CHAPTER – III
CHAPTER-III

PROBLEMS OF RUSSIAN MINORITIES IN POST-SOVIET CENTRAL ASIA

3.1 Russians In Central Asia – A Historical And Political Perspective

3.1.1 The Russian Advance

It was in the sixteenth century that the Russians began their expansion into Central Asia. The Muscovite Grant Duchy began its march on Asia as soon as it had overthrown the Mongolian yoke. In 1552, Ivan the Terrible occupied Kazan and in 1556 Astrakhan, on the Volga Delta. The southward movement from Siberia began in the eighteenth century, first into the Steppe region and later into Turkistan. Russia’s expansion into the Steppe region may be said to have begun in 1730 with the acceptance of Russian control by Abulkhair, the Khan of the Lesser Horde. The Russian advance towards the Khanates began chiefly in the first half of the nineteenth century. ¹ A scientific expedition was sent in 1824 to conduct a barometric study of the Caspian and the Aral Sea areas, with the support of half a battalion of Cossack infantry and six cannons. In 1834, a military base was established at fort Novo-Alexandrovsk on the northeastern coast of the Caspian with the object of improving trade with Khiva.

The defeat of Tsarist Russia in the Crimean War 1853 resulted in the transfer of Russian interest from the Balkans and the Near East to the Far

East and Central Asia. Instructions sent in 1858 by A. Gorchakov, Foreign Minister of the Russian Empire, to the Russian Ambassador in London, Buranov, reflected this policy. These instructions laid down “the strengthening of the influence of Russian industry, trade and culture in Asia,” as the main object of Russian policy.² Y.A. Gagemeister recommended the annexation of Central Asia for economic reasons. The region was ideally suited to the cultivation of cotton and the Syr-Darya was navigable up to the vicinity of Tashkent. The conquest of Central Asia was seen to be of great significance to Russia, because it not only formed a convenient source of raw cotton for the Russian textile industry, but also a good market for Russian manufacturers. It also gave the advantage usually furnished by colonies to the military and officials of the conquering power.³

In June 1865, Cherneayev captured Tashkent, which according to Khalfin, “fully corresponded with the ideas both of the government and the military-feudal aristocracy of the Russian Empire, and of commercial and industrial circles”. At first, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, denied the intention of incorporating Tashkent into the Russian Empire. It wanted Tashkent to act as a buffer state between the Russian Empire and Bukhara. For some time the civil government of Tashkent remained in the hands of Cherneayev, with the religious and judicial administration vested in the “khazi kalam” or supreme judge of Canon Law, subject to confirmation by Cherneayev. Ultimately in August 1866, Tashkent was declared as part of Russia.

2. N. A. Khalfin; Prisayedinienie Srednej Azii K Rossii, p. 83.
In the spring of 1866, military operations were started against the Bukhara Emirate, and by May 1866 Khodzhent, Dzhizak, and other towns and districts were taken, which opened up the direct road to Samarkand and Bukhara.\(^4\) In 1867, the newly acquired territory was formed into the Governorate General of Turkistan, with General K. P. Kaufman at its helm. In March 1868, the Emir of Bukhara declared a holy war against the Russian troops; disturbances occurred in Tashkent and other conquered towns. Kaufman acted swiftly, and in April 1868 moved on to Samarkand, defeated the troops of the Emir of Bukhara and entered the town on 2nd May 1868.

Thus, during the years 1864-1868, the two most important Central Asian States – Kokand and Bukhara – were totally defeated but, for external reasons, they were not formally annexed to the Tsarist Empire. Instead “peace treaties” were concluded in 1868 with Kokand Khanate and the Bukhara Emirate whereby these states relinquished the lands actually conquered by Russia, recognized themselves as vassals of the latter and gave the Russians extremely favourable trading terms.

Five years later came the turn of Khiva. In the spring 1873, she was over run by Russians and forced to accept terms dictated by Russia. In August 1873, a peace treaty was signed between General Kaufman and Syed Mohammed Rahim Khan, the ruler of Khiva. This treaty forced the Khan to acknowledge that he was “the humble servant of the Emperor of all the Russians” and to renounce “all direct and friendly relations existing with

\(^4\) Ibid; pp. 45-46.
neighbouring rulers and Khans”. The whole of Amu-Darya and the surrounding lands belonging to Khiva were transferred to Russia, which also obtained free navigation on the Amu-Darya. The treaty with Khiva was a typical colonial treaty resembling those of western powers and China. On the whole, this treaty assured Russia an economic hold over these three Khanates.

Next came the turn of Turkoman tribes who inhabited the Atrek Valley and the Sorkhs of the Merv oasis. The Turkoman tribes of the Tekke suffered a shattering blow when their main centre, Goeke-Tepe, and also Ashkhabad were captured in 1881. But the whole of Turkoman territory was not yet in Russian hands, and another three years passed before Merv finally acknowledged Russian rule. In 1885, the Tedzhend oasis, which for a short time had been under Afghan rule, but inhabited by the Turkomans, was annexed by Russia, thus bringing all the Turkoman country under Russian rule. By and large, by the end of 1885, the Russian conquest in Central Asia was rounded off. The work of two centuries was thus completed.

The conquest of the three Khanates and the Turkoman country raised enormously the prestige of Russia throughout Asia. There was the highest admiration for the might and fighting power of the great “White Padishah”, who had sent forth his troops from his magnificent palace on the banks of the Neva, and had far exceeded in military achievement the great names of Genghiz Khan, Timur and Nadir Shah.

5. Devendra Kaushik; op. cit. n. 1. p. 46.
3.1.2 The Establishment Of Russian Settlements

After the annexation of the three Khanates, Tsarist Russia then started a policy of settling the Russians in different Khanates. These Russian comprised of mainly military officials, skilled and unskilled workers for the construction of rail and roads, traders and middleman who exploited the native people in the cotton cultivation. Another group, the Russian bourgeoisie also set up a variety of small and handicraft industries in these Khanates.

The entire Russian population of Turkistan amounted to 5,40,674. Of this, 1,85,303 lived in towns and 3,30,469 in villages; 16,648 lived in town-like settlements and 8,254 near the stations along the railway line. Among the Russian town settlers, approximately 26,000 were industrial workers, of whom about 20,000 were railway workers. In the Russian settlements in the Semirechye, there were 11,959 households with a population of 72,117 persons and 1,428 non-Russian with a population of 6,474. 3,322 (19.5%) households (out of which 2,204, i.e., about 70% were Russians and 1,118, i.e., 30%, non Russians). Among the Russian peasant settlers in the Chimkent ‘uyzed’ of the Sur-Darya oblast, about 35% of the peasant families worked as agricultural labourers and 34% as industrial workers.

Central Asia was converted into a raw material supplying base for the metropolitan industries in Russia. Tsarist administration paid great attention to cotton cultivation and encouraged it at the expense of wheat and other agricultural products. Cotton exports rose from 873 thousand poods in 1880
A.D. to 4,960 thousand poods in 1909 further rising to 13,697 thousand poods in 1913. But the development of cotton cultivation did not improve the material conditions of the dekhans (peasants). A new exploiter, the Russian, entered the scene when metropolitan capital began to finance cotton cultivation through local firms. The cotton purchasers, who were generally Russians, acted as a sort of middlemen between the industrialist and the cotton producers.

The administration of Turkistan was entrusted not to the Ministry of the Interior but to the War Ministry. The Governor-General appointed by the Tsar enjoyed wide powers and concentrated in his hands the entire military and civil administration of the territory. He had great powers in matters relating to Bukhara and Khiva as well. He appointed from among the representatives of Russian nobility and military officers the a blast and vyezed administrative officers. Most of the vyezed commandants, writes R. Pierce, levied “additional taxes on the natives, usually to a degree that not only covered normal expenses but enabled them to live in luxury”.

Although Tsarism purposely tried to keep Central Asia as its agricultural raw material base, its military and strategic interests and also the narrow interests of the Russian bourgeoisie obliged it to construct 3,377 kilometers of railway line and 14 railway repair workshops and depots which employed a total of approximately 24,000 workers, most of which were Russians. In 1888, Samarkand was joined by rail with Krasnovodsk, in 1898 with Andijan, and with Tashkent a year later. In 1906, Tashkent was also joined by a branch line with Orenburg. The introduction of railways
marked the beginning of the end of economic seclusion of the different regions inside Central Asia and also the end of isolation of the whole of Central Asia.

The Russian bourgeoisie also had to allow raw material processing industries to develop in the territory. Cotton ginning, oil, soap, beer, brick manufacturing and wool cleaning industries began to be established in Central Asia. By 1914, there were 818 semi-handicraft enterprises working in Turkistan. The total numerical strength of the industrial workers in Turkistan in 1914 was 49.9 thousand workers. Out of these 25.5 thousand (51%) were engaged in industries and 24.4 thousand (49%) in railways. 72% of the industrial workers were from local nationalities of the Central Asia and 23% were Russians. In the railways, however, Russian workers formed the bulk of the total strength (80%). Thus, the Central Asian economy, before the October Revolution, was an economy dominated by feudal relations of production, of which the Russian bourgeoisie had the largest share.

In the colonial period, a few significant developments in the cultural sphere may be noted. Of great importance was the opening of secular schools and other cultural institutions in Turkistan. The then Governor-

General, Kaufman, attached great importance to the local people's sending their children to Russian schools where secular and scientific subjects were taught. By 1911, there were 105 such schools. The school curriculum was divided into two parts, viz., Russian language and arithmetic, etc. taught by a Russian teacher and Muslim religious instructions by a mullah.

Then came in Central Asia, not only civil and military colonial officials, "the scum" of Russian society, but also the noblest representatives of the Russian society, progressive Russian intelligentsia — scholars, scientists and teachers, democratic-minded middle level as well minor officials, artisans and workers. A public library was opened in Tashkent in 1870, made possible by gifts of books from various cultural institutions of St. Petersburg and Moscow and from donations by many Russian scholars. A number of scientific societies were organized at the initiative of the Russian scientists for the study of geography, anthropology, archaeology, astronomy and medicine. All these certainly made a contribution towards enriching the cultural life of Central Asia.

3.1.3 The Soviet Nationality Question

With few exceptions, there had been no uniformity in the Russian policies towards her newly acquired colonies. Tsarist nationality policy towards the majority of non-Russians consisted mainly in the suppression of their languages and cultures with a view to forcing Russification. The right to national self-determination as one of the basic principles of its foreign policy was proclaimed by the Soviet Union in one of its first decrees — the Decree on Peace. The Decree of Peace was subsequently confirmed by a
series of other decrees of the Russian Federation such as the Deceleration of the Rights of the Peoples of Russia, the Deceleration of the Rights of Working and Exploited People, the Appeal of the Council of People’s Commissars of the Toiling Muslims of Russian and the East, numerous diplomatic notes, statements, etc. The central problem in the Soviet nationalist policy was to maintain a delicate balance between two conflicting interests: to assure the continued dominance of the Russian majority and at the same time to reduce the alienation of non-Russian nationalities, and to guarantee that they will be equal, valued and respected members of a Soviet multi-national community. In practice, Soviet policy fluctuated between these impulses.  

3.1.4 Lenin’s Nationalities Policy

Lenin prior to 1917 adhered to the views of Marx and Engels on the question of federation. Marx opposed federation in general but accepted only the form of integral and undivided republic. Lenin and the Communist Party opted for the principles of democratic centralism. He preferred a unitary state. He believed that the Party will build a multinational socialist state – not forcibly but by voluntary and free consent.

The Turkistan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic was the first step towards the founding of national states by the people of Central Asia.

For implementing its nationalities policy, the Soviet Government created a special organ, the People’s Commissariat for Nationality Affairs (Narkomnats). Thus, soon after the establishment of their regime, the Bolsheviks were equipped with both a policy and the machinery for carrying out the momentous task of building a supra-national state. In place of the policy of national state pursued by the Tsarist regime in the multi-national Russian Empire, the Soviet Government put into practice a policy which aimed at building a number of republics which in proportion, were given an appropriate degree of internal autonomy. The expression “national in form but socialist in content” aptly describes the reconciliation effect by the Bolsheviks in the nationalities policy between the rival claims of nationalism and socialism.

