The developments in Central Asian republics after the introduction of reforms was a pointer to the change of atmosphere in the Soviet-Union. It was the most volatile region after the Baltic republics in the manifestation of ethnic discontents in violent way. In order to analyses the various developments in Central Asia, it will be appropriate to briefly analyse the political processes in Soviet Union. The political processes unleashed by radical reforms introduced by Gorbachev accelerated the developments in Central Asian republics. The various measures adopted by Gorbachev dealing with the nationalities problems were responsible in encouraging the dormant political forces to come up and play a role in Central Asia. The change in atmosphere ushered a new era in the political developments of Central Asia. The reforms in political system shifted power bases relatively from center to the republic, unlike the pre-Gorbachev period of totalitarianism in the name of "democratic centralism."

In the history of Soviet Union, the parliamentary opposition was tolerated in that period. The "Glasnost and Perestroika" meant for restructuring the society, created articulate interest groups in the system. The development both in economic, political and social sphere after reforms were tremendous. But the most important outcome of reforms were the
manifestation of nationalities problem in whole Soviet-Union which coupled with economic problem led to its disintegration.

Gorbachev introduced reform for weeding out corruption and inefficiency. But later its scope increased to all spheres. Russian poet, Evgenii Evtashenko was first who played an important role in broadening the spheres of glasnost. Then, non-Russian writers from Russian Federation voiced complaints about the neglect of their language due to atmosphere created by glasnost. In early part of 1986, party secretaries of Estonia and Uzbekistan discussed about nationalities problems in their republics.

After the advent of 'glasnost', the dormant nationalities discontents manifested throughout Soviet-Union. The violent Alma-Ata riots started after the replacement of Dinmukhammad Kunaev by Gennady Kolbin as Kazakhstan first secretary on the charges of corruption. The most violent clashes between Armenia and Azerbaijan started over Nogorny-Karabakh enclave. It was almost a war between two republics. Then almost all republics in Central Asia witnessed ethnic riots. In Central Asia, most of the riots were violent. Initially the riots were against the outsiders like Armenians, Russians, and Meskhetian Turks. But later the ethnic conflict spread to other nationalities of Central Asia like Uzbeks and Kirghiz people. The most important cause of nationalities problem was economic,
though there were the causes relating social and cultural issues in Central Asia.

In order to stem the rising tide of nationalism, 27th Congress of Communist party of the Soviet-Union was held in 1986. The first sentence of nationality section of 1986 programme however, reads: In its activity the CPSU considers all the facets of multinational character of Soviet Society". The second sentence of the new text also includes the assertion in bold letters, that "the national question which remained from past, has been solved successfully in the Soviet-Union.¹ In language policy, 1986 programme was unsympathetic on the use of non-Russian language. Rather it emphasized the constructive role of the Russian language in bringing the Russians and non-Russian together. Gorbachev advocated representation of more Russians in various non-Russian republics. In economic sphere very limited role was allowed for the republics.

So the 27th Congress was without any concrete proposal in dealing with the nationalities problems. There were no guidelines for the solution of the nationalities problem, as it pre-supposed that nationalities question has been successfully solved. Gorbachev gave no importance to the

nationalities issues. He did not take it seriously. He rather said it was due to distortion of Leninist policy, that there was manifestation of nationalism.

In 1988, nationalist tensions were rising everywhere in serious proportions. In the background of mounting nationalist tensions, the 19th conference of CPSU opened on 28th June. Some of the important measures of 19th conferences were: (i) The negative phenomena which accumulated since long, had been neglected. The 'Glasnost' and 'Perestroika' revealed these phenomena and created conditions for overcoming them (ii) It was against any sort of chauvinism and nationalism. The greater independence of union republics and autonomous regions is seen. (iii) It would decentralize power from Union to republic level emphasizing their independence and responsibility in economic, social and cultural spheres. So it promised to create elaborate arrangement for self-government of various nationalities. The soviet of nationalities of USSR supreme Soviet, its standing commission were accorded a prime position in dealing with inter-ethnic relations. (iv) The ethnic groups residing outside their national territories or ethnic groups which have no such territories should be granted more opportunity to fulfil their national cultural needs, especially in education, communication and folkart. (v) There should be appreciation of roles of schools, young pioneers and young communist league in the sphere of friendship of various nationalities. The armed forces should be
real school of internationalism. National narrow mindedness and chauvinistic arrogance should be combated (vi) It stressed for an indepth analysis of every specific situation. It should be tackled in a peaceful way within the framework of socialist democracy (vii) There should be a all-union research center for the scientific and the theoretical study of nationalities policy. (vii) It stressed for representation of all the nationalities in all party organization and government institution.2

"The party’s Nationalities policy in Today’s conditions (CPSU) platform" was ready in August 1989. The main ideas of the platform were like these. The Jurisdiction and mutual obligation of the Union and republics should be clearly defined. The economic content of self-determination and sovereignty in today’s conditions finds expression in changeover of the republics to economic accountability and self-finacing. The question of citizenship is closely linked to the sovereignty of the republics. In the future, a constitutional provision should be put in to effect in accordance with which the USSR would establish a general procedure and carry out the co-ordination of foreign policy and foreign trade activity of the Union republics. The republic’s foreign ties should not at variance with all Union interest. One of the main purpose in uniting republics in to

Union is to safeguard the country's security and peaceful labour of the Soviet people. In connection with transformation of the Soviet-Federation, questions of the status and activity of the public organization that plays an important role in the USSR's political system are being raised in a new way. Within framework in the restructuring of Soviet federation, problems of the legal status of the Russian Republic and its national-State structure should be resolved. How can transformation in the Soviet federation be conducted? Elevate the role and legal status of national autonomy with the restoration of the legitimate rights and interests of the peoples living in autonomous republics, provinces and regions in an organic part of restructuring of the Soviet federation. There should be complete and consistent implementation of constitutional principle of equality of citizens, regardless of their race or nationality. A clear demarcation must be drawn between growth of national self-awareness and nationalism. While opposing all manifestations of nationalism, it is important to be sensitive and responsive to all legitimate demands and aspiration of a national culture. It also emphasized the role of mass-media. Only deep respect for the national feelings of every people and at the sametime, utmost devotion to principle in assessing the events that are taking place can facilitate the overcoming the contradictions that arise, the calming of people's mind and return to the traditional norms of socialist
In order to find a longterm solution to the nationalities question, 28th congress of the CPSU was held in July 1990. It was to formulate a new treaty which would replace the 1922 treaty that formed USSR. It unanimously resolved to adopt following measures. The CPSU maintains that centrifugal tendency can be prevented by giving the nations right to self-determination including. It was in favour of raising the constitutional status and expanding the rights of the autonomous republics, regions. It will ensure the return of deported nationalities to their homeland. The CPSU tried its best to preserve and protect sovereignty of all the republics and cultural autonomy of ethnic minorities. The Union and republican legislations adopted subsequently attempted to create necessary prerequisites for the solution of the problem and preparation and conclusion of new union treaty. The congress maintained, that should be based on the ideas of Union of Sovereign states, which presupposed in effect equal rights of all parties to the treaties, a clearcut definition of status of every member, the differentiation between the jurisdiction of union and that of union republics, multiple contacts among them, volunteers and natural benefit. All the national state formations including the autonomous

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one, should be equal partner in the process.⁴

I. Response to party Programme in Central Asia

Gorbachev's main domestic policy thrusts in reduction of coercion and promotion of 'glasnost', his presidential and participatory style of leadership, and his overriding concern with efficiency and anti-ideological stances, all had a significant implication for ethnic politics. The reduction in the level of coercion contributed to an explosion in public activism throughout the Soviet-Union and to a dramatic change in the relationship of republic elites to Moscow and to their respective populations.⁵

During the period of Gorbachev regime, the political atmosphere had changed to a great extent. Before Gorbachev, people were not taking risk of public protest. But after the introduction of Gorbachev's reforms, the risk factor was very less for the public protest. Before the reforms there was no chance of negotiation with demonstrators regarding their demands; the most important aspect of demonstration was that these demonstrations were related to nationalities problems. The nationality line was most

prominent in the articulation of various interests. Because there was relative weakness of other collective identities and ties due to past policies.

