CHAPTER III
STUDY OF AREA

ECO Members in Brief
3.1. INTRODUCTION:

The Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) is an intergovernmental regional organization established in 1985 by the Islamic Republic of Iran, Islamic Republic of Pakistan and Republic of Turkey. ECO is the successor of the Regional Cooperation for Development (RCD) which remained in existence since 1964. ECO was later expanded in 1992 to include seven new members i.e. Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Republic of Azerbaijan, Republic of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Republic of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Republic of Uzbekistan. The objectives of the organization, stipulated in the Charter of the Treaty of Izmir include promotion of conditions for sustained economic growth in the region while transport and communications, trade and investment and energy are the high priority areas in ECO's scheme of work, other fields of cooperation such as industry, agriculture, health, science & education, drug control and human development are also on the agenda of ECO.
3.2. Azerbaijan

Fig. 3.1: Location of Azerbaijan in ECO


Fig. 3.2: Mosque in Baku
3.3: Festival in Baku

The Republic of Azerbaijan, placed in the Caucasia region is located between Europe and Southwestern Asia and on the coast of the Caspian Sea. The Independent region of Qarabagh is part of its lands which was conquered by the Armenians. Climatically the Republic of Azerbaijan has some different forms. Generally the north and east of the country are almost dry and mountainous.

Area of the Republic of Azerbaijan including the independent Republic of Nakhjavan is 86,600 km². Main non-mineral resources of this country are forests covering almost 11% of its lands. Oil, gas and electricity are the three main resources of energy in this country. According to 2007 census, its population is 8,532,400. Baku, Ganja, Ali-Bayramli and Susa are the main cities of this country. Geographically, Azerbaijan is one of the important and prominent countries regionally and internationally because it is in the middle of five other newly separated republics, it is like an intersection and close to east and west; it is the most important southern neighbor of Russia and the most important northern neighbor of Iran. Therefore, its huge resources of energy have made the neighboring countries try to get their hands on this country and to penetrate it.

Azerbaijan has huge natural resources like oil, gas, rich mines (iron, aluminum, copper, mercury, gold, sodium, magnesium, building materials, ceramic and china, Semi-precious stones, mineral water) and also more than 8,350 rivers and 400 lakes which all add to the countries importance. Since September 1994 so far Azerbaijan has signed 19 international contracts with oil companies all over the world in order to increase investment in oil industry ($60 Billion). According to oil experts, the amount of oil production in Azerbaijan and its neighboring countries will equal the amount of production in Kuwait.

On the other side, existence of huge mineral resources in Caspian Sea is one of the other considerable issues in geostrategic study of Azerbaijan which had led to conflicts between Iran and Russia on ownership of Azerbaijan on these resources. Also the way of transferring Azerbaijan’s oil and gas to western markets is also considered one of the important geopolitical issues. Russia in this case suggests the coastal city of Novorossiysk in the Black Sea, the Iranian government declares itself as the cheapest way of energy transfer and America, Georgia, Turkey and Azerbaijan suggest Baku-Jeihan pipeline in order to transfer gas to other countries.

Another considerable point is that because of weak defense conditions Azerbaijan is an easy prey for other countries to invade from north to south and from south to north. On the other side, the Caspian Sea and its separation from other big seas has caused Azerbaijan to somehow stay away from development and establish relations with other countries.

3.2.1. Historical Background

In the first century (AD), Azerbaijan was under dominance of the Russians. As the third century started, this country was conquered by Iran and was under Iranian dominance till the 11th century AD. In the 11th century AD Arabs took control of this country. As time passed, Seljuks dominated this country and that is why this country faced a cultural and architectural renaissance. After long conflicts between Iran, Turkey and Russia this country was dominated by Russia in 1813. In this year, Iran gave Azerbaijan to the Russians and the Aras River was set as the border through signing a treaty. Through 1918 and 1920 Azeries tried to get independence many times but their efforts were in vain and this country in 1922 along with Armenia,
Georgia and Russia formed Federative Republic of Russia. Russia also formed the independent state of qarabagh inside the borders of Azerbaijan. This federal government was dissolved in 1936, but the above three mentioned countries still stayed under the dominance of Russians. During years after the war, Azerbaijan was a producer of crude oil and textiles for the Soviet Union of Russia. Eventually in 1991 with coup in Soviet Union and collapse of this Union, Azerbaijan gained independence in October 1991. Independence of Azerbaijan occurred under conditions that prevailed from many years ago and especially since 1988 this country had been in the crisis of Qarabagh and conflicts between Azeries and Armenians. As Azerbaijan gained independence, this crisis increased and turned to a devastating war. Ultimately in 1994 the treaty of ceasefire was signed between Armenians and Azeries. In 1999 when Republic of Qarabagh declared independence, this crisis ended.1

3.2.2. Political Structures and economic

Azerbaijan government is a parliamentary, multiparty government with a legislating parliament. The Political system of this country is secular and it joined the European Council in 2001. The Republic of Azerbaijan which consists of Baku as the capital city has 59 regions, 11 cities, an independent republic called Nakhichevan and an independent region i.e. Qarabagh. Its constitution passed on 12 November 1995 is based on the system of power distribution. The president is selected for a five-year period with a provision for the president to be selected a second time. The Parliament of this country has 125 members who are elected through votes of people for five years.2

The Republic of Azerbaijan, compared to the other republics after the collapse of Soviet Union, expanded more through benefitting from oil resources and external investment. However inflation and outcomes of Qarabagh War, together with the policy of freeing the prices and privatization, people suffered heavy economic pressure. Since 1996 increase of oil-contract incomes, developing process of foreign economies, loans from International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, assistance of America and European countries helped the economy of this country to develop more.

Economic reformations and freeing business created a new class of merchants and manufacturers with little capital. Despite this, Azerbaijan is proceeding from concentrated communist economy to market economy. After Soviet Union’s collapse, Azerbaijan focused mostly on development of oil activities and Semi-mechanized agriculture. Despite suitable conditions for agriculture, this country has to import $400 million food material.

Extraction of crude oil and natural gas, production of oil byproducts, metal industry, extraction of iron ore, production of cement, chemicals and petrochemicals and textile are the most important economic activities of this country. 41 percent of labor force of this country is in agriculture and 7 percent is working in industry. The other 52 percent is working on service-giving sections. According to formal statistics, unemployment rate in this country is 1.1%.¹

Generally its economic activities are including agriculture, hunting, forest conservation, mines, electricity, gas, oil, major and minor business, brokering, transportation and restaurant trade. Main agricultural products of this country are: wheat, rice, rye, corn, tomato, sugar beet and potato. Its industrial products are also wine, beer, mineral water, cigarette, cotton weavings, electricity, gasoil and mazzot. Unit of money in this country is Manat. Generally, the rate of national gross growth in this country in 2008 was almost 18.3%, the total direct foreign investment in 2005 was almost $41615.5 million and the average inflation rate in the same year was almost 9.6%.²

3.2.3. Cultural, Social Situation

Religion and Society: Islam 93.4%, Russian Orthodox 3.5%, Armenian Orthodox 2.3%, other 1.8% (Census of 1995).

Islam is the religion of majority of the people in Azerbaijan. After empowerment of Safavids in Iran, Shiite religion in Azerbaijan spread under the dominance of Iran and despite lots of conflicts with Ottomans and controversies between Shiites and Sunnis, most Muslims of this country remained Shiites. Today

¹ http://web.worldbank.org/website/external/countries/ecaext/azerbaijan,country
² http://www.ecosecretariat.org.statistics
three quarters of Azerbaijan Muslims are Shiite and the others are Sunni (Hanafi). Christianity is the second major religion in Azerbaijan after Islam. It is said that a small percentage of people without belief in One God (before Islam) are present in Azerbaijan. Following Islamic principles in Azerbaijan is not like other Islamic countries and drinking alcohol and disregard of using a Hijab (Burqua) by women is apparent in this country.

3.2.4. Religion and Politics

Azerbaijan has a history and religion influenced by Iran. 87% of all its population is Muslim in which three quarters are Shiite. Through dominance and rule of Russians over this country, the role of religion has decreased in Azerbaijan and many of its mosques have been closed and Muslims conducted their worship and prayers at home. After WWI in order to prove freedom of religion, the Soviet Union established “Spiritual Council of Muslims” in Baku and encouraged Azeri officials to meet religious leader of this council and or invite Muslim religious scholars from other countries. In the 80th decade Allah Shokour Hemmat Oghlu Pashazadeh was declared the top religious scholar of spiritual council of Muslims. After independence of Azerbaijan, this council was renamed as the “Supreme Religious Council of Caucasian Community” in late 1993; the Top Religious Scholar attended the oath taking ceremony of Heidar Ali of and prayed for him. Despite this apparent presence, clergymen do not have roles in political system of Azerbaijan and their presence is usually a formality. According to the constitution of Azerbaijan, this country is secular and does not have a formal religion and policies of government are to achieve a secular government.1

3.2.5. Traditions and Customs

Traditions and customs of Azerbaijan have roots in Islamic culture and traditions which have been influenced by Western culture in recent centuries. Meanwhile, influence of Russians on Azeri culture because of their government and historical dominance is more apparent than that of other cultures. One of the surviving traditions is reading old myths with music. The reading is performed by readers called “Ashiq”. Kebab and rice are the famous Azeri dishes and their popular drink is tea.

1 Ahmadi Lafouraki. a guide book of Caspian area, central Asian countries and southern Caucasia, p. 163.
That is why there are numerous of tea houses in Azerbaijan. Eating caviar with food is common. Shaking hands is a custom for greeting and hospitality is one of the old western characteristics of Azeri’s.

3.2.6. Ethnics Diversity

Azerbaijani 90%, Daghistani 3.2%, Armenian 2%, other tribes 2.3% Azeris are the biggest ethnic group of Azerbaijan. These tribes have settled in big cities and fertile agricultural lands of Azerbaijan. Daghistanis have mostly settled on the northern borders next to Daghistan of Russia. Lezgis constitute another major tribe in Azerbaijan. These Lezgis are in contact with Lezgis of Russia and demand more rights. Kurds, Taleshis, Avars and Tats are other tribes of Azerbaijan. Taleshis are among dependent tribes of Iran and live in southeast Azerbaijan. Taleshis also like Lezgis demand more freedom and social rights from government of Azerbaijan. Moet Armenians of Azerbaijan live in Qarabagh and the two governments of Azerbaijan and Armenia have had conflicts over this area.1

3.2.7. Social Corruption

In the early 90 decade because of economic reformations, formation of economic Mafia in Qarabagh and also reorganization of military associations, Azerbaijan faced an increase in crime and corruption. In these periods, armed violent bands were born and they brought a new form of crime and corruption to Azerbaijan. According to Russian and American data, drug export constitutes a large chunk of exports in Azerbaijan. In 1993 the US foreign ministry declared that 80% of Russia’s drug export is conducted through Azerbaijan. According to reports of security sources in Russia, 82% of drugs imported to Moscow and 38.6% of imports to Russia in 1993 have been through Azerbaijan. The rate of crime in Azerbaijan has decreased in recent years and in consulate notices of different countries there are no more security warnings visible, regarding travel to Azerbaijan. From 1992 to 1996 crime and corruption have decreased by 24% in this country. Kidnapping is very rare but it is advisable that plans be settled in this regard. Despite this, according to reports of human rights organizations, misuse of executive authority in the form of organized groups is increasing among military forces.