Lenin introduced the New Economic Policy in 1921 to placate the peasantry and consolidating Soviet rule. As the Central Asian nations were largely composed of peasants, the NEP had tremendous implications for Soviet nationalities policy. The ethnic population would have to be wooed through the medium of their native languages and cultures. The more liberal approach in the economic sphere was therefore translated into the area of nationality policy. So Lenin’s principles of nationality policy utilized a standard shield for the non-Russians.

9. Ibid; p. 265.
10. Ibid.
Lenin's policy was, however, entirely inadequate as a solution to the complex national problem. By offering the minorities virtually no choice between assimilation and complete independence, it ignored the fact that they desired neither. He looked upon nationalist sentiments as a force suitable for exploitation in the struggle for power. However, as a psychological weapon, the slogan of self-determination in Lenin's interpretation was to prove enormously successful as a means of winning the support of the national movement which the revolutionary period developed in all their magnitude. 11

3.1.5 The 1924 National Delimitation

The national territorial delimitation of Central Asia which brought into existence several national republics in place of the former multinational political entities of Turkistan, Bukhara and Khorezm. The necessity for undertaking such an extensive territorial reorganization of Central Asia arose from the desire to remedy the complex national tangle which considerably hindered the development of a socialist order within the region. The heterogeneous composition of the population of Central Asia raised a number of problems. The various national groups which inhabited Turkistan, Bukhara and Khorezm did not exist on the same level of political, economic social and cultural development, and they also differed from one another in language, ways of life, customs and tradition. Vareikis, the

Secretary of the Central Committee of the Turkistan Communist Party, asserted that national delimitation was a ‘progressive step forward in the implementation of the Soviet nationalities policy in Central Asia, and that it was bound to weld together the mosaic of clans and tribes which were ethnically and culturally related to one another and consolidate them in a single socialist nation’.12

The main criticism of Soviet delimitation policy was that the Bolshevik motives for political reorganization were based on ‘divide and rule, and the communist desire to prevent a Turkic federation of the Central Asian people. Mustafa Chokayev’s dream of ‘khalgynyng gany bir, till bit, dini bir’ (a people of one soul, one tongue, one body) was rejected not only by the Bolsheviks, but also by various other Central Asian peoples who feared Tatar (in spite of the fact that Chokayev was a Kazakh) domination. He believed that the ‘division of Turkistan into tribal states’ was a plan invented solely as a ‘counterpoise’ to Pan-Turanian tendencies and that it was the ‘direct result of Sultan Galiyev’s attempted counter-revolution’.13

3.1.6 Stalin’s Nationalities Policy

Stalin’s approach to the national question was opposite to that of Lenin. His policies were to pit one republic and one ethnic group against another. He replaced the old party elites by the new ones. Among the generals appointed between 1940 to 1970, 91% were Slavs; none were from Central Asia. The use of the Arabic script, which was the only means of common communication in Central Asia before 1917, was ended in favour of Latin in 1922, and then Cyrillic after 1935 to increase the pace of integration with Russia. His other repressive measures included destruction of local economic autonomy that had existed under NEP, arbitrary redrawing of boundaries, rewriting of histories to emphasize the progressive character of the Russian imperialism and end of criticism of Great Russian chauvinism. The purges under Stalin did not stop at the political elite. Large parts of Kazakhstan, like Siberia, were turned into gulags. Anti-Islam propaganda increased dramatically under Stalin, to create a new ‘Soviet man’, which in Central Asia was only an excuse for greater Russification.14

3.1.7 Nationalities Policy after Stalin

The de-Stalinization process started in 1953, under Khrushchev. In 1955, attacks against Islam in Central Asia intensified. Veil-burning ceremonies were given widespread publicity and Khrushchev received the former Bolshevik, head of the ‘Union of the Godless’ in 1958, which shut

down the few Islamic schools and mosques which were still open. Islamic weddings and funerals were banned, and in 1959 the end of the era of the veil was officially announced, with the ceremonial burning of the last veil in Bukhara. After the Twentieth Party Congress, Khrushchev’s nationality policy took a new course. He condemned some of Stalin's crimes and admitted that “under Stalin there had been ‘monstrous’ and ‘gross’ violations of the basic Leninist principles of the nationalities policy of the Soviet State”. At the Twenty-second Party Congress in 1961, a declaration was passed that the nationalities problem in the Soviet Union had been solved with complete fusion between all ethnic groups and people.

After a few months of Khrushchev’s removal in 1964, Brezhnev came into power. He was more tactful in his references to nationality policy than Khrushchev. At the Twenty-fourth Party Congress in 1971, President Brezhnev said that fifty years of Soviet rule had produced ‘a new historical community of people - the Soviet people had emerged’, a people which was united. In the 1978 constitution even less formal independence and even fewer decision-making powers were given to these Republics than before. As a result bureaucrats ruled in an often thoroughly lethargic, corrupt and


17. *Ibid*; p. 35.
nepotistic style. These two men had ruled Central Asia for nearly twenty years, throughout what was later called the ‘era of stagnation’.

3.1.8 Gorbachev Nationalities Policy

Gorbachev’s accession to power in March 1985 coincided with the end of the long-running tenures of the first secretaries of the five Central Asia Communist Parties. The epoch of democratization in April 1985 had confronted the Soviet multi-ethnic state in a complex and historical situation. Gorbachev paced with a formidable accumulation of problems, economic stagnation, inefficiency, mismanagement, corruption and above all an unexpected rise of ethnic tension. He now had the opportunity to introduce his new policies of glasnost (openness) and perestroika (restructuring) through a more enlightened leadership in Central Asia, which would be more sensitive to local conditions.

Initially he showed remarkable insensitivity to Central Asia, which led to public resentment. The first resentment in Central Asia occurred in the most placid corner of the region – Alam Ata. In December 1986 Gorbachev removed the Kazakh party chief Din Mukhamed Kunayev, who ruled the Republic since 1964, and replaced him by an ethnic Chuvash Russian, Gennady Koblin. On 17th December 1986, a few days after Koblin took over, anti-Russian riots started, which were partly engineered by Kunayev’s supporters, but they fed on the strong Kazakh nationalist feeling.
Ethnic tensions spread to capitals like Tashkent and Dushanbe where the growing feelings of ethnic nationalism were vivid.

Central Asia continued to boil. In May 1988, there were riots in Ashkabad. In June 1989 dozens of people were killed and 1,000 were injured in Fergana Valley of Uzbekistan. In February 1990 dozens of people were killed in riots of Dushanbe. Gorbachev did not form any specific policy to deal with the nationalities. The huge acclaim that Gorbachev's policies of 'glasnost' and 'perestroika' received in the western Soviet republics and in Europe was never duplicated in Central Asia. The growth of nationalism in Central Asia was mirrored in Russia itself, where intellectuals first began to voice the need to dump the Soviet empire if Russia was to make meaningful progress. Central Asia was seen not as the source of raw material, but as an economic burden which was dragging Russia into backwardness. The Russian dissident Alexander Solzhenitsyn argued in a prophetic essay published in 1991 that Russia would only be strong 'once it has shed the onerous burden of the Central Asia underbelly'. He called for the break-up of the Soviet Union and rebuilding of Russian nationalism. Echoing the sentiments of sizable number of Russians, Solzhenitsyn stated: "We don't have the strength for the peripheries either economically or morally. We don't have the strength for sustaining an empire - and it is just as well. Let this burden fall from our shoulders, it is crushing us, sapping our energy and hastening our demise."

18. *Ibid*; p. 36.
3.2 Political Problems of Russian Minorities In Central Asian Republics

The ‘triumph of nations’ is the phrase coined by Helene Carrere d’Encava in 1993 to signify the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The nationality discord in the Soviet Union strewn over the vast territory of the country is demonstrative of a nation in turmoil. The unique features of Soviet multinationalism and the national pride of Soviet Socialism that had claimed for years to divergent national ethos of innumerable nationalities are all now questionable propositions. The open expression of hostile attitude of non-Russians against Russians, is a manifestation of a deep resentment imbedded in the ruptured ego of suppressed nationalities; using with each other to ascertain the national identities and ensure for them tenets of real self-determination.20

The disintegration of the former USSR took place under the banner of ethnic nationalism, it is only natural that the proclamation of ‘nation-states’ within the borders of the former union republics should be made on behalf of the titular ethno-nations: the Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Tajiks, Turkmen and Uzbeks. The regional, religious and dynastic – clan identities of the past gave way to a new ethnic nationalism in the Central Asian Republics. In this section we will discuss first about the inter – ethnic discord in the Republics which

preceded the disintegration of the former USSR and then go on to discuss the political problems of the ‘new Russian Diaspora’ which emerged in the early part of last decade.

3.2.1 Inter-Ethnic Discord

The events in the Kazakh capital, Alma–Ata, on 17-18 December 1986 and those in Fergana Valley of Uzbekistan and the Dushanbe riots in February 1990, were telling stories of inter-ethnic discord in Central Asia. The high point of civil disturbances turning violent in Alam–Ata was clearly demonstrative of a deep discord prevailing among the non–Russians and the ongoing struggle between the indigenous natives and the Russian settlers.

Three exclusivist and demanding needs confronted each other at Alma–Ata, Communism, religion in the form of Islam and nationalism to which was added the locally powerful force of racist attitude. The causes of the trouble was the removal, because of age, inefficiency and corruption of the 74 years old First Secretary of the Communist Party, Din Mukhamed Kunayev and his replacement by a 59 year old Russian, Gennady Kolbin. The Kazakhs felt that Kunayev’s removal was an insult to the entire Kazakh people. Thousands of disenchanted young Kazakhs gathered in Brezhnev Square to voice their discontent with Moscow’s decision to appoint an outsider to head the Communist Party of Kazakhstan (CPK). 21 National

slogans including “Autonomy and separate seat for Kazakhstan at the UN”. “We want to join China”, “America is with us”, “Russia is against us” and “Kolbin go back to Russia”, appeared in the streets of Alma-Ata. Wild rowdy crowds armed with sticks and rods, beat up and insulted citizens (i.e. Russians), overturned cars and set fire to them and broke the glasses in stores, hostels and other public buildings.\textsuperscript{22}

According to the official explanation the ‘riots’ were the results of excesses on the part of Kazakh youth -- inspired by ringleaders who were drunk or on drugs. They attacked the Soviet militia that were trying to control an ugly, unruly crowd through peaceful means. The sources of the young peoples’ disaffection was the apprehensions of the children of the local elite that they could no longer count on a life of privilege, and also as a manifestations of anti-Russian sentiments.\textsuperscript{23}

The causes of the Fergana pogrom in early June 1989 could only be traced in the periphery of history, of the deportation of Meskhetian Turks and the resultant demographic disproportion it created in their new place of resettlement. The potent causes of socio-economic anomaly existing through past four decades between the natives and the deportees generated resentment in the youth.

\textsuperscript{22} S W B Part I USSR; 1st January, 1987.
\textsuperscript{23} Marth Brill Olcolt; \textit{Problems Of Communism Vol. 39}, No. 4, p. 66.
Despite the relatively high tide of carnage in Fergana compared to that in Alma-Ata, some similarities could be observed in both the cases of violence. Firstly, both the incidents occurred territorially not far from each other and in character and content both were ethnic riots aiming at upholding the national identity of respective peoples in their Republics. Secondly, in both places majority of the indigenous natives burst out against the non-natives and the behavior of rioters was as beastly in Alma-Ata as it was in Fergana. Thirdly, the government approach to crisis management in both the places was similar – go slow, cautious and compromising.24

A variety of reasons shrouded around what caused the Dushanbe riots might uphold the truth of that bloody event which wrecked the Republic in February 1990. First, the rumour about preferential allocation of housing to new arrivals from Fergana or Caucasus was accepted as a potential cause for instigating the riot.25 Secondly, the apprehensions that sufferers of the Fergana tragedy in Uzbekistan had fled to seek refuge in Dushanbe enlivened the Tadzik animosity. A combination of all these factors among others, plus the rumours about the impending arrival of refugees in Dushanbe was all that set the ball rolling. It led the city to witness an unprecedented conflict on 12-13 February 1990 that it had never seen before.

