CHAPTER III

CENTRAL ASIAN REPUBLICS AFTER DISINTEGRATION OF USSR

The emergence of newly independent sovereign states of Central Asian republics in the former Soviet space brought a drastic change in the geopolitical and geo-strategic landscape of Eurasia in the post-cold war period. The former Soviet countries in Central Asia, which were by and large 'terra incognita' politically, strategically and economically, became frequent focus of international attention. The Bush Administration and many American pundits openly presumed that these largely Muslim republics would inevitably soon come under Iranian and other fundamentalist influences. This view was utterly unfounded and was based on a superficial and wrong-headed reading of the area.¹ Instead of this, a complex many-sided international rivalry to influence and control Central Asia's destiny, trade and resources developed in the region. The major players were Russia, Iran, Turkey, China, India,

¹. These views were based on the assumption made by the State Department's expert that Shiite and Sunnis were 'pretty much alike'; David Hoffman, 'Iran's drive to rebuild seen posing new challenges to West', The Washington Post, 2 February 1992, p. A1; A.D. Horne, 'US loses specialist fluent in the nationalities', The Washington Post, 14 January 1992, p A7.
Pakistan and America, though, Israel and Saudi Arabia initially played a lesser role.²

An important element in the emergence of Central Asian states was disintegration of the Soviet Union³ without any revolution at the centre or in periphery. Moreover, in relation to the extraordinary character of the event, the rebellions and revolts were also relatively insignificant, except perhaps in the Baltics. In fact, the decline of the Soviet system was a consequence of a deep crisis at the centre and not in the periphery. As a consequence, the republics of Central Asia attained independence, sheltered from the distress of revolution, rebellion and even crisis, not to mention the wars of liberation that many Third World Countries have had to undergo. The republics merely had to accept the


3. Soviet-Russian empire stresses the difference between the ethnical empire [in this case purely 'Russian'] and the Party [or Communist] empire. Some scholars believe that the Soviet Union cannot legitimately be termed a "Russian Empire", neither can Russians be called an "imperial people". To have an empire, Besancorn explained, 'one must have a privileged people, an essential military means of conquest and a limited goals. The Russian people has no privilege, it has "advantage" certainly as the surest ally of communism and party leaders are often drawn from its ranks, even in the national republics.... A Russian who enjoys privileges as a communist owes his privileges to his communism, not to his Russianness', quoted by J. Dunlop in I. Bremmer and R. Taras (eds.) *National and Politics in the Soviet Successor States* (Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 45-60. Russia being an empire was argued because common geopolitical area, a common economy and security requirements whose unique polytechnic cultural entity made people to co-exist peacefully, E. Pozdnyakov, 'Russia Today and Tomorrow', *International Affairs*, No.2, 1993, p. 23.
changes that were commanded from the top that is from the central
Communist Party in Moscow.

The disintegration of the erstwhile USSR which took place in a
relatively peaceful manner was significant not just because of its impact
only in the future evolution of relations between Russia and Central
Asian republics, it also influenced to a greater extent the status of
political entities of Central Asia and the process under which they all got
independence and consequently became full international actors. The
crises under which all the states found themselves were in the form of
ethnic, confessional or national struggle widely prevalent in these
republics which affirmed their relative immaturity. The important aspect
of these crises, whether internal or regional in forms, was that their
eruption took place after independence and not before. The discontent,
frustration and even 'national' vindication would have existed in certain
sections of these republics but it never resulted in a concrete movement
against the dominance of the centre. These Central Asian republics did
not leave the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics rather they were pulled
out from it. In a referendum held on March 17, 1991 [nine months before
the USSR ceased to exist] the Central Asians overwhelmingly voted to
remain within the union. Thus, these republics underwent a revolutionary change without experiencing a proper revolution.

Another aspect of peaceful disintegration of erstwhile USSR was that all Central Asian republics after declaring their independence moved into a multifarious network of international relations: the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the Organization of Islamic States (Islamic Conference) and the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) with Turkey, Iran and Pakistan as well as the CSCE and the NATO Cooperation Council. It was only the Central Asian republics, rather than the other parts of the disintegrating Soviet Union, that abruptly became the focus of the international attention. Until recently, this region was primarily perceived in its heteronomous characters, was defined by the history of the Russians and Soviet Union and was never treated as the bearer of its own history and culture. Even in the Islamic world, the Soviet Muslims were regarded for many years as the submerged part of the "universal religious community".

The demise of the Soviet Union took place formally on 8 December 1991 without prior consultation with the Central Asian republics. The presidents of Russia, Belarus and Ukraine met near Minsk

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(Belarus) to announce the creation of a Slav commonwealth and issued the statement: "The USSR, as a subject in international law and a geopolitical reality, ceases to exist". According to the announcement the new body which they had established, the commonwealth of Independent states, was open to all republics of the former Soviet Union, and to any other states which shared its aims. In response to the Minsk declaration the leaders of the Central Asian republics met in Ashkabad in Turkmenistan on December 12, 1991 and decided to become members of the CIS provided they were given the status of its cofounders. At a summit meeting of the heads of the former Soviet republics held on 21 December 1991 in Alma Ata (Kazakhstan), it was decided that the original concept of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) be enlarged to include eight other states, amongst them all five of the Central Asian republics.6 There was little enthusiasm for the new groupings, but it was generally accepted that it was necessary, at least initially, to provide a framework within which new inter-republican relationships could be formulated.

