

**NATION-BUILDING AND STATE-CONSOLIDATION
IN POST-SOVIET CENTRAL ASIA:
CASE-STUDY OF UZBEKISTAN**

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DECLARATION


I declare that the dissertation entitled "NATION-BUILDING AND STATE-CONSOLIDATION IN POST SOVIET CENTRAL ASIA: CASE-STUDY OF UZBEKISTAN", submitted by me in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the award of the degree of MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my own work. The dissertation has not been previously submitted for any other degree of this university or any other university.


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CERTIFICATE

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


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DEDICATED TO
THE LOVING AND ENLIGHTENING MEMORIES OF
MY “AJOBA!” (GRAND-FATHER)

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS:

USSR: Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

SSR: Soviet Socialist Republic

ASSR: Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic

CIS: Commonwealth of Independent States

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

With the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the Yugoslav Federation in the early 1990s, the issues of identity and nationalism came in focus in the international politics. The rise of nationalism and its great potential to ignite serious conflicts gave rise to new discourse on relevance of the concepts such as nation, nation-state, nationalism and their applicability to various parts of the world.

The wave of nationalism did not hit Central Asia until the collapse of the Soviet Union. In fact, the Central Asian republics were never keen on getting separated from the USSR. Independence came to these states as a shock and left them in the dilemma about the future course. It was in aftermath of the independence that Central Asian countries adopted nationalistic agenda. This research takes into account larger Central Asian context, but major focus will be on Uzbekistan.

Uzbekistan provides an interesting case of nation-building and state consolidation. Though Uzbek nation-state came into being in 1991, Nationalism in Uzbekistan did not emerge suddenly at that time; it has deep roots in the past. In other words, the emergence of the Uzbek nationalism and the process of Uzbek state-building was not a one-time affair but has been a continuous process. Moreover, in Uzbekistan, nation-building and state-building did not take place simultaneously but at different points of time. In the post-independence period, however, the processes of state-consolidation and nation-building seem to be going hand in hand.

Uzbek statehood started taking shape during the medieval Islamic kingdoms among the sedentary people in the heartland of Eurasia. Later the Central Asian region was divided into three Khanates; Bukhara, Kokand and Khiva; all these khanates were mainly centered in present day Uzbekistan and were ruled by the Uzbek dynasties. Most of the region came under the Tsarist rule in second half of the nineteenth century. These political formations had some features of modern statehood namely, governmental institutions, judicial courts, permanent standing armies and regular taxation. This era also

started giving some shape to Uzbek identity. During the medieval period, 'Uzbeks' was a supra-tribal name that embraced within it various tribes in the region between river Syrdariya and Urals. But these people did not have the sense of being a 'nation', as the identities were majorly influenced by supra-national (Islam) or sub-national (Tribes, Clans) consciousness. The Uzbek identity was in rudimentary form and was given specific shape only in the Soviet period.

The major milestone in the development of Uzbek identity was achieved when the Soviet regime created a federation based on 'Nationality-based Territorial Statehood' which finally ended up in the creation of the 'Union of Soviet Socialist Republics' in 1924. The process of National Territorial De-limitation which started in 1924 and ended in 1936 gave birth to the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic. Thus, for the first time the Uzbek Republic was given its current borders on the basis of the nationality criteria. Soviets played an important role in shaping of Uzbek identity through systematic codification and standardization of local languages, introduction of new scripts and revival of history, myths, and national symbols.

In Uzbekistan, as in other Central Asian States, there was no nationalist movement with separatist overtone. Though a symbolic step was taken by the Supreme Soviet of Uzbekistan by adopting declaration of Uzbek sovereignty in June, 1991 it was clearly an urge for more autonomy within the Union and not for separation and independence.

After the independence, there emerged two simultaneous processes in Uzbekistan, to be exact, state-consolidation and nation-building. The process of state-consolidation in Uzbekistan is remarkable. As we have seen, 'statehood' was not new to Uzbekistan. The medieval Muslim kingdoms as well as the three khanates in the pre-Soviet Uzbek history definitely had features of statehood; that is the governmental bodies, regular taxation, permanent standing army and so on. The Soviet Socialist Republic of Uzbekistan was also a state in the federal set up, having defined borders, governmental apparatus and internal autonomy. Thus, it is not rather appropriate to use the term 'state-building' in case of independent Uzbekistan. Though the new regime tried to introduce new constitution and create a new form of state based on democratic principles, all it was doing was consolidating existing statehood through national legitimacy and thereby

giving it international recognition. Thus, the term ‘**state-consolidation**’ is more appropriate.

The process of nation-building in the post-independence Uzbekistan is an interesting story of emergence and construction of ‘**nationalism from above**’ where the ruling elite itself initiated the nationalizing program. Overnight transition of the Soviet-trained elites to the ardent defenders of Uzbek nationalism can be seen through the prism of sudden and unexpected independence. These developments led to the transition of the Uzbek state from being a part of the tightly controlled powerful communist state to a small independent landlocked state on the world map. This compelled the ruling elites to find some program which would earn them popular legitimacy. Thus the state sought to justify its post-Soviet survival through the discourse of national sovereignty in the era of nation-state system.

Identity plays a vital role in the initial phases of independence, as it acts as a cementing force to hold the people together with some form of unity and cohesiveness. The Uzbek identity is used by the state as a tool to garner popular support and legitimacy. The ‘**Nationalizing policies**’ are adopted based on titular identity and culture. This was clearly evident from the policies like adoption of the Uzbek language as the official state language, introduction of the Latin script, state-sponsored and controlled revival of Islamic institutions, rewriting of history, glorification of medieval legendary personalities as Uzbek national heroes, introduction of new names, introduction of new national holidays, national symbols and so on. Nevertheless, the ‘nationalizing’ policies of the state are instrumental in creating the feeling of alienation and exclusion among the minorities. The culture and language that are promoted by the state as being ‘national’ are derived from a specific ethno-cultural entity and thus, others fear marginalization.

In the post- Soviet period, the Uzbek ruling elites under the leadership of president Islam Karimov have initiated the processes of nation-building and state-consolidation. These processes seem to be going hand in hand. The statehood is consolidated keeping in mind the special characteristics of the ‘nation’ and nation-building is carried forward by using state apparatus.

Review of the Literature:

In the aftermath of the Soviet Union, the issues of identity, nationalism and nation-state formation started being discussed in the scholarly circles. During the first decade of the independence of the Central Asian state, a plenty of literature was published. Scholars believed that the consolidation of ethno-national identities and the territories that the Soviets had assigned to the members of each nationality created strong aspiration towards the formation of nation-states in the post-Soviet period and thus the states were caught in the dilemma as to how to carry the process of national consolidation forward (Sengupta 1997, Patnaik 2003, Akcali 2005).

Akbarjadeh (1996) argues that the ruling elites found a useful model for post-Soviet transition in the nation-states of Europe. Former communist leaders of the Soviet era overnight became the champions of nationalism to seek popular legitimacy and to lead the newly born state to the path of independent nationhood and sovereign statehood. According to Kubicek (1997), the Central Asian elites felt the need to promote their sovereign statehood through a distinct national flavour, differentiating themselves from the neighbors and giving birth to the sense of common identity. He asserts that upsurge of nationalism is a natural process necessary for state-building. Thus Central Asian states had to cultivate it from above.

The nationalistic outburst in Central Asia was an exercise 'from above' as the state themselves adopted certain domestic policies and established domestic structures to facilitate the process of nation-building. Uzbekistan in the post-independence period has been on the forefront of nationalization. Sengupta (1997) seeks attention to the Uzbek case as it has emerged as the Central Asian state with a clearly defined national agenda. It has initiated number of 'nationalizing' program for creation and consolidation of independent Uzbek identity. Scholars have drawn attention to the state sponsored revival of cultural landmarks through glorification of the legendary personalities, revival of 'national' history and resurrection of myths, holidays and monuments.

The language policies of the state are also worth discussing. The official instatement of the Uzbek language, the revised language laws and changing of the script from Cyrillic to

Latin has attracted attention of the academics worldwide. Dollerup (1998) argues that the new language policy has three important aspects; de-Russification, Uzbekization and Westernization. Scholars have also talked about the policy of renaming the administrative institutes and places taking into account 'historical and national features'. (Akbarjadeh 1996) Another very important aspect of Uzbek nationalizing policy was the formalization of the traditional Uzbek neighborhood committees called the 'Mahallas', through the creation of 'Mahalla-Fund' in 1992 as local self-governing bodies (Koroteyeva, Makarova 1998). According to Patnaik (2003), the nationalism in Uzbekistan was earlier targeted against the Russians, but gradually the focus shifted to other indigenous ethnic groups.

The nationalizing program is criticized by many scholars as 'Uzbekisation', a systematic attempt at nation-building which has strong 'exclusivist' traits and marginalizes the minorities (Sengupta 1998, Patnaik 2003). Khazanov (1995) gives an interesting definition of the term 'minority' by arguing that minority is not just the matter of arithmetic calculations. It is in fact matter of who holds the political power and whose language and culture occupy dominant position in the state. Sengupta (1998) has rightly linked the phenomena of nationalizing states and national minorities. She argues that nationalism instead of solving ethnic/nation tangle in the region has reconfigured it.

Scholars (Akbarjadeh 1996, Sengupta 1997 and Akcali 2005) have come up with the argument that nation-building process in Uzbekistan has been going parallel to the state-building process. Akbarjadeh (1996) and Akcali (2005) cite the example of introduction of the new constitution and some of the new laws and initiation of the new form of government to justify their argument about state-building in the independent Uzbekistan. The state adopted a new constitution in December 1992 which established the legal foundation for new legislative, executive and judicial bodies. It provided for the setting up of democratic institutions.

However, while criticizing nationalism in Uzbekistan as 'Uzbekization', scholars have failed to understand that what the Uzbek government has been pursuing is basically a desperate attempt to survive in the 'nation-state system'. As the late entrant to this system, the state had to develop and inculcate nationalist feelings from above in order to

seek social cohesion. Though it has demerits, the state's attempt at fusing the processes of nation-building and state-consolidation is understandable.

This research has taken into account the larger Central Asian context, but its focus is on Uzbekistan. Uzbekistan is the centrally located state in Central Asia that shares borders with all other Central Asian states. Almost half of the Central Asian population lives in Uzbekistan. Uzbekistan has long history of sedentary statehood and is an old civilization which the Uzbek people take pride in. Moreover, among the post-Soviet independent Central Asian states, the Uzbek republic has been on the forefront of nationalization. For these reasons, the case of Uzbekistan is taken up.

The study deals with the Uzbek history, in the pre-Soviet, Soviet and post-Soviet periods, with special reference to issues like identity, nation-building and state-consolidation. Major attention is given to the post-independence processes of 'nation-building' and 'state-consolidation' and the inter-relationship.

This research was based on two hypotheses. Firstly, after the sudden disintegration of the Soviet Union and the discrediting of communist ideology, the ruling elites sought political legitimacy by championing the nationalist cause reflected in rediscovery and construction of Uzbek history and myths. And secondly, nationalism in the independent Uzbekistan is directly related to the process of state-consolidation as it provides the foundation for strengthening of the sovereign statehood.

Second chapter of this dissertation makes a detailed review of the theoretical and empirical literature dealing with the concepts of nationalism, nation-building and state. There is an attempt to find interrelation between them. The chapter also discusses the evolution of these phenomena in international politics. Third chapter deals with the history of Uzbekistan with special reference to the formation of the Uzbek identity and the development of Uzbek statehood. Analysis is mainly divided between the pre-Soviet developments as well as developments during the seven decades of the Soviet rule. Fourth chapter studies the process of nation-building and state-consolidation in independent Uzbekistan. After discussing the situation in Uzbekistan on the verge of

independence, detailed analysis is done about the nationalizing policies and program of the Uzbek regime and its impact on the processes of nation-building and state-consolidation in the post-Soviet times. The issues pertaining to identity, ethnicity, religion, culture and minorities are dealt in detail. Last chapter summarizes the findings of the study.

CHAPTER 2

NATION, NATIONALISM AND STATE: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

CONTENTS:

1. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK:

A. Nation

B. Nationalism

C. State

D. Inter-relationship

E. Nation-building and State-consolidation

2. HISTORICAL EVOLUTION:

NATION, NATIONALISM AND STATE: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Conceptual Framework:

NATION:

Nation is one of the most widely used concepts of the twentieth century. But its usage is not free from confusion, as it is used interchangeably with the other concepts such as state, nationality, and nation-state. Though it has links with these terms, it has to be clearly defined and understood, free from overlaps. According to the simplest understanding, 'Nation' is a named human community having common homeland, language, culture, history, religion and myths, giving its members sense of unity and cohesiveness. In other words, it refers to people living in a specific territory, inspired by sense of unity and common political aspirations.

If, carefully looked at the origin of the term, the English word 'nation' is derived from the Latin word '*nasci*', meaning 'to be born'. In its original usage, the term meant a group of people united by birth or birthplace, but had no political connotation. It acquired political overtones only in the late 18th century, which will be discussed in details under 'historical evolution'.

Till date, number of political scientists have tried to define the concept of 'nation'. The publication of *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, by **Benedict Anderson**, has been one of the most important milestones in the formulation of the theory of nationalism. Here, Anderson defines Nation as an **'imagined political community, imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.'** In this definition, Anderson brings out four features of the 'nation' (Anderson B. 1983: 6-7).

Firstly, it is **'imagined'** because the members of even the smallest nation will never know their fellow-members, meet them or even hear of them, yet in their minds they have the image of their communion. He quotes Gellner, 'nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness, it 'invents' nation where it does not exist' (as quoted in Anderson B. 1983: 6).

Secondly, nation is a **'community'**, as regardless of the actual inequalities and exploitation within it, the nation is always conceived as a cohesive group.

Thirdly, it is **'limited'**, because even the largest of them, encompassing perhaps a billion living human beings, has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations.

Lastly, it is **'sovereign'**, because it dreams of being free and the meaning of this freedom is formation of a sovereign state. By mentioning sovereignty as one of the important characteristics of nation, Anderson has linked the term 'nation' with that of the state.

Another outstanding definition of nation is given by **Anthony D. Smith** (2001). He can be classified as a **'primordialist'** because he highlighted continuity between the primordial *'ethnies'* and the modern 'nations'. In his argument, Smith seconds the 'imaginative' theory propounded by Anderson, as he asserts that **nation is a felt and lived community**, as it is a category of both behavior and imagination.

Anthony Smith defines nation as, *'a named human community occupying a homeland, and having common myths and a shared history, a common public culture, a single economy and common rights and duties for all members'* (Smith A. 2001: 12-13)

At the same time, he has also defined the concept of *'ethnie'* as, *'a named human community connected to a homeland, possessing common myths of ancestry, shared memories, one or more elements of shared culture, and a measure of solidarity, at least among the elites'* (Smith A. 2001: 12-13)

Smith lists the common characteristics of both these phenomena as, proper name, shared history and memories, common myths and links them to their homeland. The only feature

that distinguishes nation from the *ethnie* is that the nation has the 'public culture'. In other words, despite all the other overlaps between the two phenomena, the ethnic community does not have political referent and lacks territorial dimension. It is not necessary for the ethnic community to be in possession of its homeland. The nation, on the other hand, has to occupy its homeland in order to constitute itself as a nation. In addition, in order to establish its nationhood and be recognized as a nation, it has to evolve a public culture and desire a degree of self-determination. *Ethnies* are the passive nations and nations are in turn active ethnic communities. In the historical process, more and more ethnic communities try to take territorial components and adopt a civic model, as they seek to become nations. Here, it cannot be argued that all *ethnies* are bent on attaining nationhood, but the pressure for *ethnie* to move towards nationhood (not necessarily independent statehood) is extremely powerful (Smith A. 2001: 154).

Smith categorizes the definitions of nation into **objective definition** and **subjective definition**, former focusing upon the factors such as language, religion and culture, whereas later emphasizing attitudes, perceptions and sentiments. While he classifies Anderson's definition as subjective, he quotes **Joseph Stalin's** definition as objective. According to Stalin, 'nation is a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of common language, territory and economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture' (as quoted in Smith A. 2001: 11).

Anthony Smith, along with scholars like Walker Connor, Edward Shils, belongs to the primordialist school of thought, as they emphasize the importance of primordial ties such as language, culture, religion. They also claim that nations are the natural units of history and integral elements of the human experience.

