

---

**POTENTIAL FOR ETHNIC CONFLICT  
IN THE CASPIAN REGION**  
**Thomas S. Szayna**

---

**INTRODUCTION**

A number of incidents of communal violence have taken place in the Central Asia and South Caucasus region in the late Soviet period (late 1980s) and the initial decade of independence (1990s). In Central Asia, the incidents include riots in Kazakhstan and periodic flare-ups of violence in the Ferghana Valley (Uzbekistan). In South Caucasus, the incidents include flare-ups of violence (Azerbaijan, Georgia), and outright secessionist wars with outside intervention (Azerbaijan, Georgia). The incidents of strife differ greatly in terms of intensity, length, and immediate causes, but the warring parties in all the incidents have been differentiated largely along ethnic lines, thus justifying the use of the term “ethnic conflict” in their description.<sup>1</sup>

While the catalytic events that led to the previous incidents of ethnic conflict are case-specific, the preconditions for the violence and tensions along ethnic group lines stem from the combination of the presence of many ethnic groups in a given polity and the presence of

---

<sup>1</sup>We use the following definition of ethnicity: Ethnicity is a constructed social phenomenon. The concept refers to the idea of shared group affinity and a sense of belonging that is based on a myth of collective ancestry and a notion of distinctiveness. The constructed bonds of ethnicity may stem from any number of distinguishing cultural characteristics, such as common language, religion, or regional differentiation. Within a polity, the “markers” are widely known, internalized, and allow for easy categorization of individuals. Thomas S. Szayna and Ashley J. Tellis, “Introduction,” in Thomas S. Szayna (ed.), *Identifying Potential Ethnic Conflict: Application of a Process Model*, Santa Monica, CA: RAND, MR-1188-A, 2000, pp. 13–14. The above definition, with slight variations, is widely used by scholars of ethnic conflict.

most of the following factors: authoritarian political regimes that are by nature inefficient in conflict resolution, low income levels and widespread unemployment, official nationalist ideologies that favor some ethnic groups over others, perception of ethnicity in an ascriptive fashion, and fundamental socioeconomic disruptions that lead to a climate of fear and insecurity (see Chapter Two for more on the political problems in the region). Since the conditions that led to the previous incidents of violence still persist, and at least some of the contributing factors to violence have no quick remedies and thus will remain a feature of the region for the foreseeable future, further ethnic violence in CASC during the next 10–15 years is probable and, indeed, likely. This does not mean that ethnic conflict is likely to sweep the CASC region or that it will result in state failures in any of the states. The range of ethnic violence that might take place in the region varies greatly in terms of severity and its likely location. Moreover, even frequent ethnic riots do not necessarily pose a threat to a regime or to interstate peace in the region. But communal conflict with an ethnic dimension is among the most likely types of mass violence that may take place in the CASC region in the next 10–15 years and, depending on its specifics, has the potential to affect the security environment in the region as a whole.

From the perspective of impact on U.S. policy, the primary analytical issue is to anticipate the cases under which the potential for ethnic conflict might lead to state failure or a regional war. As a general conclusion, some potential for such dangerous pathways exists in most countries of CASC, though the largest countries (in terms of population) pose the biggest problems.

This chapter addresses the potential for conflict in the CASC region along the lines of communal—primarily ethnic—conflict. First, the chapter examines the current ethnic makeup and the extent to which the preconditions for ethnic conflict are present in the CASC states. Then, the chapter explores the potential for ethnic violence in the CASC region and points out the probable pathways for the eight countries from the perspective of interethnic relations and ethnic conflict.

## THE ETHNIC FACTOR IN THE CASC STATES

Estimates of current population in each country in the CASC region vary, sometimes substantially, depending on the source of data. Table 6.1 lists the most reliable external estimates of current population levels in each country, as well as the estimates of what the population is likely to be in 2015. The CASC states exhibit different rates of population growth. According to UN estimates, Georgia and Kazakhstan will decline in population in the period 2000–2015, Armenia will remain essentially unchanged, Azerbaijan will show moderate growth, and Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan will continue to see high population growth. Since population growth varies greatly by ethnic group, both the absolute and relative share of the total by each group is going to change the most in Central Asia. Generally, the ethnic groups eponymous with the Central Asian states will experience a high rate of natural increase. The low natural increase rates (or even declines) in South Caucasus (Georgia, Armenia) stem from a combination of high out-migration and low fertility rates.

Figures concerning the share of the total population by the major ethnic or religious groups in each country need to be taken with some skepticism. Part of the problem is that ethnicity, as a form of

**Table 6.1**  
Overall Population Estimates, CIA and UN, CASC Region

	2001 <sup>a</sup>	2000 <sup>b</sup>	Estimated in 2015 <sup>b</sup>	Percent Growth 2000–2015 <sup>b</sup>
Armenia	3,336	3,787	3,808	0.6
Azerbaijan	7,771	8,041	8,725	8.5
Georgia	4,989	5,262	4,775	-9.3
Kazakhstan	16,731	16,172	15,957	-1.3
Kyrgyzstan	4,753	4,921	5,836	18.6
Tajikistan	6,579	6,087	7,097	16.6
Turkmenistan	4,603	4,737	6,059	27.9
Uzbekistan	25,155	24,881	30,554	22.8

<sup>a</sup>From CIA, *The World Factbook*, July 2001 estimates; [www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html](http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html).

<sup>b</sup>From UN, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, [www.un.org/popin/](http://www.un.org/popin/).

constructed identity, is not static. It is malleable, and shifts in state policy affect the ethnic identification of individuals. Moreover, ethnic attachments vary in strength, and population figures alone do not reflect the intensity of the attachments nor do they indicate other aspects of identity (supraethnic or subethnic) that may affect how an individual perceives those belonging to another ethnic group. Censuses have not taken place in many of the CASC countries since their independence, and the accuracy of what censuses have been done is debatable. Consequently, many of the population figures generated both externally and internally concerning the individual CASC countries rely on adjustments and estimates of either the post-independence censuses or even the 1989 Soviet census (the last and probably the most reliable Soviet census). But the estimates also have a substantial error margin because of massive migration flows throughout the region in the last decade (not captured sufficiently in official records) and nontrivial changes in natural increase rates. Last but not least, state policies in each of the CASC states favor certain ethnic groups over others, open discussion of ethnic tensions and even a genuine portrayal of ethnic heterogeneity in each of the CASC countries is politically sensitive, and there exist national-level pressures to inflate the number of individuals belonging to the ethnic groups eponymous with the state.

With the above caveats in mind, all the states in the CASC region have some portion of the population that is not of the eponymous ethnicity, ranging from the mostly monoethnic Armenia to a highly ethnically heterogeneous Kazakhstan. In general, the level of ethnic heterogeneity in states of the South Caucasus is lower than that in the Central Asian states. Tables 6.2 through 6.9 present data on the main ethnic groups in each of the CASC states, keeping in mind that the figures given amount to no more than composite estimates on the basis of poor data and that the categories themselves are, to some extent, always in flux.

**Table 6.2**  
**Main Ethnic Groups, Armenia**

Group	Population <sup>a</sup>	Percent and Trends <sup>b</sup>	Linguistic Group	Religion <sup>c</sup>	Main Area of Settlement
Armenian	3,242,000	97.2 (-)	Armenian	Armenian Orthodox	
Kurd	61,000	1.8 (+)	Iranian	Muslim	Northwest, mainly western Aragatsotn province
Russian	8,000	0.2 (-)	Slavic	Russian Orthodox	Major urban areas, mainly Yerevan
Other <sup>d</sup>	25,000	0.8 (-)			
Total	3,336,000	100.0			

<sup>a</sup>Figure for Armenians is derived from CIA estimates for 2001; the figure is in agreement with official Armenian sources, based on estimates as of January 2000 and excluding "persons temporarily absent," the term used to denote out-migration (this is also the reason for the large difference between the CIA and UN figures for the population figures for Armenia reported in Table 6.1: UN uses official Armenian figures, which do not take into account the massive out-migration). Figure for Russians is a 1999 estimate by the Russian State Bureau of Statistics (Goskomstat), published in *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, September 17, 2001. Figures for other groups are estimates based on 1989 census figures, rates of natural increase, and overall migration trends. Total population figure is an estimate (as of July 2001) by the CIA, *The World Factbook*, [www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html](http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html). No census has taken place in Armenia since 1989. There has been large out-migration in the 1990s. The figures above are likely to have a moderate margin of error.