Then a significant change in the relationship of republic leaders with Moscow occurred in relation to their own population. Before reforms, the republican leaders were dependent upon the Central leadership. There was virtually no autonomy for the republican leaders in the matters of administration as Moscow was dictating terms to the republican leaders. The republican leaders were coerced into obedience. But situation changed to a great extent. Now people were the focal point in the political system. The leader had to convince not coerce in such an atmosphere. So the role and status changed with changing political atmosphere in the Soviet-union.

The relaxation of the political control, on the one hand accelerated ethno-nationalist mobilization. On the other hand, perestroika’s failure to revive the economy fuelled the resistance to the central intervention by the alienated republics, especially in the Baltic and Caucasus. In Central Asia, Gorbachev’s attempt to restructure politics and economy was perceived as a bid to further encroach on the limited autonomy provided to the
republics. In the time of Brezhnev, republican leaders in Central Asia enjoyed certain amount of autonomy in the administration. The limited autonomy in the economic spheres was also there.

The policy of autonomy to regional leaders of Central Asian republics was reversed by Andropov towards centralized control of the economy for the maximization of resources of various republics. The emphasis of the Central intervention in the economy of Central Asian the republics became a major component in Gorbachev’s policy. It curtailed the economic autonomy of these republics. Gorbachev’s emphasis on economic efficiency led to the removal of several senior party official in mid 1980’s on the charge of corruption and ineptitude. The policy of affirmative action in employment was replaced by one of merit, ending the "implicit understanding governing allocation of party and administrative post along ethnic lines."  

Under Gorbachev, the rolling purges in Central Asia continued and along the way the authority of Centre was enhanced. In the month of November and December 1985, the Kirghiz, Turkmen and Tajik republics

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received new first secretaries. Then in December 1986, Gorbachev sacked first secretary of Kazakhstan, Dinmukhmmad Kunaev on the charge of corruption and was replaced by Genadii Kolpin. Masliev in Kyrgyzstan and Niyazov in Turkmenia, both had served in Central Committee who were appointed. Nishanov replaced Ushman Khodzhaev of Uzbekistan in January of 1988. The background of newly appointed first secretaries reflected centralizing trend even after introduction of reforms.¹¹

There was strong reaction in Central Asia to the intervention by the center. The replacement of indigenous Central Asians from key party posts and administrative positions by Slavic bosses led to ethnic discontents among Central Asians towards Russians in those republics. The atmosphere of openness emboldened various activists to take law in to their hands sometime by violent means. The first manifestation of ethnic discontent was in the case of Kunaev's replacement by Kolbin. The Kazakhs took removal of Kunaev as a conspiracy of Central to put Slavs in their republics. The economic problems combined with ethnic discontent exploded in violent reaction. The violent riot was first of its kind in Soviet-union after reforms. The riots had been described officially as the isolated work of nationalist and opponents of perestroika. But later it was proved false after the manifestation of nationalism in many parts of Soviet-Union.

For Gorbachev, personnel changes among the Central Asian First Secretaries seemed to provide some advantages in the late 1980’s. Because all the Central Asian republican leaders consistently supported the cause of the center in the face of pressure from nationalist and popular front organizations. For example, Nishanov was quoted in a article as saying: "None of the nations represented in the Soviet-Union can assure its further free development without others." The first Secretary of Uzbekistan went further in December 1988, when he openly supported Moscow’s position in the dispute with Estonia over the supremacy of Central decisions over Union republics. In Tajikistan on September 1988, the party secretary, Kakhar Makhkamov, did not express any support for newly formed Tajik Popular front organization, "Friends of Perestroika". Speaking at party conference in Dushanbe on 10 December 1988, the secretary argued against the need for a popular front organization. In his opinion, long established formal organization were sufficient. In Kirghiz republic, first secretary Absamat Masaliev voiced negative views about various popular fronts. Like his Tajik counterpart, he decried these organizations attempting to copy mechanically the methods and actions of popular front in several regions of the country.

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9. Ibid., p.53.
The Kirghiz Party Secretary said that these movements were not for socialist goals but instead try to engage in damaging activities. They were leading people away from the chosen path by taking advantages of known difficulties of perestroika. Askar Akayev of Kirghiz SSR opposed a separate Kirghiz communist party. Speaking to kirghiz Central Committee on nationalities in January of 1990, Akayev said: Here the deciding force which united our people and which could play a crucial role in resolving this important issue is the CPSU. I therefore consider that the CPSU should be united. Without integration, without a stable and firm federation, these most difficult economic, political, scientific, technical, social and ecological issues facing our country cannot be solved.

In July 1990, Turkmen President Niyazov presented an ambivalent position on the Turkmen’s republic’s future relations with Moscow. Niyazov stated at the 28th CPSU congress that: We are in a favour of a renewed federation and want to see the choice of forms in state structure determined by the realities of life rather than by some scheme. We are in favour of an independent communist party which, once it has shaken off the guardianship of the center, will be able to direct the process of the republic’s development in line with its specific features. However, Niyazov went on to say that. We have no intention of relinquishing that place (in Soviet-Union) or serving our ties of many year’s standing what Niyazov
was advocating was merely sovereignty not independence.\textsuperscript{10}

The glasnost contributed to the frequent articulation of the regional grivenaces of various issue in Central Asia. The newly formed ethno-cultural organizations highlighted the local issues like language and cultural problems. The environmental issues were also highlighted by these organizations. Initially almost all the informal organizations demanded the restoration of the official status to their respective native languages. Then gradually new issues were taken up by these organizations. In order to establish legitimacy, the Central Asian communist parties also adopted a nationalistic rhetoric and articulated ethnic demands.

Yet their demand for an end to the exploitation of the resources of their republics by the center and concessions made to the nationalist sentiment such as the provisions of the equal official status with Russian of their indigenous languages did not transcend beyond support for autonomy. As Gorbachev began negotiation on a future constitutional framework for Soviet-Union, most Central Asian Communist party leaders favoured continuation of federal state structure in a new form. But there were few organizations which called for total independence from Soviet-Union even by the violent method, if necessary.

