

# Central Asia: Conflict or Stability and Development?

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## CENTRAL ASIA: CONFLICT OR STABILITY AND DEVELOPMENT?

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### MINORITY RIGHTS GROUP

Minority Rights Group works to secure rights and justice for ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities. It is dedicated to the cause of cooperation and understanding between communities.

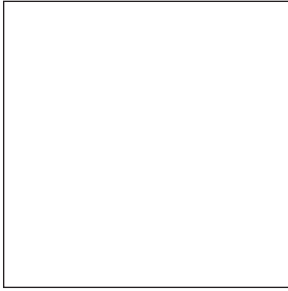
Founded in the 1960s, MRG is a small international non-governmental organization that informs and warns governments, the international community, non-governmental organizations and the wider public about the situation of minorities around the world. This work is based on the publication of well-researched reports, books and papers; direct advocacy on behalf of minority rights in international fora; the development of a global network of like-minded organizations and minority communities to collaborate on these issues; and the **challenging of prejudice and promotion of public understanding** through information and education projects.

MRG believes that the best hope for a peaceful world lies in **identifying and monitoring conflict** between communities, **advocating preventive measures** to avoid the escalation of conflict and **encouraging positive action** to build trusts between majority and minority communities.

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As part of its methodology, MRG conducts regional research, identifies issues and commissions reports based on its findings. Each author is carefully chosen and all scripts are read by no less than eight independent experts who are knowledgeable about the subject matter. These experts are drawn from the minorities about whom the reports are written, and from journalists, academics researchers and other human rights agencies. Authors are asked to incorporate comments made by these parties. In this way, MRG aims to publish accurate, authoritative, well-balanced reports.



*Uzbek men, Tajikistan.*  
JON SPAULL / PANOS PICTURES

# Central Asia: Conflict or Stability and Development?

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**Declaration on the Rights of Persons belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities** (UN General Assembly; Resolution 47/135 of 18 December 1992).

**Article 1**

1. States shall protect the existence and the national or ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic identity of minorities within their respective territories, and shall encourage conditions for the promotion of that identity.
2. States shall adopt appropriate legislative and other measures to achieve those ends.

**Article 2**

1. Persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities (hereinafter referred to as persons belonging to minorities) have the right to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practise their own religion, and to use their own language, in private and in public, freely and without interference or any form of discrimination.
2. Persons belonging to minorities have the right to participate effectively in cultural, religious, social, economic and public life.
3. Persons belonging to minorities have the right to participate effectively in decisions on the national and, where appropriate, regional level concerning the minority to which they belong or the regions in which they live, in a manner not incompatible with national legislation.
4. Persons belonging to minorities have the right to establish and maintain their own associations.
5. Persons belonging to minorities have the right to establish and maintain, without any discrimination, free and peaceful contacts with other members of their group, with persons belonging to other minorities, as well as contacts across frontiers with citizens of other States to whom they are related by national or ethnic, religious or linguistic ties.

**Article 3**

1. Persons belonging to minorities may exercise their rights including those as set forth in this Declaration individually as well as in community with other members of their group, without any discrimination.
2. No disadvantage shall result for any person belonging to a minority as the consequence of the exercise or non-exercise of the rights as set forth in this Declaration.

**Article 4**

1. States shall take measures where required to ensure that persons belonging to minorities may exercise fully and effectively all their human rights and fundamental freedoms without any discrimination and in full equality before the law.
2. States shall take measures to create favourable conditions to enable persons belonging to minorities to express their characteristics and to develop their culture, language, religion, traditions and customs, except where specific practices are in violation of national law and contrary to international standards.
3. States should take appropriate measures so that, wherever possible, persons belonging to minorities have adequate opportunities to learn their mother tongue or to have instruction in their mother tongue.
4. States should, where appropriate, take measures in the field of education, in order to encourage knowledge of the history, traditions, language and culture of the minorities existing within their territory. Persons belonging to minorities should have adequate opportunities to gain knowledge of the society as a whole.
5. States should consider appropriate measures so that persons belonging to minorities may participate fully in the economic progress and development in their country.

**Article 5**

1. National policies and programmes shall be planned and implemented with due regard for the legitimate interests of persons belonging to minorities.
2. Programmes of co-operation and assistance among States should be planned and implemented with due regard for the legitimate interests of persons belonging to minorities.

**Article 6**

States should cooperate on questions relating to persons belonging to minorities, *inter alia* exchanging of information and experiences, in order to promote mutual understanding and confidence.

**Article 7**

States should cooperate in order to promote respect for the rights as set forth in the present Declaration.

**Article 8**

1. Nothing in this Declaration shall prevent the fulfilment of international obligations of States in relation to persons belonging to minorities. In particular, States shall fulfil in good faith the obligations and commitments they have assumed under international treaties and agreements to which they are parties.
2. The exercise of the rights as set forth in the present Declaration shall not prejudice the enjoyment by all persons of universally recognised human rights and fundamental freedoms.
3. Measures taken by States in order to ensure the effective enjoyment of the rights as set forth in the present Declaration shall not *prima facie* be considered contrary to the principle of equality contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
4. Nothing in the present Declaration may be construed as permitting any activity contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations, including sovereign equality, territorial integrity and political independence of States.

**Article 9**

The specialised agencies and other organisations of the United Nations system shall contribute to the full realisation of the rights and principles as set forth in the present Declaration, within their respective fields of competence.

**Universal Declaration on Human Rights (10 December 1948)**

**Article 20**

1. Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.
2. No one may be compelled to belong to an association.

**International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966)**

**Article 27**

In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practise their own religion, or to use their own language.

**Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination (1965)**

**Article 1.4**

Special measures taken for the sole purpose of securing adequate advancement of certain racial or ethnic groups or individuals requiring such protection as may be necessary in order to ensure such groups or individuals equal enjoyment or exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms shall not be deemed racial discrimination, provided, however, that such measures do not, as a consequence, lead to the maintenance of separate rights for different racial groups and that they shall not be continued after the objectives for which they were taken have been achieved.

**Article 6**

States Parties shall assure to everyone within their jurisdiction effective protection and remedies, through the competent national tribunals and other State institutions, against any acts of racial discrimination which violate his human rights and fundamental freedoms contrary to this Convention, as well as the right to seek from such tribunals just and adequate reparation or satisfaction for any damage suffered as a result of such discrimination.

# Preface

Central Asians have experienced tremendous changes since 1991. This new MRG report analyzes the prospects for conflict, stability, and development in the region and examines how these changes are affecting relations between the different groups that constitute this diverse area. There is considerable variation among the conditions experienced in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. As newly independent countries, each experiences unique problems and responds to them in its own ways.

The situation of Central Asia's minority communities' is embedded within this context of transformation. Each country is multi-ethnic and multicultural. Inter-group relations, which were historically characterized by toleration and stability relative to other parts of the world, have come under pressure. Struggles for power among regional 'clans' resulted in an ongoing war in Tajikistan. Violent, inter-ethnic riots broke out in several other areas in 1989–90. Current ethnic conflicts tend to be concentrated in regional 'hot spots' and originate in competition for land and other scarce resources – often among Central Asian national minorities and sections of the titular population. Many members of groups that arrived in the region during the Soviet period (such as Slavs or the 'deported peoples' from other parts of the former Soviet Union) have returned to their historic homelands, either 'pulled' by the lure of prosperity or 'pushed' by the fear that they would no longer be welcome in Central Asia.

These fears have partly arisen due to recent nation-building efforts in many Central Asian states. In a number of countries these efforts are expressed in policies that bolster the position of the titular people and diminish the non-ethnic quality of citizenship, raising anxieties among minority groups, over the declaration of the language of the titular people, for example, as the only official language of the country. These concerns are further exacerbated by authoritarian responses from governments that seek to suppress opposition to their policies and curtail a group's efforts to organize itself in order to meet its needs.

It appears, however, that the fate of specific minority groups is very much tied to the development of the wider society. Most Central Asian countries have remained relatively stable. The report cites continuity within long-established institutions and conventional cultural norms as key factors in maintaining this stability. For better or worse, these features are under pressure as Central Asian societies face varying degrees of integration within global systems. A number of additional factors that may potentially lead to conflict and destabilization of the region include: 'clan'/regional rivalries, criminalization of society, cross-border irredentism, demographic pressure and environmental degradation, economic inequality, political succession and the politicization of Islam.

These pressures have been exacerbated by Western

involvement, including in development assistance, which was intended to ameliorate potential problems. Western governmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have, at times, displayed a cultural insensitivity that has alienated their Central Asian partners. A lack of awareness about the region and current conditions has sometimes meant that policies and practices have been based on erroneous assumptions that have led to damaging consequences. This points to the need for information about the complexities of the region and for outsiders to take responsibility for educating themselves before becoming involved. It is hoped that this report will make a contribution to developing this understanding.

Furthermore, this report highlights the need to address two major concerns which may impede future development and stability. The first is the need to ensure that all people in the region are able to enjoy their human rights. The second is to prevent a deterioration in conditions that will increase social pressures and put vulnerable communities at risk. MRG has extensive comparative experience in documenting what happens when governments seek to respond to socio-political and other popular movements with violence or other forms of repression. Repression escalates conflict, whereas states which respond via political accommodation and reform have been able to diffuse or even transform these types of conflicts. It is hoped that governments will recognize that an inclusive policy towards minorities and others, as well as strenuous efforts to create genuine equality of opportunity for all, will encourage individuals and groups to contribute to their country and support and defend its values.

It also appears likely that the greatest risk to non-dominant groups would arise if conditions deteriorated in Central Asia, generating resentment and the potential for extremism. Measures are needed to prevent a deepening economic crisis that is socially and politically destabilizing. The economic hardship experienced in many Central Asian countries has made it tempting for some governments to accept loans and other conditional aid packages to help bolster economic development. Yet this too may pose other long-term risks, such as the potential for Central Asian economies to be restructured in a way that exacerbates inequalities and conflict.

It is intended that this report will both contribute to a greater understanding of the region and will be used as a focal point for debate on ways forward. MRG aims to promote minority rights and cooperation between communities. The recommendations at the end of the report encourage policies and practices that could advance these goals and potentially prevent latent conflicts from escalating.

Alan Phillips  
*Director*  
January 1997

# Introduction

The term Central Asia, in Western European languages at least, has no fixed definition, but in general usage today it is often used to refer to the five former-Soviet republics of Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. This is the definition which will be used here. Within this region – which encompasses an area considerably larger than India – there are striking variations in human and physical geography. Yet there are a number of features which are common to the region as a whole. These are partly the result of historic cultural bonds, and partly of the shared experience of some 70 years of Soviet rule. Hence, some generalizations are valid for all. At the same time, each state has its own specific characteristics and this, increasingly, is resulting in differentiation and divergence in domestic as well as foreign policies.

Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, like the other constituent republics of the former Soviet Union, acquired political independence at the end of 1991.<sup>2</sup> This did not come about as a result of national struggles for liberation but as a consequence of the sudden and unexpected demise of the Union. There had been no period of preparation and planning for this momentous change: on the contrary, the governments of the newly independent states were confronted, almost literally overnight, with the task of assuming direct responsibility for a huge range of administrative, economic, social and environmental problems. They had virtually no previous experience of self-rule, and now faced an uncertain future with limited resources in every field, from specialized personnel to technological equipment, from financial reserves to international transport and telecommunications facilities.

Some of these problems are shared by all the former Soviet republics. However, in Central Asia they are more acute because of the lower level of development and the more critically balanced social and environmental conditions. During the Soviet period these republics were to a large extent dependent on all-Union economic structures and on assistance from central government. Social services, for example, were largely funded by central government subsidies. Also, the high degree of specialization in the production of raw materials had created lop-sided economies; this in turn caused a far higher degree of inter-republican trade than was to be found elsewhere in the Union. Post-1991, the abrupt cessation of central government subsidies and the dislocation of the all-Union supply, production and transportation systems, had a devastating effect on the newly independent Central Asian states. Inevitably, this caused great hardship for the population and exacerbated latent social tensions.

All the Central Asian states are multi-ethnic and multi-cultural. In the past (Soviet as well as pre-Soviet) inter-communal relations in Central Asia had generally been remarkably harmonious. However, these states are now

undergoing a painful process of readjustment and reform. In these conditions situations could arise in which minorities could be physically placed at risk, or their civil and cultural rights could be threatened. It is important, therefore, to monitor developments in the region on a continuous basis. Yet if such an exercise is to be helpful – to provide illumination rather than speculative scaremongering – it must be rooted in an understanding of the broader social, political and economic context. Those who are interested exclusively in issues relating to minority rights may find this approach inordinately cumbersome. However, minorities do not live in a vacuum but form part of a larger society. Hence it is necessary first to consider the prospects for conflict, stability and development that confront the entire population, and then to locate the minority groups within that framework.

This report does not pretend to be comprehensive or exhaustive. Constraints of space have meant that extremely complex questions have had to be touched on very fleetingly. However, to have narrowed the focus to a smaller range of topics would have risked even greater distortion. Central Asia is still a relatively unknown region for most members of the international community. Foreign commentators and policy-shapers sometimes draw false analogies with other parts of the world or they tend to over-emphasize superficial similarities within Central Asia, while ignoring underlying differences. This can result in serious misunderstandings. This report therefore aims to convey, something of the particularity of these countries. It provides a brief historical outline, reviews the key areas of post-Soviet readjustment, and identifies potential causes of regional conflict and instability. The report goes on to look at issues that impact more directly on the position of minority groups and includes a survey of the main ethnic and religious minorities in the countries under consideration.<sup>3</sup> The report also assesses the effectiveness of Western aid programmes and ends by setting out recommendations for future action.



# Historical background

The majority of the indigenous peoples of Central Asia are of Turkic origin and almost all are Sunni Muslims. However, beneath this apparent homogeneity lie strong cultural and historical differences. Traditionally, the main divide was between the predominantly Turkic nomads of the steppe and desert, and the settled peoples of the fertile oasis belt; the latter were an amalgam of an older Iranian grouping and sedentarized nomads. Despite some economic interaction along the margins of 'the steppe and the sown', underpinned by occasional military alliances, the relationship was predominantly one of mutual hostility.<sup>4</sup> This was reinforced by different attitudes to Islam. The settled peoples, who accepted the new faith within a century or two of the Prophet's death, were orthodox in their beliefs and practices, while the nomads, who were converted over a much longer period (some as late as the nineteenth century), were far more lax. Today, there are few outward differences between the traditionally sedentary peoples and the former nomads (all now sedentarized, mostly as a result of the collectivization campaign of 1929–30), but undercurrents of suspicion and distrust remain.

For most of its history Central Asia has been a patchwork of independent and semi-independent principalities. Only twice was it unified: first, and very loosely, under the Mongols in the thirteenth century, and then under the Russians in the nineteenth century. The main regional powers on the eve of the Russian conquest were the three Kazak Hordes (tribal confederations) in the north; the Khanates (state formations) of Bukhara, Khiva and Kokand in the centre; and the Turkmen tribes in the south-west. The economic base and internal organization of these formations differed, but all were fluid confederations held together by force of arms and the personal authority of the *khan* (leader). Among the nomads there was a highly developed system of tribes and sub-tribes; the sedentary peoples had similar, albeit rather looser, territorially-based groupings.

## The Russian advance

The Russian advance into Central Asia began in the eighteenth century with the gradual absorption of the lands of the Kazak nomads in the north; it ended in the late nineteenth century with the annexation of the south of the region. According to contemporary sources, resistance to the invading troops was disorganized and comparatively light. Tsarist rule in Central Asia was generally less onerous than that of European powers in their colonies.<sup>5</sup> Relations between the Slav settlers, (mainly Russians, but also significant groups of Ukrainians), and the indigenous population were on the whole amicable.<sup>6</sup> Most indigenous institutions were allowed to function as previously. The main changes

were in the economic sphere (the production of cotton, for example, was geared to the needs of the Russian textile industry), and some areas of administrative control (for example, in the levying of taxes).

## Sovietization

In the aftermath of the 1917 Revolution, Central Asia – like other parts of the Tsarist Empire – was swept by civil war. The main contenders were various Slav military and political factions, but in some areas contingents of foreign (mainly British) interventionists played an active role; there were also nationalist movements that sought to establish autonomous states in Kazakstan and Kokand, and amorphous bands of rebels, known as *basmachi*, under local military leaders. By 1920, Soviet power had been firmly established in most areas, yet the *basmachi* continued to offer a guerrilla-type resistance for almost a decade more – they claimed to be fighting a 'holy war' in defence of Islam and traditional values. Although they rarely represented a serious military threat, their influence among the indigenous population was so strong, especially in the 1920s, that the Soviet authorities were forced to temper their reformist zeal, and to delay the full implementation of programmes such as the anti-religion campaign and the emancipation of women.

The avowed aim of the new regime was 'to help the working masses of the non-Russian peoples to catch up with Russia, which is in the vanguard'.<sup>7</sup> The first, and symbolically most important, step towards the modernization and Sovietization of Central Asia was the National Delimitation of 1924–5. This resulted in the creation of five large territorial-administrative units, precursors of the independent states of today.<sup>8</sup> The borders of these new units were drawn as far as possible along linguistic lines, thereby consolidating within clearly defined territorial limits the speakers of the main indigenous language groups. The philosophical justification for this division was that 'language defined the nation'.<sup>9</sup> The evolution of tribes into nations was, according to Marxist-Leninist-Stalinist theory, part of the historical process,<sup>10</sup> thus the creation of nation states, even if in purely token form, was regarded as a prerequisite for further social and economic development.

Within its own terms of reference the Delimitation was successful, because without any movement of populations some 85–95 per cent of each of the largest Turkic groups – Kazaks, Kyrgyz, Turkmen and Uzbeks – were encompassed within their respective titular administrative units. The Tajiks, the only large Persian-speaking group, fared less well in this demarcation of 'national' territories. For centuries they had shared a common geographic space and a common bilingual culture with the Uzbeks. There could be no simple division between the two groups. The Tajiks, numerically smaller and less pow-

erful than their Turkic neighbours, were the losers because much of the land that they considered to be historically theirs, including the cities of Bukhara and Samarkand, were allocated to Uzbekistan. Only 63 per cent of the Tajik population was domiciled in Tajikistan at the time of the first Soviet census in 1926.<sup>11</sup>

The drawing of the new borders provided the physical framework within which traditional societies could be deconstructed and selectively remoulded into Soviet 'nations' or 'nationalities'. The new identities were consolidated in a number of ways. National languages, based on selected regional dialects, were codified and elaborated.<sup>12</sup> Their implementation was facilitated by the rapid development of national literatures, initially consisting of translations of Russian/Soviet works, later extended to include original compositions (which, however, remained faithful to Russian/Soviet models). National histories gave legitimacy both to the regime and to the new identities. The political socialization of the population was supported by a programme of mass education for children and adults.<sup>13</sup> In the early Soviet period, average literacy rates ranged from some 3 per cent in the south to 7 per cent in the north; by the late 1960s, virtually 100 per cent literacy had been achieved throughout the region.<sup>14</sup> Free and compulsory primary and secondary schooling was provided for boys and girls alike. Tertiary education, for which most students received stipends, was encouraged. Within each republic higher educational facilities included at least one university and numerous polytechnics and vocational colleges. Each republic also had its national Academy of Sciences, some of whose research institutes were of international standing.

Islam, which had governed the social, cultural and intellectual outlook of the region for centuries, was grudgingly tolerated for the first few years. From the late 1920s, it became the focus of a fierce anti-religious campaign. Muslim beliefs and practices were attacked, and the social infrastructure destroyed: Islamic schools, colleges and law courts were closed, the payment of religious taxes prohibited and charitable endowments (*waqf*) confiscated. Almost all mosques were closed. The abolition of the Arabic script, replaced first by the Latin script (c. 1930), then by the Cyrillic (1940), was also linked to the attempt to eliminate Islam. Soviet institutions and Soviet legal codes, superficially adapted to take account of local conditions (i.e. conforming to the principle of 'national in form, socialist in content'), were introduced in place of those of Islam.<sup>15</sup>

The manipulation of gender politics was also used as a means of undermining the old order. Women, the 'surrogate proletariat',<sup>16</sup> were given equal rights with men before the law, in education and in the workplace. They were encouraged to seek paid employment outside the home and to take an active part in the socio-political life of the community. This revolutionary change in women's status was symbolized by the end of female segregation and the abolition of the *paranja*, the head-to-toe covering traditionally worn outside the home by townswomen in the south. These and other similar initiatives did not transform women's lives as completely as the reformists had hoped – in the home, gender relations remained much as before, the patriarchal order was scarcely shaken.

Nevertheless, education and new job opportunities gradually helped to broaden horizons and, especially in the cities, women began to pursue independent careers. Some reached very senior positions in management and administration, in the professions, and in Party-Soviet organizations. This gave Central Asian women unprecedented visibility in societies in which the public sphere had previously been an exclusively male preserve.<sup>17</sup>

The built environment was also Sovietized, with broad streets and multi-storey apartment blocks visually proclaiming the advent of the new era. European-style ballets, operas and plays, reflecting Soviet taste and ideology, supplanted the traditional performing arts; at first the composers and performers of these new works were Slav, but several highly accomplished Central Asians soon made their appearance. The socialist realist idiom was also propagated in paintings and sculpture in the round (disapproved of by many orthodox Muslims as bordering on idolatry), nurturing a new aesthetic, as well as a new political and social outlook.

The influx of large numbers of immigrants from other parts of the Soviet Union changed the ethnic balance in the Central Asian republics and helped to spread different customs, attitudes and modes of behaviour. Collectivization and the sedentarization of the nomads brought fundamental change both to the organization of labour and to work skills. Traditional forms of farming, manufacture and trade were stamped out in order to make way for 'modern' (i.e. Soviet) methods. Large-scale communal projects, decreed and organized by the state, robbed the individual of a sense of control and personal responsibility. The famine and massive loss of livestock which resulted from these sudden changes caused many deaths. This accelerated the social transformation of the region, as well as fundamentally altering the economic structure. The 'purges' of the 1930s, which destroyed the intellectual elite of the new republics (including the first wave of indigenous Communists), completed the moral and spiritual evisceration of Central Asia.

The result of these and many other such changes was a rapid transformation of the public face of society. However, in the private domain, there was a high degree of conservatism. The nature of interpersonal relationships remained almost unchanged. So-called 'clans' – social networks based on traditional kin/tribal/regional groupings – continued to dominate society. These networks were gradually widened, with new bonds being formed through a shared experience (e.g. army or college) or a common professional interest. The 'clan' leaders of the Soviet period were those who could function most successfully in the new environment; descendants of the old aristocracy had no special privileges, although, on an individual level, within their own circle, they might be held in some esteem.<sup>18</sup> Client-patron chains of allegiance promoted group solidarity, and this in turn provided a power base from which to carve out covert fiefdoms within the Soviet system. Rivalry between these networks was intense and often seems to have outweighed loyalty to the larger national (i.e. ethnic) group.

Since modernization in Central Asia was imposed from outside, some Western observers believed that it would be resented, and would eventually provoke a Muslim backlash. Various 'conflict models' of development were pro-



pounded.<sup>19</sup> However, contrary to these expectations, the Central Asians proved to be among the most loyal supporters of the Union.<sup>20</sup> There were no secessionist movements in the region and scarcely any opposition to Soviet rule. Several factors contributed to this quiescence. First, Central Asian society – or more accurately – societies, have been exposed to external influences throughout history and have developed a high capacity to absorb and to adapt to new cultures. Second, the Soviet regime succeeded in coopting the elites, who in turn played a crucial role in ‘indigenizing’ the system. Third, the state created vested interests, not only at the highest level of the bureaucracy, but throughout society, thus providing ordinary individuals with incentives to maintain the system. Fourth, the totalitarian nature of the regime made possible the use of mass terror and mass persuasion to coerce the population into compliance. Finally, there was a genuine perception that, for the majority, there was a greater degree of social justice and better opportunities for advancement under Soviet rule than had previously been the case.<sup>21</sup>

despite the advances in health care, outside the main cities the provision of sewerage and clean piped water was extremely poor.



## Soviet infrastructural legacy

Soviet social engineering in Central Asia did not accomplish its original aims because the level of development continued to lag behind that of the European republics of the Union. However, when viewed in the broader context of ‘developing’ countries in Asia and Africa, it was far from a ‘failed transformation’.<sup>22</sup> At the end of the Soviet era the Central Asian republics had a standard of education comparable to that of the ‘developed’ world. There was a serviceable network of social care, and of cultural facilities (such as museums, libraries and art galleries). Medical services were well organized, although in some areas chronically under-resourced. Infant mortality was higher than in most European countries, but considerably lower than in countries such as Egypt, Iran and Turkey;<sup>23</sup> life expectancy levels were on a par with those of Latin American countries such as Argentina, Mexico and Venezuela.<sup>24</sup> Absolute life-threatening poverty, such as exists in many ‘developing’ countries, had been eradicated. Society was secular; men and women had equal access to education and employment.<sup>25</sup> Modern (Soviet) state institutions had long been in place and there was a competent body of civil servants. Communication and transport networks (road, rail and air) spanned the entire region. There was a medium level of industrialization, mostly, though by no means exclusively, connected with the extraction and primary processing of hydrocarbons and minerals.<sup>26</sup>

On the negative side, Central Asia suffered in full measure from the common shortcomings of the Soviet system: uneven development, inefficiency, inadequate technical maintenance, environmentally harmful technologies, irrational and unsustainable use of resources, and lack of familiarity with international institutions. They had little grounding in modern, international financial management, and had few of the constituent elements of a market economy (e.g. clear commercial laws, management skills, insurance and accountancy services). Moreover,

# Independence: readjustment and loss of security

**T**he security of Central Asia was guaranteed by Russia for over a century; first through the Tsarist Empire, and subsequently, the Soviet Union. Russia also set the agenda for the region's development. After the collapse of the Soviet Union the onus on security shifted to the newly emergent states; likewise, the responsibility for planning and implementing developmental policies. The sudden and unexpected transition from what was, in effect, colonial status to that of *de jure* independence created an intense sense of insecurity at every level, from that of the individual to that of the state, from the regional to the international. Today, each of these levels of insecurity impacts on one or more of the others, amplifying the potential for disorder and instability.

## The individual

**F**or the individual, the loss of the old certainties of the Soviet era has brought economic, moral and physical anxieties. Chronic inflation, shortages of basic household goods, frequent delays in the payment of wages and growing unemployment have made daily life a fight for survival. The Communist morality – and whether people abided by it or not, the ground rules were at least familiar to all – has been largely negated by the collapse of the ideology. At the same time, much that was until so recently condemned as evil – Western political and economic systems, Western popular culture – has suddenly become acceptable. The loss of moral direction has created a situation in which the former constraints have ceased to exist. On the one hand, this engenders feelings of helplessness and frustration, on the other, it leads to rampant exploitation. This change in society is dramatically underlined by an increase in violence. Five years ago, cases of grievous bodily harm were rare; now they are common. Alcoholism and drug abuse are also on the rise.

