# COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF DOMESTIC SECURITY ISSUES OF KAZAKHSTAN AND UZBEKISTAN IN THE POST-SOVIET ERA

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## ABSTRACT

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF DOMESTIC SECURITY ISSUES OF KAZAKHSTAN AND UZBEKISTAN IN THE POST-SOVIET ERA

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This thesis examines the main domestic security issues of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan and the impact of their securitization processes on the domestic and regional security policies of these countries in the post-Soviet era. Two outstanding issues that have been securitized in these countries, separatism and ethnic conflict for Kazakhstan and radical Islam for Uzbekistan, are scrutinized in detail with a comparative analysis. This thesis argues that Kazakh and Uzbek leaders, Nursultan Nazarbayev and Islam Karimov, as the main securitizing actors in their countries have securitized the above-mentioned issues for certain political objectives in the chaotic order of the post-Cold War era. However, these securitization processes for both of these countries have become an obstacle to find permanent solutions to their domestic security problems and develop more effective security policies at the

regional level. Kazakh and Uzbek leaders should renounce manipulating these problems and produce more comprehensive policies by paying equal attention to all other problems of their countries. In addition, Astana and Tashkent should try to ensure regional security rather than overemphasizing domestic one(s) if the aim is to benefit from an effective regional integration on Central Asian security. Contrary to the most of existing studies on the subject, the thesis argues that Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan are accepted as the active players that could contribute to the solution of their own security problems to a great extent, rather than being passive subjects of the "New Great Game" played among major actors.

Keywords: Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Ethnic Separatism, Radical Islam, Securitization.

# ÖZ

SOVYET SONRASI DÖNEMDE KAZAKİSTAN VE ÖZBEKİSTAN'IN İÇ GÜVENLİK MESELELERİNİN KARŞILAŞTIRMALI ANALİZİ

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Bu tez, Sovyet sonrası dönemde Kazakistan ve Özbekistan'ın temel iç güvenlik sorunlarını ve bu sorunların güvenlikleştirilme süreçleri açısından ulusal ve bölgesel güvenlik politikaları üzerindeki etkisini incelemektedir. Bu çalışmada, bu iki ülkede öne çıkan güvenlikleştirilmiş sorunlar (Kazakistan'da ayrılıkçı akımlar ve etnik çatışma ve Özbekistan'da radikal İslam) karşılaştırmalı bir analiz çerçevesinde ayrıntılı bir biçimde incelenmiştir. Tez, kendi ülkelerinde başlıca güvenlikleştirme aktörleri olan Kazak ve Özbek liderlerin (Nursultan Nazarbayev ve İslam Kerimov) Soğuk Savaş sonrası dönemin karmaşık ortamında yukarıda belirtilen sorunları bazı siyasi amaçlar için güvenlikleştirmiş olduklarını öne sürmektedir. Bununla birlikte, bu güvenlikleştirme süreçleri, her iki ülkenin de iç güvenlik problemlerine kalıcı çözümler bulmalarının ve bölgesel düzeyde daha etkili güvenlik politikaları geliştirmelerinin önünde bir engel olmuştur. Kazak ve Özbek liderler, söz konusu problemleri manipüle etmekten vazgeçmeli ve ülkelerinin diğer sorunlarına da eşit derecede dikkatlerini vererek daha kapsamlı politikalar üretmelidir. Ayrıca, Orta

Asya güvenliği bağlamında etkili bir bölgesel entegrasyondan yarar sağlanabilmesi için Astana ve Taşkent'in iç güvenliğe aşırı derecede vurgu yapmak yerine bölgesel güvenliğin oluşturulmasına katkı sağlamaları gerekmektedir. Var olan çalışmaların birçoğunun aksine, bu tezde Kazakistan ve Özbekistan, büyük aktörler arasında oynanan "Yeni Büyük Oyun"un pasif özneleri olmaktan çok kendi güvenlik problemlerinin çözümüne önemli derecede katkı sunabilen aktif oyuncular olarak kabul edilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kazakistan, Özbekistan, Etnik Ayrılıkçılık, Radikal İslam, Güvenlikleştirme.

To My Parents,

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---|---|
| ASSR | Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic |
| CFOR | Collective Forces of Operative Reaction |
| CIA | Central Intelligence Agency |
| CIS | Commonwealth of Independent States |
| CSTO | Collective Security Treaty Organization |
| EAPC | Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council |
| HT | Hizb ut-Tahrir |
| KazASSR | Kazakh Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic |
| IIF | International Islamic Front |
| IMU | Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan |
| IPAP | Individual Partnership Action Plan |
| IRP | Islamic Renaissance Party |
| ISAF | International Security Assistance Force |
| JaK | Jund al-Khilafah (Army of the Caliphate) |
| NACC | North Atlantic Co-operation Council |
| OSCE | Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe |
| PARP | Partnership for Peace Planning and Review Process |
| RATS | Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure |
| SADUM | Spiritual Directorate of the Muslims of Central Asia and Kazakhstan |
| SCO | Shanghai Cooperation Organization |
| SSR | Soviet Socialist Republic |
| U.S. | United States |
| USSR | Union of Soviet Socialist Republics |
| UTO | United Tajik Opposition |
| UzSSR | Soviet Socialist Republic of Uzbekistan |
| WMDs | Weapons of Mass Destruction |
| XUAR | Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region |

# CHAPTER I

# INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. Scope of the Thesis & Argument

This thesis comparatively analyzes the domestic security issues of two important Central Asian states, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, in the post-Cold War era. It investigates the impact of securitization of some domestic security issues on their security policies at the local and regional levels. What kind of security threats do these states have in the post-Soviet order? By whom and how some particular issues are securitized? How does this securitization process shape the domestic and regional security policies of Astana and Tashkent? This thesis, by examining the main security threats of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan and their securitization process, aims to reveal the difference in their security priorities in the post-Cold War era. By doing this, it also aims to answer whether the regional security agendas of Astana and Tashkent is the common ground to solve the security problems in the region or only an instrument to overcome their own domestic security issues.

Throughout history, the term security has always preserved its importance for the states or any kind of political entities. Central Asia as a region having noteworthy geopolitical importance and rich natural resources has always remained at the focus of the fiercest regional and global power competition. This region has experienced the colonialist policies of tsarist Russia and of the Soviet Union and still carries the legacies of these policies. During the Cold War, the region was heavily affected from the bipolar competition. Since security has been generally understood as a military defence against an outside threat, the traditional concept of military security (hard security issues within the framework of military and state-centered approach) continues to preserve its importance for the Central Asian nation-states. The New Great Game discourse indicating a new version of power struggle of

major players and their competition for the influence over the region has reinforced this traditional understanding of security.

After the end of the Cold War, however, as a result of the decline of the bipolar world, non-traditional security issues (soft security issues that have transnational and non-military character and are not necessarily state-centric) such as Islamist extremism, political Islam, terrorism, criminal activities, drug-trafficking, ethnic/tribal conflicts, economic problems, and environmental damage have started to dominate the security agendas of these newly independent Central Asian states in varying degrees. Since the non-traditional security threats may easily have spill-over effects, the states feel the need of formulating their policies on a regional basis. However, in face of these new security challenges, appropriate regional measures to overcome them have not been properly developed. Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, two important players in Central Asia, have continued to respond to these threats with the old patterns of preserving domestic security. More importantly, since these countries are much concerned about their domestic security and stability, most of the regional security policies could not yield the expected outcomes.

Compared to the other Central Asian states, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, under the rule of their ex-communist authoritarian leaders, have significant economic, political and military power to develop more effective domestic and regional security policies. Both Astana and Tashkent have long been claiming to be influential regional players in Central Asia. The regional competition between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan is based on their respective territory, population, economic strength and military power. Kazakhstan has the largest territory while Uzbekistan has the largest population and considerably huge military power as compared to the others.[1] The regional security policies of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have also great potential to affect the stability and security of the other Central Asian countries.

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[1] Lena Jonson and Roy Allison, "Central Asian Security: Internal and External Dynamics," in *Central Asian Security: The New International Context,* ed. Roy Allison and Lena Jonson (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2001), 8-9.

Although Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have been seriously challenged by the same traditional and non-traditional security threats, these security issues do not have equal importance for them. These countries having different natural resources, geographical position, economic policies and ethnic composition, have prioritized different security problems since the end of the Cold War. The different cultural, historical, economical and geographical realities have had an impact on this divergence of security threats for these states. In geopolitical terms, while Uzbekistan is the neighbour of Afghanistan and Tajikistan, two weak and fragile countries, Kazakhstan shares a very long border with the big regional power, Russia. Therefore, for Kazakhstan, due to this long border and very large ethnic Russian population in its territories, its relations with Moscow have great importance. On the other hand, Tashkent is able to follow policies that are more independent and establish closer links with the Western powers compared to Kazakhstan. However, Uzbekistan, "the geographic heart of the region"[2] has been much concerned about the Islamist insurgency in its south.[3] In a cultural and historical sense, while Islamic values are very pervasive in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan has been affected deeper from Russian culture than Uzbekistan, from the 70 years of Soviet experience. In terms of economy, although both of these countries have rich natural resources, different national economy policies of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have created different developmental paths. These kinds of diverse factors have forced these states to focus on different security threats and develop different security policies.

In their security issues, the "referent objects"[4] of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan are different from each other. Despite the fact that both of these states are eager to

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[2] Martha B. Olcott, "Central Asia: Common Legacies and Conflicts," in *Central Asian Security: The New International Context,* ed. Roy Allison, Lena Jonson (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2001), 33.

[3] Jonson and Allison, "Central Asian Security," in Allison and Jonson, 8-9.

[4] Referent objects are "things that are seen to be existentially threatened and that have a legitimate claim to survival." This term alongside with the security sectors and existential threats are explained in detail in the theoretical part of this thesis. Barry Buzan, Ole Waever, and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998), 36.

preserve their authoritarian regimes, Uzbek rule is much more concerned on its regime security. The Uzbek state is generally indentified with the regime itself. As Allison says, "For the Uzbek leadership, state security invariably is associated with regime security, though this is not spelt out."[5] For the authoritarian Uzbek leader Islam Karimov and regime elites, the regime has been existentially threatened by the Islamist fundamentalists. Therefore, for the secular Uzbek government clashing with Islamist insurgencies, the internal threats seem much more important than the external ones. Some of the post-Soviet experiences since independence such as the attacks of Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), the activities of Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT), and the Andijan events have reinforced the idea among the elites that regime security is under serious threat.

The concerns of Uzbek leadership about the political and societal realities of the country seem to be exaggerated if not baseless. The main aim of the IMU, a radical Islamist organization operating in Central Asia since 1998, is to dismantle Karimov regime and establish an Islamic state.[6] This does not mean that radical Islam poses a great risk to the moderate Islam embedded in the Uzbek society. For many scholars, area specialists and experts, the IMU activities are very limited and ordinary people do not directly tend to support the radical interpretation of Islam and its violent methods. However, the main concern in Uzbekistan, as mentioned above, is its military and political security. In Uzbekistan, since the first attack of the IMU in February 1999 in Tashkent, preserving stability at home has become much more important than Uzbek domestic and foreign policy.[7]

Contrary to the other Central Asian republics, Kazakhstan has not experienced any serious internal and external conflicts since the dissolution of the Soviet Union. "The country has enjoyed internal peace and stability, notwithstanding the existence

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[5] Roy Allison, "Security Cooperation between Western States and Russia over Central Asia/Afghanistan: The Changing Role of Uzbekistan" (programme paper, Chatham House, London, November 2008), 7.

[6] Swante E. Cornell, "The Narcotics Threat in Greater Central Asia: From Crime-Terror Nexus to State Infiltration?" *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly* 4, no. 1 (2006): 44-46.

[7] Olcott, "Central Asia: Common Legacies," in Allison and Jonson, 34.

of many opposition groups and a pervasive sense of dissatisfaction ... [in the] post-independence era."[8] However, the protests in Zhanaozen on December 16, 2011 have constituted an exemption to this relatively peaceful situation. In Zhanaozen, thousands of oil workers demanding better conditions and standard of living protested the government on the 20th Independence Day of Kazakhstan. It is officially declared that 10 people died during the unrest.[9] Although these events worried Kazakhstan's authoritarian leader, Nursultan Nazarbayev and other regime elites, it can be argued that the regime security concerns in Kazakhstan have not dominated the whole domestic and regional security policy-making as has been case in Uzbekistan.

The referent object for Kazakhstan is not directly the regime but the state on the one hand and nation on the other. It is the state because state sovereignty is under threat; it is the nation because Kazakh titular identity is threatened. The challenge posed by the geographical proximity to Russia and the separatist claims in the northern part of the country have always been important problems for the independent Kazakh state. Inter-ethnic relations and the uneasiness between socio-economically and politically advantageous/disadvantageous ethnic groups have continued to be a serious challenge. Although Kazakhs are politically overrepresented in the country, the other ethnic groups have dominated other social areas. These social cleavages within the society may lead to increases in ethnic tension.[10] In order to prevent this scenario, Kazakhstan has to preserve good relations with Russia, sometimes at the expense of its independent state-building process. In addition, it has to maintain its national economic development. It is true that Kazakhstan have been much more concerned about its economic development as compared to Uzbekistan. "This is certainly Kazakhstan's hope, and its development strategy has been to maximize its

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[8] Hooman Peimani, *Conflict and Security in Central Asia and Caucasus* (Santa Barbara: ABC CLIO, 2009), 126.

[9] "Crude Awakening: Mass Riots in Kazakhstan Oil Town on Independence Day," *Reuters,* December 16, 2011.

[10] Tom Everett-Heath, "Instability and Identity in a Post-Soviet World: Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan," in *Central Asia: Aspects of Transition,* ed. Tom Everett-Heath (London: Routledge Curzon, 2003), 184.

economic potential as quickly as possible in order to help it became a medium-sized power of some global consequence."[11]

As for Islamist insurgency, Kazakhstan seems to be the least affected country from the fundamental and radical movements. It can be argued that the implementation of open-market economy and the economic success had great impact on the relative stability in Kazakhstan. Therefore, Kazakhstan has developed a narrow counterterrorism policy in the fight against both radical Islamic groups and moderate Islamist people. Kazakhstan's approach to counterterrorism "lacks a long-term strategy that encompasses socio-economic approaches and an effective system of prevention and protection from terrorist attacks."[12] Kazakhstan does not seem to be dedicated as Uzbekistan in its struggle against Islamist insurgencies but continues to cooperate with regional and global actors in the fight against terrorism. It can be argued that the main driving force behind its cooperative behaviour is not to lose both regional and international support.

Despite this significant difference in their security issues, both of these countries have developed very militaristic responses to overcome their security threats. Alongside their domestic measures, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have responded to their security threats by engaging in bandwagoning with the regional and global powers such as Russia, China and the United States (U.S.) and being part of the regional security alliances such as Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). In all of these policies, the authoritarian leaders of these states to gain internal and external support manipulated both domestic/regional and traditional/non-traditional security issues. The leaders used the existence of these security threats as an excuse to introduce measures that are more restrictive and implement more state-centric policies. In other words, the authoritarian leaders took the advantage of their security problems

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[11] Olcott, "Central Asia: Common Legacies," in Allison and Jonson, 35.

[12] Mariya Y. Omelicheva, *Counterterrorism Policies in Central Asia* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 112.

in their domestic and regional affairs even this becomes an impediment to develop an effective regional security formation in the long run.

In this general framework, as mentioned above, this work will focus on two of the top domestic security issues of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan having significant domestic and regional impact on developing security policies. For Kazakhstan, the existential threat is separatism emanating from the ethnic separatist claims in the northern part of the country and the possibility of any Russian expansionist demands. In addition, Kazakh national identity is seen under threat in face of dominant Russian culture. For Uzbekistan, this is the existential threat of Islamist insurgency derived from unstable Afghanistan and Tajikistan and the internal weakness and vulnerabilities of the country. Not only the existential threats but also the referent objects are different in Kazakh and Uzbek cases. While for Tashkent, the referent object is the regime, even if it is not explicitly stated, for Kazakhstan, it is the Kazakh state/nation. Under these conditions, for both of these states which develop their regional security policies considering their domestic securities, the referent object is not the whole region and there is not a determined common existential threat.

Post-Soviet challenges in Central Asia such as economic and social problems, lower living standards and corruption were enormous.[13] However, in this thesis, it is argued that although Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have interrelated security threats, they have different security priorities on their agendas. In relation to these threats, Uzbekistan develops its domestic and regional security policies to preserve its state/regime security, while Kazakhstan implements them to maintain its state/national security. As a result, their policies remain highly state-centric and inward-oriented. However, the success of both domestic and regional security policies depends on the desecuritization of these *main* domestic issues by Astana and Tashkent. In other words, if Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan relinquish to securitize some of the above-mentioned security issues for certain political objectives and do

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[13] Peimani, *Conflict and Security,* 126.

not focus intensively on their state/national and regime security, then they can be successful in finding comprehensive solutions to such problems.

## 1.2. Literature Review

### 1.2.1. Conceptual Clarifications

The concept of "security" has many diverse meanings according to the mainstream theories of international relations. Prior to the World War I and after the World War II, the realist assumptions for this concept, focusing on military security against an outside aggressor and overemphasizing the role of the state, were very dominant. According to realists, there is a hierarchy in world politics based on the importance of security issues. For them, military security has been ranked first in this hierarchical order: "The 'high politics' of military security dominates the 'low politics' of economic and social affairs."[14] Alan Collins, for example, describes military security as follows:

> The most frequently used conception of military security is perceived or actual freedom from the threat or use of organized violence for political purposes. ... Military security actors can be states or aspirants or challengers to state power such as insurgent groups, and a wide range of actors.[15]

Although the significance of realist understanding of military security seems to diminish by the end of the Cold War, it continues to shape the understanding of security agenda of these states. The realist paradigms of security are still used to explain the behaviours of contemporary Central Asian states.

After the end of the Cold War, with the disappearance of bipolar world and ideological blocks, new security issues began to dominate security studies. With the introduction of these non-traditional security issues, low politics have gained importance. Buzan and his colleagues (the Copenhagen School) have not denied the importance of military security but have widened the scope of traditional materialist security studies in the post-Cold War era. They named each new aspects of security

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[14] Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, *Power and Interdependence,* 3rd ed. (New York: Addison-Wesley Longman, 2001), 20.

[15] Alan Collins, *Contemporary Security Studies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 130.

as the "sectors." There are five different security sectors pointed out in their work: military, political, societal, economic and environmental.[16] According to them, these five different sectors are the areas where different kinds of security issues prevail. They are "views of the international system through a lens that highlights one particular aspect of the relationship and interaction among all of its constituent units."[17] Buzan and his colleagues state that the analytical purpose of the sectors is to "differentiate types of interaction (military, political, economic, societal and environmental)."[18] They assert that security is survival against existential threats, but these existential threats are not same in each sector. In these sectors, there are some different units and values called as "referent objects" and threatened by these existential threats (state can appear in more than one sector). As such, the nature of survival and threat also change across different sectors and types of unit.[19]

The basic theoretical framework used in this thesis is the securitization concept of the Copenhagen school. Securitization is the power of bringing an issue to the security agenda by taking it out of normal politics and making it the most important issue of shaping politics. With Buzan's words, "'Security' is the move that takes politics beyond the established rules of the game and frames the issue either as a special kind of politics or as above politics."[20] Buzan and his colleagues describe securitization as follows:

> Securitization can ... be seen as a more extreme version of politicization. In theory, any public issue can be located on the spectrum ranging from nonpoliticized (meaning the state does not deal with it and it is not in any other way made an issue of public debate and decision) through politicized (meaning the issue is part of public policy, requiring government decision and resource allocations or, more rarely, some other form of communal governance) to securitized (meaning the issue is presented as an existential

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[16] Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework,* 22-23.

[17] Ibid., 27.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid., 23.

threat, requiring emergency measures and justifying actions outside the normal bounds of political procedure).[21]

In line with the realist/neorealist thought, this thesis accepts states as the predominant actors especially in Central Asia where the states could obtain their sovereignty and independence quite late and are keen on their authoritarian rule. This thesis agrees with the arguments of the Copenhagen School, which suggests that states may have place in more than one sector as the referent objects, and in some cases, the referent objects and securitizing actors[22] may overlap. Survival continues to be the top issue in security agenda of states even in many contemporary security problems in different security sectors. As Buzan and his colleagues mentioned, states both as referent objects and as securitizing actors continue to play a significant role in the post-Cold War era. This is more obvious in case of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan where the state and the regime elites are very strong. As mentioned above, the state/nation and regime are respectively the main referent objects for Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Therefore, for each of them, the importance of military, political and societal security varies to a great extent.

Among the considerable numbers of works which have been produced on Eurasian/Central Asian security so far, there is a consensus on the fact that Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have serious concerns on their domestic and regional security issues. However, in most of these works, the regional security concerns of these states were attributed to their relations with the major actors and their place in the regional security organizations. There is little emphasis on the difference of these security problems of individual states of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, and the main motivations behind their domestic as well as regional security policies have not been deeply examined on a comparative basis. Besides, in the current literature,

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[21] The concept securitization is analyzed in the theoretical part of this chapter in more detail. Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework,* 23-24.

[22] "A securitizing actor is someone, or a group, who performs the security speech act. Common players in this role are political leaders, bureaucracies, governments, lobbyists, and pressure groups. ... Their argument will normally be that it is necessary to defend the security of the state, nation, civilization, or some other larger community, principle, or system." This term is explained in detail in the theoretical part of this thesis. Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework,* 40.

most of the works focus on the actors but not the problem while others give more importance to the problems but not the actors. This thesis aims to do both. By filling the gap in terms of identification and differentiation of security problems of the region, it aims to reveal the impact of the domestic security concerns of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan on developing their domestic and regional security policies. In the next part, the three main groups of approaches on Central Asian security issues in the current literature are analyzed. This thesis is based on the third group of approaches that attaches greater importance to Central Asian states themselves as the active actors in their domestic and regional security issues.

### 1.2.2. Central Asian Security in the Literature

In the existing literature, security problems in Central Asia in general and in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan in particular have been examined under three different groups of approaches. These approaches have been determined on the basis of different kinds of threats, referent objects and actors. To determine these different existential threats, referent objects and actors, the main criterion here is from which level (global, regional or state) and whose perspective these works try to understand the regional and domestic security issues of Central Asia. In the first group of approaches, there are those studies that focus on the global and regional security policies of great powers, such as the U.S., Russia and China, which compete with each other in order to assert their influence and prioritize their own interests and aims on Central Asia. In this first group, Central Asian security issues have been traditionally subordinated to the global and regional geopolitical aspirations to a great extent. Since these works on Central Asian security are based on some generalizations in terms of regional/global security threats emanating from the region, they lack a deep analysis on the most important security problems and policies of the individual Central Asian states.

In the second group of approaches, there are those works that focus on the regional aspirants such as Russia, China, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan trying to maintain their security interests through the bilateral relations and regional security organizations such as the CSTO and SCO. In this group, the attempts for regionalism especially in

the security area have been much emphasized. According to Richard Weitz, "It would be risky for Washington to rely on bilateral solutions alone to address the region's security problems. Central Asian governments have shown continued interests in deepening ties with multinational institutions despite their differences over terrorism, boundaries and other issues."[23] These kinds of works underline the role of Central Asian leaders, especially Kazakh and Uzbek leaders in the regional security issues to some extent. However, in reality, they remain highly Moscow and Beijing-centred and reflect a regional order only that Moscow and Beijing promote in line with their interest and aims on the region. As such, regional security issues have been seen very important especially for these big regional players to make the smaller states more dependent on themselves. Stephen Blank explains this relationship as such: "Russian and/or Chinese policies could also lead to a diminution of sovereignty in these states making them incapable of responding to security threats and leading to their collapse."[24] Russia tries to create a secure environment that will prevent the threats coming from the west, south and southwest. In this sense, the CSTO has been seen as an instrument providing this kind of complete, if not perfect, security feeling to Russia.[25] As for the SCO, according to Enrico Fels, there are three main points serving for interests of these regional players under this organization: expelling Western forces from the region, maintaining autocratic regimes, and promoting multi-polarity.[26]

In this second group of approaches, much more emphasis is given to Central Asian security problems in general, but not the security problems of individual Central Asian states. Under this approach, the importance of individual Central Asian states in their own regional security problems is not disregarded; however, their impact is

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[23] Richard Weitz, "Averting a New Great Game in Central Asia," *The Washington Quarterly* 29, no. 3 (Summer 2006): 162.

[24] Stephen Blank, "Energy and Environment Issues in Central Asia's Security Agenda," *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly* 8, no. 2 (2010): 70.

[25] Dmitri Trenin, "Russia's Spheres of Interest, not Influence," *The Washington Quarterly* 32, no. 4 (October 2009): 13.

[26] Enrico Fels, *Assessing Eurasia's Powerhouse: An Inquiry into the Nature of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization* (Bochum: Verlak Dr. Dieter Winkler, 2009), 23-36.

seen very limited. Although the referent objects are introduced as the regional security, in reality, the referent objects change on the basis of different security needs and concerns of the actors. Some existential threats such as terrorism and drug trafficking are shared by Central Asian states, Russia, and China, but not all security problems can find a place for themselves in the individual security agendas of these states in the same order. In addition, as Blank argues, the internal security of these states is the determinant factor for the politics of Central Asian states. He says, "Even though these states acknowledge themselves to face external threats of terrorism and narcotics trafficking from Afghanistan which then corrupts and corrodes the socio-political fabric in their countries, those threats are second to the preservation of the status quo."[27]

In the third group of approaches, the domestic and regional security policies of the individual Central Asian states, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan are analyzed. It is accepted that after 20 years of independent rule, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan may assert some influence as the regional players within their geopolitically important region and undertake the responsibility to solve their critical security problems. For example, the speech of Kazak leader Nursultan Nazarbayev in 2007 displays the necessity that Central Asian states themselves take responsibility for the regional stability and security starting from economic issues to a broader area. Nazarbayev said as follows:

> We are again witnessing superpower rivalry for economic dominance in our region. ... We have a choice between remaining the supplier of raw materials to the global markets and wait[ing] patiently for the emergence of the next imperial master or ... [pursuing] genuine economic integration of the Central Asian region. I choose the latter. Further regional integration will lead to stability, regional progress, and economic, military, and political independence. This is the only way for our region to earn respect in the world. This is the only way to achieve security, and to fight effectively against terrorism and extremism.[28]

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[27] Stephen Blank, "Rethinking Central Asian Security," *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly* 6, no. 2 (2008): 32.

[28] Embassy of the Republic of Kazakhstan New Delhi, "Kazakhstan on the Road to Accelerated Economic, Social and Political Modernization" (speeches of President Mr. Nursultan Abishevich Nazarbayev, 2005)

Third group of approaches as compared to the first and second ones that have occupied most of the literature contributes to determine the converging and diverging areas among Central Asian states especially in security issues and grasp the impact of their domestic security issues on the regional level.

In all of these works, there are some overlapping areas. In each of these approaches, security issues have become important factors having an impact on the relations among global powers, regional actors and individual states in different ways and to varying degrees. As it is seen under the first and second groups of approaches, major players such as Russia, China, and the U.S. continue their competition over the region and each of them seeks new ways to become more advantageous compared to its rival. Russia and China try to achieve this aim both in the global and regional level. According to Weitz, Russia, China, and the U.S. expect some gains from establishing close ties between different multilateral security institutions in Central Asia.[29] More importantly, despite some disadvantages, it is generally argued that the great power or regional competition may be beneficial for the individual Central Asian states. Therefore, the internationalization and regionalization of security issues and the support of major players may provide some benefits to the internally fragile Central Asian states in their domestic and foreign policies. The most recent and significant example proving this argument has been the U.S. War on Terror in Afghanistan since 2001. According to Annette Bohr, "The arrival of the U.S. military forces in Central Asia provided the Central Asian states with an unprecedented opportunity to maximize strategic benefits and to establish a multiple-level security system."[30] In the following part, these three approaches are described in more detail.

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http://www.kazembassy.in/imp_person_speech_detail.php?speechid=28&importantpersonid=26 (accessed on January 25, 2012).

[29] Weitz, "Averting a New Great Game," 164.

[30] Annette Bohr, "Regionalism in Central Asia: New Geopolitics, Old Regional Order," *International Affairs* 80, no. 3 (2004): 490.

#### 1.2.2.1. First Approach: The Subordination of Central Asian Security Issues to the Great Game Debate

The first approach focusing on the Great Game discourse and traditional security issues considers Central Asian security problems to be solved within the global or wider regional level. The existing works predominantly focus on the geopolitical importance of the region and explain the strategic interests and aims of big powers under the concepts of "Great Game," "Grand Chessboard" or "New Great Game" while displaying Central Asian states individually or collectively as the only passive subjects of the game. Many of these works focus on the bilateral relations of Central Asian states with these great powers and other external actors, but Central Asian states are not separated from each other in terms of their domestic security issues. In addition, regional security issues are not deeply examined but only interpreted on the basis of the relations among major powers.

The term "Great Game" was originally used to define the competition over resources between British and Russian Empires. This new version of this game is played now between the U.S., Russia and China. "The U.S. are pushing for democratic transformation, which the Chinese and Russians view as antithetical to their goal of achieving and maintaining stability in the region."[31] This understanding encourages the involvement of these actors to Central Asian security issues and underlines the subordination of the small regional states to the presence of these major actors in the region. The role of great powers and the impact of their competition on Central Asian security issues are overemphasized.

The discourses of "Great Game" over Central Asia have not only legitimized the policies of big powers in the region, but they have also shaped security perceptions of Central Asian states since the early 1990s and affected their regional security policies. Indeed, the current literature based on mere geopolitical debates focuses on the external/military threats and usually warns Central Asian leaders about the risks

[31] Dennis J. D. Sandole, "Central Asia: Managing the Delicate Balance between the 'Discourse of Danger,' and the 'Great Game,' and Regional Problem Solving," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 40, no. 2 (2007): 261.

of losing ground on domestic and foreign affairs if they do not pay enough attention to their external security threats. As a result, to overcome these threats, both perceived and real, these newly independent and fragile states have sought for regional/international support. Moreover, in order to achieve and institutionalize this support, Central Asian states have established bilateral links with the regional and global powers, Russia, China and the U.S., in some cases, at the expense of their independent state-building processes. Consequently, despite their insecurity syndrome and nightmares of foreign intervention, Central Asian states were dragged into the arms of big powers in many crucial security issues.

In line with such approaches, there are also some arguments based on the claim that Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have benefited from the great power competition to reach their own national interests. It is stated that especially Uzbekistan, by playing one power to another, tried to obtain some political and economic benefits for its regime. The argument is based on the claim that the increase in geopolitical importance of Central Asia has become beneficial for these small and weak Central Asian states, including Uzbekistan. It is true that September 11 events have provided this opportunity to Uzbekistan in its cooperation with the U.S. on the War on Terror. However, some others argue that since the late 19$^{th}$ century, the attempt for explaining security issues within the framework of geopolitics has only served the interests of major powers while having damaged the interests of the whole region. In both of these arguments, the security problems are always considered on the basis of the interests and aims of great powers rather than the needs and vulnerabilities of individual Central Asian states.

To explain Central Asian security issues under the dominance of many actors, Ruth Deyermond uses the concept of "matrioshka hegemony" which means "hegemons at different levels coexist[ing] without significant competition, even ... [having] the potential to cooperate [in] ways that mutually reinforces their hegemony."[32] Deyermond claims that despite the New Great Game debates, this model explains the security relations in Central Asia during the 1990s, the period identified with the

[32] Ruth Deyermond, "Matrioshka Hegemony? Multi-levelled Hegemonic Competition and Security in Post-Soviet Central Asia," *Review of International Studies* 35, no. 1 (2009): 170.

U.S. as a global power and Russia as a dominant actor free from any external threat within its region. However, according to Deyermond, this approach is not applicable to the 2000s after the U.S. launched the War on Terror, which began to challenge the Russian influence in the region. However, despite the increasing tension, she claims that a hegemonic war in Central Asia does not seem to be likely, since the U.S. behaves as a regional hegemon and Russia is reluctant to challenge the U.S.[33]

By overemphasizing the role of international actors towards the region, Martha B. Olcott claims that the sudden increase in the geopolitical importance of Central Asian countries after September 11 have offered a considerable opportunity for these states to revise their ineffective policies. However, she points out that the international aids granted to these states had no positive effect on solving regional problems. According to Olcott, Central Asian leaders were unwilling to solve their shared security problems such as drug trafficking, Islamist extremism and terrorism, border security and protection of minority groups, and as such, their disagreements and conflicts deepened.[34] As she suggests, "Each Central Asian leader believes he knows better than his neighbours how to handle these common problems, so most solutions are being developed in isolation at the national level with only limited regional and international engagement."[35] In the book of Olcott, although the regional security problems are discussed to some extent, the great power logic still preserves its significance. Above all, these are the external actors who grant some chances and opportunities to the Central Asian states and it is up to these states to turn them into benefit or not.

It is argued that as a result of the new competition among these powers in the region, Central Asian states "have room to manoeuvre, to seek advantage, and to resist influence by playing off competitors -be the states or corporations- against

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[33] Deyermond, "Matrioshka Hegemony?" 170-173.

[34] Martha B. Olcott, *Central Asia's Second Chance* (Washington, D.C: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2005), 212-220.

[35] Ibid., 212.

each other."[36] However, this does not change the fact that, like the above-mentioned works, the regional issues are evaluated from the perspectives of great powers, not that of the Central Asian states themselves. For instance Eugene Rumer, while describing the relations between the U.S. and Central Asian states in the post-Soviet era, focuses mostly on American interests and Euro-Atlantic security agenda in the region.[37] He underlines the impact of September 11 on the increase in American interests over the region and claims that the American presence in Central Asia disturbed other regional aspirants, Russia and China.[38] As such, Central Asia again has been seen as an arena where all great powers struggle with each other for more influence and resources.

It is further argued that Russia has never relinquished its strategic interests over Central Asia and always tried to use its historical, cultural and geographical advantages in its relations with Central Asian states. Dmitri Trenin says, "Central Asia has become a battlefield in a new, much softer version of the Great Game, this time between Russia and the U.S. (overtly), and between Russia and China (covertly)."[39] Russell Ong also points out the fact that China does not only compete with the U.S. but also with Russia in order to increase its influence over the region. According to him, there are deep historical roots of this competition since the era of tsarist Russia.[40] In order to become successful in this game, Russia tries to establish closer links with Central Asian states and deepen its security organization, the CSTO, among Central Asian states.[41] As such, the main concern of Moscow in

[36] Rajan Menon, introduction to *Central Asia: Views from Washington, Moscow, and Beijing,* by Eugene Rumer, Dmitri Trenin, and Huasheng Zhao (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2007), 9.

[37] Eugene Rumer, "United States and Central Asia," in *Central Asia: Views from Washington, Moscow, and Beijing,* by Eugene Rumer, Dmitri Trenin, and Huasheng Zhao (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2007), 30.

[38] Rumer, "United States and Central Asia," in Rumer, Trenin, and Zhao, 45-47.

[39] Dimitri Trenin, "Russia and Central Asia," in *Central Asia: Views from Washington, Moscow, and Beijing,* by Eugene Rumer, Dmitri Trenin, and Huasheng Zhao (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2007), 84.

[40] Russell Ong, "China's Security Interests in Central Asia," *Central Asian Survey* 24, no. 4 (December 2005): 434.

[41] Trenin, "Russia and Central Asia," in Rumer, Trenin, and Zhao, 98.

Central Asia is to ensure domestic stability of Central Asian states. Moscow acknowledges that if these states have turmoil, this will inevitably affect Russia due to the shared borders, potential immigrants, and the existence of Muslim minority within its territory. Trenin underlines especially the importance of Kazakhstan for Russia, a neighbour with 7,500 km. long shared border, serving as a buffer zone which separates Russia from the Muslim countries in the south. Besides, the Russian population living in the northern part of Kazakhstan is very important for Russia. As mentioned above, there are some fears on the Kazakh side that the separatist demands from this population may challenge the Kazakh state. According to Trenin, contrary to some traditional fears, Russia does not aim to occupy the territories where Russian population resides but encourages Kazakhstan to become a multiethnic state.[42] As for Kazakhstan, Trenin claims that Kazakhstan tries to balance the major actors, the U.S., China, and Russia, however "making a clear choice in Russia's favour is hardly a realistic proposition."[43]

Another important Central Asian country for Russia is Uzbekistan. According to Russia, if Uzbekistan, as "the linchpin of regional stability" fails in its fight against Islamist extremism, this will create a major challenge for the Muslim regions and the southern parts of Kazakhstan. Therefore, Trenin states, "Moscow's interest is not in Uzbekistan's integration into Russia, but in preventing its destabilization and radicalization."[44] In sum, according to him, since Russia does not have enough military capability to assert its influence on Central Asia, it does not pose any security risks to especially Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.[45]

China is one of the three great powers seeking influence on Central Asia. Although China cooperates with Russia in regional security issues, it preserves its own interests and follows its own security policy in the region. Huasheng Zhao sums up the security priorities of China regarding Central Asia as ensuring border security,

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[42] Trenin, "Russia and Central Asia," in Rumer, Trenin, and Zhao, 85.

[43] Ibid., 86.

[44] Ibid., 88.

[45] Ibid., 104.

providing stability and combating terrorism. It is claimed that China redefines its interests in Central Asia with the establishment of the SCO in 2001 and tries to find the solution for the regional security issues under this security organization.[46] China has three main aims that it plans to realize in Central Asia under the SCO: "to weed out separatist activities on its western front, to counter the U.S. and Russian influence in the region and to act as a responsible great power in Central Asia."[47] Especially after September 11, China has presented itself as "a real and reliable security partner for the states of Central Asia and thus provides them with a viable alternative to closer security and military relations with the U.S."[48]

For China, in its relations with Kazakhstan, the main security concern is the large Kazakh ethnic group living in the Xinjiang province who are very keen in preserving their cultural, historical, and linguistic bonds with Kazakhstan. Chinese authorities are worried about "East Turkestan" movement that could use Kazakhstan as their shelter.[49] On the other hand, in face of a rising power, China, Kazakhstan's main concern is to preserve its territorial integrity and security. However, according to Zhao, as Trenin says for Russia, China has no intent to exacerbate the conflicts in the region. On the contrary, Zhao claims that the increasing economic cooperation especially in the energy sector and extra-governmental contacts may help to overcome distrust problem among these countries.[50] Compared to Kazakhstan, Uzbek-Chinese relations are less developed since Uzbekistan is not a neighbour of China and economic ties between the two remain limited.[51]

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[46] Huasheng Zhao, "Central Asia in China's Diplomacy," in *Central Asia: Views from Washington, Moscow, and Beijing,* by Eugene Rumer, Dmitri Trenin, and Huasheng Zhao (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2007)*,* 140-141.

[47] Ong, "China's Security Interests," 435.

[48] Michael Clarke, "China's Integration of Xinjiang with Central Asia: Securing a 'Silk Road' to Great Power Status?" *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly* 6, no. 2 (2008): 100.

[49] Zhao, "China and Central Asia," in Rumer, Trenin, and Zhao, 170-171.

[50] Ibid., 173-174.

[51] Ibid., 174-175.

According to Olcott, the presence of the U.S. and its preference to establish bilateral links with Central Asian states have undermined the regional initiatives. Similarly, Lena Jonson and Roy Allison claim that as the external actors are intensively involved in Central Asian affairs, Central Asian leaders may be more willing to establish bilateral links with the regional and international actors. As a result, Central Asian leaders lose their interest and eagerness to build new relations with their counterparts in the neighbour countries and the presence of external actors in Central Asia may intensify the conflicts among Central Asian states on their security issues.[52] However, not only the presence and involvement of external actors but also the attitudes of Central Asian states are determinant factors during the process of conflict formation in the region. Jonson and Allison underline the fact that non-traditional security threats take their sources from the internal dynamics of Central Asian states. They claim that the security issues of Central Asian states are intertwined to each other, but each Central Asian states pursue their own national policy based on their own interests.[53]

It is widely recognized that the conflicting interests and historical enmities are the impediments to Central Asian cooperation on the security issues. It is equally true that most of the non-traditional security problems take their sources from the internal dynamics of these states. However, in this body of literature, Central Asia is shown as the only source of conflicts both due to the "wrong" policies of local leaders and domestic problems while the major actors are seen as the "benign actors" to help these states. If these actors became successful, especially after September 11, it would be their success, but if they failed this would be accepted as a mistake of Central Asian states themselves. However, it should be noted that the involvement of external actors itself could create very serious traditional and non-traditional security threats for Central Asian states both in the short and long term.

[52] Jonson and Allison, "Central Asian Security," in Allison and Jonson, 18.

[53] Ibid., 6.

#### 1.2.2.2. The Second Approach: Limited Role Granted to Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan

In the second approach, the security problems of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan are evaluated on the regional basis under the regional security establishments. However, in these works, similar to the above-mentioned literature, Russia and China, two big regional players are supposed to dominate most of the security issues in Central Asia. In this sense, Moscow and Beijing, to realize their regional policies, aims to establish bilateral relations with Central Asian states and strengthen their security organizations in the region. Under these regional security institutions, Russia and China continue to dominate Central Asian security agenda and use its security problems and vulnerabilities as an excuse to intervene to the internal affairs of Central Asian states. In return, it is generally argued that Central Asian states benefit from the protective umbrella of these big regional states in their domestic, regional and international affairs. In these works, as it is asserted in the first approach, it is argued that Central Asian states have learned how to play one power to another in the region and benefit from the competition itself.

As mentioned above, in the second group of approaches, there are two main tendencies in evaluating regional security issues. Firstly, there are some works attributing an important role to the regional security establishments such as the CSTO and SCO and the powerful regional actors, Russia and China. Secondly, there are some works focusing on the emerging powers of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan as the regional actors in Central Asia but only on the basis of their relations with big regional powers and regional security establishments.

As one of the authors attaching great importance to the role of big regional players, Gregory Gleason claims that in the absence of Russia as a protector, Central Asian states experienced a serious security dilemma in the post-communist era. These states understood that they remained in a very "anarchic situation of competition in which they were forced to turn their own devices to ensure their security."[54]

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[54] Gregory Gleason and Marat E. Shaihutdinov, "Collective Security and Non-State Actors in Eurasia," *International Studies Perspectives* 6, no. 2 (2005): 277.

Gleason claims that some security concerns force Central Asian leaders to cooperate. “In this climate of a shared sense of common threat from non-state actors (terrorism) -and on the background of perceived encroachment from the sole remaining superpower, the U.S., the Eurasian countries returned to the bargaining table.”[55] Olcott claims that Russia may benefit from a deepened regional approach since this increases dependency of these states on Moscow.[56] Not only Russia but also China has preferred the regional approaches to the bilateral ones since the former is “the way to maximize their respective presences in what for each is a critical region” in face of the increasing U.S. military presence.[57]

The policy based on expectations to attract the attention of Russia and China to the regional security problems does not always yield good results for their solution. In fact, despite the prominence of institutions such as the CSTO and SCO to intimidate potential enemies in international area, their operational effectiveness has remained debatable in the region. Hence, as Allison says, “These bodies outwardly take the form of ‘hard regionalism’: pan-or sub-regional groups formalized by interstate arrangements and organizations that promote different forms of functional cooperation.”[58] According to him, “Their cooperative projects usually lack substance and their agreements are mostly only partially or occasionally implemented by Central Asian states.”[59] Therefore, being a part of these security establishments brought short run benefits while preventing to find deeper and permanent solutions to the regional security problems.

Alexander Frost claims that the regional security organizations, the CSTO and SCO, are the instruments of Russia and China to maintain their influence in the region. For instance, in terms of military integration within the organization,

[55] Gleason and Shaihutdinov, “Collective Security and Non-State,” 276.

[56] Olcott, *Central Asia’s Second Chance,* 208.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Roy Allison, “Virtual Regionalism, Regional Structures and Regime Security in Central Asia,” *Central Asian Survey* 27, no. 2 (June 2008): 185.

[59] Ibid.

Russian officials have already dominated most of the official ranks in the CSTO. The Russian presence in Central Asia and the CSTO activities increase the dependency of Central Asian states on Moscow.[60] Frost argues that the other objectives of Russia under the CSTO are to maintain pro-Russian regimes, mainly authoritarian, and expelling or limiting American and Chinese influence in the region.[61] "In the same way that the SCO is the obvious Chinese vehicle to penetrate Central Asia, the CSTO is the obvious tool for Moscow to try and check this penetration."[62]

Gleason claims that traditional security organizations carrying Wesphalian characteristics remain inadequate in finding solutions to the soft security issues that emerged in Eurasia in the post-Cold War period. For instance, the CSTO remains a highly state-centric organization, which is used to coordinate the national armies of its member states.[63] Gleason also clarifies the differences between traditional and non-traditional security threats in his article and investigates appropriate ways to deal with them.[64] This is an important point since the major powers and individual Central Asian states use highly militaristic instruments to deal with these threats and take some extraordinary measures against them by using old instruments. It is important to note that Gleason evaluates all states in these security organizations as the equal members and does not even mention the overwhelming role of Russia and China.

As mentioned above, there are also some works in the second group of approaches focusing on the individual Central Asian states but under the influence of regional establishments and big regional players. In this group of works, Central Asian

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[60] Alexander Frost, "The Collective Security Treaty Organization, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and the Russia's Strategic Goals in Central Asia," *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly* 7, no. 3 (2009): 85-87.

[61] Frost, "Collective Security Treaty Organization," 92-101.

[62] Ibid., 99.

[63] Gleason and Shaihutdinov, "Collective Security and Non-State," 281.

[64] Ibid., 281-283.

security issues are separated from each other in terms of their diverging points especially in security matters and examined in a more detailed way. In Central Asia, internal weakness is the common problem for all Central Asian states in changing but significant degrees. Therefore, these states try to protect their rule from the uncertainties and weakness of their countries. Blank argues that for Central Asian states, their internal security is very important to maintain stability within their territories. He claims that Central Asian states through their multi-vector diplomacy are able to mitigate (if not overcome) their external security dilemmas by seeking for some material benefits from the rivalry among global and regional actors. By doing this, they could prevent any great power from dominating the regional security agenda.[65]

Although Niklas Swanström prefers to evaluate all Central Asian security agenda as a whole while focusing on the intertwined character of these security issues in the region, he also separates weaker Central Asian states such as Kyrgyzstan from the stronger ones such as Kazakhstan. However, this separation is not well defined. According to him, "Weak states are more vulnerable to the internally generated threats than strong states, and their primary objective is to consolidate their internal stability (and political control), rather than focusing on threats originating from other states."[66] Andrei Tsygankov, in his work examining the first fifteen years of the post-Soviet states concludes that only the Baltics, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Russia can be accepted as viable states while the others, including Uzbekistan, remain very weak and pose threats not only within the country to its citizens but also to the outside world.[67]

Deyermond claims that Uzbekistan is a country having important geo-strategic position and potential to assert its influence as a sub-regional hegemon. Uzbekistan

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[65] Blank, "Rethinking Central Asian Security," 32-33.

[66] Niklas Swanström, "Traditional and Non-Traditional Security Threats in Central Asia: Connecting the New and the Old," *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly* 8, no. 2 (2010): 43.

[67] Andrei P. Tsygankov, "Modern at Last? Variety of Weak States in the Post-Soviet World," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 40, no. 4 (2007): 436-437.

is even displayed as a challenge to Russian influence in the region.[68] On the other hand, according to Reyermond, Kazakhstan does not have the same hegemonic position as compared to Uzbekistan due to its geostrategic vulnerability between China and Russia.[69] Contrary to Deyermond, Annette Bohr argues that the close relations between the U.S. and Uzbekistan reveal some cleavages between Uzbekistan and Central Asian states and distance Tashkent from its neighbours in terms of the regional security issues. On the other hand, according to Bohr, Kazakhstan emerges as an important component of the regional alignment.[70] Bohr says, "The epicenter of regionalism … has drifted decisively from a tentative Astana-Tashkent axis to a more stable Astana-Moscow one, effectively laying to rest for the foreseeable future prospects for the development of an inclusive Central Asian regional identity."[71] Kazakhstan sees itself as a "de facto leading power" thanks to its economic development and relatively open political culture compared to Uzbekistan.[72]

It is also argued that Uzbekistan did not show great interest in regional initiatives for a decade since the mid-1990s. On the one hand, by changing its attitude towards regional organizations, Tashkent has become more active since the latter half of the 2000s. On the other hand, as Allison says, for Kazakhstan having formal interest in a "broad but shallow form of regionalism," "multilateralism has been a strategy to enlarge their latitude in foreign policy and to some extent to offset Uzbekistan's regional predominance."[73] This indicates that the current regional organizations do not ensure unity among Central Asian states, but reveal the regional competition and disagreements among themselves, mainly Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. It is argued that Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan do not have primarily the region-oriented

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[68] Deyermond, "Matrioshka Hegemony?" 163.

[69] Ibid., 166.

[70] Bohr, "Regionalism in Central Asia," 491-492.

[71] Ibid., 492.

[72] Ibid., 493.

[73] Allison, "Virtual Regionalism," 187.

purposes but domestic ones in their regional security policies. Their regional security policies remain mainly state-centric and inward-oriented. In some cases, even the failure within the regional security organizations is also attributed to the inability and reluctance of Central Asian states themselves. For example, Swanström underlines the fact that the SCO has taken some measures to prevent these traditional and non-traditional security problems; however, they could not become successful due to the "inability of the Central Asian members in the SCO that lack the willingness and ability to act."[74]

Olcott examines both dependency and conflicts among Central Asian states especially on border issues and investigates whether cooperation will work in Central Asia or not.[75] According to her, "In this region, a 'cold war' could easily become a 'hot' one. At the same time, none of the states is yet able to fully defend its borders, especially demarcated and largely unpatrollable formal 'internal' ones."[76] Central Asian states acknowledge the fact that quasi-nation states always have the risk of being dominated by powerful states (as it happened under the Soviet rule), therefore regional unity is inevitably needed. However, there are some impediments to create a Central Asian regional establishment against Moscow, one of these powerful regional actors. Some Central Asian states have serious doubts; the general fear is that Uzbekistan may dominate this kind of attempt for regionalism. Uzbek dynamism and overwhelming majority of Uzbek population cause anxiety especially on the Turkmenistani part. The deep-rooted rivalry between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan also worried other Central Asian states about the question of who will be leader of this unity.[77]

Finally, contrary to the arguments of Olcott, Kathleen Collins argues that the regionalism in security issues has become more successful among Central Asian

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[74] Swanström, "Traditional and Non-Traditional Security Threats," 41.

[75] Olcott, "Central Asia: Common Legacies," in Allison and Jonson, 42-43.

[76] Ibid., 44

[77] Donald S. Carlisle, "Geopolitics and Ethnic Problems of Uzbekistan and Its Neighbors," in *Muslim Eurasia Conflicting Legacies,* ed. Yaacov Ro'i (London: FRANK CASS, 1995), 90.

states. Collins states that Central Asian region is dominated by the patrimonial authoritarian regimes that tend to cooperate among each other on security issues as long as this cooperation serves for the interests of these regimes. This tendency reinforces the term of "security-oriented regionalism" in Central Asia.[78]

#### 1.2.2.3. The Third Approach: Security from the Perspective of Individual Central Asian States

The main aim of the third group of approaches in the existing literature is to examine the security issues of the individual states and assess the impact of their security policies on the domestic and regional levels. Although most of them do not provide a comparative analysis among Central Asian states in terms of their security issues, at least, they provide a more comprehensive understanding on the reasons and consequences of the security issues at the state level. In this sense, instead of generalizing and overemphasizing the role of external actors, they investigate the peculiarities of Central Asian states and their abilities or disabilities to deal with their security problems. The political relations among Central Asian states are also analyzed in this part. Since there are limited sources in the third group of approaches as compared to the first and second group of approaches, and each of these works focuses on different aspects of the individual states, it is difficult to categorize them under a common title. In this part, the works examining the security issues, relations, and policies of Central Asian states in general, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan in particular are analyzed.

Kirill Nourzhanov, for example, argues that the security cooperation in Central Asia failed largely because it lacks "a realistic and objective threat assessment process."[79] Nourzhanov criticizes that the Great Game debate has reduced security issues in Central Asia to the struggle among major powers and "ascribed the

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[78] Kathleen Collins, "Economic and Security Regionalism among Patrimonial Authoritarian Regimes: The Case of Central Asia," *Europe-Asia Studies* 61, no. 2 (2009): 250-251.

[79] Kirill Nourzhanov, "Changing Security Threat Perceptions in Central Asia," *Australian Journal of International Relations* 63, no. 1 (March 2009): 85.

region's lack of stability primarily to machinations of imperialist rivals."[80] In addition to that, he says that focusing on specific issues in one or two countries from the Euro-Atlantic perspective and evaluating all Central Asian states in terms of their security issues without making any differentiation have been misleading so far.[81] He claims that this understanding is mainly based on the definition of Central Asian states as if they are the passive subjects of the Great Game.

