CHAPTER- IV
CULTURAL CHANGES AND IDENTITY ISSUES

Stalin followed by Khrushchev and Brezhnev deported and encouraged migration of various ethnic groups to Central Asia on the grounds that the fraternal help of advanced ethnic groups from outside could overcome the backwardness on various socio-cultural and economic fields. This made the Central Asian region more multi-ethnic and multi-religious. During Stalin period, Central Asia was divided into five republics on the basis of ethnicity and nationality. However, their borders also cut across various ethnic groups.

The legacy of seventy years of Soviet rule in Central Asia imparted the Central Asian republics with distinct features of their own which separate them from countries towards their south-east and south-west. Rather it created tensions among the groups not openly but silently, which practically had taken shape before and after the disintegration. Problems in inter-ethnic relations in Central Asia were attributed to the arbitrary nature of the inter-state boundaries laid down by Stalin early in the Soviet period. While the sedentary societies of the previous Emirates and Russian Turkestan had been separated by deserts rather than demarcated frontiers, whereas under the Soviets ethnic groups intermingled within a political unit. The changes made by Stalin increased complexities among the ethnic groups in Central Asia. A hierarchical division appeared among ethnic groups throughout Central Asia.
Table: 21

Main Ethnic Minorities in Central Asia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Uzbek Minorities In Border Areas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1 Million</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5,000,000</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2,800,000</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kazakh border colonies in Uzbekistan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2,160,000</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1,840,000</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4,700,000</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tajik Minorities in Uzbekistan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1-2 Million</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russians, Ukrainians and Germans in Kazakhstan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>8 Million</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In Central Asia, ethnic coexistence and their assertiveness among various groups is a current issue, which so far seems to be repercussion of Stalinist system. Forceful deportation of ethnic groups from one place to another without considering the concern of the population of the republics had led to strife and riots in the late 1980s. The community feelings, which arose during Perestroika, acquired a new
shape after independence and led to a number of deadly clashes throughout the region.

**Perestroika Period**

**Ethnic Conflicts: Causes And Consequences**

Central Asia was plagued by disturbances before disintegration. The causes of inter and intra ethnic tensions can be traced to Stalin, whose national-territorial delimitation in Central Asia left many groups outside the titular republic. This left minority ethnic groups in the republic. Of course this policy benefited the main ethnic groups of the respective republic. For example, the Kyrgyz ethnic group settled in Kyrgyzstan feels secure of being dominant group in the republic. But the proportion of Kyrgyz ethnic group settled in other republics feel inferior and possibilities of being deprived from various opportunities in service sector create tensions among minor ethnic groups. There are other difficulties faced by the minority ethnic groups settled in other republics, instead of their own nationally identified republics. The nationality policy caused socio-economic anomaly between the natives and the minorities. As a result, there was much resentment among the youth of both groups. In addition, the crave for good jobs and better employment opportunities deepen socio-economic anomaly between the ethnic groups. Thus, inter-ethnic resentment became the causes of ethnic conflict and vice versa.

The Ferghana riot at the end of May 1989, between Meskhetian Turks and the Uzbek, was the first major ethnic conflict. The officially accepted reasons for immediate disturbances were following:
• Some Turks had committed an outrage upon an old Uzbek woman and this raised the indignation of the native Uzbek population that sparked the conflict.

• A market brawl over strawberries is another cause adduced as the immediate reason of the pogrom. A “Turk overturned a stall of Uzbek woman selling strawberries because he thought the price was too high”,¹ was followed by a brawl that degenerated into violent clashes affecting life and property.

• Judging by the demands of the Ferghana youth, the youth demanded an increase in cotton price and to make chemical factories of the area ecologically safe.²

However, the effects of the violence were horrifying. A personnel of Uzbek government Gairat Kadyrov, said, that “about 71 people had been killed by 7th of June 1989, bodies are being found in gutted houses and the wounded are dying in hospitals. About 100 civilians were hospitalised including 88 Uzbeks and 12 Meskhetian Turks”.³ During Stalin years Meskhetian Turks, were deported from the Meskhet Javakhet (the original homeland of the group to Uzbekistan) and spreaded over other Central Asian republics later. About 80,000, Meshkhetian Turks lived in Central Asia, while about 5,000 Turks, were in the Ferghana region only. The government planned to deport them to somewhere in Russia instead of, Meskhet Javakhet, their homeland.⁴ The increasing awareness of ethno nationalism among

⁴ Ibid, p.115.
the major ethnic groups in Central Asia exacerbated the sentiments of minor ethnic groups. The seeds of ethno-nationalism in Ferghana riots spread to two other republics, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The Ferghana region is divided between republics-Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Therefore, in following year 1990, it was reflected in Dushanbe riots in Tajikistan and Osh region in Kyrgyzstan.

In early June 1990, a violent clash had taken place in the southern Osh region of Kyrgyzstan. There local Uzbeks held the view that they were unrepresented in the local government and the Kyrgyz thought that the Uzbeks were taking all the best jobs in the retail and consumer sectors. The ethnic Kyrgyz in the region also resented the fact that local Uzbeks controlled most of the city’s trade.\(^5\)

The clash was at such level that the local Kyrgyz were told to paint their doors red if they want to avoid the destruction of their property and the loss of their life. By the time violence was under control, about 200 people had died and over a thousand wounded, more than five thousand crimes were committed and hundreds of houses were destroyed. In the Osh region’s conflicts both sides were equally involved. There were brutal murders and mass rapes, which proved very humiliating for the people. However, the tragedy was prompted by the difficult socio-economic conditions and under-utilised labour resources in the region.\(^6\) The Kyrgyz population residing in Uzbekistan considered the inter ethnic situation there to be more dangerous since the Uzbek republic has become more nationalistic. For example, in the Andizhan district of Uzbekistan, where the Kyrgyz population had been continuously staying throughout the century, the number remained 72,900 in 1989,