<sup>b</sup>Future trends regarding population share are based on state policies of favoritism, patterns of natural increase, and expected migration flows. + = relative increase, - = relative decrease, ~ = little change.

<sup>c</sup>Religion associated with the ethnic group; not necessarily an indication of strength of religious attachments.

<sup>d</sup>The largest groups are Greeks and Assyrians.

**Table 6.3**  
**Main Ethnic Groups, Azerbaijan**

Group	Population <sup>a</sup>	Percent and Trends <sup>b</sup>	Linguistic Group	Religion <sup>c</sup>	Main Area of Settlement
Azeri	6,998,000	90.1 (+)	Turkic	Muslim	
Lezgin <sup>d,e</sup>	197,000	2.5 (+)	Caucasic	Muslim	Northeast, along Dagestan border
Armenian <sup>f</sup>	190,000	2.4 (-)	Armenian	Armenian Orthodox	Southwest, Nagorno-Karabakh and nearby
Russian	142,000	1.8 (-)	Slavic	Russian Orthodox	Urban centers, mainly Baku and vicinity
Avar <sup>d</sup>	51,000	0.7 (+)	Caucasic	Muslim	North, Balaken and nearby areas
Talysh <sup>g</sup>	30,000	0.4 (+)	Iranian	Muslim	Southeast, along the Caspian Sea
Tatar	27,000	0.4 (-)	Turkic	Muslim	Urban centers, mainly Baku and vicinity
Tat (Muslim)	24,000	0.3 (-)	Iranian	Muslim	Northeast, eastern range of Greater Caucasus
Kurds	22,000	0.3 (-)	Iranian	Muslim	Southwest, Nakhichevan
Turk	19,000	0.2 (-)	Turkic	Muslim	Southwest, Nakhichevan
Tsakhur <sup>d</sup>	18,000	0.2 (+)	Caucasic	Muslim	North, Zaqatala area
Other <sup>h</sup>	53,000	0.7 (-)			
Total	7,771,000	100.0			

<sup>a</sup>Figures for all groups except for the Russians and Armenians are derived from the 1989 census results, modified by rates of natural increase and out-migration. Figure for Armenians is derived from population figures in the 1989 census for Nagorno-Karabakh and surrounding areas (controlled by the secessionist Armenians). Figure for Russians is a 1999 estimate by the Russian State Bureau of Statistics (Goskomstat), published in *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, September 17, 2001. Total population figure is an estimate (as of July 2001) by the CIA, *The World Factbook*, [www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html](http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html). A census took place in Azerbaijan in 1999 but its results have been widely disputed. There has been moderate out-migration in the 1990s. A large refugee population (575,000 by UN estimates) remains in Azerbaijan in the aftermath of the war over Nagorno-Karabakh. The figures above are likely to have a moderate to large margin of error.

<sup>b</sup>Future trends regarding population share are based on state policies of favoritism, patterns of natural increase, and expected migration flows. + = relative increase, - = relative decrease, ~ = little change.

<sup>c</sup>Religion associated with the ethnic group; not necessarily an indication of strength of religious attachments.

<sup>d</sup>One of the ethnic groups inhabiting Dagestan.

<sup>e</sup>Includes several linguistic subgroups: Khinalugh, Kryts, Budukh, Udi (together amounting to about 16,000 people).

<sup>f</sup>Almost all Armenians inhabit Nagorno-Karabakh and nearby areas that are currently not under control of the Azerbaijani government.

<sup>g</sup>The Talysh category is new. Previously (1989 census) Talysh had been considered Azeris. Estimates of the Talysh population vary tremendously, with some linguistically-based estimates putting the figure at close to 1 million in Azerbaijan. The number of people in Azerbaijan considering themselves as Talysh (rather than considering themselves Azeri and using Talysh) is probably far smaller.

<sup>h</sup>The largest groups are Ukrainians and Georgians.

**Table 6.4**  
**Main Ethnic Groups, Georgia**

Group	Population <sup>a</sup>	Percent and Trends <sup>b</sup>	Linguistic Group	Religion <sup>c</sup>	Main Area of Settlement
Georgian	3,615,000	72.4 (+)	Georgian	Georgian Orthodox, some Muslim	
Armenian	430,000	8.6 (-)	Armenian	Armenian Orthodox	South, bordering Armenia
Azeri	358,000	7.2 (+)	Turkic	Muslim	South and west of Tbilisi
Ossetian <sup>d</sup>	165,000	3.3 (-)	Iranian	Orthodox Christian, some Muslim	Central, South Ossetia
Russian	140,000	2.8 (-)	Slavic	Russian Orthodox	Urban centers, Abkhazia, coast
Abkhaz <sup>e</sup>	100,000	2.0 (-)	Caucasic	Christian, some Muslim	Northwest (Abkhazia)
Greek	75,000	1.5 (-)	Greek	Greek Orthodox	South-central, coast
Kurd	33,000	0.7 (+)	Iranian	Muslim	Southwest
Ukrainian	23,000	0.5 (-)	Slavic	Orthodox Christian	Urban centers, Abkhazia, coast
Other <sup>f</sup>	50,000	1.0 (-)			
Total	4,989,000	100.0			

<sup>a</sup>Figures for all groups except for the Russians are derived from the 1989 census results, modified by rates of natural increase and out-migration. Figure for Russians is a 1999 estimate by the Russian State Bureau of Statistics (Goskomstat), published in *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, September 17, 2001. Total population figure is an estimate (as of July 2001) by the CIA, *The World Factbook*, [www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html](http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html). No census has taken place in Georgia since 1989. There has been large out-migration in the 1990s. The figures above are likely to have a large margin of error.

<sup>b</sup>Future trends regarding population share are based on state policies of favoritism, patterns of natural increase, and expected migration flows. + = relative increase, - = relative decrease, ~ = little change.

<sup>c</sup>Religion associated with the ethnic group; not necessarily an indication of strength of religious attachments.

<sup>d</sup>Majority of Ossetians inhabit South Ossetia, currently not under control of the Georgian government.

<sup>e</sup>Almost all Abkhaz inhabit the Abkhazi Autonomous Republic, currently not under control of the Georgian government.

<sup>f</sup>The largest groups are Lezgins, Turks, Tatars, and Assyrians.

**Table 6.5**  
**Main Ethnic Groups, Kazakhstan**

Group	Population <sup>a</sup>	Percent and Trends <sup>b</sup>	Linguistic Group	Religion <sup>c</sup>	Main Area of Settlement
Kazakh	7,985,000	53.4 (+)	Turkic	Muslim	
Russian	4,480,000	30.0 (-)	Slavic	Russian Orthodox	North, northeast, and urban centers
Ukrainian	547,000	3.7 (-)	Slavic	Orthodox Christian	North, northeast, and urban centers
Uzbek	371,000	2.5 (+)	Turkic	Muslim	South, Ongtusiik Qazaqstan province
German	353,000	2.4 (-)	Germanic	Protestant and Catholic	North, northeast
Tatar	249,000	1.7 (-)	Turkic	Muslim	North, northeast, and urban centers
Uighur	210,000	1.4 (+)	Turkic	Muslim	Southeast, Almaty province
Belarusan	112,000	0.7 (-)	Slavic	Orthodox Christian	North, northeast, and urban centers
Korean	100,000	0.7 (-)	Korean	Buddhist	East, southeast
Azeri	78,000	0.5 (-)	Turkic	Muslim	East, southeast
Polish	59,000	0.3 (-)	West Slavic	Catholic	North
Dungan	37,000	0.2 (+)	Sino-Tibetan	Muslim	Southeast, Zhambyl province
Kurd	33,000	0.2 (-)	Iranian	Muslim	East, southeast
Chechen	32,000	0.2 (-)	Caucasic	Muslim	East, southeast
Tajik	26,000	0.2 (+)	Iranian	Muslim	South, Ongtusiik Qazaqstan province
Bashkir	23,000	0.2 (-)	Turkic	Muslim	North, northeast
Other <sup>d</sup>	258,000	1.7 (-)			
Total	14,953,000	100.0			

<sup>a</sup>Figures for all groups are based on the 1999 census in Kazakhstan (census results generally interpreted as reliable). The total population figure from the census differs from the CIA figure of (as of July 2001) 16,731,000. *The World Factbook*, [www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html](http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html). There has been large out-migration from Kazakhstan in the 1990s, coupled with in-migration in the late 1990s. The figures above are likely to have a moderate margin of error.