Instead of focusing on the interests of major actors, Nourzhanov explains the security and foreign policies of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Nourzhanov diagnoses the problem in security issues by arguing, "There appears to be a serious disjuncture in Central Asia between the threat perceptions articulated and transmitted through the official security narrative, and the actual security situation 'out there'."[82] His argument is based on the fact that national security is an important component of regional security and unless domestic security is not ensured in these states, the conflict and instability in the region seem to continue as the irresolvable and perennial problems.[83]

Paul Quinn-Judge's article on the conventional security risks to Central Asia is helpful not only to understand the security dynamics of Central Asia but also the individual Central Asian states. This approach provides a good insight to categorize Central Asian states in terms of their security risks and to reveal their interconnectedness in security issues. According to Quinn-Judge, a security crisis in Uzbekistan or Tajikistan will inevitably spill over to Kazakhstan since "no country has developed the political and institutional resilience that would guarantee it against a crisis spilling over from a neighbour."[84] As most of the existing literature, this article also examines the Islamist insurgency in Uzbekistan and its

[80] Nourzhanov, "Changing Security Threat Perceptions," 87.

[81] Ibid., 86-87.

[82] Ibid., 98.

[83] Ibid., 100.

[84] Paul Quinn-Judge, "Conventional Security Risks to Central Asia: A Summary Overview," *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly* 8, no. 2 (2010): 56.

repercussions for the whole region. He argues, "Sooner or later, the draconian, tightly-coiled security system created by Islam Karimov will blow"[85] and this will have some impact not only on this country but on the region as well. Although Quinn-Judge's article examines the security problems in Central Asia in detail, it seems to lack a deeper analysis emphasizing the reasons behind the emergence of these security issues in Central Asian countries.

In Uzbekistan, as mentioned above, Karimov regime has long been fighting with the Islamist extremism directed to his rule. Anita Sengupta analyzes the relations between Islam, religious identity and politicization of Islam in Uzbekistan and the role of regime elites in this process. Sengupta claims that in Ferghana Valley where Islamic activism (with the establishment of new mosques and *madrasas* and increasing number of new followers) is spreading, mainly young people who are concerned with their future participate to the Islamist groups in order to find some remedy for their problems.[86] In addition to socio-economic problems, Karimov regime labels all Islamist groups as the extremists and applies very restrictive policies further radicalizing Islamist movements.[87] This verifies the argument of Bohr. The threats challenging the region's stability and security are not derived from external actors, but created by the region itself.[88]

In one of the most comprehensive studies on Uzbekistan, Resul Yalcin examines history, social transformation, transitional processes to democracy and market-economy and foreign policy of Uzbekistan. Investigating Islam in Uzbekistan, Yalcin says, "On one side the government had to symbolize the close ties between the national culture and religion through the 'rebirth of Uzbekistan.' President Islam Karimov wanted to present himself as the champion of this rebirth, but on the other

[85] Quinn-Judge, "Conventional Security Risks ," 57.

[86] Anita Sengupta, *The Formation of the Uzbek Nation-State: A Study in Transition* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2003), 202.

[87] Maria Elisabeth Louw, *Everyday Islam in Post-Soviet Central Asia* (London: Routledge, 2007), 30.

[88] Bohr, "Regionalism in Central Asia," 501.

side he has had to confront the Islamic tradition in his country."[89] According to him, "There is also an ambivalence between the fear that the government could be a threat to religiously motivated political movements in Central Asia, and its desire to take advantage of this for its own political goals, especially for legitimizing its authoritarian rule."[90]

Ronger D. Kangas depicts the presidential path of Karimov in a very interesting way. According to him, "If one were to gauge the possibility of 'future leadership,' Islam Karimov would probably not be high on anyone's list in the 1960s and 1970s."[91] In line with his claim that series of political developments made Karimov powerful by good fortune, Kangas says, "National politics would play a large part in his career advancement."[92] In his analysis, although the succession process may be handled, another problem waits Uzbekistan. "The concept of the state, both as a structural phenomenon and an image for legitimacy, is inextricably associated with Karimov himself. When he dies, the state runs the risk of losing its legitimacy."[93]

Laura L. Adams in her book on the Uzbek culture and national identity stresses on the nation-building process and promotion of Uzbekness in the post-Soviet order. She argues that the Uzbek state has used tightly controlled mass spectacles in order to reinforce Uzbek national identity in this period. In this sense, she argues that today's Uzbek holidays are not completely different from but just the reflections of the Soviet past.[94] She criticizes Karimov's regime and calls the Uzbek people for an action by saying the following:

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[89] Resul Yalcin, *The Rebirth of Uzbekistan Politics, Economy and Society in the Post-Soviet Era* (UK: Ithaca Press, 2002), 96.

[90] Ibid., 97.

[91] Robert D. Kangas, "Uzbekistan: The Karimov Presidency-Amir Timur Revisited," in *Power and Change in Central Asia,* ed. Sally N. Cummings (London: Routledge, 2002), 133.

[92] Ibid.

[93] Ibid., 144.

[94] Laura L. Adams, *The Spectacular State Culture and National Identity in Uzbekistan* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 182.

> It may be the case that, for many years, Islam Karimov was actually successful in his national ideology and in his campaigns to convince people that he was leading the country to become a great state in the future. In the 1990s, the cult of personality by proxy using Amir Timur had considerable resonance with the people and created loyalty to Karimov. However, after seventeen years of repeating the same slogans about independence and future prosperity, surely even the most enthusiastic of Uzbekistan's spectacle producers must be wondering: isn't time for a change?[95]

By using the similar term "multi-vector" policy with Stephen Blank, Reuel R. Hanks claims that this foreign policy based on pragmatic and non-ideological reasons allows Kazakh state to achieve its objectives both in the domestic and international area.[96] In the foreign policy decision process of Kazakhstan, not only the external but also the internal dynamics that will be beneficial in the short or long term are important. State security and economic development are the main domestic concerns that forces Kazakh state to pursue multi-vector foreign policy in its relations with other countries. According to Hanks, this multi-vector policy is well implemented in Kazakhstan's security relationships as it happened in its membership in the SCO and its partnership with the NATO and the U.S.[97]

Hank argues that the debates on the annexation of the northern oblast of Kazakhstan by Russia, as one of the most important security issue of Kazakhstan, and the increasing tension between Moscow and Astana has forced Kazakh state to pursue this multi-vector foreign policy.[98] Thanks to this policy, Kazakhstan has mitigated the Russian influence on its territories, if not eliminate it, and has not alienated itself from Moscow. This policy has also been used as a strong card for Kazakhstan in its relations with the West vis-à-vis Russian interests.[99] In addition, Hanks claims that the multi-vector foreign policy helps Kazakhstan to emerge as a regional hegemon

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[95] Adams, *Spectacular State Culture,* 199.

[96] Reuel R. Hanks, "'Multi-vector Politics,' and Kazakhstan's Emerging Role as a Geo-strategic Player in Central Asia," *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 11, no. 3 (September 2009): 259.

[97] Ibid., 260.

[98] Ibid., 261-263.

[99] Ibid., 265.

in Central Asia at least in terms of its developing economy and increasing international prestige.[100] Hanks illustrates Kazakhstan's active role in its domestic and regional security issues and its ability to implement an efficient foreign policy to ensure its state security.

Sally Cummings analyzes the historical development and the nature of politics in Kazakhstan in her book. By examining social, economic and political background of the country, she provides an analysis of elite legitimation, identity, political culture, economic reforms and Kazakh national cultural revival. Cummings also focuses on the dependency of Kazakhstan to Russia. According to her, "Nazarbaev's strongly confederal orientation, with his emphasis on Kazakhstan being in a wider unit that includes Russia, has sought to provide some psychological comfort to the Republic's large Russian community and is intended partly for their consumption."[101] In another article, Cummings investigates the mechanisms used by Nazarbayev to achieve and maintain his presidential rule. She summarizes the main characteristics of the Nazarbayev presidency as follows: "A process of state- and institution-building, the absence of ideology in favour of a managerial type of leadership, a kleptocratic economy and a strong personalism, buttressed by corruption, patrimonalism and venality."[102]

Martha B. Olcott examines the historical, political, social and economic background of Kazakhstan in detail since the early days of independence, focusing mostly on modern day Kazakhstan. In this book, ethnic diversity in Kazakhstan, Kazakh and Kazakhstani identities and division along ethnic lines are investigated. According to Olcott, "While continuing to embrace the rhetoric of ethnic tolerance that stresses the multinational nature of the state, the government now actively pursues policies that strengthen the Kazakhs' claim to cultural, political and economic

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[100] Hanks, "'Multi-vector politics,'" 266-267.

[101] Sally N. Cummings, *Kazakhstan: Power and the Elite* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2005), 153.

[102] Sally N. Cummings, "Kazakhstan an Uneasy Relationship –Power and Authority in the Nazarbaev Regime," in *Power and Change in Central Asia,* ed. Sally N. Cummings (London: Routledge, 2002), 62.

hegemony."[103] In terms of displaying cleavages in the society, Olcott goes beyond the inter-ethnic tension by adding other kinds of divisions in the society: intra-ethnic divisions mainly based on clans, regional differentiation, uneven distribution of wealth and the division between believers and non-believers.[104]

## 1.3. Theoretical Framework of the Thesis

In this thesis, the concepts of the Copenhagen School are used in order to identify and analyze the security threats, actors and policies of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan and examine their security dynamics. Therefore, after giving definitions of these concepts below, their relevance to the security issues of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan will be investigated on a comparative basis.

Broadening the scope of security goes back to the early years of 1980s. Richard H. Ullman in his article *Redefining Security* focuses on non-military security issues such as conflicts over territory and resources, rapid growth in world's population and poverty.[105] Ullman warns about the risks of focusing only on military security as follows:

> Defining national security merely (or even primarily) in military terms conveys a profoundly false image of reality. That false image is doubly misleading and therefore doubly dangerous. First, it causes states to concentrate on military threats and to ignore other and perhaps even more harmful dangers. Thus it reduces their total security. And second, it contributes to a pervasive militarization of international relations that in the long run can only increase global insecurity.[106]

As mentioned above, Buzan and his colleagues introduce five security sectors to international security studies: military, political, societal, economic and environmental. According to them, the main concern of military sector is "the two-

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[103] Martha B. Olcott, *Kazakhstan Unfulfilled Promise* (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2002), 52.

[104] Ibid., 183-213.

[105] Richard H. Ullman, "Redefining Security," *International Security* 8, no. 1 (Summer, 1983): 139-146.

[106] Ibid., 129.

level interplay of the armed offensive and defensive capabilities of states, and states' perceptions of each other's intentions" while the main concern of the political sector is "the organizational stability of states, system of government and the ideologies that give them legitimacy."[107] For economic security, the primary concern is "the access to the resources, finance and markets necessary to sustain acceptable levels of welfare and state power" and for societal one, it is "the sustainability, within acceptable conditions for evolution, of traditional patterns of language, culture and religious and national identity and custom."[108] Finally, the main concern of environmental security is "the maintenance of the local and the planetary biosphere as the essential support system on which all other human enterprises depend."[109]

According to Buzan and his colleagues, each one of these sectors also has specific types of interaction. They explain such interaction as follows:

> The military sector is about relationships of forceful coercion; the political sector is about relationships of authority, governing status and recognition; the economic sector is about relationships of trade, production and finance; the societal sector is about relationships of collective identity; and the environmental sector is about relationships between human activity and the planetary biosphere.[110]

Buzan and his colleagues define security as "a generic term that has a distinct meaning but varies in form. Security means survival in the face of existential threats, but what constitutes an existential threat is not the same across different sectors."[111] As given above, existential threats brought an important question to the security studies: Whose security? Unless a referent object to be protected from the threats exist, it is not possible to mention any threats and the concept of security.[112]

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[107] Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework,* 8.

[108] Ibid.

[109] Ibid.

[110] Ibid., 7.

[111] Ibid., 27.

[112] Paul Williams, *Security Studies: An Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 7.

As such, existential threats are much related to the referent objects which are "things that are seen to be existentially threatened and that have a legitimate claim to survive."[113]

As the existential threats change for each sector, so does the referent objects. In the military sector, state or other political entities are the referent objects. In the political sector, the constituting principle of states, sovereignty, and in some cases the ideology of state are the referent objects. Sovereignty can be challenged by anything that put recognition, legitimacy or governing authority into question. In the societal sector, collective identities such as nation and religion are the referent objects. In the economic sector, firms or national economies, only if the survival of the population is at stake, can be challenged by the existential threats. In the environmental sector, the referent objects vary from individual species, types of habitat to climate and biosphere.[114]

In fact, it is difficult to separate these sectors, especially political, societal and military ones from each other. As a matter of fact, Buzan and his colleagues argue, "All threats and defenses are constituted and defined politically. Politicization is political by definition, and by extension, to securitize is also a political act."[115] Security has been seen inevitably political. It has great impact on "who gets what, when, and how in world politics ... The concept of security has been compared to a trump-card in the struggle over allocation of resources."[116] This brings us to the concept of securitization of Buzan and his colleagues. According to them, within the framework of these abovementioned sectors, "something can be designated as an international security issue because it can be argued that this issue is more important than other issues and should take absolute priority."[117] In the securitization process which is an extreme form of politicization, an issue "is

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[113] Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework,* 36.

[114] Ibid., 22-23.

[115] Ibid., 141.

[116] Williams, *Security Studies,* 1.

[117] Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework,* 24.

dramatized and presented as an issue of supreme priority; thus, by labelling it as *security*, an agent claims a need for and right to treat it by extraordinary means."[118]

There are certain security actors playing important roles in the securitization process: securitizing and functional actors. The former are "actors who securitize issues by declaring something a referent object existentially threatened" while the latter are "actors who affect the dynamics of a sector. [A functional actor is] ... an actor who significantly influences decisions in the field of security."[119] The securitizing actors are different from the referent object, but in some cases, especially where the state is a referent object, the authorized representatives of the state as the securitizing actors may also speak on behalf of the state that has been declared as a referent object by themselves.[120]

Buzan and his colleagues define security as "a self-referential practice, because it is in this practice that the issue becomes a security issue not necessarily because a real existential threat exists but because the issue is presented as such a threat."[121] In other words, "Securitization is essentially an intersubjective process. The senses of threat, vulnerability, and (in)security are socially constructed rather than objectively present or absent."[122] This can be only possible through "a specific rhetorical structure (survival, priority of action 'because if the problem is not handled now it will not be too late, and we will not exist to remedy our failure)."[123] "The process of securitization is what in language theory is called a speech act."[124] Three types of

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[118] Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework,* 26. Emphasis is original.

[119] Ibid., 36.

[120] Ibid., 42.

[121] Ibid., 24.

[122] Ibid., 57.

[123] Ibid., 26.

[124] Ibid.

units explained above exist in the speech-act approach: referent objects, securitizing actors and functional actors.[125]

In order to securitize an issue, it is not enough to break rules or to have existential threats, but it is also necessary to have existential threats that legitimize the breaking of rules.[126] Declaring something as an existential threat to a referent object does not also necessarily conclude with the "securitization act," rather it is only "securitizing move." In order to complete a successful securitization act, the audience should accept this existential threat directed to the survival of the referent object. This acceptance can be obtained through coercion and consent.[127] In other words, "The security act is negotiated between securitizer and audience –that is, internally within the unit- but thereby the securitizing agent can obtain permission to override rules that would otherwise bind it."[128]

To sum up, a successful securitization must be consisted of three components: "Existential threats, emergency action and effects on inter-unit relations by breaking of free rules."[129] In addition, there are also some conditions where the desired and intended outcomes through securitization are more likely to be obtained. Securitizing actors may declare anything as a referent object. However, in reality, under some facilitating conditions, for securitizing actors, it is easier to realize a successful securitization with some kinds of referent objects than with others.[130] "Facilitating conditions are the conditions under which the speech act works, in contrast to cases in which the act misfires or is abused."[131] Buzan and his colleagues sum up these conditions as follows:

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[125] Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework,* 35-36.

[126] Ibid., 25.

[127] Ibid.

[128] Ibid., 26.

[129] Ibid.

[130] Ibid., 36.

[131] Ibid., 32.

> The demand internal to the speech act of the following the grammar of security, ... the social conditions regarding the position of authority for the securitizing actor-that is, the relationship between the speaker and audience and thereby the likelihood of the audience accepting the claims made in a securitizing attempt, and ... features of the alleged threats that either facilitate or impede securitization.[132]

As mentioned above, something can be politicized, non-politicized, securitized or desecuritized. Last but not least, in some cases, it is advisable for states to desecuritize some issues by taking them out of the securitization agenda. According to Buzan and his colleagues, "Desecuritization is the optimal long-range option, since it means not to have issues phrased as 'threats against which we have countermeasures' but to move them out of this threat-defense sequence and into the ordinary public sphere."[133]

Throughout its history, Central Asia has remained vulnerable to the diverse regional security threats, invasions and colonization attempts, so for Central Asian leaders and people, preserving their security has always become a crucial issue. In the post-Cold War era, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have had to fight against the traditional and non-traditional security issues that they had inherited from the Soviet Union. Although state has remained as the main securitizing agent for both Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan in this new order, the existential threats and referent objects of these countries have differed from each other.

In Kazakhstan, as a country that has experienced less security problems as compared to Uzbekistan since its independence, the referent object is generally seen as the state and/or nation. The existential threats to the state sovereignty and national integrity of Kazakhstan are the separatist claims especially from ethnic Russians and inter-ethnic tension derived from social structure divided along many ethnic, cultural and socio-economic lines. According to Olcott, in Kazakhstan, "social differentiation is proceeding rapidly along a number of fault lines: rural versus urban, old versus young, north versus south, and Kazakhs versus non-

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[132] Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework,* 33.

[133] Ibid., 29.

Kazakhs."[134] Among these fault-lines, the most terrible scenario is seen the annexation of Russian-dominated northern Kazakhstan to Russian territories. Although the growing Kazakh economy has been satisfactory so far and played an important role in stabilizing the country, the gap in the distribution of wealth seems to create another problem for Astana. In other words, economic development that has been as a stabilizing force so far may easily turn into a destabilizing factor especially under the shadow of the above-mentioned ethnic and socio-economic cleavages within the country. There is also a societal security threat directed towards the Kazakh titular identity in Kazakhstan. For state authorities, Russian cultural and linguistic dominance, in addition to these abovementioned factors, pose a significant security threat to the Kazakh nation.

As mentioned above, in Uzbek case, the existential threat that has challenged the regime since the late 1990s has been Islamic radicalism. Therefore, as the securitizing agent, Uzbek leader Karimov has not hesitated to present Islamist insurgency as the most important problem of the country and implemented very restrictive policies by breaking off the normal political rules. As Chris Seiple and Joshua White points out, in Uzbekistan, freedom of religion is restricted and the government is reluctant to take concrete steps to improve its human right records. Furthermore, despite the fact that Uzbekistan has economic potential, Uzbek leaders have done almost nothing in terms of creating a well-functioning market economy.[135] As put forward by an expert, "This harsh political environment does not, however, exist in a vacuum. The government has been challenged by radical Islamic groups, and the state's political repression must be seen as both a consequence and a cause of this confrontation."[136] In case of Uzbekistan, the way to legitimize the authoritarian rule of Uzbek state is to use domestic and regional security problems to reach its aims. Anna Matveeva says, "Islam Karimov

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[134] Olcott, *Kazakhstan Unfulfilled Promise,* 172.

[135] Chris Seiple and Joshua White, "Uzbekistan and the Central Asian Crucible of Religion and Security," in *Religion & Security: The New Nexus in International Relations,* ed. Robert A. Seiple and Dennis R. Hoover (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2004), 48.

[136] Ibid.

continues to present himself as a last bastion against Islamists, drug traffickers and other criminals."[137] Karimov has also benefited from the need for security and stability in his country. Paul G. Geiss says, "The head of the state does not only symbolize the state's unity, but also appears as a de-facto guardian of political stability and of the order of the state."[138] In terms of domestic security issues, both Kazakh and Uzbek cases are examined in detail with all aspects of securitization in the following chapters.

Lastly, another important concept emphasized by Buzan and his colleagues is "Regional Security Complex." In their work, Regional Security Complex is described as "a set of units whose major processes of securitization, desecuritization, or both are so interlinked that their security problems cannot reasonably be analyzed or resolved apart from one another."[139] However, in this thesis, it is argued that as the main security threats of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, two important regional players in Central Asia, differ from each other and they have securitized different security issues since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, this concept could not be properly applied to whole Central Asian region. In addition, the presence of Russia and its involvement in many Central Asian issues is another obstacle to form such kind of "Central Asian" regional security complex.

### 1.4. Outline & Methodology

The thesis is consisted of five chapters. After the Introduction, the second chapter aims to determine the main security threats securitized by the Kazakh and Uzbek leaders that are believed to challenge the state, nation and regime are analyzed. In the third chapter, the securitizing actors in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, respectively Nursultan Nazarbayev and Islam Karimov are examined in terms of their personal backgrounds, levels of popularity, public support and speech act towards their

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[137] Anna Matveeva, "Legitimising Central Asian Authoritarianism: Political Manipulation and Symbolic Power," *Europe-Asia Studies* 61, no. 7 (2009): 1009.

[138] Paul Georg Geiss, "State and Regime Change in Central Asia," in *Realities of Transformation: Democratization Policies in Central Asia Revisited,* ed. Andrea Berg and Anna Kreikemeyer (Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 2006), 33.

[139] Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework,* 201.

domestic and international audiences. In the fourth chapter, the security policies of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, both at the domestic and regional level are investigated. As the fifth chapter, the conclusion provides a general analysis of the findings.

My primary methodological tool of inquiry will be qualitative in nature, although I will use quantitative data where appropriate. The choice of specific methods and sources for building parts of the study is as follows: to be acquainted with the domestic issues of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, I will look to the primary sources and official documents of these countries. I will also examine some relevant sources such as the decisions taken by the CSTO and SCO, the processes of their implementation and the political stance of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. By analyzing the documents, books, interviews and some speeches of Uzbek and Kazakh leaders, I will also try to determine the impact of personalities, characters, level of popularities, and domestic and foreign policy preferences of these leaders on domestic and regional security policies.

# CHAPTER II

# SECURITY THREATS FOR KAZAKHSTAN AND UZBEKISTAN

This chapter looks at the main domestic security threats for Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan in the post-Soviet era. The aim is to examine the security threats of separatist demands, inter-ethnic tension and Russian dominance in Kazakhstan and radical Islam in Uzbekistan for the referent objects of each state, respectively the state/nation and the regime. In this sense, in order to understand why these referent objects in the two countries are chosen, the development of nationhood in Kazakhstan and the roots of Islam in Uzbekistan are examined from a historical perspective. Secondly, Soviet nationalities policies and anti-religious campaigns are scrutinized. Thirdly, post-Soviet security problems are investigated. At the end of this chapter, there is a conclusion where Kazakh and Uzbek cases are compared.

## 2.1. Security Threats for Kazakhstan

In this part, firstly, the development of Kazakh nation and its main components (nomadic way of life and clan identity, Islam and the Kazakh national movements) are analyzed from a historical perspective. Secondly, Soviet nationalities policies are examined. Lastly, the security issues in the post-Soviet era about the disagreements and conflicts among ethnic Kazakhs and Russians are given based on the first two parts.

### 2.1.1. The Development of Kazakh Nation

#### 2.1.1.1. Nomadic Way of Life and Clan Identity

Kazakh identity is consisted of several attachments based on clans, Islam and Kazakh nationhood that overlap and reinforce each other. Throughout history, a Kazakh man/woman had become a nomad, a Muslim, a member of a clan, and finally a member of the Kazakh nation in modern sense. In the emergence of these

identities, the traditional and cultural peculiarities of Kazakh people as well as political developments have played an important role.

Kazakhs, having been affected by geography and climate in search for pastures, migrated from one place to another in the Central Asian steppes. Kazakhs are described as "pastoral nomads whose social, economic and political structures were tightly interconnected to their specific way of life and to 2,500 years of Central Asian nomadic heritage."[140] There is a significant relation between this nomadic way of life and the emergence of Kazakh identity. "An effective system of ecological adaptation, pastoralism shaped a structure of Kazakh identity, which served to maintain social relations within and between communities."[141] Besides, "as an economic practice, pastoralism was equated with Kazakhness demarcating the boundaries of Kazakh 'most general identity.'"[142]

The Kazakh Khanate was established in the 15th century on the territories of contemporary Kazakhstan. With the establishment of this Khanate, the concept of "sovereignty" developed for the first time in the Kazakh history. The Kazakh Khanate comprising Turkic and Mongol clans and tribes maintained its rule throughout the 16th century.[143] The borders of the Kazakh Khanate covered "the territories from the Caspian Sea in the west; to the north-western border of China in the east; and from the Russian border in southern Siberia in the north to the Syr Darya River in the south."[144] By the last quarter of the 17th century, the Kazakh

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140 Steven Sabol, *Russian Colonization and the Genesis of Kazakh National Consciousness* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 11.

141 Ibid.

142 Saulesh Esenova, "Soviet Nationality, Identity, and Ethnicity in Central Asia: Historic Narratives and Kazakh Ethnic Identity," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 22, no. 1 (2002): 13.

143 Charles F. Carlson, "The Concept of Sovereignty in Kazakhstan from Kültegin to the Present," in *Altaica Berolinensia: The Concept of Sovereignty in the Altaic World,* ed. Barbara Kellner-Heinkele (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1993), 61-62.

144 Esenova, "Soviet Nationality, Identity, and Ethnicity," 14.

Khanate invaded most of the territories that belong to the present-day Kazakhstan.[145]

Kazakh identity has evolved in a gradual process in line with the emergence of clan attachments and their evolution towards political entity based on "blood relationships and ties of affinity."[146] As Collins describes, "Clans are informal social organizations in which kinship or 'fictive' kinship is the core, unifying bond among group members. Clans are identity networks consisting of an extensive web of horizontal and vertical kin-based relations."[147] Similar to other nomadic societies, this social organization and kinship division called *ru* (local clans) have always been influential in the Kazakh steppes even today.[148]

The Kazakh Khanate was divided into three tribal confederations or hordes in the mid-16th century: *Uly Zhuz* (the Great Horde), *Orta Zhuz* (Middle Horde) and *Kishi Zhuz* (Little/Small Horde).[149] "Each zhuz was composed of a multitude of genealogy-based tribes and clans, and was given a certain degree of political and military autonomy."[150] These tribal confederations have been related to the nomadic way of life since they have emerged in line with "the three natural climatic zones that forged stable migration routes for identifiable clusters of kin-related groups."[151] Members of *Kishi Zhuz* generally live in the west and northwest of the contemporary Kazakhstan. Members of *Orta Zhuz* inhabit in the northern and central regions while those from *Uly Zhuz* predominate in the east and southeast.[152]

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[145] Carlson, "The Concept of Sovereignty," in Kellner-Heinkele, 62.

[146] Sabol, *Russian Colonization,* 15.

[147] Kathleen Collins, "The Political Role of Clans in Central Asia," *Comparative Politics* 35, no. 2 (January 2003): 172-173.

[148] Edward Schatz, "Reconceptualizing Clans: Kinship Networks and Statehood in Kazakhstan," *Nationalities Papers* 33, no. 2 (2005): 239.

[149] Carlson, "The Concept of Sovereignty," in Kellner-Heinkele, 62.

[150] Esenova, "Soviet Nationality, Identity, and Ethnicity," 14.

[151] Schatz, "Reconceptualizing Clans," 239.

[152] Ibid.

In the second half of the 18th century, Russian invasion in Kazakh territories gained speed.[153] As the Khans of each *zhuz* had to sign treaties with tsarist Russia between 1680 and 1760, the Kazakhs became one of the nations under the rule of tsar.[154] Kazakh khanates gradually lost their sovereignty after Russia abolished the authority of these khans in the 1790s and suppressed them in the first half of the 19th century.[155]

Russians continued to shape political, social and economic life of Kazakhs after the establishment of the Soviet Union. The year 1917 did not only signal the end of the tsarist Russia but also foreshadowed some radical changes in Central Asia. Soviet Union launched an intensive nation-building campaign with the aim of eroding regional, religious and dynastic-clan identities and creating a new ethnicity based state on the concept of "socialist nation."[156] "In the early years of the Soviet state, the Soviets were profoundly concerned to destroy the myth of Greater Turkestan ... and deliberately fostered the germination of separate ethnic consciousness among the people of Central Asia."[157] The establishment of Central Asian republics was "the institutional expression of this policy."[158]

### 2.1.1.2. Islam

The spread of Islam particularly to the southern areas of Kazakhstan started in the 7th century and lasted for centuries.[159] According to an author, there are two waves of Islamization of Kazakhstan. "The first took place in the 9th and early 10th

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[153] Carlson, "The Concept of Sovereignty," in Kellner-Heinkele, 62.

[154] Esenova, "Soviet Nationality, Identity, and Ethnicity," 15.

[155] Carlson, "The Concept of Sovereignty," in Kellner-Heinkele, 62.

[156] Valery A. Tishkov, "The Russians in Central Asia and Kazakhstan," in *Muslim Eurasia Conflicting Legacies,* ed. Yaacov Ro'i (Oregon: FRANK CASS, 1995): 289.

[157] Pedro Ramet, "Migration and Nationality Policy in Soviet Central Asia," *Humboldt Journal of Social Relations* 6, no. 1 (September 1978): 79.

[158] Ibid. Soviet nationalities policies will be examined in detail below.

[159] Saniya Edelbay, "Traditional Kazakh Culture and Islam," *International Journal of Business and Social Science* 3, no. 11 (June 2012): 122.

centuries when the Arab armies ... conquered southern Kazakhstan ... the second occurred gradually from the 13th century until the early 19th century when Muslim missionaries introduced Islam to the rest of Kazakhstan."[160] However, the nomadic way of life among Kazakhs obstructed the dissemination of Islam as compared to other settled Turkic populations.[161] Even in the 18th and 19th century, many Kazakh nomads did not have deep knowledge on Islam as a religion.[162] It is claimed that Russian tsars promoted this kind of religious attachment by sending some ethnic Tatar missionaries to the region "in order to 'civilize' the local, mostly nomadic population."[163] Since then, the first mosques were established in the territories of contemporary Kazakhstan.[164]

In Kazakhstan, people have commonly adopted moderate Islam of Sunni orientation of *Hanafi Mazhab* (Muslim school of law). Sufism, a traditional moderate Islamic order, is widespread especially in the southern Kazakhstan.[165] Islam has been relatively more influential in the southern areas of Kazakhstan close to Uzbekistan. However, it can be argued that Islam is not a determinant factor in Kazakh political and social life. It is claimed that even in the south of the country, clan identity is seen more important than Islamic identity.[166] As Zelkina points out, "Unlike the Uzbeks and Tajiks, the Kazakhs have never seen Islam as a way of life or a source

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[160] Emmanuel Karagiannis, "The Rise of Political Islam in Kazakhstan: Hizb ut-Tahrir Al Islami," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 13, no. 2 (2007): 297-298.

[161] Edelbay, "Traditional Kazakh Culture," 122.

[162] Dmitri Vertkin, "Kazakhstan and Islam," *Defense & Security Analysis* 23, no. 4 (December 2007): 439.

[163] Ibid.

[164] Ibid.

[165] Edelbay, "Traditional Kazakh Culture," 123.

[166] Anna Zelkina, "Islam and Security in the New States of Central Asia: How Genuine Is the Islamic Threat?" *Religion, State & Society* 27, no. 3/4 (1999): 364.

of communal identity."[167] As such, "Islam in Kazakhstan has revealed itself as an integral part of the national heritage, rather than an independent political force."[168]

Tsarist Russia did not intervene much to the religious affairs of Central Asian people, including Kazakhs, as harshly as Soviets would later do. However, Soviet authorities, adopted atheistic policies opposing Islam since Islam was considered to distance people from the material world and secular/modern way of life. In order to monitor the activities of religious institutions, Bolsheviks rejected just like all other religions, Islamic teachings.[169]

Considering the atheist policies of the Soviet state, one could think that the anti-religious campaign was directly related to eradicating Muslim identity. However, this campaign also aimed to eradicate national identities fed by the Islamic values. As Louw says, "Belonging to Islam became a marker of national identity, for which no personal piety or observance was necessary; a marker which distinguished Central Asians from outsiders."[170]

In the post-Soviet era, after Kazakhstan gained its independence, there were some attempts to "revitalize" religion in Kazakh society as one of the important components of Kazakh identity.[171] In this public debate, the term "Re-islamization" has actually been addressed as a result of search for identity.[172] Islamic values were

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[167] Zelkina, "Islam and Security in the New States," 364.

[168] Ibid.

[169] William Fierman, "Identity, Symbolism, and the Politics of Language in Central Asia," *Europe-Asia Studies,* 61, no. 7 (September 2009): 1208-1209.

[170] Louw, *Everyday Islam,* 22.

[171]Azade-Ayse Rorlich, "Islam, Identity and Politics: Kazakhstan, 1990-2000" *Nationalities Papers* 31, no. 2 (June 2003): 157.

[172] Ibid., 157-158.

stressed by some Kazakh intellectuals as an "important component of national and cultural heritage" and a symbol that separate Kazakhs from non-Kazakhs.[173]

#### 2.1.1.3. Kazakh National Movements

It is known that Chinese and people from the Caucasus and Volga-Don region used the term "Kazakh" in the 13th century; while for some, Kazakh nation emerged not before the mid-15th century.[174] Although for many sources, Kazakh name having ethnic connotation was used in the 16th century, the origins of Kazakhs are still uncertain.[175] In the 19th century, the Kazakh Khanate mentioned above was divided into four administrative units under the rule of the Russian Empire: "The Steppe and Orenburg provinces in the north and east, and the Turkestan and Astrahan provinces, in which the Kazakh lands were assembled with neighbouring Russian and Uzbek territories, in the south and west."[176]

After the abolition of serfdom in the tsarist Russia in 1861, large numbers of Russians and Ukrainian peasants began to come to this region resulting in the emergence of tensions among these immigrants and nomadic Kazakhs.[177] Both the pressure coming from colonial bureaucracy and the influx of these peasants to the lands predominated by Kazakh nomads increased in the late 19th century. As these developments disturbed the local people, the uprisings of some Kazakh groups marked the era.[178]

In the face of accelerated Russian colonization, Kazak people considered that their culture and identity based on nomadic way of life were put under a serious risk.

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[173] Dilip Hiro, *Inside Central Asia A Political and Cultural History of Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkey, and Iran* (New York: Overlook Duckworth, Peter Mayer Publishers, 2009), 239.

[174] Cummings, *Kazakhstan: Power and the Elite,* 21.

[175] Sabol, *Russian Colonization,* 15-16.

[176] Esenova, "Soviet Nationality, Identity, and Ethnicity," 15.

[177] Richard Pomfret, *The Economies of Central Asia* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995), 76.

[178] Esenova, "Soviet Nationality, Identity, and Ethnicity," 15.

Therefore, the Kazakh elites sought ways to mobilize pastoral nomads around "ideas of common origin and genealogy."[179] As such, "A familiar form of group 'imagination' for Kazakhs, the *shezhire* re-emerged as important markers of *Kazakshilik* (Kazakhness) during their resistance to colonialism in the early twentieth century."[180]

In the pre-Soviet era, the familial linkages called as *shezhire* was an important aspect of Kazakh society to reveal and reinforce ethnic and national bonds among Kazakh people. Yessenova describes *shezhire* as such:

> In the pre-Soviet past the principles governing important social practices within Kazakh society were encoded in distinctive sets of narratives based on genealogical accounts and identified in the society as the *shezhire*. Adopted from the Persian and Arabic word for 'tree,' among Kazakhs the *shezhire* denoted specifically the oral tradition of genealogical reckoning that helped to form political alliances, social structuring, and lineage segmentation, and was ultimately linked to the division of pasturelands and annual migration routes.[181]

It can be argued that Kazakh national consciousness awakened especially against the external threats coming from tsarist and Soviet Russia. Kazakhs organized several uprisings under the rule of Russian authorities. The revolt of 1837-1846 that was organized by Kenesary Qasymov who was the Khan of *Orta Zhuz* and the 1916 uprisings that were realized by Kazakhs against military conscription to the tsarist army were much influential social unrests. It is said that 50,000 rebels participated to the 1916 uprisings.[182]

Another important movement launched in response to the colonial policies of tsarist Russia was *Alash Orda. Alash Orda* movement took its name from a traditional battle *Alash* (cry) of Kazakh nomads. Aiming to ensure recognition of their rights

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[179] Saulesh Yessenova, "'Routes and Roots' of Kazakh Identity: Urban Migration in Post-socialist Kazakhstan," *The Russian Review* 64, no. 4 (October 2005): 663.

[180]Ibid.

[181] Ibid.

[182] Zharmukhamed Zardykhan, "Russians in Kazakhstan and Demographic Change: Imperial Legacy and the Kazakh Way of Nation Building," *Asian Ethnicity* 5, no. 1 (February 2004): 62.

and strengthening Kazakh identity, *Alash Orda* movement seemed as one of the patriotic groups at the beginning; however, it turned into a leading national party founded by a group of Kazakh intellectuals after its first general convention at Orenburg in July and August 1917.[183] In November 1917, following the Bolshevik Revolution, the establishment of the *Alash Orda* autonomous government became an important attempt for the establishment of Kazakh sovereignty. The program of this national party determined the principles of the newly established *Alash Orda* government.[184] In December 1917, the leaders of *Alash Orda* declared the autonomy of Kazakh people through the creation of a Kazakh-Kirgiz Autonomous Region.[185]

*Alash Orda* government had a very short political life. In 1920, it established close links with the Bolsheviks with the aim of realizing a political manoeuvre. Akhmet Baytursunov, one of the prominent founders of *Alash Orda* movement said, "By becoming communists, we, nationalists, can use the legal channels for the best interests of the Kazakh people."[186] Consequently, the Kazakh Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (KazASSR) was established on August 26, 1920. The former *Alash Orda* leaders were appointed to the important governmental posts until 1937 and maintained their control over "education, press, and science, and the areas they considered strategic for the national development of Kazakhs."[187] It can be said that as a national government having control over Kazakh territory, *Alash Orda* had difficulties to maintain its existence; however, as a movement it succeeded to preserve its existence until the Kyrgyz (Kazakh) Revolutionary Committee ordered its dissolution in March 1920.[188] For an author, the fate of this government was a foregone conclusion: "With no real army at its disposal, and merger financial

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[183] Svat Soucek, *A History of Inner Asia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 215.

[184] Carlson, "The Concept of Sovereignty," in Kellner-Heinkele, 63.

[185] Ibid.

[186] Esenova, "Soviet Nationality, Identity, and Ethnicity," 19.

[187] Ibid.

[188] Soucek, *A History of Inner Asia,* 215.

resources, it was no match for the Bolsheviks, who were determined to eliminate any rival to their power."[189]

It is possible to argue that there would be no other nationalist challenges/movements against the Russian/Soviet rule for many decades to come until the 1980s.[190] Another significant event in the national history of Kazakhs is the Alma-Ata riots of 1986 that took place a year after Mikhail Gorbachev came to power. The main reason behind these riots was the appointment of Gennadiy Kolbin, an ethnic Russian as the First Secretary of the Kazakh Communist Party to replace the Kazakh leader of the Party, Dinmukhamed Kunayev. This development caused large-scale unrest of Kazakhs in the main square of Alma-Ata.[191] "We are for Kazakhstan," "Where is Kunayev?" were written in their placards, and some people were shouting "Kazakhstan for Kazakhs!" In this riot, 2 to 20 people died and 763 to 1,137 people were injured. More than 2,200 protesters were arrested.[192] "These December riots, also known as *Zheltoksan* (December), represented the peak of Kazakh national consciousness during the Soviet period."[193]

### 2.1.2. Soviet Nationalities Policies

The Soviet regime, contrary to its predecessor, the tsarist Russia, attempted to reshape the ethnic and linguistic structure of Central Asia. According to some scholars, this "divide and rule" policy was based on "ethnic engineering and Russification."[194] "Systematic implementation and high degree of success" were the main components that separated Soviet policies from the tsarist ones.[195] It has been

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[189] Soucek, *A History of Inner Asia,* 215.

[190] Everett-Heath, "Instability and Identity," in Everett-Heath, 182.

[191] Zardykhan, "Russians in Kazakhstan," 66.

[192] Hiro, *Inside Central Asia,* 241.

[193] Zardykhan, "Russians in Kazakhstan," 66.

[194] Hooman Peimani, *Regional Security and the Future of Central Asia: The Competition of Iran, Turkey, and Russia* (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1998), 45.

[195] Peimani, *Regional Security,* 45.

suggested that in modern sense, the national identities of Central Asian states, including Kazakhstan have been artificially created by the Soviet Union. However, national consciousness among Kazakh people has not been properly developed until Stalin fully implemented its nationalities policy in Central Asia.[196] The main aim behind this policy called as national delimitation was "to replace the Central Asians' culture and history with an artificial sense of belonging to distinct ethnic and linguistic groups."[197]

Soviet leaders were successful to a certain extent to reinforce the sense of Kazakhness through the creation of Soviet republican elite.[198] With the national delimitation policies, five main administrative-territorial units of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan were established in 1924-1925.[199] The Soviet authorities were calling Kazakhs as Kirghiz until 1925 in order to distinguish them from Cossacks, a Slavic group that will be mentioned below.[200] The Kirghiz Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR) was officially renamed the Kazak ASSR in 1925.[201] In 1936, the Kazakh ASSR gained full Union republic status and became Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR) and Kazakh SSR preserved its status until it became independent in 1991.[202]

An author, by referring to their nationalities policies, explains the main aims and motivations of Soviets as following:

> Soviet goals vis-a-vis the non-Russian nationalities have been summed up by the triad, Sovietization, Russianization, Russification. Sovietization, as applied to Central Asia, involves not only the spread of Marxist-Leninist

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[196] Taras Kuzio, "History, Memory and Nation-building in the Post-Soviet Colonial Space," *Nationalities Papers: The Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity* 30, no. 2 (2002): 244-249.

[197] Peimani, *Regional Security,* 45.

[198] Cummings, *Kazakhstan: Power and the Elite,* 21.

[199] Zardykhan, "Russians in Kazakhstan," 63-64.

[200] Pomfret, *Economies of Central Asia,* 76.

[201] Zardykhan, "Russians in Kazakhstan," 63-64.

[202] Cummings, *Kazakhstan: Power and the Elite,* 15.

> doctrine, but more specifically, Westernization, modernization, and secularization. ... 'Russianization' is taken here to mean 'the process of internationalizing Russian language and culture within the Soviet Union,' while 'Russification' is defined as 'the process whereby non-Russians are transformed objectively and psychologically into Russians.[203]

According to the Soviet authorities, ethnic consciousness for Central Asians was the first step to reach a Soviet man. "All national attachments were destined to disappear during the process of *sblizhenie* (rapprochement) as they became subsumed in a broader and higher ideal of socialist awareness and Soviet brotherhood."[204] "Creating a Soviet people in place of many nationalities ... was the final goal of this policy."[205] "Nationality was given, but nationalism, believing that your ethnic community was somehow superior to all others, was a crime for which you could be jailed and, under Stalin, even executed."[206]

Through the policy *korenizatsiia* (indigenization) introduced in 1923, the Soviet authorities aimed to bring native people to the governmental positions.[207] In the implementation process of this policy, local cadres were encouraged by the Bolsheviks to participate in the administration in non-Russian areas of Soviet Union and local languages were promoted in the administrative affairs.[208] From the perspective of the regime, *korenizatsiia* would go hand in hand with national delimitation policies.

While the Soviet administration implemented nationalities and indigenization policies, it also promoted Russian as a unifying language. The Arabic alphabet for all Central Asian languages was replaced with the Latin alphabet in the late 1920s. However, afterwards, in the 1940s, the Latin alphabet was once again replaced, this

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[203] Ramet, "Migration and Nationality Policy," 89.

[204] Robert Lowe, "Nation-Building and Identity in the Kyrgyz Republic," in Everett-Heath, 109.

[205] Peimani, *Regional Security,* 45.

[206] Olcott, *Kazakhstan Unfulfilled Promise,* 55.

[207] Adeeb Khalid, *Islam after Communism Religion and Politics in Central Asia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 65.

[208] Fierman, "Identity, Symbolism," 1215.

time with the Cyrillic alphabet.[209] "This latter shift, which brought the writing systems of Central Asian languages very close to that of Russian, also served to separate them from the languages of Western Europe. ... The change to Cyrillic letters also signified a shift away from a Turkic identity."[210] By the mid-1930s and onward, Soviet Union implemented "asymmetrical bilingualism" in Central Asia that compelled non-Russians to learn Russian language. In 1938, education in Russian language became obligatory in all schools of the Soviet Union. In the 1950s, Russian became the "second mother tongue" of all non-Russians in the Union.[211] The national delimitation policy yielded its results in the 1960s-1980s when the titular nations gained considerable demographic majority in Central Asian countries, with the only exception, Kazakhstan.[212] This showed the success of Soviet nationalities policies not in terms of achieving the creation of Soviet man as a final goal, but of promoting national identity and national self-determination in Central Asian societies. Although Kazakh population remained a minority in their own country up until 1989, the nation-building campaigns affected Kazakh social and political life as was the case in other former Soviet republics.

### 2.1.3. Post-Soviet Era Challenges

In the post-Soviet era, as other newly independent states, Kazakhstan has had to learn how to survive under very difficult socio-economic and political conditions and the shadow of problems inherited from the Soviet Union. Kazakhstan having many ethnic groups, especially large Russian population in its territories, had to face many problems related to these ethnic groups, including the threat of insecurity and instability. In this part, firstly, the demographic profile of Kazakhstan with a specific emphasis on Russians is given, and secondly, post-Soviet era problems among Kazakhs and Russians are examined.

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[209] Fierman, "Identity, Symbolism," 1211.

[210] Ibid.

[211] Ibid., 1215-1216.

[212] Tishkov, "Russians in Central Asia," in Ro'i, 290.

### 2.1.3.1. Russians and Ethnic Groups in Kazakhstan

It is known that in contemporary Kazakhstan, more than 100 ethnic groups are living together.[213] Back in 1993, ethnic composition of Kazakhstan was as follows: Kazakhs (39.7%), Russians (37.8%), Germans (5.8%), Ukrainians (5.4%), Uzbeks (2.0%), Tatars (2.0%), and other many small groups (7.3%).[214] In the 1999 census, these proportions changed. Kazakh were 63.1% of total population while Russians were 23.7%, Uzbek 2.8%, Ukrainian 2.1%, Uighur 1.4%, Tatar 1.3%, German 1.1%, and others 4.5%.[215] Table 1 shows the population of three major ethnic groups of Kazakhstan between 1926 and 1999.

**Table 1** Ethnic Trends in Kazakhstan[216]

| Ethnic Groups | 1926 | 1959 | 1970 | 1989 | 1994 | 1999 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Kazakhs** | 3,713, 300<br>(%57.1) | 2,787,300<br>(30%) | 4,234,100<br>(32.6%) | 6,534,600<br>(39.7%) | 7,636,200<br>(44.3%) | 7,985,000<br>(53.4%) |
| **Russians** | 1,279,900<br>(19.6%) | 3,972,000<br>(42.7%) | 5,521,900<br>(42.5%) | 6,227,500<br>(37.8%) | 5,769,700<br>(35.8%) | 4,479,600<br>(30.0%) |
| **Ukrainians** | 860,800<br>(13.2%) | 761,400<br>(8.2%) | 933,400<br>(7.2%) | 896,200<br>(5.5%) | 820,800<br>(5.1%) | 547,100<br>(3.7%) |

As seen above, Slavic populations constituted a significant part of Kazakh society for more than eight decades. The majority of these Slavic groups were Russians.

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[213] Shirin Akiner, "Towards a Typology of Diasporas in Kazakhstan," in *Central Asia and Caucasus Transnationalism and Diaspora,* ed. Touraj Atabaki and Sanjyot Mehendale (New York: Routledge, 2005), 21.

[214] Pomfret, *Economies of Central Asia,* 76.

[215] CIA Fact Book, "Kazakhstan," under "Central Asia," https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/kz.html (accessed August 26, 2012).

[216] Kulbhushan Warikoo, "Russians in Post-Soviet Central Asia: Issues and Concerns," in *Central Asia and Caucasus Transnationalism and Diaspora,* ed. Touraj Atabaki and Sanjyot Mehendale (New York: Routledge, 2005), 68.

Indeed, as an influential ethnic group, Russians have very long history in Kazakhstan. They initially came to Central Asia in the first half of the 17th century when the Cossacks had settled in the western edge of Kazakh lands.[217] Cossacks having Slavic origin settled in four areas in Kazakhstan: Semirek, Uralsk, Orenburg and Siberia. For some scholars, they arrived to Kazakhstan not as a result of "colonization" policies but "peaceful expansion of tsarist Russia."[218] Afterwards, as tsarist Russia increasingly dominated Kazakhstan, the numbers of Cossacks also increased.[219]

As mentioned above, Russians arrived in the region as large groups in the second half of the 19th century. The first comers were military personnel of tsarist Russia and they settled in important cities and towns. Some of these Russians were peasants or industrial workers working in the factories. In the early 20th century, many Russian peasant families who wanted to find better economic opportunities also came to Central Asia, particularly to Orenburg, Turkestan and Western Siberian provinces. After 1924, the Soviet officials also encouraged the Russian inflow to Central Asia. Those who came to the region were seeking for better economic conditions or were compelled to move there as a result of Stalin's purges and Soviet economic policies.[220] Deported populations from Russia and Ukraine also settled in different regions of Kazakhstan in the 1930s.[221] These deported people during and after the Second World War continued to come to the Kazakh SSR. Later on, under Khrushchev's *Virgin Lands* campaign, the influx of Russians to Kazakhstan tremendously increased.[222] Russian people from rural areas of Russia

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[217] Martha B. Olcott, *Central Asia's New States Independence, Foreign Policy, and Regional Security* (Washington: United States Institute of Peace, 1996), 59-60.

[218] Alexandra George, *Journey into Kazakhstan: The True Face of the Nazarbayev Regime* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2001), 134.

[219] Olcott, *Central Asia's New States*, 59-60.

[220] Rafis Abazov, *Culture and Customs of the Central Asian Republics* (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2007), 16.

[221] Tishkov, "Russians in Central Asia," in Ro'i, 291.

[222] Edward Schatz, "Framing Strategies and Non-conflict in Multi-ethnic Kazakhstan," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 6, no. 2 (2000): 75. Virgin lands program was initiated by Khrushchev in 1954 to

(the Volga, Central Russia and Western Siberia) migrated to these lands. As a result of these policies, Russian population continued to increase until 1970s.[223]

The dissolution of the Soviet Union left approximately 10 million Russians in Central Asia, a number equal to 37% of the entire Russian diaspora living in the near abroad. At that time, approximately 6 million of this population was living in Kazakhstan.[224] As can be seen in Table 1, in the 1989 census, 39.7% of population was Kazakh while 37.8% was Russian.[225] As Table 1 shows, in 1999, Kazakh population eventually constituted more than half of the population.

The Russian question is not only related to how large the Russians are, but also how they have deep-rooted presence in Kazakh territories. 66% of Russians living in Kazakhstan were born there (the highest proportion in all republics, including Ukraine). Furthermore, according to the 1989 census, nearly 70-80% of the people in seven of the northern regions, Akmolinsk, Karaganda, Kokchetau, Kustanay, East Kazakhstan, North Kazakhstan and Pavlodar were consisted of ethnic Russians. Therefore, Kazakh state has always felt the need to maintain unity of its northern regions that have been dominated by Russians and other Europeans (Polish, Ukrainian, and German) and southern regions where Kazakhs and Uzbeks lived.[226]

In the post-Soviet period, Russian population considerably declined. Just in a decade, from 1989 to 1999, Russian population in Kazakhstan dropped from 6 to 4.5 million. On average, 150,000 Russians emigrated from Kazakhstan every year

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solve the grain harvest problem by cultivating “the semi-arid steppes, the ‘virgin lands,’ that stretched from the Volga river into Central Asia.” Robert Vincent Daniels, *A Documentary History of Communism in Russia: From Lenin to Gorbachev* (Lebanon: University Press of New England, 1993), 250.

[223] Tishkov, “Russians in Central Asia,” in Ro’i, 291.

[224] Sébastien Peyrouse, “Nationhood and the Minority Question in Central Asia: The Russians in Kazakhstan,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 59, no. 3 (May 2007): 482.

[225] Jonathan Murphy, “Illusory Transition? Elite Reconstitution in Kazakhstan 1989-2002,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 58, no. 4 (June 2006): 533.

