CHAPTER – III

THE FALLOUT OF DISSOLUTION OF THE SOVIET UNION FOR CENTRAL ASIAN SECURITY

The seven decades of Soviet rule gave Central Asia a strong feeling of security and stability as an integral part of a militarily strong super power. During this period it remained free from internecine conflicts and felt no threat to its security from its external neighbours.

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Central Asian States’ relations with Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and the defence and security cooperation with the Russian Federation, is the result of the Soviet Union’s legacy as well as changing politico-economic, geo-strategic and security factors both external and internal to the region. Soon after the break up of the Soviet Union, it came to be realised that security of the Russian Federation and the newly independent Central Asian states is interdependent. These young states with weak economies, unstable political system and no independent strong defence capability became vulnerable to external pressure and penetration.

The newly independent states of Central Asia, which harboured no military ambitions urgently needed an ‘external stabilizing presence’ in the region. Central Asian elites still believe that Russia, the only external actor, is ‘potentially capable for maintaining the existing degree of stability in the region’.

2 Ibid., p.56.
At the same time, Russia too does not need confrontation but wants only to maintain close and cordial relations with its erstwhile components to secure a strong guarantee for regional security and stability. Russia’s comprehensive and long standing relations with Central Asia also clearly indicate that protection of newly independent Central Asian States from external threats and internal instability is the responsibility of the Russian Federation. Moreover despite withdrawal from Central Asia Russia could not ignore its strategic concern, geopolitical links and collective security interests in maintaining stability within the region. It had already ensured that no regional power supplanted Moscow’s preferential status.

Soon after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, certain regional powers namely Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia, China and Pakistan as well as other western powers, especially the United States of America, attempted to fill the power vacuum in the former Soviet republics of Central Asia. But after an initial phase of indifferent policy towards Central Asian States, Russia made a concerted effort to deter all other external and regional powers from filling the gap. President Yeltsin and his Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev personally realised that for all practical purposes and security considerations, Russia must maintain a determining influence in Central Asia.

The Russian foreign policy vis-a-vis Central Asia, since December 1991, has gone through considerable fluctuations and changes in both formulation and implementation. But mainly two schools of thought have dominated Russia’s foreign policy formulation in the post-Soviet era. The first school ‘The Euro-Atlanticist’ primarily represented by Andrei Kozyrev, Yegor Gaider and supported by Boris Yeltsin emphasised the significance of Russia’s democratic and capitalist
transformation and its identification with the North and partnership with the West as a necessary condition for this transformation and effective participation in the creation of a new world order.

Earlier, the fundamental philosophical principle of this school was based upon the principle of pre-dominance of domestic considerations in the shaping of Russian foreign policy. According to proponents of this view, the most important function of Russian foreign policy was to create an international environment that will enable Russian Federation to become a ‘democratic, market oriented, and civilized nation’. The country’s greatness, particularly on the threshold of the 21st century is determined not by the scale of its empire, but above all by the level of its people’s well being’, declared Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyev. The logical approach to achieve the goal of this school was that Russia must become a permanent member of the ‘civilized world’, more specifically to use Kozyrev’s phrase, a ‘special civilized club i.e., the G-7’. The Russian Federation’s inclusion into this ‘club’ could only take place through renunciation of all ideological vestiges of the Russian past both Tsarist and Soviet Russia has to achieve a psychological breakthrough by overcoming messianic temptations and excessive Russianess.

The Euro-Atlanticists viewed that only by following the western models, Russians can find its proper place in the emerging pan-European home. They emphasised that Western democratic values, respect for the principles enunciated in the United Nations charter, the Helsinki declarations (OSCE charter), the Paris charter on human rights, should be used as a guide for formulations of Russians.

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Foreign Policy. The pursuit of western principles should be taken as serious criteria for Russian foreign policy to set the Russian national objectives. This will bring Russian foreign policy on par with global trends. Further more, ‘it will generate a respect and trust, and will be a viable mechanism to protect the basic human rights of the Russian minorities living outside the borders of the Russian Federation in the former Soviet Republics’.

Russia being a great power will carry her ‘historical responsibility’ granted to her by the possession of nuclear weapons and the permanent seat in the U.N Security Council. The Euro-Atlanticists advocated multipolarity and ignored U.S claims of a unipolar world. Boris Yeltsin and Kozyev have repeatedly argued that Russia is a continuation of the USSR, as it relates to its international responsibility and privileges because of the exclusive claim over nuclear weapon and occupation of the Security Council seat. Russian, of course, having the distinct geographical characteristic of being situated both in Europe and Asia, also acted as a linkage between Europe and Asia. So while transforming itself it would also change the ‘Asian wing’ of the European entity into a pan-Euro-Atlantic one. The ‘immature’ states of the former Soviet Union, i.e., Central Asia which belong to another world, will by the persistence and dynamism of ‘an enlightened Russian big brother’ become part of this Euro-Atlantic ‘family’.

The Euro-Atlanticists have advocated two components for Russia’s security system — (i) the ‘partnership’ with United States and Europe through confidence building measures, disarmament and a global collective security system which stretches from Vladivostok to Vancouver; and (ii) the collective CIS

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7 Ibid.
8 FBIS-SOV, 92-020, 30 June 1992, pp.31-33.
9 Ibid.
security system, where Russia for all practical purposes will be a guarantor and dominant player. The CIS collective security will be part and parcel of this global system. This vision was clearly defined in the Charter of Russo-American Partnership and Friendship, signed by Boris Yeltsin and President Bush on 17th July 1992 in Washington.  

The Euro-Atlanticists have identified two fundamental and interconnected sources of threat for the stability of Central Asian States. First, ethno-nationalist regional conflicts that might jeopardise the security of 25 million Russians living in other republics; extra territorial but inter-ethnic conflicts that might involve a CIS member and necessitate Russian intervention. Second, the real concern over the spread of 'Islamic radicalism' both in Russia and in Central Asia. The external sources of Islamic threat have been perceived as emanating specifically from the South i.e., Iran, Afghanistan and the Middle East. In this context, Central Asia is connected with political and security and dynamics of the old 'southern flank' and thus its security and defence now preoccupy a significant place in the Euro-Atlanticists view. Although, the Euro-Atlanticist and the West have identical views of the Islamic threat, Russia will in fact provide the 'front line' of defence against the perceived threat of Islamic fundamentalism in Central Asia. Furthermore, both the religious and ethno-nationalist dimensions of threat will be subdued by the rapid incorporation of Central Asian States into Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe 'OSCE' process.