The point of curiosity at this juncture among the foreign observers was the viability of the newly emergent states. Questions were raised about the Central Asian states to get integrated into all-Union structures

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with a high level of dependence on the centre. Their total lack of preparation for independence and nervousness about the future were the prominent views of these observers. The chief threat to the stability of the Central Asian states came from mounting economic and social pressures. Since independence, soaring inflation, the sudden increase in fuel and energy prices, the disruption in the supply of industrial materials, spare parts, food stuffs, pharmaceuticals and other essential items caused serious hardships in all Central Asian states. The situation was aggravated further by the high rate of growth of population. The ever-growing demand for new employment opportunities was becoming difficult to satisfy when Central Asia was part of the Soviet Union. In the harsh economic climate of the post-independence era it was virtually impossible for these states to generate the necessary increase in jobs.

In Central Asian states the ratio of potential wage earners to dependents was very low. A sharp deterioration in the living standards caused marked heightening of social tensions in the poorer and rural areas. Frustration and disillusionment became widespread furnishing the ready breeding grounds for extremism and violence. The 'mafia networks' that previously were constrained by fear of the 'Centre' (Moscow) became a dominant force in the society. The most serious development was the proliferation of drug-related crimes; huge quantities of opium and other narcotics were cultivated in the five
republics, some for domestic consumption, some for dispatch to the CIS and possibly thence via the Baltic States to Western Europe.\(^7\)

For Central Asian republics moving into independent statehood with the legacy of economic, social and environmental malfunctioning was the greater burden for their future. The cause for the prevalent social unrest in these republics was the economic reality that independence has imposed upon them. The major reason for the Central Asian State's economic underdevelopment is explained by the 'dependency theory'.\(^8\)

Once growth started in centre (a favoured location here Russia) in a market economy, labour, skills, capital, and commodities started flowing naturally into it from the periphery (Central Asian republics). This process perpetuated growth in the prosperous regions at the expense of growth elsewhere. Thus, in relation to the periphery, cores fared better in good times and fared not as poorly in hard times. Undoubtedly, Russia after the disintegration was facing hard times economically. But it

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\(^7\) Such reports were the frequent subject of Russian and Central Asian Press. In the whole of 1992, Kyrgyz law enforcement operatives confiscated 3.5kg of struggled opium, by September on 1993, they had already confiscated more than 70 kg of contraband drugs. Pravda, 3 November, 1993.

\(^8\) 'Dependency theory' asserts that the development differentials can be explained as the product of interacting and reinforcing political and economic structures between the countries of a dominant "centre" and the countries of a subservient "periphery". These cores act as hubs for communication, commerce and industry. From the earliest days of civilization cores have attracted the agricultural products, raw materials, and human talents of peripheral areas. Since the economic benefits of concentration and proximity tended to remain in the core, the cores acquired a progressively improved position relative to the periphery, and as a result of it regional inequalities tended to increase overtime.
being a core region and Central Asian republics the periphery provided comparatively better position for Russia.

One of the major assertions of the 'dependency theory' is that the vulnerable position of the dependent region flows from an extreme specialization of the economy. Initially the dependent region is manoeuvred into a specialization on a particular primary commodity or agricultural product. In Central Asia the term 'plantation' was widely used for its cotton producing areas. Since the product was destined for export, the local economy of Central Asian republics was dominated with cotton as an export crop. In Uzbekistan, it was around 65 per cent of cultivated land, which was devoted to cotton production in mid-1980's. Turkmenistan also specialized in cotton production. During the decade of 1980s, when overall cotton production declined throughout the USSR, Turkmenistan was the only republic to have increased cotton output. Tajikistan was the third largest cotton producer despite its economy being more diversified.

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The economy of Kyrgyzstan and at least a part of Kazakhstan were closely linked to the "Cotton production Complex". Much of the industry of these republics was geared to fertilizers and agricultural machinery production. Thus, most of the Central Asian republics by any reasonable standard of comparative analysis have variations within the republics, but the agricultural economies of all of them were basically 'monocultural'. These peripheral republics were to depend heavily on the centre for sustaining their agricultural products. In mid-1980's in the campaign against corruption, cotton prices were lowered. In the process, many Central Asian farms were driven into arrears. The inability of many Kolkhozes (collective farms) to pay their workers and finance infrastructural improvements - agricultural technology, construction, schools, health care, and so on precipitated a serious Central Asian farm crisis. After insistent lobbying by the Central Asians, the USSR Council of Ministers agreed in 1989 to increase the cotton prices.11

Despite the leading role of cotton in the Central Asian economy, roughly 95 per cent of the cotton was produced for textile mills outside these republics. About 30 per cent of cotton was exported abroad.12

When cotton in the form of consumer goods returned to Central Asia, its

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11 The decree provided for a net transfer of 1250 million Rubles to the USSR during the years 1989 and 1990. I.V. Karimov, "Orientary Obnovlenie", Pravda Vostoka, September 27, 1989, p. 2, as cited in ibid.

price was added with higher labour costs of the more advanced industrial areas where the textile processing facilities were located. The superspecialization in cotton production in Central Asia resulted in devoting more than 70 per cent of best arable lands for growing cotton in the region. Dependency on Russia for staple foods kept on increasing as a consequence of 'superspecialization'.

Despite modern industrial development in Central Asia during the seven decades of Soviet rule, all Central Asian economies were characterized by a single product, with processing industries lagging far behind. Under the command economy in Soviet times some heavy industrial giants with advanced technology were bundled together with backward agriculture and animal husbandry in Central Asia.

During the Soviet period, Central Asian republics were 'beneficiary' of the command economy. Between forty to seventy per cent of manufactured and other consumer goods for Central Asia was allocated by Moscow from the Russian Federation and other republics. The development of Central Asian economies with uneven leaps were made with the assistance of Central Plan and substantial financial subsidies from the Central government in Moscow. This created a heavy

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economic dependence for Central Asia on other economies in the former Soviet Union, especially that of the Russian Federation. Years of domination by the Soviet Command economy deprived Central Asian republics of any infrastructure for market economy. The living standard as a result remained comparatively very low in the region. Common man and government officials therefore had no understanding of the market economy.