<sup>b</sup>Future trends regarding population share are based on state policies of favoritism, patterns of natural increase, and expected migration flows. + = relative increase, - = relative decrease, ~ = little change.

<sup>c</sup>Religion associated with the ethnic group; not necessarily an indication of strength of religious attachments.

<sup>d</sup>The largest groups are Moldavians, Ingush, Mordvinians, Armenians, Greeks, Chuvash, Erzya, and Udmurts.

**Table 6.6**  
**Main Ethnic Groups, Kyrgyzstan**

Group	Population <sup>a</sup>	Percent and Trends <sup>b</sup>	Linguistic Group	Religion <sup>c</sup>	Main Area of Settlement
Kyrgyz	3,130,000	64.9 (+)	Turkic	Muslim	
Uzbek	666,000	13.8 (+)	Turkic	Muslim	Southwest, Osh and Jalal-Abad provinces
Russian	603,000	12.5 (-)	Slavic	Russian Orthodox	North and urban centers
Ukrainian	71,000	1.5 (-)	Slavic	Orthodox Christian	North and urban centers
Tatar	53,000	1.1 (-)	Turkic	Muslim	North and urban centers
Tajik	47,000	1.0 (+)	Iranian	Muslim	Southwest, Osh province
Uighur	45,000	0.9 (+)	Turkic	Muslim	East, Ysyk-Kol and Naryn provinces
Kazakh	44,000	0.9 (+)	Turkic	Muslim	North, Chuy and Talas provinces
German	40,000	0.8 (-)	Germanic	Protestant	North, Chuy province
Dungan	38,000	0.8 (+)	Sino-Tibetan	Muslim	Northeast, Chuy and Ysyk-Kol provinces
Other <sup>d</sup>	86,000	1.8 (~)			
Total	4,823,000	100.0			

<sup>a</sup>Figures for the major groups are based on the 1999 census in Kyrgyzstan (census results subject to some debate). Figures for other groups are based on the 1999 census, and the 1989 census adjusted for natural increase and migration rates. The total population figure from the census differs from the CIA figure of (as of July 2001) 4,753,000. *The World Factbook*, [www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html](http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html). There has been large out-migration from Kyrgyzstan in the late 1990s. The figures above are likely to have a moderate to large margin of error.

<sup>b</sup>Future trends regarding population share are based on state policies of favoritism, patterns of natural increase, and expected migration flows. + = relative increase, - = relative decrease, ~ = little change.

<sup>c</sup>Religion associated with the ethnic group; not necessarily an indication of strength of religious attachments.

<sup>d</sup>The largest groups are Koreans, Azeris, and Kurds.

**Table 6.7**  
**Main Ethnic Groups, Tajikistan**

Group	Population <sup>a</sup>	Percent and Trends <sup>b</sup>	Linguistic Group	Religion <sup>c</sup>	Main Area of Settlement
Tajik	4,598,000	69.9 (+)	Iranian	Muslim	
Uzbek	1,691,000	25.7 (+)	Turkic	Muslim	Ferghana valley and southwest
Russian	68,000	1.0 (-)	Slavic	Russian Orthodox	Urban centers, mainly Dushanbe
Kyrgyz	85,000	1.3 (+)	Turkic	Muslim	East
Persian	25,000	0.4 (~)	Iranian	Muslim	Southwest
Turkmen	29,000	0.4 (~)	Turkic	Muslim	Southwest
Other <sup>d</sup>	83,000	1.3 (-)			
Total	6,579,000	100.0			

<sup>a</sup>Figures for the major groups are based on the 2000 census in Tajikistan (census results prone to major discrepancies), CIA estimates, and the 1989 census adjusted for natural increase and migration rates. The total population figure from the census differs from the CIA figure of (as of January 2000) 6,128,000. *The World Factbook*, [www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html](http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html). There have been large refugee inflows into and out of Tajikistan, as well as substantial out-migration from Tajikistan in the 1990s. The figures above are likely to have a large margin of error.

<sup>b</sup>Future trends regarding population share are based on state policies of favoritism, patterns of natural increase, and expected migration flows. + = relative increase, - = relative decrease, ~ = little change.

<sup>c</sup>Religion associated with the ethnic group; not necessarily an indication of strength of religious attachments.

<sup>d</sup>The largest groups are Kazakhs, Tatars, and Ukrainians.

**Table 6.8**  
**Main Ethnic Groups, Turkmenistan**

Group	Population <sup>a</sup>	Percent and Trends <sup>b</sup>	Linguistic Group	Religion <sup>c</sup>	Main Area of Settlement
Turkmen	3,613,000	78.5 (+)	Turkic	Muslim	
Uzbek	453,000	9.8 (+)	Turkic	Muslim	North and east, Dashowuz and Lebap provinces
Russian	240,000	5.2 (-)	Slavic	Russian Orthodox	Urban centers and west (Balkan province)
Kazakh	98,000	2.1 (~)	Turkic	Muslim	Northwest
Azeri	37,000	0.8 (~)	Turkic	Muslim	West, Balkan province
Tatar	33,000	0.7 (-)	Turkic	Muslim	Urban centers
Baloch	30,000	0.7 (-)	Iranian	Muslim	Southeast, Mary province
Ukrainian	26,000	0.6 (-)	Slavic	Orthodox Christian	Urban centers
Other <sup>d</sup>	73,000	1.6 (-)			
Total	4,603,000	100.0			

<sup>a</sup>Figures for the major groups are based on the 1995 census in Turkmenistan (census results subject to some debate), CIA estimates, and the 1989 census adjusted for natural increase and migration rates. CIA estimate in *The World Factbook*, [www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html](http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html). The figures above are likely to have a large margin of error.

<sup>b</sup>Future trends regarding population share are based on state policies of favoritism, patterns of natural increase, and expected migration flows. + = relative increase, - = relative decrease, ~ = little change.

<sup>c</sup>Religion associated with the ethnic group; not necessarily an indication of strength of religious attachments.

<sup>d</sup>The largest groups are Armenians, Lezgins, and Persians.

**Table 6.9**  
**Main Ethnic Groups, Uzbekistan**

Group	Population <sup>a</sup>	Percent and Trends <sup>b</sup>	Linguistic Group	Religion <sup>c</sup>	Main Area of Settlement
Uzbek	19,233,000	76.5 (+)	Turkic	Muslim	
Tajik	1,395,000	5.5 (+)	Iranian	Muslim	Central, southern, and eastern provinces
Russian	1,150,000	4.6 (-)	Slavic	Russian Orthodox	Toshkent and other urban centers
Kazakh	1,050,000	4.2 (+)	Turkic	Muslim	West, central, and eastern provinces
Karakalpak	577,000	2.3 (+)	Turkic	Muslim	Karakalpakstan
Tatar	398,000	1.6 (-)	Turkic	Muslim	Toshkent and other urban centers
Kyrgyz	219,000	0.9 (+)	Turkic	Muslim	Farghona, Namangan, Andijan provinces
Korean	217,000	0.9 (~)	Korean	Buddhist	Toshkent and northeast
Turkmen	162,000	0.6 (+)	Turkic	Muslim	Karakalpakstan and Khorezm province
Turk	160,000	0.6 (~)	Turkic	Muslim	Toshkent and northeast
Crimean Tatar	155,000	0.6 (-)	Turkic	Muslim	Samarqand and Nawoiy provinces
Ukrainian	107,000	0.4 (-)	Slavic	Orthodox Christian	Toshkent and other urban centers
Uighur	45,000	0.2 (+)	Turkic	Muslim	Northeast
Other <sup>d</sup>	287,000	1.1 (~)			
Total	25,155,000	100.0			

<sup>a</sup>Figures for all groups except for the Russians are derived from the 1989 census results, modified by rates of natural increase and out-migration. Figure for Russians is a 1999 estimate by the Russian State Bureau of Statistics (Goskomstat), published in *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, September 17, 2001. Total population figure is an estimate (as of July 2001) by CIA, *The World Factbook*, [www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html](http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html). No census has taken place in Uzbekistan since 1989. There has been large out-migration in the 1990s. The figures above are likely to have a large margin of error.