1 Koolaee, Elaheh. ECO and regional convergence, The center of science research and Middle Asia strategic studies, Tehran, 2000, p. 246.
3.3. Uzbekistan

Fig. 3.4: Location of Uzbekistan in ECO


Fig. 3.5: Amir Timor Square

Source: www.googlphoto.com
Fig. 3.6: Uzbekistan Nature

Source: www.googlphoto.com

Fig. 3.7: Uzbekistan Animal

Source: www.googlphoto.com
Uzbekistan in the heart of central Asia, It shares borders with Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Kirgizstan and Kazakhstan. Its capital is Tashkent. Its area is 447 km². Vast plains cover almost two third of the country, water resources are very little. The main feature of Uzbekistan’s climate is much temperature variation, little annual rainfall and a lot of sunshine.

Because of its geographical, economic, historical, cultural, ethnic and religious elements Uzbekistan has specific geopolitical and economic conditions. Firstly because Uzbekistan is located in the centre where Europe from the West and Asia from the East meet together, in the North it meets Russia and in the South it borders the world of Islam. Secondly it has no direct access to seas/oceans. Thirdly it is because natural resources especially gas, oil, coal and gold are abundant in this country.

The Population of this country in 2006 was 26,981,000. Ethnic groups of this country are Uzbek, Russian, Tajik, Kazakh, Tatar and other tribes. Russians and Tajiks are the most populous groups after Uzbeks.

Uzbekistan is the most populated country in Central Asia. It is located in the geographical center. It can turn into one of the economic powers in the region because of its increasing population, different natural resources and diverse economy. The Key position and main role of Uzbekistan in political geography of the region cannot be ignored because of the reasons mentioned as well as other reasons it has the potential and capability of being a dominant power in the region. Uzbekistan has affluent oil resources and is self-sufficient in this regard. This country is the second producer of natural gas among independent countries of commonwealth, one of the top ten producers of gas, the seventh top producer of gold in the world, the fourth in gold resources, the fourth producer of uranium in the world, the third producer of copper in the previous Soviet Union, the tenth holder of the biggest copper resources in the world, the second exporter of cotton in the world and the fourth producer of electricity among independent commonwealth countries. Uzbekistan is located between two big rivers of Amu Darya and Syr Darya, and these two rivers provide irrigation to agricultural lands in the region. On the other hand, sharing borders with Afghanistan, especially after September 11th attacks and war against terrorism, it plays a key and strategic role in security and stability of Central Asia.

### 3.3.1. Political and Economic Status

The first inhabitants of Uzbekistan were nomads who spoke Persian. Samarqand and Bukhara were centers of power and culture. In the early 5th century BC the kingdoms of Bakhtaran, Saghdian and Tocharian were established in this region. As the Silk route became famous as a bridge connecting between East and West, attention of Iranians towards Transoxiana was drawn more and its cities found wealth because of this transportation, and Transoxiana became one of the important regions of Iranians. Additionally, Transoxiana was the center of science and religion and great scholars of religions of that time like Zoroastrianism, Manoism and Buddhism lived there.

In the early 14th century AC Timor came to power in Asia and conquered Transoxiana like he did many other places. He gathered a number of poets, artists and scholars of that time in his capital, Samarqand and caused development and growth of Uzbek culture. After Timor's death, his dynasty ended and Uzbek tribes who had settled in north of Aral Lake started regaining their lands. As time passed in the 19th century, Russians gradually started conquering countries of Central Asia and seized Transoxiana in order to reach free waters and conquer India. In the beginning of the 20th century, the whole of Central Asia including Uzbekistan went totally under the rule of Russian Empire. After the victory of the Bolshevik Revolution and coming to power of Communists, the Soviet Union of Russia was created which included the countries of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. In 1929 the Republic of Tajikistan was separated from Uzbekistan.

During WWII attention of Russian politicians was drawn towards countries of Central Asia and many heavy industries were moved to these countries. This movement was followed by migration of Slavs and other European tribes and also exiles. At the beginning of 90th decade BC and after the failed coup in Moscow and collapse of Soviet Union of Russia, Uzbekistan gained independence in December 1991. This independence was held on referendum on 29th December the same year and Islam Karimov, the first administrator of communist party was selected president with 86% of the votes in his favor.
According to the Constitution of Uzbekistan, political regimen of this country is Republic Democratic and three Institutions of Executive, Legislature and Judiciary act independently from each other, but in reality the Executive institution, especially the president himself has the most power in the country and the two Institutions of Legislature and Judiciary are dependent on him.

The President in Uzbekistan has authority over the Executive Institution, government, board of ministers and authority over whole powers and all decisive and strategic decisions like announcement of war, emergency, specific situation and also appointment and dismissal of top officials and signing contracts and agreements are all carried out by him. Of course, in many of these cases approval of Noble Parliament is necessary, but practically it is the president who has the authority for making important and strategic decisions.

The President of Uzbekistan is selected by votes of people through public election for a 5-year period which is extendible. The President is head of the Executive Institution and has authority over all three institutions. Therefore, appointment and dismissal of supreme commanders and military authorities are carried out by him. Diplomats and other representatives of the Republic of Uzbekistan in other countries are also appointed and dismissed by the president. Ministers of the cabinet, prime minister, chief assistant of prime minister, assistants of ministers,
attorney general and his assistants, chiefs and members of constitution court, supreme court and supreme court of economy, director-general of management board in central bank and chief of Uzbekistan environment conservation committee are selected by the president and after approval of Noble Parliament, they take up their responsibilities. Appointment and dismissal of chief and assistant of Noble Parliament is carried out by the parliament.

3.3.2. Economy

Uzbekistan is a dry land in which only 10% of the land is fit for agriculture. More than 60% of their populations are villagers. Uzbekistan is a major producer of gold, oil and chemicals.

Since the time of independence in late December 1991 the government through setting subsidy and intensive control over prices has tried to control the economy. In order to fight against economic problems and providing market-based economy, the government projected huge economic plans. Its agriculture products are wheat, rice, rye, corn, potato, dry seeds, cotton, water melon, grapes, and fibers. Industrial products include drinks, cigarette, textile, acid sulfuric, chemical fertilizers, gasoil, oil, cement, TV receivers and electric energy. Uzbekistan is rich in terms of minerals. There are more than 750 types of minerals found in Uzbekistan. Its currency is Soum. Its national gross rate of growth in 2008 was almost 9% of the total direct external investment in 2005 which was almost $455.4 million and the average rate of inflation in the same year was almost 7.8%.

Uzbekistan is one of the biggest producers and exporters of cotton in the world. It is also one of the leading producers of gold in the world. Its imports include plastic, chemical products, metals, machinery equipments, food and energy. This country is the seventh in terms of Uranium resources and regarding its production it is the 13th or 14th country in the world. In the production of copper also, Uzbekistan has a top rank. Its trading partners are China, France, Germany, Kazakhstan, South Korea, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkey and the US. Its foreign business in 2007 was $2255 million.¹

¹ http://www.ecosecretariat.org.statistics
3.3.3. Cultural and Social Conditions

Religion and Society: Muslim 88% (15% Shiite the rest Sunni), Russian Orthodox 9%, other (Jew, Protestant, Baptist, Catholic, Bahai, etc.) 3%.

Muslims constitute the majority of Uzbekistan’s population. Before independence of this country, Muslims were under strict control of Soviet Union of Russia and only after independence, their condition has become better. It is estimated that 15% of the Muslims in this country are Shiites. After Muslims, Orthodox Russians are the major religious minority. They are mostly in main cities of Uzbekistan especially Tashkent. Jews are other religious minority and they are estimated to be almost 30,000. Jews are mostly in Tashkent, Samarqand and Bukhara. Since the independence of Uzbekistan almost 40,000 people have migrated to Israel and the US. Other religious minorities of Uzbekistan are Korean Christians, Baptists, Catholics, Protestants, Buddhists and Bahais.\(^1\)

3.3.4. Religion and Politics

Uzbekistan government is a secular government and supports the notion of separation between religion and politics. Constitution of this country supports religious freedoms and emphasizes on separation of religion from politics. But in practice the government does not follow the constitution and religious freedom faces challenges. Uzbekistan government intensively suppresses any kind of non-permitted activities of Islamic groups and a number of prisoners on this issue is rising. The government prevents any kind of religious activity that may threaten for it and this prohibition is not only for Muslims. But all regions it is intensively worried about influence of religious activities on ethnic pattern of society and monitors religious activities. Relations between followers of different religions are good; nevertheless, a radical Islamic group called Taher party actively confronts Jews. Permitted activities of groups and organizations are tolerated by the government but there is a firm supervision over these groups. According to the present situation, different religions and even Islam doesn’t have any role in political system of the government.

\(^1\) Ahmadi Lafouraki. a guide book of Caspian area, central Asian countries and southern Caucasia, p. 283.
3.3.5. Nationalities

Uzbek 80%, Russian 5.5%, Tajik 5%, Kazakh 3%, Karakalpak 2.5%, Tatar 1.5%, other 2.5% (census of 1996).

Since mid-90 Uzbekistan became a country with mono national population. Through independence of this country, the population of Russians and Jews has decreased greatly and migration of immigrant Uzbeks of other countries to Uzbekistan has increased. Long presence of Russians in Uzbekistan during the years of Soviet Union rule and before that has had a great influence on different cultural, social and economic parts of this country. Because of presence in political and economic power in recent years, Russians have settled mostly in Tashkent. After Russians, Tajiks are the biggest ethnic minority. It is said that the number of Tajiks in Uzbekistan has been more than what is included in the formal data. In fact the two cities of Samarqand and Bukhara belong to Tajiks and Bukhara was capital of Samanid kingdom. Nowadays Tajiks, despite a lot of oppression, have settled in these two cities and mostly Tajik Language is spoken in these cities. Relations of Tajik ethnic minority with the government are not on good terms and a lot of restrictions are imposed on them.

3.3.6. Social Corruptions

Statistics on kidnap and crime in Uzbekistan in 2002 was very high. It is because of internal conflicts especially activities of religious groups. According to statistics, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) has been responsible in many of these kidnappings especially of foreigners. Organized crimes in this country are less apparent but the data of street crimes has risen and drug traffic has also risen in this country. Insecurity in border areas especially on the border of Uzbekistan-Tajikistan and also the border of Uzbekistan-Kirgizstan has been reported frequently and there is great threat for passengers at night time.
3.4. Afghanistan

Fig. 3.9: Location of Afghanistan in ECO


Fig. 3.10: Buddhism Statue

Before The Explosions
Afghanistan with 652,225 km² area is located in southwest of Asia and is surrounded by land. This country is part of Iranian plateau and 70 percent of its land is high mountainous regions. Common languages in this country are Pashtu, Turkmen, Turk, Uzbek, Tajik, Hazara, Pashei, Imagh and Baluch. According to constitution of Afghanistan, Pashtu and Dari languages are formal languages of Afghanistan.

Hindu Kush mountain chain has covered a vast area of its lands and has always been a strong barrier for enemies. Kabul as the capital of Afghanistan and is one of the most populated cities in this country. Other important cities in Afghanistan are Herat, Qandahar, Badakhshan, Badghis, Balkh, Bamiyan, Faryab, Ghazne, Kunduz, Nimrouz and Panjshir. Population of this country according to statistics of 2006 is 22,575,900.

The term Afghanistan as a country was ratified in 1923 in the constitution of Aman Allah Shah. The term Afghan which had the same meaning with Pashto, was applied in the constitution of Muhammad Zahir Shah with a new definition that included all citizens of Afghanistan in 1964. Afghanistan historically has been a gate way to invade India. Before the discovery of new routes on the seas and later development of air ways, commercial route of west to east, the “Silk Route” passed through the north of this country. After the discovery of sea routes later the development of air ways, Afghanistan became isolated like other countries of Central Asia.

In the 10 final years of Muhammad Zahir Shah’s reign a short-term period called decade of democracy appeared which ended with a coup by Davod Khan in 1973. Then through the coup of communists and occupation of this country by the Red Army supporting the communists, a new period started in its history, but Mujahids could not form a national government. Therefore, they were soon replaced by Taliban. Finally the, Taliban regime was brought down by international coalition led by the US in 2001 and Hamid Karzai was selected as president.