The second school of thought commonly known as the Neo-Eurasianist has become increasingly relevant with the passage of time. Earlier it had considerable voice within the official establishment in foreign policy circles, cabinet level, the

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army and the Supreme Soviet. Individuals such as Vice-President Alexander Rutskoi; speaker of the Supreme Soviet, Ruslan Khasbutalov; Russia’s State Councilor, Sergei Stankevich; Secretary of the Russian Security Council, Yuri Skokov; Commander of the CIS joint armed forces, General Shaposhnikov; Russian Defence Minister, General Pavel Grachev and the powerful centrists political forces gathered under the umbrella of the ‘Civic Union’ and along with an increasingly vocal number of Foreign Ministry advisors, scholars from Russian Academy of Sciences, severely criticised some of the fundamentals of the Euro-Atlanticist school and collectively elaborated a more ‘realist’ vision of Russian foreign policy towards newly independent Central Asian republics. They opposed the idea of exclusive alliance with the West and criticised ‘the Euro-Atlanticists’ for abandoning the South. They argued that Russia’s natural and traditional allies were in the South rather than in the West. They warned against alienating China, the Muslim World, more importantly its Middle-Eastern components as well as India, and urged that Russia should develop its relations with the South on the basis of its own assessment of political developments, that is, independent of Western perceptions of that part of the world.11

The Neo-Eurasianists attached greater importance to the need for Russia to remain actively involved in Central Asia, which they saw as significant to Russia’s security and economic links to Asia and the Middle East. Furthermore, they called for a more subtle approach, distinct from that of the West, in handling relations with the newly independent Central Asian states.

As the struggle between these competing visions intensified, Boris Yeltsin and Kozyrev embraced some of the formulations of their opponents by

emphasising the need for 'adaptation in the world community', with the maintenance of Russia’s status as 'a greater power', 'with global and regional interests', and good relations with both East and West on the basis of what best served 'Russian national interest' as 'the only ideology of ... foreign policy'.

At first, Boris Yeltsin’s leadership failed to formulate a clear policy towards Central Asia. In the beginning, while giving preference to integrating the former Soviet republics into the broad frame work of the Common Wealth of Independent States (CIS) under Russia’s leadership, Boris Yeltsin could not take viable steps to fill the vacuum that the collapse of the Soviet Union created for the Central Asian republics. The fact that President Boris Yeltsin initially tried to build the CIS on the basis of an alliance with nuclear and mainly Slavic Ukraine and Belarus, and a demographically Russian-driven Kazakhstan, caused considerable anxiety to the leadership in the Central Asian Republics. They feared that Russia would focus more on those former Soviet republics which ethnically and strategically serve Russia’s new broader goal of internal democratisation.

This interface with the power vacuum factor immediately exposed the republics to regional power rivalries and Islamic influences. Of the regional powers Iran, Turkey, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia now found a new arena where they could promote their rival regional interests, and create a new area of influence. The victory of the Mujahidin over the Soviet backed government headed by the Najibullah in Afghanistan in April 1992, for the first time raised the spectre of what some of the Russians had feared. That was the threat of the spread of Islamic radicalism coming from Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan into the Central Asian States as well as into Russia’s own region of Muslim minorities, especially in Tatarstan, Dagestan and Chechnya.

Meanwhile, there was a highly publicised upsurge in the U.S. concern under President George Bush about what was called the growth of 'Iranian backed Islamic fundamentalism' in the Middle East and the vulnerability of the former Soviet Central Asian republics to it. Fears were raised also in Israel regarding denomination of the Iranian Islamic regime about the possibility of the growth of an Islamic confederation, stretching from Pakistan to Central Asia to Iran, to Turkey, against Western and by implication Russian interests in the region.13

Soon after the dissolution of the Soviet Union the Bush administration promptly established diplomatic missions in all of the five Central Asian republics. The U.S. Secretary of States James Baker, in a well publicised tour, visited to the Central Asian republics in early 1992, and urged leaders to look towards Turkey for the best model of development rather than to Iran, which he declared, to be an 'outlaw state'.14 Now the foreign policy debate in Moscow become more concerned about the potential for Islamic radicalism in Central Asia, and forced Boris Yeltsin to shift to a policy of reassertion towards Central Asian states.

Subsequent ethno-nationalist conflicts in the Caucasus, particularly in the Muslim republics of Azerbaijan and Tajikistan where a civil war erupted in May 1992 proved instrumental in giving an assertive turn in pushing the Russian policy towards the Central Asian states. Tajikistan became a venue for fierce power struggle between the ruling Communist Government of President Nabiev and the opposition, led by an alliance of the Islamists and the democrats.

The first alarm for security concern of Central Asian states was raised in early 1992, when the ruling elite there warned Moscow that its Euro-centric-orientation dominated policy could pave the way for the predatory designs of the West Asian Muslim fundamentalist forces in their lands. They spoke forcefully of the fear of loss of strategic installations in Central Asia and of the eruption of fierce inter-ethnic conflict, like those witnessed in the Caucasus. Powerful economic lobbies also demanded Russia’s continued and even enhanced ‘strategic interest in Central Asia taking into account the need of protecting the Central Asian States’.15

The chief threat to the domestic stability of the Central Asian republics was perceived from the growing influence of ‘Islamic extremism’. Since the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the emergence of Central Asian states had led to the significant enlargement of the perceived ‘Islamic threat’.

Historically, Islam has been a dominant factor in Central Asia. Samarkand and Bokhara were traditionally great centers of Islamic theological studies and the region has never remained isolated from the Islamic mainstream. However, the over six decades of communist rule did impose measure to curb religious practices. There was a sudden resurgence of Islam in all the Central Asian republics. With the collapse of communism, the fear of emergence of Islamic countries as a bloc has preoccupied the Russian as well as the Western mind. The struggle for influence in Central Asia by neighbouring Muslim countries, particularly Iran, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, and Turkey, and their continuous efforts to bring these newly independent states into its own ideological fold have spurred apprehension about a rapid growth of Islamic resurgence.

