

THE FERGHANA VALLEY AS A FACTOR OF INSTABILITY

A Master's Thesis

by

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Ankara

September 2000

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The Institute of Economics and Social Sciences  
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by

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In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
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POLITICAL SCIENCE AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION  
BILKENT UNIVERSITY  
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I certify that I have read this thesis and have found it fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Political Science and Public Administration

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Supervisor



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## ABSTRACT

### THE FERGHANA VALLEY AS A FACTOR OF INSTABILITY

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After the collapse of the Soviet Union the huge territory of Central Asia turned to be one of the most conflict-ridden and unstable areas in the world. Several bloody uprisings have occurred and are occurring in the region, including some in the Ferghana Valley. This valley plays a crucial role in the economic, social and political life of three of five of the central Asian states: Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan.

The pre-Soviet and Soviet legacy and the problems raised since the independence of these states makes me to determine several factors that directly influence on stability in the region. This thesis tries to show how these factors destabilise situation in the Ferghana Valley and the Central Asian region as a whole.

Keywords: The Ferghana Valley, Central Asia, Instability, Conflict

## ÖZET

### BİR İSTİKRARSIZLIK ETKENİ OLARAK FERGANA VADİSİ

Sydykov, Aslan

Yüksek Lisans, Siyaset Bilimi ve Kamu Yönetimi Bölümü

Tez Yöneticisi: Doç.Dr. Jeremy Salt

Eylül 2000

Sovyetler Birliği'nin yıkılmasından sonra Orta Asya'nın geniş toprakları dünyanın ençatışmalı ve istikrarsız bölgelerinden biri haline geldi. Fergana Vadisi'ndekileri de içeren pek çok kanlı ayaklanma meydana geldi ve hala da meydana gelmektedir. Bu vadi beş Orta Asya devletinden üçünün ekonomik, sosyal ve siyasi hayatında çok önemli bir rol oynamaktır. Bu devletler Kırgızistan, Tacikistan ve Özbekistan'dır.

Sovyet öncesi ve Sovyet döneminin mirası ile bu devletlerin bağımsızlığından sonra ortaya çıkan problemler benim bölgenin istikrarını doğrudan etkileyen bazı etkenleri belirlememe sebep oldu. Bu tez bu etkenlerin Fergana Vadisi ve genel olarak Orta Asya bölgesindeki durumu nasıl istikrarsızlaştırdığını göstermeye çalışmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Fergana Vadisi, Orta Asya, istikrarsızlık, çatışma

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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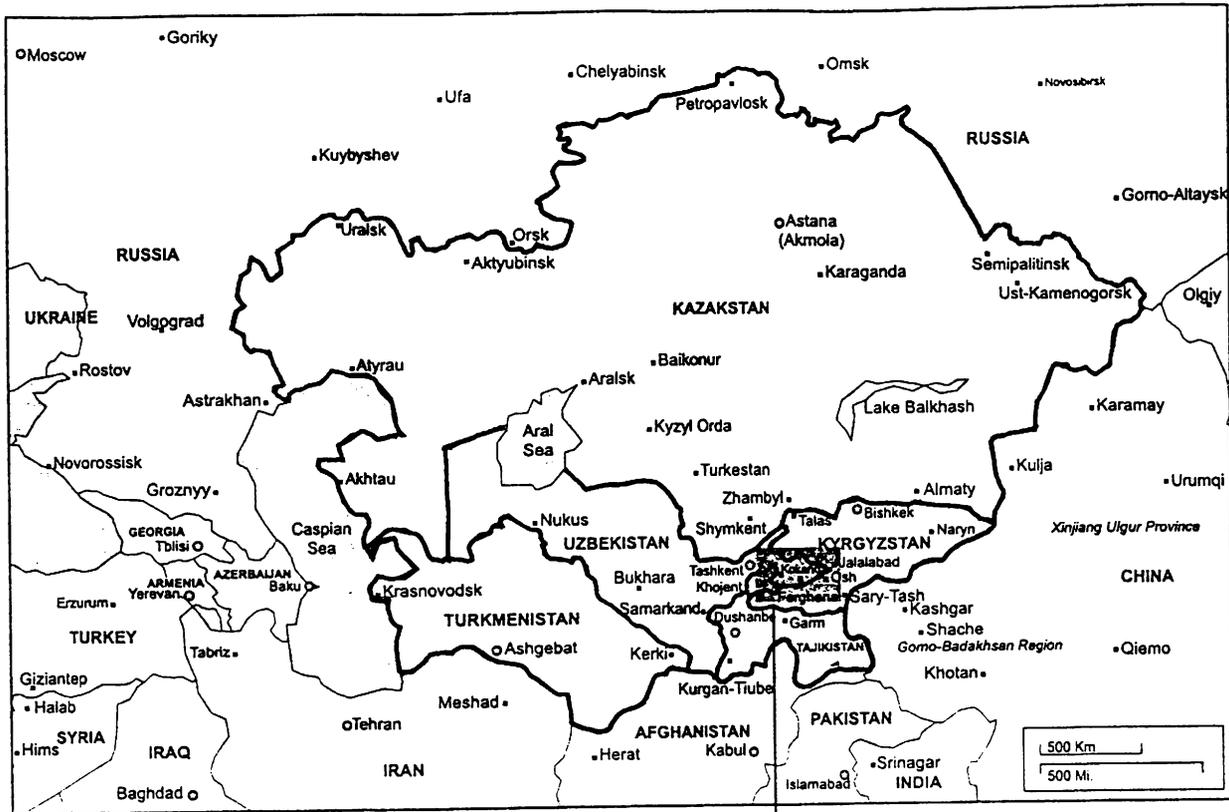
I am also grateful to Bilkent University, especially Tahire Erman and the Turkish Rotary Club who gave me an opportunity to study in this University.

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# MAP. CENTRAL ASIA AND THE FERGHANA VALLEY



Source: Tabyshalicva, Anara. 1999. *The Challenge of Regional Cooperation in Central Asia*. United States Institute of Peace, Washington

## CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

Many experts think that the Central Asian region is one of the most conflict-ridden and unstable areas of the former Soviet Union (FSU). Several bloody uprisings have occurred recently in the region, including some in the Ferghana Valley (see map)<sup>1</sup>. This valley plays a crucial role in the economic, social and political life of three of five of the Central Asian states: Kyrgyzstan, Tadjikistan and Uzbekistan. For the first time in its millennium-long history this small fertile overpopulated territory has been divided between independent states. Though the conflicts in the region are suppressed, the situation in the Valley makes it necessary to prepare different prognoses of development not only for these three republics but for the Central Asian region as a whole.

There are some internal and external problems that can lead to serious conflicts in the region. These are not only ethnic, religious or ideological but also economical, political, social, criminal, and ecological. One can predict that these conflicts will take place on a large scale and will be more difficult to solve as the situation deteriorates and as political leaders fail to evolve real mechanisms of resolution<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> In the years prior to independence and soon afterwards, several bloody conflicts occurred in the Ferghana Valley, including clashes between Uzbeks and Meskhetian Turks in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyz-Uzbek riots in Kyrgyzstan. Although they did not escalate into major regional confrontations, these conflicts demonstrated that ethnic tension in the region has reached a potentially explosive points. (Табышалиева, 2000).

<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the region's state officials do not encourage the scholarly examination of these conflicts and conflict situation in the valley. (Табышалиева, 2000)

The main problem for the region is the economy. The situation is complicated by a rapid growth of population that leads to strict competition for land, water and other resources. There is a high level of unemployment<sup>3</sup> and scarce well-paid work especially between different ethnic groups.

The establishment of international borders, the introduction of national currencies and different ways of economical reforms in its respective parts of Central Asia has complicated the situation in the historically integrated Ferghana Valley; one problem is how to preserve trade between interdependent parts of the valley after the establishment of many new customs barriers. Border control, corrupted customs, prohibition of barter and currency exchange problems are all further problems of life in the Valley. All these are the result of the policy of the central governments of Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, which is aimed at strengthening the dependence of respective parts of the valley on the centre.

Another serious problem in the region is the “black” (illegal) economy, which has been forming over decades. This is the main reason why corruption and organised crime are so widespread. Corruption of the state organs including police and courts probably is one of the reasons preventing successful democratic and economic reforms. But these problems are keener in the Ferghana Valley as it was and is the most corrupted area in the Central Asian region<sup>4</sup>; apart from official corruption the valley is a prime route for the smuggling of drugs.

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<sup>3</sup> According to the survey conducted by Institute for Regional Studies unemployment is the main factor to destabilise situation in the valley (survey was conducted in the South Kyrgyzstan). (Табышалиева, Алишева; Шукуров, 2000: 15)

The Soviet state formed in the region a wide network of social infrastructure covering general education, public health and so on, which the new independent states cannot maintain. As the result, in recent years, we see the sharp decline of education, health standards, the deterioration of the environment, an unequal distribution of resources between different ethnic groups and deterioration in the status of women<sup>5</sup>. All these tensions lead to instability in the region and especially in the Ferghana valley.

Growing regionalism, the renaissance of Islam and politicisation of the notion of “nation” are all potential sources of increased conflict and possible mechanisms for conflicts to take place.

Another problem for the Kyrgyz and Tajik parts of the Ferghana Valley is the presence of a huge number of refugees, which in its turn causes a deterioration in the economical situation in the Valley. Sometimes local people express their protest because the refugees live better as they receive help from humanitarian organisations (Табышалиева; Алишева; Шукуров, 2000: 23).

External factors play no a less role. Despite all attempts by regional governments to distance themselves economically, politically and culturally from Russia, this country is still important for the region, and especially for Ferghana where the Russian

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<sup>4</sup> About corruption in the valley and Central Asia see Critchlow, James. 1991. *Nationalism in Uzbekistan*. San Fransisco: Westview Press: 39-57.

<sup>5</sup> About sharp decline of living standard in the valley see Nalle, David. 2000. “The Ferghana Valley - 1999 A Personal Report” . *Central Asia Monitor* 1.

Federation is the only external state with a significant military force near the Valley. But Russia has no clear policy towards the region; some Russian policymakers are promoting a forward policy aimed at preventing conflict but other high officials openly claim that the continuing conflicts can serve Russian interests in the region<sup>6</sup>.

The geographical proximity, rapid economic growth, huge internal market and absence of political barriers for trade makes the People's Republic of China another important player in the region. Moreover, the importance of China will grow if a project to build the rail- and highway from Europe and Middle East to China through the Ferghana Valley is realised. This project would create jobs and increase living standards in the Valley, but at the same time ethnic conflicts in the west of China (East Turkestan) where the Muslim Turkic ethnic groups live may complicate the situation.

Iran and Turkey have not been able to become significant political and religious players in Central Asia though they have successfully developed economic relations with the region. Other states (Saudi Arabia and Pakistan) as well as private Turkish religious institutions have become the main sponsors of Islamic activity in the region (Табышалиева, 11). Turkey, Iran and Pakistan are important economic partners with the help of which the regional states want to reduce their dependence on the Russian infrastructure (for example, trade routes, gas and oil pipelines). All the above factors can threaten stability and peace in the region.

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<sup>6</sup> Solodovnik Sergey. 1993. "Stability in Central Asia and Versions of Russia's Strategy," *Vostok* (3)

The thesis consists of eight chapters including introduction and conclusion. The theoretical part of the thesis will include the notion of the term 'instability' in the context of late-developing states and is based on the possible mechanism of conflict and instability in the Ferghana Valley. I characterise Central Asian states as late developing with the specific characteristics of this model. These include the poor institutionalisation of state organs and a corresponding lack of legitimacy and capacity of the state to solve problems. The inability of the state to satisfy peoples' demands ends up with their activism. The weaker political institutionalisation is in relation to social mobilisation, the greater is the chance that the state will experience instability. In the Ferghana Valley factors such as economy, regionalism, religion and so on increase the level of social mobilisation. In other words these factors separately, together or in combination can destabilise the situation in the valley and in the region as a whole.

I followed basically three methods in this research. Firstly I conducted a literature review concerning the Ferghana valley. Secondly I followed developments in the region investigating the periodicals published since the collapse of the Soviet Union, especially in the last two years. Finally I conducted personal observation by visiting the region in 1998. This helped me to interpret the current political situation in the region. On the other hand it helped me to support my theoretical arguments through practical experience.

In my thesis I want to show Central Asia as a huge zone of instability, one concrete example of which is the Ferghana Valley. The Ferghana Valley in all aspects is an

important part of Central Asia combining the Soviet legacy with specific local features. This territory is now becoming a zone of instability. Moreover the destabilisation of the situation in the valley challenges stability in post-Soviet Central Asia as a whole. Several bloody uprisings had already happened there just before the collapse of the Soviet Union and currently fighting is going on between Islamist rebels and the Kyrgyz and Uzbek state military forces. I show in my thesis that all these factors which characterise the Ferghana Valley lead to instability and conflicts in the region.

## CHAPTER II. INSTABILITY AND LATE-DEVELOPING COUNTRIES.

The theoretical part of my thesis will be composed of two parts: first, what is meant by political instability and, second, one of the probable mechanisms of conflict.

Instability is “the range of behaviour which is to be regarded as constituting ‘destabilising’ political action”<sup>7</sup>. This behaviour is defined to include *coup d’etat*, attempted *coups d’etat*, acts of guerrilla warfare, riots, demonstrations, political strikes, deaths from political violence, assassinations, changes in the chief executive, and cabinet changes, together with changes in types of normative structure, changes in party system and change in civilian-military status<sup>8</sup>.

D. Sanders agrees that there are several types of instability and since our unit of analysis is the ‘political system’, it makes sense to employ two of the conceptual dimensions of political systems: ‘government’ and ‘regime’<sup>9</sup>. Then I suggest that the instability of governments or of regimes is manifested either in the form of changes in the government or regime, or in the form of challenges (violent or non-violent) to either the government or regime (see appendices, figure 1).