Although particular primordial features are commonly associated with nationhood, notably, language, religion, ethnicity and myths and traditions, there is no objective criterion that establishes where and when a nation exists. The cultural unity that can apparently articulate itself in nationhood is difficult to point out. It rather reflects a combination of factors. In this sense, the nation is a psycho-political entity, a group of people who regard themselves as a natural political community and are distinguished by shared loyalty or affection in the form of patriotism.

As against primordialists, there are ‘**modernists**’, who assert that nation is a purely modern phenomenon. This view is mainly represented by **Ernest Gellner** (1983) who argues that national identity is formed in response to the changing situations and historical challenges. It was directly related to the growth of industrial society, as pre-modern agro-literate societies had no place for nations and nationalism. Gellner emphasizes too much on the economic factors. According to him, the modern industrial economy needs both the new type of central culture and central state, the culture needs the state, and in turn, the state needs the homogenous cultural branding of its people. Thus, mutual relationship between the modern culture and state is the requirement of the modern economy (Gellner 1983: 140).

Benedict Anderson is also a modernist scholar, who relates rise of capitalism to the cultural roots of nation. He stresses on the revolution in the modes of communication, rise of vernacular languages and the spread of printed word, which he describes as ‘**print-capitalism**’, which finally made it practically easy and possible to ‘**imagine**’ communities, as sovereign and limited (Anderson B. 1983: 37-44).

Breuilly explains modernist idea very precisely;

“.. I do not regard the nation as having a significant pre-modern history.. Rather I treat the nation as a modern political and ideological formation which developed in close conjunction with the emergence of the modern, territorial, sovereign and participatory state..” (Breuilly, 2001: 32)

When analyzing the theoretical understanding of nation, one cannot ignore a chunk of scholars who do not regard nation as natural phenomenon. There is a group of ‘**Marxist**’ scholars who argue that the nation is the ideologically constructed phenomenon and is derived from ‘false consciousness’. It is based on ‘invented traditions’ and ‘myths’ created by nationalist ideologues. They argue that national identity is used as a device by the existing ruling class to counter the threat of social revolution by ensuring that national loyalty is stronger than class solidarity, thereby binding the working class to the existing power structure. **Eric Hobsbawm** affirmed,

'.. any sufficiently large body of people whose members regard themselves as members of a 'nation', will be treated as such. However, whether such a body of people does so regard itself cannot be established simply by consulting writers and political spokesmen of organizations claiming the status of 'nation' for it..' (as quoted in Brueuilly 2008 : 405)

NATIONALISM:

After having the basic discussion on the concept of nation, discussion can now be turned to another related and equally contested term '**Nationalism**'. In simple language, nationalism is an ideology that holds that national and political boundaries should be congruent. Or in other words, it assumes that there has to be a natural congruence between country's name, the territory it covers, the population it inhabits and the political system that administers it in the name of its people.

Anthony D. Smith (2001: 9) gives a convenient definition of the term nationalism as,

"an ideological movement for attaining and maintaining autonomy, unity and identity for a population which some of its members deem to constitute an actual or potential 'nation'."

Here, Smith identifies three goals of nationalism, viz., national autonomy, national unity and national identity. For nationalists, a nation cannot survive without a sufficient degree of all three. The link between ideology and movement does not limit the concept of nationalism to movements seeking independence. The words 'and maintaining' recognize the continuing influence of nationalism and long-established and independent nations. Another assertion of his definition is that, nations do not necessarily exist prior to nationalism. The words 'or potential' recognize the situation where a group of nationalists create a nation. Lastly, nationalisms are not limited to the attaining of independence, or political goals. It covers important areas such as culture and society. The ideal of national identity relates to cultural aspects of nationalism.

Anthony Smith (2001: 5-6) lists five usages of the term nationalism as,

1. a process of formation, or growth, of nations,
2. a sentiment or consciousness of belonging to the nation,

3. a language or symbolism of the nation,
4. a social and political movement on behalf of the nation, and
5. a doctrine or ideology of the nation, both general and particular.

Out of these five usages, Smith asserts that nationalism mainly refers to the last two usages, though second usage is also equally important.

Earnest Gellner (1983: 1) defines nationalism as,

'the theory of political legitimacy, which requires that ethnic boundaries should not cut across political ones, and in particular, that ethnic boundaries within a given state- a contingency already formally excluded by the principle in its general formulation- should not separate the power-holders from the rest.'

Gellner's argument about nationalism is twofold. Firstly, as discussed earlier, he asserts that nationalism arises only due to specific set of social conditions that occur only with industrialization, and therefore is a modern phenomenon. Thus, Gellner's modernist thesis is applicable to his argument about nationalism as well. Secondly, nationalism can be established only when 'high culture' is established and population is relatively homogeneous. It is about an entry to, participation in, identification with, a literate high culture which is coextensive with an entire political unit and its population (Gellner 1983: 140).

John Breuilly's (2008: 404) definition of nationalism highlights another aspect of it. According to this definition, nationalism is the idea that 'the world is divided into nations which provide the overriding focus of political identity and loyalty which in turn demands national self-determination'. Here, self-determination, generally means independent statehood, but nationalists also might settle for something less, such as autonomy within a federal state. Breuilly has rightly classified nationalism into various forms. The most important distinction comes from the ideology, as ideology can divide nationalism into; **civic nationalism** and **ethnic nationalism**. Here, civic nationalism envisages loyalty to the state and its values, whereas ethnic nationalism demands more

loyalty to the ethnic group. In the former, state precedes the nation, while in the later, the nation precedes the state. But this cannot always be watertight division.

STATE:

'State' has been a central theme of political science. Though some form of political organization existed since time immemorial, 'state' is a relatively modern phenomenon.

Various scholars have tried to define the concept of 'State'. According to **Max Weber**, the state is 'a human community that claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of force within a given territory' (Gaub 2003: 116). Weber emphasized on three attribute of the state; firstly, its institutional characters (the state as organisation or set of organisations), secondly, its functions (especially regarding the making of rules), and finally its recourse to coercion (monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force).

By and large, Weber's definition relates to state's legitimacy of using violence through special, clearly identified, disciplined and centralized agency. But **Gellner**, arguing that Weber's definition is not completely satisfactory, defines the state as 'the institution or set of institutions specifically concerned with the enforcement of order, through specialized agencies such as police force and set of legal courts' (Gellner 1983: 4).

Hall and Ekenberry define state through three of its important characteristics. Firstly, it is a set of institutions (manned by state's own personnel) the most important of which is the means of violence and coercion. Secondly, these institutions are at the centre of a geographically bounded territory. And lastly, the state monopolizes rule-making within its own territory (Hall and Ekenberry 1997: 1).

Generally, scholars have emphasized on four attribute of state, viz., population, territory, government and sovereignty, as the most essential, without which an entity cannot be called a state. The state exists within a particular geographically bounded territory. It



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consists of specific population, to which it gives a sense of belonging and identity by granting citizenship rights. The state enjoys sovereignty, internally as well as externally.

Government is the most essential element of the state. In fact, many-a-times the two concepts are used interchangeably. Actually, state is the main organization of which government is an administrative organ. State exists continuously and governments are made and remade. To put it differently, government is the face of the state for the common man as the state is represented by the government. This is the reason why functioning of the government assumes tremendous importance in the studies of the state.

INTER-RELATIONSHIP:

After having a detailed discussion about the three important concepts of political science, viz., nation, nationalism and state, now it is the time to discuss their inter-relationship and inter-dependence. All these phenomena would have no relevance if they are totally isolated from each other. Briefly, today's states are mainly classified as the nation-states and nationalism is the cementing force between the nation and the state. Thus it is necessary to study the inter-relationship between the three.

First, it is necessary to clearly distinguish between the concepts of the nation and the state. The state relates to institutional activity, it is about the governing mechanism. The nation, on the other hand, denotes a type of community; it is about sense of unity among the people. State can be defined as the set of autonomous institutions, possessing a legitimate monopoly of coercion and extraction in the given territory; whereas nation is the group of people bound by common homeland, language, culture and history.

Both state and the nation have territory, but there is a crucial difference between the national territory and the state territory, as the former is moral and later is legal (Oommen 1997(a): 33). State's territory is legally binding and the state provides its residents within the territory protection from the internal insecurity and external aggression. Nation, on the other hand, is the community in communication with its homeland. It is a territorial

entity to which the nationals have an emotional attachment and in which, they invest a moral meaning (Oommen 1997(b): 17).

Both nation and state take their own course of evolution. Neither nations nor states exist at all times and in all circumstances, neither are they both the same contingency. Their emergence can be independent of each other, as in, some states emerge without the help of the nations. Also some nations emerge without the blessings of the states. But nationalism holds that they were destined for each other that either without the other is incomplete and constitutes a tragedy. In other words, **nationalism is the cementing force between the state and the nation.**

This discussion brings us to the relationship between the state and the nationalism. **John Breuilly** (2001: 32) asserts that nationalism is unconceivable without the state. The central nationalist goal is autonomy, which in most cases establishes a sovereign state, justified in the name of the 'nation'. Breuilly is also a modernist, like Anderson and Gellner, as he argues that the modern state provides the key to contextualize nationalism. The formation of the specialized, sovereign, territorial, public state is the institutional context within which the idea of nationalism appears appropriate as an ideology, both in intellectual terms and as a way of mobilizing support (Breuilly 2001: 51).

Gellner's argument also strongly supports that of Breuilly. According to Gellner, nationalism emerges only in milieu in which the existence of state is almost taken for granted. Thus, problem of nationalism does not arise where there is no state. But, at the same time, it does not even arise in each and every state. On the contrary, it arises only in some states (Gellner 1983: 4-5). Here, occurs a dilemma. There are number of potential nations on the earth, but not all nationalisms can be satisfied at the same time. The satisfaction of some spells the frustration of others.

All the states in the world are not essentially 'nation' states; it means that most of them are home to the multiple populations. **T. K. Oommen** (1990: 32) has listed the following varieties of situations as regard to state-nation relationship;

1. One nation- one state, which is a very rare situation, Japan being the best possible example.
2. Parts of different nations come together to form one state for geo-political reasons, for example, Switzerland.
3. One nation divided into two states for ideological reasons, Korea being the perfect example.
4. Part of one nation is constituted into one sovereign state and remaining part of the nation is attached to another state. For example, West Bengal and Bangladesh.
5. A nation divided between two states and constituting parts of them along with other nations, example being Punjab.
6. Number of nations constituting one state, e.g. India
7. Set of migrants from multitude of states constitute a state; United States being the best example.

This brings us to the concept of ‘**nation-state**’ which is very widely used in the political science literature of the 19th and the 20th century. Nationalism is said to be having its roots in the modern **nation-state system** which emerged in Europe in the 16th and the 17th century, as the states emerged on the basis of nation or in other words, national boundaries gave definite identity to the states on the basis of nationhood. In the history of nationalism, ‘nationhood’ and ‘statehood’ are intrinsically linked as the goal of nationalism is the construction of a ‘nation-state’.

But the concept of ‘nation-state’ itself was also not free of complications. It had two serious problems. Firstly, theorists see it as putting state at the dominant position and making nation a kind of junior partner or qualifying objective. Little attention is given to the dynamics of nation. While the first problem is theoretical, the second is empirical and more serious. According to Walker Connor, the monolithic nation-state, where nation and state are exactly coextensive, where there is just one nation in the given state and one state for the given nation- is rare. Nearly 90 percent of world’s states are poly-ethnic and about half of those are divided by ethnic cleavages (as quoted in Smith A. 2001: 17).

Thus, instead of using the term nation-state, Anthony Smith (2001: 17) comes out with the term '**national state**' which, according to him is more neutral. He defines 'national state' as 'a state legitimized by the principles of nationalism, whose members possess a measure of national unity and integration (but not cultural homogeneity)'. By making national unity and integration as option, problem of 'national incongruence' can be solved. Similarly, he also talks about '**state-nations**', where poly-ethnic states aspire nationhood and seek to turn themselves into unified (not homogenous) nations through measures of accommodation and integration.

NATION-BUILDING AND STATE-CONSOLIDATION:

After dealing with the basic concepts like nation, nationalism and state and their inter-relationship, it becomes easy to understand '**nation-building**' and '**state-consolidation**' which is the main theme of this research work. The state does not come into existence overnight, neither does the nation. There is a long and complicated evolutionary process involved.

Broadly speaking, scholars have talked about two stages in the evolution of the state, viz. state-formation and state-building. State-formation, as the name suggests is a very primary stage, where the state comes into existence and starts taking shape through formation of institutions within it. Studies on state-formation emphasis on three tentacles of the state, viz., permanent standing army, regular tax-collection machinery and an expanded set of courts, whereas state-building is the formation of particular, pre-defined state-institutions (Braddick: 2000). The process of state-formation is unintentional while that of state-building is intentional top-down process involving establishment of executive and legislative capacities within a state (Fukuyama 2004).

In this research, concept of '**state-consolidation**' is used instead of 'state-formation' or 'state-building'. The reason for doing so was made clear in the introductory chapter. As per the simple understanding, 'state-consolidation' can be understood by comparing it with 'state-building'. While the process of 'state-building' relates to the establishment of the state institutions, that of 'state-consolidation' refers to the consolidation of these

institutions, as the name itself suggests. By and large, it provides for the strengthening of the permanent centralized governing institutions through specialized personnel, powerful machinery and good governance and control over consolidated territory and integrated people. Increasing **loyalty** and **durability** are two important features of state-consolidation.

The process of 'state-consolidation' cannot be accomplished in isolation, but has to be accompanied by the process of '**nation-building**'. By general understanding, 'nation-building' refers to the process of construction and consolidation of the national identity. This process aims at the unification of the people within the state so that it remains politically stable and viable in the long run. **Anthony Smith** gives a definition of the term 'national identity' as,

'the continuous reproduction and reinterpretation of the pattern of values, symbols, memories, myths and traditions that compose the distinctive heritage of nations, and the identification of individuals with that pattern and heritage and with its cultural elements' (Smith A. 2001: 18)

In most of the cases, 'nation-building' takes place through the top-down process. Here, a homogeneous language and culture is fostered and diffused and also to some degree, defined by the state. Almost all modern states have necessarily a homogenous language, and also homogenous cultures. As discussed above in Smith's argument, national identity is constructed and promoted by the state institutions through standardization of 'national' language, mass literacy, spread of primary education, promotion of literature and rewriting of history in a way that glorifies the 'golden period'. National symbols, flags, emblems are distributed and national holidays are celebrated with great enthusiasm.

When it comes to the modern nation-states, **homogeneity** fostered through nationalism which is the most important requirement. This homogenization of the population can be justified and legitimized in the argument that society needs a sense of unity and cohesiveness for stable development of the state. National language and national culture are promoted in order to bring social unification (Tayler: 191). However, through this

homogenization, there are chances of the occurrence of the question of cultural-linguistic minority groups who feel that their identity is not represented in the national identity. The sense of marginalisation, internal conflicts or the civil wars can be located in the discriminatory political institutions, exclusionary nationalist ideologies, uneven economic distribution and cultural discriminations through myth-making, problematic history writing and so on (Brown M 1996). Thus, nation-building process should evolve in inclusive manner and not in the exclusive manner. Unity, cohesiveness and integrity should not be mistaken for total homogeneity and space should be kept for diverse, yet unified identities.

HISTORICAL EVOLUTION:

After the conceptual analysis, it would be desirable to review in brief the historical developments pertaining to these phenomena in empirical political life. Without which, the study of these concepts would remain grossly incomplete.

The concept of state is much older than the other concepts like nation, nationalism. Historically human societies have inhabited state-like political units to administer themselves. The state has evolved through various forms such as ancient tiny city-states, huge middle age empires, feudal states and imperial states. But the fact that the states have existed since early times, does not prove its superiority over other phenomena. The form of state that we are concerned with in this research is a modern state. It assumes four basic features, that is, population, territory, government and sovereignty and is, by common agreement, called 'nation-state'. Since, our research does not concern pre-nation-state forms of the state, it is logical to start our historical analysis from the emergence of the nation-states.

