the Tajik minority community have increasingly alienated them from the majority Uzbeks and hence not only prevented the development of a national identity transcending ethnic and linguistic differences but have deepened the cleavage of these differences, generating social tension and conflict.

The Uzbek state is engaged in reviving its national identity base on falsification of history. Official history writing tends to mystify the origins of the Uzbek national community in order to claim antiquity. Moreover, the Uzbek State is not the least perturbed by the fact that all its so-called founding fathers lived before the advance of Turkic tribes into Mavernnahr in the 14th and 15th centuries. The Uzbek state also gives critical importance to mass loyalty to the present-day geo-political boundaries of Uzbekistan for its political legitimacy. At the same time, revival of legendary personalities, for example, Timurlane, has been taken up by the regime to justify its authoritarian rule. As far as the current language legislation is concerned ethnic entrepreneurs regard this as a policy of forced assimilation. The Constitution, in addition to acting as symbol of Sovereignty, ensures pre-eminence of the titular nation and provide special protection for their culture.

These developments did not but send wrong signals to the minority communities. They have now become more conscious of their own cultural roots. Tajiks, in particular, have also been mobilised by Tajik intelligentsia, to resist the official policies aimed against them. Tajik intelligentsia have organised many formal and informal organisations for the protection of Tajik culture and language. They also communicate with people

outside Uzbekistan and various international organisations and register their grievances and problems. Since 1991, Tajik activists have been pressing for greater cultural autonomy and an official status for Tajik language. In response to this, Uzbek government has resorted to tactics of repression of these organisation and activists. Unlawful arrests, detention, closing down of these organisations, harassment, human right violations, are now normal for the Tajiks in Uzbekistan. Sometimes, these activists and organisations are also linked to Islamic fundamentalism and depicted as anti-nationals for creating instability within Uzbekistan.

The development in the post-Soviet Uzbekistan has led many Iranologist and experts to submit with fear that Tajik language and Tajik culture would disappear from Central Asia through assimilation within the foreseeable future. Yet when it is considered that Central Asian Persian-speakers have been living under Uzbek rule for almost five hundred years and have not only been able survive but also flourish and influence Turkic language and culture, this fear seems unwarranted.

Looking back to the history of Uzbek-Tajik rivalry, one would agree that the rivalry between the two groups in pre-Soviet times were related to kinds of life-styles these group had - Sedentary and nomadic. Tajiks were the

sedentary peoples of Central Asia whereas Uzbeks were the nomads who migrated to the present territory of Uzbekistan. In the early Soviet period the conflict took a new dimension. The conflict mainly revolved around the problem of territorial delimitation due to which areas inhabited by Tajiks fell under Uzbek SSR and vice-versa. The claim of Tajiks over Samarkand and Bukhara cities, which came to the open during late '80s, were based on the fact that these cities were the heart of Tajik-Persian culture and it was rightly claimed that Tajiks were the earliest inhabitants of these cities. The Tajik demand for Samarkand and Bukhara were legitimized in the face of an unravelling truth of population figure. In the first ever census of the Russian Empire in 1897, in the cities of Samarkand oblast, Tajiks dominated the figures with 60.58 percent of males and 66.53 percent of females, whereas Uzbeks were 13.63 percent of the males and 13.35 percent of the females. The territorial demands of Tajiks against Uzbekistan remained a potential source of trouble till the end of Soviet Union and even today the demand is a bone of contention.

Today, the Uzbek-Tajik conflict in Uzbekistan has a different dimension. Now, the question can be addressed within majority-minority framework. In the post-Soviet Central Asian politics, the possibility of transfer of the Tajik-dominated region from Uzbekistan to Tajikistan seems impractical. Hence, the Tajiks of Uzbekistan are left with few options of trying but different

democratic channels and means to assert themselves for their culture and social development. But this option has limited scope in the present condition. Another important means could be the international support. The Tajik intelligentsia can draw attention of the international community towards their problem and can build pressure on Uzbek government for a solution. However, it depends upon how much determination and strength the Tajik community of Uzbekistan has to resist the authoritarian regime.

