

**ETHNIC CONFLICT IN SOVIET CENTRAL ASIA  
IN THE GORBACHEV PERIOD (1985-1991) :  
CASE STUDY OF UZBEKISTAN AND TADJIKISTAN**

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CERTIFICATE

This dissertation entitled "ETHNIC CONFLICT IN  
SOVIET CENTRAL ASIA IN THE GORBACHEV PERIOD (1985-1991):  
CASE STUDY OF UZBEKISTAN AND TADJIKISTAN", by Mr.  
Sushil Kumar Choudhary, which is submitted in partial  
fulfilment of the requirements of the Master of  
Philosophy degree, is an original work to the best of  
our Knowledge. It has not been previously submitted  
for any other degree of this or any other University.

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

*Kwarikoo* 21/7/93  
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## Preface

One need not emphasize the difficulties and dangers that beset a student of contemporary history and politics who attempts to tackle a complex socio-political phenomenon which is essentially modern, that is ethnicity. Strident politicisation of 'ethnic identity' during the last few decades and the endemic proportions of its occurrence across the globe in both the capitalist and socialist state systems, defying the expectations of the dominant paradigms in modern thought -- Marxist and Liberal, of the demise of 'primordial identity' in the wake of global interdependence, secular modernization and the emergence of single universalist culture calls for an exhaustive study of this modern socio-political phenomenon. Infact, ethnicity has attracted the attention of scholars of quite a few diverse puruations-ethnography, anthropology, sociology,,political science, etc., who have provided valuable insights on the theme. However, encompassing such issues as the nature and character of the power-structure, the role of elites, and the complex processes of societal evolution, ethnicity has eluded the grasp of even the most elaborately constructed theoretical formulations. Obsfucating the attempts to comprehend the issues underlying the newly emergent phenomenon of ethnicity is the bewildering depths of its psycho-cultural underpinnings, the diversity of its manifestations, varied patterns of ethnic mobilisation and

the differing and similar contexts of its emergence and non-emergence.

The demise of the USSR, as no other example, glaringly illustrates, on the one hand, the limitations of various theoretical formulations in understanding ethnicity and on the other its overwhelming significance as a major socio-political force in modern times. Any discussion of the theories of ethnicity in the light of the developments in the Soviet Union is beyond the scope of this work. However, a working definition of ethnicity is required without going into 'objective-subjective' or 'primordial-instrumental' debates on ethnicity to enable us to identify among the bewildering maze of rapidly occurring developments in the USSR since Gorbachev took over the reins of power, movements or forces which were 'ethnic'.

Ethnicity may be broadly defined as a process of ethnic group mobilization by its elites through the select use of ethnic symbols "for socio-cultural and politico-economic purposes". The focus of mobilisation as observed is the ethnic group which is generally identified or defined by its possession of five essential characteristics:

- a) A subjective belief in real or assumed historical antecedents;
- b) A symbolic or real geographical centre;
- c) Shared cultural emblems, such as race,

languages, religion, dress and diet or a combination of some of them which though variegated and flexible, provide the overt basis of ethnic identity;

- d) Self-ascribed awareness of distinctiveness and belonging to the group.
- e) Recognition by others of the group differentiation.

It is within the above broadly recognised parameters of ethnic group and ethnicity that we will try to locate and elaborate the ethnonational identity of the Central Asian peoples, with particular reference to Uzbekistan and Tadzhikistan, the recent manifestation of ethnonationalism and finally the conflicts and discord between various ethnic groups in these two republics.

The Geographical region of Soviet Central Asia comprises of five republics - Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tadzhikistan and Khyrgyzistan named after their respective 'titular nationality'. The population of the five republics in general is composed essentially of three main elements-Turkic (Kazakh, Uzbek, Khyghyz, Turkmen and Karakalpaks, Meshketian Turks etc.), Slav (Russian, Ukrianian, Belorussian), and Iranian (Tadzhik). There are also a sizeable number of Volga Germans, Crimean Tatars Koreans, Jews, etc. The demographic profile of the

republics has an important bearing on the ethnic question in the former Soviet Central Asian Republic.

The Turkic and Iranian peoples are indigenous whereas the Slavs and others have migrated to the region first in the wake of the Czarist conquest of Central Asia and later during the Soviet rule. The indigenous people practise Islamic religion compared to the Slavs who are either orthodox christians or atheists. The distinct peculiarities of the indigenous people vis-a-vis "outsiders", particularly the Russians with respect to the former's history, culture, religion and language have an important bearing on the ethnic question in Central Asia. The distinctive peculiarities, at one level has engendered the emergence of a broader Central Asian identity. Depending upon situational and relational contents, the Central Asia identity assumes varying forms---pan-Islanism or Pan-Turkism or an anti-Russian consciousness.

The divide, cultural and other between the indigenous nationalities and the Slavs, however, also extends to the former as well. The crystallisation of ethnic identities among the Central Asian peoples as manifest in their varied linguistic heritage, disparate social and cultural origins and residence in well-defined territories is the other important determinant of the nationality question in Central Asia. The creation of republics for each of the five

dominant ethnic groups and investing them with government apparatus on the eve of the establishment of Soviet rule in Central Asia only served to consolidate the historical processes that have accentuated ethnic identity formation.

Not surprising, therefore, the politics in the ex-Soviet union, in the wake of the inauguration of a liberal regime by Gorbachev, was largely governed on nationalist lines. A host of organisations and fronts airing nationalist demands and grievances, working for ethnic cultural revival and the widespread occurrence of ethnic conflicts became a common phenomenon in Soviet Central Asia in the post-1985 period, notwithstanding the resurgence of Islam, the only common, powerful denominator among the people of Central Asia.

The study seeks to make a critical analysis of the Soviet Nationality policy as it evolved under Lenin, Stalin, Khrushchev and Brezhnev as it had a direct and intimate bearing on the nationalities question in Central Asia. This would help us in understanding the relationship between state and the various nationalities in a multi ethnic country. Secondly, the Soviet Union being a Communist State, we would also like to examine the role of ideology in shaping the Soviet nationality policy i.e., the attitude of Marxism-Leninism towards ethnic groups and identity.



The study of ethnic conflicts between years 1985-91 assumes added relevance and significance for it was under Gorbachev that these conflicts exacerbated in the former Soviet Central Asian republics as also in other republics and ultimately resulted in their independence. However, this would entail an analysis of the policies of Gorbachev, particularly glasnost and perestroika and how these measures provided the immediate contextual background for the rise of ethno-nationalist movements. This study examines the extent and pattern of ethnic conflicts in Uzbekistan and Tadzhikistan during six years of Gorbachev's rule (1985-1991).

It is often found that the emergence of nationalism finds its basis in ethnic consciousness. The ties that bind the members of such communities are often strong and vivid and the barriers against outsiders are fairly high. The community's culture and tradition tends to permeate all classes, albeit with variants and there are usually well entrenched institutions and roles which give the community a peculiar identity separating it from the other communities. Our endeavour has been to isolate and objectively analyse such elements and determinants involved in the process of the rise of ethno-nationalism in the context of Soviet Central Asia. The question of connection between Islam and nationalism in Soviet Central Asia, has been examined in particular. The measure of influence of the region's

traditional religion on the development of local nationalism or local nationalisms, have also been examined.

The other important basis of the rise of ethnonationalism has its roots in economic, environmental and political issues. An exhaustive study of the politico-economic basis of ethnonationalism has therefore been made.

The work is largely based on such primary sources as Soviet Radio broadcasts, newspapers, magazines and research journals published in the Current Digest of Soviet press and the BBC's Summary of World Broadcasts. The relevant Communist party documents and the writings of Lenin and Stalin have been used for writing the Second chapter. Secondary sources such as books, articles from research journals and newspapers have also been consulted.

The Introductory chapter, discusses in detail the historiography on the Soviet nationality question, highlights the dichotomy present in the Soviet and western writings and offers criticism pointing out their biases, prejudices and contradictions.

In the second chapter Soviet Nationalities Policy (Lenin to Gorbachev): A Review, an analysis of the Soviet nationality policy formulated by Lenin and as it evolved under his successors, Stalin, Khrushchev and Brezhnev has been undertaken. The influence of Marx' and Engels'

writings on the 'national question' has also been traced. Besides, the impact of the policies of Gorbachev, particularly perestroika and glasnost on the emergence of ethnonationalism has been studied.

In the third chapter entitled: Ethnic Conflicts in Uzbekistan, a comprehensive survey has been presented of

- a) Historical roots of the Uzbek ethnonational identity, its components and other forms of collective consciousness competing and undermining Uzbek ethnonational identity.
- b) Ethnic Revival with particular reference to religion, language, history etc,
- c) Emergence of ethnonationalism as seen in proliferation of organisations and fronts led by the local elites demanding changes in the existing politico-economic framework and various other nationalist demands.
- d) Inter-ethnic Conflicts between Uzbeks and Meshkhetians and Russians.

In the fourth chapter, 'Ethnic Conflicts in Tadzhikistan', an attempt has been made to discuss:

- a) Historical roots of Tadzhik ethnonational identity, its elements and other forms of identity consciousness competing or trying to subsume Tadzhik ethnic identity.

- b) Ethnic revival with particular reference to religion, language, etc.
- c) Intra and inter-ethnic conflicts, between Tadzhiks, Uzbeks, Khyrghyzs, Armenians and Russians.

The last chapter would comprise of conclusions.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In the long course of my research and writing the dissertation, I have accumulated many debts and it is a pleasure to acknowledge the people who have made this work see the light of the day.

“बदंके गुरु पद पदुम पशगा  
सुराचि सुवास सरस अनुरागा ।”

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During the last stages of my dissertation I met with a road accident which almost rendered me cripple for a month. Without the generous solicitude of the chairperson, Prof. Kalim Bahadur and my 'guru' Dr. Warikoo, I would not have been able to finally submit my dissertation. I am grateful to them.

Of invaluable help have been my numerous friends, well-wishers and the doctors at the AIIMS and the JNU Health Centre who have in innumerable small and significant ways rendered assistance to me. They did everything possible to help me out for my speedy recovery.

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*Sushil Kumar Choudhary*  
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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

"Few aspects of Soviet Society have been the object of such divergent opinions and impassioned disputes as the condition of the numerous ethnic minorities inhabiting the Soviet Union. On the one hand some Western writers have denounced the Soviet Union as a colonial oppressor that has subjugated the non Russian peoples, subjected them to severe treatment and endeavoured to divert them of their native cultures by imposing upon them Russification. And in the case of some minorities, so the indictment runs,, the treatment was so severe that it may be said to border on genocide. On the other hand, in sharp contrast to this dark picture, the Soviet Union has presented to the world a radiant image. In it, (according to the Soviet scholars and official pronouncements) the numerous nationalities form a fraternal and harmonious union of which the Russian people are an unprivileged member; their separate cultures are protected and fostered in equal measure; enmity and even discord among them have evaporated under the enlightenment of Communism; and no Soviet citizen suffers discrimination because of his ethnic origin. In short, in Soviet parlance, the national problem has been solved in the Soviet Union"<sup>1</sup>

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1. Eric Goldhagen (ed), Ethnic Minorities in the Soviet Union. New York, 1968, p. vii.



These words of Eric Goldhagen written almost two decades ago rings equally true of the writings on the 'Soviet Nationality Question', of both the Soviet and a majority of western scholars during the past two decades.<sup>2</sup> Conspicuous consistency in the diametrically divergent opinions on the Soviet Nationality Policy over the decades makes one wonder whether, the inane, intense hostility of the Cold war between the two rival power blocks in the world has come to be reflected in the academics as well.

The ethnic implosion during the Gorbachev years besides exploding the myth of stability and invincibility of the first socialist state in the world also falsified another myth that the nationality question has been solved in the Soviet Union so monotonously parroted by the Soviet party apparatchik and the Soviet academicians alike over the last so many decades. Communist stalwarts from Lenin onwards to Stalin issued pompous proclamations of Marxism-Leninism having solved the national question in the multinational Soviet State with the establishment of the Bolshevik rule which abolished national oppression, invested the titular nationalities with administrative territorial states and undertook measures for the development of their language,

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2. An equally damaging indictment of writings on Soviet history is present in E.H. Carr's What is History?

culture and economic well being<sup>3</sup>. However, the most explicit statement of the Soviet state having "solved one of the most complex of problems, which has plagued mankind for ages and remains acute in the world of capitalism to this day - the problems of relations between nations" issued by Khrushchev, who claimed that "fusion (sliianie) of nations" was taking place in the Soviet Union. That the proclamation was not one of the usual communist propaganda stuff is attested by the fact that the CPSU party programme adopted by the 22nd CPSU congress in October 1961 included a passage which reads as follows : "The borders between the Union republics within the USSR are increasingly losing their former significance, since all nations are equal, their life is organized on a single socialist foundation, the material and spiritual needs of each people are satisfied to the same extent claimed and they are all united into one family by common vital interests and are advancing together towards a single goal-communism"<sup>4</sup>. The resolution gave wide currency to the 'defederalization' debate in the USSR. In the

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3. Devendra Kaushik, Soviet Nationalities Policy in Central Asia in R.G. Gidadhubali (ed) Socio-Economic Transformation of Soviet Central Asia, New Delhi, 1989, pp.3-9.

4. Gregory Gleason, Leninist Nationality Policy: Its source and style in H.R. Huttenbach (ed) Soviet Nationality Policy, London, 1990 P. 15.

academic circles the debate was initiated by P.G. Semenov who in a series of articles bluntly advocated the dismantling of republican structures<sup>5</sup>.

Brezhnev, though dropped the slivianie formula from his official pronouncements and speeches, harped on the achievement of socialism in creating "a new historical community, the Soviet People".<sup>6</sup> Soviet ethnographers and social scientists in an apparent bid to theoretically substantiate the official pronouncement of the Soviet State on the nationality question came up with the formulation that under developed conditions of socialism, a new international community, 'the Soviet People' has come into existence as a result of "inter-ethnic integration processes".

The prominent proponents of this school of thought are V. Kozlov, J Bromley, V. Tiskhov, etc.. Bromley and Kozlov remarks, "Finally inter-ethnic integration represents a process that... usually takes place within the framework of a multinational state that facilitates gradual reconciliation and merger in culture and other ethnic

5. Gregory Gleason, Federalism and Nationalism, the struggle for republican rights in the USSR, Boulder, 1990, p. 66.

6. Gregory Gleason, n 4, P. 16.

parameters... Under socialism interethnic integration process increases (compared to capitalism) as a result of strengthening economic and cultural bonds and the lack of class antagonisms. Within the Soviet Union the integration process is taking place... within the country as a whole. The formation of a new people... the Soviet People plays an important role in the further development of those processes...."<sup>7</sup>.

However, as has been explained in the following chapters, ethnic consciousness and discord showed signs of emergence within few months of Gorbachev's assumption of power. In the following years we witnessed the mushrooming of ethnic organisations voicing nationalist demands. In course of time many of these nationalities raised the banner of autonomism or separatism, the prominent example being the Baltic republics. Ethnonationalism in our opinion was one of the prime cause for the collapse of the Soviet Union, a phenomenon that socialism proclaimed to have solved.

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7. Julian Bromley and V.Kozlov, 'The Theory of Ethnos and Ethnic Processes in Soviet Social Sciences', Comparative Studies in Society and History, Vol.31 (1989), pp.435-436; Tishkov another noted ethnographer calls the Soviet people a 'meta-ethnic group' in his, 'Peoples and the state', Soviet Anthropology and Archaeology, Vol.28, No.3, 1989-90, p.82.

"Marxism", writes the sociologist Ernest Gellner, "contained the anticipation of the decline of nationalism"<sup>8</sup>. Marxists believed that modern life, the international division of labour mobility and mass education would put an end to the atavistic and localistic passions of ethnic communities. The ephemeral nature of the national question was boldly proclaimed by Marx who asserted "national differences and antagonisms between peoples are daily more and more vanishing and the supremacy of the proletariat will cause them to vanish still further."<sup>9</sup>. Like Marx, Lenin firmly believed that socialism would not only abolish the present division of mankind into small national states but would ultimately merge them. Attaching a precondition to the merger of nations, he however, states that "this possibility will become reality only ~~only~~ when complete democracy is introduced in all spheres... including complete freedom of secession"<sup>10</sup>. It is obvious that Marxist-Leninist ideologist construct has not been able to explain the extraordinary resilience of ethnicity within the socialist world, the hostilities that have grown among ethnic communities or the complex and varied evolution of Soviet nationalities problem.

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8. Ernest Gellner, Thought and change, Chicago, 1967, P. 147.

9. Marx Quoted in R.Vaidyanath, The Formation of Soviet Central Asian Republics, New Delhi, 1967, P.257.

10. Ibid, P. 261.

On the other end of spectrum is the opinion, diametrically opposite to the Soviet claims, that the nationality question in the former Soviet Union remained unresolved.<sup>11</sup> The threat to the stability of the Soviet system according to several western scholars came not from the more developed and westernised regions of the USSR, the Baltic republics and the Ukraine but from Soviet Central Asia. These scholars argue that the growth of centrifugal forces is rooted primarily in the religious and cultural divide between the central Asians and the Russians. Critchlow one of the proponents of the conflicting religious model is of the opinion that identification of Islam with ethnic values in Central Asian republics makes it antagonistic to Russo-centric Soviet political cultures.<sup>12</sup> Of similar viewpoint are Alexandre Bennigsen and Marie Broxup in their 'Islamic' threat to the Soviet State. In their work, the two authors dwell at length on the Muslims loyalty and extreme adherence to Islam, beliefs and practices and conclude that religious consciousness provides stimulus to

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11. In the 1970's and 1980's the nationality question had become a central preoccupation, if not virtual obsession in Western analysis of the Soviet system.

12. James Critchlow, Islam and nationalism in Soviet-Central Asia in Pedro Ramet (ed), Religion and Nationalism in Soviet Central Asia, Durham N.C. 1984.

Central Asian nationalism.<sup>13</sup> Micheal Rywkin<sup>14</sup> also argues on the lines of Critchlow and Bennigsen.

However, Rasma Karklins<sup>15</sup> Joseph Rothschild<sup>16</sup>, Sewyrn Bailer<sup>17</sup>, S. Enders Wimbush<sup>18</sup> and others unlike the proponents of the "conflicting religious model" do not foresee the rise of nationalism in Central Asian republics exclusively in terms of religious factor. They take due cognizance of the factor of 'ethnicity' which encompasses the religious variable. These scholars have argued that "the polarization of the Soviet peoples along ethnic lines is increasing faster than their identification with and consciousness of, a new Soviet nationhood"<sup>19</sup>. They were of the opinion that in the coming decades ethnonationalist conflicts are going to escalate to the extent of becoming insoluble within the existing socio-political system.

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13. Alexandre Benningsen and Marie Broxup, The Islamic Threat to the Soviet State, London, 1983.
  14. Micheal Rywkin, Moscow's Muslim Challenge, London, 1982.
  15. Rasma Karklins, Ethnic Relations in the USSR, Winchester, 1986.
  16. Joseph Rothschild, Ethnopolitics : A Conceptual Framework, New York, 1981,.
  17. Sewyrn Bailer, Stalin's Successors : Leadership stability and change in the Soviet Union, New York, 1980.
  18. S. Enders Wimbush, Soviet Nationalities in Strategic Perspective, London, 1985.
  19. Sewyrn Bailer, n. 17, P. 208.

Another proponent of the 'conflict model' but with a more complex analysis is Rakowska-Harmstone. She is of the view that ethnic conflicts would grow in scope and intensity with local elites coming into conflict with the Slav population for jobs and for authority in their own republics.<sup>20</sup>.

These analyses while stressing the antiquity and unvierversality of national sentiments, dismiss Soviet claims that positive sociological and cultural transformations have taken place in the non-Russian republics and condemn the attempts of Russification.

The western literature on the implications of nationalism for the stability of the Soviet system contains a number of implicit and unexamined assumptions about the nature of national consciousness and its causes which when held up for critical scrutiny are found to simply untenable.<sup>21</sup>.

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20. T. Rakowska-Harmstone, "The Dialectics of Nationalism, in the USSR", Problems of Communism, vol. 23, no. 3., pp.1-22.

21. In the west itself, a critique of both the Alexandre Bennigsen and Sewyrrn Bailer school of thought has developed. The most representative examples being Georges Suny, Gail Lapidus Victor Zaslavasky and others. (For their references see bibliography.)



Western analysis "assuming the political salience of ethnicity to be self-evident" and "treating politics as a dependent variable" anticipate the automatic unfolding of the process of ethnic self-assertion into the stage of political stabilization. Simply stating, the scholars of this school have devised a one to one formula, juxtaposed onto the realm of politics. Implicit here is the assumption that Central Asian identity is inherently antagonistic to Russian culture and the Russian dominated Soviet political system. Western Sovietologists fail to draw a dividing line between national sentiments, a strong attachment to its national cultural identity and ethnonationalism which is primarily a political movement. In fact, they can be charged of subscribing to what is called the "sleeping beauty". Theory of the nation which assumes that a sense of nation is always there but can be temporarily slumbering, waiting to be awakened, waiting to express itself once a political opening is offered.<sup>22</sup> It is therefore not surprising that in their analysis they offer no explanation as to how the ethnic group identity would metamorphosise into a political movement. Indeed one of the eminent Sovietologists without hesitation accepts his inability to give an answer - "what I have said demonstrates clearly that the multinational

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22. The Theory of Sleeping Beauty Nation was first put forth by Rupert Emerson. See Rupert Emerson, From Empire to Nation, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1959.

character of the Soviet Union poses potentially the most serious threat to the legitimacy of the Soviet state and to the stability of the Soviet regime. The question is why this potential threat has not until now become more of a reality, why the nationality problem has not become a real nationality crisis. To be frank, we do not have a full answer to this question, and I have not found an answer to it in anything I have read on the subject written the East or West."<sup>23</sup>

The drawback in the analysis of the western scholars can be traced partly to their blissful ignorance of the various theories of ethnicity which have immensely contributed to the understanding of the emergence of ethnicity as a crucial political factor in modern times. It is now widely accepted in contrast to the opinion of the Western analysts that ethnicity and nationalism are not 'given' but are social and political constructs that arise at specific historic conjunctures and is contingent on the growth of markets, capitalism, urbanization, mass education and the spread of literacy<sup>24</sup>. Second, is the theory of elite

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23. Sewyryn Bailer n. 17, P. 212.

24. Pertinent to the above proposition are Karl W. Deutsch, Nationalism and Social Communication: An Enquiry into the Foundations of Nationalism. Cambridge, 1966, Also see Eric Hobsbawm, "Some Reflections on the Break up of Britain", New Left Review, No. 105 (September-October, 1977) P. 23; Geoff Eley, Nationalism and Social History, b (1981), PP. 83-107.

competition as the basic dynamic which precipitates ethnic conflict under specific conditions which arise from the broader political and economic environments rather than from the cultural values of the ethnic groups which is inextricably, linked to the policies of the centralizing state<sup>25</sup>. Thus we see that analyses of the scholars of the West suffers from simplistic formulations which is rooted in their obsession with the primordialist theory of ethnicity.

Hardly surprising therefore, is their flawed perception that the threat to the Soviet Union's continued existence emanated not from the Baltic republics but from the Central Asian republics that were religio-culturally the most different from the Russians. Instead the very European Baltic republics were the first to unfurl the flag of secession and the "culturally Islamic" Central Asians somewhat perversely anxious to remain within the Union.

Western scholars like Alexandre Bennigsen, Marie Broxup, Helene d'Encausse and some others see the Central Asian identity exclusively in terms of religious consciousness. Their preoccupation with the Islamic factor, as is evident from the titles of their books and most of the

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25. For a detailed account of the role of state and elites in the rise of ethnicity, see Paul.R. Brass, Ethnicity and Nationalism, New Delhi, 1991, PP. 8-17.

articles, kept them away from taking due cognizance of the other forms of collective consciousness prevalent among the Central Asians—ethnonational identity, Turkic or Iranian identity and tribal or clan consciousness as we have shown in the later chapters. The other drawback of their's analyses resulting again from the excessive emphasis on the Islamic factor is the explication of formulations positing simplistic and exaggerated dichotomies that are totally at variance with the Soviet reality. These scholars assume ethnic homogeneity to be the express objective of the Soviet Nationality policy and persistence of ethnic distinctiveness to be a defeat for the Soviets, fail to take into consideration the positive role of the socialist rule in developing and consolidating many aspects of Central Asian culture and languages. Also, the analysts ignore shifts in Soviet policy over time, internal differences over policy within the party apparatus and the gap between desired objectives and the achieved goals.

A casual glance at the recent happenings in the former Soviet Union reveals that interethnic clashes and strife became endemic only after Gorbachev came to occupy the helm of affairs of this country. First serious riots occurred in Alma-Aty, The Kazakh capital on 18 December 1986, when Dinumukhamad Kunaev, a Kazakh was removed from the position of First Secretary of the Central Committee of Kazakhstan

Communist Party and a Russian, Gennady Kolbin was appointed in his place. People came out on the streets shouting slogans, "Kazakhstan for Kazakhs" and "Kolbin go back to Russia". Disturbances were widespread in Ashkabad and Nebit-Dag in Turkmenistan in May 1989. Here Armenians were attacked and anti-Armenian slogans shouted. In May-June 1989, widespread disturbances and killings of Meshkhetian Turks occurred in the Uzbek towns of Kuvasai, Margilan, Ferghana, Kokand, Namangan etc. It has been opined that this was an expression of the rising nationalism among the Uzbeks. In February 1990, riots took place in Dushanbe, the Tadzhik capital on the mere spread of rumours that thousands of Armenians were being given out of turn housing facilities. Tadzhiks demanded the handing over of Samarkand and Bukhara which form part of Uzbekistan, that Tadzhik be made the state-official language and meat (pork) processing facilities be closed. Slogans like "Tadzhikistan for the Tadzhiks" were shouted during the disturbances. Disturbances also broke out in Buk, Parkent, Andizhan, and Namangan all in Uzbekistan in February, March, May and December 1990 respectively. In June 1990 serious clashes were witnessed between Kyrghyz and Uzbek population in the Osh oblast and Frunze, the Kyrghyz capital. The Uzbeks demanded that Osh be given to Uzbekistan while Kyrghyzs demanded safeguarding of Kyrghyz national interests.

Parallel to the growth of ethnic turbulence was the emergence of numerous organisations voicing nationalist demands and grievances and working for ethnocultural revival. The proliferation of nationalist organisations at one level, was the manifestation of protest against the centralised politico-economic framework of the ex-USSR in which a particular ethnic group was perceived to be politically-economically disadvantaged. The local elites began mobilising the indigenous population for putting an end to inequal economic and political relations. In particular they were extremely critical of the 'cotton monoculture' and demanded far-reaching reforms in the existing federal setup.

At the other plane we witness was a massive ethno-religious resurgence. A host of groups and clubs mushroomed up making strident calls for making the local language. Writers, academicians and artists initiated a process of rediscovering the past through their work of history, literature, and art. Religious revival was particularly conspicuous. A section of scholars see the religious revival as a part of the process of building a national identity. They are of the opinion that it is not uncommon in the process of the renewal of national identity to reach out to the roots where the influence of religion is all too pervasive.

The ethno cultural and religious revival was in no small measure the outcome of the Soviet Nationality Policy. The 70 years of Soviet rule was instrumental in many ways in the consolidation of ethnonational identity of the Uzbeks and Tadzhiks.

However, before taking up the description and analysis of the ethnonationalist movements in Uzbekistan and Tadzhikistan in the ensuing chapters we would like to discuss the Soviet Nationality Policy as it evolved over the seventy years of the Soviet rule from Lenin to Gorbachev in the next chapter. We would also examine the influence of Gorbachevian policies in the emergence of ethnonationalism in the former USSR.

## CHAPTER II

### SOVIET NATIONALITIES POLICY (Lenin to Gorbachev) : A REVIEW

#### Marx and Engels on 'National Question'

Soviet nationality policy as enunciated by Lenin is essentially rooted in Marxist thought. It would therefore, be appropriate to present an outline of Marx and Engel's writings on 'National Question'<sup>1</sup>

In the writings of Marx and Engels the treatment of the question of national liberation and self-determination was peripheral. The duo's views on various issues pertaining to national question are to be mainly found in relation to its bearing on the concept and praxis of 'proletarian revolution'. However, Marx's paradigm on 'national question' suffers from certain glaring contradictions. The paradoxes are traceable to Marx's dialectical approach to history and again to its central preoccupation - the proletarian revolution. Marx and Engels have adopted a relativist approach while analyzing national problems of their time.

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1. For further details see Demetrio Boersner, The Bolshevik and the National and Colonial Question, Paris, 1957, pp. 1-27; Michael Lowy, On Changing the World. New Jersey 1992 pp.55-58; Walker Connor, The National Question in the Marxist Leninist Theory and Strategy, Princeton University Press, 1985; Richard Pipes, The Formation of the Soviet Union, Cambridge, 1970, pp. 21-22.



In the dialectical view of history, human society advances towards the 'supreme goal of communism' through a series of historical-dialectical phases and that a movement, or a phase of historical development never exists in isolation but only with reference to the forward march of the human species towards its communist future. According to Marx and Engels, the present historical phase is coincident with capitalism, a social system more advanced and progressive than the passing phase of feudalism. Marx and Engels therefore declared that the immediate task of the proletariat lay in helping the bourgeoisie which was revolutionary in opposition to the feudal aristocracy. The two revolutionary thinkers described a movement progressive and positive only in as far as it furthered the cause of bourgeoisie and ultimately the proletarian revolution<sup>2</sup>. Accordingly they supported the national movements directed against the Russian and Austrian monarchies which in the opinion of Marx and Engels were "reactionary" and keeping various developing nations with democratic aspirations under their dictatorial rule and preventing their consolidation. However, in their scheme of things most important nations enslaved by

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2. Demetrio Boersner, n.1, P. 26; R. Vaidyanath, The Formation of the Soviet Central Asia Republics, New Delhi, 1967, pp.4, 257, (Appendix A); Gregory Gleason, Federalism and Nationalism : the struggle for republican rights in the USSR. Boulder, 1990, p.24.

Russia and Austria were Poland and Hungary respectively. The two monarchies were also rendering impossible the national and bourgeois unification of Germany and Italy through direct and indirect intervention in the internal affairs of these countries. However, Marx and Engels balked at supporting the Czechs and South Slav who also rose in open revolt in 1848. For them, the nationalist movement of Czechs and South Slav lacked the liberating and revolutionary significance of the Polish and Hungarian movements as the former were not directed against feudal empires.<sup>3</sup>

Both Marx and Engels while being right in their evaluation of Polish and Hungarian national movements, underplayed the significance of the Czech and South Slav revolts, perhaps failing to understand their true import. Marx and Engels, especially the latter sought to explain away their criticism of the Czech and South Slav movements by putting forward the theory of "non-historic nation". According to Engels these "remnants of a nation, mercilessly crushed, as Hegel said, by the course of history, this national refuse, is always the fanatical representative of counter-revolution and remains so until it is completely exterminated or de-nationalized, as its whole existence is in itself a protest against a

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3. Boersner, n.1, p.5.

great historical evolution"<sup>4</sup>. Hegel who propounded this theory had contended that nations that have failed in creating a state of its own are "non-historic" and destined to disappear.

The writings of Marx and Engels on the Irish problem marked an important stage in the evolution of their thought on the national question. Earlier the two socialist thinkers were of the belief that a colony or an oppressed nation could only be liberated through a revolution taking place in the imperial country. With the Fenians political struggle gaining prominence in Ireland, Marx and Engels made three important theoretical formulations:-<sup>5</sup>

1. The liberation of a given nation (colony or a subjugated country) is in the interest of that nation.
2. It also benefits the cause of the proletariat of the imperial nation in that it weakens the national bourgeoisie.
3. It furthers the overall socialist future of mankind.

However, they never thought that colonial conditions obtaining in various countries of Asia and Africa would give rise to powerful anti-imperialist struggles. Marx and Engels regarded

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4. Engels quoted in Michael Lowy, n.1, p. 58.

5. Boersner, n.1, p.9.

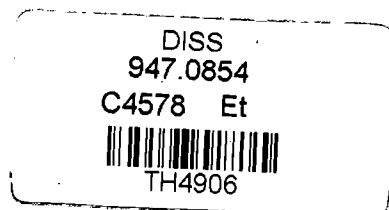
colonialism as primarily "economic issue and that these countries have only an indirect role to play in the world affairs".<sup>6</sup> In sharp contrast it was Lenin who recognized the revolutionary significance of the national question in the colonial countries and he worked to harness its revolutionary potential to further the cause of the proletarian revolution in Russia. It was again on the very same issue that Lenin encountered theoretical opposition from Rosa Luxemburg and the Left Bolsheviks.

Before, the elaboration of polemical debates between the leading leftists of the time that in great measure shaped the formulation of Lenin and Stalin's Soviet Nationality Policy, we would like to discuss in brief Marx's concept of nation and nationalism. Neither Marx nor Engels offered a precise definition of the concepts.<sup>7</sup> In their schematic formulation of dialectical-historical materialism, emphasis was laid on class consciousness as the primary and more important form of consciousness. Nationalism was virtually neglected or its significance underplayed in Marxist theory and was described as a part of an "illusory communal interest". We just have to "recall the anti-nationalist doctrine of proletarian revolution and

6. Ibid p. 23

7. Gregory Gleason, n. 2, p. 23; Micheal Lowy, n. 1, p. 55

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Marx's famous dictum-"Workers have no country". However, at the level of political activism, both Marx and Engels acknowledged nationalism as "real force". The due, in the opinion of Walker Connor were "influenced more substantively by national concepts than they were probably aware"<sup>8</sup>. It is, therefore, not surprising that in the year nationalist outbreaks in 1848 in Europe, year (1948) "the anti-nationalist tract the Communist Manifesto" was published. Proclamation on the Polish Question was drawn up by Marx. The document proclaimed in no uncertain terms the principle of the "self-determination of nations". Walker Connor referring to the theoretical and practical strains of Marxism states that "this most famous credo of nationalism was drafted by history's most famous internationalist"<sup>9</sup> Thus with the rise of nationalism as an important socio-political phenomenon, the Marxists were forced to operate on two relatively different planes, dismissing nationalism in theory and yet acknowledging it as a real force in practice.

With regard to the concept of 'nation', the Marx viewed it as a historical epiphenomenon of the capitalist social system. The bourgeoisie, the dominant class within the capitalist system

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8. Walker Connor, n.1, p. 19.

9. Ibid, p. 11.

according to Marx fosters nationalism<sup>10</sup> in three ways:-

(i) conflicting economic interests between the imperial countries gives rise to national hostility.

(ii) Exploitation of the colonial country by the imperial country engenders national consciousness in the former.

(iii) The bourgeoisie employs the tool of nationalism to maintain its domination over the working class.

However, transformation in the economic structure brings about changes in the nature of national consciousness<sup>11</sup>. He remarked, "National differences and antagonisms between people are daily more and more vanishing owing to the development of bourgeoisie, to freedom of commerce, to the world market..."

Marx goes on to assume that under conditions of socialism national differences would diminish<sup>12</sup>. However, his equation of national differences with differences in the production processes has come in for severe criticism.

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10. Michael Lowy, n.1, p. 56.

11. David Lane, Politics and Society in the USSR, London, 1970, P. 427.

12. Ibid. pp.427-428.

Marx launched a scathing attack particularly on Proudhon for the latter's advocacy of federalism as a solution to national problems. Proudhon was of the opinion that all human groups regardless of whether these groups had been able to realize their national aspirations, be accorded the privilege of federal governance. He refused to endorse national movements that took central form and recommended the Swiss type of democratic federalism, his ideal, for the whole world. Marx conscious of the importance of the bourgeois-national revolution in the dialectical process of historical materialism was of the view that both the bourgeois and working class would first have to establish a centralized administrative authority to overcome the ancien regime. The debate between Marx and Proudhon was the first of a long series of conflict among socialist groups including Lenin and the Austrian Socialists on the federal aspect of the 'National Question'.<sup>13</sup>

#### EVOLUTION OF SOVIET NATIONALITIES POLICY : THE LENIN AND STALIN YEARS

The chief tenets of Leninist formulations on the national question evolved in the process of a long drawn polemical debate in the first place between Lenin and

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13. Boersner, n.1, pp. 20-23.