<sup>b</sup>Future trends regarding population share are based on state policies of favoritism, patterns of natural increase, and expected migration flows. + = relative increase, - = relative decrease, ~ = little change.

<sup>c</sup>Religion associated with the ethnic group; not necessarily an indication of strength of religious attachments.

<sup>d</sup>The largest groups are Persians, Azeris, Armenians, Bashkirs, and Belarusians.

Figure 6.1 portrays the extent of ethnic heterogeneity in the CASC states, as measured by the percentage of the population that belongs to the ethnic group eponymous with the state and the extent of change in the heterogeneity that has taken place in the ten years that followed the independence of the CASC states. Other than Armenia and Azerbaijan, which are largely monoethnic (with the eponymous ethnic group accounting for over 90 percent of the population), all of the other CASC states contain substantial ethnic minorities. The second-largest state in the CASC region, Kazakhstan, is the most ethnically heterogeneous of all the states in this region.

Of course, for purposes of conflict propensity, heterogeneity needs to be supplemented by a more detailed look at the interethnic situation in a given state. A situation of two roughly evenly-sized groups may be potentially more dangerous from a conflict-propensity perspective than a situation in which the dominant eponymous group has to take into account two or more much smaller groups, because the

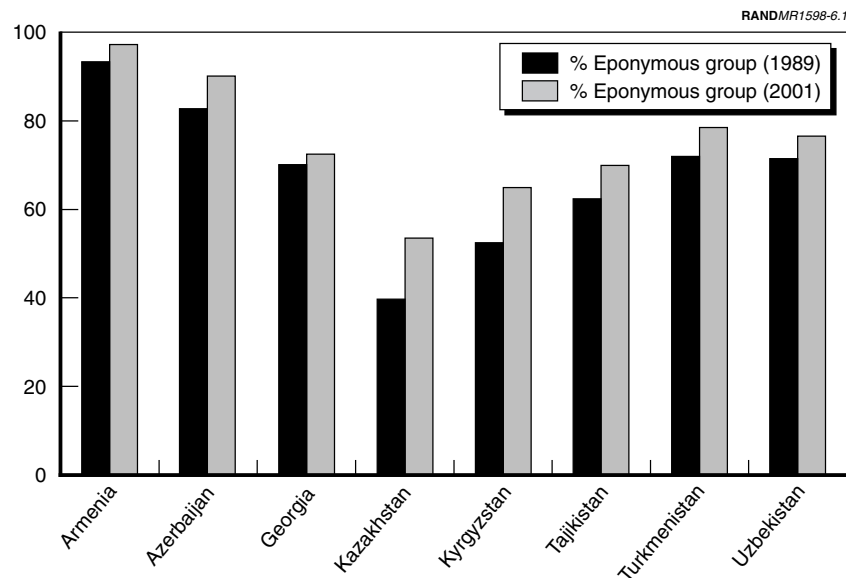


Figure 6.1—Ethnic Heterogeneity in the CASC States

adversaries may be closely matched and an environment of insecurity may pervade relations between them (due to fear of “first strike” by the other). Similarly, groups with a long history of settlement in the territory in question present a different problem than groups composed primarily of recent “settlers.” The former are likely to have a higher attachment to the territory and may not see out-migration as an option in the face of discriminatory measures along ethnic lines, whereas the latter may have a weak attachment to the territory and may emigrate rather than resist such measures. A geographically concentrated group presents different problems than a group that is dispersed. In the former case, even a small but concentrated and locally dominant minority group may be stronger than its relatively small population share indicates. Proximity to states composed of co-ethnics and ease (or even the possibility) of assimilation further modify simple heterogeneity calculations.<sup>2</sup>

Keeping in mind the caveats mentioned earlier, there are additional reasons to be cautious when interpreting population figures in the CASC region. For one, the strength of the main ethnic identities in the region is open to question. The ethnic groups eponymous with the states of the region are recent creations (with the exception of Georgia and Armenia). They are byproducts of Stalinist nationality policies from the 1920s and 1930s and the Soviet attempts to impose “national” distinctions (based on Eurocentric definitions of the nation, with its heavy emphasis on language) onto a variety of pre-modern peoples inhabiting the area. The relative brevity of Soviet control of the region means that important supraethnic and subethnic identities continue to exist. For example, in Central Asia, supraethnic identities include Muslim cultural heritage (differentiating Muslims from non-Muslims, as in, for example, Uzbeks and Tajiks on the one hand, and Russians and Germans on the other hand), Turkic background (establishing shared linguistic and historical bonds between, for example, Turkmen and Uzbeks and differentiating both from Tajiks), historical cultural affinities based on settlement patterns (linking the nomadic Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, and Turkmen, as opposed to the sedentary Uzbeks), and a Turkestani

---

<sup>2</sup>These characteristics are described in more detail in Barry Posen, “The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict,” *Survival*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (1993), pp. 27–47.

regional identity (linking many of the indigenous Central Asian groups).

In terms of subethnic attachments, there is much evidence that lineage-based subethnic identities of the pre-Soviet era remain strong and coexist with national identities. For example, before the incorporation of the steppes between the lower Volga and the Altai Mountains into the Soviet Union, the Turkic nomads who inhabited the area distinguished among each other on the basis of three *zhuz* (tribal confederations): the *Kishi Zhuz* of the western steppe, the *Orta Zhuz* of the north and northeastern steppe, and the *Uly Zhuz* of the south and southeast steppe). Further distinctions were made by the variety of *ru* and *taipa* (clans and tribes). The distinctions continue in contemporary Kazakhstan. The nomads of the Kara Kum desert comprised five tribes: Akhal Teke, Yumut, Salar, Ersari, and Kerki. These distinctions persist in contemporary Turkmenistan. Similar distinctions were present among what are now the Kyrgyz, Uzbeks, and Tajiks. The Soviet regime attempted to erase these identities, but they persisted and remain important in most of the Central Asian states. The degree of their importance is a subject of some controversy.<sup>3</sup> The regime in each of the states has in place nation-building policies (meaning an effort to construct a nationality closely identified with the state), and these policies not surprisingly tend to downgrade the significance of subnational identities. Still, independent scholars see the subnational attachments as important. Nor is the importance of subnational identities limited to the Central Asian states. In the South Caucasus, the Azeris follow the pattern of the Central Asians.<sup>4</sup> Even among the groups that have a long history of existence, such as the Georgians, regional distinctions amount to fundamental substate cleavages that mimic closely interethnic patterns of competition.

<sup>3</sup>Saulesh Esenova, "'Tribalism' and Identity in Contemporary Circumstances: the Case of Kazakhstan," *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 17, No. 3 (1998), pp. 443–462; Edward Schatz, "The Politics of Multiple Identities: Lineage and Ethnicity in Kazakhstan," *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 52, No. 3 (2000), pp. 489–506; Hilda Eitzen, "Refiguring Ethnicity through Kazak Genealogies," *Nationalities Papers*, Vol. 26, No. 3 (1998), pp. 433–451; Shahram Akbarzadeh, "National Identity and Political Legitimacy in Turkmenistan," *Nationalities Papers*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (1999), pp. 271–290.

<sup>4</sup>Fereydoun Safizadeh, "On Dilemmas of Identity in the Post-Soviet Republic of Azerbaijan," *Caucasian Regional Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (1998), <http://poli.vub.ac.be/publi/crs/eng/0301-04.htm>.