Hence, after attaining independence, all five Central Asian republics were faced with similar problems and daunting challenges to their economic development. As discussed in the previous chapter, like Russia they were also confronted with a 'giant task' to build a self-sustainable national economy out of the economic legacies of the former Soviet Union. They all were to embark upon correcting the existing distortions of their economies to get themselves integrated into the new realities of post-Communist world.

Economic reforms, though started by the Soviet leadership in late 1980s in the former Soviet Union, failed to make a significant impact in the remote and economically underdeveloped regions of Central Asian republics. Even before the Central Asian republics declared their independence, it was already clear that the reforms started by the Soviet government had a clearly defined goal of guiding the transition towards a market oriented economy. In 1991, a large number of Central Asian
governments decreed on price reforms and privatization was promulgated and were put into effect.\textsuperscript{14} In early 1992, the Russian government experimented with its radical reform programme of 'shock therapy' and liberalized prices.\textsuperscript{15} This course of economic reform was undertaken by some of the Central Asian states. The governments of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan decided to bring economic reforms through 'shock therapy'. The Russian economic reform programme made its repercussions in the other three Central Asian states. In all the Central Asian states during this period the consistent focus was on price reform and privatization as important measures for the transformation to a market economy.

In 1992, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan following the Russian path decided to bring wholesale privatization. The main direction of the economic reforms were liberalization of the economic relations, transforming of property including land on the basis of de-statisation and privatization, de-monopolization of the economy, development of entrepreneurship, creation of market infrastructure and open economic system widely attracting foreign capital and reform of the financial-credit

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\item \textsuperscript{14} Keesing's Record of World Events, n. 6.
\item \textsuperscript{15} Anders Aslund, \textit{How Russia Became a Market economy} (Washington D.C., Brookings Institution, 1995), pp.73-86.
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sphere. Nazarbayev, considering Kazakhstan's future with close linkage with Russia concluded an economic agreement with Russia in September 1992. To include other republics into ruble zone, he proposed the creation of an international bank together with the CIS council to coordinate economic policy.

In the same period, governments of Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan carried out a limited privatization programme in commercial sectors, service sectors as well as in urban residential property. They instead of a comprehensive privatization programme sought to delay privatization in industries. They followed the gradualist approach in their transition to market economy, with an emphasis on the states' role in regulating and controlling the market. Economic reforms in Tajikistan started to gather pace only after the civil war ended. Its transition to market economy encountered a number of problems.

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16 Since the beginning of perestroika and the disintegration of the USSR, Kazakhstan took its own independent path of economic transformation, the main aim of which was the construction of an effective space. Full independence in pursuing a macro-economic policy and acceleration of reform in the financial sphere was achieved after introduction of Kazakhstan's national currency. Askar Zh. Shomanov, "Social Modernization of Kazakh Society", Contemporary Central Asia, Vol. I, No. 1, 1997, p.7.

17 According to the agreement between Kazakhstan and Russia a clearing accounts system was to be established to handle trade between the two countries. Nezavisimaya gazeta, 22 September 1992, in Summary of World Broadcasts, BBC, London, 30 September, 1992, SU/1508, C2/4.

Central Asian states after initiating reforms, partially or completely, were compelled to support inter-republican trade and economic cooperation which during the Soviet time played a key role in sustaining them. Simultaneously, they also looked forward to widen the geography and circle of partners in external economic activities. With the weakening of the central power, the inter-republican trade and economic cooperation began to decline in 1991. As a result of disintegration of the Soviet Union and formation of independent states, a deep crisis penetrated the foreign trade. These states, despite going through economic reforms, failed to tap their resources for market economy. All Central Asian states had a lack of experience and unsettled character of foreign trade infrastructure. There were repeated cuts in trade subsidies which earlier had supported the bulk of their local imports. The earlier inter-republican trade and economic relations were formed on the basis of planned distribution, so difficulties were set in to bring systematic transformation and transfer of these relations into a market system. To preserve inter-republican ties, Central Asian states resorted to a device familiar to trade officials under Soviet Central planning - the bilateral agreements.

By the end of 1991, all of the 15 former Soviet republics signed agreements with most of the other newly independent states. Some of the agreements were quite general, signifying an intent to develop
economic [and other] relations of the two parties involved. For example, an Azerbaijan-Uzbekistan treaty declared that the "states will develop equal and mutually beneficial cooperation between their peoples and states in the sphere of politics, economics, trade, culture, science, technology, ecology and health care and conclude corresponding agreements on these issues". 19

In March 1992, the CIS members discussed a draft agreement on principles for regulating prices of raw materials, energy and foodstuff. All of them, except Turkmenistan, decided to set up a Commonwealth working group for the regulation of price formation and monetary and fiscal policy. In particular, the protocol decision charged the working group with finding a "comprehensive settlement of matters of price formation for products of inter-state exchange, taking into consideration the possibilities of joint financing for the development of the fuel and energy complex of the CIS member states". 20 Russia and Kazakhstan, who were primary suppliers of raw materials and energy, were


interested in raising the prices in inter-republican trade to world levels in 1992.\textsuperscript{21}

The Central Asian states, though at varying level, had considerable faith in the capacity of bilateral agreements for sustaining inter-republican ties. Tajikistan and Lithuania agreed to guarantee the first-quarter 1992 deliveries at the first quarter 1991 levels. They also agreed to make settlements in rubles according to agreed fixed prices.\textsuperscript{22} Even Kyrgyzstan's President Akayev observed in November 1991 that his republic had "stable links with various republics based on bilateral agreements". This is what, he argued, makes one confident that one can manage on its own (i.e. without a Union-type economic arrangement). He further added that new inter-republican structures would be most useful in helping Kyrgyzstan's integration into the world economy.\textsuperscript{23}