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid., p.54.
The Democratic Union

Soviet jurist Boris Kurashvili spoke out in an interview with Latvian Komsomol newspaper (Sovetskia molodezh) about the Democratic Union, that would unite socially motivated people who were not members of the communist Party. Karashvilli said that the democratic union was not be a second party in the Soviet Union (the CPSU would still have predominant control) but would fulfill some of the functions that alternative parties usually did-namely, to monitor and criticise the government and party apparatus and to make sure that they executed their duties in most efficient way.\(^{11}\)

For the first time, a parliamentary system emerged in Soviet-Union under Mikhail Gorbachev. After the seventy years, the political decision making processes was shared between communist party and the USSR's newly constituted legislative bodies, the Congress of People’s Deputies and standing Supreme Soviet. The first-semi-free All-Union parliamentary elections in the USSR were held in March 1989. The emergence of opposition was a new phenomena. For the first time opposition was legalized to a great extent. The main outcome of the election was the fact

that now atleast 10% of the members of the USSR parliament regularly identified themselves as the legal democratic opposition to the ruling communist elite.

There were some distinct features of the election to the Congress of People's Deputies which could not be called democratic. Because 2250 deputies were not elected directly. Inspite of all these undemocratic features, the event was a turning point in the political development of the Soviet-Union. It had a wide ramifications in every spheres throughout the country. The result of the election showed the disgust of general masses towards communist party. In was a protest against old order. It was the methods which was used by the masses effectively. The representatives advocating for the promotion of national interests got authority and legitimacy in their own republic. They fought for respective constituency and formed opposition with other members.

The new congress of People's Deputies opened on 25 May 1989 against a background of the protests in Georgia, Moldavia and Uzbekistan, new mass-demonstration in Erevan and Nagornyi-Karabakh, and mounting pressure from Balts. At the outset, national problem figured prominently in the debate. A temporary walkout by Lithuanian deputies indicated on the democratic functioning of parliament. The non-Russians secured two
things: a commission to look into the issues of the secret protocols of Molotov-Ribbentrop pact, and another one to investigate the event in Georgian Capital.

The Congress had barely ended when there were fresh outbreak of ethnic violence in Central Asian republics. Here the bitter fruits of the Moscow's policies, towards the region were making themselves felt. In the first half of May 1989, riots had taken place in Turkmenistan largely because of the large scale unemployment among local youths. Then serious unrest occurred in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. During the first two weeks of June, at least 99 people were killed and more than 1,000 were injured in the Ferghana valley of Uzbekistan. Here, the deteriorating economic conditions fuelled ethnic hostility and resulted in organized attacks by Uzbeks on Meshktian Turks who had been deported by Stalin from their homeland. Since 1986, there have been numerous indications of growing popular discontent over Moscow's attitude toward Central Asia. This discontent has been reflected both in outbursts of anomie violence and in the organization of elite dominated reform or protest movements, of both sanctioned and unsanctioned groups.  

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A significant development in parliamentary process occurred when, in July 1989, Interregional Group of Deputies held its first conference in Moscow. Around 250 members of the Congress of People's Deputies formed "Inter-Regional Group". This group has been called first organized opposition group in seventy years after October revolution. This group included non-Russian deputies. It was by Andrei Sakharov and Boris Yelstin. The member, Ukrainian poet Vitally Korotyuch and Sakharov called for dismantling of the Soviet-Union's imperial structure and its replacement by a voluntary confederation based on a new-treaty. He said that non-Russian should be given 'independence to the maximum degree ' and their sovereignty limited only by the consideration of common defence, foreign policy, transport and communication. Another important group Russiya club', was set up in October 1989.

In that period, Gorbachev reacted to the event unleashed by him. His reaction was by and large a strategic retreat from orthodox communist and imperial position under pressure from below. Probably he foresaw the collapse of communism as imminent. He felt helpless on declaration of right to secession from the Soviet Union led by Latvia (May 1989). Latvia (July 1989), Azerbaijan (September 1989) Georgia (November, 1989 March 1990).
The March 1990 was the most crucial month in the political developments. The elections to the republican parliaments were held. The elections were free and fair to a large great extent. It was different from previous election due to two reasons. First the election was by and large free and fair. Then victory of non-communist and pro-independence political forces in Baltic republics was new in the history of Soviet-Union. In 1990, newly elected Lithuanian parliament adopted the act "on Restoration of Independent Lithuanian state" declaring the independence from the USSR. The Lithuanian move was opposed by economic sanction but it proved ineffective against growing nationality assertiveness.

The Kremlin was again relatively passive when Estonia (in March 1990) and Latvia (in May 1990) adopted a series of measures declaring transition periods to complete independence. In May 1990, election of Boris Yelstin was a important turn in political development. In June declaration of sovereignty by Russian Federal Socialist Republic triggered avalanche of similar declaration by other union republics. When the most important republic defied authority of Kremlin, then very basis of legitimacy for sustenance was over. The supremacy of republican law over all union was became norm in political practice.
It was against this background of uncertainty, and flux in 1990, the first secretararies of the republics were transformed into Presidents (following Mr. Gorbachev's own example). By the end of 1990, all the Central Asian republics had declared their sovereignty. The constitutional implications of such declarations were not clarified and in effect they amounted to little more than an attempt to boost domestic morale. In the referendum on the future of the Soviet Union, held on 17 March 1991, the Central Asian republics returned a vote of 90 percent (Turkmenistan - 98%) in favour of its preservation.  

As William Fireman pointed out, in Central Asian Context, "Sovereignty implied the primacy of local laws over Union-Laws and a control over a republic's resources and domestic and foreign policies, but did not rule out the possibility of confederal ties with center. However, the Central Asian leaders had not moved to this position of their own accord, but were clearly following the example of other republics. For example, Turkmenia and Tajikistan announced their sovereignty in August 1990. In Kirghizia the declaration of sovereignty did not occur until December 1990, the last of all 15 Union republics.

Till the August coup, Central Asian leaders, had demonstrated no desire for total independence from the Center. In Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, opposition against the old-communist regime was able to develop to a great extent and at an earlier stage than other Central Asian republics. Here too, however, an effective and organized counteracting power to the party bureaucracy, which asserted its position unchallenged in the parliamentary elections in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan in 1990 did not emerge from the informal groups and parties. Yet in both cases, a certain political renewal of old ruling elite did occur.¹⁴

The party leadership in the republics managed for the most part to exclude any representative from the popular front organization and in fact conducted the election processes in pre-Gorbachev style. For example, Central Asian representatives to the congress of people's deputies as a rule had been elected by the old system of one candidate, one seat, and were accustomed to listening to their bosses. Thus, Central Asian deputies had become source of support for Gorbachev in the Center.