Rise of the '**nation-states**' can generally be traced to the 16th and 17th century Europe when various states emerged on the basis of 'nation', as France for the French, England for the English, Spain for the Spanish and so on. Important events of that period, which were collectively understood as '**renaissance**' and '**reformation**', had impact on political life also. Inventions in technologies, revolution in the field of transport and

communication, spread of vernacular languages led to the easy spread of literature and ideas. Rise of industrialization resulted in emergence of 'national economies'. The feudal states of the medieval period collapsed during the same period giving way to powerful monarchies. These monarchs defied the unconditional control of the papacy and asserted sovereignty over their respective well-defined territories.

The legal understanding between the rulers came with the Treaty of Westphalia (1648) through which they recognized each other's claims over the specific territory and population and their internal and external sovereignty. This led to the emergence of the 'nation-state system', or what was called as the '**Westphalian system**' of world order.

In the historical evolution, nation-states predate **Nationalism** as political phenomenon. Nation-states were created and administered by the rulers, but the people were little or not involved in the activities of their states. Neither did they have any national consciousness. This national awakening came with the tide of nationalism. According to the general agreement, it was first born during the **French Revolution** of 1789. Previously countries had been thought of as 'principalities' or 'kingdoms' and its people were treated as 'subjects'. Their loyalty was towards the ruler rather than being towards the state or the nation (Heywood 1992: 155). In France, the people rose up against the autocratic ruler Louis XVI in 1789. It was for the first time that any revolutionary movement was carried out in the name of the people, understood as the 'French Nation'. The ideology behind the French Revolution was mainly influenced by **Jean Jacques Rousseau's** idea about popular self-government. He argued that the government should be based not upon the absolute power of the monarch, but upon the indivisible collective will of the entire community. Thus, nationalism was the revolutionary and democratic creed, reflecting the idea that 'subjects of the crown' should be transformed into 'citizens of the state' (Heywood 1992: 155).

This form of nationalism was necessarily '**reform nationalism**', as it questioned the legitimacy of the power. The state then started taking shape as a clear territorial unit, justified in the name of those it ruled. It claimed sovereignty as a unique form of monopolistic authority. The written constitutions represented the contract made between the citizens and the state. The standardization and specialization of 'culture' under

modern conditions made plausible the argument that the 'people' were not the accidental collection of the individuals but rather a cultural collective, the 'nation' (Breuilly 2001: 38)

The tide of nationalism redrew the map of Europe during the nineteenth century as the autocratic and multi-national empires like Austria-Hungary, Ottoman Empire and Tsarist Russia started crumbling down in the face of nationalist pressures, giving a way to many new nation-states. The Napoleonic wars and the Revolutions of 1830 and 1848 (among Italians, Hungarians, Czechs and Germans) provided impetus to this development as the wars started being characterized as 'national wars' by this time. Italy was unified in 1861 and so also was Germany in 1871.

By the end of the nineteenth century, nationalism had become a truly popular movement, with the spread of flags, national anthems, emblems, patriotic poetry and literature and national holidays. Each nation claimed its own unique and superior qualities and considered the others as alien and untrustworthy.

Nationalism became the language of mass politics with growth of mass literacy, education and spread of newspapers. It came to stand for social cohesion, order and stability (Heywood 1992: 156). Earlier, nationalism was associated with the liberal-democratic ideas. But over the period of time its character began to change, bringing in the picture, various forms of nationalism, such as liberal nationalism, civic nationalism, ethnic nationalism, expansionist nationalism and so on. Major distinction came through the French style civic nationalism, where state precedes nation and the German variety ethno-cultural nationalism, where nation and ethnicity preceded state.

All the nationalistic political movements were accompanied by international tensions developing because of expansionist tendencies of the states, featured by mutual mistrust and rivalry. This led to the outbreak of the First World War (1914-1919). The course and aftermath of the war witnessed the emergence of more nation-states in Europe. At the Paris Peace Conference that followed this war, US President Woodrow Wilson advocated the principle of 'national self-determination' in his 14-points. Russian revolutionary leader Vladimir Lenin also backed the principle and stressed on the 'nationalities

question'. Mention of the term 'nation' in the name of the new international organization '**League of the Nations**' (1920) formalized, legitimized and gave acceptability to the established linkage between the state and nationhood. Fascist/ authoritarian movements came in power in countries like Germany, Italy and Japan promising about the restoration of national pride (Heywood 1992: 157). Thus, nationalism played important role in the outbreak of the Second World War (1939-1945) also, as the fascist or authoritarian governments claimed to represent national pride. When '**United Nations**' was set up in 1945, it was the organization of 51 nation-states coming together under the aim of restoring world peace and order.

Meanwhile, during the twentieth century, nationalism spread throughout the globe as the people of Asia and Africa rose in opposition to the colonial rule. The **National Liberation Movements** and the process of **Decolonization** took the tide of 'national self-determination' to Asia and Africa. In the second half of the twentieth century, number of nation-states on the globe increased manifold, as the overseas empires of the British, French, Portuguese and Dutch disintegrated. Almost every year the United Nations has been admitting new members. At the end of 2010, United Nations has 192 member states.

Nevertheless, some scholars have criticized the Afro-Asian variety of nationalisms. Hobsbaum (1992: 169) argues, "... these national movements in the Third World were in theory modeled on nationalism of the west, in practice the states they attempted to construct were, as we have also seen, generally the opposite of the ethnically and linguistically homogenous entities which came to be seen as the standard form of 'nation-state' in the west".

It can be said that since World War II every successful revolution has defined itself in the 'national' terms; be it the People's Republic of China, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, or so forth- and, in so doing, has grounded itself firmly in a territorial and social space inherited from the prerevolutionary past (Anderson B. 1983: 2). The process of formation of the nation-states has been going on continuously. Many 'old nations', once thought fully consolidated, have found themselves challenged by 'sub'-nationalisms within their borders (Anderson B. 1983: 3).

'Nation-ness' is the most universally legitimate value in the contemporary political life. All states are today officially 'nations', all political agitations are apt to be against foreigners, whom practically all states harry and seek to keep out (Hobsbaum 1990: 163). 'They' can be and must be blamed for the grievances, uncertainties which 'we' feel. If they don't exist, they have to be invented, as recognizably present within 'our' cities, as public dangers, agents of pollution, hating and conspiring against us (Hobsbaum 1990: 174).

Anti-colonialism and spread of nationalism in the so-called developing world generated some new forms of nationalism. Nationalism was fused with Marxist/ Socialist ideas in countries like China, Vietnam, Cuba and so on. In states like Iran, Israel nationalism was blended with religion, best represented through the Iranian Revolution of 1979.

Since the 1960s, the states, that appeared to be relatively peaceful and stable previously, have been increasingly disrupted by nationalist tensions. There arose the '**sub-nationalisms**' within them, which led to separatist movements. The Basque in Spain, Quebec in Canada, Kurds in Turkey, Tamils in Shri Lanka are some of the widely known examples of separatist movements. Today, no nation can be called stable, as there can be emergence of potential nationalisms or sub-nationalisms that can disturb its stability at any time.

As long as the 'nation-state' model was confined to the West European societies, things were relatively smooth. But problems were bound to occur when the peoples from other parts of the world started aspiring for statehood based on the national criteria following West European model. One of the important reasons for these problems is the nature of these societies where it has proved difficult to delineate the 'nation', because of linguistic, religious and cultural spillovers among the peoples.

However, according to Hobsbaum, "the principle of state-creation that developed after the Second World War had nothing to do with the Wilsonian model of national self-determination". It mainly reflected three forces. Firstly, independent states were created out of existing areas of colonial administration within their colonial frontiers, which were obviously drawn without any knowledge about inhabitants and thus had no reference to

national significance for their populations. Secondly, many of these states were product of bloody revolutions, leading to the construction of state according to revolutionary ideology and spirit. And lastly, some of those were formed through the intervention by outside forces and obviously were non-nationalist in motivation and effect. All these factors led to the further unrest and instability as sub-nationalisms kept mushrooming (Hobsbaum 1990: 178-180).

Further Hobsbaum (1990: 170) argues that the current phase of essentially separatist and divisive 'ethnic' group assertion has no such positive programme or prospect. They seem to be reactions of weakness and fear, which are disrupting smooth functioning of the nation-state system.

The events of early 1990s brought the national question again on the surface. The fall of Berlin Wall in 1989, the transformation of Eastern Europe and finally the disintegration of the Soviet Union all had their impact on the contemporary political scenario. Whether these events were cause or the effect of the **nationalist outburst** in the region cannot be answered correctly as both make sense. What mattered was that, nationalism was beneficiary of the above mentioned developments of the time.

In the first half of 1990s, big multi-national states like the Soviet Union and former Yugoslavia broke up, giving a way to emergence of number of small states in the region. These states emerged and evolved based on the national question, forming new nation-states. According to some scholars, the socialist perspective of nationality-based federalism automatically created the fracture lines along which multi-national units were to break. In Soviet Union, the problems multiplied further, as it was the communist regime which deliberately set out to 'create' ethno-linguistic territorial 'national administrative units', i.e. 'nations' in the modern sense, where none had previously existed or been thought of.

Today, some scholars argue that the forces of globalization have affected the issues such as identity, nationalism, as the world has become small and integrated place. The sacrosanct principle of state-sovereignty was weakened with the end of the Cold War, new nation-state formation, and new economic and cultural forms of globalization.

However, more important is the shift of nationalism from a state focus towards concerns with devolution, cultural recognition and transnational linkages.

The nation-states emerged in the west Europe some centuries back and are now in the process of transcending this system through the formation of a supra-state organization namely the European Union on the basis of regional integration. However, this does not mean that, nationalism does not have any relevance in the contemporary world. A number of states are still struggling to find national legitimacy for their statehood. Thus, nationalism is, and shall remain, the major political force in the coming future.

Chapter 3

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: EMERGENCE OF UZBEK IDENTITY AND STATEHOOD IN THE PRE-SOVIET AND THE SOVIET PERIOD

1. PRE-SOVIET DEVELOPMENTS

- A. Identity and Ethnicity in Central Asia
- B. Historical Evolution of Uzbek Identity and Statehood
- C. Tsarist Invasion and the Bolshevik Revolution

2. THE SOVIET PERIOD

- A. National Territorial Delimitation
- B. Soviet Federalism
- C. The Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: EMERGENCE OF UZBEK IDENTITY AND STATEHOOD IN THE PRE-SOVIET AND THE SOVIET PERIOD

The modern Uzbek nation-state came into existence in 1991, when it became independent from the Soviet Union. But Nationalism in Uzbekistan did not emerge suddenly at that time; rather it has deep roots in the past. In other words, the emergence of the Uzbek identity and the process of Uzbek state-building was not a one-time affair and has been a continuous process. This chapter will discuss, in detail, the evolution of Uzbek identity and statehood through historical method. The chapter is mainly divided in two parts: the pre-Soviet developments and the Soviet period.

PRE-SOVIET DEVELOPMENTS:

Identity and Ethnicity in Central Asia:

Central Asia has always been an ethno-linguistically diverse region and historically most of the Central Asians lacked national consciousness. Till the demarcation of modern borders, the identities were either dominated by the supra-national factors (based on Islam) or the sub-national factors (pertaining to tribes or clans). It was only after the Soviet national territorial delimitation, that Central Asian states were given specific boundaries based on the 'nationality' principle.

Salient features of the demography in Central Asia can be listed as under:

1. Most of the Central Asians have uniform **Sunni Islamic** sect affiliation.
2. Linguistically, Central Asians are broadly divided among the Persians and the Turkic. But all the Central Asian ethnic groups have a long history of **inter-relationship and inter-flow** between each other. They are linked with each other through linguistic, cultural, ethnic spillovers (Naby 1993: 153).

3. Central Asian population was differentiated between two major categories; the **sedentary population** and the **nomadic tribes**. Notably, the Kyrgyz, the Kazakhs and the Turkmens were nomadic pastoralists, and the Uzbeks and the Tajiks were more settled communities.
4. The indigenous Central Asian people have always been more loyal to their local clan/ tribe networks than to their ethnic or regional affiliation.

Central Asia was ruled by different groups like Iranian Samanid dynasty, the Mongol invaders, Turkic Timurid dynasty and subsequently the three Khanates that is, Bukhara, Kokand and Khiva. All the empires or principalities formed in Central Asia were essentially multi-ethnic and the question of ethnic identity never surfaced. Nor did the political rulers impose their own ethno-linguistic domination over the population. For instance, the Bukhara khanate, which retained its rule till 1920, insisted on no particular ethnic-based patriotism, though it was ruled by the Uzbek clan. In fact according to Naby,

'no ruling group deliberately determined to change the lives and identities of every member of the Central Asian society until the installation of Soviet nationality policy by Stalin' (Naby 1993: 153-154).

Moreover, under these rulers the boundaries also had never been very firm. Though the Tri-Khanate structure functionally divided the region into three major terrains, many semi-independent principalities had continued to exist. There were also the tribal and clan chieftains. The frontiers as they exist today did not have 'objective reality' till recently. Within the loose state-formations, continuously expanding and contracting, depending on the political fortunes of the ruling elite of the time, the peoples of Central Asia expressed a variety of overlapping identities (Sengupta 1998: 42).

The Central Asian people were linked for centuries by linguistic, ethnic and cultural interaction. They were constantly intermixing and various scattered groups were incorporated into more stable ones. For example, the Turkic-speaking nomads gradually intermingled with the ancient Iranian agricultural populations. In case of Central Asia, we

come across not only the multi-ethnic, but also multi-lingual populations. In fact, in many cases, speakers of the language overlap and bilingualism is prevalent. In other words, historically, the Central Asian people were intermixed and exclusivist national population was simply a myth (Sengupta 1998: 36-41). In other words, language and ethnicity borders did not necessarily meet (Naby 1993: 156).

The above inter-mixing and inter-relationship can be explained through the Tajik-Uzbeks case. These two ethnic groups had been so much blended that it was difficult to distinguish between them. They share a far greater degree of culture and history than other groups do with them or with each other. Despite the difference in language, Persian for Tajiks and Turki-Uzbek for the Uzbeks, the two formed in the past a coherent group that even today retains a unique closeness and at the same time competitiveness (Sengupta 1998: 46). In fact, many people in the cities like Bukhara, Samarkand spoke Tajik language and identified themselves as Uzbeks. There are several instances of inter-mixed marriages between the Uzbeks and the Tajiks. Particularly for families moved from one republic to another, siblings officially registered as different nationalities can assert that ethnic identity is a meaningful source of political allegiance (Naby 1993: 154). The inter-mingled Uzbek-Tajik communities could not be divided by simply drawing an arbitrary ethnic or linguistic boundary between them.

According to Sengupta (2002: 15-16), 'In the case of Central Asia, the relationship between the borders and identity is particularly problematic given the fact that in this region one is confronted with the dilemma of a non-conforming identity boundaries'. Thus, splitting up of the regions, on the basis of ethnicity and language was very awkward. There has been an argument that the present precise division of the peoples in Central Asia into nationalities is recent one and to some extent also arbitrary. Such distinction was not accepted by people themselves of the pre-revolution Central Asia.

But, at the same time, pre-Bolshevik existence of ethnic identities cannot be totally ruled out. The ethno-linguistic differences among Central Asians had started surfacing centuries before the arrival of the Tsar or the Bolsheviks. For example, Uzbeks became

sedentary under the rule and cultural sway of the medieval Islamic states and their language went through considerable change. The distinct linguistic groups also had differences in culture, custom, myth and epics. The groups like Uzbeks, Tajiks had even developed their national literature for centuries. The appearance of the literary Uzbek language by the end of the 18th century created the basis for the development of the Uzbek national language under the Soviets.

The recent academia is divided over the issue, whether the Central Asian identities existed in the past, or were they just arbitrary Soviet creation. In conclusion, it can be said that the identities existed in Central Asia in the pre-revolution period. But they were rudimentary in form, which were given coherence and specificity by the Soviets.

Historical Evolution of Uzbek Identity and Statehood:

According to the view of the historical school that dominates contemporary academia in Uzbekistan, the period of the 10th and 11th centuries could be taken as the time of birth of Uzbek identity from the *Karluk* branch of Turkic peoples ruled then by the Karahanid Dynasty (Ilkhamov 2004: 290). This view is based on the Primordial school of thought and is way too farfetched. The ethnonym 'Uzbek' originates from the name **Uzbek Khan** who was one of the most successful and popular leader of the Golden Horde, a great warrior, a just ruler and zealous servant of Islam. He ruled from 1312- 1340 AD. Later this ethnonym began to be applied generally to designate the subjects of Golden Horde.