In the beginning, however, bilateral agreements proved to be effective in supporting trades for several reasons. For example, prices to be charged in inter-republican trade remained the difficult subject of negotiation between and among the individual leaders. Republic

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negotiators tried to exploit the newly founded Commonwealth, while they continued to seek separate bilateral deals with each other. For example, when Ukraine and Tajikistan signed an accord in November 1991, it was agreed that Tajikistan would ship 10,000 tons of cotton to Ukraine. Ukraine wanted to pay 9000 rubles per ton, but, Tajikistan was demanding 30,000 rubles per ton. Noting the failure to establish a price, Ukraine's Prime Minister Fokin admitted, "there is no point to the treaty without this".24

A good number of agreements were not honoured in 1991 because both the centre and the republican governments had lost the power to direct enterprises to make deliveries that they did not want to fulfill. To find the supplies they needed and to obtain the food and consumer goods necessary to retain their workers, enterprises increasingly evaded the state orders. The reason for evasion was to favour the bartering of their output for that of the other enterprises. This happened because, in 1991, most of the ministries were abolished which led to the weakening of governmental power over the enterprises in 1992. Even the value of ruble as a medium of exchange, diminished with the acceleration of inflation since the third quarter of 1991.25

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Because of the absence of customs services or other reporting mechanisms along the internal borders of the CIS, the inter-republican trade was not fulfilling the objectives of the agreements. There were numerous complaints about the failure to comply inter-republican governmental agreements on mutual deliveries of goods. In a review of its trade position, Kazakhstan specified number of unfulfilled Russian export commitments, and complained that it had received no sugar from Ukraine in the first quarter of 1992. In the absence of reliable information, it might be possible to infer that inter-republican trade declined at least as much as the CIS foreign trade in the first four months of 1992, i.e. by almost 25 per cent.26

Taking into account the foreign trade or the internal trade of the former republics, economic linkages developed over decades were strained or broken in 1991 and 1992. Of course, the difficulty of maintaining supply lines across new state borders accounted for some of the decline in production of all the former Soviet republics. The weakening of the Central power had its negative effect in the inter-republican trade and economic cooperation in 1991. In 1992, after the disintegration of the Soviet Union and formation of independent states, this process became strong and spread to the traditional neighbours. As

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a result of this, during 1990-92 period, foreign trade started facing deep crisis. During these years the volume of foreign trade of the region declined by 7.9 times. The volume of foreign trade of Turkmenistan declined by 3.6 times, Kazakhstan by 6.2 times, Uzbekistan by 11.5 times, Kyrgyzstan by 15 times and Tajikistan by 21.6 times. The inter-republican trade also suffered a big set back, declining by 12.7 times for the region as a whole, including 8.4 times in Kazakhstan, 8.9 times in Turkmenistan, 16.4 times in Kyrgyzstan, 23.4 times in Uzbekistan and 36.7 times in Tajikistan.27

Reforms in Central Asian republics were initiated after attaining independence and following the path of Russia's economic experiment of 'shock therapy'. All of them met with similar fate within a span of one year. Their assumption that private ownership will automatically lead to market economy resulted with serious problems in their socio-economic structure. The de-nationalization programme promoted and enforced by the Central Asian governments failed to provide the impetus for the smooth transition to a market economy. The transition from command economy to market economy was in need of more than just the transformation of ownership. For example, privatized enterprises in

Central Asia were pushed into the market when the market itself was to develop operational mechanism and competent institutions for fair competition. Above all, macro-economic conditions were seriously constraining the growth of any non-state sectors in the economy.

Macro-economic conditions in Central Asian states were repeatedly bringing them to the edge of the crisis, ever since their independence and the start of the economic reforms in 1991. In 1992, following the Russian experiment with ‘shock therapy’, some of the Central Asian states were forced to liberalize and in a few weeks time, the prices of about 70 to 90 per cent of their consumer goods and production materials were liberalized. This created a chaotic situation in macro-economic control and management for the newly independent states. Their initiative for currency reforms and fiscal and monetary policies was seriously constrained by their inclusion into the ruble zone. Thus, the Central Asian republics, despite their micro and macro-economic situations, were compelled to embark upon a rapid transition to market economy as a result of their unexpected independence.

Another important aspect of all Central Asian republics was the multi-ethnic character of their social setting. With the declared independence of the Central Asian republics the political and social setting of the Russians and Russian-speaker had to become a fragmented
part at the mercy of their respective republics. Many Russians felt that they were suddenly reduced to the status of second-class citizens. The legacy of ethnic tensions in the Soviet times, combined with the uncertain status of the Russians in Central Asian republics formed the undercurrent of ethnic confrontation in respective republics. In past the presence of large number of Russians and Russian speaker in Central Asian republics provided a strong cultural, political and human factor linking the former Soviet republics. They were engaged almost exclusively in skilled jobs in industry, transport, and construction, as well as in engineering, medical and teaching professions.

All five Central Asian states are multi-ethnic. The number of ethnic groups in any given Central Asian state ranges from several dozen to more than one hundred. The dominant ethnic groups in Central Asia are the Kazakhs, the Uzbeks, the Turkmens, the Kyrgyzs and the Tajiks. However, the Russians account for a large proportion of the population. In four out of five Central Asian states, the Russians were effectively the second largest ethnic group in 1989. In Kazakhstan, whereas the Kazakhs account for 39.7 per cent of the population, the Russians are closely behind at 37.8 per cent. In Kyrgyzstan, Kyrgyzs constitutes 52.4 per cent and Russians 21.5 per cent. Uzbeks are 71.4 per cent and Russians 8.3 per cent in Uzbekistan. In Turkmensitan there are 72 per cent of Turkmens and 9.5 per cent of Russians. Only in Tajikistan the
Russians accounted for 7.6 per cent of the populations in 1991, the third largest ethnic group behind the Tajiks and the Uzbeks.28

The complicated composition of ethnic groups in the Central Asian population and in particular, the high percentage of Russians in Central Asia, was a direct result of the Czarist and the Soviet policies towards ethnic minorities and towards Russian migration to Central Asia. In the last 140 years, both in the Imperial Russian and in Soviet times, streams of migrants have been pushed into Central Asia from various parts of the Russian empire and the former Soviet Union. These migrants have lived and multiplied in the region. The Russians, Belarussians and Ukrainians comprise a sizeable Slavic population in Central Asia. This was the most important factor, which redefines the ethnic frontiers of the population in the region.