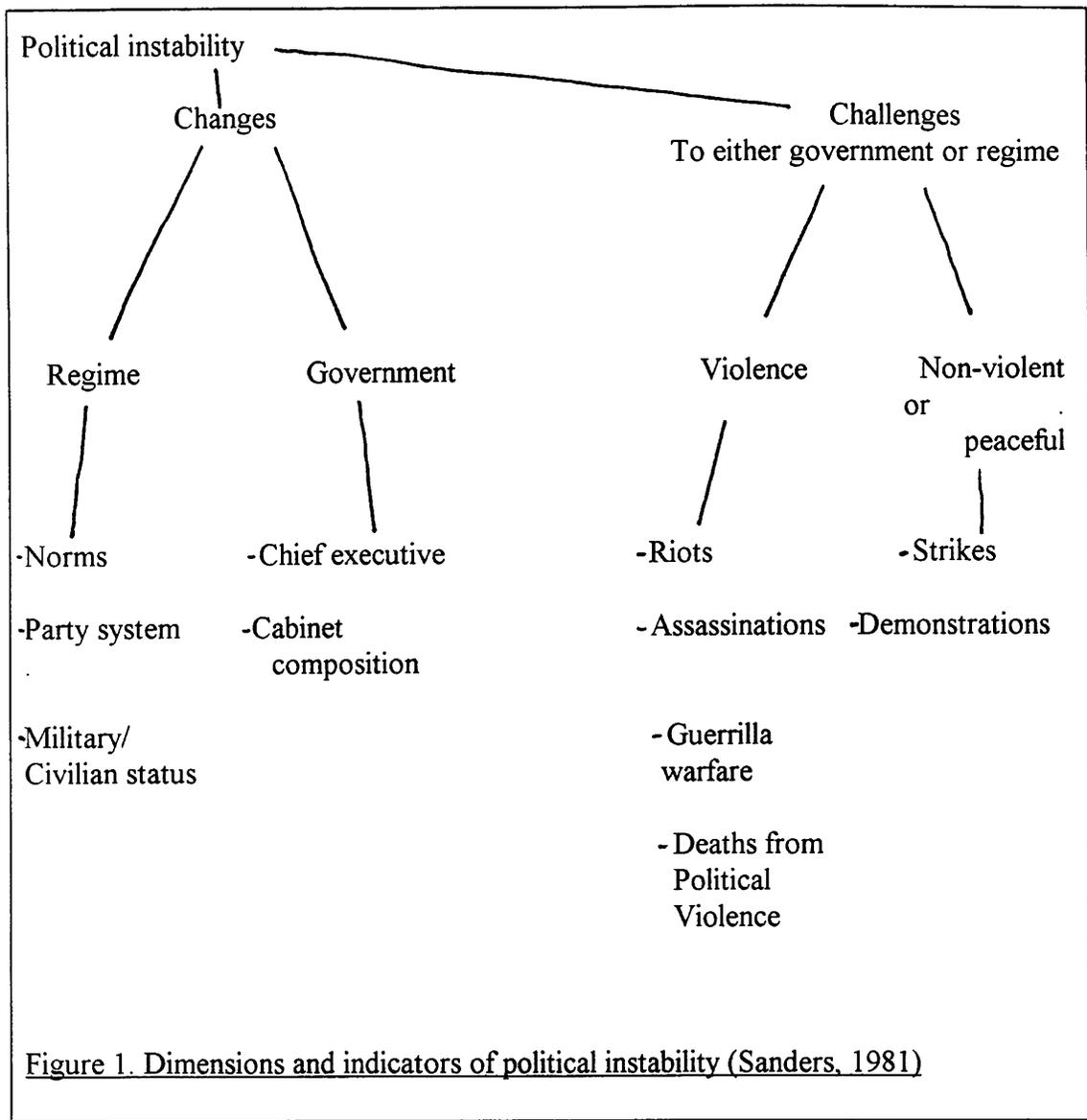
In states with relatively low levels of institutionalisation which are evident within Central Asian states there is a general tendency for relatively mild forms of

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<sup>7</sup> Sanders. David. 1981. *Patterns of Political Instability*. London: The Macmillan Press LTD. 197

<sup>8</sup> Sanders. David. 1981. *Patterns of Political Instability*. London: The Macmillan Press LTD. 197

<sup>9</sup> Sanders. David. 1981. *Patterns of Political Instability*. London: The Macmillan Press LTD. 198



instability (peaceful challenge and governmental change) to develop an internal dynamic of their own and to escalate into more disruptive forms of political behaviour (violent challenge and regime change instability).

Secondly, it is important to note that these states still depend on the former hegemony of Russia. Russia's superior power will directly influence future Central Asian

stability. But we argue that the consequences of this will depend on the nature of regimes in the region and domestic stability in Central Asia.

In this study Russian preponderance is taken as a given. Indeed, because of the vast difference in relative power between the Russian Federation and the Central Asian states, their relation should present an easy case for neorealism<sup>10</sup>. But power imbalances are not the main reason for conflict to generate<sup>11</sup>: as Menon and Spruyt have written (1999):

“An asymmetric balance of power is a systemic precondition for conflict but domestic variables are the key in explaining whether and how conflict will occur. I argue that the consequences of preponderance depend on the nature of the regime in the stronger power and the level of domestic stability in the weaker state”.

The particularities of state formation in Central Asia influence stability in the region. First, sovereign territoriality was imposed by an external power. In the beginning of the twentieth century the imperial centre formed the present borders of the states, according to the classical pattern of the policy of “divide and rule”: Moscow supported elites that were favourably disposed to the Communist Party, assigned largely arbitrary borders to the republics and autonomous territories, and allotted such territories to a specific nationality. This was a deliberate strategy to weaken peripheral resistance by institutionalising ethnic differences (Menon and Spruyt, 1999).

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<sup>10</sup> Rajan Menon and Hendrik Spruyt. 1999. “The Limits of Neorealism: Understanding Security in Central Asia”. *Review of International Studies* 25: 87

Second, the Central Asian states are late developers. Late developing states have traditionally opted for interventionist economic policies and authoritarian government to catch up to and compete with earlier developers<sup>12</sup>. Third, because sovereign, territorial rule was imposed, rival identities, such as clan membership, Islam, ethnic, and regional affinities have not been displaced by centralising, high capacity states. When statehood is imposed on less developed societies, governments will constantly be challenged by alternative logics of political organisation<sup>13</sup>. Fourth, the absence of protracted interstate conflict means that the Central Asian state institutions have not been strengthened by war<sup>14</sup>. Fifth, these states lack any experience with democratic multi-party systems. Indeed, in the wake of the collapse of the USSR the communist elites have recast themselves in nationalist garb and have created authoritarian regimes<sup>15</sup>.

These particularities suggest that local governments face three principal domestic challenges: creating a national identity, building effective political institutions, and coping with late economic development.

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<sup>11</sup> Rajan Menon and Hendrik Spruyt. 1999. "The Limits of Neorealism: Understanding Security in Central Asia". *Review of International Studies* 25: 87.

<sup>12</sup> The East Asian states are prime examples.

<sup>13</sup> Migdal, J. 1988. *Strong Societies And Weak States*, Princeton

<sup>14</sup> Tilly, Charles. 1985. "War Making And State Making As Organised Crime". In Peter Evans, D. Rueschemeyer and T. Skocpol, ed.s. *Bringing The State Back In.*, Cambridge

<sup>15</sup> The wide spread opinion in the West that the President of the Kyrgyz Republic Askar Akaev wasn't a member of communist elite is wrong. He was the Communist Party secretary on Science which was high position. Aiyp Naryn. 1996. "Privatising Democracy". *Stolitsa* (2)

The problem of building effective political institutions is central to understand the conflict in Central Asia. It constructs and gears the mechanisms of conflict. Political institutions need to be institutionalised. By political institutionalisation I mean the combination of legitimacy and capacity possessed by states<sup>16</sup>. Legitimacy is a function of the degree of popular support. Capacity is the ability to extract resources, maintain stability and cope with opposition. I define social mobilisation as the activism of citizens who make demands on the state as a result of dissatisfaction and exposure to political, cultural, economic, and religious forces<sup>17</sup>. Mobilisation can be based on class, region, clan, religion or new ideologies that transcend such divisions.

The weaker political institutionalisation is in relation to social mobilisation, the greater the chances are that the overburdened state will experience instability<sup>18</sup>. Political institutionalisation and social mobilisation will be particularly acute in Central Asia. Under conditions of weak political institutionalisation and strong social mobilisation<sup>19</sup>, ruling elites will either be displaced or will use repression to retain power. Either response can lead to domestic disorder.

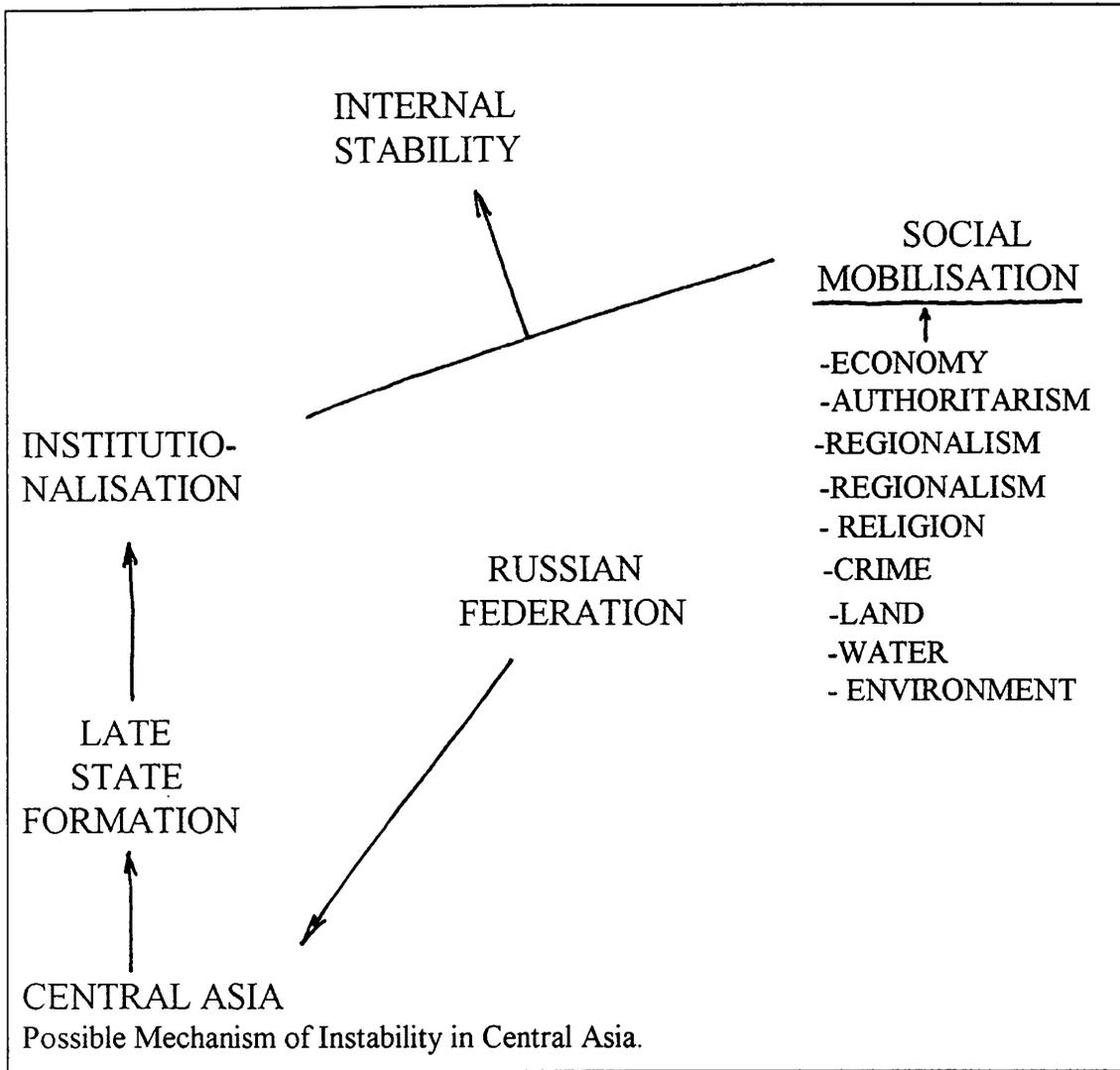
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<sup>16</sup> Roberts, Geoffrey and Alistair Edwards. 1991. *A New Dictionary of Political Analysis*. London, New-York, Melbourne, Auckland: Edward Arnold, 82

<sup>17</sup> Roberts, Geoffrey and Alistair Edwards. 1991. *A New Dictionary of Political Analysis*. London, New-York, Melbourne, Auckland: Edward Arnold, 65

<sup>18</sup> S. Huntington. 1968. *Political Order in Changing Societies*. New Haven

<sup>19</sup> A good example is the Tajik civil war. An imbalance between institutionalisation and social mobilisation in this country led to a breakdown of state authority.



## CHAPTER III. UNDERSTANDING THE PAST.

### 3.1. FERGHANA VALLEY AS A GEOGRAPHICAL UNIT.

The Ferghana Valley is surrounded by high mountains in the eastern part of Uzbekistan, southern part of Kyrgyzstan and the northern part of Tajikistan. The Kyrgyzstan lands occupy primarily the mountains and foothills of the Tien-Shan Mountains in the north and the Alay-Turkistan Mountains in the south, and from these mountains flow most of the waters which flow into the Syr-Darya, the main watercourse draining the Ferghana Basin. The Tajikistan lands are situated at the western opening of the valley where the Syr-Darya emerges from the valley into the desert-steppe, and includes the mountains to the north and south. The Ferghana Valley territories of Uzbekistan occupy the central part of the Valley, where the bulk of the agricultural land, most of the major cities, and more than half of the region's population are located (Табышалиева, 19). In each of the countries, travel to the Ferghana Valley lands requires that one either go over mountain passes or cross the territory of another country<sup>20</sup>.

In the respective republics there are the following administrative units: Andijan, Namangan and Ferghana districts (*hokimiat*) in Uzbekistan; Osh, Jalal-Abad and Batken<sup>21</sup> districts (*akimiat*) in Kyrgyzstan; Leninabad district (*oblast*) in Tajikistan.

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<sup>20</sup> *Kyrgyz Jergesi*. 1990. Frunze (Bishkek):322

<sup>21</sup> Batken is a district since 12 October 1999. Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), Newline, 12 October 1999

The Ferghana Valley is important in the sense of politics and economy for the respective republics. For instance, the Leninabad *oblast* is a strategic part of Tajikistan. There one of third of population of Tajikistan lives; it also consists of one fifth of its territory; it has three quarters of the agricultural land and produces one third of Tajikistan's GDP (Олимов и Олимова: 1994). At the same time it is the most industrialised region of the republic and is the leader of foreign investment attraction (Олимов и Олимова: 1994). The taxes, which the inhabitants of the region pay to the central government, are the only permanent financial source for the republic (Олимов и Олимова: 1994). Also the region has important political influence, for all the leaders of the republic were from this area during the Soviet period<sup>22</sup>.

A full forty percent of the territory and fifty one percent of the population of the Kyrgyz Republic lies in the Ferghana Valley part of Kyrgyzstan (South) (Табышалиева, Алишева и Шукуров, 2000: 6). This territory will play an important role in the future of this state. It has half the arable land, produces most of the cotton and has most of the coal reserves, more than half of all agricultural production and forty percent of industrial production<sup>23</sup>. The Republic's main energy sources such as oil, natural gas, coal and hydro-electric power are also located here<sup>24</sup>.