Sengupta (2002: 28) argues on similar lines,

"Uzbek rulers were the descendants of the nomadic tribes of the Golden Horde who had migrated from their original homeland east of Urals southeast towards the lower Syrdariya. They assumed the name 'Uzbek' in honor of the greatest Kipchak ruler Uzbek Khan"

Under the **Timurid rule**, was very significant step in consolidation of Uzbek identity and statehood. The Timurids brought about the domination of the *Chaghataids*¹, who were alternatively engaged either in conflict or union with the *Kipchak* Uzbeks (Ilkhamov 2004: 293-294), until they were later unified under the rule of Shaybani Khan. Under the Timurids, many more tribes joined the 'Uzbek' ethnic group. They included the Turkic-Mongol tribes, the settled Turkic people, who lost their tribal affiliations as they adopted sedentary lifestyle and Turkified Tajiks. The rule by the Timurid dynasty was constructive for development of Uzbek identity through language, culture, literature and national symbols. The Timurids advocated use of standardized *Chaghatay* language for official use instead of prevalent Persian. The flourishing of the *Chaghatay* culture took place under the Timurids (Ilkhamov 2004: 294). The role of Timurids in the identity formation of Uzbeks is over-emphasized and glorified by the contemporary Uzbek state.

Nevertheless, the role of **Shaybani Khan** in the unification of various *Dashti Kipchak* tribes cannot be overlooked. Actually, Shaybani Khan was hired by the Timurid ruler Ahmed Mirza to fight against the Mongols. But he changed the side and carved out his own empire on the auspices of disintegrated Timurid kingdom (Haider 1999: 25) In other words, Haider (1999: 19) argues; 'The Uzbeks arrived in the political scene of Central Asia first as the allies of the Timurids in fifteenth century and then gradually conquered the region'.

The Uzbek identity was strengthened in the *Maveraunnahr*² region at the turn of the 16th century with Shaybani Khan's sway over most of Central Asia (Patnaik 2003: 18). Henceforth, the Uzbeks dominated the Central Asian political scene. During this period, the Uzbek tribes occupied the plain areas between the Urals and the river Syrdariya. This transformed them from being nomadic to sedentary population which firmly established them in the region (Ilkhamov 2004: 291-292).

The charismatic leadership of the initial rulers of the Uzbek community, viz., Uzbek Khan, Abulkhair Khan, Timur, Ulughbeg and Shaybani Khan, played decisive role in

¹ The *Chaghataids* were the Turkic- Mongol tribal groups. The ethnonym comes from the name of Chaghatai Khan, son of Chenghiz Khan, who was appointed to rule this part of Mongol empire.

² *Maveraunnahr* is the synonym for middle-Asia or Transoxiana. It refers to the plain region between the Urals and river Syrdariya, and is mainly situated in present-day Uzbekistan.

unification of various *Dashti- Kipchak* tribes under the auspices of strong centralized state. During this period, various tribes joined the Uzbek community.

Uzbeks became sedentary under the rule and cultural sway of the medieval Islamic states and their language went through considerable change due to the strong influence of the Iranian-speakers with whom they closely interacted. The Uzbeks had developed their national literature since centuries. *Chagatay* language and culture was not only promoted under Timurids, but also in the Uzbek state under Shaybani Khan. The appearance of literary Uzbek by the end of the 18th century created the basis for the development of the Uzbek national language under the Soviets (Patnaik 2003: 17).

Later the Central Asian region was divided into **three Khanates**; Bukhara, Kokand and Khiva; all these khanates were mainly centered in present day Uzbekistan and were ruled by three Uzbek dynasties; the Manghits in Bukhara, the Qungrants in Khiva and the Mins in Kokand. These political formations had some features of modern statehood namely, governmental institutions, judicial courts, permanent standing armies and regular taxation. The three khanates produced some amount of internal cohesion and centralization, but they did not produce stable boundaries, either with each other or with neighboring empires.

Three centuries of dominance of Uzbeks (Timurid dynasty and tri-Khanate structure) transformed them into a homogenous group and gave them a strong sense of identity. This phase can be called as a big wave of 'Turkification' as the ruling Uzbek community embraced various tribes within it and pushed the Persian-speaking settlers to the mountainous regions (Schoberlein 1996: 12). The sense of identity was being strengthened through spread of language and literature.

Tsarist Invasion and the Bolshevik Revolution:

Almost the whole of Central Asia was conquered by the Tsarist Russian armies by 1868, though Kazakhstan was part of the Russian empire since 1820s. But the regime did not

impose any serious ethnicity appellations on the Central Asians. In fact, the Tsarist colonialism imposed 'Turkistani' identity on the people ruled directly by the Tsarist state, with Tashkent as the center. Historically, 'Turkistan' was the term used by the Persians to define the land of the Turks. Thus, this term was inappropriate as it originated in Iran. It overemphasizes one particular feature of the community as being distinct from the Persians and underemphasizes the differences within the Turkic community.

Bolshevik perspective on Russia's nationalities was based upon the concept of **national self-determination propounded by Lenin** (Sabot 1995: 226). Essentially the Marxist thought was not in conformity with the ideas like identity, nation and nationalism. According to Marxist ideas, 'nation' is the ideologically constructed phenomenon and is part of 'false consciousness'. It is based on the 'invented traditions' and 'myths' created by the bourgeoisie, which uses the national identity as a device to counter the threat of social revolution, by ensuring that national loyalty is stronger than the class solidarity.

Lenin was greatly influenced by Marxism. In fact, he was the first successful Marxist revolutionary, who implemented the ideas propounded by Marx in the real world. However, being a revolutionary, Lenin could not ignore socio-political realities of the time. National minorities in the Russian empire were oppressed under the Tsarist rule and their grievances had to be addressed if their support was sought. Although Lenin kept emphasizing on right to self-determination to the nationalities, his ultimate goal was to dissolve all the partitions and achieve international solidarity of the working class (Sabot 1995: 226).

The concept of 'national self-determination' can be traced to the first Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party in March 1898. However, it was elaborated much later (Pandey 1994: 6). Lenin was concerned about the question of nationalities and supported the right to self-determination. Consequently, he was inclined to develop a coherent Marxist nationality policy. Lenin entrusted Stalin with the task of developing Bolshevik party's program on nationalities. Stalin wrote an essay "Marxism and the National Question". In it he discussed, in detail, the concept of nation (Stalin n.d. 3-53).

According to **Stalin**,

“nation is a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of common language, territory and economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture” (as quoted in Smith A. 2001: 11).

This definition takes ‘territory’ and ‘economic life’ as two important attributes of the nation, meaning thereby that ‘national identities should be territorially and economically defined’.

A policy of national self-determination was supposed to serve many things; such as, soothe the hostility of native peoples towards the new Russian government, incite hostility toward existing capitalist government and encourage people to throw these governments and thereby consolidate party-supported regional autonomy, eliminate the national and cultural distinctions (Sabot 1995: 227).

In 1913, the central committee of the Russian Social Democratic Workers’ Party included in its program a provision on the national question, which declared the need for the demarcation of boundaries for regional autonomous and self-governing units by the native populations, conforming with economic and national compositions. Stalin, in 1918, described the envisioned Soviet federal system as a ‘union of historically distinct territories differentiated by a special way of life, as well as their national composition. The Bolsheviks perceived the Soviet federation to bring about transition from ‘the forced integration of the Tsars to a willing unification of the working masses’, with the ultimate goal being the future ‘Socialist Unitarianism’ (Sabot 1995: 227-231).

At the time of the **Bolshevik Revolution (1917)**, ‘right to self-determination’ was one of the promises by the Bolsheviks, along with ‘land, bread and peace’ Lenin called the Tsarist Russia the ‘prison of nationalities’ and guaranteed the union of free nations. This was a deliberate step taken to de-colonize relations between the Russians and the other nationalities. Immediately after the revolution, Bolsheviks were confronted by a disastrous civil war and therefore, could not deal with the nationality question right away.

The issue was then taken in early 1920s, which ended up in the formation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

The October revolution was received with mixed responses in Central Asia. The Bolshevik forces first assumed power in Tashkent, as a huge chunk of Tashkent soldiers joined them. Thereafter, '**Tashkent Bolsheviks**' became the centre of Soviet activities in the region. This led to dominance of Uzbeks in the Communist party. The ethnic atrocities by the Tsars and then by the Soviets met with several uprisings in Central Asia. The significant outcome of these came in the form of **Basmachi revolt**³, which was subsequently crushed by the Soviets. All these events made Soviets readdress their nationality policy (Sabot 1995: 229-230).

THE SOVIET PERIOD:

National Territorial Delimitation:

In 1920, the Bolshevik government decided to break-up the multinational structure of erstwhile Tsarist Russian Empire. According to Lenin's vision of the federation of the free nations, they initiated the process to redraw the administrative boundaries of the union in conformity with ethnographic divisions. It commenced the creation of a federation based on 'Nationality-based Territorial Statehood' which finally ended up in the creation of the '**Union of Soviet Socialist Republics**' in 1924.

The process of **National Territorial Delimitation** which started in 1924 and was completed in 1936 gave birth to five Soviet Socialist Republics in the Central Asian region. The process was not completely an exercise from above, as it was undertaken

³ **Basmachi Revolt** was the Muslim and predominantly Turkic uprising in Central Asia against the Soviet Russian rule. This movement started in early 1920s in and around the Ferghana Valley region. The immediate cause of it seems to be early Soviet policies in general and destruction of Kokand autonomy in particular. It was in fact the culmination of years of festering hatred towards Russian (Tsarist and Soviet) atrocities. According to some scholars, Basmachi uprising was the national liberation movement by Central Asians (Sabot 1995: 227-231).

with the participation of experts and local elite to avoid any arbitrariness. The aspirations of the local peoples were considered and the factors like history, language, culture were also taken into account. Moreover, the course was not at all hasty. Sufficient time and space was given to local leaders as well as to people to express their demands. Therefore, delimitation went on for 12 years and was over only in 1936 (Patnaik 2003: 26-27).

In 1924, Central Asia was divided into five national areas: the more advanced and more numerous people- the Uzbeks and the Turkmens- were formed into the Soviet Socialist Republics (SSR), the smaller and less advanced- the Tajiks- into Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republics (ASSR) and Autonomous Oblasts (the Kyrgyz and the Kara-Kalpaks). Subsequently, the Tajiks were promoted to SSR in 1929, the Kara-Kalpaks into ASSR in 1932. The Kyrgyz were transformed into ASSR in 1926; and in 1936, the Kyrgyz SSR and the Kazakh SSR were created. Consequently, there emerged five Soviet Socialist Republics (SSRs) in Soviet Central Asia, the Kazakh SSR, the Kyrgyz SSR, the Tajik SSR, the Turkmen SSR and the Uzbek SSR.

Scholars have come up with various arguments regarding the National Delimitation. According to some scholars, the present day borders in Central Asia were clearly Soviet creations.

Sengupta (1998: 34) asserts,

"..The Central Asian republics were artificially created by the Moscow's decree.. It was Russian and Soviet administrators who demarcated boundaries and then set about 'building nations to fit states'.. The present day Central Asian borders had no pre-Russian heritage.."

But, above mentioned view does not present complete reality. We also come across diametrically opposing viewpoint. Sabol (1995: 237) argues that 'Soviets acceptance of self-determination was in reality simply a matter of recognizing the existing situation'. In fact, there is an argument that the relative ease and success with which states were created and evolved proves that the Soviet creation of borders was not completely artificial ethnic engineering. The participation of experts and local elites in the

delimitation process was supposed to avoid arbitrariness. Thus, the delimitation was not completely an exercise from above.

Patnaik (2003: 22-23) argues that national delimitation was 'the founding principle for decolonizing relations between the former subject nations of Tsarist colonialism'. In Central Asia, demands before civil war were centered round greater autonomy within a non-autocratic Russia, rather than complete independence. The careful handling of nationality question by the Bolsheviks led to many leading Central Asian figure to join them in the civil war.

The motives behind the National Delimitation can be listed as following. Firstly, as it would facilitate organization and planning. Secondly, Turkestan would become a Soviet showcase for the people of the east. Thirdly, this was done to deal with social and economic differentiation between the various Central Asian people. And lastly, as it would satisfy temporarily the demands of autonomy and national self-determination and also reduce the inter-ethnic animosities (Sabot 1995: 236). This division and the emphasis on the differences would last until the system of socialist production brought about a standardization of ways of life that would eliminate differences between various ethnic groups and would lead to national, eventually socialist, consciousness. This progressive policy of delimitation was supposed to consolidate the Central Asian people into a single socialist state, while simultaneously accelerating the development of their respective nations.

The National Delimitation consolidated group identity by giving ethnic groups power in their territories, whereas earlier they were divided among different political units and ethnic distribution prevented the augmentation of national identity. For example, before national delimitation in 1924, a large part of Uzbeks, that is 66%, lived in Turkistan ASSR, but comprised only 41% of the population of the republic. After delimitation, however, 83% of all Uzbeks in Central Asia were concentrated in Uzbek SSR, where they formed absolute majority of 76% (Kaushik 1970: 212).

But the Territorial Delimitation also created some problems. The borders were crafted keeping in mind two opposing principles: the national-political principle, based on the ethnic divisions; and the economic principle, which included all economic links such as irrigation, production, transportation and communication (Sabot 1995: 233). In other words, though it was generally claimed that nationality will be the basic criteria for the delimitation, economic factors were also taken into consideration. Tampering was deliberately done to help the new republics to stand on their own feet. The importance of economic viability of territorial unit was not overlooked (Patnaik 2003: 29).

For example, the Khojend region was transferred from Uzbekistan to Tajikistan. Apart from being primarily Tajik, contiguity and economic importance of this part were also taken into consideration. Similarly, the Uzbek-speaking parts of Farghana valley region were given to the Kyrgyz republic for the same reason (Naby 1993: 159). In addition, Soviet policies like industrialization brought huge Slavic population to Central Asia. All these factors led to the national republics becoming multi-ethnic in nature with the titular nationality forming the majority.

Furthermore, the population in Central Asia was so intermixed and intermingled that the formation of precise boundaries was not an easy task. In such a scenario, the role of local elites and tribal leaders played decisive role. According to E. H. Carr (1969: 330), 'the division was a product of local jealousies, rather than of profound racial or linguistic or historical differences'.

Because of all these factors, no national republic could become fully homogenous. All of them had large national minorities. All the Central Asian nationalities had significant minorities staying outside their named republics. The minorities were concentrated in specific pockets, especially at the borderlands. Number of national enclaves and peripheral regions of minority groups in the republics became the reality of all Central Asian republics. For example, carving out of the Ferghana valley into three republics gave titular groups advantageous position, but sense of non-belonging to the non-titulars (Akbazadeh 1997: 68)

In case of the Uzbek Republic, majority of the population was ethnic Uzbek; but there also were people from at least more than twenty ethnicities inhabiting the republic. There were number of Tajiks, Russians, Kyrgyz, Kazakhs, Meshkhetian Turks and so on. On its border with the other Central Asian states there was concentrated minority population from each of the neighboring republics. This was evident from the huge number of Tajiks inhabiting cities like Samarkand and Bukhara and large minority of ethnic-Kyrgyz living in Andijaan oblast.

Soviet Federalism:

The Soviet Union has to be credited for coming out with a workable policy of 'nationality-based federalism'. The Soviet Union was first of its kind in the modern world to incorporate 'national' sentiments in creation of a powerful, long-lasting and peaceful 'Union' of national republics. This policy was instrumental in creating five new republics in Central Asia based on the ethnicity and nationality. In other words, Soviet Union was a unique experiment in transcending national identity by fusing two processes of intensification of the national identity structurally and simultaneously strengthening of the supra-national identity namely the 'Soviet' identity.

Soviet nationality policy established practices, and institutional arrangements that regulated nationality relations in a 'multi-ethnic state'. According to Zaslavski (1992: 98), "It was one of the most successful social policies of the Soviet regime, enabling it to reconcile a strong unitary state with a federal structure and to maintain internal stability in a country harboring deep ethnic divisions". The institutionalization of ethnicity, large-scale affirmative action and the transfer payment policy played its part in functioning of Soviet federalism. Soviets turned to federalism as an indispensable instrument for putting together the scattered parts of the empire, and thereby, Soviet Russia became 'the first modern state to place the national principle at the base of its federal structure. Soviet federalism was designed as the means of accommodating major nationalities within a unified multiethnic state, with the Union republics serving as the units of central planning (Zaslavsky 1992: 98-99).