\(^5\) Ajay, Patnaik, *Central Asia: Between Modernity And Tradition*, Konark Publisher, New Delhi, 1996, p.191
\(^6\) Ibid.
though as far back as in 1906, the number of ethnic Kyrgyz in the district was 107,000.\footnote{Ajay Patnaik, “National Minorities in Central Asia”, \textit{Dialogue}, Vol.3, No.4, April-June 2002, p.99.} After independence, when Uzbekistan declared Uzbek language as national language, the problem faced by Kyrgyz groups was quite equivalent to what the Uzbeks had faced when the Kyrgyz language was declared a national language in Kyrgyzstan. Both countries’ minority ethnic groups felt discriminated against each other.

A number of different economic, social and political factors contributed to the ethnic conflict in the Osh region. In economical terms, industry in the region had developed at a slower pace. While the towns and cities having mining and processing branches of industry were under the control of Soviet Union, the indigenous people of the region were mainly engaged in agriculture with incomes lower than the minimum living wage.\footnote{Sovetskaya kirghizia, 19th June, 1991, in Abilabek Asankanov, “Ethnic Conflict In The Osh Region In Summer 1990:Reasons And Lessons, in Rupesinghe, Kumar, and Olga Vorkunova (ed.), \textit{Ethnicity and Conflict In a Post-Communist World}, London, 1992, p.117.} The adoption of market economy had brought unemployment among youth in the republic. The youth population of eighteen-twenty age group about 3 million in the Osh region, situated near the Ferghana Valley the most densely populated area not only in the republic but in the entire Central Asia. Mobility among the native population was very low. Therefore, the job prospects were also very low and as a result the frustration of unemployment became one of the factors.\footnote{Rupesinghe, Kumar, and Olga Vorkunova (ed.), \textit{Ethnicity and Conflict In a Post-Communist World}, London, 1992, p.117.} In 1990, Kyrgyz constituted 66.6 percent in the executive committee of the Osh Regional Soviet of People’s Deputies, Russians13.7 percent and 5.8 percent Uzbeks.\footnote{Ibid, p.119.} While at the same time, Uzbeks constituted 71.4 percent of those working in the trade system of Osh. These ethnic disproportion in
the service sector caused discontent between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks of the region.\textsuperscript{11} However, these ethnic riots further affected the inter-ethnic relationships among the Central Asian nationality groups.

There were some other riots during the Perestroika period. All these variations of ethno-ideological conflicts have one thing in common: a kind of veneration, often bordering on the irrational, of what parties described as their sacred "historical rights". This is in reality an attempt to substitute civil rights for those of a certain clan as sanctified by tradition.\textsuperscript{12}

Following table present the number of clashes in the past ten years in Central Asia.

\textbf{Table 22}

\begin{tabular}{|l|l|}
\hline
\textbf{Years} & \textbf{Clashes} \\
\hline
1989 & Ethnic clashes in Uzbekistan between Uzbeks and Meskhetian Turks in Kuvasay, Margilan, Kokand and Namagan. 103 dead and over 1,000 were reported wounded. Most of the Meskhetians had to flee away. \\
1989 & Ethnic clashes between Tajiks and Kyrgyzs in Samarkendek. Tensions attributed to land and water allocation. Several people were killed and injured. \\
1990 & Osh-Uzgen riots between Kyrgyzs and Uzbeks. Dispute over redistribution of land to local residents. Hundreds of people died. \\
1990 & Dushanbe riots in Tajikistan. \\
\hline
\end{tabular}


\textsuperscript{11} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid, p.72.
Not only social discrimination and ethnic conflicts are taking place, but regional conflicts have also appeared in the region. There are also territorial claims and counterclaims, such as Kazakhstan versus Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan versus Kyrgyzstan. The Ferghana Valley is divided between three states, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. This division using boundaries drawn up by Stalin bears no resemblance to the ethnic composition. quaint borderlines in combination to numerous enclaves made inconvenient communication between different parts of the same republic without crossing another one. Inequality in opportunities was a reason of conflict. Another reason was the isolation of the region. For each of the three republics, the Valley was a peripheral region, far from the capitals. Because of disintegration of USSR, consequences of such delimitation made the Ferghana Valley one of the most potential areas of conflict in Central Asia.¹³

Ethnic tensions have limited the social safety net options. Conflicts induced challenges to social protection pertaining to the problem of displacement, demobilisation and disability, arising out of humanitarian emergency by denying aid, the destruction of the data collection, infrastructure as well as the absence of reliable data, corruption and the growing size of the unofficial economy. Ethnic tension can reduce social assistance, pensions and social funds by discriminating against the minorities. Demobilized soldiers, displaced people and women all face a variety of problems limiting their opportunities in the labour market. They may have

¹³ Dr. Anara Tabyshalieva, “Reseaching Ethnic Conflict in Post Soviet Central Asia,” http://www.ifrs.elcat.kg/publication/Anara,
outdated or inadequate skills, face discrimination or lack a network that helps them find employment.