Women have been particularly affected by the recent changes. They are usually the first victims of unemployment, and those who are able to remain in work are often forced to accept minimal wages. They are disadvantaged in other ways, too. Education is still nominally free, but charges are often levied by the school or even individual teachers; in families where there are many children, it is the girls who are the first to be taken out of school and sent to earn their keep by selling oddments in the local market. Prostitution is on the increase, and with it, the risk of venereal disease and AIDS. The situation seems to be worst in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, but similar problems exist in the other Central Asian states.<sup>27</sup>

Many rural communities have been devastated by the economic crisis. The shortage of basic commodities, the breakdown of social services, and massive unemployment are causing increasing numbers of young people to migrate to the cities in search of better conditions. They bring with them a different culture and different expectations. This often creates friction between the newcomers and the urban population. Such tensions are particularly marked in Kazakhstan, where the city environment is multi-ethnic, and also highly Russified. The migrants are often hostile not only to the ethnic minorities, but to the urban Kazaks who, in their eyes, have 'sold out' to an alien way of life and therefore are no longer 'authentic'. This often leads to tension and ill humour in day-to-day encounters between the established urban population (of whatever ethnic origin) and the newcomers.

## The state

**U**nder Soviet rule, the republics were administrative units within a larger state structure. Major policy decisions, in internal and external affairs, were taken by the central authorities. The role of the republican governments was to ensure that directives from the 'centre' were fulfilled as quickly and faithfully as possible.<sup>28</sup> Independence confronted the new states with direct responsibility for a formidable range of problems.

From a practical point of view, the first priority was the restructuring of the institutions of state management. This required such measures as the drafting of new constitutions; the upgrading and expansion of ministries, state committees and other government agencies; the establishment of national banks and other financial institutions; the reorganization of local government and the redefinition of the relationship between the districts (*rayon*), the provinces (*oblast*) and the new state capitals. The speed with which these reforms have been initiated is impressive. However, the process is inevitably disjointed and chaotic. Existing boundaries of competence and responsibility have been blurred, opening the way for power struggles within the central administration, and between the provinces and the central government. In all the new states there is a high turnover of senior personnel, also frequent changes of the titles and functions of administrative bodies. The torrent of new edicts, decrees and laws exacerbates the sense of confusion.

Another priority has been economic reform. The Soviet economy was a centrally planned, highly integrated system, based on specialization, division of labour and extensive inter-republican trade. The aim was not to produce balanced national (i.e. republican) economies, but to max-

imize the economic potential of the Soviet Union as a whole. Today, the newly independent states are engaged in the complex task of developing viable independent economies. All the Central Asian governments have expressed their commitment to the principles of a free market economy, but since few of the basic elements are in place, change is slow.<sup>29</sup> The weakness of the administrative infrastructure, which itself is in a transitional phase, makes it difficult to implement policy decisions. Attempts at privatization have been marred by inadequate preparation and insufficient legal safeguards; this has opened the way to widespread fraud, embezzlement, speculation and other malpractices.<sup>30</sup> Punitive tax reforms have laid a huge burden on private enterprises, forcing even the most honest entrepreneurs to cheat in order to survive.<sup>31</sup> The most noticeable result of economic transition has been a sharp fall in living standards, and a catastrophic weakening of social welfare systems. Education and health care networks have been greatly reduced. Maintenance of the technical infrastructure has also been neglected, resulting in a rapid deterioration of basic services.<sup>32</sup> These and a multitude of other such problems create a climate that is hardly conducive to seamless economic reform.

A third priority is the brokering of new ideologies, and new, post-Soviet national identities. The collapse of the Soviet system created a spiritual vacuum. The ideological framework within which modern Central Asian society had functioned was suddenly invalidated, and with it, the Soviet national constructs, including administrative identities, histories, languages and territorial boundaries. There were no ready alternatives: the socio-economic bases of the 'tribe states' of the pre-Tsarist era had been so thoroughly destroyed that there could be no return to that world; supra-national bonds, whether pan-Iranian, pan-Islamic or pan-Turkic, also had little emotional significance for the great majority of the population. A new orientation was required, one which would inspire a sense of national pride and confidence. As with the Soviet period (and using many of the same mechanisms), it is the state which is shaping the new ideologies in all the Central Asian countries. The cultural input differs from one country to another, but there are three common elements: a revision of history, aimed at delineating a new continuity between the pre-Tsarist past and the present, thus providing a non-Soviet legitimization of the 'nation'; a limited revival of Islam, to establish a 'national' moral and cultural basis for society in place of the Marxist-Leninist ethic; and the creation of a personality cult around the head of state, who serves as a focus for personal loyalty as well as a symbolic guarantee of national integrity.<sup>33</sup>

## Regional (former Soviet) linkages

**D**uring the Soviet period, economic and socio-cultural links between the Central Asian republics and republics in other regions of the Soviet Union were strengthened, but intra-Central Asian links remained weak. The Central Asian states are now attempting to create institutions for regional cooperation. Efforts are being made to harmonize policies concerning defence and security, the economy, the environment, and the maintenance of transnational communications and transport networks.

Some progress has been made towards the establishment of an economic and defence union between Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. However, there are also causes for regional competition: there is little complementarity in the economies of these republics and now they are in competition for the same markets; also for the same flows of foreign aid and investment. Moreover, the two largest states, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, are rival contenders for regional hegemony.<sup>34</sup>

The Central Asian states are members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). They have conducted a number of multilateral as well as bilateral treaties on trade and economic cooperation with other member states, formalizing new, post-Soviet relations. The dominant relationship, however, is with Russia, and is likely to remain so for many years. The Central Asian republics are still intimately bound to the former 'centre' by cultural, educational, defence, security, and economic ties; by transport and communications networks; and by the large number of expatriate Russian settlers (some 8 million in Central Asia as a whole). These bonds give Russia inordinate influence in the region. However, Russia does not (as of 1996) appear to have a clearly defined strategy towards the region. Some analysts hold that Central Asia is vital to Russian national interests, as a buffer against possible incursions from the south and as a source of strategic raw materials. Others, however, consider the region to be an intolerable drain on resources. Current Russian policy oscillates between these two extremes: thus, for example, the decision to oust the Central Asian republics from the rouble zone seemed designed to distance the 'centre' from the periphery, while current actions in Tajikistan indicate a commitment to remain.<sup>35</sup>

There is also an ambivalence in Central Asian attitudes towards Russia. As in many former colonial relationships, anger and a desire for retribution is mixed with admiration and affection for the old imperial power. Here, where there was no liberation struggle, no emotional preparation for independence, attitudes are even more ambivalent than in most other ex-colonies. There is a fear that the Russians will continue to be the dominant power, and that this newly-acquired independence will prove to be an illusion. Equally, however, there is a fear that the Russians will withdraw, abandoning Central Asia to whatever chaos lies ahead. This dilemma will very likely resolve itself as the newly emerged states redefine their identities and establish ties with countries outside the CIS. Russia will undoubtedly remain an important trading partner (a position it has held for several hundred years) and will probably retain significant political weight. However, as the cultural links are weakened, and the knowledge of the Russian language and history becomes less of a shared bond, there could be a growing divergence, resulting in a reorientation of interests and linkages.

## International relations

**I**n January 1992, following the formal dissolution of the Union, the Central Asian republics were pitched headlong into the international arena. A handful of former Soviet diplomats and technical advisers apart, few Central

Asians had first-hand knowledge of other countries. Moreover, there were almost no direct channels of communication with the outside world. The very first task, therefore, was the creation of a basic technical infrastructure for engagement with the international community. Extraordinarily, within some 18 months much of this was in place. There are now direct international flights to Asian and European capitals; modern telecommunications systems are being installed. Fully functional Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade are now well established. The newly independent states were accepted as full members of the United Nations (UN) in March 1992. They have since joined a number of other international organizations (including the World Health Organization [WHO], Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe [OSCE], International Monetary Fund [IMF], World Bank, etc). Each republic has established formal relations with some 100 other countries.

In their incarnation as modern nation states, the Central Asian republics have no traditional foreign policy strategies to fall back upon. This gives them a certain intellectual freedom in their approach to international relations, but it also creates a sense of insecurity, as they have little experience in assessing the international environment. Two priority goals have emerged. One is to secure capital investment and technical assistance from abroad. Some progress has been made in this direction, particularly regarding the development of the gold, and oil and gas sectors. The other priority is to diversify transport routes. At present, the main road, rail and pipeline links lie through Russia, thereby enabling the former 'centre' to retain a stranglehold on foreign trade. The widespread enthusiasm for a modern recreation of the ancient 'silk roads' is not mere nostalgia for past glories, but reflects an urgent desire to secure additional transport outlets. In the east, road, rail and air links between Kazakhstan and China are already in place; in the south-west, a road exists between Turkmenistan and Iran and a railroad was completed in May 1996. Sea links across the Caspian between Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Iran are also operational. The main components of a trans-Asian link, stretching from the Yellow Sea to the Gulf, are thus already in place and could become functional in the near future.<sup>36</sup>

In the immediate aftermath of independence there was much speculation as to whether the Central Asian states would follow the 'Iranian model' of Islamic law, thus moving into the anti-Western camp, or the 'Turkish model', thus moving towards establishing a secular, Western-style democracy. Initially, the Central Asian states did appear to favour a *rapprochement* with Turkey. There was an assumption, at official as well as popular levels, that Turkey would be able to provide unlimited aid. It did indeed provide aid (mostly in the form of credits), but far less than had been anticipated. Meanwhile, as more Central Asians began to travel abroad, on fact-finding missions as well as for periods of training, they rapidly revised their original estimates of Turkey's economic potential. Relations have remained cordial and Turkish private sector business interests are well represented in the Central Asian states, but no pan-Turkic 'special relationship' has emerged.

Iran has also not assumed a dominant position,

although closer acquaintance has certainly helped to allay some of the anti-Iranian fears and prejudices that the Central Asians inherited from the Soviet period. In the religious sphere, Iran (which is Shia, unlike Central Asia, which is almost entirely Sunni) has pursued a policy of non-interference, emphasizing instead the need for regional cooperation in trade, exploitation of natural resources, environmental protection, and the development of the Caspian Sea zone.<sup>37</sup> However, like Turkey, Iran does not have the economic resources to provide the hard currency investment that the Central Asian states require. This automatically sets a limit to the extent of its active influence in the region. A number of bilateral agreements have been concluded, particularly with Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, but Iran has generally concentrated on developing a multilateral approach within the framework of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO).<sup>38</sup>

The rivalry between Iran and Turkey (denied by official representatives of both countries, but inferred by most observers) is not the only struggle for influence in the region. Other rivalries are also being projected on to all or part of Central Asia. Several Muslim countries are competing for influence, the most active being Saudi Arabia. However, the Middle Eastern country that has had the greatest economic and diplomatic success in the region is arguably Israel.<sup>39</sup> Nevertheless, Central Asia, especially Kazakhstan, is careful to preserve a diplomatic balance by maintaining good relations with the Palestinians.<sup>40</sup> India and Pakistan are also contenders for economic, as well as for political and strategic influence. The Far East, especially China, Japan, South Korea and also South and South-East Asian countries, represent additional blocks of rival interests. The leaders of the Central Asian states have frequently stressed their intention to develop friendly relations with all members of the international community, but to avoid being drawn into any one exclusive ethnolinguistic, ideological or political grouping. To date, they have been remarkably adept in implementing this policy.



# Potential causes of conflict

**W**ithin the general context of readjustment and loss of security there are a number of specific issues which are potential sources of serious conflict. Whether or not they are activated will depend on variables both inside and outside the region. These issues are not mutually exclusive and indeed may well interact with one another. Collectively or individually, they are capable of transforming what is currently a reasonably stable environment into one of high risk.

## ‘Clan’/regional rivalry

**I**n all five states regional conflicts began to resurface once the mediating patronage of the ‘centre’ was removed. Different local groupings are now seeking to challenge the existing balance of power. The struggle is for wealth and influence, mainly through control of the administrative apparatus, but increasingly, through extended business interests (legal and illegal). In most cases, the struggle is non-physical. The case of Tajikistan, however, illustrates clearly how rapidly such rivalries can escalate into civil war (see below) when ambitions are raised and weapons are freely available. Most observers would agree that the political labels that the various Tajik factions have acquired (i.e. neo-communist, democratic, Islamic fundamentalist) have little more than superficial significance. The real contestants are the Khojentis of the north, the Kulyabis of the south and the Tavildara-based ‘clans’ of the east; the smaller regional groupings of the central corridor and the south-west switch their allegiance from one to the other of the main players, depending on the fortunes of war.<sup>41</sup> This regional fragmentation has all but destroyed the sense of Tajik national identity. It is this, quite as much as the human suffering, economic devastation and social dislocation, that will make it very difficult to rebuild the state.

The Tajik experience will probably not be repeated on the same scale elsewhere. However, no republic is free of the potential for such conflict. In Kyrgyzstan, the tensions between the north and the south are so strong that some Kyrgyz fear they will eventually render the country ungovernable.<sup>42</sup> In Kazakhstan, there are indications that regional factions are manoeuvring to secure greater autonomy. Some ascribe this to a resurgence of Horde interests. This is probably an oversimplification of the situation.<sup>43</sup> Yet, the economic disparity between the industrialized north and the agricultural south also seems likely to cause problems in the future. In Uzbekistan, there has traditionally been competition between the power bases of Ferghana, Samarkand and Tashkent. Today, there are still strong rivalries within the administration, and some regional disaffection. However, President Islam Karimov has secured the support of all the main factions and cur-

rently appears to be firmly in control.<sup>44</sup> In Turkmenistan, there are latent tensions between the different regional/tribal ‘clans’. Much of the territory of the present state is the traditional domain of the Ahal-Tekke tribe, who remain the dominant group. There are rumours that since travel restrictions with Iran have been eased, Turkmen from both sides of the border have been in closer contact and that this has increased tribal tensions as the majority of the Turkmen in Iran are from the Goklen and Yomut tribes, ancient rivals of the Ahal-Tekke.<sup>45</sup> President Saparmurat Niyazov is careful to maintain the balance between these groups, but the potential for a power struggle between regional factions exists and under stress (e.g. a worsening of the economic situation) could easily erupt.

## Political succession

**T**hroughout the Soviet period it was Moscow that controlled political succession in the Central Asian republics. Now, the mechanisms for ensuring the smooth transfer of political power must be rooted in local institutions. In theory, such mechanisms already exist: all five states have adopted a presidential system of government and their constitutions stipulate that presidential and parliamentary elections must be held at stated, regular intervals. However, it has become clear from the elections and referendums that have already been held that the great mass of the population still regards the ballot box in much the same way as it did during the Soviet period, namely, as a device for rubber-stamping the decisions that have been taken, or are going to be taken, by those in power.

Four of the current Central Asian presidents came to power during the Soviet period, having worked their way up through the system; the fifth (Imomali Rakhmonov of Tajikistan) was also formed within those structures, although at a lower level of official responsibility. Given that independence is still very new, it is not surprising that these leaders are more concerned with maintaining social and economic stability than with establishing procedures for handing over power to their successors. Moreover, they are relatively young (the oldest is president Islam Karimov of Uzbekistan, born in 1938, the youngest, President Askar Akayev of Kyrgyzstan, born in 1944) and in passable good health. The terms of office of the Presidents of Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan have already been extended by referendum beyond their original allotted span. The President of Kyrgyzstan was re-elected for a second term of office in December 1995 (although there were some concerns about the constitutional validity of this); the President of Tajikistan, formerly Acting Head of State, was confirmed in office in November 1994 as a result of a somewhat dubious election.<sup>46</sup>

However, the question of the transfer of power is one

that must inevitably be faced sooner or later. It seems unlikely that there will be a genuine choice of candidates. There are very few independent opposition parties in Central Asia, and none have succeeded in attracting broad-based public support. There are also virtually no individuals who have sufficient personal authority to command a substantial following. One of the main reasons for this is that the concept of a 'loyal opposition' does not exist in popular consciousness: dissent is equated with subversion and hence a threat to order and stability. The incumbent leaders might well groom a trusted lieutenant (possibly a kin member) to assume the mantle of successor. Yet there is an inherent risk in such a strategy, since it is always possible that the *protégé* might succeed in building up an independent power base, thus becoming a rival rather than an ally. The desire to pre-empt any attempt to establish a rival camp is no doubt one of the reasons for the very high turnover of senior officials in the republics.

This policy of constant flux cannot be maintained indefinitely. As the situation is stabilized, so a certain degree of continuity will be introduced and this could permit rival factions within the ruling circles to regroup. They would probably not be able to mount a successful challenge to a leader in office. However, when the time came for a transfer of power, whether through the leader's voluntary retirement, or involuntary physical incapacity, this could trigger internecine struggles within the government itself. The armed forces in these republics are still very small and would not represent a significant factor in any such struggle in the near future.<sup>47</sup> However, the powerful security services could play a decisive role, giving their loyalty to the candidate most likely to further their own interests. Thus, the process of transition will be prone to dangerous internal stresses until such time as the necessary institutions have been created to ensure an orderly devolution of power.

## Cross-border irredentism

There are two categories of potential cross-border irredentism in Central Asia: that involving CIS members, and that involving 'foreign' states. In both cases there are divided ethnic groups and divided lands. Within the CIS, there are over 500,000 Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan (mostly in the Osh region), and over 1 million Uzbeks in Tajikistan (in Khojent and other border regions); in Uzbekistan there are approximately 1 million Tajiks (mostly in the Bukhara and Samarkand regions) and just under 1 million Kazaks. In Kazakstan there are 6 million Russians, mostly in the north-eastern provinces neighbouring the Russian Federation.

All the post-Soviet leaders have agreed to honour the existing borders. However, in some areas minority groups have begun to militate for reunification with the main body of their ethnic group. The Uzbek populations in Khojent (Tajikistan) and Osh (Kyrgyzstan) for example, have been calling for union with Uzbekistan, drawn not only by ethnic ties, but also by Uzbekistan's growing economic and strategic importance. In the long-term, it would not be surprising if, formally or informally, these and other border regions with a large Uzbek minority

were to gravitate into the orbit of Uzbekistan. Tajik claims on Bukhara and Samarkand (Uzbekistan), however, are unlikely to be realized, since Tajikistan does not have the human or material resources with which to mount a successful challenge to its larger neighbour (although, as suggested below, the possibility of a Pyrrhic victory, using water as the ultimate weapon, is not entirely to be excluded). In Kazakstan, some of the more extreme Russian nationalists believe that for historic, cultural and economic reasons, the northern provinces should form part of Russia. For the present most of the Russian population in Kazakstan seems to believe that their interests are best served by preserving the *status quo*. This could change: if the economic decline were to continue and Kazak nationalism to increase, they might well seek *de facto* or even *de jure* autonomy. This could eventually result in some form of union with the Russian Federation. The Kazaks would certainly try to resist any such move, but in practical terms they would find it hard to prevent the Russians seceding, since especially the latter would have at least the moral support, if not indeed the active assistance, of their ethnic kin across the border.

Outside the CIS, there are about 1.9 million Kazaks in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Province of China (henceforth Xinjiang), over 1 million Uzbeks in Afghanistan and some 500,000 Turkmen in each of Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq and Turkey; also 2 million Tajiks in Afghanistan (although the term 'Tajik' as used in Afghanistan is much looser in definition than in Tajikistan). In most cases the historical and cultural links between these groups are too weak to constitute any strong attraction. The Afghan Uzbeks, for example, speak different dialects and have a different social structure to the Uzbeks of Uzbekistan. Soviet modernization has further widened the gulf between them. The same is true of the Tajiks of Tajikistan compared with those of Afghanistan. The Turkmen outside Turkmenistan mostly belong to different tribes and there is little evidence of a desire to unite (except, possibly, but not very probably, to challenge Ahal-Tekke hegemony). The one Central Asian group that does espouse strong irredentist sentiments is the Uighurs. They number some 250,000 in the CIS (divided between Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan), but an estimated 10 million in neighbouring Xinjiang. There has long been a movement among Chinese Uighurs to create an independent 'Eastern Turkestan' and there is now open support for this from some of the Uighurs of Kazakstan. However, such a state could constitute a threat to the integrity of Kazakstan, and China, because it might possibly lay claim to Kazak territory. Both the Kazak and the Kyrgyz governments have taken steps to curb the activities of the Uighur organizations on their territory.<sup>48</sup>

## Water

Northern Central Asia is relatively well endowed with rivers and lakes, but in the arid south there is a severe water deficit. The main sources of water here are the Amu Darya and the Syr Darya, rivers which rise in the mountains of the south-east and flow diagonally across a number of republics to empty into the Aral Sea. During

the Soviet period they were heavily over-exploited in order to support grandiose irrigation schemes for agriculture. Increasing quantities of water were also required for industrial projects and as the population expanded, so did the domestic demands for water. The cumulative result was that by the 1980s the flow of both rivers had been seriously reduced. This in turn caused a shrinking of the Aral Sea, which has now lost over a third of its area. The environmental damage is incalculable. The once-fertile delta regions have now been reduced to saline deserts and swamps, with high levels of water, soil and air pollution.<sup>49</sup>

International aid is currently being mobilized to help stabilize the level of the Sea, and to prevent a further deterioration. However, the condition of the Sea is part of a much larger problem. Any long-term solution must address the question of water management in the Aral Sea basin as a whole. This will require the active cooperation of all the Central Asian states. Efforts are being made to formulate joint policies, but it is already clear that it will be difficult to translate formal expressions of commitment to the common good into positive action. Upstream states believe that they have a natural entitlement to the waters that flow across their territories; they are strongly opposed to any limitation of the amount they draw off, for fear of jeopardizing future plans for development. Moreover, they are reluctant to accept curbs on the amount of toxic waste that they discharge into the rivers, since they see this as an infringement of their economic liberty. Unless rational solutions are set in place there will be a rapid decline in the quantity and quality of water available to the region. The situation is already acute and eventually could well become a *casus belli*.<sup>50</sup>

Paradoxically, international aid for the Aral Sea has aggravated the situation: the poorer mountain republics (Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan) resent the fact that their richer downstream neighbours are to receive such assistance; there have already been semi-official hints that the mountain-dwellers will use the water supply as a bargaining counter to force the people of the plains to agree to share these funds (which have not yet amounted to very much). Some Tajiks speak of using water as an offensive weapon in any territorial dispute with Uzbekistan. Three ways are suggested: poisoning the rivers, restricting the flow, and opening the sluices (or bursting the dams) to flood the plains.<sup>51</sup> It is unlikely that these threats will actually be realized, not least because they would cause almost as much damage upstream as downstream. However, it is a sobering thought that, with minimal technology, water could be used to inflict almost as much devastation as a nuclear bomb.

At the domestic level water is also likely to become an explosive issue, especially in the desert regions of Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. At present, the irrigation systems are centrally controlled by the regional authorities. As the privatization of land proceeds, these systems will have to be reorganized so as to cater for individual needs. The situation is complicated by the fact that innumerable illegal private pumps have been set up on the banks of irrigation canals; there is currently no cost-effective way of monitoring the amount of water that is being drawn off. Unless this question is resolved, dangerous water feuds between neighbours could well arise.

## Demographic trends

The Central Asian republics have very high demographic growth rates. They are still in the 'expanding stage' of demographic transition, with high birth rates and low death rates. The rate of natural increase is higher among the main indigenous groups than among the immigrant population, and highest of all in the rural areas, where the majority (and poorest sector) of the indigenous population lives. The lowest rate of natural increase is in Kazakhstan (which has the largest non-indigenous population), where it is under 20 per 1,000 per annum; the highest is in Tajikistan, where the average rate is 35 per 1,000, but in rural areas is 39.5 per 1,000.<sup>52</sup> If present trends continue, the populations of Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan could double in 25 years' time, Kyrgyzstan in 30 years, and Kazakhstan in 45 years; were it not for the ravages of the civil war, Tajikistan's population would probably double in 22 years' time.

The natural resources of the region are already under severe strain, especially water and productive land. Unless radical improvements are made in the exploitation and conservation of these commodities the environment will be irretrievably damaged. The carrying capacity of the agricultural land has already been stretched almost to the limit. If there is no alleviation of this relentless demographic pressure the quality of life will eventually diminish to the point where large-scale movements of population, accompanied by social unrest, become inevitable. As yet there has been very little urban migration in Central Asia, but this is beginning to change as young people move to cities in search of work. However, here, conditions are also deteriorating. There is rising urban unemployment, an acute housing shortage and a lack of essential services. The rate of demographic growth was becoming a major burden towards the end of the Soviet period, requiring ever greater investments in education, medical facilities and other basic infrastructural needs. If the economies of these republics can be revitalized, the surplus of workers might yet be turned to advantage. If the decline continues, it will soon become a dangerous liability.<sup>53</sup>

## Criminalization of society

Economic pressures, coupled with the general loss of ethical orientation, have led to a marked rise in personal corruption. The practice of giving and accepting 'presents' is an integral part of Central Asian culture; similarly, the responsibility to further the interests of friends and relations (i.e. members of the same clan). However, under normal conditions such obligations are fulfilled within an intuitively perceived and generally accepted scale. Today, that consensus no longer exists: what was previously a stable and 'moral' system has now become a panic-driven free-for-all. This is having a profoundly demoralizing effect on society, sapping people's dignity and self-respect, but at the same time tempting them to indulge in ever greater excesses.

Organized crime has long been entrenched in Central Asia. The anti-corruption campaigns of the 1980s were,

from a practical point of view, almost wholly ineffective. Yet they did reveal the existence, in each of the republics, of vast criminal networks. Colloquially known as 'mafias', these networks encompassed the whole of society. In some ways they represented the most efficient form of inter-ethnic cooperation, because, despite their strong regional bases, they worked closely with similar groups in other parts of the Union, especially in Moscow, the ultimate seat of power.<sup>54</sup> Since independence, the lack of a proper regulatory framework has opened the way to fraud on a massive scale, particularly in the grey area between state control and the free market.

The breakdown in law and order is reflected in an explosion of drug-related crimes. 'Soft' drugs have traditionally been manufactured and ingested in Central Asia. Over the last few years, however, there has been a sudden expansion of the cultivation of opium poppies and cannabis.<sup>55</sup> There has been a sharp rise in drug abuse, especially among the young.<sup>56</sup> The most serious aspect, however, is the ever-increasing volume of drug smuggling. Some opium is produced locally and there are rumours that facilities to manufacture heroin also exist. The main source of drugs is Afghanistan. It is impossible to seal this long, porous border, especially the remoter sections of the Tajik stretch. The economy of Badakhshan, the poorest and most isolated region of Tajikistan, is now wholly dependent on the opium trade.<sup>57</sup> The smuggling of arms is also increasing. The main destination is Tajikistan, where a variety of weapons of Chinese, Israeli, Soviet and US manufacture are in circulation.<sup>58</sup>

The law enforcement agencies in the newly independent republics are chronically under-staffed and under-resourced, thus ill-prepared to cope with these problems. All the Central Asian governments have appealed for international help to combat the drugs-related crimes and, more broadly, all forms of smuggling. However, the mafia networks' power is immense, and the rewards which they offer are very tempting, especially in times of acute economic weakness. The danger therefore exists, in some areas at least, if not in the region as a whole, that far from being vanquished, the mafia barons will become the real power-brokers.