Soviet state helped consolidation of national-territorial identities, through measures like creation of literary languages, introduction of script, creating infrastructure such as education, media etc. The Soviet state not only emphasized on official use of the titular languages and their standardization, it also built an extensive cultural infrastructure and thereby created an independent cultural and intellectual universe for these Central Asian languages as well as raised their prestige. History, language, epic, literature, folklore and traditional arts were rediscovered and developed. The Soviet state helped in nation-building process through the standardization of national languages, the creation of national symbols and the classification of the population based on nationality for all official purposes (Patnaik 2003: 30).

According to E. H. Carr (1969: 290),

'the Soviet state guaranteed respect for the rights of the non-Russian groups remaining within the Soviet system and encouraged their languages and cultures and the development of their educational system.'

Soviet Federalism granted the titular nationalities certain privileges and cultural autonomy within their territories. By creating national territories the Soviet state institutionalized the socio-political space for the titular groups to consolidate as nations. Affirmative action policies like *Khorenizatsiia* (indigenization) contributed to the 'growth of local intelligentsia and indigenization of political leadership' (Patnaik 2003: 31). It fostered preferential treatment of the representatives of local nationalities within their own territories concerning the access to higher education and placement in managerial and administrative positions through a special quota system (Zaslavsky 1992: 101).

A defined territory along with the growth of literacy in the titular language and expansion of indigenous administrative cadre strengthened the national identities in Central Asia. By protecting the educational and occupational interests of the indigenous population, especially elite and the middle classes, Soviet federation emerged successful in neutralizing their separatist aspirations.

Soviet federalism institutionalized ethnicity at two different levels. Firstly, it was institutionalized on the group level by the creation of the federation of ethno-territorial units, governed by indigenous political elites and organized into an elaborate administrative hierarchy. Secondly, it was institutionalized at the individual level through the introduction of a comprehensive internal passport system which immutably fixed the ethnic affiliation of every Soviet citizen (Zaslavsky 1992: 99).

Soviet language policy is criticized by many as attempts to expand the knowledge of Russian language. Some even condemned it to be the continuation of colonial rule. But, in reality, no multi-lingual community can coexist without a link language and no other language than Russian was in the position to become link language, both based on number of people speaking it and its infrastructure. Thus, Soviet Union used Russian for link purpose. But, in fact, Soviet language policy was based on flourishing of all the major languages as well as the supra-national identity based on Russian language. It is described as 'Russian-titular bilingualism' (Patnaik 2003: 36-37).

The Soviet Nationality policy played an important role in creation of national identity through the standardization of language, introduction of script and creating infrastructure such as education, media and entertainment. In fact, scholars like Sengupta (1998: 46) go to the extent of saying that Central Asian languages were the product and not the cause of the Soviet political policies. The Soviet state created enough institutional barriers in the form of national republics, federal structure and Communist party with the ideology of internationalism, to prevent the majority community, i.e. Russians, from converting the Soviet state into a nation-state of Russians. The Soviets did not invent languages, but they undertook to modernize the Central Asian languages through the introduction and development of grammar, phonetics and morphology, even creation of written scripts and literature.

Scholars have difference of opinion about whether the ethno-linguistic differences were the Soviet creations or were very much part of Central Asian society. Some say, it was the 'nation-building from above'. But the others argue that history of Soviet Uzbekistan

should be read as an attempt to create modern nation where previously there was ethnic group. There was no popular resistance to the creation of national territorial republics, which proves the fact that there were no alternative identities operating at an identical level.

The Soviet nationality policy accelerated the process of nation-building within the titular republics. During the Soviet period various populations which had not previously developed the national consciousness acquired national identities and turned into nations. It also led to the growing ethnic homogenization of the ethno-territorial units. National cohesion was further reinforced by the creation of firm links between nationalities, their territories and their political administrators (Zaslavsky 1992: 105-106).

According to Harmstone (as quoted in Patnaik, 2003: 11),

“the national forms, instead of becoming vehicles of socialization, increasingly became the symbol of each group’s distinct ethnic and cultural identity. Notwithstanding the Soviets insistence on ‘national in form and socialist in content’, in actual practice the society in the Soviet Union was outwardly looking socialist in a formal way but was diversified on national lines.”

Another important feature about the Soviet federalism was that it can be described as ‘welfare federalism’. It was based on the principle of ‘equitable distribution’ and had developed a vivid system of taxation and subsidies. In fact, the Central Asian republics were the beneficiaries of the ‘redistributive economic policies’ of the Soviet Union, as they profited from the ‘inter-republic redistribution of national income disproportionate to their contributions’. Central Asia underwent rapid economic growth. The region, which was predominantly agrarian for hundreds of years, transformed itself into a modern industrial one. The Soviet modernization brought with it more strengthening of the national identities.

The Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic:

Bolsheviks restored the Uzbek identity from its amorphous character and gave it coherence. According to Ilkhamov (2004: 290), the three major components, from which the Soviets fashioned the modern Uzbek identity as an ethnic group and as a nation, were as follows;

1. **Dashti- Kipchak nomadic Uzbeks:** The origin of the ethnonym Uzbek is precisely connected to them. It came from the name of Uzbek Khan, one of the most successful and popular Golden Horde chieftains. They mainly migrated to *Maveraunnahr* region in early 16th century and settled there during the Shaybanid dynasty. This transformed them from being nomadic to sedentary population.
2. **Local Turkic tribes and clans:** Number of tribes joined the Uzbek ethnic group under the Timurid dynasty which included people from the so-called Chaghatay and Oghuz Turkic tribes and clans.
3. **The Sarts:** It includes the settled Turkic people, who lost their tribal affiliations as they adopted sedentary lifestyle and Turkified Tajiks.

The unification of these tribes did not come overnight. In fact, the inter-mingling process in terms of language, lifestyle, inter-marriages and mixed territorial settlements was going on for centuries. The formal unification came with the decision of the Soviet leadership to create the Uzbek SSR in 1924. This was a major turning point in the formation of modern Uzbek identity.

Soviet Union was played a critical role in **Uzbek state-building** by creating political units having defined territories, specific population and having institutions of statehood such as government bodies, permanent armed forces and the taxation mechanism. The newly formed Uzbek republic had important features of modern statehood as listed above, but it certainly lacked 'sovereignty'. Though the Soviet republics were given a degree of internal autonomy and also right to secede from the Union, they lacked what can be called as 'external sovereignty'. The external affairs and the foreign relations of the Soviet Uzbekistan were controlled from Moscow. But Uzbekistan definitely benefited from the Soviet state-mechanisms in regard to state-building.

The formation of modern **Uzbek identity** can also be seen in close connection with the formation of Uzbek SSR and also to a large extent as a result of efforts by ruling and cultural elites. The *Jadids*⁴, the group which was very active in National Delimitation process, used the word 'Uzbek' as synonym for 'Turkic'. Later this conception of Uzbek identity was followed in forming Uzbek SSR, although it was not officially recognized (Ilkhamov 2004: 305).

The Uzbek people started gaining pride in their 'Uzbekhood' as the identity formation progressed. There were many reasons behind this. Firstly, since the Tsarist times, Tashkent had developed very friendly relations with Moscow. It was the capital of erstwhile Turkistan. Tashkent Bolsheviks supported the Soviets to take hold in Central Asia. And the Uzbek elites played very significant role in national delimitation process. Secondly, the Uzbek republic was situated in the heartland of Central Asia and bordered all other Central Asian republics. Thirdly, Uzbeks were numerically largest community in Central Asia. And lastly, the Uzbek republic was relatively homogenous as compared to other republics.

Creation of the Uzbek SSR provided specific territory to the Uzbek nationality. This was for the first time that the name of the republic, the territory it covered, the population it inhabited and the group of people who ruled over them achieved greatest congruence in the Uzbek history. This was the most significant milestone in formation of the **Uzbek nationhood**.

However, the above mentioned factors were the 'necessary' but not the 'sufficient' conditions in the consolidation of the Uzbek nationalism. There was a need to inculcate national self-consciousness, the self-image of the nation in the minds of the masses. It was necessary to develop national culture, language, history and national symbols, which would function as the cementing force among the people from various tribes, who had little or no attentiveness of being the nation so far.

⁴ *Jadids* was a group of urban inhabitants, who were impregnated with the town culture which combined Turkic and Persian elements.

Soviets had initiated the process of shaping of Uzbek nationhood through creation of the republics based on the nationality criteria, where titular nationalities were in majority and were given certain political autonomy and cultural and linguistic privileges. The Soviets went further on the consolidation of national identity as well. There was systematic codification and standardization of the Uzbek language, introduction of new scripts and even revival of history, myths, and national symbols.

Initially, in 1927, Latin script was introduced in Uzbekistan, which would facilitate to cut the cord from the Islamic heritage it inherited. And then Cyrillic alphabet was introduced in 1939. Soviets very well understood the importance of a single dialect as the national language and thus emphasized on adoption of the Uzbek language. This language was systematically codified during the very first decade of the Soviet rule with introduction of grammar, phonetics and vocabulary. There was increase in the literacy rate and knowledge of Uzbek language. The national symbols were introduced and Uzbek history was re-written which of course favored the Soviet rule. Thus, the Soviets crystallized Uzbek national identity according to their own political calculations. This connected the Uzbek people with Russia.

However, though Soviets played important role in formation of Uzbek state as well as Uzbek identity, it was never their objective to create a strong nation out of it as that would have undermined the significance of the Soviet supra-state in particular and communist ideology in general. Nevertheless, contribution of the Soviet Union cannot be denied in the formation and consolidation of national and territorial identity among the Uzbek people of these new republics.

In Uzbekistan, as in other Central Asian States, there was no nationalist movement with separatist overtone. In fact the Uzbek republic wanted to be the part of the USSR unlike its Baltic or Slavic counterparts. This was evident in the overwhelming majority voting for the continuation of the USSR in March, 1991 Referendum. Though a symbolic step was taken by the Supreme Soviet of Uzbekistan by adopting declaration of Uzbek sovereignty in June, 1991, it was clearly an urge for more autonomy within the Union and not for separation and independence. Decision of the dissolution of the Soviet Union by the Slavic republics in December, 1991 imposed unwanted independence on

Uzbekistan and other Central Asian republics. Even after the independence, Uzbekistan chose to be part of the Commonwealth of Independent States, thus not going completely out of the Soviet orbit.

Chapter 4

NATION-BUILDING AND STATE-CONSOLIDATION IN INDEPENDENT UZBEKISTAN:

CONTENTS:

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NATION-BUILDING AND STATE-CONSOLIDATION IN INDEPENDENT UZBEKISTAN:

UZBEKISTAN ON THE VERGE OF INDEPENDENCE:

Soviet Union had started showing signs of decline by the 1980s. The reasons for this were mainly twofold, economic stagnation and nationalist upsurge. However, it can rightly be said that the Nationalist outbursts during the era were both, the factors responsible as well as the impact of Soviet corrosion. The European republics of the Soviet Union like Estonia, Lithuania and Ukraine had developed very strong anti-Russian sentiments and had been demanding the break-up of the Soviet Union. The opening up of the political system under 'Glasnost' and 'Perestroika' led to the nationalist leaders from various parts of the Soviet Union coming to power. This signaled decline in popularity of the communist ideology and nationalism emerged as the alternative for it.

Nevertheless, none of the republics in Central Asia experienced the nationalist mobilization in 1980s for separation from the Soviet Union, like their European counterparts did. Most significant reason of this was that the Central Asian republics were the beneficiaries of the Union. It was under the Soviet rule that Central Asia was transformed from a backward agrarian region to a modern industrial one. They got enormous subsidies and were receivers of the Soviet system of 'economic redistribution'. Therefore, they didn't want to be separated from the Union, but only wanted some autonomy within it. This was evident from the *Birlik*, the popular movement in Uzbekistan which was concerned with issues like status of Uzbek language, cotton monoculture and the degradation of the Aral Sea (Brown 1990: 20-25). But all these movements were autonomist in nature and not separatist ones (Shams-ud-din 1999: 191).

Moreover, Russians were never targets of any ethnic/ nationalist outburst in Central Asia. None of the ethnic riots of the 1980s were targeted against the Russians, barring the 1986 anti-Russian riots in Kazakhstan. Thus, the Central Asian republics were happy being in the Russian orbit. This was evident from the massive voting in favor of the continuation of the Union in March 1991 Referendum.

Strong aspirations of the Central Asians for the continuation of the Soviet Union could not prevent its collapse. The republics of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus signed the Minsk Accord on December 8, 1991 which paved the way for the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Subsequently, all the other republics also signed the Accord on December 21 in Almaty. This led to establishment of 15 independent states, five of them in Central Asia. All the former members of the USSR were again brought together in the Commonwealth of the Independent States (CIS) to facilitate smooth transfer of power and provide for economic cooperation among the members.

Uzbekistan became independent in 1991 from the Soviet Union. This gave birth to the Uzbek nation-state according to the established international standards. Apart from the basic features of statehood like fixed territory, population and administrative machinery, it was granted international recognition as an independent state actor. It acquired the autonomy to deal with its domestic affairs and sovereignty to carry forward its international relations. The state, that was part of the tightly controlled powerful federation, was for the first time left on its own. There were apprehensions about the way state would progress politically, economically and socially.

If one wants to study the history of post-independence Uzbekistan, it is necessary to analyze the kind of situation that persisted at the time of its independence which had deep impact on future developments. This analysis mainly revolves around three circumstances, viz. the inter-ethnic riots, the migration of the Slavic population and ethnic heterogeneity.

Inter-Ethnic Riots:

The nationalist upsurge of the 1980s had massive impact on the Central Asian region. This period experienced eruption of several ethnic riots in Central Asia. However, these ethnic outbursts were different than those that erupted in the European parts of the Soviet Union. The European uprisings were mostly anti-Russian, whereas the riots in Central Asia were among the indigenous populations. Russians were never the targets of ethnic engineering in Central Asia, the reason for this being the lack of threat of linguistic and cultural assimilation with the Russians. This is explained in detail under the heading of Russian migrations. Barring the exception of the 1986 anti-Russian riots in Kazakhstan⁵, all the riots in Central Asia were between indigenous ethnic groups. In 1991, 36 outbursts were registered in Central Asia (Caucasia included) regarding the membership of certain territories certain groups (Hexamer 1999: 204). One cannot say that these conflicts were the consequence of pressure from below; they were rather, manipulation from above (Shams-ud-din 1999: 191).

The Uzbek ethnic community was one of the major participants in the ethnic outbursts. When looked carefully, one comes across many riots in which Uzbeks were involved. The reason for this can be the dominant position enjoyed by the Uzbeks in Central Asia in geographical, historical, demographic and political terms. Following are the major violent outbreaks in which the Uzbeks were involved.

In 1989, riots erupted in Ferghana valley between **the Uzbeks and the Meshkhetian Turks**⁶. The Mashkhetian Turks had always been target of the Uzbek anger in the Ferghana valley. The Uzbeks considered them outsiders and condemned them as parasites. Prolonged animosity between them resulted in the occurrence of unprecedented violence among them in 1989. The nationalist sway and openness of the Glasnost period

⁵ In 1986, violent anti-Russian riots irrupted in Kazakhstan. The immediate cause of this was the appointment of a non-Kazakh (Russian) person as the first Secretary of the republic.

⁶ **Meshkhetian Turks** were settlers of the Ferghana valley part of Uzbekistan since 1940s, as they were deported there by Stalin.

can be described as the factor responsible for this. Around 200 Meshkhetian Turks died and more than a million were rendered homeless in these riots. This led to the feeling of insecurity and non-belonging among the Meshkhetian Turks (Hero 1994: 155).

Another insurrection came about between **the Uzbeks and the Kyrgyz** in Osh in 1990. But the enmity of the Uzbeks and the Kyrgyz goes far back. They traditionally inhabited the Ferghana valley region and always had fear of ethno-linguistic assimilation. The border drawn between them is equally problematic, as there are strong minority pockets of each nationality on the borders of the other. For example, Andijaan region in Uzbekistan has substantive Kyrgyz population, whereas the Osh oblast of Kyrgyzstan inhabits a substantial number of Uzbeks. Actually the issue started in the Andijaan oblast of Uzbekistan in 1989 over land disputes. Then it was reflected in Osh in 1990. The immediate cause for this was the nationalist attitude of the regimes. Osh was the Uzbek majority area and Uzbeks dominated life and trade in this region. But the Kyrgyz leadership decided to hand over acres of land to the Kyrgyz. This action of the regime ignited violence. The reason for the conflict was mainly distribution of land, but issues pertaining to employment, jobs, representation in local bodies also came up. Language was also made a major bone of contention. The Kyrgyz language was made official due to which the Uzbeks felt alienated (Patanaik 2003: 58-59).