The Uzbek-Tajik rivalry in Central Asia has been viewed from another different perspective too. This perspective views the conflict in totality. It explains the conflict in terms of conflict between too old dominant cultures - Persian and Turkic. It explains the repression of Tajiks in Uzbekistan as well as the Uzbek interventions in Tajikistan, in the light of Uzbekistan's dream of creating a "greater Uzbekistan" or "Greater Turkestan". Having this dream in the background, Uzbekistan views Tajiks, the Persian representative in the region, as a potential threat for their dream project. The reawakening of Tajik national and cultural consciousness can pose threat to Uzbekistan's territorial integrity and regional ambitions as well as the Turkic hegemonic position in Central Asia. There is no doubt in the minds of people in and outside Central Asia that history, culture literature, art, music of the Persian culture are far more richer than the Turks. Because of this, Uzbekistan viewed an independent and



strong Tajikistan as a potential threat to its project of recreating Turkistan and also it would have undermined Uzbek's self-perception as the leader of Central Asia and of an incipient Turkic world. This factor also explains the repression and harassment of Tajiks and Uzbek's intention of eliminating Tajik culture in Uzbekistan.

However, the idea of creating a Greater Turkistan will remain a distant dream as the idea has not so far taken deep root beyond the circle of intellectuals nor, in the present conditions, Uzbekistan has the resources and strength to take up this project. At the same time, interest of Russia, China, Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan and a relatively peaceful Tajikistan and the politics involved in the region do not suggest the possibility or success of such transnational ideas and project.

One would agree that by firmly linking nationality to the notion of ethnic homeland and linking culture of the titular nations closely to state-structuring, the Uzbek elite have secured their political pre-eminence within the new polity. Despite formulation in the constitution and other legislative acts guaranteeing equality of all citizens, nationalising politics and practices are manifest in the privileged status of Uzbek language, newly revised history and the exclusion of members of non-titular groups from the echelons of power. The

Tajiks of Uzbekistan are now alienated from both political as well as social sphere of Uzbekistan. Hence, lack of effective institutions and consensual politics in post-Soviet Uzbekistan have created preconditions of ethnic conflicts.

To conclude, one may observe that the relationship between Uzbeks and Tajiks from ancient times till now, presents a mixed picture that is sometimes confusing. This confusion is more due to fact that unlike other ethnic conflicts, the Uzbeks and Tajiks do not have sharp differences. They have a common historical experience, shared common territory, very similar physical attributes. Their dresses are similar and they follow same religion and even some festivals are common. Yet, the conflict between them is sharp and deep. These common features not only show the affinity but are also the hopes for conflict resolution and conflict prevention in the future.

Still, a number of measures could be considered to reduce and eliminate the ethnic conflict in Uzbekistan and in other parts of Central Asia. Ethnic conflicts can be avoided through a system of compromise among powerful elites and proportional allotment of political representation and governmental revenue. Secondly, allocation of key post at both central and local levels on a proportionality principle. For Central position, aggregate proportion could be used as criteria for allocation, while at the local levels, the ethnic composition of

given region could be the standard. This would quell fears of domination by the titular nationality by giving other ethnic groups access to institutions that determine the allocation of resources and control the direction of policy so as to create a state in which all members feel represented and enfranchised. In long run such strategies may increase the sense of belonging.

This could be supplemented by other measures. Like the acceptance of the principle of dual citizenship, political autonomy for regions inhabited principally by non-titular nationality, recognition of Tajik (in case of Uzbekistan) as another official language, and the creation and presentation of intellectual and cultural infrastructure like newspapers, radio stations, television channels, schools and universities etc. These measures would reduce the prospect for ethnic conflict by increasing the likelihood that all members of the political community, irrespective of ethnic affiliation, feel that the state reflects their aspiration.

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