

# **NATION BUILDING IN UZBEKISTAN**

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**CERTIFICATE**

This is to certify that this dissertation entitled "**NATION BUILDING IN UZBEKISTAN**" submitted by *Mr. RANJAY KUMAR*, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the Degree of **MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY** of this University, is his original work. To the best of our knowledge, this dissertation has not been previously submitted for the award of any other degree of this University or any other University.

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

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CHAIRPERSON

***Dedicated to My Parents***

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***- Ranjay Kumar***

## **INTRODUCTION**

## INTRODUCTION

The process of decolonization which started in Post-World War II period, gave birth to many nations in Africa and Asia. Similarly, in the 1990s, the disintegration of multinational states like the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, gave rise to new nations. Some of the nations like Lithuania, Estonia are not new in strict sense of the term. They for a brief period during 1920-1940 enjoyed political sovereignty. However, the Central Asian states of Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan are new entities in the comity of nation states. These countries never in their history existed as a nation-state, rather it was during the Soviet period, that these States started their national identity formation.

Uzbekistan which is the area of study undertaken, is a case in point. It was only during the Soviet period that a modern sense of 'national consciousness' emerged among the Uzbek intelligentsia. Even after gaining unexpected independence due to the disintegration of USSR, the process of nation building has not yet been complete. Here in this study nation building has been understood in the sense of national identity construction. My view is that in Uzbekistan there is disagreement among the nationalist forces about the

context of the national identity how it is to be defined and how the narrative of nationalism is to be formulated.

During the nineteenth century, in Central Asia, there were feudal Khanates of Khiva, Bukhara and Kokand. Though ruled by Uzbek Khan, these political entity were not a nation state in modern terms. Here nation state has been defined as a state which the great majority of the citizens identify with to the extent of seeing it as their own".

These Khanates lacked the general feature of a nation state, principle of national sovereignty, a centralised administration, fixed borders, popular identification with State through education. In fact, these political entities were characterised by shifting political boundaries, a feudal background with mass illiteracy. In fact people in general had no allegiance to the sovereign except those who were immediate officials of the ruler.

It was only in the Soviet period that a sustained attempt was made to forge a distinct nation state identities in Central Asia. The Bolsheviks played a crucial role in making new nation's in Central Asia where there existed ethnic groups that talked national consciousness. Lenin perceived nationalism as a response to national-social oppression caused by the emergence of



early capitalism, and hence it was bound to disappear in the course of building socialism, which would foster internationalism. But taking cognizance of the present Czarist situation, he supported the right of national self-determination.

But what constituted a nation? Stalin defined nation as a "historically constituted stable community of people formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life and psychological make up manifested in a common culture".

The national delimitation implemented in the Soviet Union during 1924-25 which created Union republic and autonomous region, signified the implementation of the policy of national self-determination in Stalinist terms. It provided each major nation in the Union a unified territory. In Central Asia, Stalin defined nation on the basis of ethno-linguistic basis and thus came into existence the Uzbek Soviet Social Republic.

But the division of the ethnic groups on territorial basis didn't prove to be a very homogenizing one, as later events proved. The Uzbek and Tajik became the competitor for the same territory in which they have lived for centuries. As of now, Tajik still claims Bukhara and Samarkand, a part of Uzbekistan territory as their own. Stalin's principle objective in structuring a

new ethnically based order was to destroy any potential of Central Asian unification around the twin banner of Pan-Turkism and Pan-Islamism. In the late 19th century, in Central Asia, Ismail Gaspransky led *Jadid* movement, was promoting the idea of a unified Turkistan, with an Islamic identity, but with a progressive and social programme. To this day, *Jadid* programme do influence political groups in Uzbekistan. *Birlik* a staunch nationalist group is a major votary of Pan-Turkism.

Elites are the major source of transmission of national identity and nationalism. The modernization programme launched during the Stalin period saw the destruction of old elites represented by religious leaders and the Begs, mirzas etc. The collectivization programme, along with anti-religion drive initiated by the Soviet state laid down the foundation of a new socialist social order. Here the change in the script from Arabic to Roman and subsequently to Cyrillic in 1940 played a crucial role in laying down the foundation of a new identity in Uzbekistan. The break in language coupled with mass literacy drive undertaken by Soviet state meant that old identity order which was based on an amorphous pan-Islamism and Pan-Turkism could no longer hold true. One of the paradoxes of the Stalin's collectivization programme was that instead of uprooting the traditional social structure, it strengthened it. The Soviet *kolkhoz*

system was typically built around a long established village drawing within its extended family and whole clan. It basically grafted Socialist relation of production into a traditional social order. Kolkhoz system ironically became the centre for nursing and perpetualising the old social order, where people identified themselves with tribe, clan, region, religion, etc. Administratively also clan patronage system survived.

The lasting legacy of Stalin's nationality policy was that his emphasis on ethnicity did capture one of the key ingredients of a potential cohesive modern nation state. As we can see in Yugoslavia, the absence of a core ethnic group, brought instability and secessionist movement to the fore. Uzbekistan which has an Uzbek population of 70 per cent having one language and culture do have a core ethnic identity that could provide a basis for a stable national identity.

### **Nationalism**

Anthony Smith defines nationalism as a "movement for attaining and maintaining autonomy, unity and identity on behalf of a nation deemed by some of its members to

constitute an actual or potential nation".<sup>1</sup> The most important aspect of Soviet modernization policy was the development of an educational system in Uzbekistan. After the Second World War, explosion in educational opportunities in Uzbekistan also helped in forming a broad native intelligentsia. History shows that it is the intelligentsia that are most susceptible to nationalist feeling.

According to Gellner, nationalism is the product of homogenisation. This homogenisation comes from education. The homogenous system of education merges the high culture (literacy) and low culture (illiteracy), either by upgrading a low culture or imposing a high culture on low culture. This homogenization process in any society gives rise to nationalism.<sup>2</sup>

In the case of Uzbekistan, Soviet educational system acted as a homogenizing agent. By 1960s there had grown a educated class that started searching for its own roots. This search for roots led them to their Islamic past. Here High literature played an important role in their effort to rediscover their pre-Russian/Pre-Soviet culture. People expressed their nationalistic

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<sup>1</sup> Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity* (London: Penguins, 1991), p.73.

<sup>2</sup> Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1983), pp.10-13.

consciousness by professing faith in Islamic heritage. But one of the feature of Uzbek nationalism was it was basically confined to Uzbek intelligentsia. Also the demand raised by nationalist groups were not political sovereignty rather cultural or economic one. Thus when the Independence came they were unprepared for it. The lack of common agreement among the intelligentsia about the basic contour of Uzbek national identity, which was a marked Uzbek after Independence.

Generally speaking, the type of nationalism which emerges once national sovereignty has achieved, focus on the creation, crystallization and expression of the cultural identity of the nation. There is a broad consensus among the nationalist that the nation is sacred and its integrity is to be protected, that the nation has territorial integrity and certain sacred cultural contents that must be defended. Nationalist disagree with respect top how the content of this national identity are to be deprived and how the narrative of nationalism is to be formulated.

In other words, all the protagonist of cultural nationalism are equally nationalist but they vie with each other in their claim to legitimacy of their respective vision of nationalism.

Dispute among them is common. Those who hold political and economic authority define and endorse a hegemonic nationalism. A nationalism that supports and endorses the political, economic programme of those in authority and power. This particular version of nationalism is normally publicized especially abroad as the nationalism of the nation. Ignoring divergent version.

Ever since the publication of Hobsbawn's volume, the concept of "Invention of tradition" whether historical or cultural has come into vogue. In his preface to the book, *The Invention of Tradition* Hobsbawn defines invented tradition as "a response to novel situations which take the form of references to old situations, or which establish their own past by quasi-obligatory repetition".<sup>3</sup>

He also makes distinction between invented and genuine traditions. Where the old ways are alive, traditions need be neither revived nor invented. The element of invention is particularly clear in the ways history has been used to forge that comparatively recent historical innovation the nation, with its associated

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<sup>3</sup> Eric Hobsbawn and Terreny Ranger, (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp.1-2.

phenomena, "nationalism, nation state, national symbols and histories".<sup>4</sup>

Indeed narratives of nationalism are invented histories or tradition. This process of inventing involves fabrication of facts, selective remembering and partial forgetting of the national historical and cultural legacy. It is because of this fabrication of facts. Selectivity of what is to be remembered and to be forgotten, that we have we have a narrative of nationalism, standing for the identity of a nation. It is the narrative created out of a conflicting historical fact and contradicting cultural phenomena.

Those who are in power and authority are at a advantage in this respect because of their structural position in nation, in creating and propagating a national identity that promotes their own interest. They can marshall forth all the institutional apparatus as their disposal. The State can and does utilize the educational system to propagate what is believed to be the proper definition of what nation is. Those opposing the establishment may offer a different version of what a nation is supposed to be.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., pp.1-3.

The above mentioned situation also obtains in Uzbekistan. In Uzbekistan also after independence an attempt is being made to define the Uzbek national identity. The state sponsored official nationalism as espoused by the Karimov regime is challenged by two main political force. One by the secular, democratic opposition group represented by *Birlik* and *Erk* and other by the Islamist fundamentalist forces. All these three groups are engaged in the process of espousing their own viewpoint and trying to view mass loyalty towards their own version of nationalism. In fact a marked absence of a common agreement on what constitute a distinct Uzbek national identity is the general feature of post-Independent Uzbekistan.

### ***The Objective of the Study***

The main objective of the study is to examine the conditions in which Uzbek nation emerged, "particularly during the Soviet period. It also tries to examine the programmatic aspect of nation building in the republic of Uzbekistan with particular emphasis on the programme and perspective of Islam Karimov regime. It will also take into account the alternative view of nation as espoused by other political forces opposed to the Karimov regime.



Some of the questions which the author has tried to answer in this study are following:

How the Soviet nationality policy created a distinct Uzbek national identity? What was the nature of Uzbek nationalism during the Soviet period?

What are the approaches and agenda of nation building of the present government?

What are the approaches and agenda of the opposition?

What are the future prospects?

#### ***Source of Information and Methodology***

The present study is mainly based on secondary sources in the English language. The studies of Russian as well as those of other scholars have been consulted. The work of Lenin and Stalin have been used in order to get a picture of the ideological basis of the Soviet nationality policies. For information on the programme and policies of the present regime and those of opposition groups, various books and articles have been consulted apart from their speeches and works. Methodology will be mainly descriptive and analytical.

### ***The Plan of Study***

The information collected have been organised into three Chapters. The first Chapter mainly deals with the Soviet nationality policy as it was articulated by Lenin and Stalin and implemented during the Soviet period. It was during the Stalin period that territorial delimitation exercise was undertaken which gave the Uzbeks an ethnic identity all the strapping of nationhood, a state with presumed sovereignty. The Soviet language and cultural policy helped in building a native intelligentsia which became the carrier and forbearer of Uzbek national identity. Independence brought its own problem for the nascent Uzbek state. It had never exercised its sovereignty in its entire history. Now with freedom being thrust upon it, the complicated task facing the Uzbek elite was to forge a national identity that will command people's loyalty. Karimov's regime attempt in this direction has been mainly dealt in the second Chapter. The alternative view of what constitute the national identity as espoused by the opposition forces has been dealt in the third Chapter. It examines in detail the programmatic content of the opposition view, the Islamist and the broadly secular democratic nationalist forces.

A broad general analysis of the programmatic content of all the protagonist in Uzbekistan has been done in the Conclusion summing up the main findings of the study.

## **Chapter I**

## Chapter I

### UZBEKISTAN DURING THE SOVIET PERIOD

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, in Central Asia, there were three independent political units, the Khanates of Bukhara, Khiva and Kokand. The Khans or Emirs of Uzbek dynasties ruled for three centuries (16th to mid 19th centuries) until they were incorporated into the Tsarist Russian Empire. The Khan or Emirs who ruled over these states were hereditary rulers and their governments were tyrannical and oppressive in nature.<sup>1</sup> The political set up of these Khanates was of feudal nature. Although the control of the Khan in these States was quite stable and their rule provided internal centralization till the Czarist conquest, yet it cannot be denied that they could hardly check the growing influence of the provincial governors.<sup>2</sup> The sovereign had only nominal control over their provincial governors who were not only practically independent but also kept themselves constantly busy in

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1 Mary Holdsworth, *Turkestan in Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959), p.9.

2 Ibid., p.12.

waging wars against their neighbours and their sovereign in order to expand their area of influence and power.

Ethically speaking, Uzbek Khanates of Khiva, Bukhara, Kokand were heterogenous in composition. In Khiva there were Uzbeks, Turkmen, Kara-Kalpaks and Kazakhs.<sup>3</sup> Uzbeks, the dominant ethnic groups, are mainly the descendants of Turkish nomads. The historical ancestors of the Uzbek were the local Central Asian peoples such as Khorezmian, Sagdians, Manapets and Sakas.<sup>4</sup> In the earlier period, Turk tribes from the Steppe had migrated to the valleys of Zevarshan. Fergana, Khorezon and other regions of Maverannhor. As a result of intermingling with local agricultural people, the Turks adopted their economic mode of life and cultural habits, and the local who were Persian adopted the language of Turks.<sup>5</sup>

This process of ethnic inter-mixture was actively going on during the 11th and 12th centuries and during this time the main nucleus of a Turkish people known later by the ethnic name of Uzbeks was formed on the territory between Amu and Syr-Darya rivers.