## Economic inequality

During the Soviet period there was marked income inequality between the 'white-collar' political, cultural and professional elites and the 'blue-collar' workers. These differences were accepted by society at large. First, this was because although the system proclaimed equality for all, it was in fact a meritocracy in which high achievers (so long as they abided by certain ideological rules) were rewarded with impressive benefits in status, consumer goods and money; in theory, and to quite a large extent in practice, anyone, whatever their social or ethnic background, could join the ranks of the elite and there was thus the hope, as well as the belief, that one's children, even if not one's self, could share in this affluence. Second, the most privileged members of society led segregated lives, their wealth hidden from the public gaze; consequently, there was little conscious awareness of the differentials in standards of living.

Today, the poverty gap is steadily widening as the rich grow richer and the poor poorer. However, whereas before there was a perception that the disparity was justified because it was 'the great and the good' who were being rewarded, now, in popular estimation, wealth is associated with crime and moral degradation. The ostentatious lifestyles of the new super-rich are now conspicuously displayed. They present a jarring contrast to the falling standards of living of the great majority of the population. There is an increasing sense of alienation as more and more people feel marginalized, unable to share in, or even to comprehend, the economic transformation of society.

## Politicization of Islam

There is a schizophrenic attitude towards Islam in post-Soviet Central Asia. On the one hand, there is general agreement that Islam is an integral part of the national culture; on the other, there is widespread fear of the rise of so-called 'fundamentalism'. This dichotomy is born of a lack of genuine familiarity with the religion. Since the late 1980s there has been increasing interest in Islamic culture and belief, but for the great majority of the adult population it is still an unknown world. This will certainly change: thousands of mosques and hundreds of part-time and full-time Muslim schools and colleges have opened since 1989, and religious literature is now widely available. Many of the younger generation receive Muslim instruction and attend the mosque regularly. Some girls have voluntarily taken to wearing the *hejab* (Islamic-style headscarf).<sup>59</sup>

However, there are great regional variations. Pockets of devout believers are to be found in the Fergana Valley (where Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan converge), particularly in the vicinity of Namangan. This region is the heartland of the Islamic Revival Party and smaller groups such as Adolat ('Justice').<sup>60</sup> The total membership of such movements, all of which are officially proscribed, is probably in the region of 50,000.<sup>61</sup> Elsewhere in Central Asia, active adherence to Islam is much less in evidence. Mosque attendance rose sharply in the immediate aftermath of independence, but decreased markedly from 1993 onwards.

In time Islam could become politicized, a vehicle for expressing the anguish and frustration of those who have lost faith in the ability of the system to provide social justice. Yet it is unlikely that it would affect all the republics and all sectors of the population with equal force. It is highly improbable that, in the foreseeable future, Islamic regimes on the Iranian model would be acceptable to most Central Asians. What is more likely is the possibility of a prolonged confrontation between Islamic groups and government forces. A polarization, analogous to that currently found in Algeria and Egypt, could occur in Central Asia, between those who advocate a secular society (of either a Western-style democratic model or a neo-communist model), and those who believe in strict adherence to Islam.



# Minorities and minority rights

In Central Asia, there are many different social groups that, by virtue of their history, culture, economic status, geographic location, gender, race or other such distinguishing features, could be defined as ‘minorities’ in relation to a dominant ‘majority’.<sup>62</sup> This report, however, is concerned with only one category of minorities, that of ethnic groups (in Soviet terminology ‘nationalities’) who are domiciled in a state in which they are ethnically different from the titular group (e.g. Germans in Kazakhstan).

## Multi-ethnic societies

Throughout history, Central Asia has been a place of encounter between peoples of different races and cultures. It has experienced numerous mass population movements. Some of these started beyond the borders of the region and moved inwards; others spread outwards from Central Asia into neighbouring territories; others again were intra-regional. Major invasions of the ancient and medieval periods included those of the Arabs, Greeks, Mongols and White Huns. Archaeological evidence, as well as the physical anthropology of the modern peoples of Central Asia, indicates that there was a high degree of inter-mixing between the various groups. There was also a strong tendency towards cultural adaptation and assimilation.

Yet there was also great regional diversity. By the sixteenth century groupings were emerging that were ultimately to coalesce into the modern ‘nations’ of Central Asia (e.g. Kazaks, Turkmen and Uzbeks). There were also small communities who, because of their religion, class or profession, retained a distinctive, separate identity. These included the Central Asian Arabs, the Bukharan Jews, and the Central Asian Gypsies. The state formations (khanates) of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were dominated by particular tribal groupings. However, their subjects included representatives of many different origins and thus, from a modern perspective, they were multi-ethnic.<sup>63</sup> There was frequent fighting between these states, but within the unit, ethnic relations were relatively harmonious. A contributory factor here was the tradition of ethnic segmentation in trades and living areas.<sup>64</sup> This helped to minimize inter-group competition within the state.

As discussed earlier, in the late nineteenth century, after the incorporation of Central Asia into the Tsarist Empire, large numbers of Slavs began to settle in the region. On the eve of the 1917 Revolution there were over 1 million Slavs in the northern tier (Kazakhstan) and some 750,000 in the southern tier (approximately corresponding to the territory of the other four republics).<sup>65</sup> There

was little social contact between the incomers and the indigenous peoples. There were, nevertheless, underlying tensions and these exploded suddenly and with great ferocity in the Uprising of 1916, an insurrection which swept through the north and parts of the south in a matter of months (see under Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan below). Order was restored rapidly and brutally by the Tsarist troops. However, the incident left deep psychological scars on both sides.

The National Delimitation of Central Asia, carried out in 1924–5, resulted in the creation of the five territorial-administrative units (see earlier). These new formations were multi-ethnic. However, the ethnic diversity was greatly increased in the following decades. During the period 1925–40 hundreds of thousands of immigrants, mostly from the western (Slav) republics, moved into the Central Asian republics. They included Party activists, administrators, military, security and law enforcement personnel; professionals and skilled technicians; also political exiles and disinherited *kulaks* (the wealthier members of society, especially prosperous peasants).

During the Second World War there was another wave of immigration. Many of these incomers worked in the industrial enterprises that were relocated from the endangered western republics to Central Asia. Considerable numbers of orphaned and homeless children from these republics were also sent to Central Asia; some were adopted by local families, the remainder were placed in state orphanages. The largest group of new arrivals, however, were the so-called ‘punished peoples’ (i.e. entire populations who were accused of treason to the Soviet state). In the period 1936–52, some 3 million members of such groups were exiled to Central Asia under the ‘special settlement’ regime. These included Chechens from the Caucasus, Germans from Central Russia, Koreans from the Maritime Province, Meskhetian Turks from Georgia, Pontic Greeks from the Black Sea region, Tatars from the Crimea, and many others.<sup>66</sup> There was huge loss of life during and immediately after the deportations.

A third peak of immigration into Central Asia occurred in the post-war period. Mainly Slav, this was connected with grandiose development projects such as the ploughing up of the Virgin Lands in Kazakhstan (a scheme initiated by Nikita Khrushchev to boost the Soviet grain harvest by bringing previously untilled land into cultivation).

Thus, by the last decades of the Soviet period over 100 ethnic minorities were represented in Central Asia. The main historical and cultural divide was between the ‘immigrant’ and the ‘indigenous’ communities. The former included voluntary migrants, mainly of Slav origin, who were drawn from different social backgrounds and whose

period of settlement spanned more than a century. It also included the deported peoples, who had been transported in entire groups, and thus to a large extent retained their original social structures. Many of these were of Muslim origin (e.g. Chechens, Crimean Tatars). However, the stigma of their alleged treachery remained with them long after they had been 'rehabilitated' and this, in addition to their different customs and languages, set a distance between them and the local population. The 'indigenous' Central Asian minorities were also not a homogenous group. Some were part of a larger community across an internal Soviet border (e.g. Kazaks in Uzbekistan), while others were separated from their ethnic kin by an international frontier (e.g. Uighurs).

In the 1980s Russians and other immigrants started to leave Central Asia. This was largely because of deteriorating economic and environmental conditions. By 1989, the Slav communities had slightly decreased in absolute numbers in Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, although they continued to increase in Kazakstan and Kyrgyzstan. The 'punished peoples', 'rehabilitated' after Stalin's death, had gradually begun moving back to their original homelands from the 1960s onwards; in the 1980s, the movement accelerated. Meanwhile, the rate of demographic increase among the Central Asians remained high and their numbers, as well as their percentage share in the total population, rose steadily. By 1991 the titular peoples in Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan represented a substantial numerical majority; in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan they constituted well over half the population, while in Kazakstan they had become the largest of the minority groups.

## Minority rights and inter-ethnic relations during the Soviet period

During the Soviet period, great importance was attached to 'nationality': in Soviet usage, this meant ethnic identity. It was a concept quite separate from that of 'citizenship', which was defined by membership of the state, and was non-ethnically grounded. There were two main categories of 'nationality'. The numerically larger groups (such as the main Central Asian peoples) were allocated a territorial base in eponymous administrative units (republics, provinces, districts), in which they enjoyed certain accepted, although not officially sanctioned, privileges in higher education and housing, and figurehead positions in government and other organizations. The smaller groups (e.g. Uighurs) had no specific territorial base, but most had cultural rights (including some educational and publishing facilities in their own languages) in areas in which they formed substantial, compact communities. During the 1930s, some groups (e.g. Bukharan Jews) were arbitrarily deprived of these rights. Others (the deported peoples) lost all civil liberties until the mid-1950s or later.

An important aspect of the Soviet nationalities policy was the development of 'internationalism', which, in this context, meant peaceful coexistence and mutual cooperation between the different ethnic groups. In theory, no one group was privileged above another. In practice, matters did not always work out so equitably: Slavs often

held a favoured status, particularly in Party, defence and security bodies.

Nevertheless, the regime was successful in providing scope for advancement for a sufficiently wide range of people for there to be a general perception of ethnic parity.<sup>67</sup> For most of the Soviet period there was a notable degree of harmony between the different 'nationalities'. On an individual level, there were inevitably instances of discrimination and harassment, but there was no institutionalized racism. It is one of the extraordinary paradoxes of the Soviet experience that despite the horrendous sufferings endured by so many, especially in the 1930s, there was remarkably little bitterness against the Russians or any other ethnic group. Rather, there was a feeling of common tragedy, shared by all.

'Internationalism' did not necessarily lead to integration. In Central Asia, although inter-ethnic relations were generally cordial, social boundaries between the different groups were strongly maintained. Mixed marriages were rare, not only between Central Asians and immigrants, but even between different indigenous Central Asian groups.<sup>68</sup> Informal socializing was also comparatively infrequent. Preferences for ethnic segmentation in housing and employment (a feature of pre-Soviet Central Asian society) persisted, helping to preserve cultural continuity and social exclusivity. There were instances of 'outsiders' being adopted by a local community, but such cases were the exception rather than the rule.

In the 1980s, when the power of the central government was beginning to wane, and economic and environmental conditions were visibly deteriorating, hitherto latent ethnic tensions suddenly exploded into open conflict in several places. The worst instances were in the Ferghana Valley, between Uzbeks and Meskhetian Turks and between Uzbeks and Kyrgyz. It is noteworthy that the combatants were from similar backgrounds, with similar skills and spheres of activity, and thus direct rivals for control of local resources. Tensions between the titular peoples and other, more obviously different, immigrants generally remained at a low level. However, there was some anti-Russian feeling in Uzbekistan (provoked by the excesses of the anti-corruption investigations of this period); also in Kazakstan, in the aftermath of the 1986 demonstration (see below).

To summarize the situation on the eve of the demise of the Soviet Union, ethnic relations in Central Asia were still generally good, but strains were beginning to surface. Worse, precedents, albeit in isolated cases, had been set for actions that had previously been unthinkable. This took the form of armed violence between neighbours, and the open expression of anger and resentment against people who now tended to be categorized – and demonized – by group origin, rather than being judged primarily as individuals, as had previously been the case.

## Post-Soviet emigration

The sudden collapse of the Soviet Union created a profound sense of social disorientation. One manifestation of this was the change in the relative status of ethnic groups. Previously, the titular 'nationality' in a given

republic had been one group among equals, albeit with certain informal privileges. Now this 'nationality' underwent an elevation, becoming expressly equated with the state. The other 'nationalities' suffered a corresponding diminution of status: they were suddenly regarded as being less 'authentic'. This unexpected shift was deeply unsettling. Many feared that they would be marginalized and treated as second-class citizens.

Their anxieties were aggravated by the aggressively xenophobic behaviour of some of the more nationalistically inclined members of the titular peoples. (A 'hooligan' element readily attached itself to some of the nationalist groups.) There were several other factors that contributed to this sense of acute unease. The heavy emphasis on the culture and history of the titular groups, as the basis for the formal attributes of the new states, served to highlight the potential exclusion of the minorities from the main body of society. This process was particularly evident in Kazakhstan, where, within months of independence, many of the Russian-style names of towns and streets were replaced by Kazak forms.<sup>69</sup> Another cause for concern was the increased use in public life of the languages of the titular peoples, in accordance with the laws on the status of 'state languages'; few of the minorities had any knowledge of these languages and consequently they felt unfairly disadvantaged.<sup>70</sup> A third worry was the rapid 'indigenization' of senior posts in government, academic institutions, industry and other such organizations: this was taken as a clear indication that in the future, the career prospects of the non-titular peoples would be limited.<sup>71</sup>

The general economic decline, uncertainties about the political future of the region, anxieties about the possible rise of extremist Islamic tendencies, and of potential future conflicts, all contributed to an intense sense of insecurity. This, in addition to the rising cost of travel to other parts of the CIS, as well as the increasing physical and practical difficulties of leaving the region, persuaded many members of the ethnic minorities that they had no option but to emigrate as soon as possible. The result was a major exodus, mostly of Slavs, but also of some other groups (see state surveys below). The worst affected state was Tajikistan, where the outbreak of civil war triggered a mass relocation of peoples.

## Government responses

The size of the exodus caused severe economic problems in the newly independent states. A considerable proportion of the emigrants were highly skilled managers, professionals and technicians. Their unexpected departure created major problems in many vital industries, also in the health service and some areas of research and higher education. The Central Asian governments soon realized that positive steps would have to be taken to halt this haemorrhaging of valuable personnel. In all the states efforts are being made to promote good race relations, both by providing legal safeguards for the rights of minorities and by publicly encouraging mutual respect and cooperation. Incitement to ethnic strife, or harassment on racial grounds, is a criminal offence. The respective post-Soviet constitutions guarantee equal rights before the law,

in education and in employment, for all members of society. Freedom of conscience, along with other basic freedoms, is also enshrined in these constitutions. Full citizenship is open to permanent residents of the new states regardless of ethnic origin, religion or language. Some measures are being introduced to establish mechanisms for inter-ethnic cooperation and for the monitoring of minority rights. Notable developments are the creation of the Assembly of Peoples of Kazakhstan and the Assembly of Peoples of Kyrgyzstan. They are still relatively new and to date have proved to be of little more than token significance.<sup>72</sup> However, they represent a positive attitude to these questions and could in time become more effective.

In most cases the provision of cultural facilities for the minorities has remained at the same level as that of the Soviet period, or has been enhanced. There has been a proliferation of 'national' cultural centres since independence; they sometimes function as semi-formal representative bodies. They require official registration; this is usually granted, except when the authorities wish to curb the activities of a particular group (e.g. Cossacks in Kazakhstan).

Religious communities and establishments must also be registered. Again, problems only arise when the authorities suspect subversive intent. To date, in all five states, it is mainly Muslim groups that have attracted official displeasure. These are groups which are deemed to exhibit 'fundamentalist' leanings. Controls are strictest in Uzbekistan. Clerics whose teachings do not please the government have been removed from office, sometimes placed under house arrest or even imprisoned. However, here as elsewhere, officially registered communities are usually able to function unhindered. Cooperation between the different mainstream religious denominations is encouraged by the authorities and representatives of the major faiths are usually invited to participate jointly in official state ceremonies. Christianity, as propagated by various Protestant sects, is spreading quite rapidly among the Central Asians, especially in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan (although it should be stressed that actual numbers are still comparatively low). There are some indications that the state and Muslim authorities, especially in Uzbekistan, are not happy about this. There have been attempts to curb the dissemination of literature in the languages of the titular peoples (on the grounds that this is likely to be more persuasive than literature in Russian or other languages).<sup>73</sup> Some of the texts which are distributed by evangelical Christian groups are very critical of Islam and highly offensive to Muslims.<sup>74</sup> The 'new faiths' (Hare Krishna, Unification Church, Scientologists, etc.) are sometimes subjected to semi-official harassment and restrictions on their activities.

In all five states a more pragmatic attitude is being adopted regarding the language laws. The original timetable for the phasing in of these languages (c. 1996) has now been relaxed. The goals for implementation are currently set for soon after the year 2000, but many doubt whether even this is realistic, given that many members of the titular peoples do not have a perfect command of their mother tongue. Moreover, the functional vocabulary and phraseology of some languages is still relatively underdeveloped. Russian continues to be widely used. In

Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, it has been given the status of 'official' language. In Kyrgyzstan, however, although Russian was given this status in the constitution, in March 1996, 57 deputies (just over half the total number) sent a statement to the Constitutional Court requesting that the relevant article be changed so as to reduce Russian usage. Some modifications were introduced to take account of these concerns in July 1996.<sup>75</sup>

Measures such as these helped to stabilize the situation and to restore a degree of confidence. Nevertheless, some anxieties remained. The Russians, the largest of the minorities, experienced the strongest sense of dislocation and loss of security. Many felt the need for additional guarantees of their safety in the form of the right to hold dual citizenship. Turkmenistan agreed to this without hesitation in December 1993, securing in return reciprocal rights for the c. 40,000 Turkmen domiciled in the Russian Federation (mainly in the Stavropol Territory). The Tajik government also eventually accepted the principle of dual citizenship and passed a bill to this effect in September 1995.<sup>76</sup> In Kyrgyzstan, although the President and some senior officials were in favour of the measure, nationalist opposition was so powerful as to prevent it being accepted by parliament. In Kazakhstan, emigration and travel procedures were simplified, but the right to hold dual citizenship was rejected. The Uzbek government also refused to sanction this. In passports and other official documents, the reference to a person's ethnic origin ('nationality' as opposed to 'citizenship') had, by 1996, been partially abolished in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan; the clause was retained in Russian and Uzbek/Kazakh texts, but omitted in the English translation of passport entries. In Kyrgyzstan the clause was briefly abolished in 1996, only to be reinstated a few months later (see below). In Tajikistan it was retained, as previously; in Turkmenistan, new, post-Soviet passports had not yet appeared by the end of 1996 and Turkmen consular officials were unable to provide any indication as to whether or not the clause would be retained.

## Refugees, displaced people and Central Asian repatriants

In addition to voluntary emigration, there have been several involuntary population movements recently in Central Asia. The two main causes being: acute environmental degradation and armed conflict. The victims of environmental degradation have been almost entirely members of indigenous Central Asian peoples (mainly Karakalpaks, Kazaks and Uzbeks), since the worst affected areas are far from the urban centres where the majority of the immigrant ethnic groups are located. One of the disaster areas is the Aral Sea region (Uzbekistan/Karakalpakstan and Kazakhstan), which, owing to the shrinking of the Sea, is experiencing chronic desertification and severe air, soil and water pollution. It has been estimated that some 95,000 people have left the region in recent years; of these, 40,000 relocated in Kazakhstan, 50,000 in Uzbekistan (including Karakalpakstan) and the remainder elsewhere in the CIS. Another area that has suffered a comparable

level of devastation is the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site and its environs (Kazakhstan). Prolonged exposure to radiation (nuclear tests were carried out from 1949–63) has caused incalculable damage to the environment and to the health of the local population. Some 45,000 migrants have relocated in Kazakhstan and a further 116,000 (among them the Slav staff of the test site) elsewhere in the CIS.<sup>77</sup>

The first experience of armed conflict in Central Asia in modern times was the clash between Meskhetian Turks and Uzbeks which occurred in June 1989 (see below). This resulted in at least 100 deaths and caused some 100,000 to flee their homes. Of these, 74,000 were Meskhetian Turks. Some 44,000 were granted asylum in Azerbaijan; the remainder sought refuge elsewhere in the CIS. Another sudden explosion of violence was the clash between Uzbeks and Kyrgyz in Osh in June 1990 (see below). A longer and more wide-ranging conflict was the civil war which erupted in Tajikistan in 1992. At least 20,000 people were killed and over 1 million people were displaced. Some 700,000 of these were Tajiks. The great majority took refuge in other parts of Tajikistan, but 60,000 fled to Afghanistan and a few thousand moved to the neighbouring Central Asian states.<sup>78</sup> By late 1995 almost all of the internally displaced Tajiks and over two-thirds of the refugees in Afghanistan had returned home. Only a few thousand destitute Tajiks are still to be found in other Central Asian states.<sup>79</sup> Fear of actual or potential violence, as well as extreme economic hardship and the general lack of stability, caused many of Tajikistan's immigrant communities to seek repatriation at this time. By early 1996, some 300,000 Russians had left Tajikistan. Other groups, including Ukrainians, Belarusians and Turkmen, also left, numbering in all approximately 60,000.

Another form of migration that occurred at this time was that of repatriant (returnee) Central Asians. After independence, the Central Asian governments sought to re-establish links with diaspora communities outside the CIS. Many had originally fled the region in the early Soviet period. The government of Kazakhstan was especially eager to persuade these earlier emigrants to return, in order to boost the size of the Kazakh population, thereby gaining a numerical advantage over the other minorities in the state. Some 60,000 Kazaks from Mongolia and some 9,000 from Iran took up the invitation. However, it soon became clear that the decades of separation had had an effect on the language and culture of these groups. It was not easy to assimilate the returnees. They were settled in urban areas, often in homes left vacant by Germans and other departing minorities. The Kazaks from abroad found this especially uncomfortable, since many of them still followed a semi-nomadic way of life. Some later decided to return to their adopted homelands.<sup>80</sup>

# An ethnic survey: state by state

Given that there are some 80–100 different ethnic groups in each state it is impossible to cover them all in this report. The criteria for selection is, first, numerical size (which gives some indication of the social and economic importance of the group) and second, exceptional features (e.g. marked cultural differences, an unusual history, a high rate of emigration). The length of the entries is not related to the size of the community but rather to the availability of material: in the case of the Russians, for example, a great deal of information is readily available, hence the minimum basic information has been included. For some of the other groups, relatively little information is available in English, so more space has been given to them. Some information is included on religious communities, since religious allegiances often (yet by no means always) coincide with ethnic divides. Inevitably, this work cannot be seen as conclusive. The aim here is not to provide a comprehensive ethnographic guide, but to highlight the ethnic dynamics of the region.

## Kazakstan

### Titular people

Kazaks

The Kazaks are descended from Turkic and Mongol tribes. In the fifteenth century some of these tribes formed the Kazak Khanate. The rulers of the Khanate were Muslims; the main body of the Kazak tribes, however, were not fully converted to Islam until some centuries later. In the seventeenth century the Kazaks split into three tribal confederations, each under its own leader (*khan*): the Big, Middle and Small Hordes (in Kazak *Ulu Zhus*, *Orta Zhus* and *Kishi Zhus* respectively).

During the the eighteenth century, most of the Kazak tribes sought protection from the Russian Tsar against the Oirat Mongols, who were expanding their influence over Central Asia. The Oirots were finally defeated by the Qing army in 1758. However, the majority of the Kazaks remained under Russian domination. In the first half of the nineteenth century the leaders of the Hordes were deposed and the Kazak lands fully incorporated into the Russian Empire. A Russian garrison was established at Vernoje (modern Almaty) in 1854. Members of the Kazak aristocracy began to be educated in the Russian system at this time and several subsequently served in the Tsarist administration. Relations between Kazaks and Russians deteriorated in the early twentieth century following the

**State:** Kazakstan.

**Location:** Straddles Europe and Asia, stretching from the Caspian Sea in the west to the Tien Shan mountains in the east and bordering the Russian Federation to the north and west, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan to the south and the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Province of China to the east.

**Area:** 2,717,000 sq. km.

**Capital:** Almaty, population 1.1 million (1989).

**Terrain:** Mostly steppe; deserts in south and centre, mountains in south-east.

**Population:** 16.9 million (1994).

**Urban/rural distribution:** 57 per cent urban, 43 per cent rural (1989).

**Ethnic composition:** 44.3 per cent Kazak, 35.8 per cent Russian, 5.1 per cent Ukrainian, 3.6 per cent German, 2.2 per cent Uzbek, 2 per cent Tatar, 1.1 per cent Uighur (1994).

**Titular people:** Kazaks

**Ethnic minorities:** *Immigrants* – Russians, Ukrainians, (Volga) Tartars *Deported peoples* – Germans, Koreans, Poles, *Central Asians* – Uighurs, Uzbeks.

**State language:** Kazak.

**Main industries:** Energy, metal works, mining, oil and gas extraction.

**Agriculture:** Cattle and sheep breeding, cotton and rice cultivation, wheat.

**GDP per capita:** US \$970.

**President:** Nursultan Nazarbayev.

**Main political groupings:**

Azat (Kazak: 'Freedom'); Communist Party; Democratic Party; Federation of Trade Unions; Independent Professional Centre of Kazakstan; Lad (Russian: 'Harmony', a Russian party); Legal Development of Kazakstan Association; Party of People's Unity of Kazakstan (PNEK); Peasants' Union; People's Congress of Kazakstan (NKK); Socialist Party;

There are eight registered political parties and many more movements, some of which put up candidates in the parliamentary elections of December 1995. As of 1996, the above appeared to be the most influential groupings.

(Source for 1994 statistics: Kazak State Statistical Commission; for GDP: EBRD, *Country Profile*, 1996.)

massive influx of Slav settlers into the steppe region. The latter appropriated large swathes of the traditional grazing grounds of the nomads. This was one of the main causes of the 1916 Uprising against Tsarist rule.

After the 1917 Revolution Kazakhstan was engulfed by civil war. Soviet rule was established in the south by 1918, but in the north Kazak nationalist forces briefly succeeded in creating an independent state. It was not until 1920 that the whole region was brought under Soviet control. The Kazak Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (under the jurisdiction of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic – RSFSR) was created in August 1920. On 5 December 1936, it acquired the status of a full Union republic. The Kazaks suffered huge losses during the 1930s as a result of the enforced sedentarization of the nomads, collectivization and political purges. It has been estimated that some 1.75 million Kazaks (almost half the total Kazak population) died during these years.<sup>81</sup>

In December 1986, when the long-serving First Party Secretary Dinmukhamed Kunayev was removed from office – to be replaced, at Moscow's behest, by a Russian from outside the republic – Kazak students held a peaceful demonstration in one of the main squares of the capital. The meeting was dispersed with great brutality. The Kazaks had expected that the Russian population would support them in their action, since it was a protest against the heavy-handed policies of Moscow, not against the Russians as such.<sup>82</sup> The Russians they did not join them. This aroused great resentment amongst the Kazaks and gave rise to a wave of anti-Russian feeling. Today, this has largely subsided. There are some nationalists who hold highly xenophobic views, but they are a minority. In fact, as rural migration to the cities increases, many urban Kazaks are finding that they have culturally more in common with the Russians than with the incomers. There is now a growing awareness that the new state must be inclusive if it is to prosper.