Austro-Marxists and later between Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg and finally between Lenin and the Left Bolsheviks.<sup>14</sup> In his theoretical diatribe against his socialist colleagues, Lenin was helped by Stalin whose 'Marxism and the National Question' together with Leninist writings on the issue provided the framework for the formulation of the Soviet Nationality Policy. It would not be inappropriate, therefore, to outline the 'nationality debate' between Lenin and other Socialists.

Austro-Hungarian Empire, like Russia was a multi-national state and the problem of the relationship between the numerous nationalities - Austrian, Hungarian, Poles, Czechs, Ruthenians and other small ethnic groups was one of extraordinary importance. The Austrian Social-Democrats met at Brunn in 1899 to discuss the nationality problem and advocate and devise ways to solve it. Working independently and on the propositions of Austrian Socialist Party and South Slav Section, Otto Bauer came up with a solution to the national question in the Austrian-Hungarian empire. To eliminate the national animosities which threatened the overall solidarity of the

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14. For a detailed account of the "debate" see. Selections From V.I. Lenin and J.V. Stalin on National Colonial Question. 1970, pp. 9-10; Michael Lowy n. 1. pp. 59 - 74; R. Vaidyanath, n.1, pp. 250 - 205; Boersnei, n.1, pp. 32 - 58.



proletariat, Bauer put forward two important propositions,  
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(i) The empire be transformed into a federal state with the nationalities administering its own territory as far as cultural matters are concerned.

(ii) Secondly, seeing that certain nationalities were spread out over large areas of the empire not inhabiting a fixed territory which could be transformed into an administrative unit, he proposed that such nationalities as well as territorial ones would be represented in legislative and administrative organs and that members of every nationality would be given representation and protection by his national delegation.

Lenin denouncing the Austrian Socialist formulations on the national question, commented "No, we shall not have such dirty business as in Austria. We shall never tolerate it"<sup>16</sup>. He based his criticisms on the following suppositions which were later to be applied to the Russian situation :-

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15. R.Pipes, n.1, pp.24-27; R.Vaidyanath, n.2, p.252; Lowy, n.1 pp.65-68; Boersner, pp.34-35.

16. Lenin in a letter to Maxim Gorky, cited in Vaidyanath, n.2,p.253

(i) Lenin rejected the constitutional means of solving the national question. He was conscious of the fact that the nationalist fermentations among the non-Russians nationalities constituted a very potent revolutionary which the socialists should try to harness.

(ii) The doctrine of national cultural autonomy was abhorrent to Lenin because it implied the Federalist and decentralized reorganization of the socialist party. This doctrine had repercussions within the Russian Social-Democratic Party as we will note later.

His other theoretical opponent on the national question was Rosa Luxemburg who was seconded by extreme left wings within the Bolshevik group - Bukharin, Piatakov and Radek.

Rosa Luxemburg in her famous book, The Accumulation of Capital, stated that no national struggle was possible any more, that all national struggles were "actually the expression of power struggles within the imperialist camp and that even the democratic-national revolutions end up being exploited by the bourgeoisie imperialists because imperialism has permeated every corner of the world to an extreme degree". Therefore the right to self-determination of nations implies in reality the support for bourgeois nationalism. She expressed the undesirability of the

communists engaging themselves in bourgeois democratic affairs such as the national problem also for the reasons that the right of self-determination of nations is an abstract and not a physical right and that the independence of small nations is utopian from the economic point of view.<sup>17</sup> She was of the opinion that the socialists should prepare for an immediate proletarian revolution.

While refuting the theoretical assumptions of the Austrian Marxists, Rosa Luxemburg and the left Bolshiviks, Lenin formulated his own theory on the national question. The sharpening of national conflicts in eastern Europe especially in Balkans and in Russia too convinced Lenin that the national question could not be evaded. On the undesirability of the socialists engaging themselves in bourgeois democratic affairs such as the national question, Lenin admitted that "Marxism is irreconcilable with nationalism even if it is the fairest, purest, most refined and civilized nationalism. Marxism advocates internationalism in place of nationalism of any kind".<sup>18</sup> However, he accused Rosa Luxemburg of being blind to

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17. For a detailed account of Rosa Luxemburg's views on the Nationality Question see Michael Lowy, n.1, pp. 59-63; Boersner, n.1, p.41-49; Vaidyanath, n.2, p.253.

18. Lenin on "Cultural-National Autonomy" in Selection From Lenin and Stalin on National and Colonial Questions, Calcutta, 1970, P. 9; For Lenin's views also see Richard Pipes, n.1, pp.41-49.

historical realities. Both he and Stalin pointed out that the nation was a historical category belonging to the epoch of rising capitalism. The development of capitalism was everywhere accompanied by the growth of national movements seeking to establish national states. These national movements were being spearheaded by bourgeoisie<sup>19</sup>.

Recognizing the revolutionary potential of the national movements Lenin remarked, "The bourgeois nationalism of every oppressed nation has a "general democratic content which is directed against oppression and it is this content that we support unconditionally."<sup>20</sup> Lenin, therefore, believed that the cause of the proletarian revolution could only be furthered by resolving the national question. Departing from Marx's formulation Lenin, called for active collaboration between the progressive nationalisms of Eastern Europe and that of the colonies with the working class movement to jointly fight imperialism by voicing the demand of the latter of political self-determination. The emphasis of Lenin on resolving the national question on a priority basis is

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19. Lenin on "The Rights of Nations to Self-determination" in Selection PP. 13-16; Stalin, Marxism and the National Question in Selection pp. 71-76.

20. Cited in Vaidyanath, n.2, p.256.

evident from his outburst against Karl Radek, one of the members of the extreme Bolshevik group when he described the Irish rebellion as a "putsch". He wrote :

"To imagine that social revolution is conceivable without revolts by small nations in the colonies and in Europe, without revolutionary outbursts by a section of the petty bourgeoisie with all its prejudices, without a movement of the politically non-conscious proletarian and semi proletarian masses against oppression - to imagine all this is to repudiate social revolution."<sup>21</sup>

Countering the thesis of Stalin, Piatkov and others that the right of self determination of nations had no meaning under socialism, Lenin stated that the right was as valid under capitalism as during the initial stages of socialism. He categorically asserted that "the necessity of proclaiming and granting of freedom to all oppressed nations will be as urgent in the socialist revolution as it was urgent for the victory of the bourgeois democratic

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21. Lenin, The Irish Rebellion of 1916 in Selection, n.18, p.52.

revolution.<sup>22</sup> Lenin thus, in no uncertain terms, rejected Rosa Luxemburg's thesis that the objective conditions were ripe for an immediate proletarian revolution and that the socialists should not engage in bourgeois matters of national question.

Secondly, both Lenin<sup>23</sup> and Stalin<sup>24</sup> denounced the 'cultural national autonomy' concept of the Austro-Marxists. Before commencing his attack on the Austrian Social-Democrats, Stalin<sup>25</sup> elaborated the Marxist concept of nation. According to him a nation comprised four fundamental requisites (i) Community of territory (ii) Community of Language (iii) Community of economic life and (iv) community of psychological make up. Stalin defined nation as a "historically evolved, stable community of language, territory, economic life and psychological make up, manifested in a community of culture". He then proceeded to criticize Otto Bauer for his ahistorical definition of the nation. Earlier Bauer had come to the conclusion that nations "are not mere passing phenomena but organic units which date back to ancient times and which

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22. Vaidiyath,n.2,p. 261.

23. Lenin, Cultural-National Autonomy, Selection,n.18,pp.9-10.

24. Stalin, Marxism and the National Question in Selection,n.18,pp.80-86.

25. Ibid,pp.66-68.

will outlast all economic changes including the change from capitalism to socialism". A nation for Bauer is the "aggregate of people bound into a community of character by a community of fate." Stalin accused Bauer of creating a mystical concept of the nation and of ignoring the objective character of nationhood and the changing historical and economic conditions which produced it. Stalin was of the opinion that the nation was not a permanent unit but simply a symptom of a certain phase of historical evolution, namely the phase of rising capitalism.<sup>26</sup> Other essential attributes of the nation according to Stalin was sovereignty. Sovereignty by implication meant the right of self-determination, that is, the right of a nation to political separatism from an existing multinational unit and to form its own national status.<sup>27</sup> The assertion of sovereignty cut at the root of the Austrian-Marxist thesis which had sought to restrict their right merely to the cultural sphere and thereby perpetuate the multi-national structure of the Austro-Hungarian empire.

Lenin recognizing the historical legitimacy of national movements argued for the right of the nations to

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26. Ibid, n.18, p.71.

27. Ibid, p. 75.

self-determination. He drew attention to the fact that except for the Great Russian nationality, other nationalities were languishing under the oppressive Czarist regime which denied them their legitimate national claims. Reasserting the Marxist dictum that no nation could be free if it oppressed other nations, he called upon the Russian proletariat to emulate the example of Sweden. Further, he declared that the only way of showing disapproval of Tsarist policy of national oppression was by recognizing the right of subjugated nations to complete political self determination.<sup>28</sup>

There were other reasons for Lenin and Stalin for not approving the national cultural autonomy concept of the Austro-Marxist which according to them has had the effect of making the workers look to their national bourgeoisie for guidance rather than to their proletarian class brothers. Stalin, in fact, cited the example of Austria itself where the proletariat had split along national lines.<sup>29</sup>

However, Lenin and comrades though dedicated to the right of self determination of nations were more

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28. Lenin, The Rights of Nations to self-determination in Selection n.18. pp. 17-19, 29.

29. Stalin, Marxism and the National Question in Selection n.18. pp. 85-86.



committed to the socialist revolution and the unity of the working class movement. He was hostile to any suggestion or measure which would bring about division in the working class and which ultimately would harm the cause of socialist revolution. Lenin, therefore, had no hesitation in opposing the demands of the Jewish Bund, the Polish Social Democrats and the socialist parties of the Baltic and Caucasus to represent the proletariat from their respective areas. Lenin and the Bolsheviks rejected the demands on the ground that the division of the party on national lines would hamper the growth of proletarian unity, international spirit and a socialist order.<sup>30</sup> Adopting the relativist approach of Marx and Engels towards the national movement, Lenin often argued that the revolutionary potential of the national movements should be harnessed to fight imperialism and consequently promote the cause of socialism. Thus, the right of self-determination of nations did not prevent the Bolsheviks from proclaiming the primacy of the claims of socialism over national state to achieve a socialist order.

Recognizing the significance of the 'national question' Lenin and his party, Russian social Democratic Workers' Party at its founding Congress in 1989 adopted

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30. Ibid, pp.86-100.

in its Manifesto, the principle of the right of self-determination of nations. A more explicit assertion of this right was embodied in point 9 of the programme which the RSDP adopted at its Second Congress in 1903. This point recognized the right of self-determination as well as of secession.

In summary, we might say that Leninist formulation on the nationality question was informed by three abiding concerns:-

(i) First, sharp distinction was made between the nationalism of the oppressed (the non-Russian of Russia) which were to be treated with empathy as an expression of true grievances and the wholly objectionable nationalism of the oppressors (the Czarist government dominated by the Russians) which was to be fought tooth and nail.

(ii) Secondly, non-Russians in the empire had the right to set up their own nation states, the right to self-determination. This clearly reflected Lenin's awareness of the revolutionary potential of ethnically defined liberation struggles and his wish to use them, which he did with considerable effect in the October Revolution (1917).

(iii) However, the supreme task was to spread the socialist revolution and ethnic demands were secondary to this and to be subsumed under it.

Thus one of the first acts of the Bolsheviks after they seized power in Petrograd in October, 1917 was to release a document entitled, 'Rights of the Peoples of Russia'.<sup>31</sup> The rights comprised the following guarantees:-

(i) the equality and sovereignty of the people of Russia

(ii) the rights of the peoples of Russia to free self-determination even to the point of separation and formation of independent states.

(iii) the abolition of all kinds of national and national-religious privileges and limitations

(iv) the free development of national minorities and ethnic groups inhabiting Russia.

These four principles later were to form the basis of the Soviet Nationality Policy.

Another advancement in the Soviet Nationality Policy came about in 1918 when the Bolsheviks were confronted with the task of reorganizing the administrative apparatus of

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31. Vaidyanath, n.2, pp.263-264

the first communist state in the world. Before 1917, both Lenin and Stalin had been staunch opponents of the federal system of government. As noted earlier Marx had severely rebuked Proudhon for advocating federalism as a solution to national problems. Lenin and Stalin too, as we have mentioned, criticized the Austro-Marxists for proposing federalism as a solution to the nationality problem in the Habsburg empire<sup>32</sup>. Lenin had written that Marxists are "opposed to federation and decentralization" and that "While and in so far as, different nations constitute a single state, Marxists will never under any circumstances advocate either the federal principle or decentralization".<sup>33</sup> Their former disapproval of the federal solution now underwent a change and both now recognized that the adoption of a Federal constitution was "a step forward" in the objective of merging the workers of different nationalities on the provinces. Drawing upon the experience of the Swiss and American federations, Lenin in an obvious about turn, referred to a federal setup as the "surest step to the most solid unification of the different nationalities of Russia into a single,

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32. For Lenin's views on Federation see his chapters on 'Centralization and Autonomy' pp. 9-10, The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations p.33. in Selection, n.18.

33. Lenin "Centralization and Autonomy" in Selection n.18. p. 11.

democratic centralized Soviet State."<sup>34</sup> In the declaration of the Rights of the Toiling and Exploited People adopted by the Third All Russian Congress of the Soviets in January, 1918, it was stated "the Soviet Russian Republic is established on the basis of a free union of free peoples as a federation of Soviet National Republics". In April, 1918, a constitutional commission was established to prepare a draft of a new document to describe the relations between the regions and the centre. The commission recommended the creation of federal units based on national territorial principle. The principle gave formal status and political recognition to the leading nationalities and recognized their claim to homeland. The new territorial nationalities were also invested with administrative apparatus to look after the affairs of the federal unit. The national-territorial principle thus gave a sense of self-determination, a promise of autonomy and a feeling of natural representation to the national minorities.

In October 1917 the Soviet Government created a special organ, the People's Commissariat for Nationality Affairs or 'Norkomnats' with Stalin as the First Chairman for overseeing the implementation of the Soviet Nationality Policy. Towards the end of 1918, the organ of Norkomnats

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34. Gregory Gleason n.2, p.32

were established in the various republics.<sup>35</sup> The body was charged with the following functions:-

(i) to secure the peaceful co-existence and fraternal cooperation of all nationalities.

(ii) to promote their national, material and cultural development.

(iii) to supervise the application of the nationality policy of the Soviet regime.

Soon after the triumph of the 'Revolution' and the establishment of the Soviet State, the Bolsheviks were, thus, equipped with both a policy framework and an administrative machinery e.g. Narkomnats to carry out the implementation of the Leninist formulations on the nationality question.

The Leninist Nationality Policy has been rightly described by R. Vaidynath as "a reconciliation between the conflicting and competing claims of socialism and nationalism and was aptly described in the dictum "national in form and socialist in content".<sup>36</sup>

Stalin emerged as the strong man in the Soviet Union after the death of his mentor Lenin in 1924. For a man

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35. R. Vaidyanath, n.2, pp.263-265.

36. Ibid, p.265.

groomed by Lenin, commissioned by him to write a chapter on the nationality question and later appointed as the Chairman of the Peoples commissariat of Nationality Affairs, Stalin virtually subverted the spirit of the Leninist Nationality Policy though sticking to it in many other essential aspects.

Even before Stalin assumed the reins of the government, his point of view on the nationality question had begun showing deviation from the Leninist formulation. In the Seventh Congress of the Party held in April 1917, the drafting Commission under the influence of Stalin and Piatkov virtually rejected the Leninist interpretation of the right of self-determination. The resolution sponsored by them branded the right of self-determination as a phrase without definite content. Under the conditions of socialism, Stalin and his followers argued that the solution of splitting of great state formations into small national states lost its meaning and gave the slogan of "away with the frontiers". Stalin and Piatkov's stance angered Lenin who remarked, "we have been arguing so much about this question ever since 1903 that it is difficult to say much about it now. Go where you please...He who does not accept this point of view is an annexionist, a chauvinist"<sup>37</sup>.

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37. Quoted in Vaidyanath, n.1, pp. 262-263.

Lenin's rebuke had little effect on Stalin and his cohorts as is exemplified by two other instances during Lenin's lifetime. In a thesis, entitled "The Policy of the Soviet Government on the National Question in Russia" Stalin repudiating the right of secession stated, "The demand for the secession of the border regions from Russia as the form that should be given to the relations between the center and the border regions must be rejected..."<sup>38</sup>

Contrary to Lenin's wish, Stalin and his supporter, the Red Army commander Ordznikdze outrightly annexed Georgia in 1921. Local Bolsheviks were also curbed and their quest for autonomy dismissed as "National communism". Lenin dubbed the move as the "Russian nationalist mood typical of the Rusified non-Russian". On his death bed he wrote "I have been very remiss...for not having intervened energetically and decisively enough in the notorious question of autonomisation..." thereby reasserting his belief in the need for positive discrimination towards the nationalism of the oppressed.<sup>39</sup>

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38. Stalin in Selection.n.18.p. 115.

39. Theodore Shanin, Ethnicity in the Soviet Union : Analytical perceptions and Political Strategies. In Comparative studies in Society and History. Vol. 31, 1989, P. 418.



Stalin's ascendance witnessed the absolute concentration of power through the virtual domination of party organization, the army and the political police which made any right to self-determination only a formality.<sup>40</sup> Even where organizations and ideas were concerned, centripetal forces were preferred to centrifugal ones. This was backed by police which systematically destroyed any support for and any expression of local autonomy regardless of its roots. The early years of Stalin's regime saw purges of "bourgeois nationalists" who were eliminated or removed from party positions for voicing nationalist demands.<sup>41</sup> The forcible deportation of whole nationalities - Crimean Tatars, Meshkhetians, Germans, Chechens, etc. from their homelands on charges of treason was reflective of the dictatorial power of Stalin and his insensitiveness to ethnic feelings.<sup>42</sup>

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40. Ibid, p.418.

41. Dan N.Jacobs and Theresa M.Hill, 'Soviet Ethnic Policy in the 1980's: Theoretical Consistency and Political Reality' in Joseph L.Nogee (ed.), Soviet Politics: Russia after Brezhnev, New York 1983, pp.162-163. They give a detailed account of Stalin's Nationality Policy, pp.159-165.

42. Isabelle Kriendler, 'The Soviet Deported Nationalities: A Summary and an Update', Soviet Studies, Vol.XXXVIII no.3, (July 1986), pp 387-405.

Secondly, in the name of modernizing and economic advancement, Stalin launched policies which were brutal to the extreme. Stalin declared at the 10th Party Congress in 1921, "the essence of the national question in the Soviet Union is to liquidate the economic, political and cultural backwardness of the nationalities. We inherited this backwardness from the past. We do this in order to give the backward peoples the opportunity to catch up with central Russia both in governmental, cultural and economic respects."<sup>43</sup> The collectivisation of agriculture and the rapid desire for industrialization was the cause of much social strife.

Thirdly, Stalin was playing the role of what Lenin would have described, the 'Great Russian Chauvinist'. Russian nationalism came to be officially legitimated and courted. A rewriting of history began where Russian princes and Czars were glorified. The anti-Russian independence struggles of the past which had been accepted as wars of liberation were now redefined as reactionary relapses. The Czarist rule in Soviet Central Asia came to be described as "progressive".<sup>44</sup> Stalin's pronouncement during the

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43. Cited in Gregory Gleason, Leninist Nationality Policy in H.R. Huttenbach (ed.) Soviet Nationality Policy London, 1990, p. 14.

44. Jacob and Hill, n.41, pp.160-161.

victory celebrations in 1945 describing the Russians as "The leading people of the Soviet Union" summarizes aptly the "Russian Chauvinism" of Stalin.<sup>45</sup>

He, however, did not tamper with the federal format of the constitution and gave adequate impetus to the development and preservation of cultural and linguistic expression of the ethnic groups. Successors of Stalin except for certain modifications have continued to follow a policy with regard to the nationalities as formulated by Lenin and Stalin.

#### Soviet Nationality Policy under Khrushchev and Brezhnev

Khrushchev's Nationality policy was in many ways a departure from Stalin's. In the first place, he sought to undo the harsh measures perpetrated by Stalin. In 1956 Khrushchev condemned his predecessor's crimes and acknowledged that "under Stalin there had been 'monstrous' and gross violations of the basic Leninist principles of the nationalities policy of the Soviet State, namely that entire nations had been deported on spurious grounds"<sup>46</sup> Charges of treason against many of these nationalities were withdrawn and they were rehabilitated.<sup>47</sup>

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45. Theodore Shanin, n.39. p.419.

46. Khrushchev's 'Secret Speech' PP 58, 60-61

47. Isabelle Kriendler, no. 42, PP 395-401

The harsh face of Stalin's regime was watered down by putting an end to the mass terror tactics and the "thaw" brought much greater freedom of expression, the rehabilitation of national cultures and allowed considerable leeway in the interpretation of history.<sup>48</sup> However a strict watch on the manifestations of nationalist tendencies was kept and any such appearances were brutally curbed. Latvian First Secretary was, for instance, dismissed for this "crime" in 1959.<sup>49</sup> Khrushchev's destalinisation process was reversed after 1958 in order to promote the assimilationist policy. A particularly belligerent approach with regard to the remnants of capitalism was adopted among which Khrushchev included nationalism and religion.<sup>50</sup>

Coming to the realm of the governance of economic sphere, Khrushchev came to realise that in order to gain control of the ministerial apparatus, decentralisation of the decision making process is imperative. He sought to devolve power by shifting away from the branch principle of organisation and invested the decision making authority to the local bodies. The CC plenum in 1957 in a far - reaching

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48. Dominic Leiven, Gorbachev and the Nationalities. The Centre for Security and Conflict Studies, November, 1988, P. 5

49. Ibid, P. 5

50. Bohdan Nayalo and Victor Swobadan, Soviet Disunion, The Free Press, New York, 1989, PP 121-124.

restructuring of the ministerial system of management created 105 economic regions throughout the USSR and established Councils of Regional Economy to supervise these. Some of these measures were later toned down or reversed.<sup>51</sup>

A reflection of the growing confidence of the central authority in the local nationalities was seen in the indigenisation of the party and government machineries unlike the Stalinist regime. Khrushchev from republics other than the Russian Federation including Central Asia. After the Second World War there was considerable increase in the Party membership from the Central Asian republics. The Central authority was now willing to allow decisions to be made by the local elites.<sup>52</sup>

In theoretical pronouncements, Khrushchev expressed optimistic exuberance when in the XXII Party congress in 1961, he was found remarking, "The party has solved one of the most complex of problems which has plagued mankind for ages and remains acute in the world of capitalism to this day - the problems of relations between nations". Khrushchev spoke of sliianie (fusion) of nations. This gave currency to a debate that since the national question has now been

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51. Gregory Gleason, n.2, pp.67-68

52. Jacob and Theresa M. Hill n.41 pp. 166-167; Leiven n.52. p.5

solved, the rationale for the existence of the federal republics had evaporated. P.G. Semenov initiated this debate among scholars who suggested that the federal division had outlived its usefulness and might be dispensed with in the near future. In fact the idea of "defederalization" had gained such wide currency that 22nd Party congress, in October 1961 proposed, "the borders between the Union Republics are increasingly losing their former significance since ... life is organized on a single socialist foundation... and they are all united into one family by common vital interest and are advancing together towards a single goal - communism"<sup>53</sup> However, surprisingly nothing came out of the Party proclamation.

Brezhnev who did not announce a formal Nationality Policy until 1972 contradicted the theoretical formulation of Khrushchev. He took the occasion of the celebrations of the 50th anniversary of USSR to propagate the formula which became the hallmark of the Brezhnev period. The CPSU General Secretary adopted a dialectical solution to the national question. It was announced that a new historical community, the "Soviet People" had emerged. Brezhnev adopted a compromise formula that gave due importance to national distinctiveness. He pronounced that the Soviet Nationality Policy, in sharp contrast to Khrushchev, advocated the

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53. Gregory Gleason, n.2., PP. 65-67.

rastvet (development) of the nations and sblizhenie (rapprochement) of nations. Proclaiming himself to be against the forcible increase in the pace of sblizhenie process, Brezhnev maintained that the best national traditions, values and tendencies would be promoted in the Soviet multinational state.<sup>54</sup>

Brezhnev policies led to a revival of national cultures. Even in the sphere of religion, the period saw an overall softening in the tactical handling of Islam. The atheistic propaganda in the Central Asia region lost much of its punch and drive.<sup>55</sup>

Brezhnev's handling of the federal republics had an important bearing on the nationality relations. He continued the policy of recruitment of natives in the higher levels of party organisation. He encouraged political conformity and placed trust in the native bureaucracy. The national elites were given considerable leverage in administering their own republics so long as republic's economic performance was satisfactory and nationalism was kept in check. Muslim cadres appreciated Brezhnev's status quoist leadership coming after Stalin's autocracy and Khrushchev's reformism.

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54. Ibid; P. 71

55. Micheal Rywkin, Islam and the New Soviet Man, Central Asian Survey, vol. 6, no. 4 (1987), pp. 28-29.

However, Brezhnev's patronage gave rise to a "lethargic group," and nepotistic style of functioning at the republican level and nowhere has this more glaringly evident than in Central Asia.

### Gorbachev and the Nationality Question

A casual glance at the happenings in the former Soviet Union from mid-1980s reveals that inter-ethnic clashes and strife became endemic only after Gorbachev came to occupy the helm of affairs of this communist state. Therefore, the logical first step would be to attempt a comprehensive post-mortem into the seven years of Gorbachev's rule. This would give us the immediate contextual explanation of the emergence of ethnonationalism in the various republics of the former Soviet Union. Soon after assuming the leadership, Gorbachev boldly began to unfold his ideas of overhauling the Soviet system. He began by arguing that socialism essentially meant a humane and democratic society and that the Soviet Union must create such a political system which could function under unrestricted democratic control and guidance of the

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56. Ibid, P. 28; Dominic Lieven, n.48,p.5.



Soviet people as a whole. To achieve this objective he pleaded for frank debates and discussions and for participation of the people in the affairs of the country. He called for an end to censorship and free flow of information. These ideas soon crystallised into what came to be known as 'glasnost'. Gorbachev seemed to be a man in hurry who, close on the heels of glasnost embarked on a comprehensive restructuring of the Soviet society 'Perestorika' as the new programme was christened essentially meant, at the political level, introduction of democratic norm and conduct in the functioning of the government. However, the major thrust of Perestroika was to introduce basic changes in the planning, management and functioning of the Soviet command economy which had been for the last few decades marked by stagnation, low productivity, shortages, inferior quality consumer goods, rampant official corruption and a flourishing black market.

The twin policies of glasnost and perestroika were revolutionary (to some counter revolutionary) in that they aimed at virtually overhauling the nonolithic, status quoist communist system. Perestroika and glasnost though not linked in any way to the objective of bringing about changes in the 'nationality relations' virtually transformed the "nationality question" in the USSR and brought it to the fore of the national agenda.<sup>57</sup>

In the pre-Gorbachevian period, ethnic issues in the USSR were discussed under the rubric 'national question' both at the party level and the academic circles. Strict limits were placed on what could be discussed and which usually precluded the open acknowledgement of real problems in nationality relations and the working of the federal structure. Coupled with CPSU's virtual monopoly on "political resources" obviated in any way the possibilities of the various national entities to engage in ethnic politics. The all powerful central authority used its overwhelming political and coercive clout to impose its authority and decisions on the republics.

However, with the inauguration of the era of glasnost and perestroika things began to change and the sphere of nationality relations did not remain untouched by these far-reaching changes. Promotion of glasnost and pluralism and loosening of the coercive control mechanisms oversaw devolution of certain kind of "political resources" to the periphery resulting in widespread ethnic activism. Ethnic activism at the popular plane assumed three forms:

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57. For a detailed implications of glasnost and perestroika on the national question see, Gail W. Lapidus, From democratization to disintegration: the impact of perestroika on the national question in Lapidus, V. Zaslavsky and P. Goldman (ed.) From Union to Commonwealth: Nationalism and Separatism in the Soviet Republics, 1992, pp. 45 - 72.

- a) Discussion and debate on nationality relations
- b) Articulation of ethnic protest
- c) formation of ethnonational organisations to promote and safeguard ethnic interests.

### Discussion and Debate on Nationality Question

Gorbachev sponsored glasnost fostered a climate of open discussion and debate on virtually all issues including the nationality question. The new practice of deliberating on and inviting criticisms of the past and present has served to accentuate ethnic consciousness and national differences. For instance an open review of Stalin's policy during the Second World War which was referred as the finest example of the Soviet Unity, now served to intensify ethnic antagonism towards the central authority. During the Second World War, Stalin's mass deportation of certain nationalities (Meshkhetians, Crimean Tatars, Volga Germans, Chechens, etc,) and the dissolution of the homeland of many of these ethnos and the Stalin-Hitler Pact costing the Baltic republics their independence came in for scathing criticism, especially from the concerned ethnic groups and gave rise to a sense of "ethno-historical grievance". Secondly, critical examination of the state policies particularly with reference to the language, culture, religion and history of the various ethnic groups gave rise to a widespread perception that

these policies have been in the main discriminatory, promoted Russification and threatened the ethnonational identity of the groups-concerned. Thirdly, the discussions also pertained to the inequalities inherent in the federal structure. One idea which runs common through the new writings is the emphasis on the necessity of restructuring the politico-economic framework of the Soviet state and of establishing a genuine federal arrangement.

Here the organizational feature of the Soviet press played an immense role in contributing to the discussion and debate on the nationality question. The Soviet press in large measure was organized along ethno-linguistic and ethno-territorial lines rather than functional ones with the result that the press tended to provide a "national perspective" of the policies of the government, and the recent happenings and events. In this way the republican press provided stimulus to national activism.<sup>58</sup>

#### Informal Groups

The local intelligentsia played a leading role in the debate and discussion on nationality issues. Spurred on by a sense of ethnic discrimination and the need to promote their language and culture, the indigenous

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58. Paul Goble, 'Ethnic Politics in the USSR', Problems of Communism, July-August 1989, p.3.

intelligentsia found the climate of glasnost opportune to organise themselves into clubs or people's fronts to articulate the aspirations and demands of their ethnic groups. The people fronts, particularly in Uzbekistan as we have noted in a later chapter have begun mobilising public opinion and even bunched agitations on the need to promote greater democratization in the republics, to foster the growth of national language and culture and finally to protect environment and advance the economic interests of the republic. In course of time these fronts including the Birlik and Erk, especially the former emerged as the champions of the ethnic cause. In Tadzhikistan, however, these fronts notably the Tadzhikistan Democratic Party, the Islamic Revival Party and Rastokhez besides advocating demands on ethnic lines also developed political ambitions.

Gorbachev's rise to power saw the emergence of civil society in the USSR. The various organs of the police state were systematically dismantled or considerably eroded. The loosening of the coercive control apparatus in no small measure "contributed to an explosion in public activism throughout the Soviet Union". In the pre-glasnost period, demonstrations and public protests were few because there was every likelihood of the participants being persecuted or punished. (In the Khrushchev and Brezhnev period there was on average one demonstration every 18 days with few participants not numbering more than a hundred). However,

since Gorbachev assumed the realms of power, both the number of demonstrations and the participants increased dramatically. (There was approximately one demonstration every three days during the Glasnost period)<sup>59</sup>. The Central authority as well as the republican leadership showed willingness to negotiate with these groups. More important, however is the fact that most of these demonstrations were ethno-nationalist in nature.

In another significant way, Gorbachev changed the matrix of Soviet politics. During the era of the absolute hegemonistic rule of the CPSU, popular opinion was not taken into consideration while making decision and nor was it effective. There was a sea change in the Soviet politics with the coming of Gorbachev. Public opinion now emerged as an important factor in Soviet politics. In a desperate bid to legitimate its rule and authority, both in the eyes of the central authority and the population over which it ruled, the local authority sought rapprochement with the dominant nationality of the republic, began to heed public view and voice its concern. Here the republican status of the titular nationality came in handy with the indigenous elite using the status as a valuable "political resource". This is particularly seen in the

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59. Ibid, p.2.

sphere of centre-periphery economic relations. Gorbachev, in an attempt to overcome the stagnation in the Soviet economy and to install an efficient economic regime especially, in the context of Central Asia has cut subsidies, amounts of turnover tax redistribution was reduced, massive irrigation projects were abandoned and the republics made to rely on their own resources mobilisation. The economic measures alienated the republics and consequently infused an economic content to Uzbek ethnonationalism.

Gorbachev's drive to weed out corruption and nepotism in the higher echelons of power singled out Uzbekistan for particular attention. The anti-corruption drive in Uzbekistan in a sensational discovery unearthed a massive network of corrupt party and government officials found involved in fleecing Moscow of thousands of millions of roubles by padding cotton production figures. Known as the "Uzbek Cotton Affair", this massive web of corruption had been spawned to gargantuan proportions under the direct patronage of the First Secretary Rashidov (1959-1983) and had spread its tentacles even to Moscow. Purges, unprecedented in scale, of Party and government officials quickly followed. Nishanov, the First Secretary in an interview reported that over a four-year period of anti-corruption drive 59,000 senior officials

had been replaced including prominent ministers, party secretaries and even the Chairman of the Uzbek Supreme Soviet.<sup>60</sup>

The Uzbek Cotton Affair had significant consequences for the Uzbek ethnonationalism. The assault on Rashidov often took the colour of denigration of the "Uzbek people" as a whole, stimulating something like a "defensive" or "reactive" national consciousness. The massive crackdown under the guise of cleaning up corruption contributed to the rise of local dissatisfaction and dissent. It stimulated resistance to Moscow and criticisms of its long-time policy of treating the Uzbek SSR as a rawmaterial colony creating cotton monoculture, developed into a vitriolic campaign. More importantly, the anti-Moscow consciousness had the effect of papering the divisive and debilitating regional differences and served to unite the local intelligentsia. A noted scholar commenting on the Uzbek Cotton Affair "rightly states," "The consequences were to accelerate the consolidation of Uzbek nationality, trigger the formation of nationalist movement in the republic and create a national minded communist

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60. Donald. S. Carlisle, Uzbekistan and the Uzbeks', Problems of Communism, Sep-Oct 1991, p. 34.



elite in Tas khent that was no longer responsive to Moscow's will and whims"<sup>61</sup>.

Glasnost and perestroika in our opinion had another important bearing on the nationalities question. The twin policies resulted in a gradual but steady erosion of the "traditional normative framework" of the USSR and also gave increasing impetus to the ideologies of democracy and distributive justice with the perception and projection of the ruling communist regime as being autocratic, discriminatory and oppressive. By traditional normative framework, here, we mean the overarching role arrogated to the CPSU in the wake of the October Revolution in pursuance of the realisation of establishing a socialist society. This had found manifestation at levels - ideological and political. As regards the former, the implementation of socialistic objectives being the avowed aim of the first communist state it was left to the CPSU by virtue of it being the vanguard of the proletariat to bring to fruition the cherished goals of socialism. As for the latter, the CPSU being the only legal political party controlled in an absolute manner the political appartchik. However, there was a sea change with the introduction of glasnost and perestroika, in the position and power of the CPSU. Gorbachev, perceiving reluctant support from the

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61. Ibid, p.34.

party apparatus and bureaucracy to his reform endeavours sought to mobilise public opinion in an attempt to garner support for his reform programmes. In the process he undermined the hegemonic role of the CPSU both politically and ideologically. Impatient to see his reform package yield the deserved results in the domestic sector and to overcome the letharginess and reluctance of the party and bureaucratic apparatus in implementing the reforms, the CPSU General secretary sought to mobilise public opinion in favour of 'restructuring'. In his enthusiastic fervour, he went overboard displaying considerable lack of political astuteness and skill and supported all forms of popular activism at least initially even when political acumen and shrewdness might have suggested another course of action. This encouraged more and more groups to take up issues concerning people at large and here it is pertinent to point out that most of these issues were ethnonationally inspired. Hundreds of informal organisations mushroomed up overnight in the Baltic republics, Central Asian republics and the Transcaucasian republics demanding protection and promotion of their language and culture and raised vital issues of economic and political relationship between the republics and Moscow. For many of the present ills of the Soviet society, the CPSU and the government came under severe flak from these informal groups.

The fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism providing the ideological foundations of the Soviet state had been the source of its sustenance and inspiration during the seventy long years of its existence. Though Gorbachev initially showed adherence and commitment to this legitimating principle of the Soviet State, he mounted a vitriolic campaign against the Marxist-Leninist theory and denounced various aspects of Soviet history including Stalin and Brezhnev reigns. He thus called into question the legitimatising principle of the Soviet state and thereby undermined the ideological hegemony of the Marxist-Leninist theory. Besides many other things, the Marxist-Leninist ideology had served to curb and contain non-Russian ethnonationalism. Now doubts were expressed openly about the ability of the Marxist-Leninist ideology to deliver the goods to the Soviet society. Official Soviet claims about the resolution of basic human problems including the nationalities question was sought to be exposed as false or exaggerated. The gaps between socialist theory and practice were revealed. With the legitimacy of the Marxist-Leninist ideology in under attack, there began a feverish search for new doctrines to fill the void created by the abandonment of socialist principles and objectives. At the official level, the western package of democracy, liberalism and capitalism with its consumer culture was sought to be promoted. However, the

people at large though showing interest in the western package especially the aspect of its consumer culture took a special like to the ethnonationalist appeal. With the quick delegitimisation of the Communist party and ideology, nationalist causes occupied the political space which had been created by Gorbachev's policies. Thus one of the most important legitimating and cementing factor holding the Soviet state and society, ideologically and politically, the CPSU suffered an ignominious downfall. One can therefore conclude that the disintegration of the Soviet Union can in part be ascribed to the undermining of the hegemonistic role of the Communist party, and its ideology.<sup>62</sup>

Inspite of numerous manifestations within months of Gorbachev's assumption of power, of the rising tide of ethnonationalist discord<sup>63</sup>, he showed little interest in either tackling specific situations or formulating a nationality policy designed to solve the ethnic question. His non-performance in this sphere of Soviet life is noteworthy. Gorbachev highly concerned about the stagnation in Soviet economy, made economic growth through more efficient use of human, material and technological

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62. A discussion on how the attempts to reform the Soviet state led to its demise, see Anuradha M. Chenoy, 'Systematic change and Systematic Collapse', Seminar, No. 393 (May 1992) pp. 18-22.

63. On May 9th and 15th, 1985, anti-Russian riots erupted in Latvia's capital city, Riga.

resources the cornerstone of his reform package. The nationality question did not at all figure in his reform programme. Remarkably on this score, Gorbachev did not differ from his previous predecessors and in fact sounded more like them. New ideas though may have been germinating in his mind in the 1970's and 1980's, there is nothing, to show, in his early pronouncements that they extended to the nationality question. The statements of Gorbachev in the initial years of his reign on the nationality question seem to assume that there was nothing more to Soviet national relations than "boundless harmony", "friendship and brotherhood". He never tired of repeating the platitudes of his predecessors that the nationality question had been "solved".<sup>64</sup> On May 8, 1985, in a speech on the

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64. For a detailed critical account of Gorbachev's Nationality Policy see: Mikhail Gorbachev, Ethnic Relations and the Logic of Perestroika, Political Affairs, December 1989, pp. 10-16;  
Theodore H. Friedgut, Perestroika and the Nationalities; Soviet Jewish Affairs, Vol. 21, No. 1, 1991;  
Raymond Pearson, Nationalities: Decolonising the last Empire in D.W. Spring.(ed.) The Impact of Gorbachev, London, 1991, pp. 92-115;  
David Lane, Soviet Society Under Perestroika, London, 1990 Chapter 6;  
Stephen White, Gorbachev and After, New York, 1992 pp. 173-181;  
Dominic Lieven, Gorbachev and Nationalities, Conflict Studies, No. 1988, pp. 1-33;  
Alexander J. Motyl, The Sobering of Gorbachev: Nationality, Restructuring the West in Seweryn Bailer (ed.) Politics, Society and Nationality: Inside Gorbachev's Russia, Westview Press, Boulder, 1989, pp. 156-161

fortieth anniversary of the victory in World War II, Gorbachev echoing Brezhnev remarked, "The blossoming of nations and nationalities is organically connected to their all-round drawing together. Into the consciousness and heart of every person there has deeply entered the feeling of belonging to a single family - the Soviet people".<sup>65</sup> Even a year after, Gorbachev maintained his earlier views on the nationality question inspite of manifestations of the emergence of ethnonationalism. In his report to the 27th party Congress in February 1986, Gorbachev testifying to the remarkable achievement of Socialism commented that the Soviet Nationality Policy was an outstanding achievement of socialism which had done away forever with national oppression and inequalities of all kinds and a qualitatively new social and international community - the Soviet people had come into existence who were bound together by same economic ideological and political goals.<sup>66</sup> Only after the riots in Alma-Aty, the Kazakh capital in December 1986, did Gorbachev acknowledge that there were 'deformities' in Nationality relations and 'mistakes' were committed in implementing the Soviet Nationality Policy. He, however, also felt it necessary to condemn all "manifestations of national narrow mindedness,

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65. Cited in Alexander J. Motyl, n. 64, pp. 156 - 157.

66. Stephen White, n. 64, p. 174

nationalism and chauvnism, parochialism, zionism and anti-semitism." The CPSU General Secretary did not, however, deem it necessary to bring about changes in the nationality policy for the problem had been solved in principle. The only solution to "deformations" in nationality relations and manifestations of "nationalism" was seen in the intensification of the internationalist education.<sup>67</sup> This prescription continued to be mouthed for the whole of 1987.

The first inklings of reform in the nationality policy was seen at the 19th Party conference in the summer of 1988. Gorbachev though still claiming the Soviet Nationality Policy to be one of the "greatest accomplishments of socialism", gingerly outlined his first tentative ideas to restructure the Soviet Nationality Policy which were chiefly related to the working of the Soviet federation.

His suggestions were the following:<sup>68</sup>

- i. developing economic links between the various republics
- ii. economic and constitutional rights of the republics should be increased and defined precisely.

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67. Alexander J. Motyl, n. 66, pp. 158 - 159.

68. Stephen White, n. 66, pp. 175 - 176.

iii. cultural and linguistic interests of the national groups should be respected.

In the face of rapidly deteriorating ethnic relations with major inter-ethnic conflicts erupting in Georgia, Nogorno-Karabakh and Uzbekistan, Gorbachev suggested bringing far reaching reforms in the federal setup of the Soviet Union in the first ever serious discussion on the Nationality question. The 'draft' platform on the National question published in August 1989 was approved by CC in September 1989 with minor changes.<sup>69</sup>

It would suffice to mention, without going into details of the various propositions of the draft platform that the attempt of the plenum did not amount to a "solution" of the nationality question for it became clear by the early 1990's with the demands for greater sovereignty acquiring intensity that only a reconsideration of the very bases of Soviet Statehood would satisfy the aspirations of the various republics and nationalities. The draft platform in the course of time became redundant. Gorbachev after being elected as President called for the conclusion of a "new Union Treaty" which was published in March 1991.<sup>70</sup> The draft  
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69. Ibid, pp.176-178; Theodore H.Friedgut, n.66, p.83-87

70. Gail Lapidus, n.57, p.58.



advocated the formation of a "sovereign federal democratic republic" based upon the voluntary union of republics with equal rights each of which would have the option of choosing its own form of government. The central government would be responsible for security and foreign policy, law and order and the Union budget while responsibilities in energy, transport, education and socio-economic development were to be resolved jointly. The Union treaty was to serve as the basis of a new constitution and the framework of a new government was also outlined.<sup>71</sup> The new Union treaty made no reference to the social character, of the Soviet state, the term 'socialist' being deleted.

The characteristics of the new Union Treaty were in many respects of far-reaching consequences. Gorbachev who had already initiated the process of delegitimizing the Marxist-Leninist ideology now took concrete steps to dismantle the first Communist state in the world. The Marxist-Leninist ideology hitherto attacked was now formally renounced, there being no reference to socialism or communism in the new Union Treaty. A noted western scholar commented that, "the world's first socialist state had somehow disappeared with

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71. Stephen White, n.64, pp. 179-181.

the promulgation of a union treaty that made no reference to its social character." <sup>72</sup> Further, the republics were allowed to choose their own forms of property rights and government which constituted a major attack on the existing state structure. The Union Treaty received overwhelming support in the referendum held on 17th March, 1991.

Gorbachev negating the massive mandate of the acceptance of the new Union Treaty abjectly surrendered to certain other amendments in the treaty which virtually amounted to the dissolution of the Soviet State paradoxically under the plea of saving the state. The revised treaty specified that defence, foreign affairs and budgetary matters which were previously under the exclusive jurisdiction of the Central authority were now to be jointly administered and that in all other matters except in energy, transport and communications were to be under the exclusive jurisdiction of the republics. Even this diluted treaty was rejected by five of the fourteen republics of the ex-Soviet Union. In an apparent bid to prevent the weakening of the Central authority, a coup attempt by the conservative communist leaders was

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72. Ibid, p.180.

made on August 19, 1992, a day before the new Union treaty was to be signed.<sup>73</sup> The 'putsch' attempt hammered the final nail in the coffin of the Soviet state. A series of declarations of republican independence thereafter signed the deathwarrant of the first Communist state in the world.

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73. Gail Lapidus, n.57, pp.59-66.

## CHAPTER III

### ETHNIC CONFLICTS IN UZBEKISTAN

In pursuance of the implementation of the 'Soviet Nationality Policy', the Bolsheviks initiated the 'national delimitation' of borders in 1924. This far reaching measure sought to divide the then multi-ethnic political entities - the states of Turkestan, Bukhara and Khorezm (all in Central Asia) into a number of units. The republics created in this manner were formed around a 'core' nationality which was the largest or the most dominant ethnic group. One of the republics thus created was the Uzbek SSR.<sup>1</sup>

Uzbekistan with its capital at Tashkent is a land-locked country encompassing 447,000 sq. km in area. Situated in the south-east of the former USSR, it borders Kazakhstan in the north, Turkmenistan in the West, Kyrgyzstan in the east, Tadzhikistan in the south-east and Afghanistan in the south-west<sup>2</sup>. In terms of

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1. The proclamation of the Uzbek SSR was decreed on 27 October 1924 - R. Vaidyanath, The Formation of Soviet Central Asian Republics, New Delhi, 1967, p.194; Shiring Akiner, Islamic Peoples of the Soviet Union, London, 1983, p.274. However, Donald S. Carlisle in Zev Katz(ed). Hand Book of Major Soviet Nationalities New York, 1975, quoting Alexander G. Park says that Uzbekistan was created in 1925, p.283.
2. Europa World Book, London, 1992, p.

population, Uzbekistan is the largest Central Asian republic.<sup>3</sup> (19.8 millions - 1989 census)

It would not be inappropriate if at the very outset an attempt to establish the contents and contours of the Uzbek ethno-national identity after an exhaustive analysis of its historical genesis and evolution over the centuries and especially in the context of Soviet rule is made. This would facilitate an understanding and thereby the explication of the casual factors of identity persistence, and the forms. Uzbek ethnicity has come to acquire in the wake of the inauguration of glasnost and perestroika.

Uzbekistan, as the nomenclature suggests, derives its name from the Uzbeks, the dominant ethnic group or nationality of the republic (The Soviet ethnographers use the term ethnic and nationality interchangeably). The Uzbeks are basically a conglomeration of Turkic tribes, speaking a Turkic language-Uzbek and are Sunni Muslims of the Hanafi school.<sup>4</sup> Though the ethnonym 'Uzbek' may have its

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3. Lee Schwartz, USSR Nationality Distribution by Republic, 1979-1989, Soviet Geography, Vol.30, No.6, 1989, p.241; Barbara Anderson and Drian D. Silver, Demographic Sources of the Changing Ethnic Composition of the Soviet Union, Population and Development Review, Vol. 15, No.4 (Dec. 1989), p.619.

4. Shirin Akiner, nl., pp. 266-267, p.280, 284

origins in the name of Uzbek Khan of the Golden Horde branch of Mongols (1313-1340 A.D.), the crystalliation of the process of the formation of the Uzbeks as a distinct nationality was completed long before in the 11th and 12th centuries A.D. when the 'Middle Asian Interfluve' became a part of the Kara Khanid state.<sup>5</sup> However, even as late as the early 20th century the Uzbeks had not yet been consolidated into a nation".<sup>6</sup>

The ethnic formation of the Turkic groups of Central Asia in general may be understood as a sense of identity created originally namely by the birth of individual's into a group (descent) and by the crystallisation of that group's socio-economic situation into a culture. However, the original ethnic identity acquired a different cultural dimension with the Turkic groups accepting the proselytizing Islamic faith in the seventh - eighth

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5. For a detailed discussion on the historical origins of the Uzbeles see R.Vaidyanath, n.o, pp.9-12, Great Soviet Encyclopaedia, New York, 1981, pp.651-652; David. C.Montgomery in Richard. V. Weekes (ed.) Muslim Peoples - A World Ethnographic Study, Connecticut, 1978, p.461, Donald S. Carlisle, Vzbekistan and the Uzbeks in Zev Katz ed., n.1, p.285; Valery Biryukov, Peoples of the Soviet Union, New Delhi, Undated, pp 122-126.

6. Geoffery Wheeler, The Peoples of Soviet Central Asia, London, 1966 pp.13-14. Also see his, The Modern History of Soviet Central Asia, New York, 1964, pp. 7-9.

century<sup>7</sup> Indeed, religion played a major role in the identity formation of the Turkic groups. Islam re-formed the Uzbek identity.

Indeed Islam as "a collectivist religion, authoritarian; one whose doctrine is binding on the mass of believers and which tends to deploy its directions and its judgements over the whole field of life" played a major role in the identity formation of the Turkic groups. Islam by succeeding in creating a 'national tradition' which constitutes the cultural core of the ethnic identity and by providing a framework of moral values and beliefs that govern the structure of social action and behaviour pattern has left a deep distinct imprint on the Uzbek society.

Ethnic and linguistic affinity was secondary to religious and clan tribal attachments. Even as late as the beginning of the 20th Century the people of the Khanates did

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7. Zev Katz. (ed) n.1, p.285

not think themselves as belonging to nations or even to nationalities.<sup>8</sup> As Bennigsen writes, "Before 1917 among the Moslem public there was not, and there cannot be, a consciousness of belonging to a modern well defined nation. Their consciousness was pre-modern, of a purely religious type".<sup>9</sup>

About the Pan-Turkic ideology which was gaining foothold in Central Asia in the 1920s a noted scholar has this to say, "Pan-Turkic ideals were too vague, their historical foundations too remote and the geographical setting too inadequate to inspire the Muslim population in Russia"<sup>10</sup> The attempts of the Jadids or the Young Bukharaites to reform the Muslim society, chiefly in the realm of a education were doomed to failure because they were alienated from the masses and the mullahs dubbed them as 'godless'. And the only powerful anti-communist movement among the Muslims of the Soviet Union during the civil war, the movement of the Basmachis had little, if anything in common

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8. E.Allworth, 'The Nationality Idea in Czarist Central Asia in E. Goldhagen (ed) Ethnic Minorities in the Soviet Union, New York, 1968, pp. 229-247; Michael Mandelbaum ed. The Rise of Nations in the Soviet Union: American Foreign Policy and the Disintegration of the USSR, New York, 1991, p.19.

9. Alexandre Bennigsen, Islamic or Local Consciousness Among Soviet Nationalists in E.Allworth (ed.) Soviet Nationality Problems, New York, 1971, p. 176.

10. S.A.Zenkovsky, Pan-Turkism and Islam in Russia, Massachusetts, 1960, p. 273.



with Turkic nationalist aims. They were fighting for the preservation of the old ways of life, for the tribal social order and Islamic faith. The Bashmachis were as vehemently, violently opposed to the communists as to the ardent Pan-Turkists, the Jadids.<sup>11</sup>

With the consolidation of Bolshevik power in Central Asia by the end of 1921-22, a new dimension was added to the evolution of identity formation of various Turkic groups - Kazakhs, Uzbeks, Turkmen, Kyrghyz and Karakalpaks and the Iranian people - the Tadzhiks. Rejecting the demands of 'Ryuskulov group' to create a pan-Turkic state (based on a racial stock or soy) comprising all Turkic peoples residing within the Bolshevik state,<sup>12</sup> The Bolsheviks led by Lenin favoured the creation of political units based on the ethno-linguistic identity. The process of 'national delimitation' initiated in 1919 by the Turkestan Commission resulted in the formation of republics around a 'core' nationality, which was the largest or the dominant ethnic group in the area. The new political units were rigidly linked to the issue of territory. The process of 'national delimitation' in Central Asia was a part of the broader 'Soviet Nationality Policy' which proclaimed the legal and constitutional equality of the 'peoples', (read nationalities); creation of voluntary federal union; the right

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11. Ibid, p. 272

12. R. Vaidyanath, n.1, pp. 105-110.

to national self-determination and secession; abolition of all kinds of national and religious privileges and limitations; the free development of national minorities and ethnic groups; safeguarding national and cultural institutions and freedom of religious beliefs and customs<sup>13</sup>. The formation of the Soviet Nationality Policy should be seen in the broader historical context of Lenin's attempts to safeguard and promote the revolution and to negate the absolutist legacy of the Czars, so as to legitimise the rule of the Bolshevik Party over various nationalities.

The creation of republics on ethnic-linguistic basis with clearly demarcated territories, investing the federal republics with a government and administrative apparatus<sup>14</sup> and finally the rapid modernization of Central Asian peoples in the wake of massive industrialisation, complete eradication of

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13. Devendra Kaushik, Soviet Nationalities Policy in Central Asia, in R.G. Gidadhubli (ed.) Socio Economic Transformation of Soviet Central Asia, New Delhi, 1987, pp. 3-6.
14. Gregory Gleason, Federalism and Nationalism: The Struggle for Republics Rights in the USSR, Boulder, 1990, pp. 3-4, 15, 81-101; R. Vaidyanath, n.1, p.228-235; Ronald G.Suny, Nationalist and Ethnic Unrest in the Soviet Union, World Policy Journal, Vol.6, No.3-4 (1989), p. 506; T.A. Zhdanko, National State Demarcation and the Ethnic Evolution of the peoples of Central Asia in Girgu levich and Kozlov (ed). Ethnocultural Processes and National Problems in the Modern World, Moscow, 1981, pp-133-159.

illiteracy and providing techniques of mass communication<sup>15</sup> in varied ways reinforced the ethno national identities of the various Central Asian peoples.

We say so because of the following reasons:-

(1) In Central Asian Republics, boundaries have had no historical legitimacy. The delimitation of territorial boundaries and creation of republics for each of the five major ethnic groups offered both "a sense of separateness and inclusion" that reinforced local identities. Thus territorial dimension was added to the nascent group identity. It is not surprising, therefore, that vicious disputes and outbreak of violence has occurred over the question of national-territorial boundaries among the various central Asian republics.<sup>16</sup>

(2) The Soviet cultural policy adequately reflected in the express idea of promoting a national culture "socialist in con-

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15. Karl Deutsch, Nationalism and Social Communication, Cambridge MA, 1966; Eric Hobsbawm, Some Reflections on the Breakup of Britain, New Left Review, No. 105 (Sep. Oct. 1977) p.23; Geoff Eky, Nationalism and Social History, Social History, 6, (1981) pp. 83-107. These scholars believe that the very formation of nations is highly contingent on the modernization and growth of markets, urbanization, high literacy and the development of mass communications.

16. Alexandra Bennigsen and S. Enders, Wimbush, Muslims of the Soviet Empire: A Guide, Bloomington, 1986, pp.31-35; D.L. Horowitz, Ethnic Groups in Conflict, Berkeley, 1985, pp. 601-613; Lee E. Sutte, Theoretical Perspectives on Ethnic Political Behaviour in the Soviet Union, Journal of Conflict Resolution, Vol. 134, No.2 (June 1990), p.315.

tent and national in form" encouraged the development of local languages, literature and art, the titular national friendly interpretation of history and a freedom of religions. In the first place, the Soviet rule by providing modern techniques of mass communication and eradicating illiteracy, facilitated the revitalization of some of the very forms e.g. language, national history, literacy movements, etc., through which nationalist sentiments are being increasingly expressed and identified with Cultural revival in the Republics took the form of exploration as well as glorification of their historical roots, resurrection of folk heroes, promotion and purification of national language, preserving the group culture and the defense of local traditions including religions. However, the process of cultural revival was reflective of the assertion of "developing cultural identity". Secondly, the agents promoting regeneration and revival are also ironically the products of the Soviet Period. The expansion of literary, scientific and cultural institutes created a stratum of highly, intelligent and sophisticated 'national elites' who have been influential in forming and reinforcing national consciousness through the idioms and mediums mentioned above.<sup>17</sup>

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17. For further details refer, T.Rakowska, Harmstone, The Dielectrics of Nationalism in the USSR, Problems of Communism, Vol. 23, No.3, pp.10, 14; Gregory Gleason, n.14, p.100; Ronald Suny, n.14, p.507.

Thus the Communist rule in Uzbekistan has resulted in a diametrically opposite outcome than what was intended - "nationalist in content and socialist in form"<sup>18</sup>,

(3) The existence of a federal system provides for a politico-administrative apparatus through which the minority elites pursue their group interests and objectives. The federal structure, in the opinion of a section of scholarship has served to strengthen the ethnonationalist identity of the republican population.<sup>19</sup> In each of the national republics, the administrative bureaucracies, the party apparatus, and the republican leadership are to a large extent nationalised. It is, therefore, not surprising that the administrative organisations of the government and the party at the republic levels became to a large extent the "captives" of the national ethos of their namesake populations. Nationalist sympathies are channelled through the bureaucratic processes which is reflective in confrontation albeit subtle to safeguard and promote the republic's interests, especially in the economic domain. The result is that the administrative and party

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18. Michael Rywkin, Moscow's Muslim Challenge, London, 1982, p.145.

19. Gregory Gleason treats the question of federalism and nationalism in great detail. See his chapter, 'Bureaucratic Nationalism, n.14, pp.81-104; Teresa Rakowska-Harmstone, 'Chickens Coming Home To Roost: A Perspective on Soviet Ethnic Relations, Journals of International Affairs, Vol. 45, No.2, pp.523, 527, 535; Gail Lapidus, Ethnonationalism and Political Stability: The Soviet Case, World Politics Vol.36, no.4, pp.556-569; Ralph S. Clem, The Ethnic Factor in Contemporary Soviet Politics in Sacks and Pankhurst(ed.) Understanding Soviet Society, Boston, 1988, pp. 18-20.

organisation of the republics have an ostensible native cast to the way they function, the way they implement central directives and the way they see the future of the republic. In the context of disintegrating political systems, the federal units led by the local indigenous elites assume increasing significance in that it facilitates attempts to achieve some degree of local autonomy to manage the economy, to gain greater share of investment from the centre, to obtain preferential access to consumer goods and in general to modify national economic policy to the advantage of the republic. Even the highly centralized communist party of Soviet union in course of time acquired a federalised character with the indigenous republican leaders gaining greater control over their republic's momenkatura as a result of Korenzatsia easing out Russian and other slavs from important party positions. Secondly, the nativised party appartchik inevitably came to identify itself with local interest. This has been variously termed as "bureaucratic nationalism" (or "orthodox natinalism" or "insystemic nationalism")<sup>20</sup> which has been defined by Gleason as "the tendency for the national factor to be expressed withen the various branches and subdivisions of the formal organisations of the formal organizations of the Soviet system. The federal arrangement, though limited and restricted provided 'an organizational context' and 'political legitimacy' for the

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20. Rakowska - Harmstone has coined these terms, n.17.

assertion of group interests, values and demands which in the long run served to shape group identities.

(4) The list of distinct ethnic variables that differentiate Central Asian culture from that of Russia is a long one including language, literature, architecture, dress, food, pottery and music. The distinct ethnic identities of Russia and Central Asia have given rise to the syndrome of 'they' and 'we'.

This syndrome is an important element underlying the psychological basis of identity formation. The domination exercised over the polyethnic Soviet state by the dominant ethnic group, the Russians, often entailed the introduction and imposition of their culture, institutions and identity upon the minority ethnic group who cherish and possess their own identity.<sup>21</sup>

The application and implementation of Marxist-Leninist formulations were, in its varied manifestations, antagonistic to the ways and life of Central Asian peoples. This was evident in the interventionist role of the state and the party in the local religio-cultural realm and in the economic sphere. Widespread repression of the nationalities in Central Asia was perpetuated during the rule of Stalin in the wake of

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21. According to Rajai and Enloe conflicts are inherent in 'territorial states' or 'monoethnic states'. Multi-ethnic states have been termed as 'territorial state' by Rajai and Enloe and 'monoethnic state' by Norbu. For further details see Norbu's Culture and Politics of Third World Nationalism and Rajai and Enloe, cited in Dutter, n.16, p.314.

collectivization, for settling of nomadic tribes, closing of mosques and theological schools, opening of official mosques and Islamic educational institutions, launching of atheistic propaganda, purging the local cadres by dubbing them 'bourgeois nationalists', mass deportation of nationalities to republics during the war years etc. The integrationist policy of the state under the overarching framework of Marxist Leninist principles provoked an intense reaction and subdued opposition and in the long-run served to heighten national consciousness and self-assertion on the part of the non-Russian nationalities. The process of Russification coupled with the element of coercion in the subjugation of nationalities under the Bolshevik rule has served to strengthen the sense of 'ethno-historical grievance'. The contemporary presence of Russians in important Union and republic positions of economic and political powers and day to day intergroup contacts serve as continuous reminders of this history and thus contributes to the perpetuation of group identities and reinforcing individual psychological dispositions to distinguish between the good 'us' and the bad 'them'. The 'we', 'they' syndrome underlines the division of society on ethnic lines in the Soviet State.<sup>22</sup>

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22. Rasma Karklins, Ethnic Relations in the USSR, Boston, 1986, pp.71-72; Rywkin, n.18, pp-150-152, Duffer, n.16, p.315



## Emergence of Ethnic Phenomena in Uzbekistan

The suddenness with which ethnopolitics burst forth on the political stage (taking by surprise even the prophets of the 'doom school' of Sovietologists), its bewildering array of manifestations, the maze of its varied characteristics and finally its metamorphosis into the dominant political agenda of the country in a short-span of a few years relegating the much celebrated Gorbachevian reform package of glasnost and Perestroika onto the backyards of Soviet politics, in the context of rapidly disintegrating state, party and an ideology, makes the attempt to provide a comprehensive, holistic perspective of this complex phenomenon a problematic exercise.

However, after a careful perusal of the primary sources, one discerns three broad contours of the Uzbek ethnicity -

(1) Revival and regeneration of various ethnic boundary markers - religion, language, descent, territory, and historical myths and symbols - all crucial to identity distinctiveness

2) Mushrooming of organisations and groups airing 'nationalist demands' and grievances.

(3) Ethnic exclusivity, discord and conflict.

(1) Revival and regeneration of ethnic boundary markers, especially cultural emblems, crucial not only to self-ascriptive

identity but recognition by others of the same as well<sup>23</sup>. It would suffice to mention that important cultural markers are religion, language, race, dress and diet or a combination of these and that our discourse on 'ethnic regeneration' would pertain to these with special reference to religion, language and race.

The advent of Islam in Central Asia is traced to the second half of the seventh century, A.D.<sup>24</sup> and since then the Islamic faith remains a powerful socio-cultural force in the region. In fact, it has permeated various aspects of people's mode of life, and psychology. Ceremonies connected with life cycle, festivals, and pilgrimages are synonymous with Islamic beliefs and practices. The societal structure especially with reference to the position of women in the Uzbek Society and the framework of social behaviour have been determined by Islamic injunctions. Islam has even left its stamp of influence on the patterns of dress and diet. Further Islam is the leit motif in the traditional Central Asian literature and philosophy. Even the linguistic revival in

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23. The various theories on ethnic group identity viz, 'Primordialist', 'subjectivist' and the syncretist recognize the importance of cultural markers in identity formation. For a discussion of the debate on this aspect see, Urmile Phadnis, Ethnicity And Nation Building in South Asia, 1899, New Delhi, Chapter. I; Paul-R-Brass, Ethnicity and Nationalism, 1990, New Delhi, pp. 18-36.

24. Shirin Akiner, n.1, p.266

Uzbekistan is not devoid of Islamic colour. Uzbek intellectuals seem intent on demonstrating that fundamental human values and moral ethos embodied in their society are essentially Islamic. The renewed interest in the 'past' and the search for national cultural "roots" inevitably leads the Uzbek intellectuals to Islam and now the demand for the reinterpretation of history giving a more positive assessment of Islam has gained momentum. In this context, Uzbeks highlight the progressive and creative aspects of Islamic thought and philosophy over the centuries, depict themselves as the heirs of Islamic culture and, therefore, disapprove any apparent or real discrimination against Islam. Thus Islam is the symbol and substance of Uzbek national life and consciousness.<sup>25</sup> An adage, widely current in Central Asia, adequately encapsulates the situation - 'you cannot be an Uzbek, or Kazakh or a Kirghiz if you are not a Muslim'.<sup>26</sup>

Cutting across affiliations and allegiances, the Uzbek intelligentsia and the party cadres candidly admit to the fact that the notions of religion and nationalism are inextricably woven. One of the most informative Soviet Writer to date on

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25. Donald S. Carlise in Zev Katz (ed.) n.1, p.293; Rywkin, n.18, pp 84-92, Amir Taheri, Crescent in the Red Sky, London, 1989, p. 184.

26. Quoted in Yaacov Roi, The Islamic Influence on Nationalism in Soviet Central Asia, Problems of Communism, July-August 1990, p.59.

questions of Soviet Islam is T.S. Saidbaev, whose work based on empirical surveys gives an illuminating insight into this situation - "A section of the population.... still considers religion and nationalism as similar and looks at religion as being part of national life. It is judged compulsory to follow the prescriptions of Islam".<sup>27</sup>

Echoing similar views, A Tursunov, a Doctor of philosophy remarks, "As the experience... has shown belonging to the Moslem religion is often associated in the minds of believers with their belonging to a given ethno-cultural community,." On the "sources" of Islam being identified with nation, he elaborates further, "What's more, it is not only the cultural traditions and national customs that have been Islamized; Islam has penetrated deeply into the structure of the way of life as well, filling literally every aspect of its followers, daily lives".<sup>28</sup>

E.Yusupov, member of the Uzbek Republic's Academy of Science concurring, states, - "Regrettably, backward individuals view religious traditions as genuinely national".<sup>29</sup> Even the Communist party officials were forthright in their

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27. Marie Broxup, Islam in Central Asia Since Gorbachev, Asian Affairs, Vol. XVIII, Part III, (Oct. 1987), p. 283. Similar views were expressed by him in an interview given to Izvestia, CDSP, Vol. XLIII, No.48(pp. 12-13.

28. CDSP, Vol XXXIX, No.3 (1987) pp.8-9.

29. Idid, p.20

recognition of this social reality. The Uzbek Communist party Central Committee Secretary M Khalmukhamedov accepted the stabilization of observance of religion rituals "under the cover of national tradition"<sup>30</sup>. Earlier at the Uzbek Communist party congress in January 1986, the First Secretary, Usmankhodjaev stressed the fact that "religion clears the way for nationalism and chauvnism"<sup>31</sup>.

Soviet and republican newspaers and periodicals have consistently over decades commented on the phenomenon. Pravada in one of its editorials claimed that "the performance of religious ceremonies were being held under the guise of national traditions"<sup>32</sup> and that this is not a recent pheonomnon is emphasised by an article published in Pravada Vostoka on 20 December, 1979 which points to the tendency "to pass of Muslim instituions as national ones...Religious festivals and rites are declared to be a national tradition... Owing to the centuries long domination by religion of the conscioueness of believers, the religious and national origins of customs have become

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30. A. Rorlich, Islam and Atheism: Dynamic Tension in Soviet Central Asia in Willvam Fiermannled.)

31. Marie Broxup. n.27, p.283.

32. CDSP, Vol.XXXIII, no.33, p.18.

interfaced"<sup>33</sup>. A republic newspaper complained that a significant number of Uzbek youths "consider purely religious rituals and prayers (including circumcision, funeral services, weddings, fasting) to be useful and necessary and an important element of the spiritual side of the national life."<sup>34</sup> A questionnaire distributed in four different oblasts revealed that almost a significant proportion of population perceived religious rites as nationalism.<sup>35</sup>

Further, opinion widely current is that "deviation from religious rites is deviation from national tradition": and "no less than a betrayal of national honour".<sup>36</sup> The party officials in Uzbekistan therefore, continually underlined the "need to separate the religious and national ceremonies" and exhorted its cadres to fight against the religionisation of such ceremonies. Towards the fulfillment of the above objectives, committees were set to introduce and propagate progressive

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33. Pravda Vostoka, (20 December 1979) as quoted by Yaacov Roi, The Task of Creating the New-Soviet Man: Atheistic Propaganda in the Soviet Muslim Areas, Soviet studies, Vol. XXXVI, No.1 (1984)

34. James Critchlow, Islam and Nationalism in Soviet Union Asia, in Pedro Ramet (ed.), Religion and Nationalism in Soviet and East European Politics, Durham N.C., 1984, p.112.

35. Yaacov Roi, n.33, p.35.

36. Marie Broxup, n.27, p.283.

traditions, ceremonies and rituals.<sup>37</sup> One such ceremony was instituted on July 25, 1985 by the Uzbek Supreme Soviet known as the 'Annual Memorial day'.<sup>38</sup>

In the context of the identification of the national mode of life and culture with Islam by the popular masses, it was not surprising that once the iron lid of control and coercion by the Soviet state and the CPSU was lifted by Gorbachev under the twin policies of openness and restructuring, there was a massive swing of popular assertion in Islamic beliefs and practices. Evidences culled from numerous Soviet publicatins, official pronouncements and party documents and certain scholarly works on Soviet Islam attest to the emergence of 'Islamic revivalism' or 'resurgence' in the Central Asian republics. The increase in "level of religiosity" was seen to have assumed diverse formes and varied contents. It was winning converts, surprisingly even from unexpected quarters. We would like to present a detailed elaboration of this resurgent phenomenon and its implications for Uzbek nationalism.

Islam in recent years has been attracting a sizeable number of adhrents to its fold i.e. increasing number of people have come to follow and practice Islamic beliefs, customs and traditions. The development is amazing taking into consideration the fact that youth, the native intelligentsia and

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37. SWB/SU/0050, p.8/6.; CDSP Vol. XXXVII, No.33, p.12.

38. CDSP Vol. XXXVII, No.35, p.11

the avowed atheists i.e. the communists party officials have begun flocking to Islam in droves. A survey conducted in 1987 in Kaskha-Daria region (Uzbekistan) confirms the above observation. The survey showed that seventy per cent of the population carry out religious ceremonies and rituals and over eighty per cent of these were people with higher and secondary education.<sup>39</sup> Even more affirmative is the statement of A. Kuchkarov, Director of the Institute of Scientific Atheism, Uzbekistan: "The level of religiosity is practically the same in the cities and the countryside. In some areas, the proportion of believers reached 98 per cent of the population."<sup>40</sup>

A Soviet scholar expressing concern at this newly emergent phenomenon remarked, "It is no secret that religious feeling is on the rise here and there in our country, and not just among people who are not permanently employed, but among young people as well"<sup>41</sup> At its third plenary session, the Central Committee of the Uzbekistan C.P. acknowledged that "significant sections of young people have fallen captive to Moslem traditions".<sup>42</sup> A report in Pravada lamented the fact that nothing is being done to

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39. Alexandre Bennigsen, Islam in Retrospect, Central Asian Survey, Vol.8, No.1, (1989), p.92.