In Kazakhstan, Nazarbaev established a reputation as a reformer and statesman and he was elected president by the parliament in 1990. He

was elected by people in 1991. In Kyrgyzstan, President Askar Akaev embodied reform efforts since 1990, although these had to be directed against the ex-communist power apparatus, which still clings to power in above all administrative bodies. Turkmenistan President Saparmurad Niyazov most successfully managed to combine slogans of "stability" and preservation of "inner peace" above all against inter-ethnic conflicts with the retention of the communist rule. President of Uzbekistan, Islam Karimov took great deal fo wind out of the sails of national opposition "Birlik" (Unity) which represented most powerful popular movement in Central Asia. A Common feature of Central Asian republics was the transformation of communist partocracy into authoritarian presidential regime with the corresponding ideological shift from the Leninist to the national legitimation of rule.15

The August coup was a decisive point in the political developments of Central Asian republics. The stand of republics presidents of Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikstan were not clear. Whereas Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan presidents rejected it. Tass reported on 20 August 1991, that Nazarbayev, the President of Kyrgyzstan had called for "Signining of Union treaty, which has been approved by the parliaments of eight republics. Any

15. Ibid., pp.384-85.
changes to the ratified text of this document can only be made with the agreement of the supreme bodies of power of these republics. In the wake of coup, Nazarbayer called for recognition of the independence in all republics. "In two or three years', he said "economic necessities will force us to form a sound federation suiting every one. But the need to form it should be realized by all. Meanwhile, in Kirghizia Akayev spoke of reviewing the union treaty and giving more rights to the republics.\textsuperscript{16}

So the leaders in Central Asian republics were not for total independence. They were for renewed federation or confederation. Central Asia’s leaders understood how closely their republic’s economic wellbeing was tied to that of USSR as a whole and most Central Asians did as well. This helps to explains why, with the sole exception of Uzbekistan’s Erk (Independence) movement, there were no indigenous independence movement, no national liberators active in Central Asia before coup.\textsuperscript{17}

But coup revealed the bankruptcy of the CPSU. Then Central Asian republics started to sever links with the party. The first break started in

\textsuperscript{16} Grant, n. 8, p.55.

Kazakhstan when. Nazarbayev banned the activities of political parties. Then Akayev nationalized Communist Party headquarters in Kyrgyzstan. By 27th August all the five presidents of Central Asian Republics had resigned from the politburo. Then Karimov prepared for independence. It was criticized by Miralim Adilov, a member of Birlik. According to him declaration of independence was nothing but the act of self-preservation. It was substantiated by the crackdown of the authorities on Birlik. Islam Karimov stated that Uzbekistan was not ready for democracy. The allegation of the Birlik was that party will change the name. It was the timely decision of Karimov to declare independence when there was political vacuum in the country. But at same time, he did not allow other group to grow.

The Central Asian republics were reluctant to accept complete independence from the Union. After seeing no chance of any form of federation and confederation, they accepted independence. All five presidents seemed committed to plans for the newly formed state council articulated by Nazarbayev. But leaders of three slavic republics declared end of USSR and birth of common wealth of Independent states. Even after Minsk declaration, Nazaryaev voiced his continued support for the 'Preserving an association'. But ultimately thee was no scope for renewal of the some form of confederation of federation. So Central Asian States became full fledged independent states.
Political Elite

In Central Asian republics, the political elite played an important role for the introduction of reforms. The political elites deciding future course of action were from communist parties of the respective republics. There was unanimous opinion regarding the reforms in Central Asian republics among ruling political elites. Some First Secretary were loyal to Gorbachev even up to the last stage of disintegration, while some leaders pursued independent course of action. With the rise of nationalistic aspirations, republican elites changed their aims and objectives to satisfy the aspirations of local people. At the same time, some leaders adopted oppressive measures towards informal organizations which was in contrast to democratization in other republics. Even informal or other organizations were not allowed to contest in the election in some republics. Even if Moscow recruits a satisfactory leadership in Central Asia, this leadership will have to obtain mass support. Widespread mass-support, on the otherhand, can be achieved only if there is some sort of major social transformation. There are substantial material problems that must be solved before the mandated social transformation can occur however.\(^\text{18}\)

\[^{18}\] Hajda and Beissinger, No. 12, p.277.
A common feature is the traditional recruitment of elites, which is oriented to tribal connections in the formerly nomadic societies and to connections based on local and regional patriotism. The Central Asian "Party Princedoms" of Brezhnev era were based on traditional loyalty patterns. "In order to survive power struggles which characterise communist party hierarchies, the party leaders of a particular region surrounded himself with the members of his own clan, tribe or horde, since the traditional kinship and tribal relations are more reliable than the comradeship of the party." What my seem today to be conflict to be the between the communist "old regime" and democratic Islamic opposition is often connected to a greater extent with the attempt by the previously disadvantaged tribal and regional force to oust old ruling cliques or force them to share power.

Nishanov's Programme

In view of unrest and mass gathering in Ferghana, Tashkent, Namagan and other cities, as well as the forced resignation of Sh. Babakhanov, Head of the spiritual Administration of Moslems of Central Asia and, Kazakhstan, Nishanov's apprehension appeared justified.


Admitting the demonstrated inability of party to cope with overt challenges to its authority, Nishanov advanced a set of four recommendations. First, dismissing the past bureaucratic approach to the religious problems as useless, he called for steps to release the principle in freedom of conscience as prescribed in the Soviet constitution. Second, small working group should be established within party committee, to study the religions situation and overcome negative tendencies. Third, atheistic work hence-forth should include efforts to improve public services and standard of living. Fourth, the meetings should be held in all primary party organizations to ensure the proper dissemination of knowledge on appropriate methods of atheistic works. Reduced to its essentials, Nishanov programme represented a cautious attempt to contain the influence of Islam without confronting it directly.21

The programme of Nishanov was not successful in Central Asia. In the course of redefining the relationship between the Soviet-Union and its constituent Union republics, as well as between Russians and smaller nationalities, Gorbachev had insisted on maintaining a binding central authority. The retention of Central authority on crucial economic and political matters depended greatly on Gorbachev’s success in shoring up

the credibility of communist party, no small task in the wake of countless revelations of past errors from the era of Stalin through that of Brezhnev. Huge rallies, strikes boycotts and sporadic violence across the Transcaucasus and Central Asia proved the capacity of official and unofficial organizations to defy the party’s authority and exert enormous social influence. Moscow’s response to the challenge had not yet crystallized beyond the reiteration of lofty intentions at the September 1989 Central Committee Plenum on nationalities.22

The Role of Press

The most important role was played by the press in the broadening the bases of ‘glasnot’ and ‘perestroika’. The press became free to a great extent than earlier period. The press in non-Russian republics changed dramatically after the introduction of glasnost’ in Soviet-Union. Before the reform, any news had to pass through the censorship of Moscow. The news about other republics were provided through the channel of Moscow. So the real picture was not given in other republics. The journalist also did not report the sensitive news directly to the newspaper. It was properly edited to show only the positive features of Soviet-Union. All the papers were owned by government. The media was totally under control of

22. Ibid., p.142.
authorities. The press was mouthpiece of CPSU and was used as a propaganda machine. But after reforms, everyone knew about other republics. As a result, each nationality got far more information about the others. So there was increasing interaction among the various nationalities on many issues. The incident in one place got the response from other republics. The demand for transfer of Nagorno Karbakh by Armenians became instant news among all the republics. The full context of ‘Chernobyl’ disaster finally leaked out to the public. Then activist in all the republics with nuclear plants stepped up their drives to shut them down.