In any event, though it is clear that the populations of most of the CASC states tend to be ethnically heterogeneous, the quantitative information on the ethnic composition of the population in the region amounts to rough estimates with a potentially large margin of error and should be treated as such. Moreover, ethnic attachments of the main peoples in the CASC region, and especially in Central Asia, are products of relatively short processes of assimilation, and so they seem to coexist on par with other supra- and subnational identities, whose strength is difficult to judge with any degree of accuracy.

### **PRECONDITIONS FOR ETHNIC CONFLICT**

By itself, ethnic heterogeneity is a necessary precondition but insufficient for ethnic conflict to occur. Even the politicization of ethnicity is an insufficient cause of conflict. Actual catalysts are tied to some form of group-level grievances and a perception of threat and insecurity at the group level. Willingness to compromise and mechanisms for conflict resolution generally are not as well developed in authoritarian regimes as they are in democratic ones. Moreover, authoritarian regimes, by definition, tend to be more arbitrary, less transparent in decisionmaking, less willing to allow popular input than democratic regimes, and more prone to foster a climate of group-level insecurity. For all these reasons, authoritarian regimes are not as efficient and effective in heading off severe ethnic conflict. The lower restraint of authoritarian regimes toward the use of coercion amounts to an alternative mechanism for deterring ethnic conflict, but generally it is not an efficient way to deal with group-level grievances.

There are a multitude of group-level grievances in most of the CASC states, varying in their extent by country. In addition, all the political regimes in the CASC region are authoritarian, with some being highly authoritarian. Data from Freedom House illustrate the extent of their authoritarianism. Freedom House is among the best-known and oldest institutions that gauge the political and civil rights of all countries in the world according to a standard methodology.<sup>5</sup> Freedom House ranks both political rights and civil liberties, each on

---

<sup>5</sup>For full explanation of Freedom House methodology and individual country scores, see <http://www.freedomhouse.org/ratings/>.

a one-to-seven scale, with one representing the highest level of freedom and liberty and seven the lowest. Figure 6.2 traces the scores of all eight CASC states since independence. The chart uses an average of the political freedoms and civil liberties to establish one figure that approximates the extent of democratic governance in a given state. For comparison, current (2001–2002) scores of some countries outside of the CASC region are: Turkey 4.5, Russia 5.0, China 6.5, Iran 5.5, Afghanistan (under Taliban) 7.0. Other than Turkey and Greece (which has a current score of 2.0), all NATO countries have current scores of 1 or 1.5.

As a general rule, the states of South Caucasus are less authoritarian than the states of Central Asia. Georgia and Armenia are the least authoritarian of the states in the region, and Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are the most authoritarian. The data indicate that some of the liberalization and democratization that occurred in the CASC

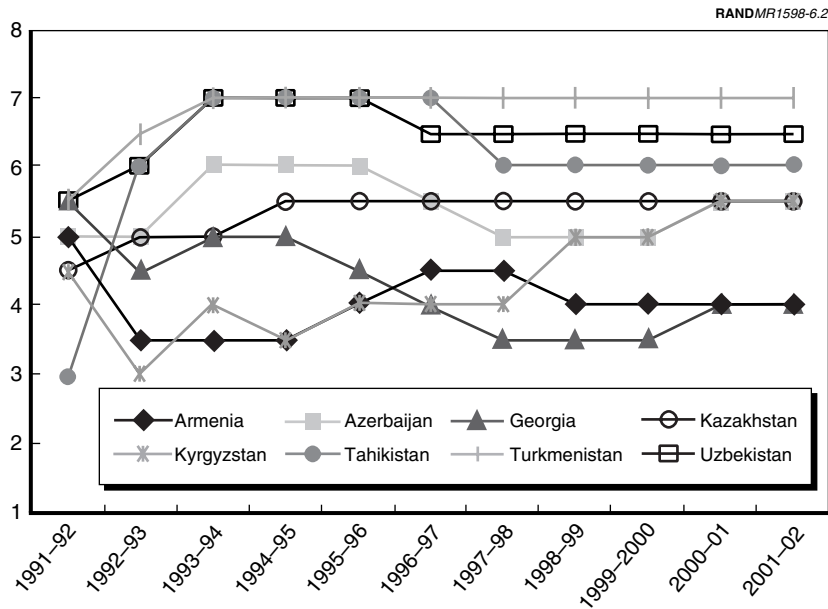


Figure 6.2—Extent of Democratization in the CASC States (Scale 1–7; 1 = fully democratic, 7 = fully authoritarian)

states after the breakup of the Soviet Union has been reversed. There are also fewer fluctuations in the regime ratings since 1996, seemingly showing that as the regimes have become more authoritarian, they have also become more entrenched. The combination of authoritarian regimes and the presence of large ethnic minorities in most of the states of the CASC region does not mean that ethnically based conflict will necessarily occur, but it does mean that some of the preconditions for such strife are in place because individuals and groups may not have access to conflict resolution mechanisms or ways to channel their grievances in a peaceful fashion (see Chapter Two for more on the political problems in the region).

In terms of ethnically based grievances, the pursuit of nation-building and “ethnic redress” by the regimes in power in all of the CASC states are probably the most important factors because of their symbolism and their implications for the ability of the nonfavored citizens to identify with the country. Regimes in the CASC region have their base of support in ethnic groups eponymous with these states and, since gaining independence, each of them (with varying intensity) has pursued policies that aim to strengthen its group’s hold on the structures of power and thereby institutionalize its newly dominant position. In short, the CASC states are “nationalizing” states (to use Rogers Brubaker’s term), in that they pursue policies that aim to assimilate, marginalize, or expel the nondominant ethnic groups.<sup>6</sup> Although the pace of nationalizing varies from country to country, the long-term goal of the regimes is clear: to build a large ethnically based pillar of support by shifting the status stratification map to ensure that the eponymous ethnic groups are in an unchallenged position of power. There is nothing unusual about the pattern being followed; a program of nationalist modernization fueled by creating a national identity on the basis of one major ethnic group was a common path to modernity in the 20th century.

Since members of the eponymous groups control the regimes of all the states in the CASC region, they have been able to use the administrative machinery of these states as tools of “ethnic redress.” Because the tools are numerous and because they are combined with

---

<sup>6</sup>Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question Reframed in the New Europe*, Oxford: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

the arbitrariness one would expect from authoritarian regimes, they are effective in an overall sense, even if the administrative capacity of the states is generally weak. The tools range from manipulation of privatization, channeling of foreign direct investment to benefit certain areas or individuals, and selective enforcement of laws so as to benefit some groups, to constitutional clauses that stipulate the primacy of one ethnic group, rewriting and outright fabrication of history to establish symbolic primacy, educational guidelines that elevate the status of the dominant ethnic group, and linguistic policies that privilege the dominant ethnic group.

Implementation of “ethnic redress” has not been so much illegal as extralegal, in that the intent to privilege the dominant group is not outlined specifically in law but is affirmed symbolically and through a number of political cues. In turn, the authoritarian nature of the regimes in power and controls on the media allow for little redress, appeal, or questioning of specific decisions. The general climate of favoritism toward some ethnic groups that emerges is unambiguous, even if there is sometimes substantial leeway in the way that the specific tools are used.

For reasons that vary from state to state, the pace and scope of “ethnic redress” has been relatively constrained so far. Though there has been massive migration, outright state-sponsored violence to drive out members of specific ethnic groups generally has not taken place (other than in Azerbaijan). The reasons include an already strong position by some of the dominant ethnic groups in their states, need for the technical skills that reside primarily among the members of ethnic minorities and the consequent desire not to alienate them further, and potential of stronger steps provoking an international reaction that might then weaken these regimes.

Since “ethnic redress” entails essentially zero-sum competition, in general it causes the ethnic minority populations to be disadvantaged relative to the dominant group. However, the ethnic groups that previously held a position of privilege end up being disadvantaged the most (in terms of status loss relative to the dominant group) or they at least bear the brunt of “redress” actions. In the CASC region, and especially in Central Asia, the most privileged group during the Soviet era had been the Russophones; the current policies of “ethnic redress” penalize these groups the most. The term

Russophones is used here because, in the context of the CASC region, Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians formed one supraethnic group that represented the Soviet system in the CASC region (the three ethnic groups were at the apex of the overall Soviet ethnic status stratification map), and Russian was the primary language of members of all three East Slavic groups who lived in the region. On both counts, the Russophones contrasted with the indigenous ethnic groups of the CASC region, who were low on the Soviet stratification map and, especially in Central Asia, often did not have working knowledge of the Russian language.