40. Idid

41. CDSP. Vol. XXXII no.3 (1987) pp. 7-8

42. CDSP. Vol. XXXVII no.40, p. 11



divert the young people from "obsolete tradition".<sup>43</sup> In 1987, a survey carried out among the undergraduate Uzbeks students at Tashkent University showed that 60 per cent of the students described themselves as Muslims and 33 per cent as not practicing and 7 per cent as atheists.<sup>44</sup> It has been reported by the atheist propagandists that the educated rural Uzbek youth are often present in those places where religious ceremonies are held. Youths and children of the school age have been found engaged in the complete or partial fulfillment of Muslim ceremonial obligations.<sup>45</sup> The conclusion one draws from the survey results and statements is in sharp contrast to the conclusion of a Soviet Scholar that only 8 per cent to 10 per cent of the Urban population is made up of believers and the percentage is little higher in the countryside.<sup>46</sup> Observance of Ramzan by school children and student led to "drop in cafeteria sales and affected the sales of food catering businesses."<sup>47</sup>

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43. CDSP. Vol. XXXVII no.33 pp. 11

44. Amir Taheri, n.25, p.141

45. Critchlow, n.34, p.112; Yaacov Roi, n.33, p.27; Alexandre Bennigsen, n.39, p.91.

46. CDSP. Vol. XXXVII no.38 (1985) p. 1

47. Rorlich, n. 30, p.193

A significant section of the indigenous intelligentsia has also embraced Islam. A Tursunov writing in Pravada notes "There are, after all known cases of members of the itelligentsia (including teachers) joining a religion..."<sup>48</sup>

Even more surprisng is the Communist party officials having fallen prey to the Islamic faith. Following the Marxist premise that "membership of religious orders and belief in God as salvation" is manifestation of the 'false consciousness' of the oppressed, the communists shunned religion and professed scientific atheism" They launched anti-religious propaganda and often persecuted religious orders and believers.

However, as accepted by no less a personality than the First Secretary of the Uzbekistan, CP Usmankhodjaev at a plenary session in 1986, "some party organisations connive and sometimes openly flirt with religion and pander to backward traditions.... There are by no means isolated cases of communists, Komsomol members and leading personnel taking part in the performance of religious rites". He even took to task the party Central Committee 'for not reacting' to the alarming situation of religious revivalism in the republic. Decrying "the coalescence of the ordinary consciousness" of many cadres with religious dogmas" the Uzbek CP that some cadres and officials "show two faces..a public and an everyday face... they

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48. CDSP. Vol. XXXIX no.3 (1987) p. 8: Yaacov Roi, n.33, p.27.

skilfully use the first face on the job and the other one in the family and at their places of the residence."<sup>49</sup> The "two faced party officials" as these personnel were known promoted in various ways the process of religious revivalism. In the first place atheists were persecuted for their anti-religious propaganda. Party officials in the Tashkent province were warned not to victimise G. Umarov, a radio broadcasting editor, and S. Mustafayev for their anti-religious propaganda.<sup>50</sup> Similarly, M. Altybayev, Director of Kashka Dyra region, House of Scientific Atheism was hounded for a year by party agencies for criticising several communists in their pursuit of religion.<sup>51</sup> The harassing tactics have dissuaded atheists from actively campaigning against "superstitious", "harmful", and extravagant Islamic beliefs, customs and traditions.

Secondly, instances have been reported where party officials have turned a blind eye to the activities of "parallel Islam" and allowed self-styled mullahs and Ishans to "unobstructedly preach Islamic dogma, engage in quackery and distribute religious literature, tape recordings and videofilms of religious content and thereby help these

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49. CDSP. Vol. XXXVIII no.40, pp. 10-11.

50. CDSP. Vol. XXXIX no.36 p. 16.

51. CDSP. Vol. XXXVII no.40 p. 11

charlatans... to encourage themselves in virtually every community<sup>52</sup>.

Lastly, many party officials have been punished for openly aiding and abetting the construction of mosques and holy tombs and also accused of endowing religious orders with liberal funds. The Dzhizak province party committee and its secretary Is. Umarov encouraged the construction of mosque costing 500,000 roubles<sup>53</sup>.

Also the first secretary of the Bukhara oblast Party committee, A. Harimov was charged with sponsoring the construction of mosques and holy tombs. He and his colleague Adylov were accused by B.I. Sviderskii, a prosecutor of generously endowing the clergy with funds.<sup>54</sup> Communist officials, Sa'eed Taherov, Director of Tashkent' telecimmunications centre and Sabur Tarsuenov, leader of the local Komsomol were denounced as organisers of semi-clandestine sessions of Quranic studies.<sup>55</sup> As late as 1986 many party secretaries, Director of factories, teachers and

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52. Ibid

53. Ibid; Rorlich, n.30, p.19.

54. Amir Taheri, n.25, p.151; Rorlich, n.30, p.190.

55. Amir Taheri, n.25, p.141.

Soviet officials were dismissed for religious observance.<sup>56</sup>

These examples recounted amply bear testimony to the fact that the fever of religious revivalism had in great measure gripped the Communist party apparatus in Uzbekistan. The Tashkent Party committee secretary was not off the mark when he argued that the revival of Islam in Central Asia might be the result of support from high-ranking party members.<sup>57</sup>

Reasons forwarded to explain the association of Communist party officials with Islam are:-

- (i) Modernization and secularisation of Islam.
- (ii) Discovery of the Islamic roots of Uzbek national culture by the intelligentsia.
- (iii) Relaxation of controls by the Brezhnev regime.

Of these the first factor requires some explanation. The increase in the education of believers, enlightened mullahs and 'official Islam' have had a modernizing and secularizing influence on Islam. Their efforts, especially of the latter two have been to portray Muhammed as a democrat, reformer and even as a socialist"; paint Islam as bulwark of progress knowledge, education, preceptor of quality, bearer of freedom;

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56. Rolirch, n. 30, p. 195

57. Ibid, p. 190

identify Islam with Marxism-Leninism; adopt religious morality to the moral ideas of the Soviet society; combine religious faith with science; and finally modernise Islamic doctrines and sharia rules with regard to women and the family.<sup>58</sup> The attempts to portray the 'modern' and 'secular' face of Islam should be viewed as an effort to prove the usefulness of religion under socialism and to link religious consciousness with the moulding of "a new believer" who is both a patriot of his country and a person committed to the socialist ideals. Thus the modernisation of Islam highlighting the compatibility of Islam with socialism in the congruence of their ideals and the absence of any fundamental incongruities facilitated the observance of Islamic practices by even those who are integrated into the Soviet System.<sup>59</sup>

The second major aspect of 'religious revivalism' in Uzbekistan is the greater observance of Islamic customs associated with life-cycle and strict adherence to the Quranic tenets of offering namaz, keeping fast during Ramzaan and going on haj. Various other rites and festivals associated with Islam began to be performed with intensified fervour.<sup>60</sup>

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58. Critchlow, n.34, p.115.

59. For details see Shams-ud-Din, Secularisation in the USSR, New Delhi, 1982; CDSP Vol. XXXVII, No. 38, p. 2

60. For details see CDSP Vol. XXXVIII, No. 33, p.11; K. Warikoo, 'Soviet Central Asia in Ferment' in K. Warikoo and D. Norbu (ed). Ethnicity and Politics in Central Asia, New Delhi, 1992, pp. 66-68; Alexandre Bennigsen, n.39, pp.93-97; Rorlich, n.30, pp.192-194 Critchlow, n.34, p.110; Yaacov Ro'i, n.26, p.53.

The more important Muslim Rituals of life-cycle are circumcision (sunnet), marriage (nikah), and religious burial. Circumcision according to all sources is performed by everybody, if both believes and non-believers and is accompanied by festivities and gift distribution. Komsomol wedding was instituted to displace the Islamic marriage. In majority of the cases, however, Soviet sources acknowledge the Komosool wedding is supplemented by wedding conducted on the lines as prescribed by Shariah under the guidance of mullahs. Another pertinent fact regarding matrimonials is that marriages with other nationalities is frowned upon and discouraged. Religious burials have become more popular and the funeral ceremonies more ostentatious. The funeral procession or j'anaza is attended by greater number of people, proliferation of religious inccriptions in Arabic on grave stones have been seen, and the mazaars or graves are being built costing thousands of roubles. The Islamic cemeteries are being transformed into centres of religious activity and which are now controlled by mullahas, generally unregistered. Even prominent communists have been accorded Islamic funerals.

Reports have proved indictating strict adherence to the offering of prayers, increasing observance of the month of ramzaan even by the communists, intelligentsia, youth and the school children. The festival at the end of ramzaan (Id) is celebrated with great gusto and festivities at the attendance at mosques during festivals is overwhelming. The celebration of

the fast of sacrifice (Kurban Ait or Bairam) which was abandoned has now been reinstated. The number of persons performing Hajj or the obligatory journey to Mecca is increasing dramatically despite high travel expenses. The government has been compelled to take adequate measures and provide finances to enable Muslims to undertake Hajj.

The Mawlud (originally an old religious festival commemorating the birth of the prophet), a group prayer is performed on the eve of the celebrations of secular holidays, life-cycle rituals, release from the army, and on such other occasions. The Mawlud according to a scholar "not only puts the communal seal of legitimacy upon that particular event but also become a mini course in religious teaching".



Thirdly, recent years have witnessed unprecedented proliferation in the number of mullahs, mosques and medressehs. A vast network of 'unofficial mullahs' i.e. not registered by the Grand Muftiah, at Tashkhent has come into existence and includes engineers, teachers, technicians, former Komsomol and communist party members and even anti-religious propagandists. These networks are mainly financed through individual donations. Many of these mullahs are young, educated and well versed in Islamic theology and law and who now enjoy greater respectability and acceptibility among the masses. These mullahs have metamorphosised into 'community leaders' performing a wide range of activities from conducting rituals and rites to preaching sermons, from restoring old mosques and building new ones to leading pilgrimages to holy places.<sup>61</sup> The prominent newspaper of Uzbekistan, Soviet Uzbekistana observed that there are "thousands of pseudo mullahs operating in the republic" .Pravada Vostoka referring to the pseudo mullahs commented that for every official mullah in the Navai district of

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61. Rorlich, n.30, pp.191-192; Amir Taheri, n.25, pp-193-194.

Uzbekistan there are 15 'self-appointed' ones.<sup>62</sup> The mullahs are said to very influential in the Ferghana region of the republic.

The relaxation of controls over religious activities from 1987 onwards saw the profuse mushrooming of mosques, medressehs and mausoleums or holy tombs".<sup>63</sup> The central Asian landscape has not come to be dotted with religious structures. Magnificent mosques with massive domes, tall minarets and huge platforms now dominate the Uzbek skyline, especially in the cities. One such mosque costing 500,000 roubles has been constructed in Dzhizak province.<sup>64</sup> Another grand mosque known as Jani Mosque in Tashkent city is nearing completion.<sup>65</sup>

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62. Marie Broxup, n.27, p.288.

63. CDSP. Vol, XLI.No.8 (1989), p.23; SWB/SU/0396, p(i); CDSP Vol. XLI, No.16 (1989), p.28; SWB/SU/0383, p(i)

64. CDSP Vol. XXXVIII, No.40, p.11

65. Amir Taheri,n.25,p.136.

Mosques presented as historical monuments have now been handed over to the believers in Bukhara, Kokand and Termez.<sup>66</sup> There are still complaints of too few mosques. Even Chaikhanas have been converted into makeshift mosques. An increasing number of kolkhozes now include special prayer halls or use common rooms as mosques on special occasions. The public response for the construction of mosques, medressehs and renovation of holy tombs has been overwhelming.<sup>67</sup>

The Khutbas or sermons delivered at the mosques are telling. The sermons exhort the believers to return to religious practices, inveigh against traditions deemed non-Islamic, deplore the deleterious effect of the Russian, demand religious teachings in schools, observance of Muslim holidays, declaration of Friday as Holiday and a ban on alcohol. Under the cover of a plea for restoration of Islam, the mullahs are in fact demanding the Islamisation of society. Even the Grand

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66. CDSP. Vol, XLI, No.16, p.28.

67. According to George I. Mirsky, (Central Asian's Emergence, Current History, October 1992) 10 new mosque are being built every day.

Mufti of the Religious Board of the Muslim of Central Asia and Kazakhstan has on numerous occasions, emphasized the importance of Khutbas for the religious education of the masses. In fact, the sermons are like "religious crash course" that are becoming extremely popular among the people who are trying to rediscover their Islamic roots. The efforts of the mullahs should be viewed as an attempt "to resocialize around the mosque a population that has been deconstructed by the Soviet economic and institutional crisis."<sup>68</sup>

#### State, Official Islam and the Pressures from Below

State sponsored "official Islam", in an endeavour to exercise some form of control over the phenomenon of religious regeneration and not to be seen lagging behind the

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68. Olivier Roy, Islam and Central Asia, Seminar, No.393 (1992) p.27; Rorlich, n.30, pp 196-197

unregistered Mullahs and Sufis, jumped onto the bandwagon of reviving Islam.<sup>69</sup> It took the lead in building many new mosques and reopening the old ones, reinstating festivals like the Qurban Bayram, printing thousands of copies of the Holy Quran, and its translation into the Uzbek language, opening new medrassahs and strengthening the infrastructure of the existing ones to accommodate the flood of students interested in seeking education in Islamic scriptures. It also started the publication of the religious journal, Islam Noori,<sup>70</sup> Preparatory work under the aegis of "Official Islam" is all set to be completed to celebrate the 1200 anniversary of the great Islamic Scholar and Theologian Abyu-Isa-al-Tarmizi. Uzbekistan's government in an apparent bid to prop up Mamayusupov as the sole spokesperson and guardian of Islamic values and institutions accorded him a highly visible role in public affairs. He often appeared on television and gave interviews to newspapers and

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69. This point has been raised by Oliver Roy, Ibid.

70 Yaacov Roi, n.26, p.51

journals to project Islam as a vital and dynamic social force in the USSR. He was given a seat in the Congress of People's Deputies as a representative of religious organization.

Mamayusupov was also a member of the delegation dispatched by the Uzbek authorities to Ferghana in the wake of ethnic violence in 1989 in a bid to quieten the situation. Financial aid and other forms of assistance by certain Islamic countries in the cause of Islam were routed through the Grand Muftiate.<sup>71</sup> Gorbachev's policies of perestroika and glasnost gravely undermined the hegemonistic legitimating ideology of Soviet State, Marxism-Leninism and debilitated the CPSU creating a crisis of legitimacy for the republican government in particular and the Soviet system in general. The republican government were now to draw their legitimacy from the people over which it exercised power and not from the omnipotent CPSU and the Centre. Consequently, the local elites became more responsive to the hopes and aspirations of the general masses.

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71. Ibid;

At a juncture when "religious revivalism" was acquiring the proportions of mass movement coupled with the need to legitimize and consolidate its authority, the republican government undertook two projects "Official Islam" as the guardian, and promoter of Islamic values and institutions. The other aspect of the endeavour was to pre-empt the metamorphosis of religion into the dominant political paradigm of the State. It would be pertinent to make a mention of the attempts by the forces of religious resurgence to merge the boundaries that separated politics from religion. The religious opposition in Uzbekistan demanded from President I. Karimov to take an oath reaffirming his faith in Quran and in effect called upon the erstwhile Communist President to discard and disown the avowed atheistic policy and give due recognition to Islam in the administration of state.<sup>72</sup> The state backed 'Official Islam' was forcibly sought to be brought under control under the plea that Mufti Babakhanov, the director of the Ecclesiastical

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72. SWB/SU/1192, p.8/4

Administration of Muslims of Central Asia and Kazakhstan (EAMCA) had "deviated from Islamic morals and ethical principles and from the norms of Shariah," and had not communicated enough with the believers. Demonstrations held in February 1989 in Tashkent called for his removal and he was subsequently relieved of his duties and a new Mufti was elected. Radio broadcasts from Ozodlik alleged that the demonstration was organised by an unofficial group 'Islam and Democracy'.<sup>73</sup> The removal has been viewed as a political act, through which the people demanded a voice in the decisions affecting the religious life of their communities.<sup>74</sup> The contention is supported by the fact that Muslims in Andhizhan, Ferghana and Namangan affirmed the will of their communities by ousting the Imams appointed by the old Mufti and electing their own religious leaders.

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73. CDSP Vol. XLI, No.8 (1989), p.24; SWB/SU/0383, p.1.

74. Rorlich, n.30, 209



The congress of religious leaders convened at Tashkent in March 1989 to reaffirm the election of Mamayusupov as the new Mufti called for "fundamental changes" in the Church-State relations.<sup>75</sup> Several thousand muslims demonstrated in Kokand, Namangan and Andhizhan shouting slogans "Mufti for President" and "Down with Communists".<sup>76</sup> There was an attempt to remove the new Mufti Mamayusupov on charges of connections with "certain State structures.", who had been quite for sometime underlining the need to separate state from religion.<sup>77</sup> However, more dangerous for the nascent Uzbek state is the design of the Party of Islamic Renaissance, to establish an Islamic State uniting all the Muslims of the erstwhile Soviet Union. The programme of the party is of the militant fundamentalism type denouncing national and ethnic divisions of the Soviet Muslims. Today it includes branches in all the Muslim republics and is especially active in Moscow, Daghestan, Abkhazia, Tadzhikistan and among the Tatars of Volga regions.

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75. CDSP Vol.XLI, No.8, p.23

76. SWB/SU/1185, p. B/5.

77. SWB/SU/1121, p.B/10

Slavs. It denounces the official clergy, demands Islamic schools, and wants an Islamic social justice founded on the Zakat and Sadaqat. The party has been denounced by the official clergy (including the four muftiyya) and condemned by the authorities of the Muslim republics.<sup>78</sup> The Uzbek authorities forbade the party to hold its congress at Tashkent in 1991 and followed it with decrees prohibiting all political activity in the name of Islam<sup>79</sup>.

In the light of the revivalist militant demands and slogans the State effected a compromise formula with 'Official Islam'. the EAMCA can attain the maximum of Islamisation measures without intervening at the political level. The delicate understanding reached also enjoins the EAMCA to control and prevent the forces of revivalism from adopting a political agenda.<sup>80</sup>

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78. Vitaly Naumkin, Islam in the states of the Former USSR, ANNALS, AAPSS, 524 (Nov. 1992) p.135, CDSP Vol. XLII, No.1., p.17;

79. Oliver Roy, n.68, p.29.

80. SWB/SU/1117, p.B/II, Rorlich, n.30, p.21; Oliver Roy, n.68, pp.27-29.

The State both, in giving impetus to the forces of revivalism and preventing it from influencing the political process in the country, has acted as a crucial catalyst (both positive and negative) in the phenomenon of Islamic resurgence. The new modus vivendi between Islam and the republican authorities is reflected in the election release of the Uzbek Communist Party on religion during the 1989 elections. The platform stated "The republican Party organization actively favours the freedom of religion and the legal rights of the believers, as well as cooperation with religious organizations.<sup>81</sup>

Sufism is another important element in "Islamic revivalism" which had been driven underground in the wake of curbs and repressive measures imposed by the Soviet authorities on Islamic practices and institutions. There are four main sufi groups or tariqas in Central Asia - the Naqsbandiya, Qadiriya, Yasawiya and Kubrawiya of which the Nagsbandiya order enjoys the largest following in Central Asia. Conservative sufi brotherhoods focus not on the mosque but

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81. SWB/SU/1117, p.B/II.

rather on private prayer in the home or in unofficial houses of worship and on pilgrimages or other devotions at holy places and is spiritual and surprisingly maraboutique.<sup>82</sup>

With the relaxation of controls by the totalitarian regime, the Sufi brotherhoods have re-emerged with strength, vitality and dynamism that is evident in the acceptance of large number of women, adepts and their increasing attraction for the younger generation and the intelligentsia. The sufi tariqas in the various following ways, have been fostering the revival of Islam.

The Sufis run clandestine religious schools and operate secret homes of prayer, chiefly in the countryside. They are often able to direct and dominate the Jamaat or the regular village assembly. The holymen are thus in a position to address the social, moral and educational needs of their fellow Muslims.

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82. Shirin Akiner, n.1, pp-6-8; Alexandre Bennigsen and Marie Broxup, The Islamic Threat to the Soviet State, London, 1983. pp. 73-77.

A point in case is the holymen of the Vichinsk rayon who was responsible for collecting the funds to build a prayer home in the country.<sup>83</sup>

Soviet authorities have been extremely critical of the practice of pilgrimages to "holy places" and link them with sufis.<sup>84</sup> It is the cult of saints, living and dead which has given rise to the practice of pilgrimages. In practically all central Asian Kishlaks there is a mazaar, the tombs of the local saint, and the place is considered to be holy. The graves of clergy, former members of the Khan and Emir administration and leaders of the Basmachi insurrection are also considered to be sacred. In Uzbekistan especially revered are the tombs of Saiyyids and Khojas whose family descended from the prophet Mohammed. Also, the mazaars of the various sufi saints, numerous in the Samarkand area are held in special esteem.<sup>85</sup> The tomb of Qusani Iba Abbas located at

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83. Rorlich, n.30, pp 201-203; Amir Taheri, n.25, pp.195-196.

84. Broxup, n.27, pp.288-289

85. Vitaly Naumkin, n.78, pp.133-134

Shah-i-Zindeh complex in Samarkand is one of Central Asia's most famous holy places. Other places famous for their monuments and mausoleums in Uzbekistan are Bukhara, Khiva and Merv. The tomb and Mausoleums of holy saints attract a large number of adepts every year and here they are taught prayer, the Quran, Arabic, rudiments of Islamic theology and to perform the litany or Zikr.<sup>86</sup> The devotees address to the mazaar wishes of various kinds, mainly about the curing of diseases, barrenness, the evil eye and the like. It is the women and youth who are chiefly attracted to the "cult of holy saints".<sup>87</sup> Even Komsomol and communist party members were found to undertake pilgrimages. For example, during the trial of the Komsomol member Mukhiddin who was also the Secretary of Buman Sovkhoz in Kokan, he was asked why had he become a member of the "Long Haired Ishans" (a sufi order) and he replied, "My

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86. Yaacov Roi, n.26, pp. 52,53.

87. Oliver Roy, n.68.p.

Komsomol membership is necessary for this world but my being a follower of religion is necessary for the next".<sup>88</sup>

The head of the sufi orders in many instances are also considered to be 'living saints'. Davalatbayev, an anti-religion propagandist mentions the head of a sufi order, Sheikh Nizamuddov Ibn Khoja who is revered as the 'flying saint' or "uchar pir". The Uzbek newspaper Soviet Uzbekistani carried a long article on one of the living saints of Samarkand, Hasanbay Saliev.<sup>89</sup>

The sufi tariqas are also linked to the publication of underground literature (Samizadt) called Islamizadt. I. Baliev writes, "Islamizadt is functioning religious publications typed and xeroxed, cassetes (audio as well as video) with sacred muslim texts and folks by religious authorities.."<sup>90</sup> . Until 1982 there was no knowledge of the existance of a Muslim samizadt

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88. Timur Kocaoglu, Islam in the Soviet Union: Atheistic Propaganda and Unofficial Religious Activities, Journal Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs, Vol.5, no.1, p.151.

89. Ibid, pp. 149-150.

90. Alexandre Benniqsen, n.39, p.102.

in Central Asia. On September 26, 1982, the newspaper Soviet Uzbekistani made significant disclosure about of the existence of substantial network for printing and distributing underground literature.<sup>91</sup> It included books titled 'About the Muslim Religion', 'Truth about Islam', 'Duties and Rites', etc. Some of the Islamizadt are printed and recorded abroad, chiefly in Iran and Afghanistan and then smuggled into the Central Asian republic. The contents of Islamizadt are not only religious in nature but also anti-Soviet. Islamizadt propagates Islamic theology and teachings in the form of extracts from Quran and Hadith literature and rallies the faithful to follow pious, simple, Islamic life. Some samizadt were strictly political condemning Soviet invasion of Afghanistan containing the speeches of Mawdudi, the Jamat-e-Islami leader of Pakistan and also that of Khomeini. The literature also advocates shunning the communists for they are not only godless but also colonisers of Islamic Land. It exhorts

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91. Marie Broxup, n.27, p.290.



the believers to "separate ways" wherever and whenever they come into contact with those who have no right to be in a land that is not theirs".<sup>92</sup> The long-Haired Ishans, the largest Sufi group in Central Asia is opposed to all forms of Soviet socialization of the younger members encouraging them to evade Komsomol membership, to attend religious schools and to refuse the military draft.<sup>93</sup> Not surprisingly, some of the sufi groups have specifically been described by the authorities as manifesting a blend of religiosity and nationalism.

No wonder that Soviet authorities 'secularised' and transformed many holy places into libraries, homes for the elderly, dining halls and cultural centres or simply demolished them; villified the itinerant sufis as opportunistic "seekers of wealth", greedy, charlatans and put many of them on trial; and gave a call for vigorous anti-religion propaganda.

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92. Amir Taheri, 4.25, pp 197-200, p.

93. Yaacov Roi, n.26, p.52.

Religious revivalism is seeking to translate Islamic puritanism into demands for changes in dress code, patterns of diet, social relationships and hierarachy especially with regard to the role and position of women in society.

In the sermons delivered in the mosques and at various demonstrations, the mullahs have demanded the closure of pig-farms and of pork processing units in Central Asia. Sermons also enjoin that only halal mutton should be served and forbids the taking of alcohol.<sup>94</sup>

Demands for changes in the dress code is closely linked to the social position and role of women in an Islamic society.<sup>95</sup> The fundamentalists have demanded the abolition of all coeducational schools, discarding of European clothes by Muslim women, change in hair-style and putting on veil.

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94. Oliver Roy, n.68, p.

95. Rorlich, n.30, p.211

Fundamentalists at Samarkand University warned the female students that if they refused to switch to the national dress for the May Day demonstration (1989) they would be killed. A journalist commenting on the effects of religious revivalism on the state of women had this to say "National revival was seen as an excellent opportunity to put back women in their place. A running campaign against short hair, short skirts and make up began in the newspapers and magazines". In fact, both Muslims and Russian women not wearing veils have been attacked and abused in the streets. Statements of the leader of Islamic Renaissance Party on the role of women is particularly noteworthy and forbodes a gloomy picture for the future of women in Uzbek Society. To a question posed on the equality of women in society, Valiakhmed Sadur, a member of the Islamic Revival party replied, "the emancipation introduced in our country... has had the result of estranging women from the family and the home. We have seen how marriage and families are breaking up and how children are suffering from this. Islam proceeds from this premise that women must above all be keepers of the home and rearers of children". Pointers to the already

worsening condition of women in the Central Asian society are  
increasing self immolations multiple child rearing,  
exorbitant bride price and deteriorating health.<sup>96</sup>

### LINGUSTIC NATIONALISM

The other important ethnic variable that has proved to be a crucial factor in the rise of ethnonationalism is the Uzbek language. The communists claim that the Soviet linguistic policy is essentially based on Lenin's solution of the 'Nationalities problem'. The central concept of Lenin's nationality policy - 'national equality' and national self-determination was also sought to be translated in the linguistic realm. Lenin believed that "no one language and especially not Russian should be given the status of state language" and that the state should take all measures to preserve and promote national language and script. In pursuance

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96. CDSP. Vol, 43, No.1(1991), p.31.

of the stated objectives of the Leninist Nationality Policy that the language planning in the 1920s was chiefly devoted to, "devising alphabets and orthographic systems which would underpin writing systems for languages which did not have them before".<sup>97</sup>

In fact, the policy constructed many languages in that these were invested with new alphabets, new writing systems, new vocabularies and new terminologies that resulted in the expansion of language function. Thus these measures not only saved many languages and dialects from virtual extinction but also transformed them into dynamic, living languages.

However, four major decisions since then with regard to the linguistic policy entirely reversed the spirit and objectives of the Leninist principles of the Nationality policy and many other policies have contributed to the rise of ethno-nationalism.

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97. Michael Kirkood, Glasnost. The National Question, and Soviet Language Policy, Soviet Studies, vol.43, No.1, (1991), pp.61-62.

The measures have had the twin effect of increasing the importance of Russian language and at the same time undermining the other national languages. These measures are as follows:-

(1) In March 1938 a decree was promulgated which made the study of Russian compulsory. Russian was thereby acknowledged as being a more important than other Soviet languages. Russian was made the second language in the national schools.

(2) At the end of 1930's and early 1940's the script of many languages was changed from Latin to Cyrillic which also happened to be the script of the Russian language.

(3) The educational reforms of 1958-59 made it no longer compulsory for children to be taught in their mother-tongue. The parents were given the option to choose the language of instruction for their children in school.

(4) The two all Union Conference on the teaching of Russian held in 1975 and 1979 respectively in the city of Tashkent on the teaching of Russian further contributed to the increasing in importance of Russian. The Russian language was now sought to be introduced in the first year of the schooling and even in the kindergarten. Even at the higher levels of education including professional technical schools the use of the Russian language was to be promoted. These measures were adopted with the ostensible aim of promoting Russian as the inter-ethnic language and the policy was embodied in the formula "Russian National Bilingualism".

The above mentioned policies promoted the use of Russian by the non-Russian people in the USSR.<sup>98</sup> The Soviet linguistic

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98. Ibid, pp 63-68; For further criticisms of the Soviet Language Policy see Paul. R. Brass, Ethnicity and Nationalism. New Delhi 1990, p.312-313. John B. Dunlop. Language, Culture, Religion and National Awareness in Robert (onquest (ed.). The Last Empire Nationality and the Soviet Future, Stanford, 1986.

policy as defined by the measures just outlined above promoted the cause of both the Russian language (with increasing number of non-Russians claiming fluency in Russian) and the other national languages for which the retention rate as the mother tongue is impressively high. However, it was noticed that the advancement of Russian language was proving to be detrimental to the cause of national languages.

The Khrushchev reforms of 1958 encouraged the parents to switch their children to schools where Russian was the medium of instruction and consequently the number of schools providing education in mother tongue declined precipitately. Thus the number of pupils who received primary education in their mother tongue decreased and that there was an overall decrease in the number of languages used as the media of instruction in the Soviet educational system as a whole.

The Russian National Bilingualism was perceived to be discriminatory and a threat to the existence of national languages. The perception of threat coupled with the fact that Russians living outside RSFSR refused to learn the native



language was the cause of intense resentment among the nationalities and which ultimately paved the way for the rise of "linguistic nationalism" in Uzbekistan.

Some of the other common grievances of the Uzbeks were<sup>99</sup> :-

(1) Uzbeks having a poor command of Russian were obliged to use it in their careers and which seriously hampered their employment and other professional opportunities.

(2) Publications in Uzbek language was declining alarmingly.

(3) Linguistic discrimination was pervasive in the work place for the office documents were chiefly written in Russian.

Paradoxes in Gorbachev's policies contributed to the rise of

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99. William Firemann, Glasnost in Practice: The Uzbek Experience, Central Asia Survey, Vol. 8, No.2, pp. 16-17.

linguistic nationalism. The failure of Gorbachev to bring about corrections in the Soviet linguistic Policy signified in the reaffirmation by the CPSU Central Committee Plenum on Nationalities in the pre-eminent status of the Russian language fuelled the nationalities unrest.<sup>100</sup> However, if it had not been for glasnost and perestroika such protests would have been dubbed as 'localism' or 'bourgeois' nationalism and suppressed.

In Uzbekistan, linguistic nationalism manifested itself, both at the popular level and the leadership level. At the popular plane, the issue of promoting and preserving the Uzbek language was taken up by the local intelligentsia and professionals and later by informal organisations. Viz the Birlik. The intelligentsia forcefully voiced concern at

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100. Kirkwood, n.97, pp.74-75.

the fate of the Uzbek language and thence of the people. In the words of the literary critic, I Haqqulov, "A people's fate is intimately linked to the fate of its language. Therefore it is necessary to raise Uzbek to the level of state language" <sup>101</sup> Linguistic nationalism also revealed itself in an anti-Moscow stance. Most of the writers felt that for the sorry state of the Uzbek language Moscow should be held responsible.

However, it was the Birlik party which took the initiative in launching an agitation on a range of issues, with an initial focus on the demand for the recognition of Uzbek language as the republic's official State language, Birlik, founded in November, 1988, organised its first unsanctioned meeting on March 19, 1989, at Tashkhent (12,000 people attended it) to pressurise the republican government to declare Uzbek the official language of the republic. A subsequent mass meeting

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101. William Fiermann, n.99. p.18.

held in April 1989 near Tashkent, under the banner of Birlik raised a host of demands including the one on the linguistic issue.<sup>102</sup> Birlik in August 1989 prepared its own draft of law on language which included the recognition of Uzbek as the state language, making Uzbek the republic's language of interethnic communication and putting end to the policy of discrimination against Uzbek language.<sup>103</sup>

Under the "pressure from below" created by the favourable public opinion on the issue of Uzbek language, the Uzbek CP adopted a law declaring Uzbek the republic state language, and was successful to an extent in posing itself to be a great champion of national culture and language.<sup>104</sup>

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102. William Fiermann, Changing Uzbek Political Environment, Central Asian Survey, Vol. 10, No. 3, p. 57. See Birlik Charter published in SWB/SU/0597, P. B/9

103. Bess Brown, The Public Role in Prestroika in Central Asia, Central Asian Survey, Vol.9, No.1, 89.

104. CDSP. Vol. XLI, No.42 (1989), p.29; SWB/SU/0597, pp. B/6-B/r The draft law on language was published in June 1989 for discussion CDSP XLI, No.25 (1989), p.33; SWB/SU/0487, p.(i).

However, Birlik's campaign to make Uzbek, the language of inter-ethnic communication was rejected by the republican authorities. Instead, the retention of Russian as the language of interethnic communication provoked huge demonstrations stretched over several days from 18th to 20th October 1989 when the draft law on language was being discussed for approval by the Uzbek Supreme Soviet.<sup>105</sup>

Interestingly, the non-Uzbeks especially Russians and Tadzhiks too were not happy with the provisions of the draft law on languages. Workers held rallies at several large plants demanding the postponement of the draft language which they say infringes on the rights of the non-Uzbek population. They are specifically critical of the provisions which say the Russian-Tadzhik or other non-Uzbek languages will be used "where possible" and "when necessary" and termed it as 'vague'. The Intersoyuz, an inter-Union informal organisation also advocated similar

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105. Bess Brown, n.102, p.89

demands.<sup>106</sup> The language issue thus has the potential of turning into a focus of conflict between Uzbeks and non-Uzbeks especially Russian. Also, the Uzbeks are incensed at the Russians' refusal to learn the language. In an angry outburst against the Russian, Timur Valiev, a leader of Birlik said, "People are living in Uzbekistan from their birth and they don't know Uzbek language. This is certainly an expression of nationalism".<sup>107</sup>

Another focal point of the language agitation launched by Birlik and the local intelligentsia was the demand for the restoration of the Arabic script which had been discarded by the Soviet authorities first in favour of Latin (1926) and then the Cyrillic script (end of 1930's). The agitation for switching over to the Arabic script bears a strong religio-historical content. Not only is Arabic the language of religious texts but Uzbek, literature prior to

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106. SWB/SU/0597, p.8/7.

107. Cited in P.L. Dash, Travails of Perestroika: The Breakway Syndrome, New Delhi, 1992.

1920's including Quran and poems by Sufi saints were written in this script. The shift from Arabic to Latin and then to Cyrillic had the effect of cutting the subsequent generations off from its literary-cultural heritage and its history having strong Islamic bearings. The writer Shukrullah, for example, states that respect for one's history and heritage begins with creating opportunities for studying it and the first step is the learning of Arabic alphabet which is bound inextricably with the literacy cultural and historical legacy of the Uzbek people.<sup>108</sup> The intelligentsia called for the introduction of Arabic script as a subject in secondary and higher schools curriculum. It was also suggested that Tashkent State University train specialists for the study of Central Asia's classical literature.<sup>109</sup>

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108. William Fiermann, n.99, p.10.

109. Yaacov Roi, n. 26, p.56.

The draft law on language provided for assistance to those wishing to study old Uzbek texts written in Arabic script.<sup>110</sup>

The other important reason for the advocating the inclusion of Arabic in school curriculum was to put a stop to the surreptitious use in teaching religious texts by mullahs and Ishans<sup>111</sup>. The linguistic agitation represents an interesting example of the fusion of nationalism, religion and history. Another such related issue was the popular request for the translation of Quran into the Uzbek language. Delay in bringing out the Uzbek edition of Quran generated widespread apprehension and the editor of Sharq Yalduzi was flooded with telegrams, letters and phone calls inquiring into the cause of the postponement of the publication of Quran.<sup>112</sup>

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110. CDSP, Vol, XLI, No.25, p.33

111. William Firemann, n.99, p.11

112. Yaacov Roi, n.26, pp.56-57.



The phenomenon of ethnicity often involves the 'search' for identity leading the concerned 'ethnic group' to explore its 'historical roots', to glorify history. The parameters of the search for identity in modern times are often imposed and defined by the past. The process of identity formation, not surprisingly, involves the exploration and resurrection of its 'historical roots to all its glory" by the concerned ethnic group. The Uzbek example is replete with instances of the intellectual elite reassuring its identity in terms of attempts to record, revive, and instil a sense of pride and respect in their great historical past.

