

**Conflict Studies Research Centre**



**Central Asian Nations &  
Border Issues**

**Dr Mirzohid Rahimov  
& Dr Galina Urazaeva**

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## **Key Points**

- \* In the 1920s and 1930s the process of defining the status and borders of the new republics in Central Asia after the Communist revolution was convoluted and protracted.
- \* It tried to follow the principles of ethnicity and economic activity, but the reality was irretrievably complicated.
- \* All the decisions were in the event made by Moscow, based on the reports of several different bodies.
- \* The legacy of these divisions persists in central Asia to this day.

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# Central Asian Nations & Border Issues

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## Introduction

The disintegration of the Soviet Union has been one of the world's important historical events, which has given rise to profound geopolitical changes not only in the former USSR, but on a global scale. Besides, the collapse of the Soviet Union revealed a number of significant problems, including the boundary demarcation between the former Soviet Republics. It is well known that the former Central Asian Soviet Republics – Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan - were founded by the Soviet power in the 1920s–30s as a result of national and territorial state delimitation; their frontiers were conditional in character and did not take into account the peculiarities of history and culture. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union and those republics' political independence the process of creating new national state formations began. The republics also began forming the system of inter-state relations, covering also such spheres as boundary demarcation between the countries. That process has not been easy and two of the main reasons were the artificial formation of the Central Asian socialist republics in the early years of Soviet power and the policies pursued during the following years.

National and territorial delimitation in Central Asia was a very complicated and dramatic affair. In historical literary sources, interpretation of this event is unambiguous and sometimes contradictory. However, newly available archival documents shed fresh light on this problem. The present paper endeavours to analyse the national-and-territorial state delimitation in Central Asia in the 1920s–30s and the present condition of inter-state relations on issues of boundary demarcation in the region. The latest archival materials from the Central State Archives of the Republic of Uzbekistan (Tashkent), the Archives of the Uzbek Republican President's Office (Tashkent) as well as the Russian State Archives of social and political history (Moscow) have been used.

## Part 1: The History of Soviet National Delimitation in Central Asia

### A. The Issue of National Delimitation

The history of national and territorial state delimitation of Central Asia has deep roots. As early as in 1913 V I Lenin spoke of a possible division of Russia according to the ethnic composition of the population.<sup>1</sup> Then, in January 1916 Lenin put forward the doctrine of “self-identification of working people”. Developing this postulate, the People's Commissariat of RSFSR<sup>i</sup> on Nationality Problems on 22 March 1918 adopted Regulations of self-determination in the Tatar-and-Bashkirian

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<sup>i</sup> Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic.

Soviet republic. The main content of these Regulations became known to the government of Turkestan from a telegram received from Moscow as early as March 26, signed by the People's Commissar on Nationality Problems I V Stalin and Commissar on Muslims' internal affairs in Russia Nur Vakhitov. That telegram also informed them that analogous regulations were being elaborated by the Narkomnat<sup>ii</sup> for Azeri, Georgian, Armenian, Kyrgyz, Sart, Tekin and other peoples of Russia, and they suggested the revolutionary organizations of these nationalities should submit their concrete plans for creating a federation.<sup>2</sup>

A year later, in March 1919 at the 8<sup>th</sup> Congress of the RCP(b)<sup>iii</sup> Lenin modified the wording, putting forward the motto "on the rights of nations to self-determining" but provided this right were expanded only for the "exploited masses (people)".<sup>3</sup>

Waging a colonialist policy, the Bolsheviks sent their representation bodies from the centre of Russia to Turkestan.<sup>4</sup> In late 1919 the Turkcommission arrived from Moscow. It was formed on the initiative of Lenin by a Resolution of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee and the Council of People's Commissars of RSFSR dated 8 October 1919, including M V Frunze, V V Kuibyshev, Sh Z Eliava (Chairman of the Commission), Ya E Rudzutak, G I Boki, F I Goloschyokin and others.<sup>5</sup> The Commission was entrusted with higher control and leadership in all spheres of life in Turkestan on behalf of the Central Committee of the RCP(b) and the Council of People's Commissars of Russia.

On 15 January 1920 the Turkcommission adopted the theses on "Dividing Turkestan into three separate republics according to national identity".<sup>6</sup> Thus, the Turkcommission's activity led to a conflict situation in Turkestan; to resolve this situation they had to go to Moscow and apply to Lenin. Eliava and Rudzutak were delegated by the Turkcommission. To participate in considering the disputed questions, including Turkestan's delimitation, the following persons left for Moscow: T R Ryskulov, N Khodjaev and G Bekh-Ivanov - that group of Muslim and Party officials is known in Soviet historiography as the Turkdelegation.

## **B. Central Communist Party, Local Authorities & Ethno-Territorial Complexity of Central Asia**

In Moscow the Central Committee (CC) of the RCP(b) formed its own Commission on Turkestan's problems (G V Chicherin, N N Kristinskiy and Sh Z Eliava) which was charged to investigate the conflict situation that arose. Each of these sides submitted their suggestions. The report of the Turkdelegation<sup>7</sup> contained some considerations against the delimitation of Turkestan into three republics according to national character, namely Kirghiz (Kazakhstan), Uzbek and Turkmen ones. It should be noted that in historical literary sources up to the 1920s under the ethnonym "the Kirghiz", "the Kirghiz-Kaysaks" (the Kirghiz-Kazaks) the Kazakhs were meant; and under the ethnonym "the Kara-Kirghiz", the Kirghiz.

The territory of Turkestan with Bukhara and Khiva was 1,699,000 square km, or one third of the European territory of Russia. According to the 1897 census this area was inhabited 89% by Turks, and including the Tadjiks (Iranians) was 97% Muslim. The distribution of certain groups among the *oblasts* (provinces) showed that in the Semirechye *oblast* about 80% of the population were Kirghiz (Kazakhs), in the Syrdarya *oblast* - up to 65%, in the Transcaspian - up to 20%, in the Fergana *oblast* - up to 12%, in the Samarkand *oblast* - up to 8%. And in the

<sup>ii</sup> People's Commissariat on Nationality Problems.

<sup>iii</sup> Russian Communist Party (of Bolsheviks).

Fergana *oblast* the Uzbeks (75%) dominated (more than 40% of all Uzbeks in Central Asia); in the Adizhan *oblast* – up to 65.5%, in the Namangan *oblast* - up to 62.5%; in the Samarkand *oblast* - up to 60%; in the Transcaspiian *oblast* the Turkmen dominated - up to 65%.<sup>8</sup>

The population of contiguous Bukhara and Khiva represented almost the same division of the Turkic groups. Common outlooks, their sense of justice, language and conditions of life closely related all these large and small groups of Turks to each other.

Differences among the Uzbeks, Kirghiz (Kazakhs), Turkmen and others are explained by the cattle-breeding, agricultural and urban way of life, and dialects were formed under the greater or smaller influence of the Persian and Arabic languages with terms borrowed from them. That is why all the groups communicated without any difficulties.

Discussing the language differentiations, the Turkdelegation stated that the Kirghiz (Kazakhs) when disseminated into the environment of the Turkmen and Uzbeks rather rapidly lost the peculiarities of their dialect; and when the Turkmen found themselves in the language milieu of the Kirghiz (Kazakhs) the same phenomenon was observed; thence follows the seeking of all the Turkic groups to establish a literary language common to all, the elaboration of which was promoted by new spelling: to the written language borrowed from the Arabs were introduced new letters corresponding to the sounds of Turkic languages and a new system of writing with vowels. This reform was expected to further promote the development of a literary language, corresponding to the existing literary Turkic languages.