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<sup>22</sup> Tajikistan's Leninabad region was the home of all republican Communist party First Secretaries from 1943 until independence. Keith Martin. 1997. "Welcome to the Republic of Leninabad?". *Central Asia4* (10)

<sup>23</sup> National Statistical Committee of The Kyrgyz Republic, <http://stat-gvc.bishkek.su/>

<sup>24</sup> *Кыргыз Энциклопедия*. 1989. "Ош Обласы", Бишкек

Although the Uzbek Ferghana Valley comprises a small part of the state's territory it is also important for Uzbekistan. Indeed it is the most populated and is the core of Uzbekistani population where the five of the ten largest cities of the state are situated<sup>25</sup>. Consisting of a little bit more than 4.3 percent of its territory, Uzbek Fergana contains twenty seven percent of the population, one third of its arable land and produces almost a quarter of cotton and agricultural production<sup>26</sup>. This territory is the source of the main water resources of the republic. Moreover the *Minbulak* oil reserve is the biggest discovered, allowing Uzbekistan to be independent in oil production<sup>27</sup>. The Coca-Cola plant in Namangan and UzDaewoo in Asaka increase the industrial importance of the region. Also Tashkent (population 2.1 million, 1990; Glen E. Curtis, 1996), the biggest city in Central Asia, is located only 70 miles from the valley and depends on the valley's supply of food production, cotton and water.

Ethnic connections in the region are very strong. It is difficult to find a family which has no relatives in other parts of the valley. In the Ferghana Valley many ethnic Uzbeks live in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan and at the same time a lot of Tajiks live in Uzbekistan. Uzbeks constitute a very substantial minority in the Ferghana Valley provinces of Kyrgyzstan (twenty seven percent) and of Tajikistan (thirty one percent), and sometimes form the majority population in rural areas bordering on Uzbekistan (UNFVDP). Also the close proximity of Tashkent to the valley compared to Bishkek

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<sup>25</sup> Glenn E. Curtis eds. Uzbekistan. Federal Research Division. Library of Congress. [http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+uz0000\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+uz0000))

<sup>26</sup> United Nations "The Ferghana Development Program" (UNFVDP). The Socio-Economic Situation. <http://www.ferghana.elcat.kg/pe-soci.htm>

and Dushanbe adds to the influence of Uzbekistan and its attempts to gain hegemony in the region.

Furthermore, among the Uzbeks, Tajiks and Kyrgyzes, there is also significant diversity. The Kyrgyz group, for example, subsumes marked differences not only between northern and southern, urban and rural groups, but also among genealogical groups that have a degree of group solidarity and play a significant role in the political life of republic<sup>28</sup>. Amongst the Uzbeks, there are marked differences between the urban and rural populations, those historically or currently engaged in agricultural versus pastoralism, and amongst groups of differing heritage<sup>29</sup>. The Tajik population includes people who have deep roots in the Valley and who often are much influenced by the long-standing contact with Uzbek, Kyrgyz and other neighbours, as well as others who have migrated more recently from remote mountain regions (Олимов и Олимова: 1994).

Thanks to its geographical location and historical experience the valley's most important economical ties and infrastructure form one whole unit. For example, to go from one part of south Kyrgyzstan to another you have to cross the borders of Uzbekistan several times. The only highway connecting Tashkent and Uzbek

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<sup>27</sup> RFE/RL Newswire, 5 August 1993

<sup>28</sup> Huskey, Eugene. 1997. "Kyrgyzstan: the Fate of Political Liberalisation". In Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott, ed.s., *Conflict, Cleavage and Change in Central Asia and Caucasus*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 254

<sup>29</sup> For information on Uzbek clans see Carlisle, Donald. "Power and Politics in Soviet Uzbekistan: From Stalin to Gorbachev". In William Fierman ed., *Soviet Central Asia: Failed Transformation*. San Francisco: Westview Press, 93-131.

Ferghana Valley goes through Tajikistan. After the collapse of the Soviet Union this entire infrastructure appeared in different states. Moreover the border division made by communists in the twenties century does not match the ethnic reality and now the border problem is urgent. For instance the Tajik part is closer to Uzbekistan than to other parts of Tajikistan as Buhara and Samarkand are considered by Tajiks historically to be theirs<sup>30</sup>. There are also Uzbek and Tajik enclaves in Kyrgyzstan and Tajik in Uzbekistan.

In other words geographical unity and ethnic and economical connections made the Ferghana Valley an integrated unit in the past; however, since the collapse of the USSR, independence and the demarcation of international borders have caused competition and tension.

### 3.2. HISTORICAL LEGACY.

The Ferghana Valley never played a leading role in the region like Samarkand or Tashkent. The only exception, which is closely connected with present geopolitical situation in the Ferghana Valley, was the Kokand Khoganat<sup>31</sup>. For the first and last

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<sup>30</sup> Mirzo Ziyoyev, a Tajik government minister has told journalists that Samarkand and Bukhara, now inside Uzbekistan's borders, are traditionally Tajik cities, implying that they should be included within Tajikistan's borders sometimes in the future. Bruce Pannier. "Central Asia: Border Dispute Between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan Risks Triggering Conflict". RFE/RF, 8 March 1999

<sup>31</sup> Akbarzadeh, Shahram. 1997 "A Note on Shifting Identities in the Ferghana Valley". *Central Asian Survey* 16 (1):66

time in its history, under Kokand governors the territory of the Fergana Valley constituted one political unit.

Seventy-five years of Soviet power in the region probably made the biggest influence after the coming of Islam 1200 years ago. During communist rule, particularly the national definition made by them in the 1920s, the region changed very much politically, economically, socially and even religiously.

Indeed the Soviet legacy appears everywhere. Its political influence is shown in three ways. First, there have been different socio-economic problems since Soviet times. Secondly the role of the centre whether Tashkent or Bishkek is the same, with strictly limited self-governing for the periphery. And finally the Soviet tradition to pass a liberal, democratic law and then not follow it is still in practice.

Now most experts think that the establishment of authoritarian types of government in Central Asian states is the logical continuation of pre-soviet history<sup>32</sup>. It may be the explanation why this type of government is so popular, at least in Uzbekistan. President Karimov likes to repeat that at times of big social and economical changes strict control by the centre is necessary for the maintenance of stability and peace<sup>33</sup>. In fact despite the political and social tensions that started in the age of Brezhnev, most people think that Gorbachev's *perestroika* (reconstruction) was the main cause of

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<sup>32</sup> This means the leading Russian expert on Central Asia Oleg Panfilov. Panfilov, Oleg. 1998. "Five Royal Presidents Rule Their Kingdoms". *Transitions* 5 (10) October

<sup>33</sup> Биряков, Сергей. 1997. "Республика Узбекистан: Модель Авторитарной Модернизации". *Восток* 1: 87-88

conflicts in Ferghana Valley in 1989 and 1990 and then the civil war in Tajikistan. Gorbachev weakened the control of the central government, allowed different political, ethnic and religious groups to declare their opinion (Биряков, 1997).

Another aspect of the Soviet policy in Central Asia was the broad spectra of questions formed after the division of Turkestan<sup>34</sup> into national and ethnic groups. This division of the region into national republics had no precedent in world history; everything was done to keep the Kremlin's control over the territories as the arbiter in questions was basically created by itself (Молдалиев: 30-31). In this sense the Ferghana Valley is a good example of the Soviet legacy which will continue for decades after the collapse of the state which produced it.

The economic legacy is unclear. On the one hand, as the poorest Soviet republics, they were subsidised<sup>35</sup>. On the other hand, the success was measured in full literacy, free though poor health care, full employment (till the end of Brezhnev era), significant infrastructural development (rail- and highways, electrification, hydro-electric stations and so on), access to service and employment of women. Compared to the almost total absence of all these things before Soviet power the results are not bad. Maybe that's why the collapse of the Soviet Union so heavily affected the Central Asian states<sup>36</sup>. In this respect the Ferghana Valley is more vulnerable as

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<sup>34</sup> Turkistan is a geographical notion of the Central Asian territory before national delimitation in 1924

<sup>35</sup> The Kyrgyz Republic's president Askar Akaev has acknowledged that before the Soviet Union is collapsed ten per cent of the republic's budget was subsidised by the centre. Akaev's interview to *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 17 October 1997

being the most heavily populated and as local elites are not in favour of present regimes in Tashkent, Bishkek, and Dushanbe.

But the Kremlin's policy of economic specialisation of regions where every region was responsible for particular goods led to the quasicolonial exploitation of natural resources and the absence of developed industry in Central Asia. All of this deeply influenced the economy of the states. Probably one of the most serious factors in the Fergana Valley would be the ignorance by Soviet planners of administrative borders between the republics. Now most natural gas and electricity from Uzbekistan goes to its Ferghana part through Tajikistan. Trade routes between North and South Tajikistan go through Uzbekistan. Businessmen must take into account new realities: sometimes barter is the only way to make business operations. Moreover the customers' and transit fees create obstacles for business.

A centralised planned economy led to two other results, which are now the reality of their economies. Firstly, there is still the parallel (black) economy that includes the system of bribes and the development of a kind of economic system that can be called organised crime. And now the black economy, the development of which was caused by the shortcomings of Soviet centralised planned economy, is significant in volume compared to the official one<sup>37</sup>. Secondly, in spite of all negative things, the economy

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<sup>36</sup> Standard of living fell sharply during. Everyone knows "life was better under communism". Nalle, David. 2000. "The Ferghana Valley- 1999 A Personal Report" . *Central Asia Monitor* 1

<sup>37</sup> Olimov, Muzaffar and Saodat Olimova. 1994. "Regionalism in Tajikistan: Its Impact on the Ferghana Valley". *Perspectives on Central Asia* 1 (3)

of the Central Asian states was “closer” to a market economy than in other parts of FSU (Former Soviet Union).

Soviet power significantly influenced religion in almost all spheres of life but the USSR failed to control Islam in the region completely. Many Muslims attended “unofficial” mosques, others believed through traditions and customs. In other words there was always a “parallel” Islam which continues to exist to the present day. And it is particularly in the Ferghana Valley that a lot of followers of conservative forms of Islam took root and particularly in this region the struggle against Islam was most severe even in the days of *perestroika*<sup>38</sup>.

Definitely it is difficult to summarise all Soviet legacies and the above are only some main features. Though continuing to be in the grip of the Soviet legacy the leaders of the successor states sometimes seems don't understand it. All spheres of conflicts whether political or over economic resources, regional division, Islam, the decline of social security and ethnic relations, bear the deep and continuous influence of the Soviet era; any understanding of any conflict in the Ferghana Valley must begin with an understanding of this legacy.

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<sup>38</sup> Бабажанов. Бахтияр. 1997. “Ферганская Долина: Источник или Жертва Исламского Фундаментализма?” *Центральная Азия* 12

## CHAPTER IV: SOCIETY IN TRANSITION.

### 4.1. ECONOMY IN DECLINE.

The Ferghana valley is one of the most populated regions in the world: about 450 people per kilometre (Rowland, 1992: 232) including a significant proportion of young people<sup>39</sup>. From 1979 till 1993 the population of the three Uzbek parts of the Ferghana increased by 44 % (from 4.1 million till 5.9 million.). Taking into the consideration the contemporary growth of population one can forecast that within six it will increase to seven million<sup>40</sup>. Moreover, such growth will affect and complicate the ethnic composition of the region because of different population growth rate among different ethnic groups.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union the development of the economy did not keep up with population growth. On the contrary, the economic situation is in crisis; for example, from 1990 till 1996 the GNP of Kyrgyzstan fell by 53.5 per cent<sup>41</sup>, which severely affected the South where agricultural production is dominant.

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<sup>39</sup> This is the second densely populated territory in the world after South China. *Российская Газета*: 4, 15 May 1993

<sup>40</sup> Economical Report on Uzbekistan for 1991. 1992. Tashkent

<sup>41</sup> Abasov, Rafis. June-July 1999. "Problems of Economic Transition in the CIS: the Case of Kyrgyzstan", *Russian and Euro-Asian Bulletin*, 8 (6).

Serious economic problems made President Karimov sack two of three heads of districts during five months<sup>42</sup>. The economic figures especially the cotton crop, which is the strategic product of Uzbekistan, sharply declined. In 1997 because of bad weather conditions the peasants produced only 60 percent of planned cotton<sup>43</sup>. This caused a serious decline in the living standard of those for whom cotton growing is the only income. Many Soviet styled collective farms went bankrupt and people were forced to live on income from other sources<sup>44</sup>.

The Leninabad *viloyat* of Tajikistan, contrary to the Uzbek and Kyrgyz part of the Ferghana valley, was always the most important economic part of the state. For instance, before the civil war this region produced 65 percent of tajikistan's GNP; this figure has probably increased, as the region is the only part of the state which was not damaged severely by war<sup>45</sup>. In Tajikistan, which was the poorest republic in the former Soviet Union<sup>46</sup>, the civil war turned the economy into chaos and the north receives nothing from the central government. Although the living standard of the region is much better than in other parts of the republic it is worse than it used to be several years ago<sup>47</sup>. Currently, with the emergence of additional difficulties with its

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<sup>42</sup> RFE/RL. 12 March 1996. *Newsline*.

<sup>43</sup> Rafik Saifulin. "The Ferghana Valley: A View from Uzbekistan". *Perspectives on Central Asia*

<sup>44</sup> Ilkhamov, Alisher . 2000. "Kolkhoz System vs Peasant Subsistence Economy in Uzbekistan". *Central Asia Monitor*, 4

<sup>45</sup> Olimov, Muzaffar and Saodat Olimova. 1994. "Regionalism in Tajikistan: Its Impact on the Ferghana Valley". *Perspectives on Central Asia* 1 (3)

<sup>46</sup> Олимов и Олимова. 1995. "Независимый Таджикистан – Трудный Путь Перемен". *Восток* (1)

<sup>47</sup> Cheterian, Vicken. 1999. "Pressure-Cooking in the Ferghana Valley". *Transitions* 3 (6), March

main trade partner Uzbekistan people of the region feel themselves more isolated politically and economically (Олимов и Олимова: 1994).

The economic situations in the three parts of the region are complicated also by social contradictions. Firstly, the people of the valley feel themselves insulted compared with other parts. Secondly, it increases tension between different ethnic groups during competition for scarce resources.

