

Central Asia: A Study of History, Society, Culture and its Affects on the
Current Political and Economic Ideologies of Today's Leaders

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is essentially to educate readers on a region that is gaining geopolitical importance. Being extremely wealthy in natural resources and strategically located in the heart of three superpowers (Europe, Russia and China) will only continue to increase this regions popularity in the coming decades. After having traveled through Turkmenistan as a Peace Corps Volunteer I became entrenched in discovering more about the mystical world that surrounds Central Asia. Since beginning this project my goals and desires changed, but managed to create a professional paper that defined the original objective.

My study is broken into four chapters highlighting various divisions of history, society, and politics. Chapter one introduces the reader to Central Asia's historical past and its importance in the ancient world. Chapter two merges with the first chapter by what drives Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan's authoritarian governments today by examining Central Asia's past political structures.

The third chapter uses the previous two sections to discover the economic, political, and regional concerns that these five young nations face today. The final chapter examines Central Asia's relationships with the international community and the regions current foreign policy issues.

Materials available were limited within the accessible libraries, which made online resources such as internet articles, reports, and newspapers essential. Secondary resources provided the foundation for historical background while primary resources supplied the key documentation for contemporary issues affecting the region today.

I hope to provide the reader with an interesting perspective on one of the most isolated regions in the world while also bridging a desire to learn more. Enjoy.

We Certify that we have read this professional paper and that, in our opinion, it is satisfactory in scope and quality for the degree of Arts in Diplomacy and Military Studies.

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Introduction:

After many years as a colonial possession, the states of Central Asia were granted independence in the wake of the Soviet Union's demise. Unlike other nations that received independence with open arms, Central Asia was reluctant to embrace their newfound freedom. Unprepared, they were forced to build nation states out of the ashes that Moscow had left with only their past to serve as a compass to follow.

Following my time spent time in Turkmenistan as a Peace Corps Volunteer I was plagued with intrigue and questions about these mysterious, loving, and compassionate people that have lived through so much during their extensive history. In a nation with very limited resources, a restrictive political regime and a future as bright as a darkened night I felt compelled to investigate further.

It was because of this amazing opportunity that I chose a subject related to Central Asia as my graduate level professional paper topic. The political atmosphere within the five states of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan are distinct, but similar in many ways and it was my goal to understand the cultural, historical and social relationships of these nations in more detail. Through a historical and cultural study my research will provide a deeper knowledge of the direction Central Asian nations embark upon when confronting domestic and foreign policy objectives. The first half of this study will ask questions such as: Is Central Asian cultural history directly related to their continued autocratic political practices? Has their tribal and nomadic lifestyles influenced political ideology? Do certain Central Asian nations still require authoritarian rule even after nomadic lifestyles have disappeared? These

questions are distinctly under-researched and the discovery of answers to them has motivated this undertaking.

The second part will evaluate the domestic and foreign issues relating to Central Asian states. What troubles have Central Asian countries encountered since independence? How have they maneuvered themselves within the context of international relations? Domestic and foreign concerns have been the primary goal since the conception of this study. These states rely heavily upon foreign investment and since beginning this research, the state of the global finance sector has deeply touched every nation including Central Asian states.

This study is comprised of four chapters and is divided as such. The first chapter will provide a deeper historical background on significant periods within the region bridging the periods from the ancient Silk Road to the present as independent states. Chapter one will discuss the foundation upon which Central Asia stands. The second chapter will focus upon the political ideology of authoritarianism. Governed under great leaders such as Alexander the Great, Ghengis Khan, and Vladimir Lenin I will illustrate a political tradition that has transcended antiquity and imbued the practices of the modern rulers of these nations. Chapter three highlights the domestic troubles that the republics have faced since becoming independent, be it political or economic dilemmas. The final chapter is by far the most dissociated of the four and is primarily written to provide a portrait of the political concerns that Central Asian states have had when confronting affairs with foreign actors and other international variables that cause disturbances. It is essential to understand how these states interact with the international community since gaining independence and the direction that they are taking as sovereign republics.

This analysis will provide a deeper appreciation for a region that is quickly becoming a dominant topic within scholarly circles.¹ Central Asia holds some of the largest supplies of fossil fuels globally and Kazakhstan is expected to become one of the top ten suppliers within the next decade. As our need for fossil fuels increase and as Russia and China reemerge as strong global superpowers in the twenty-first century Central Asia will have important significance within the globalized framework.² An understanding of the nuances associated with Central Asia will offer to those interested in the region and global affairs a much-needed analytical perspective.

¹ Linn, Johannes F. "Connecting Central Asia with the World". World Bank World Development Indicators 2009 and UNDP Human Development Report. 2 February 2009.

² International Crisis Group. "Central Asia's Energy Risks". Asia Report N° 133. 24 May 2007

Chapter One: History is Destiny: Central Asia Uncovered

Some have argued that Central Asia remains a region that many are unaware of and one that holds little significance other than to be stigmatized as a former imperial possession that found its liberation in the wake of the former Soviet Union's demise. Although elements of this grim portrayal are true, its vast and unique historical presence far overshadow this diminutive period of time. With the collapse of the Soviet Union the Central Asian states of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan found not only their future place among the worldly nations, but rediscovered their past as well.

To understand Central Asia it is imperative to define their past. History is recognized as either Eastern or Western, but within the boundaries of Central Asia these two worlds collided and bringing inevitable challenges. An examination of both the historical background of the region and its current state do much to unravel some of the mysteries that seem endogenous. This chapter is provided to give the reader knowledge of Central Asia's past glories. If we are to know its people and inhabitants today we must look back upon who they once were. The people of Central Asia have long been dominated by the political will, ideas, culture, and philosophy of others. Political movements have occurred in their past that have epitomized the regions history and altered their cultural orientation. A few examples that best describe the conditions that have altered the landscape and people of Central Asia include the Greek invasion lead by Alexander the Great in fourth century B.C., the Arab conquests of the early eighth century A.D, the brutal Mongol assault in the early thirteenth century A.D and the more recent Russian invasion in the nineteenth century. It was because of these types of

actions that we can now look at the region as a whole and witness the changes that have occurred through their long and glorious past and it is these types of characteristics that will define the political and social struggle that Central Asian states are trying to overcome today.

Central Asian civilization is built upon the mountains, valleys and oases that encompass the region and if this is not understood we would not be able to comprehend modern Central Asian states today. These were tribal societies that thrived in this region before the Treaty of Westphalia concretized the idea of a nation-state, prior to the creation of communism, and long before empires ravished their neighbors. Drifting with the seasons, following the current of nature, these were agrarian and migratory people. Even today, the largest population of people lives within the ancient fertile valleys that exist around the river systems of the Amu Darya and the Syr Darya.³

For more than 4,000 years Central Asia has been the crossroads where great civilizations of the past have blended to create the society we see today. Persian, Arab, Mongols and Russians have all met in the heart of the Eurasian continent to exchange culture, history, and commodities to create the true melting pot of human history.

The modern day citizens that live within this land are of Turkic and Mongol origin, with the exception of the inhabitants of Tajikistan who are from an Indo-European background. There are also various people of European and Russian descent that migrated to the region during Soviet rule. For the most part, ethnicity is cloaked in mystery. It was not until the ninth or tenth century A.D that the area could be described as an ethnically homogenous land and until this period the Indo-European peoples of the

³ Gregory Gleason, *The Central Asian States: Discovering Independence* (Colorado: Westview Press, 1997), 27

Iranian branch was fairly large. It is argued that Indo-Europeans originated within the borders of modern day Central Asia.⁴

It was not until the fifth to sixth centuries that the Turkic tribes started to appear in the southern parts of Central Asia. With the help of the nomadic Iranians they challenged the security of the region due to the fact that the Indo-Europeans had already settled in urban areas. From 224 A.D.- 642 A.D. the Persian Sassanid Empire were able to hold strong against the groups migration south, but the Arab defeat of the Sassanid Empire encouraged Turkic movement that continued through to the eighth and ninth centuries.⁵ Life continued and the journey of the Turkic tribes pushed further south and west and it was not until the Mongol invaders in the early part of the thirteenth century that history witnessed a significant shift again. The massive and atrocious attacks by the Mongols fueled resistance and revolt among Central Asians that left the indigenous population disbanded and their cultural centers destroyed. It was this period that marked the marginalization of the non-Turkic ethnic elements in Central Asia.

Turning points are movements when the cultural orientation of a society undergoes radical and long lasting change and these examples of ethnic and cultural domination can be defined as such.⁶ Another dramatic example of change would be the Arab victory over the Chinese Army in 751 A.D. along the Talas River, now located in Kazakhstan.⁷ This battle helped determine the orientation of the region. It is believed that due to the domination of the Arabs it helped mirror cultural traits related to the west

⁴ Shireen T. Hunter, *Central Asia Since Independence* (London: Praeger Publishing, 1996), 3-20
We can see this in an ample of the Zoroastrian holy book *Avesta*. It places the mythical original home of the Aryans-Airyanem Vaejo- in ancient Sogdia which now represents parts of Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, and Tajikistan.

⁵ Hunter 1996, 4

⁶ R.D. McChesney, *Central Asia: Foundations of Change* (Princeton: Darwin Press, INC 1996), 1-12

⁷ McChesney 1996, 5

and to a monotheistic tradition, something that reflected Middle Eastern beliefs. Had the Chinese won, Eastern philosophy, notably the Confucian tradition, could have dominated. It is also widely thought that it was this turning point that brought paper manufacturing to the Middle East from China.⁶

The last decade of the twentieth century may also be described later in history as such a turning point. After seventy long years under Soviet control the states of Central Asia were given their liberty and allowed to chart their own destiny as independent nation states. The Soviet Union, which ruled the region both politically and socially, kept a firm and decisive grip on all matters related to life within the region and then against all predictions and presumptions failed relinquishing all power- on paper.

In order to fully comprehend the diversity that exists within Central Asia it is imperative to illustrate the cultural evolution that has occurred throughout the region. For the greater part of its past the area was exceedingly influenced by Iranian civilization in its various forms.

The concept of nationhood or national identity is a relatively new idea to Central Asians since prior to the fall of the Soviet Union it was not a concept with much gravity or consequence. These are traditional people that followed political traditions that were handed down to them. Although the region is heavily influenced by Turkic and Mongol culture these dominating forces were short lived and were soon divided once their founders ceased to exist. As these invaders continued to occupy the lands they became influenced by the Iran-Islamic culture that dominated Central Asia for centuries.

Descendents of Genghis Khan were slowly assimilated into Muslim culture. For example

they adopted the rules of the Shari'a rather than the Mongol legal system of Yasa.⁸ They also used the Iranian version of the Sassanid traditions in administrative tasks that had been developed during the Abbasid Khalifat.⁹

With the influx of Arab and Turkic peoples the culture of Central Asia changed. What was once an Iran-Islamic culture organized around urban and agrarian society was changed to reflect a nomadic and tribal way of life.¹⁰ As these new cultures crept into the region, feudalism and tribalism provided new ways of existence in Central Asia. Within the society today we are still able to observe how political traditions affect culture. An example would be to examine political elections and their effects within Central Asian society. Candidates are often chosen based on their tribal affiliation.¹¹ In a system where nationality is relatively new and fragile their tribal and feudalist culture compels them to see loyalty confined to a tribe or region and/or within the clan or family. Their first priority is usually based around these groups when it comes to devotion and allegiance.

In these types of societies there are additional concerns when considering statehood and national identity. Central Asian states were given independence almost two decades ago and have managed to overcome their parallel problems with a tribal, feudal culture and cultivate a nation based on similarities rather than differences. Imperial, feudal, tribal systems strongly emphasize personal rule, a topic that will be discussed later.⁴

When Islam made its historical pilgrimage to Iran it transformed the religious movement within Central Asia, a change that still holds today. Professor Adda Bozeman

⁸ Hunter 1996, 2

⁹ Hunter 1996, 2-3

¹⁰ Hunter 1996, 3

¹¹ Hunter 1996, 8

characterized this event as “Iran’s conquest of Islam¹²”. The indigenous culture adopted the religion and structured it to work in their favor, but there are various practices that Iran embraced from Persian culture such as traditions, art, and, urban and administration development. In Central Asia today there is a push toward connecting with their ancient Iranian history. The most admired historic individuals include the Sassanid emperor Khosrow Anoushirvan and other great leaders that are linked to this era. Another link includes the holiday of Norouz, the mythical Iranian New Year that exemplifies the pre-Islamic idea of creation, fall and redemption, which many in the region now celebrate. It is claimed that the holiday is Islamic or Turkic, but the holiday predates Islam or Turkic origin.

Islam has provided the framework for Central Asian society for centuries and since gaining independence has provided an identity for the social, cultural and political aspects of social order. The majority of the population recognizes their Muslim heritage and follows the practices of Islam. Prior to the Russian invasion Islam dominated and provided the legal and moral structure within Central Asian states.

The states of Central Asia have incorporated Islam into the political and social framework of modern society. In theory, from the prophet Mohammad, Islam is expected to link the Muslim world as one unit and surpass all other characteristics that would divide an individual, tribe, or group, but unfortunately after his death the theory passed away as well. In the wake of gaining independence the leaders of these nations have attempted to build upon this belief infused with a sense of national identity as a Kazak, Kyrgyz, Tajik, Turkmen, or Uzbek.⁴

¹² Hunter 1996, 6

Soviet-era nation building had a number of problems when adjusting to the cultural traits of Central Asia. There were inconsistencies and contradictions that resulted in unforeseen troubles in the future. Prior to the Bolsheviks control of Moscow they promised freedom to the Tsars' colonial subjects, but once in power one of their first mandates was to seize jurisdiction over the colonies. Lenin and his party had to help facilitate the idea that the colonies joined the Union voluntarily to be members of the socialist movement to create a new classless society, but in reality the Bolsheviks conquered the Tsar in order to consolidate control and power.