## Ethnic minorities

In the 1989 Soviet census of Kazakhstan, 100 ethnic groups were listed separately. Almost 20 of these were represented by fewer than 100 individuals. Just under 30 groups came within the 100–10,000 range. A further 20-plus groups ranged in size from 10,000–100,000; among these were Greeks (46,746), Dungans (Chinese Muslims – 30,165), Kurds (25,425) and Bulgarians (10,426). The range 100,000–1 million included Germans (957,518), Ukrainians (896,240), Tartars (327,982) and Koreans (103,315). The two largest groups by far were the Kazaks and the Russians, each numbering over 6 million. For most of these groups, little information is available beyond the basic census statistics. Those which are better documented are discussed below.

### Germans

German immigration into Kazakhstan began during the late Tsarist period. By 1926, they numbered over 51,000. Some Germans were deported to Kazakhstan c. 1936 from western Ukraine, but the main influx was in 1944, when the entire German population of the Volga

region, numbering some 500,000, was exiled to Central Asia on charges of alleged collaboration with the Nazis. The use of the German language was forbidden and religious services could only be held in secret, and at great risk. The Germans were rehabilitated during the 1950s.

By 1989, Kazakhstan's German population numbered nearly 1 million. The majority were settled on collective farms in central and southern Kazakhstan. They had mostly lost their linguistic identity by this period, but retained a strong sense of religious community, some being practising Roman Catholics, others practising Protestants. In 1992 most were optimistic about their future in the newly independent Kazakhstan. Since then, however, they appear to have lost confidence in the will of the government to create a non-ethnically based 'Kazakstani' state: they fear linguistic discrimination and are concerned about the economic, educational and cultural prospects for their children. Many would prefer to emigrate to Germany. The German government has tried to provide incentives to persuade them to stay in Kazakhstan, since they generally have great difficulty in adapting to life in Germany, not least because their knowledge of German is very limited. Emigration quotas have also been introduced by the German authorities in an attempt to regulate the outflow. To date, however, such measures have been unsuccessful and the German population in Kazakhstan has been steadily diminishing. By 1993, it numbered just under 700,000; in 1994 it was estimated at 614,000. The population has continued to fall since then; it has probably reduced by approximately half during the period 1992–6.<sup>83</sup>

### Koreans

The Korean migration into the Maritime Province of the Russian Far East, which began in the 1860s, was prompted primarily by political and economic difficulties in Korea. By the 1920s, the Korean community numbered over 150,000. Most were engaged in agriculture (especially the cultivation of rice), fishing and manual labour. When collectivization was introduced in 1929, several thousand Koreans re-emigrated to Korea. In 1931, after the Japanese invasion of southern Manchuria, relations between Japan and the former Soviet Union became very tense. The Manchuria-USSR border zone was militarized and the local Koreans were subjected to severe travel restrictions. In 1933, in recognition of their loyalty to the Soviet regime, the Posiet Korean National Region was created. In 1937, however, with no warning and for no apparent reason, all Soviet Koreans were forcibly deported to Central Asia. They were treated with great brutality and suffered huge losses. The majority were sent to Uzbekistan, most of the remainder to Kazakhstan. By 1959, the Korean community in Kazakhstan numbered some 74,000, and 138,400 in Uzbekistan.

Many Koreans moved to the cities. They underwent heavy Sovietization. Maintenance of Korean as a mother tongue was low (in 1979, only 55 per cent of Soviet Koreans claimed Korean as their mother tongue); most adopted Russian as their first language. Limited cultural facilities were provided by the state; this included some opportunities for learning Korean in school, and some broadcasting. In the home, Korean traditions were preserved, mainly those connected with life cycle rituals and

the preparation of some types of food. Among the younger generation (post-1960s) intermarriage with other ethnic groups became quite common. Usually, however, Koreans tend to marry Slav or German partners, rarely Kazaks or other Central Asians.<sup>84</sup>

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, contacts between Central Asian Koreans and South Korea have greatly increased. There are also some contacts with North Korea. There has been a major upsurge of interest in all aspects of Korean culture, including music, dance and martial arts. The South Korean government has provided considerable support for language training, as a result of which the Seoul dialect of Korean is now gaining ground among the Central Asian Koreans, replacing their native dialects. Missionaries from South Korea have also brought about a revival of Christianity, especially of an evangelical persuasion. There is now a stronger – or at least more obvious – sense of Korean identity in Central Asia. By 1994 there were 14 organizations devoted to the promotion of Korean culture in Kazakhstan alone, also a Korean Association. Firms from South Korea frequently prefer to employ local Koreans. Some Koreans in Kazakhstan would like to receive a degree of territorial autonomy, but it is highly unlikely that they will be granted this in the foreseeable future. The great majority seem content to use present opportunities to best advantage. There is little sign of resentment or friction with the Kazak population, and few Koreans have expressed any desire to emigrate.

#### Poles

There have been several waves of Polish immigration into Kazakhstan, mostly as a result of political deportation. The first influx was in the second half of the nineteenth century, when several leading Polish intellectuals were exiled here by the Tsarist authorities. By the end of the century, there were some 11,000 Poles in Kazakhstan. There was a new influx of deportees in 1926–37, from western Ukraine and Belarus; yet more came in 1940–41. Estimates of the number of Poles who were deported during these years range from 28,000 to 60,000. The majority were settled in the Akmolinsk, Karaganda and Kokshetau provinces. As for the other exiled peoples, conditions were extremely harsh. The use of Polish was forbidden; so, too, were religious observances. The Poles were ‘rehabilitated’ in the late 1950s and given back the citizenship rights that they had been deprived of in 1936. According to the 1970 Soviet census, Poles numbered some 61,000; however, unofficial local sources claimed that many had been registered as Russians. By 1989, according to official data, their number was said to have fallen to just under 60,000; of those, only 12 per cent claimed Polish as their mother tongue. Polish sources, however, estimated the number of Poles to be considerably higher.

Over the past few years there has been a cultural revival and many of the Poles in Kazakhstan have begun to learn their native language; some have gone to Poland for further study. There has also been a resurgence of Roman Catholicism and many new churches have been opened. There are now two registered Polish organizations, the Polish Cultural Centre and the Union of Poles. The latter appears to be more nationalistic. Many Poles are con-

cerned about their future prospects in Kazakhstan. Their fears have been heightened by the exodus of so many of the neighbouring German communities, particularly since a number of the latter were also Roman Catholics. The Poles now feel increasingly isolated and many want to emigrate to Poland. In 1992 the Polish Prime Minister stated publicly, ‘we are not prepared for an organized action of repatriation’. However, by 1996 it was estimated that about one-third of the Poles in Kazakhstan had already returned to Poland or were in the process of trying to emigrate.<sup>85</sup>

#### Russians

The first large wave of Russian migration into Kazakhstan dates from the nineteenth century. By the early twentieth century there were well over 1 million Russian settlers in the region. They fell into different social categories: members of the Tsarist ‘establishment’, including administrators, doctors, engineers, geologists, surveyors and teachers; Cossack military units to guard the frontiers and to maintain law and order; peasant farmers; and several waves of political exiles (Marxists, Social Democrats, etc.). The great majority were located in the northern tier. Later, during the Soviet period, immigrants settled predominantly in this region. By the end of the 1980s the northern and north-eastern provinces of Kazakhstan were heavily dominated by Russians. Approximately one-third of the Russians were located in rural areas; most of the remainder were in the capital Almaty (in 1989, they constituted about 60 per cent of the population) and in and around the large industrial centres of the north.

Today, the most nationalist of the Russian groups in Kazakhstan are the Cossacks. Four historic Cossack units are located wholly or partly on the territory of present-day Kazakhstan: the Orenburg, Siberian, Semirechie and Ural Cossacks. They have a strong sense of group identity and aim to reinstate and preserve traditional Cossack customs. Over the past few years there have been occasional clashes between Cossacks and Kazaks in the Petropavlovsk and Ust-Kamenogorsk regions. Some Cossack leaders have been arrested.

For much of the Soviet period the Russians constituted the largest single ethnic group in Kazakhstan; according to the 1959 census, they represented 42.7 per cent (3,972,042) of the total population, whereas the Kazaks represented only 30 per cent (2,787,309). This ratio was maintained into the 1970s, at which time the higher rate of natural increase among the Kazaks began to tip the ethnic balance in favour of the latter. By 1989, the Russians’ percentage share had fallen to 37.8 (6,227,549); and has continued to decline since independence. By 1994, it was estimated to be 6 million, 35.8 per cent of the total population. There has been a substantial out-migration from the southern provinces, where the Russians were always in a minority and therefore more vulnerable. In the north, there has tended to be a consolidation of the Russian community. The Russians here feel very strongly that because of their long historic association with this region and the major contribution they have made to its development, this is ‘their’ country. They do not regard themselves as settlers, still less as ‘guests’, but as people who belong here, with as much of a stake in the land as the Kazaks.<sup>86</sup>

Several cultural and political organizations have been established. The most active of these is Lad ('Harmony'), which campaigns for equal opportunities for the Slav population. It also seeks to maintain the status of the Russian language in public life and to preserve the distinctive cultural heritage of the Slavs in Kazakhstan.

### Uighurs

The Uighurs are a Turkic people. The majority (an estimated 10 million) live in the north-west of China, in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Province. By tradition, they are traders and agriculturalists. During the nineteenth century, as the Russian Empire expanded eastwards, a portion of the Uighur population came under Tsarist rule. Most were located in the Ferghana Valley in modern Uzbekistan, the remainder in the Ili Valley in modern Kazakhstan. In 1926, there were 10,500 Uighurs in Kazakhstan. When relations between China and the Soviet Union deteriorated in the 1960s, many thousands of Chinese Uighurs crossed the border into Soviet territory. The great majority settled in Kazakhstan. By 1970, they numbered over 120,000; in the 1989 census it was recorded that they numbered 185,300, but some Uighurs claimed that this was an under-estimate. There has long been a secessionist movement among the Uighurs of China. In recent years this has taken on a more militant aspect. There is some sympathy for the aims of these Chinese Uighur nationalists among the Uighurs of the former Soviet Union, especially Kazakhstan. Some of the latter are in favour of cultural, and a few, even of territorial, autonomy from Kazakhstan. Some cherish dreams of forming a greater Uighur republic of 'Eastern Turkestan'. The Kazak authorities, like the Chinese, are categorically opposed to any form of territorial autonomy. The Uighurs in Kazakhstan have some educational and cultural facilities, but in private a number of them claim that they are discriminated against by the Kazaks, particularly in employment. There is a long history of mutual suspicion between the two groups. This is partly rooted in the old tensions between the sedentary Uighurs and the nomadic Kazaks, partly in more recent power struggles.<sup>87</sup>

### Ukrainians

Ukrainian immigration into Kazakhstan began during the Tsarist period. By 1926, they numbered over 860,000 (13.2 per cent of the total population of Kazakhstan). There was a new influx c. 1936, when substantial numbers were deported from western Ukraine. The community was at its most numerous in 1970 (just under 1 million); since then it has fallen to under 900,000. No information is available on the provision of mother tongue education or printing facilities. During the Soviet period the Ukrainians were generally regarded (by others, if not by themselves) as being part of the Russian group. Recently, however, they have shown signs of greater cultural assertion and there is somewhat more awareness of their separate identity. There has been some out-migration since 1991. By 1994, the number of Ukrainians in Kazakhstan was estimated at 857,000, a fall of approximately 20,000 since 1989.

### Uzbeks

There has always been a substantial Uzbek community in Kazakhstan. Today they number approximately 300,000. They live in compact groups in the south, where they are mostly engaged in trade and agriculture. Complaints are sometimes voiced in private about the difficulty of getting textbooks and other publications in their own language. There also appears to be some latent resentment over perceived discrimination in employment and access to local government. These are not serious problems at present, but this could change if economic conditions deteriorate further, leading to increased competition for resources, and discrimination in favour of the titular people.

### (Volga) Tatars

The Tatars from the Volga region have similar origins to the Crimean Tatars (both are descended from the Tatar-Mongol Golden Horde), but historically and linguistically they represent different groups. In Soviet census reports both groups were listed, without distinction, as 'Tatars' until 1989, when a separate 'Crimean Tatar' category was introduced. In general usage, the term 'Tatar', without any qualifier, is used primarily for Tatars from the Volga region.

Large numbers of Tatars from the Volga region moved into Kazakhstan in the second half of the nineteenth century. The first wave were mainly Muslim clerics and teachers; later, they were joined by entrepreneurs and civil servants (working for the Tsarist government). Some Kazak intellectuals of the time regarded the Tatar influx as pernicious, preferring Russian culture to the form of Islam which the Tatars were trying to introduce.<sup>88</sup>

The Tatars played an active role in the early years of the Soviet administration, because they were generally better educated than the Kazak population. In the post-war period, during Dinmukhamed Kunayev's term of office as First Secretary of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan (1960–86, with a brief hiatus in the early 1960s), the Tatars came to hold many key positions (Kunayev was partly Tatar and was identified as such in official documents until 1943). In the 1980s, Kazak resentment towards the Tatars began to resurface. Some of the Tatars, in turn, felt that they were being discriminated against, at least covertly, by the titular people. Their sense of insecurity increased after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

The Tatars tend to identify more closely with the Slav community than with the Kazaks, although by religion and ethnic origin they are closer to the latter. In the immediate aftermath of independence there was a significant exodus of Tatars from Kazakhstan (in all, some 11,000).<sup>89</sup> Since then, however, the rate of emigration has fallen. By 1994, they numbered approximately 331,000 (2 per cent of the total population of Kazakhstan). Those that remain appear to be reasonably confident about their future. There is an officially registered Tatar Cultural Centre, which provides a focus for communal activities.

### Religious communities

Kazakhstan has a wide range of registered religious organizations. However, Islam is the largest faith.



The Kazaks are by tradition Sunni Muslims, of the Hanafi school. The Mufti, (head of the official Muslim administration) in Kazakstan, is Haji Ratbek Nisanbai-uli (b. 1940, Almaty). In the south, in the regions nearest to Uzbekistan, the population has historically tended to be more formally devout and orthodox in its practice of Islam than in the north. Currently there is a revival of interest in all forms of religion. One example of this is the huge rise in the number of mosques open for worship. At the end of the Soviet period there were less than 100 functioning mosques on the territory of Kazakstan; by 1996, there were 5,000, a fifty-fold increase in the space of six years.<sup>90</sup> There are now 556 registered Muslim communities (akin to parishes). There has also been a proliferation of Islamic cultural centres; courses teaching the Arabic script, Quranic reading and Islamic doctrine and law, are widely available. Some of the more nationalistic parties (e.g. Alash) have a strong Islamic bias; several of them are opposed to the official Muslim administration, which they regard as too subservient to the government. Groups of Kazak students now sometimes finish their religious studies in Muslim colleges abroad. Also, foreign Muslim missionaries are very active in Kazakstan. Among the most successful of these are members of the Ahmadiyya, a sect which is viewed as heretical by other Muslims; its teachings are of a reformist, modernizing nature and in general seek cooperation rather than confrontation with other faiths. In addition to the Kazaks, there are approximately 750,000 other adherents of Sunni Islam in the republic (e.g. Tatars, Uighurs and Uzbeks).

Christianity is the second largest faith. The Russian population are by tradition Orthodox Christians. The Belarusians and Ukrainians, in their respective homelands, are divided between the Orthodox and Uniate (Roman Catholicism of the eastern rite) faiths. An individual survey would be required to ascertain the denomination of the settlers in Central Asia. Some do attend the Russian churches but whether this is out of Slav solidarity or because of a traditional allegiance to Orthodoxy is unclear. Orthodox churches are open for worship in most centres where there is a substantial Slav population. The Orthodox Church in Kazakstan has 177 parishes and three Eparchies (church provinces).

The Roman Catholic Church has many adherents among the Germans and Poles. There are some 20 functioning churches, served by priests sent from the Vatican. There are also a few small convents (e.g. in Almaty) and monasteries. Foreign diplomats and businesspeople now help to swell the congregations of these churches. There are 140 Baptist churches and chapels; and 112 Lutheran churches. There are also prayer houses of several evangelical Protestant sects.<sup>91</sup>

For many years, Almaty's Jewish community (mostly immigrants from Russia and the Ukraine who moved to Central Asia during the Second World War) held their services in a small, makeshift prayer room. In 1996, however, construction of Kazakstan's first purpose-built synagogue was started. The Kazak government has, according to Jewish sources, been very supportive. The cornerstone of the new building was laid by President Nazarbayev. The project – including a community centre, library and Kosher shop – is due to be completed by 1998. Finance is being provided by

private donors from Belgium and the USA. The spiritual and cultural revival of Kazakstan's Jewish community is being led by Rabbi Yeshaya Cohen, a young Lubavitcher from Israel.<sup>92</sup>

The Bahá'í faith, along with some of the newer religions (e.g. Hare Krishna, Unification Church) attract substantial followings. They are reported to have four or five communities each.<sup>93</sup>

## Kyrgyzstan

**State:** Kyrgyzstan.

**Location:** Borders Kazakstan to the north, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan to the west and south and the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Province of China to the east.

**Area:** 198,500 sq. km.

**Capital:** Bishkek, until February 1991 called Frunze. Population 616,000 (1989).

**Terrain:** High alpine; many glaciers, mountain rivers and deep lakes; only 7 per cent of land arable.

**Population:** 4.4 million (1989).

**Urban/rural distribution:** 38 per cent urban, 62 per cent rural (1989).

**Ethnic composition:** 52.4 per cent Kyrgyz, 21.5 per cent Russian, 12.9 per cent Uzbek (1989).

**Titular people:** Kyrgyz.

**Ethnic minorities:**

*Immigrants* – Russians,

Ukrainians.

*Deported peoples* –

Germans.

*Central Asians* – Uighurs, Uzbeks.

**State language:** Kyrgyz.

**Main industries:**

Electronics, gold mining, hydroelectric energy and silk spinning.

**Agriculture:** Grain, (especially barley), tobacco cultivation and sheep breeding.

**GDP per capita:**

US \$1,550.

**President:** Askar Akayev.

**Main political**

**groupings:** Ata-Meken, Communist Party, Democratic Movement of Kyrgyzstan, Erkin Kyrgyzstan.

(There are many more parties and movements but in 1996 these appeared to be the most influential.)

(Source for GDP: EBRD, *Country Profile*, 1996.)

### Titular people

Kyrgyz

The previously nomadic tribes of Kyrgyzstan are of Turko-Mongol descent. By the sixteenth century they had started to form one identifiable nation. However, tribal and clan divisions continued to be important. Today, these still exert some residual influ-

ence on the political and social life of the country. The conversion of the Kyrgyz to Islam occurred gradually. Those in the south, in the vicinity of the Ferghana Valley, began to accept the faith from the tenth century onwards, but the tribes of the north and east were converted much later, probably not before the seventeenth century. The Kyrgyz were under the domination of the Oirat Mongols for much of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. After the defeat of the latter by the Qing army in 1758 the Kyrgyz became nominal subjects of the Chinese Empire.

Russian influence began in the nineteenth century. Some Kyrgyz swore allegiance to the Tsar in the first half of the century, while others, whose territory had been under the control of the Khanate of Kokand, were incorporated into the Russian Empire when the Khanate was liquidated in 1876. Sporadic uprisings occurred under colonial rule, the most serious of which was in 1916. Some Kyrgyz fled to Afghanistan at this time. Soviet power was established in the Kyrgyz region soon after the 1917 Revolution. A Kyrgyz Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR) was formed within the RSFSR in 1924. On 5 December 1936 this gained the status of a Union republic. The Kyrgyz suffered heavy losses during sedentarization, collectivization and the purges of the 1930s. This triggered another wave of migration into China. Since independence, cross-border links have been reopened and many families have been reunited.

Throughout most of the Soviet period the leadership of the republic was dominated by Kyrgyz from the northern provinces. This trend has continued since independence. (President Akayev is a northerner, as are several other senior government figures.) This is a recurring cause of resentment in the east and south of the country. Another source of tension is the uncompromising stance of Kyrgyz nationalists on issues relating to the sovereignty of the titular people. The influence of this faction in parliament and in the media is sufficiently great to force the government to comply with their views. Thus, for example, in February 1996 a decree was passed which abolished the requirement that the nationality (i.e. ethnic origin) of Kyrgyz citizens be recorded in their passports. A few months later, after a vicious press campaign against one of the proposers of this piece of legislation, the decree was rescinded. As one commentator (herself a Kyrgyz) put it: 'The goal of the nationalists is clear. They want to demarcate the titular nation from national minorities.'<sup>94</sup>

### Ethnic minorities

In the 1989 Soviet census, 79 ethnic groups were listed separately in Kyrgyzstan. Of these, 48 were represented by populations of under 1,000. In the range 1,000–15,000, there were 26 groups; in the range 15,000–100,000 there were eight groups, including the Kazaks, Tatars and Uighurs. Only four groups were represented in the range 100,000 to 1 million, namely the Russians (916,558), Uzbeks (550,096), Ukrainians (108,027) and the Germans (101,309). The only group numbering over 1 million was the Kyrgyz (2.2 million).

### Germans

The largest group of Second World War deportees are the Germans (see under Kazakstan for background). In the first post-war census (1959) they were recorded as numbering 39,915 in Kyrgyzstan; by 1970, the figure had risen to close on 90,000, and by 1979, over 100,000. Since 1989, however, there has been a sharp decline as a steady flow of emigrants seek a new life in Germany (where they have automatic citizenship rights). Both the German and the Kyrgyz governments have been trying to halt this movement, since the continuing exodus of Germans is not only causing severe damage to the economy, administration and professional bodies in Kyrgyzstan, but is also creating problems in Germany, because they often find great difficulty in adapting to conditions in that country. Most know little German, and few have any family links in the country. The German government has tried to provide support for cultural, educational and economic activities among the German community in Kyrgyzstan, while the Kyrgyz government has given official sanction (in 1992) to the establishment of two German administrative districts in the country. However, these measures have done little to lessen the outflow. Some of the Germans in Kyrgyzstan are by tradition Roman Catholics, others are Protestants. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the emigrants are mainly Roman Catholics. Whether this is because the latter have stronger historic links with Germany, or because they feel a greater sense of alienation in Kyrgyzstan, is unclear.

### Russians

The origins of the Russian community in Kyrgyzstan date from the late nineteenth century. Today they constitute the largest minority, accounting for just over 20 per cent of the total population (916,558 in 1989). Approximately one-third of the settlers live in rural areas. Of the remainder, the majority are located in the capital, Bishkek (in 1989, they constituted 55.8 per cent of its population). Kyrgyzstan is one of the only two Central Asian republics (Kazakstan being the other) in which there was a numerical increase in the size of the Russian population in the period 1979–88, albeit by only 4,855. Since then, however, there has been a steady exodus; the proportion of Russians in the republic had fallen to 17.1 per cent of the total population by 1994 and is continuing to decrease. As elsewhere, the main reasons are the economic deterioration, fear of the rise of Kyrgyz nationalism and concerns about the language law. A constitutional amendment of July 1996 granted Russian the status of official language in areas where Russians predominate, but this did little to assuage their fears. A Slavonic-Kyrgyz University was opened in 1993, supported jointly by the Kyrgyz and Russian governments. Academic standards are high and it has proved to be popular with representatives of all ethnic groups. The Russian community continue to press for dual Russian-Kyrgyz citizenship, but the nationalist faction in parliament is firmly opposed to this and is unlikely to give way in the immediate future. In the north of Kyrgyzstan, the situation between Russians and Kyrgyz appears to be worsening. There have been several reports in recent years of confrontations between the two

groups.<sup>95</sup> Ceremonies held to commemorate the 1916 Uprising provoked a surge of anti-Russian feeling.

### Uighurs

The Uighurs constitute a relatively small group, numbering in all some 30,000 (i.e. less than 1 per cent of the total population). However, they are of particular concern to the Kyrgyz authorities since they have close links with the much larger Uighur population (numbering some 10 million) across the border in the Chinese province of Xinjiang. There have been several cross-border population movements in this region in Soviet and post-Soviet times, including: in the 1920s and 1930s (purges and collectivization on the Soviet side), 1950s and 1960s (Sino-Soviet conflict), and most recently, since independence. Consequently, many families are divided between the two countries. Some of the Chinese Uighurs espouse separatist aspirations and aim to create an independent Uighur (Turkestan) state. The Kyrgyz Uighurs do not openly support them, but are regarded with unease by the Chinese government who suspect them of providing covert assistance to their kin in Xinjiang. The Kyrgyz Uighurs have two official organizations: the Uighur Freedom Organization and the Ittipak ('Union') Cultural Centre. These have been the focus of Chinese disapproval; Ittipak was suspended for several months in 1996. At the same time, the Kyrgyz government signed agreements with the Chinese government to fight 'national separatism'. The Uighurs in Kyrgyzstan do have other means of maintaining their cultural and ethnic identity: there is an Uighur Department in the State University, and some Uighur publications appear sporadically. There have been some cases of illegal Uighur immigration from China into Kyrgyzstan in the Naryn region. The Kyrgyz government is trying to put an end to this movement, which, if it continues unchecked, could cause serious economic and political problems in Kyrgyzstan, as well as having an adverse effect on relations with China.

### Ukrainians

In 1979, the Ukrainians represented just over 3 per cent of the population of Kyrgyzstan (109,324). By 1994, however, their proportion had declined to 1.8 per cent. They did not have special language or other cultural facilities in the past and today are generally associated with the Russian community.

### Uzbeks

The Uzbeks are the most numerous of the Central Asian groups. The majority are located in the south, in the Osh and Jalal-Abad regions, bordering Uzbekistan. This is a heavily populated area with over 80 different ethnic groups represented. The Uzbeks are the largest minority. They have schools with Uzbek as the medium of instruction, also some printing facilities; there are Uzbek cultural centres in the cities. There has long been tension between the Uzbeks and the Kyrgyz in this region. The former dominate the city of Osh and the municipal administration, and have control over employment, land allocation

and other such resources. The latter are mostly rural-dwellers. In the late 1980s economic pressures began to force the Kyrgyz to move into the urban areas. This exacerbated hostilities between the two groups; in June 1990, a dispute over the allocation of building plots rapidly escalated into a bloody confrontation which left some 50 dead and 300 seriously injured. The situation has improved slightly since then, but relations between the two groups remain tense. It is widely reported that many Uzbeks, including senior officials, speak openly of wanting union with Uzbekistan.<sup>96</sup>

In recent years, Russians emigrating out of the region have tended to sell their property to Uzbeks (who are generally wealthier than the Kyrgyz). This is a potential source of friction because it is changing the ethnic balance in and around Osh in favour of Uzbeks; it is also strengthening their economic base in the region. This is much resented by local Kyrgyz.