The Turkdelegation claimed that the division of the tight-knit oblasts of Turkestan was inexpedient and to do that would be supersensitive.<sup>9</sup>

Of primary importance in preserving the integrity of Turkestan was the scarcity of water. The climatic and soil conditions of Turkestan gave rise to artificial irrigation, with strictly distributed irrigation systems and a necessary division of the population into cattle-breeding and agricultural ways of life. It would not be possible to break the irrigation links with the long established right to water use; or the alteration of cattle-breeding and land-farming households with their existing system of interchange of products and raw materials between certain *oblasts* of Turkestan, though the nomadic way of life was quite different from the settled. There was no impassable border due to the process of nomads becoming settled, and in some events the transition of the settled population to cattle-breeding lessened the amount of free water. Thus, the Amu-Darya crossed the borders of the Turkestan ASSR<sup>iv</sup> and the Bukhara and Khorezm republics, and the Syr-Darya crossed the boundaries of Turkestan and Kazakhstan.<sup>10</sup> Exploiting the resources of Turkestan, its timber and fish resources, located along the shore of the Aral Sea, and in rivers and lakes, also required a single economic policy.

Then, the Turkdelegation considered that the division of Turkestan would break the uniform plan of railway and post-and-telegraphic communication, and the regular supervision over international and currency accounts with neighbouring Asian states and foreign trade.

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<sup>iv</sup> Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic.

Opposing the division of Turkestan, the Turkdelegation thought to put forward to discuss at the Congresses of the Soviets of Turkestan and Kirghiziya (Kazakhstan) the question of their uniting; governing Kirghiziya (Kazakhstan) from Orenburg, taking into account the constant migration of the Kirghiz (Kazakhs) from the Turgay, Semipalatinsk and Steppe *oblasts* into and out of the territory of Turkestan, would prevent them establishing their own powerful administrative centre.

Guarding the boundaries, with their length exceeding those of European Russia, could raise problems too, the Turkdelegation deemed.

Historical sources implied that T Ryskulov and Turkdelegation members submitted to RCP(b) CC two reports (the first report on 23 May, the second at the end of May 1920). New archival documents reveal that there was one more report by Ryskulov,<sup>11</sup> sent on 16 June 1920 to Lenin in Moscow. It argued as follows: if to reach the goals of national self-determination one has to divide Turkestan into three republics, this would not be the logical ending, as it would be necessary to establish six more republics: Tajik, Kipchak, Kara-Kalpak, Djungan, Tarachin and Russian, because in rendering self-determination to the three large nations (the Kirghiz (Kazakh), Uzbeks and Turkmen), the plan subordinated to them the smaller nationalities; and precisely that happened later. Hence, the delegation from early on foresaw the further national delimitation of Turkestan. Without entering into other motives, the delegation pointed out finally that in general the plan of demarcation might have an unfriendly reception both from the working people of Turkestan and from ordinary Muslim Communists - such, indeed, was the case later.

It should be made clear that the Central Communist Party in Moscow had an active role in the process and all decisions were made by Moscow. In particular, during May and June 1920, the Politburo of the CC of the RCP(b), with participation of V I Lenin, four times considered the issue of Turkestan. Besides, the Turkestan question was repeatedly discussed by the Organizing Bureau (Orgburo) of the CC of the RCP(b) and by the Soviet Government. This now requires from history experts a more detailed and critical study of these issues, especially as the Moscow archives give open access to materials from the Politburo and Orgburo.

On the margins of the sheet of paper with the draft Resolution "On tasks of the Russian Communist Party of the Bolsheviks in Turkestan", Lenin wrote: "It is necessary, to my mind, to reject the project of comrade Riskulov, the project of the Commission [Turkcommission] should be adopted ..."<sup>12</sup> Then, Lenin suggested a map should be made (ethnographic and other) of Turkestan with marked divisions into Uzbekia, Kirgizia, Turkmenia and in detail find out the conditions of merging or division, though it was underlined that delimitation of the republics into three parts should not be predetermined.

Thus, the problem of the national and territorial state delimitation of Turkestan's peoples was resolved in Moscow by the Party and Bolshevik leadership of RSFSR in the mid-1920s, guided by the motto "national self-determination" of aboriginal peoples of Turkestan, and obviously in contradiction to the volition and opinion of their best representatives, the Turkdelegation.

### **C. Turkestan, Bukhara & Khorezm Republics**

1924 was set as the year which would give life to the Party and Bolshevik ideas of delimitation. The report of the 12<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Soviets of TASSR<sup>v</sup> stressed that by 1924 the work on forming a harmonious Soviet state machinery “from the top to the bottom could be regarded as almost completed”.<sup>13</sup> Besides, by that time Turar Ryskulov and his associates had been discharged; and a whole galaxy of young Muslim and Party functionaries was brought up. They were dedicated to Bolshevism and had complete and unreserved subordination to the Centre’s orders.

On 31 January 1924 in Moscow the Orgburo of the RCP(b) CC session discussed among other things the question of the national-and-territorial delimitation of the Turkestan, Bukhara and Khorezm republics and in this connection Ya E Rudzutak was commissioned to discuss beforehand the possibility of its practical realization with the leadership of these republics.

By 1924 the issue of Turkestan delimitation had grown into a larger task on delimitation of two more republics - BPSR and KhPSR,<sup>vi</sup> which juridically were independent and sovereign republics. Soviet historiography repeatedly underlined that all the peoples in Central Asia were torn into separate parts. The national-and-territorial delimitation and forming of new republics was supposed to reunite each people.

At the beginning of February 1924 in Bukhara a conference of executive officials was held, at which A Rakhimbaev, at that period an executive secretary of the CPT<sup>vii</sup> CC and a member of Sredazburo,<sup>viii</sup> made an extended report. The conference came to the conclusion that the national-and-territorial delimitation was necessary. In addition, as early as 25 February this question was included in the agenda of the plenary meeting of BCP CC.<sup>ix</sup> Fayzulla Khodjaev, the Chairman of the Soviet of Nazirs of the BPSR, addressed that plenary meeting and proposed his “Theses of the Central Committee of the Bukhara Communist Party – the main provisions on the issue of forming Uzbekistan”.<sup>14</sup> In particular, Khodjaev stated that the Soviet administrative division iterated and fixed the division of territories once accomplished by the tsarist Russian conquerors of Central Asia. It should be noted that on reconsideration of “The Theses” the Ispolburo<sup>x</sup> of the BCP CC adopted a Resolution on national delimitation which did not include Khodjaev’s provisions, but emphasized that Turkestan, Bukhara and Khorezm were (from the point of view of the Bolshevik leadership) “artificially” shaped state formations. Their multinational character, allegedly, negatively reflected on the state of the society. The Ispolburo clearly wrote in its resolution about the necessity of forming two independent republics – the Turkmen and Uzbek Soviet Republics. In accordance with this Resolution Uzbekistan by special agreement “was annexed as a fifth member to the USSR”. The Turkmen Republic was to independently define “its attitude to the RSFSR and to the USSR”. The Resolution envisaged the establishment of the Tajik Autonomous oblast as well<sup>15</sup> and unification of the Kazakh districts of Turkestan with the Kazakh Republic.

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v Turkmen ASSR.

vi Bukhara and Khorezm People's Soviet Republics respectively.

vii Communist Party of Turkestan.

viii Central Asian bureau of the CC of the RCP(b).

ix Bukhara Communist Party.

x Executive Office.