The above notwithstanding, other (non–East Slavic) ethnic minorities also have been affected by the policies of “ethnic redress.” Members of ethnic groups indigenous to Europe, though not necessarily privileged during the Soviet era, have been affected by the policies because of their European physical features and, in the eyes of the new dominant groups, their association with the power structure run by the Russians and East Slavs generally. If they had once held privileged position in the local power structure, even members of noneponymous ethnic groups indigenous to the CASC region have been the targets of some of the “ethnic redress.”

Although they are not a sufficient cause of conflict, grievances (either real or imagined) are a necessary component of mobilization of a group for political action along ethnic lines. The mobilization may, in turn, lead to conflict. Mobilization depends on several factors, especially catalytic events that provide a spark and a general sense of danger to the group, a leadership that is willing to take risks, and the extent of organization and resources available to the group that can be harnessed by the leadership.<sup>7</sup> These factors have to be measured against the state’s ability to accommodate the demands of the group, to buy it off by extending selective economic benefits, or to simply crack down and repress it. States with political systems that provide representation to aggrieved groups and that have strong conflict-resolution mechanisms can generally accommodate the group’s demands. Wealthy states can afford to limit strife by buying off the group. Repressive regimes can rely on their security apparatus to

---

<sup>7</sup>Thomas S. Szayna (ed.), *Identifying Potential Ethnic Conflict: Application of a Process Model*, Santa Monica, CA: RAND, MR-1188-A, 2000.

raise the risk for anyone participating in a group action and thus heighten the costs of collective action to such a level that mobilization is difficult. All of this simply means that mobilization does not automatically follow the presence of grievances. Some groups may remain quiescent for years despite facing repressive conditions.

Even if mobilization takes place, the outcome does not necessarily have to be conflictual. After tough bargaining, the group in question and the regime may reach accommodation. Finally, if conflict follows mobilization, it may be localized and controllable by the regime. Only in select and rare cases does conflict that sometimes follows mobilization lead to state collapse.

### **KAZAKHSTAN: AN EXAMPLE OF A NATIONALIZING STATE**

Kazakhstan provides an example of the policies pursued by the “nationalizing” states of the CASC region. Using the example of Kazakhstan does not mean in any way that the “ethnic redress” policies in Kazakhstan are more severe than in other CASC states, nor does it mean that ethnic conflict is more likely in Kazakhstan than in other states of Central Asia. Kazakhstan simply presents a case of a Central Asian state that is highly ethnically heterogeneous (more so than other Central Asian states), has experienced some ethnically based violence in the 1990s, and is ruled by an authoritarian regime. The case is meant simply to illustrate a pattern that is present, to some extent, in all of the CASC states.

The changing status of the Russian language has both symbolic implications and substantive consequences for the Russophone population of Kazakhstan. Kazakh laws designate Kazakh as the “state language” and Russian as an “official language.” Though the meaning of these terms is unclear and left undefined, other laws stipulate the phasing in of exclusive use of Kazakh by state employees.<sup>8</sup> What is especially interesting about the Kazakh language laws is that, even ten years after independence, Russian is still the native language of the majority of the citizens of Kazakhstan (since most of

---

<sup>8</sup>William Fierman, “Language and Identity in Kazakhstan: Formulations in Policy Documents 1987–1997,” *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 2 (1998), pp. 171–186.

the non-Kazakh ethnic groups as well as at least 25 percent of Kazakhs use Russian as their first language, and proficiency in Kazakh is limited almost entirely to ethnic Kazakhs). Placing Kazakh in a dominant position in such circumstances and erecting formal and informal barriers to certain types of employment based on proficiency in Kazakh represents a case of establishing a preference system that clearly favors ethnic Kazakhs over members of other ethnic groups. Such preferences and biases lead to the staffing of the governmental bureaucracy almost entirely with Kazakhs. But such a pattern of staffing has far-reaching consequences, since there is little experience in Kazakhstan (and in the entire CASC region) with an impartial state bureaucracy. Indeed, there is an expectation of favoritism along ethnic lines by government employees. Thus, laws such as the Kazakh language law have an impact on career choices and prospects for livelihood of nonethnic Kazakhs in Kazakhstan. But they also establish the potential for estrangement of the non-Kazakh population from the administrative machinery of the state. Moreover, the increasing ethnic bias comes on top of the authoritarian nature of the regime in Kazakhstan, making it even more difficult for non-Kazakhs to have their grievances addressed.

Language policy is but one example of the “ethnic redress” measures. Other steps include the favoring of ethnic Kazakhs in promotion policy in the police and security apparatus, and myriad local-level decisions that affect everyday lives. The overall trend is one of making it more difficult for non-Kazakhs to prosper in Kazakhstan in the future. Survey data and focus group discussions confirm the presence of the belief by the Russophones in Kazakhstan that they face an overall antagonistic climate.<sup>9</sup> The following excerpts from focus group discussions with Russophones in Kazakhstan provide an example of the perception of “ethnic redress”:

Female: We are all literate, and if there were courses we would go and learn Kazakh; but that would not remove the problems. They divided the kindergartens, schools, and workplaces. Factories—Russians; banks—Kazakhs. The language is just an excuse.

---

<sup>9</sup>Lowell Barrington, “Russian Speakers in Ukraine and Kazakhstan: ‘Nationality,’ ‘Population,’ or Neither?” *Post-Soviet Affairs*, Vol. 17, No. 2 (2001), pp. 129–158.

Male: Well, say, a situation arises. . . . Let's take specialists. Someone's higher in qualification, someone's lower. Right? If there is a dilemma, whom to leave, you or a Kazakh? Of course, they will leave the Kazakh.<sup>10</sup>

None of the above is to say that the "ethnic redress" policy is driven by ethnically based hatreds. Indeed, any ethnic tensions are the result rather than the cause of these policies. The policy has causes at the level of political competition and is embedded in the nature of the regime and the political patronage networks in place. In the late Soviet period, two such networks ran Kazakhstan, one mainly composed of Russians or Russophones and the other one of Kazakhs. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Kazakh network emerged as the victor and has used the machinery of the state to place its staff in positions of power and to pass laws that cement its dominant position.<sup>11</sup> Although the motivation is not one of outright ethnic antagonism, the effect of the policies is one of creating new winners and losers who are identified primarily along ethnic lines.

The policies already have had a far-reaching impact on the demographic makeup of Kazakhstan. The clearest indicator of group-level dissatisfaction among the Russophones is their massive out-migration from Kazakhstan, with estimates showing that in 1989–1999, over 25 percent of the Russians (amounting to over 1.5 million people, or over 10 percent of Kazakhstan's population in 1989) left Kazakhstan permanently. The remaining Russophones show a pattern of consolidating their area of settlement. In other words, the Russophones have largely left the already predominantly Kazakh central, southern, and western areas of the country. In areas of dominant Russophone presence (north and northeast), the margin of Russophone dominance has decreased. All this does not mean that the Russophones have migrated primarily because of the state-sponsored ethnic favoritism. Indeed, probably the most important rationale for the out-migration has been the severe economic contraction and the corresponding decline in the standard of living and

---

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., pp. 137–138.

<sup>11</sup>However, it is worth noting that with the clear victory of the Kazakh patronage network, new cleavages, this time along tribal (*zhuz*) lines, appear to have emerged within it. Timothy Edmunds, "Power and Powerlessness in Kazakstani Society: Ethnic Problems in Perspective," *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 17, No. 3 (1998), pp. 463–470.

high unemployment, combined with the fact that economic opportunities opened up to them elsewhere. But the policies of “ethnic redress” undoubtedly have contributed to the outflow, for the outmigration has a clear ethnic character. After all, the policies of preferences for ethnic Kazakhs in conditions of much greater scarcity and competition have dimmed the economic prospects of the Russophone population in Kazakhstan and established greater incentives for them to emigrate.<sup>12</sup> Figure 6.3 shows the extent of the population shift in a graph format.