3 Devandra Kaushik, *Central Asia in Modern Times* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1970), p.25.

4 Ibid., p.19.

5 Ibid.



In the 15th century there developed among the Deshti-Kypchak new powerful tribal union one of which was situated on the territory of the white Hords in the lower Syr-Darga region. This Union included a tribe which, since the 14th century came to be known as Uzbeks. By the end of 15th century, these steppe tribes led by Shelbani Khan conquered Timurid state. The Uzbek tribe which followed Sheibani Khan to Central Asia settled there and gradually merged with Turk and Tajik population. With the inclusion of Deshti-Kypchak Turk tribes, a distinct ethnic Uzbek people emerged.<sup>6</sup>

However, it will be mistake to conclude that with the emergence of a distinct ethnic group, the people considered themselves as belonging to a nation or considered the medieval Khanates of Bukhara, Khiva, Kokand as "national state". "People in general had no national consciousness in the modern sense of the term and had no feeling of allegiance to the sovereign except those who were immediate officials of the rulers".<sup>7</sup> The people had strong loyalties towards their clan, tribe. They did not call themselves as Kokandians, Khivans or Bukharan, but associated themselves with the

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6 Ibid., p.23.

7 Mary Holdsworth, op.cit., p.3.

tribe to which they belonged. Feudal loyalties were more important than national allegiance.

The prerequisite which played a historical role in the rise of nationalism and modern nation-state in Europe was feudalism and absolute monarchy.<sup>8</sup> It was the absolute monarchy which sowed the seeds of modern nationalism by performing two important tasks of Centralization and partial mobilization emphasizing the historical role of absolute monarchy in modern nationalism. Anderson writes, "The absolute monarchies introduced standing armies, a permanent bureaucracies, national taxation, a codified law and the beginning of a unified market".<sup>9</sup> Also the absolute monarchies partially mobilized, awakened their subject, especially the townsman, and to a less extent peasantry in their political struggle against various feudal lords who represented particularism and in their military conflict which constantly opposed the various monarchies of Western Europe.

This historical agent of absolutism was virtually absent in pre-modern Khanates of Bukhara, Khiva and Kokand. Here we can appreciate the historical role that

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8 D. Norbu, *Culture and Politics of Third World Nationalism* (London: Routledge, 1992), p.43.

9 P. Anderson, *Lineage of Absolutist State* (London, 1979), p.17.



Russian conquest of these areas played. It introduced, on the one hand, elements of modernization with opening of Russian school, that brought new, modern ideas. And, on the other hand, its economic policy in the region led to the penetration of capitalist relation that helped in removing feudal stagnation.<sup>10</sup> What was lacking in these Khanates by way of absolutism was performed by Leninist-political party which set in motion the powers of centralization of political power and resources.

The Russian penetration in the region began with an abortive campaign against the Khanate of Khiva in 1839.<sup>11</sup> After taking Tashkent, a part of Kokand in 1865, Czarist army defeated the Khan of Kokand the following years. In 1867, Tsar Alexander II set up the Turkestan Governor-Generalship, with Tashkent as its capital, which also included his new protectorate of Kokand under a nominally independent Khan.<sup>12</sup> Next year Czar expanded Turkestan by incorporating the Emirate of Bukhara as a protectorate. Three years later Tsar annexed

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10 D. Kaushik, *ibid.*, p.26.

11 Dilip Hiro, *Between Marx and Muhamad: The Changing Face of Central Asia* (London: Harper Collins, 1995), p.2.

12 *Ibid.*

Kokand, ending its nominal independence.<sup>13</sup> Then there was a complete control of the Czar in these Khanates.

Thus, the integration of these Khanates in the Czarist Empire was not without historical significance. It prepared the ground for the emergence of modern Uzbek nation which was shaped and created by Soviet nationality policies.

### **Soviet Nationality Policy**

Before going into detail of the Soviet nationality policy which created Uzbekistan as a modern-nation state it will be worthwhile to examine it in relation to broader theoretical framework of Marxism-Leninist ideology. Russian Empire, which covered almost one-sixth of the total land surface of the world had hundred different nationalities. The Tsarist oppression government policy of favouring Russians and oppression led to the growth of nationalist movement all over the empire. Dissatisfaction of the major non-Russian nationalities against the Tsarist regime largely contributed to the success of revolution of 1917. Immediately after the revolution the centrifugal tendencies were very strong among the national minorities. The Bolsheviks had to confront this difficult

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13 Ibid.

task of keeping together the diverse parts of the empire when Lenin assumed power in November 1917. The question relating to nationalist were widely discussed among the Bolsheviks and the main thinkers on this issue were Lenin and Stalin.

According to Marxism, nationalism and national state are the characteristic of capitalism, which, in its later stage, are bound to yield to class rivalries and to the international unity of the proletariat.<sup>14</sup> Marxism, in principle, is irreconcilable with nationalism. Marxist advocated internationalism in place of nationalism of any kind.<sup>15</sup> Even to accept the proposition that under some circumstances the economic interests of a society could coincide with its cultural division, was essentially contrary to the Marxist ideology".<sup>16</sup> However, this basic hostility of Rosa Luxembourg School, who was the chief exponent of the orthodox view on the nationality question, did not prevent Lenin from recognizing the historical legitimacy of the nationality question in Russia. Lenin declares that the only way of showing disapproval to the Tsarist policy of national oppression

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14 D. Boersher, *The Bolshevik and National Colonial Question*, Paris, 1957.

15 V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol.VII (Moscow), p.145.

16 R. Pipes, *The Formation of Soviet Union* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1970), 2nd edn., p.22.

was by recognising the right of the oppressed people to self-determination.<sup>17</sup> Lenin felt that it was only by ensuring complete equality to all nationalities and by recognizing the right of self-determination, the new regime could win the much needed faith of non-Russian nationalists for keeping the country together. Unlike Marx, Lenin did not make any distinction between the European nationalists and the colonies in this regard. He emphasised that everywhere in the world, in Europe as well as in colonies, the nationalist movement broke the feudal order and brought bourgeois democracy that provides suitable atmosphere for the growth of proletarian socialism.<sup>18</sup> Lenin's theory of self-determination clearly supported the right of the oppressed nationalities to complete independence which would even mean their right to secede. But it would be wrong to conclude that Lenin wanted or encouraged disintegration of the empire. He made it quite clear: "We demand freedom of secession for the oppressed nations not because we dream of economic disintegration or because we cherish the ideal of small states, but on the contrary we are in favour of large states and the closer unity and even the fusion of nations but on a truly democratic,

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17 Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol.VI, p.440.

18 Lenin, *The Right of Nations to Self-Determination* (Moscow), 7th print, p.26.

truly international basis which is inconceivable without freedom of secession".<sup>19</sup> He formulated this doctrine mainly to draw support from the Tsarist colonial regions. He hoped that after Socialist state's approximation of complete freedom of secession the actual secession in practice would be weak. Soon after the revolution the process of disintegration started, various nationalities started demanding the right to secede under this doctrine of self-determination. Stalin came to assist Lenin in order to rebuff these separatist tendencies primarily voiced by the bourgeoisie of these nations. He emphasised Lenin's earlier assertion that right to self-determination cannot be 'unconditional'.<sup>20</sup> Whenever the interests of nationality and that of proletariat conflicted the former has to yield to the latter. Stalin as the Commissar of Nationalities played an important role in this direction. He questioned the bonafide of the people who demanded the right. He believed that if this right was demanded by and granted to the bourgeoisie of a particular nation then there was every possibility of it being used against the interests of the proletariat; which would serve as an instrument of counter revolution. To check these counter-revolutionary development it was

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19 Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol.XVIII, p.328.

20 J. Stalin, *Marxism and National Colonial Question* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1960), p.64.

essential that the right should be accorded only if demanded by the proletariat of a nation. He further added that since economic interests of the proletariat were linked with the socialist state, therefore, there was no reason that under Socialist state the proletariat would demand such a right of secession from state.<sup>21</sup> Within this broader framework, the Soviet nationality policy was implemented in Central Asia.

The political scene in Central Asia was very messy for quite some time after the Bolsheviks came to power in November 1917. On the eve of revolution the idea of nationality, as State's earlier, did not mean much to the people of Central Asia. They didn't see themselves as an Uzbek or Tajik; rather clan and tribal identification among them predominated. The political consciousness was more or less largely absent. The lack of political consciousness among the masses was due to prevalence of mass illiteracy in Central Asia. About nine-eight per cent of the population was illiterate and a class of an intelligentsia hardly existed.<sup>22</sup> Within the intelligentsia, a distinct product of Russian education advocated Pan-Turkism, the desire to unite the Turkish speaking people. There was no conception of a national

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21 Ibid., pp.69-70.

22 E.H. Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution, 1917-1923* (London, 1964), vol.I, p.330.

group like Uzbek or Kazakh.<sup>23</sup> There were the traditional Ulema who called for Islamist identity. This small group of intellectuals came under the banner of All Muslim Congress, and the Third All Muslim Congress, demanded autonomy for Turkistan, and formation of a Muslim administration.<sup>24</sup> But the demand was unacceptable to the Bolshevik as it was mainly demanded by bourgeois nationalist, not by the native proletariat which was more or less non-existent. Then after the suppression of Basmachi movement which comprised of local tribal chiefs, land lord and Mullah which opposed Soviet rule by 1930s, Stalin implemented his nationality policy. He defined a nation as "a stable historically developed community, based on four criteria: a common language, a united territory, a shared economic life and a shared psychological outlook manifested in a common culture".<sup>25</sup>

It was during 1924-25 that "national delimitation" was effected which led to the redrawing the map of Central Asia, giving birth to Uzbekistan Soviet Socialist Republic. The boundary that was delimited during the

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23 Ahmed Rashid, *Resurgence of Central Asia, Islam or Nationalism?*, (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1994), p.26.

24 Dilip Hiro, *Between Marx and Muhamad* (London: Harper and Collins, 1995), p.10.

25 Quoted in Dilip Hiro, p.22.

delimitation exercise in the Stalin period is also the present boundary of the present Uzbekistan.

Side by side with the creation of the State of Uzbekistan, Soviet Union also undertook the exercise of creating a nation out of an ethnic group that were largely devoid of any nationalist consciousness, and the primary loyalty of the people was still towards the Clan, tribe, region. The first step towards changing the traditional set up was undertaken during the Stalin time. Stalin argued that peasantry provided the main fighting force to national movement because the peasant question lay at the root of national question.<sup>26</sup> Among peasants he perceived kulaks as prime adversaries of Marxist-Leninist Internationalism. In order to change the Socio-economic scene in Uzbekistan which was dominated by feudal relation of production and to establish socialist relation of production in the region, he included compulsory collectivization of farms as part of First Five Year Plan (1929-33). His aim was not only to eliminate the power of Kulaks in Uzbekistan known as Bais, Beks, Manabs, but also the authority of tribal notables, clan chief, village elders and make Soviet system the sole guiding force in countryside. Side by side the Soviet undertook campaign against Islam through

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26 Cited in Dilip Hiro, *op.cit.*, p.26.



a planned reorganization of socio-economic activities of masses, socialist re-education of peasants and women, anti-religious propaganda. Thus religious trust properties were taken over by the state in 1925<sup>27</sup> depriving mullah their source of income. Muslim religious practices not considered progressive were banned.

The Combined effect of the first five year plan was the destructions of traditional elite, kulaks and mullahs. However much of the religious elite were destroyed during this period, "but as a social factor, it seems that not to have been eradicated, nor were the values it championed eliminated."<sup>28</sup> One of the paradoxes of Stalin's collectivization programme was that instead of uprooting traditional social structure, it strengthened it. The Soviet Kolkhoz system was typically built around a long established village drawing within it extended family and whole class. It basically grafted socialist relation of production into a traditional social order. Kolkhoz system ironically became the centre for nursing and perpetuating the old social order, where people identified themselves with tribe, class, religion. Administratively also, clan patronage system survived.

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27 Ibid., p.26.

28 Donald S. Carlsislie, "The Uzbek Power Elite: Politburo and Secretariat (1938-83)", *Central Asian Survey*, vol.5, no.3/4, 1986, p.97.

During Brezhnev period it was the Rashidov clan which ruled Uzbekistan. The Communist Party structure of power in the Soviet Union also aided the process of clan or tribal consolidation. Since it centralised hierarchy, encouraged the accumulation of power in the hand of a small ruling elite who were free to promote their loyal kinsmen. Stalin's linguistic policy played a key role in the formation of a distinct Uzbek identity. Stalin's linguistic policy was to give each union its autonomous region, its own language. This generally meant at the policy level; enrichment and compilation of local language, replacement of Arabic and Persian word with Russian and the change over from Arabic to Roman script which was subsequently changed to Cyrillic script. The effect of this language policy was to effectively undermining the idea of a amorphous pan-Turkic, pan-Islamist identity popular among the Jadidist and Qadinis. Also, with the tight censorship prevalent during Soviet era, it in effect meant, that Soviet authority could control the reading material of the Uzbek people.

The emergence of intelligentsia in any society is linked to the general education level in the Society. In Uzbekistan also, there was unprecedented growth in literacy. From 1939 to 1970, seven year education per

1000 people increased thirteen fold.<sup>29</sup> The number of students seeking higher education also shows a quantum jump as the table below suggests.

**Table:** Seven Year Education per 1,000 people<sup>30</sup>

	1939	1959		1970
Russian	82	284	364	494
Ukrainian	81	278	343	458
Belorussian	58	219	282	401
Moldavian	--	151	208	337
Estonians	--	307	358	462
Latvians	--	369	426	490
Lithuanian	--	170	209	356
Georgian	137	375	474	578
Armenian	92	320	451	519
Azeri	52	247	365	437
Kazakh	22	194	282	403
Kirgiz	10	206	309	407
Tajik	11	201	298	387
Turkmen	14	242	363	433
Uzbek	16	214	318	420

The first two columns are based on 1,000 people, the last two on 1,000 people average ten. All figures pertain to the portion of the nationality group residing within its national territory. In the 1960s, the Soviet authorities expanded seven year schools to eight-year schools.