On 15 April 1924 Sredazburo RCP(b) CC, after hearing the report of the BCP CC, approved “setting the issue of BCP CC on national-and-territorial delimitation of Central Asian Republics”.<sup>16</sup>

One of the serious reasons urging on the Bolshevik authorities to delimitation was the opposition movement known in Soviet historiography as the “basmachi movement”; in which groups of different nationalities fought against the Soviet power. On 10 March 1924 a joint session of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Turkestan, the Presidium of the Turkestan Central Executive Committee<sup>xi</sup> and Party and Soviet officials of Tashkent was held. Rakhimbaev gave a long talk (at that time he was an Executive Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Turkestan and a member of the Central Asian Bureau of the Central Committee of the RCP(b)). Rakhimbaev clearly spoke out the true objective of the Communist Party concerning the issue of delimitation. “From the viewpoint of our Party, organizing this affair [delimitation and formation of national states] is advantageous, because if an Uzbek poor man fights an Uzbek *kulak*<sup>xii</sup>, a Turkmenian poor man fights a Turkmenian *kulak*, and a Kirghiz poor man fights a Kirghiz *kulak*, then our class struggle will not be concealed by ethnic issues.”<sup>17</sup>

Rakhimbaev stressed that the Kazakhs of Turkestan demanded that they be separated into an independent republic; the Kirgiz (Kazakh) ASSR, which had existed since 1920, in its turn claimed to join all the Kazakh lands of Turkestan to it; the Turkmen leadership of Khorezm advanced an opinion for establishment of a Turkmen Republic from territories of Khorezm and Bukhara that brought about a grave scandal at the XII<sup>th</sup> Congress of the RCP(b).<sup>18</sup>

S Khodjanov and N A Paskutskiy spoke at the meeting, opposing the demarcation, and claiming that Turkestan was unified and should not be delimited into separated national republics; to tell the truth, they said, there were no nations – Uzbek, Turkmen, Kazakhs and so on, but there was an “all-Muslim Turkic nation”.<sup>19</sup> Paskutskiy, Khodjanov and others fought for the political amalgamation of TASSR, BNSR, KhNSR<sup>xiii</sup> into a single republic, as in the TransCaucasian Federative Republic which existed at that period; also, they stood for establishing a unified economic base for the Republics of Central Asia. Mamayev opposed the demarcation, as he considered that it was necessary to retain BNSR, “because Bukhara has a great significance in the Muslim world and Bukhara in governmental aspects has a rather stable structure. The Bukharan capital is much stronger and more cultural than the Turkestan one, and it has many centuries of experience, century-old trade relations and it is impossible to easily split it. This idea [demarcation] must be cast away so far ...”<sup>20</sup>

Such concerns led to the conference failing to reach an agreement. Proceedings were submitted to the Plenary Session of the Communist Party of Turkestan, and the stenograph was submitted to the Ispolkom of the CPT CC; and in this connection the Ispolkom<sup>xiv</sup> set up a special commission which advocated the accomplishment of national-and-territorial state demarcation. The plenary meeting of the CPT CC on 23-24 March 1924<sup>21</sup> discussed the question “On national-and-territorial delimitation of the Turkestan Republic”.

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<sup>xi</sup> TurkTsIK.

<sup>xii</sup> Landowning farmer.

<sup>xiii</sup> Tajik, Bukhara and Khorezm National Socialist Republics respectively.

<sup>xiv</sup> Executive Committee.

The plenary meeting having confirmed the necessity of delimitation and restricted it within the frameworks of TASSR, suggested to form within its limits three national republics as follows: Uzbek, Kirghiz (Kazakh) and Turkmen and simultaneously separate into independent autonomous areas the Kara-Kirghiz [Kirghiz] and Tajik *oblasts*. Despite the demands to unite all the Kazakh *oblasts* in Turkestan and the Kirghiz [Kazakh] ASSR, Rakhimbaev's point of view won and it was decided to form one more Kazakh Republic. Thus, the Plenum charged the CPT with the task of settling the question on demarcation of Central Asia with the Party organs leadership of Bukhara and Khorezm.<sup>22</sup>

In February and March, the question on demarcation of Central Asia was discussed at conferences in Khorezm as well. Thus, on 3 March 1924 at the session of the Ispolburo CC of the Khorezm Communist Party, an information report was made by the member of Sredazburo RCP(b) CC I Mezhlauk on national-and-territorial demarcation. However, the session failed to make any decision; it only considered it and took it into account. Later, in mid-March in Khiva at a regular meeting, the question on demarcation was put on the agenda, and A Rakhimbaev, having come from Tashkent, made a report. The decision was made: "The Khorezmian Republic fixes off the boundaries according the national [ethnic] character, and respective districts are included again into the newly formed Republics of Central Asia (Uzbek, Turkmen and others), in case any disintegrate".<sup>23</sup>

On 5 April 1924 in Moscow at the meeting of the Politburo<sup>xv</sup> RCP(b) CC, the question on Central Asia was considered and A Rakhimbaev made a report "On Turkestan, Bukhara and Khorezm (on forming of national Republics)". These proposals were approved, but delegations from Turkestan, Bukhara and Khorezm were asked to bring to the VIII Congress of RCP(b) all the needed materials. Sredazburo was also tasked to elaborate and submit to Politburo RCP(b) CC their proposals giving their reasons on national-and-territorial state delimitation with appropriate geographical maps. Thus, in Soviet historiography there had been set an opinion, that initiative in resolving the question on national-and-territorial state delimitation proceeded from the Central Asian Republics – TASSR, BNSR, KhNSR were in Moscow at the session of the Politburo.

Accomplishing the directives of the RCP(b), Sredazburo at its meeting on 28 April 1924<sup>24</sup> passed a resolution under which the delimitation according to national-and-territorial character was recognized as well-timed and expedient, ie the question was resolved in principle. After that, they came down to preparation of practical, concrete proposals. With this in view, special commissions were formed under the Central Committees of the Communist Parties of Turkestan and Bukhara. A commission of the Sredazburo was also formed, which should complete its work by 10 May 1924 and submit proposals to the Sredazburo.<sup>25</sup> At this commission, Uzbek, Kazakh and Turkmen national subcommissions were formed. The Kazakh subcommission included the Kirghiz representatives and the Uzbek one the Tajik representatives.

The subcommissions dealt with the following issues: defining the borders of the future state formations, designation of capital cities and cultural and economical centres of republics and autonomous oblasts. In the course of the work of national subcommissions especially hot discussions arose about the character and principles of building up state formations.

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<sup>xv</sup> Political office [the Russian Communist Party's Supreme Committee].

The Kazakh subcommission suggested forming a “Central Asian Federation” but the commission rejected this proposal.<sup>26</sup> The majority of members of the national subcommissions upheld the idea of forming independent republics and their direct joining into the USSR. The reports of subcommissions were heard at the session of the Sredazburo RCP(b) CC Commission on 10 May 1924, and as early as 11 May, the Sredazburo having discussed the issues concerning national delimitation and the results of the special commission and its national subcommissions, approved the concrete plan worked out by them on demarcation of the whole of Central Asia. The Resolution read as follows:

- “1. To accept it as necessary to accomplish the demarcation of Turkestan, Bukharan and Khorezmian Republics according to national-and-territorial character without forming a federation out of the newly formed national-and territorial integrations.
2. To form (organize) Uzbek and Turkmen Republics exercising their rights as independent SSRs with direct joining into the USSR, a Tajik autonomous *oblast* within the Uzbek Republic; a Kara-Kirghiz (Kirghiz) autonomous *oblast* without resolving the question of which republic it would join.
3. To include the Kirghiz (Kazakhs) inhabiting the Turkestan Republic into the existing Kirghiz (Kazakh) Republic.”<sup>27</sup>

Thus, the resolutions mainly defined the official names of the national state formations in Central Asia. However, some questions related to configurations of state formations in Central Asia remained unsettled, such as: the question on forming the Tajik Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (the Resolution of the Sredazburo RCP(b) CC of 11 May 1924 discussed the organization of the Tajik Autonomous *oblast*). Only several months later was the Resolution on the forming of the Tajik ASSR adopted. Besides, the question on the establishment of the Kara-Kalpak Autonomous *oblast* was not resolved then. The Party organizations and Commission settled that problem in August-September 1924.