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It is this form of Islamic reassertion fuelled by ideological dogmas, translated in conflictual terms that is perceived as emerging threat to Russia and Western world. Even North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) is especially concerned about the region and has prepared its strategy to deal with contingencies outside the NATO bloc through rapid deployment of forces of around 1,00,000 soldiers. Its former Secretary General Manfred Warner, expressed his anxiety and declared, that the “Islamic fundamentalist are getting increasingly strong in Central Asia” and that this development “does not meet the interest of NATO”. Thus besides Russia the NATO countries are also alarmed by the emerging threat of resurgence of Islam in the Central Asian States.

During the post-Soviet era, the peoples of Central Asia have witnessed an interesting rivalry among the Muslim countries over using the Islamic resurgence to their advantage. The Iranians, Saudis, Pakistanis, Aga Khan’s Ismailies and some Turkish groups are regular visitor to the republics of Central Asia. These groups target funds to the region and compete with one another in their interpretation of Islam.

Instability in Afghanistan (perpetuated by fighting among the Mujahidin groups) has also created an opportunity for the Iranians, the Saudis and the Pakistanis to step into the vacuum created by the Russian withdrawal. The Afghan Civil War has brought Persians, Saudis and Pakistani’s religious groups into contact with Central Asian Muslims to create new areas of influence. Initially these groups were able to send thousands of copies of the Quran and other Islamic readings as well as modest amounts of funds to the Central Asian republics.17

16 Mushahid Hussian, FEER, July 2, 1992, p.22.
The Saudis intensified their activities in Uzbekistan and were able to control a group of people through Mohammad Sadik, formerly the official and now unofficial Mufti of Tashkent. In addition to these unofficial religious Saudi groups, some official organisations like the Muslim World League and Islamic Bank for Economic Development began to provide funds for Islamic activities in Central Asia and Caucasus.\textsuperscript{18} Contrary to the principles of its establishment, the Islamic Bank provided $3,00,000 to each Central Asian states for Islamic activities.

The fundamentalists ‘threat’ has forced the present Central Asian elites to prepare for integration with Russia. ‘In Uzbekistan’, said President Islam Karimov, ‘fundamentalism can find no support. Russia guarantees the security and indivisibility of the borders of the Central Asian region, therefore Uzbekistan can not survive without it’.\textsuperscript{19} Uzbekistan sees Russia as its only partner, which, in spite of having its own interests in the region, is a lesser evil than the fundamentalist regimes of Iran or Afghanistan. It is only Uzbekistan among the Central Asian republics, which with its authoritarian secular regime, has become the main obstacle to the expansion of Islamic fundamentalism in the region.

The military might of Uzbekistan (including direct troops participation) guaranteed the victory of the pro-Communist armed groups of the Khojent and Kulyab clans in the civil war of Tajikistan. The victory of the Islamic Democratic coalition (a complex combination of clan, ethno-territorial and political forces) heralded the beginning of a complicated internal crisis for Uzbekistan, the possible exodus of thousands of Uzbek refugees from Tajikistan (its Uzbek population exceeds one million), aggravation of conflicts with its own Tajiks (over two million), and the growth of the Islamic movements in the Ferghana Valley.

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., p,45.
\textsuperscript{19} Narodnaya Slovo, Tashkent, May 1994.
Although, no immediate external threat to any of the newly independent states of Central Asia was perceived by the political elites in the region until the out-break of the Civil War in Tajikistan in 1992. At the same time, the list of challenges to the region's stability and security was also augmented by the spectre of de-stabilization from outside the political boundaries of the region from Afghanistan as factional rivalries following the collapse of Najibullah's regime threatened to spill over into former Soviet Central Asia. Both of these developments necessiated Central Asian elites to look towards Russia for security guarantees. Muslim fundamentalism, exported by the Islamic Governments in Afghanistan was always seen as a dangerous phenomenon in Central Asian region. The ruling elites in Central Asia largely consisted former Communist era officials who had substituted nationalism for their previous ideological orientation.

The rising tide of Islamic militancy and Uzbek nationalism are the most serious challenges to the Government of President Islam Karimov. A year after Uzbekistan declared independence, Islamic fundamentalists were preparing for an armed struggle to overthrow Karimov, while urbanized Uzbek nationalists, still unclear about their aims, were united in a common hatred of Karimov. Although the Islamic opposition to the government has made dramatic strides since 1989, it became serious in July 1992 when the official Islamic hierarchy – Mufti of Uzbekistan, Mohammad Yosuf Mohammad Sadik, was voted out of office. Subsequently, the pro-government Islamic hierarchy or official Islam faced severe challenges from the Wahabi movement in Ferghana and the Islamic Renaissance Party in the aftermath of the civil war in Tajkistan.

It is the Wahabi movement in the Ferghana valley that is the most determined and best organised of all the fundamentalist movements seeking the
overthrow of the government. ‘Ferghana can explode any time. People are just waiting for it to happen, and no body can do any thing to stop it’, admitted a senior official of the Uzbek Interior Ministry in 1993. Every thing has come at once, a new multi-party system, a poor economy and now the fundamentalists. We have no immediate answer. Seven million people, one third of the total population of Uzbekistan, live in the valley, making it the most densely populated region in Central Asia. Over populated with an acute economic crises in the valley has given the fundamentalists an effective political base.  

Since 1991 militants have looked for confrontation with the city authorities in order to seize prime grounds in city centre to build mosques and madrasas – funded by the Saudi-backed Ahle-Sunnah movement. Besides this, a massive propaganda operation is underway in outlying villages in order to reconvert the population. ‘First Ferghana, then Uzbekistan and then the whole of Central Asia will became an Islamic states’ said Imam Abdul Ahad Namangan. The Imams said their aim was to overthrow the ‘Communist Government of Karimov’, and ‘spear head an Islamic revolution through out Central Asia’.  

Uzbek officials claim that the militants are creating a secret army that students are undergoing weapons and martial arts training, and that in each city hit squads have been built up to strike officials and create disturbances at an appropriate time. The crisis in Ferghana is compounded by the fact that local officials have no clear strategy to deal with the economic crisis and no idea how to curb the Islamic militants. However the militants have little influence in the capital Tashkent or in the vast southern region of Uzbekistan, where Sufism and Uzbek nationalism are much stronger forces.