29 G. Simon, *Nationalism and Policy Toward the Nationalities in the Soviet Union* (Boulder: Westview Press Inc., 1991), p.269.

30 Ibid., p.267.

However, by 1970s the expansion of the University system did not keep pace with the demand. The economic recession that began in 1970s also slowed the growth of institution of higher education. The consequence was that those students who were turned away from University constituted a potential for conflict and dissatisfaction. There has been also a growth of national intelligentsia. Here the term intelligentsia has been used in Soviet sense, which includes everybody graduated from a technical school or institution of higher learning or who holds a position that requires such qualification. In Uzbekistan the increase in workers increased from only 8 per cent in 1959 to 18 per cent in 1979.<sup>31</sup>

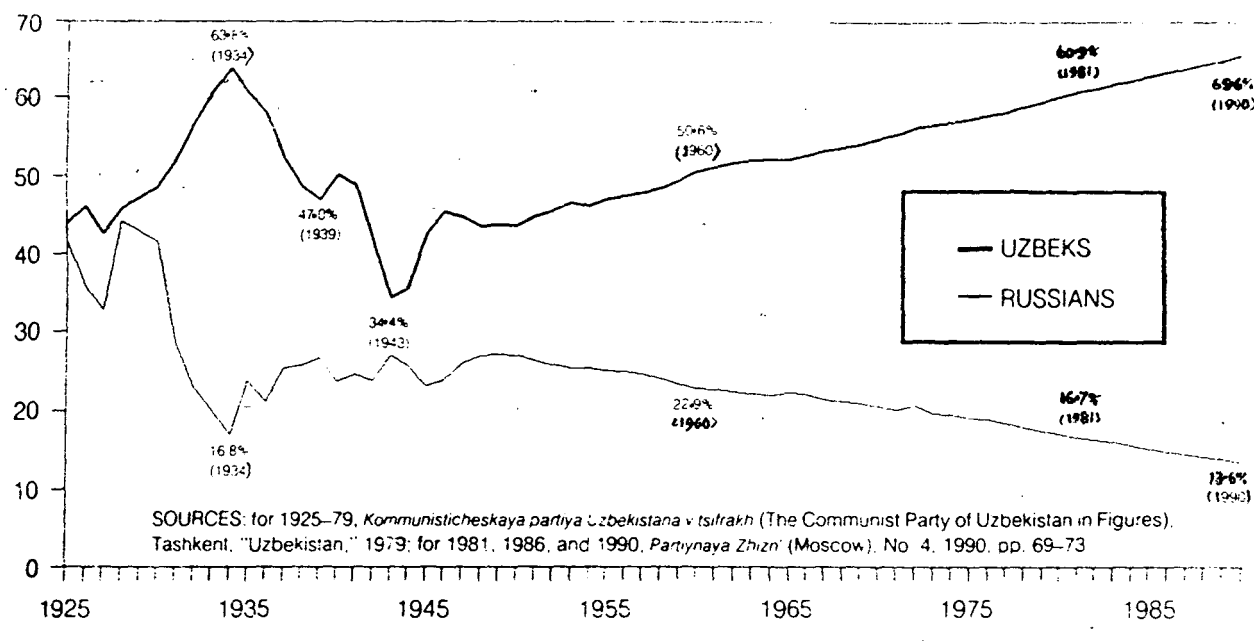
Within the party also, there was greater participation of the Uzbek in the local party structure. It was during Rashidov's era that this process accelerated. An update version of nativization campaign started in his period. Officials gave preferential treatment to Uzbeks and other natives while engaging in reverse discrimination against local Russian and Europeans. Bribery, special hiring practice and job allocation clearly reflected preferential treatment for

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31 See G. Simon, *ibid.*, pp.272-73.

the indigenous people.<sup>32</sup> Something like Uzbekization was clearly under way in 1970s.

**Figure 1:** Percentage of *Uzbeks* and *Russians* in the Communist Party of Uzbekistan, 1925-90



Source: Donald S. Carlisle, cited below.

The figure 1 which covers the year from 1925 to 1990, shows the increasing trend of Uzbekization in the

32 Donald S. Carlisle, Uzbekistan and the Uzbeks. *Problems of Communism*, vol.40, September-October 1991, pp.29-30.

Uzbekistan Communist Party. It shows increasing Uzbekization during 1930s. In the early part of decade Uzbek comprised 76 per cent of the population and by 1934, accounted for 64 per cent of party members. By 1939 the share of membership dropped to 47 and during war it reached its low point of 34 per cent. The Khrushchev/Brezhnev period brought increased Uzbekization. By 1960 Uzbek constituted 51 per cent of party membership and in 1981 they accounted for 61 per cent, and in 1990 Uzbeks made up 66 per cent of party ranks.

Thus, these figure shows that not only during the Soviet period there emerged national intelligentsias, but also started occupying the key position in Uzbekistan of Uzbekistan national structure the Uzbek Communist Party.

Historically it is the nation's intelligentsia who have been the best candidate to constitute a "national class" or nationally oriented strata. They are the group most likely to generate nationalist ideas and movement. In Uzbekistan the carrier of national consciousness were these class. By 1970s there had developed a national intelligentsia in Uzbekistan that started articulating a distinct "national consciousness". This 'national consciousness' manifested in the rewriting of history. Filling the 'blank spot' in the history became popular. In 1981, a leading Uzbek magazine *Star of East* published

a novel by young Uzbek writer, Mamadali Makhmudov which openly expressed nationalist and anti-Russian emotions.<sup>33</sup> The story takes place in mid-nineteenth century and focus on Russian conquest. Contrary to party line, which said that all Tsarist conquest "objectively" served historical progress, Makhmudov's protagonist complain that Turkistan's people have no desire to resist. The novel protagonist demands the cooperation of all Central Asian. It paints gloomy picture of Russian rule. Side by side the emerging national consciousness manifested itself in the revival of Islam. Despite the Soviet attempt to suppress and secularize Islam, Islam survived in the countryside. The search for root also led the intellectual to the pre-Soviet past, to their Islamic heritage. In 1987, a survey conducted in Tashkent University, of which Sixty per cent of the undergraduates described themselves as Muslim.<sup>34</sup> In past such surveys showed religion to be strong only among older, rural people. The graduates while calling themselves as Muslims were also members of Communist youth league. In the more liberalized period of Gorbachev a strong nationalist group like *Birlik* emerged which was mainly composed of urban intellectuals. Its platform included articulating the ecological concern of the

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33 G. Simon, op.cit., p.290.

34 Dilip Hiro, op.cit., p.163.

region to the demand for making Uzbek the primary language of the Republic.<sup>35</sup> Significantly there was no demand for secession from the Soviet Union. The passage of Act of independence on 31 August 1991 by the Uzbekistan Supreme Soviet was more in response to event happening in the Soviet Union, than a triumphant political nationalism. The articulation of political nationalism was left to be completed in the post-Independent period.

To conclude, the Soviet nationality policy was successful in creating a nation but out of an ethno. It laid the broad parameter within which the Uzbek nation was to grow and consolidate itself. The legacy of Stalin's nationality policy which emphasized ethnicity did capture one of the key ingredients of a potential viable nation state. The Soviet sponsored modernization undertaken in a traditional social order did create a condition that was favourable for the emergence of a national intelligentsia that could articulate and speak on behalf of the 'Uzbek nation'. During the Soviet period, the emerging Uzbek nationalist group significantly didn't articulate political nationalism rather what was on the agenda was a distinct economic, cultural nationalism. Also, the whole of the society was

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35 See Dilip Hiro, *op.cit.*, p.168.



not influenced by the idea of nationalism. Rather it was confined to a broad spectrum of Uzbek population, consisting of Uzbek intelligentsia and the students. The masses were to remain more or less unaffected. The loyalty of the masses towards the traditional social structure was still strong. Among the elite also there was no common agreement on what was to be the Uzbek identity, whether to project the immediate soviet past, or an exclusive Islamic past. In fact, these broad disagreement among the intelligentsia is destined to exercise a major influence on the independent national building exercise.

## **CHAPTER II**

## Chapter II

### NATION BUILDING: AGENDA AND PROGRAMME OF THE PRESENT REGIME

The issue of a national identity, which is a definitive characteristic of the nation constitute a major element of political discourse in Uzbekistan. The problem facing this country since its independence was that of creating a viable national unity within a plural society divided into ethnic, clan, tribe, regional affiliation, etc. The main component of a national identity is the promulgation of a set of values or aspiration which leads to a unique identity which is constantly referred to when soliciting support for government initiative. In Uzbekistan, Islam Karimov's regime is engaged in a complicated task of nation building after the collapse of Soviet Union and emergence of Uzbekistan as an independent entity. Corollary to it is also involved in articulating and shaping 'set of values' which will entail it the support of people in its policy implementation.

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### SEARCH FOR STATE MODEL

Immediately after Independence, what confronted the Karimov government was the search for an appropriate state model, as Marxist-Leninist ideology was discredited. In a search for appropriate state model, Karimov was influenced by Turkish model. Explaining the attractiveness of Turkish model of state, Igor Lipovsky observes that

What the leaders found appealing in the state model of Kemal Attaturk, the founding father of Turkish republic was its fundamental principle; nationalism which was lacking in Marxism-Leninism, Secularism, a *sine qua non* for the preservation of their own power, etatism, which included control of the economy and republicanism which ensured against return to the absolute rule practiced by Central Asian Khanates of Bukhara, Khiva, Kokand. Also the Kemalist economic system which had, changed to include principle of a mixed economy and means to attract foreign capital to accelerate the development of a capitalist economy, provided the model for the transition to capitalism of the socialist economics of the Central Asian states.<sup>1</sup>

Also the pull of Turkish model can be explained in Turkey's ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious closeness. Karimov has been one of the most enthusiastic

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1 Igor Lipovsky, "Central Asia: In Search of a New Political Identity", *Middle East Journal*, vol.50, no.2, December 1996, p.212.

supporters of the Turkish model, which has found support even among the opposition groups like *Birlik* and *Erk*.<sup>2</sup>

Another equally important thinking which has appealed to Karimov's national identity construct has been the ideas and programme of Sultan Galiev. In 1920s, he recommended the elimination of extreme and fundamentalist elements within Islam, but not the destruction of religious institution themselves, such as the *Wakf* or religious endowments.<sup>3</sup> What Galiev was proposing was the liberalization of these structures to adapt them to the needs of contemporary life. This suited Karimov, who was dead against any political role for Islam though he was willing to accept Islam as a cultural component of Uzbek culture.

Karimov is aware of the fact that Marxism-Leninism is no longer a valid framework in post-independent scenario. He also realises that there can be no quick transition from socialism to capitalism. He also believes that a lengthy period is required during which an alternative ideology can be built, based on elements taken from a traditional society, as well as from nationalism and Islam. Their lies the appeal of this

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2 Henry Hale in Banvazizi and Weiner, ed., *The New Geopolitics of Central Asia and its Borderlands* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1994), p.156.

3 See, Igor Lipovsky, *op.cit.*, p.213.

Turkish and Galiev model which allows Karimov to retain the structure of power and methods of leadership of old Communist regime, while making a smooth transition to a moderate, secular, nationalist political system, with a mixed economy.

### RECREATING HISTORY

In the post-Soviet period, there has been an attempt to appropriate pre-Russian period of history. The reappropriation of an Uzbek history is a natural post-colonial exercise, helping to forge the historical rights which act as the foundation of new nation states. Reconstructing history seems to be a natural corollary.

Karimov regime started with an obvious disadvantage, that of being associated with a Communist past, which was suspect in a new milieu.

Thus, in order to gain legitimacy, it has encouraged the rewriting of history to define a more authentic and nationalist historical record, drawing in the richness of pre-Russian Central Asian history and Culture.<sup>4</sup> The fruit of this historical revisionism can be seen in the metamorphosis of the region's national icons and figureheads. The figure of Tamerlane and Fergana born

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<sup>4</sup> Ronald Dannreuther, "Creating new states in Central Asian", *Adelphi Papers* (London), 28 March 1994, p.8.

founder of Mughal dynasty, Babur have replaced the previously ubiquitous Lenin.<sup>5</sup>

The Uzbek regime identifies legendary personality of Mavarounahr as the forebears of Uzbek identity. Uzbek national pride is sought to be reflected in the great military, scientific and cultural exploits of such men as Amir Timur, his grandson Ulugbek, and Alisher Nawi. In his first international address to the United Nations General Assembly, President Karimov recalled the contribution that our people have made to world civilization, naming Velikei Timur, and Ulugbek along with Al-Bukhari, Bahoufdin Nasqshband and Ibn Sina.<sup>6</sup>

The State sponsored numerous programmes to celebrate the 660th anniversary of Timur's birth. The state's film industry was commissioned to produce a film on Timur. The 600th anniversary of Uleqbek's birth was celebrated with great fanfare in Tashkent, and Bukhara. According to Karimov, Ulugbek along with al-Farabi and Ibn Sina among others are "our great ancestors who are illuminating the path to independent development of the Uzbek republic".<sup>7</sup> Coins were issued by the Central Bank of

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5 Ibid.