On 12 June 1924 in Moscow RCP(b) CC at its session had to amend the materials of the Sredazburo. On the agenda there was a question “On national delimitation of the Republics of Central Asia (Turkestan, Bukhara and Khorezm)”. The Politburo made the following resolution: from the Turkmen areas of Turkestan, Bukhara and Khorezm to form an independent Turkmen Republic; from the Uzbek areas of Turkestan and Bukhara to form an independent Uzbek Republic; the Khorezm Republic, marking off territories of the Turkmen, remained unchanged. Further on, the Resolution included provisions forming the Kara-Kirghiz (Kirghiz) Autonomous *oblast*, on the Tajik Autonomous *oblast* being included in the Uzbek Republic, and on joining the Kazakh districts of the Turkrepublic to the Kazakh ASSR.<sup>28</sup>

Based on the Resolution of the RCP(b) CC of 15 July 1924, the Sredazburo adopted provisions (Theses) on the necessity by the end of the budget year, ie by October 1924, without disturbing current economic activity, to demarcate the Central Asian Republics.<sup>29</sup>

#### **D. Central Territorial Commission & Territorial Disputes**

In 1924 the preparatory work on national delimitation had begun. Attached to the Central Asian Bureau of the CC of the RCP(b) the central territorial commission on Central Asian national delimitation had been formed.<sup>30</sup> The Commission was

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established on a parity basis and included representatives of the newly formed republics and autonomous *oblasts*.<sup>31</sup> These were the leadership of the Party and Soviet organs of Central Asia and Kazakh ASSR.<sup>32</sup>

Shorthand reports of sessions of the Central Territorial Commission<sup>33</sup> allow us to evaluate today the complexity and multiplicity of questions the executives of national-and-territorial delimitation faced. During the discussion of the projects of the national subcommissions (Uzbek, Turkmen and Kazakh) and Khorezmian delegation it had been found out that there was no consensus of opinion on the major issue – of the form and construction of delimitation. While the representatives of the Uzbek and Turkmen subcommissions held the same views, namely, to form on the basis of delimitation independent “national Soviet Republics and autonomous *oblasts*”, the Khorezmian delegation took a strong stand for the inviolability of the Khorezmian Republic; in its turn the Kazakh subcommission once again put forward the idea of establishing the Soviet Central Asian Federation.<sup>34</sup>

An even greater multiplicity of viewpoints was revealed during the demarcation of the territory of Central Asia among the targeted national formations. To resolve these vexed questions, under the Central Asian Bureau so-called technical commissions were formed. The minutes of these technical commissions are sometimes marked “Completely secret (top secret)”. At present experts have access to some of these materials.

Technical commissions had to be guided by the following immutable principles: 1. The ethnic composition of the majority of the population residing on the territory under consideration; 2. The land indivisibility of territories of new state formations. They should not be similar to strip-farming or the open-field system. However, according to the archival materials, these two major provisions were not kept to. In fact, they were neglected by special directives of higher administering bodies to suit political ambitions. The document “Materials on more precise definition of frontiers”<sup>35</sup> reveals that the accomplishment of delimitation according to nationality was impeded by the fact that peoples in Central Asia lived in alternating strips, where lands fit for cultivating and tillage alternate with steppe and semi-desert land plots suitable only for cattle-breeding. But that was precisely what Turar Ryskulov’s warning stated as early as in 1920.

In Turkestan and Chimkent *uyezds* (provinces) there were concentrated Uzbek residences, surrounded by lands belonging to the Kazakhs; an Uzbek city of Tashkent and a strip-line of Uzbek *volosts* (districts) were separated by the Kazakh trans-Chirchik *volosts* from lands of the Kuramintz, related to the Uzbeks;<sup>36</sup> further to the south-west, the Tajik *volosts* wedged in, separating the Ferghana oasis from the rest of Uzbekistan. Similarly the lands belonging to the nomadic Kazakhs and Turkmen separated cultivated lands possessed by Khorezmian Uzbeks from oases owned by Bukharan Uzbeks.<sup>37</sup>

The Bolshevik delimitation resulted in such a situation that significant numbers of persons belonging to this or that nationality found themselves beyond the boundaries of their titular state. For example, 433,000 Uzbeks found themselves beyond the boundaries of Uzbekistan. Of them there are 120,000 on the territory of present day Kirghizstan; 98,000 in Tajikistan; 78,000 in Kazakhstan; 73,000 in Karakalpakstan; 64,000 in Turkmenistan.<sup>38</sup> Uzbekistan included about 82% of all Uzbeks residing at that moment in the former USSR, and Tajikistan included 75.2% of all Tajiks.<sup>39</sup>

Forming national republics for semi-nomadic and nomadic peoples, the Party and Bolshevik leadership decided that it was necessary to give them administrative centres – cities, though the cities of Central Asia were established and peopled by the settled farming peoples. As a result of this approach mainly Uzbek populated cities and economic centres were outside Uzbekistan: Osh, Turkestan, Chimkent, Aulie-Ata (Djambul), Chardjui, Tashauz, Djalalabad, Suzak and many others.<sup>40</sup>

According to the frontiers adopted by the Central Executive Committee of the USSR, the city of Tashkent and the Tashkent *uyezd* were attributed to Uzbekistan. Tashkent, the largest city in the Turkestan *kray*, with a population of 155,710,000 people<sup>41</sup> at that time, became the object of disputes, because the Kazakh Republic intended to make Tashkent its capital city. Tashkent and the Tashkent *uyezd* adjoined Uzbekistan as a narrow land strip and were surrounded by Kazakh territories and at that period economically were attracted towards Tashkent, being the large trading and economic centre. Kazakhstan motivated its request by the fact that Uzbekistan intended to make Samarkand its capital city. In the end, the Executive Bureau of the CC of the CPT, the Central Asian Bureau and even the Political Bureau of the CC of the RCP(b), having considered and compared different points of view, came to the conclusion that Tashkent should be included in Uzbekistan as a city with an absolute majority of Uzbek population.<sup>42</sup>

Kazakhstan was offered a capital city from the following: Orenburg, Kazalinsk, Aulie-Ata and Alma-Ata.<sup>43</sup> The problem with Tashkent city was resolved but the issue of the Tashkent *uyezd* was much more complicated. The demarcation line divided the Tashkent *uyezd* approximately into two halves, separating areas peopled by Uzbeks from Uzbekistan. Besides, Chimkent city with the Chimkent *uyezd* was also separated from the Uzbek territory. As was stated later at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Plenary Session of the CC CPT held on 14 September 1924, “we had to make delimitation with some infringement of national arithmetic taking into account the reasons of economic character alone”.<sup>44</sup>

From the viewpoint of the administering bodies of that time “some nationalities were very small in number and their cattle-breeding economies were at a low level, so it was necessary to expand their territory at the expense of another nationality,”<sup>45</sup> having a larger number. Thus, being primordially Uzbek, the Kelif *tuman* (district), the Staro-Chardjui *tuman* and the Tashauz *shuro* were included in the newly-formed Turkmen republic.<sup>46</sup>

The Uzbeks residing in frontier *volosts* and indissolubly linked with cultural and economic centres in Uzbekistan persisted in joining their lands to Uzbekistan, but mostly it was in vain. The Uzbek population attributed with its lands to Kirghizia found themselves in the hardest situation.

The city of Osh according to the 1923 census counted 94% Uzbeks in its population of 14,497. The Osh *volost* according to the 1917 census counted 97% Uzbeks in its population of 31,000. The city of Osh and the Osh *volost* after the delimitation were included in the Kirghiz Autonomous *Oblast* (AO), as the city of Osh for the Kirghiz *volosts* was a large cultural and economic centre. The residents of Osh city and the Osh *volost* flatly protested against their inclusion in the Kirghiz AO, pointing out that they had many differences with the nomadic Kirghiz people in their language, traditions and culture.<sup>47</sup> Osh city together with the Osh *volost* were joined with the Manyak and Bulak-Bashin *volosts* of the Andijan *uyezd* of the Uzbek SSR.<sup>xvi</sup>

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<sup>xvi</sup> Soviet Socialist Republic.