[226] Peyrouse, “Nationhood and Minority Question,” 482.

during the 1990s.[227] Because of this emigration, Kazakhstan lost most of its skilled work force.[228] In 1999, Kazakh population constituted 53.4% of total population while this number fell to 30% for ethnic Russians.[229] As a result of emigration of minorities, repatriation of Kazak diaspora, and higher birth rates among Kazakhs, the population of ethnic Kazakhs increased.[230] Kazakh population that was 6.5 million in 1989 increased to 7.9 million in 1999.[231]

Today, according to data obtained in 2006, 4 out of 4.5-6 million of Russians in Central Asia are living in Kazakhstan as the largest ethnic minority group. Russians are generally living in the urban centers, in addition, some Russians in Kazakhstan are engaged in intensive commercial farming.[232] According to Kazakhstani demographer Makash Tatimov, Kazakhstan has twelve areas of "ethnic concentration" that may destabilize the "nationalized social space" of the country.[233] Not surprisingly, four of these twelve areas are the regions where mainly ethnic Russians are living:

> Northern area, the area of Russian compact living (former virgin lands region within Karaganda oblast); southern area of urbanized Russian compact living (Almaty/Taldykorgan, Zhamyl, and southern Kazakhstan oblasts); eastern industrial area of Russian compact living (Eastern Kazakhstan and Sempolotinsk oblasts); and western stripe living of Russians (Western Kazakhstan and Aktobe oblasts).[234]

Therefore, in the post-Soviet era, the most important security threat and dilemma for Kazakh state was how to manage a multi-ethnic state that at the same time

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[227] Peyrouse, "Nationhood and Minority Question," 493.

[228] Ibid., 482-483.

[229] Warikoo, "Russians in Post-Soviet Central Asia," in Atabaki and Mehendale, 68.

[230] Alexander C. Diener, *Homeland Conceptions and Ethnic Integration among Kazakhstan's Germans and Koreans* (New York: The Edwin Meller Press, 2005), 41.

[231] Warikoo, "Russians in Post-Soviet Central Asia," in Atabaki and Mehendale, 68.

[232] Abazov, *Culture and Customs,* 16.

[233] Diener, *Homeland Conceptions,* 51.

[234] Ibid.

aimed to reinforce national identity among its titular group. In the multi-ethnic society of Kazakhstan, ethnic Russians have always had an important place in terms of both their large population and their influence on social, economic and political spheres of life. However, Russians in Kazakhstan also have always been a source of uneasiness for Kazakh authorities.

An author explains this dilemma in the former Soviet states as such:

> Post-colonial states, such as in the former [Union of Soviet Socialist Republics] (USSR), often inherit elites and populations that are divided by culture, language, region, and foreign orientation, with some owing an allegiance to the core, titular culture and others assimilated into the imposed dominant culture of the former imperial power. ... This ideological split between the "nativists" and "assimilados" is especially pronounced in the case of Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan where Soviet nationality and economic policies left a legacy of divided titular nations where large numbers of their populations are Russian speakers.[235]

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, there was a need to create or form new social structures and identities in independent Kazakhstan. However, any policy of the Kazakh state related to ethnic issues had the potential of creating an ethnic conflict.[236] Slavic population such as Russians, Ukrainians, Byelorussians, and other ethnic groups such as Germans, Chechens and Poles settled in Kazakhstan were disturbed by increasing Kazakh nationalism.[237] Most of these ethnic groups in Kazakhstan generally preferred to migrate from the country. As for Russians, some of them preferred to migrate to Russia and some remained in the newly independent Kazakhstan. For those who stayed, there were new problems. Disagreements among Kazakhs and Russians were provoked due to various issues in the post-Soviet era: "The ongoing debates over dual nationality for Russians; the status of Kazakh as the state language; the geographical location of valuable natural resources such as oil, iron and copper; the large-scale replacement of Russians by Kazakhs in the higher

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[235] Kuzio, "History, Memory and Nation-building," 250.

[236] Everett-Heath, "Instability and Identity," in Everett-Heath, 183.

[237] However, some ethnic groups such as Koreans, Uighurs, Tatars (excluding the Crimean Tatars), and Azerbaijanis have showed a tendency to seek social and political recognition and ways of participation to the newly independent state. Diener, *Homeland Conceptions,* 41.

echelons of both public and private institutions."[238] In the emergence and escalation of these problems, the rise of nationalist sentiments on the part of both Russians and Kazakhs has certainly played an important role.

#### 2.1.3.2. Russian Nationalism

In December 1991, Russians living in the Soviet republics, including Kazakh SSR, suddenly found themselves "living abroad."[239] The former internal borders became external borders and they were internationally recognized. Therefore, Russians became "a minority in a titular state ruled by another nationality."[240] For many people, Kazakhstan was threatened by the possibility of an ethnic conflict. Indeed, in February 1994, John Ritchotte, a representative for the *National Democratic Institute* overtly voiced this view by saying, "There is just no question that ethnic tensions have been increasing. You hear a lot of people talking about the possibility of civil war."[241] Similarly, in 1994, a headline of *Kazakhstanskaya Pravda*, a local daily, "Inter-ethnic Concord among the Peoples of Kazakhstan Is More Important than Anything" indicated that inter-ethnic relations were considered to be at stake.[242] In these early years, some scholars believed that the society would become "polarised along ethnic lines," and such differentiation would become "the source of potentially explosive social disunity."[243]

Concerns about the territorial and national unity of Kazakhstan were not completely baseless. For instance, the former dissident Alexander Solzhenitsyn objected the dissolution of the Soviet Union that meant the abandonment of 25 million Russians and independence of former Soviet republics. Solzhenitsyn claimed that since the newly independent Kazakhstan had some Russian provinces, Kazakh borders were

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[238] Everett-Heath, "Instability and Identity," in Everett-Heath, 182-183.

[239] Peyrouse, "Nationhood and Minority Question," 481.

[240] Ibid.

[241] Everett-Heath, "Instability and Identity," in Everett-Heath, 190.

[242] Ibid.

[243] Ibid.

debatable.[244] Solzhenitsyn's idea of incorporating Russian-populated areas of northern Kazakhstan to Russia was objected by Kazakhs and this increased their doubts about the Russians' territorial aims. Similarly, Vladimir Zhirinovsky's aggressive, expansionist, and nationalist election campaign deepened the cleavages between Kazakhs and Russians and provoked Kazakhs to take a more hostile stance towards Russians.[245] Kazakh demographers for example claimed that three million Kazakhs perished or they were compelled to migrate under Russian and Soviet rule.[246] In 1993, Nazarbayev criticized Russian policy to be "similar to the policy of Nazi Germany towards ethnic Germans living in the Sudetenland."[247]

Another source of conflict among the Kazakhs and Russians was about the socio-economic changes in the post-Soviet Kazakhstan. Economic problems caused by the transition from centralized socialist economy to market economy worried all ethnic groups, including Kazakhs, about their future.[248] Although the situation was not promising for all segments of society, non-titular groups were more worried than the native people. "Non-Kazakhs were especially fearful about their future, not only because it seemed as though the economic decline would continue, but that they, 'outsiders,' would have reduced access to services and resources."[249] For non-Kazakhs including Russians, the opportunities were not completely lost but considerably diminished.[250] As an expert suggested, "A fundamental paradox has emerged in Kazakhstan: the economic need for cultural homogeneity is in direct

[244] Peyrouse, "Nationhood and Minority Question," 481.

[245] Everett-Heath, "Instability and Identity," in Everett-Heath, 186-187.

[246] Ibid.

[247] Ibid.

[248] Akiner, "Towards a Typology of Diasporas," in Atabaki and Mehendale, 49.

[249] Ibid.

[250] Michael Rywkin, "Stability in Central Asia: Engaging Kazakhstan," *American Foreign Policy Interests* 27, no. 5 (October 2005): 445.

conflict with ethnically related social differences, yet a deteriorating economic environment puts greater pressure on the fault-lines dividing the community."[251]

During the 1990s, the Cossack question and the autonomous challenge posed a serious threat to the Kazakh state. For many Central Asian peoples, Cossacks represented the Russian colonial past. Local political authorities considered that this ethnic group could destabilize the country through some nationalistic movements. Cossacks sought to find alternative political solutions to the Russian Question in Central Asia, including "secessionism of the northern areas of Kazakhstan, cultural autonomy for minorities, federalisation of the country, and regional integration in a supra-state framework."[252]

The 1990s were also marked by the rumours about possible secessionist riots in Altay. The scandal of so-called "Pugachev uprising" in winter 1999, when a group of Russians aimed to declare independence of the Altay area increased concerns about the separatist movements in the country. However, this uprising was harshly suppressed. The activists were arrested and their leaders were punished with imprisonment for life. Afterwards, due to their political ineffectiveness and personal schisms among themselves, the Cossacks population and its influence decreased in the north-eastern area at the end of 1990s.[253]

As mentioned above, Russian population dramatically decreased in the post-Soviet Kazakhstan. Although Russian associations encouraged Russians to stay in Kazakhstan, they could not show any consistent stance in face of this large Russian exodus. In a conference organized in 1994 by the journal *Lad*, the message was striking: "Slavic brothers, don't go!"[254] The main aim of this conference was to encourage Russians to struggle for their rights and force them to seek new ways to improve their life in Kazakhstan. However, after 1996, when Russian associations

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[251] Everett-Heath, "Instability and Identity," in Everett-Heath, 190.

[252] Peyrouse, "Nationhood and Minority Question," 489.

[253] Ibid., 491.

[254] Ibid., 494.

acknowledged the fact that Russian emigration was unavoidable, they even started to support it. In the early years of 2000s, these associations organized Russian emigration, sought legal help and no longer stressed on the cultural life.[255]

Despite the relative decline in their separatist demands, the uneasiness and complaints among Russian groups against the policies of Kazakh state have continued. In late 1990s, non-Kazakhs have objected the "perceived duplicity in the formation of socio-political institutions" in Kazakhstan and they publicly began to complain about this situation.[256] In the newly independent Kazakh state, most of the ethnic Russians who felt themselves in a disadvantageous position left Kazakhstan while those preferred to stay have been marginalised. "This question [The Russian Issue] seems to have been gradually solved by a double phenomenon, the emigration of those who wanted to leave the country and a de-politicisation of those who preferred to stay or who had no choice."[257]

### 2.1.3.3. Kazakh Nationalism

During the Soviet era, the professions of Russians in Central Asia as well as in Kazakhstan and of the native peoples were completely different from each other. Industry, transport, construction and communications were among the sectors where Russians dominated while Kazakhs were generally working in the agricultural sector.[258] After independence, Kazakhs from rural regions sought jobs in urban areas. However as they were mostly uneducated and unqualified workers, they could not compete with the Russians who had already been specialized in key sectors.[259] Therefore, the better conditions of ethnic Russians as compared to Central Asian native peoples created resentment on the part of local peoples and become the first symptoms of future ethnic conflicts. Internal migration

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[255] Peyrouse, "Nationhood and Minority Question," 494.

[256] Diener, *Homeland Conceptions,* 25.

[257] Peyrouse, "Nationhood and Minority Question," 481.

[258] Tishkov, "Russians in Central Asia," in Ro'i, 292.

[259] Everett-Heath, "Instability and Identity," in Everett-Heath, 184.

concentrated especially in the northern part of Kazakhstan caused “a breeding ground for nationalist-inspired aggression and urban conflict.”[260]

In Kazakhstan, all political parties established between 1988 and 1992 (except the Socialist Party which was renamed Communist Party) were organized or divided along ethnic lines. Only the presidential *Union of People’s Unity* and the centrist National *Congress of Kazakhstan* have announced their adherence to the principle of inter-ethnic accommodation. In addition, the main aim of any Kazakh organizations in the country was to obtain some privileges for ethnically Kazakh people. The debate “whether Kazakhstan should evolve into a multi-ethnic nation state or a Kazakh state” continued to occupy the agenda of Kazakhstan.[261]

Under such conditions, the Kazakh elites increasingly used a nationalist discourse in order to gain political support from Kazakh society. Nazarbayev frequently stressed on the national identity both at state and society level. In this sense, it can be argued that Kazakhization programme introduced by Nazarbayev has resembled to the nationalising policies of the Soviet Union to some extent.[262] Under the Kazakhization policy, newly independent Kazakh state replaced all Soviet memories with the new symbols of Kazakh history and culture. The Russian names of cities, streets and public institutions representing Soviet times were removed and new Kazakh forms were introduced. The use of Kazakh language in official works was promoted.[263]

As one expert suggests, Kazakhs who were subjected to the quasi-colonialism of the tsarist and Soviet Russia for centuries and especially to the Soviet policies that caused the loss of nearly half of the Kazakh population, have very strong reasons to distance themselves from ethnic Russians, the most influential ethnic group in

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[260] Everett-Heath, “Instability and Identity,” in Everett-Heath, 184.

[261] Ibid., 186.

[262] Murphy, “Illusory Transition?” 532.

[263] Akiner, “Towards a Typology of Diasporas,” in Atabaki and Mehendale, 48.

Kazakhstan.[264] As an author says, in Kazakhstan, "Reference to years of repression and domination by foreign cultures is an effective catalyst of ethno-nationalism."[265]

Another author describes Kazakhization policy and its repercussions as such:

> 'Rediscovering' this innate Kazakhness through encouraging interest in genealogy is an important feature of nation-building in independent Kazakhstan, but at the same time potentially controversial, as it both draws attention to the existence of sub-national networks, and irritates many urban intellectuals, of both Kazakh and Russian origin, who employ a similar pseudo-Marxist evolutionary social explanation but draw a different conclusion: that the ruling elite is tribalist and Nazarbayev an 'Oriental despot.'[266]

Although the government did not overtly take a negative stance towards other ethnic groups, "unofficial harassment" prevented non-Kazakhs to express themselves in the political scene as the equal members of the society.[267] "While it is rare to hear titular endorsement of overt exclusion (i.e. 'Kazakhstan is for Kazakhs'), the notion of Kazakhs as 'first among equals' is readily discernible within the din of public discourse."[268] As a result of nationalising project, Kazakh people deepened their national consciousness while non-Kazakhs were increasingly imprisoned by the feeling of being disregarded and isolated from the society.[269]

As a part of Kazakhization policy, the language law which promoted the use of Kazak language in governmental affairs and was "considered a far more overt mechanism of exclusion" created a great public debate.[270] The government's language policy which obliged children to have a full command of Kazakh language

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[264] Henry E. Hale, "Cause without a Rebel: Kazakhstan's Unionist Nationalism in the USSR and CIS," *Nationalities Papers* 37, no. 1 (January 2009): 1.

[265] Diener, *Homeland Conceptions*, 26.

[266] Murphy, "Illusory Transition?" 527.

[267] Akiner, "Towards a Typology of Diasporas," in Atabaki and Mehendale, 50.

[268] Diener, *Homeland Conceptions,* 26.

[269] Akiner, "Towards a Typology of Diasporas," in Atabaki and Mehendale, 49.

[270] Diener, *Homeland Conceptions,* 27-28.

and prevented the appointment in governmental positions for those who were not able to speak Kazakh fluently, created feelings of discrimination and resentment among Russians and other non-Kazakhs in the country.[271] Indeed, "informal favouritism towards ethnic Kazakhs" through the introduction of language law did not allow ethnic Russians to be employed in high ranked governmental positions.[272]

In fact, it is argued that this language requirement was an impediment for Russians working in public sector and could easily become a pretext to dismiss them. In addition, it was argued that this state policy would further diminish the already insufficient number of Russian teachers, doctors, lawyers, writers and journalists in the country, and have negative consequences not only for Russian-speaking people but also for titular nations who have been familiar with Russian culture.[273] Many Russians left the country when Kazakhs became the state language in 1996.[274] Non-Kazakh citizens, including Russians, also complained about the limitations that minority groups faced when they wanted to enter to the universities. They considered the exam for the entrance to the universities as discriminatory since only the history of ethnic Kazakhs was asked to the students.[275]

As mentioned above, another problem of Russians is dual nationality. Although it is claimed that for many Russians in Kazakhstan who consider they belong to both Kazakhstan and Russia, the citizenship issue is not asserted as a hidden separatist demand, Astana has never been supporter of this idea.[276]

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[271] Olcott, *Kazakhstan Unfulfilled Promise,* 173.

[272] Murphy, "Illusory Transition?" 532- 533.

[273] Tishkov, "Russians in Central Asia," in Ro'i, 295-296.

[274] Bertil Nygren, *The Rebuilding of Greater Russia Putin's Foreign Policy towards the CIS Countries* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 175.

[275] Diener, *Homeland Conceptions,* 31-32.

[276] Olcott, *Kazakhstan Unfulfilled Promise,* 56.

In the fourth chapter of this thesis, the policies of Kazakh state will be examined in detail. However, it should be noted here that the nationalist policies of the Kazakh state themselves disturbed and created resentment among the Russians. In this sense, it will not misleading to say that these policies always carried huge potential to ignite an inter-ethnic conflict in the country. An expert explains this situation as such:

> Interethnic differences were an irritant in Kazakhstan, but they have not been a cause for an unbreachable rift in the social fabric. What is less clear is whether the policies of the Nazarbayev government have the capacity to ignite interethnic strife like dry timber should rising nationalist sentiments among small groups of Kazakhs and Russians be set off by a spark from within or even outside the country.[277]

Despite this unpromising atmosphere in social and economic spheres, it is interesting that since the riots taken place in Alma Ata in 1986 there have not been any serious conflict emerged between Russians and Kazakhs.[278] In other words, the domestic cultural complexity of Kazakhstan has not caused any serious ethnic turmoil in the country in the last twenty years.[279] There are several reasons behind it. Since 1994, the nationalist drive has been mitigated due to the criticism from Russia and the U.S. The economic problems caused by the loss of skilled workforce so far also played an important role in this policy change.[280] In addition, ethnic Russians in the 2000s were not as visible as they were in the 1990s.[281] However, it would not be realistic to assert that the possibility of conflict among Kazakh and Russians completely disappeared; this possibility is still alive in the multi-ethnic society of Kazakhstan under the authoritarian rule.

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[277] Olcott, *Kazakhstan Unfulfilled Promise,* 58.

[278] Everett-Heath, “Instability and Identity,” in Everett-Heath, 182.

[279] Peimani, *Conflict and Security,* 126.

[280] Economic Intelligence Unit, “2008 Country Report: Kazakhstan,” 2008, 11.

[281] Rywkin, “Stability in Central Asia,” 445.

### 2.2. Security Threats for Uzbekistan

In this part, firstly, the roots of Islamic values and practices in Central Asia are briefly analyzed from a historical perspective. Secondly, Soviet policies towards Islam that deeply affected the Islamic understanding of Uzbekistan are examined. Thirdly, revival of Islam in Uzbek society after the Soviet collapse and internal and external security threats to regime security in Uzbekistan are scrutinized.

#### 2.2.1. Islam in Uzbekistan

Islam was introduced to Uzbek territories through the invasions of Arabs in 715 and spread by the Abbasid Persians to the whole region.[282] Islam, having very deep-rooted history in Uzbek territories, has always been a major identity factor in Uzbek society. Symbolizing religious and cultural identity in Uzbekistan, Islam has been very influential especially in everyday lives of the Uzbek people.[283]

Uzbek Muslims generally follow the way of moderate *Hanafi* School of Islamic jurisprudence and come from Sufi tradition.[284] "Sufism acted as a catalyst for transforming certain cultural values which came into Muslim culture from pre-Islamic civilizations into tenets of Islamic civilization."[285] Sufis, as "ascetic communities which use mystical practices," were organized around the term of brotherhoods (*tariqas*).[286] "Sufi brotherhoods -because of the way in which their hierarchy worked- exercised power over a large number of human souls. However, as time passed, the structure of the Sufi brotherhoods proved more lasting than their spiritual teachings."[287] Hosting one of the most important Islamic centers, Bukhara,

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[282] M. C. Spechler, *The Political Economy of Reform in Central Asia: Uzbekistan under Authoritarianism* (London: Routledge, 2008), 4.

[283] John Glenn, *The Soviet Legacy in Central Asia* (New York: Palgrave Macmillian, 1999), 92.

[284] Spechler, *Political Economy of Reform,* 5.

[285] Marfua Tokhtakhodzhaeva, *The Re-Islamization of Society and the Position of Women in Post-Soviet Uzbekistan* (Kent: Global Oriental, 2008), 36.

[286] Spechler, *Political Economy of Reform,* 5.

[287] Tokhtakhodzhaeva, *Re-Islamization of Society,* 36.

where an influential Sufi order, *Naqshbandiya* movement emerged in the 14th century, Uzbekistan remained a religious and cultural center.[288]

Sufism served as a mobilizing force in the last years of the tsarist rule and throughout the Soviet era. It was also seen as a significant instrument by the rulers for the legitimization of their khanates in the 18th century.[289] It is said that even Shaybani Khan who is known as the leader of the first Uzbek state in Maverunnahar had acknowledged the power of religion and used it to legitimize his rule in Uzbek territories.[290]

In order to describe the difference between Sufis and fundamentalists, Muslims such as Wahhabis who follow puritanical interpretation of Islamic teachings, Steinberger says, "Sufis and fundamentalists live in antagonistic worlds. Sufism, with its open attitude in approaching non-Islamic cultures and towards popular Islam, stands contrary towards the intolerance, dogmatic self-opinion and cultural autism of fundamentalists."[291] It is argued that instead of fundamental, puritanical and very strict versions of Islam, Uzbek people have embraced *folk Islam* based on cultural and traditional tenets.[292] It has been suggested that there is not only one version of Islam in Uzbekistan; rather, Islam displays a great diversity.[293]

In Uzbek territories, Islam goes beyond simply being a religion; it had political and social impact. "In the eastern emirates of Bukhara and Khiva and the Fergana Valley, Islam had become, and remained part of the political culture and was an essential ingredient in the social consciousness of both elites and 'masses.'"[294] In

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[288] Oliver Roy, *Creation of Nations* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 147.

[289] Ibid.

[290] Sengupta, *Formation of the Uzbek Nation State,* 181-182.

[291] Petra Steinberger, "Fundamentalism in Central Asia: Reasons, Reality and Prospects," in *Central Asia: Aspects of Transition*, ed. Tom Everett-Health (London: Routledge, 2003), 227.

[292] Ibid., 221.

[293] Sengupta, *Formation of the Uzbek Nation State,* 174.

[294] Yaacov Ro'i, "The Secularization of Islam and the USSR's Muslim Areas," in *Muslim Eurasia Conflicting Legacies,* ed. Yaacov Ro'i (Oregon: FRANK CASS, 1995), 8.

addition, religion constituted an important part of the "sense of community" of the Uzbeks.[295] Islam was also linked to national identity of Uzbeks. Muslim identity, as a part of ethnic and national consciousness, has reinforced Uzbekness.[296]

By the 17th century, Islam in Central Asia, including Uzbekistan, experienced "a period of passivity and partial decline."[297] Even before the advance of tsarist Russia to these territories, under the repressive rule of warlords, khans, begs, and emirs, there was a lack of "a religious, social thinker commanding the spiritual loyalty of the people in the region, of any stature or even a rigorous orthodoxy."[298] In the tsarist period, however, some uprisings were organized by the *Naqshbandis* against Russian dominance, such as the uprising of the Chirchik Valley in 1872 or the defense of Geok Tepe in 1879 and 1881. When the Russians conquered the region, there were four brotherhoods in Turkestan, the *Naqshbandia*, the *Kubrawiya*, the *Yasawiya*, and the *Kadiriya*. Sufis were involved in the ruling establishment in the emirates and khanates in Central Asia in the 18th and 19th centuries. Political leaders also increasingly began to acknowledge the significance of religious places of the Sufi tradition in this era.[299]

The main policy of tsarist Russia towards Islam was mainly non-interference. Muslims were allowed to practice their religion to a great extent.[300] However, this non-interference policy could not prevent the uprisings of the Muslims that emerged as a reaction to the colonial policies of tsarist Russia. In the late tsarist period, the major Islamic opposition emerged among the *Basmachis*, those who challenged

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[295] Sengupta, *Formation of the Uzbek Nation State,* 173.

[296] Glenn, *Soviet Legacy in Central Asia,* 92.

[297] Sengupta, *Formation of the Uzbek Nation State,* 182.

[298] Ibid.

[299] Ibid.

[300] Odil Ruzaliev, "Islam in Uzbekistan: Implications of 9/11 and Policy Recommendations for the United States," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 25, no. 1 (April 2005): 14.

Russian power and organized their movement as the "Army of Islam."[301] In November 1917, the Provisional Government of Autonomous Turkistan was established at the end of the Fourth Central Asian Muslim Congress in the Uzbek city of Kokand. However, in February 1918, the Bolsheviks attacked the Muslim government in Kokand and massacred the local people. On April 30, 1918 Turkistan ASSR that annexed the territories of much of the present-day Uzbekistan was formed. However, there was a high level of mistrust on the part of Muslims, especially the *ulema*, Muslim scholars, towards the Bolsheviks. Following the Kokand massacre, *Basmachi* movement emerged and Muslims launched a guerrilla war against the Soviet army in Fergana and Pamir until 1924.[302]

Another important movement in the history of Muslim Central Asia is *Jadidism*. The *Jadid* movement emerged in the early 20th century and declared two important goals as "struggle against traditionalism, and assimilation of Western ideas."[303] It took its name from the word meaning "new" or "modern" in Arabic and it was a reaction against the increase of Russian settlement and the dominance of Russian language among the intellectuals in the region. The main aim of the liberal *ulema* of the *Jadid* movement was the modernization of the Muslim educational system. This movement increased Muslim awareness in Central Asia in the 1910s and 1920s.[304]

Although there was another group fighting for independence alongside *Jadids,* conservative mullahs, the *Kadimists,* there were some differences among them. While *Jadids* were struggling against "traditionalism and assimilation of Western ideas," *Kadimists* were fighting for independence "under the banner of 'a return to

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[301] Sengupta, *Formation of the Uzbek Nation State,* 191. The Basmachi movement was an uprising against the Russian/Soviet domination in Central Asia. "The main political objective of the Basmachi resistance was the elimination of Russian or Soviet control from Central Asia and the establishment of an Islamic state based on the principles of the Koran." Didar Kassymova, Zhanat Kundakbayeva, and Ustina Markus, *Historical Dictionary of Kazakhstan* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2012), 47.

[302] Emmanuel Karagiannis, "Political Islam in the Former Soviet Union: Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan Compared," *Dynamics of Asymmetrical Conflict* 3, no. 1 (March 2010): 49.

[303] Tokhtakhodzhaeva, *Re-Islamization of Society,* 14.

[304] Karagiannis, "Political Islam in the Former Soviet Union," 48.

the old ways.'"[305] Both of these movements were destroyed by the Soviets -from the 1920s onwards.[306] Since then, "the modernization of Central Asia took place under a red flag. Under state pressure, Islam began to stagnate, but it did not die. It survived in the form of tradition, habit and domestic religious observance."[307]

### 2.2.2. Soviet Policies towards Islam

The Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 seemed to give an opportunity to the *Jadids* to reach their goals. Due to some of the promises of the Bolsheviks such as equal distribution of wealth and right to self-determination, they supported the Bolsheviks in that period. However, the idea of establishing a unified Turkic and Muslim state was rejected by the Soviets who were against any religious and ethnic establishment that could challenge their power.[308]

The establishment of a new communist state, the Soviet Union in 1918 signalled some radical changes in terms of religious issues in Central Asia.[309] For the Bolsheviks, religion was "the opium of the masses" and "enemy of the people."[310] As their main goal was to create a Soviet socialist society, the Bolsheviks firstly attempted to destroy "the weight of tradition and of religion" in Muslim society under their rule.[311] As such, they sought the ways to eliminate Islamic values and practices in Central Asia. In line with this aim, the mosques in Central Asia, notably in Uzbekistan were forced to be closed in the 1920s.[312] Only in Uzbekistan,

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[305] Sengupta, *Formation of the Uzbek Nation State,* 186.

[306] Tokhtakhodzhaeva, *Re-Islamization of Society,* 15.

[307] Ibid., 14-15.

[308] Ruzaliev, "Islam in Uzbekistan," 14.

[309] Habiba Fathi, "Gender, Islam, and Social Change in Uzbekistan," *Central Asian Survey* 25, no. 3 (September 2006): 314.

[310] Ro'i, "Secularization of Islam," in Ro'i, 5.

[311] Fathi, "Gender, Islam, and Social Change," 314.

[312] Karagiannis, "Political Islam in the Former Soviet Union," 49.

approximately 26.000 mosques were closed.[313] Soviet authorities targeted Muslim clerics and Sufi *sheikhs* (spiritual leaders) and destroyed most of the mosques to create a "Soviet man" through indoctrination and atheistic policies.[314] Bolsheviks also confiscated the *waqfs* (religious endownment) of Muslims.[315] In addition, Moscow tried to replace *maktabs* (primary schools based on religious teachings) with modern schools.[316] The *hujum* practices, "the campaign to unveil women," took place in 1927.[317] In 1928, the regime established the organization *Union of Godless Zealots* to promote scientific atheism, and declared some religious practices such as circumcision and fasting as "primitive" and "unhealthy."[318] In 1935, one of the important practices for Islam, pilgrimage to Mecca, *Hajj*, was banned by the Soviet authorities.[319]

In Soviet Uzbekistan, 90% of total population was Muslim, and 10% was Ashkenazi Jews and Orthodox Russians.[320] Since Uzbekistan was declared a Soviet republic in 1924, the main goal of the Soviet authorities was to decrease the role of Islam, one of the important components of Uzbek tradition.[321] As indicated by an expert, "As a consequence of Soviet policies towards Islam in Uzbekistan, the communal sphere ceased to be an exclusively Muslim space within which Islam was lived to the fullest, and religious law ceased to be the supreme authority

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[313] Steinberger, "Fundamentalism in Central Asia," in Everett-Health, 221.

[314] Zumrat Salmorbekova and Galina Yemelianova, "Islam and Islamism in the Fergana Valley," in *Radical Islam in the Former Soviet Union,* ed. Galina Yemelianova (London: Routledge, 2010), 215.

[315] Karagiannis, "Political Islam in the Former Soviet Union," 49.

[316] Adeeb Khalid, "A Secular Islam: Nation, State, and Religion in Uzbekistan," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 35, no. 4 (2003): 576-577.

[317] Kathleen Collins, "Islamic Revivalism and Political Attitudes in Uzbekistan" (paper funded by The National Council for Eurasian and East European Research, Seattle, 2006), 9; Eric M. McGlinchey, "Islamic Leaders in Uzbekistan," *Asia Policy* 1, no. 1 (2006): 128.

[318] Karagiannis, "Political Islam in the Former Soviet Union," 49.

[319] Ibid.

[320] Ruzaliev, "Islam in Uzbekistan," 14.

[321] Ibid., 15.

regulating behaviour."[322] However, despite these harsh policies of the Soviet state, Uzbeks continued to celebrate religious holidays and realize funeral and wedding ceremonies, and circumcise male children according to Islamic traditions.[323] As such, during the Soviet years, the Uzbeks "perceived devotion to Islam as the last barrier to assimilation into Soviet society."[324]

Not only in Uzbekistan, but also in Central Asia in general, despite the hostile policies of Soviets towards Islam, traditional Islamic practices continued through the informal channels such as family, *hujra* (informal private schools) and *Naqshbandi Tariqa.*[325] Since Muslims continued to be believers, Islamic practices were maintained as underground activities in their everyday lives.[326] In other words, "The whole set of Islamic institutions and practices established and carried out in a clandestine manner, and outside the state-controlled apparatus."[327] The Soviets became successful in "undermining intellectual component of Islam," however, by doing so, they exacerbated "folk ritualistic characteristics" of Islam.[328] Known also as unofficial or parallel Islam, folk Islam became deeply embedded in society and provided that the people continued to practice their Islamic rituals.[329]

When the Soviets acknowledged the fact that they would not succeed to eliminate Islamic elite by force, they considered co-optation to be a more appropriate method in terms of controlling Islamic elite.[330] The establishment of four *muftiyyas* in 1943

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[322] Fathi, "Gender, Islam, and Social Change," 314.

[323] Ruzaliev, "Islam in Uzbekistan," 15.

[324] Emmanuel Karagiannis, "Political Islam in Uzbekistan: Hizb Ut-Tahrir Al-Islami," *Europe-Asia Studies* 58, no. 2 (March 2006): 262.

[325] Salmorbekova and Yemelianova, "Islam and Islamism," in Yemelianova, 216.

[326] Glenn, *Soviet Legacy in Central Asia,* 91; Salmorbekova and Yemelianova, "Islam and Islamism," in Yemelianova, 216.

[327] Sengupta, *Formation of the Uzbek Nation State,* 195.

[328] Salmorbekova and Yemelianova, "Islam and Islamism," in Yemelianova, 216.

[329] Steinberger, "Fundamentalism in Central Asia," in Everett-Health, 221.

[330] McGlinchey, "Islamic Leaders in Uzbekistan," 129.

revealed the aim of the Soviet state to control Islam promoting a governmental policy, to be known as official Islam in Central Asia. In order to achieve this aim, the *muftiyya* of Tashkent (the Spiritual Directorate of the Muslims of Central Asia and Kazakhstan-SADUM) was established and headed by a *Naqshbandi* dynasty from 1943 until 1989.[331] An author explains the functions of SADUM as follows:

> The Muslim Spiritual Administration was charged with controlling a limited number of mosques, *madrasas* and clerics, with appointing *imams* to lead local congregations, with supervising limited access to religious education, training and worship, and with working out a limited practice of Islam which was compatible with Soviet citizenship.[332]

In addition to SADUM, the boards for Muslims living in Siberia and European Russia, the North Caucasus, and the Transcaucasia were established with the same purpose by the Soviet authorities.[333]

The repressive policies of the Soviet administration towards religion in Central Asia continued after the death of Stalin in 1953.[334] However, in the 1950s, some changes in the Soviet policies were observed. In these years, "The Soviet Union's desire to expand its influence in the Arab and Islamic world necessitated a more nuanced approach to Islam."[335] According to an author, "These periods of tolerance helped to safeguard Islamic traditions and helped to preserve Islam as a part of the 'national way of life, tradition and spiritual culture.'"[336]

In the late 1970s, many clandestine groups in Uzbekistan's Fergana Valley were established.[337] In these years, the rise of Islam was not seen as a significant problem for the state and party. According to an official Soviet survey published in 1979,

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[331] Roy, *Creation of Nations,* 150.

[332] Louw, *Everyday Islam,* 21.

[333] Karagiannis, "Political Islam in the Former Soviet Union," 50.

[334] Ibid.

[335] Sengupta, *Formation of the Uzbek Nation State,* 194.

[336] Ibid.

[337] Karagiannis, "Political Islam in the Former Soviet Union," 50.

"only 30% of 'formerly Muslim peoples' described themselves as 'believers' -the majority of them rural, old, and semi-literate- with 20% as 'hesitant,' and the remaining 50% as 'unbelievers.'"[338] However, Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979 and the developments in Afghanistan worried Soviet authorities once again about the rise of Islam.[339]

In the late 1980s, with the Gorbachev's reforms, a new wave of Islamic activism emerged in Soviet Uzbekistan. There were some demonstrations in early 1989 in Tashkent against SADUM's *mufti*, Shamsuddin Khan Babakhanov. The protesters were accusing Babakhanov of not fulfilling his duties as a Muslim leader. Mukhammad Sodyk Yusuf, a Muslim scholar became the new *mufti*.[340] "The overthrow of Babakhanov raised an Islamist consciousness about the power of the 'Muslim Street' that later led to confrontation with the post-Soviet Uzbek authorities."[341]

During the Gorbachev years, the ban on the mosques in Uzbekistan was removed. The unofficial clergymen who were much more influential than the official ones became more visible.[342] Above all, there were close links between the illegal clergy and the society. "The 'underground' clergy usually had poor knowledge of dogma and official ritual ... but they had an unparalleled knowledge of the domestic situation, and therefore preserved a version of Islam based upon the demands of the common man."[343]

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[338] Hiro, *Inside Central Asia,* 128.

[339] Ibid.

[340] Karagiannis, "Political Islam in the Former Soviet Union," 50.

[341] Ibid.

[342] Tokhtakhodzhaeva, *Re-Islamization of Society,* 57.

[343] Ibid.

### 2.2.3. Post-Soviet Era Challenges

#### 2.2.3.1. Revival of Islam

The religious awakening in Uzbekistan started to appear in the last years of Soviet Union. As Gorbachev's *glasnost* (openness) and *perestroika* (restructuring) policies allowed people to publicly declare and practice their religion, religion became observable in public life.[344] Although there were important steps taken for the "revival of religious practice" in the late 1980s, "it was only after independence that Islam was fully legitimized by the political authorities in Central Asia, who capitalized upon the region's Islamic heritage within state discourses."[345] In this period, the appearance of Islam increased in the public sphere through many ways: "the revival of pilgrimage, the construction of mosques, the publication of a great number of religious books, the reappearance on the streets of the *hidjab*. The government had failed in its attempts to make religion a purely spiritual force -it was now visible again in public."[346]

The collapse of the Soviet Union, in addition to socio-economic problems, created an ideological vacuum in the newly independent Central Asian states, including Uzbekistan. According to Roy, in these years, identity crisis was very much influential on the revival of *Wahhabism* as an Islamic puritanical movement that challenged the long tradition of Sufism in Central Asia.[347] "[In] this ideological vacuum where communism and state socialism have failed, where Uzbek nationalism has proven false, and where democracy is not an option or has been rejected as a failure of the West in the 1990s"[348] it can be argued that "Islamism, with its message of justice, offers a hopeful alternative."[349]

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[344] Khalid, *Islam after Communism,* 118-119.

[345] Fathi, "Gender, Islam, and Social Change," 309.

[346] Tokhtakhodzhaeva, *Re-Islamization of Society,* 166.

[347] Roy, *Creation of Nations,* 156-157.

[348] Collins, "Islamic Revivalism and Political Attitudes," 34.

[349] Ibid.

For some, this revival has come out in different ways in various parts of Central Asia. For instance, in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, it was mostly attributed to a national phenomenon and it resuscitated Islamic figures as national heroes.[350] An expert indicates, "In the late 1980s and early 1990s, there was a vividly-felt Islamic component in the politics of Uzbekistan. The return to Islam, the religion of ancestors, was supposed to be the main instrument for the spiritual revival of the nation and the raising of its cultural level."[351] An author stresses another different aspect of this revival: "The religious revivalism ... is the public appearance of a culture and a religious practice that never entirely disappeared. ... It is very fundamentalist in Fergana and in the south of Tajikistan, and elsewhere is much more linked to a simple return of traditionalism."[352] Another author explains the changes in Uzbek society in the years of Islamic revival as follows:

> Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Uzbekistan witnessed a vast increase in religious teaching and interest in Islam. Hundreds of mosques and *madrassas* (religious schools) were built or restored in Uzbekistan. Also, Korans and other Islamic literature were brought in from Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. As a result, according to Zukhriddin Khusnidivon, rector of Tashkent Islamic University, by July 2004 there were 1,935 mosques, one Islamic Institute and ten *madrassas*.[353]

The revival of Islam has been observed in Uzbek society since "the religious consciousness and outlook of people and their knowledge of the religion are weak and fragile."[354] As an author argues, "In this regard, if representatives of clergy and ordinary believers do not understand true Islamic ethics, they can desire to

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[350] Khalid, *Islam after Communism,* 118-119.

[351] Tokhtakhodzhaeva, *Re-Islamization of Society,* 165-166.

[352] Roy, *Creation of Nations,* 144.

[353] Karagiannis, "Political Islam in Uzbekistan," 263.

[354] Farkhod Tolipov, "The Gap between the de-jure and de-facto Democratization in Uzbekistan: Nine Problems of Proto-Democracy," in *Towards and Social Stability Democratic Governance in Central Eurasia,* ed. Irina Morozova (Amsterdam: IOS Press, 2005), 269.

substitute them with Islamic fundamentalism, incorporate it into society and public opinion and convert the state into a theocratic one."[355]

### 2.2.3.2. External and Internal Threats to Regime Security in Uzbekistan

In Uzbekistan, there is a close relation between the internal and external factors affecting the rise of radical and fundamentalist movements. On the one hand, being located in a very critical geography, Uzbekistan is doomed to be vulnerable to radicalism and fundamentalism in the region. On the other hand, there are also domestic radical organizations, which directly target the secular Uzbek regime.

#### 2.2.3.2.1. External Threats to Regime Security in Uzbekistan

As the bipolar world faded away, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the possibility of war among states was replaced with the danger posed by non-state actors in the first decade of post-Soviet era.[356] Islamist extremism, terrorism, and criminal networks dealing in narcotics and weapons, the Tajik Civil War (1992-1997), the rise of Taliban, Al-Qaeda networks, and the fragile situation in Afghanistan have all posed serious challenges to Central Asia in general, Uzbekistan in particular.[357]

The main aim of Islamic insurgency in Central Asia is to overthrow the secular governments in the region. The insurgents are consisted of Uzbek, Tajik and Kyrgyz opponents. Islamist extremists from the Chechnya and Caucasus also joined these militant groups. Moreover, some of the insurgents came from the Xinjiang Uighur autonomous region (XUAR) in China. The insurgents were also supported by drug traffickers and other Islamist groups in Afghanistan and other Middle Eastern countries.[358]

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[355] Tolipov, "The Gap between the de-jure and de-facto," in Morozova, 269.

[356] Gleason and Shaihutdinov, "Collective Security and Non-State," 275-276.

[357] Collins, "Economic and Security Regionalism," 260.

[358] Gleason and Shaihutdinov, "Collective Security and Non-State," 279-280.

Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, there have been two major sources of instability which were alarming for the Uzbek government. One of them was the Tajik civil war and the other was the developments in Afghanistan: the Afghan civil war, the rise of Taliban and the ongoing turmoil in the U.S.-led "War on Terror." Karimov believed that there was a close link between the Islamic insurgencies and such external factors. He said, "I can tell you that practically all of the detained persons went through training in Chechnya, Afghanistan and Tajikistan, most were Uzbek nationals."[359] Karimov accused "religious fanatics for the blasts and linked the attack to Islamic groups such as *Hizbollah*, ... and *Wahabbis*. He said ethnic Tajik citizens of Uzbekistan were currently undergoing similar training in neighbouring Tajikistan."[360]

The collapse of the Soviet Union has provided a relatively suitable ground for the mobilization of political opposition movements in the region. In the post-Soviet order, Tajikistan has become a political scene for this kind of mobilization attempt in 1992-1993.[361] However, the consequences of this attempt turned out to be of very high cost. Tajikistan, as a politically and economically weak country, was dragged into a civil war in 1992. This war broke out among the pro-regime people and opponents in May 1992 in Dushanbe and spread to the other regions as well.[362] It was an inter-elite struggle among different regions dominated by different clans.[363] As a result, during the five years-long war, approximately 50.000 people died and more than 500.000 people were displaced.[364]

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[359] Neil J. Melvin, *Uzbekistan: Transition to Authoritarianism on the Silk Road* (The Netherlands: Harwood Academic Publishers, 2000), 57.

[360] Ibid.

[361] Gleason and Shaihutdinov, "Collective Security and Non-State," 279.

[362] Lawrence P. Markowitz, "The Limits of International Agency: Post-Soviet State Building in Tajikistan," in *Stable Outside, Fragile Inside: Post-Soviet Statehood in Central Asia,* ed. Emilian Kavalski (Burlington: Ashgate, 2010), 161.

[363] John Heathershaw and Edmund Herzig, "Introduction: The Sources of Statehood in Tajikistan," *Central Asian Survey* 30, no. 1 (2011): 6.

[364] Markowitz, "The Limits of International Agency," in Kavalski, 161.

For Uzbekistan, as a neighbour of Tajikistan, ensuring and preserving stability in Tajikistan has always been an important issue. In October 1993, in order to provide security, a joint Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) force dominated by Russians with the participation of Kazakh, Kyrgyz and Uzbek forces was deployed in Tajikistan.[365] Although these forces should have been impartial, it was argued that the military intervention of Russian and Uzbek forces and the military aid given to Tajikistan helped overwhelmingly the pro-government forces during the war. In 1997, a peace agreement was concluded between the United Tajik Opposition (UTO), which was established under the leadership of the Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP)[366] and the government of President Emomali Rahmon.[367]

During the Tajik civil war, regional powers intervened to resolve the conflict; however, they could not do much in terms of building effective institutions to maintain peace after the war was over. For instance, Russia and Uzbekistan did not show any interest in establishing an effective civilian police force and implementation of judicial reform in Tajikistan. In addition, it is claimed that Russia and Uzbekistan intervened with limited regional ambitions but high security concerns due to the fear of any potential spill-over effects of the war.[368] Tajikistan has rebuilt its territorial unity in the post-conflict period; however, it has remained vulnerable to the threats coming from Afghanistan, such as radical Islam, drug trade

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[365] Shirin Akiner, "Political Processes in Post-Soviet Central Asia," in *Central Eurasia in Global Politics: Conflict, Security and Development,* ed. Mehdi Parvizi Amineh and Henk Houweling (Boston: Brill, 2005), 129-130.

[366] The IRP was founded by some Muslim intellectuals in Astrakhan "with an aim of struggling for freedom of conscience and freedom of practice for Muslim in whole Soviet territories." IRP's Tajik branch was established on October 1990 despite some objections from local rulers. The leadership had initially aimed to establish an Islamic state in the long run. Their main purpose was to deepen Islamic knowledge and values in the society. Khalid, *Islam after Communism,* 147. The IRP sought to find the solutions to the widespread uneasiness among the society through Qur'an and the Sunna. Despite the universalist aims of IRP in Muslim world, there were also some cleavages among different branches. Some harshly had criticized the Party to have also some fundamentalist aims in the past. However, the IRP has announced that it respected the constitution and objected violence. Roy, *Creation of Nations,* 154-155.

[367] Markowitz, "The Limits of International Agency," in Kavalski, 161.

[368] Ibid., 157-161.

and organized crime.[369] Tajikistan, having limited military and economic resources, needed the military presence of Russia in its territories to overcome its internal and external security threats.[370]

Uzbekistan does have strong reasons to feel threatened by internal and external extensions of Islamist insurgency in Tajikistan. Firstly, Tashkent bomb explosions in 1999, the message from the IMU to overthrow Karimov's regime, and the Islamist movements in Fergana Valley were all negative outcomes of the long-standing instability in Tajikistan.[371] Secondly, at the end of Tajik civil war, it was seen that the IRP could challenge the power of first, President Nabiev, and then President Rahmon in Tajikistan and succeeded to establish the UTO. The UTO could also persuade Rahmon in 1997 to share political power. These developments frightened the Uzbek leader who was concerned about the fate of his own regime.[372]

In the early 1990s, the all-Union IRP had started its activities by opening regional branches in different Central Asian states. The Uzbek branch of IRP, *Islam Uyghonish Partyasi*, was established in 1991 and headed by Abdullah Utayev who would disappear after he was arrested in 1992.[373] When tensions increased in the Uzbek territories of the Fergana Valley by the late 1990s and the insurgent groups announced their goal to be dismantling Karimov's regime, Uzbekistan banned the activities of the IRP. By doing so, Karimov launched a great purge against any kind of opposition and sought to strengthen his authoritarian rule.[374]

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[369] Tsygankov, "Modern at Last?" 428.

[370] Sergey Medrea, "Russia-Tajikistan Relations: Policies of the Strong and the Weak," *Central Asia-Caucasus Institute,* December 11, 2008, http://cacianalyst.org/?q=node/4985 (accessed May 12, 2011).

[371] Gleason and Shaihutdinov, "Collective Security and Non-State," 279. More information on the IMU is provided in the next part.

[372] Reuel R. Hanks, "Dynamics of Islam, Identity, and Institutional Rule in Uzbekistan: Constructing a Paradigm for Conflict Resolution," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 40, no. 2 (2007): 215.

[373] Roy, *Creation of Nations,* 155.

[374] Salmorbekova and Yemelianova, "Islam and Islamism," in Yemelianova, 222.

When the Tajik civil war ended, the Tajik IRP accepted to participate to the political process as a political party. However, the party continued to become a source of disturbance especially for Karimov. Even today, when an attack occurs in the region, Karimov usually tends to blame Tajikistan of allowing Islamist and radical organizations to operate in its territories. In this way, the Uzbek leader tries to justify his authoritarian rule by asserting that the Uzbek government is able to preserve stability. However, for Karimov, Tajikistan, by creating a suitable ground for Islamist opposition in the country (the Tajik IRP) continues to destabilize the region.[375]

Uzbekistan has also always been concerned about the developments in Afghanistan. The rise of Taliban, a local insurgency movement, especially from the second half of 1990s to 2001, posed a great security challenge to the Uzbek state.[376] "The initial popularity of the Taliban ... coupled with the rapidity of their assumption of control of much of the country, certainly did little to weaken the Karimov government's perception of politicized Islam as potentially significant rival in Central Asia."[377] The idea of being the neighbour of a country ruled by Taliban was seen highly threatening to the secular Uzbek regime.[378]

It is known that Afghanistan, as a war weary country, under the control of Taliban, has become a safe haven for the IMU militants and drug dealers.[379] Implementing strict border controls and policies, Uzbekistan seems to be successful in distancing itself from any developments in its neighbour.[380] However, since the mid-1990s, the

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375 Vitaly V. Naumkin, *Radical Islam in Central Asia: Between Pen and Rifle* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005), 76-77.

376 Seiple and White, "Uzbekistan and Central Asian Crucible," in Seiple and Hoover, 43.

377 Hanks, "Dynamics of Islam, Identity," 215.

378 Melvin, *Uzbekistan: Transition to Authoritarianism,* 38; Seiple and White, "Uzbekistan and Central Asian Crucible," in Seiple and Hoover, 43.

379 David Witter, "Uzbek Militancy in Pakistan's Tribal Region," *Institute for the Study of War,* January 27, 2011, http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/BackgrounderIMU_28Jan.pdf (accessed June 25, 2012).

380 Dina Rome Spechler and Martin C. Spechler, "The Foreign Policy of Uzbekistan: Sources, Objectives and Outcomes: 1991-2009," *Central Asian Survey* 29, no. 2 (June 2010): 160.

links between the IMU and Taliban have become one of the major concerns of Uzbek President. To cut these links and eliminate the IMU, after September 11 attacks, Uzbekistan was very eager to become a close ally to the U.S. in its "War on Terror."[381] This cooperation was logical for Uzbekistan that wanted to get rid of all Islamist and extremist elements from the region.[382]

While the Afghan issue deepened the concerns about the spill-over effects of fundamentalist movements to Central Asia on the one hand, it led Central Asian states to consider about the problem of foreign presence in their own territories on the other hand. As is seen in the Uzbek case, as Karimov increased cooperation with the U.S., Washington demanded military bases from Uzbekistan.[383]

#### 2.2.3.2.2. Internal Threats to Regime Security in Uzbekistan

The Uzbek government seems to exaggerate the nature and extent of Islamist movements in Central Asia; however, this does not mean that there are not any security threats derived from the fundamentalist and radical movements in the region. Above all, Fergana Valley, an area covering more than 120.000 sq m with more than 11 million devout Muslims is a real source of conflict for Uzbekistan. As the borders of Fergana Valley have been superficially drawn among Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan by the Soviet Union, the control is almost impossible. Most of the population -approximately 7 million people- lives in the Uzbek territories in the Fergana region.[384] The geographically and politically divided nature of this valley among three states, its socio-economic problems and the existence of traditionally religious people facilitate the spread of radical movements to the region.[385]

[381] Spechler and Spechler, "Foreign Policy of Uzbekistan," 163-164.

[382] Shahram Akbarzadeh, *Uzbekistan and the United States* (London: Zed Books, 2005), 34.

[383] Ibid., 74.

[384] Salmorbekova and Yemelianova, "Islam and Islamism," in Yemelianova, 212.

[385] Zeyno Baran, S. Frederick Starr, and Swante E. Cornell, "Islamic Radicalism in Central Asia and the Caucasus: Implications for the EU" (Central Asia-Caucasus Institute Silk Road Studies Program, Uppsala, July 2006), 14-17.

Many religious-political movements having Islamist ideologies began to operate in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan in the early 1990s.[386] These radical and Islamist groups such as *Adolat* (Justice), *Baraka* (Blessings), *Tauba* (Repentance), and *Islam Lashkarlari* (Warriors of Islam) were active in the Fergana Valley. Afterwards, the *Hizb ut-Tahrir* (HT) (Party of Liberation) and its subdivisions such as *Akramiyya* and *Hizb un-Nusrat* (Party of Assistance), *Uzun Soqol* (Long Bears), *Tabligh Jamaat* (Society for Spreading Faith), *Laskar-ı-Taiba* (Army of the Pure), *Hizballah* (Party of God), and the IMU were formed and continued their activities in this region.[387] "Islam has been used by radical groups to teach violence (the IMU) or hate (HT) while governments in the region, especially Uzbekistan, have sought to repress and control Islam."[388] In this part, the two main radical and fundamentalist organizations are respectively examined in detail: the IMU and HT.

#### 2.2.3.2.2.1. Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU): "Taliban of the Pamirs"

The IMU is a "home-grown" radical organization that was established as a reaction to Karimov's personal rule and anti-Islamist policies. The main goal of the IMU was to create an Islamic state based on the *Shari'a Law* (Islamic Law) and destroy the rule of Karimov as well as of all secular governments of Central Asia with force and violence. Since the very beginning of its formation, the IMU developed strong ties with *the International Islamic Front* (IIF) of Osama Bin Laden and received some financial and material aids from the IIF.[389] An author calls the IMU as "the Taliban of the Pamirs."[390] The leading figures in the IMU, by describing the organization as "an Islamic popular movement" and themselves as "the adherents to

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[386] Tokhtakhodzhaeva, *Re-Islamization of Society,* 63.