### Religious communities

The traditional religion of the Kyrgyz is Sunni Islam of the Hanafi school. The Mufti is Mullah Abdysatar, who was hastily elected on 26 December 1996 after the previous incumbent Haji Kimsanbai Abdurahman (b. 1940 in Kokand, Uzbekistan, of Kyrgyz parents) became embroiled in a dispute with the State Commission for Religious Affairs.<sup>97</sup> The southern regions of the country (i.e. the Ferghana Valley, bordering Uzbekistan) were converted to Islam several centuries before those of the north, and its population, especially in cities such as Osh and Jalal-Abad, tends to espouse more orthodox practices and beliefs. During the Soviet period, all Islamic schools and colleges and most of the mosques were closed. Since 1991, however, there has been an Islamic revival throughout the country. One indication of this is the large number of mosques that have been built in the past few years. It is estimated that there are now some 1,000 officially registered mosques open for worship in Kyrgyzstan. Of these, approximately half are in the south, in the Osh region.<sup>98</sup> There are also several *madrassah* (Islamic colleges), including some with courses for women. A number of Kyrgyz students now go abroad each year to further their religious studies in countries such as Egypt and Turkey. Over the past few years several thousands of Kyrgyz have also been on the annual pilgrimage to Mecca (forbidden to all but a select few during the Soviet period). Some of these activities are funded by foreign Muslims, but local communities also make a substantial contribution. The construction of the new central mosque in the capital Bishkek (completed in 1996), for example, was funded partly by Saudi Arabia and partly by Kyrgyz donors. Islam is still stronger in the southern provinces, but even in the north it is beginning to grow. In addition to the Kyrgyz, there are approximately 500,000 other citizens of the republic who are by tradition Sunni Muslim (e.g. Tatars, Uzbeks).

Christianity is the second strongest religion in Kyrgyzstan. The Russians are, at least nominally, Orthodox Christians. There is already one cathedral in the capital and a second is under construction; there are churches in most areas with a substantial Russian population and two convents are planned. Protestantism is

also widespread. Evangelical sects in particular are growing in popularity and attracting Kyrgyz converts. Since 1990, 15 evangelical chapels have opened in Bishkek alone. There has been a Baptist community in the city since 1913. In the past, its members were mainly Slavs, and later also Germans. Today, however, many of the thousands-strong Baptist congregation are Kyrgyz. By 1996 there were 20 Baptist chapels in Kyrgyzstan. Seventh Day Adventist missions have also been very active and several communities have been established. The Bible has been translated into Kyrgyz; hymnals and cards with Biblical quotations are also widely available.<sup>99</sup> The Roman Catholic Church appears to be less active in Kyrgyzstan; most of its adherents are Germans and Poles. Priests are sent by the Vatican (often of German or Polish nationality).

Other religions, such as the Bahá'í, are also represented, although to a lesser extent than the Christian sects. The first Central Asian Regional Congress of Bahá'ís was held in Bishkek in January 1995.

## Tajikistan

**State:** Tajikistan.

**Location:** Borders Uzbekistan to the west and north, Kyrgyzstan to the north, Afghanistan to the south and the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Province of China to the east.

**Area:** 143,100 sq. km.

**Capital:** Dushanbe, population 582,000 (1989).

**Terrain:** High alpine; many glaciers, rivers and deep lakes; only 6 per cent of land arable.

**Population:** 5,620,000 (1996).

**Urban/rural distribution:** 33 per cent urban, 67 per cent rural (1989).

**Ethnic composition:** 62.3 per cent Tajik, 23.5 per cent Uzbek, 7.6 per cent Russian (1989).

**Titular people:** Tajiks.

**Ethnic minorities:**

*Immigrants* – Russians  
*Central Asians* – Pamiri peoples, Uzbeks.

**State language:** Tajik.

**Main industries:** Cotton-ginning, hydroelectric power and textiles.

**Agriculture:** Cotton, fruit, grain (wheat and barley), tobacco cultivation and silk.

**GDP per capita:** US \$1,160.

**President:** Imomali Rakhmanov.

**Main political groupings:** Communist Party of Tajikistan; Peoples's Party of Tajikistan; National Revival of Tajikistan ('third force' exiled opposition group); United Tajik Opposition (extra-territorial opposition coalition, including Coordinating Centre of Democratic Forces and Islamic Revival Party).

(Source for GDP: EBRD, *Country Profile*, 1996.)

## Titular people

### Tajiks

Tajikistan differs from the other republics of former Soviet Central Asia in that the titular people are of predominantly Iranian origin and speak a language that is very close to Persian (in the other states the main indigenous groups are of Turkic origin). The Iranian settlement of Central Asia dates back to prehistoric times. Subsequent waves of population movements brought influxes of Turkic peoples (sixth century A.D. onwards) and Mongols (thirteenth century A.D.). There was a high degree of inter-mixing. The Iranian languages were best preserved in the east – in the Pamir mountains, where the speakers of eastern Iranian languages such as Shugni and Wakhi were concentrated, and in the lower foothills, where the western Iranian Tajik language was spoken. Elsewhere in the region, the population was mostly bilingual in Iranian and Turkic languages.

The topography of the south-east (i.e. the territory of modern Tajikistan), with its high mountains and isolated valleys, was not conducive to the formation of a unified nation. For much of its history Tajikistan was divided into small fiefdoms and close-knit, autarchic communities. Today, Tajik society is still dominated by these traditional 'clan'/regional ties. By the beginning of the nineteenth century the region was nominally divided between the Emirate of Bukhara and the Khanate of Kokand. Between 1868 and 1895, Tsarist Russia gained control of the Khanate and, partially, of the Emirate. After the 1917 Russian Revolution, the territories of northern and eastern Tajikistan were brought under Bolshevik control relatively swiftly, and by the end of 1918, were incorporated into the new Turkestan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, under the jurisdiction of the RSFSR. In eastern Bukhara *basmachi* troops continued to resist the Soviet regime for several more years. Based in neighbouring Afghanistan, they made sporadic incursions into Tajikistan until c. 1930.

As a result of the National Delimitation of Central Asia of 1924–5 the Tajik Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic was created (within the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic). However, some 37 per cent of those who officially claimed Tajik nationality (as well as a large number of people who for one reason or another did not formally identify themselves as Tajik) were left outside the new republic, mainly in Uzbekistan. In October 1929, the Khojent region, with a mixed Uzbek-Tajik population, was transferred from Uzbekistan to Tajikistan, and Tajikistan was raised to the status of a full Union republic of the Soviet Union.

### Ethnic minorities

In the 1989 Soviet census 84 ethnic groups were listed separately. Of these, 35 were represented by under 100 individuals. There were 25 groups in the range 100–1,000, 19 groups in the range 1,000–50,000, including Ukrainians (41,375) and Germans (32,671). In the range 50,000–100,000 there were only two groups, namely the Tatars (72,228) and the Kyrgyz (63,832). The two largest

minority groups were the Uzbeks (1.2 million) and the Russians (388,481). The titular group, the Tajiks, accounted for 3.2 million.

### Pamiri peoples

The Pamiri peoples, sometimes called 'Mountain Tajiks' or (pejoratively) 'Galchahs', inhabit the high valleys and mountain passes of Badakhshan in the east of the country. They speak eastern Iranian languages which are often scarcely mutually comprehensible and are very remote from standard Tajik (a western Iranian language). By religion they are almost all Nizari Ismailis (followers of the Seven Imams). Most other Tajiks consider the Pamiris to be 'outsiders', neither 'real' Tajiks nor 'real' Muslims. The largest group is the Shugnis, numbering approximately 20,000; the Bartangis, Rushanis and Wakhanis each number between 4,000–7,000, while the Ishkashimis, Khufis and Yazgulemis number 2,000 or less. There are substantial communities of Pamiri peoples in the neighbouring mountain regions of Afghanistan, China, India and Pakistan.

During the Soviet period Shugni was developed as a literary language and some education was offered for a while in this language. However, in these years many Pamiris left their homes. Some were forced to emigrate to the lowlands of the south to work in the cotton fields. Others moved away in search of better opportunities in education and employment. At the same time, Tajiks from other parts of the country moved into the foothills and to the capital, Khorog. By 1970, the Pamiris constituted less than half the total population of Badakhshan.

An exceptionally high proportion of the Pamiris have had higher education and they have long played an important role in the intellectual life of the republic. The fact that they are regarded as 'outsiders' has tended to enhance their role as disinterested mediators in regional power struggles. During the Soviet period they also played an active role in the security services. Since independence Pamiris have been involved in Tajik politics at the state level. Dawlat Khudonazarov, the leader of the Democratic Party, was a serious rival to the former Communist Party leader, Rakhmon Nabiev, in the November 1991 presidential elections. Khudonazarov subsequently lost much of his popular support, but other Pamiris have continued to hold prominent positions in public life. During the civil war the Pamiris were associated with the Karategin faction, but later fell out with them. Relations also deteriorated with the other main Tajik groupings (e.g. of Kulyab and Kurgan-Tyube). The main conduit for drugs from Afghanistan runs through Badakhshan along the Khorog-Osh road; many Pamiris are believed to be involved in this trade. In the past few years there has been a limited return of Pamiris to Badakhshan. There has also been a rise in Pamiri national consciousness; some activists want autonomy for Badakhshan.<sup>100</sup>

### Russians

Throughout most of the Soviet period the Russians constituted Tajikistan's second largest minority group after the Uzbeks in Tajikistan. By 1959 they represented 12.3 per cent of the total population (262,611). Actual

numbers continued to rise, reaching a peak of just under 400,000 in 1979, although their share in the total population fell steadily, owing to the higher rate of increase among the Tajiks and other Central Asians. The main areas of settlement were in Leninabad Province in northern Tajikistan, in the capital, Dushanbe, and around the major industrial plants in the central region. The exodus of Russians from Tajikistan began in the 1980s; by 1989, numbers had fallen to 388,481. The introduction of the language law, making Tajik the state language, prompted a further exodus in the early 1990s. Independence, followed by the outbreak of civil war in 1992, intensified this process. By 1996, the Russian population had been reduced to approximately 70,000. The majority of those who are left are reported to be pensioners, and poor people who have no savings which would allow them to relocate to Russia. Nevertheless, the Russian Embassy in Dushanbe is still receiving 700 applicants for Russian citizenship daily.<sup>101</sup>

Most of the qualified technical, scientific and administrative personnel have now left the country. The majority of those who remain are located either in the capital or in Leninabad Province. The Russian population have not been subjected to systematic discrimination or singled out for particular harassment. There have been a few attacks on individuals, but these appear to have been isolated incidents rather than the result of a coordinated anti-Russian campaign. Russians continue to hold senior posts in the administration. On a personal level, relations between Russians and Tajiks are generally amicable, especially in academic and artistic circles. Inevitably, however, the Russians, like all the other citizens of Tajikistan, have suffered severe financial deprivation and psychological stress over the past few years. The prospect of ongoing instability and economic decline cause Russians to continue to emigrate.

### Uzbeks

The Uzbeks constitute almost a quarter of the population of Tajikistan (over 1 million). A large proportion live in Leninabad Province, bordering Uzbekistan. Today, this is the wealthiest, most heavily industrialized part of Tajikistan. Until 1929, when there was a partial redrawing of borders, it formed part of Uzbekistan. There is also a sizeable Uzbek presence in Dushanbe. During the Soviet period, Uzbeks regularly held high office in the Tajik government. Since independence they have continued to constitute an important political force in the country, often acting as power-brokers between the rival Tajik factions. They also play a dominant role in commerce and have considerable economic power. There has traditionally been a high incidence of intermarriage between Tajiks and Uzbeks and to some extent this has blurred perceptions of ethnic identity, especially in urban areas; it is not uncommon to find families in which some members identify themselves as Uzbeks, some as Tajiks. However, recently, there has been a tendency to mobilize political support along ethnic lines and this has led to a sharper demarcation between the two groups. There is now considerable Uzbek-Tajik tension in some areas, particularly in the south, where there are large, compact communities of both groups. In the north, in Leninabad Province,

where there is an Uzbek majority, there is a strong move for reunification with Uzbekistan.<sup>102</sup>

## Religious communities

The Tajiks (excluding the Pamiris) are by tradition Sunni Muslims, of the Hanafi school. The Mufti is Amanullo Negmatzoda (elected in July 1996; his predecessor was shot dead by unknown assailants in January 1996). The Islamic revival here has taken a politicized form and given rise to an opposition force spearheaded by the Islamic Revival Party. The Soviet-era Qazi (official religious leader) of Tajikistan, Haji Akbar Turajonzoda (a graduate of the Tashkent *madrassah* and Jordanian Amman University) has become one of its leaders. There are strong pockets of Islamic resistance in the regions bordering Afghanistan and in the central region of Garm, but elsewhere religious fervour is far less in evidence. In the capital (where a large proportion of the urban population of the republic live), Islam appears to be more of a cultural than a religious affiliation. There have been attempts in some areas to impose Islamic norms of behaviour, particularly on women (e.g. requiring them to conform to an Islamic dress code). Foreign commentators (including Russians) frequently ascribe great importance to the activities of so-called Sufi leaders. The available evidence suggests that the majority of such individuals are *ishan* (holy men, often from a dynasty of hereditary religious leaders). Most have little knowledge of the formal teachings of Islam and only a tenuous link with the great Sufi orders. They do, however, have great influence over their followers. There is often considerable rivalry between these groups of followers.

The Pamiris are mostly Nizari Ismailis, whose spiritual leader is the Aga Khan; only the Bartangis and some of the Yazgulemis are Sunni Muslims. In recent years, close links have been established with the worldwide Ismaili community. There are now several aid and missionary programmes in place. The Aga Khan made an official visit to Badakhshan in May 1995 and a number of Pamiris have travelled abroad to visit Ismailis in other countries.

Christianity is represented by the Orthodox Church. There are also small groups of Roman Catholics (mainly Germans); until 1995 they were served by three priests from abroad, but these have now left and, as of 1996, had not been replaced.

## Turkmenistan

### Titular people

Turkmen

The Turkmen are of predominantly Turkic origin. They were the last of the Central Asian peoples to be brought under Tsarist rule. Turkmen resistance was finally broken in the battle for the fortress of Geok-Tepe, which fell in 1881. Soviet rule was first established in this region in 1918; in July of that year, however, nationalist elements, assisted by a British expeditionary force from Mashhad, set up an independent government. This was overthrown by

**State:** Turkmenistan.

**Location:** Borders the Caspian Sea to the west, Kazakstan to the north, Uzbekistan to the north and east and Afghanistan and Iran to the south.

**Area:** 488,100 sq. km.

**Capital:** Ashgabat, population 398,000 (1989).

**Terrain:** Mostly desert; mountains in south.

**Population:** 4,437,600 (1995).

**Urban/rural distribution:** 45 per cent urban, 55 per cent rural (1989).

**Ethnic composition:** 77.0 per cent Turkmen, 9.2 per cent Uzbek, 6.7 per cent Russian, 2.0 per cent Kazak, 0.8 per cent Armenian, 0.8 per cent Azerbaijani, 0.8 per cent Baluchi, 0.8 per cent Tatar, 0.5 per cent Ukrainian (1995).

**Titular people:** Turkmen.

**Ethnic minorities:**

*Immigrants* – Russians  
*Central Asians* – Baluchis, Kazaks, Uzbeks.

**State language:** Turkmen.

**Main industries:** Chemicals, cotton-ginning, engineering, minerals, oil and gas, and tool-making.

**Agriculture:** Cattle and sheep breeding, cultivation of cotton and fruit.

**GDP per capita:** US \$1,063.

**President:** Saparmurad Niyazov.

**Main political groupings:** Democratic Party of Turkmenistan (successor to Communist Party of Turkmenistan, dissolved in December 1991).

There is another, quite different party also called the Democratic Party of Turkmenistan, which is an illegal opposition group based in Moscow.

(Source for 1995 statistics: Turkmenistan State Committee for Statistics, January 1995. For GDP: EBRD, *Country Profile*, 1996.)

the Red Army in 1920. An autonomous Turkmen region was created by Soviet forces in 1921; in October 1924, the Turkmen Soviet Socialist Republic was created as a consequence of the National Delimitation of Central Asia. Sporadic *basmachi* resistance to the new regime continued until c. 1925. The Turkmen intellectual elite was largely wiped out by the purges of the 1930s. This finally destroyed resistance to Soviet rule. Turkmen society was organized along tribal lines. The largest tribes were the Ahal-Tekke in central Turkmenistan, the Ersary in the Turkmen-Afghan border region, and the Yomut in the west. Although modernization has weakened the strength of tribal bonds, traditional group loyalties still play a significant role in the political and economic life of the state.

### Ethnic minorities

In the 1989 Soviet census, 79 ethnic groups were listed separately in Turkmenistan. Of these, 52 were represented by under 1,000 individuals; 17 came within the range 1,000–10,000, including the Kurds (4,387). In the range 10,000–100,000 seven groups were represented,

including the Kazaks (87,802), Tatars (39,245), Ukrainians (35,578) and the Baluchis (28,280). The two largest minority groups were the Russians (333,892) and the Uzbeks (317,333). The Turkmen, the titular people, numbered 2.5 million. By 1995, there had been a significant increase in the size of the Turkmen population (3.4 million), the Uzbeks (407,100) and the Baluchis (36,400). There were smaller increases among the Armenians and Azerbaijanis (33,600 and 36,600 respectively). The other main groups showed a decline in percentage terms as well as in actual numbers (Russians down by some 35,000 to 298,800; Tartars down by almost 3,000 to 36,400; Ukrainians down by over 12,000 to 23,100).

### Baluchis

The Baluchis are an Iranian people, however, like the Turkmen, they are Sunni Muslims. Most are descendants of late nineteenth and early twentieth century emigrants from Afghanistan. In the 1926 census they are listed as numbering just under 10,000. During the 1930s the numbers of Baluchis in Turkmenistan dropped sharply, owing to the ravages of collectivization and the political purges; there were also waves of migration to Afghanistan at this time. Until c. 1960 Baluchis frequently concealed their ethnic origin, describing themselves as Turkmen. Today, most Baluchis appear to feel secure enough to be able to reveal their true identity. They number almost 30,000, living in compact groups in the south-west of Turkmenistan. Mother tongue maintenance is high (according to Soviet statistics, approximately 98 per cent). There are a number of schools (including a couple at secondary level) in which Baluchi is the medium of instruction. There are some publications in Baluchi, also regular radio broadcasts. Cross-border links are maintained with the large Baluchi communities in Pakistan (approximately 1 million), Iran (600,000) and Afghanistan (200,000). There are some indications that such connections enable the Baluchis to play an active part in the drugs trade.<sup>103</sup>

### Kazaks

The Kazaks, a Turkic people like the Turkmen, live mainly in the south, in the Balkan and Mary provinces, and in the west, in the vicinity of the Turkmenbashi port (formerly Krasnovodsk) on the Caspian Sea. In these areas are a number of schools where Kazak is the medium of instruction. Some school textbooks are published in Kazak and there is also a weekly Kazak-language newspaper (*Jumuschi*, 'Worker'). The Kazaks of Turkmenistan maintain close contacts with their kin across the border in Iran (thousands of Kazaks fled southwards in the 1920s and 1930s).

### Russians

The great majority of the Russian population in Turkmenistan is located in urban areas, especially the capital and the major industrial centres. From the late 1970s a process of out-migration has been taking place, albeit at first on a small scale (an absolute decrease of a little over 15,000 during 1979–88). After independence, the

rate of the exodus increased. According to official Turkmen statistics, between 1989 and 1995 the Russian population fell by some 35,000 (i.e. by approximately one tenth of the 1989 population). The Turkmen government has been taking measures to stem the flow. In December 1993 an agreement was signed between the Presidents of Turkmenistan and the Russian Federation allowing dual citizenship for Russians in Turkmenistan.

Russian is recognized as an official language alongside Turkmen. Primary, secondary and tertiary education is available in that language, as previously. Moreover, in Ashgabat four schools have now adopted the curriculum of the Russian Federation, so that students will be able to transfer to educational establishments in Russia with no difficulty. Russian-language press and broadcast media continue to function. Nevertheless, many Russians are still uneasy about what they perceive to be the Turkmenization of public life and, with it, the growing emphasis on Islam. Their sense of insecurity was undoubtedly increased when they were thwarted in their attempts to establish a Slav cultural centre in 1992. Those who plan to remain are, for the most part, either those who have well-established roots in the region (i.e. second- or third-generation settlers), or those who have essential skills and have therefore been offered generous contracts of employment by the Turkmen government. The latter are predominantly army officers and senior administrative, technical and scientific personnel.

### Uzbeks

The Uzbeks are by far the largest minority group of non-Turkmen Central Asians. Traditionally, they have inhabited the lower reaches of the Amu Darya and the relatively well-watered Tashauz Province in the south-east, bordering Uzbekistan. In the past there were frequent clashes between the nomadic and semi-nomadic Turkmen and the sedentarized Uzbeks. In the early 1920s this erupted into a vicious and very bloody power struggle between the two groups. In recent times inter-ethnic tension has been contained, although not eliminated. Some Uzbeks harbour dreams of reunification with Uzbekistan. There are also local disputes over water use between members of the two groups.

### Religious communities

The Turkmen are by tradition Sunni Muslims of the Hanafi school. Previously, being nomads, they had few mosques. During the Soviet period, there were only four functioning mosques in the entire republic. Since 1991, however, there has been a proliferation of religious institutions. There are now some 200 registered mosques open for worship. In 1996, a spectacular mosque was built at Geok-Tepe, the site of the last stand of the Turkmen tribes against the Russians in 1881.

In addition to the Turkmen, there are some 500,000 other Sunni Muslims in the republic (e.g. Baluchis, Kazaks, Tatars and Uzbeks). The Qazi is Haji Nasrullah Ibadullah (b. 1947, Tashauz, Turkmenistan). He is also Chair of the Council of Religious Affairs under the aegis of the President of Turkmenistan.

Bahá'ís began settling in the capital, Ashgabat, in the late nineteenth century. Construction of an imposing House of Worship (the central institutional building of a Bahá'í community) was started in 1902; when completed, in 1919, it was larger than any of the mosques or churches in the city. By this time, there were some 4,000 Bahá'ís in Ashgabat, mostly merchants and shopkeepers. By the 1920s, this was the largest centre of the faith outside Iran. During the 1930s, however, the Bahá'ís, like members of other religions, were subjected to severe harassment. In 1938, all the adult males were arrested; many were subsequently exiled to Siberia. Some 600 women and children were deported to Iran. The community as such ceased to exist. The House of Worship was expropriated by the state; it was heavily damaged in the earthquake of 1948 and finally demolished in 1963.<sup>104</sup> Since 1991, there has been something of a revival, but it appears to be on a very small scale as yet.

Christianity is represented predominantly by the Orthodox Church. Virtually all the members of the community are Russians and Ukrainians. To some extent, the Church serves as a cultural centre for the Slav population. There are no overt restrictions on the activities of the Orthodox community. Since independence, representatives of a number of other Christian denominations have established a base in Ashgabat. There is a thriving Roman Catholic community, also Baptists and a Seventh Day Adventist centre. Most of the worshippers are either Slav or members of the foreign expatriate community, but a few Turkmen of the younger generation have been converted to Christianity.

## Uzbekistan

### Titular people

#### Uzbeks

The Uzbeks are descendants of nomadic Turkic and Mongol tribes, with a substantial admixture of Iranian stock. Independent rival Khanates in Bukhara, Khiva and Kokand emerged during the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, but were conquered by Tsarist armies in the second half of the nineteenth century. Bukhara became a Russian protectorate in 1868; Khiva followed in 1873; in 1876 the Khanate of Kokand was abolished and the area annexed to Russia. Urban centres were to some extent influenced by European ideas that were introduced by the Russians. Another important impetus for change was provided when, under Russian rule, close links were developed with Muslims from other parts of the empire. Azerbaijanis and Tatars (Crimean and Volga) were already actively involved in reformist Islamic movements, and helped to propagate such ideas in Central Asia. This resulted in the opening of a number of 'new-method' (*jadid*) schools; also of some privately owned newspapers.

Soviet rule was first established in Tashkent in November 1917. The Turkestan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, an administrative unit that encompassed most of the territory of modern Kyrgyzstan,

**State:** Uzbekistan.

**Location:** Between the Amu Darya and Syr Darya rivers; in the south, it shares a short stretch of border with Afghanistan. Otherwise, it is surrounded by all four of the other ex-Soviet Central Asian republics.

**Area:** 447,400 sq. km.

**Capital:** Tashkent, population 2.1 million (1989).

**Terrain:** Two-thirds desert and semi-desert; oases and mountains in south; only 20 per cent of land arable.

**Population:** 22.3 million (1995).

**Urban/rural distribution:** 49 per cent urban, 51 per cent rural (1989).

**Ethnic composition:** 71.4 per cent Uzbek, 8.3 per cent Russian, 4.7 per cent Tajik, 4.1 per cent Kazak, 0.9 per cent Korean (1989).

**Titular people:** Uzbek.

**Ethnic minorities:**  
*Immigrants* – Russians, Ukrainians and Belarusians  
*Deported peoples* – Crimean Tatars, Koreans, Meskhetian Turks, Poles, Pontic and Mariupol (Azov) Greeks  
*Central Asians* – Central Asian Jews, Karakalpaks, Kazaks, Tajiks.

**State language:** Uzbek.

**Main industries:**

Aircraft construction, chemical, oil and gas production (tenth largest producer of natural gas in the world), heavy engineering (specializing in machinery for the cotton-growing and textile industries), metal works, textiles and cotton derivatives, Uzbekistan is the world's seventh largest producer of gold.

**Agriculture:** Cultivation of barley, cotton, fruits, jute, rice, silk, tobacco and wheat; sheep breeding, especially for Astrakhan wool. Uzbekistan produces two-thirds of all CIS cotton and is the world's fifth largest cotton producer.

**GDP per capita:** US \$2,490.

**President:** Islam Karimov.

**Main political groupings:** Adolat Social-Democratic Party; Birlik (banned opposition movement); Erk (banned opposition party); People's Democratic Party of Uzbekistan; Vatan Tarakkiyoti (Uzbek: 'Progress of the Motherland').

(Source for GDP: EBRD, *Country Profile*, 1996.)

Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, was proclaimed in 1918. Sporadic local opposition from *basmachi* groups continued until the mid-1920s. Bukhara and Khiva became nominally independent People's Republics in 1920, but were formally incorporated into the Soviet Union in 1924. In October 1924, as part of the National Delimitation of Central Asia, the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic was formed. Until 1929 it included the Tajik Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR), which was then granted full Union republic status; in 1936



Uzbekistan acquired the Karakalpak ASSR from the Kazak ASSR, until then under the jurisdiction of the RSFSR. In December 1992 the Karakalpak ASSR became the Republic of Karakalpakstan, with greater autonomy, but still constituting a part of Uzbekistan.