21 Ibid.,
22 Ibid.,
23 Ibid.,
While analysing different postures of threats to the stability of Central Asian republics, Islam Karimov commented that ‘the region can obtain a dynamic and sustainable development and be an honest partner for the world community only if stability and geo-political balances are preserved.’ While the civil war in Tajikistan pre-occupied all Central Asian leaders, Uzbek President Karimov proclaimed that he wanted Russia ‘to be the guarantor of security in Central Asia.’ He added that it was in keeping with the historical traditions and coincided with Russia’s interests as well. However, he demanded that Uzbekistan should have a leading role in any future security arrangements for Central Asia. Already by the summer of 1992 both President Yeltsin and the right-wing opposition looked to Karimov to keep the peace in Central Asia. For the first time Moscow was relying on Karimov to take major initiatives to maintain security, rather than dictating the terms for such arrangements itself. Moscow regarded Karimov, as an effective gendarme for Central Asia, and most important political actor on the Central Asian stage.

Islam Karimov, while assessing different shades of threats to the security of Uzbekistan, has took a comprehensive view of threats to the security which in his opinion are manifested in “political extremism, including religious shades, nationalism and national self-isolation, contradiction based on ethnic, inter-ethnic, local and tribal nature, corruption and criminality and ecological problems”.

There is practically no Islamic threat to the Alma-Aty regime though there is the real threat of inter-ethnic conflict, Russian seperatism, a conflict with

25 Ahmad Rashid, Resurgence in Central Asia: Islam or Nationalism (Karanchi, 1994), p.103.
Russia, which might result in the division of the country. But ethnic factor in the future stability of Kazakhstan is closely linked with the revival of Islam. Historically the Kazakhs are the least Islamicised of the Central Asian people, and they have undergone large-scale Russification. Islamic fundamentalism amongst the Kazakhs is rare compared to Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.

Islamic fundamentalism is seen by Central Asian leaders as a cause for undermining relations between ethnic groups and the political stability of the region. Kazakhstan’s President Nazarbayev has promised many times that he would take all necessary steps to ‘stop Islamic fundamentalism from rising’ in Kazakhstan. He also declared that Kazakhstan had a special responsibility in directing the Central Asian states away from subjection to the influence of Islamic fundamentalism and Iran. Similarly President Akayev of the Kyrgyz Republic also stated that he would do everything possible could to stop Islamic fundamentalism from harming the interest of Kyrgyzstan. President Niyazov of Turkmenistan, likewise said that he did not trust and would like every steps to oppose of Islamic Fundamentalism in his country. The Prime Minister of Uzbekistan pointed out that the Islamic fundamentalism is ‘incompatible with’ the national development in Uzbekistan and its spread should be ‘held back’.27

The ongoing conflict in Afghanistan and the still fragile coalition with the Islamic opposition in Tajikistan are the other major sources of threat to the stability of Central Asian states, which call for a collective approach to the problem of ensuring security in the region. Afghanistan, despite the Soviet withdrawal, remains a hotbed of instability. Torn apart by internal conflicts, encouraged by religious extremism, ethnic intolerance, drug trafficking, illegal

arms trade and external forces of different kinds. The conflict in Afghanistan threatens to spill over to Central Asia. During the last five years, the threat of extension of the civil war into the neighbouring Tajikistan has remained quite real.

Military and political crisis in Afghanistan and instability in Tajikistan have a negative impact on regional stability in Central Asia. During the recent years, events have acquired a more dramatic course because in the Afghan crisis, apart from the existing ethnic factions, a religious aspect has also been introduced. The process of politicisation of Islam has taken advanced quite far and has acquired extremely radical forms. Open pretensions to power and the wish to achieve it through use of arms, calling up on all co-religionists to support it. The recent take over of Mazar-i-Sharif by the Taliban Islamic militia, and subsequently their call for Islamisation of Afghan society by following Islamic shariat reflects real intentions of Taliban. Unfortunately, in some countries of the region there still exist the extremist elements who will not hesitate to impose the Afghan scenario on their people in utter disregard of the consequences of the events in Afghanistan. The unending fights among the various ethnic groups in Afghanistan and their confessional ambitions have had a negative effect on the entire Central Asian region.

The armed provocations on the Tajik-Afghan border which, together with other manifestations of subversive activity from the territory of the Islamic state of Afghanistan, seriously destabilize the situation in Tajikistan and consequently throughout the region. In such conditions, heterogeneous “fight for faith” use religious slogans to justify their actions and intentions for imposing their ideals and values on reluctant masses and for sowing seeds of discard and hatred against the government.
Islam Karimov, while commenting on the fear of division among nations on the basis of the ethnic principles stated that “Changes in the existing borders in the region may result in horrifying effect for the entire world community, so the conflict of similar kind in Bosnia and Herzegovina, would seem a prelude to the holocaust”.  

The long lasting regional conflicts in Afghanistan and Tajikistan have generated a wide range of problems for the neighbouring countries, especially in Central Asia. Major problems which emerged, are, the problem of refugees, illegal drug trafficking, international terrorism and arms smuggling. The rival groups, particularly in Afghanistan, regard the drug production and sale as the most appropriate means to earn money to purchase armaments and to enrich themselves. According to the estimate of some international agencies and of the United Nations, Afghanistan has become not only one of the leading producers of raw opium, but it is the biggest transit point for ever growing drug delivery to the states of Central Asia and the west.

Besides the Afghan conflict other conflicts on the territory of the CIS countries such as in Chechnya, Nagorno-Karabakh and Abkhazia also have the potentiality of a spill over in Central Asia. The border transparency between the Central Asian territories has resulted in stockpiling of arms on their territories. It is well-known that militants trained in Afghanistan in guerilla warfare have been conducting terrorist acts of subversion in the Caucasus, in Chechnya and Tajikistan.