“Socialism is a universal and transcendental philosophy based on the solidarity of the working and oppressed classes,” stated Hunter, a Central Asian Scholar.¹³ Socialism supports the belief that society has no racial, ethnic or class distinctions and cannot exist parallel to nationalism that is societies based on ethnic differences and the feeling of attachment to a particular group. Socialists have no loyalty expect to other like-minded individuals who share the same utopian philosophy. Soviet Russia attempted to bridge their union as one although in reality the republics were disjointed and following the demise of the Soviet Union the new states of Central Asia had to disregard such socialist teachings and build nations on the foundation of what they once believed to be an obsolete framework –nationalism.⁴

Loyalty within Central Asian life often does not transcend beyond that of the immediate family, tribe, or clan and this is a problem that Lenin was well aware of. In order to achieve his dream of a global utopian socialist society he believed that it was best to build small nations- republics- out of the diversified people of the region.¹³ There

¹³ Hunter 1996, 9

were several flaws in this plan due to the cultural make-up that was involved. Various ethnic groups were separated by borders while others were totally ignored, such as the Iranian civilizations of Samarkand and Bakhara, the heart of Iranian society that are now part of Uzbekistan. The numerous regional conflicts that erupted during Soviet rule and continue to inflict harm in the current age. These conflicts can be traced back to the Bolsheviks nation building tactics in the early part of the 20th century.¹³

Soviet policy also created national cultures, but failed to allow the people to practice and develop them. In theory national languages were supposed to be the primary means of communication, but because the Soviet Union did not fully accept their practice, Russian became the dominating language of the area. When indigenous languages were practiced and showed growth in a region it was treated as antisocialist, divisive, and in opposition to the principles of socialist internationalism.¹³

To many newly liberated states from the colonial era gaining independence was a long overdue aspiration, but for the Central Asian Soviet Republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan it may have been more of a dreaded nightmare. Having been under the careful watch of Moscow, where the state provided a secure political and social existence (not to mention paternalism), and to be thrust into independence without the luxury of the Soviet pocket book or the gradual relinquishment of control, these newly formed states experienced a harsh reality.⁶

Prior to independence Central Asian republics were at the mercy of Moscow and submissive to their demands. Everything was decided for them because the republic worked as a unit under the authority of Moscow. Once the Soviet Union collapsed these states were forced to assume full responsibility for the well being of its citizens, the

political and economical policies and the political structure without any warning or preparation. Once the Soviet Union subsided the Republics were required to discover the strains of development in an unfamiliar and unknown world.⁶

Since Islam was the dominating religion in the region prior to Russian invasion in the 19th century many in the west feared that Islamic fundamentalism would erupt in the Central Asian states after gaining independence. The states of Central Asia were described as the “Achilles heel of the Soviet Union because many in the west feared that it was only a matter of time before revolution occurred” and it was hoped that once given the opportunity the newly independent states would continue their multiethnic and multicultural structure that was imposed under Soviet leadership, one that reflected the diversity that existed within the states.⁶

As noted before, independence did not come to Central Asian states with anticipation or a revolution, it was given to them voluntarily and it was accepted and carried as a burden.⁶ Since liberation from the Soviet Union there have been drastic changes within the states themselves, but rather than reflecting true ideological transformations these changes have been superficial. Soviet holidays now represent the indigenous culture, names of cities have been changed, loyal communist leaders embraced the word democracy, but still maintain tight control socially, politically and economically. Many states adopted the ethnic language as the official language, but Russian remains the language of government documents and assemblies. The transformations that have occurred are only for aesthetic purposes and do not reflect the majority of the population that still embraces their Russian/Soviet heritage.⁶

The dominant political structure of the Central Asian states has continued to be rule by an individual. Many of the leaders of these countries were leftover communist leaders that transitioned to positions of power in the newly independent states. It appears from an outsider's perspective that political stability requires the Soviet style dictatorship. Identity and clan loyalty continues to take precedence over the foreign concept of nationalism.⁶

These are states that have been isolated for centuries and have had little influence with the outside world. Even during the period of colonial expansion they were isolated under Tsarist Russia and more so during Soviet rule. They were not entirely barred from outside influences however. During the end of the nineteenth century a transnationalist ideology spread to the region. Pan-Turkism and Islamic reformism were two ideological elements that extended into Central Asia and proved to be important in shaping the political environment between the years of 1914-1921.¹⁴ There were many nationalist and pro-independence movements that were created during this period, but due to the Bolshevik revolutionaries and their own agendas such groups as the Kazakh nationalist government and the Tajik *intelligencia* were forced to submit.⁴

As a result of the strict and firm central governmental system of the Soviet Union autonomous national governmental institutions were prohibited from developing. The establishment of republics within the Soviet system was only a façade because in reality they had very little control, although the degree of political rule varied under different leaderships. For example under Brezhnev the republics held greater freedom as long as they met their quotas set by Moscow and kept peace within their borders.⁴

¹⁴ International Crisis Group. "Is Radical Islam Inevitable in Central Asia? Priorities for Engagement. ICG Asia Report N°72: 22 December 2003

Fortunately Moscow understood the cultural history of Central Asia and managed to implement a system that used tribal and clan loyalty to work in their favor. By developing local systems that were structured around tribal and imperial political cultures and through paternalistic, personality based, and authoritarian tendencies Moscow manipulated the population to meet their own needs. Regrettably this same structural method continued through independence prohibiting political liberalization of any type from developing.⁴

The states of Central Asia have had many transitions within their past and this historical portrayal has only touched upon the peaks of those changes. By unraveling the various dominating forces that have influenced their religious, cultural, and social orders, we, as observers of the present, will be able to uncover what drives these states toward their domestic and foreign goals today.

Central Asian policies are governed by a central government all of which are controlled by authoritarian leaders. For centuries the people of these lands have undergone various changes that have fueled their ideological approach to their domestic and foreign policy goals today. The next chapter will illustrate Central Asia's unique past, one that has deeply influenced their goals today.

Chapter Two: To Rule with an Iron First

“...The most important distinction among countries concerns not their form of government but their degree of government.”

Sam Huntington

Central Asia, as argued previously, is a unique region, unlike any other. It has undergone incredible struggles throughout its history and has not only managed to maintain its cultural identity, but also has enveloped various elements from other cultures along the way. Unlike many of the other former republics of the USSR, the states of Central Asia have emerged upon the global stage as authoritarian dictatorships, a political taboo as assessed by many democratic nations in the west.

In order to understand Central Asia, however, it is imperative to comprehend the fundamentals of their emergence as sovereign nations and the principle investors that have made the transition possible. In an age where Francis Fukuyama proclaimed the end of history and determined that “end” to be liberal democratic political organization, one wonders how Central Asia has defied this teleological progression and remains imbedded within a feudal, authoritarian structure.¹⁵ Why have these leaders materialized out of the ashes of the Soviet Union and been allowed to stay in power long after independence? This chapter will seek to understand these questions and follow the truth behind the political ideology that controls the nations of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

¹⁵ Francis Fukuyama. *The End of History and the Last Man*. Avon Books, NY, 1992

This chapter will continue enhance our understanding of ancient Central Asia. It will provide an analytical framework for what drives these states into authoritarian governments today by examining their past political structures. Discovering the political structure and early traditional laws in the past will shed light on the present autocratic systems of today.¹⁶

Understanding Ethnic Diversity within Central Asia

Central Asia is difficult to place when grouping its inhabitants into a single ethnic classification. Their history is extremely complex and many have made the mistake of simplifying its citizens as Turks with nomadic and Mongoloid features, or Tajiks with Indo-European features; characteristics that are often times entrenched within traveler's descriptions. One might note that Kyrgyz and Kazakhs have ties to nomadic, tribal societies and Islam, while at the same time having clearly Mongoloid features, but such criteria become inoperative as soon as one enters Ferghana Valley in Uzbekistan or even in Turkmenistan. An Uzbek is someone who speaks Uzbek and calls himself Uzbek, and not necessarily somebody who has Turkic features. Nor is the linguistic criterion sufficient to determine group affiliation. Some examples that illustrate the diversity that exists within the region include the Jews of Bakhara, The Arabs of Shartuz (south of Tajikistan), and the Joggi (gypsies of Ferghana who speak Tajik, but do not call themselves Tajiks). It also includes the Iranians of Samarkand, Uzbekistan who speak Uzbek. All of these groups and their various backgrounds exist within the borders of

¹⁶ This section will give background information and citations will follow after the end of each paragraph.

Central Asia and although their ethnic diversity exemplifies the colorful history that they share they do have a commonality to build upon, Shiism.¹⁷

The classification of Uzbek, Kyrgyz, Kazakh, Turkmen, and Tajik occurred due to ruptures and transformations in their past. For example the Uzbeks, like the Kazakhs and the Kyrgyz, were tribal federations that appeared at a given moment in history and pulled other groups of people together. These groups crystallized into ethnicities not out of natural evolution, but by a political process. Uzbeks became an “ethnic group” only after the sixteenth century, meaning that they separated themselves from other tribes/clans in the region.¹⁷

We can also see this in the Kazakh case and other divided groups of Central Asia. The name Kazakh refers not to an ethnic group, but to a political choice that was made when they split from the Uzbek federation in order to maintain their nomadic way of life. The Turkmen’s of Turkmenistan were never thought of as an individual people or nation, but belonged to the family of Oghuz languages who maintained their tribal and nomadic lifestyle. This explains why we find Turkmen’s living in Turkey, Iran, and Iraq practicing modern Turkish. Their very name comes not from a specialized linguistic group, but from the way in which they live their lives, nomads of the desert. As for the Tajiks their name is derived from the term referring to the Sunni Muslims of Central Asia that speak Persian. Ethnic lines can be complex which can be seen in the Tajiks case. For example a Tajik who adopts the Uzbek language is no longer seen, and does not define him/herself as Tajik.¹⁸

¹⁷ Oliver Roy, *The New Central Asia: The Creation of Nations*. (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 3

¹⁸ Roy 2000 1-23

The various obstacles that we find in discovering the ethnic backgrounds of Central Asia and their legacies are owed to the socialization of Central Asia.

Anthropologists and other cultural advisers attempted to create around the republics imaginary lines. Although possibly flawed and definitely complicated, their legacy has left us with the nations that we see today.

The Russian/Soviet influence can be felt throughout the region of Central Asia. Architecture, technology, education, almost everything that industrialization has ushered owes its gratitude to the gilded powers of Moscow, but it came at the price of suppressing tribal and nomadic societies. One of the most coercive regimes that the world has witnessed was unable to eliminate clan divisions and prevent their role in political life. 70 years of Soviets domination the region did little to quell the cultural heritage of Central Asians and this heritage found freedom when the region was granted autonomy.

Another important factor begging attention is the tribal, clan, and kinship heritage that lives strong within the region. Clans and other 'club like affiliations' have a profound effect because they provide advantages to members.¹⁹ Many political scientists argue that the modern nation state could not exist without the homogenization of societies that exist within the imaginary borders of the state, but within Central Asia they have both managed to coexist and flourish; such as present day Kyrgyzstan where President Kurmanbek Bakiev now leads his nation.²⁰ Kyrgyzstan falls into several tribe/clan based societies. Bakiev is described in the West as a Southerner, but upon closer inspection of the Southern community one would realize that they have

¹⁹ Edward Schatz *Modern Clan Politics: The power of "Blood" in Kazakhstan and Beyond*. (Seattle: University of Washington, 2004), 9

²⁰ Benedict Anderson. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Verso books, London 1991

disassociated themselves with him and other members of his immediate clan. It is stated that in the 1880's his clan broke ranks with other members and joined with the Uzbeks of Kokan, a strongly disliked group. Currently some of his strongest opponents are from the South and they base their detestation on this principle.²¹

It becomes exceedingly fascinating to study clan based groups and their divisions because they allow us to see nationalism on an entirely different level. This is a system that focuses beyond the typical and forces us to study the cultural and political boundaries of the state. Clan politics is typically a quieter and less visible political struggle than its robust counterpart of national groups, but we should recognize that the most visible divisions and the most politically important might not be one and the same.

The reason that clan politics needs to be addressed is because it undermines an understanding of the nation-state. Ideally politics represents the diversity of a specific population, but clan politics focuses more on the tribal affiliations and their historical meanings rather than a consensus of the populous. Where is the allegiance? Is it to the State or to the local authority of a particular clan/tribe/kinships? Benedict Anderson stated, "Nation, nationality, and nationalism have all proved notoriously difficult to define, let alone to analyze".²² He addresses states as imagined communities, which they are. States are larger variations of villages and clans. Within Central Asia however we are creating a nation state from a clan-based society where possibly a larger clan rules an entire state and thus rival clans.

²¹ Frederick S. Starr. "Clans, Authoritarian Rulers and Parliaments in Central Asia." Central Asia-Caucasus Institute and Silk Road Studies Program, (2006) 8-10

²² Anderson 1991 3

For further readings on nationalism and nations please read Benedict Anderson, Eric Hobsbawm, Ernest Gellner, Anthony D. Smith, and Dudley Seers.