The partocracy in Uzbekistan at the plenary session of the Central Committee of the Uzbek communist Party in October, 1986 expressed grave concern at the growing attempts to rewrite history with the aim of idealizing the past. Usmankhayev, First Secretary of the Uzbek, recognising the far reaching implications of the attempts, remarked, "Such short sightedness is not as innocuous as it might seem at first glance. Behind it is an attempt

to rewrite history, to sow nostalgia for the patriarchal system and to depict Islam as all but the custodian of national culture..." on the one hand this has disoriented the masses with respect to objects of national pride and has done palpable damage to the cause of internationalist upbringing, and on the other hand it has created an ideological platform for extolling latter day "princelings and beys,"<sup>113</sup> An important communist functionary lamented, "Idealisation of the past and a non-class and antihistorical approach have led to a situation in which a long line of feudal despots, such as Timur, continues to parade across theatre stages, movie screens and pages of books, despots who at the unthinking hand of certain writers and contrary to historical truth are presented as humanists and farsighted politicians".<sup>114</sup>

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113. CDSP, Vol. XXXVII, No.40, p.10

114. Ibid, p.11

Uzbek intellectuals are now insistent that the people learn more about the glorious past. Poet Muhammed Salik deprecates the fact of "History of Uzbek SSR" devoting only 23 pages to 2000 years of pre-Soviet history and the history curriculum committing more space to Joan of Arc than the Central Asian heroes as shameful?".<sup>115</sup>

Secondly, the Uzbek historians and other intellectuals no longer accept the communist view of historical past as a period of "feudal chaos", "backwardness" and "brutal ignorance". They have become extremely critical of Soviet regime's attempt to dub the "historical works as falsifying the past and of the calls to be vigilant against glorification of history. The Uzbek intellectuals were criticised for having been "infiltrated by nationalists" and producing historical works and historical fiction idealising and showering praises on

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115. William Fiermann. n.99 p.8

Central Asian heroes. Imam Moenov's book on Timurid era published in the 1960s is gaining great popularity. Momenov rejects "historical materialism" as a tool of analysis and adopts the method adopted by the classical school.<sup>116</sup> Usman Khodzhayev commented, "an idealization of the historical past and a departure from class positions in assessing certain historical events and personalities have assumed an increasingly broader scope in social sciences, literature" Primqora Qadirova has chosen Sultan Hossein Bukara as the hero of the popular novels. Aziz Gayyumov came under attack for having idolized Babar. Another work against whom similar accusations were heaped is Qadirov's 'Starry Nights'. He was attacked thus, "Primul Qadirov did not have enough class maturity to discern the typical medieval nature of Babar. The writer sheds tears of emotion for this supposedly enlightened monarch, subtle lyric poet

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116. Amir Taheir, n.25, p.190

and historian, while ignoring his actual deed as an emperor".<sup>117</sup> Attempts are now being made to reevaluate the Russian rule in Soviet Central Asia.<sup>118</sup>

Several novels and plays have chosen as their theme the anti-Russian uprising of Andhizan known as the Madali Ishan revolt. Madali Ishan is now portrayed in the works as a symbol of resistance against Russian colonisation. Mahammed Ali Mahamudovic's novel published in 1971 has been charged for promoting "aggressive nationalism". The Soviet Uzbek Encyclopedia itself has been censured for "infiltration by nationalists" as some of its authors praised rulers who made towers of the severed heads of their opponents.<sup>119</sup>

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117. CDSP. Vol XXXVIII, No. p.11

118, CDSP. Vol XLI, No.37, p.23.

119. Amir Taheri in 25, p.190.

The other ground for the resentment of Uzbek historians is the portrayal of Islam as a largely reactionary force in Soviet historiography. The Uzbeks reject the categorising of works of literature and history as "reactionary" for their positive attitude towards Islam. Literary scholar Sharafiddinov pleads for a more sophisticated understanding which recognises work of art as such even if there are specific drawbacks. However, writer Nadir Narmatov calls for a more positive assessment for he insists that his ancestors lived in a religious environment and formulated their world views based in part on Islam and therefore any analysis and appreciation should locate the works of literature and history in a specific historical context.<sup>120</sup>

The intellectuals also expressed concern at the practice of neglecting historical monuments for their real or alleged relations to Islam. Prose writers Nurali Gabul

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120. William Fiermann, n.99, p.9.

deplored the state of monuments in Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva and other cities.<sup>121</sup>

#### ECONOMIC AND ECOLOGICAL BASES OF UZBEK NATIONALISM

The ethnonationalist strivings in Uzbekistan owed no less its origins to the socio-economic and ecological concerns. There was an increasing realisation among the Uzbek intelligentsia that the economic relationship between Moscow and Tashkent was one based on discrimination, subordination and colonialism and therefore detrimental to the well-being and allround development of the Uzbek society. They maintain that economic specialisation of regions perpetuated "monoculture economy" in Uzbekistan. The monoculture economy refers to the predominant importance in the republic's economy of the cultivation of cotton crop. The Central planning authority known as Gosplan set up fantastically high plan targets of cotton

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121. Ibid p.10

production for Uzbekistan. The Uzbeks in pursuance of enhancing cotton production to fulfil the plan target resorted to measures which transformed agriculture in the republic to the cultivation of a single crop i.e. cotton. 65 per cent of the total arable land in Uzbekistan was devoted to cotton growing. Even the lands reclaimed and land under the cultivation of food grains and fruits were withdrawn to be utilised for the cotton agriculture. Scientific methods of crop cultivation viz. crop rotation were dispensed with the large amounts of fertilisers and pesticides were used to enhance cotton production. Huge irrigation projects were launched to water the increasing number of cotton plantations. Around 40 per cent of the republic's labour force is engaged in cotton cultivation. The massive inputs resulted in Uzbeks producing 70 per cent of USSR's total cotton production.

#### Cotton Monoculture

With the inauguration of glasnost, the Uzbek intelligentsia started to talk of cotton monoculture as



a national disaster. The cotton monoculture in their perception has been extremely harmful not only to land, ecology and the other branches of agriculture but has proved to be equally damaging even to the material, spiritual and physical life of the 'Uzbeks'. In short they have provided a critique of the economic relationship between Moscow and Tashkent which in their understanding perpetuated the monoculture. Some of these are outlined as following:-

(1) Yaqubov, head of the Uzbek writers Association and Mohammed Salih a poet claims that cotton was bought at low prices by Moscow. A demand for price hike was made. Consequently prices were raised in 1989 and 1990 but were rejected as far from sufficient.<sup>122</sup>

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122. Boris. Z. Rumer, Central Asia's Cotton Economy in (pp.86-97).

- (2) Low wages paid to the personnel working on cotton farms was highlighted. Hashimov, editor of a literary journal claims that whereas the wages in other sectors of economy have increased by 50 to 100 per cent, the wages to labour on cotton farm remains stagnant.<sup>123</sup>
- (3) Land's under cereals and fruits transferred to cotton agriculture have led to shooting up of prices of these commodities, complains Pulatov.<sup>124</sup>
- (4) Impoverishment of soil due to the use of large-scale fertilizers and pesticides, abandonment of crop rotations and cultivation of bio-fertilizers like Alfafa and Lucerne and other unscientific cultivation practices.<sup>125</sup>
- (5) The discharge into rivers of fertilizers, pesticides and butifos defoliantes during the rainy season, shortage of drinking water, little or no cultivation of vegetables and fruit and prevalence of child and woman labour have caused high infant mortality rates, outbreak of disease and other health problems, viz.,

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123. William Fiermann, n.97, p.23.

124. Boris Rumer, n.121, p.83.

125. Boris Rumer, Central Asia's Cotton: The Picture Now, Central Asian Survey, Vol. 6, No.4, p.84.

gastro intestinal disorder, jaundice, viral hepatitis anemia, malnourishment etc.<sup>126</sup>

- (6) The most important exchange of ecological problems was the drying of the Aral sea. The construction of massive irrigation projects have led to decrease in the flow of water from the feeder rivers, Amu and Syr Darya to the Aral Sea, the latter not reaching the sea for the last 18 years.

Hydrologist acquainted with the problem assert that the water level of the Aral Sea has fallen by 13.5 meters between 1957 and 1984. As a consequence, the water body has diminished in area by an estimated 50 to 30 per cent. The dessication of Aral Sea according to meteorologist is adversely effecting the environment and inducing climatic changes. The seasons, of the year have begun to shift position with winters coming earliest and lasting for a long time. The summers now turn to be rainless, dry and hot. Another climatic change has been the increasing occurrence of dust storms carrying sand and salt to the neighbouring area in Karakalpak - ASSR and Khorezm oblast in Uzbekistan.

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126. Patricia; s M. Carley, The Price of the Plan Perceptions of Cotton and Health in Vzbekistan and Furkmenistan, Central Asian Survey, Vol. 8, No.4, pp.11-14.

Prof. Habibulaev, the Chairman of the Uzbek Academy of Science estimated that between 15 to 17 million tonnes of sand and salt are being deposited over the cotton fields and cities of Central Asia. Secondly, water resources being heavily committed to irrigation, the population is facing acute shortage of drinking water. Water from unhygienic sources are now used for potable purposes. In sum, the Aral sea tragedy is a calamity of national proportions that has aroused the concern of the entire Uzbek populate. A committee, "Save the Aral" has been formed with Shermammedov as the Chairman to devise ways and means to prevent the sea from drying. Numerous symposia, conferences and seminars have been organised to raise awareness and to pool in intellectual talents to the cause of Aral sea. The writers of Central Asia have taken the practical steps of establishing a fund in Tashkent to accept donations to save Aral.. Reports have indicated that students and workers are also contributing to this fund. The 'save Aral" campaign sufficiently mobilised public opinion to force the Soviet government to order the establishment of a special

commission to examine the Aral Problem on 11 April, 1987.<sup>127</sup>

The Uzbeks are thus convinced that ecological disasters affecting their republic have resulted from imprudent development policies pursued by Moscow. The Central authority is thus facing, increasing criticism for exploiting the republic's resources without any regard for environmental consequences.<sup>128</sup> The Birlik also has been highly critical of the cotton monoculture and organisation of agricultural practices. It put forward the following demands:-

- 1) Reduction in Uzbekistan's cotton quota
- 2) Establishment of industries to process the raw-material produced in Uzbekistan.
- 3) Raising of cotton prices
- 4) Uzbekistan title to a share of the profits accrued from processing the raw-materials produced in Uzbekistan.

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127. A detailed examination of the Aral sea tragedy can be found in CDSP, Vol. XXXIX, No.51(1988), p.11; Rusi Nasar, Reflections on the Aral Sea Tragedy in National Literature of Tarkistan, Central Asian Survey, Vol.8, No.1 pp 49-68; P.L. Dash, n.106, pp.356-361.

128. For ecological basis of Urbek nationalism see Charles. E. Ziegler, Political Participation, nationalism and environmental politics in the USSR in John Massey Stewart(ed) The Soviet Environment : Problems, Policies and Politics, New York, 1992, pp.25-26.

- 5) Hard currency earned from exporting cotton should be given to the republic.
- 6) Measures should be taken to save the Aral.

Certain economic platforms of Birlik were very obviously anti-Russian. The organisation demanded an end to the practice of bringing trained cadres from outside the republic. The Birlik accused the Central authorities of not taking interest in training local youth. Secondly, the Birlik charged the authorities of giving preferential access to housing to the Slavs and other outsiders, neglecting the requirements of indigenous population.<sup>129</sup>

The economic and ecological concerns have thus been transformed into issues of national importance. We say so because of the following reasons:-

1. Mobilisation of Uzbek people is taking place on ethnonationalist lines on matters which are considered to be crucial for the all round development and well being of the Uzbek people as a whole.

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129. SWB/SU/0597, p.B/9; William Fiermann, n.101, pp 62-64.

2. The Uzbek intellectuals took this opportunity to call for a review of economic relationship between Moscow and Tashkent and sought to bring changes in the structure of economic relationship. There were also calls for (i) sharing of nation's resources in a fair manner, (ii) transparency in accounting system, (iii) restructuring of republics inter-branches and interregional ties.
3. To ensure the economic well being of the Uzbek people, it led to the declaration of 'sovereignty' by the republican authorities which underlined the need to exercise the principle of self determination especially with regard to economic matters and control of local resources.

### **Pan-Turkism**

The peoples of Central Asia are also sought to be coalesced, united and mobilised on the platform of 'Turkic' identity. This important ethnicity variable i.e. the belief in common Turkic descent is seen competing with other determinants of ethnonational identity as the more weighty, primary factor. The Uzbeks, Kazakhs, Kyrghyz, and the Turkmen except for the Tadzhiks are of Turkic race.. In

fact delegations from the Turkic areas of the Russian Federation and a number of Central Asian republics met at Alma-Aty, capital of Kazakhstan on 18-20 December, 1991 to discuss "the possibility of the establishment of Turkestan, a state uniting republics with Turkic populations". The meeting sought to resolved the following<sup>130</sup>:-

- 1) A commonwealth of Turkic state is to be formed irrespective of religious persuasions.
- 2) The script was sought to be switched from the present Cyrillic to Latin but not to Arabic, However the proposed Turkic script would be having 34 alphabets following the script of Turkey.
- 3) The Turkic commonwealth would take steps to defend the Turkic and Muslim world against expansionist measures of Russia. A Kazakh delegate, Hasan Hajiahmetov who also happens to be the Chairman of the Kazakh National Democratic Party stated, "The situation in Russia is very tense and unstable... At any moment chauvinist Zhikrinovsky ... may come to power. So here we must be prepared to resist possible intervention". Thus the

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130. Vitaly Naumkin, n.78, pp. 138-140.



proposed commonwealth has taken an anti-Russian stance at the very beginning. The formation of Turkic regions in the territory of the Russian Federation, the Urals, Yakut and South Siberia was announced.

- 4) Branches of the Assembly were formed in the Turkic regions. A coordination council comprising representatives from all Turkic regions was also set up to initiate and direct and coordinate efforts for the creation of Turkestan.

Already in existence is the Turkestan Party (1990) which is mobilising public opinion for the unification and recreation of what was Russian Turkestan.<sup>131</sup> In Uzbekistan, there are opinions though not widespread, the favour of "for the reassertion of something very approximating to Turkestan". Although the focus of Birlik's draft programme is clearly Uzbekistan, it has been charged by the authorities of expressing ideas of Pan-Turkism and separatism. The charge is not without substance. At least some of its members have advocated the creation of Turkestan. In a round table discussion, Zahid Haqnazarov

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131. Europa Year Book, n.2, p.

stated" we need a united Turkestan, a united democratic society without division into nationalities and without borders.<sup>132</sup> Both Birlik and Erk have favoured stronger links with other Turkic peoples of Central Asia-economic, culture and linguistic. Poet Muhammed Salih, one of the leading lights of Erk who favours the formation of Turkestan remarked, "Ten years ago, I spoke out for the unification of Turkestan - I even wrote poems about it - and position has not really changed ... In the future it might be possible to create a Turkestani federation or confederation..."<sup>133</sup> He has even favoured the return to runic script, the original Turkic script and not Arabic script,<sup>134</sup> insisting that Uzbek culture is rooted in Turkic heritage. But he is not too optimistic of the creation of Turkestan in the future. Factors militating against the possibility of creation of Turkic federation are

(a) The Uzbek identity seems to be stronger and more potent than other identities

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132. William Fiermann, n.101, p.62.

133. Donald. S. Carlisle, Uzbekistan and the Uzbeks, Problems of Communism, Sep. October 1991, p.43.

134. Yaacov Roi, n.26, p.56.

(b) The Uzbek government has taken harsh measures to suppress the inter-republican people's movement for Turkestan. Recently one of the leader Bakhrouz Geob was arrested on flimsy charges.<sup>135</sup>

Another factor which might give a great boost to pan-Turkism is the emergence of Turkey as the primary external cultural and political beacon to the Central Asian nationalities except of the Tadzhiks. The four Central Asian states are bound to Turkey by historic, linguistic, cultural and racial links. Presidents of the four republics have waxed lyrical in praise of Turkish model and have talked of adopting the model. Despite having a predominantly Islamic population Turkey presents itself as a model of modern industrial, secular and democratic state with a real separation of politics from religion. The Turkish model of a secular state is extremely suited to the erstwhile communist rulers who are extremely hardpressed in the context of the emergence of religious revivalism. Secondly, Turkey follows the path of free market country and Central Asian States are also trying to rebuild their economy on free market principles after the collapse of the Communist

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135. SWB/SU/1435,p. B/12.

economy. In fact Turkey is trying to forge close cultural and economic links with Central Asian States. The former is backed and blessed by the US and other Western powers which are worried by the increasing Iranian influence in the region and also by the emergence of Islamic revivalism in the Central Asian republics.<sup>136</sup>

#### Territory as Ethnic Factor

The national delimitation of frontiers in Central Asia in 1924 on ethnic lines has given a territorial dimension to ethnic identity of the Uzbek people. Not surprisingly, one of the major causes of the outbreak of ethnic conflict has been territorial disputes.

The delimitation of boundaries left a substantial number of the titular nationality in republics other than their own. For instance hundreds of thousands of Uzbeks live in Tadzhikistan and Kirghyzistan and vice-versa. Inevitably territorial disputes have not been long in coming. The most contentious dispute is between the Uzbeks and Tadzhiks. Central Asia's two main Persian-speaking cities, Samarkand and Bukhara were included in Uzbekistan,

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136. Sushil Choudhary, *The New Order in Central Asia and India*, Link, Vol.34 (25) 21 June 1992, pp.15-20.

leaving the Tadzhiks with no prominent historical and cultural center. The Tadzhik-Uzbek rivalry over Samarkand and as we have shown in the next chapter has the potential of turning into a major ethnic conflicts. The Uzbeks have laid claims over the entire Ferghana valley which included Kyrghyzistan's Osh oblast which in 1990 witnessed bloody clashes between Uzbeks and Kyrghyzs and the former demanding the status of autonomous republic. The Uzbek have also laid claims over Khodjent province of Tadzhikistan which is primarily populated by them.. Infact after the internecine warfare between the Khodjent clan and the other clans of the republic, the former openly expressed desires of merging with Uzbekistan. The Uzbeks also argue that southern Kazakhstan and eastern Turkmenistan rightfully belongs to them.<sup>137</sup> Islam Karimov, President of Uzbekistan elaborating on the ethnic dimension of territorial disputes, observed, "the one thing that could possibly tear Central Asia apart is the issue of frontiers - those artificial boundaries that

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137. Dr. Moonis Ahmar, Conflict Resolution in Central Asia, Dawn (Karchu), May 30 1993; Mortha Brill Olcott, Central Asia's Post-Empire politics, Orbis, Vol 36, no.2 (Spring 1992), p.256.

were arbitrarily traced as early as 1924 --- If you want to pit one republic against another, you have to start talking about the frontiers.<sup>138</sup>

#### Ethnic Conflicts

At an entirely different plane a more glaring display of the rising ethnonationalist identity was to be seen in the arena of violent conflicts between the various ethnic groups. The confrontations generally followed three patterns - the dominant ethnic group, i.e., the titular nationality of the republic vis-a-vis minor ethnic group and secondly, the dominant ethnic group versus the Russians and thirdly between the major ethnic groups. Almost all the fourteen republics have witnessed ethnic clashes in one form or the other. The five Central Asian republics were no exception to the above mentioned phenomena. Bloody encounters between various Central Asian nationalities and among the five titular nationalities and minor ethnic groups have been raging in one or the other republic since 1986. We would like to present an elaboration of the volatile ethnic situation in Uzbekistan.

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138. George I. Mirsky, Central Asia's Emergence, Current History, Vol. 91 (Oct. 1992), p.336

An analysis of the varied forms and contents that define ethnic feuds in Uzbekistan reveal a set of causes, the underpinnings of which were slowly but inexorably laid down during the seventy years of Soviet rule. The three primary determinants - the demographic composition of the republic, home land stir, and the rise of Uzbek ethnonationalism were in large measure the products of Soviet nationality policy and practices, certain administrative measures and the exigencies of industrialisation and collectivization of agriculture. Having already scrutinised the causal origins of the rise of Uzbek ethnicity, its various manifestations and repercussions we would only discuss in brief the various ways in which the emergent phenomenon bears relevance on the volatile ethnic situation.

The underlying genesis of ethnic collision lie in the demographic profile of the republic. The nomenclature 'Uzbekistan' is a misnomer in one sense of the term for the republic presents a picture of variegated patchwork of demographic composition with a hundred nationalities inhabiting it. Its intricate tapestry of ethnic mosaic is rooted in the Bolshevik attempts to delimit national frontiers of the five chief ethnoses of Central Asia to

Stalin's deportation of four nationalities - Meshkhetians, Koreans, Crimean Tatars and Volga Germans during the second World War to Uzbekistan and other Central Asian republics and the massive industrialisation and collectivization of agriculture necessitated influx of skilled labour, particularly Russians and other slaves. (Table 1 shows the demographic composition of Uzbekistan).

The national demarcation of boundaries in 1924 was carried out with the objective of creating political - territorial formations around dominant ethnic group. However, the newly created states were in effect ticking time-bombs. The republics included in its territories a multitude of nationalities of diverse cultures. Secondly the dominance of the Uzbeks in population terms and the primacy given to them in the political administration of the republic to the virtual exclusion of other nationalities except for the Russians was a potential source of conflict. Lastly, the drawing of borders were in many instances haphazard and arbitrary with substantial numbers of the dominant ethnos being included in other republics. For example the violent clashes in the Osh oblast of the Kyrghyz republic between the Uzbeks and the Kyrghyz in June 1993, the Tadzhik-Uzbek feud over Samarkand and Bukhara and finally Tadzhik-Kyrghyz



conflict in the Isfara rayon are rooted in the mixed nature of the populations of these areas and therefore the demand of redrawing of borders. (Table 11 shows diverse demography of the other republics.

### Ethnic Conflict : The Meshkhetian Turks

The strongman of Russia, Stalin during World War II forcibly deported four nationalities to the different republics of Central Asia.<sup>139</sup> Table III gives the requisite data

Table III

<u>Nationality</u>	<u>Date of Deportation</u>	<u>Population</u>
Volga Germans	September, 1941	382,000
Crimean Tatars	May, 1944	202,000
Meshkhetian Turks	November 1944	200,000
Koreans *	Late 1930s	72,944

\* The population refers to Koreans in Uzbekistan according to the 1939 census - Zev Katz, p.289.

139. Isabelle Kriendler, The Soviet Deported Nationalities, Soviet Studies, Vol. XXXVIII, no. 3, pp. 387-388  
The Meshkhetians on the eve of their deportation did

not constitute a distinct nationality. They consisted of as disparate ethnic groups as the Muslim Georgians to Armenians from Azeri Karapapakhs to Turkic Kurds and other Turkicized Muslim groups. The diverse conglomeration of the Meshkhetians were distinguished by their place of residence i.e. Meshkhetia in southern Georgia and a strong attachment to Islam and Turkish culture. The sense of grave injustice and discrimination, at being forcibly deported from their homeland, the sharing of joys and sorrow whilst living in an 'alien land and the struggles and movements to return to the "homeland" worked to metamorphosise the Meshkhetian into a distinct ethnic group known as the 'Meshkhetian Turks'.<sup>140</sup>

#### **The Demand of the Homeland**

With the denunciation and dismantling of the Stalinist regime after the coming of Khrushchev, the Meshkhetians launched a movement to be permitted to resettle in their

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140. S. Endes Wimbush and Ronald Wixman, The Meshkhetian Turks: A New Voice in Soviet Central Asia Canadian Slavonic Papers, is also of the same opinion, n.3,p.389. Another useful account of teh Meshkhetian Turks can be found in Robert Conquest, The Natin Killers, The Soviet Deportation of Nationalities, New York 1970; P.L. Dash, n.106, pp.381-389.

homeland. In 1957 Meshkhetians sent representatives to Moscow to plead their cause. Several hundred families were allowed to go to Meshkhetia in 1960s and 1961. In 1964 a political organisation of Meshkhetians known as Turkish Association for the Defence of the National Rights of the Turkish People in Exile was formed for a speedy redressal of their grievances. Under the energetic leadership of Enver Odabashev, a history teacher and a disabled World War II veteran, the association sent emissaries to Moscow and issued appeals and petitions. In 1970 the 6th Peoples Congress of the Meshkhetians formally spelled out in a document a set of demands including

- i) permission to resettle in Meshkhetia
- ii) establishment of an Autonomous Republic
- iii) the right to emigrate to other republics in the event of the failure to meet the above two demands.

Already in 1956 the Presidium of Supreme Soviet lifted a number of restrictions including the right to settle anywhere except in Meshkhetia.<sup>141</sup>

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141. For an earlier effort of the Meshkhetians to return to their homeland see, Wimush and Wixman, n.139, pp 332-333; Kriendler, n.138, pp 399-400.

The Meshkhetians under Vatan, an All-Union Society of Meshkhetian Turks renewed their struggle for resettlement in Georgia. The CPSU and the Soviet government adopted resolutions to speedily resolve the resettlement issue. By September, 1988 around 100 Meshkhetian families were allowed to return to their homeland. The decision to move another 300 families in 1988 was approved. The Georgian authorities were taking steps to facilitate their return. 20 rayons in Georgia were identified for the resettlement of Meshkhetians, provisions for education of Meshkhetian children in higher educational establishments and technical colleges without competition and housing and employment arrangements were provided for. However, the Georgians were extremely wary of the return of Meshkhetian in large numbers and not unnaturally the latter registered complaints of hindrance in their resettlement drive.<sup>142</sup>

It was against these beleaguered people that ethnic violence was perpetrated by the Uzbeks first in May-June,

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142. For recent efforts of Meshkhetians see, SWB/SU/0180(1988), p.B/6; SU/0262 (1988), pp. B/6-B/7; SU/0382 (1989), pp.B/1-B/2; CDSP vol. XLI, No.4(1989), pp3-4; SWB/SU/0329 (1988), p B/8. SU/0841, pp B/6-B/7; SU-0843 (1990) pp.B/7-B/8.

1989 in different towns of the Ferghana Valley - Kuvasai, Ferghana, Tashlak, Kokand, Margilan, Namangan and Andizhan. Again in February and March, 1990, pogroms were executed against the Meshkhetians in Buka and Parkent rayons respectively in the Tashkent oblast.

Ethnic clashes first erupted between Uzbeks and Meshkhetians in the small town of Kuvasai<sup>143</sup> on 23-24 May, 1989. According to one version it all began when a Meshkhetian at the local market charged exorbitant price for strawberries. However, according to another story some Uzbeks were insulted at a beer bar run by Meshkhetian. The seemingly innocuous incident culminated in a large scale brawl between a thousand people of the two nationalities. 58 people were injured of which 32 were hospitalised. One of the injured later expired in the hospital. That tension between the two nationalities had been brewing for a long time in Kuvasai is evident from the clashes between the Uzbeks and Meshkhetians which first occurred on the 15-16th May in the same town.

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143. CDSP Vol. XLI, no.23 (1989), p.16; CDSP Vol. XLI, no(24(1989) pp.1, 3-4; SWB/SU/0594, (1989), pp.B/7-B/9.

The circulation of a plethora of vicious rumours soon after the Kuvasai episode acted as a fuel to fire fanning hatred and anger towards the Meshkhetians. One such particularly malicious rumour was that some Meshkhetian Turks had violated an old Uzbek woman.<sup>144</sup> Another pernicious canard spread around was the slaughtering of an entire "Kindergarten" by the Turks.<sup>145</sup>

The volatile mixture of the incidence of ethnic flare up in Kuvasai and the spread of malicious rumours served the function of a molotov cocktail in igniting a chain of violent incidents in the Ferghana valley. Pogroms were conducted against the Meshkhetians in Ferghana, Margilan and Tashlak on the 2nd and 3rd of June, 1989. The violence later spread like wild fire in the neighbouring regions of Kokand, Namangan and Andizhan and raged with all fury till the middle of June. In all these places Uzbeks, mostly youths in large bands numbering from few hundreds to few

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144. Yaacov Ro'i, Central Asian Riots and Disturbances, 1989-1990: Causes and Contexts, Central Asian Survey, Vol. 10, No.3 p.48 (Footnote).

145. CDSP Vol. XLI, no 24(1989), p.4

thousands burnt the houses of Meshkhetians, killed them and when prevented by the local militia and MVD troops assaulted and injured them with fire arms, fire bombs, knives, steel rods and stones.

There were also widespread incidences of arson and rioting. The Uzbek mobs directed their fury on economic facilities including factories and stores, buildings of party and Soviet agencies and institutions.<sup>146</sup> By the end of the first week of June, 11,000 MVD troops were called in to contain the ethnic conflagration. With the conflagration showing no signs of ebbing, more militiamen were pressed into service and by the end of the second week of June the number grew to 17,000. Major General Alexander Grienko, head of the Political Directorate of the MVD Internal troops reported that 103 civilians had been killed (mostly Meshkhetians), 1,010 people were injured including about 200 police officers and military personnel, 754

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146. For a detailed account of the pogromes against Meshkhetians see CDSP Vol. XLI, No. 23 (1989), pp.16-20, No.24 (1989), pp 1-8; No.25, pp 2-23, 32-33; No.27 (1989), pp 23-24; No.41,p25; SWB/SU/0480, (1989), pp B/1-B/4; SU.0594, pp.B/7-B/9, SU/0507, pp B/1-B/2.

houses, 28 state facilities and hundreds of vehicles were burnt or looted. Some 10000 guns and other weapons were confiscated.<sup>147</sup> The Uzbek authorities took prompt measures to evacuate 16,680 Meshkhetians from the violence prone areas and were given refuge in camps at the outskirts of Ferghana. The Meshkhetians were later evacuated to other republics.

Prime Minister of Russia N.I. Ryzkhov alongwith R.N. Nishanov, the First Secretary of the Uzbek communist party undertook an inspection tour of the riot torn areas. Expressing deep concern, the Prime Minister assured of taking measures to stop the bloody violence, proposed to set up a commission to investigate both the immediate provocation and the long term causes of the immediate provocation and the long term causes of the conflict and resolved to satisfy the demands of Meshkhetians.<sup>148</sup>

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147. FBIS-SOV-84-127 (July 51989); CDSP XLI, no..24(1989), p.4, No.25, p.32

148. For Ryzkhov's opinions, see CDSP Vol. XLI, No.24, pp 2-5.



Even after an abatement in the situation and despite strict security arrangements unauthorised rallies were held in Chirchik Yangi-Yul, Tashkent, Andizhan, Namangan and Ishtykhan in Samarkand demanding the expulsion of Meshkhetian Turks from Uzbekistan. Slogans for violence against these badgered people were also heard at the rallies.<sup>149</sup> There were attempts to incite pogroms in places which have escaped the holocaust of ethnic violence. Inflammatory leaflets were distributed and rallies held in Tashkent and Samarkand provinces to fan ethnic hatred and violence. Crimean Tatars and Meshkhetians held counter rallies demanding that they be protected from violent outrages. The ethnic fear percolated even into the capital city of Tashkent with hundreds of Turks emigrating from the city to the neighbouring republics.<sup>150</sup>

The fleeing of the Meshkhetians were now reported from other regions as well. The Meshkhetians, insecure and frightened, held demonstrations in Moscow to plead their cause of resettlement in Georgia on 19th June, 1989.<sup>151</sup> The evacuation of Meshkhetians

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149. SWB/SU/0480 (1989), p.B/2; CDSP Vol. XLI, No.24, p.8.

150. CDSP Vol. XLI, No.24, p.8

151. SWB/SU/0488 (1989), p(i).

from Uzbekistan which began on June 11 virtually turned into a mass exodus. By mid-July 40,000 of the 60,000 Meshkhetian population in Uzbekistan had settled in other parts of the USSR,<sup>152</sup> but chiefly in Russia and Azerbaijan. Many more citizens, especially Russians reported threats against them by indigenous population and "began voting with their feet".<sup>153</sup>

The storm had been building up (or was sought to be built up) for the last many months G. Kadyrov, Chairman of the republic's Council of Ministers explains, "Conflict situations between representatives of the indigenous nationality and Meshkhetians arose long ago in Ferghana."<sup>154</sup> Towards end of 1988 the support of Shukurov, Chairman of the province Chapter of the Meshkhetians Turk's organizing committee and Rady Khan Ismailov, another prominent Meshkhetian was sought to be enlisted by a Tashkent journalist, Alimzhan in driving away the Russians from Uzbekistan. The refusal of the Meshkhetians to support the Uzbeks in their conspiracy of launching pogroms against

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152. Yacov Ro'1, n.143, p.49 (Footnote)

153. Ibid, p. 31, 33.

154. SWB/SU/0594, p-B/7

Russians caused resentment among the former who directed their ire against the Meshkhetians.<sup>155</sup> Strangers had visited Margilan in 1988 from Andizhan to seek cooperation in organising uprisings in Namangan, Margilan and Andizhan. In April, 1989, written threats to Meshkhetians calling them to leave the republic appeared in various enterprises of the Ferghana valley. During the same period, case in which they were turned down for jobs became more frequent. A number of instances have been established in which attempts were made by using the recent census data to locate the residence of Turks. In some cases addresses were given by the police officers.<sup>156</sup>

The backdrop to ethnic strife was the worsening economic scenario in the Ferghana Valley. During the first three years of the five-year plan the average annual growth rate of real income fell to an extremely low level of only 3 per cent compared to 1.3 per cent of the previous Five Year Plan. In real terms, the per capita income amounted to a meagre 40 to 60 roubles a month. Monthly the deteriorating economic situation was the decreasing

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155. CDSP Vol. XLI, No.25 (1989), p.22

156. CDSP, Vol. XLI, No.24 (1987), pp. 6,7

per capita consumption of food products, since 1985. The production of grain, vegetables, potatoes and grapes had fallen in recent years. The growth rates of animal husbandary output also remained low. People attributed the falling agricultural outputs to cotton monoculture.

Another cause of exacerbating tension was the delays in allocation of houses and private plots for collective and state farm-workers. But what really aggravated the vexation of the people was the mounting unemployment figures 70,000 youths were sitting idle with any proper jobs. Large scale participation of the idle work force in arson and looting was therefore not really surprising given the employment situation.<sup>157</sup> In the context of acute unemployment problem and chronic delays in housing collective rumours that Meshkhetians were being give preference in housing allocation and jobs served to heighten the resentment of the Uzbeks against the Meshkhestians.

Rumours and unconfirmed news coverage notwithstanding, the central leadership at first attributed the programmes to Islamic fundamentalism. President Gorbachev who was then on a foreign

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157. For the worsening socio-economic condition fo the republics see, CDSP Vol. XLI No.24, p.6: No.4 (pp.26-27: SWB/SU/0594, p.B/8.

tour himself made a statement to this effect.<sup>158</sup> There is no doubt that arsonists at various rallies fluttered the green banner of Islam and shouted such slogans as "Long live the banner of Islam", "Long live Ayotollah Khomeini" etc.

Nishanov, First Secretary to the Uzbek CP, pointed out the "appearance of green banners within the columns of those committing excises and the distributin of fliers containing religious symbolism and signed by a previously unknown religious organization called the 'Holy Uzbeks.'"<sup>159</sup>

The action against the Meshkhetian Turks was also characterized as 'jihad'. The fact that the pogroms took place in the Ferghana valley, a strong hold of traditional Islam, the location of important holy places. e.g. Shahi-i-Mardam and one of the areas of Basmachi operations in the late 1920s, was one of the reason of ethnicity being expressed in religious terms. However, we have problems with the above proposition as outlined elsewhere<sup>160</sup>

A few days later, the Soviet and local authorities

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158. Yaacov Ro'1, n.143, p.25

159. CDSP Vol, XLI, No.24, p.4, 7, Yaacov Ro'1 n.143, p.32.

160. Yaacov Ro'1, n.26, p.60

contradicting the stance of central authority sought to portray that interethnic conflicts were the handiworks of "criminal class" who were partitioned and manipulated by "corrupt officials and disgruntled politicians"<sup>161</sup> The authorities contended that the perpetration of the pogroms were being used as an instrument in a well planned, organized, large-scale political operation that had been planned long before and was now skilfully implemented with an eye to destabilities the situation in the republic. The forces, according to the republican authorities were opposed to Perestroika.<sup>162</sup>

The drive against venal political and dissolute officials under Gorbachev, it was claimed by Nishanov, made them avowed enemies of the policy of restructuring and were promoting ethnic discord to destabilise the situation and undermine restructuring. The existence of a nexus between the criminals and the corrupt officials connected with Uzbek Affair expose was also sought to be established.<sup>163</sup> Without denying the participation of criminal gangs, fraudulent officials and unscrupulous politicians or

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161. SWB/SU/0507, p. B/1; CDSP, Vol. XLI, No. 25, p.21.