As the documents testify, Uzbek schools in *kishlaks* of the Aim *volost* were closed and replaced by Kirghiz ones; in Uzbek *kishlaks* the leading officials for the local elective authorities – the Soviets – were not elected but appointed by the higher administrative bodies (“from the top”) and the appointed officials were of the Kirghiz nationality, ie there was not a single Uzbek leading official. When the Uzbek population sent a delegation with an application describing the situation to the higher authorities – to the Central Executive Committee of the Uzbek SSR, to the Central Executive Committee of the USSR and to the Central Asian Bureau, in response 500 Kirghiz *askers* (soldiers) raided the Uzbek *kishlaks*.<sup>48</sup> All the petitions of the Uzbek population remained unanswered. As was stated in “Materials on more precise defining of the boundaries”, “so was required by the Soviet Power ideas” – so was required by the ideas of “self-government of peoples”.<sup>49</sup>

In the course of discussion of the issue of national-and-territorial delimitation F Khodjaev and U Ishankhodjaev raised the question of the Tajiks. Faizulla Khodjaev, at that time the Chairman of the Council of Nazirs of the BPSR said: “Concerning the Tajiks there are two variants: either they should be included in our republic (the Uzbek SSR) as an independent area, or they could obtain entire independence; concerning this issue we have no opinion of the Tajiks themselves.”<sup>50</sup>

Later, in debates he also touched on the issue of Tajiks, emphasizing that there were 400,000 Tajiks in the BPSR.

“Taking a closer look at this people we could see that they have neither their own government, nor Tajik language teaching schools, nothing. In the Zerafshan valley there is approximately the same number of Tajiks with the same language, the same cultural level and economic structure; having taken into account all these matters we have come to the conclusion that there is no need to divide them by certain demarcation lines but it is necessary to join these two groups of the Tajiks in one area in the form of an Autonomous *oblast* or something else. It should be agreed with Tajik officials’ opinion, supposing that the Tajik republic will have to be constructed within the boundaries of the Uzbek republic.”<sup>51</sup>

On 26 July 1924, the renewed composition of the Central Committee of the Khorezmian Communist Party disaffirmed the resolve of 9 June 1924 and the Ispolburo of the Khorezmian Communist Party CC adopted a new resolve on the necessity of national-and-territorial delimitation of Khorezm. The Politburo of the RCP(b) CC in Moscow in accordance with the submission of the Sredazburo again considered that question, and immediately included Khorezm together with Turkestan and Bukhara in the procedure of national-and-territorial state delimitation. Soviet historiography of that time wrote that in Khorezm there were unmasked “the bourgeois-and-nationalistic and Trotskyist elements, [who] hampered the forming of new Republics”.<sup>52</sup>

All these territorial claims were engendered by the objective reality itself, peculiar to Central Asia, ie strip holding patterns of land settlements of peoples; the specificity of their ethnic development and ethnogenesis; historically set throughout the region economic districts and their centres; well-organized trade-and-economic interrelations between the land-farming and cattle-breeding population. The two main principles, according to which the demarcation was accomplished: national-and-territorial and economic, did not work in the conditions of Central Asia that really existed, as Turar Ryskulov once warned.

During demarcation of disputable territories based on economic principles there appeared a profound understanding of the historical economic unity of the entire Central Asia. The participants of national-and-territorial delimitation to a certain extent admitted the unanimity of the economic area. K Atabaev was a supporter of the economic delimitation of Central Asia; he claimed "... political independence, which we proclaim, loses economic integration any sense". Faizulla Khodjaev under these conditions warned: "they should not regard their territories as separate independent economic districts, which make up a single whole and integral matter with the economy of the USSR".<sup>53</sup>

On the economic unity of Central Asia S Khodjanov also said: "Economy is not characterized only by legislative papers. So I say, however hard we tried to delimitate, we would fail to wave away (ignore) economic unity in Central Asia." His project of forming a Central Asian Federation as a united state was based on and resulted precisely from this historical territorial and economic integrity. So, along with the proposal on marking off the Kazakh territories of Turkestan Republic and joining them to the Kazakh ASSR, he simultaneously insisted on unifying the latter with all the newly formed Republics and Autonomous oblasts into a united state.

The representative from Kirgizia, T Abdurakhmanov, stated that "... as our economy ties together the economy on a Central Asian scale, it is impossible to wave away from it with a stroke of a pen and it is necessary to find the right way out".<sup>54</sup> O Karklin, the Sredazburo member, summarized the debates: "We have to resolve that the economic connection existing among the Republics in Central Asia, no matter how they would be delimited, shall be secured in the face of the present existing Economic Council". Hence, the domestic question of possible Central Asian economic independence or unifying of all newly formed state formations economically was interpreted and diverted into the everlasting question concerning the governing of Central Asia by Russia with her representative bodies. First it was a Special Provisional Commission, which arrived in 1918, then the Turkcommission (1919-1923); later the Turkburo was established in 1920, transformed into Sredazburo in May 1922 and existed up to 1934; SredazEKOSO<sup>xvii</sup> was established in March 1922. It was assumed that with the forming of national republics as a result of delimitation of Central Asia they would be independent, but the Russian Centre retained there its representative organs such as Sredazburo and SredazEKOSO.

The members of the Sredazburo and central territorial commission were well aware of the lack of preparedness of the main issues on national-and-territorial state delimitation, and the great necessity of their scientific substantiation and study; there was a need of additional materials, statistical data and appropriate maps. Yegorov, the member of the Presidium commission on division into districts, after completing a journey throughout Central Asia proposed in his report:

"... after making a description of the boundaries of the Republics in Central Asia and approval by the Presidium of the TsIK<sup>xviii</sup> of the USSR one or two years will be needed to set stability on the external borders of the Republics, seeking to focus maximum attention on their interior arrangement without making partial changes to external borders; all the claims of this or that Republic to another should be collected as material and receive thorough study."<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>xvii</sup> Central Asian Economic Council.  
<sup>xviii</sup> Central Executive Committee.

The Sredazburo and governing bodies of Communist organizations in Central Asia discussed the results of work of the territorial commission. On 14 September 1924, at the Third Joint Plenum of the CPT CC, CPT TsKK<sup>xix</sup> and Revisional Commission I Vareikis, the Chairman of the Commission and executive secretary of the CPT CC made a report.<sup>56</sup> It raised the question about capital cities:

“95% of the Uzbeks stood for Samarkand to be the capital city of the Uzbek Republic. For the Turkmen Republic Poltoratsk or Chardjui were offered. Concerning the Tajik Autonomy – yesterday Khodzhibaev said that they would be in Samarkand. For Kara-Kirghizia Pishpek would be the best capital city. The Kirghiz (Kazakhs) have a large dispute, they laid claim to Tashkent. I tend to think that they need to move to Alma-Ata.”<sup>57</sup>

Next, Vareikis emphasized, the “... question on national delimitation of existing state units in Central Asia is bound to be resolved in the constitutional order, with appropriate equal participation from certain nations which delimitate, from certain peoples bound to delimitation. But we perfectly understand that, in fact, the only leader in this question is our Party ... The Territorial commission was in session for approximately two weeks, being engaged in persistent continuous duty.”<sup>58</sup>

In other words there was direct evidence of the imperfection of the work implemented by the territorial commission. No doubt, such work required more long-term preparation and thorough grounding, taking into account the opinions of expert economists, historians, ethnographers, geographer and others. However, by that time the works of famous scholars G Cherdantsev, N Dimo, Yu Poslavskiy and others had already been issued.<sup>59</sup>