The mass media changed the people’s consciousness, which destroyed the one party dictatorship of communist and greatly contributed to the establishment of freedom of speech, freedom of assembly and other modern civil rights. The role of press changed considerably. Glasnost denied the old regime and destroyed the main obstacle to freedom of speech, that is the totalitarian information Control, but this does not mean that all of the necessary conditions for freedom of speech were fulfilled. On the contrary, there are lot of difficulties confronting the newly born journalism.  

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Soviet control of the population before Gorbachev was based on the control over information. Attempts by elites to circumvent the system of control via samizdat or other means, were never very successful, because they could not reach the large audiences. Now, given Gorbachev’s policy of ‘glasnost’, and the economic incentive, the media have to reach and hold an audience, that has begun to change. Widespread competition emerged among key elites to reach the population in other republics, Moscow, as well as foreign audience. The use of Western press by Uzbek people was most typical in Central Asia.24

Many papers were the mouthpiece of informal organization. They were using the newspaper for advocating their cases both in moscow and in their republics. The popular fronts used the papers in showing their problems on ethnic lines. Then Uzbeks learnt about the utility of the foreign press in supporting their national demands. They tried to reach the press on various issues. The monopoly of communist party controlled papers like Pravda, Tass and Izvestia were no more there. The faith of the masses on those official papers was gone. The only reliable way of information was the local-press. The foreign press was projecting the actual picture in various republics. The information in foreign media was also

very accurate and up-to-date. People were supplying this information to foreign newspapers without fear in Central Asia. So the outside world knew everything about the happenings in Soviet-Union.

The organization of Soviet Press was peculiar. By and large, it was structured along ethno-linguistic and ethno-territorial lines rather than a functional group. As a result, press provided each national group with what could be described as a national perspective of that events. So the press became a stimulus of national activism by providing details of demonstrations and their consequences. For example, Kazakh press, noted that the fewer dismissals of Kazakh officials took place in Alma-Ata following the December 1986 demonstration than of officials in neighboring republics, where there had been no demonstrations. This was the presentation of the report from nationalist angle.

The reporting of an incident was different. In the riots, the causalities were different in various newspapers. The official paper was presenting less number of deaths, while other papers gave a different figure. Although official figures had varied numbers injured and arrested during the riots, 'glasnost seemed not to have penetrated this issue. Although the official death in Alma-Ata riot was two, a samizdat document stated that 280 students were killed, as well as 29 militiamen and soldiers. (The
Independent, 8 May) in Kazakh riots A Russian version of Samizdat document kazakhstan riots was published in journal Strana-i-Mir (March, No. 1/2, 1987.25

In presentation of the incident, press differed from one another. The style of writing was different from each other. The local press played an important role in highlighting and presenting the problems before the authority. The use of local language by the media was the effective medium in arousing consciousness among the masses for a particular cause. The local press filled the vacuum created by the losing faith of masses on various official papers. Instead people believed in sincerity of western media. The press was the most effective medium of communication among the masses of various nationalities which was giving the real news within possible shortest time.

The government-controlled electronic media was compelled to show the real picture of various incident after some initial hesitation. In order to secure confidence among people, government-controlled electronic media tried to imbibe the features of impartiality. So after initial hesitation, the ethnic riots and other disturbances were presented in the national channel. So the role of press in the Soviet-Union was prominent to a great extent in

broadening sphere of 'Glasnost' and 'Perestroika'. In Central Asia, it had a powerful influence among the masses. The press had been a important medium in Central Asia in propagating the viewpoints of both communist authority and other informal organizations. Informal organizations had been vocal in articulating the various demands for Central Asia through the press.

The press moulded the public opinion on a many issues in various republic. The hitherto unknown problems like environmental pollution and cotton monoculture became most important issue in Central Asia. The secret documents relating to these problems came into open. The media gave information regarding of these issue. The drying of Aral-lake and negative effects of cotton monoculture was there but there was no public consciousness about these problems. After reforms, media brought to notice gravity of the problems. Again the high literacy rate in Central Asian republics was a blessing for the growth of mass-media. So the role of mass media particularly printed media was pivotal in creating awareness among the people in the atmosphere of openness.

II Formation and Activities of Various Groups

One of the most important consequence of Mikhail Gorbachev's reform policy was unleashing popular forces throughout the Soviet-Union.
Baltic republics were the forerunner in creating many popular groups. The Sajudis, Rukh and Azerbaijan popular front were active in their respective republics. Within barely three years, a variety of political and other groups sprung up in Central Asian republics, though influence of perestroika came to Central Asia later than other parts of USSR. The objectives of different groups differed from each other. But these groups had a strong desire for political, economic and cultural independence. They differed from each other on the extent of independence in relation to Moscow.

**Press accounts of informal groups in Central Asian republics began to appear only in 1988. The most extensive reports appeared in Kazakhstan. The activities of Birlik received little coverage in the official press of Uzbekistan. Informal groups were apparently well established in Kazakhstan by September, 1988, when a deputy republican prosecutor gave a figure of more than 3000 informal groups in Kazakhstan with more than 300 members. He stated that some were organized around leisure interests (Sports clubs), while others were involved with ecological problems, inter-ethnic relations or sought to improve the food supply; he considered their most positive contribution to move bureaucracy in taking to deal with serious social problems.**

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groups were divided into good or bad according to their contribution to the perestroika. The good informal groups were those which contributed to the success of perestroika, while bad were taking the advantages of it to further own narrow interest. The groups advocating ecological balance and consumer interest were good. The politically ambitious groups were bad.

All the groups were not characterized as political, nationalist or independence movements, although all had a political ambition. These groups can be classified into various categories. Professional groupings, youth organizations, and Literary associations. These included writers Union in Kazakhstan, Atmaken (fatherland) society, Adilet, Tajikistan's principal scientific group, Khazina; and its cultural group, Tajik language Fund whose goal was to stress connection between Tajik and Persian culture, promote classical Tajik literature and restore Tajik tradition. Environmental or 'Green Movements' Among them were Green Front in Alma Ata, Nevada-Semipalatinisk movement. Gradualist reform Movements: One was Yavaran e-Perestroika (the helpers of perestroika) in Tajikistan. Political groupings: The best known of this was Uzbekistan's Birlik (Unity). The most important political group Rastakhis was in Tajikistan. Erk developed after the division of Birlik on various issues.
Without being more specific, the meeting of the Kazakhstan Republican Buro in November 1988 on informal groups mentioned the existence of "various religious and mystical groups". In March 1989, a Kazakh named Almaz Estekov appeared in Tashkent and claimed that a group called "Islamic Democracy", which he headed was behind a large demonstration in late February that had demanded the removal of the head of the Muslim Religious Board for Central Asia and Kazakhstan. Estekov said the group had many members all over Central Asia, but particularly in both Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Its objective was to end the subservience of the official Muslim establishment to the secular authorities. The press in Uzbekistan quoted local Muslim officials as saying that Estekov was a fraud and the 'group' apparently consisted of Estekov himself. Nothing more has been heard it 27

The most popular and influential informal group was Birlik in Uzbekistan. It began as a 'working group' in November 1988 in Tashkent, set up by eighteen Uzbek intellectuals. On 28 May, 1989, 300 delegates from all oblasts of Uzbekistan assembled in Tashkent for the founding congress of Birlik, and Abdulrahim Pulatov was elected chairman of the group's governing council. Working Groups in Adizan and Namangan

27 Ibid., p.94.
oblachts and city of Kokand held founding congress in August. Although republican authorities have accused Birlik of taking part in inciting the attacks by Uzbeks on Meskhetian Turks in early June, the group stoutly denied.  