The clan/tribal-based systems that existed prior to Russian invasion are argued to be part of the reason for the totalitarian systems that presented themselves after gaining independence. The region was not lawless and did in-fact have its own governmental system that was implemented during the Mongol invasion in the eleventh century. There are several questions that scholars have about laws and regulations that preexisted the Mongols though scant conclusions have been reached.²³

Ghengis Khan and his Legacy within Central Asia

Ghengis Khan's laws, or Yasa (Yasa, Yasq, Jasaq) were implemented during his time. He brought Yasa to the people of Central Asia and over the course of time as his descendents assimilated into the Muslim society and faith the traditional laws of Yasa evolved. These types of laws were centralized career advancement and provided a kind of constitutional framework within the political environment. It was a model that was enacted in the year of his death--1227 --to at least the end of the eighteenth century. These traditions evolved with the generations and adhered to cultural norms of the times.²⁴

Yasa is argued as the primary law of Central Asia, but it later coexisted with another called Islamic *Shari'a*. To identify with *Shari'a* it is imperative to understand the term Uzbek. As mentioned before, traditionally the name Uzbek did not define a people based on language or ethnic affiliation, but was used by outsiders, often critically, to designate the entire political organization of the non-Ghengisized groups of military men and the Ghengisized clans who led them. When others outside the region, usually from

²³ R.D. McChesney. *Central Asia: Foundations of Change*. (Princeton: Darwin Press, NC 1996) 100

²⁴ McChesney, 121

Iran or India, wanted to mention the governing political system of Central Asia they used the term Uzbek, a generic term.²⁵

In the sixteenth century the word Uzbek referred to two distinct and mutually exclusive elements. One was the Shibanid family, whose leader was a direct descendant of Abu al-Khayr of the eldest son of Ghengis Khan, Jochi. Their political legitimacy rested solely on the notion that they could define themselves by their genealogical mark. They presented themselves as above the station of everyone else and used their birthright to revive the glory of Ghengis Khan. As true Ghengis Khan descendents, the Shibanid families were upholders of *Yasa*, but were also devout Muslims who followed the Islamic law, *Shari'a*.²⁵

The second element, or political grouping, referred to another political role that was part of Ghengis' past. The Uzbeks consisted of several tribes that maintained their own names. Only genealogy separated members of the tribes from the Ghengis clans. This was the only distinction that illustrated their separateness. The Shibanid families were the only members that were direct descendents of Ghengis Khan and who could legitimately claim supreme leadership under their constitution. Surprisingly, however, many of the other Uzbek tribes could claim they descended from Ghengis Khan as well. Unfortunately their bloodline was through a female relative and, therefore, had no creditability under the constitution regardless of their individual power, charisma or other possible means of control.²⁴

The Uzbeks that existed in the sixteenth century should not be confused with the modern day citizens of Uzbekistan because the term "Uzbek" referred to those groups that recognized Shibanid claims to the *Chingizid's* Khanate (or royal clan). When other

²⁵ McChesney, 122

tribes or clans such as Jalayir and Uyrat, supported others claiming *Chingizid's* legitimacy, they were given the term Moghul and “Qazaq (Kazakh)” for those that supported the rival line of Shibanid/Juchids. These terms were not used in reference to ethnicity, but rather political beliefs. It would not be until the 1920's when the Soviets created the national homelands that we associate modern ethnic/nationalities with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.²⁶

This period in history showed great devotion to the *Chingizid's* who came to power in Central Asia and gained further territory through various military campaigns against other *Chingizid's* who claimed khanate. However it is important to stress that these groups operated under the authority of a constitution, one that they all shared regardless of whom they supported. Their actions were shaped and directed by their loyalty to the legacy that Ghengis Khan left in the region.²⁴

The most important political term that can be traced to this period was *Yasa*. There is very little written material that is known about *Yasa*, but it is known that it had a profound impact on the culture of Central Asia such as the Shibanid's and Uzbeks usage of *Yasa* to justify their actions. It is irrelevant if Ghengis Khan actually created *Yasa*, but it is pertinent that the political authority of later years strongly believed in its weight and justified their actions accordingly.²⁵

No complete version of *Yasa* has been discovered and only limited fragments have lasted through the years. Ghengis Khan was actually illiterate and therefore used his advisers to transcribe. There were probably various versions floating around during the

²⁶ Starr, S. Frederick. “Clans, Authoritarian Rulers and Parliaments in Central Asia.” Central Asia-Caucasus Institute and Silk Road Studies Program, (2006) 8

period, but it is assumed that he held an official copy of his commands and orders.²⁷

Although there are various historical texts that refer to *Yasa*, it was more or less codes, commands, and orders that Ghengis Khan created. The following is a sample:

*Divide up all the subject people and apportion them to Our mother, to Us, to Our younger brothers and sons according to the name of the people, Splitting up those that live in felt-walled tents, Separating those that live in dwellings with wooden doors. Let no one disobey your word! Chastise the robbers, check the liar.*²⁸

Yasa was reestablished three hundred years after Ghengis Khan's death and the way in which it was interpreted reflects the period. Islam was the dominant religion and the social environment operated accordingly; it was heavily influenced by the other ruling decree, *Shari'a*. And it was also a time where nearly all writers were empowered by *Shari'a* rather than *Yasa*.²⁹

The neo-*Chingizid's* considered themselves members of the Muslim faith and they lived alongside both legal structures. The *Shari'a* is a divine law that does not recognize other legal systems, yet it does recognize customary law, which *Yasa* acted under. Writers of the time have shown that these two political systems worked in harmony with each other. The *Yasa*, for the most part, prescribed protocol in court ceremony, seating of the court, drinking *qumiss* (fermented mare's milk) and the

²⁷ George Vamadsky. "The Scope and Contents of Chingis Khan's *Yasa*." *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 3 no. 3/4 (Dec. 1938) 338

²⁸ D.O. Morgan. The 'Great "yasa" of Chingiz Khan and Mongol Law in the Ilkhanate. *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London*, 1986 164

²⁹ Vamadsky (Dec. 1938) 341-343

symbolic wearing of the *quiver*. They also referred to *Yasa* for other purposes involving political and criminal matters, receiving ambassadors and dealing with disobedience. The Shibaniid family and their descendents ruled from the *Yasa* and, therefore, from Ghengis Khan himself. Concurrently they referred to *Shari'a* and recognized its authority for other means, which included personal status and contracts.³⁰

The *Yasa* illuminated the leadership of the governing body within Central Asia. Supreme leadership was a heavily enforced by the right of Khanate, a right that predated Ghengis Khan- but one that he instigated special meaning to. After his domination, only one of his male descendents could claim the right and privileges of Khan. The Shibaniid's understood that in order to claim the title they needed to trace their lineage back to Ghengis Khan through his son Jochi and Jochi's son Shibani and through Shibani's fifteenth century descendant Abu Al-Khayr, khan of the northeastern region of the Caspian Sea from 1428-1468.²⁸

Those who claimed Khanate had to prove more than just their bloodline; they had to be worthy of traits that Ghengis Khan possessed such as political and military leadership. These were characteristics that needed to somehow resonant with the living descendent. Among the Uzbeks this was an important factor when confronted with succession. Balance and order needed to be respected and merit often decided whom to support in these cases.³⁰

Like many of the leaders of modern Central Asian States, the khans, once elected, were rulers for life. During the two hundred year period of rule (1500-1700) there were very few leaders that were removed. An observer from Iran stated in the sixteenth century that the Chingizid's "call all the descendants of Ghengis Khan 'sultans' and the

³⁰ McChesney 127-141

one who is eldest is designated ‘Khana’.³¹ Therefore, once the royal clan was recognized the leadership fell to the senior member of the kinship. Seniority had a primary principle for leadership and is still the accepted method in Central Asian states.

Under *Yasa* law, the rights of the land were not limited to the Khan himself, but were given to the royal clan as a whole. For example the territory under the royal clan’s control was distributed in the form of autonomous regions that were given to eligible members of the royal family. When the Shibanid’s took control of the region in the early sixteenth century each of the sub-clans that were related to the royal family were given individual autonomous areas. These lands were focused around the main oases of Central Asia, Samarqand, Tashkent, Bakhara, Balkh, Shari Sabz, and Hisar (near present-day Dushanbe). Ideally these regions were supposed to distribute rations of their resources to its family members and other Uzbek loyalists.³²

The first half of the sixteenth century was marked with stability among the four main sub-clans as seniority was handed down from elder to elder. With this system however, the political seat moved from region to region, Samarqand, Bakhara, Tashkent and then back to Samarqand, Bakhara, and finally to Balkh. By the 1550’s the senior member of Balkh, the Jani-Begids, took control Khanate and seized the region of Bakhara, thus expanding their own autonomous region. Over the course of the century there were other expansions led by Abd Allah who acted in the name of his father, Iskandar. Abd Allah was compelled to expand his territory even further by annexing all regions not under his family’s authority.³⁰

³¹ McChesney 133

³² Reuven Amitai-Preiss. “Ghazan, Islam, and Mongol Tradition: A View from Mamluk sultanate”. Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies. Universtiy of London 1996 6

There were several other disagreements that eventually lead to the regions division into two separate areas. In practice, this meant that by 1612 Central Asia was roughly divided into two great autonomous lands, Bakhara and Balkh. Bakhara included the territory to the south of the Amu Darya and Samarqand, which has great importance to all Central Asians today. Balk controlled the land from the Murghap in the west to Badakhshan in the east. Central Asia underwent a series of changes through the course of the next two centuries. By the middle of the eighteenth century, even the Uzbek tribal groups, which chose to remain tied to their past, had apparently come to realize that Khanate no longer fulfilled the ideas that it stood for and served no useful purpose in the present. Although there were still those that could trace their lineage to Ghengis Kahn through either Tuqay Timur and/or Jochi (direct descendents of Ghengis Khan), it was ineffective politically, though it still allowed for social prestige. There are several small enclaves that persisted in some way to carry the weight of Khanate through the Soviet period and for the most part these systems tended to leave a cultural legacy on the region.

One can argue that the future of politics in Central Asia lies, as it has for centuries, in re-establishing legitimate institutional systems. Legitimacy is created by a general agreement by the governed population. This selected group of individuals often invokes supreme political control for the sake of the nation and therefore forfeiting a democratic institution favored by Western states. For some nations in Central Asia such as Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan they implemented secondary laws and constitutions after gaining independence. These were established to meet the demands of the political elite and varied in reason. Kazakhstan appears to be on track as a model for Central Asian nations, whether or not these new laws work as well for Kyrgyzstan is not known.

Tajikistan is still struggling with the question of legitimacy and the outcome cannot be predicted or guessed, as observers, the global community will just have to wait. History has shown us that Central Asia has fought several tribulations throughout their time and will probably continue to do so in the future.³⁰

When the Bolshevik's captured control of the Russian government their goal was to implement a communist state, one that was ruled by the people without the interference of bureaucracy and a privileged class. Lenin's vision was to create a state where all citizens were bureaucrats and therefore no one was a bureaucrat.³³ This optimistic vision was quickly demolished by April of 1918. The communist idea where government/commodities/individuals are self-administered and independence was a short lived notion and was quickly redesigned to reflect an individual autocratic government. Lenin believed that only a strong central authority was capable of restoring the economic links that were destroyed by the revolution. An autocratic government was the only thing that could repair the source of Russian food and trade-- the countryside-- and normalize the financial system along with order and discipline. Lenin knew the empire needed a firm hand dominated by an iron fist that could control outbursts of individual and group egoism that begun to plague the nation state.³³

Continuation of Autocratic leadership

Lenin and Stalin's communist dictatorship state was yet another example of Central Asia's continued form of autocratic government that has subsisted for hundreds of years. Central Asian history has demonstrated a continued acceptance of these types of systems and it does not appear that they will change anytime in the near future.

³³ Roy 2000, 58

At the time of their independence many Western observers believed that the newly independent states of Central Asia would capitalize on a parliamentary political system and it came as quite a shock when each state created a presidential government, one that gave the president ultimate control- Turkmenistan- and power.³⁴ In the wake of the USSR's demise these states turned against the Western suggestions and embraced a subjective structure that is abrasive and harsh.³⁴ With very little knowledge of modern political systems the states of Central Asia were inclined to adopt a familiar governmental system, autocracy.

When the Soviet Union took control of the region they immediately began the process of what can be termed as the *Sovietization* of Central Asia. The legacy of this development has had significant cultural and political ramifications for all five of the nations. Islam, as noted earlier, has played a heavy role in the cultural makeup of Central Asia and deterring Islamic faith was the first process towards *Sovietization*. The Muslim issue has had historical importance not only to Soviet Russia, but also under Czarist Russia. The Soviet Union approached the Muslim population by suppressing progressive *mullahs* (religious leaders). It was their goal to implement a system of religion that was controlled by Moscow under the authority of the Minister of the Interior. Moscow worried about local *mullahs* gaining authority, especially given soviet reforms once the region was annexed. By centralizing religion under a government shield it kept the Muslim citizenry in check.³⁴

Of course the *Sovietization* occurred on other levels that included language and the creation of republics that were built around linguistic commonalities; however our focus is on other aspects of Central Asian life under Soviet leadership that had a profound

³⁴ Roy 2000, 35-60

impact on ideology. In Soviet terms people were defined by language (*natsionalnost*), which granted them an administrative status within the communist system. This also provided these groups/nations the status of Soviet Socialist Republic (*SSR*). Those that were less developed were given the status of autonomous soviet socialist republic (*ASSR*), Autonomous Region (*AR*, or *oblast*) and National Territory (*NT*, or *okrug*). Each level contained an administrative council. The Soviet Socialist Republics had the external signs of statehood: a head of state (the president of the soviet, a minister of foreign affairs (after 1944), a flag, a national communist party, a national language, an academy of sciences, a national anthem etc.³⁵

What the Soviet Union accomplished however was to create a national identity for the people of the region. It is believed that their true ambition was not to divide, but to unify them and abolish the idea of a pan-Islamist state or pan-Turkic state, that many believed would have been the alternative to these Soviet States. Most Central Asians did not identify with Turkic, Uzbek, or Tajik terms. Instead they identified more so with their tribal/clan based communities.³⁵

Communism and the Soviet legacy have continued to shape the lives of Central Asian peoples and will continue to do so. Moscow's reforms have had a profound impact on the direction these young states have taken since being forced into sovereignty. Whether the topic refers to political reform or economic reorganization Central Asian states have proceeded on a course reminiscent of Soviet leadership. Although there have been changes, very little preference has been left to the people.

³⁵ Alaolmolki, Nozar. *Life After the Soviet Union: The Newly Independent Republics of Transcaucasus and Central Asia*. New York: State University of New York 2001, 20-25

The Central Asian states were born during the Soviet period, which is painfully obvious. Independence was created in opposition to that period and not a public outcry for sovereignty. Central Asia does not have the luxury of referring back to the period preceding Sovietization or Russian colonization, as other states were able to do. Central Asian *nations* did not exist prior to Russian intervention and what did exist were emirates and other tribal confederations. The leaders of these states want to move away from the tribal/clan based loyalties and establish a vibrant nationalistic ideology.³⁶ At the beginning of independence these nations had to invent flags and get a crash course in how to create and lead a nation. The identity that is created is timeless, with no historical reference other than mythical founding figures that were taken from Soviet historiography or carried through ancient folklore. These countries have taken the “*conceptual matrix*” of Sovietism in a secularized world and anchored the present in an eternal and “*ahistorical*” past. The new independence that these nations have found is being constructed on a foreclosure of history.³⁷ They are creating a present course based on a historical legacy that has never existed. These states are looking to great authors, poets, and political leaders from their cultural lineage in order to serve their current political agendas and build a modern nation state. It is important for these states to build upon the greatness that existed within the region prior to foreign influence to build nationhood from a domestic perspective.