After Disintegration

All the Central Asian states contain dozens of ethnic groups. Although most share Islam as a traditional religious affiliation, every group has its own language and culture. In two of the republics, Russians were by far the largest non-titular group in 1989, forming 38 percent of Kazakhstan's population and 22 percent of Kyrgyzstan's. In others however, Russians constituted 10 percent or less of the population. However, according to National Statistical Committee, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, in 1999 census, the Russians constitute 12.5 percent in Kyrgyzstan, while in Turkmenistan, the percentage of Russian population is lower than 10 percent, about 6.7 percent. In these two Central Asian republics, Uzbeks formed a significant share of the population, 13.8 percent in Kyrgyzstan and 9.7 percent in Turkmenistan. With these exceptions, no other single ethnic minority exceeded 9 percent of the population in any of the two republics. Following table gives the percentage of ethnic groups residing in both republics, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan.

Table 23

Principal Ethnic Groups in Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan (Permanent Inhabitants, 1999 Census)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kyrgyzstan</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Turkmenistan</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kyrgyzs</td>
<td>64.9</td>
<td>Turkmen</td>
<td>77.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uzbeks</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>Uzbeks</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russians</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>Russians</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dungans</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>Kazakhs</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukrainians</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>Other small groups in number</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uigurs</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>Tatars</td>
<td>39,000 in 1993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kazakhs</td>
<td>42,657</td>
<td>Ukrainian</td>
<td>34,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tajiks</td>
<td>42,636</td>
<td>Azeris</td>
<td>34,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turks</td>
<td>33,327</td>
<td>Armenians</td>
<td>32,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germans</td>
<td>21,471</td>
<td>Baluchis or Persian</td>
<td>28,000 in 1989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Koreans</td>
<td>19,784</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>72,175</td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>....</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The proportion of these non-titular people range from some 55 percent of the total population in Kazakhstan to some 30 percent in Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Some of these minority groups are in Kyrgyzstan. The Russians are the largest overall minority. There are some 8 million Russians in Central Asia. About 35 percent of the population, Russians are concentrated in the northern industrialised part of Kazakhstan, bordering on the Russian Federation.\textsuperscript{15}

Ethnic conflicts in transition economies blocks or interrupts the process of economic and political reform. As a consequence, the social protection system in a transition country emerging from ethnic conflict is both in need of reform and needs to deal with the social effects of war at the same time. Conflict between an ethnic minority and a dominating ethnic majority is for the purpose of controlling state power and resources. This circumstance is usually the reason why the minority group begins to question the existing state and political structures. Furthermore, if society lacks a mechanism to regulate relations between parties to such a conflict, then there is a cause for violence in increased areas.

Ethnic tension worsens social problems in that it fuels the breakdown of economic activity and delays recovery. Moreover, it produces new groups of vulnerable people who are in need of support: internally displaced persons and refugees, demobilized soldiers, disabled people, single- and female-headed households and orphans. War decreases the capacity of the state to respond to these challenges, which is already under strain in the transition period. Administrative capacity tends to be even lower and corruption worse than in other transition

countries. Continuing ethnic tensions complicate social safety net reform and rule out interethnic redistribution because different ethnic groups may refuse to share funds with a former enemy. Ethnic minorities may be left out and discriminated against in the labour market. After disintegration when number of riots and ethnic conflicts keep continuing, the Russians and other minorities’ started to feel threatened. One reason for their sense of insecurity is the post-Soviet governments’ policies of state building. These are firmly rooted in the history, culture and linguistic heritage of the titular people of the state (i.e. the Kazakhs in Kazakhstan, or the Kyrgyz in Kyrgyzstan). Not surprisingly, the current emphasis on the heritage of the titular people as the basis for the new national-state identities has aroused the concern of the minority groups. For example, many feel aggrieved at the introduction of a titular language as the only official language of a country. They not only feel excluded from full participation in the community, but also are genuinely afraid to be treated as second-class citizens.  

With fewer rights and less protection from official organs, they might be ignored in every sector than the indigenous people. Furthermore, the privileged status of the culture and language of the titular people has ignited discrimination, which, in some cases, has taken the form of crudely aggressive, xenophobic, ethnically based nationalism. This has sometimes resulted in informal discrimination and harassment at work, for example. Compared with conditions under Soviet rule, there has been deterioration in the position of the non-titular groups.  

17 Ibid
The disproportionate burden borne by the Russian minorities has tempered anti-Russian sentiments in the region, as Russians are no longer seen as monopolizing privileged positions at the expense of the titular majority. Russian minorities have left in large numbers. Not only the Russians but also other ethnic minorities are resisting discrimination. For example, the Uzbeks who live in the Osh region, Kyrgyzstan, in 1992 had called for a referendum on the issue whether to join Uzbekistan or not. To placate the minorities, Kyrgyzstan President Akayev defined his simultaneous revival of Kyrgyz culture and sense of national identity with the realisation of the specific national interests of all ethnic groups. According to the 1993 constitution of Kyrgyzstan, all persons in the republic are equal before the law. Nobody can be discriminated on the basis of origin, gender, race, ethnicity, language, and faith, political or religious preference or other grounds. Later on Kyrgyzstan made an effort to encourage minorities, especially Germans to stay within the republic. In 1992, Akayev signed a decree setting up two German National Cultural Regions within the republic; with residents of those areas being permitted dual citizenships (Kyrgyz and German) and the population there given rights to decide certain socio-economic issues.

Though some Kyrgyz nationalists opposed this development, arguing that by providing national privileges to other ethnic groups the government is abrogating the sovereignty of the republic. The government defended its position by pointing out that national regions remained subordinate to Bishkek politically and that the

concession on dual citizenship should be treated as a special case. Similar was the case with the Russian population who stayed back in the republic. Russia was allowed to create a Slavonic University in Bishkek in 1992 and in Kyrgyzstan. Russians are feeling less and less discriminated against. The reason is that Russians were not encouraged to learn the Kyrgyz language. Lack of facilities in learning Kyrgyz language is a difficult matter for Kyrgyz people itself.