Birlik started issuing its own newsletter. Then it prepared a draft law on languages for republics. It fought for official status of Uzbek language. On 15, 19, 20 October, 1989 it demonstrated for language issues. Nearly 50,000 people participated in the demonstration on October 15, 1989. Then republican authorities assured them for giving the legal status to the Uzbek language. The local press published the programme of Birlik. There was a separate group within Birlik which was called Birlik's youth group "Union of free Uzbek youth".

Birlik was fairly moderate in its character. It gave a call for independence not total secession from the Union. It demanded that Uzbekistan should be transformed into an independent republic so that it can determine its own fate within union. But still there was confusion in its long term goal in relation to independence. The other objectives were language issue, cultural, and economic programmes. It was in favour of a

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28. Ibid., p.89.
agricultural reform. (especially an end to cotton monoculture), privatization, decentralization, the creation of textile industries, the establishment of direct trade links between Uzbekistan and other Soviet republic or foreign countries, local control over republic's natural resources, the reform in language policy, the reinstitution of original Uzbek names, the revival of Uzbek history and culture, the expansion of cultural relations with other countries and the issue of environmental pollution. Birlik became successful in getting the official status of Uzbek languages. It protested immigration of Russians into Uzbekistan and out migration of Uzbeks. Birlik demanded change of cyrillic scripts into Arabic scripts for the Central Asian language.

In early days of Birlik's existence, the founders like Ahmad Azam, Zahir A'Lam and Muhmammad Salih felt the need for widespread base in Uzbekistan. The coming of Pulatov helped the organization's growth very quickly. Because Pulatov adopted the a confrontational style and ability to project an image of being 'one of the people". He was a passionate public speaker who used earthly languages for the masses.

From the beginning, a cleavage developed among the leaders of Birlik. This cleavage, which apparently had little to do with ultimate goals (on which there was at least superficial broad agreement) concerned tactics.
The 'radicals' led by Abdualrahim Pultatov, favoured a more direct confrontation with communist party leadership, particularly in regard to unsanctioned meeting. It appears that many of the radical leaders, like Pultatov were scientists and technical specialists. These 'radicals' were extremely wary of being tricked by communist party leadership. As one of their leaders the conservative Professor Zahid Haqanazarov later explained, one Birlik faction "spoke out in favour of normalizing contacts with government of the republic, while other group gave no gound. We must not cherish vain hopes; they (the government), can trick us."  

While there are two factions in Birlik, the objective was the same for both groups. Moderates adopted the parliamentary means for achieving the goals. The moderate group leader, Mohammed Salih broke the former organization. According to him, the Birlik was too much carried away by the demonstrations. According to him, Birlik was too weak to confront local communist authorities. So Birlik was to lose with confrontation then to gain from it. The measures for reconciliation between factions two failed at an extraordinary Congress in Tashkent on November 11 1989. In February 1990, some of the moderates in 'Birlik' group established a new

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organization independent of former one which was called "Erk". On March 11, 1990, they declared Erk a political party. The first congress of ‘Erk’ was held on April 30, 1990.

The break-up Birlik into two groups was a great shock for the political democratic processes in Uzbekistan. Erk could not draw mass support as compared to Birlik, because it was largely group of intelligentsia. This elite organization had only 4000 members in June 1990. The membership of Erk was strict in comparison to Birlik. There was great ill will between two groups. Erk leaders were complaining that Pulatov was working for authorities. Then again disagreement started in taking permission to hold meeting in Red square of Tashkent. The relation with republican communist party was characterized by ups and down. The Republican (Uzbekistan) First Secretary Rafiq Nishanov in the beginning treated Birlik with contempt. Initially image of Birlik was as a extremist group who were expressing ‘ideas of ‘Pan-Turkism’ and separatism. Birlik was already a growing political force with an agenda that was both nationalist and strongly influenced by Islam.\textsuperscript{30} Probably they had been inspired by the ideology of jadidist in their objectives.

\textsuperscript{30} Olcott, n. 12, p.276.
One of the first sign of new policy surfaced at a meeting of CPUZ buro on April 27, 1989, which considered the question of "measures to reinforce the prevention of antisocial manifestations in the Republic. Nishanov condemned the ambitious leaders of some other groups who incited the people to participate in mass-demonstrations by attempting to use the healthy desire of the masses to participate in the processes of perestroika. The report on the buro meeting chided Birlik for "puting forth slogans on the inadmissibility of disorder' but refuting this with appeals to unsanctioned mass meetings and demonstrations. It was a part of attempt to put pressure on the organs of powers and discredit them.\(^3\)

Two important events in June 1989 changed the attitude of republican Communist Party (CPUZ) leadership in favour of tolerance and cooperation with good informal organization. The first incident was Ferghana valley violence. At the time of violence. Muhrnmid Salih, Abdulrahim Polatov, the new mufti of Central Asia and Kazakhstan, Muhmmidsadiq Mamayusupov travelled to valley to calm down the people. The replacement of Nishanov by Islam Karimov changed the situation. He was very much favourable to the programmes of Birlik. Among the areas which the leadership had shown the greatest interest was national culture and language.

\(^3\) No. 19, p..60.
Although the focus of Birlik's draft programme was clearly on Uzbekistan and not broader Turkestan, many of the leaders of all factions of Birlik/Erk have favoured much stronger links among republics of Central Asia and they have stressed cultural and linguistic links with other Turkic people. One sees this, for example, in the bulletin of Erk, which had published Uzbek translations of Turkish mythology and essays by the Turkish reformer Ziya Gukalp. Likewise, Birlik proposed that the law on language for republic refer to it not merely as "Uzbek" but "Uzbek (Turkic)"). At least some member publicly advocated some form of a United Turkestan. For example, in a round table discussion Zahid Haqnazarov (a member of Pulatov faction) stated, "we need a United Turkestan, a united democratic society, without division into nationalities and without borders. On the subject of Sovereignty Birlik and Erk leaders had similar opinion. They wanted the full sovereignty in the national cultural field. In June 1990, Uzbekistan Supreme Soviet adopted a declaration of republic's sovereignty which was based on the programme originally submitted by Erk.

One most important factor which changed the attitude of Uzbek leadership was that communist party was desperate for legitimacy among the masses after the reforms. Nishanov could not get support from the intelligensia in this respect. So Islam Karimov changed with the times. So
many of the programmes and policies articulated by Birlik became the centre of Uzbekistan's political agenda. The co-operation between republican communist parties and Birlik/Erk became stronger. The Communist Party of Uzbekistan adopted many legislation regarding the popular programmes, though it was not recognized by the Moscow. But the communist party of Uzbekistan got the legitimacy among the native people by accepting their demands. So the role of Birlik and Erk had been tremendous in transforming political culture and system from totalitarian system to somewhat free society. Birlik was led by intellectuals, but also included environmentalists and Pan-Turkic and Islamic activists. However its main objective is Uzbek nationalism, which means that it adopted diverse and often contradictory political positions. The movement was confused and divided due to its lack of clear goal in methods but it commanded respect amongst the people.