### Ethnic minorities

In the 1989 Soviet census, 97 ethnic groups were listed separately in Uzbekistan. Of these, 18 were represented by groups of under 100. There were 37 groups in the 100–1,000 range, 17 in the 1,000–10,000 range. In the 10,000–100,000 range there were 13 groups, including Germans (39,809), Bukharan Jews (28,369), and Greeks (10,453). In the 100,000–1 million range there were 10 groups, including Tajiks (933,560), Kazaks (808,227), Crimean Tatars (188,772) and Koreans (183,140). The Russians were by far the largest minority group, numbering 1.7 million, while the Uzbeks, the titular group, accounted for over 14 million.

#### Central Asian Jews

The Central Asian Jews, generally known as 'Bukharan Jews', trace their origins in the Bukhara-Samarkand region back over at least 2,000 years.<sup>105</sup> A tight-knit community, speaking a distinctive Judaeo-Persian language, they specialized in particular trades, e.g. the dyeing of silk textiles, and in the performing arts (the most famous singers at the court of the Emir of Bukhara came from this group). They remained separate from other indigenous peoples and from later Jewish immigrants from the Slav republics. In the early Soviet period they were allowed to establish some educational and cultural centres, but these were closed in the 1930s. Although they did not suffer serious discrimination or harassment from the Uzbeks or others, they were regarded as outsiders and consequently felt insecure. They maintained their customs and a high degree of religious observance; in the 1970s, when emigration to Israel became slightly easier for Jews throughout the Soviet Union, the Bukharans were among the first to leave. By the 1980s, well over half the community had reportedly left. At the same time, there was something of a cultural and religious revival among the Bukharan Jews who remained. Two cultural centres were opened, courses in Hebrew were organized and a few kosher restaurants appeared. Some Bukharan Jews who emigrated during the Soviet period have now begun to return to Uzbekistan.

#### Crimean Tatars

The Crimean Tatars are descended from the Crimean Khanate (founded in the early fifteenth century), an off-shoot of the Tatar-Mongol Golden Horde, and from Anatolian Turks who began to settle in the Crimea in the thirteenth century. The Crimean Khanate was annexed by the Russian Empire in 1783. There was an awakening of Crimean Tatar national consciousness towards the end of the nineteenth century. It had a strong pan-Turkic and pan-Islamic orientation and was much influenced by similar movements in Ottoman Turkey (which had, at this time a large Crimean Tatar colony). In 1917 there was an

attempt to create an independent state. Turkey and Germany immediately recognized Crimea's independence, but the nationalist government was soon dislodged by Bolshevik troops. Fighting continued for some time, but Soviet rule was finally established in late 1920; in 1921 the Crimean ASSR was created (under the jurisdiction of the RSFSR). Many Crimean Tatar leaders fled abroad.

During the Second World War the Crimea was occupied by German forces from 1941–4. On 18 May 1944, immediately after it had been liberated by the Soviet army, the entire Crimean Tatar nation was accused of collaboration with the Germans and deported to Central Asia and the Urals. The Crimean Tatar ASSR was liquidated in June 1945; in 1954 the region (*oblast*) was transferred to the jurisdiction of the Ukrainian SSR. Some 200,000 Crimean Tatars were sent into exile in 1944. They suffered terrible deprivations during the journey and the early years of the 'special settlement' regime; it has been estimated that almost 50 per cent of the population died.

In 1967 the Crimean Tatars were partially 'rehabilitated'. However, unlike most of the other deported peoples, they were not allowed to return to their homeland; the official explanation was that they had 'taken root' in Central Asia. By 1980 the Crimean Tatar population numbered some 500,000. The main settlements were in Uzbekistan (Tashkent and Ferghana Provinces) and it was here that the Crimean National Movement was most active. The primary aim of this, the first socio-political movement of its kind in the Soviet Union, was to secure a 'return to the status of 1921' – specifically, complete political rehabilitation and the right to return to their ethnic homeland. Individuals began moving back, illegally, during the 1980s; whenever they were caught they were sent back to Central Asia.<sup>106</sup>

However, by 1989, about 70,000 had succeeded in establishing themselves in the Crimea. The movement continued to grow and by 1996 some 250,000 Crimean Tatars were living in their ethnic homeland. Their return has not been welcomed by the Slav settlers who took over their property in the 1950s. There is considerable friction between the two communities. Today, most of the Crimean Tatars live in abject poverty, unable to find work. Nevertheless, most of the 250,000 Crimean Tatars who are still in Central Asia (about 200,000 in Uzbekistan) seem determined to return to the Crimea. Some international aid has been promised to help with their resettlement. The UN has pledged some \$15 million for education, health care and technical assistance; Turkey is to allocate \$87 million to build housing.<sup>107</sup>

#### Karakalpaks

The Karakalpaks are a predominantly Turkic people. Very little is known of their early history. By the sixteenth century they were settled along the lower reaches of the Syr Darya. Subsequently, they split into two groups, one of which migrated to a location higher up the Syr Darya, while the other moved southwards to the delta of the Amu Darya. After Soviet rule had been established, a Karakalpak Autonomous Province was created (May 1925) on the southern coast of the Aral Sea, encom-

passing both banks of the Amu Darya (formerly they had been divided between different jurisdictions). Initially, the Karakalpak Province was included within Kazakstan, but in 1932 it was given the status of an Autonomous Republic (ASSR) and in 1936 was transferred to the jurisdiction of Uzbekistan. After the collapse of the Soviet Union the Karakalpaks attempted to gain independence from Uzbekistan, but administratively and economically they were too closely bound to their larger neighbour for this to be viable. Since 1993, the status of Karakalpakstan has been that of a semi-independent state within the borders of Uzbekistan. It has its own government and institutions, but, as during the Soviet period, these are subordinate to Tashkent.

The population of Karakalpakstan has always been ethnically mixed, the three main, and almost equally balanced, groups being the Karakalpaks, Kazaks and Uzbeks. Today, each of these groups numbers approximately 350,000; there is also a much smaller group (70,000) of Turkmen. Over 90 per cent of the Karakalpaks live within their titular unit. The majority are rural-dwellers. There are schools in which Karakalpak is the medium of instruction; there is also a University and a Pedagogical Institute in Nukus, the capital, in which some tuition is available in Karakalpak. Newspapers, books and periodicals appear in this language and there are also other cultural facilities (radio, television, films and theatre).

Karakalpakstan has borne the brunt of the environmental, social and economic consequences of the desiccation of the Aral Sea. This was originally triggered by the huge irrigation projects of the Soviet period. Since then, however, the situation has deteriorated, exacerbated by arguments between the now independent states of the Aral Sea basin as to equitable arrangements for the management and regulation of the waters of the Amu Darya and the Syr Darya, the two feeder rivers of the Sea. Efforts are being made to solve the problem through regional cooperation, but since there are powerful vested interests at stake, progress has been very slow.

## Kazaks

There are some 1 million Kazaks in Uzbekistan, mostly in the Tashkent region, bordering Kazakstan. In the seventeenth century the city of Tashkent was a Kazak possession; moreover, some of the best pasture lands were to be found in this vicinity. After the sedentarization of the nomads, many Kazaks settled here. In the early 1920s, the more nationalistic among them wanted Tashkent to be included within the boundaries of Kazakstan. Not only did this not happen, but during the 1950s, the border between Uzbekistan and Kazakstan was altered, allocating to the former yet more of the territory that the Kazaks regarded as theirs by historical right. There have not been any open clashes between Uzbeks and Kazaks in this area, but some Kazaks feel that they are denied adequate facilities for education, publishing and broadcasting in their mother tongue. This has led to resentment and anger in some Kazak circles, albeit generally muted and privately-voiced.

## Koreans

The Koreans were deported to Uzbekistan in 1937 (see under Kazakstan for background). During the 1950s, after the punitive regime of 'special settlement' was relaxed, the Koreans began to join collective farms; they proved to be highly successful farmers, especially in the cultivation of cotton and rice. Moreover, they studied hard and made good use of whatever educational facilities were made available to them; the post-war generation produced many specialists, in agricultural sciences and management, as well as accountants, administrators and other civil servants. The Koreans also made a significant contribution to the artistic and intellectual life of the republic; Korean painters in particular came to enjoy considerable respect and admiration. Today, they are possibly the most successful of the minority groups in terms of income and status. They have benefited from the establishment of close links, at governmental and non-governmental level, with South Korea. This has been an important factor in the development of Korean-Uzbek business interests. It has also helped the Koreans in Uzbekistan to rediscover their linguistic and cultural heritage. A small minority have sought to return to their previous homes in the Maritime Province, but this has not met with great success, largely owing to the opposition of the local Russians who subsequently occupied the Koreans' property. Currently most Koreans are prepared to remain, confident that the outlook for them in Uzbekistan is promising.

## Meskhetian Turks (also known as Ahiska Turks)

Meskhetia, a part of Georgia, came under Ottoman rule in the sixteenth century. The so-called Meskhetian Turks are of mixed origins: some are descended from Turks, others from Turkicized, Islamicized Georgians. Other Turkic or Turkicized Muslim groups (e.g. the Armenian Muslim Khemshins/Khemshils) are sometimes included with the Meskhetian Turks. They lived in south-west Georgia until November 1944, when they were deported *en masse* to Central Asia, mostly to Uzbekistan, on the pretext that the military security of the Turkish-Soviet border needed to be strengthened. The group numbered approximately 100,000. An estimated 20,000 died during and immediately after deportation. Those who were fighting with the Soviet Army at the time were later stripped of their honours and privileges and were also deported to Central Asia.

During the first 12 years of exile they were subjected to an exceptionally harsh regime. This was eased somewhat in the 1950s, but it was not until 1968 that they were officially 'rehabilitated' (the last of the deported peoples to be cleared of charges of treason). By 1989 there were 106,000 Meskhetian Turks in Uzbekistan, mostly located in the Ferghana Valley. They had become quite prosperous and several held influential positions in the local administration. This brought them into competition with the Uzbeks, who viewed them as rivals. Tension between the two groups had been mounting for some time when, in June 1989, an altercation in a market suddenly sparked off a wave of rioting. This rapidly escalated into brutal gang warfare. The fighting lasted for two weeks. Order

was only restored when troops were sent in by Moscow. At least 100 people were killed in this incident. Some 74,000 Meskhetian Turks were airlifted out of the region for their own safety. About half (44,000) went to Azerbaijan, where they were granted asylum. Others sought refuge in Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan and the RSFSR.<sup>108</sup>

Of the few Meskhetian Turks who remained in Uzbekistan after 1989, several left when the Soviet Union disintegrated. Since 1970 some Meskhetian Turks have been campaigning to be allowed to emigrate to Turkey. Others want to be repatriated to Georgia. To date, few have succeeded in achieving either of these goals. Only about 300 have been able to return to Georgia; there they have been met with hostility and treated as interlopers. Some Meskhetian Turks have begun to return to Uzbekistan; others are still in Azerbaijan and the Russian Federation. A congress of Meskhetian Turks was held in Bishkek in November 1996; a similar meeting was held shortly after in Ankara. Their future remains uncertain.

### Poles

According to the 1989 Soviet census, there were just over 3,000 Poles in Uzbekistan. Many are former political exiles or their descendants. The main communities are in Samarkand and Tashkent; in both cities they erected Catholic churches (that in Tashkent, a cathedral-sized building, still remains unfinished). Over the past few years the Roman Catholic Church has provided a focus for the revival of Polish national and cultural aspirations. Links with Poland have been revitalized; (a number of Polish priests are now working in Uzbekistan). Some Poles have re-established family ties and a small number have begun to move back to Poland. (See further sub-section on Poles under Kazakstan.)

### Pontic and Mariupol (Azov) Greeks

Greek colonies began to settle along the northern shore of the Black Sea in the seventh century B.C. Their descendants, who adopted Orthodox Christianity, came to be known as 'Romei' or 'Pontic Greeks'. Some continued to speak a form of ancient Greek, while others adopted the local Tatar dialect. During the early years of Soviet rule a number of Greek-medium schools were opened; some newspapers and other publications in Greek were also allowed. In 1937 these facilities were withdrawn. After the war (1949), these and other Greek communities in the Caucasus and elsewhere (e.g. Azov) were deported to Central Asia, mostly to Uzbekistan. Here two distinct communities formed: the Pontic Greeks and the 'modern' Greeks – the latter a disparate group of immigrants from Iran and Turkey (mostly descendants of eighteenth and nineteenth century refugees) and Greece (mostly mid-twentieth century Communists). Their languages, ancient and modern forms of Greek, were mutually incomprehensible and their customs and traditions were very different.<sup>109</sup> In census reports, however, they were listed together.

By the 1980s they appeared to have assimilated well into life in Uzbekistan. The majority were located in urban areas; a number of them had become successful profes-

sionals. Some, though, began to seek permission to emigrate to Greece. This process continued after the disintegration of the Soviet Union. However, the Greek government has not been over-responsive to calls for mass repatriation. For the time being, the majority of Greeks (currently numbering some 10,000) seem likely to remain in Uzbekistan.

### Russians

Russians form the largest single minority in Uzbekistan. They do not constitute a homogeneous group either historically or socially. A relatively small proportion are third- or fourth-generation descendants of families who came to this region during the Tsarist period. In most cases, these Russians have assimilated some local customs (e.g. in food preferences and manners), and often know at least a smattering of Uzbek. They feel a strong sense of belonging to the region, and have generally been accepted by the local population as an integral part of the community. This also tends to apply to the settlers who arrived during the first decades of the Soviet period, several of whom worked closely with the Uzbeks and dedicated their lives to trying to improve the health and welfare conditions in the region. Later immigrants were usually less interested in the local culture and way of life and led more self-contained lives.

During the Second World War many academic, cultural and industrial enterprises were evacuated to Uzbekistan, bringing a major influx of scientists, skilled technicians and leading members of the performing arts to the republic. After the war, many of these returned to their original bases, but some stayed, preferring the quality of life as well as the professional opportunities that Uzbekistan had to offer. By 1959, there were over 1 million Russians in Uzbekistan. The last significant wave of immigrants arrived during the second half of the 1960s, to assist with the redevelopment of Tashkent after the devastation caused by the 1966 earthquake. During the 1960s the percentage share of the Russians in the overall population of Uzbekistan began to decline (from a high point of 13.5 per cent in 1959 to 10.8 per cent by 1979). This was mainly due to the higher birth rate of the titular people. However, in the 1980s, the Russian population also began to decline numerically, due to out-migration. The main reasons for the exodus at this stage were increased competition for employment and housing. After 1991, the rate of emigration increased sharply.

Today, the great majority of Russians live in urban areas, predominantly in and around Tashkent. They are found at all levels of the social scale, from labourers and factory workers to senior government officials, entrepreneurs and professionals, and make an important contribution to the cultural and economic life of the republic. Consequently, the exodus of Russians in 1992–4 caused considerable disruption, especially as many of the emigrants were highly qualified specialists who had held key positions in industry.

The Uzbek government has sought to reassure the settler community by upholding the principle of equal rights and freedoms for all citizens, regardless of ethnic origin; also by adopting a gradualist approach to the introduction of Uzbek as the medium of communication in public

affairs. There has been no obvious infringement of Russian cultural rights; a National Association of Russian Culture, dedicated to the protection and furtherance of Slav culture, was granted official registration in May 1992. There does not appear to have been any reduction in the number of schools in which Russian is the medium of instruction; Russian also continues to be widely used in higher education and in research institutes. Russian-language newspapers are published as previously, and although there has been an increase in Uzbek-language broadcasts, the use of Russian in the media has not suffered to any noticeable degree. A Russian-language theatre continues to function. The number of Orthodox churches open for worship has increased, as have the possibilities for the training of Orthodox clergy.

Measures such as these have helped to persuade the Russian community that the outlook for them in Uzbekistan may not be so bleak. A growing number of Russians are realizing that the Uzbeks need to reassert their national identity and that this will entail a degree of cultural reorientation. By 1996 there were still fears that Uzbek nationalism might take on a xenophobic complexion, but a substantial proportion of the Russian community appeared to be prepared to remain in Central Asia, at least for the foreseeable future.

#### Tajiks

The largest Central Asian minority group in Uzbekistan is the Tajiks, who, according to official statistics, number some 1 million, but according to unofficial (Tajik) claims, at least two to three times that figure. The majority are located in and around the traditionally Persian-speaking cities of Bukhara and Samarkand. Virtually all are fluent in both Tajik and Uzbek. During the Soviet period there were frequent complaints that they were being deprived of their constitutional rights to have education and media facilities in their mother tongue. In the immediate post-Soviet period, the situation deteriorated still further, as pressure was exerted (mainly by over-zealous local officials) on the Samarkand-Bukhara Tajiks to identify themselves as Uzbeks. The Tajik department at the Samarkand University encountered numerous problems, as did the National Cultural Centre. Similar difficulties were experienced by Tajik socio-cultural groups in Bukhara. Since then, however, the Uzbek government has made some effort to resolve these problems by giving the Tajiks greater scope for cultural and educational activities. Recent reports (including some from Tajik informants) suggest that the situation has now improved.

#### Ukrainians and Belarusians

The Ukrainians and Belarusians represent just 1 per cent of the population of Uzbekistan. Ukrainian settlers first moved to the region at the turn of the century (by 1926 there were almost 26,000 in Uzbekistan). During the Soviet period the Ukrainians and the even smaller community of Belarusians were generally identified with the Russians. Tenuous signs of a separate national identity are beginning to appear but as yet they have little formal expression.

### Religious communities

The Uzbeks are, by tradition, Sunni Muslims of the Hanafi school. In 1943 the Spiritual Directorate of Central Asia and Kazakstan was established in Tashkent. It was the largest of the Soviet-era Muslim administrations. Most of the very limited number of Islamic publications that were allowed at this period were produced here. The only two Soviet *madrassah* were also located in Uzbekistan (in Bukhara and Tashkent). In the 1980s a small-scale, informal religious revival began to emerge. It has gained momentum since independence. The most visible sign of this is the huge proliferation of mosques. In 1989, there were only 300 mosques open for worship, by 1993, the number had risen to over 5,000. The Mufti is Mukhtarjan Abdullaev (b. 1928, Bukhara). There is also a government Council of Religious Affairs which regulates all matters relating to the religious communities. Schools and voluntary organizations run courses in the Arabic language and teach the Quran. Opportunities for more advanced Muslim education are provided by the numerous *madrassah* and Islamic centres that are appearing throughout the country. A number of foreign Muslim missionaries have been active in Uzbekistan in recent years, mostly from Palestine, Saudi Arabia and Turkey. Since 1991 several thousand Uzbeks (including the President) have made the prescribed pilgrimage to Mecca; during the Soviet period, only 20–30 hand-picked representatives of the community were allowed to perform this religious obligation.

For most Uzbeks, however, Islam is still predominantly a cultural identity; regular attendance at religious services is not as widespread as the large numbers of new mosques might suggest. Nevertheless, in some areas, notably in the Ferghana Valley, Islam appears to be assuming a more extremist, militant character. It is very difficult to assess the situation from the very scanty material that is available. The government believes that this represents a potential danger to the stability of the country and has introduced stringent measures to curb the activities of 'illegal' (i.e. unregistered) Muslim groups. Foreign missionaries are also now subject to strict controls. It is reported (but with little substantiating evidence) that there are a number of underground Islamic political parties in the region. The two that appear to be fairly firmly established are the Islamic Revival Party (as in Tajikistan) and Adolat ('Justice'). However, neither seem to have much popular support. In addition to the Uzbeks there are some 2 million other citizens of the republic who are at least nominally Sunni Muslims (e.g. Kazaks, Tajiks, Tatars).

There are also substantial Shia communities (of the 'Twelver' sect, i.e. the main Shia grouping) in and around Bukhara and Samarkand. They are known as *Ironi* and are mostly descendants of Persian immigrants who settled in the region from the seventeenth century onwards. According to local unofficial estimates (which may be exaggerated), they are said to number some 200,000 today. There are three Shia mosques in Samarkand, one in the city of Bukhara, and four others in Bukhara Province.<sup>110</sup>

Christianity is spreading in Uzbekistan, although not as fast as in Kazakstan and Kyrgyzstan. The largest denomination is Russian Orthodox. The Central Asian Eparchy of the Russian Orthodox Church was established

in 1871 in Tashkent. There is a functioning Orthodox cathedral in Tashkent, also three smaller churches; most towns and settlements with a large and compact Slav population have their own churches. There is also a lively Roman Catholic community in Uzbekistan. Poles established their own churches in Tashkent and Samarkand at the beginning of the century. In Tashkent, they embarked on the construction of a vast cathedral but funds ran out before it had been completed. Germans, Koreans, Poles and others are regular worshippers at the existing small church. A convent was opened in the early 1990s by nuns from India; it is anticipated that other such institutions will be opened. There are several very active Baptist churches in Tashkent; the congregations are ethnically mixed, attracting Slavs as well as Central Asians. Some evangelical sects proselytize very actively in Uzbekistan. Their activities are sometimes frowned upon by the authorities and there have been moves to curb the amount of literature that they disseminate.

There were formerly several well established Jewish communities in Uzbekistan. There was a substantial emigration of Jews, both Bukharan and Slav, in the 1980s. However, there are still some functioning synagogues in the main cities, as well as some Jewish schools. The Slavs are Ashkenazi Jews, while the Bukharans follow the Sephardi rite. The two groups have traditionally kept their distance, maintaining separate synagogues and religious administrations. This remains the case today.



# Western involvement: a stabilizing factor?

Most of the aid that the Central Asian states receive comes from Western governments on a bi- or multilateral basis, from Western-backed international economic organizations, and from some NGOs. It takes the form of credits and loans, technical assistance, training and some humanitarian aid. The aim is to help these new states to carry through the political and economic restructuring that will enable them to be integrated into the global community, and will generate prosperity, stability and a friendly (pro-Western) environment. Most programmes have only been operating for a relatively short time. However, some general characteristics are beginning to emerge which indicate that there are issues that need to be addressed.

First, there is frequently a lack of meaningful dialogue between donors and recipients. Western donors rarely have any knowledge of the region's historical and cultural background, or the current social climate: this affects the aid which is offered. Equally, the potential recipients often do not fully understand the terms of reference within which the donors are operating, even when this is translated (and it is by no means always easy to ensure competent translation). The result of this lack of mutual understanding is that the two sides frequently talk past each other, unable (and more seriously, unaware that they are failing) to engage in constructive communication.

A second obstacle is over-hastiness on the part of both donors and recipients. The former are generally working within the time constraints of a financial year. Little action may be taken until the very last month; by then, the pressure to disburse the budgetary allocation and to achieve visible results within the specified period is such that decisions to spend relatively large sums of money can be taken on the advice of in-house officials who may assess project proposals from a technical point of view, but who may have only a limited knowledge as to whether the proposals are likely to be effective in the target country. The potential recipients, fearful of losing the proffered aid, too often accept such proposals before they have had time fully to assess the relevance to their needs. The result is mutual frustration and disappointment. On the side of the recipients, this is aggravated by astonishment and anger at the vast fees paid to foreign consultants, who proceed to present recommendations which may be ill-suited to local conditions, and are often impossible to implement.<sup>111</sup>

A third obstacle is the lack of programmatic coordination between donor agencies. This leads to an inefficient use of resources, with efforts in some sectors being duplicated several times over, while other, equally important, areas are neglected. Also, there is a tendency to indulge in

'profligate and irresponsible lending'.<sup>112</sup> The republic that has suffered most in this respect is Kyrgyzstan. Identified by a succession of Western countries as the most 'deserving' Central Asian state because of its apparent devotion to democratic ideas, Kyrgyzstan has been offered, and accepted, so many foreign loans and credits that, after only two years of independence, its external debt was already equivalent to 100 per cent of its GNP.<sup>113</sup> The country is having to borrow yet more in order to service interest payments. Kazakhstan, another country favoured by the West, was also soon deeply in debt.<sup>114</sup> Even those Central Asian economists who were originally in favour of market-oriented reforms and integration into the international economy are now beginning to look on the process as a new and more tyrannical form of neocolonial subjugation.

If Western aid is to be used effectively, and to contribute to long-term stabilization and adjustment, then far greater cultural sensitivity is required and far greater effort must be devoted to the design and implementation of aid and training programmes. If this is not done, there is a danger that such assistance will come to be seen, as it has in some other parts of the 'developing' world, as a means of furthering Western interests; resentment at being enmeshed in a new, deeper trap of debt and dependence could lead to the rise of anti-Western xenophobia and the very destabilization that donor countries hope to prevent.<sup>115</sup>

## The role of NGOs

One area in which more mutual understanding is required is that of the role of NGOs. The eagerness of foreign agencies to work with local NGOs in Central Asia seems to many (and it is important to stress that reference is not being made here only to government officials, but to informed individuals from a variety of professional backgrounds and ethnic origins) to be subversive in intent. There is no tradition of NGOs in the region. Under Soviet rule only the most innocuous 'informal', non-official associations were permitted.<sup>116</sup> Many of those who now put themselves forward as representatives of local NGOs have dubious credentials. The gullibility of foreign agencies in their dealings with such individuals is often assumed to be a cover for criminal collusion. The few who seek to establish genuinely independent organizations are frequently harassed by the authorities, since they are seen as a challenge to the government. In such cases, links with Western organizations, no matter how innocent, readily become a cause for suspicion.

There has, nevertheless, been a mushrooming of local NGOs since 1994 in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, and to a

more limited degree in Uzbekistan. Almost all of these are to a greater or lesser extent supported by foreign agencies. However, the situation is very fluid. Thus, groups may exist as names on lists and on letterheads, but have little more substance. There are a number of reasons why, apart from lack of experience, they should find it difficult to establish more permanent structures. One is the lack of a proper legal definition as to what constitutes an NGO. Without this, their whole standing in society remains uncertain. In particular, laws on registration and taxation cannot be clarified and therefore tend to be applied arbitrarily, on a case-by-case basis in these countries. Another problem arises out of NGOs' financial links with foreign organizations: being 'a point of access for foreign funding may lead to jealousy from the state and from this to greater repression or state control'.<sup>117</sup> A third problem is that NGOs' may be seen to be trespassing on areas of responsibility that the state has in the past regarded as its own prerogative. The state in question may not now be fulfilling these obligations (e.g. in child welfare), but may nevertheless resent private organizations taking over this role. A fourth problem is the all too common phenomenon of 'auto-consumption of aid by an intervening layer of NGO professionals'.<sup>118</sup>

The main focus of NGOs to date has been democracy-building, human rights, legal issues and the environment. This agenda has been largely set by the main donor, namely the USA. US organizations (government and non-government) have provided funding for, among others, the American Legal Consortium, Counterpoint Consortium, and the Eurasia Foundation. More recently European donors (bilateral and multilateral) have begun to take an interest in NGO development in Central Asia. EU TACIS (technical assistance) programmes have provided some support; also organizations such as the Aga Khan Foundation, Christian Aid, Dutch Interchurch Aid, Hivos and Novib. International agencies such as UNDP, UNHCR and the World Bank are also now involved in the region. These organizations are helping to shift the emphasis towards such issues as poverty alleviation. There is also a move now to spread out beyond the capital cities to provincial centres (e.g. Osh). Initiatives such as these may enable the NGO sector to make a more effective contribution.