The tensions between **the Tajiks and the Uzbeks** have always been a burning issue. It reached the crisis scenario in 1992, as hundreds of Uzbeks took refuge in Uzbekistan by leaving Tajikistan. This was claimed to be the result of what was described as the 'pogroms' in Uzbek-speaking villages. The Uzbeks in Tajikistan have the fear of cultural assimilation with the Tajiks and have been demanding cultural and linguistic rights within Tajikistan (Patnaik 2003: 59).

All the above riots and uprisings have had direct or indirect impact on the behavior of the Uzbek republic in the post-independence period. The atrocities that the Uzbeks have faced outside their state have culminated in more and more ill-feelings against the people from other states within Uzbekistan.

Russian/ Slavic Migration:

The Russians and other Slavic people formed a very important minority in all the Central Asian states. These people migrated to Central Asia during the Soviet times, many of them due to the Soviet economic policies, especially the industrialization program brought millions of Slavic migrant to Central Asia (Kulchik 1996: 3-4). They were mainly centered in urban areas and occupied skilled white-collar jobs. Most of Russians/ other Slavs were appointed as professionals and specialists in fields like industries, mining, railways and communications. They were economically prosperous with a very high standard of living.

The indigenous Central Asians, on the other hand, were mostly concentrated in the rural areas. The rural-urban mobility among the Central Asians was very low. Because of the 'affirmative action' policy of the Soviet Union, titular nationalities had enormous political power in their hands. But they did not enjoy this privileged position economically. The majority indigenous population was part of the rural set-up and continued their traditional lifestyle.

As the Russians lived in the cities and the indigenous people in the villages, there was never any fear of cultural/ linguistic assimilation between the Russians and the Central Asians. Even the Central Asians who lived in urban areas had no interaction with the Russians as they were confined to menial jobs. Moreover, the indigenous people did not conflict with Russians as the two never shared any resources. Russians did not know the indigenous language and at the same time Russian language proficiency among the Central Asians was also low. Thus, Russians were never target of any ethnic cleavages in Central Asia (Patnaik 2003: 92-93).

Central Asian states had very liberal attitude towards the Russians, as they knew the importance of Russian population for the development of their states. Russians were never scared of losing privileges in the real sense. They enjoyed an advantageous position in the jobs because of their skills and proficiency. Also among the Central Asians, the knowledge of Russian language was a tool of upward social mobility. Russian was the

language of inter-ethnic communication and there was no chance of Russian language losing its significance.

Despite this, thousands of Russians and other Slavic people left Central Asia in the late-1980s. The reasons for this were manifold. The independence brought with it fear of uncertainty in economic, political and cultural terms. Firstly, the loss of redistribution and subsidies from Moscow led to the complete breakdown of economy leading to hardships. Secondly, in the changed international scenario with nationalist upsurge, there was a fear that titular nationalities would gain privileges and non-titular communities would have to suffer discrimination. This was evident from the new language laws that made titular languages official. This gave Russians a sense of alienation and fear that their language and culture would lose significance. Lastly, outbursts of ethnic riots and the rise of Islam on unprecedented scale was seen by the Russians as a threat to their peaceful survival.

The perceptions about migrations differ from republic to republic. Between Russians and Central Asians, there is a disagreement over the reasons for Russian migrations. The Russians talked about the inter-ethnic issues, a sense of alienation and discrimination as the factors responsible for it, whereas the Central Asians blamed the economic hardships for the same (Patnaik 2003: 106).

Whatever the reason, the massive migrations of Russians and other Slavic people had a deep impact on Central Asia. Most important was the loss of professionals, engineers and specialists. In the times of disastrous economic crisis, Central Asians had to suffer this loss of skilled population. The Central Asian states responded to this crisis situation through variety of policies. Russian language was given the official status and Russians were granted many cultural rights. In spite of this, they could not completely stop Russian exodus.

Ethnic Heterogeneity:

The Central Asian states inherited the problematic Soviet- carved borders and could not do much about it, as the CIS Founding Charter ruled out the alteration of existing borders. As a result, they took over the ethnically heterogeneous population, which was the result of Soviet national engineering. There were ethnic minorities in all republics. Many of the minority groups were concentrated in specific pockets. In fact, each Central Asian titular group had significant minorities outside their named republic (Patnaik 2003: 123). On the borders, there were significant minorities from the neighboring countries.

For instance, in 1989, around 29% of the Uzbek population was non-titular, 8% among them being Russians. The Tajiks also formed an important minority. Though Uzbekistan was relatively a more ethnically homogenous country as compared to other Central Asian countries, it had more than 20 major nationalities, including Russians, Tajiks, Kyrgyz, Kazakhs, Kara-Kalpaks, other Slavs, Germans, Meshkhetian Turks and so on (Patanik 2003: 56). The cities like Samarkand and Bukhara were overwhelmingly Tajik-speaking. Andijaan province in the Ferghana valley region had number of Kyrgyz people. The autonomous status of the Kara-Kalpakstan region was kept intact because of its majority Karakalpak population. Around 75% of the population in cities like Samarkand and Bukhara were Tajiks. The Ferghana valley was divided among three republics, viz., Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, with ethnic spillovers (Anderson J. 1997: 139-140).

The ethnic distribution within Uzbekistan had very serious implications on the future of the newly independent state. The fear of assimilation and differentiation, due to different language and cultural groups living in the same place, was very much prevalent. Minority ethnic groups perceived the threat of what was called 'Uzbekization', which would force them to adopt Uzbek culture. There were a number of Tajik-speaking people in the country, but the knowledge of Uzbek language was considered as the necessary condition to get employment. In such a scenario, it became difficult for the non-titular nationalities to cultivate their own languages and cultures.

The tensions between the indigenous people were much more intense than those with the Russians. The reasons for this were two-fold. Firstly, these indigenous groups had ethnic-cultural-linguistic links with each other which increased the fear of assimilation. A trend of differentiation occurred despite the presence of similarities. In this process, small, relative differences were turned into absolute ones. This fear of assimilation was never felt vis-à-vis Russians and other Slavs. Secondly, the indigenous groups shared the economic and natural resources which became the bone of contention among various groups. Ethnicity was used as the tool to fight issues over water-sharing, land, employment.

Another striking feature that indicated heterogeneity was that the Uzbek national identity had internal divisions. There were regional differences within the Uzbek community and indigenous people were more loyal to their traditional clan/ tribe networks. This is described by Patnaik (2003: 60) as:

“The bringing together of Bukhara/ Samarkand part of the Bukhara emirate and the Tashkent/ Ferghana region of the Turkistan province of the Tsarist empire to form Uzbekistan led to competition among elites who were more loyal to the regions than to the nation as a whole.”

The complex regional clan/ tribe competitions and rivalries have always been part of the Uzbek culture. Although these networks continued to exist even under the Soviet system in informal ways, the differences never got intensified because of the tightly controlled nature of the system. They became visible as soon as the Soviet system loosened. Various clan networks are functional in Uzbekistan and they clash over the sharing of power and resources. In the changed circumstances, these differences became very serious and hampered the nation-building process in the post-independence period.

NATIONALISM FROM ABOVE:

As discussed above, popularity of the Communist party started declining in the 1980s. This was evident from the elections in 1989 in which the nationalist leaders from various

parts of the Soviet Union were elected to power. The nationalist sway finally led to the collapse of the USSR and its disintegration into 15 independent states. The Soviet era leaders who were still ruling various states as Presidents were confused about choosing the post-independence path for their countries.

Central Asian states did not develop the nationalist movement during the 1980s as their European counterparts did. In fact, they were supportive of the continuation of the Soviet Union. In spite of this, a nationalist wave occurred in all the Central Asian states in the post-independence period. This phenomenon can be explained by analyzing the contemporary political conditions.

Although these states got separated from the Soviet Union and had become independent, they were still ruled by the erstwhile Soviet leaders. In Uzbekistan, Islam Karimov became the First Secretary of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan in June 1989. Then, after the institutionalization of the presidential system all over the Soviet Union in March 1990, he became the elected president of the republic. And in the post-independence period, in the first direct presidential elections in December 1991, he won the presidential post by massive majority (Akbarzadeh 1996: 26).

The Soviet era leaders were liked by the people and were popularly elected with massive majorities in post-independent states. But the recognition that they sustained had to be supplemented by an established ideology. The communist ideology that legitimized their rule had already become defunct. Therefore, there was a need to search for a new ideological basis for political legitimacy. This **ideological vacuum** was filled in by the nationalist upsurge.

According to Akbarzadeh (1996: 23),

".. Once the Soviet disintegration was accepted as fait accompli, the elites proved themselves devoted champions of national independence.. Overnight the soviet-trained Uzbek elite became ardent defenders of Uzbek national independence.. (in fact) Nationalism and its philosophical underpinnings are compelling for the Uzbek elite. (as) the elite seek to justify their post-soviet existence in the discourse of national sovereignty.."

Moreover, in the aftermath of the Soviet breakdown, the old constructed identity, i.e. the Soviet identity, also went into oblivion and a need was felt to define the identity of the people of Uzbekistan. This period experienced a lot of ideological and academic debate as to which identity should be worked out, whether it should take the form of old pan-Turkic identity in the cultural sense or that of pan-Uzbek identity in a micro framework. There were even talks about pan-Islamic identity based on Sunni Islam, but it was popular only among a small group of people. This sort of dialectics provided an opportunity to the contemporary political elite to use identity as a tool to manipulate politics. Identity became politicized and the political leaders took the task of creating a new Uzbek identity.

The nationalist upsurge in Central Asia in general and Uzbekistan in particular has been an exercise 'from above'. The state under the leadership of president Islam Karimov has been playing a very active and significant role in the construction of the new 'Uzbek identity' which is dominated by nationalist ideas. The state itself adopted certain domestic policies and established domestic structures to facilitate the process of nation-building. These included adoption of new language laws, creation of new national symbols and myths, rewriting of history, revival of national heroes, renaming of places, introduction of new national holidays and so on. All these factors have led to the 'nationalization' of the 'Uzbek identity' which some critically describe as 'Uzbekization'.

Uzbekistan in the post-independence period has been on the forefront of nationalization. It has emerged as the Central Asian state that has a clearly defined national agenda. Apart from initiating a number of 'nationalizing' programs for the creation and consolidation of an independent Uzbek identity, it has tried to cultivate national patriotism for 'Vatan' (meaning the motherland) in the minds of the people.

The 'nationalizing' programs of the Uzbek state form the subject of this research work. Under the heading of 'nationalism from above', various sub-themes will be discussed to explain the role of the state in the construction of Uzbek national identity. These include the nationalist discourse, identity politics, symbolism, language, religion, institutionalization of the traditional way of life.

Nationalist Discourse:

In the post- independence Uzbekistan, several discourses emerged that dealt with identity. These include pan- Islam, pan- Turkism, and the nationalist discourse. Nevertheless, since this research relates to the nationalizing states or 'Nationalism from Above', it is desirable to talk about the discourse that influences the attitude of the state. Thus, under this sub- heading, only nationalist discourse will be discussed, and mention of other discourses will be confined only to their relevance to the nationalist discourse.

The nationalist debates started emerging in Uzbekistan in the late 1980s, during the Soviet times. The *Erk* Democratic Party and the *Birlik* popular movement were very active socio-cultural associations with strong links to Uzbek literary circles. They were lead by popular Uzbek writers and poets. These associations promoted Uzbek cultural heritage and demanded official instatement of the Uzbek language. These demands were more or less aimed at de-Russification. Under the increasing pressure from the *Birlik* and other nationalist movements, the Supreme Soviet of Uzbekistan adopted a declaration of Uzbek sovereignty on June 20, 1990. Even though this step was more of a symbolic nature, it was very significant in the evolution of Uzbek nationalism.

The post- independence nationalist discourse in Uzbekistan is dominated by the 'historical' school of thought. According to this school, the origin of the nation can be traced to the remote past and its growth is presented as linear, continuous and singular (Smith G. 1998: 15-17). The idea it propagates is based on Anthony Smith's argument that there is a continuation in the primordial ethnic communities and the modern nations. This school is also known as the primordial school of thought. Here, it is the historical bond of a particular community to a particular land that is stressed upon.

In order to consolidate the 'nation', the post- independence Uzbek state has been engaged in rediscovery of its ethnic past. The history of Uzbekistan has been rewritten and the national achievements and heroes are glorified. There is a revival of national symbols, myths, traditions and holidays. Special emphasis is given on the 'golden age' of national history, as this golden age served as the binding force that united the people. In the case

of Uzbekistan, the golden era of the Timurid dynasty is highlighted along with the glorification of the Timurid rulers as Uzbek national heroes (Patnaik 2003: 145-146).

In this process of rediscovery of the ethnic past, the period/ people that are not very much relevant for the purpose of nationalization are discarded or neglected. The past that cannot provide a cementing force to the nationalist unification is abandoned. For example, the Soviet era prominent figures have been sidelined and the Soviet past is described as the era of colonialism, and the Russians as colonizers. Though anti-Russian outlook of the current regime is not always emphasized because of the presence of Russian minority in Uzbekistan, 'De-sovietization' is one of the basic features of the contemporary nationalist discourse.

Even though pan-Turkism never had sway in Central Asia, Uzbek intelligentsia has been talking about renaming the republic as 'Turan' or 'Turkestan'. Many of the Uzbek scholars argue that Uzbekistan is a synonym of Turkistan and Uzbeks have the right to rule over other Turks. In fact, there is a presence of a group that advocates the creation of 'greater Turkestan' with Tashkent as the capital. This has threatened the other non-Uzbek Turkic nationalities in Uzbekistan in particular and in the rest of Central Asia in general.

The Uzbek state attaches immense importance to mass loyalty to the present-day boundaries of Uzbekistan. The concept of *Vatan*, meaning the motherland, has been revived and unconditional commitment to the country is emphasized upon. Uzbek nationalism is coupled with a sense of patriotism. The state has been asserting that the 'nation' comes first and that the individuals have to sacrifice for the good of the nation.

Contemporary nationalist discourse in Uzbekistan has been committed to the process of 'totalizing' the nation. The Uzbek nation is seen as a strong, indivisible entity. This tends to blur the internal differences within the nation. But at the same time it turns the differences with other nations into absolute ones. There has been a tendency to differentiate despite the existence of similarities. This creates a very harsh divide in the form of 'we- they' phenomenon. The people of other nations are seen as threats to the Uzbek nation (Patnaik 2003: 129-130).

Identity Politics:

In simple terms, identity is what people think of themselves in public spheres. Identity plays a vital role in the initial phases of nation-building, as it acts as a cementing force to hold people together with some form of unity and cohesiveness. It provides cultural benchmarks, symbols and resources based on which the masses are bound together.

In Uzbekistan, identity has been derived from multi-layered networks. These layers include sub-national, national and supra-national identities. At the sub-national level, there are family kinships, Mahallas, clan and tribal networks; at the national level, there are identities pertaining to the Uzbek ethnic group and nationality; and at the supra-national level, identities like Islam and Turkistani identity operate. In Central Asia, people never had national consciousness. Their identities were generally confined to the sub-national level. During the Soviet period, construction of the Soviet identity was undertaken on large scale (Sengupta 1996).

In the post- independence period, the Uzbek state has exploited the identity issue to the fullest in its nation-building attempts. Through the distinctive ‘Uzbek identity’, it has been trying to justify and legitimize its rule. The Uzbek-hood is being utilized as a tool to galvanize the support of the people. It is an attempt to build a state which derives its legitimacy from a particular ethno-cultural nation. There is consolidation of the link between the culture of the titular nation and the state. The preamble of the Uzbek constitution, adopted in December 1992, reads, ‘the people of Uzbekistan are ‘guided by historical experience in developing Uzbek statehood’.