Central Asians have survived various leaderships throughout their history and managed to maintain tradition through the worst of times. What they have taken from their past include their tribal/clan societies, the rules and laws that Ghengis Khan ushered

³⁶ Roy 2000, 127

³⁷ Roy 2000, 125-130

in and the reminiscent ideology that the Russian and Soviets brought. Central Asia has a history of authoritarian governments. Whether it is a tribal leader, Ghengis Khan, the Khans, Lenin/Stalin or any number of the current presidents, they all reflect a desire to maintain an iron fist system. They may never reach the Western democratic model and authoritarian control may evolve to some degree in the future, however these countries are intact and maintaining their sovereign rights as newly independent states among the world's nations. Central Asia's tribal legacy and communist education have illustrated their desire to maintain authoritative governments in a pro democratic world.

It is not to say that there has not been a trend towards principles that define a liberal democratic state such as Kyrgyzstan's attempts towards a market economy, but that authoritarian governments continue, much as they did in the past, to dominate in the present. There is a lingering autocratic need that is believed to be imbedded within the culture of Central Asia. Many from the west disagree with authoritarian rule due to a variety of issues that will be covered in the next chapter, yet the choice is purely subjective and systems of government should not be conceived of teleological. These clans/tribes/nations have managed to exist and sustain cultural traditions through various rulers and appear to endorse the current governments regardless of existing problems.

After having studied the relevance of political ideology that has consumed their past the following chapter will examine problems that plague the newly formed states domestically. After the historical significance behind the authoritative governments of these five republics we will have a better insight into the domestic troubles that have surfaced in the states of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

Chapter Three:

Living on the Edge: Central Asian Internal Dilemmas

Political struggles, tussled economies, and challenges that face multiethnic nations are all problems that the states of Central Asia have encountered since independence. Pushed from the cradle of the Soviet Union Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan have all felt the pain and strains that many newly independent nations go through on their path towards becoming not only territorially sovereign but judicially sovereign, as well.³⁸ Authoritarian governments attempt to sustain and improve their states, but new challenges are constantly on the horizon.

Economic setbacks, ethnic conflict, and political rivalries have exploded within the five nations of Central Asia. Each state has felt the ramifications of at least one if not all of these problems within the last two decades and all will likely continue to find further difficulties in the future. Domestic concerns maintain a high level of importance within Central Asian states. This chapter will define the major problems that plague the region internally and the solutions, if any, which have been found. Through our continued study historically and culturally we have been able to unravel the domestic concerns today and how they came to be.

Economic conditions within the Central Asian states have changed dramatically since becoming independent. Under the Soviet Union, Central Asia was called the

³⁸ David A Lake. "The New Sovereignty in International Relations." *International Studies Review*. Vol. 5 No. 3 (Sept. 2003) 303-323

USSR's "third world".³⁹ They were considered backward and products of exploitation. From the 1970's until the Soviet collapse the region held the highest birth rate in the empire, but they were also the poorest.⁴⁰ For people who lived outside the capitals of the republics, there was little hope of a better life. The people of these lands were heavily dependent upon industry and agriculture and since the Soviet break-up very little of this life has changed.

State Economic and Political Background

Central Asian economies and lifestyles have declined since the end of the USSR. In some cases there are widespread shortages, especially medical supplies including disposable needles, anesthetics, antibiotics, and numerous other pharmaceutical products.⁴¹ In that light it is no wonder that health conditions have dropped drastically. One would only need to walk into a hospital in any major urban area and realize the devastating consequences caused by the lack of provisions. Whatever changes have been introduced since independence only reflect a greater problem, political rule.

Politics have always been of major interest to world societies and Central Asia is no exception. Since the time of its conception the world was on edge awaiting the birth of free democracies they believed would root within the newly independent states of the region. Unfortunately their hopes were diminished when the states of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan adopted governments reminiscent of their Soviet republics. These nations chose to preserve the old bureaucracy and political systems of the Soviet Union. Their continued usage of past governmental

³⁹ Nozar Alaolmolki. *Life After the Soviet Union: The Newly Independent Republics of the Transcaucasus and Central Asia*. State University Press, New York. 2001 23

⁴⁰ Nozar Alaolmolki. *Life After the Soviet Union: The Newly Independent Republics of the Transcaucasus and Central Asia*. State University Press, New York. 2001 27

⁴¹ Alaolmolki 2001, 27

structures resulted in dictatorial regimes, which have now ruled the states of Central Asia for two decades.⁴²

Kazakhstan, which became independent on December 16th 1991, welcomed their former Supreme Soviet leader Nursultan A. Nazarbayev as elected president on the same month. The nation consists of a bicameral parliament that maintains a Senate and the *Mazhilis*. Although the senate, which contains 47 seats, 7 that are appointed by the president and 40 that are elected by local assemblies, and the *Mazhilis*, 107 seats, (9 out of the 107 members are elected from the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan that represents the country's ethnic minorities) has little power when compared to Nazarbayev. On August 30th 1995 President Nazarbayev adopted a new constitutional amendment that extended his term of office and expanded his presidential powers. He now controls the ability to initiate constitutional amendments, create and dissolve government laws, dissolve parliament if need be, call referenda at his discretion and appoint administrative heads of regions and cities. The international community has criticized his allowance of power and judged the amount he allocates to his relatives and close associates. He is also credited with suppressing opposition groups and supporting unfair elections within his country while at the same time is perceived as a strong leader in a nation that has the ability to destabilize rapidly.⁴³

Kyrgyzstan's independence was given officially on August 31st 1991. They adopted a constitution on May 5th 1993. This nation is one of two Central Asian states that witnessed presidential transition since becoming independent. Former president

⁴² Hooman Peimani. *Failed Transition, bleak Future: War and Instability in Central Asia and the Caucasus*. Greenwood Publishing Group, Conn. 2002 63

⁴³ Central Intelligence Agency, "World Fact Book: Kazakhstan" 18 December 2008, <<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/kz.html>> 13 January 2009.

Askar Akayev fled Kyrgyzstan in March of 2004 due to an alleged interference of governmental elections that inflamed the nation in a wave of protests. The current leader of the nation is Kurmanbek Bakiyev who won a landslide election in July 2005 with a promise to end corruption and nepotism along with ending the nation's notable poverty. Although officially elected president in 2005, he had been acting the part since the previous year when Akayev fled the country.⁴⁴

The nation has a unicameral system called the Supreme Council (*Jorgorku Kengesh*), which contains 90 elected members. Although Bakiyev came to power as a popular leader his ratings have declined since taking office in 2005. Several members of parliament have been killed and there is a strong belief that organized crime is increasing within the country. His relationship with parliament is even more tempestuous since he has accused its members of obstructing legislation and contributing to the nation's unraveling stability.⁴³ On the other end of the spectrum, parliament has judged Bakiyev for backpedaling on promises to allocate presidential power to elected officials. In November 2006 the President gave additional power to parliament after days of mass protests in the capital, but later that same month Bakiyev managed to reinstate some of his authority through revisions to the nation's constitution. In March 2007 the people of Kyrgyzstan threatened mass protests if he did not resign. In response he agreed to appoint a moderate opposition leader in parliament as prime minister. However in October of the same year voters and the international community were outraged by elections in the country. What was supposed to have been a voter approved constitutional amendment appeared to have been tampered with. Two months later

⁴⁴ BBC News. "Country Profile: Kazakhstan." BBC News. 7 August 2008.

Bakiyev and his party won an overwhelming win which further demonstrated the lack of free elections within the state.⁴⁴

Tajikistan became independent officially on September 9th 1991. The nation was at the time under the leadership of Rahmon Naviyev who was forced to resign following the nation's first election that took place on November 19th 1992.⁴⁵ Supreme Assembly chairman Emomali Rakhmonov was elected as the nation's first leader and was later elected president on November 6th 1994. The state consists of a bicameral Supreme Assembly (*Majlisi Oli/Majlisi Milliy*) that consists of 34 seats, 25 of which are members selected by local deputies, 8 appointed by the president and 1 reserved seat for the former president. The second house is called the Assembly of Representatives (*Majlisi Namoyandagon*) and contains 63 seats whose members are elected by popular vote.⁴⁶

Rakhmonov is yet another example of a Central Asian leader scrutinized by the international community and opposition leaders domestically for unfair elections. In 2006 he won a third term in office, in elections widely considered fixed, and dismissed by most as a staged attempt at democracy. Rakhmonov is not a leader that has tolerated opposition and his party, the People's Democratic Party, holds nearly all seats within parliament.⁴⁶

Turkmenistan's official day of independence is marked as October 27, 1991. This nation is the second state within Central Asia to have changed leaders since becoming independent, but unlike Kyrgyzstan whose former president fled the country Turkmenistan's prior leader, Saparmyrat Niyazov also referred to as *Turkmenbashi*

⁴⁵ Naviyev was forced to resign following a bloody civil war that entrenched the nation. Tajikistan's Civil War will be covered later in this section.

⁴⁶ Central Intelligence Agency, "World Fact Book: Tajikistan," 18 December 2008, <<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ti.html>> 13 January 2009.

(leader of the Turkmen) passed away in December 2006. Niyazov's former deputy Prime Minister Kurbanguly Berdymukhamedov now leads the country. He was sworn in February 14th, 2007 after having captured 89% of the vote. The legislative branch contains two parliamentary bodies, the People's Council (*Halk Maslahaty*) and the National Assembly (*Mejlis*). The People's Council consists of roughly 2,500 delegates some of which are elected by popular vote and others are appointed. The National Assembly contains 50 seats that are filled by elected members.⁴⁷

Former president Niyazov created a personality cult within the nation based on his and his family lineage. *Turkmenbashi* is the name he adopted during the transition from communist leader of Soviet Turkmenistan to the nation's president for life. Ironically the constitution calls for elections of the president, but contradicts itself when maintaining *Turkmenbashi* president for life. Niyazov believed the seven decades his people spent under Soviet control degraded the Turkmen people and it provided him justification for creating a personality cult that rivaled that of Stalin and Mao. "Halk, Watan, Turkmenbashi" is a chant that you can hear within the state during any one of its numerous state created holidays. "People, Homeland, *Turkmenbashi*" is the literal translation and it represents Niyazov's desire to build nationalism around a personality cult defined by his persona.⁴⁸

Turkmenistan represents the most unique state within Central Asia due to Niyazov's leadership. Around the nation there are massive posters of himself that scale public buildings and solid gold statues strategically placed around the capital city of

⁴⁷ Central Intelligence Agency, "World Fact Book: Turkmenistan," 18 December 2008. <<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/tx.html>> 13 January 2009.

⁴⁸ Ash, Lucy. "Grim Legacy of Grandiose Leader." BBC News. 21 December 2005

Ashgabat, one which rotates with the sun to illustrate himself as the chosen one. Whether it's in the classroom, public office, or a Boeing airliner, his image was the nation and it was never forgotten. It was Niyazov's goal to achieve a state of fusion that linked the president and the people.

During his rule he was publicly viewed as the greatest leader, but in private many criticized him. Out of fear, opposition was not an option. Living standards diminished greatly while he was alive. He was more interested in Ashgabat's modernity rather than improving quality of life of the "questioned"⁴⁹ four million citizens. His authoritarian leadership increased security in the country and made opposition to his rule feared. Anyone within the government who posed a threat found himself suddenly displaced at a foreign embassy, far from the political battlefield of Ashgabat. Others were taken and never seen again.

President Berdymukhamedov who was once Niyazov's personal dentist became the Turkmen health minister in 1997 and then deputy premier in 2001. Under Niyazov's instruction Berdymukhamedov was required to implement health reforms within the nation that nearly collapsed the already weakened department. These reforms required an immense change in health practices, which included closing all medical facilities outside the five major cities and forcing uneducated staff to practice medicine. This meant that the majority of the nation's citizenry, whom lived outside the urban areas, were denied access to nearby healthcare and an untrained doctor would be assisting those that chose to travel to the city.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ It is believed that the official government population census is inflated and does not reflect the actual number of nationals.

⁵⁰ BBC News. "Country Profile: Turkmenistan." BBC News 30 July 2008.

For many years Niyazov's health had diminished and the nation, as well as the world, were worried about the stability of the state if something should happen. He was president for life and an autocratic ruler who had not chosen a successor. At the time of Niyazov's death the transition appeared smooth and the upcoming election was an exciting point in Turkmenistan's history. At the time there were six candidates, all of which were from the Democratic Party of Turkmenistan. In light of years passed, exiled figures living abroad were banned from competing. Local electoral officials stated that 95% of the population turned out for the election, though human rights groups and western diplomats condemned the outcome by accusing it of being fixed.⁵⁰

Uzbekistan became independent on September 1st, 1991 and is lead by President Islam Karimov who's been in power since March 24th 1990. The nation's domestic political structure is comprised of a bicameral system that is much like other Central Asian nations with a Supreme Assembly (*Oliy Majlis*) and a lower Legislative Chamber. The Supreme Assembly is filled by 84 members who are elected by regional governments and 16 that are appointed by Karimov. The Legislative Chamber holds 120 seats whose members are elected by popular vote. All parties representing the Supreme Assembly support President Karimov.⁵¹

Islam Karimov has actually dominated Uzbekistan since 1989 when he was the then Communist Party leader in the Soviet Republic of Uzbekistan. Human rights groups and western observers have criticized him, like other leaders of the region, as a ruthless authoritarian who uses fear, repression and poor living standards as a means to maintain his post as president. He changed the constitution in 1995 to extend his presidency until

⁵¹ Central Intelligence Agency, "World Fact Book: Uzbekistan," 18 December 2008, <<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/uz.html>> 13 January 2009

2000 and again added an additional amendment in 2002 that extended his term from five to seven years. Seven years later and he is still in power. His opponents that live abroad have called his legacy shameful, but with insufficient opposition power within the nation there is little that can be done. Karimov has no tolerance for opposition within his state. Uzbek state police have been called to squash such movements and Karimov has been internationally criticized for human rights violations, which will be discussed later in the chapter.⁵²

Fearful of Islamic radicals finding refuge in his country Karimov has outlawed opposition groups. In response to such groups in 2005 several hundred citizens were killed during a protest in the eastern city of Andijan. Ruled by terror of Islamic Radicals Karimov remains strong in his devotion to repel any person or group that poses a threat. In 2006 the head of the Sunshine Uzbekistan opposition movement, Sanjar Umarov, was imprisoned for eleven years (later reduced to eight) for his involvement with the opposition organization. It is believed that there are several Islamic militant groups that are active within the state.⁵³ One is the *Islamic Movement of Turkestan*, which was allegedly responsible for a terrorist blast in Tashkent in 1999 that killed more than a dozen people. Karimov has pledged to keep the country safe from extremists that aim at using “hatred and aversion to debunk the secular path of development.”⁵³

Political opposition within Central Asia has the tendency to make political or social progress within the region difficult for those that advocate change both domestically and internationally. All five nations are opposed to political opposition and each has different groups, domestically or abroad, battling for change. As in the case of

⁵² BBC News. “Country Profile: Uzbekistan: Leader” BBC News. 30 July 2008.