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3.4.1. Political and economic status

After the Bonn conference and agreement of different Afghan groups from 2001, the interim government led by Hamid Karzai came to power. The Afghanistan is Islamic republic. According to the new political structure of this country, its rules are based on the principles of Islam. The government has undertaken to turn Afghanistan into a developed country with a system based on social justice and democracy.

Economically, Afghanistan is considered one of the least developed countries in the world and economic difficulties have intensified this backwardness. Economy of an Afghanistan started improving in 2001 after the collapse of Taliban. Many of its people live below the poverty line. The Rate of unemployment in this country is 43%. Almost 81% of its people are farmers, 11% are in industry (mainly weaving) and 9% are in services.

Afghanistan industries include textile industry which was completely destroyed during the bloody conflicts of Afghanistan. Mineral resources of Afghanistan are natural gas, chromites, beryllium, coal and iron. Resources of ruby, turquoise and azbest have also been identified in Afghanistan. Estimation of early 1980s revealed that nearly 300 million barrels of crude oil resources are available in this country. Potentials of agriculture and animal husbandry are also present. Agricultural lands of Afghanistan are still producing opium and drugs so that war lords could fund their military needs through drug traffic.¹

Economic activities of people are agriculture, forest conservation and fishing. Popular agriculture products are wheat, rice, rye, corn, potato, grapes and vegetables. Industrial products are oil, wine, fiber, wool, shoes, nitrogen, cement and electricity. Currency of this country is Afgani. The kate of annual national gross growth in 2008 was 11%, the total foreign investment in 2005 was almost $173.7 million and the average inflation rate in the same year was 11.4%.

According to the geographical location of Afghanistan and plans of the US, Afghanistan has been considered as a way of transferring oil and gas pipelines from Central Asia so that sources of energy reach Europe through this place. Regarding

¹ http://www.irtp.com
this, there are many opportunities for providing investment and giving technical-engineering services. In order to utilize natural potentials and economic advantage, the government of Afghanistan has two major plans ahead:

First, planning for creation of economic stability and security within effective frames of law in order to attract foreign investment. Second, planning for economic, social and cultural development in the country and activities for creation of suitable fundamentals to attract international investors. Afghanistan is one of the routes of gas and oil transfer from Central Asia to the Indian Ocean. Since oil resources of countries around the Caspian Sea are the richest in the world, the issue of transferring them to global markets has brought many changes in the region after independence of Central Asian countries and Caucasia in recent years.

Most debt of this country is to Russia and International Monetary Fund which reaches almost $8 billion. After the decline of Taliban, more than 60 countries in the world committed themselves to help this country. Imports of Afghanistan include machinery and equipment, chemicals, food, finished goods and medicine. Its exports are dry and fresh fruits, animal skin, wool, carpet and handicrafts. It’s most important commercial partners are Japan, Pakistan, South Korea, India, Germany, Turkmenistan and China. Foreign business level in this country in 2007 was less than $7301 million.

### 3.4.2. Culture and Religion

Formal religion of the Afghan people is Islam. Muslims constitute almost 99% of its population. Almost 84% of them are Sunni and the rest are Shiite. There are a few Hindus and Jews as well. Literacy is very low in Afghanistan, particularly among Afghan women because during the time of Taliban they were forbidden to study. 47.2% of men and less than 15% of women over 15 years old are literate. Regarding health and hygiene facilities, Afghanistan has severe problems.  

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3.5. Iran

Fig. 3.11: Location of Iran in ECO

Source: E CO TIMES, the Monthly News Journal of ECO cultural institute, July, 2009, pp.41.42, wwwcieco.org

Fig. 3.12: Different nature in Iran
Fig. 3.13 : Persepolis
Fig. 3.14: Hafez Tome

Source: www.googlephoto.com

Fig. 3.15: Winter in Tehran

Source: www.googlephoto.com
Area of Iran is 1,648,195 km² and it has borders on the Caspian Sea in the north and Persian Gulf and Oman Sea in the South both of which are among important regions of oil and gas production in the world. The term “Iran” in ancient Persian is “Aryan” and in Middle Persian “Eran” means “Airyanama” i.e. the land of original people. Climatically it is a country one of the most variable forms of temperatures in the world. Temperature differences in winter between the coldest and hottest regions reach almost 40 C°. Generally, Iran is located in a place that in terms of rainfall is considered as semi-dry and dry. According to 2006 census its population is 68,467,413. Its main cities are Tehran, Mashhad, Isfahan, Kerman, Shiraz, Sari, Rasht, Tabriz, Uromiye, Kermanshah, Ahvaz and Zahedan.

Iran has an old history (almost 7000 years) and is considered one of the most ancient countries in the world. Historically it is divided into two periods: Pre-Islam and Post-Islam. The Islamic revolution in 1979 led by Ayatollah Khomeini and participation of the majority of people brought down the monarchy in this country and laid the basis for coming to power of Islamic republic.

Contemporary history of Iran after the revolution passed through some eventful periods: the period of interim government and end of relationship with the US after taking hold of American embassy in Tehran, spread of Islamic ideology and export of revolution, Iran-Iraq war, passing away of Ayatollah Khomeini and coming to power of Construction Government led by Hashemi Rafsanjani, development of Reformation Movement and coming to power of Seyed Muhammad Khatami, innovator of Dialogue among Civilizations and coming to power of Mahmud Ahmadi Nejad.

3.5.1. Political and economic structure

Political system of Iran is Islamic republic which is based on the constitution passed in 1979 (modified in 1989). After the revolution, the highest rank in Iran is the Supreme Leader (Vali Faqih). The Assembly of Elites chooses the Leader. After the Leader, power is divided among three main institutions i.e. the Legislature that includes parliament of Islamic Council (Majlis) and Council of Guardians in which the passing of the first must be approved by the second. If there is any controversy between parliament and Council of Guardians, it is settled in the Assembly of
Identifying System Convenience. The Executive Institution led by the president is chosen for four years through direct election by people. Head of the Legislature Institution is chosen by the Supreme Leader.

Iranian economy is a mixed economy that consists of different aspects. Oil is the main economic resource. In recent years, the government has given serious thought about interference of government in economy and some plans were executed to free economy. 85% of Iran’s income is through oil export. Iran has the second largest oil resources (11% of the whole registered resources equal to 130 billion barrels) and also the second gas resources in the world (18% of registered gas resources equal to 26 trillion m3). Other important minerals of the country are: coal, metal such as gold, magnesium, chromites, copper, lead, zinc, nickel, cobalt, silver and chemicals such as sulfur and salt, decorative stones, gravel, sand and uranium. The Agriculture section constitutes of one fifth of gross internal production. Almost one fourth of Iran’s labor force is engaged in this section. Mine and production constitutes altogether one sixth of gross internal production and employs one eighth of labor force. After the revolution people were encouraged to have more children, and then plans for controlling population were launched. Some thinkers believe that the large numbers of unemployed youth are a threat to internal stability of Iran. According to formal statistics, the rate of unemployment has reached double digits. Rate of inflation has been fluctuating between 8.6% and 25%.

The Rate of unemployment has been fluctuating between 9.2% and 13%. Vast governmental control and allowing privatization again, eight years of war with Iraq, international sanctions, reliance on oil income and uncontrolled population growth have made the economy of Iran face many ups and downs. Generally, economic activities of people are related to: agriculture, forest conservation, fishing, mining, electricity, gas, oil, small business, machinery repair, hotel business, transportation, brokering, real estate business, etc. Agriculture crops are: wheat, rice, rye, corn, potato, beet, beans, tomato and grapes. Industrial products of Iran include: oil, liquid gas, industrial alcohol, jet fuel, gasoil, crude oil sediment, grease, tar, carpet and handicraft. Iranian currency is Rial. Rate of national gross growth in this country was almost 6.6% in 2008, direct foreign investment was totally $30 million in 2005 and the average rate of inflation was 12.1% in the same year.
This country is an important member of the United Nations, Non-Aligned Movement, Islamic Conference Organization, OPEC, and ECO Organization. Because of possessing oil industry, petrochemicals and natural gas, Iran has an important position in global economy. The capability of domestically produced goods to compete with foreign goods and appropriate political relationship with other countries are the two main principles to develop non-oil export, however Iran is not in a happy position in this regard. The gap between non-oil exports and imports in Iran is too wide. Decrease of national currency value to help exporters was not very useful and the possibility of appropriate investments has been limited in this area.

Imports of this country are food and live stock, raw material, vegetable and animal oil, chemicals, basic products like iron, steel, machinery equipment, electrical equipment, etc. Its exports are agricultural products and traditional goods like carpet, fruit, and chemical products like iron, steel and oil. Its main business partners are UAE, Germany, France, China, Italy, South Korea, Russia, Japan, Turkey and South Africa. The level of foreign business in this country in 2005 was almost $13.032 million.¹

3.5.2. Culture and Religion

Formal religion of the Iranian people is Islam and its main religious sect is Jafari Shiite, but there are other sects such as Hanafi, Zeidi, Maleki, Shafei and Hanbali. Believers of other religions such as Jews and Christians also live in Iran. According to the 13th Act of the constitution, only Christians, Zoroastrians and Jews, within the framework of constitution, have the right to perform their rituals.

Iranian culture has deep roots in history. A glance at independent countries around Iran reveals the range of the spread of Iranian culture. Altogether, elements of Iranian culture which are seen beyond the borders of Iran are the followings:

Persian language which is the main branch of Iranian culture; national ceremonies such as Norouz, legendary characters like Rostam, allegorical myths like troll, Simorgh (phoenix), etc., Iranian science, art and culture and Shiite religion.

¹ Koolaee. Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) achievements and prospects, p.55.
3.6. Pakistan

Fig. 3.16: Location of Pakistan in ECO


Fig. 3.17: Aurangzeb Mosque
Islamic Republic of Pakistan has thousand km coast line boarder on the sea of Oman. Its area is 796,095 km². The name “Pakistan” has been coined term from names of the main Islamic lands in West India: “P” for Punjab (Pakistan), “A” for Afghan areas (Pashto) located in the northwest, “K” for free Kashmir, “S” for Sind and “TAN” for Baluchistan. The eastern part is mostly mountainous. The erstwhile East Pakistan broke away from West Pakistan (the Islamic Republic of Pakistan) and formed a separate nation called Bangladesh. In the east of Pakistan, there are fertile plains of Punjab. The Climate and nature of this country is of deserts, semi-desert in some parts and mountainous. Most parts of Pakistan are not suitable for agriculture. Its formal language is Urdu but people speak languages such as Punjabi, Pashto, Shindhi and Saraki. English is also vastly used.

The Population of Pakistan in 2007 was 158,700 million. Most important cities of this country are Karachi, Lahore, Feisal Abad, Rawalpindi and Islamabad. Its capital is Islamabad which is the tenth most populated city in the world.¹

Gradual decline of the Mogul empire in early 18th century provided opportunities for Afghans, Baluches and Sikhs to gain power and control vast areas till the British East India Company dominated South Asia. This land was one of the colonies of Great Britain. During Gandhi’s movement against colonization, Pakistan led by Muhammad Ali Jinnah (one of Gandhi’s friends) was carved out of India and become an independent free sovereign state.

The first battle of Indian independence in 1857 was the last armed battle against Britain in the region which laid the basis for a non-armed freedom struggle by the national congress of India. Despite this, Indian Muslims on 29th December 1930 with the speech of Allameh Iqbal, the president, demanded the formation of an independent Muslim country in northwest and southeast Asia. Muhammad Ali Jinnah supported the notion of two nations and guided the Muslim League to accept “Lahore Agreement” in 1940 which ultimately led to separation from India and formation of Pakistan. Muslim League party was the most important party after independence. Then other parties such as the National Unity of Pakistan and People party of Pakistan appeared on the political scene of this country. Since early 1980s General Zia-ul-Haque and National Unity party reinforced Islamic rules in Pakistan.