The members of the Central Asian Bureau and Central Territorial Commission were clearly aware of the fact that the delimitation issues had not been prepared properly. The poor quality of the work was admitted by I A Zelenskiy, Chairman of the Central Asian Bureau of the CC of the RCP(b): “The first step we made was the work on national delimitation and forming national republics. We have made this work in rough, there is much incomplete here, that work was done with an axe.”<sup>60</sup> In spite of that, the Joint Plenum of the CPT CC, CPT TsKK and Revisional Commission on the whole approved the plan of national-and-territorial state delimitation of Turkestan, Bukhara and Khorezm and adopted a resolution to convene an extraordinary session of the TurkTsIK in order to consider and approve this plan.<sup>61</sup>

The documents show that all the preliminary preparation work and decisions on national-and-territorial state delimitation were made only by the Party organ headed by the Sredazburo of the RCP(b) CC, and then it was agreed to submit that question to approval by the TurkTsIK, ie to the Soviet organs. In other words the Soviets up to that time were kept out of the discussion and resolving of epoch-making questions of the peoples in Central Asia. Besides, the Resolution adopted at the Plenum emphasized, “2. To open a broad campaign of discussing the Party Resolution On National Delimitation within the working and dekhkan [peasant] masses of Turkestan.”<sup>62</sup>

Nevertheless, at the meeting of the Ispolburo CPT CC on 12 July 1924, the cipher telegram from RCP(b) CC received from Moscow was discussed. It read as follows:

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<sup>xix</sup> Central Coordinating Committee.



“... in accordance with the question of national delimitation the following should be considered necessary: a). To forbid the Party members to go to the *kishlaks* and *auls* with the aim of carrying on agitation and propaganda among people, and on the whole to forbid any work related to the question on national delimitation not commissioned by the Party committees ... c). once again warn all the Party members that in case of violation of the Resolution of the RCP(b) CC regarding this question, the infringers will be called to strict account ...”<sup>63</sup>

An agitational campaign was accomplished under the close control of the leading Party bodies and primarily of the Sredazburo of the RCP(b) CC. Everywhere, at the *Oblast* Party Committees commissions comprising the executive officials of the *oblasts* were formed to pursue the campaign; instructional sittings and Party meetings were held and the plans for pursuing the agitational campaign were prepared. As a preliminary, instructional work was done by the members of the Sredazburo RCP(b), as well as CPT CC; I Vareikis, the executive secretary of the CPR<sup>xx</sup> CC also gave instructions on the methods and procedure for waging the campaign.<sup>64</sup> He addressed the Third Joint Plenum and stated that “concerning the political aspect there was no opportunity to draw conclusions yet; neither CC nor Sredazburo has the possibility to ascertain how precisely the ideas of national delimitation were interpreted in the midst of the indigenous population.”<sup>65</sup>

Soviet historiography stated that

“in some places the agitational campaign on national-state delimitation in Central Asia was conducted inadequately, without taking into account the general political directives of the Party on the national question, sometimes in carrying out the agitational campaign instead of explanation and clarifying national delimitation and Communistic views on the national question, instead of the discussion of major questions related to the delimitation, they 'disputed in the commission on delimitation partial territorial questions about the joining some *volost* or village to one or another Republic”;<sup>66</sup>

and Soviet historiography regarded the annexing of some inhabited locality to one or another Republic as inessential questions. The Party elite's desire to bring the discussion of the question on national-and-territorial state delimitation into rigidly regulated frameworks yielded its own results: it made it possible to avoid some serious disturbances and achieve success in gaining approval and support of the Party plan from ordinary Party members and the non-Party masses.

### **E. Establishing Central Asian National Republics**

On 15 September the special extraordinary session of the TurTsIK<sup>67</sup> met, with the only item on the agenda being national-and-territorial state delimitation in Central Asia and forming national republics. R Islamov made a report, where for the first time it was announced that the delimitation of Central Asia was the will of the indigenous peoples in the region.<sup>68</sup> On 16 September 1924, the session of the TurTsIK adopted the following Resolution:

"Following the principles guided by national interrelations and national formation of peoples in the Soviet Union, in order to meet the general volition of working and *dekhkan* masses of the Turkestan Autonomous

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<sup>xx</sup> Russian Communist Party.

## Central Asian Nations &amp; Border Issues

Soviet Socialist Republic, the Central Executive Committee of the TASSR resolves the following:

- In pursuance of the general volition of the working and *dekhkan* masses of the Uzbek people, to render the Uzbek people the right to quit (cancel) membership in the TASSR and form an independent Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic.
- In pursuance of the expressed general volition of the working and *dekhkan* masses of the Turkmen people, to render the Turkmen people the right to quit (cancel) membership in the TASSR and form an independent Turkmen Soviet Socialist Republic.
- In pursuance of the expressed general volition of the working and *dekhkan* masses of the Kirghiz (Kazakh) people, to render the Kirghiz (Kazakh) people the right to quit (cancel) membership in the TASSR aiming at joining up the Kirghiz (Kazakh) oblasts of the TASSR with the Kirghiz (Kazakh) Soviet Socialist Republic.
- In pursuance of the expressed general volition of the working and *dekhkan* masses of the Kara-Kirghiz (Kirghiz) people, to render the Kara-Kirghiz (Kirghiz) people the right to quit (cancel) membership in the TASSR and form the Kara-Kirghiz (Kirghiz) Autonomous oblast.
- In pursuance of the expressed general volition of the working and *dekhkan* masses of the Tajik people, to render the Tajik people the right to quit (cancel) membership in the TASSR and form the Tajik Autonomous oblast.
- To submit this Resolution to the All-Russian Central Executive Committee of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic for consideration and adoption at the regularly scheduled session.”<sup>69</sup>

Later the form of the national state self-determination of the Tajik people was amended. At the session in October 1924, the Uzbek Bureau on national-and-territorial state delimitation resolved: to agree with the decision of the Tajik Commission on forming the Tajik Autonomous oblast included in the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic. At the same session, it was decided not to raise an objection against including in the Tajik Autonomous oblast the Penjikent and Ura-Tyuba districts.<sup>70</sup>

On 20 September 1924 the fifth All-Bukharian *Kurultai*<sup>xxi</sup> of the Soviets took place, which adopted a Resolution on national-and-territorial state delimitation. On 29 September-2 October 1924 the All-Khorezmian *Kurultai* of the Soviets took place, which also adopted a Resolution on national-and-territorial state delimitation. On 14 October 1924, the second session of the BTsIK<sup>xxii</sup> RSFSR having considered the resolution of the TurTsIK on national-and-territorial state delimitation, adopted it

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<sup>xxi</sup> Congress.

<sup>xxii</sup> Bolshevik Central Executive Committee.

with the following amendments: the Tajik Autonomous *oblast* was transformed into the Tajik Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic included in the Uzbek SSR. The Kara-Kalpak *oblast* was included in the Kirghiz (Kazakh) SSR, and the Kara-Kirghiz (Kirghiz) Autonomous *oblast* was directly included into the RSFSR.<sup>71</sup>

On 27 October 1924, the second session of the TsIK of the USSR granted the request of the Turkestan TsIK, the fifth All-Bukharian *Kurultai* of the Soviets and the fifth All-Khorezmian *Kurultai* of the Soviets on national-and-territorial state delimitation and forming new Soviet Socialist Republics and oblasts. In its Resolution, the TsIK of the USSR entrusted to: "the Presidium of the TsIK USSR to accomplish the settling formalities concerning the newly formed Republics of Central Asia in accordance with Resolutions of the Congresses of the Soviets in these Republics".<sup>72</sup>

In the territory of the Turkestan, Bukharian and Khorezmian Soviet Republics there had been formed the following structures: the Uzbek SSR, including the Tajik ASSR, the Turkmen SSR, the Kara-Kirghiz (Kirghiz) Autonomous *oblast* affiliated to the RSFSR and the Kara-Kalpak Autonomous *oblast* affiliated to the Kazakh ASSR. The Kazakh districts of Turkestan were affiliated to the Kazakh SSR.