⁵³ BBC News. “Country Profile: Uzbekistan.” BBC News. 30 July 2008

Turkmenistan, many people praised Niyazov for his leadership, but only discussed their discontent in small familiar settings. There are topics that Central Asian citizens avoid and political dissatisfaction is one that is regarded to be taboo.

Political Opposition

Since independence there have been several movements within the region that tested the will of opposition groups. One journalist, Irina Petrushova, stated, “the political environment is just like the old soviet system. She further said that the police follow the people just like the authorities hounded dissidents under the Communists. Petrushova added that this type of invasive approach allows those in power to remain so forever”⁵⁴. Historically Central Asia has not held a strong, vibrant opposition movement of any kind out of fear of either being killed or forced into exile. Since becoming independent little has changed within the region as far as resistance is concerned. Meddling in that area of politics is still dangerous and many are afraid to disagree with their governments.⁵⁴

Countless citizens have been jailed for involvement in opposition groups such as Feliks Kulov of Kyrgyzstan who was sentenced to 10 years in May of 2002 on an alleged embezzlement charge that was supposedly politically motivated. Mohammad Solih, chairman of the Erk Democratic Party of Uzbekistan was the only challenger to President Islam Karimov in the first presidential elections and after years of harassment by state police he was forced to flee Uzbekistan in 1993 and has since lived in exile as a political refugee.⁵⁴ Citizens of these states have learned harshly that involvement with opposition groups will either lead to imprisonment, exile or death.⁵⁴ Many of the problems related

⁵⁴ Zamira Eshanova. “Has New Alliance with West Helped Opposition Movements?” Eurasianet.org. 05 July 2002.

to opposition movements are based in ethnic conflicts that afflict the region. As was discussed in the previous chapter many of the countries coexist somewhere between nationalism and tribal/clan affiliations with an added element of religion and a movement to institute Islamic fundamentalism into politics. The most prominent dispute that has erupted within Central Asia occurred in Tajikistan, shortly after independence.

The lack of a cohesive society in Tajikistan could be the result of its rough terrain that has historically fragmented its society by making contact between regions difficult. When discussing local politics the nation's disjointed population is more concerned with region of origin than anything else. When conflict erupted in 1992 it shook the core of the Central Asia due its possible spread into other nations. Tajikistan was entrenched in a competition between neo-Communists that were tied to the former Soviet regime and the new Islamist and nationalist groups that materialized after independence. Many believed the conflict was a dispute among regional identity groups that catapulted its way into a nationwide war. During the Soviet era the two regions of Leninabad and Kulyab formed the heart of the Communist party. When the USSR began to diminish other regional identity groups emerged to challenge the domestic power structure and dominated the regions of Garm and Gorno-Badakhshan.⁵⁵

The most powerful of the groups were the Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan (IRP) who wanted to create an Islamic state and promoted a resurgence of Islamic fundamentals.⁵⁶ The other groups were what many would call democratic and contained three secular nationalistic parties that encouraged political reform and economic liberalization. During the first election in 1991 these two groups banded together to

⁵⁵ Conor McAuliffe. "[Tajikistan Peace Negotiations](#)." Al Nakhlah: Tufts University: The Fletcher School Online Journal for Issues related to Southwest Asia and Islamic Civilization, (Fall 2006) 2

⁵⁶ McAuliffe 2006, 2

challenge the neo-Communists by introducing an Islamist-democratic candidate who was defeated by Rokhman Nabiev. To many, the election was considered rigged and after coming to power in 1991 Nabiev had very little domestic authority in Tajikistan.⁵⁷

In the spring of 1992 the nationals of Tajikistan showed their strong distaste for their government by erupting in a violent opposition movement in the capital Dushanbe. Divided by ideology, ethnic and regional differences Tajik's marched and protested against their political elite. People were injured as demonstrators for the opposition became violent. Thankfully Russian troops that had been stationed in the nation were able to relieve the country from a full-scale civil war for the time being while Nabiev agreed to create a coalition Government of National Reconciliation that included the opposition Islamist and democratic parties. Unfortunately the neo-Communists disliked Nabiev's idea and the government was unable to consolidate control.⁵⁷

Following the next six months anarchy and violence continued to spread throughout Tajikistan, imprisoning the nation in a civil war. Eventually Nabiev was kidnapped by the opposition and forced to resign by September 1991.⁵⁸ Following his relocation parliament voted no confidence in the Government of National Reconciliation and selected Emomali Rakhmonov as acting head of state, another neo-Communist from Kulyab region. With the help of two supporting regional militias Rakhmonov began to consolidate power and executed a violent campaign against the IRP and other opposition groups who later were formally united as the United Tajik Opposition (UTO).⁵⁹ The civil war continued into 1993 and 1994 and very little changed, but eventually it came to a

⁵⁷ McAuliffe 2006, 2

⁵⁸ McAuliffe 2006, 2

⁵⁹ Toshmuhammadov 2004, 15

military stalemate. Haggard and defeated the UTO military commanders continued to battle Rakhmonov and his party in a costly guerrilla war well into 1996.⁵⁷

With the help of the United Nations, especially the UN Special Envoys, negotiations for peace were set out, although it appeared difficult since even in 1993 and 1994 neither group seemed ready for a settlement.⁵⁸ Since the beginning of 1992 the UN had been involved in the conflict and in 1993 stepped into a position in efforts to help mediate a resolution by appointing Ismat Kittani of Iraq as Special Envoy to Tajikistan.⁶⁰ Talks started in May 1993 and the first round of communication between the opposing sides started in April of 1994.⁶¹ Kitanni was instrumental in the peace talks and used his knowledge of the region to help support UN peacemaking initiatives. He consulted with Russian, Uzbek, Kyrgyz, Kazak, Pakistani, and Afghan governments and organized representatives from each nation to be official observers in the negotiations. Russia was able to use its power to persuade Rakhmonov to enter peace talks especially since Russian troops were responsible for helping Rakhmonov and his neo-Communist government to remain in control. Uzbekistan, Tajikistan's Western neighbor, also informed Rakhmonov that they preferred negotiations in order to return stability to the region.⁶²

Neither side had finished and still sought to add to the conflict, but both suffered degradation of military supplies and the worsening human conditions caused a lack of political support from either party. The neo-Communists were unwilling to part with their political power even though they were losing momentum. There was a belief that if

⁶⁰ McAuliffe 2006, 2

⁶¹ Mehraïl Toshmuhammadov. "Civil War in Tajikistan and Post Conflict Rehabilitation." Center for Slavic Researches. Hokkaido University. 2004. 15

⁶² McAuliffe 2006, 3

they agreed on a ceasefire they could consolidate political gains and generate enough economic growth to further reinforce both military capacity and political stability. Ironically the opposition had similar goals. Another factor that helped implement peace negotiations was the instability that both sides saw from the southern nation of Afghanistan. They were fearful that the political trouble could spread into Tajikistan further complicating the already deteriorating conditions.⁶²

Eventually peace talks began in April 1994 and concluded in June 1997 with a peace accord.⁶³ There were three distinct phases of the negotiations. The first phase lasted from the beginning of the talks till August 1995 when both sides agreed on fundamental political principles.⁶³ This characteristics and the ceasefire/prisoner exchange of September 1994 highlight the first phase.⁶³ During the second phase very little occurred and any advancements that were made during the first were quickly lessened. In the final phase there was a breakthrough that included Rakhmonov who flew to Afghanistan to meet with resistance leader Said Abdullo Nuri on December 10 and 11 of 1996.⁶⁴ The two conflicting leaders agreed to a draft agreement outlining the next steps of the peace process and renewed a ceasefire agreement to quell fighting that had broken out again during phase two. The formal agreement was signed two weeks later in Moscow along with another agreement that defined the power and function of the Commission on National Reconciliation. By May 1997 all remaining issues, which included future status of refugees, disarmament and reintegration of UTO forces into the national army, legalization of the IRP, and a thirty percent quota for opposition forces

⁶³ McAuliffe 2006, 4

⁶⁴ Toshmuhammadov 2004, 16

within the political field, were solved.⁶⁵ On June 27, 1997 the opposition leader Nuri and Rakhmonov signed the General Agreement on the Establishment of Peace and National Accord in Tajikistan, ending the UTO's military opposition.⁶⁶

Uzbekistan has not been spared from conflict either. In December of 1991 a group of unemployed Muslims decided to take over a Communist Party Headquarters as a result of being denied access to build a mosque. This was the beginning of a battle that is still present today between Islamic Extremists and Karimov's government. The leaders of the heist eventually organized the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU). Although they were present in the state it was not till March 19th 1999 that the government took notice of them.⁶⁷ They sent a letter to Karimov demanding that he resign or be removed by force. Not taking the threat seriously Karimov did nothing which later caused the IMU's decision to attempt an assassination in February 2000.⁶⁸ By August 2000 the conflict was apparent and fighting between the government and IMU forces in Ferghana Valley intensified. A week later the number of fatalities reached twenty-five citizens.⁶⁹

The IMU is mostly militant Islamic extremists from Uzbekistan, but also from other parts of Central Asia. Besides their main objective of ousting Karimov, the IMU is determined to introduce Islamic Shari'a again into a Central Asian government. There are many that believe the IMU is funded by Afghanistan's Osama bin Laden, Saudi officials, Turkish, and Pakistani groups. By 2003 the group launched a series of attacks in the capital Tashkent, which sparked the government to renew their campaign against political

⁶⁵ McAuliffe 2006, 4

⁶⁶ McAuliffe 2006, 4

⁶⁷ Mark Burgess. "In the Spotlight: Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan." CDI: Terrorism Project. (25 March, 2002) paragraph 2

⁶⁸ McAuliffe 2006, 2

⁶⁹ Toshmuhammadov 2004, 16

and Islamic opposition groups.⁷⁰ On May 16th 2005 the fourth largest city in Uzbekistan, Andijan, erupted with violence when the government forcibly dispersed a demonstration. The group of demonstrators (several thousand) had been outside a city prison protesting the unfairness of the court system. The bloodshed started when a group of armed men stormed the prison to release the inmates that received unfair trials. After the breakout the armed men took control of various public buildings as supporters demonstrated outside the regional administration building.⁷¹

This conflict in Uzbekistan between Karimov and opposition groups is ongoing. There have been no open dialogs between the two and it appears that Karimov is not interested in dealing with the Islamic fundamentalists. As the war on Islamic fundamentalists continues Uzbekistan has western support for its crackdown on domestic matters.

Kyrgyzstan's troubles are more infused with regional disputes rather than religious ones. From inception as a modern, nation-state, Kyrgyzstan was seen as an island of democracy among other former republics, but this image was quickly tarnished as the nation's former president quickly absorbed power under his presidency (as mentioned he was forced to flee the country). The current president Bakiyev was guilty of leading the nation as an autocratic ruler, but relinquished some authority in the fall of 2006 under pressure of opposition groups, parliament and a thousand other protesters. This was a momentous occasion for Central Asians since violence usually coexists with public support for political change. The last anti-government display was held in

⁷⁰ Breffni O'Rourke. "Uzbekistan: International Community Grapples With Unrepentant Tashkent". Radio Free Europe: Radio Liberty. (11 May 2007)

⁷¹ Kun Li. "Civil Conflict Spurs Concern for Children." UNICEF. (16 May 2005)

Uzbekistan the previous May where hundreds of people were shot by government troops.⁷²

When Bakiyev came to power he had a strong level of support not just within the government but also from the people. For the first eighteen months of his career as president many turned against him after he sought to consolidate more power for the presidency. One protester during the Bishkek protest said

We really believed in him, but things became worse. Akayev (former president) stole so much from people and Bakiyev promised that he would give everything back. But instead he gave it all to his sons and his relatives. We no longer trust him, he broke all his promises⁷³.

After Bakiyev promised to give more authority to parliament he issued another amendment redistributing some powers back to his position. Very little new information has emerged from Kyrgyzstan since the November 2006 elections.⁷³

Economic Troubles

The final segment that needs to be discussed when considering domestic concerns involves economic disparities. Since the fall of the Soviet Union quality of life in Central Asia has also fallen dramatically. National development also included national economic stability, a difficult position that the republics did not manage while under the Soviet shield. The road that started at independence to the present has been an interesting ride

⁷² Natalia Antelava. "People Power Forces Changes in Bishkek." BBC news. 6 November 2006

⁷³ Antelava 2006

for Central Asians and the turbulent times are more than likely to continue as their economies face new frontiers.