As Benazir Bhutto returned to power a new phase in political and social changes of Pakistan started. Bhutto became prime minister in 1988 and in 1990. Under pressure of dissidents she handed over the reins of government to Muhammad Navaz Sharif. Navaz Sharif emphasized on execution of Islamic rules. In April 1993 Navaz Sharif was dismissed. Benazir Bhutto was elected again as the Prime minister through election. Navaz Sharif come to power again. In 1999 Pervez Musharraf, a top military commander seized power from Navaz through a bloodless coup. Wave of objections rose against Musharraf and Benazir Bhutto returned again in order to take part in election but was assassinated during one of her election campaigns. Her husband Asif Ali Zardari came to power after the presidential election in 2008.

3.6.1. Political and economic structure

In April 1973 some modifications were carried out in the constitution of 1956. After reinforcement of militants, a new constitution replaced the previous one on 15 October 1999. Pakistan is a federal republic and Islam is the formal religion of the
country. Presidential System of Government is followed in this country. It has Parliament of Senates as well as National Association. The President of Pakistan is the head of government and also supreme commander of military forces and is chosen by Electoral College of Pakistan. The Prime Minister is usually the head of the biggest party in the National Assembly. Every state has its own ruling system and a state assembly. Pakistan Army has always had an influential role in politics of the country. The army has had control of the country many times since 1958.

Agriculture constitutes the greatest part of Pakistan’s economy and the country’s export income. Economic activities are mostly based on agriculture, mining construction, transportation and business. Almost one fourth of the country’s income is through agricultural products. Economy of this country is basically reliant on agriculture. The agricultural products of this country are sugar beet, wheat, rice, fiber, potato, corn, orange and mango. Although this country was very poor in 1947, its rate of economic growth in the following four decades has been higher than global average. This progression decreased in 1990s.

Vast changes in recent years have accelerated economic growth rate especially in construction and production of financial services. Development of non-agricultural sections like services has changed the economic structure. Industrial productions of Pakistan are different types of fibers, yarn, sugar, oil, cement, drinks, crude iron, bicycle and motorcycle tire, electricity, etc.¹ the currency of this country is Rupee. The rate of gross national growth in Pakistan was 5.6% in 2008, total direct foreign investment in 2005 was almost $1524 million and the average rate of inflation in the same year was almost 9.3%.

This country can establish a good connection network with other countries through south, east and west. The port of Karachi port in Southern Pakistan has made it possible to have access to open seas. Among the general objectives of Pakistan, freeing of economy, privatization and non-concentration of economy could be mentioned. Tendency towards global markets and spread of free business especially with developed countries are its priorities.

¹ Koolaee. Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) achievements and prospects, p. 57.58.
Pakistan is trying to attract direct foreign investment into the country and also increase its exports to other countries.

This country has coordination with developed countries in order to join WTO. Its imports are: food, crude mineral material, petroleum products, animal and vegetable oil, polish, chemical products, machinery and equipment for transportation. Its exports are: rice, fiber, leather, woolen carpets, and sports equipment. The Main economic trade/business partners of this country are China, Japan, Australia, Germany, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Afghanistan, Iran, Turkey and Britain. Foreign business level in 2007 was below $20914 million.

3.6.2. Religion and Culture

Islam is the formal religion of Pakistan and most people are Sunni. Population of Shiites is almost 5% to 20%. Pakistan is the sixth most populated country and the second Muslim-settled country in the world. 3% of the population is Christian Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox. Population of Hindus also is almost 1.8%.

3.7. Tajikistan

Fig. 3.19: Location of Tajikistan in ECO

Source: ECO TIMES, the Monthly News Journal of ECO cultural institute, July, 2009, pp.41-42, wwwcieco.org
Tajikistan has a big mountain chain which is the origin of most rivers in central Asia. This republic has a mild climate and its agriculture has developed very well so much so that during the reign of Soviet Union, Tajikistan was famous as the “fruit basket of Russia”. Development of roads and railroads from Chabahar to
Central Asia and Afghanistan is a golden opportunity that can bring out these countries, especially Tajikistan from isolation and connect them to free seas through the nearest routes.

The term “Tajik” (Tazik or Tajhik) has an Arabic origin. It seems that Iranians of Central Asia and Afghanistan called Muslims by this name. Another explanation is that Turks knew only Iranian Muslims. The Capital of Tajikistan is Dushanbe and formal language of people is Persian with Tajiki dialect. Russian language also has widespread commercial and official usage. Tajiks make up the majority population of Transoxiana. Many of them are settled in the most populated republic of the region, Uzbekistan.

The area of Tajikistan is almost 143,100 km² and its population in 2006 was 6,640,000. Main cities of Tajikistan are Dushanbe, Khujand, Kulyab, Kurgan Tappe, Istiravshan, and Kanibadam. Geographically Tajikistan is located in Southeast Central Asia sharing borders with China and Afghanistan and also closeness to Pakistan and India have made this republic the gateway of Central Asia to these countries. Russia still considers Central Asian countries as its security districts for its southern borders and presence of Russian minority in this republic is another reason for Russian interest in Tajikistan. Presence of different natural glaciers in Tajikistan Mountains which are the main sources of Amu Darya and Syr Darya two rivers, has given a specific strategic importance to this country. These two rivers are the main sources of water for Central Asian countries. Because of passing through mountainous regions, rivers of Tajikistan have special significance in production of electricity, whereas, previously these rivers were the main sources of electricity production in Soviet Union. Natural resources and mines especially uranium (14% of world uranium resources) are very important for the use of atomic centers of Russia and other countries in the region. Also the presence of nuclear weapons factories in Tajikistan, gives special importance to this republic. Other resources of this country are gold, silver, coal, zinc and lead mines.

3.7.1. Political and economic structure

In the sixth century BC the present Tajikistan regions were parts of Achaemenid Empire. In the 14th century BC Alexander defeated Achaemenid and conquered this land and after his death, Tajikistan remained a part of the Greek Bakteria government. Sekas invaded this land in the 1st century BC and were driven
towards east by Takhars. Takhars conquered the whole of Bakteria and named in Takharistan and established the Kooshan Empire. The Kooshanids ruled over the region dominating for 200 years and as their empire declined in late 3rd century, Huns invaded Takharistan and conquered it. As Islam emerged, Muslims conquered Central Asia and Tajikistan in the 7th century AD and called it Mavara-on-Nahr (beyond river, Transoxiana). Later on, Samanids (Iranian dynasty) dominated over whole of Transoxiana and since the 9th century AD ruled over it. Qarakhani Turks in the 10th century and the next century Seljuk Turks conquered this land. Later the Moguls, Timurids dominated the whole region and ruled over it until the 15th century AD. As time passed, Uzbeks took advantage of the weakness of Turks and gradually conquered Tajikistan in the 15th century. Regardless of short periods during the time of Nader Shah and Shah Abbas when Tajikistan came under Iranian dominance, mainly Uzbeks dominated the region until in 19th century when Russian conquered the region. In the mid-nineteenth century, Russia conquered the main areas of Tajikistan i.e. Ura Teppe and Khujand to enter Afghanistan. On the other side the emirate of Bukhara started expanding his territories and succeeded in conquering Qara Tegin and Darvaz. As the Bolshevik revolution started, this country was conquered by the Bolsheviks and in setting the political boarder of Independent Republic of Russia in 1924, Tajikistan was given to Uzbekistan. On 16th October 1929, this republic to be promoted as a United Republic and the Russian Socialist Republic of Tajikistan came into existence. After the collapse of the Soviet Union of Republics of Russia, this country on 9th September 1991 became independent with the name of Tajikistan.1

1 Ahmadi Lafouraki. a guide book of Caspian area, central Asian countries and southern Caucasia, pp.3-5.
Nature of political regime in Tajikistan is democratic and presidential, system of government. According to the constitution, the three institutions of Executive, Legislature and Judiciary act separately from each other. But at a glance at the political structure of the country we find that the president, in addition to the presidency, has dominance over all institutions, government, and over Noble Parliament (highest organization of government) as well, and candidates for the most important governmental and ruling positions are selected to the parliament by him. In the political system of Tajikistan, the president has a lot of power and responsibilities like: appointment and dismissal of state, military and judiciary officials, announcement of emergency, leading Security Council, announcement of pardon, absolute leadership of military forces, announcement of war, awarding medals and the like are carried out by the president. Although the selected individuals by the president are to be approved by parliament, leading the Noble Parliament the most important governmental organization is given to the president.

The President is elected by direct votes of people for a period of 5 years and it can be extended only once. The President is the head of government, the executive institution, head of all forces and also head of Noble Parliament. The Prime Minister, members of board of ministers, court judges, assistants of ministers, chief assistant of president, heads of governmental committees, head and assistant and judges of constitution, head of assistant and magistrates of general economic courts, attorney
general and his assistants, head of national bank and his assistant all are chosen by the selection of the president and approval of parliament. Heads and members of other courts are selected by the assistant of Court of Justice and approved by the president. The political System of Tajikistan is based on the constitution, political parties have the freedom of activities in this country but these activities have to be within the in framework of law. Principles like freedom of speech, respect to rights of people, educational support and assistance and issues like that have been included in the constitution.

3.7.2. Economy

This country has the lowest gross national product among the republics of previous Soviet Union. 60% of the people live in poverty and the rate of inflation in this country is high. Economy of Tajikistan has weakened because of 5 years of civil war and reduction of Russia’s assistance to this country. Tajikistan is dependent on assistances of Russia, Uzbekistan and international assistances. It seems that every plan for economic development of Tajikistan and also for attracting foreign investment depends on sustainability and endurance of peace and stability in Tajikistan.

Major natural sources of this country are a little oil, uranium, mercury, brown coal, silver and gold. Economic activities of people are: agriculture, manufacture, construction, business, transportation, civil services, social security and education. Industrial products include: cotton, oil, alcohol, cigarette, wool and cotton threads, shoes, soda solvent, aluminum and cement. Tajikistan currency is Somoni. The Rate of national gross growth in this country in 2008 was 15%, the whole direct foreign investment in 2005 was approximately $54 million and the average rate of inflation in the same year was almost 7.1%.

3.7.3. Cultural and Social Situation

Religion and society: religion of majority of people in Tajikistan is Islam. According to latest statistics, Muslims constitutes 90% of Tajikistan population. 85% of this population is Sunni and mostly followers of Hanafi sect. Shiites constitute 5% of the country’s population who are mostly Ismailia. Shiites who mainly live in the east and southeastern parts of the country and in the independent state of Badakhshan. Next to

1 Koolaee. Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) achievements and prospects, p. 61.
the Muslims, the biggest religious minority is believers of Russian Orthodox. Believers of this religion are mostly Russian or Ukrainian who live in Dushanbe. A few members of other sects of Christianity like Catholics, Baptists and Armenian (Gregorian Church) live also in Dushanbe. Other religious minorities which form a small percentage of Tajikistan population are Judaism and Bhaism who mostly live in Dushanbe.

3.7.4. Religion and Politics

According to the constitution of Tajikistan, organizations and religious groups do not have the right to interfere with policies and have been prevented from being involved in governmental affairs. Despite this fact, religious groups have had a lot of influence on political status of Tajikistan especially after independence of the country. All religious affairs of Muslims of this country are supervised by the Department of Judges which has been established in 1988 in the time of Soviet Union of Russia. This department is just religious and doing political activities is forbidden in its principles. This department is in relation with Islamic Organization of Central Asia and Kazakhstan in Tashkent and receives financial assistance of Islamic countries through them. These assistances are for religious purposes are not aimed at formation of a political-religious party. Although the old head of this department, Judge Tourjan Zadeh is an influential person in Tajikistan and in the events after independence of the country, especially civil war of 1992 and 1993 has played an important role. After civil war and stability and coming to power of Rahmanov presence of religious elements in political power and in politics decreased and the policy of separation between religion and politics has strictly been followed.