All the above leads to a decline of living standard and ethnic tensions which may cause serious problems in the near future. For example, in Kyrgyzstan a low living standard applies to South Kyrgyzstan as a whole; the percentage of people living below the poverty line here is higher than in other parts of the republic and continues to grow<sup>48</sup>. The average salary is about half of that in the capital<sup>49</sup>. For the last several years the distinction between rich and poor has increased; it is also ethnically coloured. Many Kyrgyz people think that they have fewer advantages over Russian in the North and Uzbeks in the South as historically they were not involved in trade and industry<sup>50</sup>. In Soviet times the average salary in the Leninabad *oblast* was the highest

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<sup>48</sup> Jumagulov, Sultan. 5 May 2000. "Политическая Элита Кыргызстана". *Institute for War and Peace Report*

<sup>49</sup> June 1996. *Osh region. Economical Strategy*: 15

<sup>50</sup>Trade and industry are considered the most profitable. At the same time they associates with urban population which living standard is much higher than in the country. For example, in responding to the question of the sociological survey conducted in 1991 concerning the reason for the armed conflict between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan's Osh district in June 1990, almost half of the experts (49%) mentioned unsatisfactory housing conditions. There were 58,000 people on the waiting list for housing, of which Kyrgyz were a considerable percentage. At the same time, among (retail) trade workers 71.4 % were Uzbek nationals, public dining facilities 74.7%. Among the taxi drivers in Osh 79% were Uzbeks. Such inequality in employment in the most "prestigious" spheres, which provided considerable opportunities for satisfying consumer demand in a general environment of consumer scarcity, has generated a feeling among part of the Kyrgyz population, especially young people, of wounded pride and deprivation in their own land. (Elebaeva. 1992: 81)

in the republic but by September 1996 it was as less than half that of the capital (2366 roubles compare to 5065)<sup>51</sup>. This also concerns the Uzbek part of the valley where the living standard is lower than in the average in the republic.

Almost in every republic of Central Asia unemployment is made worse by the presence of two “bad” sides of the Soviet and the third world systems. The collapse of the USSR led to the break of the economic ties between deliveries and consumers. Even today this is a problem for the region despite a less industrialised economy compared to, for example, Russia or Ukraine. This problem is complicated by rapid population growth and a higher percentage of young people compared to the European Commonwealth of Independent States countries.

These two problems have consequences: these young people grew up in the last years of the Soviet Union and had got used to receiving some privileges from the state .

The problem of unemployment was one of the main reasons of recent ethnic conflicts in the Ferghana Valley. Specifically it caused the strengthening of the “Adolat” (Justice) organisation in the Namangan in 1992, and was one of the factors in the Osh turmoil in 1990 (see appendices, table 1).

## 4.2. AUTHORITARIANISM.

It is difficult to say to what extent political factors are greater than economic or social but their influence on the stability in the region is considerable. Growing regionalism, the renaissance of Islam and ethnic division in the region are sources of future conflict in the Ferghana Valley.

The situation has deteriorated because of other factors, especially the flood of refugees<sup>52</sup> and its influence on the valley; suppression of human rights and freedom of speech; regional contradictions and the role of militaries.

The geographical location and common Soviet history left Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan to some extent with similar political problems and circumstances. These three states face a deep socio-economic crisis, regional instability, potential ethnic and religious conflicts. In all three states where the population is divided into rich and poor (most of them fall into the latter one), significant wealth is directly connected with political power. Struggle for power is the attribute of development; however, it is sometimes difficult to analyse the scale and the quality of power struggle.

Since independence Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan chose the different ways of development. The policy of reform is closely connected with the names of Presidents; in other words it is personalised. All of three states are authoritarian

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<sup>51</sup> 1996. *Asia Plus*: 6

especially Tajikistan and Uzbekistan where absolute autocratic regimes have been formed.

The concentration of power in one hand has had a direct influence on stability in the region. On the one hand it stabilises the situation for short period of time. But it is problematic to keep stability for long period of time. The example of Uzbekistan's President proves how personal rule can obscure the establishment of institutionalisation and the emergence of the civil society.

Does the sudden death or discharge of a President from the office mean inevitable crisis? Experience of countries of the third world does not give a clear answer, but this obviously means that building efficient democratic institutions and an equitable legal system are the best guarantors of permanent stability.

Kyrgyzstan is Central Asia's "leading model" of democracy for Western countries with its political pluralism, freedom of speech and guaranteed human rights. But in recent years Akaev's regime has shown a trend towards authoritarianism. Now one could hardly characterise his regime as democratic. The President has prolonged his term in the office by a pseudo-democratic election in 1995 and definitely intends to run for a third term<sup>53</sup>. After the last presidential elections Kyrgyzstan held two

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<sup>52</sup> In 1994 there were 21,000 refugees on the territory of Kyrgyzstan. Most of them were Tajik refugees (few were from Afghanistan) and as usual they settled in the South. UNHCR report, 1998. [http://www.unhcr.ch/statist/98oview/tab1\\_4.htm](http://www.unhcr.ch/statist/98oview/tab1_4.htm)

<sup>53</sup> In the Kyrgyz Republic constitution the same person can not be a President more than two terms continually. But in the 13 July 1998 the Constitution Court of the Kyrgyz Republic passed verdict that Akaev could run for the Presidency one more time for he was elected by present constitution

referendums after which amendments to the constitution were made, greatly strengthening presidential power. Things are no better concerning human rights. Several publishers and several opposition figures have been arrested and jailed and corruption has reached the uppermost echelons of authorities<sup>54</sup>. The recent February 2000 parliamentary elections, according to the Organisation on Security and Cooperation in Europe “were not in full compliance with OSCE commitments”<sup>55</sup>.

But, in spite of all shortcomings, the political regime in Kyrgyzstan remains the most open in Central Asia, and with greater efforts, tries to defend pluralism and the rule of law against a background of sharp social-economic crisis - instability in Tajikistan, and traditional opposition between the largest ethnic groups in Kyrgyzstan society, Kyrgyz (former nomads) and Uzbeks (settled agrarian) and Russians, who suddenly find themselves in a new, foreign country after the disintegration of "their" empire.

Civil war in Tajikistan not only has destroyed the country economically but also politically. Disintegration of the country has been so strong that some experts say that there is no longer a Tajik state<sup>56</sup>. For the government, which completely depends on Russian army and field warlords, who directly participated in combat actions, the present peace treaty is only the very first step towards the construction of a new Tajik

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only one time (in 1991 he was elected according to old Kyrgyz Soviet Socialist Republic's Constitution and present Constitution was adopted in 1993).

<sup>54</sup> Тимирбаев, Вячеслав. 11 Ноября 1999. “Спрут по Имени Коррупция”. Вечерний Бишкек

<sup>55</sup> OSCE/ODIHR Releases Primarily Statement on Kyrgyzstan Parliamentary Elections. <http://www.osce.org/indexe-se.htm>

<sup>56</sup> Namangani one of the leaders of Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan who in the August-September captured several villages in the South of Kyrgyzstan and took hostages, bases on the territory of

state. But in any case, the peace treaty tells us about the change, if still only on the paper, from the authoritarian, uncontrolled rule of the south Kuliab clan formally headed by the president Rahmonov, towards greater pluralism<sup>57</sup>.

#### 4.3. REGIONALISM.

Regional differences in the context of the Ferghana valley form two problems. First, there are no significant contradictions in the very valley within respective republics, for instance, between Osh and Jalal-Abad districts. Only in North Tajikistan does there exist a certain potential for conflict: this is the historical rivalry between the regional centre of Khujand with Ura-Teppe (in the southern part, the second largest city in the district) and Pendzhikent (in the western part, a geographically and economically this area is closer to Samarkand than to it is to Khujand). To a certain extent "President Rakhmonov has been trying to exploit these differences by encouraging demands from Ura-Teppe for greater authority and autonomy, and selectively promoting officials from that city over Khujandis"<sup>58</sup>. But even in North Tajikistan this is nothing in contrast with the importance of the other aspect - regionalism: conflict between corresponding parts of valley and their central government (ruling clan).

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neighbouring Tajikistan and Afghanistan. This events showed how freely can move different armed people on the territory of Tajikistan and to what extent central government control the situation.

<sup>57</sup> First post-war presidential elections in November 1999 where present President Imomali Rakhmonov was the only candidate shows how fragile is situation in the republic. Bruce Pannier. "Tajikistan: One-Man Presidential Race Shows Country's Fragility". RFE/RL, 13 October, 1999

<sup>58</sup> Keith Martin. 1997. "Welcome to the Republic of Leninabad?". *Central Asia*, 4 (10)

Regional political elites from the valley do not enjoy central power. This is more painful for the Khujand elite considering that they ruled the republic for almost the whole Soviet period<sup>59</sup>. This is the main reason of present conflict in the Tajik part of valley where regional divisions are stronger than ethnic or religious ones. Regionalism was a main factor of civil war in Tajikistan. However, at the same time, the regionalism factor is also important in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, since decisions on the permanent economic prosperity of the region are made in capitals and often these decisions don't satisfy the local elites' interests.

The Leninabad region, with its long history of political and economic domination in Tajikistan, has outlived a sharp economic decline. The exclusion of North Tajikistan from the 1997 peace negotiations on the conditions attached to the formation of a coalition government and from the National Revival Council shows that it will have no say in decision-making on the country's future. An assassination attempt on President Imamoli Rahmonov in Khujand and the arrest of the younger brother of Abdulatipa Abdulojanova as well as accusations against Abdulojanova himself threatens the further disintegration of the country (Keith, 1997).

In Kyrgyzstan a problem also exists of strong, rival, internal and regional interests. Its scale is not as great as Tajikistan. Here there is a competition between the North around the capital and the Issyk-Kul lake, which is more industrialised and has a big Russian minority - and the South which is more agricultural and has a big Uzbek

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<sup>59</sup> Since 1943 till independence. Keith Martin. 1997. "Welcome to the Republic of Leninabad?". *Central Asia*, 4 (10)

minority. In spite of the South having more than half of Kyrgyzstan's population it has little influence on the centre. Furthermore, despite the central government's attempts to help the South, many Southerners (both Uzbeks and Kyrgyz) think that Akaev's government favours for the North. For instance, all recent governors of Osh are from the North<sup>60</sup>. There also exists an economic side of the problem – most Southerners think that foreign investments basically go to the North, particularly to Bishkek<sup>61</sup>. This is a general feeling in the South among Kyrgyz and Uzbeks. It is not yet clear how the ethnically divided but regionally united South can influence stability in the region.

In Uzbekistan the importance of the regionalism problem is less clear because of lack of information and authoritarian regime established by Karimov. On the one hand one of the deciding elements in the maintenance of stability is his ability to balance regional interests. On the other hand, in the words of a Uzbek politician<sup>62</sup>, it was always important which regional alliances control a central power. Now it is clear that the Ferghana valley is not one of the bases of Karimov's power, which is centred on the Tashkent and Buhara/Samarkand regional elites<sup>63</sup>. In any case, amongst the

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<sup>60</sup> President Akaev explains it as fight against tribalism. Sultan Jumagulov. 5 May 2000. "Политическая Элита Кыргызстана". *Institute for War and Peace Report*.

<sup>61</sup> According to the National Statistics Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic only eight per cent of direct foreign investments goes to Jalal-Abad district and twelve per cent to Osh district. But, for example, to Bishkek - 33.5 per cent and to Issyk-Kul - 41 per cent. National Statistics Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic, Bishkek, 1999.

<sup>62</sup> "During a June 1991 visit to Tashkent, an Uzbek official close to Karimov told the author that the capital was buzzing with rumors of feuding between President Karimov and Vice-President Mirsaidov, who was said to represent the interests of the Tashkent "merchant clan". In general, there was much talk of divisions within the Uzbek elites along "clan" lines, a phenomenon recognized by Karimov in the July 1991 interview cited above". Critchlow, James. 1991. "Nationalism in Uzbekistan". Boulder. San Francisco, Oxford: Westview Press, 210

Ferghana valley elite there exists a feeling of exclusion and this explains why Karimov so often dismisses the heads of regional administrations of the Ferghana valley of Uzbekistan.

As in the South of Kyrgyzstan, there exists among Uzbeks of the Ferghana valley resentment that the region does not get foreign investments. Partly this is because the peasants are obliged to sell cotton to the state cotton at fixed prices<sup>64</sup>. Finally, it is not clear how deeply these feelings interact with religion in particular. Unlike president Rahmonov, Karimov does not tend to exclude the Ferghana elite completely, and remains popular amongst inhabitants of the Uzbek part of the valley, in spite of the repression of religious activists. With respect to the region he follows a policy of the "carrot and stick" - attracting little investments in the agriculture but simultaneously trusting the local authorities as well as criticising their political and economic policy<sup>65</sup>. In reality it is one more aspect of his popularity-he directs all criticism to local and regional authorities in the valley as well as in Uzbekistan.

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<sup>63</sup> Carlisle, Donald. "Power and Politics in Soviet Uzbekistan: From Stalin to Gorbachev". In William Fierman ed., *Soviet Central Asia: Failed Transformation*. San Francisco: Westview Press, 118

<sup>64</sup> McCray, Tom. 1997. "Complicating Agricultural Reforms in Uzbekistan: Observation on the Lower Zaravshan Basin". *Central Asian Monitor* 2

<sup>65</sup> Saifulin, Rafik. "The Fergana Valley: A View from Uzbekistan". *Perspectives on Central Asia*

#### 4.4. RELIGION.

What the role of Islam is presently and what it will be in the years to come is one of the most disputed questions among those who study the Ferghana Valley. Judging by the example of other Islamic countries many people predict a threat of "fundamentalism" to the region and all three leaders have expressed their anxiety<sup>66</sup>. Since Uzbekistan gained independence in 1991 President Islam Karimov has warned of Islamic fundamentalism threatening the stability of the entire Central Asian region; justifying sustained harassment of Islamic groups at home, he has pointed to the bloody five-year war in neighbouring Tajikistan between communists and Islamic groups as proof of what would await Uzbekistan if religious fanatics were allowed to preach or ever settle in the country. "I assure you that tomorrow when they declare Tajikistan an Islamic state they won't stop at that. An Islamic state with its ideology will come to us for sure through the Ferghana Valley", he declared on Tashkent television. However, "while I am President, we won't allow any Islamic order in Uzbekistan"<sup>67</sup>.

At the same time religion plays an important stabilising role in a region burdened by social, economic and political changes. Presently in the Ferghana valley, Islam presents itself as more than a religion – it is a lifestyle and the core of the local community. All leaders of Central Asia try to encourage religion, because it promotes

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<sup>66</sup> As a rule they finger the example of Tajikistan. And in countries such as Uzbekistan that threat is used to justify repressive policies – the logic is that slow social reform will prevent the spread of radical Islam. Bruce Pannier. "A Need for Common Ground in Tajikistan". See special issue "The Islamic Threat in Central Asia: Myth or reality?" in *Transition*, 24 (1), 29 December 1995

<sup>67</sup> Bruce Pannier. "President Blames Two for Bombing". RFE/RL, 19 March 1999

stabilisation, and, simultaneously, raises a sharp objection to political Islam; but the border between these modes of behaviour is not always clearly defined. President Karimov follows a policy of "early warning", and has quickly dealt with any popular independent Moslem leader who threatens his personal authority. But this can cause an inverse reaction amongst populations and interested political groups.

