CHAPTER - II
REGIONAL INTEGRATION: THE GEOSTRATEGIC FACTORS

Background

The sudden collapse of the Soviet Union has led to the emergence of 15 new successor states in this region. Of these, Central Asia has experienced the birth of 5 new states. These include Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. The emergence of these new successor states of the former USSR has changed the political map of the region. Its impact is being felt in the surrounding regions. A simultaneous change has also been witnessed in the international political environment at the global level. The period marked the dissolution of the Soviet Union, end of East-West cold war and liberation of a number of East European and Caucasus countries along with unification of Germany. As such both Russia and the Turkic states find it very difficult to come to terms with the meaning of independence in the post Soviet world. The ideological struggle between communism and democratic world has ended. In this transition period, the international politics has become very complex. For these new countries of Central Asia, the condition has been particularly complex, considering that not one of the new Central Asian states has been able to develop an understanding of the nature of its own interests. So long as

USSR existed, the interest of these now new countries were defined by the communist ideology.

In the changed geopolitical scenario in the erstwhile Soviet Central Asia, these new states must generate their own sense of national identity and national interest, friends and foes - a process upon which they have scarcely embarked. This applies to all the 5 newly emerged sovereign states of the region.

These states face many problem. The experience of existing as independent states for these countries is an alien phenomena. Under Soviet regime the basis of statehood was on ethnic lines like Uzbek, Tajik, Turkoman, Kazakh and Kyrgyz. When these countries became independent, they were not prepared for it as independence came unexpectedly. Under these circumstances the Central Asian states are learning the fundamental elements of statehood like sovereignty, border, ethnic composition, political ideologies, economic substances, internal and external threats, religion, foreign policy etc. They also took over an economic structure that was distorted by regional specializations and excessive trade dependence upon other successor states.

Various geostrategic issues that will influence the geopolitics of the regions can be identified. These factors may be categorized under 2 head.

I. Internal or Local factors.
II. Regional and Global factors.

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4 Ibid.
1. Internal or Local Factors:
   (1) Nationalism
   (2) Ethnicity/ Ethnic factors
   (3) Border problem
   (4) Russian factor
   (5) Islamic revival/ Fundamentalism
   (6) Economic integration
   (7) Environmental crisis
   (8) Water sharing
   (9) Access to sea
   (10) Security and nuclear issues
   (11) Development of nation states in the region.

II. Regional or Global Factors:
   (1) Natural resources and interest shown for it by the foreign countries through their multinational companies, and
   (2) Aspiration of the (extra-regional) international players for domination in the region. (Russia, Iran, Turkey, Pakistan etc)

I. INTERNAL FACTORS (INTRA-REGIONAL FACTORS)

The intra regional factors refers to those factors that are common to all the countries of the region.

(1) Nationalism
The problem of nationalism and national identity has assumed a central place among the Central Asian states after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The issue
of national identity has such a pivotal significance in the region that it may influence the development of political, economic, social and cultural processes in the Central Asian States (CAS) It seems “theoretically valid that national identification of the people determines their future relationship whether they will integrate or disintegrate and whether they will live in conflict or at peace with each other”.

There are two components in nationalism – one is past i.e. the possession of rich legacy of remembrance i.e., the cultural factor, the other is the present i.e. the actual desire of the states to live together in the present times. The present of a nation may not have a direct continuation with the past. In this sense, we find that the concept of nation is changing. Nation is thus a dynamic concept in terms of past-present relations. Scholars generally ignore the changing nature of nation.

There are many dimensions to nationalism in Central Asia. Both the classical and modern parameters of nationalism is found in Central Asia. This is because in the present times of globalization, internationalisation of the domestic political process takes place. ‘As a result, the Central Asian states cannot avoid being built from without as well as form within’. On this basis it can be said that nation building is no longer the result of the sole ethnic self determination of a group of people. It also has an element of political will

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7 Ibid. p. 183-84.
(modern parameter) that is imposed on them or develops within themselves. Economic self-sufficiency has also been recognized as an important determinant of nationalism so that the state can cater for the welfare and prosperity of its people.9

An interesting dimension of studying nationalism in Central Asia is that geopolitics and nationalism are interrelated. Geopolitics influenced nationalism in the modern Central Asian states from the very beginning of their existence when Stalin’s cartographer divided the region into Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.10 But now that these countries have become independent, nationalism is developing among them and the countries are asserting themselves. Now it depends on these countries as to how they shall exist for example Turkmenistan has so far followed a policy of ‘positive neutrality’11 while Uzbekistan follows the ‘Uzbek path’.12 Nationalism also influences geopolitics in the post independent period in the sense that these countries have to perform two relatively opposite tasks that of regional integration and consolidation of national sovereignty and independence.13 In other words it can be said that there is a cause and effect relationship between geopolitics and national identification. This fact was also revealed by Ali

12 Ibid. p. 177.
Banuazizi and Myron Weiner in whose opinion the 'reason for analysing Central Asian developments within a geopolitical framework is to know the way in which each republic defines its own identity – separately from or in common with one or more of its neighbours.

Nationalism: Meaning and Context

Nationalism is both an ideology and a sentiment. As an ideology nationalism is an identification with an entity i.e. the nation. Nationalism as a sentiment refers to the commonly shared emotions all the people of the nation. In the modern times, nationalism has been associated with political connotation. "Nation is an ethnic group which has come to believe that it is a nation and has consciously made the transition on the basis of some organising principle. Membership in that nation is expressed as nationality and nationals (i.e., people of the nation) possess some form of allegiance to the nation which is distinct from its political aspiration embodied in nationalism."

The concept of nation and ethnic group both are similar but different since both have certain common objective and subjective criteria. The objective elements include language, culture, shared history, homeland, religion and racial features. The subjective criteria includes the awareness of the group of people comprising nation or ethnic group that they are separate from the other group of people. But these (nation and ethnic group) are different as nation required some "organising principles" around which the people are

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15 Ibid. p. 77.
integrated. These organising principle may be (a) political, manifested by nationalism; (b) socio cultural, reflected by linguistic or cultural heritage; of (c) territorial, reflected by homeland. An ethnic group does not have an organising principle, they just use the cultural symbols to differentiate themselves as a subjectively self conscious community. A nation on the other hand is more than just the consciousness of otherness between different groups. Nation asserts this distinction of otherness between different groups as source of identity and defends this identity vis-a-vie other nations or ethnic groups or other sources of identity.

According to some scholars nation has a dual character i.e. a past and present. Past implies common possession of a rich legacy of rememberances while the present is the desire to live together. Nationalism has a changing dynamic nature. The present of the nation does not always have a direct continuation of the past. Nationalism contains elements of both old and new social organisation. A modern state cannot have the elements of archaic nationalism like the nomadic-sedentary lifestyle or Persian-Turkic divide. It also has elements of high cultural value that is based on education. The changing nature of nationalism has often been ignored by scholars dealing in nationalism in the newly emerged Central Asian states. Moreover, there are ambiguities regarding the interpretation of the component of nationalism. For example, John Brevilly says that identity of nation is explained in an arbitrary manner. If the nation is portrayed as a cultural community, culture becomes the

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\[16\] Tolipov, Farkhod, "Nationalism As a Geopolitical Phenomenon; the Central Asian Case", Central Asian Survey, 2001, Vol. 20 No. 2 p. 183
criteria for nationalism, but if a nation is portrayed as a political community, politics becomes the criteria.\textsuperscript{17}

A holistic analysis of nationalism indicates that nationalism has many dimensions. It may be put under 2 subheads:

(A) Classical or Traditional parameters – it relates to the past and

(B) Modern parameters – it relates to the present.

(A) \textbf{Classical set of parameters or traditional parameters:}

(i) Ethnicity – it is one of the main determinant of nationalism. Nancy Lubin has described the ethnic component in Central Asia as having ‘multiple and mixed identities – Muslims and atheist, Soviet and Asian, Turkic and Slav, clan and regional and individual ethnic identities- have long co-existed within Soviet Central Asian Society”.\textsuperscript{18}

(ii) Political will – nationalism includes the political will of the people.