[387] Baran, Starr, and Cornell, "Islamic Radicalism in Central Asia," 17.

[388] Seiple and White, "Uzbekistan and Central Asian Crucible," in Seiple and Hoover, 41.

[389] Rob Johnson, *Oil, Islam and Conflict: Central Asia since 1945* (London: Reaktion Books, 2007), 114-115.

[390] Ibid., 114.

the *Hanafi madhbab*," say, "The IMU derived programmatic ideas exclusively from the *Qur'an* and the *Sunna*."[391]

Tohir Yoldash and Juma Namangani, the founders of the IMU, were initially representing the Uzbek IRP. They established a mosque in the Uzbek city of Namangan in Fergana and attempted to impose strict Islamic rules on the society, however, their demands to establish an Islamic state was rejected by Karimov.[392] Afterwards, Yoldash and Namangani broke away from the IRP that was declared illegal by the Uzbek government and they established *Adolat* Party.[393] *Adolat* captured the former Communist Party Headquarters in Namangan in 1991 and forced the Uzbek state to accept their demands.[394] As a result of increasing tension between the Uzbek state and *Adolat*, the leadership cadre of this organization was put down and the party was outlawed. However, Yoldash and Namangani fled to Tajikistan.[395] The leaders objected the peace accords signed after the Tajik civil war and distanced themselves from the Tajik IRP.[396] Eventually, the IMU was established in September 1998 by Tohir Yoldash and Juma Namangani at Kabul. Although it changed its name as the Islamic Movement of Turkestan soon after 2001, it still uses its initial name.[397]

An author draws parallel lines between Basmachis and the IMU fighters as following:

> Like the Basmachis, the IMU too is made up of Muslims of different nationalities and they too were supported from the outside (Pakistan, Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia). ... Besides fighting the outsiders (Russians),

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391 Naumkin, *Radical Islam in Central Asia*, 74.

392 Swante E. Cornell, "Narcotics, Radicalism, and Armed Conflict in Central Asia: The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 17, no. 4 (November 2005): 626.

393 Hanks, "Dynamics of Islam, Identity," 212; Johnson, *Oil, Islam and Conflict,* 117.

394 Cornell, "Narcotics, Radicalism, and Armed Conflict," 626.

395 Hanks, "Dynamics of Islam, Identity," 212; Johnson, *Oil, Islam and Conflict,* 119.

396 Cornell, "Narcotics, Radicalism, and Armed Conflict," 626.

397 Johnson, *Oil, Islam and Conflict,* 114-115.

> the IMU, like the Basmachis, fought against the treacherous elements of the local population that 'betrayed' Islam by taking the side of the 'infidels'. Nevertheless, there is still a difference between them. While the Basmachis primarily fought against the external enemies (Russians), the IMU's focus is on the governments inside Central Asia. [398]

The IMU launched bombings on February 16, 1999 in Tashkent. The IMU militants could not be successful to kill Karimov, but sixteen innocent civilians died and more than one hundred people were injured in the explosions that were also directed to the governmental buildings.[399] In the statement given by the IMU political department, it was said:

> The IMU holds the ruling despotic regime fully responsible for the explosions that took place in Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan, as these explosions are a logical outcome of the manifestly brutal and violent policy of the Uzbek government toward its own people. The people having no way to communicate with its government in peaceful language had been forced to use a language that government could understand.[400]

The IMU continued its activities throughout 1999. A mayor and three officials were captured by the IMU militants in August in Kyrgyzstan's Osh region. Kyrgyzstan accepted to fulfil all demands of the militants in order to save hostages. Uzbekistan accused Kyrgyz authorities of showing weakness against militants. The hostages taking activities of the IMU increased in the following months. On August 23, 1999, four Japanese geologists and an interpreter were captured by the militants.[401] The IMU received 2 to 5 million dollars in exchange for the release of Japanese hostages.[402]

In August and September 2000, the IMU militants clashed with the soldiers in the south of Kyrgyzstan and in the Surkhan Darya region of Uzbekistan. Passing the borders of Uzbekistan, the IMU launched several attacks on Uzbekistani units from

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[398] Ruzaliev, "Islam in Uzbekistan," 15.

[399] Naumkin, *Radical Islam in Central Asia*, 76-77.

[400] Ibid., 82.

[401] Ibid., 90-91.

[402] Cornell, "Narcotics, Radicalism, and Armed Conflict," 627.

much closed places to Tashkent.[403] It has only organized small-scale attacks in Uzbekistan so far, because it wanted to display the inability of Karimov's rule and unpreparedness of its security forces to manage the crisis. It has also been suggested that, the main aim was to create an Islamic state in Batken region of Kyrgyzstan due to its appropriate geographical conditions and highly religious population. After the establishment of an Islamic state, the next step would be to contain Karimov and create spill-over effect of these attacks to Uzbek territories.[404]

The War on Terror launched by the U.S. after September 11 became a turning point for the decline of the IMU. In Afghanistan, the IMU members had joined Taliban in their fight against Western powers. The battle for Kunduz in November 2001 signalled the fall of the IMU as Namangani was killed by the U.S. forces. Although several IMU members were killed as a result of U.S. raids, the organization still continues its activities by crossing borders and preparing itself for the new attacks. It is know that many "sleeper cells" of the IMU have remained in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.[405]

The IMU realized its most influential attack after the Tashkent bombings in March 2004. During five days-long incursions, 47 people lost their lives, and many people were wounded. The IMU began to direct its attacks towards the security forces rather than innocent people. In the following period, the IMU have started to use suicide bombers. The targets were the U.S. Embassy, the Israeli Embassy, and the Office of the General Prosecutor. Three Uzbek security guards died and eight civilians were injured in these attacks.[406] In 2008, 2009 and September 2010, the IMU militants continued to clash with Uzbek security forces and used explosives in

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[403] Naumkin, *Radical Islam in Central Asia*, 95.

[404] Cornell, "Narcotics, Radicalism, and Armed Conflict," 628-629.

[405] Ibid., 632.

[406] Richard Weitz, "Storms Clouds over Central Asia: Revival of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU)?" *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 27, no. 6 (2004): 521.

their attacks. The IMU's new leader, Usmon Odil announced that Tohir Yoldash was killed on August 27, 2009, in Pakistan's South Waziristan region.[407]

#### 2.2.3.2.2.2. Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT)

HT has not originally emerged in Central Asia, but established in Jordan in 1953 by Taqi al-Din Nabhani who was influenced from the idea of Arab nationalism. Its aim was "to resume the Islamic way of life and convey the Islamic call to the world."[408] HT carries its activities in the Middle East, Asia and Western Europe.[409] It currently appears in more than 40 countries in the world. The headquarters of the organization is in London while official headquarters are in Jordan. As compared to the other Islamist and radical organizations, HT is more popular and has some ideological purposes.[410] "HT is an elitist movement that operates as a self-declared political party grounded in radical Islamist ideology while using theology to justify its position."[411] As was put by two experts:

> The aim of HT is to resume the Islamic way of life and to convey the Islamic *da'wah* (message) to the world. This objective means bringing the Muslims back to living an Islamic way of life in *Dar al-Islam* (land of Islam) and in an Islamic society such that all of life's affairs in society are administered according to the *Shari'ah* (Islamic) rules, and the viewpoint in it is *halal* (permitted) and the *haram* (forbidden) under the shade of the Islamic state, which is the *Khilafah* (Caliphate) state. ... It also aims to bring back the Islamic guidance for mankind and to lead the *Ummah* (community) into a struggle with *Kufr* (disbelief), its systems and its thoughts so that Islam encapsulates the world.[412]

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407 "IMU Announced Longtime Leader Dead, Names Successor," *Radio Free Europe,* August 17, 2010.

408 Naumkin, *Radical Islam in Central Asia*, 128.

409 Louw, *Everyday Islam,* 27.

410 Baran, Starr, and Cornell, "Islamic Radicalism in Central Asia," 19-20.

411 Zeyno Baran, "Hizb ut-Tahrir Islam's Political Insurgency" (The Nixon Center, Washington, December 2004), 17.

412 Houriya Ahmed and Hannah Stuart, "Hizb ut-Tahrir: Ideology and Strategy" (Centre for Social Cohesion, London, 2009), 13.

HT has a three-staged strategy to establish the Caliphate. Firstly, HT tries to widen its base through the recruitment of new followers and continues its propagandas. By promoting the model of Prophet Muhammad in mobilizing people, HT educates new followers according to the Islamic teachings. Through this education, HT plans to create loyal and courageous members who are ready to suffer on the way of God. In the second stage, HT aims to interact with *umma*, Muslim community, in order to convince them for their participation to the HT's revolution. In this stage, "an intellectual transformation through political and cultural interaction" is encouraged. HT also aims to ignite the hatred between governments and people and forces to establish an Islamic way of life. As a final step, HT envisages a revolution but not a violent one unless it is necessary. The organization also expects that in case of Islamic revolution, governments would accept it without any use of force.[413] Some says that HT is currently in the second stage, the stage called as "intellectual political struggle."[414]

The numbers of HT members are uncertain. According to some sources, there are approximately 7.000 HT followers only in Uzbekistan while this number is 15.000 in Central Asia.[415] Some say that HT has 15.000-20.000 members in Central Asia, most of them are located in Uzbek territories.[416] However, the cell structure of HT makes difficult to estimate the exact numbers of HT members and its sympathizers. In each cell, there are three to seven people headed by a leader. However, each cell leader has also its own leader so the members of a cell only know their own leader, but cannot reach the other high ranked figures in the organization.[417]

According to an author, HT can be seen as a neo-fundamentalist movement as it aims to convince people to accept its own ideas and replace the current regimes with an Islamic state as a final goal. To achieve this, HT prefers a non-violent, but

[413] Baran, "Hizb ut-Tahrir Islam's Political Insurgency," 21-22.

[414] Ahmed and Stuart, "Hizb ut-Tahrir: Ideology and Strategy," 18.

[415] Hanks, "Dynamics of Islam, Identity," 213.

[416] Louw, *Everyday Islam,* 27.

[417] Baran, "Hizb ut-Tahrir Islam's Political Insurgency," 24.

radical and political alteration. HT severely criticizes some organizations using democratic channels to gather power and support.[418] Believing in the spill-over effect from one country to another, HT aims to spread its ideology under the banner of Caliphate that might challenge the deficits of modern state such as "corruption, inequality and injustice."[419] HT opposes any attempts for subordinating or attacking Islam. HT members consider that the main tenets of capitalism, that is, democracy, pluralism, human rights and free market politics could not be acceptable for an Islamic state. They challenge democracy since "it makes the human being, not the creator as the legislator."[420] They do not even believe that the essence of democracy allows the people to govern themselves; rather they argue that democracy legitimizes the unjust rule of the capitalists.[421]

HT began to receive support in Central Asia in the early and the mid-1990s. In order to broaden its base, HT took advantage of the political and ideological vacuum that emerged after the collapse of the Soviet Union.[422] In an atmosphere where an ordinary citizen does not know the fundamentals of Islam, HT receives support since it claims to teach the "real Islam."[423] In other words, those do not even have basic knowledge on the main tenets of Islam tend to participate to the HT bases in order to receive religious education.[424] Besides, the socio-economic problems, such as increasing level of unemployment and poverty, have been effectively instrumentalized by HT in its discourses.[425]

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[418] Karagiannis, "Political Islam in Uzbekistan," 265-266.

[419] Naumkin, *Radical Islam in Central Asia*, 129.

[420] Ibid., 137.

[421] Ibid., 132.

[422] Baran, Starr, and Cornell, "Islamic Radicalism in Central Asia," 22.

[423] Khalid, *Islam after Communism,* 163.

[424] Baran, Starr, and Cornell, "Islamic Radicalism in Central Asia," 22.

[425] Ibid.

In the late 1990s, HT began its activities in Uzbekistan, a country where the organization is the most powerful and influential compared to the other Central Asian republics.[426] Problematic regions of Uzbekistan such as Andijan, Ferghana and Namangan, have become important centers for HT followers.[427] HT announced that its followers were decimated due to the attacks of despotic rulers in Iraq, Syria, Lybia, and Uzbekistan.[428] However, the organization continues its activities against Karimov whose rule is seen as "tyranny of the Jew."[429] As put forward by an expert, "The utopian vision of a just and moral society presided over by a caliph is attractive to people living through chaotic conditions under brutal and authoritarian regimes."[430]

In Uzbekistan, HT follows two important strategies: recruitment of female members and spreading its ideology in the prisons. Firstly, female recruitment is very popular for HT, since the police are more tolerant towards women during the arrests. In addition, women in Central Asia are influential since several of them are educated people and pursue their careers. Secondly, through manipulation of difficult conditions in the prisoners, HT also tries to spread its ideology there. In response, the Uzbek government separated HT members from the other prisoners so that the organization could not continue its propaganda. As Uzbek policies disturbed many relatives of HT members, these people began to protest Uzbek state in Kazakhstan and Tajikistan.[431]

The HT's recruitment methods and its attempts for indoctrination pose threats for the Uzbek state. According to Samuel Huntington, "The higher the level of education of the unemployed, alienated, or otherwise dissatisfied person, the more

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[426] Emmanuel Karagiannis, *Political Islam in Central Asia: The Challenge of Hizb ut-Tahrir* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 58-59.

[427] Ibid., 62.

[428] Naumkin, *Radical Islam in Central Asia*, 129.

[429] Louw, *Everyday Islam,* 28.

[430] Khalid, *Islam after Communism,* 163.

[431] Karagiannis, *Political Islam in Central Asia,* 58-59.

extreme the destabilizing behaviour which results."[432] The HT followers in Uzbekistan are chosen especially from among the burgeoning young people. Most of them have good education and participate to this organization from rural areas. Furthermore, even those who are not educated undergo a long process of theological and ideological training.[433]

HT rejects the violent methods of the radical organizations such as the IMU. However, it is not certain whether HT is non-violent or not. According to some scholars, "HT cannot be called 'non-violent'; rather, its ideology suggests that it is not using violence yet but will do so when the time is right."[434] Although there is not any concrete evidence that HT has organized any violent attacks in Central Asia, it is rumoured that some followers reject the non-violent strategy of the organization. Some sources say that HT members fled to Afghanistan and joined the IMU.[435] Although HT headquarters denied such kind of allegations by saying, "HT is a political party that engages in intellectual and political work and does not involve itself in militant actions," it remains questionable whether it has links with other Islamist radical movements or not.[436]

### 2.3. Conclusion

After more than two decades of independence, new generations of young people who have no vivid memories of the Soviet times have emerged in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. However, Kazakh and Uzbek societies are still ruled by the ex-communist leaders who inherited not only the problems of the past but also Soviet way of thinking towards the security issues at the top of their agenda: radical Islam for Uzbekistan and Russian question for Kazakhstan. In the post-Soviet era, Soviet nationalities policies have had significant impact on the formation of Kazakh

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[432] Seiple and White, "Uzbekistan and Central Asian Crucible," in Seiple and Hoover, 53.

[433] Ibid.

[434] Karagiannis, *Political Islam in Central Asia,* 20-22.

[435] Louw, *Everyday Islam,* 27- 28.

[436] Naumkin, *Radical Islam in Central Asia*, 145.

national identity and Kazakhization policies. Similarly, Soviet approach towards Islam have shaped Uzbekistan's secular and pragmatic stance towards religion since the early years of independence.

Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have not been challenged by the same security problems in the post-Soviet order. As these countries have different kinds of geopolitical, cultural, social and economic realities, their security problems, the existential threats and referent objects have also differed from each other. However, both Nazarbayev and Karimov have tried to gain legitimacy in the eyes of their citizens with the aim of displaying a powerful stance against their existential threats. In other words, while the presence of existential threats challenges the referent objects for each state, it also provides an opportunity for the leaders to test their power. It is interesting to note that the attempts of these leaders for legitimizing their rule and preserving state and regime security have created new security challenges for them. In this sense, in both of these countries, it is difficult to explain security threats without mentioning security policies which have been generally counterproductive in nature.

Security threats examined in this chapter continue to challenge state and regime security of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. For Kazakhstan, although separatist claims have declined since the late 1990s, Russian minority still creates problems. As for Uzbekistan, the members of Islamist organizations continue to target Karimov and organize their attacks. Tajikistan and Afghanistan have still destabilizing potential for Uzbekistan. In other words, these security threats exist in real terms. In the next chapter, the perceived threats of the elites and leaders are analyzed, with a specific emphasis on how two leaders perceive, create, and even manipulate the security threats analyzed in this chapter for their own political purposes.

# CHAPTER III

## SECURITIZING ACTORS IN KAZAKHSTAN AND UZBEKISTAN

As Buzan and his colleagues define, “A securitizing actor is someone, or a group, who performs the security speech act. Common players in this role are political leaders, bureaucracies, governments, lobbyists and pressure groups.”[437] According to them, these actors will claim that “defend[ing] the security of the state, nation, civilization, or some other larger community, principle, or system” is necessary.[438] Buzan and his colleagues argue that these securitizing actors legitimize their extraordinary policies by emphasizing urgency and emergency of the situation at hand. “The special nature of security threats justifies the use of extraordinary measures to handle them. ... Traditionally, by saying ‘security,’ a state representative declares an emergency condition, thus claiming a right to use whatever means are necessary to block a threatening development.”[439] Furthermore, for a successful securitization, the audience should accept the securitization attempt initiated by the securitizing actors. Buzan and his colleagues say, “A discourse that takes the form of presenting something as an existential threat to a referent object does not by itself creates securitization- this is *securitizing move*, but the issue is securitized only if and when the audience accepts it as such.”[440]

In this chapter, the securitizing actors are respectively taken as the most prominent political figures of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan: President Nursultan Nazarbayev and Islam Karimov. The audience for each are consisted of domestic and international ones: the Kazakh and Uzbek societies and international community,

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[437] Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework,* 40.

[438] Ibid.

[439] Ibid., 21.

[440] Ibid., 25.

namely the West. For each of these leaders, their personal background, their popularity and public support and their rhetoric to securitize the issues notwithstanding whether they are based on real or perceived threats, namely their power of speech act, are examined. In the last part, a conclusion for this chapter will be provided.

### 3.1. Nursultan Nazarbayev: Securitizing Actor in Kazakhstan

Nursultan Abishuly Nazarbayev, the first president of independent Kazakhstan, remains the most popular and influential political figure in the country. Nazarbayev who dedicated himself to the state and nation-building of Kazakhstan is perceived as the key actor to maintain state sovereignty and ensure national consolidation. In this sense, Nazarbayev has the necessary power and influence to securitize the current issues in Kazakhstan mainly based on inter-ethnic relations and territorial integrity.

In this part, firstly, personal, educational and professional background of Nazarbayev is examined. Secondly, his public image and popularity especially during the elections and referendums is investigated. In the last part, the rhetoric used by him to securitize Kazakhstan's problems based on ethnicity and nationalism is analyzed.

#### 3.1.1. Who is Nursultan Nazarbayev?

Nursultan Nazarbayev was born in 1940 in Chemolgan, a small village which was located in the east of the city of Almaty.[441] His childhood and youth passed in this village with his peasant family.[442] In 1958, while Nazarbayev was still a student, he began to work as a steel worker and metallurgist in the Karaganda Metallurgical Combine in Termitau, a town in the province of Karaganda, in north-central Kazakhstan.[443] The beginning of his political career also coincided with these years.

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[441] Cummings, "Kazakhstan an Uneasy Relationship," in Cummings, 59; Jonathan Aitken, *Nazarbayev and the Making of Kazakhstan* (New York: Continuum, 2009), 8-13.

[442] Aitken, *Nazarbayev and the Making of Kazakhstan,* 10-14.

[443] Ibid., 19.

Nazarbayev was elected to full membership to the Communist Party in July 1962.[444] In fact, at the beginning, he was more interested to continue his works as a metallurgist at the steelworks rather than being involved in party affairs. However, in 1968, upon the proposition of city party secretary, Nazarbayev accepted to work as a full-time official of the Communist Party.[445] Later, he was appointed as the deputy to the first secretary of the Termirtau party committee in 1970 and the secretary of the party committee of the Karaganda steel plant in 1972.[446] In 1976, Nazarbayev was appointed to the position of secretary of the Karaganda regional party committee in charge of industry.[447] In 1979, he became the secretary responsible for industry and economy in the secretariat of the Kazakh Communist Party. As such, Nazarbayev became a member of the national cabinet and principal governing body of the Soviet Republic of Kazakhstan.[448]In 1984, he became the chairman of Kazakhstan's Council of Ministers. When he was elected, Nazarbayev, a reform-minded politician, was the youngest Soviet republic chairman at the age of forty-four. In May 1989, he was elected as the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan. In June 1989, Nazarbayev was appointed as the head of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan and in September 1989, as the chairman of the republic's Supreme Soviet. In March 1990, through a parliamentary election, he was promoted from chairmanship to the presidency in his career. In the election held on December 1, 1991, Nazarbayev won 98.8% of the vote.[449] Nazarbayev ran unopposed in this election to which 80% of the eligible voters participated.[450]

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[444] Aitken, *Nazarbayev and the Making of Kazakhstan,* 33.

[445] Ibid., 40-42.

[446] Ibid., 44.

[447] Ibid., 51.

[448] Ibid., 53.

[449] Cummings, "Kazakhstan an Uneasy Relationship," in Cummings, 59-61.

[450] Olcott, *Kazakhstan Unfulfilled Promise,* 26.

In the post-Soviet Kazakhstan, Nazarbayev has been seen as the symbol of the national independence.[451] The slogan of Nazarbayev during 1991 election was, "Want a Flag for Kazakhstan? Cast Your Vote for Nursultan."[452] Just two weeks later, this nationalist discourse unexpectedly turned into a reality. Nazarbayev was caught by surprise, as the other Soviet leaders, in seeing how fast the Soviet Union disintegrated. He was unprepared and reluctant to be leader of a newly independent country. In this context, on December 16, 1991, Kazakhstan became the last union republic, which proclaimed its independence "under its Moscow stalled leader."[453] As an author claims, Nazarbayev had strong reasons to declare independence with caution:

> Nazarbaev's ambivalence over asserting Kazakhstan's sovereignty reflected the widespread desire of the inhabitants of the republic to remain part of a broad Slavic or Eurasian entity. ... The near colonial dependency of its incumbent communist elites on the metropole manifested their anxieties about their personal survival and about holding together a multi-ethnic society described as among the most 'international' of all Soviet republics, without the support and protection of Moscow.[454]

Since independence, under the leadership of Nazarbayev, Kazakhstan is being ruled by the former Soviet elites who gathered more power at their hands than before.[455] Nazarbayev described what kind of Kazakhstan he planned to create in an interview with the Japanese newspaper *Hokkaido Shimbun* in October 1991 as follows: "I see Kazakhstan as a democratic, presidential republic, with a professional parliament, elected on a multiparty basis, and with strong executive power in the centre and in the regions."[456] Nazarbayev strengthened the executive branch of power in all aspects of social, economic and political life. "The President is at the epicentre of

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[451] Gregory Gleason, *The Central Asian States Discovering Independence* (Oxford: Westview Press, 1998), 85.

[452] Cummings, *Kazakhstan: Power and the Elite,* 22.

[453] Bhavna Dave, *Kazakhstan: Ethnicity, Language, Power* (Oxon: Routledge, 2007), 8.

[454] Ibid., 9.

[455] Joma Nazpary, *Post-Soviet Chaos Violence and Dispossession in Kazakhstan* (London: Pluto Press, 2002), 31.

[456] Cummings, *Kazakhstan: Power and the Elite,* 24.

all state- and institution-building efforts, and the presidential office and executive order have come to dominate all branches of government."[457] One of the advisers to Nazarbayev said, "Nazarbaev is the supreme arbiter... He presides over the judicial, executive, and legislative branches. ... He embodies supreme power."[458] In Kazakhstan, the head of the state has still more power and authority than the parliament does.[459]

One major indication of such tendency took place by the nationwide referendum held on April 30, 1995, as a result of which the presidency of Nazarbayev was extended until 2000. Nazarbayev was re-elected one year before than the planned elections, on January 10, 1999.[460] "The 1995 referendum ... served to consolidate power; the 1999 early elections were intended to build authority (even if they were undemocratic)."[461] Actually, Nazarbayev had already begun an informal election campaign for the 2000 presidential elections in 1998. In these years, through the amendments of the parliament, the president's term was extended from five to seven years (effectively, then, until 2006). The minimum age requirement to be elected as a president was increased from 35 to 40, and the age limit of 65 was removed. These amendments, incorporated in the October 1998 legislation, were considered as the legal basis to institutionalize Nazarbayev's power in the country.[462]

In 2005, having 91% of the votes, Nazarbayev was re-elected for another seven year term as president.[463] With this last election, it was proved that there was not any

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[457] Cummings, "Kazakhstan an Uneasy Relationship," in Cummings, 63.

[458] Eric McGlinchey, *Chaos, Violence, Dynasty, Politics and Islam in Central Asia* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011), 155.

[459] Ibid.

[460] Pınar İpek, "Challenges for Democratization in Central Asia: What Can the United States Do?" *Middle East Policy* 14, no. 1 (Spring 2007): 98.

[461] Cummings, "Kazakhstan an Uneasy Relationship," in Cummings, 71.

[462] Cummings, *Kazakhstan: Power and the Elite,* 28.

[463] Aitken, *Nazarbayev and the Making of Kazakhstan,* 189.

serious opposition to his rule. An author says, "Nazarbayev remains master of the game in Kazakhstani politics, with all power and support he needs to remain in office until the time, and probably the successor, of his choosing."[464]

The regime of Nazarbayev can be best defined as a neo-patrimonial regime "which combines personal or patrimonial use of authority to procure loyalty and compliance with emphasis on an efficient, Western-style system of administration."[465] For an expert, Kazakhstan can be described as an "authoritarian democracy."[466] This explains why for many analysts, "A 'velvet' revolution in Kazakhstan is unlikely. Rather, what we may observe is a slow 'democratization' process that does not challenge the authoritarian rule of the president."[467]

It was argued that although Nazarbayev seemed eager to cooperate with the opposition parties and to include some of them in a coalition government, economic prosperity based on larger oil production impeded to take concrete steps towards democratic reforms and the promotion of civil liberties. In addition, some social and political groups preferred to benefit from the generosity of the ruling elites and gave political support to Nazarbayev in return.[468] An author says, "President Nazarbayev did everything to block the emergence of any serious political opposition. His family controlled the media, political parties and a good deal of the business world."[469] "It is common knowledge that all key sectors of the government (national security, taxation, media) and the economy (oil and gas, metallurgy,

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[464] Aitken, *Nazarbayev and the Making of Kazakhstan,* 191.

[465] Dave, *Kazakhstan: Ethnicity, Language, Power,* 141.

[466] McGlinchey, *Chaos, Violence, Dynasty, Politics,* 155.

[467] İpek, "Challenges for Democratization," 98.

[468] Ibid.

[469] David Lewis, *The Temptations of Tyranny in Central Asia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 7-8.

telecommunications, banking) in Kazakhstan is under the personal control of Nazarbaev and his 'extended family.'"[470]

A long-term presidential spokesperson who became the Minister of Information and Culture in 2006 said the following: "Business and power constitute a single monolith in Kazakhstan, whose unconditional leader is Nursultan Nazarbaev: a de jure and de facto symbol and guarantor of the unity of the people and state power, the inviolability of the Constitution, rights and freedoms of the citizens."[471] The formal and informal networks that were instrumentalized by Nazarbayev with the aim of establishing and guaranteeing his power can be summarized as follows: "institutional manipulation, including the use of democratic façades to maintain power, cadre reshuffling, increased centralization through elite recruitment and territorial changes, and a careful balancing of both domestic and foreign constituencies."[472]

There is also a close relation between the patronage system and the inequality among ethnic groups in Kazakhstan. The "core nation," titular Kazakhs which were more disadvantaged in terms of socio-economic and educational background just after the collapse of the Soviet Union, have received some social and economic benefits from the Nazarbayev regime. By using the patronage system, the regime has gained political support and loyalty from these groups in return.[473] As seen, the power of Nazarbayev was not limited to formal political support. "The president has a staff of several hundred who can conduct informal interventions or offer necessary persuasion in situations where the more formal powers are inadequate, or might work too slowly."[474]

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[470] Dave, *Kazakhstan: Ethnicity, Language, Power,* 141.

[471] Ibid., 148.

[472] Cummings, "Kazakhstan an Uneasy Relationship," in Cummings, 64.

[473] Dave, *Kazakhstan: Ethnicity, Language, Power,* 142.

[474] Nazpary, *Post-Soviet Chaos Violence,* 8.

In these kinds of authoritarian states where strong leaders are insistent to rule, the main question is who will be the next leader when the incumbent passes away. For both Nazarbayev's Kazakhstan and Karimov's Uzbekistan, the answer to this question is still uncertain.[475]

### 3.1.2. The Public Image of Nazarbayev

Nursultan Nazarbayev was a very influential and prestigious political figure in the Soviet Union. According to some people, Nazarbayev was the only non-Russian politician who could replace Mikhail Gorbachev, the last leader of the Soviet Union.[476] Nazarbayev has been successful to preserve his popularity in the eyes of the people even after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. As the family of Nazarbayev was rural people, it is said that Nazarbayev could easily empathize with the ordinary people in his country.[477] By stressing the commonalities between ordinary citizens and himself, Nazarbayev won the sympathy of the masses and increased his popularity in Kazakhstan. In his official biography, he says, "It used to be that people boasted about their 'proletarian' origins. Now the trend is to find some aristocratic blood among their ancestors. Well there was never one aristocrat in my background. I am the son, grandson and great grandson of shepherds."[478]

As mentioned in the previous chapters, Nazarbayev took over a very complex multi-ethnic and multi-confessional country where Russians constituted nearly half of the population. Under his presidency, Nazarbayev avoided alienating this large Russian population. 98.8% of the votes given for Nazarbayev in December 1991 elections proved that he was supported by both ethnic Kazakhs and Russian-speaking population.[479] In order to achieve this result, Nazarbayev tried to balance

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[475] McGlinchey, *Chaos, Violence, Dynasty, Politics,* 160.

[476] Gleason, *Central Asian States Discovering,* 84.

[477] Personal Page of Nursultan Abishuly Nazarbayev, "People's President," under "Phenomenon of the First President," http://personal.akorda.kz/en/category/narodniyi_prezident (accessed September 25, 2012).

[478] Cummings, *Kazakhstan: Power and the Elite,* 65.

[479] Gleason, *Central Asian States Discovering*, 84.

the nationalizing policies and appease ethnic groups in the post-Soviet period. Attributing a balancer role to himself, Nazarbayev visited both Mecca and Vatican in 1994.[480] In 1995, in an interview given to a Russian newspaper, Nazarbayev said, "Islam and Christianity are the two flanks of Kazakhstan's spiritual legacy."[481] Extreme religious groups such as the ethnic Kazakh movement *Alash* were not allowed to be registered. Regardless of whether they were Muslim, Christian or Buddhist, Nazarbayev objected the emergence of any political parties having religious aims.[482] Since independence, it has been claimed that in a multi-confessional country, ethnicity-based politics would create turmoil and disorder.[483] As Nazarbayev stressed, "Kazakhstan could not thrive as a nation if the loyalty of its citizens was constantly in question as it would be if they were simultaneously the citizens of two different and potentially competing states."[484]

For some authors, Nazarbayev's nationalism was not exclusive and violent. "Nazarbayev's nationalism was initially the most temperate of any of the post-Soviet leaders."[485] The main reason is that "he sought to define Kazakh nationalism in a way that was explicitly tolerant of the contributions of non-Kazakhs, and this in turn provided increased support for his policies of preserving strong ties among the post-Soviet states."[486] This public image of Nazarbayev which seemed tolerant to the ethnic groups was also promoted by the media. An expert says, "The entire media, biased in favour of Nazarbaev, portrayed them as 'nationalist,' affirming Nazarbaev's self-cultivated image as a protector of minorities."[487] This public image has been further reinforced with the emphasis on the multi-ethnic structure of

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[480] Cummings, *Kazakhstan: Power and the Elite,* 81.

[481] Ibid., 80.

[482] Ibid.

[483] Ibid.

[484] Olcott, *Kazakhstan Unfulfilled Promise,* 56.

[485] Ibid., 30.

[486] Ibid.

[487] Dave, *Kazakhstan: Ethnicity, Language, Power,* 111.

the village where Nazarbayev grew up. It was argued that Nazarbayev had both acquaintance with and good insight into the cosmopolite life in the Kazakh lands. Indeed, Chemolgan had a cosmopolite society with some 900 inhabitants in the 1940s. Only 200 of this population were native Kazakhs; while the rest were deported Ukrainians, Poles, Chechens, Armenians, Meshketian Turks, Kurds, Balkars, Germans and ethnic Russians who arrived there as a result of Stalin's purges.[488] In the official website of Nazarbayev, there is a narrative to describe how Nazarbayev's family was tolerant to other cultures:

> One day his father Abish brought home [a] Balkar family of special deported immigrants. Nazarbayev's family sheltered them and helped to find the work. And Abish Nazarbayev during this time became friends with Balkars and quickly learned their language. ... No one was divided according to nationality. Nursultan Nazarbayev, later wrote in one of his books, that among the boys, no one remembers who you are - Kazakh, Ukrainian, Chechen or German. ... Boyish gangs were separated only according to streets where they lived. Sometimes they fought street to street. But friendship and mutual help have been a way of life.[489]

According to Nazarbayev, "Ethnic harmony is vital for Kazakhstan's political, economic and social development as an independent state."[490] There is also a legal basis of what Nazarbayev claims. Article 5 of the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan states as follows:

> Formation and functioning of public associations pursuing the goals or actions directed toward a violent change of the constitutional system, violation of the integrity of the Republic, undermining the security of the state, inciting social, racial, national, religious, class and tribal enmity, as well as formation of unauthorized paramilitary units shall be prohibited.[491]

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[488] Aitken, *Nazarbayev and the Making of Kazakhstan,* 8.

[489] Personal Page of Nursultan Abishuly Nazarbayev, "Biography and Family," under "Phenomenon of the First President," http://personal.akorda.kz/en/category/biografiya (accessed September 25, 2012).

[490] Pınar Akçalı, "Nation-State Building in Central Asia: A Lost Case?" *Perspectives on Global Development and Technology* 2, no. 3-4 (2003): 424.

[491] Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan, "Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan," http://www.parlam.kz/en/constitution#_Toc150237533 (accessed September 23, 2012).

Despite the assurance given by Nazarbayev to the ethnic groups as well as this above-mentioned constitutional rule, the concerns of ethnic Russians of Kazakhstan on the policies of Nazarbayev would increase over time. The results of a 1994 survey revealed this fact as follows:

> Kazakhstan's Russians supported plans that would in some way turn back the clock; one 1994 survey found that a full 86 percent of Russian respondents were in favour of the reconstitution of the USSR. This same poll found that only 45 percent of the Russian respondents expressed complete faith in the president. Sixty-seven percent of their Kazakh fellows did the same. A 1995 study also found Kazakhs more supportive of Nazarbayev than were the Russians. When asked who might best lead the country out of crisis, 72 percent of the Kazakhs named Nazarbayev as opposed to only 55 percent of the Russians surveyed.[492]

For Nazarbayev, public opinion polls play very important role to maintain his legitimacy in the eyes of all segments of the society. As an expert says, "Nazarbayev believes that public opinion can and must be managed but he had been bedevilled by the question of just how much and when to heed the public."[493]According to this expert, "He understood from the onset that to be a popular leader he would have to enjoy the strong support of Kazakhs, regardless of their political persuasion, and to be supported or at least tolerated by the country's non-Kazakh population as well."[494]

As an author describes, Nazarbayev has strong incentives to ensure this balance, considering especially the Russians vis a vis the titular nation:

> The unusual ethnic structure of Kazakhstan has motivated the president to observe the rights of minorities to large extent and to seek their integration into the country, in recognition of his country's need for friendly ties with Russia for economic and political reasons. It is also a clear sign of his concern about the threat of Russia's direct intervention in his country's internal affairs. ... Moreover, Kazakhstan's need for the ethnic Russians, who account for most of the educated and skilled population, has created another incentive for President Nazarbayev to appease them. His accommodating approach has

[492] Olcott, *Kazakhstan Unfulfilled Promise,* 79.

[493] Ibid., 30.

[494] Ibid.

> inclined the ethnic Russians, by and large, to support his government. Balancing Kazakh nationalism with the recognition of minority rights has helped the Kazakh government prevent the eruption of opposition movements. Yet, many factors will likely contribute to the emergence of opposition challenges to the Kazakh state, including Kazakhstan's limited economic growth relative to its needs (its booming oil industry notwithstanding), the growing Kazakh nationalism, and Russia's increasing interest in re-establishing itself in the former Soviet republics.[495]

For Nazarbayev, in a multi-ethnic society, it was not easy to establish an independent state, capable of maintaining its existence in the post-Soviet world. On this way, Nazarbayev has encountered many difficulties and had to make very hard choices. In fact, he had to balance different goals striving against each other. "Recognizing the linguistic and ethnic claims of Kazakhs and offering protection to a large minority of Russian-speaking groups; sponsoring Kazakh ethno-cultural regeneration and maintenance of a multi-ethnic polity defined by the centrality of the Russian language" were only some of them.[496] Especially in the first years of independence, Nazarbayev established his rule by receiving the support of the Russophones who regarded him as a reasonable alternative to the nationalist Kazakh groups such as *Alash* and *Zheltogsan*.[497] "Today, these and similar groups are completely marginalised, and many Russophones have withdrawn their support for Nazarbaev, seeing him as in the last resort responsible for the on-going Kazakhification of the country."[498]

In the second half of the 1990s, Nazarbayev thought he was losing popular support. However, in fact, "Opinion polls reveal[ed] that he ... [did] in fact enjoy the substantial backing of the public: in a survey of 1500 citizens conducted in July 1995, 80.5% of respondents approved of the job Nazarbaev is doing."[499] Similarly,

[495] Peimani, *Conflict and Security,* 6-7.

[496] Dave, *Kazakhstan: Ethnicity, Language, Power,* 163.

[497] Pal Kolsto, "Anticipating Demographic Superiority: Kazakh Thinking on Integration and Nation Building," *Europe-Asia Studies* 50, no. 1 (1998): 65.

[498] Ibid., 65-66.

[499] Paul Kubicek, "Authoritarianism in Central Asia: Curse or Cure?" *Third World Quarterly* 19, no.1 (1998): 34.

public opinion polls held in late 1997 still showed that Nazarbayev preserved a considerable public support in general although his economic policies were supported by only a third of the population. A year later, 20,000 people put their signature under a petition calling for Nazarbayev's resignation. However, this was only a minority in a country of nearly fifteen million and Nazarbayev continued to be as the most popular Kazakh politician.[500]

Kubicek gives the result of a survey conducted in July 1995 as follows:

> 84% of ethnic Kazakhs and 60% of Russians expect national relations to remain stable for the foreseeable future. In addition, a large plurality (35.3%) claimed that what they liked most about Nazarbaev was his role in maintaining stability in the republic. While the economy continues to perform poorly, most in the survey (62%) prefer reform in stages (Nazarbaev's stated intention) and more (48.4%) prefer state control over the economy than little or no state control (38.5%). In short, a sizeable group within Kazakhstan appear to support Nazarbaev's policies and claims. Moreover, the notion that strong central authority will help deny opportunities to national, ethnic, or regional groups is empirically supported, since nationalist revivals are most likely to occur in periods of institutional decline at the centre.[501]

In the presidential elections held on April 3, 2011, Nazarbayev won 95.5% of the votes and it became evident that he continues to be a charismatic and popular leader in the eyes of his people.[502] In his official website, it is stated, "Thanks to a strong popular support and public confidence the President successfully embodies all of his ideas and initiatives and leads the country in a cohort of leader-states with a developed economy, social security and stability in society."[503] In his book, Nazarbayev states that political stability has priority over all other issues. He also

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[500] Olcott, *Kazakhstan Unfulfilled Promise,* 26.

[501] Ibid., 35-36.

[502] "Kazakhstan's Long-serving Leader Stays in Power," *Reuters*, April 4, 2011.

[503] Personal Page of Nursultan Abishuly Nazarbayev, "People's President," under "Phenomenon of the First President," http://personal.akorda.kz/en/category/narodniyi_prezident (accessed September 25, 2012).

supports the idea that in an Asian society, discipline and order are more important than the democracy that envisages a gradual transition.[504]

In general, therefore, it is possible to conclude that Nazarbayev became the "most 'progressive' leader in Central Asia" despite the fact that his rule was basically authoritarian.[505] Moreover, the personality of Nazarbayev and the state-building process in Kazakhstan remained closely intertwined; therefore, it was not possible to separate them from each other.[506] "Nazarbayev's will has just about always been translated into state policy, initially because he was strongly supported by the population and later because he had created the institutions necessary to buffer him from popular criticism."[507] Furthermore, Nazarbayev found an appropriate atmosphere in the society to realize his policies. As an expert suggests, "The Kazakhs are ... open and flexible people, which probably explains Nazarbayev's greater manoeuvrability and malleability in dealing with the opposition."[508]

### 3.1.3. Nazarbayev's Discourse on Ethnicity, Nationalism and Separatism

#### 3.1.3.1. Domestic Audience

##### 3.1.3.1.1. The Need for Security and Stability

Nazarbayev described Kazakhstan "as a rapidly emerging economic and political power with a peaceful and harmonious society."[509] In the post-Soviet Kazakhstan, where the feelings of uncertainty and insecurity have been widespread among the people, Nazarbayev has displayed himself as the provider and guarantor of peace and order. Therefore, within this context, he has benefited from the rhetoric of the

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[504] Nursultan Nazarbayev, *Kazakistan Yolu* (Ankara: Kazakistan Büyükelçiliği & TİKA, 2006), 34.

[505] George, *Journey into Kazakhstan,* 10.

[506] Olcott, *Kazakhstan Unfulfilled Promise,* 26.

[507] Ibid.

[508] George, *Journey into Kazakhstan,* 10.

[509] Erica Marat, "Nation Branding in Central Asia: A New Campaign to Present Ideas about the State and the Nation," *Europe-Asia Studies* 61, no. 7 (September 2009): 1129.

need of stability and security for many years. Not only at home, but also abroad, this served the interests of the ruling elites. An expert explains this situation as follows:

> Kazakhstan has purposefully promoted its image as an 'oasis of stability' in the region, and as a multi-ethnic state that has successfully preserved ethnic harmony and peace throughout the turbulent years of transition from Soviet rule. Quite pertinent in understanding this discourse on ethnic harmony is the role played by the political elite, president Nazarbaev in particular, in initially constructing and amplifying the threat of ethnic conflict and irredentism by pointing to the demographic preponderance of Russians across the border. The Nazarbayev regime was able to garner significant regional and international attention and support for monitoring its border regions, and subsequently take credit for its critical contribution to averting conflict and preserving ethnic harmony.[510]

The political elite working with Nazarbayev also tried to keep the fear of instability alive among the people. They aimed to remind the population in every occasion that any social unrest would result in further chaos.[511] Stressing the importance of stability, Nazarbayev in one of his speeches mentioned stability as "the first priority of the republic."[512] These words that were implicitly addressed to the threat of any ethnicity-based conflict in the post-Soviet Kazakhstan were seriously taken by the public. As an author claims, "People buy this argument to a great extent. Given the ethnic nature of the networks of influence and hooliganism people are afraid that any civil unrest may exacerbate the chaos by instigating widespread ethnic violence."[513] Nazarbayev made his aim clear by saying as follows: "Our priority is firm and indisputable: security of the nation and preservation of the statehood."[514] Nazarbayev also underlined "unity, concord and stability" to be "the key vector of

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[510] Dave, *Kazakhstan: Ethnicity, Language, Power,* 119.

[511] Nazpary, *Post-Soviet Chaos Violence,* 180.

[512] Ibid.

[513] Ibid.

[514] Personal Page of Nursultan Abishuly Nazarbayev, "Quotations," under "Unique Sides of the Personality," http://personal.akorda.kz/en/category/citati_i_viskazivaniya (accessed September 25, 2012).

our development."[515] He also said, "Only the countries that could protect themselves prosper."[516] Nazarbayev justified his authoritarian rule by emphasizing the necessity to be a strong state against security threats.

Having concerns about the potential for inter-ethnic conflict and separatism, Nazarbayev concluded, "Democracy would be too disruptive and ultimately threaten the state's integrity."[517] In line with Nazarbayev's thoughts, some authors state the following:

> Political liberalization would mean ethnic mobilisation, and since it would be hard to reconcile competing groups' claims ... and there is an acute risk that nationalist political entrepreneurs will 'outbid' each other in order to win votes in each ethnic community, the stability of the state would be endangered.[518]

Therefore, Nazarbayev has attributed another role for himself. He must become "'wise father,' one who knows best and is obliged to silence the voices of extremists."[519] Nazarbayev stated, "The first task of the state must be to consolidate the political community and build a sense of Kazakhistani patriotism. The appropriate means to this end, in his opinion, is a strong president who can ensure stability while managing (limited) pluralism."[520] To achieve this, he envisaged a presidential rule entitled with a strong executive power. As a matter of fact, in October 1992, Nazarbayev said to the public: "The executive must be extremely tough now so that people can feel the strength of the state."[521]

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[515] Personal Page of Nursultan Abishuly Nazarbayev, "Quotations," under "Unique Sides of the Personality," http://personal.akorda.kz/en/category/citati_i_viskazivaniya (accessed September 25, 2012).

[516] Ibid.

[517] Kubicek, "Authoritarianism in Central Asia," 35.

[518] Ibid., 36.

[519] Ibid., 35.

[520] Ibid.

[521] McGlinchey, *Chaos, Violence, Dynasty, Politics,* 149.

#### 3.1.3.1.2. Towards Ethnic Kazakhs

In search for a new identity within an ideological vacuum created by the collapse of the Soviet Union, Kazakhstan initially defined itself with its core ethnic nation in ethno-cultural terms.[522] In this identity definition, the Soviet legacy played an important role. Under the Soviet Union, "the concept of the 'nation' has not been identified with the total population of the country, as a political unit. Rather, it has been regarded as a cultural and ethnic entity."[523] This became also the case for the identity dimension of nation-building in the post-Soviet Kazakhstan. While having the aim of preserving ethnic harmony in his country, Nazarbayev has promoted the idea of Kazakhness in every aspects of social and political life. As an expert says,

> President Nazarbayev has made continual reference to his pride in being a Kazakh, his desire to honor his ancestors, and the need for those who live in the republic to respect the traditional Kazakh culture. Although he has often identified these values as a source of interethnic tolerance, his intent was to emphasize the special relation of Kazakhs to Kazakhstan.[524]

Nazarbayev while appeasing Russians through giving some assurances has nevertheless underlined the primacy of Kazakhs in the newly independent republic. In his speech given at the Forum of the Peoples of Kazakhstan on the first anniversary of independence, Nazarbayev referred only to the ethnic Kazakhs while disregarding other ethnic groups in the country. By doing so, he treated them as the "others" living in the Kazakh land.[525] Similarly, in a forum, while he said that the state should guarantee equal rights to all ethnic groups in Kazakhstan, he asserted as follows:

> The interests of the native nation (Kazakhs) in individual instances will be stipulated in particular. ... This concerns the revival of the national culture and language, the restoration of spiritual-cultural and other ties with the Kazakh

[522] Dave, *Kazakhstan: Ethnicity, Language, Power,* 27.

[523] Kolsto, "Anticipating Demographic Superiority," 51.

[524] Olcott, *Kazakhstan Unfulfilled Promise,* 31.

[525] Hale, "Cause without a Rebel," 21.

> Diaspora, and the creation of some kind of preconditions for the return to their homeland of people who were forced to leave Kazakhstan.[526]

Likewise, in 1992, Nazarbayev said the following: "It is 'quite appropriate even if the principle of equality of opportunities for all and equality before the law is valid, if in particular cases special provision is made for the interests of the native nation, the Kazakhs, as happens in many other states.'"[527] Similarly, in a speech made in 1994, Nazarbayev claimed, "A nation cannot exist without a state, it vanishes. It is not our people's fault ... that it has become a minority in the land of its ancestors. It is quite appropriate if in some cases the interests of the indigenous nation, the Kazakhs, are given special emphasis in this state."[528]

Since the early years of independence, as will be mentioned in the next part in detail, Nazarbayev has pursued Kazakhization policy based on "the reviving the Kazakh language and culture and promoting the return of the Kazakh diaspora."[529] On the one hand, the immigration of Kazakhs into the Kazakh lands was encouraged through legal channels and constitutional assurances. On the other hand, Nazarbayev indicated, "It was not a problem for those to emigrate 'who do not have deep roots on Kazakh soil.'"[530] Such statements confused the Russians, nearly a quarter of those who preferred to leave the country during the 1990s.[531] As some experts indicate, "the containment of a potential ethno-regional challenge from the Russophone north of Kazakhstan by a twin strategy of control, by suppression of Russophone political movements and Kazakhization of administration and security," and "the accommodation of Russophone elites by cooption, particularly

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[526] Hale, "Cause without a Rebel," 21-22.

[527] Cummings, *Kazakhstan: Power and the Elite,* 84.

[528] Olcott, *Kazakhstan Unfulfilled Promise,* 31.

[529] Hale, "Cause without a Rebel," 22.

[530] Ibid.

[531] Ibid.

in the economy" marked the first half of the 1990s.[532] Indeed, against the nationalizing policy of Nazarbayev based on territorial integrity and centralization, Russians preferred to move to Russia and not raise their voices in a "steadily repressive and neo-traditional Kazakhized regime."[533]

Nazarbayev established a link between the characteristics of Kazakh people and the inter-ethnic relations. For him, the openness and generosity of Kazakh people lie behind the success of inter-ethnic relations. In a speech he made in 1994, he defined "the genetic characteristic of Kazakh people" as "their openness and their generosity, their willingness to welcome, to give shelter to those who need it."[534] According to an expert, "references [Nazarbayev made] to the titular group were predominantly about how ethnic Kazakhs may work to improve relations with other ethnic groups."[535] As such, it is claimed, "The Kazakh language was to play a 'further consolidationist role' among ethnic groups and the 'national idea' was 'to strengthen intra-national unity.'"[536] In one of his speeches, Nazarbayev guaranteed that Kazakhs would show understanding and respect in face of "the interests and requests of other peoples."[537] He further said, "In his long-term vision for the year 2030 ... Kazakhs played an 'integrating role' amidst the country's cultural diversity."[538]

Despite his commitment to the promotion of Kazakh identity, Nazarbayev felt the need of change his discourse in some cases with the aim of unifying the society through emphasizing common bonds and displaying a more inclusive stance

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[532] James Hughes and Gwendolyn Sasse, "Comparing Regional and Ethnic Conflicts in Post-Soviet Transition States," in *Ethnicity and Territory in the Former Soviet Union Regions in Conflict,* ed. James Hughes and Gwendolyn Sasse (London: FRANK CASS, 2002), 30.

[533] Ibid.

[534] Sally N. Cummings, "Legitimation and Identification in Kazakhstan," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 12, no. 2 (2006): 183.

[535] Ibid., 182.

[536] Ibid.

[537] Schatz, "Framing Strategies and Non-Conflict," 86.

[538] Ibid.

towards non-Kazakhs. In this respect, rather than stressing on Kazakhness, from time to time Nazarbayev also underlined the importance of the Kazakhstani identity. As a matter of fact, an expert analyzes the rhetoric used by Nazarbayev and ruling elites in the early 1990s as follows:

> While in 1994 Nazarbaev referred to the 'genetic characteristics of Kazakhs' these are now applied to all Kazakhstanis—'tolerance and patience of Kazakhstanis, their cordiality ... and affability.' ... Just as identification feeds into legitimation, the legitimation process is reinforcing practices of the Soviet period. ... All Kazakh nationalists and the majority of Kazakh intellectuals expressed the opinion that Kazakhstan's state symbols should reflect the history of ethnic Kazakhs, rather than the history of multi-ethnicity.[539]

In the post-Soviet Kazakhstan, the integration of non-titular groups, mainly Russians is problematic. Non-Kazakhs "either ... may be culturally integrated into the titular national culture, or they may be politically integrated into the state, in which case they will retain most of their cultural traits."[540] As for the Kazakh state, the political support of these groups was as important as their cultural integration to the society. Only if the people in Kazakhstan could "transfer their political loyalty to the new state" Kazakhstan might turn into a "functioning entity."[541] "They must develop a sense of belonging in the state and forge a common identity as ... 'the People of Kazakhstan,' in other words, as ... a Kazakhstani nation."[542]

These political concerns inevitably led Nazarbayev to give ambiguous speeches on the nationality issue. In his official statements, as will be mentioned in detail below, "Nazarbaev has tried to avoid confrontation on the ethnic issue by asserting that Kazakhstan is both a multinational society and a homeland for the ethnic Kazakhs at the same time. In a sense, he has tried to avoid making a choice between an ethnic and a civic nation concept."[543] Similarly, in a congress of *Qazaq tili* society

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[539] Cummings, "Legitimation and Identification," 191.