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25. Ibid; p. 115.
The ethnic dimension of the Dushanbe conflict of 1990 could be logically construed in the following potential elements: the presence of a strong Uzbek-Tadzik animosity, the prevalence of a strong anti-Caucasian especially anti-Armenian feeling among the Tadziks and a clear expression in leaflets mailed to the residents of Tashkent’s Khamzin borough demanding that Russians leave the city by 1st March.26

3.2.2 Emigration of the Russian Population

Given the boisterous situation prevailing in the Central Asian Republics, it was feared that there may be widespread migration from these republics. The Izvestia reported ‘The Russians are not being called occupiers as is the case in the Baltics. They are not being driven out. There are no military operations. But they are leaving’.27 During the first six months of 1990, Russian emigration from Kyrgyzstan was at a rate of 2.6 times those that of the previous year. From the Osh region, about 3,200 Slavs departed in the first months following the riots. In the first few years, Kyrgyzstan had the second highest number of emigrants in the CIS, after Tajikistan.28

During the Dushanbe riots in 1990, the Russians still encountered incidents of assault and intimidation aimed at them. More frightening to the Russian population has been prospect of success of the Islamic movement in

26. Ibid; p. 117.
27. CDPSP; Vol. XLIV, No.25, 1992, p.10.
Tajikistan. After the February 1990 events in Dushnbe, at least 1,00,000 left Tajikistan in the course of a year. In April and May 1992 there was some anti-Russian incidences, after which 20,000 people left Dushanbe. By the end of 1992, nearly 1,50,000 Russian speakers left the civil war-ravaged Tajikistan. Before the civil war began there were about half a million Russians and Russian-speakers and by 1996 only about half remained. Even from Kazakhstan substantial migration has been taking place until recently. Between 1989-1996, the Russian population there declined by 7,28,000.29

In a sociological study conducted by the Giller Institute in 1995, of the 1,000 persons questioned, as many as 47.4% showed a willingness to leave Kazakhstan.30 However, according to Nazarbayev, the emigration in Kazakhstan is not a Russian-related phenomenon only. It is mostly because of the departure of Germans, 3,00,000 of whom left Kazakhstan in 1993. In fact according to Kazak President, 1,54,000 Russians came to Kazakhstan in 1993 (including 54,000 from other parts of Central Asia). The proportion of German emigration has been higher than that among Russians. Between 1989-96, the Russian population declined by 9.8 % as compared to 55.5 % decline among Germans. Yet in terms of absolute number, the net out-migration of Russians in Kazakhstan was 6,78,000 as compared to 5,37,000 among Germans.31 Refer Table-3.1 for population change among Russians in Central Asia.

31. Ibid; 10.
Table 3.1

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<th>Population by nationality</th>
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Between 1992-96, Central Asia accounted for 59% of all net migrations to Russia from former Soviet Republics, of which 25% was from Uzbekistan. Of all the migrants from Central Asia to Russia between 1989-96, ethnic Russians constituted 70%. The net population transfer of ethnic Russians from Central Asia to Russia during the same period was equal to over 14%(1.3 million people) of those ethnic Russians who were permanent residents in the region in 1989.32

3.2.3 Reasons for Emigration of Russians

Not because of cultural alienation, but the fear aroused by riots and later the Tajik civil war left its mark on the Russian-speaking population in Central Asia. The religious activism among the indigenous nationalities has been another factor that also scared the Russian population. Since independence there has been a rapid growth of registered mosques – from 17 in 1989 the number of Friday mosques went up to 150 in early 1993 and to 204 in 1997, apart from more than 5,000 prayer houses.33

Rise of Wahabism, has been a very potent factor in Russian’s feeling of insecurities in Central Asia. Bakhtar Union of the Democratic Youth, an association of rural intellectuals in the south of Tajikistan, had warned a year before the Dushanbe riots in 1990 about the dangers that could accrue from the growth of such elements and did come out sharply against the menace. In 1990, Russian political scientists and ethnographers were writing about the rise of the radical Wahabi movement and the forms and methods of their operation. Their views were published in a collection called Civil Movements in Tajikistan, brought out by the USSR Academy of Sciences. The problem, however, as pointed out by Kuzmin, was that even in those days of glasnost, real purposes were skillfully concealed and slogans like ‘democracy’ and ‘national renaissance’ were advanced through organizations like the Rastokhez. 34

Between 1990-94, as many as 2,00,000 Russians left Kyrgyzstan. The land issue and the land reform bill are so important in Kyrgyzstan because significant number of Russians work in the agriculture sector. The situation in Kyrgyzstan is aggravated by the relatively grave economic situation. Although the average wages in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan are approximately equal, prices of food products in Tashkent are substantially lower than in Bishkek. In Turkmenistan, which has been the most stable state in the region, the Russians are relatively free of fear of ethnic unrest or economic pressure.35

Many Russians perceived the new language laws as the basis for job discrimination. Among Russians, including those who were born and brought up in Central Asia, knowledge of the local language is limited to a few. For instance, only 1 percent of the Russians in Kazakhstan and 1.2 percent of Russians in Kyrgyzstan know the respective titular languages. The new language laws of various Central Asian states did not provide for necessary measures to help Russians master the local languages.36

Another reason for the emigration of the Russian population was the worsening economic condition of the Central Asian Republics. The economic situation in Tajikistan was the worst among all the states in the region. As a result of the armed conflict, industry in the country was immeasurably destroyed and virtually wiped out in the south.

In Kyrgyzstan about 1,000 enterprises had to close for lack of raw materials and the ranks of unemployed swelled by thousands every month within a year after independence. Between 1990-96, about 2,10,284 Russians left the Kyrgyz republic and 15,976 Kyrgyzs came into Kyrgyzstan. About 70 percent of the emigrants consisted of industrial workers, skilled and highly qualified Russians, and this represented a severe loss to the local economy.\textsuperscript{37}

A survey conducted by United States Information Agency (USIA) in Kazakhstan found an alarming number of reported joblessness or non-payment of wages to those who are in jobs. According to the Tajik government, the economic loss due to the civil war was to the tune of $7 billion and industrial production declined by 72 percent between 1992-1997. In the south of the country nearly 80 percent of the industrial potential was destroyed.

In short, Russian emigration was partly influenced by ethno-nationalism, especially in republics that have been less affected by riots, civil war or religious fundamentalism. The very process of economic decline and recession has made the position of Russians vulnerable in all the republics. Some leaders in Central Asia believe that emigration is economically determined and draw parallels with the Baltic States, where, due to better economic conditions, there has been less Russian emigration, though the citizenship laws are exclusionary in those states.

\textsuperscript{37.} Centre for Central Asia News File; No. 1, November 1992, p.1.
3.2.4 Differing Perceptions on Russian Migration

There is a difference in perception about the reasons for Russian migration between the Russians and Central Asian leadership. The Russians draw attention to the ethno-cultural issues and discrimination, thereby suggesting that they were forced migrants rather than those looking for better economic opportunities available in Russia as compared to Central Asia. The Central Asian leadership, on the other hand, underplays the ethnocultural and political aspects highlighting the economic hardship that leads to Russian emigration. 38

A study by the Moscow-based Gorbachev Foundation hardly mentions the economic aspect, except for pointing out the limitations on minority rights in the fields of privatization, land reforms etc., out of nearly seven important factors which it ascribes as reasons for Russian discomfort. Other factors, according to the study, include growing evidence of ethnocentric domination often leading to de facto limits on the rights of Russians and other minorities; state language laws which gave inadequate transition periods and few arrangements for learning that language; discrimination in work, housing and education; trend towards Islamisation of everyday life in a number of states; worsening personal relations with neighbours and members of the local community in everyday life, evident, for example, in the dismissive tone adopted by the shopkeepers and providers of services; military conflicts in some states leading to a sense of personal insecurity;

38. Ajay Patnaik, 'Nations, Minorities, States In Central Asia', p. 106.
limitations on minority rights in the fields of privatization, land reform etc.\textsuperscript{39}

Anderson cites similar surveys conducted among the Russians in 1992, which showed that the majority (59.7 per cent of those surveyed) considered worsening inter-ethnic situation as the reason for out-migration of Russians from the republic as compared to a smaller fraction who regarded unemployment (7.6 per cent), price rise (6.6 per cent) and problem of getting a good education for the children (16.5 per cent) as important reasons. The first group included 29.4 per cent who pointed out to the laws adopted that effectively reduced the rights of the Russians, and 13.2 per cent who raised the issue of threat of physical violence.\textsuperscript{40}

Other surveys have also pointed to the worries of the Russians regarding the changing ethno-cultural situation in Central Asia. For example, the survey conducted in Uzbekistan in 1991 and in Kyrgyzstan in 1992 by a group from the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology of the Russian Academy of Sciences showed that a very large number of Russians in Tashkent (79 per cent) preferred Russian to be given the same status as the titular language and were worried about the rapid pace of implementation of the language law, though it has been pointed out by Fierman that its implementation in the republic has been largely symbolic rather than substantive. In Kyrgyzstan, too, over two-thirds of those polled said the language law has affected their position and even a larger number (80 per cent) were in favour of use of Russian in higher and secondary specialized education. These surveys showed not just the different perception the

\textsuperscript{39} Ibid; p. 106.
\textsuperscript{40} John Anderson; 'The International Politics of Central Asia', p. 150.
Russians have but also their anxieties regarding their social and cultural future in the region.\(^4^1\)

Another survey in the same Republic conducted by USIA Office of Research established that even urban Kyrgyzs, who speak Russian language well and have liking for Russian literature and writings, feel that any reluctance on the part of the Russians to learn the titular language is a sign of disrespect for the local population. Timothy Edmund, in her interviews in Almaty in 1996, found that supporters of Kazakh cultural revival felt that indigenisation is not at the expense of other nationalities, which are free to preserve and promote their culture through their ‘national cultural centres’ set up by the government. Promotion of Kazakh language and changing place and street names are seen as natural in a state that is the titular republic of the Kazakhs.\(^4^2\)

The anxieties of the Russians increased with the adoption of the state Programme for Language Development for 2001-10 that effectively provides for full switch over to the use of state language (Kazakh) in state bodies, in drawing up and adopting state acts, in legal proceedings, in record keeping by local government bodies and in such spheres as culture, education and healthcare, etc. The Association of Russian, Slavonic and Cossack Public Associations (ARSC), which met for its Third Conference


on 12 May 2001, underlined that this would make the official status of the Russian language meaningless. Meanwhile, the Slavic movement, *Lad*, had called for making Russian the state language like it had been done in Kyrgyzstan.\(^{43}\)

Exodus of Russians in the initial years may have been due to fears aroused by inter-ethnic riots and the introduction of language laws. There could be other compelling reasons in subsequent years. Alexander Filonyk suggested in the context of Kyrgyzstan that it could be due to what he calls the ‘cumulative factor’ (because many have emigrated, hence those who are left feel it is even more dangerous to stay), the lack of will or ability to adjust to the new conditions following the collapse of USSR, and the economic situation. These, he suggests, are the main psychological reasons for emigration though there have been no real outward exhibition of anti-Russian sentiments. Barring a demonstration in the Issyk-Kul area in July 1991 there have been no anti-Russian group activities. Even the nationalist party *Asaba* (The National Revival Party) formed in early 1990s has been unable to attract membership and to influence the situation in the republic. In the Parliamentary elections of 2000, nationalist parties like the *Erkin* Kyrgyzstan and more radical nationalist organization *Asaba* were marginalized. The former secured 3.7 per cent of the votes and the latter only 1.58 per cent.\(^{44}\)

\(^{43}\) *Kazakhstan Daily Digest*; online, available on [www.eurasianet.org/resource/Kazakhstan](http://www.eurasianet.org/resource/Kazakhstan).

Filonyk even accuses Russian nationalist organizations like *The Foundation of Russian Community in Kyrgyzstan* for creating a fear psychosis and encouraging emigration from the Republic by offering incentives such as promise to get land allotment in Russia and helping to start a new life in different regions of Russia. The above-mentioned organization has even been promising land in the Rostov region of Russia in particular, though Cossacks there are not interested in having new settlers. It has been difficult for the Russians from Central Asia to reintegrate with their co-ethnics in the Russian Federation. Interestingly, those who are considered ‘Russians’ in Central Asia are regarded as ‘Central Asians’ or ‘outsiders’ in Russia, Rostov points out.