A definite process of ‘Uzbekisation’ based on titular identity and culture could be seen. This distinction and relevance of identity evolved against ‘other’ identities. This ‘nationalizing’ program of the Uzbek state was clearly evident from its policies like adoption of the Uzbek language as the official state language, introduction of the Latin script, state-sponsored and controlled revival of Islamic institutions, rewriting of history, glorification of medieval legendary personalities as Uzbek national heroes, introduction of new names, introduction of new national holidays, national symbols and so on.

When it comes to identity politics in Uzbekistan, its orientation has been changing over a period of time. In the immediate aftermath of the Soviet disintegration, the identity politics was mainly directed against the Russians and other Slavs. This was evident from the de-Sovietizing policies of the state like new language laws, renaming of places and administrative organs, rewriting of history, introduction of new motifs, holidays and so on. But gradually the identity issues were no more determined by anti-Russian sentiments and started being directed against the neighbors/ other indigenous groups. This can be seen in the hostility between Uzbek- Kyrgyz and Uzbek- Tajik peoples (Patnaik 2003: 155).

Identity politics has strengths as well as weaknesses. It gives cohesiveness among a particular group, but creates divisions between various groups. All the efforts of the Uzbek state have led to an increasing nationalist consciousness among people, increasing patriotism and social cohesion. But in the multi-ethnic, multi-lingual state like Uzbekistan, this kind of 'nationalising' policy is bound to lead to an increasing sense of marginalisation, alienation and deprivation among the population that is outside the titular nationality. Instead of solving the ethnic/ national tangle in the region, the 'exclusivist' policies of the regime have led to increasing inter-ethnic tensions between the Uzbeks on the one hand and other minority groups on the other.

This issue is discussed by Schoberlein-Engel (1996: 20), who asserts,

"The notion of unity in diversity can become a casualty when the state gets into the business of defining what people's identity should be rather than listening to how they define themselves."

Symbolism:

The independent Uzbek state has been using a lot of symbols in order to assert its nationalizing attitude. These symbols include national heroes, holidays, traditions and myths that assert Uzbek-ness. These motifs are revived, invented and rediscovered from the historical achievements of the Uzbeks and have enormous force of cohesion. These

symbols reach the common masses and inculcate in their minds a sense of oneness and belonging.

Graham Smith (et al) (1998: 144) argues,

'To create unified and distinctive nations and impart a sense of common destiny to their members, nation-builders unearth, appropriate and exploit the ethno-symbolic resources at their disposal'.

The above argument justifies various acts of the Uzbek government to emphasize nationhood through various national symbols.

The first and the most significant symbolism of the Uzbek state is reflected through **Reinforcing of the Legends**. The Uzbek national pride is rooted in the political, military and cultural achievements of historical figures like Amir Timur, his grandson Ulughbeg, Al-Bukhari, Naqshband and Ibn Sina, which are restored by the state. These national heroes are the representatives of the glorious period of Uzbek history and thus can give a strong bond to the Uzbek nationality internally. Moreover it stresses the claim to greatness of the Uzbeks externally.

Restoration and glorification of the legacy of Timur is the most evident act of the government. He has been renamed as *Amir Timur* instead of erstwhile *Timur Lane*. Timur is projected as the big national figure and the forbearer of the Uzbek legacy. Many monuments have been erected in his honor in Tashkent and Samarkand which was Timur's seat of power. A huge statue and a museum have been built in Timur's memory. Timur's 650th birth anniversary was enthusiastically celebrated in the year 1994-95 (Patnaik 2003: 146-147). Apart from Timur, other resurrected historical personalities include Timur's grandson Ulughbek, an able statesman and patron of sciences and arts, Al Farabi, Ibn Sina, Imam Bukhari, Khoja Naqshband and so on. Ulughbegh's 600th birth anniversary was also celebrated in Tashkent.

There are a number of **Monuments** that are restored in the post- independence period including museums, statues, mosques and other 'national monuments'. The state has initiated **Celebrations** of various so-called national festivals. This includes September 1, Independence day, Navroz, the new year festival and other holidays. These celebrations

are initiated and sponsored by the state which organizes different extravaganzas on these days.

Another important symbolism used by the state for de-Russification and Uzbekization was **Renaming**. Karimov signed a resolution in 1996 on the renaming of administrative-territorial and other objects. The decree stated that the new names should take into account 'historical and national features' (Patnaik 2003: 153). The government has also set up a Terminology Committee attached to the Cabinet Ministry to look after the transition from Soviet to Uzbek names. All the non-native names of places and administrative bodies were replaced in the early years of independence.

Schools are deliberately used to promote nationalist feelings among young minds. And Uzbek history has been completely rewritten through rediscovery and creation of the 'national' past. It is specially designed to prevent the influence of Soviet ideological underpinnings and emphasis is laid on the ethnic past, the glorious period and the national heroes.

Language:

Language is the most important tool of identity formation as it gives people a sense of unity and cohesiveness. This is the reason why language is the most widely used phenomenon by nation-builders. Uzbek language was systematically codified and standardized under the Soviet rule. However, during the Soviet period, it always enjoyed the status of a second language after Russian. The nationalist movements including the *Birlik* movement in the late 1980s started demanding the official instatement of Uzbek language.

The new constitution of independent Uzbekistan was adopted on December 8, 1992. Article 4 of the constitution grants official status to the Uzbek language. Moreover, in the revised language law in 1993, it changed the script from Cyrillic to Latin.

The transition under way in Uzbekistan with regard to language comprises of "a complicated web" of three factors (Dollerup 1998: 144-146);

- **De-Russification:** Russian has been the language of knowledge and inter-ethnic communication. But after Uzbek was made the official language, the relevance of Russian weakened. The state has deliberately abandoned the prevalent use of Russian language and the symbols representing Russian language are also replaced. Russian names are interchanged with more native names.
- **Uzbekization:** Uzbek was made the official language. In 1994, Parliament proceedings started to be interpreted in Uzbek along with Russian and in 1997, it was made mandatory for every civil servant to know the Uzbek language. The opening of new Uzbek medium schools, setting up of the faculty of Uzbek language at the Tashkent University and promotion of Uzbek literature and media are other acts that promoted the language. The state has been taking all the necessary steps to uphold the Uzbek language.
- **Westernization:** Though this is not a very significant feature, it was evident through the change of the script from Cyrillic to Latin alphabet and promotion of the learning of English and other west European languages.

This procedure of linguistic transition has been slow, gradual and effective. Language has played a vital role in the process of nation-building.

Religion:

During the Soviet period, Islam has always been a private affair and has no influence on public/ political lives of the people. The pan- Islamic identity has never had sway over the Central Asian population. Its growth is heavily checked by the national, regional and sub-national networks of identities. Islam survived in a very subtle way during the Soviet period, as the public display of religion was prohibited. It was confined to the four walls of the houses. After the Glasnost period, there were talks about revival of Islam in Central Asia. This was evident from the increasing number of Mosques and the Madrassas. Post-independence period saw mushrooming of various religious institutions in Uzbekistan. The Ferghana valley region was specially known for the Islamic upsurge it experienced.

In Uzbekistan, to improve his public image as the defender of Uzbek identity, Islam Karimov sponsored the revival of Uzbek cultural benchmarks and Islam was seen as one such benchmark (Akbarzadeh 1996: 27). An appeal to Islamic symbols and traditions was seen as a useful political tool with which legitimacy could be reinforced. The government has been very active in sponsoring celebrations of Islamic festivals as national holidays. The process of rehabilitation of Islamic mentors such as Imam Bukhari, Naqshband as the great Uzbek ancestors is also under way with the government's approval. Several old Mosques and religious centers have been revived and restored. The International Center for Islamic Studies was established in Tashkent. For Uzbekistan, revival of Islamic heritage signals their pride in the sedentary urban culture that flourished in Transoxiana under the rule of their great national heroes (Khalid 2007: 119). According to Kubicek (1997: 648) Uzbekistan is comparatively 'more Islamic' than rest of Central Asia and thus, ruling elite is likely to seek legitimacy by appealing to Islamic symbols.

The above phenomenon is very nicely described by Khalid (2007: 118);

"For Central Asians, rediscovery of their national heritage meant, in part, rediscovering Islam and Muslim culture and reestablishing links with the broader Muslim world that had been severed by Soviet xenophobia. Islam was part of the nation's ethical and spiritual values.. The revival of Islam in contemporary Central Asia is therefore a profoundly national phenomenon."

However, while Karimov's government is engaged in revival of Islamic symbols and mentors, it has absolutely no intention of allowing Islam a substantive political role. The state has put an active check on the spread of religious institutions. The Uzbek government has been constantly clarifying that the national ideology is antithetical to the Wahhabi variety of Islam (Patnaik 2003: 166). In fact, the state exerts tight control over the religious affairs through the '**Committee for religious affairs**' attached to the state cabinet of the country. The state is involved in religious appointments and the activities of the appointees are restrained. The activities in the immediate and extended neighborhood of Uzbekistan have signaled that the Uzbek leadership curtails religious activities on its own soil.

Institutionalization of the Traditional Way of Life: Case of the ‘Mahalla’:

The ‘Mahalla committees’ are the neighborhood communities in Uzbekistan. They were traditionally the main regulators of Uzbek social life. Mahalla determined the whole range of social relations of an individual in daily life. It is a vital social group involving its members into a web of mutual relationships. Several common activities took place in the Mahallas and big functions within the Mahalla were attended by all members. There was a constant ‘give and take’ of goods and services within the members. Mahalla as an institution itself provided a number of services. It had its own administrative machinery with a head, supported by a Mahalla committee. It gave people support and expected complete loyalty from them in return. In a traditional Uzbek setting, the individual could not have any good life outside the Mahalla (Koroteyeva and Makarova 1998: 138-139).

The Mahallas continued to exist during the Soviet system also. In fact, it gave illustrations of a hybrid of the Soviet and the traditional local forms and practices. This combination was unintentional as the Soviet system did not interfere in local traditional settings and the day-to-day life of the people was influenced by the Mahallas.

In the independence period, the Mahallas are given ‘official status’ by the Uzbek government. There was a presidential decree in 1992 about the creation of the so-called ‘**Mahalla- Fund**’ with President Islam Karimov himself as the chairman. This Mahalla Fund system creates a national hierarchical organization with branches at every level of administration (Koroteyeva and Makarova 1998: 139-140). Here the Mahallas are projected as the ‘organs of local self-government’ (Patnaik 2003: 152). They are used as the organizational mechanisms for implementing state’s social assistance programs and funds for them are allocated from national budgets. The Mahallas are encouraged to organize festivals, functions, competitions, etc.

Through the Mahalla Fund, the state has formalized the traditional aspect of life which earlier escaped state control. This is evident from not only the increasing number of Mahallas, but also through the penetration of the state’s activity in the day to day life of people. It is actually indigenization, but the state prefers to call it ‘restoration of national

traditions'. Thus, the state has initiated nation- and state-building based on appropriate specific indigenous local institutions.

This was a part of the initial attempts of the state to search for new identities, especially distinct from Russia. The Russian and Slavic minorities have a feeling of being left out of this as the Mahalla is a strictly indigenous Central Asian institution which is foreign to the Russians. This was also a part of the state's attempt towards 'de-Sovietization' and 'Uzbekization'.

According to Koroteyeva and Makarova (1998: 143);

".. the state-building process in Uzbekistan is simultaneously a process of nativization (indigenization). It entails the promotion of local institutions and practices. And only those who are in a position to accept them can legitimately claim membership in the Uzbek nation. In practice this means that non- indigenous groups such as the Russians and other Europeans are likely to find themselves increasingly excluded."

NATION-BUILDING AND STATE-CONSOLIDATION:

After discussing the Nationalizing programs of the Uzbek government, it is now time to move to the central theme of this research work, that is, nation-building and state-consolidation. In the post- Soviet Uzbekistan, these processes have been going hand in hand. Thus, it is necessary to deal with them under the same heading.

According to Akcali (2005: 103),

'.. After independence, the Central Asian countries, in addition to nation-building, also started state-building.. (here) nation-building and state-building go hand in hand, as there is now an attempt to build an independent state that derives its legitimacy and support from the nation.'

The nation-building process in any country has the implications for its domestic socio-political scenario as well as the international environment. Therefore, this heading is subdivided into two sections; national perspective and international dimension.

National Perspective:

The process of **state-consolidation** in Uzbekistan is remarkable. As we have seen, 'statehood' was not new to Uzbekistan; medieval Muslim kingdoms as well as the three khanates in the pre-Soviet Uzbek history definitely contained the basic features of statehood, including governmental bodies, regular taxation, permanent standing army and so on. The Soviet Socialist Republic of Uzbekistan was also a state-like unit in the federal set up, having defined borders, governmental apparatus and internal autonomy.

Independence of Uzbekistan from the Soviet Union in 1991 created Uzbek nation-state as per the established international norms. The new state had definite borders, specific population, government apparatus and internal autonomy coupled with external sovereignty. Modern Uzbekistan is definitely a nation-state as it strikes relationship between name of the state, its territory, the population it inhabits and the group of people that govern them. Nationality has become a firm criterion to consolidate Uzbek statehood.

In the post- Soviet period, the Uzbek state adopted a new constitution and new laws. This established the legal foundation for new legislative, executive and judicial bodies. It provided for the setting up of democratic institutions. A new political system was also introduced which was claimed to be open and democratic. These attempts of the state can perhaps be described as the consolidation of the already existing statehood on the basis of the national legitimacy, thereby giving it international recognition.

The process of **nation-building** in the post-independence Uzbekistan is an interesting story of emergence and construction of 'nationalism from above' where the ruling elite itself initiated the nationalizing program. The model of 'nation-state was taken as the tool to consolidate their independent statehood.

The nation-state system is very old and has been widely prevalent in the world for more than a century. It originated in west Europe and gradually spread to rest of the world. In fact, in the contemporary world, 'nationhood' is considered to be the most desired basis

of any state. Not all the states in the world today are nations, but there is an aspiration towards nationhood. Turbulent events of early 1990s brought this wave of nationalism to erstwhile socialist world with sudden disintegrations of the Soviet Union and former Yugoslavia.

This was the time when the issue about nation-state building in these post-Soviet states started being discussed in the scholarly circles. Scholars believed that the consolidation of ethno-national identities and the territories that the Soviets had assigned to the members of each nationality created strong aspiration towards the formation of nation-states in the post-Soviet period and the states were caught in the dilemma as to how to carry the process of national consolidation forward.

The Uzbek republic was given its current borders during the Soviet National Delimitation process. It was the Soviet rule that played constructive role in development of the Uzbek identity. Nevertheless, the Uzbek identity was under-developed as the supra-national 'Soviet' identity was fostered more forcefully. Collapse of the Soviet Union paved the way to consolidation of the Uzbek identity backed by national sovereignty, which was used by the ruling elites as a tool for political legitimacy.

Overnight transition of the Soviet-trained elites to the staunch defenders of Uzbek nationalism can be seen through the prism of sudden and unexpected independence. These developments led to the transition of the Uzbek state from being a part of the tightly controlled powerful communist state to a small independent landlocked state on the world map. Moreover the erstwhile communist ideology went into oblivion. This compelled the ruling elites to find some program which would earn them popular legitimacy. Therefore the state sought to justify its post-Soviet survival through the discourse of nationalism in the era of nation-state system. According to Kubicek (1997: 644), '.. (the Central Asian elites) need to imbue their states with a distinct national flavor, differentiating themselves from the neighbors and giving birth to the sense of common identity'.

In the post- independence period, the Uzbek state has exploited the identity issue in its nation-building attempts. The Uzbek-hood is being utilized as a tool to galvanize the

support of the people. It is an attempt to build a state which derives its legitimacy from a particular ethno-cultural nation. There is consolidation of the link between the culture of the titular nation and the state. The preamble of the Uzbek constitution, adopted in December 1992, reads, 'the people of Uzbekistan are 'guided by historical experience in developing Uzbek statehood'. This 'nationalizing' program of the Uzbek state was clearly evident from its policies like adoption of the Uzbek language as the official state language, introduction of the Latin script, state-sponsored and controlled revival of Islamic institutions, rewriting of history, glorification of medieval legendary personalities as Uzbek national heroes, introduction of new names, introduction of new national holidays, national symbols and so on.