6 Quoted in Shahram Akbarzadeh, "Nation building in Uzbekistan", Central Asian Survey, vol.15, no.1, 1996, p.29.

7 Ibid.

Uzbekistan to celebrate Ulugbek's birth anniversary. However, this exercise is to create a historical myth is not without danger. The danger is that any post-Colonial interpretation of the past if it fails to be strictly impartial, it can harm relations between different ethnic, social or religious groups. The attempt of the regime to appropriate any historical figure which happens to be associated with the present territorial boundary of Uzbekistan, has the potential to stir up tension with other states and ethnic groups of Central Asia, which are also undergoing their own stages of nation building. Particular mention can be made of Tajik. Tajiks who belong to Persian ethnic stock were the principal victim of Turkish Uzbeks who came to Central Asia from time to time as invaders and displaced them from the fertile river valleys of that region, creating an atmosphere of uneasy coexistence. The Uzbek claim to anything remotely connected with Samarkand, Bukhara as being Uzbek creates resentment among the Tajiks who stake their own claim on these regions."<sup>8</sup>

As per the evaluation of the Soviet period, the period cannot be just wished away, since many aspect of that legacy have become embedded in the basic structure

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8 See P.L. Dash, "Ethno-nationalism in Uzbekistan", in Warikoo ed., *Central Asia, Emerging New Order*, Har Anand Publication (New Delhi, 1995), pp.105-07.



of Central Asian Society. Russian and Soviet rule for all its fault did introduce modernity, industrialization and rapid social change in Central Asia", and this limits the space for identity formation leading to pristine pre-Russia past. Even at the most basic level of Uzbek identity, period of Russian and Soviet rule has left an indelible impression. The Bolshevik may have failed to achieve their aim of forging a common Soviet identity, which would affirm its loyalty to revolutionary internationalism rather than local nationalism. But it has left a mark. The post-Soviet leadership has been quite frank about its past debt and continuing dependence on Russia. As Karimov emphasised "we need Russia like air, like water, no less important is our spiritual kinship".<sup>9</sup> It can also be seen in their foreign policy orientation where special relation with Russia is emphasised.

"Unlike other parts of former Soviet Union in Central Asia either have not been under intense popular pressure to destroy the structures inherited from Soviet rule. They have been able to introduce pre-Russian tradition but without destroying the realities created through the period of Soviet rule".<sup>10</sup>

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9 Quoted in Ronald, op.cit., p.10.

10 Ibid., p.11.

This pragmatic attitude can be seen in Karimov's approach to the question of ethnicity, statehood, nationalism and religion.

#### NATIONALIST AND ISLAMIC DIMENSION

In Uzbekistan, as elsewhere in the Soviet Union, the initial development of a nationalist agenda came from outside the Communist party. During the liberal atmosphere of late Gorbachev period, informal groups emerged in Uzbekistan, which began to express dissent. In Uzbekistan a group called *Birlik* first emerged to protest against the drying up of the Aral sea and the excessive development of cotton production. *Birlik's* agenda ranged from promotion of national language and cultures to calls for greater autonomy from Moscow and the Centre, although secession was hardly on the agenda.<sup>11</sup>

Islam Karimov, with his Communist background (he was long time member of the republic Gosplan and Secretary of Kashkadariya Obkom, before being elevated to the post of First Secretary of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan in 1989) naturally saw himself under threat. The response was quick. He implemented many of the demands of the

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11 For details, see William Fierman, "The Communist Party, 'Erk' and the Changing Uzbek Political Environment", *Central Asian Survey*, vol.10, no.1, 1991, pp.55-72.

nationalist groups. In October 1989 language law was passed that made the Uzbek language as the State language. Similarly in cultural field, Karimov started rehabilitating the purged nationalist of 1930s. In a speech in February 1980, he quoted the great poet Cholpan.<sup>12</sup> Karimov also took cognizance of the *Birlik* demands for ending cotton monoculture which was posing a detrimental effect on the ecology and on the Republic's economic health. He supported Uzbek position on cotton and on other issue of economic exploitation like the need for a price overhaul. In June 1990, the Uzbekistan's Supreme Soviet adopted a declaration on the sovereignty of the Republic which was based on program originally submitted by *Erk*.<sup>13</sup> This law gave primacy to Uzbek laws over Soviet laws. Following the example of Gorbachev, Karimov also got himself elected as executive President of the republic.

The attainment of full independence at the end of 1991 further strengthened the nationalist credentials of Karimov's regime. The informal nationalist group like *Birlik* and *Erk* had barely contemplated such unconditional independence. Islam Karimov made sure that he shall receive the lion's share of the glory of independence.

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12 Ibid., p.30.

13 Ibid., p.66.

The introduction of the trappings of statehood — new flags, constitution, opening of diplomatic relationship, introduction into international organizations like United Nations were perfect public relations exercise to cement their national and international stature. With the effective control of the media, and with their connections to the mass of the population through the structures of power inherited from the Communist party apparatus, Karimov had an unassailable advantage over the nationalist groupings which were generally confined to urban area led by urban intelligentsia.

While it has been easy for the Karimov regime to don the nationalist mantle, the same cannot be said for its Islamic inheritance. The relationship with its Islamic heritage has been less than easy. Years of Soviet sponsored atheism have failed to lessen popular devotion to Islam or expunge the belief that Islam extends beyond private or public life. The Islamic revival which was unmistakably seen during Gorbachev's period received a tremendous boost after Uzbekistan's Independence. This can be seen in the proliferation of mosque and *madrasas* in Uzbekistan, particularly so in Fergana valley and elsewhere. During 1990-92, the number of mosque in Namangan rose from two to 26, which subsequently

increased to 130.<sup>14</sup> The response of Karimov towards Islam has been to make a distinction between Islam as a political force and Islam as a political force. While growth of Islam as a private religion is encouraged like building of mosque and establishment of religious schools, any manifestation of political Islam is resisted. Then Karimov was initially willing to register political opposition groups like *Birlík* and *Erk* but has refused to countenance the registration of the Uzbek branch of Islamic Renaissance Party.<sup>15</sup>

Karimov is opposed to the state adopting any ideology. But it did not inhibit him from stressing the importance of Islam. "Consideration for religion and Islam plays an important part within our internal and international conduct...It manifests itself in the way of life of the people, their psychology and in the building of spiritual and moral values, and in enabling in to feel rapport with those who practice the same religion."<sup>16</sup>

In order to demonstrate his Islamic heritage he undertook pilgrimage to Mecca, started beginning his

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14 Figure taken from Dilip Hiro, "Islamist Strength and Weakness in Central Asia", *Middle East International*, 5 February 1993, p.20.

15 Ronald, op.cit., p.16.

16 Quoted in Dilip Hiro, *Between Marx and Muhammad: The Changing face of Central Asia* (London: Harper and Collins, 1995), p.182.

speech with *Bismallah al Rahman al Rahim*, took oath of his Presidential office in the name of Quran. Thus Karimov's regime is willing to treat Islam as a crucial part of Uzbek culture, but it is also determined to maintain strict division between religion and government.

#### AUTHORITARIAN STATE STRUCTURE

The favourite slogan of Islam Karimov domestically has been "order and stability". In the guise of "stability" there has been an unmistakable centralization of authority in the President, and simultaneously a systematic attempt is being made to undermine all source of challenge to Karimov's authority. This has given rise to a strong authoritarian state structure in Uzbekistan. To the opposition call for more freedom and increased democratization he points out to the situation in neighbouring Tajikistan where a democratically elected president was deposed by opposition group led by Islamist.

Putting Karimov's regime policy in perspective, Jamal Kamal, Chairman of the Writer Union said,

We are telling the opposition, please, wait some years we have no army, no strong border, we must strengthen national independence and secure our border first. Then we will go step

by step towards democracy and human rights which will take ten years.<sup>17</sup>

In fact, the concern for a stable border is not unjustifiable, because strong regional separatism represents a continued challenge to Tashkent. In Uzbekistan there are five major regional centres. In the contest for political power three have historically been most significant -- the South with Samarkand and Bukhara, the West in the Fergana Valley and the Capital Tashkent.<sup>18</sup> Since the Khrushchev period Samarkand and Bukhara have dominated the political scene. During Rashidov era, who belonged to Samarkand Bukhara, region attempt was made to sideline Fergana Valley's regional power. But it was never overcome and it has remained the strongest alternative centre of political power. A predominantly agricultural society, Fergana valley is the most traditional and religious part of Uzbekistan. Since the onset of Perestroika, the number of mosques and religious schools have multiplied. The IRP branch of Uzbekistan and Wahabi movement which is the most determined and organized of all fundamentalist group has

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17 Quoted in Dilip Hiro, op.cit., p.187.

18 Donald S. Carlisle, "The Uzbek Power Elite: Politburo and Secretariat (1938-83)", *Central Asian Survey*, vol.5, no.3/4, 1986, pp.94-96.

struck root there.<sup>19</sup> A number of vigilante groups have emerged, like *Adolat* (Justice) which acts as a form of local religious police, enforcing Islamic codes of moral conduct. Tashkent is the third major political centre in Uzbekistan. Its power is connected to its domination of the trade sector and the "Shadow economy". Although weaker than other two competing regions and not in a position to seize power independently, it can play an important intermediary role and its support can be critical in any power struggle.<sup>20</sup>

Karimov's strategy has been to concentrate power in his own hands. The new Constitution which was ratified by Supreme Soviet in 8 December, 1992 ensured untrammelled presidential power. The Supreme executive power was vested in the President. The new constitution dissolved the regional Soviets and replaced them with a governance system based on regional *hakims*. These *hakims* are appointed by President and Karimov has ensured that they remain loyal to him. Similarly Karimov Cadre policy has been carefully designed to ensure absolute loyalty. He has promoted figures from all the major regional clans, carefully balancing their respective claims, but ensuring

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19 See, Ahmed Rashid, "Resurgence of Central Asia, Islam or Nationalism?" (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1994), p.100.

20 Ronald op.cit., p.32.



that all those selected are personally loyal to him and do not represent any potential challenge to his power. His policy towards opposition party has been, a policy of systematic attempt to undermine them. The national democratic forces like *Birlik* and *Erk* were initially given greatest formal freedom. This was partly because they were well known internationally and their suppression in the early days of independence would have harmed Uzbekistan's chance of acceptance by international community".<sup>21</sup>

However, once Karimov felt secure, the leaders of *Birlik*, *Erk* were subjected to physical attacks, periods of enforcement, and enforced emigration. Both the organizations were banned later on.<sup>22</sup> In their place Karimov has allowed his own hand picked opposition party *Vatan Tarrakeriet* led by Anvar Yeuldashev.

Karimov has been most hostile to his Islamic opponents. His fear was not only that such groups had a potentially much wider mass base, given the traditional high regard for Islam among the rural population, but

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21 US Secretary of State James-Baker during his visit to Tashkent in mid-February 1992, told Karimov that Uzbekistan needed to demonstrate that it was advancing along the path of democracy, to make this point he visited Salin and Pulator in their office. See Dilip Hiro, op.cit., p.178.

22 See, Ahmed Rashid, op.cit., p.79.

also that the centre of more assertive Islamic movements was in the major potential competitor for central power, the Fergana valley.

In a report prepared by various government departments and security services it noted that there has been a sharp escalation of activity by Islamic fundamentalism. The Security Service claimed that "arms caches and camps for training militants for an Islamic coup in the republic has been discovered in Fergana valley".<sup>23</sup> The Islamic fundamentalist have also never made their desire secret to overthrow Karimov's regime.

The Karimov's government has attempted a dual policy towards Islamic opponent. On the one hand it has attempted to ensure that the Islamic life of the country is carefully controlled and directed by the official and state sponsored Muslim hierarchy, the Muftial and on the other hand it has followed a policy of repression against the Adolat, IRP cells in Fergana valley. The new Constitution prohibits political parties based on nationalistic or religious principle (Art.54). It has banned the Islamic group under this article. Also, missionaries from Saudi Arabia and other Islamic countries were expelled from Uzbek territory. Suitable

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23 *Current Digest of Post Soviet Press*, vol.XIVI, no.1 (1994), pp.17-18.

changes were made in the law "on Freedom of conscience and Religious Organization" which establishes under the Republic of Uzbekistan Council of Ministries, a Religious Affairs Committee with such broad oversight, consultative, evaluative and reporting function that it essentially nullifies any independence on the part of religious Institutions and severely restrict religious freedom.<sup>24</sup> He has also not tolerated dissent within his own party. In 1991 October, the then Vice-President, Shahrullah Mirsaidov, who was closely connected with Tashkent clan, attempted to instigate a constitutional coup against Karimov who belongs to Samarkand. Karimov survived a vote of no-confidence. Mirsaidov was subsequently not only pushed out of government and legislature but was also placed under virtual house arrest, for having allegedly incited the students to demonstrate against the President in January, 1992.<sup>25</sup>

What about Democracy? One scholar has called democracy in Central Asia as "facade-democracy".<sup>26</sup> It is an apt description. It works on the minimal principle of

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24 *Current Digest*, op.cit., pp.17-18.

25 Martha Brill Olcott, "Emerging Political Elites" in Bannazizi and Weiner ed., *The New Geopolitics of Central Asia and its Borderlands* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1994), p.54.

26 R.R. Sharma, "Paradoxes of Transition", in Warikoo, ed., op.cit., p.42.

democracy, that is election which has taken place in Uzbekistan. In the first Presidential election, opposition candidate Md. Salib was allowed to participate. But serious allegation of irregularity abounded. Consequently, Karimov won. The inherent weakness in the democratization process can be seen by the fact that instead of opting for a direct election, Karimov preferred to have his term extended to the year 2000, endorsed by a Parliament passed with his supporters and endorsed in a Plebiscite held on 26 March, 1995.<sup>27</sup>

The apparent shallow nature of democracy in Uzbekistan can be explained by the fact that there has never been any democratic tradition worth the name in the region's history. By tradition Uzbek like other "nationalities of the region are conservative and strongly respect authority".<sup>28</sup> Also the appeal of democracy or a liberal political system was widely discredited by the anarchy and bloody civil war in Tajikistan. As Albert Musin, a *Birlik* supporter observed, "The local intelligentsia are frightened that in Uzbekistan democracy will lead either to extreme

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27 See Shahram Akbarzaden, op.cit., p.26.