According to Kyrgyz President Akaev, Russian emigration was not due to the state’s ethnic policy, but because of the low standard of living in his country. Another important feature was that, unlike their fellow Russians in some Central Asian states, a large proportion of Russians worked in the defence industry and were rendered jobless with the break up of the USSR. Kazakh President Nazarbayev has highlighted that Russian emigration is not a result of state policy and their presence is in the interest of Kazakh nation itself. Speaking to *Komsomolskaia Pravda* in 1993 he clarified that there was no state policy to change the demographic situation in the state by
As shown in Table 3.2, the total number of refugees and forced migrants were much less than the total emigration to the Russian Republics between 1992-2000: resettling Kazakhs from Mongolia and border regions of China, as has been alleged in some quarters. The chairman of the opposition Republican Party of Kazakhstan, S. Akatayev, said during a rally of the national democratic parties and movements in front of Parliament building in mid-June 1992, that his party was not advancing any anti-
Russian slogans. What is more, the party was asking the Russian population of Kazakhstan for help and support, he added. 45

3.2.5 Political Marginalization of The Russians in Central Asia

There has been, along with the shrinking of the demographic base, increasing marginalization of the Russian minorities in the political sphere. According to Schatz, during the period of most significant change in the ethnic profile of the state apparatus in Kazakhstan (1985-1994), non-Kazakh proportion in high-level posts fell from 50 per cent to 25 per cent. He also cites a senior Kazakh journalist of an important newspaper in Chimkent to show that this was more visible in the most heavily Kazakh areas of the country, where fluency in Kazakh language was a prerequisite for inclusion in the power structure.46

In the political sphere the further marginalization of the Russians was visible even during the Soviet times and it gained momentum in the post-Soviet years. In the 1989 elections, for example, Kyrgyz occupied 58.5 per cent of the seats in the Congress of People’s Deputies and 65 per cent of the seats in the Supreme Soviet of Kyrgyzstan. The Uzbeks (about 22 per cent of the population) were still in a better position with about 29 percent seats in the Congress and 19 per cent seats in the Supreme Soviet of Kyrgyzstan.47

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The elections to Kyrgyzstan’s Parliament in 1995 further alienated the ethnic minorities from the political process. The Russians and Uzbeks who represent about 30 per cent of the population of the republic are disproportionately represented in parliament. The results of 1995 elections to the Kyrgyz Parliament showed that ethnic Kyrgyz were over represented with 87 deputies out of a total of 105; their share was nearly 75 per cent of the parliamentary positions though they constituted 56 per cent of the population. Uzbeks represented 8 seats and Russians only 6 seats in the Kyrgyz Parliament (Zhogorku Kenes). The share of Uzbeks in the population went up from about 13 per cent in 1989 in Kyrgyzstan to 14 per cent in 1995, which did not, however, translate into greater share in the administration, even in the southern regions. In 1995, Uzbeks occupied only 4.7 per cent of key posts in the Osh regional administration and 2 per cent in Jalalabad town government, though they constituted significant proportion of the town government, though they constituted significant proportion of the population in the two southern provinces of Osh (over a quarter) and Jalalabad (40 per cent).

Similar under-representation is visible in other Republics as well. In the first parliamentary elections in independent Turkmenistan held in 1994, 

48. John Anderson; The International Politics of Central Asia, p. 141.

112
all the candidates were elected unopposed to the fifty-seat unicameral legislature, the Majlis. Of those 45 were Turkmen, 3 were Uzbek and 2 were Russian.\textsuperscript{50}

An overwhelming majority of members of Uzbekistan’s Parliament (Oily Majlis), following the elections in December 1994, were Uzbek, including the chairman of the Parliament, two of its four deputy chairmen, and all the chairmen of its twelve committees. Uzbeks constituted 86 per cent of the members of the Parliament (compared to 77 per cent in 1990), which was higher than their share in the population of the republics (about 75 per cent). The Parliamentary elections of Tajikistan in 1995 resulted in a Majlis Oily (Parliament) that had, apart from overwhelming number of Tajiks and 18 Uzbeks, only two Russians and one Kyrgyz in a house of 181 deputies.\textsuperscript{51}

In Kazakhstan, Russians face harassment in the form of administrative decisions taken from time to time. For Example, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Kazakhstan in August 1992 passed a directive that stated, ‘In the promotion of personnel and the conferral of titles upon employees, the attitude of employees in question towards the study of the Kazakh language shall be taken into account.’\textsuperscript{52} Without any control over political and administrative structures, there is very little chance for the Russians to influence decision-making and protect their economic status.

\textsuperscript{50} Graham Smith; \textit{(et. al.)}, op. cit. n. 32. p. 152.
\textsuperscript{52} Graham Smith; \textit{et. al.}, (ed.), op. cit. n. 32. p. 154.
Election in Kazakhstan in 1994, illustrated the declining influence of Russians in the political and administrative structures. Though Russians constituted about 37 per cent and Kazakhs 42 per cent of the total population, the former had only 48 deputies in the new parliament as compared to 105 Kazakh deputies. Even in the elections that followed next year in 1995, after the Supreme Court cancelled the 1994 elections for irregularities, Russian share in the new parliament remained quite disproportionate to their share in the population of the republic.53

The political representation of the Kazakhs has been clearly quite in excess of their demographic ratio. Kazakhs occupy more than two-thirds of the seats in the upper house of the parliament, the Senate, elected in late 1995 and early 1996 (32 of 47), while Russians hold less than one-third (13 seats). Similarly, Russians only hold 28 per cent of all seats in the lower house, the Majlis, while the Kazakhs hold 65 per cent (although they made up only 46 per cent of the population in 1995).54 Higher share of Kazakhs in the legislature is not a post-Soviet phenomenon. In the 1989 Supreme Soviet of Kazakhstan, Kazakhs comprised 46.7 per cent compared to 41.8 per cent Russians. In the first multi-candidate elections in 1990, Kazakhs won 49.3 per cent of those from territorial districts as compared to 33.0 per

54. Graham Smith; et. al, (ed.), op. cit. n. 32. p. 152.
cent by Russians. Kazakhs constituted 69.3 per cent of those elected by public organizations compared to 15.9 per cent Russians. As a result, in the legislature as a whole, the Kazakh share was 54.2 per cent as compared to 28.8 per cent Russians.\textsuperscript{55}

The lower number of Russian candidates, it has been reported, was due to large-scale rejection of nominations from Russian candidates. The elections of Kazakhstan in 1994 were a glaring example. More than 200 nominations were rejected and most of those represented Russian nationalist or Cossack organizations. As a result, only 128 candidates were Russians as compared to 566 Kazakh candidates. Even the Presidential nominations for 42 seats favoured Kazakhs. Though Russians outnumbered the Kazakhs among those above the voting-age, the former finally managed only 28 per cent representation in the parliament.\textsuperscript{56}

In 1994 a group of researchers from the semi-official Institute for the Development of Kazakhstan computed the ethnic composition of the top echelons of executives in two key bureaucracies – the apparatus of the Cabinet of Ministers and the Presidential apparatus. Their findings are present in Table 3.3.

\textsuperscript{55} Martha Brill Ocott; ‘Democratization and Growth of Political Participation in Kazakhstan’, in Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrot (eds.), pp. 219-220; Ian Bremmer and Cory Welt, p. 193.

Table-3.3

First And Second Echelon on Executives In Kazakhstan’s Organ (Ethnic composition, per cent of the total).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1993</th>
<th>1994</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Russians</td>
<td>Kazakhs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cabinet of Ministers</td>
<td>24.9</td>
<td>73.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presidential Apparatus</td>
<td>25.8</td>
<td>67.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share of total population</td>
<td>43.4</td>
<td>42.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The political marginalisation of Russians in the Central Asian Republics is clearly bothering them. They fear that lack of fair representation in the decision-making process would harm their economic and cultural interest. This issue needs to be seriously addressed by the present Central Asian Republics.
3.2.6 The Question of Double Citizenship

The vexing question of “dual citizenship” has created a lot of problems in the Central Asian Republics, after the disintegration of Soviet Union. All the central Asian States have Russian population with Kazakhstan having the largest. After initial migration the Russians are now reduced to a minority. Many ethnic Russians have lived in Central Asia their whole lives, and now feel no obligation to accept the status of second class citizens.

If we assess Article 4 of the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan it discriminates against Russian speakers since it does not recognize for them affiliation to citizenship of Russia, but for “Kazakhs living in other states the right to hold citizenship of other states is recognized.” As far as the principle of self-determination of the people is concerned, V. Lafitskiy maintains, that the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan “does not recognize the right of the Russian-speaking population to self-determination” and “reunification with the Russian Federation”, which, in his opinion “contravenes the UN Charter and many other rules of international law.”

After lot of debate an agreement between the Republic of Kazakhstan and Russian Federation on simplification of the procedure of obtaining citizenship of the Republic of Kazakhstan, arriving for permanent residence

in the Russian Federation and citizens of the Russian Federation arriving for permanent residence in the Republic of Kazakhstan, was reached. Hence both the republics are to be referred to as the parties proceeding from a striving of the peoples of the two countries to maintain and strengthen historic and traditional friendly ties and reaffirming their adherence to obligation with respect to guaranteeing generally accepted international norms and human rights and freedom, desiring to ensure favorable conditions for the exercise by their citizens of the right to select and acquire citizenship of the other party on the basis of free will of the people, guided by the Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance of 25th May 1992 between the Republic of Kazakhstan and Russian.\textsuperscript{59} This citizenship Agreement Treaty was later ratified by both the Parties.\textsuperscript{60}

President Karimov of Uzbekistan rules out dual citizenship in his country. He further said that the process of the migration, the exodus of the Russian speaking population from Uzbekistan took place in the past. “Today, however, I would like to say with great satisfaction that this process has virtually been halted in 1995.”\textsuperscript{61} Both Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan are not willing to grant dual citizenship to the ethnic Russians. The only Central Asian Republic to grant dual citizenship is Tajikistan. On 7th September 1995, both the countries signed an agreement on dual citizenship and a declaration on greater integration between the two countries.\textsuperscript{62}

\textsuperscript{59} FBIS-SOV-95-107, 26\textsuperscript{th} January 1995, p. 67.
\textsuperscript{60} FBIS-SOV-95-044, 7\textsuperscript{th} March 1995, p. 75.
\textsuperscript{61} SWB SU/2369 G/2, 31\textsuperscript{st} July 1995.
\textsuperscript{62} SWB SU/2404 G/1, 9\textsuperscript{th} September 1995.
Given the present ethnic heterogeneity of Central Asia, no nationality should make territorial claims to regain what it considers its ‘historic territory’ and in the process enlist the support of its co-ethnic in a neighbouring state for its nationalist project. Nor should a nation think of the present boundaries as the homeland only of one titular group only. The building of a state based on multi-ethnicity and pluralism would help in peace and stability in the region. Any instability in one republic could spill over to the neighbouring republic by migration of refugees and also flow of radical nationalist influences. Thus, it is in the interest of all the states that cross-transfer of minorities does not take place. For that, each of these states needs to ensure minority rights within its boundaries.63

Menon and Spruyt suggest measures like dual citizenship, political autonomy for regions inhabited principally by non-titular, recognition of Russian as having co-equal status with the titular language, creation and preservation of an intellectual and cultural infrastructure of the minority nationalities, etc., as measures that would supplement the ‘consociational’ approach.

While nation-building went on full swing immediately following independence, the large number of minorities residing in each Republic began to feel insecure. Realizing that the overwhelming majority of the population from the minority groups are going to stay despite all their fears

63. Ajay Putnaik; op. cit. n. 38. p. 136.
and insecurities, and also that the minorities are indispensable for economic and social progress, state-builders have lately made efforts to focus more on preserving and promoting the multi-ethnic character of society and state through more inclusive policies. 64

64. Ibid; p. 136.
3.3 Socio-Economic Problems of Russian Minorities in the Central Asian Republics

Former Soviet Central Asian was socially and economically backward on the eve of the October Revolution in 1917. It was predominantly agrarian. But seven decades of Soviet rule transformed the once backward Soviet Central Asia into modern and well developed region. The Muslim representation increased in various fields of social development. Their number in party cadre, managerial position showed a significant rise. Illiteracy was eradicated completely.

