Chapter I
Tajikistan declared its independence on 9th September 1991, soon after the break up of the former Soviet Union. Area wise and population wise it the smallest republic of the region. Being surrounded by the Turkic speaking population, except from the south (Afghanistan), there was a sense of fear that it would be overwhelmed by the Turks in the region. Soon the Republic embarked on the task of building its own national identity based on race, culture and language and several other components. Language and literature have played very important role in the formation of any national identity.

As far as Tajikistan is concerned, in recent years, some Western and Russian scholars have sought to construct a Tajik identity based on the combination of language and religion. According to this concept, a Tajik is; any Tajiki/Persian speaking Sunni Muslim. This definition helps to distinguish Iran’s predominantly Shia inhabitants from their Persian-speaking counterparts in Tajikistan, but it fails to pose a clear and cohesive definition of Tajik ethnic identity. That there are about 8 million people (Tajiks) in Afghanistan, fit this definition of Tajik-identity, but politically they have shown little inclination to identify themselves with their brethren on the north. Generally, the difficulty of establishing a Tajik identity is the principal obstacle to developing a strong sense of Tajik nationalism among Tajikistan’s population. In many respects, this also explains the persistence of a strong regional loyalty that has bedeviled the nation-building process in post-Soviet Tajikistan. Unlike other Central Asians, the Tajiks have not been able to identify with a historically cohesive political entity. This has led to Tajikistan’s marginalization in regional politics and its domination by its more cohesive and big neighbours, especially Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. Another feature of the population of Tajikistan is that it contains a sizeable percentage of non-‘Tajiks’, largest among them being the Uzbeks but there are also Kyrgyz, Tatars and others.
This research is an attempt to study the formation of identity of a country, namely Tajikistan, on the basis of language, literature, culture and history. For this purpose, research materials available in different languages were used. Knowledge of Persian and Tajiki was particularly helpful in this regard.

Babajan Ghafurov's book *Tajikan* (Persian), (Dushanbe, 1997), is one of the most comprehensive books about Tajikistan in Persian language. This book covers the period from pre-historic to modern times. Focussing on Tajikistan the book discusses the social, cultural linguistic, ethnic and regional developments from the wider Central Asian perspective. The detailed study covers almost every aspects of the Tajik nation in 1234 pages. The author, who is an authority on Tajikistan, provides comprehensive details about Tajik ethnicity, language, culture, history to economy et al. This book has been translated from its original language, Russian, into the English language by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute of Asian Studies, Kolkata, with its introduction written by Prof. Devendra Kaushik.

*Peoples of Central Asia* by Lawrence Krader, (Uralic and Altaic series, Indiana University, Bloomington: 1963), gives a detailed analysis of the languages of Central Asia in a broader perspective. The author uses different types of classifications before elaborating on the principal linguistic groups of Indo-European and Altaic languages. Though published in the early 1960s this book is still relevant and quoted widely in the academic researches.

Geßenr's theory of nationalism in *Nations and Nationalism*, (Cornell University Press, 1983) stresses the primacy of material conditions in shaping political thought and social changes. For him this is the development of 'industrial society'. The connection between nationalism and industrialization is that particular form of polity and culture is required if industrial economic growth is to occur. These forms combine in a nation-state. Once industrialization took off, the old state was generally unable to maximize their advantages and profits until they changed both their cultural life and their state structure.

Paul Brass's *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison*, (New Delhi, 1991) discusses ethnicity and nationalism in the present world. For him, ethnicity is a
sense of ethnic identity and the objective cultural marker. He believes that the conversion of cultural differences into basis for political differentiation between peoples arises only under specific circumstances that need to be identified clearly. His first theory is that the elite competition arises from broader political and economic environment rather than from cultural values of an ethnic group in question. Second theoretical argument emphasizes the critical role of the relationship between the elites and the state, particularly the role of the collaborators with the opponents of the state authority and state intrusion into regions inhabited by distinctive ethnic groups.

Reza Zadeh Shafaq’s book *Sarikh-i-Adabiyat-i-Iran* (Persian) (Teheran: Inteshar-i-Ahang, 1369 A.H) deals in details the origin and development of different Indo-European languages of the Central Asian region. The development of Persian (Tajik) language has been given in details. Earlier people used the pictographic language which gradually changed to the words based on sounds. Then people started writing and it was called ‘cuneiform’. After that Parsik came into use. Parsik was the Persian into Arabic script. This change was brought by the Arabs who had conquered Iran in mid 640s A. D. Iranians welcomed the new religion but never left their own language. This book also discusses the roles of some famous writers and poets who have enriched this language through their writings like Firdausi, Saadi etc. It also covers the development of Persian language and literature in India and has the list of Indian writers of this language.