One of the problems that all nations have faced is the adoption of individual national currencies. For example Kazakhstan, Central Asia's poster-child for progress, instituted its own currency, the *tenge*, in 1993 and at its inception created a period of national instability. When it was introduced, USD\$1 equaled 4.68 *tenge* and a year later the exchange was \$1.00 to 54 *tenge*. The currency continued to decline another 117 points before the Kazakh government implemented programs to stabilize the currency at 45 *tenge* to the dollar. A main contributor to the problem was the decision to produce bank notes in order to meet financial obligations causing massive inflation (3,061% in 1992 and 2,26% in 1993). Currently the *tenge* is 123.8 to the U.S. dollar and due to Kazakhstan's impressive influx of foreign capital from oil-related properties Kazakhstan's potential growth appears to be unstoppable.⁷⁴

Although the nations have been plagued with high inflation rates and quickly declining currencies, Central Asian states have the potential of becoming valuable members of the global community due to the remarkably high deposits of minerals, oil, gas, and crops such as cotton. Also, due to the Soviet Union's emphasis on education these countries have highly educated populations. However, fortune has not yet come to Central Asia and quality of life has decreased sharply since independence. Crops are losing yields, unemployment is up, and the rich natural resources such as oil and gas have yet to be developed because of investment and pipeline disputes.⁴³

Central Asian isolation from seaports has made exportation of their natural resources extremely difficult and the only way to access their goods by land is to use

⁷⁴ Alaolmolki 2001, 69

foreign pipelines, which have not worked well in the past. Kazakhstan has embarked upon policies that are aimed at reducing their dependence on foreign investment, which many of the Central Asian nations need in order to build their economies.⁴³ For the last twenty years the state has attracted foreign investors to develop oil fields, but that has led to several arguments over production terms. Currently the government is trying to develop its manufacturing potential to stay out of the chaotic squabbles they are currently in with foreign investors.⁴³

Kazakhstan is seen as the beacon of prosperity within the region, but by contrasting the nation with Tajikistan one will understand the fragility and disparities that exist within Central Asia. Tajikistan has one of the lowest standards of living among any of the former Soviet Republics and this is partially blamed on the landscape that is only 7% arable. Like other nations in Central Asia, Tajikistan depends largely on cultivating natural resources.⁷⁵

Tajikistan's economic situation remains at a delicate state because of its uneven implementation of reforms, corruption and poor governance, large unemployment rate, and the burden of external debt. The civil war of 1992-97 damaged the already weakened economy and caused industrial and agricultural production to quickly derail. Since the end of the conflict almost two-thirds of the population lives in abject poverty. In 2004 economic growth increased by 10.6%, but dropped 8% in 2005, 7% in 2006, and 7.8% in 2007.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Alaolmolki 2001, 97

⁷⁶ CIA, Tajikistan, Economy

In this current troublesome economy however Tajikistan's GDP has increased while Kazakhstan's has declined.⁷⁷ Reports from several sources have linked Tajikistan's GDP growth rate for 2009 to be between 3.5%-7.1% while Kazakhstan is expected to grow just 1% for 2009, but has the ability to rise significantly if the market recovers.⁷⁸ In a global market economy, Kazakhstan or any other nation that trades openly with the international community are dependent upon that of others. Tajikistan or other states within Central Asia that trade domestically or internally are often spared the rash realities of global recessions and their GDP's have the capacity to mature even during an international economic crises. For the year 2009 Kazakhstan's GDP is expected to decrease -2% and increase to 1.5% in 2009 according to the IMF. Tajikistan however will increase their GDP 2% for 2009 and increase to 3% in 2010, given the current outlook of the global economy.⁷⁹ Although Kazakhstan is still seen as a modern state in what many consider to be a backwards region, Tajikistan appears to be ahead of the game.

Cotton is the most important crop within the country, but unfortunately this sector is poorly managed with an aging infrastructure. Other high commodity resources include aluminum, gold, silver, uranium, tungsten, hydroelectric, silk, fruits, and vegetables. Most of the mineral and natural resources that Tajikistan holds are undeveloped due to the lack of capability to process them or the facilities that have access to do so are too small and obsolete.⁷⁵ A majority of the nation's population is employed in these industries, but with its persistent corrosion economic growth may continue to decrease.⁷⁵

⁷⁷ Olzhas Auyezov, "Update 1-IMF Sees Kazakhstan 2009 GDP Growth at 1 pct". Reuters India. 16 January 2009.

⁷⁸ Times of Central Asia. "Tajikistan's GDP Reportedly Rises 3.5 Percent in Q1 09". 12 May 2009

⁷⁹ International Monetary Fund. Republic of Tajikistan and the IMF/Republic of Kazakhstan and the IMF. 17 June 2009.

There is increasing international assistance and the country has implemented policies to increase privatization practices of medium and large-scale industries. In 2002 Russia offered a debt restructuring agreement that would eliminate \$250 million of Tajikistan's \$300 million debt.⁴⁶ There are also companies from Russia that are developing the nation's water systems that will prevent future electrical blackouts due to poor management of water levels in rivers and reservoirs.⁴⁶ China has also discussed plans of modernizing highways and the nation's electricity transmission network.⁴⁶ The country, which has been historically isolated due to rough terrain, may become more interconnected with itself and its southern neighbor Afghanistan if a US funded \$36 million bridge project is completed soon.⁴⁶

Economic conditions in Central Asia will hopefully continue to find good fortune as the nations advance in their stages of development. Although only two nations were illustrated it is hoped that they provided a contrasting viewpoint on conditions that run rampant within Central Asia. High rates of inflation, deteriorating infrastructures, mismanaged industries, corruption, and a strong desire to maintain public ownership are all characteristics that the states of the region share.

Domestic concerns afflict every nation in the world especially newly independent states such as Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. As these nations continue to mature their economies will hopefully find a source of stability. Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan all appear to be headed towards stronger stages of economic and political development and hopefully Tajikistan and Uzbekistan follow in the near future.

Through the course of our exploration we have unfolded the historical, ideological, and domestic problems that plague the Central Asian states in an attempt to hopefully fulfill our continued understanding of how authoritarian governments maintain control in a constantly democratic pushed global society. As noticed these states appear to have a historical legacy that maintains autocratic communities, but the question remains how long will they remain independent especially within a region so heavily influenced by global powers such as Russia and China.

In the following chapter we will fuse Central Asia's domestic issues with foreign policy. A majority of Central Asia's domestic problems are directly influenced by foreign investments and maintain strong sectors centered on international affairs. The region has adopted the right to be called the New Great Game due to the influx of foreign rivals competing for rights to its rich natural resources. The following chapter will shed light on the New Great Game, the major players, and Central Asia's reaction to the invasion of foreign capital and foreign diplomats in order to understand the importance the region as well as their leaders in the coming years.

Chapter Four:

Battling International Relationships: Central Asian States and Geopolitics

Central Asia was once the heartland of ancient Asia because of its pivotal geographical location. Whoever controlled the region also controlled the “passageways to the riches of the East and the markets of the West”.⁸⁰ It was a strategic position that belonged to many including Ghengis Khan and Alexander the Great. Since gaining independence these nations are again on the frontline in what has been called the New Great Game of Central Asia. Various nations, and international organizations have materialized in order to reap the benefits that the region offers. China, the EU, Iran, Russia, Turkey, and the United States have attempted to use soft power and hard power, (especially Russia) as a means of control in the modern age. A new era has approached the region and it is challenging the leadership abilities and sovereignty that these states have been given.

Like all viable nations in this era, the nations of Central Asia have not only educated themselves on domestic life, but also they have had to discover the concepts of foreign policy to assure their sovereignty. The fact of the regions proximity not only to Islamic fundamentalist states but also to both China and Russia, combined with its shared Soviet values has made Central Asia a crossroads for international politics since gaining independence. This chapter will deepen our understanding of foreign policy within Central Asian nations and the supposed New Great Game. It will highlight the relationships of influential countries as well as illustrate various international

⁸⁰ Gregory Gleason, *The Central Asian States: Discovering Independence* (Colorado: Westview Press, 1997), 137

organizations that Central Asian states belong to in order to understand connection between these nations and the outside world. Out of the spoils of past glories the nations of Central Asia have risen to become independent states. With almost two decades of independence behind them these states have emerged upon the global stage ready for action. Given their history with neighboring nations, this chapter will deepen our knowledge of the complexities involved in Central Asian foreign policy.

China and Russia are the frontrunners for control in the region; this heavy exertion of their power can be attributed mostly to the region sitting just outside of their borders. These energy rich countries are at the threshold of prosperity, but also at risk of being consumed and dominated if they allow it. The New Great Game consists of other members seeking to exploit their riches, which will be discussed, but this chapter will emphasize Russia and China

Although the New Great Game has received a great deal of attention, it may be over exaggerated especially since it will not resemble the first Great Game. During the 19th century Central Asia became the battleground for two of the worlds most influential empires, Russia and Great Britain. It was a conflict based on territory and therefore security. As the Russians continued their expansion southward into Central Asia they were in direct conflict with the British government that continued to push their rule northward on the Indian subcontinent.⁸¹ Both feared the other would directly confront their regional security and undermine their sphere of influence. Today the players resemble those of the past, but with a much more diversified team. This is a battle for influence, for control and dominance, particularly among China, Russia, and the United

⁸¹ Nozar Alaolmolki. *Life After the Soviet Union: The Newly Independent Republics of the Transcaucasus and Central Asia*. State University Press, New York. 2001 18

States. Professor Michael Klare theorizes that resources are going to be the next cause for global conflict. Although Klare views the Caspian Sea region as a future battleground for the United States and Russia, he underestimated China's involvement in Central Asia. These three nations are passively acquiring local allies, energy resources and military advantages for their own protection, but yet share commonalities when discussing terrorism and drug trafficking. It can only be hoped that Klare is wrong in his assessment and that cooperation among the three superpowers continues to increase over the coming years. Their partnerships, if worked to ensure multilateral cooperation, could be extremely beneficial for the states of Central Asia.

Russia

Due to its close proximity and history with Central Asia, Russia leads the three major players in concerns about regional occurrences. One of Russia's larger objectives is to secure vulnerable southern borders against the importation of Islamic extremism and drug trafficking. From Moscow's view they also need to continue economic goals that include ensuring its participation in the regions natural resource development and continued shared pipeline usage.⁸²

On April 2005 President Vladimir Putin addressed the nation, stating

*The collapse of the Soviet Union was the biggest geopolitical catastrophe of the century. For the Russian people, it became a real drama. Tens of millions of our citizens and countrymen found themselves outside Russian territory. The epidemic of disintegration also spread to Russia itself.*⁸³

⁸² David Lewis. "Resources and Rivalry in the 'Stans'". World Policy Institute: Fall 2008 128

⁸³ Vladimir Putin. "State of the Nation Speech." Russia. 25 April 2005

His administration vowed to restore Moscow's influence within Central Asia as a top priority.⁸³ Even though the limit of Russian economic and military power fails to give complete hegemonic status, they still maintain a strong command of soft power. After all, Russia was the imperial power of the region for over 70 years and is seen as the most important external actor.

The same national address also included Putin's foreign policy goals and it focused entirely on the region and other members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

*In protecting Russia's interests in foreign affairs, we are interested in developing the economy and strengthening the international prestige of our neighboring countries. We are interested in the synchronization of the pace and parameters of reform processes in Russia and CIS states [which comprises Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Ukraine] and are ready to adopt useful experience from our neighbors and also share our ideas and the results of our work with them.*⁸³

Russia showed a strong determination to maintain a close working relationship with their former lands in hopes of preserving an influential voice, above others, that may be challenging their authority.

Russia is currently trying to reassert its place among the former republics by pushing for more economic opportunities and stronger security partnerships while

seeking to exclude Western influence in the region- particularly in military affairs or pipeline routs. Many Central Asia elites, who usually favor Moscow, worry of a Russian *revanche* issue because of their newly found empowerment, but Moscow has tried to ease anxieties that it is not the empire it once was.⁸⁴

The obvious advantage for Russia is geography. In September 2004 Kyrgyzstan President Akayev gave a presentation where he stated “Russia was given to us by God and History”.⁸⁵ As mentioned in previous chapters, independence in the region was not embraced with an open hand, and a willing heart, but rather was accepted reluctantly. Central Asia’s landlocked states continue to rely heavily on Soviet transportation, communication, supply-chains, and other networks that traverse Russia or fall under their control.⁸⁶ Currently Russian firms own the majority of the transportation infrastructure. Companies such as Lukoil, Gazprom, and United Energy Systems have invested large amounts of capital in various energy production and transportation projects in Central Asia.⁸⁶ Russia often flexes its strength and dominance when it interrupts gas supplies to other nations. They have used this method to instill fear among former republics and to ensure their supremacy. For example, Russia has the ability to exploit its pipeline monopoly to prevent supplier countries, such as Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan, from exporting their products.⁸⁷

Russian soft power economics works in other areas as well. Even as China becomes more present within the region, Russia remains Central Asia’s leading trade

⁸⁴ David Lewis. “Resources and Rivalry in the ‘Stans’”. World Policy Institute: Fall 2008 129

⁸⁵ Erdin Beshimov. “Kyrgyzstan at the Crossroads: President Askar Akaev of Kyrgyzstan Speaks at Harvard.” Kathryn W and Shelby Cullom Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies. Harvard University Vol 12 No 1 (Fall 2004) 2 paragraph 4

⁸⁶ Richard Weitz. “Averting a New Great Game in Central Asia.” The Washington Quarterly. Summer 2006 156 paragraph 4

⁸⁷ Richard Weitz. “Averting a New Great Game in Central Asia.” The Washington Quarterly. Summer 2006 156-157

partner. Their strong devotion is again linked to their past, and their historical connection to Moscow. The Russian economy and higher standard of living attracts millions of immigrants (mostly illegal) from Central Asia where they usually find employment in the construction industry. The complexities between Russian and Central Asian relations grow more intricate when regional governments realized that the earnings from immigrants (remittances) create an essential contribution to the GDP in Central Asian nations, giving Central Asian government another reason to stay within the Moscow's good graces.⁸⁸

Kazakhstan and Russia have one of the most transparent borders among the five nations. Due to the large number of ethnic Russians living within Kazakhstan it provides Russia with additional leverage and clout. With many Russian nationals working in commercial, managerial, and technical services, Kazakhstan cannot afford their loss if they chose to migrate to Russia, like so many did after independence. Since oil and gas prices have increased in recently Moscow has become much more affluent within Kazakhstan. Given the recent high prices of energy resources Russia has renewed their love affair with their Kazakh neighbors.⁸⁸

The Russian government also increased their military presence within the area. In October 2003 Russia established a military base in Kyrgyzstan, only 30 kilometers from a U.S. base.⁸⁹ It's the first such military base since the Cold War. President Bakiev stated that the Russian base in Kant will be there forever, while the United States was allowed to remain as long as there is still security problems in Afghanistan and they agree to pay 100 times more than it has been asked to previously. As of February 6th, 2009

⁸⁸ Weitz 2006, 157

⁸⁹ Bruce Pannier. "Kyrgyzstan: Russian, U.S. Military Bases on Opposite Tracks." Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty. 18 February 2008

Kyrgyzstan has decided to terminate its contract with the United States and is closing the base.⁸⁹ This illustrates the disparities in foreign policy objectives and favoritism that Russian is given. Russia has opposed a U.S. military base in Central Asia from the beginning and the closure will be a “significant diplomatic victory as Russia reasserts its influence in all former Soviet republics and beyond”.⁹⁰

In October 2004 Tajikistan allowed Russia’s 201 Motorized Infantry Division a permanent base near Dushanbe and also allowed Russia to house an air base the following year with enough housing for 6,000 military personnel.⁹¹ Uzbekistan and Russia signed a bilateral agreement, The Treaty on Strategic Cooperation, in June 2004.⁹¹ It stated that the “sides, based on the separate agreements, will offer to each other the right to use the military facilities located within their territories”.⁹¹ The accord provided additional Russian military assistance to Uzbekistan and created a joint antiterrorism institute. In 2005 the two nations conducted their first joint military exercise since the collapse of the Soviet Union.⁹³ Two months later they signed a Treaty on Allied Relations that promised mutual military aid in the event either becomes victimized by terrorism or any other unrest that could pose a safety risk.⁹² This further demonstrates Russia’s objective of regaining and maintaining their political power within Central Asia. Out of fear, Russia will not relinquish their iron fist.