In Kyrgyzstan the problem of Islam is not as strong as in Uzbekistan. The division in South Kyrgyzstan is more ethnic than religious. In Tajikistan the role of Islam differs from other countries of the region, at least at the state level, since an Islamic party is part of the government coalition according to the peace treaty. But political Islam in Tajikistan has not so important a role; an Islamic party was even included in coalition government and can serve a signal for Moslem activists in Uzbek and Kyrgyz parts of valley.

In Uzbekistan differences exist not only between Islam and the state, but also within Muslim society, usually based on differences of "official" and "parallel" Islam in the Uzbek part of valley. In fact, one can say these differences are greater between Muslim and state officials. One can easily see an open hate between the official "state" clerics and the representatives of the Wahhabism movement<sup>68</sup>.

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<sup>68</sup> Babajanov, Bahtiyar. 1999. "The Ferghana Valley: Source or Victim of Islamic Fundamentalism?" *Central Asia and Caucasus*, 4 (5)

The Ferghana valley, particularly the Uzbek part, for a long time was known as a home of Islamic activists, often called "Wahhabist"<sup>69</sup>. If there is any tension between Islam and the Uzbek state, probably it will be expressed here in the Ferghana valley. In 1991-1992 a conflict of such sort occurred. In November 1991, the "Wahhabis" and other Muslims activists staged a demonstration in the town and captured a Communist party building with the intention of establishing an Islamic centre in *Namangan*<sup>70</sup>. The protest was quickly transformed into a movement for Muslim self-government. The officials accused Islamic extremists over the bloody Tashkent bombing on 16 February 1999. The two men the Uzbek government has labelled as organising the attack - Takhir Yuldash, the leader of Hizb-ut-Tahrir; and Mohammed Solih, the leader of the banned *Erk* Democratic Party-- remain outside the country and beyond the grasp of Uzbek authorities<sup>71</sup>.

At the end of August 1999 a religious extremist group known as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan took 13 hostages including four Japanese geologists captive in the Batken district (then Osh district). The militants, led by Juma Namangani (an ethnic Uzbek field commander based in Tajikistan) demanded the release of 50,000 prisoners from Uzbek jails, and their safe pass into Uzbekistan. Almost two month of

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<sup>69</sup> Known as the puritans of the Islamic faith, the Wahhabis believed in the establishment of a Muslim community similar to that which existed at the time of the Prophet Muhammad when Islam dominated every facet of the believer's life (Haghighyeghi, 1996). The Wahhabi movement was introduced to Central Asia from India in the early nineteenth century (Haghighyeghi, 1996). They are believed to be a fundamentalist movement appeared at the end of the 1970s in Tajikistan (Malashenko, 1993) or in the Ferghana valley (Haghighyeghi, 1996) who began to call themselves Wahhabis. But Abduvakhitov (1993) says that term's apparent origin traces to reports commissioned by Moscow officials and exploited by the authorities to discredit them.

<sup>70</sup> Mehrdad Haghighyechi. 1994. "Islam And Democratic Politics In Central Asia". *World Affairs*, 156 (1), # 4:190

crisis ended with the release of the hostages and the payment of a ransom<sup>72</sup>. “The significance of this recent incident is that the level of instability is far higher than had previously been assumed”<sup>73</sup>.

In all three countries of Central Asian region, policy in respect of religion is directed towards a balance between the support for Islam as a faith and checking it so that it does not get out of control, limiting any possibilities of the appearance of antigovernment politicians of Islam. In Uzbekistan, learning from the experience of other Muslim countries such as Turkey and Indonesia, President Islam Karimov actively supports religious activity by constructing mosques, supporting pilgrim to Mecca and giving significant financial and political support to official clerics. For instance, many foreign funds, particularly Turkish and Saudi, finance official clerics and thus facilitate their control by the state<sup>74</sup>. Finally, President Islam Karimov has “islamised” himself, going from the leader of the Communist party and an atheist to taking an oath on the Koran and making the *hajj* to Mecca<sup>75</sup>.

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<sup>71</sup> B. Pannier and Z. Eshanova. “Uzbekistan: Trials Against Tashkent Bombing Suspects Begin”. RFE/RL, 13 May 1999

<sup>72</sup>High-ranking sources in the Kyrgyz Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs confirm that the Japanese government, at the recommendation of Kyrgyz officials, paid US \$2 million dollar ransom for the release of the Japanese hostages in the form of Official Development Assistance. Marchenko, Tamara. 19 January 2000 “Rethinking Namangani: The Ramifications of Paying Terrorists”. *Central Asian and Caucasus Analysis*

<sup>73</sup> Akiner, Shirin’s, Associate Fellow at the Royal Institute of International Affairs in London, comments on the hostage crises. Bruce Pannier. “Uzbek Militants’ Presence Causes Concern. RFE/RL, 31 August 1999

<sup>74</sup> Mehرداد Haghayechi. 1994. “Islam And Democratic Politics In Central Asia”. *World Affairs*, 156 (1), # 4:190

<sup>75</sup> Birgit Brauer. 5 November 1999. “The Lure Of Fundamentalism”. *Central Asia and Caucasus*

The Uzbek government uses, on the one hand, a policy of " carrot and stick", supporting the renaissance of Islam but banning political parties based on religion particularly in the Ferghana valley, though such prohibition will be lifted in Tajikistan according to the peace accord<sup>76</sup>. As part of a declared policy on preventing politicisation and organisation of Islam, the Uzbek government uses all possible methods: hundreds of Islamic activists are in prison and at least three have disappeared without trace<sup>77</sup>.

The repressive policy of Uzbek authorities against Islamic activists has compelled many to immigrate to Kyrgyzstan. Around Jalal-Abad they have organised and built several mosques and religious schools, with Uzbek followers basically (Haghayeghi, 1996: 95). There is some evidence that their activity is directed to the Uzbek part of the Fergana valley. This has resulted in pressure from the government of Uzbekistan on the regional authorities of Osh and Jalal-Abad. There is already some evidence that the Uzbek intelligence service has a network of agents on the territory of South Kyrgyzstan to watch Islamic activists<sup>78</sup>.

Generally speaking, the presence of Uzbek Islamic activists can cause tensions between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks. Uzbeks are considered "better" Muslims than Kyrgyz whose nomadic past has resulted in a different Muslim attitude; they already visit

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<sup>76</sup> Cheterian, Vicken. 1999. "Pressure-Cooking in the Ferghana Valley". *Transitions*, 3 (6)

<sup>77</sup> More than 500 people were arrested in Tashkent after 16 February 1999 bomb explosions. Press-release of human rights organisation in Osh, Kyrgyzstan.

mosques differently and at different time (because Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan have different time and Uzbeks of Kyrgyzstan follow the Uzbekistani time) (Табышалиева: 10).

Another problem is a direct result of the civil war in Tajikistan. According to some sources 500 inhabitants of Namangan joined the Tajik opposition in North Afghanistan and fought to make an Islamic state in Tajikistan<sup>79</sup>. It is clear that their intention is not limited only to Tajikistan. The establishment of a coalition government in Tajikistan will become a catalyst for the greater activity of Islamic groups in the region, including the Uzbek part of the Ferghana valley. This is not the result of the integration of the Islamic opposition into the coalition government but is mainly the result of the end of the civil war which led to the appearance of the phenomenon of “kalashnikov culture”. “With the end of war, those fighters who do not belong to any particular political group and who earned their living fighting during the war lost their purpose”<sup>80</sup>.

With the exclusion of Afghanistan, foreign influence upon political Islam until now has been limited. Iran is one of the least important players. There is some evidence that the “Wahhabists” get enormous amounts of financial support from Saudi Arabia

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<sup>78</sup> This fact acknowledged the Kyrgyz newspaper, loyal to state authorities. There are some hints that Bishkek sanctions operations of Uzbek intelligent service on its territory. Асель Оторбаева. 2000. “Весна: Тревоги Обоснованы”. *Вечерний Бишкек*, 25 Февраль

<sup>79</sup> Anvar Usmanov. Uzbek political emigrant living in Munich, Germany gives this information in the program “Caucasus and Central Asia. Authoritarian Regimes Lie that They are Necessary for Stability”. RFE/RL, 5 November 1999

<sup>80</sup> Birgit Brauer. 5 November 1999. “The Lure Of Fundamentalism”. *Central Asia and Caucasus*

and Pakistan<sup>81</sup>. Theological differences between *shiism* in Iran and *sunnism* in Central Asia are considered to be the main reason why Iran does not try to spread Islamic ideology and influence in the region. Additionally, this state considers its commercial and trade interests with these countries as being more important.

The influence of the situation in Afghanistan on the region is very strong and complex. There is already anxiety about Afghanistani support for the Tajik Islamist opposition, many of whom were trained in North Afghanistan<sup>82</sup>. Presently, however, Tajik and Uzbek official persons understand that support and participation of the Islamists fails any comparison with the threat of the "Taliban", and this explains a desire of the involved parts in the Tajik civil war to force President Rahmonov and the opposition sign a peace agreement.

Generally speaking, concerning religion and its influence on stability in the Ferghana Valley and in Central Asia as a whole, one can conclude that the Islamic threat to stability is more of an imagined threat. Indeed, "Tashkent has used the imagined Islamic threat as an excuse for its authoritarian politics internally and territorial consolidation externally"<sup>83</sup>.

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<sup>81</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski hints that Saudi Arabia supports Wahhabism in Central Asia. An Interview With Zbigniew Brzezinski. 14 February 1999. "Thoughts on the Political and Geo-strategic Realities of the Caucasus and Central Asia". *Central Asia and Caucasus Analyses*

<sup>82</sup> Rashid. Ahmed. 1999. "The Taliban: Exporting Extremism." *Foreign Affairs*, November/December

Central Asian leaders are growing increasingly authoritarian. Their rigged elections and restrictions on political parties have undermined democratic alternatives, leaving underground Islamist movements as the only political opposition.

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<sup>83</sup> Shahrām Akbarzadeh. 1 March 2000. "Is Islam Threat To Stability In Central Asia?". *Central Asia and Caucasus Analyses*.

## CHAPTER V. GREAT DRUG ROAD?

### 5.1. CORRUPTION AND ORGANISED CRIME.

One of the main factors which can destabilise the situation in Central Asia is not the economy itself but the mechanism of the black economy formed during decades and resulting in wide spread corruption and organised crime.

For a long time organised crime has caused economic stagnation and it may be the only reason for the failure of any government's development policy; indeed without solving this problem any reforms will fail to influence the valley positively.

As was mentioned above one of the legacies of Soviet power was the integration of economies of the regional states. In the centralised economy when the basic goods, services and control were in short supply, a parallel, highly organised criminal economical system developed alongside the official one. In the last years of Soviet power one could hardly distinguish between the "parallel" and official economies – the borders between them weren't clear<sup>84</sup>.

With the end of the Soviet era the scale of organised crime and corruption sharply increased. A recent survey showed that corruption is widespread among who distribute the deficit goods and services (trade, business and etc.) and who control

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<sup>84</sup> "Employment and National State in Soviet Central Asia: Difficult Compromise". Preston University Press, 1984 , Chapter 6

and govern these sectors of the economy (high-ranking officials, police and court organs, prosecutor and etc.)<sup>85</sup>. It also includes the bribes to work in these sectors. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of state monopoly in these spheres of public life most observers remark that corruption and organised crime has reached an incredible level<sup>86</sup>(see appendices, figure 2).

Some people point to other states' examples and try to show that corruption and a black economy have a positive side and can play a stabilising role. The supporters of this idea believe that it helps to redistribute income in favour of the poor stratum of the population but unfortunately one can't see these investments, and organised crime's potential to destabilise the situation in the region is high. The poor don't get rich but poorer! Corruption and organised crime have sharply increased the distinction between rich and poor and also increased the anger of the population against the officials and bureaucrats and have shaken their belief in political leaders, police, ministers and others, who are regarded as working only for their own interests.

But the most important thing is that corruption and organised crime completely weaken/break the official economy and is the main and may be the only one barrier to democracy and market economy directed to solve the economic problems which have already caused conflicts in the region and are still a threat to stability. The more corruption and organised crime occur after independence the more the population is

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<sup>85</sup> Бектурганов и Момунов. 2000. "Бумажная Демократия". *Вечерний Бишкек*, 25 Февраля

sceptical of reforms and legal private business including their negative attitude to small business

Indeed most of the respondents in some survey in Central Asian states directly associate economic reforms with the increase of corruption and disorder<sup>87</sup>. Because of their private interests officials are not interested in changing the present situation into something more open and just. Generally democracy and a market economy are based on the rule of law and cannot be established in an economic framework most of which operates outside this law.

Corruption also destroys and has a destabilising political effect on society in the whole. In the Soviet Union the charge of corruption was often used purely to dismiss officials for political reasons. Throughout Central Asia this method is actively used against journalists who investigate corruption<sup>88</sup>. The court system is widely regarded as corrupt<sup>89</sup>. Finally at a time when the standard of living is declining, the high expenditure on bribes has a destabilising effect.

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<sup>86</sup> Zanny Minton Beddoes. 7 February 1998. "A Caspian Gamble. Central Asia Survey". *The Economist*, 15

<sup>87</sup> "Central Asia Take Stock: Reform, Corruption And Identity". *USA Institute of Peace*, 1995

<sup>88</sup> For attacks on journalists in Central Asia see article by Abdumannob Polat. 1995. "Central Asia Political Refugees". *Central Asia Monitor*, 2-3

## 5.2. DRUG TRAFFICKING.

This informal economy system and corruption and organised crime established the base for one of the biggest businesses in Central Asia and definitely in the Ferghana valley – the illegal production and transportation of drugs and probably other goods. Drug smuggling has been a feature of the region for a long time but started to increase sharply in the mid of the 80s and the beginning of the 90s, first because of the war in Afghanistan and then because of the collapse of the USSR. Now that the valley is isolated in terms of trade and communications from the rest of the region because of its geography and state policy the Ferghana valley is the ideal place to process and transport opium and other drugs grown mainly in Afghanistan and Pakistan to the West. Some trafficking routes go from Central Asia to Belarus, Ukraine or Romania before going to the West. Other routes go through the war torn Caucasus region, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Turkey<sup>90</sup>.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union the Central Asian states' border with Afghanistan, Iran and Russia became transparent and weakly controlled. Most drugs are transported along the 750 kilometres long Osh-Horog road from the Afghan-Tajik border to the Kyrgyz city of Osh<sup>91</sup>. According to the United Nations Drug Control Program, along this road goes “more than 2,000 trucks per month... (the road) is widely believed to be the most commonly used way to smuggle a large portion of the

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<sup>89</sup> Бектурганов и Момунов. 2000. “Бумажная Демократия”. *Вечерний Бишкек*, 25 Февраля

<sup>90</sup> 18 November 1999. “The Drug Problem in Central Asia” *Central Asia and Caucasus Forum Summary*

opium produced in Afghanistan, estimated at over 2,400 metric tons annually”<sup>92</sup>.