Industrial growth in Central Asia received a great boost with the launching of the first Five Year Plan in 1928. Industrialization, establishment of educational institutions, nuclear testing and mechanized farming dramatically changed the overall economic scenario. The demographic explosion, ethno-religious beliefs, linguistic and educational factors are inextricably intertwined. All these factors as a whole affected the socio-economic development of Soviet Central Asia. Economically speaking, within former USSR, performance of Central Asian Republics at various levels has been poor when compared to their European counterparts. But it is an acknowledged fact that the socio-economic development of former Soviet Central Asia proceeded much ahead than that of its neighbouring countries like Turkey, Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan. The Central Asian Republics often blamed the Russians and the Soviet authorities for their dismal failure in economic growth and social progress. All these factors added fuel to the rising ethno-religious nationalism.
3.3.1 The Demographic Imbalance

The “demographic explosion” strongly affects the overall ethnic composition and had a definite bearing on the ethnic dynamics of Central Asia. Muslims of Central Asia have registered a high population growth rate as compared to the Russians. The average Muslim growth rate between 1959 and 1979 has been around 3 times the national average and approximately 4 times that of the Russians. The 1989 Soviet Census count established a sizeable increase in the indigenous Muslim population of Central Asia. Kazakhs constituted a majority in Kazakhstan for the first time since the early years of the Union. Kazakhs shared 39.7 per cent of the republic’s total population in 1989 as against 30 per cent in 1959. Similarly, Kirghizs became a majority within their own republic for the first time since 1930s. They increased their ratio of population from 40.5 per cent in 1959 to 52.4 per cent in 1989. Uzbeks, Tajiks and Turkmens continued to consolidate their leading position within their respective republics of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan raising their share of population from 62.1 per cent in 1959 to 84.7 per cent in 1989, 53.1 per cent in 1959 to 62.3 per cent in 1989, and 60.9 per cent in 1959 to 72 per cent in 1989 respectively. Several factors such as poor family planning, practice of early marriages, low employment of women in organized sectors of economy and high ratio of rural population have contributed to this phenomenon. The population

66. Ibid; p. 71.
explosion forced them into more intense socio-economic rivalry with the Russians in terms of competition for employment, housing, educational facilities etc. The Central Asian Muslim population was expected to rise from 44 million in 1979 to 64 million by the year 2000. Similarly during the period 1959 to 1979 the percentage of Russian population declined from 13.5 percent to 10.5 per cent in Uzbekistan from 30.2 per cent to 25.9 percent in Kyrghizstan, from 13.3 per cent to 10.4 per cent in Tajikistan and from 17.3 per cent to 12.6 percent in Kyrghyzstan (Refer Table 3.4). It was expected to be reduced further to an average of 6 per cent by the year 2000 A. D. 67 The 1989 Census clearly illustrates this trend (Refer Appendix Table 1).

Table-3.4
Population Change In RSFSR And Central Asian Republics (in thousand)

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RSFSR</td>
<td>101438</td>
<td>119046</td>
<td>130079</td>
<td>138365</td>
<td>142117</td>
<td>40.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uzbek SSR</td>
<td>6164</td>
<td>8395</td>
<td>11799</td>
<td>15765</td>
<td>17498</td>
<td>185.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kazakh SSR</td>
<td>6592</td>
<td>9755</td>
<td>13009</td>
<td>14858</td>
<td>15648</td>
<td>137.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kirghiz SSR</td>
<td>1716</td>
<td>2131</td>
<td>2934</td>
<td>3588</td>
<td>3886</td>
<td>126.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tadzhik SSR</td>
<td>1509</td>
<td>2045</td>
<td>2900</td>
<td>3901</td>
<td>4365</td>
<td>189.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkmen SSR</td>
<td>1197</td>
<td>1565</td>
<td>2159</td>
<td>2827</td>
<td>3118</td>
<td>160.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Another important change typical of the Muslim population growth during this period has been a gradual decline in the urbanization process and a sharp rise in rural population. This is due to the unwillingness of rural cadres to migrate outside their territories even if they had better jobs. The desire to maintain their religious-cultural traditions and Islamic ethos is primarily responsible for this attitude.\(^{68}\)

On the contrary, if we look at the 1989 census, except in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan (where Russians comprise 37.8 percent and 21.5 per cent respectively), the percentage of Russians in other Central Asian republics was less than 10 per cent. They were concentrated in larger cities of Central Asia. In the capital cities of Tashkent (Uzbekistan), Alma-Ata (Kazakhstan), Frunze (Kyrgyzstan), Dushanbe (Tajikistan) and Ashkabad (Turkmenistan) the percentage share of Russians was 34.0, 59.0, 55.7, 32.4 and 32.3 per cent respectively. If the Russian population were to be removed from just these cities alone, the share of Russian in the total population of Soviet Central Asia would drop to half.\(^{69}\) Table 3.5 shows the trends of urban population in Central Asia.

During the past few years particularly after the violent ethnic clashes in various parts of this region there has been a remarkable rise in the out migration of non-indigenous people such as Russians, Armenians, Meshkitian Turks, Germans, Jews, etc. from Central Asia. This has been the direct fall out of the violent attacks on such minority groups by the local

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\(^{68}\) \textit{Ibid}; p. 71.  
Table-3.5

Urban Population As Proportion Of The Total Population Of Central Asia (per cent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Uzbekistan</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kazakhstan</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyrghizistan</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tajikistan</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkmenistan</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


majority, xenophobia, intensifying chauvinism and declaration of local languages as the official language. According to an official report submitted to the Tajikistan Communist Party Central Committee in August 1990 about 23,000 skilled Russians had left Tajikistan during the first seven months of 1990 alone.\(^70\) This exodus was ascribed to the riots in Dushanbe in February 1990 and declaration of Tajik as official language\(^71\)

The very fact that Central Asia alone accounted for nearly one-third of the total population growth of the USSR between 1979-1989, a proportion

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which was nearly thrice that of its nation’s leading share of 11.5 per cent of the total population in 1989 and further that Central Asia accounted for more than one-fifth (20.2 per cent) of the rural population of the USSR, were facts to foretell us about the most complex rural scene that would prevail in Soviet Central Asia for years to come.\footnote{P.L. Dash; op. cit. n. 1. pp. 107-108.}

3.3.2 The Issue of Demography and Numbers

One of the most important themes in the nationalist discourse is the significance of the numerical strength of the titular group in the Central Asian Republics. This view was also reflected in the state policy of the Republics. The law of citizenship in Kazakhstan, for example, allowed dual citizenship to ethnic Kazakhs living abroad, but to no other group. Government encouraged immigration of Kazakhs from CIS states, Mongolia, Turkey, Iraq and China. It enticed these new immigrants, as well as Kazakhs living in the south of the country, to settle in the north with offers of subsidized housing, work and Kazakh-language schooling. This effort subsequently lacked enthusiasm due to expenses involved, apart from Russian opposition and lack of interest or ability to emigrate on the part of the Kazakh diaspora.\footnote{Ian Bernmer, and Cory Welt; op. cit. n. 53, p. 184.}

During the first five years after independence, 1,20,000 Kazakhs returned from former Soviet republics as well as from other countries. The
government of Kazakhstan organized the return of some 70,000 Kazakhs from Mongolia, Iran and Turkey. Half of this migration occurred in 1992, first year following independence. Incidentally, half the Kazakh families living in Mongolia (60,000 out of a total of about 1,20 000) are believed to have moved into Kazakhstan. 74 In 1997, the share of Russians went down to 32 percent of the total. The share of the former went up further to 53.4 per cent (7 million out of a total population of about 15 million) in 2000.75

Of the Turkmen diaspora, 64 per cent lived in Karakalpakstan in Uzbekistan. The rest were mostly in Iran and Afghanistan. Before independence, the Fatherland Society was formed with the aim of encouraging this Diaspora of reportedly three million who lived in Iran and Afghanistan to return to Turkmenistan. About 47,000 immigrants came into the republic between 1989-96. Incidentally, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are the only ones in the region where the titular population constitutes more than three-fourth of the total population.76

The governments actively pursued a carefully designed national policy aimed at significantly boosting the share of the titular population. Thus, in Kazakhstan, the Kazakhs coming from outside are automatically

75. Figures for 2000 are according to Altynshash Dzhanova, head of Kazakhstan’s Migration and Demographic Agency. ITAR-TASS News Agency, Moscow, 26th January 2000.
76. Tim Heleniak; op. cit. n. 28, pp. 372-374.
recognized as refugees and have preferential status with regard to returning and finding a home and a job, free college admission and housing, and freedom to travel within the territory of the republic. The number of Kazakhs settled in northern Kazakhstan increased from 30,000 in 1991 to 45,000 in 1993. Also moving into Southern Kazakhstan were many families from Iran and Karakalpakstan and from China and Turkey. Demographic gains for Kazakhs have also been a result of large-scale exodus of Russians and other nationalities from Kazakhstan. This trend was visible even in the later years following the adoption of the language law.

Fearing the alienation of the Russian minority and the economic and political consequences of this, states have taken various steps to prevent emigration of Russians. Nazarbaev has taken care to couple his nation-building efforts to a policy that he dubs as 'harmonisation'. This is intended to encourage the participation of Russians in facets of Kazakh life and integrate them in the new state. Automatic citizenship, tolerance of Russian language and culture, and government subsidies to the Russian dominated industrial sector etc., are all components of this policy.

Table 3.6

Population Change Among Titular Nationality in Central Asia (1989-96)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population by Nationality</th>
<th>Change from 1989 to 1996</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percent of which</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyrgyzstan</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyrgyz</td>
<td>52.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kazakhstan</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kazakhs</td>
<td>39.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tajikistan</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tajiks</td>
<td>62.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkmenistan</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkmen</td>
<td>72.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uzbekistan</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uzbekks</td>
<td>71.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Though both the 1993 and the 1995 Constitutions declare, ‘Kazakhstan was created on the basis of Kazakh self-determination’, equal rights for all citizens, regardless of race, nationality, language or religion have been guaranteed. The new constitution grants automatic citizenship to all who desire it, with no language or residence requirement whatsoever. The constitution (Art. 5) expressly forbids the establishment of any social organization that seeks to forcibly change the constitutional order,
undermine state security, violate territorial integrity, or promote ‘social, racial, national, religious, class, or tribal discord’.

### 3.3.3 Language Factor

The polyglot character of the Soviet society had always remained a factor of paramount importance. There are two major language families in Central Asia, (i) Iranian group of the Indo-European family and (ii) Turkic group of the Altaic family. Except Tajikistan which belongs to the Iranian group, the remaining four languages – Uzbek, Kazakh, Kirghiz and Turkmen - belong to the Altaic family. Besides these five major languages, there exist more than a score of other languages – Tatar, Karakalpak, Uighur, Dolganic, Nogaistsi, Shorts, Tofalari, to mention a few.

Despite Soviet efforts to impose the use of the Russian, the pervasive influence of an educational system that emphasized the Russian language for upward mobility and a conscious policy of Russification, the Central Asian people remained intensely proud of their language and culture. Table 3.7 demonstrates that while the percentage of those knowing the national language remained fairly constant between 1979 and 1989, the percentage of those claiming to speak good Russian actually decreased in Uzbekistan by more than half and in Tajikistan by more than 2 percent. Those speaking good Russian increased only marginally in other republics – the largest increase being registered in Kazakhstan where nearly half the population was Russian anyway.
Table 3.7
Languages Spoken In Central Asia, 1979 And 1989

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Languages</th>
<th>1979</th>
<th>1989</th>
<th>1979</th>
<th>1989</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kyrgyz</td>
<td>97.9</td>
<td>97.8</td>
<td>29.3</td>
<td>35.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tajik</td>
<td>97.8</td>
<td>97.7</td>
<td>29.6</td>
<td>27.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkmen</td>
<td>98.7</td>
<td>98.5</td>
<td>25.4</td>
<td>27.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uzbek</td>
<td>98.5</td>
<td>98.3</td>
<td>49.3</td>
<td>23.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kazak</td>
<td>97.5</td>
<td>97.0</td>
<td>52.3</td>
<td>60.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ahmed Rashid; The Resurgence of Central Asia: Islam or Nationalism. (Oxford University Press, Karachi, 1994).