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Inter-ethnic conflicts in Central Asia which have become aggravated in the post-Soviet period pose a serious threat to the security of the region. As already stated there are about 25 million Russians settled in Central Asia. All the Central Asian states are multi-ethnic in their composition with the number of ethnic groups ranging twelve and above. The dominant ethnic groups in the Central Asian states are the Kazakhs, the Uzbeks, the Kyrgyzs, the Tajiks and the Turkmens. However, the Russians account for a large proportion of the population. In four, out of five Central Asian republics, the Russians are the second largest ethnic groups. In Kazakhstan, where as the Kazakh account for 39.7 percent of the population, the Russians are closely behind at 37.8 percent. In Kyrgyzstan, the population consists of more than eighty ethnic groups. The relative percentage of the Kyrgyzs and the Russians is respectively 52.4 percent and 21.5 percent. Of all the ethnic groups in Uzbekistan, the Uzbeks form 71.4 percent. The Russians at 8.3 percent are still the second largest ethnic group there. In Turkmenistan, there are 72 percent of Turkmens and 9.5 percent of Russians. Only in Tajikistan, the Russian, accounting for 7.6 percent of the population in 1991, are the third largest ethnic groups after the Tajiks and Uzbeks.\(^\text{29}\)

The presence of a large proportion of the Russian population remains a major problem in inter-ethnic relations in the Central Asian States. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union and subsequent declaration of independence of Central Asian republics, the Russian suddenly found themselves a minority in the multi-ethnic new states of Central Asia. The collapse of the Soviet Union removed the rationale for existence of the Soviet ‘nationalities’. Now the Central Asian peoples have started rejecting the ‘new’ national identities. They are more and more looking to larger and older group identities. This change has further increased the apprehensions of the Russian minority.\(^\text{30}\)


\(^{30}\) Ibid.,
Amongst the Turkic people, especially the Uzbeks, this has led to a certain enthusiasm for the idea of a Turkestan, or more broadly, a pan-Turkic identity. Similarly, some Tajakis are attracted by the idea of a greater Iran. The titular nationalities in Central Asia which recently begun to assert themselves. This has had a profound impact on the Russian minority, which has begun to lose their old position.

The Russians, who began to feel themselves as second class citizens due to the passage of the new laws on state language, began to migrate from Central Asia. The inter-ethnic riots in Ferghana and Osh (though these did not involve the Russians) as also the bloody civil war in Tajikistan also increased the fears for their security among the Russians living in Central Asia. The confrontation between the Russians and the major ethnic groups in Central Asian states have been most clearly visible in Kazakhstan, where 70 percent of the Russians in Central Asia live. Largely as a result of ethnic confrontation and ethnic tension, a large number of Russians have left the Central Asian states. According to statistics provided by the media of Kazakhstan in 1992, more than 175,000 Russians left Kazakhstan, again in 1993, another 170,000 Russians opted to migrate out of Kazakhstan. It has been openly admitted that such a large-scale emigration of Russians from Kazakhstan has a lot to do with 'ethnic tensions'. Other republics of Central Asia, i.e., Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan also witnessed large-scale immigration of their Russian population in 1992. Currently the Civil War in Tajikistan has triggered a sizable exodus of Russian minorities from Tajikistan, reducing the Slow population by almost about a half.

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Today, according to the U.N High Commission for Refugees, Russia is receiving more refugees and immigrants than any other country in the world. The deterioration of Russia-Central Asia relations may further lead to an exodus of hundreds of thousands of Russians and Russian speaking minorities into the Russian federation.\(^{32}\)

The situation in Kazakhstan is quite different from that in the other four republics. The ethnic problem in Kazakhstan is complicated by the fact that the Slavs (mostly Russians) and Kazakhs are equally balanced. The slavs are located in compact settlements in the rich industrialized north bordering with Russia. They are also well organised, with experienced political action groups and para-military formations (the Cossacks). They regard this region as their birth right and are fully determined neither to leave it nor to accept the status of second class citizens. Militants amongst them have long been demanding secession in order either to form an autonomous Slav state or to seek unification with Russia.\(^{33}\) Significantly, President Nursultan Nazarbayev, requires Slav support in order to safeguard his own positions, which is increasingly under pressure from Kazakhs extremists. The latter believe in a greater degree of 'Kazakhification' of all aspects of public life.

The level of tensions between the two communities fluctuates constantly, influenced by both domestic conditions and by external factors, primarily, of course, by the situations in Russia. In case of possible outbreak of an armed conflict, it could most probably lead to the dismemberment of Kazakhastan as well as trigger a sizeable exodus of Russian minorities towards the Russian Federation. These inter-ethnic problems and rise of radical ethnic nationalism of an anti

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Russian orientation, which is acquiring strong base in Central Asia in general, and in Kazakhstan particular, will be checked only by the rapid incorporation of the Central Asian states into the fold of a common security and defence system embracing both Russia defence and security system and Central Asia. Mutual relation between Russia and Central Asian states can only protect large Russian speaking ethnic communities in all the republics of Central Asia.

Currently, another threat to the stability of the Central Asian republics comes from mounting economic and social pressures. As elsewhere in the CIS, there has been an explosion of crimes in Central Asia. The ‘Mafia networks’ now have become a dominant force in Central Asian society. Cross border smuggling of every conceivable commodity, from icons to uranium and from weapons to luxury goods, is now quite prevalent. There are less visible problems that have a direct bearing on regional stability and therefore on Russian interests: ‘the production of drug-related crimes; production and trafficking of narcotic substances; illegal trade in arms; disruption of communication infrastructures; human right violations; the spread of corruption and criminality; the expansion of fundamentalists ideologies; and the inclination towards violence by specific groups, including those pursuing clerical policies’.34

A significant factor in the relations between Russia and Central Asian states is the existence of a practically unified post-Soviet defence area, which leaves Russia no alternative but to defend the status quo in the region. At the same time Central Asian states have no independent security system, but entirely depend upon Russia. The Russian defence doctrine views the territories of Central Asian as vital to Russia’s interests, while their outer borders (the borders of the CIS) are

34 Roald Z. Sagdeev & Susan Eisenhower (ed.), Central Asia: Conflicts, Resolution and Change (USA, Maryland, 1994), pp.43-44.
strategic to the territorial definition of Russia. The protection of exterior border of CIS (although the CIS's internal borders hardly exist) from external penetration is the responsibility of the Russian Federation. The Russian army and the Russian-speaking officer corps of the Central Asian armies are the main instruments necessary to maintain the actual unity of the defence zone. Even this doctrine was tested during the civil war in Tajikistan. Russia's comprehensive and long standing relations with Central Asia also clearly indicate that protection of newly Central Asian states from external threat and internal instability had been the responsibility of the Russian Government.