162. CDSP Vol. XLI, No.24, p.1.

163. Yaacov Ro'i, n.143, p.32

religious fundamentalists, to solely attribute to be a little far fetched and an exercise in oversimplification. Arguments pointing to religious motivation in carrying out the pogroms does not bear the weight of scrutiny. The victims of Uzbek violence were fellow Muslims, not followers of an alien religion. The invocation to the slogans of Islam were a less potent rallying point than the slogan advocating the killing of Turks and Russians. Here again Russian who are followers of Christianity or are atheists were not targetted. It was against the fellow Turks and coreligionists that the pogrom of ethnic cleansing were directed. Thus what we are witnessing is the assertion of Uzbek ethnic identity over an identity based on Pan-Islamism or one based on Pan-Turking. Later developments and events in the Osh oblast of Kyrghyzstan and the Tadzhik-Uzbek conflict over Samarkhand and Bukara confirms our above observations.

Secondly, the participation of Uzbeks in the whole incident was in one sense overwhelming. Not only the mass of people including the youths but Uzbeks at various levels of social and political life were charged with active connivance, instigation or even participation in the riots against - Meshkhetians. Marauding crowds intoxicating with

the wine of ethnic hatred were seen butchering Meshkhetians and burning their houses. In Kokand city, crowds numbering 5000 to 6000 burnt, pillaged and killed. The participation of Uzbek youth was not the least unexpected for most of them were unemployed and angry at Meshkhetians getting the choicest jobs. (This was, however, a rumour). One republican Komsomol organ throwing light on the mass participation of common Uzbek folk states that "frustration of poverty and humiliating social inequality" on one hand and on the other, the predominance of unthinking people had created a mad crowd that could neither be stopped nor talked to".<sup>164</sup>

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164. Ibid; 26



No less an authority than the then Prime Minister of USSR Ryzhkov indicated unequivocally a number of party workers and republican officials, who were most probably Uzbeks on their active abettment and connivance in the conflicts. He accepted without any hesitation that they supplied the bandits with gasoline and transportation, gave Vodka to youngsters, provided informations, about the locations of residence of the Meshkhetians. Even the intelligentsia was accused of instigating inter-ethnic strife. Lt. General Viacheslav Pankin, head of MVD's department of Criminal Investigation stated that among the active participants in the events were also representatives of the intelligentsia, many of them, "active members" of Birlik who endeavoured to "present the brigandage as a meeting for national unity". Birlik, though not a champion of national chauvinism and exclusivism was reported by Moskovskie Novosti to have organised public meeting calling for the closure of a chemical factory and in cotton mills at Kokand just prior to the pogroms. Pravda reported that tension especially in the town of Kuvasai was whipped up many months before the eruption by certain representatives of informal organisation". Nishanov, the Secretary of Uzbek CP, blamed Birlik for fomenting ethnic passions." To be blunt", he remarked, "recently the increase in tension has been facilitated by ... unofficial associations including

the principal reason for worsening of the standard of living is the migration to the republic of individuals from other regions of the country. Thus we see that the various sections in the Uzbek population - youth, government, party officials and the intelligentsia - promote or participate in inter-ethnic strife.<sup>165</sup>

Moreover ethnic strife was not confined only to Ferghana, Namangan and Andizhan provinces. In February and March 1990, ethnic violence spread to Buka and Parkent rayons of Tashkent province respectively. And again, pogroms were directed against the hapless Meshkhetian Turks. Following the pattern of Ferghana riots, rumours that Meshkhetian Turks had beaten up an Uzbek collective farm worker provided the pretext of the outbreak of ethnic violence. On 19 February, 1990 about 200 people organised pogroms against Meshkhetians, burning and looting their ouses. The violence continued to the next few days. On 22nd February about 50 houses of Meshkhetian Turks were burnt down.<sup>166</sup> 600 Meshkhetian were given refuge in Kumyshkan sanatorium in Parkent oblast of Tashkhent province. Feeling insecure, Meshkhetians numbering 4000 emigrated to other

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165. Ibid, pp 27-30.

166. SWB/SU/0695 (1990), p i

republics of the Soviet Union.<sup>167</sup> No deaths were however reported.

Closely following on the heels of the Buka episode was the occurrence of ethnic "disorder" in the Parkent rayon of Tashkent province. In all probability the latter was triggered by the former and in fact, on 3rd March a rally of 4,000 to 5,000 persons demanded that several hundred of Meshkhetian Turks be immediately removed from the rayon's sanatorium to which they had been temporarily evacuated following the interethnic conflict in the neighbouring rayons. The volatile crowd attacked and burnt the buildings of the rayon's party committee and Internal Affairs. Two were killed in police firing. The Meshkhetians who were earlier given refuge in Kumyskhan sanatorium were packed off to a different rayon.<sup>168</sup>

With the increasing incidence of violence perpetrated by the Uzbeks, Meshkhetians doubled their efforts for resettlement in Meshkhetia. On 23rd January, 1990, they organised a demonstration in front of Moscow TV centre to voice the demand for the recreation of their homeland in

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167. Ibid. SU/0705, p.B/6.

168. Ibid SU/0704, p.i, SU/0705 .B/6: SU/0706, p.B/5.

Georgia.<sup>169</sup> Immediately in the aftermath of Buka episode, the Meshkhetians lodged a protest against the pogroms to the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet and Council of Ministers of Uzbekistan. The meeting of the Meshkhetians and the Presidium of the Uzbek Supreme Soviet also adopted a joint appeal to the USSR Supreme Soviet to speed up the work of the commission on Meshkhetians to facilitate their early return to the ancestral land.<sup>170</sup> The USSR Supreme Soviet soon after adopted draft resolution on resolving the Meshkhetian issue. The Meshkhetian Turks held a demonstration on the 15th May in Moscow for an urgent redressal of their claims in the light of the draft resolution of the Supreme Soviet.<sup>171</sup> The Meshkhetians under the banner of Vatan in August 1990 announced the organisation of a peace march from Sochi in Southern Russian to Georgia to highlight their plight. Thousands of Meshkhetians from all parts of USSR assembled at Adler near Sochi town. The march, however, was called off by Y. Sarvarov, the Chairman of Vatan on the insistence of the

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169. SWB/SU/0679 (1990), pp.B/17-B/18.

170. SU/0700, p.i

171. SU/0766,p.i

Georgian authorities.<sup>172</sup>

Meshkhetians of Ferghana and Tashkent, the Meshkhetian from Kazakhstan picketed the Turkish embassy in Moscow in July 1990 for over a week to demand their resettlement in Turkey. Slogans like "Turkey is our homeland", "President Ozal save your countrymen", etc., were heard. The expectations of resettlement in Turkey added an international angle to the Meshkhetian Turk question.<sup>173</sup>

Another aspect of inter ethnic discord was the prevalence of anti-Russian stance among the Uzbek populace. During the months preceding the violent incidents in Ferghana valley, members of other nationalities, chief among them being the Russians, received threats as well. Even during the pogroms in June 1989, slogans calling for exterminating the Russians were heard. Again in February, 1990, leaflets not only in Tashkent but also in areas bordering Tadzhikistan were circulated demanding the immediate eviction of Russians from Central Asia. Russians fearing reprisals on the patterns of pogroms staged against Meshkhetians started leaving the republic in large numbers.

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172. SU/0841, pp.B/6-B/7; SU/0843, pp.B'7-B'8.

173. CDSP XLII, No.29, p.22; SWB/SU/1143, p.A4/3

The violent incidents at Namangan on December 2, 1990 also had a touch of ethnic hatred. Five unarmed soldiers of the Special Purpose Battalion, mostly Russians, were dragged from a local bus, tortured for more than a hour and then set afire by hysterical Uzbek youths numbering 3,000 on the specious plea that they had "stripped an Uzbek woman". Three civilians were killed by police in a bid to save the unfortunate soldiers.<sup>174</sup> The incident did have a tinge of ethnicity, for on the night of the very same day some 50 to 70 Uzbek youths attacked and made an abortive attempt to set afire a Russian orthodox church in a predominantly Uzbek neighbourhood.<sup>175</sup> The republican authorities and the local press attributed the outbreak of violence to the prevalence of a pronounced anti-army sentiment among the Uzbeks.

#### Uzbek-Khyrgyz Conflict

Ethnic conflicts in the Dsh oblast of Khyrgyzstan showed in ample measure that an identity with religious consciousness (Islam) or racial affiliation (Turkic) as its defining characteristic remains secondary to an identity

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174. SWB/SU/0938 (1990), p.i, SU/0940, pp.B/1, B/3; CDSP Vol XLII, no 48, p.32; No.5/.pp 13-15.

175. CDSP Vol. XLII, No.51, p.14.

based on "being an Uzbek" or a "Tadzhik" or a "Khyrgyz". Similarities in religious faith and racial origins notwithstanding, the Uzbeks and Khyrgyz clashed and killed each other. The identities that fought were not Islamic or Turkic but those which were derived from being an Uzbek and Khyrgyz. It is, therefore, not surprising that running battles between these two ethnic communities in Khyrgyzstan caused repercussions in the neighbouring republic of Uzbekistan. Here the Uzbeks were highly incensed at the plight of their fellow ethnic brethren in Khyrgyzstan.

Despite the fact, that for each of the five more important nationalities of Central Asia - Uzbek, Khyrgyz, Tadzhik, Kazakh and Turkmens, separate republics were recarved, a substantial number of these indigeneous nationalities are to be found in republics other than their own. It has already been noted that the unsatisfactory demarcation of borders is one of the more potent sources of ethnic conflict. The Osh oblast in Khyrgyzstan is contiguous to Uzbekistan and contains 500,000 Uzbeks i.e. more than 26 per cent of its total population. Here, on the 4th of June, in the town of Osh, there occurred ethnic clashes between the Uzbeks and Khyrgyz over a piece of land and it soon engulfed the entire province including the

districts of Uzgen, Saraku, Alal, Naukatsky and the city of Dzhdala-bad.<sup>176</sup>

The conflict in a matter of few days also spread to the republic capital Frunze (now renamed as Bishkek).<sup>177</sup> Unlike the situation in Ferghana province, where the Meshkhetians were at the receiving end i.e. the victims of pogroms staged by the Uzbeks, in Khyrgyzstan conditions of near civil war prevailed. Slogans were given exhorting the Khyrgyzs to travel to Osh to join their fellowmen in their fight against the Uzbeks. In fact there were instances when Khyrgyzs descended from the adjacent mountainous region on their horsebacks to render help to their "brothers" in the bloody confrontation. Rallies were organised demanding the expulsion of non-indigenous nationalists from the republic.<sup>178</sup> The Uzbeks, on their part, demanded adequate representation in the police force and party apparatus. Various informal organisation, Adolat, asked for the creation of an autonomous republic for the Uzbeks in Khyrgyzstan.<sup>179</sup>

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176. SWB/SU/0783, pp. B/3-B/6; CDSP Vol XLII, No.23 (1990), pp 1-5.

177. SU/0785, p.B/1, CDSP Vol XLII, NO.23, p.2,3.

178. CDSP Vol. XLII, NO.23, p.3; SU/0785, p-B/2

179. CDSP. Vol XLII, No.25, p.16; SWB/SU/0784, p.B/6.



However, more alarming was the imminent outbreak of war between Uzbekistan and Khyrgyzstan. Uzbeks of the Andizhan province that borders the Osh oblast were highly inflamed at the tragic fate of their fellow kinsmen. More than 15,000 Uzbeks from the province made a violent attempt to enter Khyrgyzstan and assist the fellow Uzbeks to fight the "Khyrgyz marauders". Two other factors exacerbated the situation. Thousand of Uzbeks from Andizhan province had crossed the borders with their flocks of sheep into the distant pastures of Khyrgyz steppes. Secondly, there was a fear that pogroms might be perpetrated against the 70,000 Khyrgyz residents of the Andizhan province. The Uzbek authorities took concrete measures to prevent the ethnic clashes in Khyrgyzstan from growing into a full fledged conflagration between the population of the republics. The crowd of 15,000 Uzbeks armed with spikes and spades were repulsed from the borders by army attachments. Remarked Vadim Bakatin, USSR minister of Internal Affairs, "On the borders between Andizhan and Osh stands a crowd of thousands of people armed with weapons itching to avenge the injuries that have been inflicted on Uzbeks in the latter region." Moreover troops and armoured vehicles were deployed to seal the borders and to foil further attempts by the Uzbeks to

cross border.<sup>180</sup> Secondly, President I. Karimov of Uzbekistan ordered on June 8, 1990 the imposition of emergency in the district contiguous to Khyrgyzstan - Jalal Kunduk, Kurgantep in Markhamat, Pakhtabad and Khojabad. Curfew was clamped on the city of Andizhan. The Presidential decree justified the introduction of the state of emergency in the context of "certain forces to stage mass disorders" in the districts. Further, the President sent a telegraphic message to Mikhail Gorbachev to dispatch defence ministry personnel to the riot region for "there is a real danger of events in the Osh region degenerating into a conflict between the two republics." Vadim Bakatin, USSR Minister of Internal Affairs, on orders of Gorbachev rushed 2850 troops to Osh Rayon to maintain order. Echoing grave concern he declared, "The local clashes may grow into a conflict between the two republics."<sup>181</sup>

The outbreak of ethnic upheavals in Khyrgyzstan created deep fault lines not only in the Khyrgyz society but also among the two republics. The ethnic upheavals in Khyrgyzstan took place in the context of confrontation over

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180. SWB/SU/0785 (1990), p.B/1; CDSP Vol. XLII, NO.23 (1990) p.4.

181. SWB/SU/0786, p.i, SU/0787, p.B/1; CDSP Vol. XLII, No.23 (1990), p.4.

scarce land resources, the demand of the Uzbeks for the creation of an autonomous republic in the background of growing unemployment, chronic shortage of housing and lack of representation in party and bureaucracy.

An upsurge in ethnicity was also seen in the realm of Tadzhik-Uzbek conflict over a variety of issues. However, Tadzhik-Uzbek ethnic feud would form the subject of discussion of the next chapter.

Two other communities in Uzbekistan - Crimean Tatars and Volga Germans gained prominence and public attention for voicing ethnic demands. The administrative units of both the Crimean Tatars and Volga Germans were dissolved by Stalin on charges of collaborating with Germany during World War II. Further, the two nationalities were deported from their "homelands" and transported to the different republics of Central Asia including Uzbekistan. The systematic dismantling of the coercive apparatus and the methodical whittling of the hegemonic powers of the CPSU, enabled the two nationalities in a more strident, organised and visible manner to air their grievances and demands.

## CHAPTER - IV

### Ethnic conflicts in Tadzhikistan

The Turkestan Commission entrusted with the task of "national delimitation" of boundaries in Central Asia, created in 1924 Tadzhik ASSR as a part of the Uzbek SSR. It was only on October 16, 1929, that the Tadzhik ASSR was accorded the full fledged status of "sovereign republic".<sup>1</sup> Tadzhikistan is the smallest Central Asian republic with an area of 143,000 sq. kms. Located in the south-east corner of the former Soviet Union, Tadzhikistan borders in the south on Afghanistan, in the east on Chinese province of Xinxiang, in the north on Kyrghistan and in the north-west on Uzbekistan. It is separated from Pakistan and India by the narrow "panhandle" of Wakhan corridor.<sup>2</sup> Tadzhikistan with a population of 5,093,000 (1989 census) has its capital at Dushanbe.

The locution "Tadzhikistan" is apparently derived from the taxonomic phraseology "Tadzhiks", the predominant ethnic group or nationality of the republic. Strictly speaking from the ethnohistorical point of view, the nomenclature Tadzhik denotes differentiation of Iranian

1. R. Vaidyanath, The Formation of the Soviet Central Asian Republics, New Delhi, 1967, pp.220-235.
2. The Europe World Year Book, London, 1992, p.2825.

language group from Turkic groups -Uzbeks, Kazakhs, Turkmen, Kyrghiz and Karakalpaks.<sup>3</sup> The term "Tadzhik" has, however, undergone several shifts of meaning over the centuries.<sup>4</sup> Derived from the Arabic tribal name "Tayy", the word Tadzhik came to be used simply for Arabs in Central Asia. Later the Iranian subjects of the Arabs in contrast to the Turks were called Tadzhiks. It underwent a further change in its meaning when it came to denote anyone who had accepted Islam. In modern times, for the Russians the terminology implied a trader of Central Asia. The Tadzhiks were alternatively called "sarts", a word used for sedentary population of Central Asia or "Sogdons", the inhabitants of ancient Sogdania. The varied connotations, the locution "Tadzhik" came to acquire over centuries reflects, in our opinion, the fluidity or tenuousness of the ethno-national identity of the Tadzhik people. The emergence of Islam during the recent years as a more potent identity reference point and as a dynamic political force virtually displacing the currents of Tadzhik ethnonationalist impulses to a peripheral plane buttresses our argument. We would,

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3. Louis Dupree in Richard V. Weeks (ed.), Muslim Peoples - A World Ethnographic Survey, Connecticut, 1978, p-389.
4. Shirin Akiner, Islamic Peoples of the Soviet Union, London, 1983, pp.303-304.

however, take up the discussion of the causes of the appearance of Islam as a more important socio-political force than the Tadjik ethnonational identity while analysing the rise of Tadjik ethnicity.

The ethnonational identity of the Tadjik people has been primarily determined by three historical conjunctures<sup>5</sup> : seventh century Arab conquest; the emergence of the Samanid dynasty in the tenth century; and the establishment of Bolshevik rule in 1917. Though the political power of the Arab conquerors proved to be ephemeral, the Islamic religion they brought with themselves till today is "the dominant unifying cultural and social force in the area". The Islamic faith created a "national tradition" which constitutes the socio-cultural core of the Tadjik ethnic identity. The life-cycle of the Tadjiks is largely governed by Islam. Birth, circumcision, marriage and death, are all ritually marked. Festivals are religious in origin. Further, by providing a framework of moral values and a code of strictures and injunctions that govern the structure of social action and behaviour patterns of a "Muslim", Islam

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5. For a detailed account of the historical origins of the Tadjik people see, T.Rakowska-Harmstone, Tadjikistan and the Tadjiks in Zev Katz(ed.) Hand Book of Major Soviet Nationalities, New York, 1975, pp.320-323; Great Soviet Encyclopaedia, New York, 1981, Vl.25, p.283; Shirin Akiner, n.4, pp 302-304; R.Vaidyanath, n.1, pp.12-15; V.Biryukov, Peoples of the Soviet Union, New Delhi, Undated, p.154.

has left a deep, distinct and lasting imprint on the Tadjik identity. Majority of the Tadjiks are Sunni Muslims of the Hanafi school except for the 'Pamiris' or 'Galchas' who are Ismaili shias. The 'Mountain Tadjiks' as they are also known inhabit the south-west of the Autonomous Gorno Badakshan province. They speak an assortment of Pamiri dialects which though belonging to the same south-west Iranian group of languages which the other Tadjiks converse in, are "virtually mutually incomprehensible". The Tadjiks of the "plains" consider them to be a separate non-Tadjik ethnic group inspite of identical, non-religious cultural patterns.<sup>6</sup>

The second crucial factor in shaping the Tadjik identity was the rise of Samanid dynasty in circa tenth century A.D. The process of ethnogenesis of the Tadjiks that began in the eight century A.D. with the advent of Islam saw completion in the tenth century A.D., the period coincident with the Samanid rule. The Samanid dynasty gave great impetus to the formation of the ethnic core of the Tadjiks. The reign of the Samanids is closely linked to the spread of a common Tadjik language which under their patronage became the dominant language. It is this Tadjik language which is now spoken by the

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6. Akiner, n.4, p.374.

Tadzhik people. The Tadzhik language belongs to the south-west Iranian group of languages and is closely related to Persian with which it shares a common linguistic and literary heritage. The outstanding contributions of poets Rudaki and Firdausi immensely enriched the Persian literature. Science reached new heights due to Avicenna's discoveries. The cultural, literary and scientific achievements of the Samanids constitute a glorious chapter in the history of Tadzhiks. Urgench, Merv, Samarkand and the Samanid capital, Bukhara emerged as renowned centres of culture in the medieval era.<sup>7</sup>

The important ethnic variables coalescing to constitute Tadzhik identity in the pre-Soviet period were language, religion and descent. It were, however, on the bases of two variables - language and descent to the exclusion of religion that the Bolshevik carved out the present Tadzhik republic. The new political unit was rigidly linked to the issue of territory.

Having already discussed in detail the Bolshevik influence on identity formation in the previous chapter, it would suffice to mention that the creation of republics on ethno-linguistic basis, clearly demarcated boundaries, investing the republic with a government and

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7. Zev Katz, n.5, p.320; Vaidyanath; n.1, p.14; Great Soviet Encyclopaedia, n.5, p.283.



administrative apparatus. Rapid modernisation of Tadzhik people in the wake of industrialization and spread of education and promotion of Tadzhik culture and literature cumulatively worked to reinforce and consolidate the ethnic identity of the Tadzhiks.<sup>8</sup> Commenting on the importance of Soviet rule with regard to ethnic revival of Tadzhiks, Rakowska-Harmstone remarks, "For Tadzhiks this resulted in revival of the Samanid heritage and differentiation between their Persian roots and the Turkic heritage of the Uzbeks."<sup>9</sup> In sharp contrast to the pre-Soviet period,

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- B. For general comments on the influence of Soviet period in the growth of ethnonationalist identity in Soviet Union see R.Vaidyanath, n.1, pp.228-235; Ronald Suny, State, Civil Society, and ethnic cultural consolidation in the USSR - roots of the national question in Lapidus, Zaslavsky and Goldman(ed.), From Union to Commonwealth National and Separation in the Soviet Republics, Cambridge University Press, 1992, pp.24-26; Gail Lapidus; Ethnonationalism and Political stability: The Soviet Case, World Politics, Vol.36, no.4 (July 1984), p. 566; Gregory Gleason, Federalism and Nationalism: The struggle for republican rights in the USSR, Boulder, 1990, pp. 3-4, 15, 81-101.

For specific reference see, T.A. Zhdanko, National State Demarcation and the Ethnic Evolution of the Peoples of Central Asia in I.T. Gringulevich and S.Ya, Kozlov(ed.), Ethnocultural Processes and National Problems in the Modern World Moscow, 1981, pp. 133-159; Barry M. Rosen; An Awareness of Traditional Tadzhik Identity in Central Asia, in E. Allworth(ed.), The Nationality Question in Soviet Central Asia, New York, 1973, pp 61-72; T. Rokowska Harmstone; Tadzhikistan and the Tadzhiks; n.5, pp 345-348.

9. T. Rakowska-Harmstone, Russia and Nationalism in Central Asia: The case of Tadzhikistan, Baltimore, John Hopkins University, 1970, Chapter 7.

the Tadzhiks now came to be imbued and inspired by the consciousness of having come to constitute a distinct people or group.

After a careful sifting of the source materials, one encounters three broad features of Tazhik ethnicity :-

(i) Revival of ethnic boundary markers - religion, language, descent, territory, etc. crucial to identity distinctiveness.

(ii). Proliferation of organisations and groups raising demands and grievances. Some of these also have on their agenda revival of language and culture.

(iii) Ethnic exclusivity and discord.

#### Revival of Ethnic Boundary Markers : (A) Religion

In the context of identification of the national mode of life and culture with religion, it is not surprising that once the iron lid of control and coercion was lifted by the Soviet state under Gorbachev there was a massive swing of popular assertion in

Islamic beliefs and practices. Evidences collected from numerous Soviet publications, official documents and party pronouncements and certain scholarly works on Islam corroborate the emergence of "Islamic revivalism" or

"resurgence" in the Central Asian republic of Tadjikistan. We would like to present an exhaustive account of the resurgence of Islam and its ramifications for the newly emergent Tadjik ethnonationalism. Numerous speeches and statements by republican leaders, academicians and officials attest to the "resurgence of Islam in Tadjikistan". No less a dignitary than the First Secretary of the Tadjik CP, K.M. Makhamov, while exhorting the party workers to intensify atheist propaganda drew attention to the increase in religiosity -- "Recently ... among the population the level of religiousness... has grown appreciably. Numerous facts bear witness to the stepped up activity on the part of the Muslim clergy and instances of the instruction of young people and the teenagers in the dogma of Islam, the reproduction and dissemination of literature and tape recordings....and the showing of video films of religious propaganda nature... have become more frequent. The most reactionary representatives of the clergy are trying to breathe new life into nationalistic vestiges and to revive outmoded and harmful customs and rites under the guise of national traditions".<sup>10</sup> In a candid revelation to foreign journalists, he accepted that "Islam is still a great power" in

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10. CDSP, Vol, XXXVIII No. 35, p.3

the republic,<sup>11</sup> Pravda on January 16, 1987 published an article by A. Tursunov, Doctor of Philosophy, based in Dushanbe, the Tadzhik capital, who wrote, "It is no secret that religious feeling is on the rise here...in our country..."<sup>12</sup> Similar concerns were expressed by M.S. Asimov, President of the Tadzhik SSR Academy of Sciences, "The revival of Islam is a fact which cannot be repudiated".<sup>13</sup>

Results of sociological surveys indicate that in the republic of Tadzhikistan as a whole 45 per cent of the people considered themselves believers.<sup>14</sup> However, religiosity has been more marked among the rural population of Tadzhikistan.<sup>15</sup> Only after taking into consideration the fact of 70 percent of Tadzhik population being rural, that the full import of the magnitude of religious revivalism in Tadzhikistan can be understood. First Secretary Makhamov remarked, "Part of the population, especially in rural areas, continues to

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11. Azade-Ayse Rorlich, Islam and Atheism: Dynamic Tension in Soviet Central Asian in William Fiermann(ed.) n.

12. CDSP Vol. XXXIX No. 3, p.7.

13. SWB/SU/0041 (1988) p.B/4.

14. Rorlich, n.11, p.190.

15. CDSP. Vol. XXXVIII No.35, p.5; CDSP Vol, XLIII, No.40, p.3; Barry M. Rosen, n.8, p.72; T.Rakowska-Harmstone n.5, p.349.

unquestionably carry out the precepts of the Sharia."<sup>16</sup> Even the intelligentsia in Tadzhikistan was found to be following the precepts of Islam. One-third of the teachers of a school in Tadzhikabad to a question "whether you find religion useful" answered in affirmative. Majority of the employees of a hospital in the same city also answered to the query in positive terms.<sup>17</sup> More disturbing to the Communist leadership was the "fascination" of youth with religion. R.K. Alimov, First Secretary of Tadzhikistan's Youth Communist League, admitted that students were succumbing to "the influence of bourgeois ideology and religion."<sup>18</sup> In a sample survey conducted at Rural Vocational Technical School No. 39 in Garm district, majority of the pupils responded in affirmative to the question - "Do you find religion useful?"<sup>19</sup> Every third student of the age group 12-14 in the secondary school of Kusangir district (Kurgan Tyube region), were believers.<sup>20</sup> In 1986, a survey on the level of religiosity of students of the medical and pedagogical

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16. CDSP, Vol. XXXVIII, No.35 p.5

17. CDSP, Vol. XXXIX No.3, p.8; CDSP, Vol. XXXVIII, No.35 p.4.

18. CDSP Vol. XXXIX, No.9 p.9.

19. CDSP, XXXVIII No.35, p.4.

20. Alexandre Bennigsen, 'Islam in Retrospect', Central Asian Survey, Vol. 8 No.2, p.92.

schools in Kurgan-Tyube province gave the following results - 16.8 percent of the students claimed to be believers, 39.5 percent were hesitant, 28.6 percent said to be non-believers, 6.9 percent as atheists and 8.2 percent refused to answer. The hesitating according to the survey "may well ask for the help of religion if placed in exceptional circumstances".<sup>21</sup> An enquiry showed that on the Maxim Gorky and Karategin state farms and in the Kaznak, Kalal Surkh, Kalanak and a number of other rural soviets many people were drawn especially youth to the religious services. The general observance by rural young people of the Uraza fast during the month of Ramzaan and their participation in prayer meeting and other religious rites has been widespread. The youth including the members of the YCL followed their Komsomol wedding with a formal marriage ceremony presided by a mullah. In one instance they attacked Fazliddin Mukhammadiyev, a well known writer of the republic for his atheistic propaganda.<sup>22</sup>

Women in Central Asia have been found to be highly religious. A Soviet expert on Islam opines that the root

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21. Marie Broxup, 'Islam in Centralo Asia since Gorbachev', Asian Affairs (London), Vol. XVIII (Part III), Oct. 1987. p.289.

22. CDSP, Vol. XXXIX No.9, p.9; No.3, p.8.; CDSP, Vol. XXVIII No.35, pp.4-5.

cause of the relatively large influence of Islam on Central Asian women "is the fact that fewer of them are employed outside the home".<sup>23</sup> It is chiefly among them that maraboutique practices are widely prevalent and is largely responsible for the sway of tabibs and ishans in the countryside.<sup>24</sup> The Secretary of Leninabad Oblast Party Committee, Bikhadzhal Rakhimova explicating the state of women in Tadzhikistan commented, "Without going deeply into history, I will just say that in the years of Soviet power our women have rid themselves of much what formerly made them dependent. But the traditional way of life, ignorance and superstition are sometimes an insuperable chasm."<sup>25</sup> It is in the context of increased religiosity among women that S.Dadabaeva, the Director of Scientific Atheism Department of the Philosophy Faculty of the Tadzhik SSR Academy of Sciences made a strong plea for a greater propaganda effort among women.<sup>26</sup>

Even the Communists and other officials who till yesterday were avowed atheists came to be afflicted by the contagion of Islam. First Secretary of Tadzhik CP in a

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23. CDSP, Vol. XXXIX No.3, p.8.

24. Olivier Roy, 'Islam and Central Asia', Seminer No.393, 1992, p.29.

25. SWB/SU/0259 (1988), p.B/2.

26. Yaacov Roi, The Task of Creating the New Soviet Man: Atheistic Propaganda in the Soviet Muslim Areas, Soviet Studies, Vol. XXXVI, No.1, p.32.

forthright acknowledgement of party officials involvement in religious activities confessed, "Instances are known in which some comrades including those who are supposed to ensure the observance of the legislation on cults are themselves guilty of double dealing..."<sup>27</sup> Communists were discovered taking part in religious ceremonies, "especially where family and every day life relations are concerned."<sup>28</sup> To the astonishment of the Tadzhik CP officials and communists were found to be frequenting prayer houses.<sup>29</sup> The participation of officials in religious activities was widespread is evident from a survey conducted in Kurgan-Tyube where 75 p.c. of the official refrained from answering a question about the reasons for their reluctance to undertake atheistic propaganda.<sup>30</sup> In fact in 1985 twenty communist officials were expelled from the Tadzhik CP "for participation in religious holidays and rites."<sup>31</sup> One 'expose' reported in 1986 alleged that party organizations of five Tadzhik Sovkhozses not only refrained from disseminating

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27. CDSP Vol. XXXVIII No.35, p.4.

28. CDSP, Vol. XXXIX, No.9, p.9

29. CDSP, Vol. XXXVIII, No.16, p.21

30. SWB/SU/0128 p.B/3

31. CDSP Vol. XXXVIII, No.35, p.4.



atheistic propaganda but went to the other extreme of protecting those who observed religious rituals. Certain Tadzhik farm officials tacitly supported its conversion of their guest house into prayer houses and allowed nine chaikhanas to serve the same function.<sup>32</sup> Instead of taking steps to curb the objective of mullahs, officials in the Leninabad provinces were found to have allowed the mullahs to operate and preach on the payment of 13 roubles. The ishans and Khatiba regarded the payment of levy as official recognition and authorization of their works<sup>33</sup>.

Heightened religiosity of the people was seen in devout observances of the daily five prayers, ramzaan and rites pertaining to life-cycle. Two years ago there were 17 mosques but today there are 2870 operational mosques in Tadzhikistan besides the proliferation of thousands of prayer houses. Almost everyday mullahs open new mosques built entirely with public donations.<sup>34</sup> The Lenin Kolkhoz in Dushanbe provided land for the construction of a mosque.<sup>35</sup> Tadzhikistan's first medresseh was opened in

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32. Rorlich, n.11, pp. 189-190

33. CDSP, Vol. XXXVIII, No.35, p.5

34. Ahmed Rashid, in Far Eastern Economic Review, January 1992.

35. Olivier Roy, fn, 18, p.29

September 1990 at Dushanbe by Gazi Akbar Turadzhanzade. Numerous other medressehas were built at Khudzhand, Kurgan Tyube and Gissa rayon.<sup>36</sup> Clandestine religious schools imparting Quranic and Shariah teachings have been unearthed in Dushanbe.<sup>37</sup> The business in illegal Islamic publication called samizadt or Islamizadt was flourishing.<sup>38</sup> Kommunist Tadzhikistana, the official republican newspaper revealed that a thousand copies of Islamizadt literature were confiscated in Kurgan Tyube from one Kurban Umaru. In March 1989, Dushanbe resident, Gaffer Zaidullayev was caught distributing "ideologically detrimental materials of libelous content "Jihad" pamphlets and propaganda with pan-Islamic ideas.<sup>39</sup> Islamizadt literature chiefly pertained to writings and speeches of Ayatollah Khomeini, A Maddudi, the founder of the Jamat-e Islami of Pakistan and that of Jamal Din Afghani, the pan Islamic ideologue. Books by Hasan Al-Bonna the founder of the Muslim religious extremist organisation, the Muslim Brotherhood and by M. Kutba and S. Kutba of the same organisation have been in popular demand. Religious video film called

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36. SWB/SU/0825 (1990), p.B/5.

37. Amir Taheri, Crescent in a Red Sky, London, 1989, p.194; Alexandre Bennigsen, n.20, p.101.

38. Amir Taheri, n.37, pp. 195, 197-200.

39. CDSP, Vol. XLI No. 11 (1989) p.24.

'magnizadt' imported from abroad are in great demand<sup>40</sup>. Certain other developments point to the increase influence of Islam on Tadzhik society.

People have started sporting Islamic symbols, discarded the Russian greeting and taken to Islamic style of Asalamwalaikum, giving their new born babies the name Ayatollah and reverted to Islamic dress-forms, especially the veil.<sup>41</sup> The cult of 'holy places' and pilgrimages is widespread in Tadzhikistan. In practically all Central Asian Kishlaks there is a mazaar - the tomb of the local saint - which is highly venerated. According to S. Polyakov, in Tadzhikistan especially revered were the graves of Khojas and Saiyyids whose families were claimed to have descended from the Prophet Mohammed<sup>42</sup> Also held in special esteem are the mausoleums of Sufi saints. Mausoleum of Maulana Yakub Charkhi, a Naqshandi on the outskirts of Dushanbe, has been restored. Women and children

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40. SWB/SU/0212, (1988) p.B/4, Taheri, n.37, pp. 195, 197.

41. K. Warikoo, Soviet Central Asia in Ferment in K.Warikoo and D. Norbu (ed.) Ethnicity and Politics in Central Asia, New Delhi, 1992, p.68, Taheri, n.37, p.193.

42. Vitaly Naumkin, Islam In the States of the Former USSR' Annals, AAPSS, 524, Nov. 1992, p.133; SWB/SU/0259 (1988), p.B/1.

frequently undertake pilgrimages to the holy place.<sup>43</sup> Mausoleum of another saint, Amir Said Khamdani, in the city of Kulyab has been turned into a holy place. Leninabad province enjoys the distinction of having the largest number of holy places.<sup>44</sup>

The unofficial mullahs and Sufi tariqas the protagonists of 'parallel Islam' are primarily responsible for religious revivalism. Instances in recent years of mullahs taking initiative to collect funds for repairs or construction of mosques, mausoleums, medressehs and prayer houses and for other community purposes are numerous in Ura Tuybe, Kanibadam, Kommunistichesky, Kobodiyen, Ordzhonikidzeabad, and Tursunzadi districts<sup>45</sup>. The parallel mullahs ran clandestive medressehs and printing presses for dissmination of Islam<sup>46</sup>. The Khutbas or sermons preached at mosques by the parallal mullahs are telling. The sermons exhorted the faithful to return to religions practies, while deploring the deleterious influence of Russain culture, especially on women. The mullahs demanded religious teachings in schools, halal mutton, ban on sale of alcohol,

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43. Oliver Roy, fn.24, p.29.