Economic self sufficiency – nationalism implies that the states gives prime importance to the welfare and prosperity only of its own people.

(B) \textbf{Modern parameters}

Security is a common concern for all the 5 countries in the region. This is an important element of nationalism sine these countries, both individually and

\textsuperscript{17} Brevilly, John, \textit{Nationalism and the State}, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1982), p. 348.

collectively perceives it as a threat and make strategies to defend their security from other external and internal factors.

**Nationalism in Central Asia:** The immediate goals of the Central Asian states is two fold – firstly, to absorb the sudden shock of independence, and secondly, to establish new national policies based on the indigenous requirements of individual countries (during the Soviet rule the Soviet wish was imposed overriding the interest of these states). The problems faced by these newly independent countries are diverse in nature. The leaders also do not have the experience in the administration of the government. Therefore decisions on the national policies are of adhoc character.

Today, the traditional nationalist aspiration has strongly emerged in all the 5 states. This is because the people who were underground in the old Soviet system have come to the forefront. Nationalism in being promoted by a small political elite and not by the population themselves.\(^{19}\)

The population is not aware of the various dimensions of nationalism. Thus the nationalism is coming top down.

(a) **Titular nationality:** Each of the states of Central Asia contains dozens of nationalities apart from the titular nationality. The other nationality includes (I) Russians, (ii) other Central Asian nationalities (Uzbek, Tajik, Kazakh etc) and (iii) the nationalities from the other part of the former Soviet Union, particularly from the Caucasus. The population composition of some states

shows that only 73 percent of Uzbekistan is Uzbek while only 40 percent of Kazakhstan’s population is Kazakh. The rest of the population consists of other nationality. It has been seen that almost in all cases, the titular nationality has its interest against the interest of other nationalities within the republic, irrespective of the fact whether these other nationalities are Muslim on Turkic. After gaining independence, nationalist forces that were underground in the old Soviet system, has emerged and are pressurising their respective Governments to formulate policies that are in the interest of the titular nationality of each republic. They assert that the overall ethnic mixture of the republic should in no case get precedence over the interest of the titular nationality.

It should however be noted that the official policy run counter to the nationalist aspiration. The decision makers realize that loading the policies in favour of the titular nationalities while at the same time ignoring other nationalities has the potential for future ethnic conflicts. Therefore no Government is prepared to take over the complex nationalities problem at this juncture.

Homeland and language are component of titular nationalism. All the different nationalities that live in this region have their own ethnic homelands. All the countries have encouraged the local language. In the Soviet times, Russian was the official language and the local languages had very little significance. But now the local language of all the countries have been made

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the official language of the respective countries.\(^2\) There are other forms of nationalism that have emerged in these countries in its post independent phase.

At present, these may be said to be in a nascent stage, but are likely to develop as time progresses.

(b) **Pan Islamic Nationalism:** It attempts to break the national barrier of these nations in order unite all the Muslims. But it stops at the Soviet frontiers and does not extend to the whole world of Islam.\(^2\)

This is because under the Soviet rule, religion was never encouraged. There was lack of knowledge of Arabic language among the Central Asian clergy. Islam had a weak hold over the largely nomadic culture of the Kazakh, Kyrgyzs and Turkmen. Added to this, the modernization process undertaken by the Soviets makes the rise of Islamic nationalism difficult.

The role of Islam is restricted only to spiritual renewal and rediscovery of the rich cultural heritage of the people of Central Asia.

(c) **Religious Nationalism:** This is an unfortunate expression of nationalism because it treats religious heritage as a necessary attribute. It can vary from extreme from of religious fundamentalism to refusing to surrender to modernization. The difference between the two is that while fundamentalism requires Islam to play a political role as a nationalist force, refusal to...

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modernization means that Islam should play a leading role in cultural and ideological aspects of life.

However the threat of religious nationalism in the region is also unfounded. The leaders of the Central Asian republic have made it clear that religion has not place in the political life. Nor are they willing to develop a distinctly Islamic leaning foreign policy.\(^23\) The leaders fear that a Tajikistan type scenario may emerge.

(d) **Liberal Nationalism:** It is a modern form of nationalism that has emerged especially in the post independent period. It has distinguished from both the communist and pure ethnic nationalism. Its nationalism is tied to the territory. It is democratic, it prefers pluralist politics, but like the communist it is firmly wedded to both secularism and multi-ethnicity.\(^24\) The best representative of this is found among the intelligentsia and has a nationally mixed composition and is concerned about minorities. A good example is the "Democratic Movement" of Uzbekistan led by Mussina Albert, the "Democratic Party" of Tajikistan led by Shadmon Yusukov, the "Zhelgostan" of Kazakhstan which has become the National Democratic Party headed by Amanzhol Nelabayev and Khosan Murzakhemetov, along with Social Democratic Party of Kazakhstan set up by Kazakh and Russian intelligentsia in June 1990.

(h) **Ideological oriented stands:** Communists have lately turned nationalists not only in Central Asia but everywhere in the former Soviet Union. There are


\(^{24}\) Ibid. p. 1235.
very clear cut and visible groups and they are in positions of power in the bureaucracy, in the academic establishment and specially in management. Some product of communist nationalism are Nazarbayev in Kazakhstan, Saparmurad Niyozov in Turkmenistan and Islam Karimov in Uzbekistan. They are the strongest political and institutional force even today with a demonstrated capacity to win elections. Only in Tajikistan they are under serious threat from the Islamic forces. Off late, the communist nationals have countered the fundamentalism in the region and thus have helped to restore tranquility in the region.

(2) Ethnicity

The concept of ethnicity and its difference from nationalism has been discussed earlier while discussing nationalism. Ethnicity depends to a large extent on the attributes of language, socio-cultural mores and historicity. The ethnic problems of Central Asian assumed serious proportions in the past few years when violent inter-ethnic clashes affected Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. Various factors such as ethnic seclusion, nationalist and religious resurgence, growing unemployment, low productivity in farming and industry are responsible for the heightened inter-ethnic tensions in Central Asia. The problem if further compounded by the complex ethnographic structure of the region. Uzbek, Turkmen, Tajik, Kazakhs and Kara Kalpits inhabit different territories where they form a predominant majority. This is the consequence of arbitrary geometric territorial demarcation of 1924, which redrew the map of Central Asia by creating separate national republics and
autonomous oblasts. The boundary of individual states, therefore, was more administrative than historical. As a result of this, about one million Tajiks find themselves living in Uzbekistan while the same number of Uzbek reside in Tajikistan. A unique situation exists in Kazakhstan, where in the northwest and central part, the Kazakh are in minority. It is increasingly becoming difficult for the multi-ethnic societies to resist the progress towards autonomy and independence for ethnic minority groups.25

Substantial presence of settlers from European part of Russia adds yet another dimension to the problem. The violent Russian-Kazakh, Kirghiz-Uzbek, Uzbek-Tajik and Uzbek-Meshkitian Turk clashes in Alma-Ata, Osh, Dushanbe and Fergana during the period since 1990 has made it clear that they are not wanted by the titular nationalists.26 Currently, about 14 million inhabitants of Central Asia are non-Asians. They are mainly Russian, German and Ukrainians. They are urban dwellers, highly skilled workers and are Orthodox Christians. The non-Asians are in majority in the Republic of Kazakhstan, where they are settled mainly in the northern half of the republic. In the republic of Kyrgyzstan, the non-Asians form a quarter of the population. In the other three Central Asian States (CAS), the non-Asians are in influential minority, although they are numerically far outnumbered by the Asians. It is

widely acknowledged throughout Central Asia today, that during the period of Soviet rule, the non-Asian ethnic groups formed the ruling elite of the region. The surge of ethnic nationalism in Central Asia which followed the declaration of independence by the individual states has therefore, targeted the non Asian groups in an attempt to wrest political power from them. The success of these attempts has varied form state to state depending on the demographic structure of the states. Thus, because of the ethnic balance in Kazakhstan, the non-Asians and Asians have been compelled to share power, while in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, the ascendancy of the Asian ethnic group is already a fact.