In the eyes of Central Asian elites, Russia remains the only actor potentially capable of maintaining the existing degree of stability in the region. Central Asia's newly independent states are not yet capable of securing themselves, nor is any other potential patron of the region likely to play that role. The importance of Russia to the region as a stabilizing actor and the lack of alternatives to it are highlighted by the position of two regional great powers – Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan – as consumers of security vis-à-vis Russia. Each has an equally unique and significant dependency on Russia.

For Kazakhstan, with its minority kazakh population, its Russian or Russified majority, as well as extensive common borders with the Russian Federation and good relations with Russia constitute the most basic precondition for its territorial integrity and survival as a state. For Uzbekistan, with its sizeable population – by some accountants two million or more Tajiks population and common border with Civil War–torn Tajikistan and Afghanistan, Russia's military presence in the region is a crucial requirement for domestic stability.
Russia’s security interests in Central Asia are not limited to neighbouring Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan only. Russia has always been a great power with a large sphere of influence and will remain one. It will continue to actively pursue its interests throughout the territory of the former Soviet Union as a right or as a responsibility, “laid on its shoulders by history and geography”.35 This great power vision has firmly supplanted the isolationist and retreatist mood that dominated the early post-Soviet consensus with respect to Russia’s policy toward the “near abroad”.

Geopolitically Russia's security interests in Central Asia are vital for overall stability of the region. The concept of modern power with modern, 'neo-colonial' character has allocated to Russia the role of an enlightened big-brother. The common threat perception posed by rising tide of forces of political Islam around the neighbouring countries has been realised by leaders of both Russia and Central Asian states. But Russia can never tolerate emerging threat of Islamic fundamentalism in Central Asian states. It desires that all Central Asian states should retain their secular character. Russian leaders fear that once Islamic fundamentalist forces succeed in penetrating into Central Asia, they might as well enter Russia where there is a sizeable Muslim population. Hence Russia continues and even enhances its strategic interests in Central Asia on the plea of protecting the region form external threat and internal instability. Besides this, protection of the external borders of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) especially of Central Asia along the ‘southern flanks’ from the rising Islamic radical forces sponsored by powerful volatile neighbouring Islamic states of Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Turkey and Saudi Arabia is the responsibility of Russia. The peace keeping efforts by Russia and security of southern borders especially Tajikistan's

border with Afghanistan from the Islamic radical forces have enhanced the security of the new Central Asian states. The presence of Pakistani and Afghan guerillas in the Chechnian conflicts adds a new dimension to Central Asian states' internal security.

From the stand point of Russia, defined as a great power, its withdrawal from Central Asia would be inconceivable and would violate the most basic and general Russian security concern. Russia's withdrawal from Central Asia would create a geopolitical vacuum in the region, which would then become vulnerable to penetration and influence of hostile or potentially hostile outside powers (their competition for influence in Central Asia) as well as ideological movements hostile to Russia.36

The major regional contenders in international rivalry to influence and control Central Asia's destiny, market, trade, and resources, especially Kazakhstan's and Turkmenistan's oil and gas, described as an economic warfare, are Russia, Iran, Turkey, China, U.S.A., Saudi Arabia, India and Pakistan. Israel is not direct competitor in the region, but it has sought to prevent pro-Iranian fundamentalism from gaining a foothold there, and crucially prevent nuclear proliferation from Kazakhstan to other Muslim states. But 'despite facing enormous domestic difficulties, Russia intends, both in theory and practice to remain the major actor and dominant player in the affairs of Central Asia'.37

In terms of security concern in Central Asia, Russia gradually realised that the Gulf countries are trying to capitalize on the security vacuum in Central Asia

36 Ibid., p.59.
to promote their own influence and ideological preferences. Russia made it clear to Iran that the development of closer Russo-Iranian relations depended on the nature of Iran’s Central Asian policy. Only good behaviour of Tehran would permit the continuation of the $5 billion Russo-Iranian arms agreements initiated by Mikhail Gorbachev in 1989. Though unhappy about the suppression of Tajik Islamic fundamentalists during 1992-93 civil war, Iran promised to remain neutral in the internal affairs of Tajikistan.

Although, Iran needs Russia to establish close relations with all five newly independent republics of Central Asia as well as to gain entry to Trans-Caucasia at the same time it also entirely depends upon Russia as a major arms suppliers. The geographical proximity of the Central Asian state of Turkmenistan and cultural affinity of Tajikistan with Iran expose these two republics to the threat of Tehran’s sponsored Islamic fundamentalism. These fundamentalist influences from across the border, targeted mainly against Central Asian states, have alerted Russia towards the security of its erstwhile components and caution from Iran. Another important development causing concern to Russia is the vision of the pan-Islamic bloc harboured by the Islamist’s elites of Iran. This intention is strongly supplemented with the evidence of allegation of world community that Iran is in the final stage of assembling at least three nuclear weapons from out of scattered disassembled parts/ fissile materials acquired from Central Asian states of the former Soviet Union. 38

It is reported that during the visit of Iranian intelligence delegation in 1991 to Central Asian republics, an Iranian expert on weapons of mass destruction, Chambiz, met several officials from Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and Azerbaizan. It

38 Yossef Bodansky, “Iran acquires nuclear weapons and moves to provide cover to Syria”, Defence and Foreign Affairs Strategic Policy, File 1992, p.3.
was reported that he got assurance of help in developing the nuclear programme of Iran. The next deal was carried out by Chamron, a nuclear physicist, who was assigned the task to make recruitment of Soviet experts for working in Iran. In a deal reached between Iran and Kazakhstan, Iran agreed to pay 130-150 million U.S. dollars for three nuclear weapons. Iran is also reported to have recruited 50 experts and 200 senior technicians mostly from the Kurchatov Institute (Semiplatinsk-21) to build nuclear weapons in Iran. The Iranian recruitment list included Vladimir Kubar and Philip Gurkhanian from the Kurchatov Institute in Moscow, Arsen Hamidadah from Kazakhstan and Alexander Ahmediadeh from Turkmenistan.