Another indication of group-level dissatisfaction is the emergence of mainly Russian groups and political movements in northern Kazakhstan that have secessionist goals. While these groups have

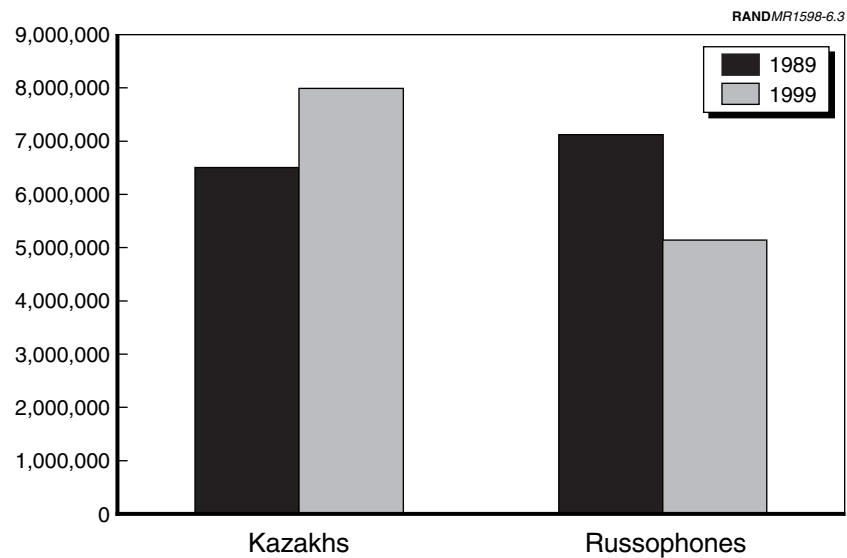


Figure 6.3—Extent of Demographic Shift in Kazakhstan, 1989–1999

<sup>12</sup>Richard H. Rowland, “Urban Population Trends in Kazakhstan During the 1990s,” *Post-Soviet Geography and Economics*, Vol. 40, No. 7 (1999), pp. 519–552. The same pattern applies to Kyrgyzstan and the other Caspian states: see Rafis Abazov, “Economic Migration in Post-Soviet Central Asia: the Case of Kyrgyzstan,” *Post-Communist Economies*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (1999), pp. 237–252.

been minor so far, their small prominence may stem more from the relatively mild “ethnic redress” steps taken by the Kazakhstani regime, media restrictions on information, constraints on their ability to organize, punitive measures by the regime, and lack of support from Russia than from low resonance among the population. In fact, opinion surveys have shown that ethnic Russians in Kazakhstan, especially those in northern Kazakhstan, are more irredentist-oriented than ethnic Russians in other post-Soviet states.<sup>13</sup>

Although the official population statistics need to be considered with a healthy dose of skepticism, the overall trend is clear. Over the course of ten years of Kazakhstan’s independence, ethnic Kazakhs have moved from a position of plurality and rough similarity to the number of Russians in Kazakhstan to one of outright majority. Moreover, the shift has come not from any unusual jump in the Kazakh rate of natural increase or any substantial in-migration, but from a large drop in the number of ethnic Russians and Russophones in general. According to the 1999 Kazakhstani census and the 1989 Soviet census, the Russophones dropped from almost 44 percent of the population of Kazakhstan in 1989 to 34 percent in 1999. Out of 21 ethnic groups that numbered over 10,000 in Kazakhstan in 1999, only the groups indigenous to the CASC region, and particularly to Central Asia, showed demographic growth in the period 1989–1999 (Kazakhs, Uzbeks, Uighurs, Dungans, Kurds, and Tajiks). All other groups showed demographic declines, sometimes at drastic levels.<sup>14</sup> Taking their population in 1989 as 100 percent, Russians declined to 74 percent, Ukrainians to 63 percent, and Belarusians to 63 percent. In absolute numbers, Russians decreased by 1,582,401, Ukrainians by 328,639, and Belarusians by 66,012. While future migration patterns will depend on “push” and “pull” factors, it is reasonable to expect that the longstanding Russian settlements in northern and eastern Kazakhstan will remain. If the “ethnic redress” policies continue, the autochthonized Russophones who reside there may

---

<sup>13</sup>Edwin Poppe and Louk Hagendoorn, “Types of Identification Among Russians in the ‘Near Abroad,’” *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 53, No. 1 (2001), pp. 57–71.

<sup>14</sup>Even taking into account a moderate margin of error in the Kazakhstani 1999 census, the patterns of growth of some groups and reduction of others are unmistakable.

become increasingly alienated and subject to easy mobilization against the government along ethnic lines.

Dissatisfaction among the Russophones, as demonstrated through their level of out-migration, is real, but the interesting question is why the Kazakh regime has pursued relatively mild policies of “ethnic redress” and eschewed policies aiming at a rapid assimilation or expulsion of non-Kazakhs. The reasons include some that are unique to Kazakhstan<sup>15</sup> as well as others that are generally applicable to the CASC region and Central Asia in particular. The specific reasons include a historical relationship between Kazakhs and Russians that is different from Russian relations with other peoples of Central Asia. They include the long period of Russophone settlement in Kazakhstan, the lengthy period of association with Russia, extensive cultural Russification, and Soviet/Russian origins of Kazakh autonomy and statehood. The more general reasons include a generally cautious policy when it comes to discrimination against the Russophones for fear of provoking a reaction from Russia, combined with the ongoing need to trade with Russia and to employ the mainly Russophone managerial and technical elite to help run Kazakhstan’s economy.<sup>16</sup> To a greater or lesser extent, most of these considerations also play a role in the policies of other regimes in the CASC region. Kazakhstan’s contiguity with Russia, the Russophone presence in northern Kazakhstan (in areas bordering Russia), and the frequent voicing of irredentist claims toward Kazakhstan on the part of Russian nationalists (including Alexander Solzhenitsyn) make Russian territorial claims on Kazakhstan a distinct possibility and strengthen the likelihood that the regime will act cautiously so as to avoid a potentially catastrophic Russian counterreaction. When a regime has fewer incentives to act carefully toward noneponymous ethnic groups, as in Uzbekistan, the policies of “ethnic redress” have been more pronounced.

---

<sup>15</sup>Michael Rywkin, “Kazakhstan and the Rest of Central Asia: Fifteen Shades of Difference,” *Nationalities Papers*, Vol. 26, No. 3 (1998), pp. 573–579.

<sup>16</sup>When it comes to the new states’ dependency on the technical expertise that resides primarily with the Russophones, the situation in post-Soviet Central Asia resembles that of postcolonial French and Portuguese Africa. Moshe Gammer, “Post-Soviet Central Asia and Post-Colonial Francophone Africa: Some Associations,” *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 2 (April 2000), pp. 124–149.

Although greater alienation of the Russophones in Kazakhstan is certainly a possibility, there is nothing inevitable about it. The constitution of Kazakhstan adopts a clear territorial (or civil) basis for citizenship rather than an ethnic one. In other words, the constitution refers to the Kazakhstan nation rather than the Kazakh nation (other constitutions in Central Asia are not as clear on this point).<sup>17</sup> As such, the phrasing is more inclusive, and other ethnic groups are not treated in a clearly secondary fashion. The phrasing opens up the possibility that Russophones, despite their non-Kazakh roots, can still develop a Kazakhstani national identity.<sup>18</sup> While no one can fail to recognize that the Kazakhs are “first among equals” in Kazakhstan, the status is better than “first with no others allowed.” Interestingly enough, there are indications of the emergence of a Eurasian identity (understood differently from the way the term is used in Moscow) among the Russophones of northern Kazakhstan. In the specific context of northern Kazakhstan, the term refers to a Slavic-Turkic identity that is indigenous to the area. This may be an example of a coping strategy that includes an identity shift and which may be acceptable to the regime in the context of the development of a Kazakhstani national identity and loyalty. However, to paraphrase Gyanendra Pandey, the question of “can a Russian be a Kazakhstani” is unlikely to be answered in the affirmative as long as the Kazakhstani national identity remains built around Kazakh ethnicity and all its attached symbolism.<sup>19</sup>

The case of Kazakhstan illustrates the overall point that grievances alone are not enough to lead to conflict. Similarly, the presence of

---

<sup>17</sup>Of course, the problem is not one of laws but of the regime respecting the laws. On this score, the record of the Central Asian states (and to a lesser extent, the states of South Caucasus) living up to the principles established in their constitutions is poor. The poor record notwithstanding, there is important symbolism in having clear references to a civic rather than ethnic identity underpinning a country. For some examples of the wide difference between theory and practice regarding constitutions and elections in post-Soviet Central Asia, see Rebecca M. Bichel, “Deconstructing Constitutionalism: The Case of Central Asia and Uzbekistan,” *Interactive Central Asia Resource Project (ICARP) paper*, 1997, [www.icarp.org/publications/pub-deconstruct.html](http://www.icarp.org/publications/pub-deconstruct.html); and John Anderson, “Elections and Political Development in Central Asia,” *The Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, Vol. 13, No. 4 (1997).