Mohammad Reza Djalili, Frédéric Grare and Shirin Akiner (eds.), *Tajikistan: The Trial of Independence*, (New York: 1997) is a book consisting thirteen articles about Tajikistan. This book deals in the social, political and economic condition of Tajikistan since it achieved independence in September 1991. The book looks through the painful transition, punctured by a series of political crises, which resulted in the division of its people into rival and antagonistic clans. It also examines the prospects and results of the foreign intervention, chiefly by Russians and Uzbeks; and a spilling over its borders into Afghanistan and Uzbekistan, where thousands of Tajiks have fled for refuge.

Suchandana Chatterjee in *Politics and Society in Tajikistan*, (Kolkata: 2002), deals with politics and society in Tajikistan in the aftermath of the civil war. She analyses
the process of state-building from rhetoric and counter-rhetoric the character of elite politics in the aftermath's of war in Tajikistan and the challenges of survival encountered by various sections of the society. She does a detailed study on character of social fragmentation, public opinion, and the significance of identities in the centralised state structure. Her argument revolves around group interest other than those constituted by the sense of belonging to a particular ethnic group, i.e., Tajik. She believes that there are identities at work here (e.g. Pamiri) whose importance would never be wholly displaced over time. Finally there is an attempt made by her to de-link Tajik domestic politics from post 9/11 developments in Afghanistan.

Oliver Roy in his, *The New Central Asia*, (New York:2000), sheds some light on the process of nation building, the decomposition of the traditional solidarity groups, and the emergence of the new nationalist elites in Central Asia, from within the Soviet framework. He takes a historic perspective. The contemporary perspective is based on his fieldwork conducted between 1990 and 1996, mainly focusing on Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. His point of view comes from the South: he studied Tajikistan from the standpoint of an afghantsy (a veteran of the Afghan war, in Russian slang), rather than from the standpoint of a Sovietologist.

K.Warikoo’s paper, *Cockpit of Central Asia*, provides a detailed analysis of the role of Afghanistan and Afghan Mujahideen in shaping and influencing the events in Tajikistan, particularly the rise of Islamism in that country.

K.Warikoo and Dawa Norbu (eds.), *Ethnicity and Politics in Central Asia*, (New Delhi:1992) presents an integrated view of the developments taking place in Central Asia and adopts an interdisciplinary approach. Second section of the book deals with former Soviet Central Asia including Tajikistan. Five authors have contributed and presented their view on the social, economic and political situation in the region. Prof. Warikoo gives a perspective on the changing socio-political situation with particular reference to ethno-religious resurgence, demography and the political uncertainty prevailing in the region.
K. Warikoo (ed), *Central Asia: Emerging New Order*, (New Delhi: 1995), presents an integrated viewpoint on the transition taking place in and around Central Asia. The book explores the whole range of events relating to the problems of transition, rise of ethnicity, nationalism and problems of regional security and the emerging relationship between Central Asia and adjoining countries of Russia, Iran, Turkey, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Mongolia, by eminent specialists. The book also has contributions from Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Turkish scholars.

Shirin Akiner, *Tajikistan: Disintegration or Reconciliation?*, (London: 2001) The author analyzes the internal and external dynamics of the Tajik conflict, assessing the relative weight of the political, ideological, ethnic, and regional factors. He also considers the impact of developments in Tajikistan for the wider Central Asian region and the prospects for a lasting peace and economic recovery.

Kabir Ahmad Jaisi’s book *Tarikh-i-Adabyat-i-Tajikistan* (Urdu) (Delhi: Urdu Development Council, 1997), exclusively deals with the development of language and culture in Tajikistan. It is among one of the few books written in Urdu language focusing on Tajikistan. The writer has a detailed description of various phases of the development of Tajik language and literature. Different forms of literary styles prose, poetry, drama and short stories are covered in it. There is also a brief introduction of famous Tajik writers and poets.