All the states of Central Asia adopted language laws in 1989-90 that not only elevated their titular languages to the status of state language but also restricted the use of non-titular languages. However, despite language reforms, the real situation has not been as unfavourable to national minorities as projected. Some suggest that the leadership was reluctant from the beginning to strictly implement the language laws. Later developments further prompted it to back out of the nationalist agenda it initially projected.

The impact of Russian emigration can be quite detrimental to the economies of newly independent states of Central Asia and it is difficult to visualize any language-based discrimination in the near future. Essentially Russian remains the language of inter-ethnic communication. As it is, the laws would take some time to come into real force and their strictest implementation in the near future is doubtful. Most state laws provide for the continued use of Russian language. Turkmen law even talks of national-Russian bilingualism; Tajik law proclaims ‘the Russian language as the
language of inter-ethnic communication functions freely in the territory of Tajikistan'. It has also committed to maintain the linguistic rights of the non-Tajik population, most notably the Uzbeks. In Uzbekistan, under a resolution passed by the Parliament, the deadline for changing the Uzbek alphabet from Cyrillic to Latin script was pushed back by five years to 2005.

In the new Constitution of Kyrgyzstan, all languages, including Russian, are guaranteed free development and use. Discrimination on the basis of lack of knowledge of the state language is not permitted. Akaev asserted in 1994 that his country was doing everything in its power to preserve the role and usage of Russian language. The share of Russian schools and Russian language groups at institutes, as well as the number of people being trained as specialists in Russian philology, was at the same level as it was in 1990, he added. A source of pride for Akaev is the Kyrgyz Russian university, unique of its kind in all the CIS countries which was set up with Slavonic assistance from Russia. Classes at the University are held in three languages – Russian, Kyrgyz and English. Following Akaev’s arguments to accord stronger legal status to the Russian language at a Constitutional Convention in December 1994, the Constitutional Court in early 1996 approved in principle a change in Art. 52(2) of the Constitution and allowed the use of Russian as an ‘official language’. The continued use

81. *CDPSP*; Vol. XLCI, No. 8, 1994, p. 27.
of Cyrillic might help Russian-speakers to learn the local language. The law of Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan proclaim freedom of choice of language of instruction.\textsuperscript{82}

The law of Kazakhstan adopted in 1990 required a fluent knowledge of the Kazakh language only for the President, the Vice-President, the Chairman of the Supreme Soviet and the Chairman of the Constitutional Court. Kazakh Constitution accords Russian language the status of the language of inter-ethnic communication. Lack of knowledge of the state language cannot be the basis of denying citizens the rights conferred by the constitution on all citizens.\textsuperscript{83} A compromise to allay the fears of the Russian-speaking minority regarding the new language law was reached in September 1990, which stipulated that areas with an overwhelming Russian population would just have to provide Kazakh language service by 1995 and switch to a fully bilingual administration in another five years, by January 2000.\textsuperscript{84} Of all the successor states, Kazakhstan has the second largest number of schools in which classes are conducted in Russian. Nearly 1.9 million students attending these schools constituted half of all school children in the state in 1993.\textsuperscript{85}

\begin{flushright}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{83} \textit{CDPSP}; Vol. XLCl, No. 1, 1994, p. 15.
\item \textsuperscript{84} Martha Brill Olcott; 'Kazakhstan: A Republic of Minorities', in Ian Bremmer and Ray Taras (ed.) p. 320.
\item \textsuperscript{85} \textit{CDPSP}; Vol. XLV, No. 11, 1993, p. 23.
\end{itemize}
\end{flushright}
The adoption of the language laws, it is argued, has not only symbolized the growing marginalisation of the Russians in the new state but is even responsible for out-migration of Russian-speakers from the Central Asian Republics. However, out-migration from Central Asia is not a recent phenomenon and has been going on since early 1980s. The exodus of Russian-speaking population intensified in the years of uncertainty, when a number of riots rocked the Central Asian region, which also witnessed the growth of radical Islamic movements. Subsequent economic problems accelerated this process. Yet, neither are the Russians singled out for discrimination, nor have the states embraced nationalism and Islam as defining identities. In the case of Kazakhstan, especially, Russian language has been accorded a respectable status. The leadership, having realized the need for protecting the multi-ethnic character of the society, has been discouraging nationalizing zeal among the titular population.

Developments lately provide further evidence that Kazakhstan’s state-building policy is not going to be based on a mass linguistic transformation. While the 1993 Constitution accorded Russian the Status of ‘language of inter-ethnic communication’, the 1995 constitution conferred ‘official’ status upon it as well (though not that of the ‘state language’). The dual-language policy has so far ensured a balance and the space for the Russian-language has remained substantial. For example, Russian-language newspapers still outnumbered Kazakh ones and television programmes in Russian continued to dominate the airwaves in the mid-1990s. Of all the successor states, Kazakhstan has the second largest number of schools in which classes are conducted in Russian. Nearly 1.9 million students attending these schools
constitute more than half of all school children in the state.\textsuperscript{86} In 1993-94 school year, for example, about 57.2 per cent of the students in Kazakhstan were studying in Russian schools compared to 40.1 per cent in the Kazakh schools.\textsuperscript{87} About 40 percent of Kazakhs, according to one survey, hardly spoke their native language and even the draft constitution was written and published in Russian.\textsuperscript{88}

The new law of Kazakhstan allows everyone the right to use his or her native tongue and freely choose the language of communication, education and creativity. Both Kazakh and Russian are used in documentation of state and government institutions, constitutional documentation, arbitration courts, military field of science, names of state institutions, texts of seals and stamps, labels of goods, all texts of visual information. Both languages are also used in postal-telegraphic messages and custom documentation.

In a subsequent order by the Ministry of Justice on 5th April 1998 'On the implementation of the law of the Republic of Kazakhstan on languages in the republic of Kazakhstan', it was stipulated that all acts of the ministry have to be passed in the state language along with the translation into

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{86} \textit{CDPSP}; Vol. XLV, No. 11, 1993, p. 23.
\item \textsuperscript{87} Robert Kaiser and Jeff Chinn; 'Russian-Kazak Relations in Kazakhstan', \textit{Post-Soviet Geography}, Vol. 36, No. 5, 1995, p. 263.
\end{itemize}
Russian. Documentation has to be in both Kazakh and Russian. Responses to requests of citizens and organizations have to be in Kazakh or in the language of inter-ethnic communication. 89

The language status of the Russians in Kyrgyzstan is even more protracted. In June 1994, a Presidential decree made Russian an official language in predominantly Russian-speaking areas as well as in 'vital areas' of the national economy. The 1993 Constitution (Art. 5) had given Kyrgyz sole state language status while guaranteeing 'equal rights' for Russian and all other languages used by the republic's population. The June decree of 1994 entitled, 'On Measures to Regulate Migrational Processes in the Kyrgyz Republic', was intended to stop out-migration of the Russian population. Since 1996 Akaev repeatedly attempted to push through a Constitutional amendment that would elevate the position of Russian further by giving it the status of 'official language'. Although in late 1996 the Constitutional court approved the proposed amendment, in June 1997 the Parliament failed to pass it. 90 And finally, the Legislative Assembly, the lower house of the bicameral parliament, passed the legislation granting 'official status' to Russian language and the law came into effect on 29th May 2000. Akaev issued a special decree on 20th May 2000, outlining measures to improve the conditions for the Russian minority.

89. Ajay Patnaik; op. cit. n. 38. p. 209.
90. Martha Brill Olcott; Kazakhstan, p. 151.
In Uzbekistan, the trend, however, has been not to offer any special status to the Russian language. A revised edition of Uzbekistan’s language law, adopted in December 1995, removed Russian language’s normative status as the language of inter-ethnic communication and put it at par with other non-Uzbek languages. However, unlike in the 1989 law, knowledge of Uzbek was no longer made a compulsory requirement for employment in the state sector and some other professions that were meant to serve the population. The New Law (Art. 12) allows citizens to receive notarized documents in particular non-titular languages only by special request, whereas the old law explicitly prohibited (Art. 27) responsible officials from rejecting petitions, complaints and suggestions on the ground of language knowledge, be it titular or Russian. The new law permits the use of not only the state language but also other languages in management and administration and also in preparing different kinds of documentation where the majority of the staff of the corresponding enterprise or institution uses any of those particular non-titular languages.

Turkmenistan, like Uzbekistan, also has not offered any protected status to Russian language either in its language law of 1990 or its Constitution of 1992. Turkmen position is explained by the leadership as a response to the decreasing share of Russians that could become even more marginal given the vast differences in the birth rate. In the initial years Special Commissions were set up at enterprises to determine the degree of state language knowledge of the employees and decide on their constitution accordingly, with a view to switch over to the Turkmen language by 1996. However, not only has the deadline for using the state
language in the workplace was extended to 2001, but substantial use of Russian still continues in the national media. Though the daily broadcast of Russian TV programmes was reduced from 17 to 10 hours, the weekly length of Russian programmes on national TV is 52 hours, which is 28 percent of the total. This is quite substantial considering the fact that Russians constitute only about 6 per cent of the population. Russian newspapers are also readily available.  

In Tajikistan a government resolution, 'On the programme of the government of Tajikistan on development of the state language and of other languages in the territory of the Republic of Tajikistan', was adopted on 21st October 1997, which had two parts – one on the state language and the other on non-Tajik languages. Part two concentrated on special arrangements aimed at maintaining and harmonizing the development of all other languages, including courses in those languages at educational institutions, TV and Radio broadcasts etc. The state radio and TV broadcasts are in both Tajik and Russian languages. Leading Russian newspapers are Narodnaya Gazeta, Bizness i Politika, Vechernie Vesti and Kuryer Tajikistana.  

In short, present debates surrounding demographic and language issues are meaningless. This is so because the share of the titular group has been constantly increasing in Central Asia in the last few decades. Higher rate of growth among the indigenous population and negative migration trends among the Russian population has already led to numerical consolidation of the titular group in its republic. The real worry for the minorities, however, is their gradual exclusion from the republican power structures. This has been witnessed in all organs of state – the executive, the judiciary and the legislature. Even in areas where they have substantial share in the population or even majority, the share of the Russians in the decision-making structures has been disproportionate to their demographic strength.93

3.3.4 Language And Identity

Language as an identity marker has been of special significance since the formation of national-republics in the Soviet Period. It not only was a major basis of formation of various republics, it became one of the main issues affecting inter-ethnic relations.

High level of ethnic heterogeneity of Central Asian cities and urban areas in the Soviet period resulted in the emergence of Russian language as the main language of interaction, higher education and skilled professional jobs. However, knowledge of Russian language among the rural population was limited and even among the urban Central Asians from the indigenous

population a very sizable section did not speak Russian language at all. Less than a third of the indigenous population, barring the Uzbeks, could use Russian fluently as a second language.

The linguistic and ethnic environment, according to Kozlov, hindered migration of rural Central Asians to the cities during the Soviet period. Full integration into urban life required a fairly good knowledge of Russian language because of its position as the basic language of inter-ethnic interaction and of scientific and technical literature. It was also the working language for the majority of qualified occupations, by which the normal process of urban social and professional mobility was determined. This problem of linguistic alienation could have been overcome, according to Kozlov, by either bilingualism or by the increased use of ethnic languages and gradual replacement of Russian language in places where it had historically become the main urban language. Kozlov even suggested a link between language and employment in Central Asia, where service industries requiring knowledge of the local language attracted indigenous population to jobs in the administrative apparatus, culture and educational sphere. This implied that linguistic barrier was strong in case of Central Asians seeking jobs outside the service sector in the urban areas.