[540] Kolsto, "Anticipating Demographic Superiority," 52.

[541] Ibid., 51.

[542] Ibid.

[543] Ibid., 56.

in November 1992, Nazarbayev made the following remarks: "We should not forget that the sovereignty of Kazakhstan is in many ways special. First and foremost it is a peculiar synthesis of the national sovereignty of the Kazakhs and the sovereignty of the people of Kazakhstan in general as an ethnopolitical community."[544] In a conference held in Almaty in May 1993, Nazarbayev explained the main components of the new Kazakhstani state ideology as such: "A major task, ... would be 'to combat every chauvinism, nationalism and separatism'. This should be done by the inculcation of 'Kazakhstani patriotism.'"[545] He continued as follows:

> In the world, there are quite a few states, even very prosperous ones, which contain more different nations and nationalities than we have in Kazakhstan. In these countries patriotism is especially strongly developed. A devotional attitude towards the state symbols reigns in society. For instance, at the beginning of the school day, during the swearing in of a jury or an official, and at many other events and mass gatherings the state flag is flown and the national anthem played.[546]

It is difficult to ascertain under what conditions Nazarbayev preferred to change his discourse from the one based on "Kazakh nation" which only emphasized titular Kazakh people to an all-embracing one based on "Kazakhstani nation." It can be argued that in the early years of independence, with the aim to gather political support, Nazarbayev was relatively more cautious not to alienate the Russians in the country. However, in the second half of the 1990s, contrary to the 1995 Constitution that brought some changes in favour of Russians and Russian language, Nazarbayev began to use a more nationality-oriented discourse. As an author says, "Even if the idea of Kazakhstan as 'the form of statehood of the self-determining Kazakh nation' has disappeared from the Kazakhstani constitution, it is still alive and kicking among influential opinion makers in Almaty."[547]

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[544] Kolsto, "Anticipating Demographic Superiority," 56.

[545] Ibid., 57.

[546] Ibid.

[547] Ibid., 59.

#### 3.1.3.1.3. Towards Ethnic Russians

For Nazarbayev's supporters, the ethnic groups living in Kazakhstan are lucky as they have a leader who is very tolerant to other ethnic groups thanks to his personal background and family life. An author supporting this view says the following:

> It was a benefit to the culture and spirit of the new country that its first President had a long history of personal tolerance and respect for multi-ethnic diversity. This dated back to his childhood in a rural village full of ethnic groups; to his student days in Russian-speaking Ukraine; and to his labours as a steelworker in the heat of a blast furnace manned by many different nationalities at Karaganda Magnitka. Nazarbayev remembered with filial pride how popular his father Abish had been among the immigrant families of Chemolgan for his welcoming and cooperative attitude towards them. Like father, like son. Moreover, friendliness to foreigners was a Kazakh tradition.[548]

Likewise, in another narrative, it is told how Nazarbayev himself rejected any kind of discrimination attempt among ethnic groups. "As a response to his personal aide, ... who suggested an ethnic Korean for a job on the President's staff, he [Nazarbayev] said: 'Stop your 'ethnic this' or 'ethnic that' thinking! Origins don't matter anymore in Kazakhstan. We are one big family.'"[549] Nazarbayev also said, "Our ancestors lived united to survive, we should be united for the great accomplishments."[550]

It is true that although Nazarbayev aimed to promote Kazakhness in the post-Soviet Kazakhstan, he also tried not to antagonize Russians living in his country.[551] However, it would be misleading to say that there was not any fear, especially in the early years of independence, about the potential for ethnic conflict to break out in Kazakhstan. In these years, Nazarbayev was worried about the ethnic instability in

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[548] Aitken, *Nazarbayev and the Making of Kazakhstan,* 118-119.

[549] Ibid., 120.

[550] Personal Page of Nursultan Abishuly Nazarbayev, "Quotations," under "Unique Sides of the Personality," http://personal.akorda.kz/en/category/citati_i_viskazivaniya (accessed September 25, 2012).

[551] Olcott, *Kazakhstan Unfulfilled Promise,* 31.

his country and said: “Whoever tries to stir up discord and harmony between the Kazakhs and the Russians will be the common enemy of the two nationalities.”[552]

In one of his speeches to a congress of the *Qazaq tili* society in November 1992, Nazarbayev said the following: “We should not forget that the sovereignty of Kazakhstan is in many ways special. First and foremost it is a peculiar synthesis of the national sovereignty of the Kazakhs and the sovereignty of the people of Kazakhstan in general as an ethno-political community.”[553] In fact, the ethnicity and nation-building discourse used by Nazarbayev in some official and unofficial sources were seen inconsistent. An author argued that as Nazarbayev tried not to lose one side to another among Kazakh and Russian population, he made different statements to different audiences.[554] Quoting from an expert, the author continues as follows: “Nazarbaev has tried to avoid confrontation on the ethnic issue by asserting that Kazakhstan is both a multinational society and a homeland for the ethnic Kazakhs at the same time. In a sense, he has tried to avoid making a choice between an ethnic and a civic nation concept.”[555]

An expert evaluates Nazarbayev’s policy as follows:

> Nazarbayev’s policy is especially delicate because Kazakhstan’s large Russian population requires him to portray the republic as a secular, multinational entity rather than as a Central Asian one of Turkic and Muslim pedigree. But he is also ‘obliged’ to pronounce the national and religious facets of the nation to prevent the rise of nationalistic or religious opposition.[556]

Although the measures and discourse of Nazarbayev to prevent any ethnic turmoil seemed to work at first, most of these policies were carried out at the expense of Russians. An expert explains this situation with these words: “The institutionalized primacy of the titular nationality and language and the ‘remedial’ intent of the

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[552] Akçalı, “Nation-State Building in Central Asia,” 424.

[553] Kolsto, “Anticipating Demographic Superiority,” 56.

[554] Ibid.

[555] Ibid.

[556] Zardykhan, “Russians in Kazakhstan,” 77.

nationalizing state have deterred a direct competition along ethnic lines."[557] According to her, "Although Nazarbaev's ethnic management strategy has put a lid on the manifestation of ethnic or linguistic grievances; it has exacerbated civic apathy and a sense of alienation from the state."[558]

Reminding the large Russian exodus from Kazakhstan during the 1990s and questioning "Kazakhstan's claims to being an 'oasis of stability and ethnic harmony,'" it was stated that "ethnic 'stability' has come at high cost to the principle of ethnic equality and pluralism."[559] Directing harsher criticisms to Nazarbayev, another expert further suggests the following: "Nazarbayev is an advocate of one nation in words, but his politics counters Russian against Kazakh and sets one *dzhuz* against another."[560] As this experts asserts, "The president asserts: 'I am the guarantor of intra-national concord,' although he is a manipulator of the nationality question. This is why the fourth *dzhuz,* the Russians, feel uncomfortable in Kazakhstan today."[561]

Language problem has been one of the most debatable issues in terms of discrimination in the multilingual Kazakhstan. To overcome this problem, as will be discussed in the next chapter in detail, Kazakh language was accepted as the sole state language while Russian gained the "official" language status. The way to handle language problem also displayed the eagerness of the ruling elites to appease Kazakhs, Russians and Russophone Kazakhs.[562] "Nazarbaev has periodically asserted that Kazakhstan has amicably resolved its language question, which has

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[557] Dave, *Kazakhstan: Ethnicity, Language, Power,* 139.

[558] Ibid.

[559] Ibid.

[560] George, *Journey into Kazakhstan,* 232.

[561] Ibid.

[562] Dave, *Kazakhstan: Ethnicity, Language, Power,* 166.

echoes of Soviet era claims that the 'national question' in the USSR has been 'solved.'"[563]

However, although Nazarbayev underlines that the republic prohibits "discrimination based upon language" and "Russian will remain for most people in the republic what he calls in his 1993 statement 'a channel of introduction' for the flow of information to the republic," the government gives more support for the promotion of Kazakh language as compared to Russian.[564] The criticism is that "while President Nazarbayev has taken pains to reassure the local Russian population on the matter, he has done little to slow the trend toward Kazakh linguistic domination."[565]

It is also argued that Nazarbayev made some ambivalent speeches on the language issue. In his speech to the Kazakhstani Supreme Soviet on June 9, 1994, he said the following on the issue:

> The state programme for the development of the Kazakh language and other languages had disturbed not only the Russophone population but also many Kazakhs. ... A new language law therefore ought to be adopted which will 'eliminate all and every discrimination against the Russian language' at the same time as I would identify effective measures for the advancement of the Kazakh language.[566]

These examples show that the need to satisfy both the Kazakhs and the Russians forced Nazarbayev to apply different discourses in dealing with the ethnicity and nationality related issues, particularly the language problem. While some argue that this ambiguity does not solve but exacerbates the problem, some authors are more optimistic about the role of Nazarbayev in maintaining the stability among different ethnic groups. An author from the second group says, "Behind all these kinds of conciliatory language policies is Nazarbaev. ... He serves as a unifying force of divisive interethnic relations. He has played an important role both in defusing

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[563] Dave, *Kazakhstan: Ethnicity, Language, Power,* 166.

[564] Olcott, *Kazakhstan Unfulfilled Promise,* 180.

[565] Ibid.

[566] Kolsto, "Anticipating Demographic Superiority," 57.

ethnic conflicts and in addressing the fears and anxieties of ethnic Russians."[567] In his book, mentioning the process of making the 1995 Constitution, Nazarbayev himself stressed his own unifying role. He wrote the following:

> In many issues named as "national" issue, very harsh discussions took place. ... In every occasion, I reminded to those who participated to the meeting that the new Constitution should not discriminate the people on the basis of their nationalities, on the contrary, it should unite them.[568]

In fact, a doctrine, internationalism, lies behind this ambivalence. Internationalism was a doctrine introduced by the Soviet Union and it envisaged "interethnic harmony that implied integrationist tendencies ... and that held a special position for ethnic Russians who were understood as the architects and the custodians of the new socialist political order."[569] After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the new Kazakh state that adopted this internationalist discourse faced two problems at different levels:

> International structures with a preference for stability in a region with nuclear arsenals applied pressure for the construction of civic, rather than ethnic, norms of citizenship. ... On the domestic front, the central challenge was for the state elite to accommodate its ethno-nationalist core of titular Kazakhs, but within limits imposed by the need to avoid destabilizing society through the radicalization of ethnic Russians.[570]

These international and domestic imperatives differed from each other. "The former produced incentives for the creation of a civic polity while allowing a degree of ethnicization; the latter produced incentives for ethnicization while allowing a degree of civicness."[571] The elite had to appeal both of them since "by framing practices as 'internationalism,' the elite attempted to depict its actual practices as acceptable both to those with preferences for civicness and to those with

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[567] Chaimun Lee, "Languages and Ethnic Politics in Central Asia: The Case of Kazakhstan," *Journal of International and Area Studies* 11, no. 1 (2004): 113.

[568] Nazarbayev, *Kazakistan Yolu,* 54.

[569] Schatz, "Framing Strategies and Non-Conflict," 74.

[570] Ibid., 77.

[571] Ibid.

preferences for ethnicization."[572] Furthermore, "The rhetoric and some of the practice of multi-ethnicity have been achieved at little cost to state sovereignty. The rhetoric of multi-ethnicity has been intended as much for an external audience- Russia and the West- as for domestic consumption."[573] It can be argued that the rhetoric of multi-ethnicity has been beneficial for Nazarbayev to attract the attention of both international and domestic audience.

### 3.1.3.2. International Audience

In every occasion, especially on international platforms, Nazarbayev has always emphasized the multi-ethnic character of Kazakhstan. According to him, "From ancient times Kazakhstan has played a role of the historical bridge between East and West, North and South, it has been the cross-road of cultures and civilizations."[574] As he also states, "This was the place where Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam, Mongoloid and Caucasian races, Indo-European and Turkic-Mongolian languages met."[575] The emphasis of Nazarbayev on the Eurasian character of the Kazakh state is based on "the geographic centrality of Kazakhstan and the multi-ethnic population that occupied its territory."[576]

Kazakh ruling elites stressed the importance of Kazakhstan's uniqueness as being Eurasian, between Europe and Asia-Pacific region.[577] In a monograph published by Nazarbayev in 2005, the President said, "Astana can rightly be called the centre of Eurasia, since it is located between Europe and Asia and thus has soaked up the cultural heritage of both West and East for centuries."[578] "Nazarbaev viewed

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[572] Schatz, "Framing Strategies and Non-Conflict," 77.

[573] Cummings, *Kazakhstan: Power and the Elite,* 82.

[574] Personal Page of Nursultan Abishuly Nazarbayev, "Quotations," under "Unique Sides of the Personality," http://personal.akorda.kz/en/category/citati_i_viskazivaniya (accessed September 25, 2012).

[575] Ibid.

[576] Schatz, "Framing Strategies and Non-Conflict," 78.

[577] Cummings, *Kazakhstan: Power and the Elite,* 82.

[578] Marat, "Nation Branding in Central Asia," 1129.

Eurasianism as an organic outgrowth of the territory, explaining that it was derived from 'our geographic position at the crossroads in the Eurasian region.'"[579]

The best example of promoting this discourse on cultural diversity in international area was the campaign for Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) chairmanship. Nazarbayev paid great attention to this campaign, which he saw as an opportunity to convey his vision to domestic and international audience. During this process, Nazarbayev frequently stressed the multi-cultural and multi-ethnic nature of his society.[580] For some, the OSCE chairmanship became a victory for Nazarbayev since, through this success, it was accepted that peaceful relations among ethnic groups have been achieved through the efforts of Nazarbayev's regime.[581] Nazarbayev himself said the following on this issue: "Both the East and the West appreciates our unique experience, our achievements in coordinating interests and protecting ethnic rights. I am confident that the more countries use our experience of public dialogue and interethnic consent, the safer the world will be."[582]

Nazarbayev further emphasized the preference of the Kazakh state regarding the possession of nuclear weapons on Kazakh lands as follows:

> Keeping the weapons could have made Kazakhstan a larger player in our potentially volatile region, and surely the world would be more aware of us today. There were some who encouraged us to keep the arsenal. But larger considerations, including the role and responsibility of emerging democracies like ours, weighed heavily in the decision. Our focus was on building a new economic and political model in Kazakhstan, and we had a firm belief that our future and welfare rested on commercial and security relationships in the West.[583]

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[579] Schatz, "Framing Strategies and Non-Conflict," 78.

[580] Marat, "Nation Branding in Central Asia," 1129.

[581] Ibid., 1127.

[582] Personal Page of Nursultan Abishuly Nazarbayev, "Quotations," under "Unique Sides of the Personality," http://personal.akorda.kz/en/category/citati_i_viskazivaniya (accessed September 25, 2012).

[583] "The Promise of Emerging Democracies," *Washington Times,* September 9, 2009.

Similarly, Nazarbayev wrote the following in a volume published in 1996:

> Kazakhstan is recognized by almost all of the countries of the world as an independent state, strengthening its sovereignty, and there is no real threat of military interference in its internal affairs . . . We are trusted, we are paid attention to, [and] we are invited to mediate in the management of conflicts. World business had boldly and powerfully come to us. The most powerful companies of the world invest in the future of our country.[584]

In his foreign policy that will be discussed in the next chapter in detail, Nazarbayev is a "careful balancer" and "an enthusiastic joiner of international organisations."[585] On the personal page of Nazarbayev, it is stated as follows:

> Kazakhstan is becoming an increasingly significant player on the international arena. ... The President of Kazakhstan delivers speech at such high-level meetings as UN General Session, Nuclear Security Summit, World Economic Forum in Davos, etc. Moreover, our country hosted high-level events. An illustration of it is the OSCE Summit in Astana held in December 2010, the 38th Session of the OIC Ministerial Council in June, 2011, and others.[586]

It is further added, "The President of Kazakhstan also initiated a series of forums that gather the most representative participants and compel the international community's attention."[587] Among these forums, "The Astana Economic Forum, the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions, the Eurasian Media Forum, sessions of the Council of Foreign Investors and others" were emphasized.[588]

Nazarbayev attempted to contribute to the settlement of disputes in the international area. To give some examples, he suggested a peace plan for Armenia and Azerbaijan in 1991. In 1992, he proposed the creation of an Asian version of the

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[584] Edward Schatz, "Access by Accident: Legitimacy Claims and Democracy Promotion in Authoritarian Central Asia," *International Political Science Review* 27, no. 3 (2006): 272.

[585] Aitken, *Nazarbayev and the Making of Kazakhstan,* 205.

[586] Personal Page of Nursultan Abishuly Nazarbayev, "International Recognition," under "Phenomenon of the First President," http://personal.akorda.kz/en/category/mezhdunarodnoe_priznanie (accessed September 25, 2012).

[587] Ibid.

[588] Ibid.

OSCE. In 2000, he offered peace talks between the Taliban and Northern Alliance in Afghanistan. In addition, Nazarbayev declared his intention to undertake a mediator role between Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan in 2001 and between Pakistan and India in 2002. He also underlined the importance of hosting Pope John Paul II just after the September 11 attacks.[589]

Nazarbayev also emphasized cooperation of Kazakhstan with the U.S. in the aftermath of September 11 on security issues as an evidence of eagerness of his country to collaborate with democratic regimes. He states as follows:

> Sharing common values of freedom and peaceful development, democracies firmly support each other. That is why since ... [these] terrorist attacks that shocked the entirety of mankind, Kazakhstan has stood shoulder to shoulder with the United States in the fight against international terrorism and today provides much-needed assistance for the stabilization of Afghanistan.[590]

For Nazarbayev, the international recognition also meant more prestige at home. According to an expert, "Whatever the motivations for this multilateralism, international engagement was a way to frame legitimacy for a domestic audience" and "Nazarbaev proposed his state as being unique in its ability to foster tranquillity in a multi-confessional and multi-ethnic domestic society."[591] However, some argue that describing the Kazakh state as "international," "multi-ethnic" and "civic" and committing to "civic and democratic norms" are only "declaratory and symbolic" statements of the Kazakh ruling elites.[592] For them, this is the best way of promotion of a country to domestic and international audience. However, according to these criticisms, the reality does not have to be as such.

### 3.2. Islam Karimov: Securitizing Actor in Uzbekistan

Islam Abduganievich Karimov, the first president of independent Uzbekistan, dominates all aspects of social, economic and political life in the country. Karimov,

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[589] Schatz, "Access by Accident," 273.

[590] "The Promise of Emerging Democracies," *Washington Times,* September 9, 2009.

[591] Schatz, "Access by Accident," 274.

[592] Dave, *Kazakhstan: Ethnicity, Language, Power,* 136.

just as Nazarbayev, has worked for the state and nation-building in Uzbekistan since the early days of independence. The secular and authoritarian regime of Karimov has been the target of several Islamist groups since the late 1990s. Karimov, a very influential political figure among the Uzbek people, has exploited the fear of instability and cracked down not only Islamist extremists but also other political opponents to ensure his regime security.

In this part, firstly, personal, educational and professional background of Karimov is given. Secondly, the public image and popularity of the Uzbek leader is examined. Thirdly, Karimov's way of securitizing the Islamist threat through his speeches, statements and written works directed to domestic and international audience are investigated.

### 3.2.1. Who is Islam Karimov?

Islam Karimov, an ethnic Uzbek, was born in 1938 in the historical city Samarkand. As the members of Karimov's family were civil servants, Karimov found opportunity to continue his higher education.[593] Graduated from the Central Asian Polytechnic Institute and later the Tashkent Institute of National Economy, he became a mechanical engineer and an economist. Karimov completed his doctoral studies in economics and published several articles in this field.[594]

In 1960, Karimov began to work for the Tashkent Farm Machinery Plant (Tashselmash) as an assistant foreman and later a technologist foreman. Between 1961 and 1966, he served as a leading design engineer at the Chkalov Tashkent Aviation Production Plant. Starting from 1966, Karimov carried out his work in the State Planning Office of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Uzbekistan (UzSSR) for more than 15 years as the senior scientific specialist and later served as the first deputy chairman of the office. Afterwards, Karimov became the minister of finance of the UzSSR and in 1986 he worked as the deputy chairman of the Council of

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[593] John R. Pottenger, "Civil Society, Religious Freedom, and Islam Karimov: Uzbekistan's Struggle for a Decent Society," *Central Asian Survey* 23, no. 1 (March 2004): 60.

[594] Ibid.

Ministers, deputy head of government of the UzSSR and the chairman of the State Planning Office. In the same year, he was appointed as the first secretary of the Communist Party of the Kashka Darya oblast located in southern Uzbekistan. Since then, by concentrating his work in the Communist Party, Karimov quickly advanced in his career. In June 1989, he became the first secretary of the central committee of the Communist Party of the UzSSR, and on March 24, 1990, he was elected as the president. In 1990, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Karimov became the head of the People's Democratic Party of Uzbekistan, the former Communist Party of the UzSSR.[595]

Uzbekistan declared its independence on August 31, 1991. Receiving 86% of the votes in a multi-candidate election, Karimov was elected as the president for a five-year term on December 29, 1991.[596] Actually, in these years, Karimov was not seen as a strong candidate for presidency by the opposition and public at large. Firstly, there was a groundless rumour among the society that Karimov was half Uzbek and half Tajik. Furthermore, Karimov's wife had a Slavic origin. Secondly, Karimov lacked strong clan political support. Thirdly, the general belief was that the opposition that was consisted of radical Islamists on the one hand and democrats (namely the political parties of *Erk* and *Birlik*) on the other, would challenge Karimov in the elections.[597]

*Birlik* was banned in 1991 and although *Erk* was allowed to participate to the first presidential election, by preventing other parties from being registered and rigging, Karimov was able to declare his victory.[598] As mentioned above, Karimov received 86% of the vote in this election.[599] Later, Karimov's presidency was extended to 2000 in a national plebiscite which took place on March 26, 1995.[600] In the 1995

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[595] Pottenger, "Civil Society, Religious Freedom," 60-61.

[596] Ibid., 61.

[597] Naumkin, *Radical Islam in Central Asia*, 69.

[598] Adams, *Spectacular State Culture,* 45.

[599] Ibid.

[600] Pottenger, "Civil Society, Religious Freedom," 61.

plebiscite, 99.6% of the eligible citizens voted for the extension of Karimov's term from 1997 to 2000.[601] A year later, on June 15, 1996, with the aim of showing his independency as a president, Karimov resigned from the post of chairman of the People's Democratic Party.[602] On January 9, 2000, Karimov was re-elected for another five-year term. In this election, 92% of the eligible voters voted for Karimov.[603] Through another plebiscite held on January 27, 2002, presidential term of office was increased from five to seven years.[604] In this referendum, in order to increase his support, Karimov depicted Uzbekistan's cooperation with the U.S. in the "War on Terror" as an achievement of his government.[605] These developments strengthened Karimov's power and secured his presidency. Not surprisingly, Karimov also won the presidential elections held in December 2007 without confronting any serious opposition.[606]

As was the case in Kazakhstan, the ex-communist leaders have remained in their offices in post-Soviet Uzbekistan too. Although there were opposition groups in the early years of independence, the ex-communist elites did not allow them to participate actively to the Uzbek political life.[607] An expert summarizes the political situation in the country as follows: "In Uzbekistan ... the transfer of power from the Soviet elite to the national elite was mainly a matter of changing names on the office doors."[608]

From the very beginning of his presidency, Karimov tried to guarantee his regime by maintaining his control over the parliament and local governments. To achieve

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[601] Yalcin, *Rebirth of Uzbekistan Politics, Economy,* 148.

[602] Ibid.,148. See also Annette Bohr, *Uzbekistan Politics and Foreign Policy* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1998), 4-5.

[603] Yalcin, *Rebirth of Uzbekistan Politics, Economy,* 148.

[604] Pottenger, "Civil Society, Religious Freedom," 61.

[605] Akbarzadeh, *Uzbekistan and the United States,* 14.

[606] Karagiannis, "Political Islam in the Former Soviet Union," 47.

[607] Gleason, *Central Asian States Discovering,* 118.

[608] Ibid.

this, Karimov was entitled to issue decrees, resolutions and instructions that strengthened the executive branch of power. Karimov has authority to appoint and dismiss the prime minister, other members of the cabinet, the procurator-general and his deputies as well as the judges and regional governors. Karimov may also dissolve the parliament with the permission of the Constitutional Court, but the parliament may only terminate the president's term in case that he is not able to carry out his duties due to a health problem.[609] Karimov became successful to institutionalize his power through the legislature (*Olij Majlis*) which can be described as "a rubber stamp organization."[610] Besides, he established his control over the governors (*hokims*) of the dozen *villiati* (provinces) and the Republic of Karakalpakstan.[611]

Uzbekistan is described as a country where authoritarianism has a long traditional history and Western style democracy, which aims to bring fast reforms, is not seen appropriate.[612] As is the case in many Central Asian states, Uzbek leadership also preferred to embrace "the idea of a strong state [and] belief in government as the core of social life and autocracy."[613] Karimov established "a political system that would tolerate no dissent."[614] According to an expert, "Constitutional authority, electoral procedures and rule of law are all liberally applied by government officials to underscore what is taking place in the country. ... Karimov is nothing more than an 'elected dictator,' or perhaps an 'elected authoritarian figure.'"[615]

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[609] Bohr, *Uzbekistan Politics and Foreign Policy,* 3-4.

[610] John Ishiyama, "Neopatrimonialism and the Prospects for Democratization in the Central Asian Republics," in *Power and Change in Central Asia,* ed. Sally N. Cummings (London: Routledge, 2002), 52.

[611] Ibid.

[612] Bohr, *Uzbekistan Politics and Foreign Policy,* 20.

[613] Yalcin, *Rebirth of Uzbekistan Politics, Economy,* 3.

[614] Philip Shishkin, "The Enemy We Need Washington Courts a Repressive Uzbekistan-Again," *World Affairs,* January/February 2011, 40.

[615] Kangas, "Uzbekistan: the Karimov Presidency," in Cummings, 141.

In rhetoric, however, Karimov seemed to value modern democracy, at least in the early years of independence. He would write in 1992:

> The source of inspiration for independent Uzbekistan is our people's commitment to universal human values. Our people have managed to keep alive the sparks of justice, equality, good-neighbourliness and humanism through centuries of adversity. The highest objective of reformation in Uzbekistan is to revive those traditions, fill them with new content, and set up the necessary conditions for achieving peace and democracy, prosperity, cultural advancement, freedom of conscience and intellectual maturity for every person on earth. ... Special attention must be given to the renaissance of our traditional national culture. However, such a revival of national self-awareness cannot depart from the ideals of the humanistic world culture, universal human values and the traditions of our multinational society.[616]

In time however, it became clear that the Uzbek elites had different views on the universality of Western values and did not always share a pro-Western attitude.[617] Karimov himself revealed his doubts about "the imposition of what he saw as specific (not universal) values coming from Europe" by saying, "Not everything that is allowed in European countries can be accepted here."[618] In the 1990s, the government policy was "to advocate a wide range of international norms in order to demonstrate that Uzbekistan was a 'normal' nation and equal members of the world community."[619] However, in the 2000s, the regime encouraged the Uzbek writers to criticize the West, especially the activities of international organizations. The government did not want to accept the findings of these organizations on Uzbekistan's unpromising human rights records and rejected to be pressured by the defenders of international norms.[620]

Within such a framework, the "Uzbek model" which is based on gradual economic and social change under the rule of a strong leader would be emphasized.[621]

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[616] Adams, *Spectacular State Culture,* 59.

[617] Ibid., 195.

[618] Ibid.

[619] Ibid., 59.

[620] Ibid.

[621] Bohr, *Uzbekistan Politics and Foreign Policy,* 20.

"According to Karimov, the Uzbek model builds on an indigenous tradition and foresees gradual and steady progress based on 'oriental tradition.'"[622] Karimov, in most of his speeches underlined that a free-market economy could not be immediately implemented in Uzbekistan. In an interview he gave to the Russian newspaper *Izvestiya* on September 18, 1991, Karimov said that Uzbekistan was not ready for market economy, but instead, Chinese-style limited economic reforms were more suitable. He also stated that he would not allow political protest in the country.[623] According to an expert, "On economic transformation Uzbekistan preferred economic 'gradualism' for two main reasons: (1) the economic structure left over from the Soviet era; (2) the economic models of privatization and marketization which were alien models to the local conditions."[624] In his own book, Karimov claims, "It is difficult to provide a smooth transition from any administrative-command system to the principles of a market economy when the regulating role of the state is ignored."[625]

It was argued that, in this context, Karimov succeeded to bring and preserve stability to the country to a considerable extent. However, there are still doubts whether this relative stability will continue in Uzbekistan without Karimov. As an author says, "The current system of rule, which is inextricably linked to the actions and fate of one man, does not lend itself to a smooth transfer of power. Consequently, whether or not Karimov's successor will be able to maintain a stable Uzbekistan remains to be seen."[626]

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[622] Yalcin, *Rebirth of Uzbekistan Politics, Economy,* 54.

[623] Pamela Blackmoon, *In the Shadow of Russia Reform in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2011), 31.

[624] Yalcin, *Rebirth of Uzbekistan Politics, Economy,* 4.

[625] Blackmoon, *In the Shadow of Russia,* 31-32.

[626] Bohr, *Uzbekistan Politics and Foreign Policy,* 24.

### 3.2.2. The Public Image of Karimov

In the post-Soviet Uzbekistan, religion and nationality have played significant roles in terms of shaping the public image of Karimov. In fact, Islam and Uzbekness are intertwined identities in the country. Islam is not only seen as a spiritual domain, but also a crucial part of Uzbek national consciousness. However, it is also quite interesting to see that many Uzbeks (ordinary citizens as well as the members of the government) who identified themselves as Muslim experienced some trouble in fulfilling the pillars of their belief and religious practices.[627] The ambiguity on Islamic identity and insufficient Islamic knowledge were actually the outcome of 70 years long repressive Soviet policies towards religion. In these circumstances, Karimov was seen as a saviour for religion for his people. An author says, "President Karimov was a person that I heard mentioned as possibly being *avliyo* [saint] several times by people who (in line with official representations) presented him as the man who brought Islam back to Uzbekistan, and Uzbekistan back to Islam."[628]

As for nationality, another major component of Uzbek identity, Karimov established a link between his personality and Amir Timur in order to have more prestige and strengthen his authority in Uzbekistan.[629] Amir Timur,[630] a historical figure who was described as a "despot and a ruthless conqueror" in the Soviet times, is now "an all-purpose symbol in Uzbekistan" and has served for "the

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[627] Adams, *Spectacular State Culture,* 61.

[628] Louw, *Everyday Islam,* 131-132. "*Avliyo* [means] saint, friend of Allah. The term, in Arabic, is the plural form of *wali*. However, I only rarely heard the term *wali* used among Muslims in Uzbekistan. The plural form, however, is commonly used as singular." Louw, *Everyday Islam,* 177.

[629] Bohr, *Uzbekistan Politics and Foreign Policy,* 21.

[630] "In the post-Soviet era, Islam Karimov has been able to rely on the leadership of ancient historical figures to symbolize his own power. Most important, of course, are the many references to Amir Timur, the fourteenth-century Central Asian leader who based his empire out of Samarqand. … Essential in these discussions is how strong leader -Timur- is able to overcome external threats and internal stability and create a state wherein culture, economy, and society can thrive. When combined with actual political, procedural and appointive powers, the symbolic importance of employing historical continuity has only enhanced the Karimov presidency." Kangas, "Uzbekistan: The Karimov Presidency," in Cummings, 139.

Karimov regime by providing a cult of personality by proxy."[631] "The President, in fact, related almost everything about himself or his actions to Timur, leading to a common discourse about Timur as a patron of the arts and sciences, as a strong leader and caretaker of this people, and as a pious but worldly Muslim."[632] Karimov who has gathered popular support by showing himself "as a caretaker and cultivator of a new, national history," created an image of himself "as an essential figure in modern Uzbekistan by making Uzbeks proud of their collective past."[633] Karimov himself wrote, "Our duty is to replenish our national spiritual treasury with the new names and works by our great ancestors -philosophers, scholars and creators of beauty."[634]

Despite the emphasis on his leadership, Karimov did not create a cult of personality.[635] However, he gave importance to the promotion of his leadership in the public space. As an expert suggests:

> Presidential rule has been anchored in the broad powers assigned to Karimov and in the extensive fortification of his image as a strong, virtually irreplaceable leader. In a style reminiscent of the old communist era, his portrait hangs in public places, and quotations ascribed to him are displayed on placards and billboards throughout the country. The media print his speeches and decrees, and bookshops generally set aside a special section for his myriad published works. ... [One of his books] *Uzbekistan on the Threshold of the Twenty-First Century* ... notably strives to portray him as not only the country's leading politician but also its leading thinker.[636]

Observing Uzbek social and political life under the authoritarian and repressive rule of Karimov, another author says the following:

> In many countries, holidays are used as opportunities to propagandize government policy, but in Uzbekistan, holidays were often the first time many

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631 Adams, *Spectacular State Culture,* 147.

632 Ibid.

633 Kangas, "Uzbekistan: The Karimov Presidency," in Cummings, 139.

634 Ibid.

635 Ibid.

636 Bohr, *Uzbekistan Politics and Foreign Policy,* 5.

> people heard about government policy, for example, when a presidential decree was published in the newspaper around the time of the holiday. In many countries, policies are framed by the slogans of the administration in power, but in Uzbekistan, policies were crafted to contribute to whatever campaign had been declared that year by the government (2008, for example, was "The Year of Youth"). In many countries, cultural events are used for political purposes, but in Uzbekistan, nearly every political event was adorned with the trappings of Uzbek national culture.[637]

With such an attitude Karimov's regime aimed to maintain authority and control over the people. Karimov defined himself as a "fatherly figure."[638] The state has been promoted as an institution entitled to lead and guide the society in all aspects of life. The Uzbek government adopted the idea of a powerful and benign leadership that was seen appropriate for the needs and demands of the people.[639] "The 'benevolent authoritarianism' of Islam Karimov is not an accident, and reflects the historical legacy of power relations in Uzbekistan."[640] In Uzbekistan where traditional power relations dominate the political and social life, the state is seen equal to the president and the authoritarian character of the state is mostly perceived as something favourable by the society.[641]

The Uzbek people seem to be satisfied with the provision of limited safety under the benignly autocratic government.[642] In fact, in its relations with the society, the new Uzbek state maintained the Soviet mentality that was based on "manipulation and intimidation."[643] However, the need for a strong leader to ensure stability in the country took precedence over the demands for freedoms and rights. Informal interviews and public opinion polls indicate that since there is a need for a powerful

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[637] Adams, *Spectacular State Culture,* 4.

[638] Kangas, "Uzbekistan: The Karimov Presidency," in Cummings, 134.

[639] Gleason, *Central Asian States Discovering,* 118.

[640] Kangas, "Uzbekistan: The Karimov Presidency," in Cummings, 130-131.

[641] Ibid., 141.

[642] Melvin, *Uzbekistan: Transition to Authoritarianism,* 58.

[643] Gleason, *Central Asian States Discovering,* 118.

leader among Uzbek people, despite lack of freedoms, the general situation is seen well in the country.[644]

In relation to the relative success of Karimov in preserving stability, an expert makes the following comments:

> What can be said of Karimov's record in Uzbekistan? ... Although the state was largely unprepared for independence, order has been maintained and state authority has expanded. The economy, while far from trouble-free, has performed relatively well, and it may experience positive growth in the near term. People's basic needs appear to be satisfied, and there is no popular push for change, nor any apparent threat to Karimov's rule. The human rights record of the government, of course, is an obvious source of concern. Nonetheless, given the challenges the government has faced and the results it has achieved, one can make a strong case vindicating the road taken.[645]

Regardless of whether they reflect the truth or not, public opinion polls and surveys show that Islam Karimov is perceived as a strong ruler. This public image is probably derived from his fight against terrorism.[646] In face of the IMU attacks in the late 1990s and early 2000s, Karimov exerted more authority and silenced dissident voices under the pretext of eliminating the militants.[647] Described by the official media as "external threats" and labelled as "Wahhabists," the IMU and HT were targeted by the President in order to preserve stability.[648] There are some conspiracy theories that these organizations are more "fiction" than "fact." It is also asserted that these organizations perform an informal opposition, which can be described as a "front for clan organizations opposed to Karimov."[649] However, even this conspiracy theory "makes for usable fodder for the president himself. Karimov

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[644] Kangas, "Uzbekistan: The Karimov Presidency," in Cummings, 141.

[645] Kubicek, "Authoritarianism in Central Asia," 33.

[646] Kangas, "Uzbekistan: The Karimov Presidency," in Cummings, 130-131.

[647] Ibid., 130.

[648]Ibid., 141.

[649] Ibid.

can effectively use 'conspiracy theories' to root out enemies and maintain power."[650]

Islamist groups like the IMU and HT tried to manipulate public opinion against Karimov. However, in Uzbekistan, where "the notion of Uzbekistan and president" are inseparably promoted by Karimov himself and "the state ... is in essence his personal project"[651] these attempts seemed to have limited success. In addition, in a paradoxical way the Islamist groups and the existence of an authoritarian leader seem to reinforce each other not only in Uzbekistan, but also throughout the Central Asian region. An author explains this as follows:

> Unfortunately, radical Islamist groups are a boon to Central Asia's autocratic rulers. Indeed, the Islamist opposition and the region's dictators both benefit from a symbiotic relationship. Uzbek president Karimov, for example, justifies authoritarian rule as a temporary necessity, a defense against the 'terrorism, extremism, and fanaticism, which has been posing a threat to our peaceful and calm life.' HT responds by rallying Uzbek public opinion against 'the arrogant, tyrant ruler.' Radical Islam and authoritarianism are mutually legitimating, an irony which HT, the IMU, and the region's autocrats actively encourage.[652]

Actually, Uzbeks turned out to be generally depoliticized people under the repressive rule of Karimov. "Many lived in an essentially private world, revolving around family, friends and work, with as little engagement as possible with the repressive state."[653] In Uzbekistan, there are neither appropriate political channels nor psychological readiness to take a stance against the failures of Karimov's regime. "Many Uzbeks feel powerless and afraid. The tiny opposition is under siege, freedom of speech is virtually non-existent and pious Muslims are harassed."[654] However, Andijan events that broke out in 2005 as a result of the

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[650] Kangas, "Uzbekistan: The Karimov Presidency," in Cummings, 141.

[651] Arkady Dubnov, "'L'Etat, C'Est Lui!' The House that Islam Karimov Built," *Russia in Global Affairs* 8, no. 1 (January-March, 2010):121.

[652] Eric M. McGlinchey, "Revolutions and Religion in Central Asia," (PONARS Policy Memo *364*, June 2005), 3.

[653] Lewis, *Temptations of Tyranny in Central Asia*, 47.

[654] "After the Horror, More Horror," *Economist,* December 14, 2005.

arrest of 23 local businessmen who were accused of being members of *Akromiya* which was called by Uzbek police as an Islamist extremist group[655] unexpectedly put an important challenge for Karimov's regime. In Andijan, some groups protested the arrests and trial process of these businessmen and "the dispensation of street justice brought supportive crowds into the city square."[656] However, the response of Karimov to the protesters would be severe: Uzbek security forces did not hesitate to open fire on these groups by the order of Karimov.[657]

On the one hand, Andijan events displayed "the potentially destabilizing demonstration effects mass mobilization generally and youth mobilization in particular may have on Karimov's weakening autocratic rule."[658] On the other hand, by proving the power of his regime, Karimov further intimidated these opposition groups, and even used this event to blame Islamist extremists. As a matter of fact, in his visit to Andijan, Karimov said, "Not a single peaceful civilian was killed there, just gangsters. Firearms were always near their bodies."[659] In addition, as pointed out by an expert, "The government made various spurious attempts to make its cover-up of the Andijan events more credible. A video was released purporting to prove that the uprising was an attempt by Islamists to seize power."[660] By doing so, Karimov aimed to justify his decision to kill unarmed civilians in Andijan and persuade the domestic and international audience on the necessity to take this decision. Moreover, after the Andijan events, Karimov's regime introduced new repressive policies against journalists, human right activists and political opponents.[661]

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[655] Lewis, *Temptations of Tyranny in Central Asia*, 53.

[656] McGlinchey, *Chaos, Violence, Dynasty, Politics,* 122.

[657] Ibid., 122-123.

[658] Ibid., 141.

[659] Dubnov,"'L'Etat, C'Est Lui!'" 125.

[660] Lewis, *Temptations of Tyranny in Central Asia*, 69.

[661] Ibid., 66.

In an interview to *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* in 2005, Karimov seemed extremely self-assured with his power. He said, "Everything closes on me and that's not accidental."[662] As pointed out by an expert, "The Uzbek president no longer needs support to prove the legitimacy of his rule, since he is confident that he is the only person capable of maintaining stability in the country."[663] Two years after the Andijan events, Karimov won the presidential elections held on December 23, 2007 with 88.1% of the vote. Although Karimov was able to maintain his rule receiving high popular support once again, this election showed that he lost his popularity slightly as compared to the previous election in 2000 in which Karimov had received 92% of the votes.[664]

A survey conducted in 2007 by Uzbekistan's Center for Social Opinion revealed that "more than 80 percent of the country's young people ... [were] content with their lives and satisfied with the country's social and political systems."[665] Criticizing this survey, an expert said as follows:

> Opinion poll results in countries like Uzbekistan should be viewed with 'extreme caution.' This is due to a number of factors. ... One is, obviously, the prevailing atmosphere of fear. This is a regime which has a highly developed security structure. ... When someone is stopped on a street in Uzbekistan and asked to give his or her opinion about government policies or living standards in the country, there is a very slim chance that they will openly criticize the government without fearing the possible consequences of their action, which could include being detained or even jailed.[666]

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[662] Dubnov, "'L'Etat, C'Est Lui!'" 124.

[663] Ibid., 123-124.

[664] "Karimov's Meaningless Win," *Economist,* January 2, 2008.

[665] Farangis Najibullah, "Uzbekistan: Poll Says Youth 'Satisfied' Despite Scarce Jobs," *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty,* November 26, 2007.

[666] Ibid. Ironically, the results of a recent survey conducted *Gallup International* in 2011 ranked Uzbekistan "13th out of 58 in terms of the happiness of its population." For more info see "Uzbekistan is a Nation of Happy People," *Uznews.net,* February 7, 2012.

### 3.2.3. Karimov's Discourse on Radical Islam and Islamist Extremism

#### 3.2.3.1. Domestic Audience

##### 3.2.3.1.1. The Need for Security and Stability

President Karimov has often stressed the importance of having a strong executive body to preserve stability in the country. Karimov said that for stability, he was "prepared to pay any price, however high."[667] Indeed, in Tashkent, the billboards on which Karimov's words, "Stability is the treasure house of the Uzbek people and must be preserved" are written.[668] "Karimov ... has promoted a 'cult of stability' by claiming that his rule, even if considered harsh by some, is the only way to ensure social and inter-ethnic harmony in the country."[669] As an author asserts, "The present government has attributed the prevailing stability directly to its own policies, with the implicit assumption that a different leadership style might well have engendered chaos and bloodshed."[670]

Discourse based on peace and stability requires a real or imaginary enemy. For Karimov, this enemy is originated from Islamist threat. He said the following: "Today, when humanity has entered the 21st century, religious fanaticism and extremism represent a social evil threatening peace and progress on Earth."[671] In his book, he wrote, "History testifies that extremist and fundamentalist movements often give rise to serious conflicts that threaten stability and security. ... Such concerns in Uzbekistan point to the need to strengthen our sovereignty and to

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[667] Bohr, *Uzbekistan Politics and Foreign Policy,* 20.

[668] James Bell, "Redefining National Identity in Uzbekistan: Symbolic Tensions in Tashkent's Official Public Landscape," *Cultural Geographies* 6, no. 2 (April 1999): 200.

[669] Kubicek, "Authoritarianism in Central Asia," 32.

[670] Bohr, *Uzbekistan Politics and Foreign Policy,* 29-30.

[671] Andrew F. March, "The Use and Abuse of History: 'National Ideology' as Transcendental Object in Islam Karimov's Ideology of National Independence,'" *Central Asian Survey* 21, no. 4 (2002): 377.

ensure its security."[672] The ruling elites also said to their citizens as well as to international community that political Islam and Islamization of the state was a real threat in Uzbekistan.[673]

In reality, there is a potential for instability led by the Islamist militants who target Karimov's regime. However, the fear of instability has been exploited by Karimov in order to justify his authoritarian policies.[674] Karimov has manipulated "Islamophobia, the need for stability and the promise of welfare" in order to justify his repressive rule.[675] An author says the following:

> The ingrained fear of political Islam, which was labelled 'fundamentalist' or 'Wahhabi,' put the regime at loggerheads with autonomous political factors with an Islamic orientation. The increasingly repressive measures taken against Islamic groups and organisations were justified in terms of national security and political stability.[676]

Indeed, in Uzbekistan, the fundamental freedoms and rights remain under the shadow of extraordinary measures taken in the fight against terrorism. National unity and stability overweight the basic tenets of democracy. Alleging the existence of Islamist threat as a pretext Karimov papers over the cracks in the policies of his government.[677] Indeed, "Extremism was blamed for threatening everything that was good in Uzbekistan. Strict measures and heightened state control over the public domain were presented as a small price to pay for the protection of the national way of life."[678]

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[672] Islam A. Karimov, *Uzbekistan on the Threshold of the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge: Massachusetts, 1998), 19-20.

[673] Akbarzadeh, *Uzbekistan and the United States,* 2.

[674] Bohr, *Uzbekistan Politics and Foreign Policy,* 20.

[675] March, "Use and Abuse of History," 373.

[676] Akbarzadeh, *Uzbekistan and the United States,* 24.

[677] Ibid., 20.

[678] Ibid.

An author criticizes this attitude of the Uzbek government as follows:

> The current government has failed to look for other ways besides the use of torture and violence to counter the extremization of certain strata of the population. ... Failure to provide better living standards and social justice for the population did not push the government to look for alternative ways other than repression and persecution to help lessen the radicalization of Muslims. ... Especially concerned with his own security and unclear about the political climate surrounding him, President Karimov will be reluctant to allow for changes.[679]

National economy has also been affected from the manipulation of the existential threats. Islam Karimov has been reluctant to implement economic policies and postponed economic reforms with the aim of securing political and economic interests of the ruling elite and ensuring social stability.[680] Karimov said that there should have been a balance between safety and economic reforms. The increase in the military expenditures was proved to be right in relation to the restriction of imports and access to foreign exchange in the late 1990s when terrorist attacks increased.[681]

Uzbek foreign policy has been heavily dominated by the "obsession with the Islamic threat" which has been generally overstated by the Uzbek officials and the media. [682] Indeed, the concerns of the Uzbek state were not baseless. The civil war in Tajikistan from 1992 to 1997 had deeply disturbed the Uzbek ruling elites. This war reminded the imminent threat of political Islam that could challenge the Uzbek regime and pervade to the society. In addition to that, the victory of Taliban in Afghanistan persuaded the Uzbek leadership that preventing Islamic fundamentalism would be the top priority of Uzbek foreign policy.[683]

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[679] Ruzaliev, "Islam in Uzbekistan," 25-26.

[680] Blackmoon, *In the Shadow of Russia,* 29.

[681] Ibid., 32.

[682] Akbarzadeh, *Uzbekistan and the United States,* 3.

[683] Ibid., 39.

Karimov used the geographical location of the country and instability in the neighbouring countries as an excuse to implement restrictive policies at home. In his statements, he always blamed external forces and regional security problems for the spread of Islamist extremism and terrorist attacks in Uzbekistan. He said in October 1998 the following:

> What is Uzbekistan supposed to do to maintain stability, freedom and independence in the lawlessness that surrounds us? Who were we supposed to turn to for support when the Taleban [Taliban] were seizing one city after another, making no secret of their euphoria, and threatening to move even further north?[684]

For Karimov, there is a close relation "between his country's slow pace of democratic reform and the dangers of Islamic extremism emanating from its neighbours."[685] In April 2000, Karimov asked the Central Asian leaders the following:

> While war is in progress there [in Afghanistan], while the most dangerous fanatics and bandits are concentrating there, how can we seriously engage in matters of renovation and democratic transformation and how can we calmly create a market economy and integrate into the world economy?[686]

Karimov has certainly benefited from the Uzbek-U.S. cooperation on the fight against terrorism. This cooperation proved Karimov right as the dangers of Islamist extremism were also accepted in the international area.[687] "Karimov was chasing Islamist conspiracies, some real but most of them imagined, when 9/11 [September 11] happened, and his own private war became conglomerated with the Global War on Terror."[688] In July 1999, Karimov said, "The world community is worried about what is going on in and around Afghanistan, notably the rise in international terrorism and extremism, drugs and arms trafficking and the radicalization of

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[684] Everett-Heath, "Instability and Identity," in Everett-Heath, 193.

[685] Akbarzadeh, *Uzbekistan and the United States,* 39.

[686] Ibid.

[687] Ibid., 40.

[688] Shishkin, "Enemy We Need," 42.

Islam."[689] Likewise, in 2003, Karimov supported the U.S. in its war with Iraq and attracted the attention of international community to his country by saying: "If weapons of mass destruction reach terrorists the situation will get out of control. We had this problem for the past eleven years; this is not a problem that can be neglected any longer."[690]

In his speeches and statements, Karimov showed the Islamist networks in the region as the sources of terrorist attacks. For instance, after Tashkent bombings in 1999, while most of the people were discussing who could be responsible for these attacks, Karimov stated the following: "Virtually all of those arrested have undergone training in sabotage in Chechnya, Afghanistan and Tajikistan. They all belong to various terrorist and extremist religious groups such as Hizbollah and Hezb-e Tahrir [Hizb ut-Tahrir] or are supporters of the Wahhabi sect."[691] Karimov accused "religious fanatics" for the attacks and even claimed that Tajik people living in Uzbekistan were trained in Tajikistan.[692] Furthermore, Karimov also denied that "the defeat of the criminals" is victory, because according to him, "they were also Uzbek, albeit Uzbeks whose minds had been poisoned."[693] For Andijan events, Karimov said, "I'm convinced that what happened in Andijan was impossible without serious preparations and the experience gunmen had accumulated in Afghanistan and other hot spots."[694]

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[689] Akbarzadeh, *Uzbekistan and the United States,* 44.

[690] Ibid., 59.

[691] Everett-Heath, "Instability and Identity," in Everett-Heath, 196.

[692] Melvin, *Uzbekistan: Transition to Authoritarianism,* 57.

[693] Nick Megoran, "Framing Andijon, Narrating the Nation: Islam Karimov's Account of the Events of 13 May 2005," *Central Asian Survey* 27, no. 1 (March 2008): 19.

[694] Didier Chaudet, "Islamist Terrorism in Greater Central Asia: The 'Al-Qaedaization' of Uzbek Jihadism," *Russia/NIS Center,* Russie.Nei.Visions no. 35, December 2008, 22.

Karimov considered that the networks of religious groups extended outside the region as well. He said to *Moscow News* the following:

> It's no secret that approximately 500 people from Central Asia are being trained in Pakistani camps, with money that comes from Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and other world centres of Islam. Twenty-year-old men from Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan are sent there; first they are taught religious dogmas, then contemporary forms of terrorist activity, and then they are sent back here, to the Fergana Valley. So what happened there wasn't just a spontaneous act.[695]

Karimov further claimed, "Radical Islam is poised to penetrate Central Asia and ... Wahhabi proselytism from Saudi Arabia is the central threat, together with the Taliban and the United Opposition in Tajikistan."[696] In his speech at a press conference on April 29, 2004, referring to the IMU, Karimov said, "The origins of the March attacks Tashkent and Bukhara are now clearer and ... Remnants of the IMU were responsible for them."[697] He added as follows: "Evidence from people arrested in connection with the attacks-particularly maps allegedly in their possession- showed they came from Pakistan."[698] Following suicide bombings near the U.S. and Israeli embassies in Tashkent on July 30, 2004, the Uzbekistani authorities suspected once again that al-Qa'ida and the IMU cooperated to realize these attacks.[699]

In a recent official visit to his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin, Karimov expressed his concerns on the withdrawal of Western forces from Afghanistan. He said that the withdrawal of western troops from Afghanistan could increase the

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[695] Everett-Heath, "Instability and Identity," in Everett-Heath, 203.

[696] Melvin, *Uzbekistan: Transition to Authoritarianism,* 54.

[697] Naumkin, *Radical Islam in Central Asia*, 118.

[698] Ibid.

[699] Ibid.

threat posed by Islamist extremism, drug trafficking, and the potential of spreading of extremist activities to the neighbouring countries.[700]

By attracting the attention of domestic and international audience to the links between home-grown Islamist organizations and regional and global Islamist networks, Karimov aims to display the severity and urgency of Islamist threat. The search for an enemy outside distracts the attention from the real problems of the country as well as the responsibilities of the current government. Karimov also aims to show that it is very difficult to dismantle terrorist organizations without international cooperation. This international cooperation in the fight against terrorism also legitimizes Karimov's rule at home.