Iraj Bashiri, *Tajikistan Dar Qarne Bistum* (Tajik), (Minnesota: 2002) deals with the contemporary Tajikistan. The study here covers the period of 20th century Tajikistan. How was the social, economic and political condition in that period, how the present day Tajikistan is trying to overcome the problems faced by her society and economy.

Astride Von Borcke, Valentin Buschkow and Aschut Manutschcharjan, *Civil War of Tajikistan* (1992-1997), translated into Persian by Ladan Mokhtari and Ali Rahmani, (Teheran: 2002). This book covers the period of civil war in Tajikistan. The crisis in the traditional society came up when new ideas began to emerge. Social awareness brought regional and racial opposition and clashes in the society. A chapter has been devoted to
leading social forces covering socio-religious movements; fundamentalism and Islamic revolution.

Definition

No nation in the world is without ethnic differences, language, cultures, religion, race—all these criteria distinguish people across the world. Tajikistan, a new emerging nation is grappling with the problem of ethnic differences and efforts are on to build national Tajik identity. The most recent campaign of this kind is the drive to reinvent and glorify the Samanids—a dynasty that ruled Mawarannahr-Transoxiana and Khorasan during the 9th and 10th centuries A.D. Contemporary Tajik historians claim it to be ethnically, the first Tajik state. Presently the government of Tajikistan and other organisations are pursuing the goal of establishing an exclusive ‘Tajik identity’ beginning from the period of long and distinguished pre-history; the identification of historical injustices inflicted upon the Tajiks by extraneous forces such as Arabs, Turks, Mongols, Uzbeks, Russians and the justification of the claims to specific territories 'historical homeland'.

Rationale

On the basis the survey of relevant literature we can say that the culture, language and identity play vital role in the development of society and help in nation building process. They bind the people together. Historical and cultural symbols and historiography are highlighted to evoke common national response. Cultural revival through historical references and promoting Tajik language has been an important factor in nation building in Tajikistan. But with this many contemporary cultural and linguistic minority groups are also gaining a higher level of group consciousness. At present Tajikistan is divided into four administrative provinces, Khujand in the north; the Khatlan, covering the Qurghanteppa area in the south-west and the Kulyab area in the south-east, which was recently merged from two provinces (oblasts) into one; and the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region in the east of the country. In addition, the Republican Subordinated Regions, covering the central part of the country, comprise the Gissar and Gharm Oblasts. These regions are different, diverse in culture and language and often having conflicting interests from one another. It is proving to be a tough task to assimilate the peoples of these regions into one nation. As such, this study would delve into all these problems.
Scope of the Study

1. A theoretical analysis of role of language, culture and identity in the multi-ethnic society.
2. Historico-political study of the development of language, literature and culture of Tajikistan from ancient till modern times, and role played in the evolution of Tajik society.
3. Study the changes in Tajik language and literature during the Soviet period and after
4. Analyse the new thrust given to Tajik language and literature after the independence of Tajikistan.
5. Critically studying the role of identity in the nation building process in Tajikistan.
6. Analysing the causes and consequences of the conflicts in Tajikistan due to the factors like linguistic differences and cultural diversity. Examining and assessing the possible solutions for social and political development of Tajik society.

Research Problem

The study has tried to answer the following questions;

1. Does in the conflict in the Tajik society has anything to do with the differences in languages and cultures in different regions?
2. Can there be a standard definition of ‘Tajik’ identity, which may be acceptable to every section of the Tajik society including the scholars?
3. Has adoption of Tajik as the national language been successful in uniting the people of Tajikistan?
4. What are the possible solutions to deal with the present ethnic, religious and political crisis in Tajikistan?

Hypothesis

The proposed research study seeks to test the following hypotheses;

1. The physical characteristics of the landscape over a long historical period have shaped the national identity of the Tajiks primarily on the basis of their linguistic, racial and cultural traits.
2. Distinct ethno-cultural heritage of Tajiks can play an important role in the creation of all encompassing Tajik national identity.

3. Tajik language and culture are being promoted in independent Tajikistan as part of the nation building process through various media.

4. Regional and geo-cultural divisions in Tajikistan hamper the process of nation building process particularly in Pamir Badakhshan, Kulyab and Khujand areas, posing challenges to the formation of a uniform Tajik ethno-cultural identity in Tajikistan.

For this study, field trip to Tajikistan for data collection was conducted in April-May 2009 and local and primary research materials in Tajiki, Russian and other languages were consulted.