Ethnicity depends to a large extent on its attributes of language, socio-cultural moores and religion. In Central Asia, the non-Asian and Asian ethnic groups are set apart by all these three. These ethnic groups are very easily identifiable and become soft targets when ethnic violence flares.

Turkey played the ethnic card in order to make impressive economic and cultural headway in the region. Currently, Turkey has emphasized its linguistic and socio cultural bonds with the Central Asian countries. Turkemen, Uzbek, Kazakh and Kirghiz belong to Turkic language group. These ethnic groups also belong to the Turko-Mongol race. These also have same religious bonds with Turkey through Sunni Islam. Turkey has made generous offers to assist Central Asian States in their development programmes. Attempts were made to institutionalize its relations with these states by calling a summit of Turkic speaking people.27

27 Stobdan, P., "Emergence of Central Asia; Strategic Implications, Strategic Analysis, Vol. 18 No. 2, p. 301.
Iran has initiated efforts to influence Central Asia through Tajikstan, the only Persian speaking state in the region. Tajik, also belong to the Iranian stock. Iran’s efforts to expand relations revolve around linguistic and socio-cultural bond. Its interest is amply reciprocated by the Tajiks.

Religion is another element of ethnicity in Central Asia. The different religion professed by the non Asian and Asian ethnic group of Central Asia also shows divergence in their identity. While the non Asian profess Christianity and the Asian are followers of Islam.

Under the Soviet rule, the religious differences were not visible because there were not many churches and mosques. But after the introduction of Glasnost and the subsequent independence of the Central Asian States, the process of religious revival is under way in these countries. Its effect is manifested on the geopolitics of the region. Religious revival is being exploited for political purpose. Adoption of religion as a base for nationalism contains seeds of discord between the ethnic groups residing in Central Asia.

The ethnic composition of Central Asia, which is rich in diversity, will be a crucial determinant in bringing stability in the region. The experiences from the complex societies around the world shows that ethnicity has the potential to cause conflict in the region. But the Central Asian States are very conscious of this problem. As the problem of ethnicity is common to all the countries of the region, they are trying to solve it in a broader regional perspective through regional co-operation.
Issues relating to state formation in the region:

State formation is a process through which the various social groups are organized politically in a modern set up. State is defined by possession of sovereignty. Central Asia also faces the problem of state formation in the present times. The complexities related with the Central Asian case is that it is a multi-ethnic society. State formation can become a long-standing problem if the various social groups are not politically institutionalized and assimilated in the state satisfactorily. Ideally speaking the “nation-state” is the most stable and peaceful state formation. A nation state is on which a single nation resides. It is a rare situation in the modern word. Examples are Japan, Korea, Denmark, Iceland, etc. The remaining states are multi-ethnic or multi national.

The Central Asian states has to deal with state formation in the multi-ethnic and multinational background. The five new states that came into existence in Central Asia in 1991 did not have any experience of nationhood. In the 1920, the Soviet authorities created a series of embryonic states based on ethno-linguistic criteria, but it did little to overcome the traditional industries. Stalins decision to combine these created states on ethnic basis with some degree of economic rationality has further complicated matters. It resulted in many of the states being created on the basis of artificial borders. For example, Bukhara and Samarkand is part of Uzbekistan but nearly three quarters of its population are Tajik. The other problematic areas are the Fergana valley which

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is divided between the three states of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan but whose vast majority of the population is Uzbek; Chimkent oblast in southern Kazakhstan has ninety percent Uzbek population.30

Background to the problem of state formation in Central Asia

The history of the people of Central Asia as ethnic groups, nations, citizens and perhaps countrymen is similar to other colonial experience but still unique as a result of “Soviet experiment.”31 Historically, the people of this region have differentiated themselves on two basis (i) religion and (ii) lifestyle.

(i) Religion: Islam was the first level of consciousness. The people differentiated between followers of Islam on the one hand, and Jews, Christians, Hindus Zoroastrians on the other. All these religious groups led a settled lifestyle. Religious distinction manifested itself in lifestyle distinction. Thus religion provided a basis for differentiation among the people.

(ii) Lifestyle: The other and more important difference delineating the Central Asian people is nomadic versus settled lifestyle. The nomadic people of the north and the south are organized differently from the agriculturist and the city dwellers who lead a settled life. The nomads were converted to Islam much later than the settled population.

The Soviet Experience: The ethnic situation was different in the pre-Soviet period and the Soviet period. In the pre-Soviet period “the northern nomads

were aware of belonging to the Greater, Middle and Lesser Horde". The concept of Kazkh, and Karakalpak was alien at that time. In the Soviet times, the aim was to divide and conquer the present Central Asian region. So the Soviet Nationalist policy created nations where none had existed before. The Central Asians felt that there was no meaningful distinction between themselves, so they decided to enter the Soviet Union as a signal block called “Turkestan”. But this would have challenged the Russian hegemony within the Soviet Union by dint of it being a geography large and populous republic. So the Soviets created nations arbitrarily from amongst the inhabitants of the region. This was done to maintain control over this region and to ensure that it did not challenge the central authority, and to ensure that they did not succeeded from the Soviet Union.

Analyzing the demographic composition, the region was divided into four logical divisions.

(a) The Turks within Russia were divided in many autonomous republics, eg. Chechen, Chuvash, Tartar, Bashkik, Dagestani etc.
(b) The northern steppe nomad was divided as Kazkhs, Karakalpak, Kyrgyz etc.
(c) The settled bilingual population was divided into the Tajik and the Uzbek, and
(d) The southern nomads remained as the Turkmen

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32 Ibid.
It is under these above mentioned factors that the political options for
the newly independent states of Central Asia has to be chosen. Two models of
state formation in the states Central Asia are available. They have to choose
from either of these. The choice should be made carefully because these
countries are plural society. The requirement of all should be fulfilled so that
the future is trouble free.

The first model is the nation-state model. In this model, “a single ethnic
community is both politically and demographically prevalent, and ethnic
minorities, if any, are bound to accept the culture and language of the majority
as normative.” Example includes England, USA, France, New Zealand etc.

The second model consists those type of state where ethnic
heterogeneity is politically institutionalized and the culture and language of any
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heterogeneity is politically institutionalized and the culture and language of any
particular group are not accepted as normative. The examples of this type of
state include Switzerland, Belgium, India, Indonesia etc.

The ethnic and demographic situation along with historical, political,
cultural and social factors shall determine the choice between the two models.

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33 Patnaik Ajay, “Nation-States in a Multi-Ethnic Society: The Case of Central Asia” in Shams-
ud-din, eds., Geopolitics and Energy Resources in Central Asia and the Caspian Sea Region
34 Ibid.
35 Ibid.
Not only the proportion of an ethnic group to the total population, but their territorial distribution should also be considered while choosing the model for Central Asia. This is because 70 years of Soviet rule did not engender a sense of loyalty of the people to the nation. If the share of the titular ethnic group is predominant, then the nation state model has a better chance of being followed.

These states have shown a preference for the nation-state model, as their policy reflects. It is too early to judge the suitability of this model in these states. Even before gaining independence, all the Central Asian states adopted a new language law in 1989. The native language was made the official language. The rights and privileges of the ethnic minorities were directly and indirectly curtailed. They felt as if they were discriminated as jobs were also reserved for the titular nationalities. It resulted in the emigration of the ethnic minorities from Central Asia. It changed ethno-demographic composition and created conditions that favoured the nation state model.

The alternative to this is the multi-ethnic state model. In this model, all the ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious minority shall receive equal official recognition. The problem with this model is that the majority group sentiment in the Central Asian State is in favour of nation state model. The dilemma is evident from the experience of Kazakhstan since its independence.