44. CDSP Vol. XXXVIII No. 35 p.

45. Ibid, p.5

46. Alexandre Benniqsen, n.20, p.101

the official observance of Islamic holidays and the shift from Sunday to Friday for the weekly holiday. Their tirade against un-Islamic culture is particularly noteworthy.<sup>47</sup>

However, far more significant than the phenomenon of religious resurgence in Tadzhikistan per se is the actuality of Islam having donned the political mantle in the republic. Political Islam as a matter of fact, with its avowed aim of creating an Islamic state has emerged as a major rallying point and in the process has completely overshadowed the ethnic dimension of the republic's society and politics. The rapidly unfolding events in the republic distinctly point to the inexorable reality of Tadzhikistan having been gripped by the forces of Islamic Revolution. The patent possibility of Tadzhikistan going the Iran or Afghanistan way is causing tormenting nightmares to the erstwhile albeit reformed communist regimes of other Central Asian republics including Uzbekistan. The political landscape of the region would experience tectonic shifts if the Islamic Revolution is brought to successful, consummate end. The ethnonationalist basis of the republics of Central Asia is under serious threat from the militant

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47. Oliver Roy, fn.24, p.27

pan-Islamic ideology. Unlike the other Central Asian republics the emergence of Islam as more crucial factor in Tadzhik society and politics in contrast to the other bases of ethnonational identity e.g. language or to the Tadzhik identity itself needs careful scrutiny and explanation.

Militant Islam in Tadzhikistan is a curious admixture of religious fundamentalism, and political intrigues and manoeuvres and Khomeinism. Further, an interplay of ethnicity and the changing geo-political scenario both at the regional and global level shapes to a lesser or greater extent the contours of militant Islam in Tadzhikistan. The rise of religious fundamentalism in Tadzhikistan is seen in the emergence of two particular brands of Islam - Wahabism and Islamic Renaissance party, Wahabism deriving its name and inspiration from Abdul Wahab, a Saudi puritanical religious preacher of the eighteenth century, seeks to restore Islam to its original pure, sublime form. In October 1986, First Secretary of Tadzhik CP acknowledged the existence of Wahabism - "In particular, in Kulyab and Kurgan Tyube provinces--- adherents of Wahabism, a religio-political movement that is extremely reactionary and nationalistic have appeared"<sup>48</sup> Besides its fanatical streak, Wahabism

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48. CDSP, Vol. XXXVIII, No.35, p.5.

sought to undermine and overthrow the Soviet System. According to the Soviet sources, a self-styled Wahabi Kalandar Sadurdinov, was for many years in the Kurgan Tyube province, been delivering sermons on the role of Islam in the life of Moslems and of the need to strengthen its time-honoured foundations. Often, he read to the gatherings, chapters from the Quran and saw to it that religious ceremonies and festivals were carried out as prescribed by Quranic injunctions. The mullah has been criticising, "Soviet Union internationalist assistance to the Afghan people" and described the stationing of Soviet troops in Afghanistan as an attempt to turn "the Afghans into infidels". He had a strong following not only among ordinary collective farmers but also among the intelligentsia.<sup>49</sup>

In the settlement of Bustonkala, Kommunistchesky district, Wahabi mullahs K. Ibragimov and K. Timurov have organised religious schools for children.<sup>50</sup> More militant and charismatic is mullah Abudullah Saidov who advocates the revival of the purity of Islam and authentic monotheism. Saidov rejected 'official Islam' and accuses it of apostasy. He was one of the early proponents of the establishment of Islamic state in

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49. CDSP, Vol. XXXIX, No.9, p.10.

50. Ibid.

Tadzhikistan. The mullah in 1986 persuaded his believers to petition the 27th party Congress to form an Islamic state in the republic. Failing in this he exhorted his followers at the Turkistan State Farm in the Vaksh district to "virtually take up arms" to realise their dream. The mullah was arrested in August, 1986 for inciting the population against the Soviet state.<sup>51</sup>

The situation was so alarming that in a severe crackdown, dozens of these mullahs were arrested and put on trial. Mullah Saidov was sent to a Siberian labour camp for two years. In a most revealing information concerning the political aspect of Wahabism, V.V. Petkel, Chairman of Tadzhik KGB stated, "dozens of trials were held in 1986-87 of ring leaders, unofficial Muslim Clerics who not only fanned religious sentiments but also called for a jihad against the existing system. They had for themselves set the goal of infiltrating Communist Party, Soviet and law enforcement organs in order to facilitate hostile designs".<sup>52</sup>

On being released after spending 2 years in Siberian camps, he now carries his ministry openly. In

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51. The Islamic Influence on Nationalism in Soviet Central Asia', Problems of Communism, July-August, 1990, p.61; Marie Broxup, n.21, p.289; Rorlich, n.11, p.208

52. Oliver Roy, n.24, p.29.



a recent interview he supported the Algerian FIS and pleaded for an Islamic economy. He is now an active member of the Islamic Renaissance party<sup>53</sup>.

The war in Afghanistan played its role in the growth of Wahabism and may have been directly influenced by the Afghan Mujahideens.

More significant is the rise of a populist and political Islam embodied in the party of Islamic Renaissance. The Party was formed at Astrakhan on June 9, 1990 on the initiative of the Muslims of the RSFSR<sup>54</sup>. Today it includes branches in all the former Muslim republics and is particularly strong in Tadzhikistan. Ignoring the ban orders on the formation of the Islamic Renaissance Party in Tadzhikistan by the Tadzhik Supreme Soviet, its delegates held the founding Congress at Chortut village, not far away from Dushabe on the 9th October, 1990.<sup>55</sup> The ban orders and the subsequent heavy fines imposed on some of the party's leaders in no way affected the activities of Islamic Renaissance Party. In an interview to the newspaper

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53. Alexandre Bennigsen, n. 20, p.103

54. CDSP, Vol. XLIII, No.1, p.17; Oliver Roy, n.24, p.29; laumin, n.42, p.134.

55. SWB/SU/0896, p.B/11; SWB/SU/0978, pp. B/15-B/16; CDSP, XLII No.47(1990) p.21; CDSP, XLII, No.13 (1991) p.17.

Komsomolet Tadzhikistan, Davlat Usman, a member of the Coordination Committee and the Council of Ulemas of the IRP candidly admitted that his party was very much active in the republic with more than 10,000 members.<sup>56</sup> After its legalisation in August 1991<sup>57</sup> the Party held its inaugural Congress on the 26th October and declared its independent Status vis-a-vis the parent I.R.P. The Chairman of the IRP is a charismatic mechanic, Muhammed Sharif Himmat Zade and is called by his followers the "Gulbuddin of Central Asia" after the fundamentalist Afghan Mujahideen leader Hekmetyar. Zade spent more than a decade in the political underground helping to build the IRP. He was trained with the Afghan rebel and has close links with the Muslim Brotherhood in the Middle East and the Jamat-e-Islami of Pakistan.<sup>58</sup> Speaking of the plans of the IRP, Zade in an interview to the correspondent of 'Nezavisimaya Gazeta' remarked that his party sought to establish "Islam... as the state religion and that we shall live according to the laws of Islam"<sup>59</sup>. Echoing similar

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56. CDSP, XLII, No.47 (1990), p.21.

57. Sophie Quinn - Judge, Far Eastern Economic Review, October 3, 1991; However, according to the SWB reports (SWB/SU/1173,p(i), the party was still demanding legislations during the September demonstratins.

58. Ahmed Rashid, Far Eastern Economic Review, January 9, 1992, p.18.

59. SWB/SU/1211, P.B/7.

view point is his deputy, Daulat Usman, "We have a model of society to offer - the very model that has existed since the time of Prophet Muhammed himself. Everything ought to be the way Allah ordered. No deviations are to be tolerated".<sup>60</sup>

In a short span of few years of its formation, the Islamic Revival Party in league with Rastokhez and Democratic party started flexing their political muscle and took the first tentative steps towards the ouster of the Communist regime. In the beginning of September, 1991, the IRP and other opposition parties were not only able to displace the First Secretary of Tadzhik CP, K. Makhamov from the presidential post in a sort of coup d'etat for his support to the August putsch to remove Gorbachev but was also successful in foisting their nominee Asolonov as the acting President. Asolonov obliged the IRP when he decreed the suspension of Tadzhik CP, nationalised its property and dismantled the Lenin Monument in Dushanbe.

However, the Communists regrouped and got elected Rakhmon Nabyev the President, replacing Asolonov, revoked the suspension of CP, banned IRP and declared a state of emergency in Tadzhikistan. However, IRP, Rastokhez and

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60. Michael Serrill, Time No.24, (June 15, 1992), p.26.

Democratic party joined hands and came together under the banner of Union of Democratic Forces to overthrow the communists. It held rallies in the capital Dushabne and the province of Kulyab and Kurgan-Tyube demanding the dissolution of Tadjik C.P.<sup>61</sup> Though not successful it succeeded in extracting the promise from the communists of holding nationwide elections to select the President on October 27, 1991.

In evidence of the growing appeal of its fundamentalist Islamic ideology, the IRP supported candidate Khudnazarov of the Democratic party secured 34 percent of the total vote in the presidential election. The communist party candidate Rakhmon Nabiyev was elected as the President with 58 percent of the popular votes.<sup>62</sup> A detailed elaboration of the birth and rise of the IRP warrants the following conclusions :-

- (1) The growing clout of the IRP, especially in the southern and eastern provinces of Kurgan Tyube and Gorno Badakshan region and as also in Kulyub province, is an index of the rising Islamic

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61. For a detailed account of th events from September to November 1991 see CDSP Vol. XLVII, No.39 (1991), p..9-11; CDSP Vol. XLIII NO.40 (1991), pp.1-5; SWB/SU/1173 p(i); Ibid: SU/1186,p.B/5; SU/1187,p.B/7; SU/188, p.B/2; SU/1190, p (ii); SU/1191, p.B/1

62. SWB/SU/1213, p.B/15.

consciousness of the Tadzhiks. The Chief spiritual leader of Tadzhikistan has played no less a role in the rise of religious consciousness among the Tadzhiks. Unlike the official clergy of the other republics of Central Asia, the Gazi Kolon has effected a break with the state authorities. He wields considerable influence in both ecclesiastic matters and political affairs of the republic. With regard to ecclesiastical matters, the chief Gazi has watered down the control of the government. It is the official clergy under the chief Gazi that has taken lead in opening mosques and medressehs. Further, and more significantly, he has handed over the mosques to the new radical clergy and allowed them to carry out other religious ceremonies e.g. funerals, brushing aside the authentic demand that the mosques should be run by official clergy.<sup>63</sup> Secondly, being a people's deputy and an influential religious leader the Gazi exercises ample political clout. The Gazi Kolon was one of the potential candidates in the last year's presidential elections but later withdrew. He has struck a medium path in Tadzhik politics between the two extreme postures of the former communists and the IRP.

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63. SWB/SU/1213. p.8/15.

Not in favour of an Islamic state, the Qazi nevertheless advocates the establishment of "Islamic democracy". Spelling out his ideas on the future of Tadzhikistan, he remarked, "We must combine the experience of Western European democracy with Islamic laws. Tadzhikistan must undoubtedly be a democratic state but the role of Islam must be sufficiently great and any government must reckon with the Islamic clergy".<sup>64</sup> In 1991 as a people's deputy he submitted a set of proposals that would have gone a long way in Islamisation of the republic - declare Muslim holidays as non-working days, to switch the weekly holiday from Sunday to Friday, to serve halal mutton, ban alcohol, to exempt mosques and clergy from land taxes, etc.

There are other reasons as well in the rise of religious revivalism. Given the numerical superiority of Turkic peoples in Central Asia and talks of Pan-Turkism in the region is creating anxiety among the Tadzhik who feel encircled. It may be one of the reasons of Tadzhik emphasis on their Islamic identity vis-a-vis ethnic identity and also the plausible interest in developing close ties with Iran and Afghan

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64. Ibid, p. B/16.

Mujahideen.<sup>65</sup>

In a recent radio broadcast from Tadzhikistan, a call was aired for the creation of "Great Iran". The radio stated, "present-day Iran is the only country with which Tajiks and Tajikistan has linguistic, religious and blood connections... Tadzhikistan's inclination towards Iran is like brother embracing brother.. Our eyes, minds and our way is towards the Great Iran".<sup>66</sup> Turkey came in for bitter criticism for promoting pan-turkism. It stated, The growth of religious consciousness in Tadzhikistan has, however, in no less measure been promoted by Iran and Afghanistan, two nations in severe grip of Islamic fever. Teheran in an active bid to play greater role in Central Asia and to fulfill its larger aim of exporting Islamic Revolution is accordingly exploiting its close cultural, religions and linguistic affiliations, to develop good relations with Tadzhikistan. Iran is also using the "economic trump" as well to bring the republic under its orbit of influence.<sup>67</sup>

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65. S.H.Hunter, Nationalist Movements in Soviet Asia, Current History, Vol. 89, (October 1990), p.338.

66. SWB/SU/1471, pp. A1/3-A1/4.

67. For the Iranian motivation and compulsions in developing relation with Tadzhikistan see, Graham E. Fuller, Emergence of Central Asia, Foreign Policy (78), Spring 90, pp. 49-67; P. Stobdan, Central Asian Regional Security, Strategic Analysis, 15(5) August 92, pp. 465-85;

More overt role in subverting the existing Communist regime and replacing it with an Islamic regime is being played by the Afghan Muzahideen. Its assistance to the IRP and other opposition groups fighting the communists has increased substantially after the overthrow of the Najibullah regime.<sup>68</sup>

(2) Unlike the regimes of the erstwhile albeit reformed communists in the other Central Asian republics, the communists in Tadzhikistan have stuck to their guns. In spite of the dismantling of communist structure in the former Soviet Union, the communists have been successful in holding onto their own against repeated assaults on its bastion and have been successful in rallying thousands of people in their support in the provinces of Khodjent, Kulyab and other regions as well.

(3) Amidst the conflicting trends of emerging consciousness, ethnonational identity of the Tadzhiks seems to be getting blurred.

#### Linguistic Ethnonationalism

One of the components of ethnicity e.g. language is an essential constituent of Tadzhik identity. A vigorous

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68. For further details see, Abha Dixit, Tajikistan : Engulfed by Flames of Afghan Civil War, Vol. XV, No. 9, pp. 873 - 881.



movement during the last few years of the Gorbachevian regime arose in Tadzhikistan with language as its primary agitational focus. The movement grew in strength with the widespread support of the republic's intelligentsia-writers, academics, scientists, etc., culminating in the declaration of Tadzhik as the State language of Tadzhikistan in July 1989. Already at the all-Union level, the March 1987 round table discussion organised by the Presidium of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR and the journal Istoriya SSSR, the March 1988 plenum of the USSR Union of writers and the debates in the columns of journal Druzhiba narodov in May-June 1988 revealed deep seated differences among the Soviet intellectuals on the linguistic question that often took the colour of ethnonationalist divide. The official Soviet policy of national Russian bilingualism came in for sharp criticism for promoting Russian at the expense of national languages. The intellectuals expressed grave concern at the future of national language and urged immediate corrective measure to safeguard and promote them.<sup>69</sup>

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69. Micheal Kirkwood, Glasnost, The National Question and Soviet Language Policy, Soviet Studies, Vol. 43, No. 1 (1991), pp 70 - 77. For a discussion of the Soviet Language Policy also see, Paul R. Brass, Ethnicity and Nationalism, New Delhi, 1990, pp. 312-313; John B. Dunlop, 'Language, Culture, Religion and National Awareness' in Robert Conquest (ed.), The Last Empire : Nationality and the Soviet Future, Stanford, 1986, p. 11 - 18.

The academic ferment on linguistic plane percolated down and affected the ethonationalists climate in the republics.

The first stirrings of discontent on the linguistic issue in Tadzhikistan surfaced in late 1988. Academician M. Shukrov of the Tadzhik Academy of Sciences launched a scathing criticism of the Soviet language policies which in his opinion promoted "policy of Russification".<sup>70</sup> The switching over from the Arabic alphabet first to Latin and then to Cyrillic script in the 1930's to the attempts in the present times to introduce Russian languages in the republics at the lower grades of all elementary schools according to him obviously led to the neglect of Tadzhik language and various other deleterious effects. T. Dzhabarov, lecturer of the Dushanbe Pedogical Institute drew attention to the limited usage of the language in Tadzhikistan national life. It was pointed out that "the use of Tadzhik was increasingly limited to the family and school". Party organisations, Soviet bodies, ministries and departments, industrial and construction enterprises, scientific institutions etc., did not use the Tadzhik language. Not only basic administrative work and documents on technology and science but also usual official business were also not

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70. SWB/SU/0349, pp..B1/5-B1/6.

covered in the Tadzhik language. The restricted use of Tadzhik in socio-political sphere was "cause for particular concern and anxiety". Secondly, the dereliction of Tadzhik resulted in various abuses creeping into the language structure. Flagrant distortions in wording, phraseology, sentence construction and other rules and laws of the language according to the Tadzhik intellectual inevitably would "signal the death of the language." The displacement of Arabic alphabets and the introduction of Cyrillic script in 1930's is a matter of much resentment among the Tadzhiks. The sudden shift in the script deprived generation of Tadzhiks of a knowledge of their historical legacy and in fact were cut off from their root.<sup>71</sup>

The restricted usage of Tadzhik language, invasion of distortions in Tadzhik grammar and abandonment of the Arabic script cumulatively served to heighten the indignation of Tadzhik people. Yeverani Bazzazi or 'Helpers of Perestroika', a group set up at the end of 1988 by prominent Tadzhik intellectuals including a USSR Supreme Soviet deputy Bazar Sabir organized demonstrations in Dushanbe demanding Tadzhik to be made the state language<sup>72</sup>. Tadzhikistans' principal scientific group

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71. Ibid, pp.B/5-B/6; SWB/SU/0367 pp.B/2-B/3.

72. P.L. Dash, Travails of Perestroika : The Breakway Syndrome New Delhi, 1992, p. 410.

Khazina formed a cultural circle, the Tadzhik Language Fund to promote classical Tadzhik literature and to espouse the cause of the Tadzhik language<sup>73</sup>. At a conference of Tadzhik journalists, writers and others from the intelligentsia convened on 24th - 25th November, 1988 at Dushanbe and a month later in December 1988 M. Shakrov and nine other intellectuals put forward a set of three demands:<sup>74</sup>.

- (1) The Tadzhik language be recognised as the State language. To this effect a special article should be enshrined in the Tadzhik constitution.
- (2) To ensure legal guarantees for use of the language in state bodies, in enterprises, departments, secondary and higher education, science and technology, health and municipal services, etc., a special law on the Tadzhik SSR languages be framed.
- (3) A special commission with the participation of linguistic, sociology and legal experts should be appointed to draw up draft law on the status of Tadzhik and other languages in the republic.

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73. Bess Brown, Public Role in Perestroika in Central Asia. Central Asian Survey Vol. 9 No. 1 pp. 87-96; Shireen Hunter, n. 64, p. 327.

74. SWB/SU/0367, p.B/3.

These measures in their opinion were imperative to save the Tadjik language from possible "extinction". To ensure its "survival" and to promote its development, the Tadjik intellectuals argued resolute measures according privileges and advantages to the national language is an absolute necessity.

Bowing to the nationalist demands, the Tadjik government appointed a commission to frame a draft law on the status of Tadjik and other languages. Already in July 1988 the central committee of the Tadjik CP adopted two decisions on the question of improving and perfecting the study of Tadjik language in the Republic<sup>75</sup>. The Commission received numerous letters pertaining to the need of introducing the study of Arabic Script.<sup>76</sup>

The agitation for the declaration of Tadjik as the state language and the reintroduction of Arabic script assumed a militant form. On 24th February, 1989, a Tadjik crowd comprised chiefly of students and again in March 1989 demonstrators in Dushanbe demanded the recognition

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75. Devendra Kaushik, Cultural Aspects of Soviet Nationalities Policy in Central Asia, Warikoo and Norbu (ed.), no. 66 p. 128

76. Yaacov Roi, The Islamic Influence on Nationalism in Soviet Central Asia, Problem of Communism, July-August 1990, p. 57 (Footnote)

of Tadzhik as the republic's official language and the displacement of Cyrillic script by the Arabic alphabet system. The crowd turned violent in March 1989 beating up party members that led to the arrest of several students.<sup>77</sup>

Communist Tadzhikistana accused the "organisers of the rallies" arousing "primitive nationalism" and of "fomenting national strife". It brought to attention the threats of physical violence and abusive attitude on people expressing views not in favour of the declaration of Tadzhikis the state language. The republic virtually condemned linguistic chauvinism in the following words

"It is criminal to splinter the youth on the basis of national indicators. It was necessary to examine and determine what has been the outcome of all the profuse talks about language in the Baltic and Moldovia and... There was no more serious and dangerous crime against humanity than the fanning of national hatred". It is evident from the tone and tenor of the republic's newspaper that the issue of language had began to show an ethnic hue.<sup>78</sup>

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77. SWB/SU/0450, p. B/1; Amir Taheri, Crescent in A Red Sky, London, 1989, p. 152

78. SWB/SU/0450, p. B/1; Also cited in Yaacov Roi, Central Asian Riots and Disturbances, 1989-1900 : Causes and Context, Central Asian Survey, Vol. 10, No. 3, p. 49 (Footnote)

On 22nd July 1989, the Tadzhik supreme Soviet adopted by a majority vote a law granting Tadzhik the status of State language. Russian was declared the language of communication between nationalities and to be used in inter-republican and Union business. The law also stipulated the inalienable right of a citizen of any nationality living in the republic to use and develop his own language and culture.<sup>79</sup>. The law on Tadzhikistan's languages was dubbed as 'discriminatory' with regard to languages other than Tadzhik. Language-inspired conflicts were reported in the sphere of daily and trade services on transport and public places soon after the ratification of the law on languages. More significant was the charge that "this decision has led to the destabilisation of the situation in Tadzhikistan and to an exodus of non-native population". Acute shortages of personnel in industrial enterprises, medical institutions and in education were began to be felt. However, the migration might have been also triggered by the February 1990 inter-ethnic clashes in Dushanbe. Representatives of employees of aviation, design institutes and other work collectives appealed to the Parliament to pass a decree on bilingualism and to bring about suitable amendments in the language law to halt the "negative phenomenon" of the exodus of non-

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79. CDSP Vol XLI No. 29(1989) P. 31; SWB/SU/0517 P. (i)

Tadzhiks<sup>80</sup>.

The Tadzhik government alarmed at the mass exodus of non-natives chiefly Russians promptly framed a law for punishing the infringement of the equality of languages as expressed in hostile attitude to any national language in degrading the dignity of citizens for linguistic reasons and in obstructing the use of any language. Infringement of the equality of languages is punishable with corrective labour for a period of upto two years or a large fine.<sup>81</sup>

An extreme manifestation of linguistic chauvinism was seen when allegations by a section of republic's scientific and creative intelligentsia were made that the people of Pamir region were non-Tadzhik and objected (in all probability) to the study of Pamir dialects and printing periodicals in these languages. The objections as already noted in the beginning of the chapter may have been inspired by (a) The Pamiri people being Ismaili Shias and (b) the Pamiri dialects though belonging to the same group of language as the Tadzhik language is virtually incomprehensible<sup>82</sup>.

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80. SWB SU/0866 P. B/5.

81. SWB/SU (13 Nov. 1989) P. B/7

82. Ibid; SU/0212 (1988) P. B/3.



Linguistic agitation in Tadzhikistan as observed in earlier pages also broached the issue of the Arabic script as well. Numerous letters to the Commission set up to draft the law on language were sent pleading the cause of the implementation of Arabic script. Demonstrations in February and March 1989 at Dushanbe also demanded the displacement of the Cyrillic script with the Arabic script<sup>83</sup>. In August 1991 the Democratic Party of Tadzhikistan called for immediate switching over to the Arabic alphabets. A decision was taken in January 1992 to replace the Cyrillic script with Arabic script.<sup>84</sup>

#### Tadzhik-Uzbek Rivalry

The religio-cultural unity among the Tadzhik people is rooted in Islam and survival of traditional patterns of life-style extending beyond Tadzhikistan's frontiers. In fact most authorities are of the opinion "that centuries of common historical and religious development resulted in the growth of a central Asian cultural heritage...that there was no cultural differentiation between Tadzhiks and Uzbeks of the plains except that Tadzhiks spoke Farsi and Uzbek Central Asian Turkic... Most Tadzhiks of the plains

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83. SWB/SU/0450 (1989) P. B/1.

84. K.N. Pandita, Central Asia; In Quest of New Directions in Warikoo and Norbu ed., n.66, p.91.

consider themselves indistinguishable from Uzbeks".<sup>85</sup> And indeed as we have pointed elsewhere the emergence of political Islam in Tadzhikistan draws its inspiration from Pan-Islamic ideology and thereby validates, the above conclusion. Notwithstanding the manifestation of Pan-Islam in Tadzhikistan, there are indications, that national identity and priorities come into play on the question of Tadzhik language, Persian heritage and when dealing with other Central Asian republics, especially Uzbekistan.

Having analysed the influence of Farsi language on the Tadzhik identity, we would like to trace out the manifestations of Tadzhik ethnonationalism vis-a-vis its relationship with other Central Asian ethnic groups chiefly Uzbeks. The "traditional hostility" between the Tadzhiks and Uzbeks is rooted in history and cultural peculiarities of the two ethnos. The political dominance of the Uzbeks in the Central Asian Region including the present area comprising Tadzhikistan since the fifteenth century A.D. fostered animosities between the two ethnic communities. The Uzbek control of Bukhara and Samarkand, "the two cradles of Tadzhik civilization" has resulted in much bitterness and hostility between the Tadzhiks and Uzbeks.

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85. Drawing on the studies of Alexandre Benningsen, Lemerrier Chantal-Quellejay, Edward Allworth and Geoffrey Wheeler, T. Rakowska Harmstone comes to the above conclusion in Zev Katz (ed.) n.5, p. 326, n. 64, p. 326

Secondly, growing cultural assertiveness has intensified rivalry between the Tadzhiks and Uzbeks. Traditionally there has been an ethnic hierarchy of sorts in the region. Tadzhiks consider themselves and are albeit grudgingly considered by others except the Uzbeks to be the people with the oldest and richest culture. Turkmens are considered by both Tadzhiks and Uzbeks to be semi-nomadic and much less cultured. The Kazakhs and Kyrghyzs are looked on by other Central Asian as "gruff nomads" only recently converted to Islam. The Farsi speaking Tadzhiks claim to be the inheritors of Persian civilization, a legacy hotly disputed by the Uzbeks. A reinterpretation of history has led both Tadzhik and Uzbek intellectuals to claim Persian poets and scientists as their own. Pravda vostoka commenting on Tadzhik-Uzbek rivalry stated, "Part of the intelligentsia still has a certain lack of understanding in matters of the historical part of the two peoples..."<sup>86</sup>. Despite historical evidences of Persian poets Rudaki, Firdausi, Omar Khaiyyam, Hafiz and others and scientists. Avicenna being "Tadzhiks", a number of Uzbek scholars use the label "Central Asian" to describe them in history text books. The attempts of the Uzbek intellectuals to conveniently ignore the fact that Tadzhikistan and parts of present day Afghanistan formed

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86. SWB/SU/0212 P. B/2.

the 'Greater Khorasan', where Persian literary and cultural renaissance occurred is the cause of much bitterness and resentment among the Tadzhiks.<sup>87</sup>

The "traditional hostility" between the Tadzhiks and Uzbeks besides having origin in conflicting claims over historical past is also rooted in the 'National delimitation' of boundaries in 1929. The demarcation of borders left a substantial Tadzhik population in Uzbekistan and as also the two historic cities - Bukhara and Samarkand which the Tadzhiks claim to be the "cradles" of their glorious civilization.

The Tadzhiks have still not been able to reconcile themselves to the loss of the two historic cities<sup>88</sup>. R. Masov, Director of the Institute of History and Archeology, Academy of Sciences of the Tadzhik SSR remarks wryly, "History is evidence of the fact that in the years leading to the formation of the USSR wrongs occurred in solving issues relating to the border demarcation" Echoing broadly similar view point is a Tadzhik poet living in Uzbekistan, Khyat Ne'mat, "It is not a secret that in the years of boundary demarcation, due to the hostility of some Pan-Turkish politicians, the Tadzhik people were

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87. Shireen Hunter, n.64, p. 326.

88. SWB/SU/0212, p.B/2.

divided into pieces".<sup>89</sup> Tadjik enclaves in Uzbekistan is a potent source of ethnic conflict and indeed nationalist Tadjiks talk sometimes widely of recovering Samarkand and Bukhara.<sup>90</sup>

Questioning the legitimacy of the national delimitation of boundaries in 1924 would in the future open a Pandora box of ethnic conflicts. Elaborating on the volatility of boundary question, Uzbek President Islam Korimov remarks, "the one thing that could possibly tear central Asia apart is the issue of frontiers - Those artificial boundaries that were arbitrarily traced as early as 1924.... If you want to pit one republic against another you have to start talking about frontiers"<sup>91</sup>.

The other important issue at the bottom of Tadjik-Uzbek tension is the plight of the Tadjik people in Uzbekistan. Tadjiks across the borders have organised rallies to pressurise the Uzbek government to take immediate steps to ameliorate the plight of Tadjiks living in Uzbekistan. The Tadjiks have charged the Uzbek authorities of adopting measures to forcibly "assimilate" the Tadjiks in Uzbekistan. One young Tadjik speaking of

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89. SWB/SU/0612 (1989), p. B/7.

90. Quoted from George I Mirsky, *Central Asia's Emergence, Current History*, Vol. 91 (Oct. 1992) P. 336.

91. Steven Erlanger, n.89, SWB/SU/0212, p.B/2.

the experience of his grand father said, "In 1924, they started writing in our passports that we are all Uzbeks. And if an old man insisted that no, he was Tadzhik or Sogdi, they ended up very far away from here"<sup>92</sup>. Secondly, there were numerous cases of the closure of Tadzhik medium schools in Bukhara, Samarkand, Surkhandarya and Ferghana oblasts. There is an acute shortage of Tadzhik text books in Uzbekistan and that there are insufficient scientific and literary books. The Tadzhiks pointed out that only two books in Tadzhik have been published in Uzbekistan on the specious plea of the lack of printing facilities. The demand for periodicals and newspapers in the Tadzhik language was brushed aside by the Uzbek authorities.<sup>93</sup> M. Shukrov, member of the Tadzhikistan Academy of Sciences accused Uzbekistan of withdrawing Tadzhik language from the social and educational life of the Tadzhiks living in Samarkand and Bukhara oblasts of that republic. He demanded a discussion on the plight of Tadzhiks living in Uzbekistan by the USSR Congress of People's Deputies and the establishment of a special commission to suggest ways and means of improving the plight of Tadzhiks living outside Tadzhikistan. Aisha Khamidova, a Tadzhik staying in Bukhara and member of the

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92. SWB/SU/0118 P. B/2;SU/0212 P. B/2-B/3; SU/0612 B/7;CDSP VOL. XL NO. 25,P. 9-10.

93. SWB/SU/0012,P. B./8.

City's Intelligentsia Club-Bukhara Aftab-i-Suzam raised two common complaints of the members of her ethnic group in Uzbekistan - obstacles in receiving radio and TV telecasts from Dushanbe and the need to regularize Samarkand-Bukhara-Dushanbe airlink. However, more surprising than raising demands was Khamidova's appeal to the Tadzhikistan government to initiate moves to fulfill the demands of Tadzhiks living in Uzbekistan. In fact Makhamov, First Secretary of the Tadzhik CP, time and again raised the issue at All-Union rostrums including rectification of passports of Tadzhiks living in Uzbekistan<sup>94</sup>.

The Tadzhik claims and demands were not mere propaganda. No less a government functionary than the First Secretary of Uzbek CP, Nishanov in an interview acknowledged the sorry state of affairs of Tadzhiks in Uzbekistan, "Yes during the period of stagnation there were distortions and deformation with regard to Tadzhiks<sup>95</sup>. The Tadzhiks of Samarkand held a massive rally in the city on September 15, 1989, to bring pressure on the Uzbek government to fulfill their demands regarding upliftment of Tadzhik language, educational facilities, increase in number of periodicals and newspapers from Dushanbe and opening of air services between Samarkand-Bukhara and

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94. SWB/SU/0012, p. B/8

95. CDSP VOL. XL NO. 25 (1988) P. 9.

Dushanbe. More significant was the outcry for abolition of boundaries between Samarkand and Bukhara and the establishment of an autonomous republic for the Tadzhiks in Uzbekistan.<sup>96</sup> In "support" of the September 15 rally, massive congregation of Tadzhiks was organised in Dushanbe the very next month in October 1989. Some of the slogans that rent the air on the occasion were - "May Samarkand and Bukhara live forever - two cradles of the Tadzhik nation", "Bukhara-Dushanbe airlink should be established", Tadzhiks living in Uzbekistan should be given national and cultural autonomy", etc.<sup>97</sup>

Earlier clashes between Tadzhiks and Uzbeks over a piece of land in Samarkand was reported to have occurred in June 1988. The Uzbek writer and publicist had then warned about "embryonic inter ethnic frictions" and called on the local authorities to take measures to prevent them from developing into bloody conflict.<sup>98</sup> Again in February 1990 Moscow World Service citing Interfax agency spoke of inter communal riots in Samarkand, the report was later contradicted.<sup>99</sup> However, there is some truth in the disharmonious relations between Uzbeks and

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96. SWB SU/0612 P. B/7.

97. Ibid, p. B/7.

98. Yaacov Ro'i n.77, pp.24-25.

99. SWB/SU/0962, p.i.



Tadzhiks in Samarkand. One Uktam Bekmukhamedov, leader of Samarkand's Tajik Society was beaten and jailed for a year for "organising mass disorders". He was arrested again and exiled from Samarkand. On December 8, 1992 he was seized by Uzbek agents in neighbouring Kyrgyzstan after a human rights conference and taken to Taskhent.<sup>100</sup>

The above analysis leads us to conclude the following:-

(1) Most of the demands put forward by the Tadzhiks of Uzbekistan bore the stamp of ethnicity in that they were related to safeguarding 'Tadzhik identity'.

Further, the struggle of Tadzhiks to protect their identity acquired the dimension of self-determination as the inalienable right of Tadzhiks.

(2) Secondly, the agitation did not remain confined within the borders of Uzbekistan. The Tadzhiks of Tadzhikistan were equally if not more concerned at the plight of their brethren across the border. Both the Tadzhik government and the people at large remonstrated their support to the demands of their fellowmen in Uzbekistan.

(3) The 'territorial' variable of ethnic identity also come into play. The Tadzhiks denied the legitimacy of

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100. Steven Erlanger.

the national delimitation of borders in 1924 and till date have remained unreconciled to the loss of territory of Uzbekistan, particularly the cities of Bukhara and Samarkand. Here we notice the inextricable linkages between ethnicity and territory, especially when the region in question bears connection with the historical memories of that ethnic group.

#### Uzbek-Kyrghyz Rivalry

Clashes in the Isfara Rayon in 1989 is another example that shows ethno national identity coming to fore in situations of conflict between disparate communities or groups. Despite the fact that the Tadzhiks and Kyrghyzs had been living in the same region (Ferghana Valley) and possessing a remarkable community in religious and cultural spheres, the two ethnic groups fought each other in July 1989 over land and water rights in which dozens were injured and one killed. The construction of new settlements, exploitation of land, building of roads including the supply of water in the Batken Rayon of Osh Region (Kyrghyzstan) in a disputed territory without the necessary agreement from the Tadzhiks of the Isfara Rayon led to clashes between the inhabitants of Chorku, Vorukh and Surkh Soviets of Tadzhikistan and the Samarkandyk Soviet of Osh oblast. Fire arms and knives were freely used in which more than a dozen people were injured and

one killed. Curfew was imposed by Tadzhik authorities in the Isfara Rayon. The Matchoi irrigation canal was partly destroyed and filled up with stones which resulted in considerable damage for crops.<sup>101</sup>

Border talks to resolve the issue have failed, both sides blaming each other. The Tadzhiks have laid claims to 24,000 hectares of land in Batken rayon.<sup>102</sup>

Here again one notices the close linkage between ethnic identity and territoriality.