Later on there was demand for making Russian language the second official language. The demand continued till 1996 when officially a law was framed by describing Russian as the language of “inter-ethnic communication”. Although earlier the idea was rejected on the ground that it was meaningless in legal terms and that constitution could only speak of state language, later on Russian was accorded official language status in 2000. However, to eliminate the anti-Russian feelings, the government of Kyrgyz Republic, provided freedom for preservation and equal and free development of Russian and other languages spoken in the republic. University education in Kyrgyzstan is carried out largely in Russian (although Kyrgyz instruction is available in some departments in some universities, where textbooks are available), so that Russian language capability remains an important skill for those who wish to go for higher study.

In Turkmenistan, the Constitution adopted on 18th May 1992, provides equal rights and freedom to all citizens. There is no legal basis for discrimination against ethnic minorities. The constitution provides for the rights of speakers of languages,

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21 Ibid.
22 Ibid, p.149
other than Turkmen to use them. Of course, Turkmen had been declared as the official language in July 1999. However, Russian language instruction and usage are widespread. Ethnic Russians also have right to hold dual citizenship in keeping with a 1995 bilateral treaty between Turkmenistan and Russia.²⁴

Recent debates in the parliament of Kyrgyzstan demonstrate great sensitivity about the role of Russian Language in the republic. In Kyrgyzstan, with President Askar Akaev’s support, a bill was introduced to change the constitution to give Russian language the status of official language, leaving Kyrgyz the only state language. The parliament could not determine the difference between a state and an official language and so referred to the constitutional court, which in turn referred this question to the “terminology commission”.²⁵

Russians in Central Asia are highly qualified and skilled professionals. Therefore, the governments of Central Asia are also interested in their staying back for the benefit of the economies of their states. However minorities and language problems are not only faced by the Russians, but by other minorities such as Kyrgyz, Uzbek, Turkmen and others who are staying in republics other than their own one.

Language and Ethnic Tensions

Language is one primary cause of inter ethnic conflicts. To some extent there is tension related to language in Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, though it is confined

to limited areas. While in Kyrgyzstan language carries great potential of becoming one of the inter and intra ethnic battlefields on a statewide basis.

In Turkmenistan, after independence Turkmen became the national language, which created problems for Uzbeks residing in Turkmenistan. A kind of competition between Uzbeks and Turkmen exists over the use of education, media, and administration, housing, construction, privatisation, selections of officials, employment and so on. The problems are acute in those areas where the Uzbeks are concentrated.

Moreover, such problems could become a factor affecting relations between these two republics. Nevertheless, the presence of Uzbeks minority will not raise any questions about the overall linguistic identity of Turkmenistan. The Russian language remains important throughout the republic, but will not reassert its dominant role.

About 13.8 percent of the total republican population, in Kyrgyzstan is Uzbek. The Kyrgyz domain remained separated by the mountain ranges that run between the south of Kyrgyzstan in the Ferghana Valley and the Kyrgyz in North. In Kyrgyzstan, the adoption of language law in September 1989, brought into the open inter-ethnic tension later on. Even though Russian language was adopted as language of inter-ethnic communication, the most controversial element of law was Article 8, which required management and professional personnel- a stratum that the Slavs retain the ability to speak Kyrgyz to their workers or clients.26 The Kyrgyz South, a part of the larger multiethnic Ferghana valley, has much in common with neighbouring Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, both economically and culturally.

Therefore, there are pressures for expansion of Uzbek's role in the South. The relations between Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan could be negatively affected due to inferior treatment of Uzbeks. Not only Uzbek minority of the republic but others such as Ukranian, Azeri, Moldovian, Kazakh and other monorities are facing the same problems. The Uzbeks as a large proportion after Kyrgyz, residing in the republic have the power of resisting the government decisions. The other small minorities who are feeling discriminated in various sectors also may join the opposition group. As a result, any inferior or discriminating situation can be converted into ethnic conflict. To avoid the conflict and ensuring a peaceful merging of the two parts of Kyrgyzstan is a difficult task for the government. As President Askar Akaev has noted “Kyrgyzstan inherited the burning fuse of the Osh conflict and intra republican confrontation between north and south”.27

However, the task to resolve the conflict between two parts of Kyrgyzstan can be possible only by political and economic approaches through pragmatic methods and precise tactical programmes in areas such as education and economic development.

**Education System and Ethnic Minorities**

In each and every society education is a stabilizing factor and reflective mirror of the society. The attitudes that flourish beyond the school wall inevitably filters into the classroom. By looking at the ethnic conflicts in Central Asia, the role of education becomes vital. It can have a negative face as a weapon to provoke

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ethnic conflicts when in classroom the teacher gives the example of ethnic conflicts and puts emphasis on national policies which some times neglect the distinct culture of ethnic minorities. Another one is the positive face of educational provisions, which carries out peace programmes, reflecting the cumulative benefits of the provisions with equal emphasis on ethnic majority and minorities of the country.

In Turkmenistan, the educational system achieved a great success by giving equal emphasis to all minorities in the republic. The law “On Education” provides all citizens of the country irrespective of their ethnic origin, social status and gender, free education at all levels. According to 1995 census, the literacy level of the population between the ages 9-49 was 99.8 percent. Turkmenistan also follows gender equality in educational system. Total enrollment in all levels of education is estimated to be 90 percent, almost equally for male and female. In urban areas the level of education in higher than in rural areas where education level of female is higher than that of males.\(^28\) Of course there are inconsistencies in educational institutions because minorities face problems in accepting national language as teaching medium.