3.7.5. Customs and Traditions

Norouz is one of national ceremonies in Tajikistan. Tajiks celebrate Norouz and carry out many traditions along with it including cooking a special dish called Sumalak which is made of wheat buds. Halva is one of the famous sweets in Tajikistan. It is customary in Tajikistan to start a meal by eating sweets. Other foods of this country are Pilav, Shishlik, Lipiushka (kind of bread), Samsa, Chiburekki (kind of cake), Shorpur (kind of soup) and Laghman. Tea and Kafeer (kind of strong yogurt drink) are famous drinks and served along with breakfast. One of their traditions is
respecting bread which they do not throw away or step on, to remove shoes when entering someone’s house is another tradition of Tajikistan People.¹

3.7.6. Nationalities

Tajik 64.9%, Uzbek 25%, Russian 3.5%, other (respectively Tatars of Volga, Kirghiz, Ukrainian, German, Turkmen, Korean, Belarus and Armenian) 6.6% Uzbeks are mostly settled in Western Tajikistan and in cities and border lands with Uzbekistan. Russians and other ethnic minorities like Ukrainians, Germans, Belaros and Armenians are settled in Dushanbe. These ethnic minorities build up the greatest technical forces of Tajikistan in important industrial, military and economic sections. Some part of Russian population is settled in Khujand (Lenin Abad). Kirgizs are settled in the eastern parts (border of China) and border lands of Kirghizstan.

Uzbeks and Russians have established relationships with the government and they have radio and television channels in Tajikistan.

3.7.7. Social Corruptions

The rate of crime and kidnap is very high in Tajikistan. The amount of crimes on borders of Tajikistan-Kirgizstan and Tajikistan-Uzbekistan is very high and travel to these border lands must be avoided. Foreigners might fall prey to kidnappers and be victims of terrorist groups. Because of the existence of terrorist groups, organized crimes (mostly political) are rampant and drug traffic, especially on the borders of Afghanistan has increased. Due to abundant supply of opium to this country, there is a possibility of the presence of heroin laboratories in the country and it is said that almost 30% to 50% of economic activities in Tajikistan are concerned with drugs.

¹ Ahmadi Lafouraki. a guide book of Caspian area, central Asian countries and southern Caucasus, p. 339.
3.8. Turkmenistan

Fig. 3.23: Location of Turkmenistan in ECO


Fig. 3.24: Castle in Silk Road
The Republic of Turkmenistan in southwest of Central Asia is bound on the west by the Caspian Sea, on the south by Iran, on the southwest by Afghanistan, on the northeast by Uzbekistan and on the north by Kazakhstan.¹ Despite its small population, Turkmenistan is a multinational country. Different Ethnic groups have equal rights according to the constitution. The Political geography of Turkmenistan was formed after occupation of this country by Russia and signing the Akhal agreement in 1881. Agricultural units are on the banks of Amu Darya, Morghab, Tejen and plains and hills of Kupotdag. Amu Darya, Tejen and Morghab rivers flow through Turkmenistan.

The area of this country is 488,100 km² and its population in 2006 was almost 4,899,000. Its main cities are: Ashgabat, Turkmen Abad, Dashhawuz, Mary, Balkan Abad, Turkmen Bashi, Bayram Ali, Tejen and Serdar.

Because of especial geographical conditions, Turkmenistan has advantages in Central Asia. Sharing borders with Iran which is the connecting point with countries of Central Asia, increases the commercial importance of this country; because other

Central Asian countries can connect to the world out of Russia only through Afghanistan and Western China. But having connections with Iran makes it easy for Turkmenistan to have access to the Middle East, Turkey, Persian Gulf and Pakistan. That is why Turkmenistan can play an influential role in Central Asia. On the other hand, Turkmenistan is the gateway to Central Asia and is the only suitable way for other countries to have access to Central Asian countries. This country is on the way of the Silk Route which was considered the connecting road of Far East to Europe in ancient times. On the one side Turkmenistan shares borders with Iran and in the east with Afghanistan which has always been challenging with civil political and military conflicts and infusion of civil conflicts of Afghanistan to Turkmenistan through the eastern borders has always worried Turkmenistan authorities. Instability in Tajikistan, the subject of Turkmens settled in Tajikistan borders and conflicts with Azerbaijan over the way of utilizing the Caspian Sea water is another of the important geopolitical issues that this country is facing. The Republic of Turkmenistan which has a great deal of potential and practical economic facilities and existence of rich natural resources regarding its vast area and small population can provide a good future to this country. Identified gas resources of this country are double that of North Sea and four times more than Mexican Gulf resources. This country produces 80 billion m³ gas every year and in this regard it stands fourth in the world. 96% of this gas is suitable for export.

3.8.1. Political and economic status

Contemporary Turkmenistan has always been part of Iranian or Koushanian Saghdi kingdoms. This country was part of Achaemenid kingdom from 6th till 4th century BC and then it passed on to the Ashkanian. As Ashkani kingdom started to decline in the third century BC, this country was controlled by Sasanids. Later at the start of the 7th century AD through defeat of Sasanids by the Arabs and their progress towards Central Asia, this country was conquered by Muslims and contemporary Turkmenistan, after the emergence of Iranian dynasties like Taheris and Samanids was regarded as part of the conquered lands by Muslims. Although the affluent presence of Turks weakened the position of Iranian tribes, this land was under the dominance of Iran. As Turkmens embraced Islam and Seljukis appeared in the late 10th and 11th Centuries AD, this country entered a new phase in its history. In those years Qaznavids overpowered by defeating the Samanids and took control over south
and southwest of Central Asia. On the other side, Turkistan of China and eastern part of Central Asia were dominated by Karakhanids and Turkmens were mediators between these two empires. First through defeating Samanids, Seljukis conquered Transoxiana and then through defeating Qaznavids, they conquered Marv, Azerbaijan, Mesopotamia and Middle East, and established a great dynasty. As Seljukis weakened, Moguls invaded Turkmenistan. The Invasion of Moguls brought about a great chaos. Marv and Turkmen Abad were destroyed completely and Turkmenistan was conquered by Moguls and they divided this country into two parts. As a result of this division, southern part of this country was dominated by Ilkhans of Iran and the northern part was dominated by Mogul successors and Uzbek Ilkhans. After Moguls, Timurids came to power. In the late 15th century AD Muhammad Sheibani, a Uzbek leader brought down the last Timurid ruler and conquered Central Asia. Between 15th and 17th centuries AD contemporary Turkmenistan went under the rule of Safavid dynasty again. King Abbas settled 1,500 Kurds in Qara Teppe Mountains to safeguard northeastern borders of Iran. In the early 18th century Nader Shah invaded Turkmenistan and in 1706 AD, he conquered Bukhara and Khiva. In 1728 AD after overwhelming Turkmens, Nader Shah settled Turkmens in Khurasan, Estar Abad and in Marz Dasht. After the conquests of Nader Shah, a large group of Turkmens had to get rid of Khanate of Khiva and migrated to coasts of the Caspian Sea and Estar Abad areas. After migrating to Atak, Tekke Turkmens tried to conquer Tejen and Sarakhs areas in 1855 AD Tekke Turkmens conquered Marv. Sometimes the Turkmens obeyed the ruler of Khurasan and sometimes the Khan of Khiva. Because of the gradual decline of Qajar kingdom, Turkmen-settled borders in Khurasan faced chaos and crisis. The Invasion of Naser-ed-Din Shah commanded by Heshmat-ud-Doleh to Marv in 1861 was unsuccessful and Iran lost its authority there and Turkmen tribes under the rule of Khanates of Khiva and Bukhara became powerful in the region.¹

Since the 6th decade of the 19th century the Russians became determined to conquer Turkmenistan and marched towards Afghanistan in order to reach the warm waters of the Persian Gulf. Eventually after two decades of defeat, in 1881 AD the Russian General Skoblof through attacking Akhal and conquering Gok Teppe Fortress could defeat Turkmens and occupy Turkmenistan. After settling in Turkmenistan, the

¹ Ahmadi Lafouraki, a guide book of Caspian area, central Asian countries and southern Caucasus, P. 360.
Russians established Mavaraye Khazar (beyond Caspian) State or Zakaspi Oblast and stabilized their bases. As the Bolshevik revolution started in Russia, the Turkmens also joined this revolution and started fighting against the Tsar. In the late 1917 Mavaraye Khazar State was totally dominated by the council of Bolshevik Russians. Those Communists ruled over Turkmenistan until 1991 and introduced many changes in Turkmenistan during these years. This country was independent according to Lenin’s orders and was counted as a member of Soviet Union of Russia. Ultimately in October 27, 1991 as Soviet Union collapsed, through 94.1% vote of its people, Turkmenistan became independent and Safar Murat Niyazov was selected as the president.

**Fig. 3.26: Political Structure in Turkmenistan**

The political regime of Turkmenistan is “republic” but a glance at the range of the president’s authority we find that against the articles of the constitution regarding distribution and balance of power, the president has a lot of authority and has full dominance over the Legislature and the Judiciary. In this way it could be inferred that the system of Turkmenistan’s Government is “presidential system” and most authority and power are concentrated in his hands. After the president, Parliament of Community Convenience is the highest authority in the country which is also led by the president.

The Governmental system of Turkmenistan is dependent on the president and the most important orders and instructions are issued by him; the president has the authority over most important legislation organization i.e. Parliament of Community
Convenience and can establish this parliament whenever he wants. Also according to the constitution, in addition to parliament, the right of legislation is given to the president as well and he can issue orders, instructions and commandments which are equal to constitution and are to be followed. The Parliament of Community Convenience is also a very important organization in decision-making and legislation in the country which is led by president and important decisions such as: announcement of war and peace, changing borders of country and holding referendums are carried out by this organ.

President as the highest authority of the state is elected through direct votes of people for 5 years but this Act was broken in 1999 and Safar Murat Niyazov was selected as life-time president. The President has the authority over government and holds the post of the prime minister as well. Members of Board of Ministers are selected by the president and parliament gives them vote of confidence. The President has also full authority over the armed forces and appointment and dismissal of top military commanders are carried out by him. Appointment of Turkmenistan Ambassadors to other countries, appointment and dismissal of chiefs for Supreme Court (Supreme Bureau of State) and Supreme Court of Economy, attorney general and assistants of ministers’ cabinet are all performed by the president. The President is head of Parliament of Community Convenience. Court judges are selected by courthouse and after the president’s approval are appointed.

Turkmenistan government is a one party government which is run by the president. He has authority over the only lawful party (Kurdistan Democratic Party), over government and also Parliament of Community Convenience. The post of Prime minister does not exist in Turkmenistan. In fact president is the leader of Turkmenistan and has full authority over government and media. After independence, Turkmenistan has not struggled to establish a democratic system and still continues with dictatorial system of government.

3.8.2. Economy

Turkmenistan is a vast desert which has concentrated agriculture in some parts. It owns one of the largest natural gas resources (5th position) in the world as well as some oil. Turkmenistan is the tenth cotton producer in the world. This country
has encountered less economic recession than other former republics of Soviet Union of Russia. Incomes of this country through oil and gas sale have somewhat controlled economic crisis. In 1994 rejection of Russia to transfer Turkmenistan’s gas to crisis-struck countries, fluctuated economic growth of this country. This country has dealt with market reformation very cautiously and hopes to keep sustainable economic growth through gas and cotton sale. Most oil resources of the country are concentrated in the west especially on the coast of Caspian Sea. Natural gas resources are available almost all over the country.