#### 3.2.3.1.2. Towards Muslim Believers

In the post-Soviet era, introducing new "freedom of religious expression," Karimov has proudly presented himself as a Muslim leader to the believers.[701] The revival of Islam among the Uzbek people in this period necessitated the formulation of an official policy towards Islam. As will be examined in the fourth chapter in detail, in these years, Karimov seemed to embrace Islamic values and in order to prove his sincerity he established mosques, restored holy places, even performed the *hajj* (pilgrimage) to Mecca and swore his presidential oath of office on the Qur'an.[702] In his appeal to the public, he frequently referred to the "Allah's wishes" putting his hand on the holy book.[703] In 1992, Karimov wrote, "Islam is the religion of our forefathers, the substance and essence of the Muslims' daily existence."[704] Karimov

[700] "Islam Karimov: NATO Makes Insufficient Efforts to Solve Afghan Issue," *Afghanistan.ru*, June 7, 2012.

[701] Kangas, "Uzbekistan: The Karimov Presidency," in Cummings, 139.

[702] Bohr, *Uzbekistan Politics and Foreign Policy,* 27.

[703] Akbarzadeh, *Uzbekistan and the United States,* 18.

[704] Karagiannis, "Political Islam in the Former Soviet Union," 56.

said in an interview with the Uzbek language daily *Khalq Sozi,* “Islam is the conscience, the essence of life, the very life of our countrymen.”[705]

Almost a year later after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Karimov criticized the immorality and suppression in the Soviet era towards religion: “I must say that the gravest crisis that has befallen us is not economic but moral. The consequences of the destruction of age-old moral principles for ideological reasons will be far more difficult to overcome than the chaos in the economy.”[706] As an expert says, “Islam Karimov in Uzbekistan has regularly referred to Islam in political speeches and interviews, lamenting the destruction during the Soviet years of Islamic culture and ancient moral principles relating to Islam, or more precisely to Uzbek *musulmonchilik* (‘Muslimness’).”[707] Karimov himself said, “The communist ideology- which lacks spirituality, is fanatical and anti-national in character- contributed greatly to the formation of the prerequisites for religious fundamentalism within post-Soviet space.”[708] Therefore, in search of someone to be guilty, Karimov accused the Soviet past for the current problems of the country.

This dramatic change in Karimov’s discourse reflected his need to legitimize his rule in an overwhelmingly Muslim society.[709] “Responding to his opponents who accused him of being a product of the communist nomenclatural system, and in an effort to improve his public image as a defender of the Uzbek nation, President Karimov has actively sponsored the revival of Islam as an Uzbek cultural landmark.”[710] Karimov’s attempt to make Islam more visible in public space also

[705] Akbarzadeh, *Uzbekistan and the United States,* 17-18.

[706] Pottenger, “Civil Society, Religious Freedom,” 60.

[707] Louw, *Everyday Islam,* 33.

[708] Karagiannis, “Political Islam in Uzbekistan,” 275.

[709] Adams, *Spectacular State Culture,* 46.

[710] Yalcin, *Rebirth of Uzbekistan Politics, Economy,* 96.

became the evidence of how the Communist ideology describing religion as "the opiate of the masses" was falsified.[711]

Karimov has changed his discourse not only on Islam but also on nationality that is Uzbekness. Karimov who was known as "a staunch supporter of Moscow's authority" in Soviet times, began to advocate national values after independence.[712] He became "the guardian of the sacred Vatan (motherland), whose fate is intimately linked with that of the current elite."[713] Uzbek government revived and introduced some nationalistic symbols and ideas to the Uzbek society. The ruling elites emphasized pure Muslim-Turkic character of the new Uzbek state and encouraged the people to embrace traditional values.[714] "The Karimov regime has apparently been more confident in 'nationalizing' Islam since it rules over a largely mono-ethnic Sunni population."[715] As Karimov himself said, "The necessities of national culture and spiritual revival, socio-economic and political renovation of the state structure, sovereignty and independence strengthening have brought us to the national independence ideology."[716] Likewise, according to him, "With all its criteria, shape and conditions basing on national spirit, language, customs, ancient traditions of our people, should in the future install in our minds belief, mercy, tolerance, fairness and the great thirst for knowledge."[717]

An expert explains Karimov's position towards Islam and Uzbekness in the early years of independence as follows:

> President Karimov conceded that Islam was an important part of Uzbek heritage and a central pillar of national identity. That was an important factor

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[711] Yalcin, *Rebirth of Uzbekistan Politics, Economy,* 96.

[712] Gleason, *Central Asian States Discovering,* 118.

[713] Kubicek, "Authoritarianism in Central Asia," 32.

[714] Spechler, *Political Economy of Reform,* 30.

[715] Karagiannis, "Political Islam in the Former Soviet Union," 56.

[716] Yalcin, *Rebirth of Uzbekistan Politics, Economy,* 87.

[717] Ibid.

> that contributed to the failure of Soviet efforts to eradicate Islam. The leadership understood that its nation-building enterprise would be incomplete without due attention to Islam and its role Independent Uzbekistan. It, therefore, tried to align itself with the Islamic revival that was sweeping through the country.[718]

Uzbek government sponsored Islamic celebrations and feasts and declared *Qurban bairam (‘id al-qurban)* and *Uruza bairam (‘id al-Fitr)* as national holidays.[719] In this sense, in line with his discourse, Karimov showed that he was ready to take concrete steps on this way. Karimov who considered that the ideological vacuum could be filled only by nationalism, said the following: “The patriotism of Uzbek citizens is a guiding star, a reliable compass pointing to the road of reforms . . . Those who are proud of their country can do much to glorify both their own families and their native land.”[720]

However, according to some scholars, the ideological vacuum has been filled not by nationalism as Karimov expected but Islamist extremism:

> The post-Soviet ideological vacuum has instead been partly filled by political Islam, because its discourse about the establishment of a just society sounds familiar to many Uzbeks after decades of intense Soviet propaganda. In addition, the rise of political Islam has coincided with the rapid growth of religiosity within Uzbek society. ... Notwithstanding the foreign connections, therefore, political Islam in Uzbekistan is indigenous-driven.[721]

While promoting Islamic ideas and values, Karimov who remained suspicious against extremist groups controlled and monitored Islamic practices and Islamist organizations in the country.[722] In this sense, as will be discussed in the fourth chapter in detail, by keeping Muslim Spiritual Board and the *muftiate* under control, Uzbekistan maintained old Soviet policy towards Islam.[723] “The regime tolerates

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[718] Akbarzadeh, *Uzbekistan and the United States,* 17.

[719] Ibid., 17-18.

[720] Karagiannis, “Political Islam in Uzbekistan,” 275.

[721] Karagiannis, “Political Islam in the Former Soviet Union,” 58.

[722] Bohr, *Uzbekistan Politics and Foreign Policy,* 27.

[723] Spechler, *Political Economy of Reform,* 85-86.

non-official Islam throughout the country as long as dissenting Muslims do not get involved in politics."[724]

In his statements, Karimov stressed the importance of preserving the right of religious as well as non-religious groups to express themselves. He encouraged "freedom of religion" in his country saying, "Every individual has the right to hold his or her own opinion and beliefs, to perform religious rites and rituals. Religion today as a spiritual force facilitates the process of purification by exposing lies and hypocracy [sic] and promoting high moral principles."[725] However, he also advocated the right of secular thinking, believing that "the interaction between secular and religious thinking will promote 'the richness, variety and development of the human race.'"[726] Likewise, Karimov said, "We reject outright extremism and fanaticism in religion. We also oppose the use of religion for political goals. Our religion should be rid of fanaticism and extremism. We are fighting fanaticism and the discredit of Islam rather than religion."[727]

It is, therefore, possible to argue that Islam has a major political importance for Karimov. However, for him, making policy decisions regarding Islam is not easy. "On one side the government had to symbolise the close ties between the national culture and religion through the 'rebirth of Uzbekistan.' ... Karimov wanted to present himself as the champion of this rebirth, but on the other side he has had to confront the Islamic tradition in his country."[728] As a matter of fact, as Karimov wrote in his book, "At present and in the future people of Uzbekistan do not want either to renew the sad experience of the Soviet era or to succumb to the new

[724] Spechler, *Political Economy of Reform,* 86.

[725] Pottenger, "Civil Society, Religious Freedom," 65.

[726] Ibid.

[727] Everett-Heath, "Instability and Identity," in Everett-Heath, 196.

[728] Yalcin, *Rebirth of Uzbekistan Politics, Economy,* 96.

religious extremism that we have witnessed during our first years of independence."[729]

It has been claimed that the Uzbek policy towards Islam has not been consistent. For example, according to an expert:

> The post-Soviet Uzbek government's policy towards Islam has been ambiguous. On the one hand it has made use of Islam as a means of nation-building. In books, speeches and interviews, Uzbekistan's President Islam Karimov has persistently pointed out that religious piety is fundamental to the Uzbek national character. On the other hand, the government has cracked down on Islam in the name of the War on Terrorism, identifying Islamic 'extremism' or 'Wahhabism' as the greatest threat to the security of the nation.[730]

Another expert also agrees with this view by saying, "The government in Tashkent is focusing on the opposite, destabilizing the elements of 'Islamic rebirth.' It has declared 'ethnic and religious extremism' the main enemies of the state and tends to label all movements or perceive them as potentially 'dangerous extremists.'" This expert also stresses the ambiguity of Karimov's regime: "There is also ambivalence between the fear that the government could be a threat to religiously motivated political movements in Central Asia, and its desire to take advantage of this for its own political goals, especially for legitimizing its authoritarian rule."[731]

### 3.2.3.1.3. Towards Islamist Extremists

From the very beginning, Karimov had shown no tolerance towards anyone who could threaten social order and peace. He said in July 1992, "It is necessary to straighten out the brains of one hundred people in order to preserve the lives of thousands."[732] However, by the late 1990s, both in terms of his discourse and policies, Karimov became even more intolerant towards the opposition, especially those people who supported religious extremism. Personal experiences and

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[729] Karimov, *Uzbekistan on the Threshold,* 23.

[730] Louw, *Everyday Islam,* 8.

[731] Yalcin, *Rebirth of Uzbekistan Politics, Economy,* 96-97.

[732] Chaudet, "Islamist Terrorism in Greater Central Asia," 10.

concerns always play important roles in shaping the policy decisions of the leaders. As such, Karimov's counterproductive response to Islamists was the outcome of the President's own security needs after the assassination attempts of the militants in 1999.[733] Having the aim to attract the attention to the severity and urgency of the religious extremism that threatens stability in the country, Karimov told in a parliament speech broadcasted on Uzbek radio, "Islamist guerrillas 'must be shod in the head' ... 'If necessary I'll shot them myself, if you lack the resolve.'"[734] In 1999, Karimov also said the following: "Any father of a militant would be arrested" and added "If my child chose such a path, I myself would rip off his head."[735] "In a less demagogic fashion, Karimov has explained how he 'will never give the go-ahead to those who are today trying by any means to introduce political Islam, religious extremism and fanaticism.'"[736]

An author evaluates such speeches of Karimov as follows:

> According to Karimov, they [militant groups] want to impose 'alien spiritual ideals and values' that will disrupt Uzbek society and ultimately return Uzbekistan to 'medieval obscurantism'. He argues that Islamic militants, calling themselves 'fighters for faith,' attempt to justify their political activism by preaching a perverted understanding of Islam. Karimov has condemned both international terrorism and religious extremism and fundamentalism and declared them to be the greatest threats to Uzbek stability and sovereignty.[737]

Article 31 of the Constitution of Uzbekistan declares, "Freedom of conscience is guaranteed to all. Everyone shall have the right to profess or not to profess any religion. Any compulsory imposition of religion shall be impermissible."[738] In Article 6, it is stated as follows: "Religious organizations and associations shall be

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[733] Geiss, "State and Regime Change," in Berg and Kreikemeyer, 34.

[734] Bohr, *Uzbekistan Politics and Foreign Policy,* 29.

[735] Johnson, *Oil, Islam and Conflict,* 14.

[736] Everett-Heath, "Instability and Identity," in Everett-Heath, 194.

[737] Pottenger, "Civil Society, Religious Freedom," 68.

[738] "Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan," *The Governmental Portal of the Republic of Uzbekistan,* <http://www.gov.uz/en/constitution/> (Retrieved on 27.09.2012).

separated from the state and equal before law. The state shall not interfere with the activity of religious associations."[739] Implementing some extraordinary policies against Islamists, Karimov violated these articles, and more importantly the spirit of the Constitution.[740]

Even in 2005 Andijan events, where thousands of Uzbeks came together to protest Karimov's regime, Karimov argued that this was an "Islamist uprising" and used armed troops to stop the citizens. According to the Uzbek official sources 189 people, according to the U.S. State Department 700 people died in this event.[741] Andijan events became the symbol of how Karimov tried to eliminate all extremists in his country, even at the expense of innocent people.

The response of Karimov to the Andijan events was closely related to how he perceived these events. According to him:

> In Andijan, fundamentalist extremist groups tried to carry out their plan. ... They hoped to achieve in Uzbekistan what the crowds had done in Kyrgyzstan, where the local and central governments proved to be weak. The fundamentalists attempted to use their poisoned rhetoric to rally youth into capturing Andijan's administrative buildings and, in this manner, create a so-called 'Islamic caliphate.' The fundamentalists hoped that the local population would support them. But no one came out to the square, no one supported them.[742]

An expert draws attention to such words of Karimov regarding the Andijan events as follows:

> A key framing device that Karimov uses is to define the Andijon [Andijan] incident instigators as 'criminals,' 'gunmen' and 'terrorists.' He insists at the outset that they must be named 'armed criminals,' and regularly refers to their actions as 'criminal.' However, as the narrative progresses, they are increasingly called 'terrorists' and 'religious extremists.' These terms are, of course, very different: a terrorist or religious extremist is presumably

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[739] "Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan," *The Governmental Portal of the Republic of Uzbekistan,* <http://www.gov.uz/en/constitution/> (Retrieved on 27.09.2012).

[740] Karagiannis, "Political Islam in Uzbekistan," 263.

[741] McGlinchey, *Chaos, Violence, Dynasty, Politics,* 56.

[742] Ibid., 122.

> motivated by ideology, a criminal by personal gain. Karimov resolves this tension by framing the Andijon [Andijan] incident as a criminal plot with outside backers whose motive is to exploit instability and chaos to seize power and introduce a criminal state.[743]

Karimov also described the Andijan events as "an illegitimate attempt to subvert the constitutional order, its proponents doubly culpable for deliberately bypassing constitutional channels of political action and legal redress."[744] However, as mentioned above, in his fight against terrorism, Karimov himself violated human rights and religious "freedom."[745] An expert says the following:

> Karimov's obsession with and response to real and perceived threats to Uzbekistan's national security by Islamic militants may ultimately undermine his social experiment in a liberal or decent civil society and freedom of religion in a way that the militants are incapable of achieving on their own.[746]

Many analysts argue that depoliticized opposition in Uzbekistan came together under Islamist organizations and that the repressive policies of Karimov have become counterproductive. "The failure of the Karimov government to distinguish between moderate Islamist forces in Uzbekistan and more radical elements may tend to radicalize larger and larger segments of the religious community."[747] Likewise, "The Uzbek government has also taken a serious political risk by putting the entire opposition in the same basket as 'fundamentalists,' and 'extremists' and 'nationalists.'"[748] As such, "The government's policy of suppressing all dissent is counterproductive and will simply end up creating more militant operations that the authorities already claim to be fighting."[749] "The government's anti-Islamic policies may in fact be catalysing the politicization of Islam, with the result that clerics and

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[743] Megoran, "Framing Andijon, Narrating the Nation," 20.

[744] Ibid., 25.

[745] Pottenger, "Civil Society, Religious Freedom," 73.

[746] Ibid.

[747] Ruzaliev, "Islam in Uzbekistan," 22.

[748] Yalcin, *Rebirth of Uzbekistan Politics, Economy,* 58.

[749] Ibid.

other believers who did not formerly regard themselves as opponents of the regime may one day find themselves in the forefront of a resistance movement."[750]

#### 3.2.3.2. International Audience

In order to attract the attention of international community, especially the West, Karimov consistently stressed the threat posed by political Islam and by doing so, he justified extraordinary measures of his government mostly taken at the expense of fundamental rights and freedoms.[751]

Despite some problems with Western powers on critical issues, especially human rights records of Uzbekistan, for Karimov, having recognition in the international area is important. In one of his interviews, Karimov said, "For many years, Uzbekistan was almost unknown to the world community, though not through its own fault. I am glad that now Uzbekistan is successfully and with confidence joining the world community."[752] For Karimov, Uzbekistan has become known in the international area thanks to its cooperation with the U.S. during the Afghanistan War:

> I am proud to mention that during its short history of independence, Uzbekistan has proved to be a reliable partner and an active supporter of progressive ideas, general democratic norms. It is evident that the country's activity to facilitate the resolution of complex international conflicts (Afghanistan, Tajikistan), form a new system of regional, national and global security (initiated nuclear free zone in Central Asia), oppose international terrorism, drug trafficking, illegal weapons trade, prove that Uzbekistan has got the right to become an estimated and reliable member of the world community.[753]

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[750] Bohr, *Uzbekistan Politics and Foreign Policy,* 30.

[751] Akbarzadeh, *Uzbekistan and the United States,* 2.

[752] Islam Karimov, interview by Central Asian News, http://www.oocities.org/umidn/Umidn/News/interview.htm (accessed September 30, 2012).

[753] Ibid.

Karimov also wrote the following in his book:

> Influential, authoritative and prestigious world figures, who stand against religious fundamentalism in any form, understand the role and importance of Uzbekistan in this common quest for normal, peaceful, mutually beneficial development, and for the coexistence of different cultures and civilizations.[754]

However, the Andijan events revealed that if regime security was at stake Karimov did not hesitate to direct harsh criticisms to the West. As a matter of fact, just before Independence Day in 2005, in a speech given at the monument of the victims of repression, Karimov made the following warning:

> In conditions of direct struggle against international terrorism, some powers try to slander our country. A person who considers himself a true son of this land does not have the right to be indifferent or unconcerned. ... If we live with faith that we have never been worse than others and won't be in the future, if we are convinced that the Uzbek people never has been and never will be dependent, force will never break us. ... All our compatriots should understand correctly what the goals of the lies and slander about Uzbekistan are and have a firm position with respect to events and independent judgment and views. The aim of the information war following the Andijon [Andijan] events is firstly to lower the prestige of Uzbekistan in the world.[755]

As seen above, the relation between the West and Uzbekistan is far from being consistent. Karimov is so preoccupied with the Islamic threat that he even determines his foreign policies and shapes his agenda according to it. However, it should be noted that, despite these up and downs, just as it has happened at home, Karimov has benefited from securitizing Islamist extremism in the international arena. By doing so, he has continued to manipulate the social, economic and political problems of his country without finding concrete solutions to them and saved himself from the criticism of the West to some extent. In this sense, although the audiences are different in domestic and international levels, the rhetoric used by Karimov to securitize issues and collect the benefits remains mostly the same.

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[754] Karimov, *Uzbekistan on the Threshold,* 28.

[755] Adams, *Spectacular State Culture,* 195-196.

### 3.3. Conclusion

Both Kazakh President Nazarbayev and Uzbek President Karimov are the strongest political figures in their countries. They have demonstrated their power by maintaining their rule and gathering public support for more than 20 years. To remain at their offices, they have followed quite a similar way: establishing authority and control in all segments and sectors of the country, implementing very authoritarian policies, strengthening the executive branch and institutionalizing their power. However, most importantly, in the post-Soviet period, with the aim of securitizing some threatening issues for state and regime security, both of these leaders have showed their power of speech act through their influential public discourses. For Kazakhstan, this issue was inter-ethnic instability and separatism, for Uzbekistan, it was Islamist extremism.

Furthermore, both Nazarbayev and Karimov have depicted political stability as the treasure of their nation and their personal rule as the guarantor of this stability. While in Kazakhstan, the feeling of being safe seems ensured under the rule of the popular leader, Nazarbayev, to a great extent, in Uzbekistan, the people seem to enjoy a limited safety under the rule of Karimov. However, in both of these cases, to changing degrees, the leaders were seen as the protectors of the relative peace and stability by their people. Indeed, what are secured in both of these countries are mostly the interests of the ruling elites.

While securitizing some issues, notwithstanding whether they are based on real or perceived threats, both of these leaders have used their authoritarian rule, charismatic leadership, and their positive public image. For both of them, there have been two different but interrelated audiences at different levels: domestic and international. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the securitizing agent and audience negotiate on the security act so that the securitizing agent receives the consent of the audience to break off normal political rules.[756] In both of these countries, these audiences, especially domestic ones, have been eager to accept the securitizing moves initiated by the securitizing actors, Nazarbayev and Karimov.

[756] Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework,* 26.

In Kazakhstan, in the domestic sphere, there are two major audience groups: the ethnic Kazakhs and Russians. In a multi-ethnic society with a large Kazakh and Russian population, Nazarbayev has to be very careful not to alienate one of these ethnic groups. Therefore, due to the need for balancing these different audiences, Nazarbayev inevitably made some inconsistent statements and speeches in the past. In Uzbekistan, likewise, Karimov has to find a balance between devout Muslims and secular people as two different audiences in his country. However, for Karimov, ensuring this balance is not as important as it is for Nazarbayev. Karimov does not even make any difference between ordinary citizens and Islamist extremists. To consolidate his authoritarian rule and secure his regime, Karimov usually labelled all Muslims as extremists. In both of these countries, the discourses as well as the policies of the leaders towards their existential threats became harsher and more repressive more so for Uzbekistan.

Nazarbayev and Karimov, as the securitizing actors, have received the consent of their domestic audiences, and as such obtained the right to break off normal political rules to overcome their existential threats. In this sense, both Nazarbayev and Karimov have benefited from the securitization process at home and to some extent, in abroad. In domestic politics, this has provided an opportunity to cover the weaknesses and inabilities of the current government in handling the problematic issues in a more peaceful and comprehensive way. Besides, in the process of securitization, these leaders have justified their extraordinary measures taken at the expense of freedoms and rights.

In the international area, especially in the Uzbek case, the securitization of Islamist extremism following September 11 has provided a degree of international recognition to the country. For Karimov, this pragmatic approach aimed to benefit from the atmosphere created by the attacks. In fact, Karimov, afterwards, did not follow a consistent line in its relations with the foreign powers, mainly the West after September 11. However, in Kazakhstan, the existence or perception of security threats gave impetus to political leaders to make further progress and gain more prestige in the international area. Nazarbayev, almost in every speech, has

underlined the importance of Kazakhstan for the international order and declared the eagerness of Astana to integrate with the larger international community.

In the next chapter, in line with these discourses mentioned above, security policies of Kazakhstan towards nationalist and separatist movements and security policies of Uzbekistan towards radical Islam at both domestic and regional/global level will be examined in detail.

# CHAPTER IV

# SECURITY POLICIES OF KAZAKHSTAN AND UZBEKISTAN

In this chapter, the security policies of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan are analyzed at the domestic and regional levels. In terms of domestic security policies, for Kazakhstan, the policies towards nationalist and separatist movements; for Uzbekistan, the policies towards radical Islam are examined. In terms of regional security policies, for both of these states, the membership of regional security organizations, mainly the CSTO and SCO and the bilateral relations with major powers, Russia, China and the U.S. are also analyzed with a specific emphasis on the influence of leaders on the emergence and implementation of these policies. In the last part, a short conclusion for this chapter is provided.

## 4.1. Security Policies of Kazakhstan towards Nationalist and Separatist Movements

Security policies of the Kazakh state towards nationalist and separatist movements are derived from the existence of ethnic groups, mainly Russians in the country. However, as a response to this threat, nationalism among Kazakhs, which has been promoted since independence, has become a crucial part of these policies. Therefore, the security policies of the Kazakh state focus on both eliminating any separatist threat from the country and removing any obstacle to strengthening nationalism among the Kazakh population. In this context, this part examines the main components of nation-building process and the domestic measures taken against any separatist movements. Firstly, domestic security policies of Kazakhstan towards Kazakh nation-building process and Russian separatism are analyzed. Secondly, regional security policies of Kazakhstan are examined.

### 4.1.1. Domestic Security Policies of Kazakhstan towards Kazakh Nation Building and Russian Separatism

Kazakh leader Nursultan Nazarbayev has certainly played an important role in the nation-building process in Kazakhstan. As a leader generally seen as successful "in confronting the challenges of nation-building, maintaining Kazakhstan's national integrity, avoiding ethnic conflict, providing economic prosperity, and ensuring international legitimacy" Nazarbayev has used his charismatic leadership to establish and reinforce authority in the country.[757] Indeed, over the last twenty years, these achievements have provided Nazarbayev an opportunity to strengthen his rule across the country.[758]

In multi-ethnic and multi-cultural Kazakhstan, a very difficult nation-building process lies behind the success of Nazarbayev. As Bohr says, "The less ethnically homogenous the population of a Central Asian state and the authoritarian its system of rule, the greater the controversy engendered by its nationalising policies."[759] Indeed, contrary to Uzbek and Turkmen leaders who were able to affect the executive branch and did not face any serious difficulties while enacting laws, Kazakhstan always became a scene for some public debate when the state made some initiatives for passing laws related to ethnic issues.[760]

The multi-ethnic character of the new Kazakh state has worried the Kazak leadership about the fragmentation of the country. One of Nazarbayev's speeches given back in 1991 explicitly reflected this fear. He said, "God grant that no one should stir up Kazakhstan on ethnic grounds. It would be far worse than

[757] Rico Isaacs, "'Papa' Nursultan Nazarbayev and the Discourse of Charismatic Leadership and Nation-Building in Post-Soviet Kazakhstan," *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* 10, no. 3 (2010): 439.

[758] Ibid., 441.

[759] Graham Smith, Vivien Law, Andrew Wilson, Annette Bohr, and Edward Allworth, *Nation Building in Post-Soviet Borderlands: The Politics of National Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 141.

[760] Ibid.

Yugoslavia."[761] "Nazarbayev, who noticeably seeks to find the middle path between both Russian and Kazakh nationalistic extremists, has made it publicly clear that any threat to the territorial integrity of Kazakhstan will provoke bloodshed."[762] Nazarbayev outlawed the Kazakh nationalist party *Alash* and the movement *Zheltoqsan* (December) that discouraged Russian emigration. The activities of some separatist groups, such as the Cossacks, were also banned in this period. Pioneers of these pro-Kazakh and pro-Russian groups were jailed and the authorities used brutal force against them. The suppression of the Kazakh state towards any opposition movements continued throughout 1990s.[763]

Having the aim to prevent any possibility of ethnic conflict, Nazarbayev's nation-building campaign has been based on his commitment to a multi-ethnic and multi-religious Kazakhstan. This aim has been an effective policy goal for the Kazakh state not only within but also outside the country. As explained by an expert:

> Since 1991, the President has stressed how the multi-cultural and multi-confessional nature of Kazakhstan determined the inescapable path of civic responsibility and cross-national state identity. This language of internationalism served the legitimation process at home and abroad. At home, it was directed to the non-titular groups who demographically outnumbered the Kazakhs. Abroad, it was primarily intended to reassure Moscow that Nazarbayev recognized the rights of Russia's co-ethnics abroad.[764]

However, while on the one hand Nazarbayev appreciated the ethnic and cultural diversity of his country, on the other hand, he implemented very nationalistic policies aiming to promote Kazakh language, history and identity.[765] Although the Kazakh state seemed to be embracing all other ethnic groups living in the country, official ideology of the Kazakh state was mainly based on the Kazakhsness. In the 1993 Constitution, it was declared, "The Republic of Kazakhstan as the form of

[761] Diener, *Homeland Conceptions,* 21.

[762] Everett-Heath, "Instability and Identity," in Everett-Heath, 188.

[763] Kubicek, "Authoritarianism in Central Asia," 35.

[764] Cummings, *Kazakhstan: Power and the Elite,* 80.

[765] Isaacs, "'Papa' Nursultan Nazarbayev," 439.

statehood of the self-determined Kazakh nation shall provide equal rights for all citizens."[766] In the 1995 Constitution, in the preamble, it was mentioned Kazak people as follows: "We, the people of Kazakhstan, united by a common historical destiny, constituting statehood on the native Kazakh land."[767] Although the 1995 Constitution seems to be more inclusive for ethnic minorities, as an author argues, "By defining the territory as 'Kazakh Land' other groups are furtively characterized as subject to the titular community's hospitality."[768]

For many Kazakh officials, post-Soviet Kazakhstan is seen as the Kazakh land which hosts ethnic Russians as well. As an author says, "The process of nationalizing social space has clearly been Kazakh-centric, and while rarely overtly exclusive, has clearly contributed, over the past decade, to the institutionalization of this 'host-state' structure."[769] The same author also says the following:

> The Nazarbayev regime has operated in a dualistic socio-political environment, wherein a public rhetoric of civic nationalism is often countered by Kazakh nationalists compelling the state to enact laws and policies promoting the titular community as, at best, 'first among equals' and, at worst, the only group truly belonging within the new state.[770]

Three important policy goals have been observed in the post-Soviet politics of Kazakhstan: "the retention of a unitary rather than federal state; the simultaneous promulgation of a civic Kazakhstani and an ethnic Kazakh identity; and the prioritisation of stability and authoritarianism over democratisation and pluralism."[771] These goals were to reinforce the national identity centred on Kazakhness and strengthen the authority of the Kazakh rule. To achieve them,

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[766] Rett R. Ludwikowski, *Constitution-Making in the Region of Former Soviet Dominance* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 443.

[767] Diener, *Homeland Conceptions,* 23.

[768] Ibid.

[769] Ibid.

[770] Alexander C. Diener, "Kazakhstan's Kin State Diaspora: Settlement Planning and the Oralman Dilemma," *Europe-Asia Studies* 57, no. 2 (March 2005): 330.

[771] Sally N. Cummings, "Independent Kazakhstan: Managing Heterogeneity," in *Oil, Transition and Security in Central Asia,* ed. Sally N. Cummings (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 27.

Nazarbayev launched Kazakhization policy in Kazakhstan. The nationalist discourses of the new Kazakh state were embodied and reinforced in this policy. Through Kazakhization policy, the Kazakh state aims to provide gradually some social, political and economic gains for the ethnic Kazakhs who have been disadvantageous under the Soviet rule.[772] The cornerstones of this Kazakhization policy were explained as follows:

> Promoting the revival and development of the Kazakh language and Kazakh traditional values, encouraging the immigration of ethnic Kazakhs from abroad, giving tacit support, at least unofficially, to the emigration of non-Kazakhs, and building a state institutional structure consisting mostly of Kazakhs.[773]

In addition to the aspects mentioned above, economic development was also an important component of nationalizing policies in Kazakhstan.[774] The main policies to realize Kazakhization are examined below.

#### 4.1.1.1. The Revival of Kazakh History

From the very beginning of independence, Kazakh officials have frequently stressed on 500-year long tradition of Kazakh statehood going back to the establishment of the first Kazakh Khanate. A scholar summarizes the importance of Kazakhness for the Kazakh state as follows:

> The 'Kazakhness' of the state was always a part of official ideology. Just as the 1993 constitution claimed its first political authority to arise from 'the Kazakh people,' so the 1996 statement of ideology bases itself on the claim that: 'The territory of the republic of Kazakhstan... has since the most ancient of times been settled by large empires and separate khanates of the Turkic peoples, the ancestors of the Kazakh people. Since the fifteenth century this was the territory of an independent government, the Kazakh khanate, the world's first state organization of Kazakhs.'[775]

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[772] Zardykhan, "Russians in Kazakhstan," 72.

[773] Ibid.

[774] Isaacs, "'Papa' Nursultan Nazarbayev," 440.

[775] Olcott, *Kazakhstan Unfulfilled Promise,* 65.

The 1916 uprising against tsarist conscription and 1986 events that broke out due to the appointment of a Russian to lead the Kazakh Communist Party are portrayed as the important attempts of Kazakhs for liberation against the colonial rule.[776] During the celebration of the fifth anniversary of independent Kazakhstan in Almaty, Nursultan Nazarbayev emphasized the 1986 "nationalist riots" in Kazakhstan in an attempt to create a national myth for the Kazakh nation. In line with the same aim, the independence day of Kazakhstan was declared as December 12, the day when these riots broke out.[777]

During the 1990s, the Kazakh state spent significant amounts of money for the celebration of prominent figures in Kazakh history. These figures were used to display how ethnic Kazakhs who had close links with Russian culture had been enriched by foreign cultures. By doing so, the Kazakh state also aimed to show the internationalist character of Kazakh culture.[778] "The 150th birthday of Abay Kunanbai, known for his translations of Pushkin and Goethe into Kazakh, the celebrations of Chokhan Valikhanov, the Russified Kazakh ethnographer, and Dzhambul, the talented musician and improviser who sang paeans to Joseph Stalin" were among these figures used to realize this aim.[779]

#### 4.1.1.2. Language

One of the most important attempts of Kazakh officials in the post-Soviet order to assert the national character of the newly established state was the language policy. In Kazakhstan, just after independence, "cultural-literary elites, public figures and bureaucrats evoked slogans such as 'a nation cannot exist without its language' as they validated their claims with reference to Lenin's promise of national self-determination and protection to small languages and nations."[780] Kazakh elites

[776] Kuzio, "History, Memory and Nation-building," 258.

[777] Ibid.

[778] Schatz, "Framing Strategies and Non-Conflict," 80.

[779] Ibid.

[780] Dave, *Kazakhstan: Ethnicity, Language, Power,* 98.

understood the survival of Kazakh language as the survival of the nation. Using the metaphor of "language death," they asserted, "If the indigenous language is not recognized on its historical homeland, where else does it have a chance to survive? ... Russian is the state language of Russia: hence it cannot become the state language of Kazakhstan."[781]

In 1989, a new language law that had declared Kazakh language as the state language was adopted by Kazakhstan's Supreme Soviet. With the introduction of the same law, Russian became the language of inter-ethnic communication. This law also stressed that no one could be discriminated on the basis of his/her lack of proficiency in state language.[782] This language law was the main reason behind the Russian exodus from Kazakhstan.[783] However, it should also be noted that in those years, the other Soviet republics had also declared these kinds of language laws that made the language of titular nations the official language. In this sense, this law followed a general trend that most of the former Soviet states pursued after they gained independence and, in this sense, could not be accepted as a unique nationalist attempt in Kazakhstan.[784]

*The Decree on Education* adopted on January 18, 1992 stressed the status of Kazakh language as the state language and announced that all state and official communication would be in Kazakh by 1995.[785] The 1993 Constitution reiterated that Russian should be the language of inter-ethnic communication and Kazakh would be the state language. According to the 1993 Constitution, having full command of the Kazakh language was the requirement to be elected as President.[786] Contrary to the former constitution, the 1995 Constitution granted important rights

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[781] Dave, *Kazakhstan: Ethnicity, Language, Power,* 100.

[782] Pal Kolsto, "Nation-building and Language Standardisation in Kazakhstan," in *Oil, Transition and Security in Central Asia,* ed. Sally N. Cummings (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 123.

[783] Warikoo, "Russians in Post-Soviet Central Asia," in Atabaki and Mehendale, 76.

[784] Dave, *Kazakhstan: Ethnicity, Language, Power,* 99.

[785] Ibid., 100-101.

[786] Kolsto, "Nation-building and Language Standardisation," in Cummings, 124.

to Russian population. "It de-emphasized ethnic Kazakh historic rights over the new republic's territory and raised the status of Russian from the language of inter-ethnic communication to official language."[787]

*The Concept for the Language Policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan* proposed in 1996 allowed the use of Russian language in public space while making the use of Kazakh language compulsory for official use. According to this Concept, any communication from public offices should be conducted in Kazakh as the state language.[788] A new version of language law that worried non-Kazakhs was discussed in the Kazakhstani parliament, the *Majilis,* in the autumn of 1996. According to this draft language law, all ethnic Kazakhs had to learn Kazakh by January 2001 while ethnic Russians, with the five years-long additional time, were obliged to learn Kazakh until 2006. However, as the criticisms increased towards these obligations, they were removed from the final version of the law when it finally passed in the summer of 1997.[789] This new law declared, "Every citizen of Kazakhstan was duty-bound to learn the state language, since 'this is absolutely necessary for the consolidation of the people of Kazakhstan'" while also stating that Russian could be used in all organs of the state and in local administration.[790] According to this law, official bodies of the Kazakh state would use Kazakh and at least 50% of all television and radio broadcasting would be in Kazakh language. Although Kazakh nationalists suggested putting a sentence stating that Russian would be used only when necessary, this was not accepted.[791] In addition to them, for those who want to study in the universities, the government even made obligatory to pass an entrance exam where the history of ethnic Kazakhs was asked.[792]

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[787] Cummings, "Independent Kazakhstan: Managing Heterogeneity," in Cummings, 28.

[788] Kolsto, "Nation-building and Language Standardisation," in Cummings, 124.

[789] Warikoo, "Russians in Post-Soviet Central Asia," in Atabaki and Mehendale, 76.

[790] Kolsto, "Nation-building and Language Standardisation," in Cummings, 124.

[791] Dave, *Kazakhstan: Ethnicity, Language, Power,* 102.

[792] Diener, *Homeland Conceptions,* 32.

The 1999 national census, the first national census conducted by independent Kazakhstan, "put a seal of legitimacy and success upon Kazakhstan's language policy."[793] According to many Kazakh officials, this census indicated the success of the Kazakh state in terms of displaying the majority status of Kazakh and successful implementation of state language policy in Kazakhstan.[794]

**Table 2** Proficiency in the state language (Kazakh) and in Russian among major nationalities in the 1999 census of Kazakhstan (in percentage)[795]

| Nationality | Proficiency in language | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Of my nationality | Of other nationality | |
| | | Kazakh | Russian |
| **Kazakh** | 99.4 | - | 75.0 |
| **Russian** | 100.0 | 14.9 | - |
| **Ukrainian** | 16.1 | 12.6 | 99.5 |
| **Belarusian** | 13.5 | 9.0 | 99.4 |
| **German** | 21.8 | 15.4 | 99.3 |
| **Uzbek** | 97.0 | 80.0 | 59.2 |
| **Tatar** | 37.1 | 63.6 | 96.9 |
| **Uighur** | 81.3 | 80.5 | 76.1 |
| **Korean** | 25.8 | 28.8 | 97.7 |

As of 2012, the language issue has not been resolved in Kazakhstan. Some people suggest bilingualism in the country. Some others argue that Kazakhstan could be divided into two as North and South Kazakhstan, and the former would be incorporated to the Russian Federation. However, the Kazakh authorities harshly

[793] Diener, *Homeland Conceptions,* 112.

[794] Ibid.

[795] Dave, *Kazakhstan: Ethnicity, Language, Power,* 113.

responded to these kinds of suggestions and did not tolerate any separatist activities in its territories.[796]

#### 4.1.1.3. Repatriation of Kazakhs

The Kazakh state encouraged ethnic Kazakhs to immigrate to Kazakhstan throughout the 1990s. At that time, 4.5 million ethnic Kazakhs were living outside the country, mostly in China, Uzbekistan, Russia, Mongolia, Turkmenistan, Afghanistan and Turkey.[797] In the Resolution of the 1992, Nazarbayev called "all Kazakhs to unite under a single flag on the soil of Kazakhstan."[798] Similarly, *the Concept for the Formation of the State Identity of the Republic of Kazakhstan* declares, "Kazakhstan is the ethnic centre of the Kazakhs. They have no other state entity anywhere in the world that would show concern for the preservation and development of Kazakhs as an ethnic group."[799] The Kazakh state called the people who returned to Kazakhstan, *Oralmandar*. This term comes from the Kazakhs verb *oralu* (to return). The legal use of this term is reserved only for "the Kazakhs coming to Kazakhstan from the far abroad and within the structure of a quota system established by the Kazakhstani government in 1993."[800]

Repatriation of Kazakhs has been seen as an important step for boosting Kazakh presence in the country and realizing Kazakhization policy. Kazakh state spent huge amounts of money and provided housing and employment to encourage Kazakhs living abroad to return to the country.[801] In the official documents, the statistics of Kazakh immigration are given as follows:

> Between 1991 and 1996, 154,941 ethnic Kazakhs immigrated to Kazakhstan: 84,828 (55%) from Russia, 65,126 (40%) from Mongolia; 4,617 from Iran;

[796] Kolsto, "Nation-building and Language Standardisation," in Cummings, 126.

[797] Zardykhan, "Russians in Kazakhstan," 75.

[798] Diener, "Kazakhstan's Kin State Diaspora," 339.

[799] Ibid.

[800] Ibid., 328.

[801] Zardykhan, "Russians in Kazakhstan," 75.

> and the remainder from China, Afghanistan and other countries. According to the Migration and Demographic Agency of Kazakhstan, from 1992 to 1 January 1998, about 39,500 families or 170,000 ethnic Kazakhs moved to Kazakhstan from abroad. ... According to ... [another] official estimate, the number of repatriated Kazakhs who immigrated to Kazakhstan for permanent residence between 1991 and 2001 reached 500,000.[802]

As can be seen from Table 3, quota for Kazakhs who returned from abroad gradually decreased between 1993 and 2001.

**Table 3** Ouota for Kazakh Diasporic Return throughout the 1990s[803]

| Year | Quota-Families | General Estimate of People Based on Number of Families | % Fulfillment |
|---|---|---|---|
| **1993** | 10,000 | 60,000 | 76.5 |
| **1994** | 7,000 | 42,000 | 51.5 |
| **1995** | 5,000 | 30,000 | 66.6 |
| **1996** | 4,000 | 24,000 | 63.6 |
| **1997** | 2,200 | 13,200 | 56.0 |
| **1998** | 3,000 | 18,000 | 53.4 |
| **1999** | 500 | 3,000 | 56.0 |
| **2000** | 500 | 3,000 | 91.6 |
| **2001** | 600 | 3,600 | |

#### 4.1.1.4. Dual Citizenship

Dual citizenship is another important issue in post-Soviet Kazakhstan. According to Cummings, "Neither a state (Kazakhstani) nor a national (Kazakh) identity was readily available to the new nation- and state-builders."[804] The debates on dual citizenship dominated the agenda of the Kazakh state especially between 1992 and 1994. The main concern of the Kazakh state is the incorporation of Russian-populated northern regions to Russia, and to prevent this, some attempts were made by the Kazakh elites to establish a civic identity embracing the state rather than the

[802] Zardykhan, "Russians in Kazakhstan," 75.

[803] Diener, "Kazakhstan's Kin State Diaspora," 328.

[804] Cummings, "Independent Kazakhstan: Managing Heterogeneity," in Cummings, 28.

nation.[805] However, Kazakh leadership objected the dual citizenship "which it equated with dual loyalty and a possible north-south split."[806] "If the Kazakh government accepted dual citizenship, Russians could obtain legal power to protect their rights and avoid the bureaucratic obstacles of integration."[807] Since 1995, the issue of dual citizenship has been out of the political agenda.[808]

#### 4.1.1.5. Appointment of Kazakhs to Administrative Positions and Key Sectors

It is argued that the nationalizing policies of the Kazakh state have a significant impact at all levels of government, administration and economic infrastructure in the country.[809] In the post-Soviet era, for ethnic Kazaks, Russians were no longer "elder brothers" but were "colonizers."[810] Russians were distanced from the public sector, business, banking and law.[811] Ethnic Kazakhs were appointed to the administrative positions; in some cases even replaced the ethnic Russians.[812] "The nationalizing measures have undoubtedly produced a Kazakhization of personnel. ... Kazakhization is the trigger, rather than the effect, of the rising Kazakh share in the population and the exodus of Russian speakers."[813]

Kazakhs dominated the administrative ranks and political scene in Kazakhstan. In the early years of independence, "Some 80 per cent of Nazarbayev's administrative appointees, including regional governors, were ethnic Kazakhs. With most of the republic's key posts given to Kazakhs, administrative appointments ... do not reflect

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[805] Cummings, "Independent Kazakhstan: Managing Heterogeneity," in Cummings, 27.

[806] Ibid., 28.

[807] Zardykhan, "Russians in Kazakhstan," 74.

[808] Cummings, "Independent Kazakhstan: Managing Heterogeneity," in Cummings, 28.

[809] Dave, *Kazakhstan: Ethnicity, Language, Power,* 151.

[810] Kuzio, "History, Memory and Nation-building," 257.

[811] Ibid.

[812] Dave, *Kazakhstan: Ethnicity, Language, Power,* 151.

[813] Ibid., 152.

the ethnic composition of society."[814] Dave explains the overwhelmingly Kazakh population in the parliament throughout the 1990s with some statistical data:

> Before Kazakhstan's Supreme Soviet (the legislative body inherited from Soviet times) was dissolved in 1994, the Kazakhs held 60% of the seats. ... The Parliament elected in December 1995, after the adoption of the new Constitution, had 71 Kazakhs and 37 Slavs out of a total membership of 124 (77 member *Majilis* or lower house and 47 member Senate or upper house).[815]

The language law provided some advantages to Kazakhs compared to non-Kazakhs, primarily Russians. The eligibility criteria during the presidential elections on January 10, 1999 have become the manifestation of this policy that explicitly favoured Kazakhs. In this election, all candidates in order to have a right to stand had to pass a Kazakh language test.[816] The same discrimination continued in the parliamentary elections in the late 1990s and 2000s. "In the 1999 parliamentary elections, Kazakhs obtained 58 out of the 77 seats in the *Majilis*, amounting to over three-fourths of the total."[817] Similarly, "Following the *Majilis* elections of 2004, the Slav share in Parliament is 19 seats, or about 16.5%, whereas Kazakhs held 95 of the total 124 seats."[818]

Dave referring to the study of Sabit Zhusupov in 1998 about "the increasing domination of the Kazakhs in the presidential administration and in the *oblast* (regional) leadership during the period 1995-1998" provides the following data:

> The composition of the presidential administration was 68.4% Kazakh, 26.3% Russian and 5.2% other. Of all oblast heads or akims in 1995, 70% were Kazakh, 20% Russian and 10% belonging to other nationalities, although about 70% of these had careers and work experience connected to the Communist Party apparatus. In 1997, out of all the 16 *akims* (regional heads),

[814] Zardykhan, "Russians in Kazakhstan," 73.

[815] Dave, *Kazakhstan: Ethnicity, Language, Power,* 152.

[816] Everett-Heath, "Instability and Identity," in Everett-Heath, 187-188.

[817] Dave, *Kazakhstan: Ethnicity, Language, Power,* 152.

[818] Ibid.

> (14 oblasts plus the two administrative divisions of Astana and Almaty), twelve were Kazakhs, three Russians and one a German.[819]

In addition to these data, some political scientists observed the following: "80-90% of administrative personnel since the late 1990s are of Kazakh nationality. (...) Over 80% of officials in ministries of oil and gas, information and media, foreign affairs and justice were Kazakhs."[820]

#### 4.1.1.6. Regional Elections

Nazarbayev declined the number of regional units from 20 to 16 and abolished the regional administrations in 1997.[821] From the very beginning, Nazarbayev rejected to give any formal territorial or financial autonomy to these units.[822] He also rejected any suggestion that the regional governors should be elected rather than appointed and some elections were realized at the district level.[823] Nazarbayev said the following in August 2002: "History had demonstrated how elections for local governors led to the 'extremely severe break-up' of the Kazakh regions and ultimately to small groupings who fought for 'illusory power.'"[824] With the aim to maintain the dependency of regional powers to the centre, he implemented "strict presidential control over the appointment and removal of *akims* whose average tenure rarely exceeds three years in office."[825] By doing so, he achieved to establish a strong presidential republic.[826]

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819 Dave, *Kazakhstan: Ethnicity, Language, Power,* 152.

820 Ibid.

821 Geiss, "State and Regime Change," in Berg and Kreikemeyer, 36.

822 Dave, *Kazakhstan: Ethnicity, Language, Power,* 145.

823 Cummings, "Independent Kazakhstan: Managing Heterogeneity," in Cummings, 28.

824 Ibid.

825 Dave, *Kazakhstan: Ethnicity, Language, Power,* 145.

826 Cummings, *Kazakhstan: Power and the Elite,* 24.

#### 4.1.1.7. Capital Change

Aiming to control the northern border provinces where Russians have historically been living, the Kazakh leaders changed its capital from Almaty to Astana in 1998. According to official statements, the reason was that Almaty had been vulnerable to earthquakes and was not convenient for expansion due to the high mountains surrounding the city. However, many argued that with this decision, the Kazakh state actually attempted to preserve territorial integrity and encouraged ethnic Kazakhs to migrate to the north of the country.[827] As Cummings argued, demographic balancing including the capital change was one of the important ways to bolster national cultural revival in Kazakhstan.[828]

#### 4.1.1.8. The Assembly of the Peoples of Kazakhstan

The Assembly of the Peoples of Kazakhstan was established in 1995 as "a 'personal' initiative of Nazarbayev for preserving ethnic harmony."[829] The Assembly is consisted of over 300 representatives of different ethnic groups, and has branches at the oblast level. In the Assembly, there are delegates representing different national-cultural centres, and other delegates from academicians, artists, writers and social activists nominated by Nazarbayev himself. The president is also the chairman and seems to be "the guardian-protector of small minorities."[830]

The Assembly of Peoples was established to negate the concerns of ethnic groups in the country. However, even in the Assembly, the ethnic groups are not equally treated. An author clearly explains the status of ethnic groups, especially Russians within the Assembly:

> It was presented as part of a project to build a Kazakhstani nation that was not based on nationality. In practice however, the policy toward nationalities has distinctly divided the minorities into several groups. The most favoured ones,

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[827] Cummings, "Independent Kazakhstan: Managing Heterogeneity," in Cummings, 27.

[828] Cummings, *Kazakhstan: Power and the Elite,* 84.

[829] Dave, *Kazakhstan: Ethnicity, Language, Power,* 131.

[830] Ibid.

> symbolically, were the nationalities without a titular state (for example Dungans, Kurds and Uigurs) and the supposedly socially weak nationalities (such as Chechens and Buriats). A second group consisted of several socially well-integrated national minorities, well supported by their state of origin, such as Germans and Koreans and, to a lesser extent, Ukrainians, Poles and Greeks. Russians alone comprised the third group, marginalised since they neither were deemed to be a national minority given their numbers, nor were they a part of what is defined as the Kazakh 'titular nation.'[831]

Regarding the above-mentioned reasons, another author criticizes the Assembly by saying: "Most analysts also regard the formation of the Assembly of the Peoples of Kazakhstan as a 'puppet' body-politic ... [providing] the image of representation, voice, and access to state power for the full array of ethnic communities within Kazakhstan."[832]

#### 4.1.1.9. Economic Development

Another crucial aspect of nation-building has been Kazakhstan's economic development. The economic development is seen as *sine quo non* for the success of nationalizing projects by Nazarbayev. "The president's mantra of the 'economy first and politics second' is repeated often by key supporters who conflate Nazarbayev's nation-building achievements as fundamental to the success and prosperity of Kazakhstan."[833] In his speech in August 2002, Nazarbayev reiterated, "When the economy develops, politics should develop too."[834] For the Kazakh state, there is also important link between economic prosperity and inter-ethnic stability. As asserted by one of the pro-president Kazakh elite, "Stability and peace between ethnic groups can be achieved by economic reforms and economic benefits and when this is achieved it will lead to democracy."[835]

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[831] Peyrouse, "Nationhood and the Minority Question," 483.

[832] Diener, *Homeland Conceptions,* 47.

[833] Isaacs, "'Papa' Nursultan Nazarbayev," 440.

[834] Cummings, "Independent Kazakhstan: Managing Heterogeneity," in Cummings, 31.

[835] Isaacs, "'Papa' Nursultan Nazarbayev," 440.

After having undergone a thorny transition period from socialist economy to market economy in the early years of independence, prioritisation of economic reform in Kazakhstan has succeeded to a great extent. According to many analysts, Kazakhstan's macro-economic reform performance was better than the Soviet times.[836] Its geographic position, foreign direct investment in its oil and gas sectors, and liberal economic policies of the Kazakh state allowed the economy to expand.[837] Kazakhstan, especially as an important energy supplier, has dedicated itself to develop the necessary technology and to diversify its economy.[838]

Despite these positive developments in the economy, it is difficult to say that this economic prosperity has been equally distributed to all segments of the society. Kazakhs who were economically disadvantageous in the early years of independence started to gain more opportunities as compared to non-Kazakhs.[839] In the transition period, many state-owned enterprises, especially in the industry sector, passed to ethnic Kazakhs. Ex-communist party leaders of Kazakhstan and their relatives and associates became the new owners of the previous state enterprises. During the economic transition, who would gain more was largely dependent on family ties as well as clan membership.[840]

#### 4.1.2. Regional Security Policies of Kazakhstan

One of the important aspects of nation-building policy of Nazarbayev is to ensure international recognition for his country.[841] He attaches great importance to balance different regional and global powers in the region.[842] This policy is named as

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[836] Cummings, "Independent Kazakhstan: Managing Heterogeneity," in Cummings, 28.

[837] Sergej Mahnovski, Kamil Akramov, and Theodore Karasik, "Economic Dimensions of Security in Central Asia," (RAND Corporation, Pittsburgh, 2006), 7.

[838] Ibid., 21.

[839] Rywkin, "Stability in Central Asia," 445.