Feshbach argued that one major consequence of Russian domination of the skilled labour force had been that of tailoring labour demand to suit its own skills. This means, types of employment that could absorb the local...
skill were not generated sufficiently. To enter into employment the local population had to have the type of skills that the Russians had mastered and for this knowledge of Russian was a necessity and so a handicap for the indigenous population. Knowledge of Russian was essential, thus, for both employment and training. 95

Others have pointed out that Russian language in Central Asia was a means to upward social mobility and was also an indicator of the level of development of a nationality. According to Lewis, Rowland and Clem, this was so because the foci of industrial development and socio-cultural transformation in Central Asia had been the city. Therefore, the mobility of Central Asians to the cities was crucial for utilising the opportunities in the modern sector. The replacement of Russian domination by the local nationalities in urban-industrial employment, and in jobs requiring education and skill, would indicate the relative socio-economic advancement of the latter. 96

The issue of language is more of an emotive issue. The minority needs to learn the language of the majority group in a country, though in some countries like India there are more than one official language and more time is given for a gradual transfer to the language of the linguistic majority. In Central Asia, most of the bilinguals are found among the indigenous Central

Asian population while the Russian population is mostly monolingual. For example, while nearly a quarter of the Uzbek population of Uzbekistan could speak Russian fluently; only 4.6 per cent of the Russian population of the republic could make similar claims about knowledge of Uzbek in 1989. The expectations for a complete switch to use of the state language is not unreasonable, yet the process should be given adequate time.\(^{97}\)

3.3.5 The Economic Crisis

The republics of Central Asia transformed from backward agrarian areas to industrialized republics during nearly the seven and half decades of Soviet existence. Large-scale transfer of skilled professional workers from European regions to Central Asia made it possible to undertake this enormous transformation. However, despite the progress made during Soviet years in terms of upward mobility, most indigenous Central Asians still lived in rural areas (more than 70 percent) and worked in agriculture at the time of Soviet disintegration. In the urban areas they were predominantly in light and food industries and in the service sector. Skilled workers in industries were mostly Russians or other Europeans. Although the proportion of the Russian population is not very high in Central Asia as a whole, industrial employment level among Russians was about three times higher than that among the indigenous population in some cases. In Kazakhstan, non-Kazakhs constituted about 57 percent of the population, but in the industry their share was 75.8 percent of all industrial workers.\(^{98}\)

\(^{97}\) Ajay Patnaik; op. cit. n. 38. pp. 180-181.

\(^{98}\) CDPSP; Vol. XLVI, No. 13, 1994, p. 10.
This pattern of occupational distribution had some bearing on the nationality relations. The economic position and cultural identity of the Central Asians were barely threatened by the presence of Russians. Since most Central Asians lived in rural areas and tenaciously clung to their traditional ways of life, there was no real threat of cultural assimilation from the Russians. But on the other hand the economy of Central Asia improved rapidly after 1927. The standard of living, education, communication, public health and productivity rose much higher. This was possible due to the Soviet policy of eliminating age-old backwardness and socio-economic inequality in Central Asia. As a result of huge capital investment made in the agricultural and industrial sectors, Central Asia has been transformed into an advanced region. In 1989 the Central Asian Republics received from Russia 24 billion in US dollars. Despite the attempts of the Soviet leaders to prevent the worst, Central Asian economy experienced stagnation starting since the late 70s, afterwards transformed into the process of degradation. The end of 80s halted the industrial growth, and with the disintegration of the USSR a disastrous decline started.

A series of ethnic tensions occurred in the Central Asian Republics after June 1986 and continued till 1990. Important among them are the “Dushanbe Spring”, “the Fergana Summer”, and the “Alma-Ata Winter”. The rise of nationalist sentiments and inter-ethnic conflicts coincided with deteriorating economic conditions in Central Asia. Socio-economic

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inequalities between Russians and the indigenous people were great, causing resentment. Inside the Central Asian Republics, Russians and other Europeans are concentrated in urban and industrial areas, over-represented in white collar jobs and managerial positions and thus have higher incomes. They are over-represented in the institutions of higher education while the indigenous people are under-represented, while industry has developed in the Central Asian Republic, the skilled labour employed in industrial locations is not the native people but ‘outsiders’.

If the inequalities between republics, and between Russians and natives persisted all the time, why didn’t nationalist sentiments materialize earlier? One reason was that despite the gap between republics, Moscow’s redistribution from rich to poor republics through subsidies kept the latter happy for most part. The other reason was that the economic situation in the former Soviet Union was relatively stable and functioning well enough to meet the basic needs of society until the 1980s. So far the rise of ethnic tension, deteriorating economic conditions seem to be a prerequisite.

The unemployed labour surplus, in the region, which, although existent in the 1970s, worsened in the 1980s, was strong contributor to ‘anti-foreigner’ feelings among native peoples. While unemployment got worse in


\[\text{\textbf{101. Ibid;}}\]

144
the 1980s, new Russian immigrants were coming into the region and taking the best jobs because they were better trained. This fuelled the anti-immigrant sentiment as well.\textsuperscript{102}

In Kazakhstan, where the large-scale nationalist demonstrations of the region were staged in 1986, the economy was in a "catastrophic state" by 1985. The Kazakhs realized that they were among the most economically disadvantaged people in the federation and that, in the USSR's declining years; their impoverishment was rapidly worsening. If Kazakhstan could be only for Kazakhs, as the demonstrators demanded, then labour excess and food shortages would be less of a problem, since 40% of the population would have to disappear, either by migration or through extermination. Although such ethnic cleansing has not taken place in Kazakhstan or in any large scale in any of the other Central Asian Republics, the desire of the native peoples remains there.\textsuperscript{103}

\section*{3.3.6 Economic Performance And Social Stability}

All the countries of the region experienced sharp deterioration in growth performances following independence. During 1992-96, real GDP declined on an average by 37 percent cumulatively (though it varied from 16 percent in the case of Uzbekistan to 60 per cent in Tajikistan). Positive growth trends have been visible since then, though they are still not out of

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{102} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{103} Ibid; p. 499.
\end{flushleft}
the red and some of them have incurred heavy foreign debts. Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan were particularly badly hit by August 1998 financial crisis in Russia, which affected their exports to Russia and other neighbouring CIS states.¹⁰⁴

The total external debt of the Central Asian states between 1992-98 increased nearly seven-fold, reaching $10.5 billion by the end of 1998. This too was from a non-existent basis at the time of their independence, since Russia undertook the foreign trade liability of the former USSR. The debt to GDP ratio has grown from, 0.6 per cent in 1992 to more than 54 per cent by 1997 in Kyrgyzstan (it shot up to 98 per cent of GDP in September 2001); from 74.4 per cent to 109 per cent in Tajikistan; from nil to 63.9 per cent in Turkmenistan. Only Kazakhstan from 43.2 percent to 20.6 percent brought it down. In the case of Uzbekistan, though it increased from 3.1 percent to 17.6 percent, it is within reasonable limits. While Tajikistan suffered immeasurably from a long and bloody civil war, the external debt of Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan are likely to create serious problems for their economies in the future.¹⁰⁵

Foreign direct investment (FDI) has steadily grown over the year, from $120 million in 1992 to more than $7.6 billion by the end of 1997. But the bulk of it, 5.7 billion (about 76 percent) went to Kazakhstan, mainly due

¹⁰⁴ Ajay Patnaik; op. cit. n. 38. p.229.
¹⁰⁵ Ibid.
to investment in the oil sector. FDI flows remained comparatively lower and volatile in the other countries of the region. For example, such investment accounted for only about 9 percent of the total investment in Turkmenistan (with huge natural gas reserves) in the first half of 2001. 106

GDP has shown positive growth trends in recent years, but inflation still remains high, though it has been brought down from dramatically high levels in 1992 (two digit levels by 1999 from four digit levels in 1992). Kazakhstan, whose inflation rate was more than 2962 percent at the end of 1992, brought it down to 8.3 percent at the end of 1999. Inflation still remains high in countries like Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, the two most vulnerable to radical movements. These governments find it difficult to balance public expenditure needs and government revenue. For example, minimum wages and pension in the public sector declined by 49 percent in 2000-2001. (Refer Table-3.8). During the same period Tajikistan faced food shortages due to droughts. The government of Uzbekistan had to increase charges on bread, gasoline and public transport, pushing up consumer prices further. 107

Generally, there has been a recovery process since the late 1990s. Yet, the real GDP remained quite below the 1989 level in absolute terms, barring

106. Ibid; p. 230.
in Uzbekistan. Transition from a centrally planned economy to a market-oriented one has so far been both complex and painful. The consequent policy and institutional reforms - independent banking and financial systems, introduction of new national currencies, reorientation of economic incentive structures and approaches to economic management – have been wide ranging, costly and resulted in significant dislocation as well as fall in output, income and employment. In the first five years following independence, the economies of Central Asia experienced severe recession. The subsequent years though have witnessed some stabilization and recovery. 108

The social sector, however, remains in bad shape and can create social and political unrest unless steps are taken to check it. Unemployment, both official and disguised, is at a high level. In Kazakhstan, for instance, the registered unemployment rate rose from 0.4 per cent in 1992 to 4.2 percent in 1996 and despite some improvement was still at a high of 3.9 percent in 1999. Real wages plummeted, and barring Uzbekistan, where it was more in 1997 compared to the beginning of 1993, and Kyrgyzstan where it was roughly the same, other states registered significant drops (in Tajikistan it was 95 percent less). 109

### Table-3.8
**Central Asian Economics: Growth Rates And Inflation***

*(1998-2001, in percentage):*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kazakhstan</td>
<td>-1.9</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>-19.0</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>-2.4</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyrgyzstan</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tajikistan</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>13.0a</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>43.1</td>
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<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>7.6a</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>25.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**Notes:**

- * Figures of 2001 are estimates.
- a- Figures for January-September.
- b- Figures for January-June.

The fall in employment and real wage, combined with declining spending in social sector and removal of subsidies brought down real wages, increased unemployment and under-employment that affected the general living standard of the masses. Kazakhstan largely removed subsidies for food, housing, transport, and other items in October 1994, and was soon followed by Kyrgyzstan. Subsidies were replaced by targeted cash payments.
Beginning with 1993, a wide range of subsidies were withdrawn in Uzbekistan and central heating and public transport subsidies were abolished in 1996, though price control, including for most foodstuffs, and subsidy for some services including municipal service, remain in effect.\textsuperscript{110}

Turkmenistan did away with most food subsidies by 1996, and the relatively small subsidies for bread and public transport that remain are largely funded by state enterprises through cross-subsidization. Substantial subsidies, however, remain for gas, electricity and water. Tajikistan replaced its general bread subsidy with targeted cash compensation to families in 1996. Subsidies for electricity and irrigation have been reduced, though substantial subsidies continue for transport, housing and utilities.\textsuperscript{111}

The Central Asian Republics cannot ignore the implications that economic stagnation and crises have on inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic relations. Timothy Edmunds has drawn attention to the fact that though the focus of nation-builders has been the relationship with the Russian population, the actual division is between power and powerlessness. A small group enjoys power, while the rest of the population cutting across ethnic groups belong to the category that has been deprived since independence. The largest segment of the powerless are of course the rural Kazakhs.\textsuperscript{112}

\begin{itemize}
\item 110. \textit{Ibid.}
\item 111. Timothy Edmunds; 'Power and Powerlessness in Kazakhstani Society: Ethnic Problems in Perspective', p. 470.
\end{itemize}
In situations of prolonged crises, the divisions within society come to the surface and further complicate the situation. Radicalizing ethnic or religious identity could further drag the states down the path of chaos and instability. The leadership in the Central Asian states are aware of these dangers of politicizing identities and are trying to build a Central Asia that reflects its multi-ethnic character.\textsuperscript{113}

3.3.7 Impact of the Emigration of Russians

Russians represent mainly the skilled and professional section of the population in Central Asia. At the time of independence, though their share was less than 8 per cent in Tajikistan and slightly over that in Uzbekistan, they represented 21 per cent of the specialists with higher or specialized education in Tajikistan and 17 per cent of those in Uzbekistan. The loss of this skilled population naturally worried the leadership of Central Asian states. For example, it was reported in 1990 that the drain of Russian specialists from the Syrdar thermal station, the largest in the Uzbek republic, left its two 300,000-kw generators without adequate supervisory personnel and as a result power production suffered drastically. Similarly, other republics had to face the problem of losing highly trained persons in many key positions. In Kyrgyzstan, in 1993 alone, a thousand doctors left the republic, and in 1994 from a single oblast in Kazakhstan (Ust-Kamenogorsk) 302 teacher and 55 doctors emigrated.\textsuperscript{114}

\textsuperscript{113.} Ajay Patnaik; op. cit. n. 38. p. 232.
Russians were mostly in modern and large-scale industrial enterprises, funded and controlled by the Union during Soviet times. The break up of the Union hit those enterprises hardest – metallurgy industry in Kyrgyzstan, gas processing and aluminum industry in Tajikistan, oil and chemical industry in Turkmenistan, chemical, metallurgy, aircraft industry in Uzbekistan. In Soviet times, Kazakhstan had 196 large-scale industrial enterprises related to military production, situated mostly in Russian-dominated north. In the aftermath of Soviet collapse, such enterprises could hardly keep operating. Industries like the Petropavlovsk heavy machine-building plant, with about 80 per cent of all output being military hardware, Kubyshev and Kirov works in Pavlodar and Ust-Kamenogorsk respectively, lost almost the entire military contract that led to layoff of thousands of workers since independence. This has badly affected the population of these cities, which are largely Russian.