Abundant resources of calcium salt are also found in Quirdag region. Natural sea salt resources are concentrated in Qaraboghaz Gulf. Elements like mirabilis and other valuable chemicals could also be found in this country. Most agricultural lands of Turkmenistan are in Qaraghum which are mostly used as pastures for sheep. In agricultural lands of this country there are crops like: cotton, fruits, vegetables and grapes. Cultivation of silkworm has recently developed and production of wheat has also improved well.

Products of Turkmenistan are cotton, wheat, weaving product, blankets, relief carpets, nitric acid, nitrogen fertilizer, gasoil, sediments of crude oil and electric energy. Textile is the second most important product of Turkmenistan in industry which has provided job opportunities for more than 30,000 people. Also regarding electricity, Turkmenistan has considerable supply and produces annually up to 12 billion kw/h electricity. Its currency is Turkmen Manat which came into circulation after independence of the country in November 1993. The rate of national gross growth in Turkmenistan was 8% in 2008. Total direct foreign investment was $61.5 million and average inflation rate in this year was 10.5%.  

3.8.3. Cultural and Social Situation

Religion and Society: Muslims 98%, Russian Orthodox 9%, Armenian, Jew, Bahai and other 2%.

Muslims who are the largest religious group in Turkmenistan are mostly Sunni and followers of Hanafi sect. Uzbek and Kazakh inhabitants of this country are also Hanafi Sunnis. Muslims are spread all over Turkmenistan. Shiites are another group of Turkmenistan Muslims. Number of Shiites in Turkmenistan is very few and its

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1 Koolaee. Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) achievements and prospects, p. 65.
believers are Iranian and Azeri people. They are settled mostly on the borders with Iran. The largest religious minority in Turkmenistan are the Christians. Followers of Russian Orthodox are the major Christian group who are mainly settled in Ashgabat, Turkmen Bashi, Bairam Ali, Kerki and Buzmin. Baptists, Catholics and Protestants are other Christian groups. Catholics are settled in Ashgabat most of this followers are foreign believers. Protestants are German minority who are mainly in Sarakhs or its suburbs. It is estimated that nearly one thousand Jews live in Turkmenistan. They migrated there from Ukraine during WWII and settled in Turkmen Abad (near the border of Uzbekistan).

**Religion and Politics:** The government of Turkmenistan is secular and separation of religion from politics has been clearly mentioned in its constitution. According to the constitution, no religion has been formalized and mentioning separation of religious organizations from government, their political activities are prevented. On the other side, 70 years of communist dominance over this country has alienated religions and religious traditions and customs in the society. The contemporary government of Turkmenistan also has severely restricted activities of religious groups especially that of Muslims and prevents formation of politico-religious parties.

**3.8.4. Customs and Traditions**

Singing the famous song of “Laleh” by girls is one of the customs in this country. Lalehs have love themes objects and narrate the stories of lovers. Another custom of Turkmens is that men and women wear traditional clothes. Fur hat (wool hat), wool garment (in winter) and loose pants are clothes of men and hat (Borik), silver and gold jewelry, forehead jewelry, etc. are women’s ornaments. Plav, Shishlik kebab, Lipioshka (bread), Shourba, Ghorme and Ishkiyikli are some of the traditional Turkmen dishes. Taking off shoes before entering the door is essential and respecting bread is another tradition of these people.

**3.8.5. Nationalities**

Turkmen77%, Uzbek9.2%, Russian 6.7%, Kazakh 2%, Baluch, Azeri, Tatar and Iranian 5.1% (1999 census)

Before 1991 the Russian were the largest ethnic minority after Turkmens. Migration of Russians to Turkmenistan started at the time of Tsars and continued until full independence of Turkmenistan. After independence, dominance of Russians
ended and most of them went back to Russia. During these years, Russians had important posts in industry (heavy and light) as well as agriculture and animal husbandry. They were considered as expert forces of Turkmenistan. Nowadays the population of Russians in Turkmenistan has decreased and some industries like tourism and hotel trade are run by them. Other nations in this country like Uzbek, Kazakh, Azeri and Armenian immigrated to this country during the time of Soviet Union of Russia. Some of these tribes also have remained inside the country through Turkmenistan border-setting. These tribes are spread all over Turkmenistan. Iranians also were considered as old citizens of this land. Presence of Iranians in the years of 1900 in Turkmenistan was large and many of them were merchants. Iranians are mostly settled in Ashgabat and at present are mainly in trade. Baluch tribes are also Iranian tribes who had mainly settled in Marv.

3.8.6. Social evils

Percentage of organized crimes in Turkmenistan is very low. But percentage of ordinary street crimes is increasing and especially so at nights. Theft occurs almost everywhere in Ashgabat and presence of women in public places after dusk has been reported to be risky. Rate of kidnap is average and foreign passengers especially merchants are more subjected to these crimes.

3.9. Turkey

![Fig. 3.27: Location of Turkey in ECO](image.png)

Turkey in southeast of Europe and southwest of Asia, is surrounded by water on three sides. The Bosphorus Strait divides this land into two Asian and European sides. The First Congress of Geography held in Ankara in 1941 divided Turkey into
seven geographical zones. Regarding climate, greenery and dispersion of different farms, climatically there are differences between coastal and middle areas. Regarding these features, Turkey has been divided into four coastal areas and three middle areas.\(^1\) The names of the four coastal areas are taken from the seas which are bordering them (Black Sea, Mermere, Aegean and Mediterranean) and three other areas according to their geographical locations in Anatolia carry the names of these areas (Middle Anatolia, Eastern Anatolia and Southeastern Anatolia).

Ankara is the capital of Turkey and its important cities are Istanbul, Izmir, Adana, Bursa, Erzurum, Konia, Antalya, Urfa and Van. Istanbul in European part and Zonguldak, Sinop and Trabzon in the Asian part are the major ports of Turkey. Mersin, Alanya and Antakya in the coast of Mermere Sea, Izmir and Antalya on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea and Uralic on the coast of the Aegean are other ports of Turkey.

Formal language of this country is Turkish. Kurds of this country are settled mostly in southeastern and eastern parts of the country. Smaller ethnic groups in Turkey are Azerbaijan Turks (northwest), Laz (north), Arabs (south) and Armenians (Istanbul). The area of Turkey is 769,604 km\(^2\) land and 13,958 Km\(^2\) seas which is totally 783,563 km\(^2\). Its population in 2006 was almost 72,974,000.

Turks of Turkey were tribes of Seljuk Turks who migrated from Central Asia to Anatolia plateau and after conquering Byzantium (Eastern Rome), established the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman Empire declined after WWI. Mustafa Kemal Pasha became a national hero of Turkey because of organizing national resistance against aliens and established the Republic of Turkey based on the principle of separation between religion and politics. He was called Ata Turk (father of Turk). Mustafa Kemal since 1922 started his plan by political reformations and established a powerful government-nation. After WWII, during the Cold War, Turkey played the mediator role between the two Blocks and was of great importance internationally. In September 1980 power was transferred through a bloodless coup. Constitution was put on referendum in 1982 and by 90% of the votes presidency of Gen Evren was extended for seven more years. In this period many left-wing papers were blocked and

\(^{1}\) http://www.gototurkey.ir/cografiya.cgi
the militants provided economic growth of Turkey. Through public election of 1983 power came back to parliament.

In 1988 when Saddam invaded north Iraq, the Turkish government gave refuge to Iraqi Kurds and was not ready to send them back to Iraq, but in 1991 Turkey threw them out of the country. They took refuge in the mountains. Thereafter, Turkey faced the problem of Kurds in the region which brought about many problems in the way of this country joining the EU \(^1\). Since 2007 Justice and Development Party through winning people’s votes, has put Abdullah Gul as president of the country.

**3.9.1 Political and Economic structure**

According to the constitution passed in the 1982 in parliament of this country, legislation authority has been given to national parliament which has 550 representatives who are selected by people’s votes for 5 years. The executive authority has been granted to president who is chosen by parliament for seven years. His powers include appointment of the prime minister, selection of top members of judiciary, administration of central bank and foreign organizations, the breakup of parliament, announcement of emergency, etc. He has control over business units and political parties as well. In May 2004, there were modifications in constitution according to which equality between men and women’s rights was formalized and security courts were abolished.

Economy of Turkey consists of a collection of developed industries, developing commerce and agriculture. Economic growth of Turkey in recent years was because of powerful movement of industries, services, banking, transportation and commerce in this country. Textile, the main production branch of Turkey has had a great role in export of this country. This country stood 16\(^{th}\) in the world and 3\(^{rd}\) in Europe regarding economic development in 2004. Also it has had a great development in tourism.

Income of Turkey in this section was announced to be more than $150 billion in 2004. According to mass economic development plan of Turkey, it is expected that the amount of foreign trade of this country till 2023 will reach more than $500 billion. Economy of Turkey is a combination of local and modern industries that is expanding.

\(^1\) Koolaee. Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), achievements and prospects, p. 68.
day by day. Affluent agricultural products of Turkey in 2005 were 5th in the world. In 2006 11.2% of Turkish people found jobs. The Private sector of Turkish economy is also strong and developing rapidly and it has a great role in banking, transportation and communication. In recent years Turkish economy has developed very well and in 2004 and 2005 it has reached 8.9% and 4.7%. Economic activities of Turkish people are: agriculture, forest conservation, and fishing, production of electricity, gas as well as construction, hospitality industry transportation, social services and business. Its agricultural products are wheat, rice, rye, corn, sugar beet, tomato, watermelon, apple and grapes.

Its industrial products are margarine, sunflower oil, beer, leather, crude steel, cement, TV receiver, automobile tire, car engine, derrick, bus and electricity. The Currency of Turkey is Lira. The rate of national gross growth in Turkey was 5.78% in 2008, total direct foreign investment in 2005 was almost $8638 million and the average rate of inflation in the same year was 7.7%.

Since 1947 Turkey has been considering foreign business. Following economic reformations of 1980 and supporting the policy of export increase, this country’s income increased in 1980s. As in 1990 its foreign business income doubled. Global commerce and continuing import series and getting rid of tariff restrictions on export, caused income of this country to double in 1994 compared to that of 1990. Relations of Turkey with EU have experienced fluctuations since 1996. The EU blocked its economic supports after the conflicts of Turkey with Greece, but the 1999 earthquake and the closeness of the two countries to each other removed this blockage from the path of Turkey. Since then Turkey has struggled a lot to join EU, but this union has set forth certain conditions for allowing Turkey to join the Union.

Imports of Turkey are: raw material, grease, oil products, medical and drug products, plastic, iron and transportation machinery and equipments. Its exports are: food, livestock, livestock chemical products, iron, copper, color TV receivers, automobile and different kinds of garments. Most important business partners of Turkey
are: Italy, France, Germany, Switzerland, US, Britain, Algeria, Belgium, Iran, Russia and Spain.¹

3.9.2. Religion and Culture

More than 99% of Turkish people are Muslims. In the constitution of 1924 Islam was declared as the formal religion, but in modification of 1928 it was omitted. After 1950 some governments tried to mediate between religion and politics, but after 1960 secularism was supported more than Islam by dominant groups.

Antakya is one of the important cities of Christians which has played the role of Christian family center during the past 4 centuries. In 1986 the number of Christians in Turkey was estimated to be 100,000. Christians of Turkey include Armenians, Bulgarian Orthodox Christians and Greek Orthodox Christians. According to the statistics of 1996 the number of Christians in Turkey reached 25,000. The Center of Jewish society in Turkey is in Istanbul.