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The Russian Problem

Although, the leaders of the five Central Asian countries have placed considerable emphasis on the need to preserve ethnic harmony within the republics, special emphasis has been given to conciliate the Slavic and the European sections of the population, which are different from the Turkic origin people of Central Asia. There are various geostrategic reasons behind this. Firstly, because of their sheer size, the Russian population cannot be regulated. There are around 12 million Russian speaking population in these countries of which 9.5 million are ethnic Russian and two third of these have here born in the region. Russian make less than 10 percent of the population in Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan, but in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, they make 38 percent and 22 percent of the population and thus cannot be ignored. Apart from this, these Russian minorities possess many of the professional and technical skills that these new countries require for further development of their economy and the maintenance of social welfare structures as well as the military establishments. For examples, in Tajikistan, Russian make up 7 percent of the population but 21 per cent specialists and technicians are Russian. Similarly, in Uzbekistan, Russian comprises 8.3 percent of the population while they occupy 17 percent of the technical posts. The titular nationalities shall fill such position is the near future but not overnight. Finally, the Russia population play a significant role in the emerging relations between

Russian and the successor states. In the post independent period, the Russian became the prime targets of the nationalists because they were the political economic elites and also because they enjoyed the best perks of the local life.  

The fate and treatment of Russians is the 'near abroad' has became a major issues in Russian politics.

The presence of the Russians can be of vital importance to the Central Asian States, yet the nationalists seek to remove their presence and influence from their states. The nationalists treat it as vestiges of colonialism. They wish to prepare and train the people of titular nationalities for the more skilled and responsible jobs. The problem with the Russian is that they have lived in the Central Asian States for generations and as such have severed all family ties with Russia. At this point of time they have nowhere to go. Even Russia may find it difficult to accommodate them.

Today Kazakhstan has the highest numbers of Russian – at about 40 percent. Many of the Russians have migrated to Russia since the breakup of the Soviet empire.

It is notable that there exists a difference between rhetoric and reality on the status of the Slavic population in these countries. It complicates the problem further. During the early years of independence, the rhetoric of the Central Asian leaders was that the Slavic population was still wanted. Certain measures like the narrow citizenship laws typical of the Baltic states was

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eschewed, citizenship was offered to the all the community is these countries at

Among the five countries, it appears that only Kyrgyzstan has made the
greatest efforts to encourage the minorities—notably the Russians and the Slavs
to stay. In 1992 itself, the Kyrgyz President Akaev signed a decree setting up
two German National Cultural Regions within Kyrgyzstan. The residents of
these areas where permitted dual citizenship and the people were given the
right to decide certain socio-economic issues.

Despite the rhetoric and good intentions of the Central Asian leaders, the
developments have shown that the Slavic population do not believe that they
have a future in these countries. This is evident by a study produced by the
Moscow based Gorbachev Foundation in 1993 which suggested that for the
Russians, various factors were contributing towards the social discomfort.

Under these circumstances, the Russian and other minorities were faced
with few options in the early 1990’s – should they leave Central Asia in
anticipation of a bleak future for themselves or should they stay and adapt to
their new status.

Many Russians preferred to emigrate. In fact from the late 1980’s itself
the process of emigration of the Russian had started. In Tajikistan, 80 per cent
of the 3,80,000 strong Russian population left by mid 1993. In Uzbekistan,
despite political stability, half a million had left by 1995 that included Jews and
Tartas. Many who remained in Uzbekistan opted to take the Russians citizenship as a precaution against future difficulties.\textsuperscript{41}

By early 1996, it was reported that roughly a quarter or nearly 3 million of the Slavic population had left Central Asia since the late 1980s.

In order to protect the interests of the Russians living in the Central Asian Countries, Russia has taken active interest about the well being of the Slavic and Russian speaking population in near abroad. Diplomatic engagements have taken place between the two sides.

The end of Soviet Union saw the resurgence of Islam in the Central Asian republics. This was an understandable reaction to the Islam’s oppression under the Soviet rule.\textsuperscript{42} In fact, Islam survived as cultural – religious phenomena during the period of militant atheism followed during the Soviet rule. The ideological void created by the collapse of the Marxism-Leninism nurtured Islamic consciousness in the region. The rise of Islam in the region raised practical implications about its resurgence on the political development in the region.\textsuperscript{43}

(4) Religious Revivalism

The revival of Islamic fundamentalism is the most immediate ideological challenge in the Central Asian States. All the five states of Central

\textsuperscript{41} Open Media Research Institute, 36, 22 February, 1996.
Asia are experiencing this problem, although the magnitude varies from nation to nation. Islam is the primary cultural force in the region although it was not indigenous to this region. It was only by the eight century A.D. that Islam had its impact felt in this region. Even communism, which does not give importance to religion could not subdue Islam. It was being practiced unofficially even during the Soviet regime. Thus, it seems quite natural that it has remerged with vengeance once the official repression has ended. Not only this, Islam serves as a vehicle of nationalist expression especially against the non Muslim population like Slavs who reside in these countries in good numbers.

Two versions of Islam has emerged in these countries. One is the official version and the other is the unofficial version. The unofficial version of Islam has appeared in the form of Islamic fundamentalism and threatens the existing politics of these countries. It is also an impediment to the emergence of modern state in the region. The official Islam is against this as it supports the national leadership of these countries. It believes that Islam does not need parties. It is a cultural element.

The threat of unofficial Islam has emerged strongly in the form of Islamic political organizations like Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan Islamic Democratic of Turkistan etc.

Of these the most significant is the Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP). It was founded in June 1990, at a Congress of the Muslims held in Astana. It aimed to revitalise Islam within the Soviet Union. Its objective was to enable
the Muslim population of the former Soviet Union to live according to the requirements of the Koran. The IRP had three regional structures including one for Central Asia. The Central Asian branch was dominated by Tajik activists and was based in the dense network of unofficial mosques and the Koranic schools that had flourished during the late Soviet period.\textsuperscript{44} The IRP gave a call for supporting strong Islamic movements that emerged in Sudam, Pakistan, Algeria etc. It rejected the secular regimes.\textsuperscript{45}

An equally hostile Islamic political organizations is the Islamic Democratic Party of Turkmenistan. It is based in Uzbekistan but seeks to unite all the Muslim of Central Asia in an Independent state following Islamic laws.\textsuperscript{46}

The Islamic fundamentalist movement appeared in the Fergana valley of Uzbekistan where the Wahabis had been active since the late eighties. About one-third of the total population of Uzbekistan live in the Fergana valley. The first manifestation of militant Islam in the Fergana valley was in the form of violent demonstrations at the time of President Karimov’s visit to Namangan in early 1992. In Namangan alone there were 60 groups with 2500 members.\textsuperscript{47} The Islamic fundamentalists demand for setting up an Islamic states in Uzbekistan was turned down by President Islam Karimov.

\textsuperscript{46} Atkin, M., "Islamic assertiveness and the waning of the old Soviet Order", \textit{Nationalities Papers}, Vol. 20, No.1, 1992, p. 64.
\textsuperscript{47} Izvestiya, 5 December, 1991.
The developments in Tajikistan alerted the authorities to the potential challenge that Islam might pose to their position. The potential for conflict in Tajikistan first became apparent is February 1990 when riots in Dushanbe, Tajikistan capital, left over 20 dead and many more injured.\textsuperscript{48}

The newly emerged countries are ill equipped to deal with the Islamic revival. In fact, the truth seems that these countries are unable to deal with the why and how of Islamic politics.

The reemergence of Islam in the region can also be analysed in terms of space i.e. the geographic location of these countries. Geographical proximity with Iran is a major factor. Iran is interested in pushing its brand of radical Islam in the region. The export of Islamic revolution has become the official policy of Iran under Ayotallah Khomenie who nurtured the ambition of becoming the supreme leader of the Muslim world. The victory of the fundamentalist forces in Afghanistan after the overthrow of Najibullah regime in 1992 has further increased the possibility of the emergence of a new block with the added participation of Pakistan, Iran and Turkey. Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have made energetic attempts to re Islamise Central Asia by aggressive export of Muslim ideology.\textsuperscript{49} The struggle for Islam in Central Asia started in the mid 1980, when the republics first tried to obtain greater sovereignty and independence.