The relationship between the United States and Russia in reference to Central Asia appears to be dwindling. Moscow initially accepted the U.S. presence after the September 11th, attacks because they knew U.S. forces could fight local Islamic

⁹⁰ BBC News. Kyrgyz Closure of US Base ‘Final’. BBC News: 6 February 2009.

⁹¹ Weitz 2006, 157

⁹² Weitz 2006, 158

extremists more effectively than they or their allies were capable of.⁹³ Since 2005 we have seen the relationship between the two great powers grow more intense. State operated media in Russia has repeatedly urged Central Asian governments to crack down on U.S. supported civil liberties groups.⁹² Former U.S. ambassador to Russia, Alexander Vershbow, said that Moscow drew Central Asian support by fostering the impression that the United States tried to undermine the political regimes in the region.⁹² One scholar believes that if Moscow continues to push this agenda it could lead to regional instability due to false alarms being raised.⁹² The world is not prepared for another conflict at this time especially at Afghanistan's backdoor.⁹⁴

Russia's primary concern for Central Asia is to preserve the internal stability of the five nations. They are aware that any local turmoil might cause a succession crisis and escalate into a total political confrontation infested with Islamic fundamentalists or cause inter-ethnic conflicts. However, Russia is still strongly devoted to maintaining as much control as possible over the resource rich nations which would allow Russia to extract, transit and access the raw materials to world markets.⁹⁵

Moscow is firm in its attempt to retain military presence within the region and turn the Russian dominated Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) into a foundation of regional security.⁹⁶ Russia uses the notion that no other great power is ready to handle the responsibility of providing security for Central Asian nations and to drive their foreign policy directives. Russia also realizes that their geopolitical control in

⁹³ Weitz 2006, 158

⁹⁴ Weitz 2006, 158

⁹⁵ Dr. Igor Torbakov,. "From Hegemony to New Geopolitical Competition: Assessing Russia's Strategic Footprint in Central Asia". The Finnish Institute of International Affairs. Briefing Paper 22, 6 October 2008. 4

⁹⁶ In May 2002, the Collective Security Treaty renamed itself the Collective Security Treaty Organization to preserve territorial integrity and seek closer cooperation with other multilateral institutions such as the United Nations, SCO, etc.

the region may be unrealistic due to the rapid globalization of the world, but they are prepared to keep their two largest competitors, the United States and China, in check when it comes to their ambitious goals.⁹⁷

China

As China becomes a stronger and more influential player among the globalized world, their interests in Central Asia are purely self-seeking, just as the other nations are. To China, Central Asia is essential to its existence and stability. This is a nation that demands resources in order to maintain not only their population, but also their booming economy. As China continues to grow they no longer contain the domestic supplies to sustain itself and must import if they are to survive. Central Asia offers the energy resources they will need in the coming years to continue domestic growth.

If China continues to develop its economy it will require the interdependence of these states to continue to exist. Their presence is expanding at a remarkable rate as new routes for trade (pipelines, highways, railways) are developed. Chinese commodities can already be purchased at larger bazaars and Bishkek and the city has even designated a street after Den Xiaoping. China emerged as an economic powerhouse in the late 20th century and positioned itself strategically in Central Asia in the first decade of the 21st. For its security and to continue its economic success China needs to embed itself within the region to ensure its safety.

As China gains momentum as a growing powerhouse in the East their economy and citizens will grow more dependent on oil and other fossil fuels. Their need for energy is projected to increase by 150% by 2020 and to sustain its growth the nation will require

⁹⁷ Torbako 2008, 5

larger amounts of foreign oil.⁹⁸ In the first four months of 2006 China's oil imports from Kazakhstan more than doubled compared with the same period in 2005.⁹⁹

China has approached Central Asian governments and secured the trust of the government, the presidents, and improved relations especially through the creation of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, a multilateral organization that is build upon mutual interests of all member states. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) was given its official title in 2001, prior to this it was known as the Shanghai Five. It began as a regional system in the late 1990's to solve border disputes lingering between Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and China. The first official meeting took place in Shanghai in 1996 and it focused on building confidence between the six members.¹⁰⁰ The conference concluded to be very successful and allowed the Shanghai Five to agree on other areas of interest such as countering terrorist attacks and drug tracking, two concepts that were focused on primarily during the Shanghai Five 1998 meeting.¹⁰¹ During the 1998 meeting the member states wanted to see more from the organization and they proposed to turn the border between the five countries into a frontier of genuinely equitable and mutually advantageous cooperation where the five nations will emerge as independent partners.¹⁰² By 2000 the group assembled to discuss such diverse issues that included concerns with law enforcement, economic and trade relations.¹⁰³

In may 2003 the SCO welcomed Russia as a member state and today also includes

⁹⁸ Gal Luft. *"Fueling the Dragon: China's Race into the Oil Market."* Institute for the Analysis of Global Security 2006

⁹⁹ John Douglas, Mathew Nelson, Kevin Schwartz. *"Fueling the Dragon's Flame: How China's Energy Demands Affect its Relationship n the Middle East."* U.S.- China Economic and Security Review Commission. 14 September 2006. 6

¹⁰⁰ Benjamin Goldsmith. *"Here There Be Dragons: The Shanghai Cooperation Organization"* Center for Defense Information. September 2005

¹⁰¹ Torbako 2008, 5

¹⁰² Torbako 2008, 5

¹⁰³ Goldsmith 2005

the observer states of India, Iran, Pakistan, and Mongolia.¹⁰³ Both Russia and China hold a large range of influence within the SCO, but China remains as the head. The SCO does not only illustrate a mutual agreement between these neighboring nations, but sends an image to the world that China is capable of instituting and promoting multilateral relations, something that the United States has failed to achieve within Central Asia.¹⁰³

The SCO is extremely important to China and their strategic goals within Central Asia. For example the SCO helps control and contain Islamic extremists that hope to destabilize the region.¹⁰⁴ China's northwestern province of Xinjiang has erupted in numerous protests and conflicts over the past several years as the Muslim population hopes to gain independence. Due to the problems in Xinjiang, Beijing has made antiterrorism high on its priority list. The SCO also deters further development of U.S./Central Asian relations. Given the history of United States in the region, especially with Afghanistan and other republics the Chinese government worries about their encroachment along their borders. The SCO is an ideal tool to gain leverage against the U.S. by concealing its domestic interests and goals in a multilateral organizational disguise.

Beijing's interest and willingness to flex its diplomatic strength is increasing at an alarming rate. The nation had hidden itself under an international organization of its own creation to battle international politics in its struggle to secure its own economic and national security goals. Although it does provide authentic objectives and help sustain development, there are points of suspicion. When the declaration was signed, China actively sought ways to counter the U.S. by implementing language such as "protector

¹⁰⁴ Amardeep Athwal. *China-India: Contemporary Dynamics*. Routledge. New York: 2008

and financier of Central Asia”.¹⁰⁵ It has hoped to secure Central Asia and ensure their economic interdependence.¹⁰⁵

China’s relationship with Mongolia may facilitate as a parallel of what to expect in the future of China and Central Asian relations. China increased its funding to Central Asia, particularly Kazakhstan. For example during 1999 alone, China provided 1.1 billion dollars in foreign investments, mostly for the beginning stages of a pipeline from Kazakhstan to China’s western provinces. China was also a large facilitator in greasing Mongolia’s economy and political success. In 1999 58.1% of Mongolia’s exports went to China. As of 2000 China contributed to 25% of foreign investments in Mongolia. The Peoples Republic also insisted that Mongolia privatize their business, which created opportunities for Chinese corporations to infiltrate their neighboring nations market. The outcome of China’s influence has provided the ability to manipulate the Mongolian economy according to Beijing. They essentially created a post-colonial economy that demands cooperation if Mongolia is to survive.¹⁰⁶

Central Asia is likely to be Beijing’s next economic target. Kazakhstan continues to increase trade with China. As of 2007 Kazakhstan supplied China with roughly four billion dollars worth of fossil fuels compared with one billion to the U.S. Kazakhstan is a major economic partner for China for a variety of reasons that include stability, market reform, and industrialization. As of 2004 China had invested as much as \$1.3 billion and had 12,000 workers employed in various projects including the Karaganda pipeline. For Central Asian nations, foreign investment is the key to economic success and Kazakhstan is no exception. The looming questions is whether or not the Kazak government will

¹⁰⁵ William Lam. “China Brief: Exploiting a Favorable Climate”. The Jamestown Foundation: China Brief Vol. 2 No. 9. 2002

¹⁰⁶ Asian Development Bank. “Central Asia’s Rapid Growth to Continue in 2006-2007.” 6 April 2006

continue to produce products domestically and diversify their trade partners in order to avoid dependency.¹⁰⁶

China is aware of the troubles that they will face in the coming century if resources are not a top priority. The SCO may gradually shift towards an economic alliance rather than a security driven organization for the fact that China needs to ensure its energy imports. Currently China has been dealing with its energy needs within Central Asia on a bilateral basis, most notably in Kazakhstan, which is considered the eleventh ranked nation for oil reserves, nearly twice as plentiful as the oil that is under the North Sea. By 2011 China oil exports could rise to 104.3 million tons compared to 60 million tons today and to 156.4 million tons by 2015 if they continue their plans for increasing pipeline routs through Xinjiang.¹⁰⁷

Security appears to be highly important to not just Central Asians, but to China and Russia as well. Both nations see the SCO as a way of countering Western influence within the energy-rich region and are also aware of its strategic importance. Michael Hall, a Central Asian expert stated, “what unites these group’s are genuine common concerns about security, about border issues, and about trade and energy. There is a certain sense of wanting to let the U.S. know that they are a force to be reckoned with”¹⁰⁸.

Russia and China are eager to secure Central Asia’s substantial energy reserves for their own use, but a conflict emerges when Russia wants to maintain its pre-eminence in a region it has long considered within its traditional sphere of influence. China and

¹⁰⁷ Vitaly Frolenkov. “China and the SCO Member Countries of Central Asia: Cooperation Over Energy.” *Far Eastern Affairs*: Vol. 36, No. 2. 2008 67-68

¹⁰⁸ David L Stern. “At Asian Security Meeting, Putin and Iranian Criticize the U.S.” *New York Times*: 17 August 2007

Turkmenistan signed a deal in August of 2007 that would help supply China with 30 billion cubic meters of gas annually over the next 30 years while Moscow has locked up long-term gas supplies with Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan in an effort to replenish its dwindling supplies.¹⁰⁸ Soon after, Russia reached a deal with Turkmen Gas to pipe supplies through Russia, which was considered a huge setback for the United States. They hoped to ship Turkmenistan's gas across the Caspian Sea in order to avoid Russian pipelines which Moscow has routinely shut-off for various reasons including price increases and to ensure payment.¹⁰⁸

Regional Actors

Turkey was among the first nations to recognize the Central Asian republics immediately after their independent in the early 1990's. They were referred to as sister states, or Turkic republics and generated excitement on almost every political level within the nation. A Turkish world that stretched from the Adriatic Sea to the borders of China became a new topic within Turkish policy circles and media. This shift towards a more realistic and conservative policy line in the current age was difficult to overcome.¹⁰⁹

Prior to the break-up, the republics of Central Asia had a strong desire for a special relationship with Turkey once the Soviet Union disintegrated. Turkey, who usually does not provide aid, granted \$1.5 billion in low-interest loans and an additional \$79 million in relief aid along with direct air-links to four of the capitals, telephone connections, and Turkish state television programs.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ Bülent Aras. "Turkish Policy Toward Central Asia." Foundation for Political, Economic, and Social Research: No. 12 April 2008 1

¹¹⁰ Henry Kamm. "Turks Fear Russia Role In Ex-States." New York Times: 19 June 1994

Today Turkey is working towards a more realistic approach than the grand alliance of Turkic States it had at the time of independence. It is currently looking to create an environment of cooperation and eliminate regional power constellations such as China and Russia. It does so by means of state and civil society organizations that help promote economic development and political stability. Turkey is well aware of the problems that these young nations face such as growing nuclear activities, international terrorism, increasing drug trafficking, and illegal immigration as well as international competition for control. This friendly neighbor to the West hopes to provide peace and stability in an area where unsteadiness could arise at any given time.¹¹¹

Iran is another nation with strong interests within Central Asia. As was noted in Chapter Two, Iran dominated Central Asia centuries ago and still have strong roots imbedded within the culture. Tajikistan for example is a Farsi speaking nation-- Iran's lingua franca-- and all Central Asian nations recognize their Islamic heritage. Iran also offers open seaports for exportation, something that these young states would benefit from. Although there is a strong historical linkage between these nations they would rather involve themselves with China, Russia, or Western states.