The national-and-territorial state delimitation had not been completed thereupon, however. The Tajik ASSR in May 1929 was transformed into the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic.<sup>73</sup> At the same period the question of the Khojent district was considered. The district was peopled mainly by the Tajiks but was part of the UzSSR; the Khojent district was then annexed to Tajikistan, and its population grew to 1,156,015 people, Tajiks comprising 78%; and then in October was included directly into the USSR.<sup>74</sup>

In 1926 the Kirghiz Autonomous *oblast* was transformed into the Kirghiz ASSR, and in 1936 it was transformed into a Soviet Republic and was directly admitted to the USSR. In 1936 in accordance with a new USSR Constitution, the Kazakh SSR and the Kirghiz ASSR were transformed into independent Soviet Socialist republics and directly entered the USSR. As for the Kara-Kalpak Autonomous *oblast*, according to the initial division in 1924 it was included in the Kazakh ASSR which itself was included in the RSFSR. Later, in 1930 the Kara-Kalpak Autonomous *oblast* was included directly into the Russian Federation, and in 1932 it was transformed into an Autonomous republic. From late 1936 up to now it has remained within Uzbekistan.<sup>75</sup>

Later on in 1939, 1956 and in other years a similar practice of turning over the lands continued. Thus, mistakes have influenced the further development of each republic. Administrative bodies did not observe regulations which they themselves adopted as fundamentals, which resulted in infringement of human rights. Taking all these matters into account, history experts should further study the newly revealed documents related to the national-and-territorial state delimitation in Central Asia.

## **Part 2: Inter-States Border Issues in Post-Soviet Central Asia**

### **A. Border Issues in New Geopolitical Realities of Central Asia**

The end of the twentieth century was characterized by major geopolitical changes, especially those aroused by the break up of the Soviet Union. As a result of the

collapse of the USSR, the former soviet republics received their political independence, Central Asia among them.

The end of USSR brought possibilities for Central Asian countries to be members of the international community and at the same time created a power vacuum in Eurasia. It should be noted that the great geopolitical thinker Halford Mackinder in his "Heartland" theory portrayed Central Asia as the heart of the world and in order to control the world, this piece has strategic importance and must be controlled.<sup>76</sup> Post-Soviet Central Asia is thus important for the geopolitical interests of the major powers – Russia, the United States, China, Iran, India and other countries. From a strategic perspective the western countries now attach increased importance to Central Asia's central location at the crossroads of Eurasia.<sup>77</sup>

There are many factors which make the region important for global politics. Firstly, Central Asia's geopolitical location, among important countries such as China, India, Iran, Russia and Pakistan. Secondly, Central Asia and the Caspian region's energy resources. Thirdly, Central Asia, primarily Afghanistan, can also be regarded as a source of possible threats to other countries of the world, because of illegal drug production and traffic and terrorism. All these and other factors have encouraging regional and global players to compete in Central Asia in the post Cold War era.

At the same time the Central Asian republics had no experience in world politics, because in the Soviet period they were deprived of the possibility of directly entering the international community, lacked their own foreign policy institutions and lacked the right to establish external links independently. The Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Soviet Central Asian republics had no real authority, since all foreign relations were handled through Moscow. All international contacts were established only with Moscow's permission and under its strict control. The achievement of independence allowed Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan to make free choices in their sovereign development and open possibilities to integrate in the world community.

After the disintegration of the USSR, the state frontiers of the former Central Asian Soviet Republics, the nominal administrative lines which divided the republics, became the most significant attribute of state sovereignty. The coming into being of a new statehood persistently required from the republics official territorial frames for sovereignty and regimes providing a sufficient level of security throughout the country. National-and-territorial delimitation in the 1920s-30s and the ensuing years of the Soviet power had left a number of territorial problems in inter-relationships between Central Asian countries unsolved, and they became the reason for conflicts. Thus, the Ferghana valley, distributed among the Kirghiz, Uzbek and Tajik republics, especially clearly illustrates how the formal lines of boundaries replenished by an emerging number of enclaves and areas due to landscape peculiarities and communication links actually became an enclave or semi-enclave; in particular, the Tajik enclave of Vorukh in Kirghizia and Uzbek enclaves of Sokh and Shakhimardan in Kirghizia.

The major problems in the process of forming official state boundaries are the ethno-territorial problems which emerged in 1920s-30s as a result of the establishment of state formations based mostly on artificial titular nations, as a result of which significant ethnic minorities appeared in the neighbouring republics. These problems represent great difficulties for the post-Soviet republics. During the Soviet period these contradictions did not grow into open opposition, as in the

Union, the Centre performed the role of supreme arbiter. With a weakening single centre, and then with emerging newly formed states, the former hidden territorial problems were seriously aggravated, often not having an ethnic slant.

### **B. Inter-State Relations on Border Delimitation & Demarcation**

Between 1991 and 2001 there were a large number of contended land plots located on the Kazakh and Uzbek, Tajik and Kirghiz, Uzbek and Turkmen and other boundaries. Though by now most matters have been settled, some uncertain segments still remain. The process of demarcation and arranging frontiers between the post-Soviet Central Asian republics actually began only at the end of the 1990s, though national frontier guard services were formed as early as in 1993-94.<sup>78</sup> New threats to state security had become a serious motivation in the process of constructing administrative barriers on the new Central Asian borderlines, in particular, the Taliban coming out to the southern boundaries of the CIS in 1997, the acute activation of the Islamic Movement in Uzbekistan, which committed raids throughout Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, as well as the activation of religious extremist organizations and drug trafficking via the region. It has become obvious that new threats to security, in conditions of transparent boundaries, and the fact that four out of five Central Asian states border Afghanistan threaten the rapid dissemination of armed conflicts throughout the region. One of the forms of response has become the efforts of countries to put up frontier barriers, strengthen immigration control and thorough customs examination and clearance of goods. This has forced the processes of delimitation and demarcation, sometimes unilaterally. Some countries in the region have also mined their borders.<sup>79</sup>

**Kazakhstan-Uzbekistan** Delimitation and demarcation between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan was completed in two stages. In the first stage 96% of the border was delimited. Accordingly, an Agreement was signed by the presidents of these two states on 16 November 2001 in Astana. As a result of further contacts in 2002 the border going through the settlements of Bagys and Turkestanetz, the Arnasay dam and others were completed. And on 9 September 2002, in Astana, the presidents of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan signed an Agreement "On certain segments of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan borderlines".<sup>80</sup>

According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Uzbekistan the delimitation of frontiers between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan "had been accomplished on the basis of the administrative-and-territorial boundary between the Kazakh and Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republics taking into account normative acts controlling demarcation as well as mutually agreed cartographic materials". Thus, the delimitation of the entire official borderline between the two states with a total length of 2,159 km has been legally formalised. With the opening of negotiations on state frontier demarcation, the second stage of arranging frontiers had begun, in particular on the land.

The 2002 Agreement on delimitation failed to regulate the fate of all borderland settlements and only resolved the issue of some disputable lands. For example, after long talks the Kazakh village of Turkestanetz was attributed to Uzbekistan and, instead, Kazakhstan retained control over the most significant water reservoir. At the beginning of 2003 the governments of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan mutually agreed a re-division of borderlines. Uzbekistan obtained land surrounding the settlements of Bagys and Turkestan located northeast from Tashkent. Kazakhstan obtained a neck of land between the Chardara reservoir and Lake Arnasai. The Kazakhstan "enclave" got a direct transport connection with the rest of the country.