**Intra-Ethnic Tensions**

There are some intra-ethnic conflicts also existing in these two republics, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan. There is tensions, between northerner and those of the poorer south, who are the ancestor of the Kyrgyz, a people of mixed Turkic, Mongol and Kipchak descent, probably originated from the areas of upper reaches of

Yenisei, gradually settled near southern ward Tien Shan mountain range\textsuperscript{29}, complicated the situation. The tension between the two parts of the republic comes to such a level that many Kyrgyz feel that the republic is possibly leading to partition. Apart from it, regional and urban-rural distinction, between north and south, show lack of unity between the two regions.

South Kyrgyzstan is the most populated part of the republic. Osh and Jalalabad oblasts constitute 51 percent of the country's population. They respectively occupy first and second places in birth rate among all the oblasts of the republic. The high birth rate is accompanied by backwardness in the level of living, in incomes per head of the population and municipal, road and other services, along with low wages in the agricultural.\textsuperscript{30}

In Turkmenistan, around 30 tribes are residing in the republic. The traditional domain of the Ahal-Tekke tribes is in south-central Turkmenistan, the Ersary near the region of the Turkmenistan-Afghan border, the Yomud in the western and northeastern and the Saryks is in the southernmost corner of the republic. The dominant groups have many subdivisions, and though they steadily losing their economic position, but continue to follow tribal loyalties and influencing the Turkmen.\textsuperscript{31} Clan consciousness is maintained by high rates of endogamy as well as differences in dialect and dress. The regional differences have influenced the army and universities, raising questions about young people's indifference to the issues.\textsuperscript{32}

\textsuperscript{29} National Statistical Committee, Bishkek, "KYRGYZSTAN", Eastern Europe, Russia and Central Asia, Europa Publication, 2002.
\textsuperscript{30} Ajay, Patnaik, "Socio-Cultural Changes In Post-Soviet Central Asia", in N.N Vohra, (ed.), Culture, society and politics in Central Asia and India, Shipra, publication, New Delhi, 1999, p.204.
\textsuperscript{31} National Statistical Committee, Ashkhabad, "TURKMENISTAN", Eastern Europe, Russia and Central Asia, Europa Publication, 2002.
\textsuperscript{32} N.N Vohra, (ed.), op.cit., p.204.
Migration

After disintegration Russians are the first to migrate from the republics. The poor economic conditions in the non-Russian former Soviet republics have exacerbated the rate of Russian migration. In Kyrgyzstan the three largest ethnic groups are the Kyrgyz, Uzbeks and Russians. It is to be noted that between 1989 and 1995 over 250,000 Slavs have migrated back to Russia, a large percentage of these migrants came from the south. Psychological and economic reasons contributed to the emigration of the Russian population from the republic. Today Russians leave largely due to the economic crisis, demographic changes in urban areas, and unemployment. Another reason of Russian migration is the Islamisation of everyday life. Of course, in Kyrgyzstan Islamisation is not so visible but it became a matter of concern for Russians. The so-called problem of the state language has also played a role in Russian emigration.33

Years ago the Russians began to settle in Ferghana and all kinds of developments existing in the region are also the result of their contribution. But since independence they are migrating from the Ferghana Region. Some other ethnic groups such as Uzbeks returned to Uzbekistan. Turkmen migrated to Turkmenistan, Kazakhs to Kazakhstan. Among them those who are not migrating out of the country are facing problems. Now they are migrating to those places in Kyrgyzstan, where same groups are concentrating or where ethnic tensions have not broken out.

33 Sovetek J. Toktomyshov, op.cit., p.10.
Table: 24

Net Emigration by Ethnic Groups In Kyrgyzstan, 1989-1994 (thousands)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>41.9</td>
<td>33.8</td>
<td>77.5</td>
<td>120.6</td>
<td>51.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyrgyz</td>
<td>-0.8</td>
<td>-3.4</td>
<td>-4.3</td>
<td>-2.2</td>
<td>-2.8</td>
<td>-1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>48.5</td>
<td>80.9</td>
<td>31.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukrainian</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belorussian</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.3</td>
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The population of the Kyrgyz Republic comprises of more than 80 ethnic groups. As on January 1, 1993, the population was 58.6% Kyrgyz, 17.1% Russian, 13.8% Uzbek, 1.8% Ukrainian, 1.3% Tartar, 0.9% Kazakh, 0.8% German, and 0.8% Tajik. The expectation towards ethnic homogeneity resulting from the emigration of non-Kyrgyz groups did not add anything positive to the country. Instead of homogeneity feelings among all ethnic groups, it gives the intimation of an increase in inter-ethnic tensions. The economic crisis and the process of the current social, economic and political reforms may also increase inter-ethnic friction. The policy of the republican leaders and the general objective of the population to ensure inter-ethnic harmony are increasing slightly. But for interethnic harmony, it is necessary to lessen ethnic tension, which results from migration of the minority population in the republic. Neighbouring countries also follow the fate of their respective co-ethnic groups in the Kyrgyz Republic.34

Among the minorities the migration movement proceeded not only within the republic but is continuing from other republics of Central Asia. From the provinces like Khudjiant, Djirgital, and Murgab of Tajikistan, people are migrating to Osh region, because of inter-ethnic tensions in those provinces. There are some other reasons for migration like, better job prospects and more economic opportunities or bright career for their children. Sometime people of rural areas are migrating to urban areas in the hope of good jobs and opportunities. For example, there is a rural exodus in the direction of Osh region in Kyrgyzstan. The reason is to get job opportunities better than the place where they are surviving. The so called "punished people" (Ingush, Balkars, Karachi and Crimean Tatars), considered as

