PREFACE

Five independent countries emerged in Central Asia after the break-up of Soviet Union in 1991. After the disintegration Central Asia became a classic region to study inter-ethnic relations and the new governments' policies towards the minorities. The Central Asian Republics namely Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan have a collective population of only 51 million people. Yet, this small and scattered population contains over 100 distinct ethnic groups. Hence, the ethnic issue has gained prominence during their transitional period of state formation and nation building.

The political implications of ethnic politics in Central Asia have been largely influenced by the Soviet legacy. From the geographic distribution and numerical locations of ethnic entities to the demarcation of territorial borders, the impact of Czarist rule and the nationality policies of successive Soviet regimes have determined the nature of inter-ethnic relations in Central Asian. Similarly, political developments and economic dynamics in the former Soviet Union have played a major role in influencing the direction of Central Asian ethnic politics.

The region witnessed socio-political tensions and ethno-religious resurgence, which led to the emergence of a qualitatively new and complex situation. Ethno-religious nationalism assumed unprecedented proportions, thereby disturbing the status quo in the entire region. Islam has remained the manifestation of the local identity, a unifying force that cuts across social and ethnic barriers. Its great potential was felt in mobilizing masses on a supra-national basis. Political assertion by the native Muslims was a direct consequence of socio-economic developments in Soviet Central Asia. In the course of modernization,
self-awareness manifested itself in the form of nationalist movements, anti-Soviet and anti-Communist demonstrations. Moreover, it was Gorbachev’s policies of ‘perestroika’ and ‘glasnost’ which provided an opportunity to the people of former Soviet Union, including those of Central Asia, to give vent to their feelings and aspirations that remained suppressed for long.

Freedom of the press enabled them to voice their grievances and demand publicly through the media. During the Gorbachev era, the entire Soviet Central Asia witnessed ethnic turmoil and discontent. Subsequent revolutionary developments led to the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the formation of Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). It, therefore, becomes important to study the dynamics of ethnic relations in the former Soviet Central Asia.

Decades of Russian and Soviet rule in Central Asia produced one of the most ethnically diverse landscapes in modern history. Caused by the policies of Russification (russifikatsia) and deportation of the politically undesirable, in a period of less than one hundred years, more than one hundred nationalities, ranging from Russian, to Volga Germans to Koreans, to Jews and Meshketian Turks, were transplanted in the region. The largest of these ethnic groups are the Russians. There are about 25 million ethnic. Russians now living outside the Russian Federation. This situation represents a potential threat to the political stability among and within the newly independent Central Asian Republics. In conjunction with these policies that clearly accentuated the differences in ethnic identities, Central Asia was subjected to Stalin’s Programme of National Territorial Delimitation and the forces settlement of the Kazak and Turkmen population in the 1920s and 1930s. The division of Central Asia into five Soviet Socialist Republics, was declared to have been on ethnic consideration,
left behind meandering political boundaries that cut across ethnic considerations.

Like other newly independent countries of Africa and Asia and Latin America after the end of the Second World War, the Central Asian Republics are facing similar problems like, inter-ethnic conflict, economic crisis, and problems of governance. However, any solution of inter-ethnic conflict can be made only when the historical legacy of formation of various ethnic groups is studied properly. In a society, where one’s own ethnic group or clan provide a source of identity to its people, such conflict situations are difficult to overcome. Similarly, the problem of migration especially of Russians and Germans, pose a grave challenge to the Central Asian Republics. The new states have to provide adequate security to them and create an environment in which they can feel secure about their future. Major tasks before the ruling elites of Central Asia now are to reconcile various groups interest and build a stable socio-political structure. Finally, the inter-ethnic problem to a large extent can be resolved when ruling elites provide adequate means of economic security to its people, irrespective of their nationality. Since the economic resources are scarce there is competition among various ethnic groups to control these resources. The elites of these ethnic groups try to mobilize their respective ethnic group to further their own interests. This leads to conflicts. Thus it requires a pragmatic approach on the part of leaders of Central Asian Republics to achieve a social system free from ethnic bias.

In the first chapter, an attempt has been made to study the concept of ethnic minorities and nationalism in a theoretical perspective. Both the western and Russian concept of ethnicity and nationalism have been discussed. The contemporary ethnic situation in
Central Asia and the country-wise ethnic profiles have also been studied.

The second chapter explores the rise of ethnicity, Islam and nationalism in the Central Asian Republics in the post-Soviet period. With the impact of *perestroika* and *glasnost*, there was an Islamic resurgence in Soviet Central Asia. This chapter also analyses three Islamic movements in Central Asia since 1991, namely *Hizb-ul-Tahrir* (HT), *the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan* (IMU) and the *Islamic Renaissance Party* (IRP). The search for ethnic nationalism, pan-Turkic nationalism or secular nationalism has not been very encouraging. One finds that Islam provides an effective medium to unite and mobilize the majority community of Muslims in Central Asia.

In the third chapter the Russian minority, which is the largest in Central Asia today, has been studied in detailed. The major issues that has been covered in this chapter are, first the Russian settlements in Central Asia from a historical and political perspective. Second the Soviet nationality question from Lenin to Gorbachev have been discussed. Third, the political problems of the Russians in Central Asia have also been traced since the disintegration of USSR. Fourth, the socio-economic problems of the Russians have also been analysed.

The fourth chapter makes a critical analysis of the German minority in Central Asia. It traces the origin of German settlements in Central Asia and the major problems faced by them. It also makes a study of the policies of the German government towards the Germans living in Central Asia. It seems that Germany is willing to help these Central Asian Republics in the process of state building and nation building if the Central Asian countries look into the problems of the ethnic German minorities.
The fifth chapter deals with the Korean minority living in Central Asia. It goes into detail as to how the Koreans were settled in Central Asia due to Russia-Japanese rivalry. It also looks into the problems of the Korean minority in Central Asia and how the Korean government and the Korean multi-national corporations like LG, Daewoo, Samsung and others are helping the Central Asian Republics to build their infrastructure and other development projects, which in turn is helping the Korean minority resident in Central Asia.

In the last chapter some suggestion are given to avoid inter-ethnic conflict in the Central Asian Republics. If one has to manage conflicts in a multi-ethnic region like Central Asia, they have to evolve a common civic and human rights values that actively discourage ethnic particularism and exclusivity, and respect cultural diversity and pluralism.

In the study, attempt has been made to analyse the ethnic minority situation in Central Asia by following the historical and analytical methods. The study is based on both primary and secondary source material, articles and commentaries published in various journals and news papers. A number of books dealing with the subject have also been consulted.