Some people argue that corruption and crime and especially the arms trade to some degree stabilise the situation because they provide incomes and work and even initial capital for business. But as in other states, the drug trade destabilises the situation: the concentration of revenue in a few hands destroys the official economy, increases the possibility of competition between different criminal groups and disrupts the rule of law especially in the police force. And definitely drugs is the main barrier to radical reforms. According to the words of the Kyrgyz Ambassador to the US: “When Islamic extremists took Japanese hostages in Batken, the drug issue came to the fore. The leader of the kidnappers, Juma Namangani controls 70% of the drug trafficking in the region”<sup>93</sup>.

In fact drug growing, production and transit in the Ferghana valley influences the whole structure as measured in the crime rate, the effect on families and the economy. The Kyrgyz ambassador concludes that “drugs have dramatically changed the psychology of the Kyrgyzstan people”<sup>94</sup>. On the other hand, the criminal drug groups

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<sup>91</sup> Kyrgyzstan Ambassador to USA Abdrisaev. *Central Asia and Caucasus Forum Summary: Drugs: A Threat To Central Asian Security*. 15.03.2000.

<sup>92</sup> “UN Drug Program to Launch Regional Law Enforcement Project Linking Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan And Uzbekistan”. *Press Release*, [http://www.odccp.org/press\\_release\\_1997-05-02\\_1.html](http://www.odccp.org/press_release_1997-05-02_1.html)

<sup>93</sup> Kyrgyzstan Ambassador to USA Abdrisaev. 15 March 2000. “Drugs: a Threat to Central Asian Security”. *Central Asia and Caucasus Forum Summary*

<sup>94</sup> Kyrgyzstan Ambassador to USA Abdrisaev. 15 March 2000. “Drugs: a Threat to Central Asian Security”. *Central Asia and Caucasus Forum Summary*

are interested in destabilising the situation in the region for they want the state structures to be weak and unstable<sup>95</sup>.

The influence of criminal groups on ethnic relations is not definite. On the one hand, it probably has a negative effect on attitudes toward Russians as they are considered to be the main drug traders. Observers say that the Russian militaries, especially the 201 motorised division in Tajikistan and Russian border troops are greatly involved in narco-business<sup>96</sup>. Russian border troops are viewed not as soldiers but drug traders: some evidence of this lies in the discrepancy between the figures of confiscated and delivered quantity of drugs for inspection. For example “authorities said about 400 kg. of drug were confiscated in 1996 but only seven kg. from one source and 50 kg. from another were actually delivered for inspection”<sup>97</sup>.

On the other hand crime in the former Soviet Union was international in nature and still is. One former officer in Osh said: “Where drugs are concerned different criminal groups cooperate. The Tajiks get opium from Afghanistan, and if they transit it through Uzbekistan then they hire the Uzbek courier or if to Almaty then they hire the Kyrgyz in Bishkek.”<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Olimov, Muzaffar and Saodat Olimova. 1994. “Regionalism in Tajikistan: Its Impact on the Fergana Valley”. *Perspectives on Central Asia* 1 (3)

<sup>96</sup> Lange Keely. “When Drug Lords are Warlords”. *Transition* Vol. 2, No 19, 20 September 1996

<sup>97</sup> Voice of Free Tajikistan, 15 April 1997

<sup>98</sup> Voice of Free Tajikistan, 15 April 1997

Smuggling in the Fergana valley is not limited to drugs only. Some observers note the increase of arms trade in the region and the quantity of weapons in the hand of the population. The president of the Nuclear Physics Institute in Tashkent, A. Yuldashev, says that any material can be carried through the territory of Central Asia. “ I guarantee that if someone steals nuclear material he can transport it anywhere. There are 150 border posts in Uzbekistan and none of them have equipment to find this material.<sup>99</sup>” Proof of weapons smuggling was the scandal in Kyrgyzstan when the authorities captured 700 tonnes of weapons going to Afghanistan from Iran<sup>100</sup>.

Generally, corruption, organised crime and drug transit influence the state of the police and the military, that is, on organs both of which are important to the stability and order of the region.

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<sup>99</sup> Graham Turbivii. May 1997. *Presentation In The US Institute For Peace.*

<sup>100</sup> RFE/RL, 13 October 1998, Newline

## CHAPTER VI. White Gold: The Cotton Dictatorship.

When at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Central Asia fell under the control of the Russian Empire the Russians started to introduce cotton as a monoculture in the Ferghana valley and Central Asia in the whole. The amount of Central Asian lands under cotton cultivation rose more than 70 times between 1870 and 1916<sup>101</sup>.

Then in the 1930s the Soviet government used repressive methods under the command economy to establish cotton development as a monoculture crop. Moscow viewed cotton as a strategic resource and financed production accordingly. Due to huge investments, Soviet Uzbekistan in the 1960s and 1970s became one of the world's largest cotton producers and the site of the largest irrigated region in the former Soviet Union. By the 1980s "white gold" constituted more than two-thirds of Uzbekistan's gross output and employed about 40 per cent of the labour force. In 1983, Uzbekistan alone produced almost as much cotton as the entire United States<sup>102</sup>. As late as the mid-1960s, half of the sown area in Uzbekistan was still covered by grain, fodder and vegetables<sup>103</sup> but by 1990 the cotton fields covered more than 85-90% of some areas in the Ferghana Valley<sup>104</sup>.

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<sup>101</sup> January 1996. *Perspectives on Central Asia*, 1 (1).

<sup>102</sup> Rumr, Boris. 1989. "Soviet Central Asia. A Tragic Experiment". Boston: 62

<sup>103</sup> Glantz, Michael; Rubinstein, Alvin Z. and Zonn, Igor. 1993. "Tragedy in the Aral Sea Basin: Looking Back to Plan Ahead?". *Global Environmental Change*, 2 (3): 176

<sup>104</sup> Craumer, Peter R. 1992. "Agricultural Change, Labor Supply And Rural Out-Migration In Soviet Central Asia." In Robert A. Lewis ed., *Geographical Perspectives On Soviet Central Asia*, London: Routledge, 144

However, the forced growth of cotton has given rise to unresolvable problems in the water balance of the region, creating "one of the very greatest ecological problems of our century"<sup>105</sup>, an "impending disaster"<sup>106</sup>, and "a dangerous experiment with nature"<sup>107</sup>.

The water resources of Central Asia's two major rivers-the Syr-Darya and Amur-Darya have been practically drained dry by cotton irrigation systems. Therefore, the water from these rivers does not reach the Aral Sea, which has caused a precipitous drop in its level. If the situation is not changed, the Aral Sea is likely to disappear by the middle of the next century<sup>108</sup>.

## 6.1. Water.

Presently we already have groups of ten of  
conflicts because of land and water (from  
the speech of President of Uzbekistan of Islam  
Karimov on meeting of Central Committee of  
Communist Party of Uzbekistan, 23 March 1990)

In the next century, cause of a war will be fresh water (from the report of Worldwide Bank,  
quoted in «The Economist» ,  
Vol. 336, No. 7927, August 12, 1995, p. 36).

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<sup>105</sup> Юсупов. 10 Сентября 1987. *Правда Востока* : 3

<sup>106</sup> Кудайбергенов., 6 Мая 1987 *Литературная Газета* : 6

<sup>107</sup> Григорьев. 1987. *Проблемы Освоения Пустынь* : 2 .

<sup>108</sup> Kulchik, Yuri. "Central Asia After the Empire: Ethnic Groups, Communities and Problems". Ed. Roald Sagdeev and Eisenhower, Susan. *Central Asia. Resolution, and Change*: 95

At the beginning of the twentieth century only about five per cent of the total river flow was used for irrigation<sup>109</sup> but the expansion of the irrigation area led to a steady reduction in the flow of water into the Aral Sea until it stopped altogether. Indeed, water use in Central Asia is enormous. In 1988, the water withdrawal in the Aral Sea basin for all purposes was 125% of the average annual water resources<sup>110</sup>.

Water demands are dominated by the needs of the agricultural sector, accounting for 87% of the total use<sup>111</sup>. Irrigation is the main cause for the water crisis in Central Asia. The rapid extension of the irrigation area since the 1950s caused immense water use wastage and heavy losses in the distribution and transmission system of irrigation water (an estimated 30-40 %)<sup>112</sup>. Moreover, in Central Asia as a whole, the water usage rates are 25-75% higher than the established norm<sup>113</sup>.

The influence of distribution and qualities of water on political and economic development of new countries of Central Asia has increased. In spite of several agreements signed by the Central Asian republics on water management in the region (the last one was signed in February 1997) each republic looks to its own needs first.

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<sup>109</sup> Figures for Amu Dar'ya are: 1917 7% of the river flow, 1955 15% and 1983 more than 50% (see Stefan Klotzli. "The Water and Soil Crisis – A Source For Future Conflicts?", *ENCOP Occasional Paper*, # 11

<sup>110</sup> Figures taken and calculated from Philip Micklin, pp. 90-93 and from other sources. Micklin, Philip. "Water Management Problems in Soviet Central Asia: Problems and Prospects".

<sup>111</sup> Stefan Klotzli. "The Water And Soil Crisis – A Source For Future Conflicts?", *ENCOP Occasional Paper*, # 11

<sup>112</sup> Raskin, Hansen, Zhu and Iwra. 1992. "Simulation of Water Supply and Demand in the Aral Sea Region". *Water International*, 17:60.

The problem is complicated by the fact that almost all water flows from one country into another. This demands an approach to water management which is sustainable in the long run. But the lack of land resources and arid climate, limited annual and seasonal access to water, obscure borders can enlarge the probability of potential conflict in the region because of water.

Problems which did not exist ten years ago appeared to be actual since three countries became independent: as long as they were within the structure of one country there were no problems of management and water payments; all fell into one economic system. Now Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan which have the majority of water-reservoirs, have to support a system, the waters of which are basically used by Uzbekistan and Kazakstan<sup>114</sup>. According to Bransten:

In Soviet times, it was easy, Kyrgyzstan's mountains held the water and Uzbekistan's fields the cotton. So year after year, the State Planning Commission (Gosplan) in Moscow ordered Kyrgyzstan to empty most of its reservoirs to water Uzbekistan's plantations of "white gold." The Uzbek harvest filled the Kremlin's coffers and Moscow made sure that Kyrgyzstan received just enough in compensation subsidies to keep the operation going.

After the Soviet Union fell apart at the end of 1991, and both states gained their independence, the deal lost much of its appeal to the Kyrgyz. They continued to

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<sup>113</sup> Boris Rumer: 1989. *Soviet Central Asia. A Tragic Experiment*, Boston:76

<sup>114</sup> Of the 50,000 million cubic meters of water that Kyrgyzstan's lakes and reservoirs collect each year, only 12,000 million cubic meters remain in the country.  
Jeremy Bransten. *Kyrgyzstan/Uzbekistan: The Politics of Water*. RFE/RL, 14. October 1997

provide their water, free of charge, to Uzbekistan, but now received no subsidies from Moscow. By contrast, Uzbekistan began to grow richer, since it no longer had to deliver any of its cotton profits to the Kremlin<sup>115</sup>.

Relations between the countries of Central Asia in many ways depend on the differences in the condition of development since the beginning of their independence. This includes energy resources and access to fresh water. Uzbekistan has significant resources of oil and natural gas; Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan lack both. However, these two countries have great quantities of fresh water, which Uzbekistan does not have. This is why the conflict over the sharing of fresh water between the three republics is quite probable<sup>116</sup>.

Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan can block water access to Uzbekistan completely. But Uzbekistan has energy resources and this will certainly be a trump card to gain access to the water resources of upstream countries. Now relations between Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan are already completely decided in the context of water relations. Uzbekistan often shuts off natural gas supply to Kyrgyzstan because of debts, which makes Kyrgyzstan take reprisals, for instance by blocking the water supply. The December 1999 crisis when Uzbekistan cut natural gas supply spurred Kyrgyzstan into increasing energy production in the Toktogul Hydro-electric Station which leads to a water deficit in spring-summer for Uzbekistan<sup>117</sup>.

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<sup>115</sup> Jeremy Bransten. *Kyrgyzstan/Uzbekistan: The Politics of Water*. RFE/RL, 14. October 1997

<sup>116</sup> In the summer of 1989, armed conflict occurred between the Kyrgyz of Isfara and Tajiks in the neighbouring Batken (Kyrgyzstan) over the division of the enclave's water and land resources...

In any case, relations between the countries of the region in the context of water problems will depend on internal policy and situations in each country separately; governments which successfully carry out economic reforms are more likely to solve the regional water problem.

## 6.2. Land.

The borders between the countries of Central Asia are among the most complex and tangled in the world. The administrative borders created by the communists in the 1920s do not follow any ethnic and demographic lines. Moreover, there are several enclaves on the territory of different states<sup>118</sup>. There have been already ethnic conflicts in which land has been the cause. In 1989 the border between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan was the cause of conflict; the Osh riots which caused the death of more than 200 people was also because of land (Табышалиева, 2000: 20).

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<sup>117</sup> Autumn-Winter 1999-2000 gas crises between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan the first Vice Prime-Minister of the Kyrgyz Republic Boris Silaev characterised as a “political pressure” of Uzbekistan. Then he added that Kyrgyzstan had to increase energy production which can lead to water deficit in spring-summer for Uzbekistan. A. Tuzov. “Gaza Ne Budet Do Novogo Goda!” (No Natural Gas till New Year!), *Vecherniy Bishkek*, 22 November 1999.

<sup>118</sup> There are three enclaves in the south part of Kyrgyzstan: Uzbek Shakrimardan, Sokh and Tajik Vorukh. The nature of this enclaves are not clear still. Shakrimardan, Sokh and Vorukh were among the hotbeds of the anti-Communist Basmachi guerilla, which was particularly fierce there in the 20 - 30<sup>th</sup> years. After the Red Army pacified the region, these politically unreliable areas went under direct military administration from Tashkent, the Soviet stronghold in Central Asia. It is during this period that the present-day enclaves got oriented more towards Tashkent in terms of transport and telecommunication links and economic activity than to its immediate surrounding area. In 1936, Shakrimardan, Sokh and Vorukh (all agricultural enclaves in a quite arid area) were integrated in Soviet republics of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, for one considered that the Uzbeks and Tajiks (sedentary farmers) would need more agricultural area than the far less numerous Kyrgyz (mountain

The borders between the Central Asian republics have long been problematic. There is also a problem of disputed territories between Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan in the Ferghana valley. Many irrigation channels were built in the Soviet times, most of which cross the territory of different countries. Tensions grow between local administrations on both sides of channels because of financial questions, in particular who pays maintenance costs (Молдалиев, 2000: 31).