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“Hostile/enemy’ classes sent by Stalin to Central Asia in 1943/44) and other minorities deported during the Second World War (Volga Germans, Kurds, Khemsins, and Greek) are witnessing population decline.35

European out-migration from the Ferghana Valley has increased greatly over the past ten years. The main factors of emigration among Russians are economic insecurity, mass unemployment among the Slavic population, a lack of demand for their skills and difficulties in obtaining proper education.36

Table: 25

National Division Population Of Turkmenistan, 1959-1995 (Percentage)

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Source: 1995 Census in Turkmenistan, Vol.1, Ashghabat, Goskomstat (Statistical Department) of Turkmenistan, 1996, p.18

35 Johan Gely, Ferghana Valley: In the Middle of the Empires, http://www.turkiye.net/sotalsota.html
36 Ibid.
Turkmen society was more or less homogenous and traditionally guided. However, within the past fifteen years, the proportion of Turkmen and Uzbek was increasing both due to natural reasons and migration. After the breakup of the Soviet Union, non-Turkmen mainly emigrated. This trend is likely to continue in future.

In Turkmenistan, Russians are the single largest migrating group and Turkmen is the largest group among immigrants. Women made up of 46 percent of migrating population in 1990 and 48 percent in 1994. About 50 percent of emigrants and about 64 percent of immigrants are youth of 15-29 age groups. The rate of out-migration is highest among specialists with higher education or partial higher education (39 percent) and for those with secondary special education (55 percent).³⁷

Turkmenistan's efforts basically posture the impression of positive neutrality and maintain close contacts with Russia and Turkey. Kyrgyzstan's governmental policies are geared towards mixed orientations in lieu of interethnic rivalries. Due to threat of religious extremism, it is advocating an open society, which can initiate diverse programmes to balance and resolve the problems.³⁸

In Turkmenistan, there is an outflow of highly trained urban population with industrial skills to many other republics of Central Asia and CIS countries. The migration from rural to urban areas consists of workers who are less skilled than the workers who leave the country. The republic needs to encourage a balanced growth pattern between rural and urban areas to resolve the problem of rural to urban migration in search of jobs. The government of Turkmenistan is establishing

industrial plants and related social infrastructures in rural areas. That can reduce internal migration and a balance developmental growth can be possible.

In Turkmenistan, there is also a need to improve the reliability of migration data. For example, one estimate available for 1997 indicates that 19,972 people left and 4024 people arrived in the country. Such figures are subject to definitional and registration problems, since one person moving across borders ten times a year will be counted as ten migrants. Similarly, a number of movements within the country can be missed. The International Organization for Migration is assisting the Government in addressing such problems.39

Refugee as Minority

The ethnic conflicts causes thousands to be homeless. A number of people become displaced within the recognized national boundaries of their own country and face the problem of internally displaced persons. Hundreds of thousands of people are pushed across the borders and became refugees. Refugee moves from one place to another, one republic to another. In Turkmenistan, by the end of 2001, around 14,000 refugees and asylum seekers entered and were provided required protection; among them about 650 individually recognized refugees from Afghanistan and 28 from other countries. Turkmenistan hosted about 12,500 prima facie refugees who came from Tajikistan, and more than 750 prima facie ethnic Turkmen refugees who migrated from Afghanistan. A national refugee law adopted

since 1997 has not yet been implemented. Therefore, UNHCR is according refugee status under an ad hoc arrangement with the Turkmen government, by which the latter can recognizes prima facie refugees and others refugees certified by UNHCR. In Turkmenistan, mandated refugees are enjoying same social and economical rights as Turkmen citizens, in accordance with the 1997 refugees law. Those refugees, who are coming under prima facie law, are settled in rural areas of Turkmenistan. The UNHCR continues to work with the government on the acquisition of Turkmen citizenship for ethnic Turkmen refugees coming from Tajikistan. Besides that the UNHCR is working with three Turkmen non-governmental organisations in order to implement the programmes aiming to assist refugee women and children, and providing help to acquaint them with the life, culture, and traditions of Turkmenistan.\textsuperscript{40}

Kyrgyzstan in 2001 provided shelters to around 9,700 refugees who migrated from Tajikistan (8,400), and Afghanistan (850). During the same year, about 380 persons applied for refugee status in Kyrgyzstan, among them 201 were from Afghanistan, 151 from Chechnya and 28 from Tajikistan. Refugees from Tajikistan constitute about 90 to 95 percent ethnic Kyrgyz who arrived in Kyrgyzstan after its independence in 1991. Some of them migrated from Tajikistan after the outbreak of Civil War in 1992. UNHCR assisted some 1,190 ethnic Kyrgyz in repatriating back to Tajikistan during the year. The state Agency of Migration and Demography is an organisation that comes under the Kyrgyz government bears the responsibility of refugees and asylum seekers. Although Kyrgyzstan usually recognises the status of refugee granted by UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), individual

refugee status is determined in exceptional case, since refugees from Afghanistan and Tajikistan can create possible ethnic tension in later years. Both Afghanistan and Tajikistan are victims of Islamic Fundamentalism. Of course indigenous people of Kyrgyzstan may not be influenced so much, but infiltration of fundamentalism may create ethnic tension. 41 The question arises whether traditional Islamic solidarity, which had been rooted in nomadic tribalism among indigenous people of Kyrgyzstan, can be incorporated within radical Islamic fundamentalism. What would be the nature and awareness of the Central Asian Islam? Would it be able to transcend the differences in languages and the states' rivalries? Or the population will be more responsive to the fundamentalists and extremists? Although awareness on radical Islamic movements have started and methodical recommendations and suggestions on how to organise counteraction against extremist movements and organisations are published through newspapers and mass media in Kyrgyzstan, there is still a long way to reach the natural inter-ethnic democratic way of cooperation. 42

State Policy

Political, social, economic factors are destabilising the ethnic and religious situation in Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan. Governmental decrees and decisions are simply declarative and there is no serious control over their implementation. Activities of state bodies in the field of inter-ethnic policy are not coordinated and

42 Johan Gely, Ferghana Valley: In the Middle of the Empires, http://www.turkiye.net/sotalsota.html
are sometimes chaotic; numerous structures are separate and maintain a bureaucratic approach, without considering the long-term perspective of inter-ethnic relations. Efforts by public organisations are sporadic and isolated, and based on short-term projects. However, one possibility for reducing tensions in the Central Asian region would be to increase cooperation, and information sharing among the regional powers, and cooperation between the republics.