The other neighbour, Pakistan, too is wooing the Central Asian republics. Earlier, the extension of the Islamic world order into Central Asian territory was also the plank of General Zia-ul-Haque Afghan policy. This policy in subsequent stages was also followed by the ex-prime Minister of Pakistan, Ms. Benazir Bhutto and currently by Mr. Nawaz Sharif. The Central Asian leadership after sensing the real motives of Pakistan, warned Islamabad in 1992, that any effort to sponsor fundamentalist regimes in Afghanistan would provoke the Tajiks, settled there, and lead to a further break-up of that state, generate violence, massive refugees flows, and trigger an unacceptable possible domino effect.

Ideologically, Pakistan has a greater stake in getting the Central Asian states into Islamic fold. It has its own set of design in Central Asia. The idea to set up an "Islamic crescent" in its north stretching from the Caspian to the Arabian sea, revival of Islam and the idea of Islamic bomb has alerted both Russia and the Western countries. Boris Yeltsin, the President of the Russian Federations, while

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39 Ibid.,
40 Ibid., pp.3-4.
expressing fear over the Islamic bomb, referred to Pakistan as a probable center of new geo-strategic Islamic bloc, involving Iran, Turkey, Afghanistan and Central Asia states. The Russian leaders are also well aware of Pakistani official line since 1980, when Soviet troops were deployed in Afghanistan. At that time, Pakistan openly supported Afghan Islamic militia (Mujahedin) with arms and ammunitions against the Soviet troops, and carried out a holy war against the communists beyond Afghanistan and Central Asia. Recent developments in Afghanistan have, however, offered fresh opportunities for Pakistan to implement its design. Participation of thousands of Pakistani’s para-military forces along with the Taliban Islamic militia at the time of attack and further seize of last stronghold of opposition, Mazar-e-Sharif, in August 1998, clearly exposed heinous design of Pakistan’s policy towards Afghanistan crises. In that situation, it is the responsibility of Russia to check every intention of Pakistan for the sake and security of its erstwhile Islamic segments to prevent from possible Islamification for the restoration of the stability in the region.

Turkey’s approach to the region since 1991 invoked Islamic and Turkic solidarity as well as real politik to restrain Russian influence. The Turkish policy outlined by the Late Premier, and then President, Turgat Ozal, sought Turkey presence in world politics from the Adriatic to the Great Wall of China, wherever Turkic people are involved. Though criticised as neo Ottomanism or reborn Pan-Turkism, it was merely a policy of economic penetration, especially in the Black Sea and Central Asia and of cultural diffusion, a kind of civilising mission to younger brothers. It reflected both the sense of European ambivalence about to including Turkey in the post ‘Cold War’ West as well as the exuberance following the Gulf-War and fall of Soviet power. Backed by the Bush administration and subsequently by the Clinton administration, Turkey’s expansion policy meant a
greater economic presence around its borders to stabilize those areas, generate a
new rationale for inclusion in the West, its 'civilizing mission' to Central Asia and
to present a counter model of a secular democratic westernizing Muslim states that
would check Iran ideologically and ‘Iran and Russia politically'.

China, the most powerful border country, is the most likely and strongest
competitor with Russia for future influence in Central Asia. Compared to the
United States, the policy of China towards Central Asia is oriented along
important national concerns. One of them is the strategic interest to preserve the
stability of Russia and its help in preventing the final establishment of an
unipolarity in international relations. For the foreseeable future, China’s
objectives are to prevent an upsurge of Islamic or of nationalist agitation among its
Muslim people (Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Uighar ) in Xinjiang and its Western provinces
that borders Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. China has good reasons to fear Islamic
unrest, and that’s why it could not afford an unstable situation along its three
thousand kilometers long border with Central Asia, especially at the border with
the Xinjiang – Uighur autonomous region, where the majority population are non
Chinese. The stability of Dogu (Eastern) Turkestan or Xinjiang, where the
separatist movement is going on and has been restive since 1989, is of much
concern to China. Xinjiang Daily, the official newspaper, frequently issues stern
warnings against Muslim militancy and Turkic nationalism, asserting that
“separatists will be seen as traitors and prosecuted”.

43 Tabassum Firdaus, “Central Asia: Security Stakes and Strategies”, World Focus (New Delhi),
June 1995, p.56.
Thus, China and Russia are both vulnerable to Islamic threats. This common threat perception is part of the larger basic harmony of world view and strategic interests that has led to a Sino-Russian alliance. But despite all these development, one can not ignore Beijing’s own designs towards the Central Asian states. China, a strong, a powerful economic and military power in the Asian region, expresses its unhappiness over the Uighur separatist movement in Xinjiang on the border of Kazakhstan. Beijing also carries-out nuclear blasts in Lop Nor, barely 200 kilometers away from the Kazakh border.

All these developments around the periphery of Central Asian states and the international rivalry for influence in that region where new independent states have emerged, have added to the importance of Russia as the real guarantor of peace, security and stability of the region, which can only be achieved by incorporation of the Central Asian Republics into a common security and defence space.

Apart from nuclear weapons, the enriched uranium stockpile in Central Asia is also becoming accessible to external buyers. Kazakhstan and Tajikistan hold 30 per cent of the uranium reserves of the former Soviet Union. Recent CIA studies show a wider distribution of uranium reserves in Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. As these states are faced with severe economic problems, the possibility of sale of uranium to raise hard currency is quite high and causes serious concern to the Russia as well as to the Western countries. The concern in Washington resulted in an agreement between the U.S and Tajikistan to limit the exports of Central Asian uranium, which was signed during James Bakar’s visit to the region in February 1992. Meanwhile Kazakhsthan is already talking about upgrading its arms industry to enter the world arms market.
Nuclear weapons and enriched uranium materials scattered in the Central Asian states are also a matter of great concern for Russia's strategic policy towards the new republics of its southern flank. Illegal delivery of Soviet arms and weapons from the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) to the neighbouring countries as well as to the 'hot spots' of the world is a great concern for the Russian Federation. Among the major recipients of smuggled Soviet weapons are the Palestinian fighter, Croatian guards, Libyan terrorists, Albanian rebels, Algerian fundamentalists, and Serbian guerillas as well as terrorists of many other countries.

Among the CIS and five Central Asian republics, Kazakhstan is the second largest state, and Asian nuclear successor state to the USSR. Out of the massive nuclear arsenal of roughly 27,000 weapons that the former Soviet Union possessed, Kazakhstan possessed 1800, i.e., 7 per cent of the total weapons on its soil as of September 1991. The position of Central Asian states in regard to tactical nuclear weapon deployment regime was as given below.