In the post-Soviet Uzbekistan, the processes of nation-building and state-consolidation have been progressing **parallel to each other**. In fact, the upsurge of nationalism from above can be considered as the process necessary for state-building (Kubicek 1997: 647). Contemporary ruling elites have fused these two processes so much so that it is difficult to look at them separately. The adoption of a new constitution and declaration of new decrees ushered in the consolidation of the existing governing bodies. However, this consolidation was itself undertaken keeping in mind the nationalist fervor of the new republic. The new constitution calls for construction of Uzbek statehood. Various laws and decrees have emphasized on the use of Uzbek language in government activities such as parliamentary proceedings, administration, etc. The bureaucrats are compelled to master the Uzbek language and education is imparted in the same medium with special stress on inculcating nationalist feelings. Thus, the statehood that is consolidated in independent Uzbekistan is necessarily based on a ethno-linguistic and cultural benchmarks of a particular 'nation'.

These 'state-consolidation' attempts through massive nationalizing programs are described as the process of 'Uzbekisation' based on a titular identity and culture. This program of 'Uzbekization' initiated by the Uzbek leadership has its consequences. It is criticized by many scholars as a systematic attempt at nation-building which has strong

'exclusivist' traits. It emphasizes the importance of the titular groups and thereby marginalizes the minorities.

Khazanov (1995: 22-23) gives an interesting definition of the term 'minority' by arguing, "the minority and majority status are more than just a matter of arithmetic proportion of various ethnic groups within a certain state. It is in fact matter of who holds the political power and whose language and culture occupy dominant position in the state". He lists three characteristics of minority politics.

- First, the claim of a group of people to belong to an 'ethno-cultural nation' different from the dominant ethno-cultural nation.
- Second, the demand for state recognition of this distinct ethno-cultural nationality.
- Third, the assertion of certain cultural and political rights on the basis of this ethno-cultural nationality.

Sengupta (1997: 286) argues that "the question of 'national minorities' has to be essentially examined vis-à-vis the state which designates them as a minority". She has rightly linked the phenomena of nationalizing states and national minorities and the nationalizing policies of the regimes have to be seen in the light of national minorities. She argues that nationalism instead of solving ethnic/nation tangle in the region has reconfigured it. She further asserts, "This program of 'nationalization' of political space in the region has meant that a number of people are now left outside their own national territory or do not have one" (Sengupta 1997: 270).

As discussed earlier, Uzbekistan is a multi-ethnic country having more than 20 ethnic groups residing in it. Multiplicity is more visible in the urban areas. There are specific minority pockets where minorities are in majority. And the nationalizing program of the regime has led to systematic 'Uzbekisation' of the population. There are number of codified Uzbeks who actually speak Tajik/ Kyrgyz language. Tajiks tell their identity as 'Uzbek' because of the strong perceived threat of deprivation (Foltz 1996). The official account put the number of Tajiks in Uzbekistan to 5%, but Tajiks insist on much higher figure, ie, 25-30% (Patnaik 2003: 127). Non- Uzbek language groups perceive the threat of assimilation. For instance, the Samarkandi dialect of Tajik language is Turkified as

compared to the Tajik spoken in Dushanbe (Foltz 1996: 214). The alienation is also evident from the decreasing number of the Kyrgyz and Tajik schools in Uzbekistan and reduction in the number of Tajik publications in the Tajik majority areas.

The Language-demography and political pre-eminence has given exclusive character to nation-building process. This has implications for the emergence of modern Uzbek nation-state. Non-Uzbek minority ethnic groups have a sense of alienation and non-belonging. The culture that the state promotes as national culture is unfamiliar to them; and thus, they feel left out of 'national' environment. This has hampered the nation-building process in Uzbekistan.

International Dimension:

Nationalism is an essential component for state-building. This is internationally accepted phenomenon of the contemporary world. The state has to resort to nation-building for internal cohesion and external recognition. The Central Asian states which are new entrants to the international 'nation-state' system had to undertake it from above. This was a desperate attempt to win legitimacy among its own people and respect from the international community.

Akbarzadeh (1996: 30) argues,

".. Nation-states are widely accepted as natural formations on the global scale and this is conducive to attempts at glorifying the Uzbek nation by the state. In other words, the state in Uzbekistan is fostering its own nation to legitimize its international standing.."

But the exclusive traits of the Uzbek nationalism are problematic and need to be checked. Apart from inculcating sense of non-belonging among the non-titular population, it hampers the international reputation of the state.

Uzbekistan is the most powerful country in Central Asia, barring Kazakhstan. It is also the most populous among other Central Asians and shares border with all Central Asian countries and Afghanistan. It inhabits significant minorities from all its neighbors and

several other non-titular ethnic groups. Moreover, Uzbekistan has significant Diaspora in the neighboring countries and Russia. Uzbekistan's relations with the outside world is determined by the treatment it gives to its minorities.

The CIS founding charter commits the member states to present borders inherited from the Soviet Union. And this is the reason why claims and counter-claims over each others' territories and people would create tensions.

Patnaik (2003: 134-135) has discussed this issue;

'Given the present ethnic heterogeneity of Central Asia, no nationality should make territorial claims to regain what it considers its 'historic territory' and in the process enlist the support of its co-ethnic in the neighboring state for its nationalist project. Nor should a nation think of the present boundaries as the homeland only of one titular group. The building of the state based on multi-ethnicity and pluralism would help in peace and stability in the region.'

In the Central Asian region, almost all the ethno-territorial as well as economic tensions center on Uzbekistan (Dawisha and Parrot 1994: 85). Uzbekistan being the powerful country, there is perceived threat of Uzbek domination of the region. The borders disputes, issues of water sharing, environmental problems and threat of Islamic fundamentalism are all influenced by the ethnic equations in the region. Thus, the nation-building process within Uzbekistan has implications on its relationship with the other Central Asian countries.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSION

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The modern Uzbek nation-state came into existence in 1991, when it acquired independence from the Soviet Union. But Nationalism in Uzbekistan did not emerge suddenly at that time; rather it has deep roots in the past. In other words, the emergence of the Uzbek identity and the process of Uzbek state-building was not a one-time affair and has been a continuous process.

Central Asia has always been an ethno-linguistically diverse region and historically most of the Central Asians lacked national consciousness as such. Till the demarcation of modern borders, their identities were either dominated by the supra-national factors (based on Islam) or the sub-national factors (pertaining to tribes or clans). All the kingdoms or principalities that were formed in Central Asia were essentially multi-ethnic and the question of ethnic identity was never taken seriously. The rulers did not impose their own ethno-linguistic identity over the population. Moreover, under these rulers the boundaries also were not very firm.

The indigenous Central Asian people were linked with each other by linguistic, ethnic and cultural interaction for centuries. They were constantly intermixing and various scattered groups were incorporated into more stable ones. Thus, they lacked the specific demarcation of ethno-linguistic borders.

Formation and evolution of the Uzbek identity is an interesting story. They were the descendants of the nomadic tribes of erstwhile Golden Horde who were united under the leadership of great ruler Uzbek Khan. The ethnonym 'Uzbek' comes from the same source. The Uzbek was the name given to a collectivity of various tribes. These tribes gradually migrated to the *Maveraunnahr* region between the Urals and river Syrdariya. The establishment of the Timurid rule was a very vital step in consolidation of Uzbek identity and statehood. The Timurids united even more tribes such as Chaghataids (the

Turkic- Mongol tribes) others settled Turkic tribes and Turkified Tajiks. The Timurid dynasty was also instrumental in development of Chaghatay culture and literature which subsequently became 'Uzbek' culture. They became a more stable group as they developed distinct identity under the rule of Shaybani Khan.

The tri- Khanate structure that divided the Central Asian region in three parts was very significant in the development of Uzbek identity and statehood, because all the three Khanates, Bukhara, Kokand and Khiva, were mainly centered in present day Uzbekistan and were ruled by three Uzbek dynasties. Three centuries of dominance of Uzbeks (Timurid dynasty and the tri-Khanate structure) transformed the Uzbeks into a homogenous group and gave them a strong sense of identity. This period brought a big wave of 'Turkification' as the ruling Uzbek community embraced various tribes.

Tsarist colonialism imposed 'Turkistani' identity on the people ruled directly by the Tsarist state. Though Central Asians were never swayed by the pan- Turkic identity, it played a positive role in the development of Uzbek identity. Pan- Turkism in Central Asian clearly meant domination of the Uzbeks in subtle way. In addition, Tashkent was capital of the erstwhile Turkestan and thus the center of all Tsarist activities in Central Asia. This gave Uzbeks central position in the Tsarist administration. The role of 'Tashkent Bolsheviks' could not be denied in the establishment of Soviet rule in the region.

Modern borders of Uzbekistan were crafted through the nationality policy of the Soviets. The process of National Territorial Delimitation which started in 1924 and was completed in 1936 gave birth to five Soviet Socialist Republics in the Central Asian region. The process was not completely an exercise from above, as it was undertaken with the participation of experts and local elite to avoid any arbitrariness. Moreover, the course was not at all hasty. However, Territorial Delimitation also created some problems. The borders were crafted keeping in mind two opposing principles: the national-political principle and the economic principle. Furthermore, the population in Central Asia was so intermixed and intermingled that the formation of precise boundaries

was not an easy task. Thus, no national republic could become fully homogenous. All of them had large national minorities.

The National Delimitation was the most significant step in consolidation of Uzbek identity and statehood. This was for the first time that a state was created on the basis of 'nationality criteria'. This consolidated the group identity by giving the Uzbek ethnic group strong position in its territory. 83% of all the Uzbeks in Central Asia were concentrated in the Uzbek SSR, where they formed absolute majority of 76%. Through the 'affirmative action' program of the Soviets, Uzbeks received advantageous position in their republic, with the concentration of the political power and some cultural and linguistic privileges. It was for the first time that the name of the republic, the territory it covered, the population it inhabited and the group of people who ruled over them achieved greatest congruence in the Uzbek history. This was the most significant milestone in formation of the Uzbek nationhood.

The Soviet state helped the consolidation of national-territorial identities through measures like creation of literary languages, introduction of script, creating infrastructure such as education, media etc. The Soviets not only emphasized on official use of the titular languages and their standardization, but also built an extensive cultural infrastructure and thereby created an independent cultural and intellectual universe for these Central Asian languages as well as raised their prestige. History, language, epic, literature, folklore and traditional arts were rediscovered and developed. The Soviet state helped in nation-building process through the standardization of national languages, the creation of national symbols and the classification of the population based on nationality for all official purposes.

In Uzbekistan, as in other Central Asian States, there was no nationalist movement with separatist overtone. In fact the Uzbek republic wanted to be the part of the USSR unlike its Baltic or Slavic counterparts. This was evident in the overwhelming majority voting for the continuation of the USSR in March, 1991 Referendum. Though a symbolic step was taken by the Supreme Soviet of Uzbekistan by adopting declaration of Uzbek

sovereignty in June, 1991, it was clearly an urge for more autonomy within the Union and not for separation and independence. There appeared *Birlik* popular movement in Uzbekistan which was concerned issues like instatement of Uzbek language, cotton monoculture and the degradation of the Aral Sea. But separation from the Union was not there on its agenda.

The period of openness in 1989-90 led to eruption of several ethnic riots in Central Asia. For instance, in 1989, violence took place in Ferghana valley between the Uzbeks and the Meshkhetian Turks. Another insurrection came about between the Uzbeks and the Kyrgyz in Osh in 1990. Most of these riots and uprisings were related to Uzbekistan. There are several reasons for this. Uzbeks are the most numerous ethnic group in Central Asia. The Uzbek republic shares border with all the other Central Asian republics. And Uzbekistan is home to several ethnicities. It inhabits minorities from all its neighbors. The ethnic clashes of the region had direct or indirect impact on the behavior of the Uzbek republic in the post-independence period.

Thousands of Russians and other Slavic people left Central Asia in the late-1980s, many factors being responsible for this, including economic breakdown, nationalist wave among the indigenous people, new language laws and revival of Islam. Massive migrations of Russians and other Slavic people had a deep impact on Central Asia. Most important was the loss of professionals, engineers and specialists. In the times of disastrous economic crisis, Central Asians had to suffer this loss of skilled population.

Uzbekistan's independence in 1991 gave birth to the Uzbek nation-state according to the established international standards. Apart from the basic features of statehood like fixed territory, population and administrative machinery, it was granted international recognition as an independent state actor. It acquired the autonomy to deal with its domestic affairs and sovereignty to carry forward its international relations.

Although the state was separated from the Soviet Union, it was still ruled by the erstwhile Soviet leader, Islam Karimov. However, the communist ideology that gave him legitimacy had already become defunct. Therefore, there was a need for a new

ideological basis for political legitimacy. This ideological vacuum was filled in by the nationalist upsurge. Moreover, in the aftermath of the Soviet breakdown, the old constructed identity, i.e. the Soviet identity, also went into oblivion and a need was felt to redefine the identity of the people of Uzbekistan. In the independence period, Identity became politicized and the political leaders took the task of creating a new Uzbek identity.

Nationalistic upsurge in Central Asia in general and Uzbekistan in particular has been an exercise 'from above'. The state under the leadership of president Islam Karimov has been playing a very active and significant role in the construction of the new 'Uzbek identity' which is dominated by nationalist ideas. There is a 'nationalizing program' through which the state has been promoting the ethno- cultural motifs of a particular community. A definite process of 'Uzbekisation' based on titular identity and culture is clearly identifiable. This distinction and relevance of identity is juxtaposed against 'other' identities.

The post- independence nationalist discourse in Uzbekistan is dominated by the 'historical' school. In order to consolidate the 'nation', the post- independence Uzbek state has been engaged into a rediscovery of its ethnic past. The history of Uzbekistan is rewritten and the national achievements and heroes are glorified. There is a revival of national symbols, myths, traditions and holidays. Special emphasis is given on the 'golden age' of national history, example being the Timurid rule, as this served as the binding force that united the people.

In the post-independence Uzbekistan, the processes of nation-building and state-consolidation have been progressing hand-in-hand. The contemporary ruling elites have fused these two processes so much so that it is difficult to look at them separately. The adoption of a new constitution and declaration of new decrees ushered in the consolidation of the existing governing bodies. However, this consolidation was itself undertaken keeping in mind the nationalist fervor of the new republic. The new

constitution calls for construction of Uzbek statehood. Various laws and decrees have emphasized on the use of Uzbek language in government activities such as parliamentary proceedings, administration, etc. The bureaucrats are compelled to master the Uzbek language and education is imparted in the same medium with special stress on inculcating nationalist feelings. Thus, the statehood that is consolidated in independent Uzbekistan is necessarily based on the ethno-linguistic and cultural benchmarks of a particular 'nation'.

These 'state-consolidation' attempts through massive nationalizing programs are described as the process of 'Uzbekisation' based on a titular identity and culture. This program of 'Uzbekization' initiated by the Uzbek leadership has its consequences. It is systematic attempt at nation-building which has strong 'exclusivist' traits. Uzbekistan is multi-ethnic country with people from more than 20 ethnic groups staying in it. There are specific minority pockets where minorities are in majority. Because of the nationalizing programs of the regime, non- Uzbek ethnic groups perceive the threat of assimilation. There are number of codified Uzbeks who actually speak Tajik/ Kyrgyz language. Tajiks tell their identity as 'Uzbek' because of the strong perceived threat of deprivation. The alienation is also evident from the decreasing number of the Kyrgyz and Tajik schools in Uzbekistan, reduction in the number of Tajik publications in the Tajik majority areas.

The nationalization under the regime has provided the society with sense of unity and cohesion. The cultural and traditional motifs that are used in the process have consolidated 'national' citizenship. But, at the same time, if they are creating sense of alienation and marginalization among a certain section of population, they have to be given a second thought.

Whatever the Uzbek government has been pursuing as 'nationalizing program' can be seen through the prism of its attempt achieve popular legitimacy and survive in the international nation-state system. Nationalization of the territorial entity through factors like identity, culture and language is not a new phenomenon. This system emerged in the west Europe and then gradually got spread to rest of the world. The post- Soviet Central

Asian state like Uzbekistan is a new entrant to the system. And for consolidation of its territorial statehood, it was rather necessary to adopt the 'nationalizing' policies.

In contemporary international scenario, only the states that are strengthened by the nationalist fervor can survive. Nation - building gives them internal cohesion, peace and stability and international recognition and respect. Thus, the 'nationalization' of the state is not problematic; it is rather indispensable. The only challenge is to carry on the nation-building in such a manner that includes all the citizens and does not create sense of being left out.

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