\textsuperscript{49} Ibid.
There are some specific issues, which indicate that Islam, as a political model may not be applicable to this region. The argument being that there is a strong rivalry among the Islamic states to introduce their brand of Islam in Central Asia. There is competition between Iran and Turkey to influence the people through Islam. This shall prevent the society to turn into a cohesive Islamic unit. The relationship among the Central Asian Islamic sect are complicated by different cultural and tribal backgrounds. Clan and sub-clan loyalty is more important to the people than religion. Moreover Islam is not homogenously strong in all parts of Central Asia. A majority of the nomadic population has pre-Islamic beliefs. Modernisation is also a hindrance to the revival of Islam.

(5) Boundary problems

The five Central Asian countries also share common boundary problems. During the early part of Soviet Union, Central Asia was governed as "Autonomous Soviet Republic of Turkistan". It was based on the concept of establishing a united state of all Turkic people within Central Asia. It was viewed that Turkistan was nationally and linguistically homogenous.

Turkistan was divided into five independent republics in 1924. They are Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. The boundaries were drawn artificially. It did not have organic evolution. The borders were drawn for political administrative entities that were never meant to become independent. However, the official Soviet version was that the necessity of reorganization arose from the desire to remedy the national tangle.
of the region.\textsuperscript{50} It was further claimed that only by the creation of nationally homogenous republics harmonious relations could have been established among the various national groups in the region. For the demarcation of the boundaries, a special decree was adopted by the Turkistan Commission in January 1920. On its basis the All Russian Central Executive Committee directed the Turkestan Central Executive Committee to “set to work on the redivision of the administrative districts of Turkestan in conformity with their national composition so that real freedom of culture and economic development of the toiling masses of the indigenous peoples of Turkestan is ensured and any possibility of national inequality is removed.

The work of setting out the boundaries of the new states within Turkestan was assigned to various Central Asian agencies during 1922-24. Each of these agencies were sensitive to the local demands but at the same time had to carry out the wishes of Moscow.\textsuperscript{51} In this process tension was inevitable as smaller ethnic groups tried to avoid being swallowed up in the new Uzbek republic, which was seen as a reincarnation of Greater Bukhara and was strongly promoted by Faizulla Khojaev and other young Bukharas turned Bolsheviks.\textsuperscript{52}

Whatever be the official reason, the ground reality is that the boundaries were arbitrarily demarcated by the Soviet cartographers with a deliberate


attempt to cut across the ethnic settlement in such a way that no one ethnic
group could completely dominate a country. The result is that besides the
titular nationality, there are many other minority ethnic groups in most of the
countries. As such, nation-state could not evolve in these countries, and these
countries did not challenge the Soviet supremacy.

After these counties gained independence, the boundary problem has
come to the forefront once again. All the countries sharing common boundary
with its neighbour have boundary problems. Problems exist because historical,
geographical and social factors were completely disregarded in determining the
borders
(a) Kazakhstan – Kyrgyzstan:
The boundary between these two countries crosses predominantly mountainous
terrain. Since 1936 this border had divided these two countries but it achieved
international status in 1991.

Geographical Setting: - This boundary meanders in a roughly east-west
direction for 1051 kilometers starting at the juncture with the Chinese border.

Historical background: - Until the Soviet period, there were very few clearly
defined boundaries in Central Asia. After the Russian revolution of 1917, the
Russian Red Army rapidly consolidated control over Russian Central Asia and
the region was formally divided into rational units. In 1936, Kazakhstan and
Kyrgyzstan which was initially designated as Autonomous Soviet Republic in

53 Sengupta, Anita, “Beyond Boundaries-Identity, Nationality and Consciousness in Central
Asia”, Contemporary Central Asia, Vol. 11, No.1, March 1988, p. 35.
54 Ramazan, Ozey, “The Geopolitical Importance and Main Problems of the Turkic World,”
1936 was promoted to full union republic status with collapse of the Soviet Union at the end of 1991. The Alma-Ata declaration which established the Commonwealth of Independent States elevated the existing republican boundaries to full international borders without any change.55

**Present Situation**: Although both the Governments have pledged to respect the territorial integrity of their neighbors, a number of territorial claims have been made by the nationalist groups on either side of the borders. There are border disputes and disturbances between Alma Ata’s Dzambul oblast in Kazakhstan and Bishkek’s Talas oblast in Kyrgyzstan.

(b) Kazakhstan – Turkmenistan

**Geographical Setting**: These two countries share a short international boundary of 379 kilometers. This is in fact the shortest boundary between the former Soviet republics of Central Asia.

**Historical background**: The area of Kazakhstan was ruled traditionally by the Mongols from the thirteenth century onwards. It came under Russian control from the eighteenth century. The area was inhabited by the traditionally nomadic but now sedentary Kazakh people. It joined the U.S.S.R. in 1920 as an autonomous republic, but became a full union republic in 1936. The international boundary between Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan is new. It was established in December 1991 after the collapse of Soviet Union.56

**Present Situation**: Formally there is no boundary dispute. However the old conflicts have not been resolved, Now, there is an urgency to resolve these old

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conflicts so that these nations can progress forward and look to other issues. Turkmenistan claims a part of Mangyshalk oblast of Kazakhstan which is on the littoral part of the Caspian Sea.

(c) Kazakhstan- Uzbekistan.

Geographical setting: The boundary between these two countries crosses both diverse topographical environment as well as a diverse mix of nationalist feelings. Among the physiographic diversities, this region encounters mountains, fertile plains, desert, plateau and Aral Sea. This border runs from east to west for 2003 kms. On the west, it contains straight-line segments. On the east the border begins at the tripoint with Kyrgyzstan at an elevation of over 4000-meter. It goes south west passing the north of Tashkent and south of Syr Darya River to ultimately reach the southern shore of the Charbarinskoye Vdkhr. From here it passes in straight-line segments via the Kyzylkum desert to the shores of the Aral Sea. The land boundary continues in the emerging island of Vozrozhdeniya in the Aral Sea, splitting it into two. On the western side of Aral, the boundary heads in the west-southwest till it reaches the Ustyurt Plateau. It then turns south to meet the Turkmenistan borders.

Historical background: Previously both the states had been union republic in the Soviet Union. The Kazakh people are ethnic mix of Turkish and Mongol tribe who speak Turkic language. The region that now constitutes Kazakhstan became an autonomous republic in 1920 and a full republic in 1936. Uzbekistan became a constituent republic of U.S.S.R. in 1925.
Both Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan became sovereign states in 1991 following the break up of the Soviet Union. With the establishment of the Commonwealth of Independent States in 1991, it was agreed that these new countries would accept the territorial integrity of the republics as was created under the Soviet Union. Karakalpak has become a sovereign parliamentary republic within Uzbekistan. 57

Present Situation: At present there are a number of outstanding territorial claim by both parties. These have the potential to destabilize future relations between both the countries. Kazakhstan supports the secessionist claims for Karakalpak sovereignty. Karakalpak is a titular nationality in Uzbekistan and is a sovereign parliamentary republic within Uzbekistan. It has been arguing for succession of their area from Uzbekistan ever since Uzbekistan gained independence. Similarly, Uzbekistan has modest claims for the southern part of the Chimkent region between the Syr Darya and Arys rivers. Secessionist claims are also being made by Uighurs and ethnic Germans from Kazakhstan.

(c) Kyrgyzstan – Tajikistan:

Geographical setting: The borders between these two countries extends for over 870 kilometers. There are a number of places on the border that are disputed. Through the Alma-Ata declaration, both the countries are committed to observing the inviolability of their borders. Yet, there are a number of threatening claims made between the two sides.