In the summer of 1989, according to official information from the Telegraph Agency of Soviet Union ( TASS), a long-standing dispute over land and water rights in a number of areas on the border between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan led to the conflict known as the Batken Kyrgyz-Tajik conflict. Only after the involvement of the militia (police) and internal troops using weapons was the conflict brought under control: 19 people were wounded, one of whom died in consequence<sup>119</sup>.

One year later there was fighting in south Kyrgyzstan, the Kyrgyz capital of Frunze (now Bishkek) and areas of Uzbekistan's Ferghana, with martial law being imposed in a number of locations for a considerable period of time. By August 17, 1990, when the violence had for the most part subsided, TASS had placed the death toll at 230, with 400 unaccounted for<sup>120</sup>:

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nomads). Interesting fact is that Uzbek enclave Soch is inhabited mostly by Tajiks, 99%. UNDP in Kyrgyzstan. <http://www.undp.kg/english/batken.html>

<sup>119</sup> H.B. Paksoy (ed). 1994. *Central Asia Reader. The Rediscovery Of History*. New-York and London: M.E. Sharpe. Inc. 169.

“On Monday, June 4, 1990 Soviet troops, after days of sporadic clashes between Kirghiz and Uzbek in Kyrgyzstan’s Osh Oblast, opened fire on a mob of Uzbeks throwing rocks and gasoline bombs. The group, which had separated from a protest crowd of reportedly 20,000 was angered by what they perceived was a Kirghiz SSR government policy of granting ethnic Kirghiz preferential access to scarce homesites in an 80-acre tract of land released by the republic for housing construction”<sup>121</sup>.

The problem of border demarcation between the republics remains unresolved especially in the Ferghana valley. As with the water problem, these problems were not so serious during Soviet power but with independence they have worsened. In February 1999 the Kyrgyz parliament deputies tried to raise the question of borders in the parliament. Dooronbek Sadyrbayev – a deputy – told his colleagues that Uzbek officials were shifting the border between the two countries in Uzbekistan’s favour. In some places he said they were moving them as much as 24 kms from the position defined by the agreements between the two states<sup>122</sup>.

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<sup>120</sup> Colson Charles. January 4, 1991. “Kirghizia: Political Stagnation Gives Way to Democratic Impulses”. *RFE/RL Report on the USSR*. 31-32. In Elebaeva Aynur B. February 1992. “The Osh Incident: Problems For Research”. *Post-Soviet Geography*. 33:78.

<sup>121</sup> June 7, 1990. *New-York Times*, A1, A8. In Elebaeva, Aynur B. February 1992. “The Osh Incident: Problems For Research”. *Post-Soviet Geography*. 33:78. These conflicts (1989 Kyrgyz-Tajik, Uzbek-Meschetian Turk, 1990 Kyrgyz-Uzbek and others which occurred in late Soviet period) can’t be characterised as ethnic. The former member of Central Committee of Communist Party of Soviet Union A. Yakovlev argues that these conflicts were organised together by revenge forces in the centre and local clan-bolshevik structures. Yakovlev, Anatoliy. 1994. *Gorkaya Chasha. Bolshevizm I Reformatsiya v Rossii*. 345. In Kosolapov, Nikolay. November 1995. *Konflikty Post-Sovetskogo prostranstva: Politicheskiye Realii. Jurnal Mejdunarodnaya Ekonomika I Mejdunarodniye Otnosheniya*. 11:47.

<sup>122</sup> B. Pannier. “Border Dispute Between Uzbekistan And Kyrgyzstan Risks Triggering Conflict”. *RFE/RL*, 8 March 1999

The problem is also complicated by the ongoing political crisis. After the attempt on the life of Uzbek President Islam Karimov in February 1999<sup>123</sup>, Uzbekistan declared that terrorists might have fled to Kyrgyz territory and blocked the borders completely<sup>124</sup>. Then after the August-September 1999 hostage crisis in the Ferghana valley part of Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan started to demarcate the borders. Moreover, as from this year Uzbekistan enters a visa mode for the people from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. And this, of course, will complicate trade in the valley.

The Kyrgyz President Askar Askaev, according to Russian political scientist Valeriy Khlupin has confirmed that the problem of borders is very real and that there is in dispute territory (about 50 hectares) between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan in which the Tajik side doesn't want to compromise<sup>125</sup>.

Uzbekistan unilaterally defined its frontiers with its neighbour in October 1999, which made Bishkek raise the border issue. Approximately 50 armed men penetrated deep

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<sup>123</sup> On 16 February 1999, in what was apparently a coordinated attack aimed at killing Uzbekistan's President Karimov, six car bombs were detonated nearly simultaneously in the center of Tashkent. The first bomb went off outside the Interior Ministry building; troops were sealing off the site when a second car broke through the security cordon and head for the nearby government headquarters. Security opened fire, killing two bystanders, but the car's occupants escaped, and the vehicle subsequently exploded. The president's motorcade, while nearby, was unharmed. According to Uzbek press reports, four more diversionary bombs then went off damaging nearby sites, including the National Bank, a police station, and a site containing several foreign embassies. "Tashkent Car Bombing – Who and Why?". *Central Asia and Caucasus Analyst*, 6 March, 1999

<sup>124</sup>RFE/RL, 17 February 1999, *Newsline*

<sup>125</sup> Nikolay Fomin's interview with V. Khlupin. 2000. "Sovremennyyi Kyrgyzstan Glazami Rossiyskogo Nabludatelya" (Modern Kyrgyzstan in the eyes of Russian watcher), 25 April, <http://www.eurasia.org.ru/cgi- Eurasia/r-test.pl?dialog>

into the Kadamjaisky region of Kyrgyzstan and set up border fences. A similar incident took place in the Aravansky region<sup>126</sup>. At the beginning of this year the Kyrgyz government initiated border talks, which have only deepened the atmosphere of mistrust between the two countries. Unofficial statistics reveal that Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan are in dispute over hundreds of thousands of hectares of land. The latest round of border talks held in April this year ended in deadlock

### 6.3. Environmental Issue.

Environmental deterioration influences the Ferghana valley in two ways. Firstly sharp deterioration of the soil and water has economic consequences. Secondly, as in the Soviet times, the ecological problems are still relatively safety to express discontent against authorities: in other words they are a cover for other issues such as the local protest against the sharp decline of standard of living.

The most significant example is the tragedy of the Aral Sea directly connected with the inflow into the sea of the rivers Syr-Daria (Naryn) and Amur-Darya which are mainly receiving water supply in the Ferghana Valley. The drying up of the Aral Sea has become a symbol of man's ravaging attitude towards natural resources and of the extensive and misdirected economic development in the south of the former Soviet

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<sup>126</sup>Sultan Jumagulov. 2000. "Border Dispute Threatens to Escalate". *IWPR's Reporting Central Asia*, 1

Union. This is a really big problem, which severely influence human health, causing sand and salt storms, water pollution and etc.

The Aral Sea, once the fourth largest landlocked sea in the world (69,500 km<sup>2</sup>), has been reduced to two third of its previous volume and half its size. For centuries, the boundaries of this landlocked sea between three deserts - Kara Kum, Kysyl Kum and Ustjurt - remained almost unchanged, with a fluctuation of about three meters in depth. In recent years especially in 1995-1996 the Syr-Darya rarely reached the sea. In the first half of 1993, the Syr Darya fed the Aral with 3.2 km<sup>3</sup>, whereas up to 2.5 km<sup>3</sup> ended in the collector lake of *Arnasay*. For the Aral, this water has been lost forever<sup>127</sup>.

High evaporation of about 58 km<sup>3</sup> (a 90 cm water layer!) over the surface was equilibrated by small precipitation (156 mm/year) and surface or subsurface inflow. Although the sea has no outlet, the water was only slightly saline (1-1,4%)<sup>128</sup>.

The sea's area, volume and salinity has fundamentally changed since the early 1960s. The Aral Sea has dropped by 16.5 meters in depth, shrinking by 56% and it has lost almost three-quarters of its volume, whereas salinity has multiplied to 30g/l<sup>129</sup>.

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<sup>127</sup> *Ekokuryer*, 22. July 1993:3

<sup>128</sup> Precoda: Norman:1991. "Requiem for the Aral Sea", *AMBIO*, 3-4 (20):109-110

<sup>129</sup> Precoda: Norman:1991. "Requiem for the Aral Sea", *AMBIO*, 3-4 (20):109-110

The degradation of soils is closely connected with the exhaustion of water resources in Central Asia. Massive irrigation has led to large-scale salinisation due to saline irrigation water and water logging causing the rising of the ground water table. The excessive application of biocides - mainly due to a low immunity of cotton to diseases - and mineral fertilisers has poisoned much of the soil resources and polluted the drainage water flowing back to the rivers. The drying up of the Aral adds an ugly dimension in this respect; salts and toxic dust from the exposed sea bed contribute to the salinisation of soils in the adjacent agricultural regions of the Aral Sea.

Another evident consequence of the Aral's shrinking is the change of the region's micro climate. As a barrier against cold winds from the north, the Aral Sea originally had a moderating function in the regional climate system and served as a catalyst for an enforced formation of clouds because of enormous masses of vapour rising from its surface. This moisture replenished the ice and snow caps of distant mountains, completing the region's water cycle. It is assumed that even the precipitation patterns in the mountains of Central Asia will change with a desiccated Aral Sea. The climate has become more continental with a shrinking water surface. Warmer summers, cooler winters and lowered humidity have caused a shortened growing season with heat-loving cotton cultivations that have been turned into rice paddies<sup>130</sup>.

Millions of tons of salts and toxic chemicals transported by the rivers ended up in the Aral Sea as the last deposit of the region. But the sea has changed its role from a receiver to a chief supplier of salt. While shrinking, the Aral Sea has accumulated an

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enormous quantity of salts. On the desertified sea bed area of about 36,000 km<sup>2</sup>, *solontchak* (white alkali soil) develops from which an estimated 75 million tons of toxic salt and dust - mainly sodium chloride and sodium sulphate - are deflated annually<sup>131</sup>. This windborne salty dust - directly deposited or incorporated as aerosols in acid rain - is a serious danger to the plants and soils in the agricultural areas. In the Aral region, an average of over 500 kg of salts and sand fall annually on each hectare of the ecologically and agriculturally important delta of the Amu Darya. They further contaminate crops in the central provinces of Uzbekistan: Bukhara, Navoy and Samarkand. However, the saltstorms carry their toxic load far beyond the Aral region. Dust from the Aral has been found on the top of the Himalayas, in the Ganges and Brahmaputra rivers, and even in the Pacific and Arctic oceans as far as 10,000 km away. Experts think that these soluble salts will accelerate glacier thawing especially in the Pamir mountains ultimately, melting the stock of the Amu Darya, the most important waterway of Central Asia<sup>132</sup>.

The Ferghana valley is directly affected by the disaster of the Aral sea. It influences agriculture and human health in the valley. Every one of the Central Asian states must reduce water consumption in order to increase inflow into the Aral Sea this affects the agriculture of the region. Moreover it has direct economic consequences for every of

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<sup>130</sup> Critchlow, James. 1991. *Nationalism in Uzbekistan*. San Fransisco: Westview Press : 81

<sup>131</sup> Precoda: Norman:1991. "Requiem for the Aral Sea", *AMBIO*, 3-4 (20):113

<sup>132</sup> Precoda: Norman:1991. "Requiem for the Aral Sea", *AMBIO*, 3-4 (20):111

five states are obliged to transfer one per cent of its GNP to the “Save Aral” foundation<sup>133</sup>.

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<sup>133</sup> Jalling, Lasse. “Water Management in Central Asia”. 1998. *NIASnytt*, 3

## CHAPTER VII. Geopolitics.

Stability in the Central Asian region in the coming years will depend in some cases on the other states' policy and first of all on the policy of the Russian Federation. The whole Central Asian region can be characterised as unstable and an area where conflicts can erupt at any time. Moreover, it is not so difficult to destabilise the situation and in fact even relatively weak forces outside the region can do so by supporting any aggressive forces within the region. On the other hand, especially after the end of Tajik civil war (at least there is no armed combat), geostrategic plans for the transportation of natural resources to the world market make most of the players in the region interested in supporting stability in Central Asia, including the Ferghana valley.

The existence of instability spots in the region is complicated by the existence such conflict zones outside the region. In the West it is the Caucasus conflict zone, characterised not only by present armed conflicts but also by numerous potential instabilities; in the South it is periodical conflicts in Kurdistan, the Persian Gulf and a permanent one in the whole territory of Afghanistan.

There is still permanent tension between Pakistan and India. Potential conflict can take place in the West of China (East Turkestan). In certain conditions every one of these instabilities can transformed into armed conflict. Moreover, each of these states

has an ethnic minority problem which can destabilise the situation for many years to come.

## 7.1. RUSSIAN FACTOR.

Despite attempts of the regional states to distance themselves economically, politically and culturally from Russia this state continue to retain its influence in the region. Although Russia is too weak to reconquer the region, it is strong enough to threaten its stability. Even with new pipelines, Russia will retain considerable control over Central Asia's natural-resource exports<sup>134</sup>. Despite any difficulties and problems the Russian military remains a force to be reckoned with.

Any conflict or instability in the region which can develop confronts Russia with a choice: either to try to stabilise the situation or immediately to quit the conflict-ridden area. This choice is complicated by the fact that it does not have its own fortified borders, to which it could withdraw its armed forces and reliably protect itself from the violence, narcotics and arms being exported from the zone of instability.

It must be admitted that the danger of Russia's efforts to stabilise the situation by turning into an instrument for the support of one regime or another is already apparent. In any case, the greatest threat of military commitments turning into political sphere lies in unilateral guarantees and measures, should the Russian leadership find it necessary to resort to them.

According to the January 1993 “Concept of Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation” adopted by Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the November 1993 “Basic Provisions of the Military Doctrine”, adopted by the Security Council of the Russian Federation, its immediate periphery, that is the former USSR, was declared as a zone of vital interests to be secured<sup>135</sup>.

Russia simultaneously launched a diplomatic campaign aimed at the legitimisation of the Russian military presence and peacekeeping activities in the CIS<sup>136</sup>. Russia is claiming “special responsibility and authority for the former Soviet Republics (a new version of the Monroe Doctrine)” with recognition of its claims by the West and sanctioned by the UN<sup>137</sup>.

But Russia’s problem is that it is much weaker than the Soviet Union and traditional Soviet diplomatic and military methods don’t help its foreign policy. Russia explores its connection with some people and groups abroad to implement problems. Russia’s “antiterrorist operation” in Chechnya can destabilise the situation in the Caucasus. In an interview with “Frankfurter Allgemeiner Zeitung” the American political scientist and former National Security Adviser Z. Brzezinsky called the Russian action in the Chechnya an attempt to destabilise the situation in the whole Caucasus region.