Western States: European Union and the United States

The United States and the European Union appear to have similar concerns for the newly independent states. From their inception Washington, at the request of Secretary of State James A. Baker, planned to move decisively to open embassies in the republics to counter expanding Iranian influences and it was their hope at the time to use Turkey as a role model for the new states since they were Muslim, but secular and tied to the West.¹¹²

¹¹¹ Aras 2008, 4

¹¹² Thomas L Friedman. "U.S. to Counter Iran in Central Asia." New York Times: 6 February 1992

The United States had been focused on Central Asia more aggressively since the terrorist attacks on September 11th, 2001. They have sought to establish themselves as a major regional power to pursue economic and security interests. Some may argue that the United States voluntarily abandoned Central Asia following the end of the Cold War because it was out of their sphere of influence, but within that of Russia.

Although the United States is still engaged in the region there have been several set-backs which are linked to the SCO and Russia's growing prominence. In June 2006 Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad called for the SCO to become a powerful body able to "block threats and unlawful strong-arm interference from various countries".¹¹³ Another problem that the United States faces is their reluctance to understand the complexities that exist within Central Asia. "The U.S. government hasn't been willing to pony up the money to educate policy makers on these areas with deep nomadic traditions"¹¹⁴, said a Central Asia specialist for the U.S. government. It is estimated that it takes a half a million dollars and four to five years to train a specialist in these parts of the world. This contributes to the set backs in foreign policy that the U.S. had when Turkmenistan and Russia agreed on a new pipeline. Due to our lack of understanding and comprehension our own interests are at stake. "If there's anything for American policy makers to understand about formerly nomadic people is that they generally place an all-important pride in their independence".¹¹⁴

The United States and its European allies combine their efforts within Central Asia under a NATO program titled Partnership for Peace (PFP). It is a bilateral

¹¹³ Brian Carlson. "The Limits of Sino-Russian Strategic Partnership in Central Asia". Journal of Public and International Affairs: Vol 18 2007 167

¹¹⁴ Ilan Greenburg. "Memo from Almaty: Ancient Nomads Offer Insights to Modern Crises." New York Times: 8 August 2007

cooperation between individual nations and NATO and allows participating countries to choose their own priorities for aid. Based on NATO principles the program is dedicated to increasing stability, eliminating threats and fostering security relationships between partner nations and NATO, as well as other participating states. Kazakhstan is currently seeking assistance from PFP to “promote interoperability among NATO and PFP nations by working together in a variety of situations through joint military training efforts”.¹¹⁵ In September 2008 Dr. Alan Stolberg from the U.S. Army War College provided two presentations to the students and faculty of National Defense University in Kazakhstan, Security Issues in Central Asia and a workshop on security threats in the 21st century.¹¹⁶

Uzbekistan has worked closely with PFP in key areas such as: security cooperation, defense and security sector reform, civil emergency planning, and science/environment. One of the highlights of this bilateral relationship occurred in 2008 when Uzbekistan signed an agreement to carry out a Science for Peace and Security project.¹¹⁷ It was adopted to destroy the nations stocks of *mélange*, an extremely toxic substance. Other nations within Central Asia work with PFP on more security related issues, especially given that the proximity of the conflict in Afghanistan. As these partnership relationships mature we will see if they eventually become full pledged members of NATO.¹¹⁷

The European Union is seeking to enhance their relationship and partnerships with the republics of Central Asia, particularly since they have failed to do so in the past.

¹¹⁵ USJFCOM. “Partnership for Peace.” USJFCOM Public Affairs.

¹¹⁶ Henri Bigo. “Defense Education Enhancement Program with Kazakhstan National Defense University Underway as of Sep 08.” PFP Consortium of Defense Academies and Security Studies Institutes: 30 October 2008

¹¹⁷ NATO. “NATO’s Relations with Uzbekistan.” < <http://www.nato.int/issues/nato-uzbekistan/index.html> > 12 March 2009

If the E.U. hopes to achieve this mission they will need to differentiate themselves from their competitors by helping Central Asians achieve modernity and reform peacefully. It is also widely believed that the E.U. will need to embrace these states without allowing Central Asian nations the opportunity to be member states.¹¹⁸

The E.U. is prepared to reach out to the Central Asian states, yet demands their role in the region to stand out from other major players such as Russia, China, and the United States. Dependency on external energy sources and the need for diversified energy supply policy in order to increase energy security open further perspectives for cooperation between the European Union and Central Asia.¹¹⁹ The European Union's efforts will strengthen relations and increase energy production and its efficiency while also ensuring that their own regional needs will be met in the coming future.

The European Union also hopes to assist through its Strategy and Commission's program for the period of 2007-2013. Aid will be given on an individual basis judged by specific needs, requirements and performance in areas such as human rights, good governance, democracy and social development. The EU has planned to double its financial aid Central Asia within the 2007-2013 years.¹¹⁹

During the first four years (2007-2010) of its regional and national level programs the European Union has pumped an estimated €314 million (USD \$397.4 million) into Central Asia. Regional programs are earmarked €94.2 million (USD \$119.2 million) and are aimed at promoting interregional relationships. At the national level each nation is

¹¹⁸ Neil J Melvin. "The European Union's Strategic Role in Central Asia." Centre for European Policy Studies: No 128 March 2007 1-7

¹¹⁹ General Secretariat of the Council. "European Union and Central Asia: Strategy for a New Partnership." Council for the European Union: Oct 2007 6

given separate amounts due to the priority areas the EU is participating in. All central Asian nations excluding Kazakhstan contain two goals:¹²⁰

- *Poverty reduction and raising living standards:*
 - *Regional and local community development.*
 - *Sector reform in rural development and social sectors*
- *Good Governance and economic reform:*
 - *Democratic development and good governance (promoting civil society, social dialogue and democratic processes, judicial reform and rule of law, improving public administration and public finance management)*
 - *Implementing trade and market regulatory reforms, and building administrative capacity.*

Kazakhstan's priorities are:

- *Poverty reduction and raising living standards:*
- *Regional and local community development*
- *Reform in rural development and social sectors*
- *Good governance and economic reform:*
- *Democratic development and good governance (promoting civil society, social dialogue and democratic processes, judicial reform and rule of law, improving public administration and public finance management)*

¹²⁰ European Commission: External Cooperation Programmes. <http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/asia/country-cooperation/index_en.htm> March 12th, 2009

- *Implementing trade and market regulatory reforms, and building administrative capacity.*

Funding at the national level also differs depending on the nation and priorities. For example: Kazakhstan received €44 million, Kyrgyzstan €55 million, Tajikistan €66 million, Turkmenistan €22 million, and Uzbekistan €44 million.¹²⁰ Based on the information available the European Union has a great deal of interest in a peaceful, democratic and economically prosperous Central Asia.¹²¹

The future of Central Asia is unclear at this point in time. Their foreign policies thus far have been able to navigate the floodwaters that globalization has ushered in. As China and Russia continue to reemerge in global affairs these nations will require security if they are to maintain their sovereign rights as independent states. By continuing their trade partnerships and communication with the West the states of Central Asia will have options if and when Moscow and Beijing push their economic weight around.

The New Great Game of Central Asia is not to regain empires, but to obtain economic and energy influence. If these two nations have the ability to monopolize the economic sectors within Central Asia they will have the power to control the political environment and its people. By diversifying their trade partnerships with the global community they will have the ability to maintain their sovereignty and not be belittled by foreign oppressors.

¹²¹ General Secretariat of the Council 2007, 9

A Collision with Modernity: The Present and the Future of a Region

One of the most intriguing parts of Central Asian culture, society, and history can be observed at a bazaar in any major city located within the five states. The bazaar is not just a location where goods are sold, but provides an elemental lifeline for the people that call these lands home. One of the best locations to witness the collision of modernity and tradition can be seen at the Tolkuchka Bazaar outside the city of Ashgabat in Turkmenistan, the largest bazaar in all of Central Asia. At the bazaar, merchants express themselves by graciously inviting you to view their goods. The sweetness of fruits ripening in the desert sun, woven handmade rugs decorated with the symbolic designs of the Teke tribe, and the musky aroma of camels and goats fuse together with the modern conveniences of electronic goods from China, various automobile supplies, and every other knickknack imaginable. Surely, this juxtaposition of both past and the present has found harmony in the center of Central Asian life.

The history of Central Asia is far from reaching its apex and its future will only deepen our understanding of this ancient land. At the core of this study, we have seen three constant characteristics: culture, history, and society and without the help of these subjects we would not have been able to unravel the complexities surrounding Central Asia. The nations of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan have taken on a great journey from the time of their people as tribal nomads and outlined territories and will have a prosperous future as long as domestic development progresses.

One major concern regarding the states Central Asia is directly related to the global economic crisis that has infected almost every market. These nations are

dependent on foreign aid in order to maintain the already minimal standards of living. Kyrgyzstan is a nation that has been severely hardened by the financial crisis crippling our global economies. This is a nation where 800,000 citizens work abroad, mostly in neighboring Kazakhstan or Russia, and remittances provide up to 30% of Kyrgyzstan's GDP.¹²² Maksat Bolotbekov, a construction worker, used to be a guest laborer in Kazakhstan, but returned home a year ago after construction projects were halted due to lack of funding. Tajikistan is another nation that relies heavily on foreign capital. It is estimated that nearly 50% of their GDP comes from abroad.¹²² Kazakhstan was the first of the republics to feel the monetary drought at the end of 2007. Banks halted loans and the country's housing and real estate market evaporated swiftly and to add insult to injury Kazakhstan lost even further revenue as oil prices plummeted in the fall of 2008. The nation now waits as the global economy recovers, but for states such as Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan they are left with a large population of young men returning home from guest labored jobs to find their own nations in worsened conditions.

Besides the financial disaster that these nations may encounter in the coming years, there is also the price it may reap on social life. Since gaining independence a peculiar act has gone largely unnoticed within Central Asia or at least Turkmenistan where this author lived during 2004-2005. There were a large amount of women raising children without husbands and when asked about this oddity he was informed that the husbands had passed on. After further inquires it was revealed that their husbands had committed suicide after failing to provide financially for their families. With the current

¹²² Stern, David L. "Financial Crisis Halts Central Asia's Economic Boom". The Huffington Post: 17 December 2008

depression within the region and if the states of Central Asia seep deeper into financial despair it is feared this act could become more problematic to the point of epidemic.

Stability is what is sought within Central Asian states and hopefully it will be found. The United Nations is looking at the global financial disaster as a chance for Central Asia to reach certain social goals. The *United Nations International Labour Organization* is hoping to offer immediate relief in terms of job opportunities and “basic social and economic floor of empowerment and opportunity to counteract rising poverty”.¹²³ These are states that have been isolationist not by choice, but by geography and if they can support themselves through the crisis they may emerge better than before.

There is also a concern in terms of their sovereignty and the likelihood that they will remain sovereign in the future. On March 5th, 2009 the Associated Press interviewed former Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev. During the interview he discredited the current leader, Vladimir Putin and his party “as the worst of the communists he once led and helped bring down” while also stating “Russia is today a county where the parliament and the judiciary are not fully free”.¹²⁴ Although he clearly disliked the direction Russia is on the former leader maintains high aspirations that Kazakhstan, along with Ukraine and Belarus, will rejoin Russia in forming a new union.¹²⁴

Kazakhstan is by far the most successful state within Central Asia and through this study it is understood that it relies heavily upon its relationship with Russia. Its successes could be the reason Moscow advocates for the union. Unlike the other republics that have struggled in one way or another Kazakhstan has embraced its future much more explicitly. China has invested in the country heavily through pipeline

¹²³ United Nations. “Economic Crisis Gives Europe, Central Asia Chance to Reach for Social Goals.” UN News Centre: 11 February 2009.

¹²⁴ Dan Perry. “AP Interview: Gorbachev Criticizes Putin’s Party”. Associated Press: 5 March 2009

development and the nation also contains the largest Russian nationals of any of the new republics, a characteristic that could have influenced modernity much earlier than other states.

This study has instructed the importance of understanding Central Asia's past glories in hopes of better comprehending the present. It has followed the path from its conception as tribal nomads to the modern age as independent nations flowing with the vibrancy history have filled it with. Its rulers have maintained an autocratic tradition that ran through their ancestors into the present despite the glimmering promise of a democratic model inspired by globalization.

Through the last four chapters we have also investigated domestic concerns within the five republics and the troubles that continue to emerge. How will these nations face the coming years as they progress? There are many assumptions that could be concluded, but that is not the goal of the author's research. The objective was to understand Central Asian nations from a historical, cultural, and social perspective and provide a glimmer into this unknown and fascinating region. This journey began as a study to examine how political ideology fuels Central Asian domestic and foreign policy initiatives and it ends with the same question for the reader. In many ways it is believed that there is a strong tradition to maintain the autocratic leadership that has ruled Central Asia since its conception, but there is also hope that some liberal ideals will be able to purge this entrenched way of governing as these nations states mature and grow. Their story will unfold regardless of our assumptions or perceptions, however we can embrace what has been taught and seek what has not. Central Asia holds a special significance

within global history and it will continue to enlighten as we uncover the mysteries that yet to be untold.

What can be expected in the coming years for adolescent nations of Central Asia? As history has shown and educated the people of this region have the ability and vivacity to endure more than we - as observes - have given them credit for. They will continue to mature as young nation states and encounter both tradition and modernity as they peruse the plentiful bazaars that call like beacons for the young and old alike. These culturally rich nationals will carry on with a continued hope of a stronger and brighter future for their kin, clansman, nation, religion, and various other cultural identities that are recognized throughout the five nations of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

Central Asian society is built around its cultural and historical legacies and without it we would never be able to appreciate and recognize the incredible, warm, and caring people that fill these lands with a reservoir of ancient knowledge. Predictions will not be made about the political future of Central Asian states, but it is hoped that readers will be able to use the knowledge given to help understand impending tribulations that may emerge in the coming year. If we use history as a key to unravel the social complexities that exist today we will be better prepared at understanding the cultural links that fuel the political policies in amazing regions such as Central Asia.

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