A large number of Russians and other European population in Central Asian republics were compelled to leave as multi-ethnic character of Central erupted in Ferghana (1989), in Dushanbe (1990) and in Osh (1990). It was estimated that the out migration of non-indigenous specialists from Central Asia was more than 2,00,000 in 1990.29 During


29 Ajay Kumar Patnaik, “Russians in Central Asia”, paper presented in the Seminar on “Reform, Conflict and Change in CIS and Eastern Europe”, at the Centre for Soviet and East European Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, on 23-27 November, 1993.
the first six months of 1990 Russians emigration from Kirghizia was at a rate of 2.6 times that of the previous year. From the Osh region 3,200 slavs left the republic in the first month following the riots. With the exception of Tajikistan, Kirghizia had the highest number of the emigrants in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). A total of 77,000 left Tajikistan in the last nine months of 1992, more than twice the figure for the corresponding period in 1991.30

The multi-ethnic character of the Central Asian states was further complicated by the religion. Although Islam was dominant in the region, other religions also had considerable following, largely because of the ethnic mix in Central Asia. The five titular nationalities - the Kazakhs, the Uzbeks, the Kyrgyzs, the Turkmens and the Tajiks as well as the Tatars and the Uighurs - were Muslims. But the Muslims were divided in the region on sectarian strife. However, the importance of religion in the development of relationships between ethnic groups in region was due to the rising influence of Islam in the political, economic and social life of the newly independent states of Central Asia. The confrontation between revolutionary Muslim elements and Islamic fundamentalism was the cause of this conflict. For example, the success of Islamic movement in Tajikistan was alarming for the Russian population. During

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the Dushanbe riots in 1990, though the Russians were not singled out for attacks, there were incidents of assault and intimidation aimed at them.\textsuperscript{31}

After the events of February 1990 in Dushanbe, when riots between Uzbeks and Meskhatian Turks took place, at least 100,000 people left Tajikistan in just one year. In April and May 1992, there was an outburst of anti-Russian feeling which resulted with the leaving of 20,000 people from Dushanbe.\textsuperscript{32} By the end of 1992, Interfax reported that nearly 150,000 Russian speakers (which include Ukrainians, Germans, and Koreans) had already left the war ravaged republic of Tajikistan.\textsuperscript{33}

The exodus of Russians and Russian-speaking population from the region severely affected the socio-economic conditions of the newly independent Central Asian states. The Central Asian political leaders expressed their serious concern about the loss of professional and skilled personnel, which could have a serious impact in the socio-economic structures of their states. This view was admitted not only by the leaders of the government but by the members of the opposition as well. All of them were urging the Europeans to stay. The President of was appealing

\textsuperscript{31} Ajay K. Patnaik, n. 29.

\textsuperscript{32} \textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{33} Ian Bremmer and Ray Taras (eds.), n. 30. p. 346.
to the Russians not to leave and so was done by many Uzbek intellectuals.34

The exodus of Russian-speaking people from the Central Asian republics made a serious impact in the economy of Central Asia. In Uzbekistan, it was explained by Yurikhokhlov, head of Uzbek Airlines shipping service: "The Meskhetion Turks, who were engaged in agriculture, have left, the Crimean Tatars, who were workers and vegetable growers, have left; and the Jews have left - newsstands and tailor shops have closed. The Russians, who are the working class, the engineers and designers, are leaving and industry will stop."35

In Tajikistan efforts were made to normalize the situation. Davlat Khudonazarov, a member of the special commission normalizing the situation in Kurgan-Tynbe province, discussed with the representative of the local Russian minority and ensured them that the Commission's efforts are gearing up for their interests. He gave them assurance to do everything for them by which the situation could be stabilized in the southern part of Tajikistan. The initiative of Tajikistan's government was to normalize its economy and security before it takes an ugly turn. Thus,


Tajikistan decided to delegate Russia an authority to protect its external borders, during the visit of Russian Vice-Premier, Alexender Sokhin. A bilateral agreement on guarantees in the area of human rights was initiated in Dushnabe. The Tajik leadership assumed obligations to provide social and legal guarantees for the Russian population in its territory.36

Similar concern of the serious impact of exodus was prevalent in Kyrgyzstan. In Kyrgyzstan, Russians constituted half of the Bishkek's population and a quarter of the whole country. The major concern for President Akayev was to halt the migration. He was forcefully against the emigration of Russians, Jews and other minorities. For Germans two national cultural autonomous districts were established. Akayev, to regain the support and understanding of the Slavic community, appointed two Russians in his Cabinet and continued the conduction of State Council's session in Russia. His Vice-President, Kuznetsov and interior minister, Kulov were Russians. Though Akayev's allies included Kirghiz nationalists, he refrained from pursuing a pro-Kirghiz agenda. In September 1991, he vetoed a land reform bill passed by the republican's Supreme Soviet, which stipulated that all land in the republic would be the property of the Kirghiz nation. And by March 1992, Akayev vetoed

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the bill thrice.\textsuperscript{37} It was only in Kyrgyzstan where the teaching in the Russian language in schools and universities were maintained at the same level and no discrimination was allowed against person not fluent in the state language. The number of newspapers published in Russian was comparable to the number of Kyrgyz papers.\textsuperscript{38}

The confrontation between Russians and the major ethnic groups in Central Asian states was clearly visible in Kazakhstan, where 70 per cent of the Russian living in Central Asia reside. Ethnic riots between Russians and Kazakhs were reported frequently. Unlike other states, where Russians are dispersed in industrial centre and large cities, in Kazakhstan, they are heavily concentrated and form a majority in northern regions of the country. Geographically closer to Russia, the area came under Russian influence several centuries ago, or much earlier than the predecessors of other modern Central Asian republics. Thus, it becomes natural for the large sections of Russians living here for several generations to consider the steppes of northern Kazakhstan as their homeland.