In Turkmenistan, a country with authoritarian rule even though the constitution provides the freedom of press and expression, the government controls and funds all electronic and print media, and prohibits the media from reporting the views of opposition political leaders and critics, and reaction of ethnic groups. Only two newspapers, Adolat and Galkynysh are nominally independent, and they were created by presidential decree. President Niyazov has been declared the 'founder' of all newspapers in Turkmenistan. The status of independent human rights organisations is under the control of President of Turkmenistan. The oath of loyalty to the nation is adorned by specifying in the front pages of all country's newspapers and magazines that "If I criticize you may my tongue fall out". Restriction on the development of mass media and absence of books and journals reflecting inter-ethnic relations and the cultural life of ethnic groups in Central Asia do not help in understanding the problems they are facing because of nationalising policies introduced by the republic. Turkmenistan therefore, seems to be less interested about the problems of other ethnic groups. Whether facing the problems of staying submissively or problems like poverty, family tension and so on, ethnic minorities might be less interested or has less time to interact with other ethnic minorities to
resist the governmental policies that are made without consulting them or taking into account their problems.\textsuperscript{43}

The mutual exploration of two or more ethnic minorities groups and the peculiarities of their cultures and histories, and the search for possibilities of common action are lacking. Therefore, the 'rumour syndrome' plays a major part in the inter-ethnic conflict. In that situation the media can play an important role by exploring the persisting condition of minorities that can gain the sympathy of other ethnic groups and of government also. Through media minorities can gain the support from international humanitarian agencies, and also find solution to their personal and social segregated problems.\textsuperscript{44}

Central Asia is comprised of about hundred ethnic groups. It is diverse in ethnic terms while at the same time it is largely dominated by a mono-ethnic elite. The mistrust between states in the region has led to a great deal of difficulty in looking at grassroots conflicts over the borders. Constant conflict between the establishment, and ethnic and religious groups, contributes to instability in almost all Central Asian countries. Discontent over the employment situation has led the minority populations to distrust the governmental policies. Because of this, the minorities want to see proportional representation in local power structures, especially in mixed areas. Minorities' discontent over employment policy is one of the indicators of the state of inter-ethnic tension. The existing tendency to support

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid.
'our own people' has led to an ethnic imbalance in employment in state departments.\textsuperscript{45}

Although the Central Asian region has suffered various violent ethnic conflicts in recent years where hundreds died, there was no serious action taken to lessen the suffering and mutual suspicion between all ethnic groups. The dearth of unbiased information reaching the people often means that rumours are widespread in the region and are often difficult to distinguish from facts. The confusing status of the Soviet legacy such as 'nations', 'states', and 'ethnic groups' referred to in Central Asia has led to an exaggeration of ethnicity.\textsuperscript{46}

Before Soviet times, ethnicity was unimportant in the region, where most people considered their regional or clan loyalties to be stronger. The Soviet system, however, encouraged the development of ethnic identities, for a variety of cultural, ideological and political reasons. Ethnicity was the fifth item on the Soviet passport, for example. During Soviet times, ethnicity was always emphasised along with the 'brotherhood of nations', and the common Soviet citizenship. This combination led to the development of ethnic identity and nationalism being hidden by the subconscious refusal of many people to accept that ethnic conflicts exist.\textsuperscript{47}

**Inter-State Cooperation:**

There are a number of disputed areas in Uzbekistan-Kyrgyzstan, Kyrgyzstan Tajikistan and Uzbekistan-Turkmenistan borderlands. In this connection, mutual accusations levelled at each other of illegal activities in their territories by another

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{46} Ibid
\textsuperscript{47} Sovetek J. Toktomyshov, op.cit., p.8
and violation of national laws and sovereignty are a common issue. 1999 onwards, after the incursion of Islamists to the territory of Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, the extremists found Kyrgyzstan as easily accessible because of its own ethnic tensions and weak governmental policies along with economic backwardness. So the target of extremists has quickened the need for border delimitation and demarcation. However to resolve all the border related disputes the Central Asian republics have set up bilateral commission in 2000, on the basis of inter-states agreements. While Turkmenistan settled its border issue with Central Asia neighbour in September, 2000 on the basis of a bilateral agreement which became the first one of such sort made by any Central Asian country.48

**Women: Mono-Ethnic Minority**

Another problem in the Central Asian patriarchal society is that men always dominate the society and household, while women bore all the responsibility of the family and children. Many ethnic and religious traditions limit the role of women and increase discrimination and segregation in the region. Even when talking about ethnic violence in Central Asia, mention about trauma, in particular rape, and sexual violence and increased domestic violence during and after conflict are rarely mentioned. Institute For Regional Studies (IFRS) in 1998 in Kyrgyzstan has taken up the study of the patriarchal traditions, which suppress and oppress women under a novel academic discipline- mono-ethnic minority.49