On 19 May 2004, 17 km from Tashkent, between the Customs houses of Gishtkuprik and Znibek-zholy two symbolic boundary posts were set: the first with the state emblem of Uzbekistan and the second with that of Kazakhstan. Along the whole length of frontiers (2,351 km) the Uzbek-and-Kazakh boundary will be marked by a single row of more than 1,500 boundary posts with state symbols on their opposite sides. According to specialists the process of demarcation will take about three years as the frontiers are to be marked in high mountains, deserts and swamps.

**Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan** On 26 February 2001 Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan adopted a Memorandum on the legal regulation of delimitation of their mutual state borders. It should be noted that the Kyrgyz-Uzbek frontier is one of the most contradictory in post-Soviet space. After long talks of inter-governmental commissions in 2003, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan declared that they had agreed to the delimitation of 654 out of 1,270 km of the mutual state border and had no claims on each other. In defining the demarcation line, Tashkent used the map of 1927 and Bishkek that of 1954. These maps have many differentiations. That is why at present the two countries have managed to come to an agreement with each other concerning only half of the total length of boundaries. More than 400 km still remain disputable. The seriousness of the conflict is testified by the fact that Uzbekistan has mined its own side of the border with Kyrgyzstan. The mines are set along the whole length of the demarcation line, particularly on the borders of the enclaves of Sokh and Shakhi-Mardan in the Batkent oblast of Kirghizia, as well as in the Ferghana Valley. According to the US State Department, the mined segments include densely populated areas. 13 people were blown up in the mine fields in 2001-2002.<sup>81</sup>

However, at the special session of the Permanent Council of the OSCE, held in Vienna on 18 June 2004,<sup>82</sup> Uzbekistan stated its preparedness to consider the issue of clearing parts of the border of mines. In July and August 2004 a number of meetings took place between the representatives of the Boundary services of Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan in Khaidarkan, Batken (Kyrgyzstan) as well as in Sokh and Kuvasai (Uzbekistan), where technical issues were discussed.<sup>83</sup> As a result, the Uzbek side started clearing of mines the territory between the enclaves of Sokh and Shakhi-Mardan.<sup>84</sup>

**Other Areas** Also complicated was the process of formalizing and arranging the boundaries between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Up to now it has not been completed and 15% of the 1,500 km border is unmarked. The border demarcation and delimitations process is ongoing between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, Russia and Kazakhstan.

**Central Asia-China** It should be noted that the Central Asian republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan also inherited disputable segments on the outer boundaries, particularly on the border with China. Before the USSR's disintegration there were 25 disputable segments.<sup>85</sup> In the Soviet period, despite numerous negotiations, the problem of disputable borderlines remained. The common border between the Central Asian republics and China included 19 disputed areas, which added up to a territory of about 34,000 km.<sup>86</sup> Since 1992 Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan as independent states have had talks with China. This resulted in some treaties being signed on delimitation between China and Central Asian republics: Kyrgyzstan and China in 1997 and 1999 signed documents on Kyrgyz and Chinese delimitation. According to these treaties Kyrgyzstan obtained about 70% of the disputable territories and China about 30%. Similarly, treaties on delimitation between China and Kazakhstan and Tajikistan

have also been signed; disputable lands were divided into equal parts (50-50). It should also be stated that there were multilateral talks between Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and China on the issues of delimitation of frontiers and on this basis in 1996 the well-known "Shanghai Five" was established. After Uzbekistan joined them it was renamed in 2001 "The Shanghai Organization for Co-operation".

## Conclusion

It must be noted that the history of the artificial creation of national Soviet Socialist Central Asian republics in the 1920s-1930s requires thorough and critical study of historical documents concerning the delimitation of the Central Asian republics, particularly the materials and documents available in the archives of the Central Asia republics (mainly Uzbekistan), Russia and other countries.

National-and-territorial delimitation left the newly independent republics of Central Asia with a large number of problems, including the problem of inter-state boundaries. However, despite the difficulties, the regional republics on the whole have managed to resolve the issue of delimitation on a mutually beneficial basis. In addition, the newly independent republics in Central Asia should be most careful in resolving the problem of precise definition of disputable lands, and not be guided by emotions. They should settle the problems and conflicts of inter-state delimitation on the basis of mutual benefit and compromise.

## ENDNOTES

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  - <sup>2</sup> Tzentralnyy Gosudarstvennyy Arkhiv Respubliki Uzbekistan (TzGA RUz), f25, op 1, d 4, l.l, pp383, 385.
  - <sup>3</sup> Alimova D (ed), Turkestan v nachale XX veka: k istorii istokov natsionalnoy nezavisimosti – Tashkent, 2000, p380-381.
  - <sup>4</sup> The first commission was the "Specialized Provisional Commission" (February-November 1919); the second was the Turkcommission (November 1919-1923); then there was the Turkburo (July 1920-April 1922); and the Central Asian Bureau (April 1922-November 1934).
  - <sup>5</sup> See for details: E Voskoboynikov, A Zevelyov. Turkkommissiya VTzika i SNK RSFSR i Turkburo TzK RKP(b) v borbe za ukrepleniye sovetsoy vlasty v Turkestane – Tashkent, 1951, p192.
  - <sup>6</sup> Zevelyov A I, Iz istorii grazhdanskoy voyny v Uzbekistane - Tashkent, 1959, p452.
  - <sup>7</sup> Rossiyskiy Gosudarstvennyy Arkhiv sotsialno-politicheskoy istorii (RGSPi) (The Russian State Archives of sociopolitical history), f 5, op 1, d 2920, ll, 26a-28.
  - <sup>8</sup> Tursunov Kh, Obrazovaniye Uzbekskoy Sovetskoy Sotsialisticheskoy Respubliki (The formation of the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic), Tashkent, 1957, p113-114.
  - <sup>9</sup> RGASPI, f 5, op 1, d 2920, ll, 30-31.
  - <sup>10</sup> Kh T Tursunov, op cit, p143.
  - <sup>11</sup> RGASPI, f 5, op 1, d 2920, ll, 35-98.
  - <sup>12</sup> V I Lenin, Collected works, Vol 41, p435.
  - <sup>13</sup> TzGA RUz, f 17, op 1, d 784a, l.l, 137-140.
  - <sup>14</sup> Archives of the President's Office of the Republic of Uzbekistan (AAP RUz), f 60, op 1, d 4269, l, 41-42.
  - <sup>15</sup> AAP RUz, f 60, op 1, d 4269, l, 41-42.
  - <sup>16</sup> Ibid, d 105, l, 11-12.
  - <sup>17</sup> AAP RUz., f 60, op 1, d 4260, l, 5.

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- 21 Ibid, d 1236, l, 1-45.
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- 25 RGASPI, f 62, op 1, d 98, l, 205.
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- 38 M Rahimov, G Urazaeva, *Natsionalno-territorialnoye gosudarstvennoye razmezhivaniye Tsentralnoy Azii v 20-30 gg 20 veka*. In Golunov S (Ed), *Fenomen mejgosudarstvennih granits. Problemy prigranichnoy bezopasnosti I transgranichnoye sodrudnichestva v Yevrasii*, Volgograd, 2004, pp80-81.
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- 46 Ibid.
- 47 Ibid, l. 9.
- 48 Ibid.
- 49 M Rahimov, G Urazaeva, ..., p82.
- 50 RGASPI, f 52, op 1, d 25, l, 30.
- 51 Ibid.
- 52 AAP RUz, f 14, op 1, l, 77.
- 53 AAP RUz, f 60, op 1, d 3868, ll, 22-29.
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- 55 TsGA RUz, f 86, op 1, d 2538, ll, 51.
- 56 AAP RUz, f 60, op 1, d 3866, ll, 5-40.
- 57 Ibid, l, 33.
- 58 Ibid, l, 18.
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- 63 Ibid, d 3870, l, 4.



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