28 Martha Brill Olcott, "Central Asia: The Calculus of 'independence'", *Current History*, vol.94, no.594, October 1995, p.340.

nationalism or Islamic fundamentalism".<sup>29</sup> A majority of Uzbek citizens have accepted certainty in urban area, Karimov argument that political stability requires strong central power. Karimov clearly understands that it is economy, not politics which is his primary challenge and which will ultimately consolidate or undermine his continued hold on power.

### **ECONOMIC REALITIES**

Uzbekistan like other countries of Central Asia had to pay a very high price for its independence with a severe dislocation of its economy, a high rate of inflation ranging above hundred per cent with a contracting economy. Coupled this was the general expectation among the people of better future, as they were now Independent. before going into detail into Karimov's economic policy it will be worthwhile to have a look at Soviet economic legacy.

The Soviet planners considered the entire country as a Single Economic Complex, where there was a close economic linkage among the republics based on the principle of economic specialization and cooperation. The Central Asian country being the lesser developed region of the former Soviet Union depended more on other

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29 Quoted in Dilip Hiro, op.cit., p.175.

republic to satisfy their demand for a large number of consumer goods, machinery and equipment.

In Uzbekistan, Agriculture and allied sectors predominate in its national economy. In 1980s the republic supplied more than sixty per cent of Soviet Union's raw cotton, including more than forty per cent of the fare-fibre varieties. Approximately half the sown areas, practically all of them irrigated, were planted to cotton. Agriculture and allied sector's relative share in the production of national income was thirty per cent in 1989 which was only slightly less than industry's share (33.55). The relative share of its work force in industry and Construction (37.8%) excluded the share of work force in industry and construction (23.75%). The republic's agrarian character is also largely characterized by the fact that according to 1989 census, fiftynine per cent of its population lived in rural areas.<sup>30</sup>

The other sectors of the economy has not developed in commensurate with Uzbekistan's size and potential. In 1989, Uzbekistan, produced 3.3 per cent of Soviet Union's electric power, 5.2 per cent of natural gas, 0.7 per cent of finished rolled ferrous metals, 0.8 per cent coal, 3.9 per cent chemicals, 5.6 mineral fertilizers, 3.3 per cent

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30 Cf. B. Plyshevski, "Reforming the Economies of the CIS: Uzbekistan", *Problem Economic Transition* January 1995, vol.38, no.1, p.85.

chemical fibres and threads, 61.4 per cent cotton fibres, 5.8 per cent cotton fabric, 6.7 per cent silk fabric, 5.3 per cent, 15.8 vegetable oil, 5.5 per cent canned goods.<sup>31</sup>

The above data clearly shows that except for cotton industry no other sector of the economy was developed to satisfy the local demand. Though it produced 67.14 per cent cotton of Soviet Union it produced only 5.8 per cent of cotton fabric. There was clearly an underdeveloped local textile industry. Similarly, above data clearly shows that production of industrial materials, durable goods and consumer goods were barely developed, certainly not in a position to take care of local needs.

These goods were imported from other republics of the Soviet Union. In 1988, according to the USSR State Committee for statistics, Uzbekistan had a negative balance of trade within the Soviet Union to the tune of 2.5 billion rubles.<sup>32</sup> This huge trade deficit was not much of a problem during Soviet Union as it was made up by infusion of heavy subsidy from Moscow.<sup>33</sup> Though Uzbekistan sustained certain losses due to the sale of

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31 Cf., *Ibid.*, p.55.

32 *Ibid.*, p.87.

33 Ajay Patnaik, "Transition to a market Economy", Warikoo, ed., *Central Asia: Emerging New Order* (Har Anand Publication, 1995), p.153.

raw cotton for relatively low purchase price, this loss was significantly offset by the low price it paid for petroleum products, gas, ferrous and non-ferrous metals, durable goods etc. However Independence has brought a colossal problem to the fore. It has to procure these goods in world market at market prices which are essential for rapid economic development. Also there was a marked slow down in the economic growth rate of Uzbek economy during the 80s. Even through the average annual growth rate of produced national income in 1980s was three per cent, that is it was on par with or even higher than all union rates (in 1981-85, 3.2 per cent while in 1986-89, 8.9, 2.7 per cent) per capita national income increased slowly by only 0.3 to 0.4 per cent a year because of large families, high birth rate and high rate of population growth. The increase in population per 1,000 person was 26.4 persons in 1980, and 27.5 in 1990 corresponding figure for USSR was 8.0 and 6.5 persons respectively. This high growth in population meant that per capita magnitude was half that of all union average and was declining (in 1985, 53 per cent in 1989, 46 per cent).<sup>34</sup>

The worsening economic condition was no less exacerbated by Gorbachev's policy of concentrating

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34 Cf. Plysheveski, op.cit., p.85.



resources in modernization of engineering industries<sup>35</sup> which was grossly underdeveloped in the region and not in tune with the need of the local economy. Thus, the necessary vital investment was not coming, affecting the economic development. Thus in Uzbekistan the rate of unemployment continued to be seven per cent between 1987-1990.

Another key problem is the adaptation of labour. The indigenous labour force is low-skilled and concentrated in low skilled occupation. The industrialization in the region was carried out by Slavic nationality and their technology. The bulk of the local population was hired to agriculture, also agriculture being highly labour intensive, there was low industrial pull among the titular population. The republic has been hit hard by the migration of Russians from Uzbekistan. Till now, 200,000 Russians have already left Uzbekistan and many are planning to do so due to the rise of Islamic fundamentalism and discrimination in favour of Uzbeks with a million Russians holding key technical and managerial posts having left by 1993, the economy has suffered. Uzbek officials admit that the migration has

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35 See Ajay Patnaik, *op.cit.*, pp.150-54.

been so massive that some plants have to close due to lack of trained personnel.<sup>36</sup>

#### KARIMOV'S REFORM POLICY

Thus, at the time of independence, Karimov's regime was confronted with a difficult economic situation. Economy was shrinking instead of growing and people's aspiration for a better future was growing. Uzbekistan's leadership posed the task of formulating its own reform programme reflecting national conditions and peculiarities. Its content can be judged on the basis of pronouncements by the president and other republic leaders and practical measures implemented by the government (unlike other former Union republics, no single document explaining this program was published). According to Plyshevskii the most basic principles of the Uzbekistan reform policy are "the graduation of the reforms and their implementation in a controllable regime in the interests of all the people...and state support for the development of initiatives and entrepreneurship".<sup>37</sup> The transition to market economy is viewed not as an end in itself but as a means of raising the economy to a higher level, especially in a qualitative sense.

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36 Ahmad, Rashid, *op.cit.*, p.95.

37 Plyshevskii, *op.cit.*, pp.88-89.

Ideologues of the Uzbek path of transition to market relations identify five principles in which the reforms are based; they are: the priority of economics over politics, the guiding role of the state during the transition period; rule of law, powerful social policy, gradual, evolutionary movement to the market.

Explaining the policy outline of his government, Karimov published a seventy two page pamphlet in Uzbek and Russian, *Uzbekistan: Its Own Road to Renewal and Progress* while reiterating his commitment to a

socially minted market economy" he highlighted the problems of transition from the present system to a market economy "Due to low living standard of the people in Uzbekistan the tactic of shock therapy will not work, we should move to a market economy step by step finding the right pace which is not too slow or too fast, to prepare the people for a market economy...Before establishing a market mechanism we should conduct strong measures of social defense of the people.<sup>38</sup>

Then the methods of shock therapy, of the forced and spasmodic transition to market has been categorically rejected. In the initial stage of reforms, the republic devoted special attention to an active social policy so that they would not be at the expense of a lower living standard. This is the basis of price, wage and employment policy.

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38 Quoted in Dilip Hiro, op.cit., p.182.

Initially, price liberalization increased hardship on the population. Inflation reached 300 per cent in the first half of 1992. Between April 1991 and 1992 prices and tariff had gone up by 600 per cent.<sup>39</sup> In order to lessen the hardship the salaries of state employees, particularly workers in education, health care and pension and student stipends were raised to offset the effects of price increase. The ratio of subsidies and non-wage income to total cash increased from 27.6 per cent in 1987 to 30.2 per cent in 1990 and to 40 per cent in 1991; the ratio of taxes to cash income declined from 6.1 per cent in 1987 to 6.0 per cent in 1990 and to 3.9 per cent in 1991, which shows that especially after 1990 subsidies increased a great deal.<sup>40</sup>

Uzbekistan's law on employment makes provisions for a special quota on job, places for college and University graduates and for other groups of population that are not competitive in labour market. According to Rustom Sadier, the then Deputy Minister of labour,

Social protection of population is one of Uzbekistan government's priorities. It is being carried out through a system of social privileges and benefits. Those sections of population who due to a number of objective reasons cannot support themselves by their own labour get social benefits. They are children,

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39 Ajay Patnaik, op.cit., p.156.

40 Ibid., p.157.

elderly people and disable people. The state also pays benefits to people who have lost their jobs as a result of staff redundancies or liquidation of enterprises and haven't been provided with a suitable job.<sup>41</sup>

The regime's commitment to active social policy can be seen in the budgetary provision of 1996 which earmarks 47 per cent of resource for social programme.<sup>42</sup>

In the agricultural sector, reform policy emphasises the advantage of collective farms that have proved more viable than state farms. The bulk of produce of collective farms and state farms is published by the states. However, in 1951 state and collective farms were authorized to sell five per cent of planned cotton independently for free prices. Starting in 1992, the share of cotton, cocoons, grain, rice and basic livestock products independently sold by farms was raised to fifteen per cent, the share of fruits vegetable and potatoes was raised to half the production by volume. In 1991-92 peasants were allotted an additional eight per cent of all irrigated land for personal subsidiary plots.<sup>43</sup> The Uzbek government has also started the first stage of destabilization. It decided to sell of 200 state

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41 Quoted in Ajay Patnaik, *ibid.*, pp.156-57.

42 *Summary of World Broadcast*, SUW/0467, p.WAS/5, 3 January 1997.

43 Cf. Cited Plyshveskii, *op.cit.*, p.90.

farms to worker teams in the first quarter of 1993, with another 500 states for privatization by the end of 1993.<sup>44</sup> However, there is great reluctance among the government to go full fledged towards privatization of land as it is feared that it may provoke bloodshed.

Attempts are being made to reduce its dependence on cotton and increase the acreage for grain, vegetable, fruit and fodder crops. Special attention is devoted to expanding cotton processing capacities.

At the industrial front, the structural reorganization is focused in strengthening the industrial bases for processing republic's rich mineral resources. Uzbekistan mined sixty ton of gold in 1996, making it the eighth in overall gold production.<sup>45</sup> Measures are being taken to reduce its reliance on fuel imports from Russia by developing its own coal and petroleum industry on the statistical evidence for 1995, Karimov can claim that his policies have been partially successful, at least in relative to the other former Soviet republics where production has fallen more perceptibly. The data in Figure 1 illustrates this. In Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan economic output since 1991 has decreased by 17 to 26 per cent respectively while in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and

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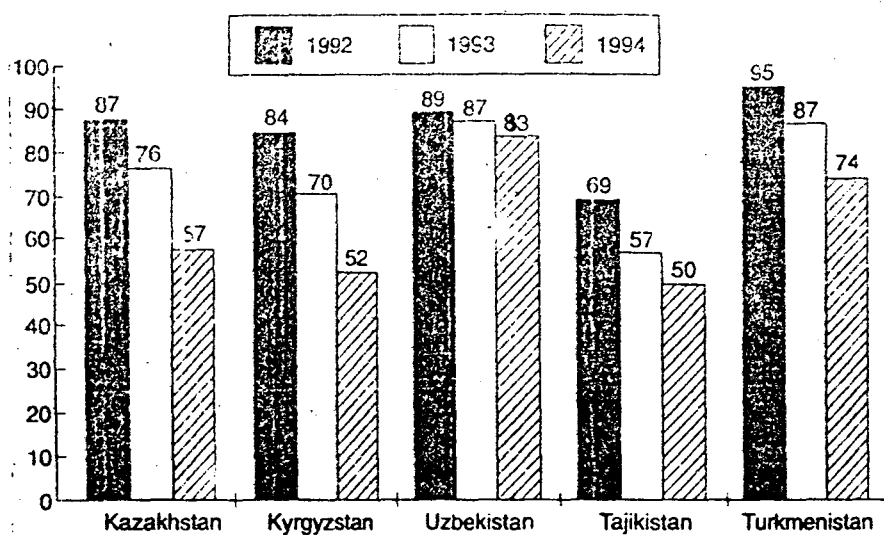
44 Ajay Patnaik, *op.cit.*, p.155.

45 *The Economic Times* (New Delhi), 20 June 1997, p.11.

Tajikistan, the decrease in economic output ranges between 43 and 50 per cent since 1991. These trends are more or less represented by the data in Figure 2. Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan recorded dramatic slump in industrial production whereas Uzbekistan was able to maintain its industrial production at 1991 level.