57 Ibid. p. 336.
The border between these two countries begins at the tripoint with China. Initially, the border runs west but then it take almost a U-trun and runs east till a point where it meets the Uzbekistan border.\(^{58}\)

**Historical background:** Kyrgyzstan was annexed by Russia in 1864 and was a part of independent Turkestan republic between 1917 to 1924. From 1936, it became a constituent Soviet Republic. The people of Kyrgyzstan are mountain dwelling nomads. They are the descendents of the Mongol invaders and they speak Turkic language. The Tajik are also descendants of the Mongol invaders. It was conquered by the czarist Russia between 1877 and 1900 and since then the northern Tajikistan has been governed by them while the southern Tajikistan was ruled by the amir of Bukhara. Tajikistan was formed in 1924 from the Tajik areas of Bukhara and Turkistan. It became a constituent republic of the Soviet Union in 1929. From late 1980s there was a resurgence of Tajik consciousness. After independence there was a polarization of the people of regional and tribal affinities of the Tajik people. It led to a full-scale civil war in 1992. This civil war was instigated by the conflicting forces of communism and Islamic fundamentalism.

The territorial aspirations have increased in Tajikistan at places where it was latent. The Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous oblast in southeast Tajikistan has declared itself as an autonomous republic in December 1991. Gorno-badakhshan on the eastern end of the border with Kyrgyzstan is fragile and it demands more independence from Tajikistan.

\(^{58}\) Ibid. p. 347.
Present Situation: At present a number of border disputes have aggravated on either side of this boundary. The problem is much serious in the northern sectors where the border is badly configured. Kyrgyzstan has disputed territory on the northern slopes of the Alay and Zaalayskiy mountains in the vicinity of the cities like Batken and Isfara near the tripoint with Uzbekistan. Kyrgyzstan also claims the northern area of Gorno-badakhshan region in Pamir Mountains.59

(e) Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan

Geographical setting – The boundary runs for 1099 kms. The border areas are exposed to sociopolitical upheavals and regional demands for autonomy. Running west to east, this boundary loops around Pskemskij mountain ranges, crosses the Chatkal river valley and meanders down to the Syr Darya Valley. It touches along the Fergana valley (northern banks of the Syr Darya basin) and then turns towards Osh. It then moves south to the Fergana valley and meets the Tajikistan border. In Southern Kyrgyzstan there are three territorial enclaves of which Sokh and Iordan belong to Uzbekistan and the third belongs to Tajikistan.

Historical Background: The Kyrgyz are Turkic Muslim. Traditionally they are nomadic herding people but during the Soviet era the nomadism was abandoned in favour of individual farming with state collectivization. At present the ethnic Kyrgyz make up 52% of the population of the Kyrgyzstan while Russian constitute 22%. Russian are the largest minority and live in

59 Ibid. p. 348.
Bishkek, the capital city. Other ethnic minority includes Germans and Uzbek. Kyrgyzstan was the last of the Central Asian republic to declare sovereignty. It declared independence on 12th December 1990.⁶⁰

**Present Situation:** The former boundary still exists as under the Soviets. Thus the territorial aspirations between the two countries still lies at a dormant stage. In 1993, Kyrgyzstan introduced its own currency. It led to increase in tensions between the two countries as Uzbekistan saw it as a politically motivated decisions directed against Uzbekistan. Another source of tension lies in the eastern border with Uzbekistan where certain groups are advocating the return of Uzbek dominated Kyrgyz cities of Osh Uzgen, Dzhalat-Abad, and Karavan to Uzbekistan. Thus the boundary remains under dispute. Uzbekistan has placed landmines along its border with Kyrgyzstan. The Kyrgyz authorities claim that several citizen have been killed and injured and US $900 million worth material damage has been done.⁶¹

(e) **Tajikistan-Uzbekistan:**

**Geographic Setting:** This boundary attained international status in 1991 when all the previous inter republic borders of Central Asia were retitled. Parts of the boundary are under dispute. The boundary between these two countries is 1161 kilometers long. The boundary begins at its junction with Afghanistan (Turmez) and runs northward and then eastward before it meets the Kyrgyzstan border on the southern banks of the Fergana Valley.

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⁶⁰ Ibid.
Historical Background: Tajikistan was conquered by Russia in the 19th century and was called Turkistan then. In 1924, the Tajik Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic was created within the framework of the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republics. In 1929, after heavy political bargaining, Tajikistan was elevated to the status of Soviet Socialist Republic.

The Tajik is unique among the Central Asian ethnic group in that they are not Turkic. Rather than have descended from the Persian speaking Iranians. They have lived in valleys surrounded by high mountains because of which they have been able to preserve the ethnic, cultural and linguistic identity. Uzbek make up 25% of the population of Tajikistan. They live in the Leninabad oblast in northern Tajikistan. Many Tajiks also live in Uzbekistan’s Fergana Valley. The territorial aspirations have reemerged in the post independent phase. 62

Present Situation: As per the Alma Ata declaration of 1991, the old inter republic boundary between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan has been elevated to the level of international border. The Tajik resent the inclusion of Samarkand, Bukhara and other historic Tajik populated city of the Zeravshan Valley into Uzbekistan. Some also lay claim to the Surkhan Darya region southwest of Dushanbe. As against these demands of the Tajiks, the Uzbek nationalists demand that the Fergana Valley towns in Tajikistan such as Khodjent, Istara, Kanibandam be returned to Uzbekistan. These towns has been excluded from the Tajik Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic created in 1924. These were

only included when Tajikistan was made a republic in 1929. Uzbekistan have also placed landmines on its border with Tajikistan. The Tajik state Border Protection Committee claims that 22 Tajiks have been killed.⁶³

(f) Turkmenistan-Uzbekistan:

Geographical Setting: Through the Alma Ata declaration of 1991, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are committed to observing the existing inter republic boundary as the international boundary now. Though there are no official boundary dispute between these two, there are a number of informal territorial claims made by the nationalist of both these countries.

The length of the border between these two countries is 1621 kms. To a large part this boundary forms part of the Amy Darya. The border starts at a junction near Afghanistan and runs north westward upto 56° longitude where it meets the Kazakhstan border.

Historical Background: In the late nineteenth century the rule of Imperial Russia was extended to what is now Turkmenistan. Both Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan were established on October 1924 as the socialist republic of the U.S.S.R.

The new boundaries varied from the old boundary. The territory of Khiva Khanate was divided between Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Karakalpak Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic and Turkmenistan. The Kokand Kanate was divided between Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan while

Bhukara emirate was divided between Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan.  

The ethnic Turkmen are the majority in Turkmenistan making up 73% of the total population. There are some Uzbek populated pockets in the northern and eastern parts, most notably in the Dashowrz region.

Present Situation: There are several nationalist and secessionist claims on the both sides of the border. The Uzbek nationalist claim the strip of territory southeast of Chardzhov between the existing border and the Oxus part of the Tashavz region of the northern Turkmenistan. On the other hand the Turkomen nationalist lay claim to the area of Uzbekistan South of Bukhara. They claim the city also.

(6) Ecological Problems:

The environmental problems in Central Asia are of transnational character. Two important issues that demand attention are the ecological crisis around the Aral Sea and the controversy related to the use of water.

Ecological Crisis around Aral Sea:- The Aral Sea as well the whole Aral Sea basin achieved worldwide notoriety as one of the major human induced environmental degradation of the 20th century. It is often referred to as Quiet Chernobyl. The resentment about the state of the Aral Sea is very great among the local people today and gets reflected in the following verse:-

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65 The International Geographical Union has singed out the Aral basis as one of the earths critical zones.
When God loved us
He gave us the Amu Darya
When he ceased to love us
He sent us Russian engineers

The Aral Sea is a terminal lake that is fed by two major rivers, the Syr Darya and the Amu Darya. It forms a natural border between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. In 1960, the Aral Sea was the fourth largest lake in the world but today it is on the verge of deteriorating into a small and dirty water body. The shrinking of the Aral Sea has attracted the attention of governments, environment and development organizations, media and public around the world only from the mid 1980’s when the policy of Glasnost (openness) was adopted. The policy of Glasnost allowed the fuller airing of the problems and grievances of the Aral Sea that was already well known to elites.