[840] Zardykhan, "Russians in Kazakhstan," 72-73.

[841] Isaacs, "'Papa' Nursultan Nazarbayev," 440.

[842] Cummings, "Independent Kazakhstan: Managing Heterogeneity," in Cummings, 33.

"multi-vector" foreign policy, and "it is driven both by heterogeneity at home and the need, as a landlocked state, to secure multiple pipeline routes and markets abroad."[843] By successfully implementing this policy in foreign relations, Nazarbayev could be able to balance the competing interests of the West, mainly the U.S., Russia, and China in terms of security issues. It is also argued that through this policy Nazarbayev found a great opportunity "to play one against the other in ensuring Kazakhstan's national interests."[844] An author describes this policy as follows:

> The term 'multi-vectorism' refers to a policy that develops foreign relations through a framework based on a pragmatic, non-ideological foundation. Multi-vector foreign policy then essentially is motivated solely by the perceived interests of the state in achieving its policy objectives. ... The basis of the relationship resides exclusively in the potential costs and benefits to Kazakhstan as an inter-state actor. ... The factors underlying policy decisions are not necessarily exclusively external, but may also be based upon a domestic dynamic that engenders benefit in the short or long term. [845]

Kazakhstan established global and regional security relations within the framework of this multi-vector foreign policy. Kazakhstan became a member of the SCO, participated in the NATO Partnership for Peace programme, and established bilateral links with the U.S.[846] Kazakhstan became a member of the Russian-led security organization, CSTO.[847] In addition, Kazakhstan is eager to play a key role in regional security and in this respect; it fully supported the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA), headquartered in Almaty.[848]

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[843] Cummings, "Independent Kazakhstan: Managing Heterogeneity," in Cummings, 33.

[844] Isaacs, "'Papa' Nursultan Nazarbayev," 440.

[845] Hanks, "'Multi-vector politics,'" 259.

[846] Ibid., 260-261.

[847] Collective Security Treaty Organization, "Basic Facts," http://www.dkb.gov.ru/start/index_aengl.htm (accessed July 3, 2012).

[848] Hanks, "'Multi-vector politics,'" 261. Realizing its first summit in Almaty in 2002, CICA is a very new in the field of ensuring security and cooperation among members, Afghanistan, China, India, Israel, Iran, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Russia, and others which have more than half the world's

In Strategy 2030, Nazarbayev said, “Our country would make use of the military assistance and would co-operate with its neighbours in sharing the burden of regional defence.”[849] As such, Kazakhstan tries to ensure its regional security in two ways: by participating to regional security organizations and by establishing bilateral relations with regional and global players. In the light of the above-mentioned concepts and foreign policy principles, in this part, firstly, the regional security organizations, the CSTO and SCO and the membership of Kazakhstan to these organizations will be examined. Secondly, the bilateral security relations of Kazakhstan with Russia, the U.S., and China will be investigated.

#### 4.1.2.1. Kazakhstan in the Regional Security Organizations (CSTO –SCO)

In Central Asia, regionalism in security issues has been accelerated since the first half of 2000s. Russia and China have played a significant role in the establishment of some security organizations, the CSTO and SCO respectively. Kazakhstan became the member of both of these organizations. In order to understand respectively the main goal of Astana and its active participation to them, it is necessary to examine briefly these security organizations.

CSTO, a regional security organization, was established in 2002 on the basis of the Tashkent Collective Security Treaty which had been created in May 1992. The decision to establish an international organization was taken by the founding member states, Russia, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The main reason behind this attempt was “the need of adaptation of the Treaty to the dynamics of regional and international security and counteraction against new threats and challenges.”[850]

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population today. Kanat Saudabayev, “Kazakhstan and the United States: Growing Partnership for Security and Prosperity,” *American Foreign Policy Interests* 27, 2005, 186.

[849] President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, “Strategy 2030,” http://www.akorda.kz/en/kazakhstan/kazakhstan2030/strategy_2030 (accessed July 3, 2012).

[850] Collective Security Treaty Organization, “Basic Facts,” http://www.dkb.gov.ru/start/index_aengl.htm (accessed July 3, 2012).

Article 2 of the CSTO Treaty states the following:

> In case a threat to security, territorial integrity and sovereignty of one or several Member States or a threat to international peace and security Member States will immediately put into action the mechanism of joined consultations with the aim to coordinate their positions and take measures to eliminate the threat that has emerged.[851]

CSTO announced that the "new threats and challenges" in the sphere of "soft security," such as drug trafficking and illegal cross border migration became primary issues that the organization had to deal with. [852] The current members of CSTO are Russia, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan.[853] Uzbekistan who had joined the CSTO in June 23, 2006[854] has suspended its membership in June 2012.[855]

Dissolution of the Soviet Union has left many problematic issues in terms of border delimitation. The establishment of SCO was based on the need to resolve these border problems between Kazakhstan and China and the other states. China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan started negotiations in the area of confidence-building in military affairs in the border regions after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. In 1993, China and Kazakhstan agreed on the principles of bilateral military contacts. In April 1996, the leaders of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan and the State Chairman of China and Russian Foreign Minister Yevgenii Primakov concluded an agreement on confidence building in military issues in Shanghai. In 1997, Shanghai Five signed the Agreement on Mutual Reductions of Military Forces in the border areas. In July 1998, the sides came together again and

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[851] Collective Security Treaty Organization, "Basic Facts," http://www.dkb.gov.ru/start/index_aengl.htm (accessed July 3, 2012).

[852] Alexander I. Nikitin, "Post-Soviet Military Political Integration: The Collective Security Treaty Organization and Its Relations with the EU and NATO," *China and Eurasia Quarterly* 5, no. 1 (2007): 35.

[853] Collective Security Treaty Organization, "Basic Facts," http://www.dkb.gov.ru/start/index_aengl.htm (accessed July 3, 2012).

[854] Vitaly V. Naumkin, "Uzbekistan's State-Building Fatigue," *The Washington Quarterly* 29, no. 3 (Summer 2006): 137.

[855] "Uzbekistan Quits Russia-Led CSTO Military Bloc," *RT*, June 28, 2012.

discussed the strengthening of regional peace, stability and economic cooperation. This meeting was concentrated mainly on non-traditional threats such as terrorism, illegal arms trafficking, drug-trafficking and religious fundamentalism.[856]

The 2001 Shanghai Summit has become a turning point in the short history of SCO. In this Summit, The Shanghai Five has turned into an international organization. In Shanghai, the Presidents of Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, in other words, "the original Shanghai Five plus Uzbekistan" signed the Declaration on the Establishment of SCO.[857] In January 2002, at the meeting of SCO foreign ministers in Beijing, a regional anti-terrorism organization was established. In May 2002, the Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure (RATS) in Tashkent has been approved. Besides, in 2003, the SCO Secretariat was opened in Beijing.[858]

The SCO signalled the emergence of a different kind of regional organization based on cooperation among the equals and promised mutual benefits to all parties of the organization.[859] "The Cooperation of the five countries does not constitute an alliance: it is not established at the expense of relations with other nations, nor is it directed against any third country."[860] Although it is known that the SCO rejects the U.S. presence in the region and follows an anti-Western agenda in practice, these kinds of statements are still important for Kazakhstan that declared its intention to have peaceful relations with outside world.

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[856] Xing Guangcheng, "China and Central Asia," in *Central Asian Security: The New International Context,* ed. Roy Allison and Lena Jonson (Washington: Brookings Institution, 2001), 159-160.

[857] Richard W. X. Hu, "China's Central Asian Policy: Making Sense of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization," in *Central Asia at the End of the Transition,* ed. Boris Rumer (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 2005), 138.

[858] Jing-Jong Yuan, "China's Role in Establishing and Building the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)," *Journal of Contemporary China* 19, no. 67 (2010): 864.

[859] Hu, "China's Central Asian Policy," in Boris Rumer, 137.

[860] Ibid., 137-138.

### 4.1.2.2. Bilateral Relations of Kazakhstan with Russia, the U.S., and China

Good-neighbourly relations and peaceful coexistence lies at the heart of Kazakhstan's foreign policy and its search for a place in the international scene. Nazarbayev pursues a pro-active foreign policy and tries to contribute to the stability of Eurasia. Having the awareness of being located at a very dangerous region surrounded by diverse security threats, Kazakhstan aims to promote regional security.[861] To achieve this, Nazarbayev referred Central Asia as a "'belt of expectation,' belonging neither to the West, nor to the East."[862] He argues, "The choice that the region will eventually make will influence 'not just the balance of power in Asia and Eurasia, but ... the global geopolitical balance as well.'"[863] Therefore, Nazarbayev tries to maintain its security relations and cooperation with the major states of Russia, the U.S., and China. In his foreign policy, he avoids alienating these powers and tries to preserve equal distance to each one of them.

Having this aim, Nazarbayev stresses the importance of country's geographic position at the crossroads of Europe, the Middle East and Asia and describes his country as "Eurasian." In this sense, Snow Leopard carrying the characteristics of both East and West is used as a metaphor for Kazakhstan.[864] "The Snow Leopard is a combination of 'western elegance' and 'oriental wisdom,' embodying 'a space that links Europe to the Asia-Pacific region.'"[865] Snow Leopard, as "an animal unique to the Kazakhstani mountains, fiercely independent 'but never the first to attack anyone'" symbolizes the uniqueness of Kazakhstan.[866]

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[861] Imangali Tasmagambetov, "Kazakhstan: From a Strategy of Survival to a Strategy of Prosperity," *American Foreign Policy Interests* 26, 2005, 38.

[862] Nourzhanov, "Changing Security Threat Perceptions," 91.

[863] Ibid.

[864] Hanks, "'Multi-vector politics,'" 258.

[865] Cummings, "Independent Kazakhstan: Managing Heterogeneity," in Cummings, 33.

[866] Ibid.

#### 4.1.2.2.1. Kazakh-Russian Relations

Establishing and maintaining good relations with Russia has always been crucial for Nazarbayev. Nazarbayev was aware of the fact that his desire to make his country a regional power was possible only through the advice of and assistance from Moscow. The geographical proximity as well as historical and cultural links also forced Kazakhstan to develop economic, political and military relations with Russia.[867] The two countries share 7,500 kilometres long border, the longest in the world. Russia considers Kazakhstan as a Eurasian state and the northern regions of Kazakhstan is the extension of Siberia and Urals in geographical, demographical and economical terms.[868] There are intense economic relations and energy partnership between the two countries.[869]

In May 1992, Kazakhstan signed the Treaty of Russia-led CIS. Kazakhstan has a very pro-Russian stance within the CIS.[870] Kazakhstan is "friend with everyone," but Moscow occupies "top priority" for the Kazakh foreign policy.[871] The relations between Kazakhstan and Russia increased especially in the second half of the 1990s, mostly based on pragmatism and mutual understanding of their interests. Security and the emergence of non-traditional threats in the region such as terrorism, drug trafficking have become the backbone of the close cooperation in Moscow-Astana axis.[872] These states have experience on military cooperation in regional security issues. Kazakhstan sent some units for the joint peacekeeping force in Tajikistan in 1993 alongside with Russia and Kyrgyzstan.[873] The

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[867] Everett-Heath, "Instability and Identity," in Everett-Heath, 188.

[868] Trenin, "Russia and Central Asia," in Rumer, Trenin, and Zhao, 85.

[869] Ibid.

[870] Kuzio, "History, Memory and Nation-building," 245.

[871] Nygren, *Rebuilding of Greater Russia,* 175.

[872] Vitaly V. Naumkin, "Russian Policy Toward Kazakhstan," in *Thinking Strategically: The Major Powers, Kazakhstan, and the Central Asian Nexus,* ed. Robert Legvold (Cambridge: American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 2003), 41.

[873] Trenin, "Russia and Central Asia," in Rumer, Trenin, and Zhao, 100.

membership of Kazakhstan in the CSTO, as the closest ally of Russia among the other former Soviet republics, is very important for Moscow. Kazakhstan has given a consistent support to Russian security policy under this regional security organization.[874]

After independence, the most important issue in the areas of defense and security was the removal of nuclear arsenal that remained in Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty on December 13, 1993 and agreed to get rid of all nuclear arsenals on its territory.[875] In July 1994, it signed an agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency declaring that it would conduct nuclear activities only for peaceful purposes. In this process, the U.S. also played an important role.[876] In 1995, Kazakhstan and Russia signed an agreement on "cooperation and mutual payment for the utilization of nuclear materials in the SS-18 strategic nuclear missiles."[877]

However, Kazakhistan's Baikonur Spaceport became a problem between Russia and Kazakhstan when both sides claimed ownership on this facility. As in early 1992, 8000 highly trained Russians and only 38 Kazakhs were working in the Baikonur Spaceport, Nazarbayev could not nationalize it. After intense discussions, the two sides signed an agreement in March 1994 on a twenty-year lease with Russia's initial one-time payment of more than $1 billion and annual rent of $115 million.[878] Russia started to pay this amount in 1999.[879] In January 2003, Kazakhstan and Russia signed another agreement on the extension of the use of the

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[874] Roger N. McDermott, "Kazakhstan's Defense Policy: An Assessment of the Trends," *Strategic Studies Institute,* February 2009.

[875] Olcott, *Central Asia's New States*, 71.

[876] Naumkin, "Russian Policy Toward Kazakhstan," 41.

[877] Ibid., 42.

[878] Olcott, *Central Asia's New States*, 72.

[879] Nygren, *Rebuilding of Greater Russia,* 180.

Baikonur Spaceport up to 2050. In March 2005, they agreed on new investment on this facility.[880]

After Putin came to power in Russia in 2000, Kazakh-Russian relations further developed. As an expert indicated, “The relationship was thus both stable and good-natured when Putin entered the Kremlin and there were no sour ‘left-overs’ in the relationship.”[881] Russian and Kazakh leaders paid many official visits to each other during the 2000s.[882] The cooperation of Kazakhstan with the U.S. against international terrorism after September 11 did not deteriorate the relations between Astana and Moscow, but even strengthened it.[883] Although the U.S. has increased its presence in Central Asia after September 11, Kazakhstan remained inclined towards Russia as its most influential neighbour and an important economic partner.[884]

Kazakhstan and Russia have signed some 50 military and defense agreements so far. In 2001, they established a bilateral commission on military technical cooperation. This was a necessity at that time since Kazakhstan had 20 defence enterprises inherited from the Soviet Union. In 2002, Russia and Kazakhstan signed another agreement on defense cooperation for nine years. A year later, they concluded a draft agreement on the joint use of troops to deepen military cooperation. In January 2004, the agreement of a joint air defense, air force, and joint naval systems was signed. This agreement was an indication of further integration of defense policies of these countries. In 2006, Kazakhstan declared that it would buy Russian air defense system –S300 PS.[885]

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[880] Nygren, *Rebuilding of Greater Russia,* 180.

[881] Ibid., 176.

[882] Naumkin, “Russian Policy Toward Kazakhstan,” 59.

[883] Nygren, *The Rebuilding of Greater Russia,* 176.

[884] Cummings, “Independent Kazakhstan: Managing Heterogeneity,” in Cummings, 33.

[885] Nygren, *The Rebuilding of Greater Russia,* 177.

There are two important issues for Kazakhstan and Russia. One of them is the border issue while the other is the Russian minority in Kazakhstan. Firstly, the issue of the demarcation of the borders have been largely solved when Kazakhstan and Russia signed a border delimitation agreement in January 2005.[886] As for the second issue, it occupied the security agenda of both Russia and Kazakhstan especially during the 1990s. During the first half of the 1990s, Russia paid inadequate attention to Kazakhstan. However, this foreign policy changed under Andrei Kozyrev, the Foreign Minister of Russia in Yeltsin's government[887] who said the following in 1994: "We should not withdraw from these regions which have been the sphere of Russian interests for centuries."[888] Within the framework of this "near abroad" foreign policy, Russia took "great interest in the fate of Russians" in the former Soviet republics.[889] Although there was some pressure on Nazarbayev to accept dual citizenship, some realistic Russian politicians were well aware of the fact that this would have a destabilizing effect in Kazakhstan, a scenario that Russia itself never desired.[890]

As mentioned above, the issue of dual citizenship and the criticisms on Kazakh internal politics declined in the mid-1990s. In January 1995, Russia and Kazakhstan signed some agreements that made citizenship status in Kazakhstan clearer.[891] Despite some ups and downs, the Russian question did not cause a severe crisis between Russia and Kazakhstan so far. Russian leaders paid greater attention to protect the interests of Russian citizens in Kazakhstan; however, they avoided intervening Kazakh domestic policies.[892] Moreover, Nazarbayev emphasized good

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[886] Nygren, *The Rebuilding of Greater Russia,* 179.

[887] Naumkin, "Russian Policy Toward Kazakhstan," 46.

[888] Ruth Deyermond, *Security and Sovereignty in the Former Soviet Union* (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2008), 146.

[889] Kubicek, "Authoritarianism in Central Asia," 39.

[890] Naumkin, "Russian Policy Toward Kazakhstan," 46.

[891] Ibid., 47.

[892] Ibid., 50.

relations between Russia and Kazakhstan to gain legitimacy in the eyes of his country's Russian population. The interests and aims of Russia continue to be determinant factors for Kazakhstan's foreign policy choices. Russia is still a very important economic partner to Kazakhstan.[893]

It must however also be noted that despite its close ties with Russia, Kazakhstan, increasing its confidence in the international arena, tried to avoid any dominance by Russia. Kazakhstan's 2011 Military Doctrine clearly reflected this policy. This doctrine "does not imply any subordinate relationship to Russia as the country develops both defense cooperation and military-technical assistance from its close ally, or placing the CSTO or the SCO too close to the foundation of its national security planning."[894] Nazarbayev's main purpose is "to achieve the eventual integration of two states without subordination of Kazakhstan's sovereignty."[895] "Nazarbayev, while an advocate of close relations with Russia, is at the same time a staunch opponent of Russia's imperialism."[896]

#### 4.1.2.2.2. Kazakh-U.S. Relations

Kazakhstan's good relations with the U.S. are a source of pride and portrayed as a foreign policy success for Nazarbayev. Through Kazakh-U.S. friendly relations, Nazarbayev became able to increase the international prestige of his country.[897] By establishing close ties with the U.S., Kazakhstan also desired to secure its place in the region regarding other countries. As Oliker says, Kazakhstan's effort "to build ties with the United States... should not be seen in a context of a zero-sum game with either China or Russia. ... From its perspective, ideally, Russia, China, and the U.S. will each balance the other's influence and each contributes to Kazakhstan's

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[893] Cummings, "Independent Kazakhstan: Managing Heterogeneity," in Cummings, 33.

[894] Roger N. McDermott, "Kazakhstan's 2011 Military Doctrine and Regional Security Beyond 2014," *CACI Analyst*, June 13, 2012.

[895] Olcott, *Central Asia's New States*, 63.

[896] Trenin, "Russia and Central Asia," in Rumer, Trenin, and Zhao, 86.

[897] Olcott, *Central Asia's New States*, 83.

own goals."[898] The main areas for cooperation in terms of security issues between Astana and Washington are "the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) and the fight against terrorism."[899]

From 1993 to 1996, Kazakh and American officials visited each other several times.[900] The U.S. cooperated with Kazakhstan to eliminate nuclear weapons, nuclear reactors and biological and chemical weapons infrastructure that Kazakhstan inherited from the Soviet Union. Kazakhstan was also eager for this cooperation and wanted to prevent weapons proliferation.[901] From 1995 on, the relations in the region started to become more complex. The disagreements between the U.S. and Russia became more obvious and the multi-vector foreign policy of Kazakhstan risked its relations with the U.S. to some extent. In addition, the U.S. increasingly began to pay more attention to Uzbekistan and stressed its importance to balance Russian power in the region.[902] Between mid-1990s to mid-2000s, the relations between Kazakhstan and the U.S. were also negatively affected from the criticism of the U.S. about the authoritarian character of the Kazakh regime. However, despite these criticisms, Kazakhstan has always avoided distancing itself from the U.S.[903]

September 11 and the U.S. intervention to Afghanistan changed the picture once again. The U.S. deepened its cooperation with Uzbekistan[904] while it continued to

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[898] Olga Oliker, "Kazakhstan's Security Interests and Their Implications for the U.S.-Kazakh Relationship," *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly* 5, no. 2 (2007): 67.

[899] Kanat Saudabayev, "Kazakhstan and the United States," 185.

[900] Robert Legvold, "U.S. Policy Toward Kazakhstan," in *Thinking Strategically: The Major Powers, Kazakhstan, and the Central Asian Nexus,* ed. Robert Legvold (Cambridge: American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 2003), 91.

[901] Sergey V. Golunov and Roger N. McDermott, "Border Security in Kazakhstan: Threats, Policies and Future Challenges," *Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 18 (2005): 49.

[902] Legvold, "U.S. Policy Toward Kazakhstan," in Legvold, 90-91.

[903] Ibid., 92-94.

[904] Cummings, "Independent Kazakhstan: Managing Heterogeneity," in Cummings, 33.

have some substantial cooperation with Kazakhstan.[905] According to Cummings, "Uzbekistan's prominence in the U.S. fight against terrorism undercuts Kazakhstan, whose international image as the region's economic engine and 'epicentre of peace' is less prized in the immediate post-11 September world."[906] After September 11, Nazarbayev gave the U.S. Air Force landing rights at three air bases in southern Kazakhstan.[907] He assisted in transferring the shipments of supplies to the U.S. bases in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. In July 2002, the U.S.-Kazakh memorandum of understanding that allowed the U.S. military aircraft to use Almaty airport for emergency military landings was signed.[908] In September 2003, a military cooperation agreement that would cover five-year long period was signed "to combat terrorism, develop peacekeeping forces, bolster air defense capabilities, and enhance security in the Caspian Sea."[909] In February 2008, this agreement was extended to 2012.[910]

During the U.S. operation in Iraq, Kazakhstan became the only Central Asian country sending a small and non-combatant troop to Iraq.[911] Kazakh troops returned home in late 2008.[912] In 2004, Kazakhstan and the U.S. signed an agreement ensuring further cooperation in the fight against bioterrorism. This agreement was signed for more than ten years period under the *Nunn-Lugar program*, which helped Kazakhstan to dismantle WMDs, more than 1,000 nuclear warheads and the infrastructure of the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site.[913] There was also an individual

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[905] Legvold, "U.S. Policy Toward Kazakhstan," in Legvold, 94.

[906] Cummings, "Independent Kazakhstan: Managing Heterogeneity," in Cummings, 33.

[907] Trenin, "Russia and Central Asia," in Rumer, Trenin, and Zhao, 100.

[908] Jim Nichol, "Kazakhstan: Recent Developments and U.S. Interests," (CRS Report for Congress, June 2011), 13.

[909] Ibid.

[910] Ibid.

[911] Hanks, "'Multi-vector Politics,'" 260-261.

[912] Nichol, "Kazakhstan: Recent Developments," 13.

[913] Kanat Saudabayev, "Kazakhstan and the United States," 185.

partnership program between Kazakhstan and the U.S. The U.S. furthermore assisted Kazakhstan to establish a small naval force in the Caspian.[914] Between 2002 and 2005, two countries realized almost "50 joint military events, including joint military exercises, representing a doubling of such activities."[915]

By receiving the permission of the Kazakh state and using railway transportation in early 2009, NATO countries transferred non-military supplies to Afghanistan in order to provide assistance to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) located in this country. An agreement on over-flights rights for military equipment and personel was agreed by the U.S. and Kazakh authorities in April 2010. In April 2010, General David Petraeus, Commander, U.S. Central Command, declared that Washington had purchased over $62 million of Kazakh products such as lumber, cement and bottled water to transport them to Afghanistan.[916]

The humanitarian and economic assistance of Kazakhstan to Afghanistan and its decision to allow U.S. cargo flights to Afghanistan across its territory satisfied the U.S. authorities. Therefore, in a joint meeting of April 2010, President Obama expressed their appreciation for these genuine efforts of Kazakhstan. In this meeting, Nazarbayev and Obama also sought new ways to increase Kazakhstan's role in supporting the Northern Distribution Network which were consisted of supply routes to Afghanistan. Obama also underlined the U.S. support for Kazakhstan in its attempts in terms of liberalizing its media and political system within the framework of legal reform. In addition to them, a Consulate General was opened in Almaty and the consul began to perform his duty in August 2010.[917]

Another important aspect in the Kazakh-U.S. relations is Kazakhstan's partnership with NATO. Kazakhstan continues to have the most advanced cooperation programme with NATO as compared to other Central Asian states. NATO-

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[914] Trenin, "Russia and Central Asia," in Rumer, Trenin, and Zhao, 100.

[915] Hanks, "'Multi-vector politics,'" 260.

[916] Nichol, "Kazakhstan: Recent Developments," 13.

[917] Ibid., 12.

Kazakhstan relations began in 1992 after Kazakhstan joined the North Atlantic Co-operation Council (NACC) which became the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) in 1997. Kazakhstan signed the Partnership for Peace programme in 1995. In 2002, Kazakhstan deepened military and defence-related cooperation by joining its Planning and Review Process (PARP). In 2003, Kazakhstan also entered 19+1 discussions with the Alliance, and developed its partnership further in 2004 through continued dialogue and efforts to participate in Partnership for Peace programs, which could help its armed forces. Kazakhstan has expressed interest in receiving NATO's assistance in the following key areas: organisation of the Border Guard Service, language training, training of personnel, communications and information systems, and upgrading equipment. In 2005, Kazakhstan made the strategic decision to develop an Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) with NATO. In January 2006, the country became the first -and thus far only- Central Asian Partner to have agreed an IPAP with the Alliance.[918]

#### 4.1.2.2.3. Kazakh-Chinese Relations

The relations between China and Kazakhstan have deepened since Kazakhstan gained its independence. 1.700 kilometres long Chinese-Kazakh borders necessitated cooperation between these states.[919] Not only because of this shared border, but also because of the importance of Kazakhstan in regional political and economic structures, China gave more importance to its Central Asian neighbour.[920] However, this border issue also created some problems between the two countries. China attempted to solve this issue together with all of the other Central Asian states, including Kazakhstan. As mentioned above, 1994, 1997 and 1998 agreements were the major steps in the resolution of the dispute among these

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[918] Alexander Vinnikov, "NATO and Central Asia: Security, Interests and Values in a Strategic Region," *Security and Human Rights* 20, no. 1 (2009): 76.

[919] Zhao, "Central Asia in China's Diplomacy," in Rumer, Trenin and Zhao, 139.

[920] Xing Guangcheng, "China's Foreign Policy Towards Kazakhstan," in *Thinking Strategically: The Major Powers, Kazakhstan, and the Central Asian Nexus,* ed. Robert Legvold (Cambridge: American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 2003), 108.

countries.[921] Especially, the 1994 agreement was an important step in terms of being the first agreement signed between China and Kazakhstan as a member of CIS.[922] The Sino-Kazakh joint communiqué in November 1999 contributed to the resolution of the border issue and peace and stability in the region.[923]

The main security problem for China in general and in its relations with Kazakhstan in particular is the Uighur separatist movement emanated from the Xinjiang region. Uighurs are Turkic people who live in the Xinjiang province, along the Kazakh border.[924] Before examining the impact of the Xinjiang issue on Kazakh-Chinese relations, it is necessary to give a historical background of the Uighur migration to Kazakhstan and the Uighur separatism in Xinjiang.

Unrest and political dissident in Xinjiang goes back to the 19th century. Ili Valley encompassing the current borders between China and Kazakhstan was a transit area where the people moved due to the political violence and famine. The first major population movement across the border between Russia and China occurred in the first half of the 1880s. In the northwest China, Muslim rebels who benefited from the weakness of Qing Empire[925] in the mid-19th century established some short-lived Muslim states. In 1871, Russia invaded the territory of Uighur Sultanate in the Ili Valley. However, ten years later, Russia relinquished its territorial claims and returned this region to the Qing Empire. In 1885, Chinese authorities established their control in the province of Xinjiang (New Border).[926] However, Qing troops

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[921] Zhao, "Central Asia in China's Diplomacy," in Rumer, Trenin and Zhao, 172.

[922] Yasmin Melet, "China's Political and Economic Relations with Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan," *Central Asian Survey* 17, no. 2 (1998): 243.

[923] Zhao, "Central Asia in China's Diplomacy," in Rumer, Trenin and Zhao, 172.

[924] Justin V. Hastings, "Perceiving a Single Chinese State Escalation and Violence in Uighur Protests," *Problems of Post-Communism* 52, no. 1 (January/February 2005): 28.

[925] "Qing dynasty, Wade-Giles romanization Ch'ing, also called Manchu dynasty, Pinyin Manzu (1644-1911/1912), the last of the imperial dynasties of China." Encyclopaedia Britannica Online, s.v. "Qing Dynasty," http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/112846/Qing-dynasty (accessed August 28, 2012).

[926] William Clark and Ablet Kamalov, "Uighur Migration across Central Asian Frontiers," *Central Asian Survey* 23, no. 2 (June 2004): 167-168.

caused turmoil in the region. Having deep concerns about living under the Chinese rule, thousands of Uighur families moved to Russian portion of the Ili Valley between 1881 and 1884. Since then, the Uighurs has become one of three main ethnic groups in the Russian territories along with the Kazakhs and Russians.[927]

Another major inflow of Uighur and Kazakh families occurred from Soviet Russia to China in the late 1920s and early 1930s as a result of Stalin's repression. The 1930s marked the increasing Soviet presence in the Xinjiang region.[928] In the 20th century, there were two major attempts in Xinjiang for the establishment of independent republics: "in 1933-1934 in the Kashgar area and in 1944-1949 in the Ili Valley."[929] The establishment of an "Interim Government of the East Turkmenistan Republic" in 1944 in the city of Ili became an important development for this movement.[930] However, Chinese communists who came to power in 1949 defeated this government.[931]

In the early 1950s, as a result of the rapprochement between the Soviet Union and China, local people were encouraged to migrate to Soviet Russia. In 1954, *the Virgin Lands Program* of Khrushchev, which aimed to turn the steppes of Northern Kazakhstan, Western Siberia and Altai into new farmlands, necessitated new immigrants for these regions. For the Soviet authorities, Uighurs and Kazakhs constituted potential labour force to realize this program. Chinese authorities who saw this migration as an opportunity to eradicate all anti-Chinese elements in the Ili Valley also supported it.[932] This last migration took place from the mid-1950s to the spring of 1963 when the border was closed.[933]

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[927] Clark and Kamalov, "Uighur Migration," 168-169.

[928] Ibid., 169.

[929] Melet, "China's Political and Economic Relations," 232.

[930] Guangcheng, "China's Foreign Policy," in Legvold, 115.

[931] Clark and Kamalov, "Uighur Migration," 169.

[932] Ibid., 170-171.

[933] Ibid., 169.

The ethnic tension in Xinjiang further increased in the late 1980s. Anti-Han[934] movements showed themselves in the demonstrations in Urumqi in June 1988. Chinese authorities restricted the right to demonstrate and closed the city of Urumqi to foreigners. China's respond to the events that took place in April 1990 was more severe. 200 mosques and 50 schools were closed and Xinjiang's clergy was cleansed.[935]

The dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the revival of Islamic revival in the neighbouring Central Asian states and Afghanistan alarmed Chinese authorities to pay more attention to its Xinjiang province.[936] For China, after the Soviet collapse, "Security within Xinjiang was to be achieved by economic growth, while economic growth was to be assured by the reinforcement of the state's instruments of political and social control, which in turn was to be achieved by opening the region to Central Asia."[937] However, Chinese policy towards the region could not stop the rebellions that continued throughout the 1990s. On the contrary, the increase in Chinese Han population in Xinjiang and their economic and political powers created greater disturbance among Uighurs.[938]

September 11 events changed the Chinese attitude towards the Uighur opposition. Using the sensitivity of international community about terrorism at that time, Beijing preferred to call the separatist movements in its country as terrorist activities. By doing this, it aimed to lessen criticisms of the international community over Chinese policies towards Uighur dissidents. In addition, it tried to delegitimize

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[934] "Han dynasty, Wade-Giles romanization Han, the second great Chinese imperial dynasty (206 BCE-220 CE) after the Zhou dynasty. It suceeded the Qin dynasty (221-207 BCE). So thoroughly did the Han dynasty establish what was thereafter considered Chinese culture that 'Han' became the Chinese word denoting someone who is Chinese." Encyclopaedia Britannica Online, s.v. "Han Dynasty, http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/253872/Han-dynasty (accessed August 27, 2012).

[935] Melet, "China's Political and Economic Relations," 234-235.

[936] Michael Clarke, "China, Xinjiang and the Internationalisation of the Uyghur Issue," *Peace & Security: Formerly Pacifica Review: Peace, Security & Global Change,* 22, no. 2 (2010): 215.

[937] Ibid., 216.

[938] Melet, "China's Political and Economic Relations," 245-248.

political dissent and gain public support for its repressive policies.[939] However, the respond of Chinese authorities to the separatist movements remained harsh and merciless. In the latest major riot occurred on July 5, 2009 in Urumqi, 184 people lost their lives and more than 1000 people were wounded.[940]

Xinjiang is a geo-strategically important region for China's national sovereignty. The ethnic and cultural ties between Xinjiang's people and Central Asian peoples increase this importance.[941] Especially Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan have close cultural ties with Uighurs living in Xinjiang.[942] In Kazakhstan, 250,000 Uighur people live.[943] As of 2012, this number constitutes approximately 1.4% of total population.[944] It is claimed that insurgents aim to gain the support of this population for their irredentist claims.[945] In the Xinjiang region, in the areas close to the border, more than 1.3 million Kazakh residents preserve their ethnic, historical, linguistic and cultural ties with the Kazakhs living in Kazakhstan.[946] The main concern of Beijing is that Uighur separatists in this region use Kazakhstan's territories as a safe haven.[947]

For China, there is always a risk that Central Asian states, especially Kazakhstan, give support to these separatist movements. In order to prevent this, China established close diplomatic ties with these countries within the body of SCO,

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[939] Clarke, "China, Xinjiang," 220-221.

[940] Ibid., 213.

[941] Melet, "China's Political and Economic Relations," 231-232.

[942] Preeti Bhattacharji, "Uighurs and China's Xinjiang Region," *Council on Foreign Relations*, May 29, 2012.

[943] Golunov and McDermott, "Border Security in Kazakhstan," 40.

[944] CIA World Factbook, "Kazakhstan," under "Central Asia," https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/kz.html (accessed August 26, 2012).

[945] Golunov and McDermott, "Border Security in Kazakhstan," 40.

[946] Zhao, "Central Asia in China's Diplomacy," in Rumer, Trenin and Zhao, 172.

[947] Guangcheng, "China's Foreign Policy," in Legvold, 115.

which it sees as an instrument to strengthen these diplomatic ties.[948] According to an expert, the SCO "was created 'to ensure the support of Central Asian states,' and to 'prevent any emergence of linkages between Uighur communities in these countries and Xinjiang.'"[949] Having the support of the members of SCO and establishing close bilateral relations with Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, Beijing became successful "to effectively neutralise Uyghur advocacy organisations in Central Asia."[950] In the 1998 joint statement, it was declared that the SCO's member states would not "allow their territories to be used for the activities undermining the national sovereignty, security and social order of any of the five countries."[951]

For Kazakhstan, the support for these groups may cause Islamist movements spread to Kazakhstan and may provoke territorial claims. Therefore, Kazakhstan avoided disturbing China by supporting Xinjiang separatists and even sent some suspected ones to China.[952] Nazarbayev supported the Chinese position on that issue, objected nationalist separatism and promised not to allow these groups to organize activities towards China from Kazakh territories.[953] Therefore, for China, Kazakhstan is an important partner in terms of security cooperation in its fight against Uighur separatism.[954] In 2002, Kazakhstan and China signed the "Good Neighbour Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation," "Agreement on Cooperation against Terrorism, Separatism, and Extremism," and "Agreement between the Chinese Government and the Kazakhstani Government on Preventing Dangerous Military Activities."[955]

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[948] Preeti Bhattacharji, "Uighurs and China's Xinjiang Region," *Council on Foreign Relations,* May 29, 2012.

[949] Ibid.

[950] Clarke, "China, Xinjiang," 222.

[951] Ibid.

[952] Golunov and McDermott, "Border Security in Kazakhstan," 40.

[953] Guangcheng, "China's Foreign Policy," in Legvold, 116.

[954] Wenwen Shen, "China and Its Neighbors: Troubled Relations," *Eu-Asia Centre,* March 1, 2012.

[955] Zhao, "Central Asia in China's Diplomacy," in Rumer, Trenin and Zhao, 172.

In 2003, they focused on a cooperation program for the period between 2003 and 2008. The formation of China-Kazakhstan Cooperation Commission, providing equal representation for Kazakh and Chinese vice-premiers, became another area for further cooperation between the two countries in 2004. In July 2005, Kazakhstan and China established strategic partnership, as such Kazakhstan has become the first Central Asian state to form such partnership with China.[956]

Despite these promising developments, it cannot be said that Kazakh-Chinese relations are purely unproblematic. An expert says the following:

> Beyond the Uyghur issue itself, Central Asian publics, especially that of Kazakhstan, remain ambivalent at best and fearful at worst about Chinese intentions in the region. ... China's image in the publics of these states is ... tarnished by the perceived ill-treatment of the Uyghurs in Xinjiang and fears regarding Beijing's influence in Central Asia.[957]

Apart from the Uighur issue, many Kazakh people consider that China, in near future, may swallow Kazakhstan due to its increasing Chinese population in the country and its growing economic power. For some, China even has territorial claims on the Kazakh territories.[958] According to an expert, "There is a hypothesis that a spring-board is being prepared in Xinjiang for launching the next advance into Central Asia and Kazakhstan."[959] Despite some objections to this hypothesis,[960] it can be still argued that the concerns and fears of Kazakh people are still alive in face of a growing Chinese influence from day to day.

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[956] Zhao, "Central Asia in China's Diplomacy," in Rumer, Trenin and Zhao, 172.

[957] Clarke, "China, Xinjiang," 223.

[958] Eric Hayer, "China's Policy Towards Uighur Nationalism," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 26, no. 1 (2006): 82.

[959] Konstantin Syroezhkin, "Chinese Presence in Kazakhstan: Myhts and Reality," *Central Asia's Affairs* 42, no. 1 (2011): 18.

[960] For the same author, China does not have any hidden agenda on Kazakhstan. He says, "China has no intention of attacking anyone in the near future. And there is no need for this. In present-day economic globalization, it is much more efficient not to conquer and claim territory, but rather use its potential in one's own interests. This is what China is doing.... All the talk about how 'tomorrow millions of Chinese peasants will come to claim Kazakhstan's land' is another scare tactic conceived by the opposition and cannot be underpinned by real facts." Syroezhkin, "Chinese Presence in Kazakhstan," 19.

## 4.2. Security Policies of Uzbekistan towards Radical Islam

The emergence of radical and fundamentalist groups has become the nightmare and top security agenda of the secular Uzbek state since the second half of the 1990s. The authoritarian character of the Uzbek regime and Karimov's strict and uncompromising attitude towards radical groups further complicated the issue. In this part, the domestic policies of Karimov's regime towards radical Islam are analyzed and the impact of these policies on the religious movements is briefly explained.

### 4.2.1. Domestic Security Policies of Uzbekistan towards Radical Islam

In the early years of independence, the Uzbek state tried to build a new nation-state based on the celebration of Uzbekistan's memories and traditions of its glamorous past. Uzbekness was promoted in every aspects of life.[961] In this context, the new Uzbek state embraced the Islamic heritage and its ethical and moral values. Sunni tradition was promoted as "an example of the humanist traditions of the Uzbek nation."[962] As put by an expert, "The Karimov regime has apparently been more confident in 'nationalizing' Islam since it rules over a largely mono-ethnic Sunni population."[963] As an another author summarizes, "Karimov regime recognizes the crucial part Islam plays in structuring and Uzbek national identity and in constructuring a viable, functioning state."[964]

In the first days of independence, for Uzbek leadership, Islam also served as an instrument to gain support and recognition in the Muslim-dominated society.[965] In other words, Uzbek regime, in need of strengthening its rule, tried to ensure and

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[961] Khalid, "A Secular Islam: Nation, State," 587.

[962] Ibid.

[963] Karagiannis, "Political Islam in the Former Soviet Union," 56.

[964] Reuel R. Hanks, "Religion and Law in Uzbekistan: Renaissance and Repression in an Authoritarian Context," in *Regulating Religion: Case Studies from Around the Globe*, ed. James T. Richardson (New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers, 2004), 324.

[965] Martha B. Olcott, "Sufism in Central Asia: A Force for Moderation or a Cause of Politicization?" (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington, May 2007), 25.

maintain its own legitimacy in the eyes of believers.[966] At one time, Karimov said the following: “I, as the leader of Uzbekistan, will never allow any evil powers to despise our holy Islam, our ancestors’ conviction, our Muslim citizens, to endanger life in our society. I know that is my holy duty, not only as president, but also as a Muslim human being.”[967] His motto after the Tashkent bombings of 16 February[968] was “Allah in our hearts, in our souls.”[969] Karimov even swore on the holy book Qur’an in his inauguration ceremony. He also went on pilgrimage to strengthen his image as a leader who was respectful to Islam.[970]

Despite this religious tolerance and promotion of Islamic tradition in the early years of independence, the constitution of Uzbekistan stresses on the secular nature of the state as the other post-Soviet constitutions embracing the principle of the separation of religious affairs and state affairs.[971] In the Uzbek Constitution, Article 31 says, “Freedom of conscience is guaranteed for all. Each person has the right to practice any, or no, religion. Forced imposition of religious views is not permitted.”[972] Article 61 points out separation of religion and states as follows: “Religious

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[966] James Critchlow, *Nationalism in Uzbekistan: A Soviet Republic’s Road to Sovereignty* (San Francisco: Westview Press, 1991), 167.

[967] Louw, *Everyday Islam,* 34.

[968] In Tashkent bombings, many government buildings were destroyed, sixteen people lost their lives and more than 100 people were injured. The main target of these attacks was Karimov himself. Although no one took the responsibility of these bombings, the Uzbek government blamed Islamist extremists coming from Afghanistan and Tajikistan. In June, six suspects were sentenced to death as being responsible for these attacks, however, in fact, there were not any convincing proof about their crimes. Khalid, “A Secular Islam: Nation, State,” 588.

[969] Louw, *Everyday Islam,* 34.

[970] Karagiannis, “Political Islam in the Former Soviet Union,” 56.

[971] Sengupta, *Formation of the Uzbek Nation State,* 199.

[972] Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), “Freedom of Religion or Belief in Uzbekistan” (a policy brief for the OSCE Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting on Freedom of Religion or Belief, Vienna, 9-10 July, 2009), http://www.osce.org/odihr/38053 (accessed July 9, 2012).

organizations and associations are separate from the state and equal before the law. The state does not interfere in the activities of religious associations."[973]

Seeing political Islam as a threat to the secular order of the state, Karimov began to suppress any Islamic activities in the country. In this sense, the policies of independent Uzbek state have resembled the Soviet policies to a great extent. An expert explains this resemblance as such: "Like the old Soviet regime, the new Uzbek government employs multiple levers to deter what it perceives as excessive independence among practising Muslims."[974] However, the policy of the Uzbek regime towards Islam has two different dimensions. While Karimov sponsors "religious education in instances that do not challenge his politics," simultaneously declares all kind of Islamic ideas as being "extremists" and "fundamentalist."[975] An author explains the situation in Uzbekistan as follows:

> While the cultural and social benefits of Islam are recognized and encouraged by those in power, a political role for the faith is clearly not. This results in a curious contradiction: for more than a decade Islam has been heralded by the regime as a sine qua non of an evolving Uzbek national identity, yet any attempt to use Islam as a platform for political opposition or even to express discontent is branded 'extremists' and usually attributed to sinister foreign influences.[976]

Karimov aimed to cut any links between Wahhabis[977] and the foreign powers. For instance, in the early years of independence, seeing that some Uzbek imams were

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[973] Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), "Freedom of Religion or Belief in Uzbekistan."

[974] Eric M. McGlinchey, "Divided Faith: Trapped between State and Islam in Uzbekistan," in *Everyday Life in Central Asia Past and Present,* ed. Jeff Sahadeo and Russell Zanca (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 313.

[975] Helen Keller and Maya Sigron, "State Security v Freedom of Expression: Legitimate Fight against Terrorism or Suppression of Political Opposition?" *Human Rights Law Review* 10, no. 1 (2010): 166.

[976] Hanks, "Religion and Law in Uzbekistan," in Richardson, 325.

[977] Wahhabism is "a revivalist-purificatory movement under Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab (d. 1787), which sought, among other things, to eliminate Sufism. In the twentieth century Wahhabism became (and continues to be) the official religious policy of Saudi Arabia. In all of the former Soviet Union the term 'Wahhabi' is used as a general term for Muslims who are considered to be threats to the established system." Louw, *Everyday Islam,* 179. In Uzbek official statements, the term Wahhabism is used as the synonym of fundamentalism. In this sense, fundamentalism "struggles to maintain

eager to establish close relations with the Saudi partners, Karimov warned about the causes of these unacceptable relations established with the wealthy Saudis who invested in some religious organizations in Uzbekistan.[978] Tajik Civil War (1992-1997) deepened the concerns of Uzbek regime about the rise of fundamentalist movements. Karimov tried to prevent any possible effects of Tajik Civil War by banning all Islamic parties in the country.[979] Notwithstanding their purposes, any Islamic party or organizations were not allowed to operate within the Uzbek borders.[980] As mentioned earlier, the Uzbek branch of the IRP established in January 1991 was closed. The Party Chairman, Abdulla Quori Otaev, disappeared in December 1992.[981] An Islamic group, *Adolat* created in 1991 was also banned by Karimov in March 1992.[982]

Karimov also targeted the religious leaders in the country. Muhammad Rajab, an imam in the city of Kokand in the Fergana Valley, became one of the first victims of Karimov's anti-religious policies. In 1994, Rajab was punished by a local court with the claim of possessing narcotics. Uzbek forces also closed his mosque.[983] The most striking example of Karimov's crackdown policies targeted Mohammad Sodik Mohammad Yusuf, an Islamic scholar and a head of mufti of Central Asia. In September 1991, thousands of people protested the rule of Karimov and demanded Karimov's resignation and his replacement by Mohammad Yusuf. For Karimov,

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religion in its original form, rejecting all innovation. It thus poses a threat to the well-being of the nation and the state." Khalid, "A Secular Islam: Nation, State," 588.

[978] McGlinchey, "Divided Faith: Trapped between State and Islam in Uzbekistan," in Sahadeo and Zanca, 315.

[979] Salmorbekova and Yemelianova, "Islam and Islamism," in Yemelianova, 222.

[980] Collins, "Islamic Revivalism and Political Attitudes," 16.

[981] Melvin, *Uzbekistan: Transition to Authoritarianism,* 53.

[982] Zelkina, "Islam and Security in the New States," 361.

[983] McGlinchey, "Divided Faith: Trapped between State and Islam in Uzbekistan," in Sahadeo and Zanca, 307.

this event was a serious legitimacy crisis that had to be urgently overcome. Therefore, Karimov forced the mufti to flee from the country in 1993.[984]

Karimov destroyed not only Islamic opposition, but also any kind of secular opposition to strengthen its authoritarian rule in the country. Uzbek regime de-legitimized all political opposition, parties and movements in Uzbekistan. *Birlik* and its splinter group *Erk*, two most influential parties established in 1988, became the victims of this political suppression.[985] The political demands on the status of Islam were not at the top agenda of either of these parties. However, as the popularity of *Birlik* grew and as the party organized large-scale protests in the late 1980s, Karimov was disturbed by the existence of political opposition in the country. Although at first agreed to recognize *Birlik*, he later rejected to register it as a political party.[986] Karimov used diverse methods to deal with political opposition. He suppressed the opposition parties, sent their leaders to exile or promised them some attractive career opportunities in the high-ranked governmental offices. By doing so, Karimov did not allow new persons and groups in the Uzbek political arena to gain any political power.[987]

Karimov also wanted to maintain his influence on Islamic way of life by adopting new laws. *The Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations* in June 1991 stated, "Creation of activity of any part of a religious nature is not permitted in the Uzbek SSR, nor are branches, departments, or divisions of religious parties created outside the republic."[988] This law prevented the IRP to become a political

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[984] McGlinchey, "Divided Faith: Trapped between State and Islam in Uzbekistan," in Sahadeo and Zanca, 309.

[985] Akbarzadeh, *Uzbekistan and the United States,* 29.

[986] Hanks, "Religion and Law in Uzbekistan," in Richardson, 320-321.

[987] Matveeva, "Legitimising Central Asian Authoritarianism," 1112-1118.

[988] William Fierman, "Political Development in Uzbekistan: Democratization?" in *Conflict, Cleavage and Change in Central Asia and the Caucasus,* ed. Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 377.

force in the country. In addition, according to this law, religious organizations had to be registered by local authorities.[989]

In general it is possible to argue that Karimov allows Islam at the society level but within the limits of "government sponsored Islam," a policy which was inherited from the Soviet rule. The policy of the Uzbek government towards religion is "a policy based on an uncompromising premise of 'that which is not controlled is forbidden.'"[990] Soviet-era SADUM was replaced by *O'zbekiston Musulmonlar Idorasi* (the Muslim Directorate of Uzbekistan) in post-Soviet Uzbekistan.[991] This Muslim Directorate known as Muftiate is one of the most important instruments of the Uzbek state to control and monitor religious leaders in the country. Although it is announced as being independent from the secular state, in fact, it is under the control of state administration that aims to put pressure on Islamic clergy of Uzbekistan.[992] All religious instructions and the relations with the Muslim world are conducted by this Muftiate. New madrasas appeared and the hajj was organized under its authority. Since its establishment, the Muftiate has controlled and even closed many mosques in Uzbekistan.[993]

In May 1998, the *Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organization* imposed new restrictions on religious organizations.[994] For an expert, this law was "deceptively titled" because it had nothing to do with freedom of conscience and religious organization. On the contrary, it banned "the private teachings of religious practices."[995] With this law, new restrictions were introduced on freedom of

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[989] Fierman, "Political Development in Uzbekistan," in Dawisha and Parrott, 377.

[990] OSCE, "Freedom of Religion or Belief in Uzbekistan."

[991] Khalid, "A Secular Islam: Nation, State," 587.

[992] McGlinchey, "Divided Faith: Trapped between State and Islam in Uzbekistan," in Sahadeo and Zanca, 307.

[993] Khalid, "A Secular Islam: Nation, State," 587.

[994] Melvin, *Uzbekistan: Transition to Authoritarianism,* 52-54.

[995] McGlinchey, "Divided Faith: Trapped between State and Islam in Uzbekistan," in Sahadeo and Zanca, 310.

worship and religious groups. Not only the registration of mosques and religious associations became compulsory, but also secular dressing codes were imposed.[996] As pointed out by experts, the meaning of this law for Uzbek society and Islam was going beyond merely regulating Islamic way of life in the country. "The most alarming characteristic is that it makes religious activity itself a matter of national security. By equating religious offences with national security offenses, the law criminalizes religious activity itself."[997]

After six bombs exploded in Tashkent on February 16, 1999, Karimov labelled all Islamists, radicals and Wahhabis as potential terrorists. Despite the lack of intelligence to reach the clandestine networks of this movement, the Uzbek police accused many people without obtaining any concrete evidence. This kind of method has been accepted unjust and heavily criticized by human rights defenders in the country.[998] Karimov blamed extremist religious groups in general, and Wahhabis and HT in particular for these attacks. Karimov stated that these religious organizations constituted a critical problem for the Uzbek state and accused them of aiming to establish an Uzbek state similar to the other Islamic countries and an Islamic Caliphate. Warning about the dangers of these groups, Karimov called the Uzbek people to respect "real Islam."[999]

Afterwards, the IMU militants were suspected for the February 1999 attacks. As put forward by an expert, "Regardless of how murky the story of the February 1999 Tashkent bombings is, it is clear that IMU militants were involved and that many of them were cold-blooded killers who were closely linked to transnational terrorist networks."[1000] Karimov implemented extraordinary measures against the radical organizations. His statements revealed his anger towards Islamist extremists. "Such

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[996] Louw, *Everyday Islam,* 26-27.

[997] Keller and Sigron, "State Security v Freedom of Expression," 166.

[998] Naumkin, *Radical Islam in Central Asia*, 149.

[999] Sengupta, *Formation of the Uzbek Nation State,* 201.

[1000] Naumkin, *Radical Islam in Central Asia*, 81.

people must be shot in the head. If necessary, I will shot them myself."[1001] It was claimed that Uzbek security forces tortured the detainees who were accused of the 1999 attack. There was a general view that the trial of the suspected Islamist militants was not fair as it was closed to the media and public. Twenty-two people who appeared before the court were found guilty and punished.[1002] However, these harsh policies could not stop Islamist extremists. Another devastating attack was realized in July 2004 when the suicide bombers targeted the American and Israeli embassies and the Uzbek Prosecutor-General's office in Tashkent and killed several people outside these embassies.[1003] Uzbek security forces responded to these attacks with the similar kind of tight controls and extraordinary measures.[1004]

The policy of the Uzbek government towards religious fundamentalism also involves labelling all family members of religious extremists. Uzbek security forces arrest not only those who are accused of being extremists, but also their relatives. Uzbek courts imprison these people for long years. The relatives of religious extremists are also subjected to social exclusion in the society. They face many difficulties and impediments when applying for a job in the governmental bodies. Local police and mahalla committees[1005] continuously keep an eye on them.[1006] By doing so, Uzbek government tries to intimidate extremists and dissuade those who participate or support these kinds of radical groups.