## Human and minority rights

The question of human rights remains an extremely sensitive area. Central Asian officials often view the conditionality that is attached to many aid programmes as an unwarranted intrusion into their domestic affairs. Foreign-sponsored programmes that seek, for example, to promote gender equality or to protect the rights of particular minority groups are also often resented. International criticism of the conduct of elections in these countries is viewed in a similar light. Many Central Asians – and by no means only government officials – are beginning to insist, with increasing vehemence, that they have a different, but equally valid perspective on the relationship between the individual and society. The West's advocacy of such concepts as political pluralism and freedom of speech is often regarded as tantamount to a cam-

paign to destabilize the region at a time when many feel it is already in a precariously balanced situation.

However, the Central Asian states are all signatories to the major UN and OSCE documents relating to these human rights issues. Thus, although the governments of these countries may disagree with the interpretation of some fundamental concepts, nevertheless, they have undertaken to honour certain obligations. The UN and OSCE try to provide support and guidance for this endeavour by initiating a dialogue with officials and other responsible individuals in these countries.

More directly connected to issues concerning minority rights, one of the main areas of activity so far has been the organization of conferences and seminars, and related exercises of networking and data-gathering. A number of important conferences have been organized in the region and elsewhere. These have included the 'CIS Conference on Refugees' and associated preparatory Meetings of Experts (1995–6), held under the aegis of the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR); also the 'Symposium on Central Asia: OSCE Comprehensive Security and Regional Challenge' (Tashkent, 1996) and 'Seminar on Confidence Building' (Dushanbe, 1996), which had a human rights component. These events, particularly the 'CIS Conference on Refugees', produced valuable documentation on questions relating to the position of minorities in Central Asia. The international conference on 'The Kazak Constitution and Minority Rights', held in Almaty, 1993, organized jointly by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation and the Kazak Institute for Strategic Studies, likewise resulted in a useful publication. The OSCE Seminar on the Human Dimension Issues in Central Asia (Almaty, 1994), also the follow-up activities of the OSCE High Commissioner Max van der Stoep and the Foundation for Inter-Ethnic Relations (The Hague) have helped to raise important issues. Given the scale of the problems of transition for society as a whole, it is perhaps not surprising that there has as yet been very little real movement on these matters.

Immediate practical assistance has also been given. The UNHCR has helped with the repatriation of refugees in Tajikistan. The OSCE and International Committee of the Red Cross have also been involved in monitoring the human consequences of the civil war and have been assisting with the peace-making process. Efforts such as these are helping to establish procedures for conflict resolution and prevention in Central Asia. This in turn helps to alert regional agencies to potentially dangerous areas of inter-ethnic confrontation. It is encouraging that some small local groups have begun to play an active role in this process (e.g. the involvement of representatives from Bishkek in the Network on Ethnological Monitoring) – even if it is a sober reminder that at the official level 'most activities seem to be designed for the media spotlight'.<sup>119</sup>

# Outlook

This report has shown that the decolonization of Central Asia has moved into a new phase. By the end of 1996 Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan had moved furthest in the direction of economic and military reintegration with Russia. Along with Belarus, they had signed up to the 'Agreement of Four', a core CIS grouping.<sup>120</sup> At the same time, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan were attempting to establish parallel mechanisms for intra-regional cooperation, as preparation for the creation of a Central Asian union. It is not yet clear how these overlapping configurations are to function. Tajikistan is still threatened by internal divisions which at times flare up into armed clashes; the economy is in ruins, the government propped up by Russian support – to the relief of a large proportion of the population, who believe that the Russian presence guarantees a modicum of stability. Uzbekistan is beginning to emerge as a major regional power. Its economic policies are yielding promising results and it is exhibiting considerable finesse in the conduct of international relations. Turkmenistan, endowed with vast hydrocarbon resources, a tiny population, and a long land border with Iran which allows for the diversification of transport routes, is following the most independent policies. Making neutrality the guiding principle of its foreign relations, it is distancing itself firmly, yet cordially, from other Central Asian states, and from the CIS.

Today, despite the social, political and economic upheavals of the past five years, Central Asia is still remarkably stable. The main reason for this is the highly conservative nature of society. The very specific conditions under which the modernization of the Soviet period took place meant that change and development in the public sphere (i.e. the workplace) scarcely penetrated into the private sphere. Here, custom and tradition continued to be the dominant features. This conservatism, especially in the face of external threats, favours consolidation rather than fragmentation. It is underpinned by a number of socio-cultural factors. One is absolute respect for seniority: each individual is acutely sensitive to, and bound by, interlocking hierarchies of age, social standing and administrative power. Another characteristic feature is the great emphasis on consensus: whether in the private or the public sphere, disputes tend to be resolved through negotiation and compromise, leading to the formulation of a common view. A third feature is the all-embracing sense of community. A high degree of conformity is required from all members.<sup>121</sup> This entails full participation in group activities and the fulfilment of numerous obligations and responsibilities to the extended family. In return, the individual receives constant material and emotional support from the community.

Yet the situation is beginning to change. Something of an age revolution is taking place as increasing numbers of young people assume senior positions due to their more

'modern' skills. Older peoples' experience is being devalued. The erosion of traditional values is also being triggered by the introduction of the 'Coca-Cola culture'. Newly-available Western consumer products, films and advertisements are changing the aspirations of the young, especially in urban areas. Moreover, the increased presence of non-CIS foreigners confronts them daily with examples of very different lifestyles. The activities of foreign missionaries – not only of various Muslim groups, but also of numerous Christian denominations, and of new faiths such as Hare Krishna and the Unification Church – as well as of representatives of foreign governments and NGOs, are also gradually having an effect.

Such influences could help to create more open societies, with a higher degree of transparency in government and other public institutions, and greater personal freedoms. They could also undermine the protective and supportive mechanisms that have, up until now, enabled these societies to withstand internal as well as external stresses. Both tendencies can already be seen, most noticeably in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. In these countries there has been relatively more progress towards democratization than elsewhere in Central Asia, but also a more marked degree of social disintegration. This is evidenced by such phenomena as higher levels of crime, more pronounced tensions between different social groups and an increase in family breakdowns.<sup>122</sup> Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan are arguably more vulnerable to the problems of transition because of the greater complexity of their ethnic structures. However, there has also been a political will to implement change rapidly. In Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, by contrast, greater stress is laid on maintaining traditional values, with more cautious and selective attitudes to 'modern' ideas. Which approach will prove to be the more effective in the long-term is impossible to predict at this stage.

As of now, the outlook for these five states remains in the balance. All are well endowed with natural resources and rich human capital. However, they will only be able to realize their potential if sound development policies are implemented. This in turn will require stability. For many Central Asians, at all levels of society, this has come to be seen as the most pressing priority. Foreign commentators sometimes regard the emphasis that is placed on the need to maintain stability as exaggerated, or even as a ploy to justify authoritarian rule. There is undoubtedly an element of truth in this. Nevertheless, the potential causes of conflict outlined earlier are very real; were they to be activated, they could bring immense misery and destruction to the region. Under these conditions, it is not easy to find an appropriate balance between freedoms and controls, conservatism and innovation. The Central Asians are only just embarking on what is likely to be a long and difficult learning curve.



## Prospects for minorities

It is difficult to draw firm conclusions as to the position of the minorities in the newly independent Central Asian states because too many key factors are still in flux. The titular peoples have embarked on a difficult transition from a system that failed them to a new, as yet undefined system. They are simultaneously engaged in the reconstruction of the national identity, the restructuring of the state apparatus and the reform of the economy. This is one reason why issues relating to minorities are not high on their agenda. Another is that for 70 years the 'nationalities' policy was dictated by the central authorities. Today, this is yet another area in which the post-Soviet governments are having to assume a hitherto unfamiliar responsibility for defining aims and implementing strategies. There is a growing awareness of the need to address the issue of minority rights, but this is generally regarded as of secondary importance in comparison with basic questions relating to security, stability and survival. Hence consideration of such matters is often postponed, or given only token acknowledgement. Some important measures have been taken, as previously discussed, but there is as yet only limited understanding of the full range of issues relating to minority rights.

The minorities are also in a state of transition. For most (with the notable exception of the deported peoples), the idea of being a 'minority' is still new and disconcerting. In the past, members of these groups tended to relate to society as individuals rather than as representatives of a specific ethnic community. Today, they have few integrative mechanisms within their own groups and almost no horizontal linkages with others in a similar position. Some, notably the Germans and Slavs, have formed socio-political movements to lobby for their special interests. They are particularly active in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. However, most members of minority groups – including Slavs – prefer to negotiate informal accommodations and understandings with the relevant authorities, and with their neighbours. Moreover, many are still undecided as to whether to stay in Central Asia. This uncertainty makes them reluctant to spend time on campaigning for rights which they may not be there to enjoy.

The level of formal involvement in party politics is low among ethnic minorities. However, this is also true of the wider population. Political parties are commonly regarded with distrust – a legacy of the Soviet experience. In theory, legally registered parties must be open to all, without ethnic or religious bias. In practice, many are mono-ethnic. Some have the stated aim of advocating the rights of a particular group (e.g. Russian Lad in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Ata-Meken in Kyrgyzstan). The authorities are eager to encourage membership of 'presidential' parties (i.e. those which have the support of the respective presidents). However, as with membership of the Communist Party in the past, those who join often do so for social and professional reasons rather than out of political conviction. Some minority representatives have stood as candidates in parliamentary elections. In Kazakhstan in particular they have often encountered difficulties in securing registration. Nevertheless, in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan there are cur-

rently several parliamentary deputies from the non-titular peoples, although in percentage terms they are still under-represented.<sup>123</sup> In Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan minorities account for a smaller share of the population than in the other two states. Partly for this reason, and partly because greater stress is laid on national consolidation, the ethnic composition of parliament in these countries is generally not revealed. The senior government posts in all five states are held by members of the respective titular peoples. Second-rung posts, however, are frequently occupied by members of minorities. Not being part of regional networks, they are often regarded as 'honest brokers' in ministerial and departmental power struggles, and this gives them a certain advantage.

No information is available on minorities' specific economic situation, since official statistics are not broken down by ethnic categories. Such circumstantial evidence as there is does not reveal a discernible pattern that is unique to minorities. They seem to have been affected by the recent economic changes in much the same way as the rest of population: thus, most have seen a sharp fall in their standard of living, but a few have been able to respond successfully to the new economic challenges.

A large proportion of the immigrants are located in urban centres. Conditions in these areas are generally better than in the rural settlements, where the majority of the titular peoples are settled. In the early stages of the privatization of housing, and of small and medium-sized enterprises, it was sometimes suggested that minorities were better able to take advantage of such opportunities, since they were, on the whole, more prosperous than the titular peoples. Such feelings were much in evidence in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, where it was claimed that groups such as the Jews, Koreans, Russians and Uzbeks (all stereotyped as 'typical traders', in contrast to the image of the property-less nomadic forebears of the titular peoples) were 'buying up the national wealth'.<sup>124</sup> Elsewhere, though, minorities (e.g. Uzbeks in Osh) claimed that the local authorities were dominated by 'clans' who favoured the titular peoples. However, although the ethnic issue did undoubtedly cause problems, there were many other shortcomings in the way in which privatization was carried out at this time. Later, when procedures had been improved, ethnically-related complaints generally stopped. At the lower end of the socio-economic scale, the liberalization of the economy has undoubtedly tended to exacerbate ethnic tensions and there is often palpable animosity between the different groups. At the level of small businesses and above, however, there are normal working relationships. Commercial partnerships and networks of contacts are usually multi-ethnic.

Today, after several years of independence the prospects for minorities in the Central Asian states seem somewhat brighter than they did in the immediate aftermath of the demise of the Soviet Union. Relations with the titular peoples are, on the whole, improving. Some – though not all – of the initial fears about ethnic discrimination have proved to be groundless. The language laws are no longer causing such concern, since it is generally accepted that, for the foreseeable future at least, they will be interpreted more liberally than had originally been anticipated. There is a high degree of confidence in the

incumbent presidents and a conviction that while they remain in power conditions will be tolerable. There are still concerns about career prospects: the 'indigenization' of senior posts, for example, continues unabated. However, the problems of relocation are also now becoming clearer. Some of those who emigrated in the late 1980s or early 1990s have begun to return, disappointed and disillusioned by the difficulties of settling down in a new environment.

The exodus of minorities continues, but the volume has begun to decrease. The highest rate of emigration is now among the Germans. This is partly motivated by fears about possible future developments in Central Asia, but in large measure it is driven by the lure of better prospects in Germany. A substantial number of Greeks and Poles would like to emigrate, but quotas are restricted by the policies of the governments in their ethnic homelands, which seek to discourage mass repatriation. The movement of other deported peoples to homelands within the CIS such as, for example, the Crimean Tatars and Meskhetian Turks, is limited by the hostile attitudes of those who appropriated their lands and property. In these cases, remaining in Central Asia is often their best – or even only – option. The Koreans, the deported people who succeeded in adapting best to their new environment, continue to prosper in business, in government and in other public organizations. They maintain close contacts with North and South Korea (especially the latter), but show little inclination to leave the Central Asian states.

The position of the main indigenous (i.e. Central Asian) minorities has also improved. Regional cooperation between the Central Asian governments has helped to ensure that better educational, media and other cultural facilities are provided and that cross-border contacts are maintained. Thus in general, there are grounds for cautious optimism. Nevertheless, there are some areas in which the risk of instability and conflict remains high. The potential protagonists are not immigrants and titular peoples, but indigenous Central Asian groups. The most sensitive spots are in the densely populated Ferghana Valley, particularly along the Uzbek-Kyrgyz border in the vicinity of Osh and Jalal-Abad (scene of the 1990 Uzbek-Kyrgyz disturbances);<sup>125</sup> along the Uzbek-Tajik border in Leninabad Province; and along the Kyrgyz-Tajik border in the vicinity of Isfara (Tajikistan). Old rivalries over land and water, exacerbated by the additional burden of economic decline, rural unemployment, rapid demographic growth and the other factors outlined in this report, could very easily ignite brutal inter-ethnic conflicts in these areas. However, the one positive outcome of the 1989–90 strife was that it alerted both governments and the general public to the horrors of such clashes. Efforts are currently being made at local and national levels to monitor these situations and to defuse problems before they reach the point of explosion.



# Recommendations

**T**wo central characteristics of Central Asia should be considered in recommendations to promote minority rights and cooperation between communities in the region: the multi-ethnic character of the emerging states and the relatively high levels of stability in inter-group relations. Nevertheless, the policies, practices, and experiences of inter-group relations vary from country to country. Therefore these recommendations are intended as broad principles. They are formed in recognition that Central Asian societies have the greatest capacity to address the root causes of potential conflicts in a political and social climate where there are opportunities for dialogue between different groups and between government and society. This can create the foundations of political and social systems that are responsive to both the unique and the common needs of all communities.

## 1. Enhancing the civic character of the state

**S**tates should recognize the multi-ethnic and multicultural composition of their population and at the same time encourage the non-ethnic qualities of citizenship. Governments are urged to develop policies and practices which promote both a common civic identity, encompassing all communities residing in the country, and the distinct identities of ethnic, religious, and linguistic groups. In their official documentation, states should avoid imposing the categorization of individual citizens by their national or other identity. Where this practice exists, governments should work towards abolishing it. In the interim period, the decision to declare one's identity could be left to the discretion of the individual concerned, provided that states fulfil the following principle: 'no disadvantage may arise for a person belonging to a national minority on account of the exercise or non-exercise of such rights' (CSCE Copenhagen Document of 1990, paragraph 32).

## 2. Compliance with international standards of human and minority rights

**M**embership of international institutions obliges Central Asian states to implement international legal standards for the protection and promotion of minority rights. They must also cooperate fully with the relevant international mechanisms. Each government should consider signing and ratifying all international con-

ventions relating to human rights, including those recognizing the right of individual complaint. States are urged to take steps to fulfil their obligations in the legal, political, social, and economic sectors so that everyone in their domain may enjoy their rights. While it is understandable that each country will evolve governmental and legal systems suitable to its own context, the specific features should adhere to universally accepted human rights principles. National human rights commissions may help to ensure compliance with these standards and give people recourse in the event of violations of their rights.

## 3. Non-discrimination and equality of treatment

**G**overnments are encouraged to implement legislation ensuring that members of non-dominant groups are not discriminated against in the wider society. The judicial system should offer proper and effective redress of any discrimination as provided by Article 6 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1965). In some cases it may be necessary to implement special measures to overcome past discrimination in order to attain equality for all, in conformity with Article 1.4 of the same Convention. Governments in the region should be supported in the development of such independent institutions as ombudsman on minorities or special multi-ethnic boards with a mandate to address specific cases and to advise policy-makers on practices that can promote equality. The principle of non-discrimination and equality of treatment does not contradict minority rights provisions, such as education in minority languages, in accordance with the UN Declaration on Minorities and other international standards.

## 4. Right to effective participation

**T**he UN Declaration on Minorities and the OSCE Copenhagen Document of 1990 (paragraph 35) sets forth the rights of minorities to participate effectively in public life and in decisions concerning the minority to which they belong or the regions in which they live. Central Asian governments should take active steps to respect these rights. Mechanisms for effective representation of minority concerns should be structured into governing systems. If a government plans any measures that will affect a particular group, it should engage in a full consultation and obtain the informed support of the group. In countries where national minority assemblies or similar bodies exist, they should have competencies to recommend or advise governmental policy and legislation on issues

affecting minority communities. Membership should be representative and the selection and operating procedures should be transparent. International financial assistance may be needed to support the work of these bodies. There may also be a role for international organizations to provide technical assistance and training for staff, when requested, including training on international minority rights and on the operations of international institutions and mechanisms.

## 5. The right to associate

The rights to freedom of expression and association are universal. The UN Declaration on Minorities has furthermore enshrined the rights of minorities to establish and maintain their own associations, as well as to establish and maintain free and peaceful contacts with other members of their group or other groups both in-country and internationally. States should uphold the right to associate and not impede efforts by minorities to organize in a peaceful and lawful way to achieve their community's legitimate objectives.

## 6. Development of civil society

Central Asian governments are urged to create an environment conducive to the development and growth of NGOs and other forms of civic life. This can involve creating a secure legal environment that permits a broad definition of NGOs for registration purposes and tax laws that are beneficial to non-profit organizations. Governments are further urged to consider the emerging expertise of NGOs as a valuable resource in the evolution of their country and to consult with them in policy matters as appropriate. In addition, NGOs and other non-official forums may play an important role in conflict prevention in potentially explosive areas.

## 7. Regional cooperation

Promoting harmony among Central Asia's titular nationalities may be the most reliable means of guaranteeing the rights of all ethnic groups in the region. Efforts to create thriving, stable societies may therefore be enhanced by increased regional cooperation and confidence-building processes. Intergovernmental dialogue and bilateral treaties can develop solutions to problems involving national minorities in neighbouring states in keeping with international standards. International monitoring and support may be needed to ensure implementation. Exchange between representatives of local NGOs and joint initiatives to address common problems should also be encouraged. International organizations may have a useful role in convening and facilitating initial meetings on key areas of concern. The OSCE should be commended for its leadership in this area and encouraged to arrange meetings that allow the free expression of diverse points of view.

## 8. Development and security

All groups in Central Asia must have the opportunity to develop fully. Development programmes should not favour the wellbeing of certain groups over others. The roots of potential conflicts in many places appear to be connected with competition for land and resources. Poverty alleviation and social development may therefore be the key to long-term conflict prevention. Development schemes to improve the economic and social position of disadvantaged communities should be designed with community member involvement at every stage and be based on the values of self-reliant and sustainable development. Development organizations are encouraged to elicit communities' assessment of their own needs before planning for particular projects. They should gear their involvement to long-term, high-quality, programmes. International organizations should be conscious of the region's unique cultural and social context, and should avoid mechanically applying models used in other parts of the world. While lessons may be learned from elsewhere, they are best fostered through direct dialogue and exchange between organizations from other parts of the 'developing' world and Central Asian organizations.

## 9. International donor aid and avoiding the debt crisis trap

Governments and multilateral institutions need to address the economic and developmental factors which can undermine otherwise stable states and exacerbate tensions between communities: such as, large debt burdens and the social costs of structural adjustment programmes, environmental destruction and development projects which benefit only part of the population. International financial institutions are urged to behave responsibly to prevent long-term, costly problems for the region. Governments are urged to be cautious in accepting and negotiating the terms of aid so as to prevent the type of indebtedness which may eventually require assistance to maintain debt servicing. Priority should be given to ensuring that wealth generated from the exploitation of natural resources is reinvested for the benefit of a country's population and not for the sole benefit of the elites.

## 10. Creating opportunities for dialogue and exchange

International exchanges should be fostered to enable governmental and non-governmental actors throughout the region to meet with others who have experienced similar situations. It is also important for people in other parts of the world to learn from Central Asians, particularly with regard to their histories of multicultural societies. It is therefore important to facilitate Central Asian representation in international meetings on issues of common concern, including issues pertaining to minority rights and conflict prevention.

- 1 Terms such as 'indigenous' and 'immigrant' are used in this report in a descriptive sense, in accordance with standard dictionary definitions. They do not here carry specific legal or political implications. The term 'minority' is used here to refer to the non-titular peoples in a given state. It should be noted that this term, too, does not imply a legal distinction in status and rights. It is not widely used in Central Asia and in some states, notably Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, it is regarded as an inappropriate designation. Ethnic designations are generally preferred for this reason.
- 2 Four Central Asian republics, like many other Soviet republics, made declarations of 'sovereignty' (in Soviet usage a less absolute concept than 'independence') in 1989 (Kazakhstan being the exception). In the referendum of 17 March 1991 on the future of the Soviet Union, the Central Asian republics returned a vote of over 90 per cent in favour of retaining the Union. In the months following the unsuccessful coup to unseat President Gorbachev in August 1991, the same four Central Asian republics declared full independence. However, at the time these were seen as little more than formal statements, with no constitutional weight. Kazakhstan did not declare its independence until 16 December 1991, after the Soviet Union had ceased to exist in all but name.
- 3 Population statistics in the report are taken from the Soviet census reports of 1926, 1959, 1970 and 1989, unless otherwise indicated. Later surveys, carried out by the independent states, are often based on estimates rather than on full population censuses.
- 4 Parts of this Report have previously appeared in S. Akiner, 'Conflict stability and development in Central Asia', L. van de Goor, *et al*, *Between Development and Destruction*, London, Macmillan, 1996, pp. 257–97.
- 5 Skrine, F.H. and Denison Ross, E., *The Heart of Asia*, London, Methuen, 1899, give an interesting account of the Russian administration in the region, drawing informed parallels with the British administration in India (see especially pp. 408–16).
- 6 See, for example, the account by the American diplomat Schuyler, E., *Turkistan*, vol. 1, 3rd ed., London, Sampson Low, Marston, Searle and Rivington, 1876, pp. 115–23. But note the uprising against Tsarist rule referred to on p. 15 of this Report.
- 7 See Stalin, I., *Marksizm i natsional'nyi vopros*, (no place of publication), OGIZ, 1939, pp. 267–70.
- 8 Only Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan were accorded the status of full Union republics in 1924; the other units acquired this status subsequently, Tajikistan in 1929, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan in 1936. Minor boundary adjustments were made at various times during the Soviet period.
- 9 Smith, A.D., *The Ethnic Revival*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989, pp. 45–52, traces the history of the identification of nationality with language. Hobsbawm, E.J., *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780*, Cambridge, CUP, 1990, pp. 52–63, sets the question in a broader socio-political framework. In Central Asia, a region where bi- and multilingualism were the norm rather than the exception, language had not previously been a significant marker of identity.
- 10 Stalin, I., *Op. Cit.*, pp. 9–16.
- 11 According to the 1926 Soviet census the percentage of the titular nationality living within their own republic was as follows: Kazaks 93.6; Kyrgyz 86.7; Tajiks 63.1; Turkmen 94.2; Uzbeks 84.5. However, it should be borne in mind that there was considerable confusion over the definition of these ethnonyms, which, prior to Soviet rule, had scarcely been used by the indigenous population (the local categories of self-definition were clan, tribe, region and religion). Thus, although the Soviet territorial division was more successful, in terms of ethnic consolidation, than were similar divisions imposed by other colonial powers, it was nevertheless not quite as consistent as it purported to be.
- 12 See Kirkwood, M. (ed), *Language Planning in the Soviet Union*, London, Macmillan, 1989.
- 13 As Zajda, J., observed, the aims of Soviet education included 'teaching in the spirit of communism and developing a Marxist-Leninist philosophy of life', *Education in the Soviet Union*, Oxford, Pergamon, 1980, especially pp. 108–80. See also Morison, J., 'The Political Content of Education in the USSR', in J. Tomiak (ed), *Soviet Education in the 1980s*, London, Croom Helm, 1983, pp. 143–71.
- 14 The speed at which universal basic literacy was achieved is a subject of contention, see Akiner, S., 'Uzbekistan', in Kirkwood, *Op. Cit.*, footnote 10, p. 117, for a brief account of different assessments.
- 15 A good overview of Soviet policy towards religion is given by Walters, P., in S. Ramet (ed), *Religious Policy in the Soviet Union*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993, pp. 3–30. For policies towards Islam, the fullest account in English remains Bennigsen, A., and Lemerrier Quelquejay, Ch., *Islam in the Soviet Union*, London, Praeger, 1967. For more recent studies, see *Religion, State and Society: the Keston Journal*, vol. 24, nos 2–3, June–September 1996.
- 16 Massell, G., *The Surrogate Proletariat*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1975.
- 17 Aminova, R., *The October Revolution and Women's Liberation in Uzbekistan*, Moscow, Nauka, 1977; Pal'vanova, B., *Emansipatsiia musul'manki*, Moscow, Nauka, 1982.
- 18 Aspects of traditional Central Asian society are discussed at greater length in Akiner, S., 'Ethnicity, Nationality and Citizenship as Expressions of Self-Determination in Central Asia', in D. Clarke and R. Williamson (eds), *Self-Determination: International Perspectives*, London, Macmillan, 1996, pp. 249–74.
- 19 Patnaik, A., 'Modernization, change and nationality process in the USSR', in Shams ud Din (ed), *Perestroika and the Nationality Question in the USSR*, Delhi, Vikas, 1990, especially pp. 108–15, surveys the main theories.
- 20 The author had many conversations with members of the so-called 'nationalist' movements that appeared in the Central Asian republics in 1989–91; at that time, none were in favour of independence. In March 1991, Abdurahim Pulatov, the leader of the Uzbek movement Birlilik, went so far as to say that premature independence would greatly harm the fragile process of democratization in Central Asia.