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<sup>134</sup> Suyunbaev and Mamytova. 1998. “Natural Resources as a Factor of Development of Central Asia”. *Central Asia and Caucasus*, 1

<sup>135</sup> Duygu Sezer. 1996. “Russia and the South: Central Asia and Southern Caucasus”. *European Security*, 2 (5):304.

<sup>136</sup> Duygu Sezer. 1996. “Russia and the South: Central Asia and Southern Caucasus”. *European Security*, 2 (5):305

According to him it will lead to isolation of these states and Central Asian states from the world. It will jeopardise their efforts to integrate into the world economy and push them into the Russian orbit<sup>138</sup>.

The election of former KGB boss Vladimir Putin to Russia's presidency breeds fear among Central Asian leaders. Putin has already made it clear that Russia is ready to reintegrate the FSU republics as much as it suits its interests<sup>139</sup>. In Central Asia, conspiracy theories abound that Chechen rebels, as well as "Wahhabi" terrorists are receiving their training first in Moscow and then in the Middle East<sup>140</sup>. Many believe that Moscow is using these fighters to destabilise the republics on the periphery in order to justify future military incursions in the region. Putin's current and bloody campaign in the Caucasus has caused a palpable fear in the Soviet successor states in the southern tier (see appendices, table 2).

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<sup>137</sup> Alexei Arbatov. 1993. "Russian Foreign Policy Alternatives". *Int. Security*, 18/2:29-30.

<sup>138</sup> Irina Lagunina. An interview with Z. Brzezinsky. RFE/RL, 13 November 1999.

<sup>139</sup> Nikolay Fomin. "Nazarbayev Ne Priehal Na Inaguratsiyu" (Nazarbaev Didn't Attend Inauguration). *Tsentral'no Aziatskiy Bulletin*. 12 May 2000.

## 7.2. Uzbek Regional Hegemony Ambitions.

Uzbekistan with a population of 23.4 million (as of January 1997), is the largest state in the Central Asia<sup>141</sup>. It alone shares borders with all Central Asian states and has significant diasporas in each of them (see appendices, table 3). Unlike Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, which have multinational population, Uzbekistan has a relatively homogeneous population. This country has the region's largest and best-trained armed forces, well-developed industries, an extensive network of research institutes and higher educational establishments, and a large *intelegensia*. It also contains the historical cities of Bukhara and Samarkand within its borders.

Uzbekistan has had periodic disagreements with its neighbours over the allocation of water resources and payments for gas oil shipments. The withholding of gas deliveries by Tashkent due to non-payments has led to shortages in parts of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan are in many respects natural rivals, competing for both the role of regional leader and the attention of foreign investors. The tightening by Kazakhstan authorities of the customs regime on its border with Uzbekistan and the recent border demarcation by Uzbekistan and its intention to introduce visa regime are also reported to have created tensions between the two central Asian leaders<sup>142</sup>.

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<sup>140</sup> Beatrice Hagan. 2000. "What Is the Meaning of Democracy in Central Asia?". *Central Asia and Caucasus Analyses*. 1 March

<sup>141</sup> Human Development Report: Uzbekistan 1997, Tashkent, *UNDP*:52

Uzbek-Kyrgyz relations have been strained by fears among Kyrgyzstan leaders that Tashkent may take too great an interest in Bishkek's affairs. These concerns have been exacerbated by Karimov's displays of strengths in their region, such as the holding of military exercises in the Osh region of Kyrgyzstan in the spring of 1993 without prior permission of Kyrgyzstan.<sup>143</sup> Tensions rose to the surface in the summer of 1996 when the governor of Osh region, where a large Uzbek diaspora lives, accused Tashkent of harbouring claims to the territory of Kyrgyzstan and strengthening its military position in the Ferghana Valley.<sup>144</sup>

In 1995 Tajikistan officials accused Uzbekistan of stealing wheat intended for Tajikistan<sup>145</sup>, and Tajik-Uzbek relations deteriorated sharply after the Khojand events in November 1998, when about 1000 armed people under the command of Colonel Khudaberdiyev entered the Ferghana Valley of Tajikistan from Uzbekistan and tried to make a state coup. Addressing the Tajik parliament on 12 November, President Imomali Rakhmonov said he had proof that his Uzbek counterpart, Islam Karimov, had rendered assistance to former Tajik Prime Minister Abdumalik Abdolloyev, whom Rakhmonov identified as the mastermind behind the failed rebellion. "By organising coups and helping rebels, the Uzbek leadership wants to bring the whole of

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<sup>142</sup> Islam Karimov Serditsya (Islam Karimov is angry). *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*. 22.04.98. Tatyana Koratskaya. "Uzbeki Tiho Delyat Granitsy, Soglasno Svoim Kartam"(Uzbeks divide the border silently according to their maps). *AIF-Kazakhstan*, 3.02.2000.

<sup>143</sup> Olcott., Martha Brill. 1996. *Central Asia's New States*. Washington, United States Institute of Peace Press: 107

<sup>144</sup> "Khronika Odnoi Rotatsii" (Chronicle Of One Retirement). *Slovo Kyrgyzstna*, 30-31.07.1996. The controversial governor of Osh region, Janysh Rustenbekov, was removed by a presidential decree in July 1996.

Tajikistan under its control” said Imomali Rakhmonov<sup>146</sup>. Tajik Prosecutor-General Salomiddin Sharapov condemned Uzbekistan's alleged complicity in the revolt as "armed intervention" and claimed that the rebels had undergone training in Afghanistan<sup>147</sup>.

Since independence Uzbekistan has pursued a distinctive and assertive regional policy. Until the Taliban successes in Afghanistan and the rapprochement in Tajikistan this policy had been relatively successful.

Uzbekistan and Russia have a relationship in which competition for regional influence and common national objectives often run in tandem. Afghanistan and Tajikistan are the most evident arenas in which this relationship is being conducted.

Neighbouring Central Asian states have commented, with some concern, on Uzbekistan's alleged regional ambitions<sup>148</sup>. The Uzbekistani government, much to the consternation of the other four Central Asian republics, is not afraid to herald its view of itself as the regional leader. Alimov is keen to promote the official view that Uzbekistan is a prime regional actor, declaring that, “there is little reason to believe that any of these countries (Kasakstan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan) could anchor

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<sup>145</sup> RFE/RL 12 May 1998, *Newsline*

<sup>146</sup> RFE/RL 13 November 1998, *Newsline*

<sup>147</sup> RFE/RL 13 November 1998, *Newsline*

<sup>148</sup> These echo similar historical apprehensions of Uzbek hegemony.

the region's stability, resist pressures from without or mobilise political and economic resources needed to resist chaos”<sup>149</sup>.

Now Islamic fundamentalism is viewed as the main threat to stability in the Central Asian region. But this threat is perhaps, “more of an imagined threat”<sup>150</sup>. Tashkent has used the imagined Islamic treat as an excuse for its authoritarian politics internally and territorial consolidation externally. Tashkent’s border initiatives are ostensibly aimed at securing its territory against Islamic infiltration but they are seen as evidence of an Uzbek hegemonic mind-set in other Central Asian republics. They are fears that Tashkent may feel justified in expanding its borders. This is likely “to adversely affect inter-ethnic relations as Uzbekistan’s neighbours would view their Uzbek minorities as a liability – a fifth column”<sup>151</sup>. More serious than the imagined Islamic peril, therefore, Uzbekistan’s policies pose a challenge to regional stability.

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<sup>149</sup> K. Alimov. 1995. "Uzbekistan's Foreign Policy: in Search of Strategy". In Sagdeev and Eisenhower, eds. *Central Asia, Conflict, Resolution, and Change*. Chevy Chase:187

<sup>150</sup> Shahram Akbarzadeh. "2000. Is Islam Threat to Stability in Central Asia" *Central Asia and Caucasus Analyses*, 1 March

## Conclusion.

After the disintegration of the USSR few experts predicted that the Central Asian states could survive. Many of them noted that these states had no experience of independence, that they were not nation-states in the classical sense and warned that conflicts would occur all over the huge region. It was believed that most of them couldn't preserve their independence and would disintegrate (especially Kazakstan). Now after years of independence we can be more optimistic about the future of the region; at least we can say that the states haven't turned to permanent bloody conflicts except for the civil war in Tajikistan.

These countries' fortunes will depend most of all on what they can do for themselves. Optimists construct rosy scenarios in which the countries with the biggest resources – Kazakstan, Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan - use their mineral wealth to speed up economic development. With flexible and efficient markets, they should be able to build economies based more broadly than just on oil or gas. Through careful investment in infrastructure and education the riches could be widely spread. Uzbekistan could abandon its introversion and become the economic hub of Central Asia with a large domestic market and a diverse export base.

But a darker scenario of wasted resources, economic stagnation and ethnic strife is equally possible. Moreover, regional regimes are becoming more authoritarian while corruption and cronyism are rife. Unchallenged, these weaknesses will prevent the region from fulfilling its promise. Its development will be slowed as foreign investors

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<sup>151</sup> Shahram Akbarzadeh. "2000. Is Islam Threat to Stability in Central Asia" *Central Asia and*

stay away. Its integration will grind to a halt and falling economies will fuel ethnic animosities. Today's fragile stability could quickly dissolve into violent chaos.

The Ferghana Valley, a densely populated, volatile zone spanning Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan is already experiencing severe conflict. Many of the region's problems stem from two conflicting Soviet legacies – one of division and the other of unity. The disintegration of the Soviet Union and division of the Central Asia into independent states has harmed the Valley by dividing up a natural economic and social area into three different countries. On the other hand the Soviets installed artificial boundaries in the region to create five states. The borders, however, were administrative rather than political or economic. The region's infrastructure and economy was based on a single unit, such that the Central Asian states provided raw materials to feed factories in Russia and Ukraine. Understanding the region's infrastructure and economy – roads, rails, and water networks – is crucial to comprehend its current problems. For example, the main road from Tashkent, the Uzbek capital, to the Ferghana Valley crosses Northern Tajikistan. As Uzbekistan continues to build more border controls the tensions will likely mount. This has already raised the land disputes and tensions on the borders.

The problem of regionalism, religion, drug trafficking, crime, environment, water, land and so on in the Ferghana Valley are destabilising the situation in the region. Taking into consideration the sharp decline of standard of living in the region one can predict that these factors may lead to social, political and ethnic turmoil on a scale

surpassing the present conflict in Tajikistan. The late-developing states as in the case of Central Asia can easily turn into chaos failing to satisfy the population's demand.

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## APPENDICES

**Table 1. Factors destabilising ethnic relations in the Southern Kyrgyzstan (over 5%).**

Osh district	%	Jalal-Abad district	%
Unemployment	66.8	Unemployment	54.8
Falling living standards	40.9	Wrong personnel policy	30.7
Rise in Crime	32.8	Rise in Crime	30.1
Shortage of food and water	23.5	Activity of nationalist movements	30.1
Wrong personnel policy	20.1	Customs abuses	29.5
Activity of religious groups	15.9	Insufficient attention to the state languages	26.5
Activity of nationalist movements	14.4	Rise in crime	23.2
Insufficient attention to languages and customs	13.8	Shortage of food and water	15.4
Customs abuses	12.4	Territorial claims and disputes with neighbouring countries	12.7
Increase in number of refugees	10.0	Activity of religious groups	7.2
Territorial claims and disputes with neighbouring countries	8.1	Difficult to say	6.6
Mass media	7.5		
Insufficient attention to the state language	6.6		

Source: Табышалиева, Анара; Алишева, Атыркуль; Шукуров, Эмиль. 2000. Социальные реалии южного Кыргызстана. Бишкек: Институт Региональных Исследований

Note: Face-to-face interviews were conducted from 25 February till 5 March 1998 in *Osh* and *Jalal-Abad oblasts* of the Kyrgyz Republic. 1000 respondents were interviewed.

**Table 2. Central Asia and Russia. Power indices.**

Country	Population	GNP (US \$ billion)	Area (thouz. sq. km.)	Armed Forces
Russia	148	1,100	17,075	1.24 m
Kyrgyzstan	4.5	2.1	199	12,200
Tajikistan	5.8	1.1	143	9,000
Uzbekistan	22.6	11.0	447	70,000

Source: Rajan Menon and Hendrik Spruyt. The limits of neorealism: understanding security in Central Asia. *Review of International Studies*, # 25, 1999: 90

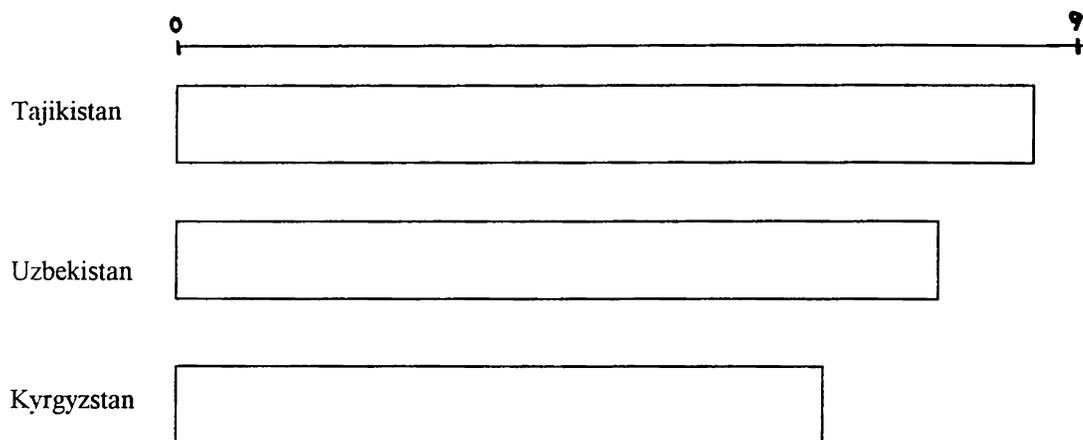
Note: Population figures are for 1989 and have been rounded; GNP and armed forces data are for 1996.

**Table 3. Distribution of Uzbek within Central Asia (1989).**

Country	Number	Percentage of Country's Population
Uzbekistan	14,123,626	71.3
Kazakstan	332,016	2.0
Kyrgyzstan	550,095	12.9
Turkmenistan	317,252	9.0
Tajikistan	1,197,091	23.5
Total	16,520,080	

Source: Annette Bohr. Uzbekistan Politics And Foreign Policy. The Royal Institute Of International Affairs, 1998, p. 50.

**Figure 1. Corruption index\*.**



\* Assessment of corruption by a panel of regional analysts;

most corrupted = 9, least corrupted = 0

Source: European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. Cited in "The Economist", February 7, 1998, *Central Asia Survey*: 15