3.10. Kirgizstan

Fig. 3.30: Location of Kirgizstan in ECO


¹ http://www. Ecosecretariat.org. statistics
Kirgizstan is located in northeast of Central Asia between Tian Shan and southwest of Pamir-Alay highlands. Most of this country consists of snow-covered mountains among which there are different rivers and ponds. Isk Cool is the largest
and deepest lake and Naryn, Talas and Chu are big rivers of this land. Another feature of this country is that it is prone to many earthquakes, its climate is also cold and it is mountainous.

The formal language in this country is Kirgiz which belongs to the linguistic category of Central Turkish. Some of its vocabulary regarding merchandise and agriculture are Persian and have been adopted from Persian through relations of Kirghizes with Iranians settled in this area. Kirgiz language along with Russian is used for official, judiciary and formal communication purposes. Its main cities are Bishkek, Oush, Jalal Abad, Qara Gul, Tekmek, Qara Balta. Area of this country is 199,900 km² and its population in 2006 was approximately 5,189,800. Old chronicles of China name tribe for the first time as Kin-Ken whose people were very similar to Kirghizes. Kirghizes in 840 AD brought down Oyghur kingdom in the Northeastern Mongolia. Since mid-seventeenth century, Kirghizes were inclined towards Islam, although their devotion to Islam had not yet deepened, but in their cavalry slogans they called war with Oyrats as a religious war. In 1787 Kirghizes were regarded as Chinese. They had to pay taxes to Khanate of Khughand in the 1830s. Khanate of Khughand accepted Russian support in 1868. Eventually Russian power became established in 1919 in Kirghizstan. Conflict over power continued in some parts of Kirghizstan especially in the south until 1922. Through reformations of Gurbachov and collapse of the Soviet Union, Kirghizstan appeared as an independent country in the world of business.

3.10.1. Political and economic status

The Constitution of Kirghizstan was passed in May 1993. The Government of this country is headed by the president who is selected by direct vote of people for 5 years. The President has supreme powers and can dismiss the Legislature and veto their decisions. President is a coordinator between three institutions and makes decisions and determines general policies of the country. The Legislature consists of two parliaments i.e. Legislation Parliament and Public Parliament. Parliament members consist of candidates of parties, groups or independent candidates. Communist party of Kirghizstan is the most powerful party against government. Members of this party have decisive posts. Act 8 of Kirghizstan constitution has

1 Koolaee. Economic cooperation Organization (ECO), achievements and prospects, p. 71.
announced the dominant system of this country based on separation of religion from politics and citizens are free in choosing their religions and sects.

Among Central Asian countries, Kirgizstan has followed market economic reformations more seriously. The Inflation rate decreased from 88% in 1994 to 15% in 1997. Economy of this country has been advanced and dynamic and most of its shares have been sold. Regarding the mountainous environment of Kirgizstan, its economy is based on agriculture and animal husbandry. Agriculture sector includes 40% of national gross growth and one third of labor resource. Unlike most republics, in this country private sector has a remarkable share in agricultural activities. Industrial sector produces 30% of national income. The important industries are metallurgy, agricultural equipment and machinery, food products, electronics and textile. There are also varieties of facilities for import of sugar in this country. Unlike other republics, gas and oil resources of this country are limited, but it has considerable amounts of mineral resources such as coal, gold, mercury and uranium.

This country is economically very dependent on other republics of Soviet Union especially in export markets, and import of oil, gas and other goods. This is the result of previous concentrative economy and economic policies followed by Moscow. After independence in 1991 widespread activities were launched in order to change and modify the structure of policy-making and also organizational and economic structures of this country. One of the major problems of Kirgizstan is the low rate of public taxes which is not enough to support services, facilities, and for social and cultural activities. Furthermore, there is no productive and dynamic system established for collection of taxes. The Economic system of Kirgizstan reveals goal and plans of its government. The Economic reformations of Aghayov were ratified in July 1992.

Today, Kirgizstan has small and large privatized industry of extracting mercury, antimony, uranium, coal and gold. There are more than one thousand gold mines in Kirgizstan. Kumtor Mine is one of the most mountainous and highest gold mines in the world which in relation to its gold resource is categorized among one of the world ten gold mines. Economic activities of the people include: agriculture, mineral extractions construction, electricity, major and minor business and restaurant
trade. Its agricultural products are wheat, rye, corn, potato, sugar beet, onion, garlic and apple. Its industrial products are vegetable oil, sugar, drinks, cigarette, textile, shoes, cement and electrical power. Currency of this country is Tanga. Rate of national gross growth in this country in 2008 was approximately 4.3%, whole sum of direct foreign investments in 2005 was almost $210, 10 million and the average rate of inflation in this year was 4.3%.

3.10.2. Social and Cultural aspects

Religion and society: Muslims 75% (mostly Sunni), Russian Orthodox 20% and other religions: Judaism, Catholic, Buddhism and Baptism 5%.

Muslims are the biggest religious group in Kirgizstan since 17th century AD. Islam spread all over the country through Forghaneh Valley by Uzbek clergymen. Absolute majority of Muslims is Sunni who follow the two sects of Hanafi and Shafei; of the two, Hanafis are more in number. There are also a few Shiites in this country (1000 according to 2002 statistics). Muslims have been spread almost all over the country in both urban and rural areas. Orthodox believers are mostly settled in big cities (like Bishkek), in which the population of original Russians is more. There is a direct relationship between religion and race in Kirgizstan. Kirgizes in this country are mostly Muslims and originally Russian people are mostly Orthodox or followers of one of western religions. Jews are among other religious minorities of Kirgizstan. Jews are divided into two Bukhara and European groups. Bukhara Jews are mostly in South Kazakhstan and European Jews are settled in Bishkek. Other Christian minorities are in Bishkek and different missionaries from western countries are active in this city. It must not be forgotten that some tribes in Kirgizstan are still idolaters and worship different objects and animals.

Religion and Politics: constitution of Republic of Kirgizstan has guaranteed freedom of religions and Kirgizstan government tries to execute this law. However, against Islamic groups which the government is worried about, it is watchful about their activities.

1 http://www.ecosecretariat.org.statistics
On the other side Republic of Kirgizstan is a secular country and 8th Act of this country’s constitution articulates separation of religion from politics and that government does not support any specific religion. In this country, all religious activities must be registered and the groups must get sanctions for their activities. This is performed by the ministry of law and a kind of permanent supervision is carried out on activities of these groups. Religious education in schools is forbidden, nevertheless, there are activities on progression to establish organized religious education in schools under supervision of government which has not been welcomed very much.

3.10.3. Customs and Traditions

Kirgiz foods are derived from history of this country and in some cases they have been influenced by Chinese foods. Popular Kirgiz dishes are: Shishlik, Liposhka (type of bread), Plav, Laghman (kind of soup with mutton), Beshbarmak, Shurpor (kind of soup), Manti, Samsa and Chibureki. Eating horse meat is another custom of these people. Tea houses are visible all over the country and people drink a lot of black and herbal tea. Koumys and Dzarma are other drinks of Kirgizes. Another custom among them is glorious holding of Norouz ceremony. Epic story of Manas, hero of Kirgizes is very popular among people of this country and narrating his adventures is one of the traditions among its people.

3.10.4. Nationalities

Kirgiz 52.4%, Russians 18%, Uzbeks 12%, Ukrainians 2.5%, Germans 2.4% and other nations 11.8% (Tatar, Kazakh, Uyghur, Tajik, Turk, Korean, Azerbaijani, Dungen).

Kirgizes are the largest nationality of Kirgizstan. The most import governmental positions are in their hands and they control the country. Nationally they belong to Moguls of Southern Siberia and majority of them are Hanafi Muslims. Occupation of most Kirgizes is industry and agriculture and they are spread all over the country. Russians are the biggest minority nation of Kirgizstan. As the empire of Tsar developed in late 19th century, immigration of Russians to Kirgizstan started and through the Bolshevik revolution and after that WWII, this immigration was more
intensified. Russians constitute mostly the expert forces of Kirgizstan and are very active in industry.

Russian language in Kirgizstan is considered the formal language and many Slavs ethnics have settled in Bishkek. Uzbeks are some of the other ethnic minorities in Kirgizstan. These people are mostly settled in southern cities Kirgizstan including Jalal Abad and Owsh. Uzbeks are mostly farmers and grow cotton and they are very similar to Kirgizes and it is difficult to distinguish between them. Immigration of Ukrainians to Kirgizstan like that of Russians started in the late 19th century and between 1920 to 1930 it reached its climax. They immigrated to Semire Chie and became main producers of sugar. Ukrainians were culturally active in Kirgizstan and during the following years, number of immigrants increased. But after the collapse of Soviet Union, many of them returned to their homeland, and this process procedure is still continuing. Germans are mostly farmers and are settled in rural areas especially in Chotalas area.

Tatars are among the other tribes of this country. Immigration of Tatars to Kirgizstan started in late 19th century. Since then, Tatars constitute cultural class of Kirgizstan and nowadays most of them have academic education and are considered as significant scientific figures. Majority of them are university teachers, doctors, researchers and teachers. Relationships of Tatars with Kirgizstan government are very cordial.¹

3.10.5. Social evils

According to final reports, rate of crime in Kirgizstan is high and kidnapping has been reported as being average. Tourists and businessmen have been targets of kidnappers during recent years. The statistics on the rate of crime and corruption especially against foreigners has increased in Kirgizstan as in other commonwealth countries. In this country, ethnic controversies are the main reasons for violence. In addition, drug traffic and smuggling from across neighboring countries have increased. Theft of travelers properties at hotels have been reported. Probability of

¹ Ahmadi Lafouraki. a guide book of Caspian area, central Asian countries and southern Caucasia, p. 447.
night-time violence and the risk of hiring passing cars as taxi at night could be dangerous and risky.

3.11. Kazakhstan

Fig. 3.33: Location of Kazakhstan in ECO

Fig. 3.34: Panfilov Park

Kazakhstan has a very important Geostrategic position. It is the only Central Asian country which shares borders with two big countries – Russia (6846 km²) and China (1533 km²) and on the west it boarders the Caspian Sea. Other neighbors of Kazakhstan in Central Asia are: Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Kirgizstan. Kazakhstan is located in a region full of challenges and tensions and includes significant features because of radical and extremist groups playing key roles in regional and international affairs. Also because of being the fourth country in development and production of atomic equipment and possessing more than 100 racial and tribal groups, this country is extremely important. Of course it must be mentioned that Kazakhstan was the first country which voluntarily has taken historical steps towards nuclear disarmament through closing its experiment sites in 1991, removal of all nuclear reactors in 1996 and destruction of factories which produced nuclear equipment. This country has also signed the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty, Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty and it has joined the protective groups of International Atomic Energy Agency and as the first country, passed acts on supervision over export of nuclear weapons. On the other hand, Kazakhstan having abundant resources of oil, gas and minerals plays an important
role in global markets. Therefore, geostrategic and geopolitical importance of Kazakhstan could be studied under four aspects:

- Creation of Stability in the Region: ethnic and racial variety (over 100 racial groups) in the region, nuclear disarmament, movement towards peace and security, creating an appropriate atmosphere based on principles of democracy and economy of job market

- A Historical example of Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons: destruction of nuclear arsenal, following the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty and Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty creating a region free of nuclear weapons

3.11.1. Political and economic status

Central Asia came under the rule of Achaemenid kings in the 6th century BC. Alexander defeated Achaemenid kingdom in 330 BC and reached Kabul and Hindu Kush in 328 BC. During AD years this land has always passed from hand to hand among nomadic tribes and inhabitants. In these periods, silk and equestrians kills had outstanding roles on regional changes. Equestrian archers were the most important military forces of that time and during these periods; Tatars, Western Turks, Arabs and the Chinese dominated this land. In 1219 AD, nomadic Moguls invaded this land and conquered all its regions. Dominance of Moguls persisted for 600 years. After Genghis Khan’s death and decline of the Mogul Empire, one of his commanders called Timur Lane conquered this land. After Timur, Kazakhs struggled hard to take hold of this land but because of invasion of Oyrats (of Mogul tribes) to Kazakhstan and conquest of eastern parts of this country by them in 1630 AD, that event never took place. Between 1690 and 1720 Kazakhs were defeated decisively and the conditions were prepared so that they submitted to the dominance of Russians in the 19th century. As the Bolsheviks led by Lenin came to power, Anwar Pasha (a young Turk) promised Lenin that he would bring Central Asia and India under the dominance of Communist Russia. But Anwar Pasha was trying to establish a country on pan-Turkism. He could never achieve this goal and because of issuing religious positions in time and also utilizing military power, dominated the whole central Asia including Kazakhstan. Through carrying out the policy of devide and rule, Lenin created different republics of Kazakh, Kirgiz, Tajik, Turkmen and Uzbek in 1920s and the present form of Central Asia is the result of his creation. Kazakhstan was
under the rule of Soviet Union of Russia till 1991 and after the collapse of Soviet Union of Russia, it gained independence on 16th December 1991 and became a member of Commonwealth Countries. Nour Sultan Nazarbayov has been president of this country since 1991.