#### Inter and Intra Ethnic Discord and Conflict

A more blatant display at an entirely different plane of the Tadzhik ethnonational identity was witnessed in the form of violent conflicts on issues pertaining to certain other ethnic groups. For three days onwards February 12, 1990 widespread arson, looting and killings occurred in the republic's capital, and according to some reports also in other towns of Tadzhikistan, on the ground or pretext of rumours that 5,000 Armenian refugees from Azerbaijan were being allotted priority housing.<sup>103</sup> The housing situation in the republic was extremely acute

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101. CDSP VOL. XLI NO.33(1989) P.31; SWB/SU/0510 pp. B/1-B/3

102. SWB/SU/1079. P. B/3; Ibid SU/1083 P. B/4.

103. For a detailed account of programs in Dushanbe in February 1990 see, SWB/SU/0688, pp. B/5 - B/6 ; SU/0689, pp. B/1-B/4; SU/0690, pp. B/1-B/3; SU/0693, p. B/6; SU/0694, pp. B/3 - B/4

with more than 50,000 people in need of housing facility or repairs. The Tadzhiks who had already been for many years waiting for their turn in the queue for housing perceived the "preferential treatment" as an encroachment upon their legitimate rights. Highly peeved, the Tadzhiks mostly students assembled in front of the building of the CP of Tadzhikistan Central Committee shouting slogans - "Down with Armenians", "Evacuate the Armenians", etc. The very next day ethnic fury of Tadzhiks burst out in form of violent acts. Thousands of Tadzhiks gathered again in front of the Communist Party demanding the immediate evacuating of the Armenians from the Republic. The militant crowd clashed with the militia and tried to loot and burn the CP building. After having being driven out from the clashes, reports of clashes with other ethnic groups, looting and burning of their houses as well as of government buildings started pouring in.<sup>104</sup> The Tadzhik government proclaimed a state of emergency and curfew was claimed in the city of Dushanbe. It took instant steps of airlifting the 39 refugees who had arrived from Azerbaijan to Yerevan, the Armenian capital. Over 100 Armenian inhabitants of Dushanbe also

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104. The students massive participation in demonstration and pogroms is conspicuous. Their largescale participation is explained by the widespread unemployment situation prevalent in the republic. Around 70,000 people in Dusanbe itself were unemployed and some 117,000 young men and women were only seasonally employed. SWB/SU/0693, P. B/6

left with them. Subsequent investigation revealed that "extremist gangs" active in Dushanbe held a meeting shortly before the disturbances and adopted a plan of action for driving Armenians out of the republic. It was this gang that on February 10, 1990 a day before the outbreak of ethnic strife vandalized and robbed the apartments of Armenians living in the Capitals' Zervashan microborough<sup>105</sup>. Also significant is the fact that representatives of Ajerbaijan People's Front were active in provoking anti-Armenian sentiments : It was discovered that large amounts of money and drugs were distributed specifically to young people instigating them to expel all foreigners including the Armenians<sup>106</sup>. M. Nizamidinov, engineer at the Baku Construction Institute and E. Dzhafarov, an employee of the NBC News, both Azerbaijanis were expelled from the republic<sup>107</sup>.

There were also rumours that the victims of Ferghana pogroms had fled Uzbekistan to seek refuge in Dushanbe "revived" in the words of one scholar, "the traditional Uzbek-Tadzhik animosity". The years of inheritance in Uzbekistan had left them with no viable choice of

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105. CDSP Vol. XLII No. 34 (1990) p. 25; For a detailed account of the Front's activities and objectives see S. Hunter's

106. SWB/SU/0693 p. B/7.

107. SWB/SU/0762 p. B/5.

communication except Uzbek. The linguistic affinity of the refugees was excuse enough to trigger hostility<sup>108</sup>.

On the 13th and 14th February, 1990, inspite of the curfew regulations, the situation became more exacerbated. Clashes and pogroms spread to more than 200 localities of the capital. According to preliminary estimates, 37 people were reported killed and more than 80 injured.<sup>109</sup> Russians were reported to be among the victims. Pogroms were, however, also directed against the Russians. Accounts of few Russians being killed and attacked including women have been catalogued. Slogans like "Make the Russian answer for everything", "Down with the Russians", "Tadzhikstan for Tadzhiks" and "Non-Tadzhiks leave Tadzhikstan", etc.,<sup>110</sup> were heard. Leaflets calling the Russians to leave Tadzhikistan were also distributed. One of the leaders of Rastokhez Party involvement of which in the inter-ethnic strife is a well known fact, had for long been spitting fire against the Russians. Mirrakhimov openly stated that he would travel around the regions of the republic to rouse the people to drive away the Russians from the republic. Even earlier when he was not a member of the Rastokhez Party reportedly told voters in one

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108. P.L. Dash, n. 71, p. 403.

109. SWB/SU/0689, p. B/2.

110. Ibid, p. B/3; SU/0690; p. B/1; SU/0762, p. B/5; Yaacov Roi, n. 77, p. 34.

district not to elect the Russians to the post of People's Deputy because he would invite more Russians, and squeeze out the Tadzhiks from jobs and housing. He blamed the "non-Tadzhiks" for all the ills that had befallen the republic—the growth of crime, environmental degradation, high infant mortality. He predicted that within a decade 'Tadzhikistan would become a full fledged Islamic state'. The KGB pointed out that certain strata of the population were particularly receptive to his missives.<sup>111</sup>

It cannot be denied that the disturbances at Dushanbe to a less extent, were inspired by the rising religious favour in the republics. The Commission appointed to investigate into the causes of pogroms found that 10 days before the violent events, during the opening of a mosque in the village of Arbokhatun in Leinisky district, plans for rioting and plundering in Dushanbe were hatched. At the ceremony many believers shouted out calls for the overthrow of Soviet power and the establishment of an Islamic State<sup>112</sup>. On the eve of the outbreak of violence, speeches by Islamic fundamentalist leaders were distributed on audio and video tapes which in the main exhorted the 'faithful' to form an Islamic state.<sup>113</sup>.

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111. SWB/0768 P. B/5. Yaacov Ro'i, n. 75 pp. 61-62

112. CDSP Vol. XLII NO. 34 P. 25.

113. SWB/SU/0762 P. B/5.

In fact slogans like "power to the clergy", were frequently heard during the disturbance.<sup>114</sup> The possibility of Afghan mujahideens crossing the border to help the extremists was a reality<sup>115</sup>.

There was, however, more to the ethnic violence that rocked Dushanbe in mid-February 1990, notwithstanding its anti-Armenian and anti-Russian tenor. A careful perusal of the events and the subsequent developments shows that an intense struggle for power was taking place under the cover of rousing Tadjik nationalism. The assertion of the communist leadership of attempts to capture republic's government by "power hungry" politicians has not been taken seriously by scholars as is evident from their analyses of the Dushanbe disturbances. They seek to paint the conflict with the colours of ethnic hostility and strife.

Elucidation of events would demonstrate that the turmoil in mid-February in Dushanbe was not so much a confrontation between ethnic and religious forces as traditional clan tussle for power. The tribal or clan consciousness seems to be particularly important in the political network existent in Tadjikistan. Cadres are frequently selected for local party and government positions as well as posts in scientific and higher educational

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114. SU/0690 P. B/2.

115. SU/0693 P. B/7.



institutions by virtue of their clan affiliation.<sup>116</sup> Boris Rumer, a noted scholar on Central Asian politics, maintains that clan and tribal consciousness "not only survived but became even stronger in the Soviet era...A majority of the national cadres remain loyal to their clan."<sup>117</sup> Since the creation of Tadzhikistan in 1929 all leading positions in the republic have been occupied by leaders from the Leninabad area (now Khodent) including the recent incumbents Makhamov and Naviyev to the exclusion of the clans from the other three provinces, Gorno - Badakshan, Kulyab and Kurgan-tyube. The inequitable power arrangement in Tadzhikistan made the leaders from the south "unhappy" and according to Iuri Gankovskii, a scholar at the Moscow Institute of Oriental Studies, to competition between the local clans provided the backdrop against which social and political unrest has become widespread.<sup>118</sup> It is therefore not surprising that with the loosening of the coercive apparatus, the clans from the southern region made a concerted bid to capture the power structure. The prime figure behind the disturbances, B. Karinov, Deputy Chairman of the Republican Council of Ministers and Chairman of the State Planning Committee was supported by

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116. Yaacov Roi, n. 77, pp. 36 - 31;

117. Boris Rumer, Soviet Central Asia : A Tragic Experiment, Boston, 1989, p. 148

118. Yaacov Roi, n. 75, p. 54 (Footnote).

"Kulyab men". The leader of the Rastokhez Party Abduzhabbar who was part of Waddud or the People's Committee formed in the wake of the resignation of CP First Secretary and other important dissident functionaries belonged to the Kurgan-Tyube clan.

The inter-ethnic strife, within two days of its outbreak transformed itself into a fervid tussle for power. On the 14th February, crowds which had earlier demanded the evacuation of the Armenians were now crying for the resignation of the republican leadership. The slogans now shouted were - "Karimov - true son of the Tadzhik people", "Our President - Karimov", "If you cannot lead, hand over power to the clergy", etc., Makhamov, the first secretary handed over his resignation to the people assembled in front of the Communist party building. Immediately after, from amongst the participants a "Provisional People's Committee" or Waddud (Unity) was formed which was headed by among others by B. Karimov, the Deputy Chairman of Council of Ministers and the Chairman of Tadzhik Gosplan and Abduzhabbar, the leader of Rastokhez Party. It was proclaimed that the Provisional Peoples Committee would be exercising power from hence. A statement on Tadzhik TV was made to the effect that the government had handed over the reins of power to the Provisional People's Committee<sup>119</sup> The People's

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119. SWB/SU/0718, P-B/2

Committee charged the then government of the incapability of resolving the republic's problems and demanded that the top leaders of the CP of Tadzhikistan, Council of Ministers and Presidium of the Supreme Soviet resign and that the state of emergency and curfew be lifted.

However, at the plenum of the CC of the Tadzhik CP the resignations were termed as "not being in accordance with the views of the communists and the overwhelming majority of the republic's inhabitants" Makhamov and Khayayev Chairman of the Council of Ministers were forced to withdraw their resignations. The Plenum of CC "condemned the attempts by certain circles and un-official associations to act from position of force". A month later Buri Karimov, and Nur Tabarov, the Minister of Culture were relieved of their posts for taking a very active part in mass disturbances.

Not losing heart, the opposition comprising the Democratic Party, Rastokhez and the Islamic Revival Party all of which are based in one or the other of the three provinces Kulyab, Garm and Kurgan-Tyube joined hands to oust Rakhnum Nabiyeu, the Tadzhik President, who hailed from the Leninabad clan.

The Kulyabi clan later broke away from the opposition ranks when the IRP, Rastokhez and the Democratic Party had forced the resignation of the parliamentary

speaker, a kulyabi<sup>120</sup>.

During the renewed offensive of the opposition forces in May 1992, the breakup of Tadzhikistan on clan lines seemed imminent. Under the pressure of opposition, Nabiyev's formation of the government of "national conciliation" was rejected by the Khojent and Kulyabi clans. The two clans emphasized that the new government was formed in contravention of the republic's constitution and that they would not take part in the proceedings of the Supreme Soviet<sup>121</sup>. It was also reported that the the Khodjent leadership is in favour of the creation of "a northern republic of Tadzhikistan". The population of the Khojend region is largely Uzbek and it is speculated that the province may ultimately merge in Uzbekistan. Earlier in April 1992, the Gorno-Badakshan autonomous oblast where the opposition forces are still strong had transformed itself into an "autonomous republic"<sup>122</sup>.

In conclusion we make the following observations:

1. Notwithstanding its rich cultural heritage, a well developed language and a favourable political condition, the definition of the ethnic identity of

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120. Hindustan Times, August 14, 1992.

121. SWB/SU/1387 p.B/7, SU/B91 p. b/5

122. Ibid SU/1377 p. c1/4.

the Tadzhiks has become problematic. This is because the processes of consolidation of Tadzhik ethnicity, unlike Uzbekistan, has received a severe setback due to emergence of religious fundamentalism.

2. Two other factors have also been responsible for undermining Tadzhik ethnicity, Communism and clan rivalry.
3. Geographical and cultural proximity to Afghanistan and Iran, two states in the grip of fundamentalists have been active in promoting Islamic fundamentalism in Tadzikistan.

TABLE 1  
Ethnic Trends in the Uzbek SSR  
(Population in thousands)

Nationalities	Year 1989
Uzbeks	14,142
Karakalpaks,	412
Russians	1653
Tatars	468
Crimean Tatars	189
Kazakhs	808
Tadzhiks	934
Koreans	183
Kirghiz	175
Ukrainians	153
Jews	65
Turkmen	122
Turks	106
Azerbaijani	44
Others	356

Sources : 1989 All Union Census (Lee Schwartz, Soviet  
Geography ).

TABLE 2

Distribution of Uzbeks in the other Central Asian Republics  
(Population in Thousands)

Republics	Population (1989)
Kazakhstan	332
Kirghistan	550
Turmenistan	317
Tadzhikistan	1198

Sources : 1989 All Union Census (Lee Schwartz, Soviet  
Geography ).

TABLE 4  
Ethnic Trends in the Tadzhik SSR  
(Population in thousands)

Nationalities	Year 1989
Tadzhiks	3,712
Uzbeks	1,198
Russians	338
Tatars	72
Kirghiz	64
Germans	33
Ukrainians	41
Jews	9.5
Turkmen	20
Others	95.3

Sources : 1989 All Union Census (Lee Schwartz, Soviet Geography ).



## Conclusions

The Communist Party of the Soviet Union never tired of making pompous proclamations of solving the 'national question' in this most multi-ethnic state. Here is one sample - "The party has solved one of the most complex of problems which has plagued mankind for ages and remains acute to the world of capitalism to this day - the problems of relations with nations." Even Gorbachev, hailed "for this freshness of approach and revolutionary solutions" to various outstanding problems confronting the Soviet State had nothing new to offer on the national question. Gorbachev sharply deviating from the path tread by his predecessors, remarkably did not differ from them on the nationality question. He continued to chant the standard Soviet mantra on the nationality problem (at least during the early years of the reign). In his report to the 27th Party Congress in February 1986. Gorbachev testifying to the remarkable achievements of Soviet State commented that socialism had done away forever with national oppression and inequalities of all kinds and had engendered the formation of a qualitatively new social and international community - the Soviet people who were bound together by same economic, ideological and political goals.

To project the Soviet experimentation in the sphere of nationality relations as one of the outstanding achievements

of socialism magic formulae as Sliinie or fusion of nations, Sblizhenie or rapprochement of the nations, emergence of qualitatively a new international community i.e. "the Soviet people" etc. were ingeniously coined and regularly chanted at solemn occasions and party foras. Much of the scholarly work in Soviet Union was devoted to providing academic validation of the Soviet pronouncements on the nationality question.

The myth so assiduously constructed, nurtured and so loudly and proudly proclaimed to the world at large was severely dented within months of Gorbachev's assumption of the reins of the Soviet State. In May 1985, anti-Russian riots erupted in Latvia's capital city, Riga. And within few years of his reign the myth was completely exploded. Proliferation of peoples' Fronts, organisations and parties voicing ethno-national grievances and demands, endemic ethnic conflicts, strident demands for independence, emergence of the phenomenon of ethno-religious revival and finally widespread agitations, demonstrations and other forms of public protests for the fulfillment of one or the other ethnic demands completely demolished the Soviet myth on the nationality question. Ethnonationalism soon metamorphosised into the dominant agenda of Soviet politics.

Recognising nations and nationalism as a historical category belonging to the epoch of rising capitalism, it was

envisaged, both by Marx and Lenin that under conditions of socialism national differences would diminish and eventually dissolve. Their expectations were belied - Ethnonationalism was as much a reality of the capitalist system as of the Socialist system.

The rise of ethnicity in many ways was engendered by the very same system which sought to obliterate it. The Soviet solution to the nationality question was enshrined in the Soviet Nationality Policy.

Lenin, the chief architect of the Bolshevik policy towards the nationalities in a bid to negate the Czarist legacy of the "prison house of nations," harness the revolutionary potential of the oppressed nationalities in overthrowing the Czarist regime, to prevent the eventuality of domination by Russians, the major ethnic group, over the other nationalities and taking into cognizance the national aspirations of the subjugated nationalities came up with an unique federal formulation now known as the Soviet Nationality Policy. The policy in very many ways was responsible for the emergence of ethnicity in the USSR in that it served to consolidate and re-form the identity of the five major ethnic groups of Central Asia. These were :-

- (i) The federal units of the Union were to be based on ethnolinguistic identity. The Bolsheviks rejected

the demand of the 'Ryuskulov group' to create a pan-Turkic state comprising all the Turkic peoples residing in Central Asia. In the very beginning they nipped in bud the rise of pan-Islamic or pan-Turkic identity. This act of the Bolsheviki was decisive in the consolidation of the process of identity formation of the five major ethnic groups. A noted scholar on Central Asia states, "The creation of separate nations out of such peoples after the Bolshevik Revolution did not correspond with any national consciousness or yearning on the part of those peoples - - - The present more or less precise division of the indigenous peoples of Central Asia - - - is a recent and to some extent arbitrary one. Before the Revolution such a division was only dimly realised by the people themselves - - - Nevertheless the socio-political identity imposed by the Communist regime has gained a lasting acceptance".

- ii) The Bolsheviki added the territorial dimension to the ethnic identity. The five major ethnic groups were found to be inhabiting all the then existent political entities - Turkestan, Bukhara and Khorezm. The three multinational political units were abolished by the Turkestan Commission

entrusted with the task of 'national delimitation' of boundaries. It created five nationally homogenous republics around a 'core' ethnic group which was the largest or the dominant nationality in the area. The five republics were named after their respective 'titular nationality'. The delimitation of territorial boundaries and creation of republics for each of the five major ethnic groups offered both a sense of "separateness and inclusion" that reinforced local identity. It is not surprising, therefore, that vicious disputes and outbreak of violence has occurred over the question of national-territorial boundaries among the major ethnic groups.

(iii) The dominant ethnic groups besides being provided with fixed territory were also invested with a politico-administrative apparatus which in the opinion of a section of scholarship has served to strengthen their ethnonational identity. In each of the republics, the administrative bureaucracies, the party apparatus and the republican leadership are to a large extent composed of the indigenous elites. It is therefore, not surprising that the administrative apparatus and party organisation of the republics have become "captive" of the national ethos of

their namesake population and identified itself with local interests. This has been variously termed as "bureaucratic nationalism" or "insystemic nationalism" or "orthodox nationalism". Thus the federal arrangement though limited and restricted provided an "organizational context" and "political legitimacy" for the assertion of group interests, values and demands which in the long run served to shape group identity.

- (iv) The Soviet cultural policy reflected in the express idea of promoting national cultures, "socialist in content and national in forms" triggered the process of ethno cultural revival in the republics. It took the form of exploration and glorification of their historical roots, promotion of national language, preserving the group culture and defence of local traditions and religion. Two other factors facilitated this process of ethno-cultural revival. In the first place, the expansion of literary, scientific and cultural institutes in the republics created a stratum of highly intelligent and sophisticated "national elites" who have been crucial in forming and reinforcing national consciousness through local idioms and mediums. Secondly, the Soviet rule by

providing modern techniques of mass communication, eradicating illiteracy and undertaking industrialisation enabled the general populace to gain knowledge of their history, culture and religion and imbued them with a sense of identity.

- (v) The cultural divide between the Russians and the Central Asians has engendered the syndrome of 'we' and 'they' which is an important element underlying the psychological basis of identity formation. The 'we' and 'they' syndrome further sharpened because of the domination exercised by the Russian over the Soviet State which entailed Russification meaning the imposition of the dominant groups' language, culture and institutions which was resented by the subjugated ethnic group. Secondly, the presence of Russians in important union and republic positions and day to day intergroup contacts served to intensify the psychological disposition of 'we' and 'they'.

Thus we notice that the 70 years of Soviet rule in Central Asia imbued and vested the indigenous peoples with the five crucial determinants of ethnic identity - self-ascriptive awareness, recognition by others of the group differentiation, real geographic centre, consolidation of cultural emblems and the belief in historical antecedents.

In a historical twist of irony, the Communist regime in the Soviet Union that posited that class rather than nationality was the key determinant of social structure and made a determined effort to efface nationality and create a supra-socialist system presided over a process which resulted in the formation of nations. These nations though built on the foundations of distinct ethnos are, as we have shown, largely the products of the complex history of the seventy years rule of Soviet nation.

It was, however, Gorbachev's regime that decisively transformed the very nature of the national question in the former USSR. The national question in the form in which it had been inherited from the past ceased to exist and its place was taken by the emergence of a qualitatively new phenomenon - the politicisation of nations. Gorbachev's participatory style of functioning, inauguration of a regime dedicated to openness, loosening of the coercive control apparatus, advocacy of restructuring particularly in the realm of economic performance and finally his impatience and criticism of the bureaucratic apparatus and the party organisation precipitated the rise of mass nationalism. With regard to Gorbachev's role in the emergence of ethnonationalism, we make the following observations:-

- (i) The inauguration of a regime of openness and the systematic dismantling of the coercive structures



fostered a climate of discussion and debate which with reference to nationality question gave rise to close scrutiny and criticism of the past and present policies of Russification, the existing politico-economic framework, etc. The liberal atmosphere engendered a widespread perception of the need to safeguard national culture, language and politico-economic interests.

(ii) Spurred on by a sense of ethnic discrimination and the need to promote their language, culture and religion and to safeguard the economic interests of the nation, the indigenous intelligentsia found the climate of glasnost opportune to organise themselves into clubs or people fronts to articulate the aspirations and demands of their ethnic group. The people's fronts, particularly in Uzbekistan launched agitations, demonstrations and other forms of public protest to give vent to their demands.

(iii) During the era of the absolute hegemonistic rule of the CPSU, the ruling apparatchik was responsible to no one including the people over whom they ruled. Public opinion emerged as an important factor in Soviet politics with the coming of Gorbachev. The republican leadership and the

party, in a bid to legitimise its rule in the eyes of the people over which it ruled, sought reapproachment with the dominant nationality and began to heed public opinion and voice its concern. Here, the introduction of competitive elections played an important role.

- (iv) The undermining of the hegemonic role of the CPSU by Gorbachev's policies facilitated the rise of ethnonationalism. The hegemonic role of CPSU found manifestation at two levels - ideological and political. Its hegemony at both the levels came under severe attack. The open atmosphere of debate and discussion resulted in the CPSU coming in for severe flak for its past lapses and mistakes. Soon frontal attacks were also mounted on the tenets of Marxism-Leninism which had for 70 long years provided the ideological foundations of the Soviet State. Even Gorbachev joined the attack bandwagon. Secondly, mushrooming of organisations and groups resulted in serious erosion of the political supremacy of the CPSU. In the first place, with the onset of the era of glasnost and perestrioka, it were the informal organisations that started setting the agenda of Soviet politics. Elections reactivised the role of CPSU and undermined its

monopoly of political organization by subjecting it to political competition. It compelled the party to become responsive to local aspirations and demands. The reforms gave unprecedented leverage to organized local groups and accelerated the fragmentation of the party along national lines.

However, it is pertinent to point out that the rise of nationalism was an unintended consequence of President Gorbachev's reform policy. In fact, the nationality question had never been a part of his reform agenda. On this score, Gorbachev remarkably did not differ from his previous predecessors. New ideas though may have been germinating in his mind in the 1980's, there is nothing to show in his early pronouncements that they extended to the nationality question. In the initial years of the reign, the pronouncement of Gorbachev seem to assume that there was nothing wrong or amiss on the national front. Infact, on the national question he sounded more like his predecessors and on solemn occasions and party foras parroted the platitudes of his predecessors that the national question has been solved. Only after the riots at Alma-Aty, the Kazakh capital in December 1986, did Gorbachev acknowledge that there were "deformations" in nationality relations and "mistakes" were committed in implementing the Soviet Nationality Policy. The increasing manifestation of nationalism at various levels

and numerous instances of growing ethnic conflict compelled him to formulate a nationality policy in 1989. However, it proved to be still born. The twin policies glasnost and perestroika had unleashed an upsurge of nationalism that was not to be satisfied with cosmetic changes. Demands for greater sovereignty became more strident. His last effort to salvage the Union with the proposal of a New Union Treaty came a cropper. The coup attempt dealt a death blow to his efforts. Four concluding remarks after a brief discussion of the Gorbachev's policies are in order :-

- 1) The nationality question did not at all figure in his reform programmes. During the initial years of his reign he subscribed to the idea that the nationality question had been solved.
- 2) The twin policies of perestroika and glasnost were in many ways responsible for the emergence of ethnonationalism.
- 3) He only came to acknowledge that "deformations" existed in national relations and mistakes were committed in implementing in the Soviet Nationality Policy after the outbreak of numerous ethnic conflicts in different republics.
- 4) His measure and policies to contain the rising tide of ethnonationalism came a cropper. His policies on one

hand failed to satisfy greater demand of sovereignty and independence and on the other hand alarmed the conservatives of his systematic efforts to weaken the central authority. He lost the legitimacy, in the eyes of both the anti-nationalist and pro-nationalist forces. Not surprisingly, the former launched a coup attempt to remove him and the latter declared independence after the Coup attempt.

Within barely three years, the contagion of nationalism that arose in Baltics soon caught onto the Central Asian republics of Uzbekistan and Tadzhikistan. Ethnonationalism in the two republics though assumed similarity of forms and contents were in many respects essentially different. Cross-comparisons of the Uzbek and Tadzhik experience bring out in sharp focus the points of departure between them. While delineating the contours of Uzbek ethnonationalism, we would seek to point its similarities and differences with Tadzhik ethnonationalism.

Awakening of nationalism amongst the Uzbeks was seen to be assuming three forms:

- (1) Ethnocultural Revival
- (2) Economic and Ecological nationalism
- (3) Ethnic Conflicts.

## Ethnocultural Revival

We notice a strong revival of cultural markers viz. religion, language, dress code, etc, that differentiates a group from the other. The defence of national language, culture became the central theme of the phenomenon of ethnic revival. Glasnost brought to surface deep resentments against linguistic and cultural Russification and indictment of its absurd and sometimes tragic consequences for Uzbek language and culture were voiced. In a rising tide of speeches and articles leading literary and cultural figures attacked "national nihilism" lamented or deplored the erosion of their national languages and cultures which they asserted were in danger of atrophy or outright extinction and pressed for measures to protest and restore their status and role. In virtually all cases, the initiative in creating the movements came from cultural and scholarly intelligentsia with members of the republic's Union of Writers playing a central role. The functional of this group in the society made the intelligentsia the quintessential bearer of national cultures. In Uzbekistan, the Birlik and Erk and in Tadzhikistan, Khazina and Tadzhik Language Fund which were instrumental in raising the issues of language, culture and history were essentially composed and led by the indigenous intelllgentisia.

However, it were the mullāhs and the sufis and not the

intelligentsia who have spearheaded ethnic revival on the religious front. Unlike Uzbekistan, forces of Islamic revivalism in Tadzhikistan have sought to penetrate the realm of politics. Though hitherto unsuccessful, political Islam is making determined efforts to dislodge the erstwhile Communists from power in this republic. Here three points need to be highlighted. In the first place, the geographical proximity and ethnocultural similarities with the Tadzhiks of Afghanistan and Iranians are crucial factors in the revival of Islam both at the social and political planes. Islamic fundamentalism with its varied connotations and implications is sought to be exported to Tadzhikistan by the Afghan mujahideens and Iran. Secondly, the reason for enhanced Islamic revivalism in Tadzhikistan is perhaps because the Tadzhik alone of the Central Asian nationalities are of Persian rather than Turkic stock and culture and naturally prefer to emphasize a factor that stresses their belonging to the region. A section of the Tadzhik elite not unnaturally give expression to their apprehensions concerning the predominance of the Turkic culture in Soviet Central Asia by reaching out and seeking increased ties with Iran and Afghanistan. Thirdly, the growing perception of the utility of Islam as a political weapon has led the clans of Gorno-Badakshan and Kurgan-Tyube regions to use the Islamic card to dislodge the Communists. The rise of Islamic card to dislodge the Communists. The rise of Islamic Fundamentalism

had important repercussions for Tadjik ethnonational identity. In Uzbekistan, the erstwhile Communists have sought to control the forces of Islamic revivalism in active collusion and collaboration with the "Official Islam" while giving encouragement to other forms of ethnic revivalism. Secondly, the government has taken effective measures to curb the activities of religious forces in the political realm. We draw the following conclusions from the above brief sketch :-

(i) In Tadjikistan the Islamic identity is seen to be subsuming the ethnonational identity despite other forms of ethnic revival e.g. language.

(ii) Uzbekistan presents a picture of contrast. Though Islamic revivalism is pretty strong in the republic, Uzbek ethnonational identity has come out to be the stronger of the two identities.

Ethnonationalism in Uzbekistan and Tadjikistan, particularly the former was not only defined by ethnic parameters but also by the larger societal concerns of economy and ecology. The discussion of economic performance and reform unleashed by the process of perestroika infused economic and ecological content into Uzbek ethnonationalism. The local intelligentsia began to offer a critique of Soviet command system of production and administration. From their perspectives, the extreme over-centralization had vitiated



the very meaning of federalism. Popular reaction in both the republics has been to blame Moscow's command-administrative system for creating severe social and economic dislocations. In Uzbekistan, the intelligentsia led by Birlik and the Communist leaders alike demanded elimination of the so-called cotton-monoculture which in the opinion of many had assumed the proportions of "national disaster." An Uzbek writer Yaqubov ascribed "all our trouble" to cotton monoculture and poet Muhammed Salikh denounced Uzbekistan's relationship to Moscow as "colonial." Among the harmful consequences of "cotton mono culture" cited by Uzbeks are political corruption, improper patterns of land use, drying of Aral Sea, soil exhaustion and public health hazards from the widespread use of pesticides. Especially, the drying of the Aral Sea is being considered a "tragedy of national proportions." The intelligentsia launched a massive exercise of public mobilisation on the issue, set up an 'Aral fund' to save Aral, set up a committee, 'save the Aral' and launched agitations to force the Soviet government to set up a commission to examine the Aral problem. In Tadzhikistan, the organisation Rastokhez patterned on Birlik of Uzbekistan sought restructuring of Tadzhik life and called for greater sovereignty. Ashkara and Association for Culture or Ecology are the "Green" groups in Tadzhikistan which have held protest meetings against the construction of Rogun hydro-electric station and its high dam in the Pamir region.

Economic development and environment issues have thus come to be closely linked to nationalist and separatist demands in Uzbekistan and Tadzhikistan. Uzbeks are convinced that environmental problems affecting their republics have resulted from imprudent development policies pursued by Moscow. The legacy of central planning and Russian domination has infused economic and environmental issues with colonial, connotations. Central authorities have been criticised for exploiting republics' natural resources without regard for the ecological consequences of such developmental strategies. Not surprisingly, declarations of sovereignty by Uzbekistan and Tadzhikistan denied Soviet authorities legal jurisdiction over their natural resources and called for greater devolution of powers in the realm of economic governance.

A more glaring manifestation of ethnic nationalisms was seen in the outbreak of violent conflicts between various ethnic groups. Accompanied by the phenomena of ethnic revival and economic and ecological nationalism was increasing ethnic exclusivity and discord. In Uzbekistan, ethnic conflict was seen taking place at three levels :-

- 1) The titular nationality i.e. Uzbeks versus the Slavs, particularly Russian.
- 2) The titular nationality versus the minor ethnic groups i.e. Heshkhetians

- 3) Between the titular nationalities both at the intra and inter-republic level.

In the case of ethnic conflict between the Uzbeks and Russians, though not marked in interesting as in the other cases is rooted in the distinctive primordial identity of the two ethnic groups and secondly it was a protest against the dominance of the Russians in the centralized politico-economic framework in which the uzbeks perceived themselves to be disadvantaged.

The ethnic conflict between the Uzbek and Meshkhetians was probably more rooted in the worsening economic condition of the Ferghana region. In the context of worsening economic situation the Uzbeks considered the Meshkhetians as outsiders "eating" into their jobs and housing more pertinent, however, is the fact that Meshkhetians though belonging to the same racial phenotype and following the same religion as the Uzbeks were not spared. In widespread programs, the Meshkhetians were killed and looted. Almost all the Meshkhetians have now left the republics. Here we notice they play of Uzbek ethnonational identity and not pan-Islamic or pan-Turkic identity. The ethnic conflict between Uzbeks and Kyrghyz and the Uzbek. Tadzhikis rivalry are rooted in the delimitation of boundaries in 1924 and the ethnic distinctiveness of the groups involved. Though the five republics were created around a "core" or the dominant

nationality, substantial numbers of them were left in other republics. In the context of acute housing situation and scarcity of employment opportunities, clashes broke out between the Uzbeks and Kyrghyzs in the Osh oblast of Kyzghyzstan. Here again, pan-Islamic or pan-Turkic identity seems to be completely over shadowed by the ethnonational identity of the Uzbeks and the Kyrghyzs. We conclude the following :-

- 1) Identities based on pan-Islamic or pan-Turkism are pretty weak in Uzbekistan. Uzbek ethnic identity emerges as the primary identity factor in the republic's society and politics.
- 2) Conflicts and rivalries were rooted in primordial distinctiveness and worsening economic condition.

Conflict in Tadzhikistan occurred at three levels :-

- (i) Ethnic Conflict
- (ii) Clan Rivalry
- (iii) Confrontation between Communism and Islamic Fundamentalism.

Ethnic conflict between the Tadzhiks and the Armenians and between the former and the Russians though not as acute as the other two conflicts primarily originated in the

distinctive ethnic identity of the three groups and secondly took place in a situation of chronic housing shortage and massive unemployment.

However, more important is the conflict between the Tadzhiks and Uzbeks and Tadzhiks and Kyrghyz. The genesis of ethnic discord between Tadzhik and the other two ethnos lies in the border delimitation of Central Asia in 1924. Samarkand and Bukhara was claimed to have been unjustly handed over to the Uzbeks and the disputing claims over the two cities has become the focus of Tadzhik-Uzbek rivalry. Tadzhiks also clashed over land and water rights in the Isfara Rayon with the neighbouring Kyrghyzs. Here we notice the territorial dimension of ethnicity.

Notwithstanding the ethnic conflicts between the Tadzhiks and the other ethnos, internecine struggles between the Tadzhiks themselves on basis of clanship and religion have had important implications for Tadzhik ethnonational identity. The conjunction of clan and religion in the contest for power has resulted in the blurring of Tadzhik ethnonational identity. The southern clans of Gram and Kurgan - Tyube who have hitherto been deprived of a share in the power arrangement in Tadzhikistan are employing the Islamic card to overthrow the Khodjent clan (helped by the Kulyab clan) which has held power in the republic since 1929. The Khodjent clan still adheres to the communist

ideology and is opposed to Islamic fundamentalism. We make the following inferences :-

- i) Deep fissures on the lines of clanship, religion and class ideology in the Tadzhik Society have spilt Tadzhik identity and considerably diluted it.
- ii) The struggle for power and the attempts of Afghan mujahideens and Iranians have sought to promote a broad pan-Islamic and Persian identity.

In the concluding few sentences, we want to make the following observations:-

- i) The national movements in Uzbekistan and Tadzhikistan were still trying to locate their moorings, were in the process of defining and demarcating their objectives and were grappling with the anti-national ideologies of Communism and religious revivalism when their experience was cut short by the collapse of Central authority. Neither the republican leadership nor the Birlik and Erk led by local intelligentsia were in favour of total independence as has been the logical culmination of independent movements round the world over. A noted Central Asian scholar has observed, "Few peoples of the world have ever been forced to become independent nations. Yet that is precisely what happened to the five Central Asian republics--". This

is to say that ethnonational movements are in the process of attaining maturity.

ii) Notwithstanding, the absence of the demands of independence the Uzbek ethnonational identity emerges as the more potent social and political factor than the identity of pan-Islamism or pan-Turkism.

iii) Unlike Uzbekistan, the Tadzhik experience presents a picture of contrast. The confrontations between various clans, and between Communism and Islamic fundamentalism coupled with the Iranian and Afghan factors have tended to dilute Tadzhik ethnic identity.

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