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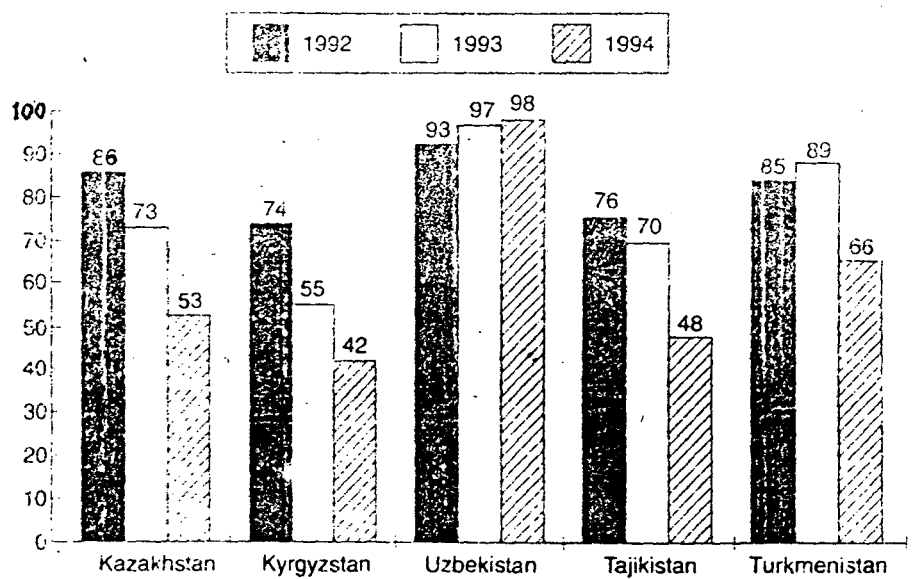
**Figure 1:** The Development of Gross National Product (GDP) since 1991 (1991=100)



**Source** Heribert Dieter, "Regional Integration in Central Asia: Current Economic Position and Prospects", *Central Asian Survey*, vol.15, no.3/4, 1996, pp.376-77.



Figure 2: The Development of Industrial Production (Gross) Since 1991 (1991-100)



**Source** Heribert Dieter, "Regional Integration in Central Asia: Current Economic Position and Prospects", *Central Asian Survey*, vol.15, no.3/4, 1996, pp.376-77.

In 1996 also there was a relatively good economic progress with inflation being sixty per cent, reserves including gold being 1.5 billion US dollar, industrial production was up by 5.9 per cent, and the GDP grew at a modest rate of 1.6 per cent.<sup>46</sup>

The cautious approach of Karimov has seen Uzbekistan's economy doing better than its neighbouring countries but the painful period of transition is not yet over.

#### **Ethnic Factor**

If coping with a deteriorating economic crisis is the first priority of the government, the second most pressing problem could be the ethnic complexities. Though Uzbek comprises 71.4 per cent of the population, other significant ethnic groups are Russians 8.3 per cent, Tajiks 4.7 per cent, Kazakh 4.1 per cent, Tartars 2.4 per cent, and Karakalpakas 2.1 per cent.<sup>47</sup>

The most significant of the minority ethnic groups are Russians and Tajiks. There are also sizeable ethnic Uzbek minority in other Central Asian Republics notably

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46 SWB, SU W/0467/WAS 15, 3 January 1997.

47 This data has been taken from *Dialogue Today International Quarterly*, no.3, 1994, p.13.

in Kyrgyzstan, 12.9 per cent of total population and in Tajikistan 23.5 per cent of population.

During Gorbachev period some of the bloody inter-ethnic clashes took place in Uzbekistan. During the first half of June 1989, Uzbeks in Fergana Valley attacked Mushketian Turk burning their settlement and killing them. Nearly 200 people killed with widespread destruction of property.<sup>48</sup> Also in the Osh Oblast there was violent clashes between Uzbek and Kyrgyz in 1990.

These clashes were pointer to the fact that Uzbekistan was to become a flash point of ethnic violence in the whole of Central Asia. In fact all problems of the current Uzbek tangle can be traced to the Soviet efforts for making Uzbekistan ethnically the most populous and politically most influential in Soviet Central Asia. Though Tajiks are the oldest ethnic group in the region with its own rich cultural and civilizational heritage, the Soviet authorities exercise in declining Central Asia's historical map, made Tajik's subordinate to Uzbekistan in 1924. Although Tajikistan acquired the status of a Union Republic in 1929, it remained much smaller in size and much weaker economically. The Tajiks have always resented their domination by the Uzbeks. This resentment erupted when it became independent. Fervent

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48 Dilip Hiro, *op.cit.*, p.166.

nationalist sentiment among Tajiks came out into open. A "Great Khorasan State" was publicly advocated by a group of irredentist nationalist intellectuals in Tajikistan, under the banner of "Great Ariana Society". Their dream is to unite the Tajiks of Afghanistan and Tajikistan as well as the region lost Tajik lands (of Samarkand and Bukhara) in Uzbek territory.<sup>49</sup>

On the other hand, Pan-Turkic ideal of a confederation has become very popular among Uzbek nationalists. "The idea of a Greater Uzbekistan" incorporating Uzbek settled lands in other republics -- or even the whole of Turkistan attracts extreme nationalist among the Uzbeks. However, pan Turkic idea is unpalatable to the Tajik who belong to Persian ethnic stock".<sup>50</sup>

Thus, the Uzbek-Tajik ethnic conflict has the potential to bring instability and chaos in Central Asia even leading to a demand for a redrawing of maps. On the ethnic fronts, other likely problem immediately facing Uzbekistan are the large concentration of the Koreans. They are primarily concentrated in an around Tashkent. In the Karakalpak autonomous republic, the Uzbek-Karaplak

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49 Anthony Hyman, "Moving out of Moscow's Orbit the Outlook for Central Asia", *International Affairs*, vol.62, no.2, 1993, p.297.

50 Ibid., p.297.

share is predominantly in favour of the native Karakalpaks, who demonstrate a keen desire to be totally independent of Uzbekistan.<sup>51</sup>

This volatile ethnic diversity in Uzbekistan poses a challenge to Karimov's nation building programme. The policy adopted by the Karimov's regime has been to forge closer relationship with its neighbours and take active steps to curb irredentist movements or ideas.

#### **Foreign Relationship**

Foreign policy exercise is just an extension of nation-building exercise at home as the leader's fate is tied up with that of the state and the leader must protect the nation by fending off or counterbalancing potential foreign threats. The security threat to taking Uzbekistan is mainly internal which has external dimension like the ethnic factor. Aware of the ugly rise of ethno-nationalism in Central Asia, Karimov's regime has taken steps to secure the inviolability of its territory. What added urgency to this matter was the happenings in Afghanistan where after the deposition of Najibullah regime in April 1992, Afghan mujahedin rebels split among themselves. Meanwhile in Tajikistan, demonstration erupted in the capital, Dushanbe unleashing

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51 See P.C. Dash, op.cit., pp.110-11.

a chain of events which led ultimately to the overthrow of Nabiev. In order to protect the state, from instability at the external front, it signed a mutual defence treaty with Russia, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Armenia, during the CIS Summit held in Tashkent on 15 May 1992. Under the treaty, signatories consider aggression or threat of aggression against one country to be aggression against all parties.<sup>52</sup> The Uzbek Supreme Soviet ratified the treaty on 3 July 1992,<sup>53</sup> and the Uzbek Foreign and Defence Ministers have already called for more Russian troops to enter Uzbekistan to help protect its border with Afghanistan.

Simultaneously, apart from its defence pact with Russia, Uzbekistan signed a document also with other Central Asian states at their meeting in Tasshauz, Turkmenistan, in March 1995 in order to foster close ties with each other. The document declares that the countries respect and "recognize the right of each state to choose its own path of development and its own model for its state and social system".<sup>54</sup> The parties also confirmed their unconditional respect for the territorial integrity

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52 Henry Hale, *op.cit.*, p.163.

53 *Ibid.*, p.147.

54 Current Digest of Post-Soviet Press, vol.XVII, no.10, 1995, p.14.

and sovereignty of all five countries and the recognition of their historical borders".<sup>55</sup>

Apart from taking steps that would neutralize threat to the state boundary, Karimov also realises that badly needs a progress in economic front. Also there is a desire among the Uzbek leadership to lessen its dependence on Moscow. It joined Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) in February, 1992, along with the five Central Asian countries of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan; the other members being Pakistan, Turkey, Afghanistan and Azerbaijan. It is unclear how meaningful the ECO will become; members themselves disagree about their vision of it. Iran has emphasized the Islamic nature of the ECO and maintained that this organization could represent the first step towards a common Islamic market. Turkey, however, is opposed to putting emphasis on Islamic character of ECO.<sup>56</sup> The ECO members at the February Summit approved ten per cent reduction in trade tariffs, a common market for agricultural products, training of experts and the creation of a common development bank.<sup>57</sup> But there is little chance of ECO success.

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55 Ibid., p.14.

56 Henry Hale, op.cit., p.163.

57 Ibid.

In order to give impetus to regional economic cooperation, Karimov, Akaev, and Nazabaev took a major step in this direction on 1 February 1994, by removing customs on their states common borders.<sup>58</sup> This was the first stage towards a Central Asian 'economic union' launched by Karimov and Nazarbaev on 10 January 1994. During a summit at Issyk-Kul, 29-30 April, 1994, Kyrgyzstan officially joined the Union which envisions the creation of a common market by 2000 A.D.<sup>59</sup>

A strong Central Asian cooperation fits into broader Uzbek foreign policy strategy. On the one hand it will help counter balance preponderant Russian influence within the CIS, on the other hand, Uzbekistan by virtue of being the most populous state in region would play the leading role in a Central Asian grouping.

This desire of Uzbekistan can also be seen in its emphasis on closer ties with Turkey. It sees Turkey as a strong counterbalance to Russia, although not strong enough to replace Russia. "We regard Turkey as an elder brother", Karimov declared in late 1991. However, this initial enthusiasm for Turkish ties has faded as Uzbek leader came to recognize that Turkey is much weaker

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58 Ibid., p.152.

59 Ibid.



economically and technologically than many West European and other countries.

Uzbekistan has not shown any enthusiasm for any kind of alliance with Teheran as it is suspected of having fundamentalist credentials. Also Iran has more interest in Turkmenistan. As far as the USA and the West is concerned they are important for Uzbekistan. They are the source of modern technology and can help Uzbekistan in securing assistance for the same from the World Bank. USA initially withheld diplomatic ties until Uzbekistan demonstrated adherence to democracy and human rights, but became unnerved by Uzbek-Iranian ties and opened its embassy in Tashkent on 16 March 1992.<sup>60</sup>

The relation with Pakistan and Afghanistan is more feared than welcomed, primarily because of their dubious credibility of having strong fundamentalism and being located on the routes of narcotic trafficking to Central Asian states.

What about Russia? Though Karimov desires more flexibility in conducting its own foreign policy, unconstrained by Russian interference, but history, economic and strategic compulsions forces it to accord "special ties with Russia". This can be seen in its

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60 Ibid., p.163.

signing of mutual defence pact with Russia in 1992. An abrupt break with Russia will also bring economic disaster. Being a landlocked country, all its trade routes go through Moscow. And also due to the shrinking of Aral sea there is a growing water shortage in the region. The only radical solution to tackle this water shortage is to rechannel water from Siberia into Central Asia. For this it needs the support and cooperation of Russia. Commenting on the leverage that Moscow could enjoy on the Central Asian States in future Igor Lipovsky observes:

It can't be ruled out that Russia's future relation with Central Asian states will echo the policy followed by Khiva in its relation with Turkman tribe of Mangyshlak, when the Khivan Khans alternately released and shut off water over the now dried up course of Uzboi in order to secure the obedience of those restless tribe.<sup>61</sup>

### **Conclusion**

The success and failure of Karimov's attempt to gain mass loyalty toward his conception of national identity depends largely upon the success of his economic reform. If he is able to generate sufficient amount of economic prosperity and provide security to his population, he has a fair chance of success. He knows that the prime

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61 Igor Lipovsky, "Ecological Situation in Central Asia", *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol.47, no.7, November 1995, p.1119.

challenge to his state sponsored nationalism comes from the Islamist fundamentalists and the extreme nationalist groups represented by *Birlik* and *Erk*. Though he is against the political role of Islam in Uzbekistan, he is prepared to accept it, as a cultural component of Uzbek national identity. But the increasing authoritarian tendency shown by his regime, can prevent the emergence of necessary national consensus which will be very useful in providing stability in this transition period.

## **Chapter III**

## Chapter III

### NATION BUILDING: AN ALTERNATIVE VIEW

Three main groups are competing for political control everywhere in the region. Representative of the old Central Asian partocracy -- in most places split into competing groups -- are struggling to remain in control. They are challenged by the new, so-called democratic groups dominated by intellectuals who generally played only a peripheral role under the old political order. The partocracy is also opposed by revivalist Islamic groups composed of fundamentalist style clerics who are trained outside of the official establishment.<sup>1</sup>

This scenario also obtains in Uzbekistan. Karimov regime, is challenged by both, a democratic groups led by intellectuals under the banner of *Birlik* and *Erk*, as also by the Islamist group under the banner of Islamic Renaissance Party and *Adolat*. These opposition groups offer "alternative" to Karimov's concept of "What is to be Uzbek national identity". Broadly speaking these two, Islamic and others professes different programme and vision for Uzbekistan and also their following and programme do sharply diverge. The nationalist opposition to Karimov's regime is broadly represented by two rival political organizations *Birlik* and *Erk*. *Erk* is a

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1 Martha Brill Olcott, "Central Asia's Post-Empire Politics", *Orbis*, vol.36, no.2, Spring 1992, p.255.

breakaway faction of *Birlik*. By far the strongest among the two is *Birlik*. Both the rival political organizations link Uzbek identity with the pre-Soviet past, rooted in pan-Turkism and a sort of moderate Islamic democracy. In fact it will not be wrong to think that they are articulating *Jadidist* programme in an new milieu.<sup>2</sup>

*Jadid's* or innovators, saw Turkey as a model for a Muslim state. The father of the revival of Pan-Turkism was a Tartar intellectual Islamil Gasprinsky. In his newspaper *Terjuman Perevodchik* he stressed the politico cultural commonality of the Turkish people. He advocated that people should unite under a common Turkish language and a common culture, and resist the mullahs and the Slavs.