**Nuclear Weapon Deployment, as of September 1991**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>States</th>
<th>Strategic offensive forces</th>
<th>Ground Forces</th>
<th>Air Defence</th>
<th>Air Forces</th>
<th>Naval Forces</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kazakhstan</td>
<td>1,150</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkmenistan</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uzbekistan</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Krgystan</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tajikistan</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,150</td>
<td>510</td>
<td>425</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2180</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There was considerable speculation as to what would happen to these weapons ever since the overall responsibility of the Soviet Union ceased. According to the National Resources Defence Council, 104 of the former Soviet Union's 308-3S, 18 missiles are deployed at two bases in Kazakhstan along with 40 Bear H Bombers capable of carrying AS-15 air launched cruise missiles. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, by January 1992, the command and control system for the 108 silo-based SS-18 CBMs in Kazakhstan were modified to preclude rapid launch.\(^{45}\)

In the aftermath of the Soviet collapse, Kazakhstan was a party to the agreement signed by 11 CIS members which committed themselves to "preserve and support common military and strategic space under a united command, including unified control over nuclear armaments regulated by special agreements". Kazakhstan together with Ukraine turned down Yeltsin's offer shortly after the independence to redeploy all nuclear weapons located on their territory back to Russia.

In a major policy statement in October 1992, President Nursultan Nazarbayev, said that his country did not became a nuclear state of its own accord. However, he overcame the problem by signing the London Protocol on May 23, 1992 and assumed all the obligations of the former USSR under the START I Treaty. The US administration continued its pressure on the Kazakh President to give up strategic weapons deployed on Kazakh soil. Kazakhstan decided to sign the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) as a nuclear state, following the signing of a Collective Security Treaty at the CIS summit in Tashkent. Apart from the U.S. agreement to consider Kazakhstan as a party to the Strategic Arms

Reduction Treaty (START) treaty, it was given a written assurance by the US Secretary of States, James Baker, that the US would make every effort to ensure that the international community defended Kazakhstan in the event of an external nuclear attack or threatened to attack.\textsuperscript{46} Thus shortly before signing the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance with Russia on May 25, 1992, President Sultan Nazarbayev surrendered his country’s nuclear power status by signing the NPT. During the summer of 1994, 2000 nuclear warheads were transported from Kazakhstan to some unknown place in the U.S in a secret operation.

In Kazakhstan, a giant state of Central Asia, a former nuclear weapon successor state, Russian officers are still employed to control the nuclear plants and installations. Kazakhstan, along with other four republics lacks necessary indigenous know-how for large defence industries, standing army and technological advancement in arms production. In the defence production of Kazakhstan, only 3 per cent local people are employed.

All Central Asian states with the sole exception of Turkmenistan, though with varying degrees of emphasis, preferred and in fact insisted on a substantive collective security system with active Russian participation. Even in the case of Turkmenistan, it has already concluded a bilateral defence and security agreement with Russia. The Central Asian elites from Kazakhstan to Turkmenistan were not satisfied with the token gesture of the nuclear umbrella of the CIS for their security. They were demanding a more comprehensive, meaningful security system which included practical measures in dealing with the conventional defence of their territory and their borders. Early optimism over the formation of an ‘Asian-Turkic/ Islamic bloc’ was fading in the face of the realities of historical

interdependence with Russia. Commenting on the pivotal role of Russia for the
security of Central Asia, Askar Akaev, the President of Kyrgyzstan, stated that:
‘The Eurasian entity hinged on Russia, it would collapse if it (Russia) ceased to be
a world power, with painful implications for Kyrgyzstan as well. That’s why we
must make our contribution to Russia’s revival’. 47

The concern over the ‘Islamic threat’ while all along present in Russia and
Central Asia, now demanded some practical measures. A long-term view of
problems meant that although the domestic dimensions of the threat was driven by
internal instabilities, a containment of its external dimension meant the protection
of the exterior borders of the CIS and especially Central Asia along the ‘southern
flanks’. If Islam were to penetrate the CIS, the main direction of is external route
would be the South West Asia/ Persian Gulf region, particularly Iran, Afghanistan
and Pakistan. The security of southern borders would not only have enhanced the
physical security of the new Central Asian republics, but it was loaded with a clear
political message of Russian sensitivity to all regional actors towards this issue.

The policy shift away from the Euro-Atlanticist to a Neo-Eurasianist
outlook clearly indicates a serious accommodation of an adjustment to the
emerging realities facing Russia and the new Central Asia states. The security
policy of Russia towards Central Asia, is also to maintain a buffer zone around the
region, and between itself and explosive Middle East, and South Asian region and
also to preserve there a balance of power. The strong motivation for the Central
Asian states to ensure a frame work for multilateral military links and to retain
bilateral military relationship with Russia is the heavy concentration of the former
Soviet defence production and research and development (R & D) in the Russia
Federation.

Besides these factors, Russia views the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) as a potential adversary. At the same time China is emerging as powerful, militarily and economically strong country, and there is an objective danger to Russia of a renewed conflict with china in the future. The emerging regional power of China and its growing ambitions can only be checked by unified security programme of both Russia and Central Asian states.

These factors (Russia still formally a great power, its historical responsibilities granted to her by the possession of nuclear weapons, occupation of permanent seat in the United Nation’s Security Council, United State’s claim of dominating the unipolar world, end of Cold War and demise of communism from East Europe etc.) have forced Russia to continue its efforts towards forging a collective security system reinforced by bilateral security treaties with all Central Asian states.

In all bilateral defence treaties, multi-lateral security agreements and collective security system for CIS, Russia for all practical purposes remained as sole guarantor and dominant player. All Central Asian states without exception preferred and in fact insisted on a substantive collective security system with active Russian participation. In near future Russian will give priority to develop its military relationship with the Central Asian states, which are central to its geopolitical interests. This would create a security buffer around much of Russian perimeter. Protection of Central Asian states from external threats and internal instabilities is the responsibilities of the Russian Federal Government. In keeping all these factors and circumstances, Russia has concluded a series of bilateral treaties on security and military assistance with all its newly independent southern Central Asian states.