The economic aspects of Russian exodus from Central Asia was explained by Yuri Kholhlov, then head of Uzbek airline’s shipping service: ‘The Meskhetian Turks, who were engaged in agriculture have left; and the Jews have left – news stands and tailor shops have closed. The Russians – who are the working class, the engineers – are leaving, and then industry will stop.’

Exodus of Russians has been highest in Tajikistan as result of the combined effect of economic decline and political turmoil. The impact of this mass migration on the economy is visible. The Tursunzade aluminum plant, the Vaksh nitrogen fertilizer plant and the Nurek hydroelectric power stations are already on the verge of complete shutdown and that could mean further exodus of the remaining Russian and other Slavic population.\footnote{118}{CDPSP; Vol. XLV, No. 17, 1993, p. 13.}

Schools and institutions of higher learning and training started to shut down due to large-scale Russian emigration. Tajik authorities have been making efforts to persuade the Russians to stay. Davlat Khudonazarov, then a member of the Special Commission on normalizing the situation in Kurgan-Tyube province, met with representatives of the local Russian minority in September 1992 and briefed them on the work that the Commission was doing and assured them that it would do every thing it could to stabilize the situation in the southern part of Tajikistan.\footnote{119}{Kh. M. Umarov; ‘The New Census of Tajikistan in 2000: Some Reflections’, Contemporary Central Asia, Vol. IV, No. 1-2, 2000, p. 29.}

The same is true of Turkmenistan, whose borders are secured with the participation of Russian troops through a common task force of Russian and Turkmen border troops. A treaty on the Joint Protection of Turkmenistan’s state borders was signed to this effect in September 1993. This was especially essential at the time of independence, since Turkmenistan had only 13 Turkmen officers in the border troops and it was difficult to recruit and train professional officers from among the local population. Given the

\footnote{118}{CDPSP; Vol. XLV, No. 17, 1993, p. 13.}
fact that only 10 percent of Turkmenistan’s officer corps is indigenous, the role of the Russians is vital in the evolution of the republic’s defence forces. In response, Turkmenistan was the first country in the region to have granted Russians the right to dual citizenship.\textsuperscript{120}

President Niyazov of Turkmenistan considers the presence of Russian population as a positive factor in relations with Russian states and stated, ‘Tens of thousands of Russians and Ukrainians live in Turkmenistan, and we consider them our citizens, our compatriots. There will always be a connecting bridge between our compatriots. This is our strength and our wealth...Instigation of inter-ethnic hatred is considered one of the gravest crimes in our state’. Then Russian President Yeltsin and Niyazov, the President of Turkmenistan, signed a package of bilateral agreements in 1993, which also included an agreement on settling questions of dual citizenship and on regulating the migration process and protecting migrant’s rights.\textsuperscript{121}

Though Russian emigration has been mostly from Tajikistan, the present government is eager to ensure the protection of the Russians both for economic and national security reasons. Tajikistan has delegated to Russia the authority to protect its external borders. During the visit in 1992 of then Russia Vice-Premier, Alexander Sokhin, this was formalized. A bilateral agreement on guarantees in the area of human rights was also

\textsuperscript{120} Rossiiskiye Vesti; 22nd September, 1992, p. 2.
initiated in Dushanbe. The Tajik leadership assumed obligations to provide social and legal guarantees for the Russian population in its territory.¹²² Tajikistan has continued close ties with Russia, which remains the main commercial partner. Trade turnover between the two countries amounted to more than $360 million in 2002, which was 32 percent of Tajikistan’s total foreign trade.¹²³ Tajikistan would not like any thing to affect the economic relations that is so vital for its post-civil war recovery and reconstruction. This is besides the need to ensure the continuation of Russian security umbrella provided to this vulnerable CIS frontier state by 25,000 Russian armoured troops.

Kazakhstan’s concern regarding departure of Russians extended to the military sphere as well. In 1992, the republic faced a shortage of officers when 1,417 officers permanently left the republic and another 836 were in the process of doing so. By early 1994 the problem became so acute that Kazakhstan assigned the guarding of its border to a joint Kazakhstan-Russia force. Same is true of Kyrgyzstan as well, where poor pay and living conditions led many Russians as well as others to desert the Kyrgyz army even after Russian officers were offered incentives like allotment of free housing and reassignment in Russia if they continued till 1999 in their present service. Russian troops have been deployed to share the guarding of Kyrgyzstan’s border with China.¹²⁴

¹²⁴ Martha Brill Olcott; Central Asia’s New States, Washington, DC, 1996, pp. 74,111.
3.3.8 Response of Central Asian States to Russian Emigration

The exodus of Russians on a larger-scale aroused concern among Central Asian elite, worried about their Republics losing brains and skills. Russians, for example, made up half the population of capital Bishkek and nearly a quarter of that of Kyrgyzstan at the time of independence. Although many were leaving, to allay the apprehension of the minorities about their future, President Akaev was reported to have said as early as in 1992, 'I am against emigration. I just want to keep the Russians, Jews and other minorities. We have just set up two national cultural autonomous districts for the Germans'. He actively solicited support and understanding of the Russian community and appointed a Russian to his cabinet immediately after independence.¹²⁵

Exodus of Russian-speakers was approaching what Akaev in 1994 called 'rush hour'. He himself proposed, above all in the key economic sphere, measures to discourage emigration. These included the formation of a joint Russian-Kyrgyz holding company, which among other things would concern itself with the fate of those enterprises most of which are Russian-speaking. For the moment, the law on bankruptcy would not be applied to those 29 enterprises, which formed the nucleus of Kyrgyzstan's industry. Other proposed measures include the holding in trust of the real estate of

Russians leaving Kyrgyzstan for Russia; assistance to medium-sized and small businesses run by ethnic Russians in the state, etc. A Presidential decree also provided for ensuring fair representation to Russian-speakers in bodies of power at all levels, extended the dead-line for shifting business correspondence to the state language, simplified the procedure to obtain Russian citizenship and to restore Kyrgyz citizenship to ethnic Russians. It was also ruled that in enterprises where the majority are Russian-speakers, as well as in spheres of activity involving the use of Russian language, the latter would have official status, along with Kyrgyz.  

Akaev has not been opposed to the idea of dual citizenship to the Russians. He even has suggested it at various times. At the convention of a Kurultay (National Congress), the first of its kind, held in January 1994, while giving a call to ‘unite the peoples of the republic and to strengthen inter-national friendship and civic peace’, Akaev stressed the necessity of preventing mass emigration and argued for dual citizenship to Russian-speakers and Germans who constituted the main emigrants. Though he has not yet succeeded in persuading his Parliament to grant dual citizenship status to the Russian population, he is seeking to make life easier for them in the republic. Turkmenistan’s leadership similarly thought that this could prevent large-scale emigration and dual citizenship was granted to Russians as a step to discourage emigration.

Though there was fear of Islamic fundamentalism spilling over to Uzbekistan from Tajikistan, the government of President Karimov has done everything it could to prevent such a movement from growing. The ‘Islamic spring’ that flourished between 1990-92 has faded and the government of Uzbekistan made significant changes in its policy on religion since late 1992 that has among other things also restricted population’s freedom to religion. These include special permission to build a mosque, restrictions on holding religious functions, dismissal of official and provincial governors who facilitated the construction of religious buildings, strict control over the content of sermons delivered in the mosques and over sources of financial support for religious institutions and clergymen, ban on dealing with religious organizations in Islamic states, stricter visa regulation for citizens of these countries, and close monitoring of all trade, banking, commercial, charitable and other relations with such countries.129

In Kyrgyzstan, all religious organizations are required to register with the State Commission on Religious Affairs, created in March 1996. A Special Commission was also set up next year by the Council of Ulema of the Spiritual Directorate of Kyrgyzstan’s Muslims to draw up measures to prevent the spread of Wahabism, especially in the Osh region. The Mufti of Kyrgyzstan and the National Security Ministry established special bodies to monitor radical Islamic activities in Osh and Jalalabad. So far, the confrontation between official and unofficial Islam has remained on a low key as compared to Uzbekistan. Yet, the danger increased in the late 1990s

129. CDPSP; Vol. XLVI, No. 1, 1994, p. 17.
with growing cross-border militancy and incursions on the rise. The fall of Taliban in Afghanistan has taken the pressure off Kyrgyzstan.\textsuperscript{130}

Exodus of Russians from Central Asia is related to a host of factors—ethnic, cultural, political, economic and so on. According to some, migration to a certain extent was expected even if things were normal. The very breakup of Soviet Union would have made those Russians without strong roots in Central Asia feel quite insecure and ready to leave. These sources point out that less than half of the Russians living in Central Asia in 1989 were born there. These first generation Russians living in Central Asia are most likely to be the first to leave.\textsuperscript{131} Yet the new states need to encourage every section to feel secure in every manner.

Central Asian states have moved a long way since the days of inter-ethnic riots in the 1989-90 and nationalist euphoria following independence. Russian nationalist organizations banned earlier are being solicited for creating ethnic harmony. Who would have thought before 1995 in Kazakhstan that the President of the Republic could nominate as a Senator a leader of \textit{Lad}, a Russian nationalist organization banned and refused permission to put up candidate in the 1995 parliamentary elections? The effort has been to persuade the Russians to stay by using the influence of these organizations. In Kyrgyzstan a similar Russian-based organization \textit{Soglasie} that appeared in 1994 has been tolerated.\textsuperscript{132}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{130} Ajay Patanaik; op. cit. n. 38. p.119. \\
\textsuperscript{131} Graham Smith, et al; (ed.) op. cit. n. 32. p.208. \\
\textsuperscript{132} John Anderson; \textit{The International Politics of Central Asia}, p. 152.
\end{flushright}
Uzbekistan has about a hundred national-cultural centers of which the Russian, Korean, Ukrainian, Tatar and Georgian centers are quite influential, though the government has so far been unwilling to treat these centers as the only or main representatives of the minorities. Important centers of Russians are ‘Association of Russian Language and Literature in the Republic of Uzbekistan’, ‘Association of Russian culture’, and ‘Russian center’. In Kazakhstan, the national-cultural centers are institutionalized as basic units of ethno-cultural self-government of the minorities.

The language laws, which could form the basis of certain degree of alienation, are flexible to take care of the immediate concerns of the Russian-speaking population. Islamic fundamentalism, which has been one major source of worry, has not spread as was feared in the beginning. This situation has helped in slowing down emigration of Russian population from Central Asia in recent years. Refer Table-3.9

Table-3.9
Russian Emigration From Central Asia, 1989-96.
(Net decline in thousands)

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<td>4.7</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Decrease(%)</td>
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<td>1.3</td>
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<td>2.5</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>12.1</td>
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Condition of Russians in Central Asia could either become a destabilizing factor between Russia and Central Asia or could become an integrating factor bringing the CIS countries closure together. While Russia would do nothing to arouse the hostility of Central Asian society towards its Russian minority, the governments of Central Asia would do their best to provide a friendly atmosphere to its Russian minority in order to avoid confrontation with Russia itself. With nationalist euphoria fast evaporating, Russian emigration from Central Asia is likely to decline in the future. In fact, since the mid-1990s Russian and other Russian emigration has substantially declined in Central Asia.¹³⁴

¹³⁴ Ajay Patnaik; op. cit. n. 38, p. 118.