\textbf{Most of the Russians were opposed to the ‘Kazakhisation’ of Kazakhstan. Their demand was to give equal status to Russian language}


\textsuperscript{38} Ajay K. Patnaik, n. 29.
with the Kazakh language. According to statistic provided by the media of Kazakhstan in 1992 more than 175,000 Russians left Kazakhstan and 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 Russian from Kazakhstan has a lot to do with "ethnic tension and relations in Kazakhstan.\textsuperscript{39}

Kazakhstan's President Nazarbayev, repeatedly stressed that ethnic harmony should be considered essentially vital for country's political, economic and social development. He also emphasized common efforts for strengthening harmony and stability. And warned that whoever tries to stir up discord and disharmony between the Kazakhs and the Russians would be the common enemy of the two nationalities\textsuperscript{40}. The chairman of the opposition Republican Party of Kazakhstan, S. Akatayev, said during the rally of national democratic parties and movements in front of the parliament building that his party is not advancing any anti-Russian slogans. Rather, his party is asking the Russian population of Kazakhstan for help and support.\textsuperscript{41}


\textsuperscript{40} Xinhua News Agency (Almaty), 7 April 1993, as quoted in ibid., p.81.

Despite serious efforts by the regime and moderate Russian organizations, the process of ethno-political polarization kept on going. Many Russians either did not feel secure, nor had serious doubts about their future life in the republic. The number of persons who left Kazakhstan increased from 23,600 in 1988 to 306,000 in 1991 and over 400,000 in 1994. According to opinion poll by the Hiller Institute, 44.7 per cent of non-Kazakhs would prefer to emigrate.42

The dilemma for ethnic Russians in Central Asia was either to leave for Russia, or to mobilize themselves politically and strive for the political institutionalization of ethnic heterogeneity. Repatriation was complicated because most of the Central Asian Russians were born in the region or have lived here for decades, and cannot easily find a place for themselves in Russia. On the other hand, the authoritarian regimes of Central Asian republics, except Kyrgyzstan, hardly permit voicing any collective claims. In Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan any political movement and organisations which do not profess loyalty to the regime was bound to be considered illegal. Uzbek authorities on several occasions had taken action against participants in the human rights movements even beyond the borders of the republic. With the civil war going on in Tajikistan, the majority of Russians fled the republic. Several

hundred thousand Russians, mostly young people, moved to Russia from the remaining republics too.

In all Central Asian states, the language issue would have partially influenced the decision of those leaving these republics. The exodus as stated earlier was also prompted by all around chaos and civil war, rise of religious fundamentalism and worsening inter-ethnic relations. Another important factor in Russian emigration could be the ongoing industrial recession. Insufficient deliveries of energy sources and raw material from Russia and the absence of centralized orders, union enterprises whose workforce were Russians speakers were closing down, further added the pace of emigration.

After discussing the unprecedented political changes that occurred in Central Asian states leading to their struggle for integration into market economy, and the changing character of their social setting leading to the exodus of Russians and Russian-speakers, it becomes essential to discuss the issue of Security which gained new dimensions. Central Asian republics after disintegration of Soviet Union became full international actors. Undoubtedly, the situation after gaining independence of Central Asian republics differs from that which prevailed before the dissolution of the Soviet Union. During the Soviet period these republics were an inherent and fully integrated part of the Superpower and were therefore protected by the security umbrella of the
Soviet Union. With the disappearance of Soviet Union, these republics became normal powers in the global system. At the regional level Central Asian states became more sensitive to the events in Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan and vice versa. This rising reciprocal sensitivity was interpreted by some scholars as an 'extension of the Middle East'. Thus, Central Asian republics emerged as a region whose strategic importance should be dealt with the issue of nuclear security, border disputes, defense and military cooperation and the multilateral security arrangements.

Taking into account the nuclear security issue one of the important fallout of disintegration of Soviet Union for Central Asia was Kazakhstan becoming a quasi-nuclear power. Nuclear weapons were forced upon Kazakhstan as part of the Soviet strategic deployment. Kazakhstan, the largest of Central Asian states and the most populous after Uzbekistan, inherited on its soil the strategic nuclear missiles from the Soviet military. Kazakhstan inherited part of the Soviet nuclear arsenal, which included 104 SS-18 long-range ballistic missiles [each carrying 10 warheads]. Kazakhstan also hosted two strategic missiles launch sites at Derzhavinsk and Zhangiz-Tobe, and one strategic bomber
airbase with 40 TU-95 Bear bombers stationed there. The former Soviet Union also built a nuclear test zone at Semipalatinsk in Kazakhstan.43

On 21 December 1991, an Agreement on Nuclear Weapons and their control was signed at Almaty by the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). And by late January 1992, all tactical nuclear weapons were withdrawn to Russia from Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan’s leadership accepted the unified CIS control over the nuclear weaponry.44 But the status of Kazakhstan as a nuclear-weapon status remained unclear. In February 1992, the Kazakh President Nazarbayev claimed during his visit to India that ‘Kazakhstan’s nuclear threat perception evolved from the nuclear arsenals in possession of Russia, China and the United States’. He also claimed that in principle of parity, Kazakhstan would be prepared to destroy its nuclear warheads provided the USA, Russia and China agreed to follow a similar course.45