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49 Sovetek J. Toktomyshev, op.cit., p.8
The question of under-estimating women in the power structures was often answered by referring to the mentality of the local people. People mentioned a proverb: 'a man with a frog's head is better than a woman with a golden head.' Access of women to decision-making in politics and economy does not necessarily affect other spheres of life. They do not prefer women deputies in those spheres where the most important decisions on peace and security are taken nor in the management sphere.50

On the one hand, there is a strong participation of women in Central Asian families to manage extreme socio-economic situations. Otherwise their participation usually is confined to small entrepreneurship. In some cases, this has strengthened the position of women in families. On the other hand, women's representations have been ignored in the decision-making process in society and the state. The number of women among the heads of organisations and institutions has sharply decreased, especially at the local administrative levels; in district, province (regional) and republican and other administrative bodies; in the government, the parliament and on all levels of power structure.51

The gender insensitivity of ethnic conflicts or instability has never been an issue of discussion, while women became another victimized minority in the Central Asian society. As like other ethnic minority, women are also ignored, discriminated and suppressed in administrative, political and management spheres. When an open ethnic conflict or a war is going on, women are the first victims of gang rape torture and wounded. However, according to a survey of the IFRS

50 Ibid
51 Ibid
Religion and Ethnic Minorities

A large part of ethnic resurgence appeared because of religious beliefs and faith. In Kyrgyzstan this challenge emerged in various forms. In some parts of Ferghana Valley in Kyrgyzstan, Islam is becoming resurgent across the borders, particularly with Tajik and Uzbek influence. After the Taliban tried to manipulate Tajikistan, through frequent resurgences, the menace vibrated to Kyrgyzstan borders also. Of course, Kyrgyzstan has maintained a strong border security, yet the influence was there. In North of Kyrgyzstan both Islam and Christianity are present, where ethno-religious resurgences have been witnessed. In South of the republic, ethnic resurgences are more than the North.

It was seen that during the Kyrgyz-Uzbek clashes in 1990 (in Osh and Uzgen) “the government attempted to use Imams to pacify the opposition groups.” Religious figures were allowed to address the believers from various newspapers, the radio and television, even though Islam is not very popular among the young people in Kyrgyzstan, where Islamic tradition has been much weaker than in other Central Asian republics. Still, of around 6,000 mosques recently built in Central Asia, 1,000 are located in Kyrgyzstan. Mosque construction has been intensive in the Kyrgyz part of the Ferghana Valley, where their number has doubled in recent years. The role of Christianity in the area of Ferghana Valley has been limited in

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52 Ibid
regard to active participation in various activities. In the South, the Muslim community has been divided on an ethnic basis (but in Islam, nationality of the believers is not important) in the area.\textsuperscript{53}

It is true that in Kyrgyzstan people are not influenced by religion or they did not get scope to be influenced by religion. Another reason is that the Ferghana Valley seems to be very sensitive because of intra-ethnic tension as it joins the borders of Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. At the same time external actors coming from Afghanistan and Iran also influence people of the Valley. Therefore, in Ferghana Valley, Islam spreads up quickly than any other part of the republic. Islam is most influential among the Uzbeks.\textsuperscript{54}

The geographical interdependence of the Central Asian states necessitates cooperation to resolving water and other disputes like land disputes, internal migration, economic integration and many other concerns. However, such collaborative efforts should be forwarded from top officials, while the rest of the government establishment, as well as economic and cultural entities can be incorporated later on.

Consequently, attempts at regional cooperation look impressive, but has yet to accomplish a great deal. Lack of regional cooperation can further exacerbate the ethnic tensions in and between the regions, as well as between the republics. In many of the republics the indigenous ethnic groups have gained control of state apparatus to the detriment of other ethnic groups living in the area.

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid.
The primary actor in this campaign has been President Askar Akaev, who assumed his current post in the aftermath of the violence in Osh. He has fought for a civic, inclusive definition of the Kyrgyz nation, and has incurred the wrath of nationalist forces that want to create a "Kyrgyzstan for (ethnic) Kyrgyz". Recognizing the divisiveness of this slogan in the pluralist reality, Akaev has taken steps to ensure that all peoples can feel secure in the new Kyrgyzstan. Discrimination is legally forbidden, and equal rights are constitutionally guaranteed. He vetoed a measure that declared the land the property of the "Kyrgyz people" (narod), favoring instead the more inclusive "people of Kyrgyzstan." Statements of ethnic affiliation natsionalnost have been removed from Kyrgyz passports, reaffirming a commitment to a political-territorial basis for identity. In other words, Akaev is attempting to create "Kyrgyzstantsy," people who base their identity upon the state of residence and feel a bond with their fellow citizens regardless of ethnic background.55

"One of our main focus points has been inter-ethnic peace," the Kyrgyz President says. "All ethnic groups are represented in the Assembly of the People of Kyrgyzstan today" 56 he adds, ethnic clashes between Kyrgyz and ethnic Uzbeks claimed hundreds of lives in the Southern part of Kyrgyzstan in the early nineties, and there is still some tension along the border with Tajikistan. But by the volatile standards of young Asian democracies, Kyrgyzstan's different ethnic groups are living in peaceful coexistence.

56 Meltem Sancak, Intra and Inter Ethnic Relations in Central Asia, http://www.eth.mpg.de/people/sancak/sancak.html
In an effort to placate concerns of ethnic Russians, he proposed dual citizenship, official status for the Russian language, and creation of a 'Slavic' university. Conciliatory moves have also been made to Uzbeks in Osh, lest separatist sentiments gain strength. These efforts, combined with Akaev's commitment to economic and political liberalization, have helped create the most fertile ground for pluralism in the region.57