The Islamic opposition to the republican authority in Uzbekistan made dramatic strides since 1989. The official Islamic hierarchy sponsored by the government faced crisis in July 1991, when the Mufti of Soviet Central Asia (later renamed the Mufti of Uzbekistan), Mohammed Yousuf Mohammed Sadik, was voted out of office and replaced by another Mullah. Mufti Sadik was accused of corruption, formed profit by of selling of free korans from Saudi-Arabia and being too close to the government.
He was reinstated two days later after government intervention. The proximity to the regime was viewed as a treachery by many Uzbek Muslims.

Subsequently the pro-government Islamic hierarchy or official Islam, as it is called, faced severe challenge from Wahabi Movement in Ferghana, and the Islamic Renaissance Party (IPR) and after shock of civil war in Tajikistan. The IPR remained banned in Central Asia except Tajikistan. The chairman of IPR in Uzbekistan, Abdullah Utayev and Abdullah Yousuf were based in Ferghana valley. Then in August, Uzbek intellectuals set up rival Muslim Party namely, Islamic Democratic Party led by Dadakhan Hassanov. The Islamic Democratic Party demanded the imposition of Sharia or Islamic law through non-violent Islamic revolution in Uzbekistan.

A new group emerged in Tajikistan. It was called Rastakhis or Rastokhez Popular Front. It was founded in September 1989 by Tajik writers and intellectuals. The group was for Islamic revival, parliamentary system and democracy. The group had strong nationalist tendencies. Although the Rastokhez Popular Front, was largely a movement of the

intelligentsia. It could hold two hundred demonstration. It was not a mass based organization. But still it had the objective of throwing the old authority out of power.

The Democratic Party of Tajikistan (DTP) was founded after the February 1990 crackdown by a 42 year old Professor of philosophy, Shodmon Yousuf. The party claimed a membership of 15,000 people. It advocated a mixture of Islamic revivalism, Tajik nationalism and parliamentary democracy.

In February 1990, another opposition group, the Popular Unity Front was founded by some businessman. Its aim was to push for quicker transition to market economy. The chairman of front was Otakhon Latif who was a journalist by profession. The front was not effective in political activities. The Yavaran-e-Perestroika (the helpers of perestroika) was a coalition of Tajik intellectuals. It was led by Askar Hakim who was editor in chief of the journal Adabiyat-va Sanat (Literature and Art) and Loik Sherali, editor in chief of the Tajik language literary journal Sedai-eshargh (The voice of East). They were creating a Tajik Popular Front like Baltic republics. They were cautious in the programme on independence of Tajikstan.
According to local sources in Uzbekistan, a new underground "Islamic Party" which calls for a federation of Islamic Central Asian Republics independent of Moscow, was spreading through the region. The Western press reported that rumours are rampant about the arms from Afghanistan being collected in Ferghana basin (The Independent, 6 June 1990).33

The group called "Tajik (Farsi) Language Fund," had to promote the Tajik language and culture. It tried to strengthen relationship between Tajik and Persian culture. The group Ru-Ba-Rua (face to face) in Tajikistan was not prominent nationalist group.

Islamic Revival party was Tajikistan since 1983. The leader of Islamic Revival Party was Mullah Abdullo Saidov. The main objective of the party was for establishment of an Islamic state. The activity of the party at first was highly secretive to the point that proselytising was carried out at feasts (tuys) accompanying the rites of a passage where lights were lowered to make the Mullah's face invisible when he spoke.34

34. Allen Hetmanek. "Islamic Revolution and Jihad come to the former Central Asia: The Case of Tajikistan", Central Asian Survey vol.12,

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Wahabi Mullah, Abdullo Saidov urged his followers to petition 27th Congress of CPSU in 1986 for the Islamic state of Tajikistan. It was alleged that he declared 'jihad' against the authority after the failure in his objective. His followers staged demonstration against his arrest and demanded release. He changed to parliamentary method for achieving an Islamic state.

The undeniable fact is that fundamentalist Islamic Revival Party or to be exact, the underground Islamic Revival movement out of which TRP grew dates back to the 1970s. It was ignored or treated as KGB disinformation. The long series of demonstration in the republic of Tajikistan staged probably by Islamic activist. The demonstrations in Kurgan Tyube on October 1986, and Kulyab in October 1989, were either overlooked, or not characterized as at least partially involving Islamic activism by specialist on Tajikistan or Central Area as well.35

The proliferation of Muslim nationalism in Central Asia reasserted the Muslim root, as majority of them bear apart from Islamic, Turkish ethnic identity. In the wake of glasnost and Perestroika, the Kremlin's

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Ibid., PP.365-366.

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nationality policy posed a challenge to Islam which became dominating factor in the vacuum of communism. But the situation changed due to five to six decades of atheistic pressure of Soviet rule which developed local consciousness rather than religious one. New political changes provided them to form their own political parties which would be assured of firm support from the local people.

The most prominent environmental group in Kazakhstan was "Nevada-Semipalatinsk" movement. It was founded by Olzhas Suleimenov, a well known controversial poet, and writer Mukhtan Shakhanov in February 1989. The movement was named after two nuclear sites in Soviet-Union and U.S.A. Initial objectives of the movement were stopping of all nuclear weapons testing in two sites, ending disposal of radioactive materials and conversion of military industries to environment related enterprise. It put emphasis specifically on shutting down the Semipalatinsk nuclear site.

The environmental pollution was acute in Kazakhstan due to presence of heavily polluting industries such as lead, chemical plants, nuclear test site and industry for agricultural experiment that drained the

ground water. "Kazakhstan was Just a junk heap where Russia threw all its garbage". Said Olzhas Suleimenov. In 1988 eight cities were listed polluted even by Soviet standard. The biggest cause of pollution in northwest-Kazakhstan was the Ekibastuz power plant which was running on low grade-coal. The 450 kilometre long lake Balkhas west of Alma-Ata, became heavily polluted after copper smelters were set-up on its shores in 1930s. Birds and other lake life is practically extinct. While drawing of water supplies from the lake means 40 percent of Kazakhstan's population were drinking polluted water. The region suffered from high level of viral hepatits, some 470 cases for 100,000 people. The pollution problems attracted the attention of mass in Kazakhstan. It was the single issue which was supported by all the people in Kazakhstan. So republican authorities took the notice of the ecological issues.

Olzhas, Suleimenov gathered together a group of intellectuals and scientists on 28 February 1989 in Alma-Ata to protest against two nuclear tests sites. After that the movement collected one million signatures in the streets with a appeal to both superpowers to end the nuclear testing. After the protest, republican Communist Party was forced to pass a resolution for an end to the testing. Then nuclear testing which was stopped in

37 Rashid, No.32. pp.122-23.
October 1989. The Nevada Semipalatnisk movement organized the first ever international anti-nuclear conference, "Brothers and citizens of the Earth" from 24 to 26 May 1990 in Soviet Union. Its main appeal was, "our steppe is shaken by nuclear explosions and we cannot keep silent anylonger. There is forty years of nuclear tests, which contained thousands of Hiroshima. Fear for the future poisons our consciousness. We are afraid of drinking water, of taking food, of giving birth to our children.\textsuperscript{38} The movement had been successful stopping the nuclear testing in Kazakhstan. It also raised the ecological problems of Aral sea. The movement got the support from President Nazarbayev. It was the only movement in Kazakhstan getting overwhelming support on the ecological issues. After the coup, the movement developed into main opposition political party in Kazakhstan. On 5 October 1990, it was named as People's Congress of Kazakhstan which advocated speedy privatization.