In early 1992, President Nazarbayev also made the assertion that Kazakhstan had the right to join the nuclear club and that Kazakhstan should keep its nuclear weapons because of its unique geopolitical

45 Ibid.
position between Asia and Europe. Early in 1992 one official explained that Kazakhstan has two large nuclear-armed neighbours - Russia and China - and saw in the missiles a guarantee of its security.\(^{46}\)

All the above-mentioned assertions made by Kazakhstan's President Nazarbayev shows clearly the uncertainty about Kazakhstan's nuclear-power status. It also proves further that Kazakhstan after becoming a full international actor realized its geo-strategic position in the post-Communist world. As Nazarbayev during a visit to Washington in May 1992, asserted that Kazakhstan was seeking security guarantees from Russia, the US and China before it would agree to give up its nuclear weapons.\(^{47}\) Unlike Belarus, Kazakhstan with Ukraine took a slightly restrained position about Russia's ownership of nuclear arsenals. Kazakhstan, though not demanding the access to control panel, was looking forward to take possession of nuclear forces.\(^ {48}\)


An important document the Lisbon START Protocol of 23 May 1992 was signed by Kazakhstan for the removal of all strategic offensive weapons at least by the end of the century. The Treaty also stipulated that Kazakhstan with Ukraine and Belarus must join the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty as non nuclear-weapons states within the shortest possible time. In early 1993, Kazakhstan together with Ukraine, raised the question of nuclear weapons deployed in their territories. There was an underlying uncertainty in Kazakhstan about the future orientation of Russian foreign and security policy. Many people fear that Russia—perhaps not until after Yeltsin—will seek hegemony or even try to reconquer the former Soviet Republics. There were reports in spring 1992 that between 2 and 3 nuclear weapons had been 'lost' in Kazakhstan and suspected to have been smuggled to Iran. Such reports indicates that underhand removal (loss) of nuclear weapons or materials from the stock

49 The START Treaty envisages massive reduction in the field of strategic offensive weapons to 6,000 warheads within 7 years following the conclusion of the treaty. The treaty will probably come into force at the end of 1992, but by 1993 at the latest, once the ratification procedures have been finalized. The implementation of the START arrangement will be effected in such a way that the offensive strategic weapons deployed in the Ukraine, Byelorussia and Kazakhstan will be destroyed first and totally.


piles of the former Soviet Armed forces may risk the proliferation of nuclear weapons from Kazakhstan.

The shaky response of Nazarbayev towards the nuclear weapons in Kazakhstan's possession indicates his desire to highlight Kazakhstan's international status in response to Russia's hegemony. Kazakh leaders were aiming to use nuclear weapons in their possession for bargaining with the West. Their intention was to play the nuclear card for strengthening their position within CIS, which was facing crisis and conflicts among its member states.

The ambiguous attitude of Kazakhstan about the nuclear weapon in its possession became a major concern for the West and USA. The Western countries put a lot of pressure on Kazakhstan to give up its nuclear weapons. The American leaders made it clear that unless Kazakhstan made clear and unequivocal commitment to being a non-nuclear state, Kazakhstan could not expect any American support for Kazakhstan in international affairs and also any aid from the West, including economic and technical support. In November 1992, US experts visited Kazakhstan to discuss the technical aspects of destroying the missiles within the country rather than shipping them back to Russia.\footnote{Interfax, November 5, 1992, in \textit{Summary of the World Broadcasts}, BBC, SU/1536, 10 November 1992, B1/17.} Nazarbayev asserted throughout 1993, that Kazakhstan would
need both US funding and technical help to destroy the missiles.\textsuperscript{54} This continual temporising on the issue of giving up the missile indicates that Kazakhstan's policy-makers found it very difficult to reconcile themselves to the potential loss of their nuclear status in the world community.

For the newly independent Kazakhstan, closer relationship with the West and the USA was essential for economic and technical cooperation for its state-building process. Hence, under the US and Western pressure Kazakhstan eventually made its unequivocal commitment to being a non-nuclear state. In return Kazakhstan eventually got explicit security pledges from all the three most concerned nuclear states, the USA, Russia and China. The pledges included the undertaking that none of them would target their nuclear weapons at Kazakhstan and that none of them would use nuclear weapons against Kazakhstan after Kazakhstan removed all nuclear weapons from its territory. Thus, Kazakhstan ratified START-I Treaty in July 1993 and in February 1994 acceded to the Non-Proliferation Treaty as a non-nuclear state. In return, the United States provided Kazakhstan with financial assistance to dismantle these weapons and remove fissionable material. According to press reports the last nuclear warhead in Kazakhstan was

dismantled on March 31, 1995, making the country "a genuinely nuclear free state".\(^{55}\)

These agreements on disposing of Kazakhstan's strategic nuclear weapons did not cover the fate of the Baykonur Cosmodrome and the semipalatinsk missile launch area in Kazakhstan. The cost of building and maintaining the Cosmodrome was mostly financed by Russia. Hence, Russia believed that they are entitled to own it.\(^{56}\) According to Kazakhstan, they too have contributed considerably to the cost of buildings and the maintenance of the space station and since installation is on their territory and being a sovereign state, they must have the control of it. To Russians, contribution to the cost of Baykonur's maintenance by Kazakhstan was insignificant, amounting only to 6 per cent of its annual budget.\(^ {57}\)

On March 28, 1994, both countries reached a compromise under which space station would legally belong to Kazakhstan but will be leased to Russia for 20 years from January 1994. Russians assured Kazakhs for not making Baykonur a "Russian military base" and to pay


\(^{57}\) Ibid.
$115 million annually as rent.\textsuperscript{58} As discussed before in this chapter, serious economic problems with lack of adequate funds in the initial period was the situation in the region. Such a condition of the state had enough potential to create obstacles in the implementation of the treaty. Russia's annual rent was insufficient for rehabilitating the region where space installations were located\textsuperscript{59}. Salaries of the Kazakh employees were to be brought at par with the Russian employees. Living conditions in the region deteriorated since independence; theft and crime were rampant and food and fuel supply was often erratic. Another unresolved problem was the fate of the Semispatlanik missile area and problems caused for Kazakhstan's inhabitants by excessive level of radioactivity in the vicinity of nuclear installations.