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[1001] Khalid, "A Secular Islam: Nation, State," 587.

[1002] Naumkin, *Radical Islam in Central Asia*, 77.

[1003] Freedom House, "Uzbekistan," under "Reports 2012," http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2012/uzbekistan (accessed August 17, 2012).

[1004] Johnson, *Oil, Islam and Conflict,* 136.

[1005] "Mahalla, 'a city neighbourhood,' incorporated several dozens of families held together by either kinship or profession, and grouped around the neighborhood mosque." Demian Vaisman, "Regionalism and Clan loyalty in the Political Life of Uzbekistan," in *Muslim Eurasia Conflicting Legacies*, ed. Yaacov Ro'i (London: FRANK CASS, 2005), 106. Mahallas, based on territorial base, are consisted of people who live in a same place and collectively solve their own social problems. They have an important function as the basic form of social organization. They provide a link between the people and the state. "Mahallas as 'institutions of self governance of citizens' have served the interests of the state in terms of facilitating implementation and regulation of state policies." Yalcin, *Rebirth of Uzbekistan Politics, Economy,* 141.

[1006] OSCE, "Freedom of Religion or Belief in Uzbekistan."

Another major event emerged in May 2005 in Andijan.[1007] In the Andijan uprising, the Uzbek soldiers and police officers killed around 700-800 civilians who protested for the release of Andijan businessmen accused of being members of *Akramiyya*, a religious organization.[1008] This event increased the tension among the people, authorities and human rights defenders once again.[1009] However, despite some criticisms in the international area, through this event, Uzbek state tested its own power to resist such kinds of opposition movements. This event clearly showed that regime security was more important for Karimov than the life of its citizens. It can also be argued that Andijan events discouraged many insurgency groups while boosting the self-confidence of the Uzbek regime.

Political Islam has always been considered as a "potent language of opposition" and "potent mobilizing force in Central Asia."[1010] The Uzbek president, using the discourse of "Islamic fundamentalism" tries to securitize this issue and justify his decisions on "the suspension of religious freedom and political pluralism, restrictions on the media, and the creation of an authoritarian state."[1011] As an author says, "The elevation of this perceived threat to the level of an existential one (its securitization) has been used by the regime to legitimize its restriction of outlets for political participation and its crackdown on the opposition."[1012] In Uzbekistan, home-grown political Islam has been deeply involved in local problems and remained "a rational and powerful strategy for opposing autocratic rule."[1013] That is why radical Islamist organizations targeted Karimov's rule: "The more authoritarian

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[1007] Collins, "Islamic Revivalism and Political Attitudes," 17.

[1008] Ibid., 17-18.

[1009] Karagiannis, *Political Islam in Central Asia,* 65.

[1010] Eric McGlinchey, "Constructing Militant Opposition: Authoritarian Rule and Political Islam in Central Asia" (paper prepared for the Yale Lecture Series on Central Asia, April, 2004), 1.

[1011] Hanks, "Dynamics of Islam, Identity," 219.

[1012] Matteo Fumagalli, "Alignments and Realignments in Central Asia: The Rationale and Implications of Uzbekistan's Rapprochement with Russia," *International Political Science Review* 28, no. 3 (2007): 255.

[1013] McGlinchey, "Constructing Militant Opposition," 10.

the state, the more pronounced Islam will be in society."[1014] By closing all the channels to negotiate with the government, Karimov did not give any chance to his opponents. As a result of this, a home-grown radicalism has emerged in Uzbek territories.[1015]

In Uzbekistan, it is known that more than 7000 political prisoners have been punished because of their religious beliefs so far.[1016] According to some scholars, this policy is "a cover for the government's inability to promote economic progress and prosperity in the country and defame the opposition."[1017] "The Karimov regime has also largely spurned the mantra of privatization, and the state remains a powerful actor in the economy."[1018] Indeed, Karimov has used the resources so far to eliminate political and Islamist opposition rather than to revitalize the Uzbek economy. Especially between 1996 and 2002, in a period the attacks of Islamist extremism gained speed, there was "minimal economic reform" but "increasing political repression" in the country.[1019]

#### 4.2.2. Regional Security Policies of Uzbekistan

Uzbek leader Karimov has embarked on an "ideology of national independence" which indicated the "incarnation of glorious values, aspirations and moral principles of its *multi-national population*" and distancing itself from "global consumerism, radical Islam and ethnic nationalism."[1020] The main characteristic of Uzbek foreign policy is shifting alliances between Russia and the West. By doing this, it can be

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[1014] McGlinchey, "Constructing Militant Opposition," 14.

[1015] Naumkin, "Uzbekistan's State-Building Fatigue," 132.

[1016] OSCE, "Freedom of Religion or Belief in Uzbekistan."

[1017] Ibid.

[1018] Khalid, "A Secular Islam: Nation, State," 586.

[1019] Richard Pomfret, *The Central Asian Economies since Independence* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2006), 33.

[1020] Spechler and Spechler, "Foreign Policy of Uzbekistan," 163. Emphasis is original.

said that Uzbekistan "reserved its freedom of manoeuvre."[1021] As pointed out by an expert, "The regime of Islam Karimov has been actively manoeuvring and altering the idiom of threat in order to maximise its strategic rent."[1022]

This shifting foreign policy of Uzbekistan can be observed in its relations with regional security organizations and major powers. As Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan also tried to preserve its regional security through the membership of regional security organizations, mainly the CSTO and SCO and bilateral relations with the major powers, Russia, the U.S. and China. However, contrary to Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan is far from having a consistent policy in these establishments and its relations with these powers. In the following part, the role of Uzbekistan in these regional security organizations and its relations with these major powers are respectively examined.

#### 4.2.2.1. Uzbekistan in the Regional Security Organizations (CSTO-SCO)

In the last twenty years, Uzbekistan, either jumped on the bandwagon under the leadership of Russia and cooperated with Russia, or in some cases, distanced itself from Moscow and turned its face to the West, mainly the U.S. By doing so, as mentioned above, Uzbekistan aimed to create a space for manoeuvre against the major powers and retain freedom of choice in its foreign policy. Uzbekistan was one of the founding members of the CIS in 1992, but afterwards joined the anti-Russian block GUUAM together with Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova.[1023]

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[1021] Spechler and Spechler, "Foreign Policy of Uzbekistan," 163.

[1022] Nourzhanov, "Changing Security Threat Perceptions," 90.

[1023] Ibid. "GUUAM (Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan and Moldova) Group was formally founded as a political, economic and strategic alliance designed to strengthen the independence and sovereignty of these former Soviet Union republics. Cooperation among delegations of Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine started in 1996 in Vienna, Austria, at the CFE Treaty Conference, where four states issued joint statements and proposed common initiatives. On October 10, 1997, the Presidents of Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine met in Strasbourg during summit of the Council of Europe and stated their mutual interest in developing bilateral and regional cooperation, European and regional security, political and economic contacts. On April 24, 1999, GUUAM was enlarged by one more member – Uzbekistan." GUUAM, "The GUUAM Group: History and Principles," under "General Information," November 2000, http://www.guuam.org/general/history.html (accessed August 3, 2012).

Since the establishment of the CSTO, Uzbekistan is a very problematic member of this organization. Any member of CSTO has right to leave the organization and Uzbekistan used this right several times in the past.[1024] In 1997, Uzbekistan did not extend its CSTO membership.[1025] However, it re-established its relations with this organization in August 1999.[1026] Uzbekistan renewed its CSTO membership on June 23, 2006.[1027] In 2009, Karimov rejected to sign the agreement on the Collective Forces of Operative Reaction (CFOR) within the CSTO treaty and minimized its cooperation with the organization. Uzbekistan also objected the plans of Moscow to open a military base in Kyrgyzstan. Tashkent has very recently suspended its CSTO membership on June 26, 2012.[1028] Commenting on this development, an expert claims that the decision of Uzbekistan is much more complex than being merely labelled as shifting foreign policy. He argues that Uzbekistan has strong reasons behind its decision to suspend its membership:

> Tashkent was opposed to the creation of the 20,000 strong Collective Rapid Reaction Forces, first proposed in December 2008 and officially formed in June 2009. ...During the formative stage for the new force structure, Tashkent advanced the concept that all CSTO members should contribute equal numbers of troops and have joint say in their use. This was ignored, and the force that emerged, without Uzbek participation, had Russian and Kazakh elite airborne and air mobile units as its mainstay. But Tashkent had deeper concerns; not only the size and precise structure of the CSTO forces but on the conditions of their operational use. In the interim, in June 2010 the ethnic violence in southern Kyrgyzstan resulted in Bishkek's request for assistance from Moscow. ... During this period, Tashkent also opposed Moscow's plans to open a new air base in southern Kyrgyzstan. In December 2010, the CSTO summit in Moscow advanced amendments to the CSTO charter to allow action in response to a range of crisis, including a domestic upheaval in a member state, and even included civil emergencies. Uzbekistan refused to sign the documents. Further advances during the CSTO summit in December 2011, such as the decision to sign an agreement among members requiring

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[1024] "Uzbekistan Suspends Its Membership in the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO)," *Fergananews,* June 29, 2012.

[1025] Naumkin, "Uzbekistan's State-Building Fatigue," 137.

[1026] "Uzbekistan Suspends Its Membership," *Fergananews.*

[1027] Naumkin, "Uzbekistan's State-Building Fatigue," 137.

[1028] "Uzbekistan Suspends Its Membership," *Fergananews.*

> consensus in the case of a foreign country seeking basing rights on the territory of a member state or to issue a joint communique offering a common stance among members on key issues, were met by Uzbek non-compliance.[1029]

As seen, Russia could not establish a strong regional security structure under the CSTO. Uzbekistan's decision to suspend its membership became an important signal that there are cleavages among the member states even on the most important issues for the organization. This also shows that for Russia, having close historical ties with Central Asian states does not always guarantee to establish stable relations with them. The best example of this fact is Uzbekistan, who remains reluctant to give support for the CSTO's activities. Uzbekistan always had some doubts on Russian intervention in case of any instability in the region. Therefore, until today, Uzbekistan preferred to diversify its partners by establishing agreements with the U.S. and NATO while preserving its membership status at the CSTO.[1030]

As for the SCO, Uzbekistan continues its membership in this body in a much more consistent manner as compared to its membership in the CSTO. One of the SCO meetings, the Dushanbe Summit realized in 2000 has special place for Uzbekistan. In this meeting, with the aim of preserving regional security, the member countries agreed on the cooperation against any regional threats. Uzbek leader Karimov had attended the meeting as an observer. At the end of this meeting, the Dushanbe Declaration was accepted by the member countries.[1031] Afterwards, in 2001, Uzbekistan joined the SCO.[1032]

The SCO as a regional security organization is important for Uzbekistan for several reasons. Firstly, like the other member states, through the membership to this organization, Uzbekistan found the opportunity to balance the powers of big

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[1029] Roger McDermott, "Understanding the 'Uzbek Way' on Security," *Asia Times,* July 24, 2012.

[1030] Fyodor Lukyanov, "Uncertain World: CSTO Must Evolve into Military Alliance," *Rianovosti*, April 28, 2011.

[1031] Hu, "China's Central Asian Policy," in Boris Rumer, 137-138.

[1032] Farkhod Tolipov, "Multilateralism, Bilateralism and Unilateralism in Fighting Terrorism in the SCO Area," *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly* 4, no. 2 (2006): 159.

regional actors, Russia and China.[1033] As an expert says, "Karimov is keen to avoid any appearance of weakness or isolation within Central Asia, keeping his relations with both Moscow and Beijing as balanced as possible."[1034] Secondly, anti-terrorism policies implemented in the SCO helped Karimov to eliminate, or at least, to intimidate religious groups targeting the Uzbek regime. "Uzbekistan joined the SCO in 2001 as it sought a common forum for responding to the ... IMU, a transnational guerrilla threat."[1035] Thirdly, contrary to many Western organizations, the SCO being consisted of many authoritarian states does not criticize repressive policies of Uzbekistan, and even gives support for these policies.[1036]

Some argue that the SCO is an "anti-Western organization" and a "club of autocratic governments."[1037] It is also claimed that the organization is created to minimize Western influence and ensure stability in the region. In this sense, the SCO grouping "as a 'pact for regime survival' ... provides 'mutual support [for] the Central Asian member governments in addressing internal and external pressures in the name of promoting highly valued regional stability.'"[1038] These characteristics of this organization seem to be very attractive for the Uzbek state that desires to establish domestic and regional security and to ensure the balance among regional and global powers.

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[1033] Fyodor Lukyanov, "Uncertain World: SCO's 10 Year Search for Balance," *Rianovosti*, June 16, 2011.

[1034] Roger McDermott, "Uzbekistan's Relations with China Warming," *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 2, no. 142, July 22, 2005.

[1035] Stephen G. Brooks and William C. Wohlforth, *World Out of Balance: International Relations and the Challenge of American Primacy* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2008), 74.

[1036] Fels, *Assessing Eurasia's Powerhouse,* 28.

[1037] Ibid.

[1038] Ibid.

#### 4.2.2.2. Bilateral Relations with Russia, the U.S., and China

##### 4.2.2.2.1. Uzbek-Russian Relations

During the 1990s, since the major driving force behind Uzbek foreign policy was distancing itself from Russian penetration and dominance, Tashkent was reluctant to have any cooperation with Russia.[1039] Uzbekistan, as a member of the CIS, managed its own trade policy and put an end to use Russian rouble as its currency in 1993. In the years of Boris Yeltsin, Russia did not provide enough assistance to Uzbekistan in the areas of economy and military. Only after Russians and Uzbeks decided to intervene in the Tajik Civil War, they found an opportunity to strengthen their military ties.[1040]

The Uzbek-Russian relations have developed as a result of some regional developments and the reactions given by the Uzbek regime to them. In the 2000s, due to the colour revolutions in Central Asia and Western criticisms directed towards the Uzbek regime (especially after the Andijan events), the Uzbek government considered that its alliance with the West could jeopardize its regime security. As a result, Uzbekistan turned its face to Russia. Russian President Putin and Karimov signed the "Treaty of Allied Nations" on November 14, 2005. According to this, in cases of emergency, two countries agreed on using military facilities on each other's territories and taking military measures against aggressor states. At that time, the West had already imposed some sanctions against Uzbekistan due to the Andijan events. In this context, Russian-Uzbek alliance became beneficial for Uzbekistan, because at least, it provided to Tashkent a considerable amount of arms delivery.[1041] The Uzbek government might also think that the experiences of Russian army gained in the Chechen conflict could be used in dismantling the IMU forces in the region.[1042] However, Karimov has always

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[1039] Naumkin, "Uzbekistan's State-Building Fatigue," 132.

[1040] Spechler and Spechler, "Foreign Policy of Uzbekistan," 163-164.

[1041] Naumkin, "Uzbekistan's State-Building Fatigue," 135.

[1042] W. Alejandro Sanchez, "A Central Asian Security Paradigm: Russia and Uzbekistan," *Small Wars and Insurgents* 18, no.1 (March 2007): 124.

avoided any Russian dominance that could "constrain Uzbekistan's own field of manoeuvre in Central Asia or allow Russia direct access to Uzbek military facilities. By resisting a relationship of tutelage under Russia he has set limits to the depth of Russian-Uzbek strategic partnership."[1043]

The military cooperation between Uzbekistan and Russia continued in 2006. In this year, Uzbekistan gave the right to use its airfield at Navoi as a base to Russia.[1044] However, Uzbekistan had some conditions regarding the use of this airfield. Russia could not be able to gain access to Navoi in case of emergencies.[1045] As such, Uzbekistan aimed to both secure its regime and receive support from Russia.[1046]

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russia aimed to prevent the former Soviet states from independently participating to the international security and economic organizations.[1047] In this sense, Russia always tried to stress some common grounds among these countries. For instance, contrary to Western powers, Russia has never directed any criticism to authoritarian regimes of Central Asian states. For Karimov, cooperation with Russia has been seen as an opportunity in terms of consolidating his power in the country. However, as is mentioned below, Uzbekistan also developed close relations with the West, mainly the U.S., although it also tries not to alienate Russia. Allison argues that despite some ups and downs in relations with both of these countries, Karimov tried to establish a balance between Russian and American interests.[1048]

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[1043] Allison, "Security Cooperation between Western States," 3.

[1044] Blank, "Energy and Environment Issues," 91.

[1045] Ibid.

[1046] Ibid.

[1047] Peter B. Humhrey, "The State Policy of Play in Russia's Near Abroad," *JFQ*, no. 55, Fall 2009, 46.

[1048] Allison, "Security Cooperation between Western States," 4.

#### 4.2.2.2.2. Uzbek-U.S. Relations

Uzbek-U.S. relations deepened after September 11 events especially in the security area. However, even prior to these events, Uzbekistan had started to see the U.S. as a security ally due to some attacks of the IMU in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan.[1049] In 1999, Karimov had allowed the entry of some units of Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to the country. These units had been trained to capture Al-Qaeda's Leader Osama Bin Laden. In Central Asia, Uzbekistan has always been seen as the closest ally of the U.S. in fighting Islamic fundamentalism because "Uzbek government was not penetrated by Taliban sympathizers… [and] Karimov had no sympathy for bin Laden."[1050]

Implementing strict border controls and policies, Uzbekistan seems to be successful in distancing itself from the turmoil in Afghanistan. However, since mid-1990s, the links between the IMU and Taliban in Afghanistan have become one of the major concerns of the Uzbek President. In face of this security threat, after September 11 attacks, Uzbekistan became an important ally to the U.S. The threat emanating from the terrorist groups provided high level of the U.S. military assistance to Uzbekistan.[1051] The IMU had been listed by the U.S. as a terrorist organization having close links with Al-Qaeda.[1052] During the Afghanistan War, the IMU members assisted the Taliban forces. The U.S. forces targeting the IMU militants alongside Taliban were able to destroy one of the prestigious leaders, Namangani, in Kunduz in November 2001.[1053]

Uzbekistan provided a military base, Karshi-Khanabad, to the U.S. forces near the northern border with Afghanistan. This military base was once used by the Soviets. The U.S. granted hundreds of billions of dollars to Uzbekistan in the period of

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[1049] Spechler and Spechler, "Foreign Policy of Uzbekistan," 164.

[1050] Naumkin, "Uzbekistan's State-Building Fatigue," 132-133.

[1051] Spechler and Spechler, "Foreign Policy of Uzbekistan," 163-164.

[1052] Naumkin, "Uzbekistan's State-Building Fatigue," 132-133.

[1053] Cornell, "Narcotics, Radicalism, and Armed Conflict," 632.

2001-2003.[1054] Just after he Uzbek government permitted the use of this base, the U.S. gave an additional $25 million grant to Uzbekistan "for weapons and other military purchases."[1055] Karimov also signed a "Strategic Partnership and Cooperation Framework Agreement" during his visit to Washington in 2002.[1056]

It must also be pointed out that, during this period, the U.S. stopped criticizing the harsh and restrictive authoritarian policies of Uzbekistan.[1057] The authoritarian policies continued to be implemented and Uzbekistan's rubber-stamp parliament extended Karimov's presidency without elections.[1058] This U.S.-led war was successfully instrumentalized by the Uzbek government, as an expert says, "The war on terror was a 'blessing' for the Uzbek regime as it allowed it to consolidate its grip on power and at the same time benefit from external legitimacy through its new ties with the USA."[1059] The Uzbek state also aimed to gather support for its foreign policy initiatives in its domestic politics. For instance, in 2001, the Muftiate forced Uzbekistan's imams to support the U.S. for its military engagement in Afghanistan, although many of them had some concerns about the devastating effects of the war on a Muslim society.[1060]

However, Uzbekistan's pro-U.S. policies did not last long and there emerged several conflicts between the two countries in time. There were several factors behind the deterioration of relations: the decrease in danger posed by Afghanistan, insufficient U.S. investment in Uzbekistan despite high expectations of the Uzbek state, the increasing American insistence on democratization and regime change in

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[1054] Spechler and Spechler, "Foreign Policy of Uzbekistan," 164.

[1055] Pauline Jones Luong and Erika Weinthal, "New Friends, New Fears in Central Asia," *Foreign Affairs* 81, no. 2 (March/April 2002): 62.

[1056] Spechler and Spechler, "Foreign Policy of Uzbekistan," 164.

[1057] Ibid.

[1058] Luong and Weinthal "New Friends, New Fears," 69.

[1059] Fumagalli, "Alignments and Realignments in Central Asia," 256.

[1060] McGlinchey, "Divided Faith: Trapped between State and Islam in Uzbekistan," in Sahadeo and Zanca, 307-308.

Uzbekistan especially after the occupation of Iraq, the U.S. support for the colour revolutions in Central Asia and Caucasus, and criticism on state violence in Andijan events of 2005. As a result of these tensions, Uzbekistan expelled the U.S. forces from Karshi-Khanabad base which was used to support Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan.[1061]

In late 2007, Karimov signalled the possible improvement in the relations between the U.S. and Uzbekistan by saying the following: "In its foreign policy Uzbekistan has always been and remains the supporter of mutually beneficial cooperation and mutual respect with all close and far away neighbours, *including the U.S. and Europe.* We will never turn off this road."[1062] By 2008, Uzbek-U.S. relations began to improve in military area. The head of the U.S. Central Command to Uzbekistan in January 2008 heralded the possible cooperation by allowing some NATO forces to gain access to the aerial facilities at Termez. Termez has been used by Germany as a trans-shipment base and as part of humanitarian assistance to NATO operations in Afghanistan.[1063]

Uzbekistan also permitted the transit of U.S. non-lethal supplies to Afghanistan via its territories in January 2009 after the visit of the Commander of the U.S. Central Command, General David Petraeus. Passing through Russia, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan, the first rail shipment of U.S. non-lethal supplies reached Afghanistan.[1064] Secretary of State, Robert Blake has recently declared the following:

> [Uzbekistan played] a vital role in international efforts to confront violent extremism in Afghanistan. It has provided much-needed electricity to Afghanistan, undertaken infrastructure projects in Afghanistan such as the rail

[1061] Spechler and Spechler, "Foreign Policy of Uzbekistan," 164.

[1062] Ibid., 166. Emphasis is original.

[1063] Allison, "Security Cooperation between Western States," 3.

[1064] Jim Nichol, "Uzbekistan: Recent Developments," 3.

> line to Mazar-e-Sharif, and facilitated the transport of non-lethal supplies into Afghanistan via the Northern Distribution Network.[1065]

Agreements on the area of military educational exchanges and training were signed between the U.S. and Uzbekistan after the visit of General Petreaus in August 2009. In addition to that, Uzbekistan and the U.S. started to organize bilateral meetings and intensify cooperation through delegations, diplomatic channels, military-to-military contacts and trade and investment overtures. The First Bilateral Consultation meeting was held in late December 2009 with a U.S. visit by an Uzbek delegation led by Foreign Minister Vladimir Norov.[1066]

#### 4.2.2.2.3. Uzbek-Chinese Relations

China tried to pursue friendly and close relations with all of the independent Central Asian states, including Uzbekistan. For China, there are many ways of establishing and strengthening relations with these states: “develop[ing] normal and friend-neighbourly relationships ... negotiat[ing] and resolving boundary disputes with three of them -Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan; expand[ing] economic ties with [them],”[1067] and lastly, but more importantly, “seek[ing] their cooperation in preventing the rise of Islamic fundamentalism and ethnic separatist elements from spreading into China’s ... XUAR.”[1068] Through these policies, China aims to maintain its influence in the region.

The diplomatic relations between Uzbekistan and China were established on January 2, 1992, almost a year after the independence. President Islam Karimov paid visits to China in 1992, 1994, 1999, 2005 and 2011. In 2001 and 2006, Karimov went to Shanghai to participate in the SCO summits. The Presidents of the People’s Republic of China, Szyan Szemin in 1996 and Hu Jintao in 2004 and 2010

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[1065] Jim Nichol, “Uzbekistan: Recent Developments,” 1.

[1066] Ibid., 3-4.

[1067] Yuan, “China’s Role in Establishing,” 857.

[1068] Ibid.

officially visited Uzbekistan.[1069] From the early years of independence, Uzbek-Chinese relations were developed through summits and visits of delegations. These bilateral relations have been concluded with 170 documents so far.[1070] The cooperation between Uzbekistan and China encompasses many different areas ranging from "political cooperation in the international arena, joint efforts in countering terrorism, religious extremism and separatism, mutually beneficial interaction in trade, economic, investment, cultural and humanitarian spheres."[1071]

The most important problem China had with the newly independent Central Asian states was the border problem. As mentioned earlier, China tried to solve border issues by establishing the SCO. However, since there are no common borders between Uzbekistan and China, Tashkent and Beijing have enjoyed less problematic relations compared to the other Central Asian countries. However, the lack of a common boundary has also prevented the establishment of closer links in terms of direct contacts and trade relations. Uzbek-Chinese relations have been accelerated at the regional level after Uzbekistan joined Shanghai Five in 2001.[1072] According to an expert, these relations further developed after the Andijan events in 2005.[1073]

### 4.3. Conclusion

With the aim of consolidating their rule and gaining legitimacy, both Nazarbayev and Karimov have attached greater importance to national history, revival of old traditions and nation-building processes. In this respect, Kazakhstan has focused on

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[1069] Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan, "Cooperation of the Republic of Uzbekistan with the Countries of the Asia and the Pacific," under "International Cooperation" http://mfa.uz/eng/inter_cooper/uzbekistan_countries/uzb_asia_pacific/ (accessed August 20, 2012).

[1070] Governmental Portal of the Republic of Uzbekistan, "Uzbekistan and China Expanding Cooperation," under "Press-center," April 18, 2011 http://www.gov.uz/en/press/politics/8915 (accessed August 20, 2012).

[1071] Governmental Portal of the Republic of Uzbekistan, "Uzbekistan-China: Toward Enhancing Cooperation," under "Press-center," June 10, 2010 http://www.gov.uz/en/press/politics/5730 (accessed August 20, 2012).

[1072] Zhao, "Central Asia in China's Diplomacy," in Rumer, Trenin and Zhao, 174.

[1073] McDermott, "Uzbekistan's Relations with China."

Kazakh national identity and historical developments. Uzbekistan, having a very long Islamic tradition, has embraced the Sunni tradition and aimed to implement official Islamic policies. By doing so, both of these leaders aimed to unify their people around shared values and to deepen national consciousness in the society. However, in both of these countries, some groups who could not identify themselves with the majority continue to pose serious challenges.

In face of these challenges, the authoritarian regimes of Nazarbayev and Karimov take extraordinary measures. Both of these leaders have developed very reactive policies against these security concerns and threats. This kind of approach has not brought any solution to the problems yet, on the contrary, deepened them. In this sense, it can be argued that, in both of these countries, the regime character has become an important factor in deepening the security problems and determining the successes or failures of security policies.

In domestic policies, the threats such as the continuous attacks of radical organizations are more visible in Uzbekistan and it can be argued that Karimov has taken more extraordinary measures as compared to Nazarbayev. Although both of these leaders have grounded their policies on some constitutional articles and laws, it is difficult to mention the rule of law in these states. However, it can be argued that, contrary to the substantial policies of Karimov, the domestic policies of Nazarbayev seem to be more consistent and comprehensive. For instance, while Nazarbayev implements economic dimensions of his domestic and regional security policies, Karimov lacks this kind of economic perspective.

There are also some differences in terms of relations established with the other major actors at the regional and global levels. For Nazarbayev, the international image of his country is very important while for Uzbekistan, it is not equally important. Nazarbayev tries to improve its international image by promoting the multi-ethnic and multi-cultural characteristics of his country, establishing good relations with the outside world and developing its economy. However, Uzbekistan, always being criticized of violating human rights, experiences some up and downs in its relations even with its partners. Consequently, Uzbekistan loses prestige due

to its foreign policy preferences while Kazakhstan increasingly becomes a reliable partner for many countries.

# CHAPTER V

# CONCLUSION

In the current literature, most of the studies examine security issues in Central Asia at the regional and global levels. Analyzing security problems of Central Asian states with these macro-level lenses causes an overgeneralization of security issues in each Central Asian state. Furthermore, by exaggerating the impact of the regional and global powers on the region, this approach overlooks the role of the Central Asian states in dealing with their own security issues. After more than 20 years of independence, there is a need for scrutinizing domestic security problems of these states in order to develop a more elaborate and proper security analysis in Central Asia. This kind of approach may also help to portray Central Asian states as active players in their security issues rather than only passive subjects of the New Great Game among major powers.

Two of the Central Asian states come to the forefront in terms of their economic and political capacities that would enable them to handle their security problems in a more effective way: Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. In the chaotic order of the post-Soviet era, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have encountered various challenges at both domestic and regional levels. However, having different geographical, historical, cultural, societal and economical characteristics, Astana and Tashkent have prioritized different kinds of security problems on their domestic security agendas. In this thesis, domestic security issues of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan in the post-Soviet era are analyzed on a comparative basis. This study focused on two outstanding security problems: separatism and ethnic conflict for Kazakhstan and radical Islam for Uzbekistan. By doing so, it aimed to find out the impact of the securitization of these particular security issues by political leaders on their domestic and regional security.

The Copenhagen School and particularly the term "securitization" developed by Buzan and his colleagues constituted the theoretical basis for this study. Chapters are generally organized in line with the main components of the securitization concept. In the first chapter, security threats for each state are determined. In the second chapter, by focusing on the securitizing actors, Nazarbayev and Karimov, the leaders of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, their personal background, popularity, public image, and power of speech act towards their domestic and international audiences are analyzed. Finally, in the third chapter, security policies of Astana and Tashkent at the domestic and regional levels are scrutinized. In the regional level, the memberships of these countries to the regional security organizations, mainly the CSTO and SCO and their bilateral relations with major powers, Russia, China and the U.S. are examined.

The global security dynamics of the Cold War order had considerably overshadowed security issues at the domestic and regional levels. The end of the bipolar world and the struggle of the superpowers, however, marked the beginning of a new era drawing more attention to local and regional security issues. As Buzan and his colleagues indicate, this change mostly occurred in the area of military security.[1074] In the post-Cold War era, the scope of security studies that had earlier been dominated by traditional security understanding with its special reference to hard security issues (mainly military) has widened. Non-traditional security problems, in other words, soft security or transnational issues such as radical Islam, terrorism, drug trafficking, ethnic/tribal conflicts, economic problems and environmental damage have been introduced to the security agendas of states.

As non-traditional security threats are interlinked to each other both at the global and more so at the regional level, usually requiring comprehensive measures, states increasingly feel the need of focusing on their regional security. However, this does not mean that traditional security threats have disappeared or lost their significance all together; on the contrary, as the historical fears and threat perceptions continue to shape security policies of one state to another, military security still preserve its

[1074] Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework,* 61.

importance in the post-Cold War era. As such, traditional security threats generally constitute the main incentive behind establishing regional security organizations. In addition, as states seek to take traditional militaristic measures against non-traditional security threats as well, regional security organizations have additional objectives in this new era.

The regionalizing dynamics of the post-Cold War order do not have an equal impact in all parts in the world. As Buzan and his colleagues argue, one of "the main losers from the post-Cold War release of regional security dynamics" is Central Asia.[1075] In this region, "The collapse of Soviet power has unleashed intense processes of securitization and local conflicts over territory, population and status."[1076] As a result of the intensity of their domestic security issues, two important Central Asian states, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, now have to deal with their own domestic security problems before ensuring an effective regional security. As neither Kazakhstan nor Uzbekistan have any independent state-building experience in their history prior to 1991 with no strong institutional capabilities, it becomes even more difficult for these states to adapt themselves to the new world order and effectively deal with their traditional and non-traditional security threats.

As compared to traditional security threats, non-traditional ones may easily cross borders and affect neighbouring states, as is the case for Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. However, for both of these states, the impact of non-traditional threats on their survival is considered crucial as preserving and maintaining their *domestic* securities have primary importance, overshadowing regional security. In both of these states, as the security issues were mostly inherited from the Soviet times, finding solutions to these deep-rooted problems is very difficult. Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have developed very traditional and militaristic responses to these new threats, either individually or under the security establishments in the region, mainly the CSTO or SCO.

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[1075] Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework,* 67.

[1076] Ibid.

## 5.1. Broadening Sectors

Although studies on broadening the concept of security began in the early 1980s, the analysts have paid more attention to them especially in the post-Cold War era. As mentioned in the introduction, Buzan and his colleagues introduce five different security sectors to security studies: military, political, economic, societal and environmental ones.[1077] In fact, most of these security issues in relation to these five sectors were already on the national and political security agendas in the earlier periods, however "they lacked a conceptual framework into which a coherent policy response could be placed. ... By becoming 'security' issues, they automatically gained a level of governmental attention and policy response previously limited to military issues."[1078] An expert explains the main contribution of Buzan to the literature as follows: "Opening up security to embrace new sectors was valuable in itself, but more importantly it served to break the intellectual stranglehold of the 'national security' concept."[1079] Although Buzan does not deny the primacy of the state (as many neo-realists putting much emphasis on the structure of the international system do), he discusses security at different levels: individual, national and international.

Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan encounter significant challenges from these five security sectors at local, regional and global levels. In each sector and at each level, Kazakh and Uzbek states have difficulties in going beyond the "national security" concept. These states, having trouble of freeing themselves from the memories of 70 years long Soviet rule and seeking recognition as independent members of the international system, attach great importance to their state survival and sovereignty. Nazarbayev and Karimov, consider all kinds of security threats as if they are directed to national security of their countries. However, it is important to note that national security and state security does not mean the same thing for these states.

[1077] Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework,* 8.

[1078] Michael Sheedan, *International Security: An Analytical Survey* (Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2005), 44-45.

[1079] Ibid., 48.

For Kazakhstan, in order to ensure national security, it is the nation-state that has to be preserved while for Uzbekistan, even if it is not explicitly declared, it is the regime. In both cases, however, it is very difficult to demarcate clear-cut lines among state security, national security and regime security, as their authoritarian leaderships claim to be protectors of all.

It would be misleading to assert that regime security has no importance for the regime elites in Kazakhstan. In recent years, the spill-over effects of the Arab Spring in the Middle East and North Africa and the rise of Islamic movements in Kazakhstan have worried Nazarbayev considerably about regime security in the country. "A deficit of reform" and "the persistence of leaders in power" which have been the main sources of social unrests in the Arab streets are also the problems in Kazakhstan to some extent.[1080] For this reason, following the Arab Spring, as a sign of solidarity among the authoritarian regimes, Nazarbayev came together with the leaders of Central Asian states and Russia on all occasions. As argued by an expert, "The authoritarian regimes can even use the Arab Spring as an argument in favor for the 'stability' they offer to the people."[1081]

With the aim of taking an advantage of the tensions created by the Arab Spring, Islamist organizations began to threaten the Kazakh state. For instance, the most salient Islamist organization of the recent years in Kazakhstan, *Jund al-Khilafah* (JaK) (Army of the Caliphate)[1082] "has urged Kazakhs 'to draw lessons from the Arab Spring and get rid of their governments'"[1083] and challenged Nazarbayev by

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[1080] Muhammad Tahir, "Governments Move to Thwart 'Arab Spring' in Central Asia," *Eurasianet*, April 28, 2011.

[1081] M. K. Bhadrakumar, "CSTO: All Dressed up, Nowhere to Go," *Asia Times*, August 17, 2011.

[1082] JaK began its activities in the aftermath of Nazarbayev's victory in the presidential elections of April 2011. This organization objects Nazarbayev's religious policies that it considers as anti-Islamic and aims to dismantle his secular regime. However, in the foreseeable future, it seems difficult that JaK would succeed to destroy Nazarbayev's regime on its own. For now, JaK exacerbates the current problems of Kazakhstan and reveals the vulnerabilities of Kazakh security forces. Jacob Zenn, "Rising Terror Group Exploits Kazakh Unrest," *Asia Times,* December 21, 2011.

[1083] Jacoob Zenn, "Kazakhstan Struggles to Contain Salafist-Inspired Terrorism," *Terrorism Monitor* 10, no. 17, September 13, 2012.

saying, “His regime would follow the same path as those in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya because of its ‘anti-Muslim’ policies.”[1084]

For some experts, the rise in Islamist activities in Kazakhstan was not surprising. Emphasizing the geographical proximity of Kazakhstan to the Muslim Caucasia, a political scientist says the following on the issue: “There are no so-called Nazarbayevians who would be immune to the threat of the Islamic movement.”[1085] However, it should be noted that Kazakhstan is still relatively a more peaceful country as compared to its neighbours, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, in terms of Islamist and extremist activities. Only time will tell whether the concerns about regime security in Kazakhstan in face of such radical movements would occupy the whole political agenda of the Kazakh state or not.

## 5.2. Existential Threats and Referent Objects Pertaining to the Relevant Security Sectors

As explained in the introduction, according to Buzan and his colleagues, “Security means survival in the face of existential threats, but what constitutes an existential threat is not the same across different sectors.”[1086] They argue, “Existential threat can only be understood in relation to the particular character of the referent object in question.”[1087] Consequently, as the main security problems differ for Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, so do their existential threats and referent objects in relation to the relevant security sectors.

For Kazakhstan, the existential threat is derived from the ethnicity/nationality question and the possibility of inter-ethnic tension between its titular Kazakh nation and large Russian population. Kazakh state was worried about the separatist demands from ethnic Russians especially throughout the 1990s. Nazarbayev, from

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[1084] Jacoob Zenn, “Kazakhstan Struggles to Contain Salafist-Inspired Terrorism,” *Terrorism Monitor* 10, no. 17, September 13, 2012.

[1085] “Is Kazakhstan on Threshold to Jihad?” *Kavkazcenter,* July 13, 2011.

[1086] Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework,* 27.

[1087] Ibid., 21.

the very beginning of independence, has also grasped the importance of preserving and promoting Kazakh national identity in face of culturally and linguistically influential Russian population. These concerns are still persistent for the Kazakh state but to a decreasing degree. As such, the referent objects in question for Kazakhstan are mainly the state and/or nation, just as Buzan and his colleagues indicate: "The referent object for security has traditionally been the state and, in a more hidden way, the nation. For a state, survival is about sovereignty, and for a nation is about identity."[1088]

In Kazakhstan, the dynamics of its main security problem, the ethnicity/nationality issue, can be analyzed within both the political and societal sectors. It is in the political sector with the referent object of the state, as state sovereignty is considered to be under threat. It is also in the societal sector because the titular nation is a referent object. Actually, it is difficult to make a clear distinction especially between the military, societal and political sectors, the three sectors examined in this study in relation to the domestic security issues of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.

To begin with the political sector, as was mentioned in the introduction, "Existential threats to a state are those that ultimately involve sovereignty, because sovereignty is what defines the state as a state. Threats to state survival are therefore threats to sovereignty."[1089] As stated above, in Kazakhstan, the separatist demands from ethnic Russians have long been considered as the main security threat to the sovereignty of the Kazakh state. This internally destabilizing factor has also an external dimension: a very close neighbour, Russia, a potential supporter of Russian separatist groups. Although Russian authorities have declared on numerous occasions that Russia has no intention to intervene in the internal affairs of Kazakhstan, ethnic Russians in Kazakh territories continue to be a strong card in the hands of Russia, the soft belly of Kazakhstan. As such, the territorial disintegration

[1088] Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework,* 21.

[1089] Ibid., 150.

of the state continues to be, although in decreasing degrees since the late 1990s, a nightmare for the Kazakh state.

As for the societal sector, as given in the theoretical framework, Buzan and his colleagues say, "The organizing concept in the societal sector is identity. Societal security exists when communities of whatever kind define a development or potentiality as a threat to their survival as a community."[1090] Kazakh titular identity, having a disadvantageous position especially in the early days of independence in face of the Russian social, cultural and economic domination is taken as the referent object for the societal sector in this thesis.

For Uzbekistan, the existential threat is the radical Islamist activities targeting the secular regime of Karimov. Since the late 1990s, Islamist extremism and radical movements have dominated the agenda of the Uzbek state. As the target of these Islamist groups are Karimov and his secular rule, the referent object for Uzbekistan is the government itself. However, as mentioned above, in Uzbekistan, there is no clear-cut difference between the state, regime and nation in terms of being referent objects, since Karimov is seen as a legitimate representative and protector of all. In other words, although Islamist extremists target Karimov's regime, not directly the Uzbek state, as the state is equated with the authoritarian leadership, Uzbek state can be accepted to be at risk.

The security threats of Uzbekistan may be classified under the political and military sectors. These threats are in the political sector because, as explained above, it is the state sovereignty what is threatened by them. Within the framework of political sector, in the Uzbek case, the existing structure of the government is threatened by the radical Islamist groups, who challenge to secular state ideology of the Uzbek state by replacing it with an Islamic one.

In terms of military sector, the Uzbek case is also interesting. As given in the introduction, Buzan and his colleagues say, "The military security agenda revolves largely around the ability of governments to maintain themselves against internal

[1090] Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework,* 119.

and external military threats."[1091] Uzbek state does not fight against another state, but a terrorist organization, the IMU, as an internal threat having close ties with the other radical groups in the region such as al-Qaeda. Karimov, in his speeches, always refers to the external dimension of the Islamist threat coming from Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan. He considers radical Islam as a very serious military threat and responses very harshly to the Islamist extremists. In the military sector, the most important referent object is the state although it is not the only one.[1092] However, in the Uzbek case, both the most important and the only referent object is the state, more precisely the regime.

### 5.3. Securitization

As explained in the introduction, in each of these sectors, the security issues in question are non-politicized, politicized or securitized. In terms of securitization, Buzan and his colleagues summarizes the necessary components of a successful securitization as such: "Securitization studies aims to gain an increasingly precise understanding of who securitizes, ... why, with what results, and ... under what conditions (i.e., what explains when securitization is successful)."[1093] In the following part, those components of securitization for Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan are analyzed.

#### 5.3.1. Who Securitizes?

The securitizing actors for the main security issues of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan within the framework of three security sectors, political, societal and military, is the state. In both of these countries, in the name of the state, Nazarbayev and Karimov have presented themselves as having a legitimate right to declare the referent objects. Both of these ex-communist leaders are the strongest political figures who have excessive control and authority in their countries. Not surprisingly, just like having great influence on all aspects of political, societal and economic life and all

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[1091] Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework,* 50.

[1092] Ibid., 49.

[1093] Ibid., 32.

segments of the society, Nazarbayev and Karimov claim to be the primary actors in these five security sectors as well. For them, any issue related to stability and security is crucial, therefore they should not be left at the hands of an actor other than the state.

Both in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, there are different audiences at two levels, the domestic and international ones. In Kazakhstan, the domestic audiences are consisted of ethnic Kazakhs and Russians, while in Uzbekistan the domestic audiences are Muslim believers and Islamist extremists. In Kazakhstan, Nazarbayev has to convince the domestic audience on the necessity to take some extraordinary measures against separatism, however at the same time, needs to appease large Russian population. By doing so, Nazarbayev tries not to alienate Russians since providing their cultural integration and gaining their political support is also important for the Kazakh state. However, Nazarbayev, feeling the need of appealing to both of these groups, made some inconsistent statements on the nationality-related issues. Indeed, with the aim of keeping a foot in both camps, he frequently addresses to either ethnic or civic concept of nation, referring respectively to the Kazakh and Kazakhstani identity. Contrary to Nazarbayev, Karimov seems to have a more consistent and harsher stance towards Islamist extremism. Karimov does not even make a distinction between ordinary devout Muslims and militant Islamists and labels whoever is pretended to disturb social and state order as radicals or extremists.

As for the international audience, by implementing a “multi-vector” foreign policy, Nazarbayev aims to gain reputation and recognition in the international area and seeks to diversify areas of cooperation with other states, notwithstanding the persistence of his country’s security problems. In other words, Nazarbayev does not allow the current security problems of Kazakhstan, even the most challenging one, to prevent Kazakhstan from establishing good ties with the outside world. This is also the case for Kazakh-Russian relations despite the problems regarding the Russian population living in Kazakhstan.

Contrary to Nazarbayev, Karimov, a leader who frequently changes foreign policy orientation of his country, is mostly seen less reliable as a partner by foreign countries. The Uzbek state follows a very pragmatic foreign policy that changes according to the security needs and concerns of the leadership. As such, Karimov faces some difficulties to convince the international audience that his extraordinary policies against Islamist extremism are necessary and right. Although the contributions of Uzbekistan to the "War on Terrorism" is appreciated by the West, especially by the U.S., its extremely militaristic responses directed to the ordinary Muslims (as was the case in Andijan in 2005) were considered unacceptable by the international society. Therefore, the Uzbek state is mostly criticized by the West regarding its human rights violations, which are mostly the outcomes to the extraordinary policies taken during the securitization process.

As these two authoritarian leaders are so influential and sole actors in the securitization process, it is difficult to evaluate or determine the role of functional actors. It is probably because of the fact these functional actors are themselves under the control of the securitizing actors, dependent on them and they are not allowed to be involved in the decisions on security matters.

### 5.3.2. Why Do They Securitize?

For Nazarbayev and Karimov, there are various political objectives behind securitizing some issues over the others. Firstly, for both of these leaders who have similar ideological and political backgrounds, preserving authority and maintaining legitimacy have vital importance. To achieve this, these leaders have successfully manipulated the need for security and stability in the chaotic order of the post-Soviet era. They claim to be the guarantor of peace and order and the main stabilizer against any security threats directed to their countries. Consequently, by portraying themselves as fatherly figures and protectors of the state and/or nation, they become able to maintain their authoritarian rule with considerable popular support at home.

Secondly, as a result of the securitization policies, Kazakh and Uzbek leaders have succeeded to justify their extraordinary policies that were implemented to overcome

the existential threats of their countries. By doing so, they have also depoliticized some of their opponents. The existence of these security threats are always used as a pretext not to abandon the authoritarian system of government and not to replace it with a more open and pluralistic one. For Uzbekistan, this is the case for economic policies as well that remain highly state-oriented. Contrary to Uzbekistan, the Kazakh state has realized successful economic reforms, integrated itself to the world economy and ensured prosperity with a conviction that high level of economic development and prosperity may also help to solve ethnic and socio-economic problems of the country.

Thirdly, through securitization of some issues, Nazarbayev and Karimov can distract attention from other problems in their countries such as widespread corruption, nepotism, inefficient use of resources, and unequal distribution of economic power. By doing so, they avoid taking any responsibility to solve them. Indeed, both Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan inherited many different political, cultural, socio-economic and environmental problems from the Soviet Union. Although to varying degrees, in the post-Cold War era, institutional weakness, infrastructural problems, social and political instability, problematic economic transition, and ecological disasters continue to pose challenges for Astana and Tashkent. However, by attracting the public attention to some specific issues but ignoring many others, the state authorities can conceal many of their shortcomings. Furthermore, the tendency of both of these authoritarian leaders is to find some scapegoats both at home and abroad, who then can be accused of igniting some of these problems or making their solutions harder.

### 5.3.3. With What Results, under What Conditions Do They Securitize?

Under some conditions, the impact of speech act is greater and consequently success in securitization turns out to be higher. As given in the introduction, Buzan and his colleagues define these conditions as such: "Facilitating conditions are the conditions under which the speech act works, in contrast to cases in which the act misfires or is abused."[1094] In the advance of securitization attempts by Kazakh and

[1094] Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework,* 32.

Uzbek leaders, the post-Soviet chaos and uncertainties have played a great role. In Kazakh and Uzbek societies, the fear of instability and insecurity was widespread and the need for a strong leader to eliminate this fear was very high. In both of these countries, there were the ideological vacuum of the post-Soviet era and search for strong identity (either national or religious). Majority of the Kazakh and Uzbek people saw themselves as disadvantageous in terms of their social, economic, cultural and political status.

In Kazakhstan, the ethnic Kazakhs were complaining about their secondary status in terms of social and economic power as compared to Russians who worked in the key sectors of the economy and had better living conditions. As a result, in the early years of independence, the main goal of Kazakh political parties was to obtain some privileges for the titular nation. These conditions urged the Kazakh elites to use a more nationalistic discourse with the aim of gaining support from the society. Therefore, Nazarbayev launched the Kazakhization policy in which the principle of "first among equals" concerning the titular nation was implemented. Some discriminatory policies raised the concerns of Russians and marginalized other ethnic groups in the society, so the likelihood of interethnic conflict increased. As the potential for interethnic conflict increased, it became easier to persuade the domestic audiences that some extraordinary measures had to be taken.

The existence of Russians, their separatist demands in the early years of independence and geographical proximity to Russia have facilitated securitization in Kazakhstan. However, the decline in the nationalist drive since the latter half of the 1990s, economic problems caused by the loss of Russian skilled workforce and decrease in the demands of ethnic Russians in the 2000s (as compared to 1990s) impeded further securitization of that issue.

In Uzbekistan, the revival of Islam took place as a response to the years passed under the Soviet anti-religious campaigns. Karimov, by showing limited tolerance to Islamist activities especially in the early years of the independence, used religion as a political tool to gain support and legitimacy from the overwhelmingly Muslim society. However, revival of Islam was also alarming for the Uzbek state in terms of

the rise of political, radical and fundamental groups. Therefore, Karimov implemented Soviet style official Islam based on monitoring and controlling Islamic activities. In the 1990s, the Tajik civil war and the rise of Taliban in Afghanistan became serious concerns for the Uzbek state. The attacks of the IMU worried both the elites and the ordinary people who were concerned about potential instability and conflict in Uzbekistan.

Karimov was challenged by the danger of Islamist extremism directed to his secular regime by the end of 1990s and was seeking support to get rid of this problem. This support came from the U.S. in the aftermath of September 11 attacks in the form of close cooperation in the "War on Terror." At that time, the U.S. had already begun to securitize radical Islam and terrorism in the world. The Uzbek state has benefited from the securitization process launched by the U.S. and the U.S. presence in the region that helped to crack down Islamist militants, particularly the IMU leaders. By joining the international campaign, Uzbekistan has also found an opportunity to gain recognition in the international arena.

As explained above, the facilitating conditions have helped Nazarbayev and Karimov to securitize some issues more easily than the others. In fact, in general, authoritarian rulers usually benefit from using the discourse based on the preservation of nation and state security in order to maintain their legitimacy and justify their authoritarian policies in the eyes of their people. Buzan and his colleagues say: "National security ... works to silence opposition and has given power holders many opportunities to exploit 'threats' for domestic purposes, to claim a right to handle something with less domestic control and constraint."[1095] As such, according to them, the idea of "the more security the better" is not acceptable. "Basically, security should be seen as negative, as a failure to deal with issues as normal politics."[1096] However, this cannot be said for Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, as for both Nazarbayev and Karimov, more security is better, since securitization

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[1095] Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework,* 29.

[1096] Ibid.

provides them to consolidate their power, exert more control over the society and maintain their rule.

Unless Kazakh and Uzbek authorities abandon their securitization policies at home, in other words, unless they stop manipulating main security problems for domestic political purposes it seems more difficult to find effective solutions to them. The "main" security problems are considered to have primary importance mostly because they are the products of securitization process. Otherwise, in these five different sectors, there is not a hierarchical order concerning the security issues. Indeed, after more than 20 years of independence, it is time for Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan to produce comprehensive policies by paying equal attention to all these issues. Especially for Kazakhstan, it can be the right time of launching desecuritization process where the ethnicity/nationality question would no longer be seen as a security problem. For Uzbekistan, this seems more difficult as radical Islam and terrorism continue to be a securitized issue at the global level. The Uzbek regime would continue to benefit from securitization of radical Islam as long as countries such as Afghanistan remain unstable. This would result in a continuous feeling of threat by the extremist group on the part of Karimov. As of 2012, however, both Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan seem to focus on domestic security as the most important part of their political agendas. In other words, regional security does not get as much attention as domestic security for the leaders of these two countries.

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**TEZ FOTOKOPİ İZİN FORMU**

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**YAZARIN**

Soyadı : Turgut
Adı : Arzu
Bölümü : Avrasya Çalışmaları

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**TEZİN TÜRÜ** : Yüksek Lisans [X] Doktora [ ]

1. Tezimin tamamı dünya çapında erişime açılsın ve kaynak gösterilmek şartıyla tezimin bir kısmı veya tamamının fotokopisi alınsın. [ ]

2. Tezimin tamamı yalnızca Orta Doğu Teknik Üniversitesi kullancılarının erişimine açılsın. (Bu seçenekle tezinizin fotokopisi ya da elektronik kopyası Kütüphane aracılığı ile ODTÜ dışına dağıtılmayacaktır.) [ ]

3. Tezim bir (1) yıl süreyle erişime kapalı olsun. (Bu seçenekle tezinizin fotokopisi ya da elektronik kopyası Kütüphane aracılığı ile ODTÜ dışına dağıtılmayacaktır.) [X]

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