The Alma-Ata people's front tried to unite the diverse popular groups under United Front structure. But it had no comprehensive programme beyond declaring support for perestroika.

The was a group in Kazakhstan in the pattern of "Memorial Society", of Moscow called Adilet (Justice). It was founded by writer S. Dzhandosov.

\textsuperscript{38} Rashid, No 32, p.123.
The objective of this group was to construct a monument for the victims of Stalinism and to establish a research centre to investigate Stalinist repression. A branch of it was known to exist in Karaganda which tried to get the records of the prison camp complex and locate burial grounds. The group organized a meeting with former guards and officials of prison camp to get attention of Moscow.

In November 1988, a communist member in Dzhambal Dhkaev established a society called Atameken (Fatherland). The aim of society was unification of Kazakhs and their isolation from other peoples of the USSR, first and foremost in the sphere of language and culture. The objectives of Atameken was criticized by all as degrading in character. A German "Rebirth" society was announced in Alma-Ata. It might have been due to reaction among German nationalities towards Kazakh exclusions by society like Atameken.

The Democratic Union, with branches in Alma-Ata, Karganda and Uralsk was more radical and extreme. This Union made a aspiration to play the role in some kind of opposition to the CPSU. Its objective was to change existing political system in country. With a view to achieve the goal, they declared their readiness even to push society towards a crisis situation, create hotbed of conflict and to organize mass disorder. They
tried by all possible means to include Kazakhstan in their sphere of influence.

Another organization with branches in the Kazakh Republic was the All-Union Socio-Political club. The objective of this group was same like the Democratic Union. They circulated samizdat documents. They planned the way of mass disobedience and various unconstitutional activity in Kustancy.

In Turkmenistan, first informal group was born in the autumn of 1989. The name of group was "Agzybirlik" or "unity". Some six hundred academics and intellectual formed this group. The group appealed to deputies and people of Turkmenistan to declare "memorial day" for the massacre of Goek Tepe tribe in 1881 (when General Skobelev exterminated. Teke tribesmen in 1881) and criticized Central Committee for the inaction in this regard. But the government declared the its meeting illegal and denounced the group as ultra-nationalist. They were not allowed to conduct meeting on by authority. After that incident, the movement went into underground.

In March, 1989, the young Kyrgyz intellectuals formed an "informal" opposition group called "Ashar" or "Solidarity" Ashar tried to raise the
issue of the housing problem in Bishkek. Then demonstrators of Ashar occupied land and city authorities allowed the private houses to be built. On 4 February, Ashar organized a rally in Bishkek demanding better housing and promotion of Kyrgyz language. They opposed the refugees from Azerbaijan after the disturbance there on the issue of Nagorny-Karabkh. A new political party of Democratic Movement of Kyrgyzstan (DMK), demanded the resignation of Absamat Masaliyev after the Osh incidence in which many people were killed. The formation of informal groups in Kyrgyzstan was very late in comparison to other republics in Central Asia. The informal groups were not large in number. The Asher was localized in nature and its objectives were also very limited. It had no political objective. Only Democratic Movement of Kyrgyzstan was prominent political party in the republic which put challenge to republican communist party.

A significant portion of unofficial Islam was a byproduct of Sufism. Soviet authors talked of Sufism as a potential political opposition. The traditionalist conservative Sufi brotherhood which focuses not on the mosque but rather on private prayer in home or in unofficial houses of worship and on pilgrimages or other devotions at holy places, are basically. Murid or Darvesh or communitarian. By its very nature, Sufism propounded its own system of rites and rule for spiritual training,
empowering the master (Shaykh, Murshidor Ustad) help individual mystic, to reach higher level of spiritual knowledge, as a result of which the master comes to command total obedience and fealty. The Centres of opposition to Russian conquest, the brotherhoods played an important role in Basmachi movement. 39

After decades of forced underground activities, it reemerged with all its strength and vitality. The unique characteristic of the movement was the large number of women adepts, increasing number of young people and intelligentsia. They were able to influence the activities of private and collective existence of people. They were also producing the Muslim Samizdat which propagated teachings of Islam. They were mostly active in rural areas. A high level of religiousity and adherence to Sufi tariqa was not predominant any more in the backward rural areas. Many authors reported appearance of radical religious groups in the cities, in urban, industrialized areas, and significantly in places where Muslims are living in close contacts with Russians. 40 Some of the Sufi groups were described by authorities as manifesting "a blend of religiousity and nationalism". Sufism


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does not believe in organized political party. So there was no organized groupings in Central Asia of Sufi-brotherhood. It was resilient for more period against communism due to this peculiar character. It was most influential on the people because it was open to all and needed no organized religious activity in mosques.

In Tajikistan, a new trend developed where elements of fanaticism, puritanism and a political commitment to Islam were blended. The Soviet call it wrongly "Wahhabism" and describe it as a religious political movement, extremely reactionary and nationalistic. They get inspiration from the radio broadcast of Iran. They were for establishing the Islamic republic based on the Shariah, opposing the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. In Central Asia, particularly in Tajikistan, there was resurgence of Wahhabism. The arrest of Abdullah Saidov sparked street demonstration in Tajikistan.

The wahhabism face challenges from Sufism. It is different from Sufism. Wahabism was aided by external factors. It was alleged to be funded by Muslim brotherhood of Pakistan. The Wahhabism was very influential in the southern region of Tajikistan. But the Sufi brotherhood

41. Ibid., P.289.
is the manifestation of the cultural root of Central Asian republics. It has overcome the oppressive rule of communist regime by the way of official Islam. It was a force without any organized character. So it was most difficult for Soviet-authorities to confront Sufi brotherhood members. Sufism was a major force even before the formation of Soviet-Union. The resistance against Tzarist rule came from the Bashmachis who got inspiration from brotherhood. Sufisim was the deterrent to a great extent in the growth of wahhabism in Central Asia.

The growth of informal groups proved that communist party was not capable of articulating the interests of all sections of society. The glasnost revealed the defects of the system. The informal groups articulated the various demands of the masses. These groups acted as the pressure group in whole Soviet Union. Inspite of strict control, informal groups were popular among the masses in Central Asia. Then many of their demands were fulfilled by the republican authorities. The communist party in Central Asian republics changed their attitudes co-opting with various groups for their very survival due to fear of political legitimacy.

Some informal groups filled the vaccum created after the August Coup by converting themselves into political parties. In Central Asia "Birlik" played prominent role in the political process. Except some groups,
majority were not for total separation of Central Asian republics from the Soviet-Union. They were for the federation or confederation. So the informal groups filled the vacuum created by the desovietization of the political culture. Informal groups were the important actors in the forming of pluralistic and democratic system of political development.