*Birlik* (unity), or Movement for the Preservation of Uzbekistan's Natural Material and Spiritual Riches was established in November 1988 by a group of eighteen prominent Uzbek intellectuals.<sup>3</sup> At *Birlik's* founding Congress on 28 May 1989, Abdulrahim Pulatov, Professor of Cybernetics was elected Chairman of the Party's governing Council, attended by three hundred delegates.

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2. Ahmad Rashid, *The Resurgence of Central Asia, Islam or Nationalism*, (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp.87-88.

3. *Ibid.*, p.98.

The draft programme of the party, though called for Uzbekistan to become sovereign, it nevertheless indicated that Uzbekistan would remain part of a Soviet Union governed according to a Leninist nationality policy.<sup>4</sup> During the Soviet period it made its stand clear on number of issues that helps us in understanding its articulation of alternative Uzbek identity.

During the Soviet period, it articulated the cultural and economic nationalism, with outright secession from the Soviet Union being not on the agenda. The very first public demonstration of *Birlik* on 19 March 1989 in Tashkent, called for declaring Uzbek as the official language of the Republic.<sup>5</sup> The draft programme (adopted in May 1989) called for a thorough study of the cultural heritage of the Uzbeks. It called for the replacement of place names with their historical equivalent, publicizing the activities and programme of several organization which were banned in 1930s and introducing the study of the Arabic script into Uzbek schools curriculum. Many of the leaders of all factions of *Birlik* and *Erk* favour stronger link among republics of

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4. William Fierman, "The Communist Party, *Erk* and the Changing Uzbek Political Environment", *Central Asian Survey*, vol.10, no.3 (1991), p.56.

5. B. Brown, "The Public Role of perestroika in Central Asia", *Central Asian Survey*, vol.9, no.1 (1990), p.89.

Central Asia and they have stressed cultural and linguistic links with other Turkish peoples. Some of the movement's members like Zahid Hagnazarov favour a united Turkistan, a united democratic society, without being divided into nationalities and without borders.<sup>6</sup> *Birlik* draft programme called for respect of personal freedom, guarantee of privacy of correspondence and telephone as well as guarantee of religious and political belief.

On its economic programme, the draft programme called for an end to Uzbekistan's one crop cotton based economy. It called for a sharp reduction in Uzbekistan's cotton crop acreage and establishment of factories that can process its raw materials. It specially calls for setting up of textile industries that could use the local cotton available. It favoured lessening of the trade reliance on Russia and to diversify it, by establishing trade links with other Soviet republics.<sup>7</sup> After independence it has started pressing for the denationalization of land and introduction of gradual market reform.

In February, 1990, *Birlik* split, and a breakaway group led by Muhammed Salih called itself *Erk*

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6 William Fierman, op.cit., pp.62-63.

7 Shireen T. Hunter, "Nationalist Movement in Soviet Asia", *Current History*, vol.89, no.549, October 1990, p.327.



(Independence), the name of a political party that in 1920s has sought full independence for Turkistan.<sup>8</sup>

In 1990 *Erk* had only 4000 members most of them were members of the intellectuals with a large proportion of them residing in Tashkent.<sup>9</sup> The split was partly due to personnel feud and partly due to disagreement on tactics. *Erk* felt that *Birlik* being far weaker than the local Communist authorities, it could lose more than gain by seeking direct confrontation with authorities.<sup>10</sup> Md. Salih stressed that *Birlik* goals could be better achieved through parliamentary means. Personnel feud also played an important role in the breakup of the organization. Unlike *Birlik* which boycotted the first presidential poll in Independent Uzbekistan, *Erk* Democratic Party participated. *Erk's* candidate Md. Salih got thirteen percent of the total vote polled to Eighty six percent polled by Karimov. *Erk's* strong position on Uzbek nationalism, alienated non-Uzbek voters. *Erk* refused to

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8 Yaccov Roi: "The Islamic Influence on nationalism in Soviet Central Asia", *Problem of Communism*, vol.39, July-August 1990, p.58.

9 William Fierman, op.cit., p.58.

10 Ibid.

accept the result, claiming that Salih had gained forty-six per cent of vote.<sup>11</sup>

With the gaining of Independence and *Erk* being disillusioned with Karimov's democratic commitment, *Erk* and *Birlik* again started coming together. Both the political organization share more or less a similar political programme. Both takes strong line on Uzbek nationalism and both are enthusiastic about the concept of Turkistan. In fact, both *Erk* and *Birlik* sponsored the Congress of the supporters of Turkistan in Tashkent on 7 March 1992.<sup>12</sup> The assembly was also attended by pan-Turkish element from other Central Asian republics. Though Karimov government is sympathetic to the concept of pan-Turkism especially in its cultural sense it doesn't like its political overtone.

Of the two, *Birlik* is the more stronger which claims over 1 million supporters. Karimov regime also seems to have identified it as potentially more threatening. It has been refused registration as a political party though it was registered as a movement.<sup>13</sup>

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11 Dilip Hiro, *Between Marx and Muhammad: The Changing Face of Central Asia* (London: Harper Collins, 1995), p.179.

12 Dilip Hiro, *ibid.*, p.178.

13 Article 54 of Uzbek Constitution forbids political parties based on "nationalistic or religious principles".

### Islamist Opposition

Islamic opposition group in Uzbekistan are mainly represented by the banned Islamic Renaissance Party and Adolat (Justice) Party -- a socio-religious party that calls for the establishment of an Islamic rule. They are considered to be the potentially more dangerous opponent to the Karimov regime. Martha Brill Olcott observation has relevance here,

Islam as a religion is now widely feared, not just in the former Soviet Union but in most of the Western nations, largely because it demands of its adherents the same allegiance the state requests. Equally important, today's Islam is not generally content to see itself as a balm for easing the sores of this world while waiting for the next, but tends to understand itself as a prescription for how people may live better.<sup>14</sup>

In Uzbekistan also, Islamic Renaissance Party's Uzbek branch leader, Abullah Yusuf declared that "it was ready to undertake political activity in order to establish Islam as the Muslims' way of life in this republic".<sup>15</sup>

This is in sharp contrast to Karimov's agenda which essentially sees Uzbekistan as a secular state.

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14 Martha Brill Olcott, "Central Asia: The Calculus of Independence", *Current History*, vol.94, no.594, October 1995, p.341.

15 Dilip Hiro, *op.cit.*, p.173.

The Islamists among the other relatively secular opposition groups can offer an alternative concept to Karimov's regime view of "Uzbek National Identity". Before going into the details of the programmatic content of the Islamic parties, it will be worthwhile, to look at the history of Islam during the Soviet era.

### Islam in Soviet Era

Soviet policy makers' policy toward Islam from the Bolshevik revolution onwards was distinctly hostile. Motivation of Soviet policy makers in attacking Islam and Islamic institutions responsible for its reproduction and maintenance were both ideological as well as pragmatic. Ideologically, Islam and religion were considered incompatible with the requirements of modern (secular, individualistic, egalitarian, rational and industrial) socialist way of life, hence it could not be tolerated.<sup>16</sup>

Pragmatically Islam provided the only common cohesive intellectual and organizational framework for the ethno-linguistically heterogenous people of Turkistan. Muslim leadership (*Ulema* and *Sufis*) closely

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16 William Kmedlin, William Care, Finley Carpenter, eds., *Education and Development in Central Asia: A Case Study of Social Change in Uzbekistan* (Leyden: E.J. Brill, 1971), p.75.

linked to traditional ruling circles as well as public posed the only credible source of challenge to Soviet hegemony in the region. Almost all resistance to Czarist expansion in the area including the anti-Bolshevik *Basmachi* movement were mobilized and led in the name of Islam.<sup>17</sup>

Thus, the Soviet authority on the one hand tried to physically repress the Islamic practices and its institution by outlawing its practices and destroying mosques, closing traditional religious institutions of learning like *madrasas*, outlawing all public form of Muslim worship including performance of life crisis rituals, changing muslim components of personnel names, abolishing all Shariat courts.

Hand in hand with its repressive anti-religious policy it put into place numerous new Soviet institutions in order to combat Islamic influence. These included major educational institutions such as Soviet Schools as well as many other institutions of socialization and community service such as peasant unions, Pioneer, Komsomol Youth organizations, 'Red' *Chaikhana*, women clubs, Red army, illiteracy campaign, press and electronic media. These institutions served

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17 Marie Broxup, "The Basmachi", *Central Asian Survey*, vol.2, no.1, 1983, pp.57-59.

simultaneously all agencies of education and secularizing changes.<sup>18</sup> Schools and affiliated organizations served as the principle instruments of desirable social change, including diffusion of modern culture and Soviet morality (secularism, atheism, strong labour ethics, sacrifice for the collective and absolute loyalty to the State) dissemination of Marxist Leninist ideology, Science and Technology, belief in materialism.<sup>19</sup>

However, it seems that the Soviet attack on Islam and Muslim social organization, as well as Soviet sponsorship of an alternate code of Soviet morality based on Communist ideology were less effective in rural central Asia.<sup>20</sup>

Thus, in the Soviet era there emerged three variants of Islam. Official or establishment Islam, various forms of unofficial Islam, in particular, Sufi brotherhoods, and Islamic tradition and folklore as preserved by the population as a whole.<sup>21</sup>

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18 William K. Medlin, William Care, op.cit., pp.66, 176.

19 Ibid., pp.188-89.

20 Nazif Shahrani, "Central Asia and the Challenge of Soviet Legacy", *Central Asian Survey*, vol.12, no.2, 1993, pp.130-31.

21 Yaccov Roi, "The Islamic Influence on Nationalism in Soviet Central Asia", *Problems of Communism*, vol.39, July-August, 1990, p.50.

### ***Official or Establishment Islam***

Four Spiritual Boards or Directorates were set up in Tashkent, Baku, Makhachkala, Ufa in 1943, with the express intention of the authority to secularize Islam. It was given the responsibility for maintaining those mosques and *madrasas* which were officially approved and for printing Korans and other religious literature. Official Islam tended to show considerable moderation in its requirement for the faithful's conforming to the five pillars of Islam (Zakat, Haj and Ramadan fast). This flexibility had ensured continued adherence to at least a semblance of Islamic tradition.<sup>22</sup>

### ***Unofficial Islam***

This unofficial Islam, also a byproduct of Sufism, retained its appeal among the large scale of Muslim population that didn't find the limitation imposed by the Soviet authorities in the practice of orthodox Islam.

The conservative Sufi brotherhood did not focus on the mosque, but rather on private prayer in the home. Thus it simply went underground faced with massive anti-Islamic drive of the Soviets. Despite being underground for several decades, the Sufi brotherhood was not

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22 Ibid., p.50.

weakened. In fact it gained strength as they attracted large number of women adherents and younger generation.<sup>23</sup> It was during Gorbachev period that attempt was made to coopt Islam in implementing some of the social goals of Perestroika, such as combating social evils like alcoholism, corruption. The net effect was that it led to the improvement of the position of official Islam in Central Asia. Mamayusupov, *mufti* of Central Asia was made a member of a delegation dispatched by the Uzbek Republic Party first Secretary to the Fergana valley to help placate the population in the wake of ethnic violence that broke out there in May-June 1989.<sup>24</sup>

This institution of official Islam has been assigned more or less the same job in Independent Uzbekistan to check the more virulent form of political Islam for putting out a considerable Muslim *samizdat* -- unofficial publication that propagated Islamic teaching and organizing religious study courses, attended by teenagers. In fact, this unofficial Islam kept the Islamic consciousness alive among the Central Asian population particularly in the rural area.

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23 Ibid., p.52.

24 Ibid., p.51.



### Politicization Of Islam

Though Islam as a tradition was very much alive, particularly in the rural areas, it was during the eighties that there was a marked revival of Islam in Uzbekistan. In 1987, in a survey of undergraduates with a Muslim background at Tashkent University, sixty per cent described themselves as Muslim, thirtyfive per cent being hesitant and seven percent called themselves as atheist".<sup>25</sup> In the past such surveys had shown religion to be strong among older, rural people. This period saw the emergence of national consciousness among the region's youth and intellectuals. Any search for national tradition increasingly led them to their religious motif.<sup>26</sup> Amin Usmanov, an Uzbek writer, asked in June 1988, "Why have we not tired of looking in an one-sided manner at the dark aspect of Islam in our past culture? Has not the time come to speak fairly of both the positive and negative aspects of the religion?"<sup>27</sup>

Thus attempt was being made to portray the positive human aspect of Islam questioning the official view that emphasizes the darker side of Islam. What certainly aides

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25 Dilip Hiro, op.cit., p.163.

26 Yaccov Roi, op.cit., p.59.

27 Cited in Dilip Hiro, op.cit., p.162.

this process of politicization of event was the happenings outside the Soviet Union borders.

The Soviet Union's intervention in Afghanistan where regiments consisting of Central Asians were deployed brought the Uzbek soldiers in direct contact with ethnic brethren who had fled during *Basmachi* revolt.<sup>28</sup> Iranian Islamic revolution brought in its wake hostile Islamic propaganda, this certainly attracted the youth particularly in Fergana Valley, where ethnic hardship were particularly strong. During the anti-Meshkhetian riot in Fergana valley in May-June 1985 banners emerged which read "Glory to the Banner of Islam, the Islamic religion and Ayatollah Khomeini".<sup>29</sup>

It seems quite natural for a population that was witnessing nationalistic/religious revival to express their grievance against the present established order in Islamic form.