- 21 Geiger, H.K., *The Family in Soviet Russia*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1970, esp. p. 128.
- 22 Fierman, W., (ed), *Soviet Central Asia: The Failed Transformation*, Boulder, Col., Westview Press, 1991.
- 23 See *Vestnik statistiki*, Moscow, no. 7, 1991; and Smith-Morris, M. (ed), *The Economist Book of Vital World Statistics*, London, The Economist, 1990. It should, however, be noted that the Soviet definition of infant mortality (as opposed to death by miscarriage, for example) was slightly different from that used by international organizations, hence the figures are not absolutely comparable.
- 24 Life expectancy at time of birth for men (1989) ranged from 61.8 years in Turkmenistan to 73.1 in Kazakstan (see *Vestnik statistiki*, *Op. Cit.*, p. 75).
- 25 For an evaluation of the effects of Sovietization on Central Asian women, see Akiner, S., 'Between tradition and modernity: the dilemma facing contemporary Central Asian women', in M. Buckley (ed), *Post-Soviet Women: From the Baltic to Central Asia*, CUP, Cambridge, Spring 1997, pp. 261–304.
- 26 During the Second World War many industries were relocated from the vulnerable European republics of the Soviet Union to Central Asia, especially to Uzbekistan; this strengthened and broadened the industrial base of the region. There are a number of industrial plants in Central Asia today that were formerly of all-Union importance, such as the aircraft-building factory in Tashkent.
- 27 See Akiner, S., 'Between tradition and modernity: the dilemma facing contemporary Central Asian women', *Op. Cit.*, pp. 261–304.
- 28 However, they did at times succeed in subverting the process to further local interests. Dinmukhamed Kunayev and Sharaf Rashidov, First Party Secretaries in Kazakstan and Uzbekistan respectively during the Brezhnev period, were outstandingly successful in pursuing their own national agendas.
- 29 A good analysis of the subject is given by Kaser, M. and Mehrotra, S., *The Central Asian Economies After Independence*, London, Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1992. A new enlarged and updated edition is forthcoming.
- 30 P. Svoik, the then Head of the State Anti-Monopolies Committee in Kazakstan, publicly voiced his concerns over the shortcomings of the privatization programme (*Kazakhstanskaia pravda*, 19 January 1994, p. 2). He saw the creation of state holdings, which brought together several enterprises, as a covert means of ensuring that the most promising industries remained under the control of bureaucrats. In Kyrgyzstan there were also major problems at all levels of the privatization process. Better results appear to have been achieved in Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, where a more cautious approach to reform was adopted.
- 31 According to Zh. Kulambetov (*Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, 13 April 1994, p. 3), some 80 per cent of the profits of a commercial enterprise were taken in tax (informed sources suggested an even higher rate). 'Mad interest rates' were charged on bank loans. The situation was similar in Kazakstan. By 1996, there had been little improvement in the situation in either state.
- 32 There are many reports in local newspapers on this subject; also full-length reports for international agencies. See, for example, *UNDP Human Development Report on Republic of Tajikistan 1995*; *UNDP Human Development Report on Kazakstan 1996*.
- 33 This trend is most pronounced in Turkmenistan, where the President has been given the official title of *Turkmenbashi* 'Leader of the Turkmen'; many streets and buildings have been renamed after him, also the port of Krasnovodsk on the Caspian Sea and the Kara Kum canal. In the other states the sentiments are as strong, but expressed somewhat more discreetly.
- 34 Kyrgyzstan is attempting to play the role of mediator between its two larger neighbours (*Panorama*, 7 May 1994, p. 1).
- 35 K. Eggert, writing in *Izvestiia*, 11 July 1993, summarized the reasons why Russia could not abandon Tajikistan; his primary conclusion was that it would open the way to 'Muslim extremism' in Central Asia. This argument still has many adherents in Russia.
- 36 Iran and China are equally enthusiastic about the prospects for this route. An 'Eurasian transport corridor' is projected, stretching from the port of Rotterdam to that of Lianyungang, via Eurasia, a distance of 10,900 km. The main rail links are already in place, but multiple tracks are currently being constructed in some parts of China so as to meet the expected increase in demand towards the end of the century.
- 37 The Caspian Sea Cooperation Zone was created, on Iran's initiative, in February 1992; it brings together the five littoral states of the Caspian Sea. It is primarily concerned with the protection and sustainable exploitation of the resources of the Sea.
- 38 The ECO developed out of a series of previous regional alliances, dating from 1955, between Iran, Turkey, Pakistan, and briefly, Iraq. In 1984 Iran attempted to revitalize the alliance with Turkey and Pakistan, but it was only in February 1992, when the first summit meeting of Heads of State of ECO members was held in Tehran, that the organization embarked on a sustained programme of activities. The five Central Asian republics, as well as Afghanistan and Azerbaijan, have now also become ECO members.
- 39 Freedman, R., 'Israel and Central Asia: a preliminary analysis', *Central Asia Monitor*, 1993, Washington, DC, no. 2, pp. 16–20, and Nedvetsky, A., 'Israel's policy: the post-Soviet Moslem republics', *Middle East Monitor*, September 1993, Nicosia, vol. 2, no. 2, pp. 28–36, give complementary analyses of the subject.
- 40 Yassir Arafat was given a warm reception by government officials when he visited Kazakstan in September 1993. Links between Kazakstan and the PLO date back to the Soviet period, when Palestinian students were encouraged to pursue their studies in Almaty. In December 1995, when President Nazarbayev made a three-day visit to Israel, he included a trip to Gaza to meet with Yassir Arafat. An agreement on bilateral cooperation was signed with Arafat.
- 41 See Djalili, M.R. and Grare, F. (eds), *Le Tadjikistan à l'Épreuve de l'Indépendance*, Geneva, Institut Universitaire de Hautes Etudes Internationales, 1995; an enlarged, updated version is to appear in English in

- 1997: *Tajikistan: The Trials of Independence*, London, Curzon Press. See also Jawad, N. and Tadjbaksh, S., *Tajikistan: A Forgotten Civil War*, London, Minority Rights Group, 1995.
- 42 See 'The north-south axis: what is shattering it?' in *Kyrgyzstan Chronicle*, 21 December 1993, no. 4, p. 4.
- 43 See Akiner, S., *The Formation of Kazakh Identity: From Tribe to Nation-State*, London, Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1995, pp. 75–7, for an alternative view.
- 44 President Islam Karimov was born in Samarkand and is a native speaker of Tajik; however, he studied and subsequently worked in Tashkent and has succeeded in building a firm base there; he has also consolidated good relations with leading members of the Ferghana group.
- 45 The question of Yomut–Ahal-Tekke rivalry was raised in articles in *Izvestiia* (20 May 1994) and *Segodnia* (12 May 1994); they evoked an angry rebuttal from a group of eminent Turkmen in *Izvestiia*, 9 June 1994.
- 46 The Turkmen, Uzbek and Kazak Presidents received huge, Soviet-style majorities (the Turkmen 99.5 per cent) in favour of extending their terms of office. In Kyrgyzstan the bill for a similar referendum was rejected by the Kyrgyz Legislative Assembly; the incumbent President thereupon called a snap election. He won 72 per cent of the vote but there were widespread allegations of misconduct. In Tajikistan likewise, the conduct of the presidential election was heavily criticized.
- 47 The armed forces of these states were created out of the units of the Soviet army that were stationed on their territory at the time of the collapse of the Soviet Union. These units, together with all their equipment and property, were taken under the jurisdiction of the respective governments by decree of the presidents of these republics. Subsequently, many of those who were of Slav origin, particularly the officers, elected to return to their own republics. These formations are thus already below strength. Moreover, they have major shortfalls in many vital areas. It will take a considerable amount of time, money and planned effort to create viable national forces. See further Akiner, S., 'Soviet military legacy in Kazakstan' in *Jane's Intelligence Review*, vol. 6, no. 12, 1994, pp. 552–5; Kangas, R., 'With an eye on Russia, Central Asian militaries practise cooperation', *Transition*, vol. 2, no. 16, August 1996, pp. 16–19; Green, J. (ed), *Jane's Sentinel: Security Assessment, Russia and the CIS*, London, Jane's, 1996, under relevant headings.
- 48 In July 1996 Chinese President Jiang Zemin made an official visit to Almaty and Bishkek; talks were held on, among other issues, cooperation in preventing inter-ethnic and religious conflicts and 'national separatism'. These questions relate primarily to the activities of Uighurs.
- 49 Rumer, B.Z., *Soviet Central Asia: A Tragic Experiment*, Boston, Unwin Hyman, 1989, pp. 76–104, gives a clear account of the problems and suggested solutions.
- 50 See Roberts, B., 'Central Asian water allocation: change through crisis', *Central Asia Newsfile*, April 1996, pp. 8–9. The World Bank, Asian Development Bank and USAID have undertaken various initiatives aimed at improving water allocation in the region. However, as Roberts indicates, institutional inertia is such that they have had little success. In May 1996 an agreement was signed between the governments of Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan which established quotas for the use of the waters of the Syr Darya. The intention is to balance the Kyrgyz need for water to generate hydroelectricity in the winter months with the needs of the Kazaks and Uzbeks for water for irrigation in the summer.
- 51 Members of Rastokhez, the first socio-political movement in Tajikistan, made this point very forcibly to the present author in 1990. Such views have since been aired, openly but off the record, at a number of environmental conferences in the region.
- 52 There was a slight fall in fertility rates in the mid-1970s, but they then began to rise again (see relevant data in *Naselenie SSSR 1987, 1988*, Moscow, Finansy i Statistika). In Kazakstan, however, the birth rate has been falling recently (*UNDP Human Development Report on Kazakstan 1996*, p. 31).
- 53 According to the demographer V. Perevedentsev ('Evraziia', *Moskovskie Novosti*, 11 October 1992), in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan in the near future for every 10 people who leave the working age range, another 35 will enter it.
- 54 The most notable case of fraud was the massive falsification of cotton production figures in Uzbekistan. This meant that the state was paying annually for the procurement of some 1 million non-existent tonnes of cotton. The profits were divided between high-ranking figures in Moscow and in Uzbekistan. Thousands of people were arrested and tried in connection with this scam in the mid-1980s. Similar scams were operated in the other republics. Most Central Asians would agree that corruption was widespread and that some action was required to curb it. Nevertheless, the ferocity of the anti-corruption campaigns was felt to be more politically than legally motivated. It was claimed that many innocent people were victimized. See McCauley, M., 'Agriculture in Central Asia and Kazakhstan in the 1980s' in S. Akiner (ed), *Political and Economic Trends in Central Asia*, London, British Academic Press, 1994, pp. 90–101.
- 55 In Uzbekistan, for example, in 1994, in the course of the annual anti-drugs campaign 60 hectares of high-grade opium poppies were destroyed. In southern Kazakstan alone, it is estimated some 5,000 tonnes of marijuana are now produced annually. (See reports by Denisenko, E., in *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 21 July 1994; also *Panorama*, 11 June 1994, no. 23, p. 13; *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 22 June 1994.)
- 56 In 1992, P. Conradi noted that in Kazakstan drugs were being found on children as young as eight or nine years-old (*The European*, 17–20 September 1992). An intergovernmental agreement on fighting drugs-trafficking was signed on 4 May 1996.
- 57 Lange, K., 'When drug lords are warlords', *Transition*, 20 September 1996, pp. 15–18; Pannier, B., 'Drug traffic on the rise in Central Asia', *Ibid.*, pp. 12–14.
- 58 Khaidarov, G. and Inomov, M., *Tajikistan: Tragedy and Anguish of the Nation* (no place of publication), LINKO, 1993, p. 42.

- 59 This is mainly in Uzbekistan; in Tashkent, the number of schoolgirls and college girls who wear the *hejab* is relatively small, but it is more common in provincial towns and villages.
- 60 This is quite a different party from the Adolat Social-Democratic Party founded by the Uzbek authorities in February 1995. There is yet another Adolat Party, founded, also in early 1995, by Shukrulla Mirsaidov, former Vice-President of Uzbekistan and an Adolat Uzbek movement in Osh (Kyrgyzstan).
- 61 Estimates given to the author by local Muslims in Spring 1994. See also Bichel, A., 'Political parties in Turkestan republics', *Bitiğ*, January 1997, pp. 8–11.
- 62 See Tajfe, H., *The Psychology of Minorities*, London, Minority Rights Group International, 1992, for a discussion of this topic.
- 63 The populations of the three khanates were predominantly Uzbek, but included significant numbers of Bukharan Jews, Central Asian Arabs, Central Asian Gypsies, Indians, Karakalpaks, Kazaks, Persians, Tajiks and Turkmen. Vakhobov, M.G. *et al.* (eds), *Istoriia Uzbekskoi SSR*, vol. 1, pt 2, Tashkent, AN UzSSR, 1956, p. 11.
- 64 Sukhareva, O., *Bukhara: XIX – nachalo XX v.*, Moscow, Nauka, 1966, provides a useful account of the different occupations of the various groups (the Bukharan Jews, for example, had a virtual monopoly of indigo-dyeing) and their areas of habitation.
- 65 Demko, G., *The Russian Colonisation of Kazakhstan 1896–1916*, Bloomington, Ind., Indiana University Press, 1960, pp. 98–9; Fomchenko, A., *Russkie poselenie v Turkestanskom Krae*, Tashkent, Fan, 1988, pp. 71–8. There were also other European settlers in the region. In the early 1930s Maillart, E., (*Turkestan Solo*, New York, G. P. Putnam Sons, 1935, pp. 269–75) encountered two colonies of German Mennonites in southern Kazakhstan. They disappeared without trace during the years of Soviet rule.
- 66 The first and to date still most detailed account is that by Nekrich, A., *The Punished Peoples*, New York, W. W. Norton, 1978.
- 67 Despite the fact that Russians were the dominant group in the Soviet Union, the highest post of all, that of General Secretary of the Communist Party, was held by non-Russians for over 40 years of the Soviet state's existence, i.e. the Georgian Stalin (1927–53) and the Ukrainian Khrushchev (1953–64). In 1989–91, the Kazak First Party Secretary, Nursultan Nazarbayev, was sufficiently influential for many to consider him as a credible candidate for the role of deputy to Mikhail Gorbachev.
- 68 The level of mixed nationality marriages (i.e. between two different Soviet nationalities) in the Central Asian republics in 1970 ranged between just under 11 per cent in Uzbekistan to over 20 per cent in Kazakhstan. However, all types of mixed marriages are included in these statistics (i.e. those that are inter-immigrant and inter-Central Asian, as well as those that are between immigrants and Central Asians). In rural areas, where the majority of the titular people in all five republics were located, the percentage of mixed marriages was far lower, especially in Uzbekistan (5.7) and Turkmenistan (3.4).
- 69 On 14 May 1993 the Supreme Kenges (parliament) of Kazakhstan adopted a resolution to change the Slav version of the names of a number of towns, settlements and provinces to conform with Kazak norms of pronunciation. In some cases the spelling was changed (e.g. Alma-Ata to Almaty, Chimkent to Shymkent), in others the whole name was changed (e.g. Gur'ev to Atyrau, Shevchenko to Aktau).
- 70 The situation was exacerbated by the fact that there were very few dictionaries or textbooks that would enable these groups to learn the state language. By 1996, five years after independence, matters had not improved greatly, judging from the material available in local bookshops.
- 71 In Kazakhstan, for example, less than three years after independence, the four highest offices of state (President, Vice-President, Prime Minister and First Deputy Prime Minister) were all held by Kazaks.
- 72 A. Elebaeva, of Network Representatives in Bishkek summed up the situation in Kyrgyzstan thus: 'Although state institutions of Kyrgyzstan support and encourage activities of the national and cultural associations of the Peoples' Assembly of Kyrgyzstan, there are only few positive results and most activities seem to be designed for media spotlight. [...] When it comes to materialization of all good intentions, there is little done in practice.' (*Network on Ethnological Monitoring and Early Warning of Conflict: Bulletin*, vol. 2, no. 4, September 1996, p. 19). The situation appears to be very similar in Kazakhstan and elsewhere.
- 73 Tabyshalieva, A., *Central Asia Today*, vol. 3, 1994, pp. 11–16.
- 74 For example, see *Islam under the Magnifying Glass*, published in Austria (no date) by a group called Light of Life. It contains tendentious statements about Islam and was being freely distributed by missionaries in Tashkent in 1995.
- 75 *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, 1 July 1996; *Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, 19–20 July 1996.
- 76 On 7 September 1995 the Tajik government signed an agreement with the Russian government 'On the settlement of questions of dual citizenship', but by the end of 1996 it had still not been ratified by the Russian Duma.
- 77 Preparatory Conference Material for 'Regional Conference to Address the Problems of Refugees, Displaced Persons, Other Forms of Involuntary Displacement and Returnees in the Countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States and Relevant Neighbouring States' (hereafter, CIS Conference 1996), May 1996, p. 15.
- 78 *Ibid.*, p. 9.
- 79 In October 1994, there were over 6,000 refugees from Tajikistan in Uzbekistan. More recent figures are not available, but most, it seems, are still there (*UNDP Human Development Report on Republic of Tajikistan 1995*, p. 51).
- 80 A Presidential decree of 24 April 1996 fixed a quota of 4,000 families for 1996 for repatriants wishing to settle in Kazakhstan. The measure was primarily intended to limit immigration from Mongolia. A sum of Tenge 670 million was allocated out of the state's unemployment fund for housing development and creation of infrastructure for the repatriants.



- 81 Tatimov, M.B., *Sotsial'naiia Obuslovlennost' Demograficheskikh Protessov*, Alma-Ata, Nauka, 1989, pp. 120–6.
- 82 Many writers have described this incident as an anti-Russian demonstration. However, Karshil Asanov, an outspoken Kazak nationalist (both during the Soviet period and since independence) was one of a number of eyewitnesses who gave a very different account of events. In his book *Pravda o Prestroike v Kazakhstane* (privately printed in Almaty in 1991) he stressed the fact that the meeting was not motivated by nationalistic sentiments, but rather by anger against the Party leadership (which included many Kazaks).
- 83 Statistics from CIS Conference 1996, Preparatory Material.
- 84 Unpublished 30-page article by Kazak Korean scholar, P.A. Pak-Ir, written in November 1995. The work is ostensibly about 'Russian-language Korean studies: yesterday and tomorrow', but in fact is a detailed account of the twentieth century history of this community, compiled by someone who has lived through much of it.
- 85 'Polish exiles in Kazakhstan: searching for home', *The Warsaw Voice*, 18 October 1992, noted that representatives of the Polish community estimated that there were 100,000–400,000 Poles in Kazakstan at that time. See also Gawęcki, M., 'Charakter zmian zbiorowości polskiej w strukturze etnicznej współczesnego Kazachstanu', *Przegląd Wschodni*, 1994, no. 2, pp. 165–95. Other informative articles in the Polish press on this subject include 'Jak daleko stąd, jak blisko' and 'Argumenty za repatriacją', *Rzeczpospolita*, 5 January 1995; 'Powrót po dwóch wiekach rozłąki', *Ibid.*, 18 July 1995.
- 86 In the north-west, quite a few Russians speak some Kazak and are generally on very good terms with their Kazak neighbours. Elsewhere, however, there is often considerable friction.
- 87 This is particularly evident in Xinjiang. The Kazaks there have been trying to persuade the Chinese authorities to allow them to establish a separate Kazak region, free of Uighur influence.
- 88 See further Akiner, S., *The Formation of Kazakh Identity: From Tribe to Nation-State*, London, Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1995, p. 28.
- 89 *Kazakhstanskaia Pravda*, 8 July 1995.
- 90 An interview given by the Deputy Mufti of Kazakstan to the Islamic Press Agency in September 1996. Saudi Arabia is funding the construction of the central mosque in Almaty, at an estimated cost of US \$13 million.
- 91 *Central Asia Newsfile*, December 1995, p. 11.
- 92 *Jewish Chronicle*, 22 November 1996, p. 6.
- 93 *Central Asia Newsfile*, December 1995, p. 11.
- 94 Elebaeva, A., *Op. Cit.*, p. 20.
- 95 See, for example, the report compiled for the World Bank by K. Kuehnast, December 1993, *Zhenshchiny i Ekonomicheskie Peremeny v Kyrgyzstane*, p. 9.
- 96 In 1989 Uzbeks in Osh region formed Adolat, a movement with an extremist nationalist agenda; it enjoyed considerable local support in 1990, but since then its influence seems to have declined. The Uzbek government does not encourage or support irredentist sentiments, but it is acknowledged that the possibility of a spontaneous move for unification with Uzbekistan cannot be excluded.
- 97 He appears to have objected to state interference in religious affairs, 'Muslims elect new mufti', *Summary of World Broadcasts*, SU/2805 g/6, 31 December 1996.
- 98 Tabyshalieva, A., *Op. Cit.*; also Tabyshalieva, A. and Amanbaeva, B., 'From undisputed society to ... preventing of disputes', *Kyrgyzstan Chronicle*, 26 July 1994, p. 3.
- 99 Communications from A. Tabyshalieva, a respected Kyrgyz researcher of religious affairs, in London, 1996.
- 100 The Pamiri nationalist movement Lali Badakhshan was organized in September 1989; it was banned by the Tajik Supreme Soviet in June 1992. In April 1992 the legislative body of the Badakhshan Autonomous Province proclaimed its independence, but it retracted this declaration in June of that year.
- 101 *Central Asia Newsfile*, July 1996, p. 6.
- 102 See *Almanac: Tajikistan 1994*, Chalidze Publications, Benson, Vt., pp. 45–6, where it is stated categorically that in 1992 'Leninabad (i.e. Khojent) had threatened to join Uzbekistan'.
- 103 Author's discussions with Iranian and Turkmen officials.
- 104 See further Momen, M., 'The Bahá'í community of Ashkhabad; its social basis and importance in Bahá'í history', in S. Akiner (ed) *Cultural Change and Continuity in Central Asia*, London, Kegan Paul International, 1991, pp. 278–305.
- 105 The fullest account of the history and culture of the Bukharan Jews in English is an unpublished paper (1995) on the subject by Professor Michael Zand of the Hebrew University, Jerusalem.
- 106 There is now a considerable literature in English on the Crimean Tatars. See, for example, the Minority Rights Group Report no. 6 (new ed.), 1980, *The Crimean Tatars, Volga Germans and Meskhetians*. An excellent, more recent work is Wilson, A., 1994, *The Crimean Tatars*, London, International Alert.
- 107 *Central Asia Brief*, vol. 12, nos 7–8, July–August 1996, p. 19.
- 108 Minority Rights Group Report no. 6, 1980; CIS Conference 1996, Preparatory Material.
- 109 Supplement on 'Perestroika i natsional'nye problemy', *Novoe Vremia*, 1989, pp. 10–11; also local Greek informants in Tashkent in 1995–6.
- 110 See article by Trofimov, D., 'Friday mosques and their imams in the former Soviet Union', in *Religion, State and Society: the Keston Journal*, vol. 24, nos 2–3, June–September 1996.
- 111 For example, in 1993 the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development extended a loan worth US \$38 million to the Kazak government. A large proportion of this sum – up to US \$30 million, according to some reports – was set aside for the hiring of foreign consultants. This aroused considerable anger in Kazakstan, where it was increasingly felt that the services provided by such individuals were over-priced and of dubious benefit. In November 1996, in response to these criticisms, the government decided to limit the budget for consultants from this loan to US \$16 million

- (see *Delovaia Nedelia*, 15 November 1996).
- 112 Williams, M., *International Economic Organisations*, New York, Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994, p. 83, speaking of the debt crisis in 'developing' countries; many of the problems he describes are already appearing in Central Asia.
- 113 There are major discrepancies in estimates of the Kyrgyz debt. On 13 January 1996, the Prime Minister, Apas Dzhumagulov, delivered a detailed survey of the preliminary statistics on the country's macroeconomic performance in the previous year. The figure given for the external debt was US \$487.7 million, servicing of which had cost Kyrgyzstan approximately US \$63 million in 1995; the country's principal creditors were the European Union, World Bank and Asian Development Bank (*Slovo Kyrgyzstana*, 18–19 January 1996, p. 7). However, Ivan Borisov, representing the Communist opposition, suggested that the figure was actually closer to US \$1.5 billion (*Res Publica*, 13 February 1996, p. 4).
- 114 *Panorama*, 30 April 1994, 12 October 1995 and 21 October 1995.
- 115 The lending policies of Western countries and Western-led international financial organizations are following a pattern very similar to that which is to be observed in other parts of the 'developing' world. A. Pettifer, in *Debt, the Most Potent Form of Slavery* (February 1996, London, Debt Crisis Network, c/o Christian Aid) describes analogous situations in Africa and Latin America. As the author points out (p. 21), in these countries a large proportion of bilateral aid is used to pay for imports and to service interest payments on debts. The result is that much of this aid bypasses the country in question and goes 'straight back into the coffers of creditors'.
- 116 The first NGOs in anything like a Western sense emerged in the late 1980s and were mostly concerned with ecological issues such as the Aral Sea and the Semipalatinsk testing site.
- 117 Report on DSA Conference, September 1996, prepared by Pratt, B. and Goodhand, J., INTRAC (Institutional Development of NGOs in Central Asia), Oxford, p. 6. The conclusions reached in this study are very similar to those arrived at independently by the present author. Pratt and Goodhand state that to date most NGO funding has been 'low quality', i.e. it is short-term and there is high conditionality. 'Donors ... have funded projects which give high initial visibility but have no long-term sustainability'.
- 118 *Ibid.*, p. 7.
- 119 Elebaeva, A., *Op. Cit.*, p. 21
- 120 On 29 March 1996, Belarus, Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan and Russia signed a wide-ranging agreement on 'The Regulation of Economic and Humanitarian Integration'. It envisages, *inter alia*, a customs union, the harmonization of legal systems, development of common energy and transport systems and coordination of foreign policy.
- 121 Foreigners sometimes see only the restrictive aspects of this social order, without understanding the benefits. It is worth noting that Central Asians who travel abroad are often shocked by the lack of social cohesion that they see in so many countries in the West.
- 122 There is anecdotal evidence to suggest that there is a high level of family stress; there is also some official confirmation that marriages are becoming more unstable. The Committee on Youth of the Akmola Province (Kazakstan), for example, produced statistics for 1995 which revealed that the number of marriages in the province had fallen by 25 per cent. The average duration of a marriage between people under 30 years of age was 3 years; 30 per cent of divorces occurred in marriages of less than one year's duration (*Kazakhstanskaia Pravda*, 3 July 1996, p. 1).
- 123 The Kazak parliamentary elections of March 1994 produced, out of a total of 177 deputies, only 49 Russians, 10 Ukrainians, three Jews, three Germans and six representatives of other ethnic groups; the remainder were all Kazak. In the December 1995 elections 68 Kazaks were elected, 31 Russians, two Ukrainians, one German, one Korean and one Uighur.
- 124 President Akayev himself went on the record to this effect in an interview included in a BBC documentary film series on Central Asia entitled *The Crescent and the Star*, recorded in 1992.
- 125 Elebaeva A., *Op. Cit.*, p. 20, is one of a number of Kyrgyz specialists on inter-ethnic relations who identifies the Osh and Jalal-Abad area as a potential trouble spot.

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