Unlike other Central Asian states, nuclear security issue in Kazakhstan was the product of disintegration of the Soviet Union. Kazakhstan, the only Central Asian state was forced to acquire a quasi-nuclear status in the region, took a different approach to the military-strategic questions. In the similar fashion a new domestic and regional dynamic was created in all Central Asian republics after gaining independence. As individual Central Asian republics began to formulate

\textsuperscript{58} "Baykonur Will Become a Military Base", in \textit{FBIS/SOV-95-006}, January 10, 1995, p. 27.

their "national" security priorities and interests, the erosion of Central Asian unity on military issues became unavoidable. Natural differences among all Central Asian states, determined by their different resources and capabilities, geo-strategic position, domestic situation, and perceived status and role, resulted in a noticeable differentiation of approaches to the military-strategic questions.

Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, the two major republics of Central Asia, took preliminary steps for the creation of small national armies. The two largest states of the region and rivals for the status of regional "power centre" became more assertive due to their military requirements. As a precondition for this step, Kazakhstan, late in December 1991 and followed by Uzbekistan in January 1992, placed all its troops stationed on their territories, with the exception of strategic forces, under republican national jurisdiction. Uzbekistan was the first Central Asian state to argue for a separate national army within the structure of CIS joint armed forces and setting up a republican defence ministry, and separate national army within the structure of CIS. Joint armed forces are setting up a republican defence ministry separate from that in Moscow. Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev in April 1992 signed a decree authorizing the withdrawal of the 40th Russian army, which fought in

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Afghanistan and was subsequently stationed in Kazakhstan, from the Command of Central Asian Military District and its subordination to the Kazakh government. Kazakhstan was building its national army predominantly made up of Russian Officers Corps, while Uzbekistan's plan for a 35,000 strong army relied heavily on Uzbek recruits.

Kyrgyzstan's President Askar Akayev and his close associates in the beginning of 1992 expressed their desire to refrain from setting up of their own armed forces. They rather promoted a vision of Kyrgyzstan as the future Switzerland or Singapore of Central Asia. The republic's stand on military-strategic issues at that stage was expressed by Akayev: "we are for a neutral Kyrgyzstan and do not intend to enter any military blocks. We do not want to create our own army, and we are not thinking of taking into our jurisdiction military formations stationed on the republic's territory."

Turkmenistan also followed a distinct military strategic perception in the region. On the deployment of a large part of the Turkmenistan Military District's units and weapons in its territory, it

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announced that their number are far more than its requirement. Turkmenistan refused to claim the troops stationed on its territory. The financial aspect of these troops was calculated to be a heavy burden for their economy. Turkmenistan rather looked forward to Russia for military agreements. In February, President Saparmurad Niyazov emphasized that if the idea of the single CIS armed forces failed, his republic would be in favour of concluding a defence alliance with Russia.

The collapse of Soviet Union caused the loss of a unified force structure. A great degree of ambiguity prevailed about the Soviet military in Central Asia. By 1990, the integrity of these forces faced a serious challenge when a number of republics declaring their sovereignty, asserted their right to create national armies. In December 1991, the first CIS summit in Minsk recognized the situation and left it to the individual republics to decide whether to control their conventional armed forces independently or transfer them to CIS command structures. Ukraine and Moldova chose to establish their own forces. The Central Asian republics were more receptive to the idea of a joint CIS command, but very soon their position changed. Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan

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65 Ibid.
declared the creation of their own armies and put all troops (except strategic units) stationed in their territories under their jurisdiction. In Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan, the status of locally based forces could not be settled. Even Russia decided to create its own national army, though it could have dominated the joint command. Thus, by the time a collective security agreement was concluded, in mid-May 1992 in Tashkent, a great degree of ambiguity surrounded the fate of the future national armies in Central Asian States.

When the Central Asians began to organize their own armed forces, independent military system demanded the development of new local command and control structures. There was need of immediately adopting new military doctrines, packages of "military laws" and general plans for future military construction. Troops were led by predominantly Slav officer corps, undergoing the old training courses learning the same military regulations and wearing old uniforms. For example, the Kazakh army was almost entirely under the command of Slav officers. According to Kazakh statistics for the past 74 years only three representatives of the Kazakh nation managed to graduate from the Military Academy of the General Staff and only two were able to qualify for the degree of the candidate of the military science.66

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With the disintegration of the Soviet Union the predominant section of the Slav officers made consistent effort to return to their native republics. With the wreckage of the mighty Soviet army the troops in Central Asia suffered from psychological and organizational disarray, difficulty with the supply of spare parts and ammunition as the traditional military-industrial ties lost its linkages. As discussed before, the economic situation in Central Asia, the budgetary shortfalls and economic hardships resulted in low salaries, a steep decline in the prestige and social status of military service. Thus, it became difficult for Central Asian states to quickly achieve self-sufficiency in the creation of national armies. In the given period it was difficult for them to train their own officers, to create their own military colleges, to sort out questions of military supplies, to develop national symbols and loyalty and to cultivate their own culture of military-civilian relations. In such a background the Central Asian states' dependence on Russia and Russians continued immediately after the disintegration of the Soviet Union.