#### Islamic Fundamentalism

We have to make a distinction between Islamic revivalism and Islamic fundamentalism. In a society where

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28 K. Warikoo, ed., *Afghanistan Factor in Central Asia and South Asia Politics* (New Delhi: Trans Asia Informatics, 1992).

29 Summary of Wars Broadcast, BBC, June 16, 1989.

the majority of people are Muslim, there will be a natural tendency among the people to show interest in its rediscovery, when lid of repression is taken out and simultaneously the existing socio-political order fails to satisfy the material-moral need of the people. On the other hand, the virulent form of political Islam also popularly called as Islamic Fundamentalism brooks no interference between its followers and religion. It seeks total loyalty of the people, it doesn't see Islam as one of the multiple identity that a people can possess, rather people possess one identity only, that is an Islamic one. According to the fundamentalists, Islam is a socio-political ideology where there can be no separation of state and the mosque.<sup>30</sup> This face of political Islam which is totally opposed to Karimov government is represented by Islamic Renaissance Party, Wahabi Movement and Adolat Party.

Islamic Renaissance Party was officially registered in Moscow, held its founding Convention in June 1990 in Ashwakhon. It aimed primarily at obtaining concessions and religious freedom equal to those granted to Russian orthodox Church under Gorbachev then asking Muslims to

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30 Dilip Hiro, "Islamist Strengths and Weaknesses in Central Asia", *Middle East International*, vol.20, no.1, 5 February 1993, p.,20.

"live according to Quran."<sup>31</sup> In Uzbekistan it has been banned. The Uzbekistan branch of the Islamic Renaissance Party is led by Abdullah Utayev and his first deputy Abdullah Yousuf. It declared its political goal as to "establish Islam as the Muslim way of life in this republic". Their area of strength lies in Fergana Valley and Samarkand region.<sup>32</sup>

The other religious organization Adolat with its headquarter in Namangan, a bastion of Islam, began to impinge on the everyday life of Muslims in Fergana valley. Even during Communist rule many local Muslims including Communist party members in Namangan used to have Islamic ceremonies for marriage and birthdays in secret. Independence saw a rapid revival of Islam in the Fergana valley and elsewhere. The number of mosque in Namangan, a city of 360,000 rose from two to twenty six. The province of Gnomon accounted for 130 mosque, more than half the total in all of Central Asia before Perestroika. Until 1989, only four muslims from the Gnomon province were allowed to undertake haj. Three years later the figure was 1500, accounting for nearly two-fifth of the Republic's total of 4000. It is in Namangan that Adolat formed vigilante groups to impose

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31 Dilip Hiro, op.cit., p.173.

32 Ibid.

the veil on women and a ban on the sale of alcohol and made citizen's arrest of suspected criminals. The accused were tried by Islamic judges, who often restricted themselves to sentencing the guilty to forced labour in the construction or repairs of local mosques.

Another hot spot where the Islamic fundamentalists are very strong is in Fergana valley, the traditional bastion of Islam, where the *Basmachi* revolt also drew its strength. Here the puritanical Wahabi movement are active.<sup>33</sup> Fergana valley is one of the most sensitive areas in Uzbekistan. It houses around one-third of Uzbekistan's population, making it the most densely populated region in Central Asia. Overpopulated with an acute land shortage, having unemployment rate close to 35 per cent it provides an ideal breeding ground for the fundamentalist forces.

With the money pouring in from Saudi Arabia, there has been an upsurge in building of mosques and *madrasas*. A massive propaganda operation is underway in outlying village in order to reconvert the population. "First Fergana, then Uzbekistan and then the whole of Central Asia will become an Islamic state". This is the battle cry of Imam Abdul Ahadi. According to the Imam, their aim was to overthrow the Communist government of Karimov and

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33 Ahmed Rashid, op.cit., p.100.

spearhead an Islamic revolution throughout Central Asia.<sup>34</sup>

The government of Islam Karimov is quite aware of the threat that these Islamic fundamentalists poses. The Uzbek official claim that the Islamic militant are creating a secret army of students are being trained in weapons and hit squads are being formed, with the express intention of striking at official targets and, creating disturbances. The security forces claimed to have foiled attempts by Islamic agents to instigate disturbances. Arms cache and camps for training militants for an Islamic coup in the republic have been discovered in Fergana valley.<sup>35</sup>

Wary of the Islamic fundamentalist activities, Islam Karimov's regime has banned all the Islamic Organizations.<sup>36</sup> Strict administrative and security measures have been taken against the Islamist group. Now it is difficult to build a mosque without special permission, even with money donated by public.<sup>37</sup> It

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34 Quoted in *ibid.*, p.100.

35 *Current Digest of Post Soviet Powers*, vol.XLVI, no.1, pp.17-18.

36 Article 54 of the Constitution prohibits political parties based on nationalistic or religious principle.

37 *Current Digest*, *ibid.*, pp.17-18.

actively supported Gen. Dostum in Afghanistan in order to stop the flow of arms and hostile elements from crossing the border from Afghanistan. On the other hand, he has not been averse to show his Islamic credentials by going to Haj and paying tribute to cultural aspect of Islam. However, he is totally opposed to any political role of Islam in the country.

#### PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

The alternative view that is espoused by opposition groups to official nationalism has both its strength and weaknesses. The relatively moderate secular group represented by *Birlik* and *Erk* are mainly confined to the urban areas and command influence among urban intellectuals and students. The other obvious handicap they suffer from is that both groups are banned organizations, hence have great problem in propagating their views among the masses.

On the other hand, the Islamists possess the potential to emerge as the strongest challenge to state sponsored national identity construct. They reject Karimov's contention that state and Islam are to be kept separate. They see Islam as a socio-political ideology in which there can be no separation of the State and the Mosque. Groups like Islamic Renaissance Party supports a

supranationalist identity, that of uniting all the Muslims of Central Asia under the banner of Islam. They tend to play down identity of ethnic groups and nationalities. They seek to put an end to ethnicity-based nationhood. However, it seems to be too late as George Mirsky observes "Ethnicity was given a tremendous boost by Soviet regime...people look for and assert their identity in terms of both ethnicity and religion".<sup>38</sup> Much will depend not only on the strength of Islamic following but also on the outcome of power struggle going on in the country. Here also they suffer from a lack of unity among the disparate groups that come under the banner of Islamic fundamentalism. They suffer from sectarianism. Wahabis are against Sufism. They condemn Shias and other minority sect in Islam, Wahabis are pitted against Islamic Renaissance party".<sup>39</sup> The Islamic group also suffers from the fact that the people, particularly in urban areas are not very familiar with the Islamic rituals and practices. It will take at least a decade for them to familiarise with Islamic rituals and practices.

Notwithstanding these weaknesses the fact remains that the Islamist group among the opposition are the

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38 Goerge Mirsky, "Central Asia's Emergence", *Current History*, October 1992, vol.92, p.336.

39 See Ahmed Rashid, *op.cit.*, p.101.



strongest, potential challenger to Karimov's official nationalism. Their appeal and chance of success of visualizing an Islamic Uzbekistan lies in the success or failure of Karimov's economic policy. If Karimov fails to provide a reasonable amount of prosperity and security to its people, then the situation will be more favourable to the Islamic groups to exploit.

## **CONCLUSION**

## CONCLUSION

During the nineteenth century in Central Asia there existed no modern nation State as such. What was there was a medieval era feudal Khanates of Khiva, Bukhara and Kokand. People of various ethnic admixture lived there, like the Uzbeks, Tajiks, Turkmans etc., but they were yet not conscious of the fact; whether they belonged to a nation or not. In fact there was a clear absence of modern nationalism among these peoples. Their loyalty was towards their tribe, clan, region, rather than towards a nation-state. No national consciousness as such existed among these various ethnic groups. Uzbeks as a distinct ethnic group existed, but like the other ethnic groups they lacked the national consciousness.

It was only after the region's incorporation into Czarist rule, that an element of modernity was introduced. With the opening of Schools that taught Russian language and modern subjects, a very small group of native intellectual emerged under the banner of *Jadid*, which talked about an amorphous Central Asian identity based on Pan-Turkism and Pan-Islamism. Significantly missing was the demand for a modern nation-state for each ethnic groups in the region.

It was only after the October Revolution, that the Soviet nationality policy was implemented in Central Asia which gave rise to five distinct nation states, one of them being Uzbekistan. Lenin perceived nationalism as a response to national-social oppression that was caused by the emergence of early capitalism and therefore bound to disappear in the course of building Socialism. It was Stalin as the Commissar of nationalities, who defined nationality on the twin basis of ethnicity and language. The national delimitation undertaken during 1924-25 in Soviet Union on Stalin's formula gave birth to the existing State of Uzbekistan. A modern state structure was provided to the nascent Uzbek State, with its own border, flags, state structures. However, it will not be true to say that the Uzbek people were conscious of the fact that they were a Uzbek nation. Whatever the motive of Stalin's nationality policy, it had a far reaching consequence as far as the nascent Uzbekistan was concerned. Stalin's collectivization programme and anti-religious drive, paradoxically created a dual society in Uzbekistan. At the one level there emerged a new native elite that was to express loyalty towards the Soviet Union, which simultaneously became aware of the fact that was also a Uzbek nation. At the other level, mainly in the rural areas, the old traditional social structure survived. People's identification with their tribe, clan

system survived in the rural areas. The paradox of this situation was to significantly affect the nation building exercise in Uzbekistan.

By 1960s in Uzbekistan, the Soviet sponsored modernization process created a native intelligentsia. This native intelligentsia started search for its root. This period also saw the emergence of nationalistic feeling in Uzbekistan. Many factors were responsible for it. The insensitive handling of Rashidov affairs, general economic stagnation, inflamed the nationalist feeling.

It was difficult to express nationalistic feeling in a totalitarian society where nationalism was considered as bourgeoisie nationalism, hence to be suppressed. With Islam still surviving in the society at an unofficial level, Islam became the rallying point. It became the medium to express Uzbek national identity.

Many factors explained the upsurge in Islam during the late 70s and early 80s. First, the relaxed atmosphere of Gorbachev era, second the events in Iran and Afghanistan made Islam a living socio-political ideology rather than a fossilized creed. Also in the absence of familiarity with other non-Marxist creed, Uzbek people who were Muslim, fell on it, as it distinguished them from other Slavs. Islam became a medium for expressing Uzbek national identity.

Thus, at the time of Independence in Uzbekistan, there existed mainly three level of nationalism. At the one level their was ethnic nationalism that called Uzbekistan for the Uzbeks represented by *Birlik* and *Erk*. At the other level existed a supra nationalism, represented by Uzbek Communist elite who professed faith in a common Soviet identity. At the third level were the subnationalist tendency where the people retain loyalty towards their clan, tribe and region instead of a broader Uzbek national identity.

Another important feature of nationalism in Uzbekistan was that there was no movement for secession from Soviet Union, rather it was mainly cultural and economic nationalism. The unexpected independence created a piquant situation for the nationalist in Uzbekistan. It left them little time for forging a common Uzbek national civic identity. This absence of a commonly agreed Uzbek national identity is to prove the major obstacle in building a Uzbek national identity that will command people's maximum loyalty.

The collapse of Marxism-Leninism created an ideological vacuum in the post-Independence period in Uzbekistan. Also in post-Independent period there emerged three main political forces. These political forces in order to fill the ideological vacuum created by the

demise of Marxism-Leninism offered their own version of nationalism in order to define the content of Uzbek national identity and to draw mass support towards it. One group led by *Birlik* and *Erk* championed the cause of ethnic nationalism. Another political force which emerged, was the Islamic Fundamentalist forces, drawing its strength and appeal on the past-Islamic heritage. It offers a alternative socio-political ideology, that emphasise the exclusive Islamic identity of Uzbeks. The other most important political force is the ex-Communist apparatus represented by Karimov regime.

Karimov regime was handicapped from the start. The primary task that it faced was to gain legitimacy in Uzbek people eyes as it was associated with a Communist past that was more or less discredited now. It put the task of nation building at the top of its agenda in order to gain legitimacy. The regime has generally adopted a two prong strategy to gain mass loyalty towards his official sponsored nationalism. On the one hand, he has appropriated the moderate content of both ethnic nationalist and Islamist groups. On the other hand, he has built an authoritarian political structure that makes difficult for the opposition groups to propagate their view.

Karimov regime feels more comfortable in sponsoring and appropriating an ethnic Uzbek nationalism, than an exclusive Islamic socio-political ideology. It has no qualm in championing a moderate ethnic nationalism like renaming the street and place of historical figures which are considered to be Uzbek forefathers. But he is dead set against any political role for Islam in Uzbekistan. The Islamic fundamentalist have also made no secret of the fact that they want to overthrow his government.

At the political level, Karimov has built an authoritarian power structure, repressing opposition parties, sponsoring loyal opposition party and increasingly concentrating power in his hand. It is true that democracy is considered to be inalienable part of drawing people's in the nationalistic stream. It makes people feel involved in the nation building process. But in Uzbekistan it will not be advisable to go for more expansion of political participation. In the absence of a common agreement among the intelligentsia about the future, Uzbek national-civic identity, it will create more problem rather than help the task of nation building. The Uzbek society is still segmented, people's identification towards sub-national identity is still strong, expansion of premature political participation will create a more instable political condition.



But the validity of consensus building cannot be denied. The increasing authoritarian tendency displayed by Karimov regime could prove to be counter productive. He needs to coopt and cooperate with the moderate political forces in Uzbekistan, so that a common consensus could be forged, that will help isolate the extremist forces and further the task of nation building.

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