**Fig. 3.36 : Political Structure in Kazakhstan**

The nature of political regime of Kazakhstan is “republic”. In other words, the system of Kazakhstan Government is a non-religious independent system which is based on the constitution. Although according to the constitution, the government consists of three institutions of Executive, Legislature and Judiciary, the president as head of government and head of the Executive Institution has the highest position in the country. The President as head of the Kazakhstan presidency, dominates over government and country, has authority of the Executive, full command of military forces and overall supervision over the three institutions.

The Powers enjoyed by the president in the political system of Kazakhstan are very many. Important and decisive responsibilities such as appointment and dismissal of prime minister, cabinet council, attorney general, top state officials, military and judiciary officials and commanders, dismissal of parliament and government, war and peace announcement and emergency announcement are all responsibilities of the president. Of course it must be mentioned that in some of these cases, parliament and the government must also give their consent, but still the president is considered as the most powerful political figure of the country.

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1. Ibid, p. 472.
The President of Kazakhstan is selected through referendum and winning votes of people. Prime minister is selected by the president and after approval of parliament takes office. Selection and dismissal of assistants for prime minister and members of cabinet (ministers) are also carried out by the president. Head of central bank is selected by the president and approved by parliament.

Appointment and dismissal of attorney general, chief of national security commission, heads, mayors, governor generals and mayors of big cities are accomplished by the president. Among 39 members in Parliament of Senates, 7 members are chosen by the president and the other 32 members are selected by people indirectly through elective boards of parliament members from different regions of the country. Among the 77 members of parliament, 10 members are selected from the majority parties and the others are selected by people.

Members of Supreme Bureau of State are selected by the president and after approval of parliament take up their responsibilities. Head and two of seven members in Council of Constitution are selected by the president, two others by the head of Parliament of Senates and the last two members are selected by head of parliament. All diplomats and political representatives of Kazakhstan in other countries, commanders and top officials of military, and chief of Budget Commission of State are also appointed or dismissed by the president.

Political system of Kazakhstan is democratic and according to the constitution. Parties in this country have widespread freedom and media and papers also play remarkable roles. At present almost 689 newspapers, 161 magazines, 157 electronic channel and 9 information agencies are active in Kazakhstan. The President is chosen through election and by majority of people’s votes ad plays an important role in the political destiny of the country.

3.11.2. Economy

Kazakhstan has abundant resources of fossil fuel. In 2000 and 2001 it had a two-digit growth rate. The establishment of the Caspian Sea pipeline from Kazakhstan to Black Sea has developed export potentials of this country. It is the second republic among the previous republics of Russia that has rich metal deposits and other
important resources. Steppe plains of this country along with high agricultural potentials promise bright future prospects for this country’s economy. The Industrial sector of Kazakhstan is reliant on extractions of mineral resources. This country needs agricultural machinery, tractors and some defense items.

In 1995-97 the government moved towards privatization and freeing economy. In December 1996, signing a consortium contract on setting pipelines from west of Kazakhstan in the oil region of Tengiz to Black Sea increased greatly the oil export of this country. The country was affected by reduction of oil price and economic crisis of Russia.¹ Most important mineral resources of Kazakhstan are copper, silver, gold, manganese, lead, tin, nickel, phosphate and uranium. It has also rich iron resources. In gold resources Kazakhstan is the seventh country in the world. There are 146 gold mines and 121 mines with compound of gold elements in this country. Kazakhstan has the greatest potential resources of oil and gas in the countries around Caspian Sea. It produces 1.8 million barrels of oil from the Caspian sea every day from which two thirds belong to Kazakhstan. This country exported 1.1 million barrels of oil a day in the first half of 2005. Kazakhstan is considered as a producer and exporter of agricultural products.

Its main economic activities include: agriculture, fishing, mines, factories, electricity, gas, hospitality industry and brokering. Its agricultural products are: wheat, rice, rye, corn, chawdar, potato, tomato, cabbage and sunflower. Its industrial products are: wheat, sugar, beer, mineral water, cigarettes, textiles, fiber, sulfuric acid, engine, white oil, mazotte, cement, copper, and electric energy. Currency of this country is Tenge. The rate of national gross growth in 2008 was approximately 5.3%, total amount of direct foreign investment in 2005 was almost $1721.1 million and average rate of inflation in this year was 7.6%.²

In order to improve their economic condition Kazakhs turned towards international institutions and financial resources. These institutions in turn, according to their own policies, suggested the path of free economy. This country is moving along this path. Attraction of foreign investments is an outstanding point in

¹ Koolaee. Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), achievements and prospects, p. 76.
² http://www.ecosecretariat.org.statistcs
investment policies of Kazakhstan which has the role of coordinating foreign participation with national economic objectives. Regarding export resources, Kazakhstan is the fifth country among republics of previous Soviet Union after Russia, Ukraine, White Russia and Uzbekistan. Its import goods are: food complementary, mineral products, chemicals, plastic, and machinery equipments. Its exports are vegetables, mineral products, and chemical products, pearl and basic goods. Totally, the rate of foreign trade in this country in 2007 was almost $14999 million.

3.11.3. Cultural and Social aspects

Religion and Society: Muslim (Sunni, Hanafi) 47%, Russian Orthodox 44%, Protestant (mostly Baptist) 2%, Roman Catholic and Jew, etc. 7%.

As one of Central Asian countries and also part of the Turk population in the region, Kazakhstan is under the influence if Islam and its development. Nevertheless, influence and penetration of Islam in different parts of Kazakhstan society is not as much as the influence is on neighboring countries. Many Kazakhs had not embraced Islam until the 18th and even 19th centuries AD. As communists dominated over Kazakhstan, the authority of Soviet Union added to their control over Muslims and called Islam a destructive power in Central Asia, but after independence of Kazakhstan, religious activities greatly increased in this country. Muslims of this country supported by Islamic countries, increased the number of their mosques and Islamic schools, and there are 230 Islamic unions active in this country now. After Islam, Russian Orthodox Christians are the biggest religious group in this country. Slav Russians of this country are followers of this religion. German inhabitants, a group of Slavs, the Polish and Koreans are Catholic and Protestants of this country. German minorities are mostly settled in Almaty and the areas around it. The population of Jews in this country is also active in most big cities and they have created Jewish associations.

Religion and Politics: although Kazakhstan is called a Muslim country, it could hardly be called that. Especial geographical position of this country has created a mixture of different Asian and European nations. That is why Kazakhstan has not yet been influenced by religious movements and groups. Religious organizations have
never been so powerful to gain political role in the society. They have not tried to take on this role and of course the Kazakhstan constitution does not give them such permissions. After independence of this country, there was a great leap in improvement of religious freedoms. During the independence period of this country religious conflict or formation of religious groups have not been mentioned. Despite this the government, of Kazakhstan forbade creating religious parties through passing an act in 1995 and supervised over activities of all religions through forming a council of religious affairs. The act in 1995 formally announced this country as a secular country and that religions have no role in the political system of this government.

3.11.4. Customs and Traditions

Kazakhs are hospitable people. Shaking hands with others with both hands while greeting shows friendliness and respect between them. As an example the name “NurSultan” is used in short form with the suffix “ke” as Nurke. In Kazakh houses a dear guest is hosted with Kalleh Pacheh (boiled sheep head). Usually this food is placed in front of the guest before everyone else and of course before the eldest member of the house. Regarding clothes, Kazakhs wear different types. Wearing local and traditional clothes is popular especially during celebrations. Famous Kazakh foods are Kazi, Suret, Besbarmak, Shisshlik and Liposhka. Popular drink of Kazakhs is tea which is served dark. Their special drink is Kumis (fermented horse milk) which is made in special places called Kumis house.

3.11.5. Nations

Kazakh 53.4%, Russian 30%, Ukrainian 3.7%, Uzbek 2.5 %, German 2.4 %, Uyghur 1.4%, other 6.6% (1999 census).

Kazakhs constitute the majority of population in Kazakhstan today. They were nomadic tribes who used to migrate during different seasons of the year. Till 1920 they have lived this way and in the 20th decade they tended towards settling down and at present they mostly live in rural areas. Slavs and other non-Asian (central) tribes migrated to Kazakhstan several times. Rural immigrants (since 19th century), industry workers (since 1930), political prisoners (since 1930 till 1950) and all others who had been exiled by Stalin before or after WWII due to fear of aligning with enemy forces; Slavs and non-Asian tribes are among immigrants of this country. Germans from
Volga and Ukraine, Ingushes, Karachais, Balkans, Chechens, Turks and Kalmyks from Caucasus, Tatars and Koreans from borders of Korea and Russia immigrated to this country. Germans and Koreans engaged themselves un-industrial and management jobs and tribes of Caucasus occupied jobs of their ancestors (agriculture). After independence of Kazakhstan as Slavs and Germans migrated to their countries and Kazaks returned from neighboring countries to Kazakhstan, Kazakh population of this country increased and exceeded other nationalities. Despite a variety of nationalities in Kazakhstan, there has not been ethnic war and conflict in this country; but between Slavs and Kazaks, there have been and still are tensions over language, jobs and education. Nowadays the influence of Kazaks on many of the official affairs is apparently obvious. That is why many Slavs as well as Germans immigrated to their own countries. Although nationalist Kazaks are satisfied with it, lack of educated Slavs and Germans has damaged the economy of this country. Nowadays Slavs mostly live in the north of Kazakhstan and have control over economy of these areas.

3.11.6. Social evils

The rate of crime and violence is high in Kazakhstan whereas the rate of kidnap is average. Kidnap (especially of children) has occurred in this country and specifically businessmen and merchants have fallen victim to it. Proportion of organized and planned crimes has been increasing which is apparently visible in cases related to drugs. That is why street violence has become more brutal than before. According to the annually published data approximately 17 murders, 13 rapes and 458 thefts take place for every 100,000 citizens of this country.¹

3.12. Conclusion

In order to count factors of success in an economic or political region, we must consider factors such as strategic location, affluent mineral resources, wide area, sufficient population, history and common culture, etc.

Nowadays, we can find unions with a minimum of these factors have been able to reach their determined objectives.

¹ Ahmadi Lafouraki. a guide book of Caspian area, central Asian countries and southern Caucasus, P. 518.
ECO is a region that has perhaps most of the needed elements for development. Vast area, sufficient population, affluent and unique resources, strategic location, and common history and culture are among these factors. But does possessing all these elements lead a region to development? Or other elements are needed as complementary to these factors, because if only these factors were enough, we would have a region in the world that could be an appropriate example for a tendency towards regionalization to other parts of the world.