The Aral Sea is situated approximately 6000 kilometers to the east of the Caspian Sea. The Aral Sea gets its name form the numerous islands that are found here. In Kazkh language “Aral’ means ‘island’ There used to be more than 1,100 island that were separated by lagoons and narrow straits.

Till 1960, the Aral Sea covered 66,000 square kms and was the fourth largest lake is the world. Though the Aral Sea lies between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, all the five states of Central Asia share the Aral Sea basin, which is an area of 6,90,000 square km. The Aral Sea is in reality a terminal lake that is fed by two major rivers, the Syr Darya in the north and the Amu Darya, in

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the South. The Amu Darya, the largest river in the region, starts from the Kunlun mountains in the Hindu Kush range and runs north west through the Pamir heights and then flows through Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and once again through Uzbekistan before entering the Aral Sea. The Syr Darya river starts from a northern base of the Tien Shan Mountain in Kyrgyzstan, flows through Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and then into the Aral Sea.

The sea sustains a good harvest of fishery. Variety of fish species are found chief of which is the Aral sturgeon. The deltas were rich in biodiversity. Marshes and wetlands were found. Large population of Saika (antelope) wild boars, wild, fox, muskrat, turkey, goose and duck were found.

Before the arrival of imperial Russia in the region, the population living here was predominantly nomadic. This was due to the desert environment of the region. The primary task of the Russian government was to settles the population into agricultural communities. It was found that if irrigation was provided, the land would be good for agriculture. As such canals were dug to facilitate agriculture and most of the agricultural production in the region was dependant on irrigation. Cotton cultivation was promoted in the region because the geographic conditions suited it. The first major irrigation project came into operation in 1939 with the construction of a canal surrounding the Fergana valley in Uzbekistan. In the late 1940's large amount of water from the river

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Syr Darya was diverted to the Kizil – Orda in Kazakhstan and near Taskhant in Uzbekistan for agricultural purposes.

In the 1950’s and 1970’s more canals were dug to promote cotton monoculture. These includes the five hundred miles Qara Qum Canal from Amu Darya to Ashkabad, the Mirzachol Sahar irrigation network, the Chu Canal in Kyrgyzstan and the Bahr-i-Tajik reservoir in Tajikistan.\textsuperscript{70}

The tragic demise of the Aral Sea began in 1960. The irrigation schemes diverted so much water, that by late 1970’s virtually none of this water reached the sea. Whatever little water that reached the Aral Sea was so polluted by the (over-use of chemical fertilisers and pesticides that its pollution level was seven times that of generally acceptable world standards.\textsuperscript{71}

Before 1960, 55 million cubic meters of water flowed into the Aral Sea. During the 1980s the average flow into the sea was only 7 billion cubic meters. In 1990’s only 1 to 5 billion cubic meters have reached the sea. Since 1960, seventy-five per cent of the lakes volume has been lost and there are fears that it may dry up completely by 2015. As such a there is a crying need for sustainable development in the region through mutual cooperation of the command countries.

Environmental Degradation due to Aral Sea

Not only has the Aral Sea shrunk in size, the region around the Aral Sea has also undergone environmental degradation.


Some major environmental problems of the region are discussed below:-

(i) Desertification:- It has now claimed an area within a radius of about 200 kilometers from the shoreline. The area is covered with dust and salt and is causing changes to the climate patterns of the region and has detrimentally affected the livelihood of the region's inhabitants. Fishing has completely stopped and about 10 million hectares of the pastures have been lost due to the mineralisation of the river water.72

The Aral Sea level has dropped from 53 meters above sea level to 36 meters. Its surface has shrunk by half and volume by three-quarters. The Uzbek Academy of Sciences says that the desert to the South and east of the Aral Sea has already expanded to 5 million hectares. This is often referred to as 'white desert.'73

(ii) Destruction of fish population in the Aral Sea:– Fishing was a thriving business in the Aral Sea before 1960. The fact that more than 60 percent of the lake has disappeared plus the increasing amounts of pollutants entering the Aral Sea by rivers has adversely affected fishing. The salinity of the Aral Sea water has increased to such an extent that many areas in it have the salinity of the open seas.

(iii) Climatic Changes: The drying of the Aral Sea has brought about noticeable changes in the climatic conditions. The sea warming effect in winter and its cooling effect in summer has decreased dramatically. Because of

73 The toxic salt pans encrust its surface after merging with the Karakum (black desert) and Kyzylkum (red desert), that surround the Aral Sea.
continental climate, the Aral Sea has an annual temperature range of upto $70^\circ$C ranging from $40^\circ$C in summer to minus $30^\circ$C in winter. In the past, the Aral Sea mitigated the cold winds form Siberia in winter, while in summer, the high evaporation kept the summer milder in the region. In spite of the high evaporation, the water balance in the region was maintained because of the vast supplies of water from the two rivers. As a result of the climatic change in the region, summers are short and dry and winters and cold and long. The precipitation on the shores of the Aral Sea has reduced.

(iv) Health Conditions:- The environmental crisis has affected the health conditions of the people. People have little access to drinking water. The chemical runoff from the farm lands has polluted the water even more. The mineral context in the water has increased fourfold to 40 gram per litre. Both human and livestock are threatened by this quality of water,

The toxic residues when blown by wind causes respiratory disease. The child mortality rate in the region has increased in the period after 1970.

The solution to these problem can be arrived through a coordinated effort of all the countries affected by this problem. There is a need for regional co-operation on environment related issues, in the region. The amount of water withdrawn from the rivers tributaries should be drastically reduced. It can be done by imposing water usage charge on the people. Alternatively, improved irrigation methods can be used, like using sprinkler system, or drip irrigation instead of the flooding method as practiced today. Not only this, the agricultural practices may also change. In the Soviet period, an integrated
system of agriculture was practiced where the Aral Sea region of Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan produced cotton for the entire Soviet Union while Ukraine produced wheat for the entire Soviet Union. These agricultural commodities were sent to the republic that needed it. But now as these countries have become independent, they need to become self sufficient in all the agricultural commodities. This can be done by diversifying agriculture rather than by promoting monoculture.

(8) Issues Relating to Water Sharing:

Wars of the next century will be over water. The potential for conflict over river water use is very strong in the Central Asian States. The role of water resources in the economic development (through irrigation, hydroelectric power etc.) of the Central Asian countries has become pronounced in the post independent phase. In addition, these countries now have significant influence over their own water resources. Considering that the rivers flow across countries, the issue of water management has become more important. This problem can be overcome through regional co-operation among the riparian states. During the Soviet period, water management was centralized and under the authority of the Ministry of Land Reclamation and Water Resources in Moscow. But now in the post independent period, these countries have influence over their own water resources.

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Political Geography: Future water related conflict in the Central Asian region may be anticipated because of a poor match between the political and physical boundaries. As mentioned earlier, the current political demarcation in Central Asia is the result of actions taken by the Soviet authorities in Turkestan in 1924-25.

Hydrographic Characteristics: Central Asia experiences hot summer and cool to cold winters. The precipitation varies from 100 mm to 300 mm. It is 100mm in the Kara Kum and Kyzl Kum deserts, Aral Sea, and the Fergana basin. The arc of 300mm rainfall or more lies in the foothills of the mountains in the south and east.\textsuperscript{76} The water requirement in the water deficient region is mainly for agricultural, industrial and domestic use. Agriculture consumes about 90 percent of the water availability while industry consumes 7 percent and domestic consumption accounts for the remaining 3 percent. The water requirement is fulfilled through the diversion of water of rivers Amu Darya, Syr Darya, and Zeravshan and its tributaries. All the three rivers are fed by seasonal snow and ice melt from the high mountainous areas. The Syr Darya and the Amu Darya flow out of the Tein Shan and the Pamir mountains respectively and drain into Aral Sea.\textsuperscript{77} The Zeravshan originates in the high Pamir of the northeast Tajikistan. It flows through the Kyzl Kum desert and disappears there (before reaching Amu Darya) because of high rate of evaporation.

**Water Use:** The availability of water is limited because of three main reasons
(a) The growing population requires more water for agricultural, industry and
domestic use. (b) Water supplies are used more rapidly than they are renewed. 
(c) The access of water supplies is concerned in the hands of few people.

The upstream republics of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan consume much 
less water than their downstream counterparts. Uzbekistan alone consumes 60 
percent of the regional water supplies. Irrigation is the single most important 
consumer of water in all the republics. It is noteworthy that Uzbekistan and 
Tukmenistan have industrial consumption at twice that of Tajikistan and 
Kyrgyzstan.

As these countries have recently gained independence, they have just 
started water management institutions. Thus, there are possibilities for the 
eruption of water based conflict in the region. It can be solved through regional 
co-operation.

This has led to vulnerability of the Central Asian Republics to water 
based conflicts. The exploitation of water resources in Central Asia has the 
potential to destablise not only its internal stability but external relations as 
well. The increasing concern for potential conflicts among the Central Asian 
states emerges from the practice of swaping water for energy resources. The 
relationship between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan is affected because of this. 78

The potential conflict areas in Central Asia may be identified:

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78 Daphne, Biliouri, “Keeping the lid on Central Asia” Water dispute” Janes Intelligence 
Syr Darya Basin- The potential for conflict between Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan is high. Kyrgyzstan enjoys its riparian position of being an upstream country. It can exercise control over the amount of Syr Darya flowing into Uzbekistan. Uzbekistan needs more water for irrigation. Disagreements between these two countries over the use of Syr Darya water has arisen shortly after both countries become independent.

Problem between Kazakhstan and Tajikistan over sharing of Syr Darya water also has the potential for destabilizing relations between these two countries. But considering that these countries do not have common boundary the tension may not assume alarming proportions.

(b) Amy Darya basin: The potential for conflict is between two downstream countries of Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. There have been outbreaks of violence in the delta of Amu Darya over the diversion of river water and redirection of drainage water flows from the irrigated fields across the republic boundaries.

(c) Zeravshan Basin:- Currently all the water of the Zeravshan basin is used in the Samarkand and Bukhara province of Uzbekistan. Tajikistan has expressed its desire to divert 12 per cent of the average annual flow form the upper Zeravshan.

Examples of Water based conflict

There have been numerous small scale, water based region conflicts in Central Asia. Some of the important conflicts are:-
Fergana basin- Recent outbreaks of conflict of local significance has taken place in the Fergna basin. It was provoked by competition for scarce resources. The general decline in the economic situation has further accentuated this problem. In 1990, a dispute over land and water in Osh region of Kyrgyzstan along its border with Uzbekistan claimed over 300 lives.

The Uzbek living in the Osh region, together with a high population density and finite amount of arable land in the mountaineous region contributed to the conflict. Another local conflict in the Fergana basin involved the republics of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Three enclaves were created in the fertile valleys of the Pamir mountain is south western Kyrgyzstan that belonged to the neighboring republics.

(ii) Lower Amu Darya – Local outbreak of violence has taken place between Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan (Dashhowvz province of Turkmenistan and Khorazm province and Karakalpakstan within Uzbekistan). The violence erupted over the redirection of the drainage waters. Turkmenistan has started work on extending the Tiyamuyan canal past Dashhowvz to increase water diversion. It may further heighten tension in the areas.

Avoiding water based conflict in Central Asia is of prime concern. It can be done through regional cooperation as almost all the five states are involved.

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The Central Asian republics are following their own separate development paths. Identification of possible areas of water based conflict, and the creation and evolution of new institutions to deal with the evolving geographic issues, may help lay the ground work for broaden inter-regional cooperation.

(9) Economic Factors

(a) The economic basis for regional integration in Central Asia rests on a common economic policy for the region under the Soviet rule. Under the Soviet system, one of the primary economic functions of Central Asia was the supply of raw material, particularly cotton. As far as industrial production is concerned, these countries had infant industries for the production of technologically sophisticated products, for example, manufacture, of transport aircraft was done in Uzbekistan.

(b) Structural differences in economic issues is found among these countries today. These differences existed in the Soviet times also and have become pronounced as these countries gained independence. For example, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan have not joined the integration efforts of the neighbouring countries like Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. Turkmenistan’s economy had been initially buoyed by the export of natural gas and so it did not feel the need to join the integration efforts. But the economic slumps of 1994 has made Turkmensitatn give a second thought to joining the integration efforts.
(c) Another factor of homogeneity between these countries is that the World Bank has classified these in the category of "lower middle income" countries. Only Tajikistan is classified as low income country. The difference in per capita Gross National Product of these countries is very low. The similarity in the economic condition may smoothen integration efforts in the future.

(d) The educational level of these countries is also similar. In the Soviet period there was state funding of education because of which the quality of education in these countries was good. But since gaining independence, the government funding in science and education has reduced drastically. It may result in shortage of qualified individuals which may become a bottleneck in economic development. Though in a negative way, this also happens to be a unifying force of these five Central Asian republics.

Because of the above mentioned commonalities, these states should develop a high degree of regional integration in the coming years. This would make it necessary to homogenize the various concepts of economic policy. It may be difficult to arrive initially, but in the long run this should be the best option for all the five countries. The region can become an economic force if they jointly project themselves in the world economic system rather than dealing individually with the world economic system.

(10) Transport and Communications:

All the five countries are land locked countries. Access to sea is a common problem for all these countries. There are various options available to
these countries. The choices of routes vary from Iran, Turkey, Afghanistan and Pakistan or via China.

(11) Security Issue:

The Central Asian countries has assumed great geostrategic significance in the present time. In fact, this region has historically been the area of major military campaigns.

1. This area has also experienced many waves of Muslim conquest and invasion in the 7th century A.D.

2. Mongol invasion have been predominant in this region. The Mongol campaigns went to areas like West Asia and Europe.

3. This area has also experienced the struggle for dominance between two European Powers in the form of Russia and Britain. It is also turned as “Great Game”.

4. By the second half of the 19th century, Russia had consolidated its hold over the region. After the Russian revolution of 1917, it started the process of forming new republics in the region. By the year 1936, five full republics came into existence. These republics had a heterogeneous mixture of ethnic population. Borders were arbitrarily drawn showing scant respect to the peopling of the region.

5. Now that these countries have become independent, the security related issues have the potential to assume dimensions of tension and insecurity in the region. There are other issue that have made this region geostratagically very important. It includes the handling of the nuclear issues. Kazakhstan is
the only the Asian country apart from China and India that has nuclear weapons. It has a total of 1,340 strategic nuclear weapons and 650 of tactical nuclear weapons. The proper handling of the nuclear weapons is major issue. There is a great speculation as to what would happen to these weapons when the overall responsibility of the Soviet Union ceases. If the control of these weapons come in terrorist hands, it could have dangerous implications for the world peace.

6. Terrorism is a security issue that has arrived in the world with a vengeance. Even after the fall of Taliban regime in Afghanistan, terrorism great potential to destabilise the prospects of peace in the region. This problem is compounded with the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in the region. Both these fit hand in glove with each other. It is hoped that the present global campaign against terrorism should bring an end to this problem.

II. GLOBAL FACTORS (EXTRA REGIONAL FACTORS IN REGIONAL INTEGRATION)

The Global Factors in regional integration includes

(i) Natural resources and the interests of the foreign multinationals in the region. (Politics related with oil etc)

(ii) Aspirations of the international players for leadership in the region (role of Russia, Iran, Turkey, Pakistan etc.)

Changes are unfurling in Central Asia with each passing year. It is being anticipated as to what sort a new great game would emerge in Central Asia. Trends show that the tendency for regional cooperation is increasing in the
region. The proposal for a "United Central Asia" was mooted at a summit at Tashkent in 1993. It would be too early to speculate on the nature and viability of an ideal integration in the region.

The factors mentioned above are the major issues over which cooperation is required among the Central Asian countries. These factors have the potential to destabilise relations between the countries. The positives thing is that the countries realise that these problem can be solved by mutual cooperation among themselves.