<sup>18</sup>Edward A. D. Schatz, “Framing Strategies and Non-Conflict in Multi-Ethnic Kazakhstan,” *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (2000).

<sup>19</sup>Gyanendra Pandey, “Can a Muslim Be an Indian?” *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 41, No. 4 (1999), pp. 608–629.

many ethnic groups in one state, even if some of them have grievances, in no way means that a conflict is either inevitable or even likely. Few countries in the world are more ethnically heterogeneous than Kazakhstan, but despite an authoritarian regime in place and policies (implemented in an arbitrary fashion) that have created a climate that privileges one ethnic group over others, the country has avoided any violent ethnic incidents since the early 1990s. There is nothing that precludes the current state of affairs from lasting for another decade or longer.

### CATALYSTS TO ETHNIC VIOLENCE

Even if all the preconditions for ethnic violence were in place, that still would not mean that such strife is inevitable.<sup>20</sup> For sustained violence to occur, either a group or the state must believe that the opportunity structure allows for a decisive action to eliminate the perceived threat from the other side. Anticipating the occurrence and severity of potential ethnic conflict depends on three main criteria: the type of conflict, the issues in contention, and the extent of external involvement. Each type of conflict is explained below, followed by an examination of the likelihood of each type of conflict in the CASC region.

Concerning the type of ethnic conflict, there are at least three possible patterns. One involves a group or several groups in a coalition against the state. Another involves intergroup conflict, pitting one or more groups against another one or more groups. In this case, the state is involved not as a participant but as a “referee” in the intergroup conflict. Still another involves intergroup conflict but with the state partial to one side. Such a type of conflict is a hybrid of the

---

<sup>20</sup>The analysis here rests on previous RAND work concerning the emergence of ethnic conflict (Szayna, *Identifying Potential Ethnic Conflict*). The three-stage model developed in that work traces the development of ethnic and communitarian strife, beginning with the conditions that may lead to the formation of an ethnic group, then the group’s mobilization for political action, and ultimately its competition with the state. The model integrates diverse insights offered by various theories that focus on separate aspects of ethnic and communitarian strife—such as relative deprivation of the populace or the extent of state capacity—into a comprehensive model that speaks to the entire *process* of ethnic mobilization, from the structural roots of conflict all the way to social reconciliation or state breakdown. The model also allows predictions based on the relative strengths and weaknesses of the specific state and group.

group-versus-state and intergroup strife. In any of the above, either the state or the group or groups in question may be the initiators of conflict.

Issues in contention in ethnic conflict can range widely, from redressing a local grievance to desire for national-level legal changes that involve recognition of group rights, all the way to secession. Some regimes have the accommodative capacity to allow secession without resorting to armed conflict. However, such regimes are exceptions to the general rule that the more far-reaching the goals of the group, the greater the potential for severe conflict. When the group that controls the state is the initiator of conflict, it can bring the machinery of the state against a specific group. There can be any number of specific reasons for a regime to turn to violence in such a manner, though generally the group controlling the state does so as a means of increasing its own power by scapegoating another group or because it perceives some kind of a threat (even if distant) from it.

Armed intrastate conflict almost always tends to bring some form of external involvement. But the extent of such involvement ranges widely, from concern over human suffering, to fear of a spillover of conflict onto neighboring territory, all the way to concern over (or desire for) the breakup of the state undergoing strife. The different types of concern motivate divergent types of support for the group(s) or the state. Geographically distant states that are not great powers generally limit their involvement to issuing diplomatic “notes of concern” and sending humanitarian assistance to the affected area. Neighboring states are always involved in some fashion and are forced to take sides to some extent. These steps may stem from internal motives and cost-benefit assessments, such as in the choice of the extent of resources devoted to policing the border to prevent smuggling of supplies to the warring parties and controlling any cross-border refugee movements. But they have implications for the conflict and tend to draw the neighbors into the conflict in one way or another. Neighboring states, great powers, and regional powers also may have goals that motivate outright active support for one of the warring sides. In some cases, such goals may lead to provision of troops and weapons or even an outright armed intervention on behalf of one side.

The potential for severe conflict, meaning a rapid state collapse and/or a civil war with potential intervention, is greater when a combination of certain types of ethnic conflict is matched with certain group characteristics. Of the three types of ethnic conflict, the group (or groups) versus state conflict (regardless of who initiated it) is potentially the most severe if the group in question encompasses a substantial portion of the population. This is so because in cases of ethnic conflict, lines are drawn along group lines, and even though most of the group's members are not combatants or involved in the strife, they are potential sympathizers and supporters and the state treats them as such. But if the state apparatus suspects much of the population of sympathizing with or supporting armed strife against the state, then it is impossible for that state apparatus (and the state itself) to function effectively. When the state is a "referee" among striving groups or even favors one side, there may be disruptions in civic functioning but not a basic state distrust of a large share of the citizenry.

Concerning the continuum of issues in contention, the higher the level of group goals, the greater the likelihood that the conflict will be severe. Any group advocating secession or administrative changes that bring it more power has more potential for sparking severe conflict because a state generally will resist meeting such demands. Finally, if the group in question has substantial resources available to it (relative to the resources available to the state), then the conflict is likely to be more evenly matched and severe. External support is an important factor here, in that it increases the resource base greatly and can make a group that is otherwise dwarfed in terms of resources into a formidable opponent.

The presence of all of the above elements generally foreshadows a particularly severe conflict, one that has the potential to lead quickly to state breakdown. If these elements are not present, however, ethnic conflict taking other forms can still have problematic regional implications. Other types of ethnic conflict can lead to state failure, though they are likely to do so in a more gradual fashion. Especially when the groups in question have a low level of resources relative to the state, the state is likely to keep them under control for some time. But unless the conflict is brought to an end quickly, the dissolution of "normal" functioning of state structures in areas affected by strife is likely to be accompanied by the growth and then the institutional-

ization of a criminal or “war” economy. In other words, in the absence of state regulating mechanisms, nonstate structures (such as organized crime) are bound to fill the vacuum and adapt to the conflict in order to prosper from it.<sup>21</sup> In the long run, such a development amounts to a dissolution of the state from within.

### POTENTIAL FOR ETHNIC VIOLENCE IN THE CASC REGION

The occurrence of ethnic conflict in one or more CASC states during the next 10–15 years does not necessarily mean that such strife will have clear ramifications for the United States. It may take the form of localized clashes that have little further significance, as was the case with ethnically based riots in western Kazakhstan in the early 1990s. But it is also clear that over the next 10–15 years, a number of groups in CASC might be involved in ethnically related strife that fits the description of a severe conflict. If U.S. forces remain engaged in combat or peace operations in central and western Asia, then the likelihood of the United States being at least affected by—or even drawn into—severe ethnic strife in the CASC region is high. Whether the conflict remains potential or becomes actualized depends on the internal evolution within the specific countries as well as among the major neighboring states. The potential for conflict is explored in more detail below, first examining Central Asia and then South Caucasus. Each subsection is organized by origin of the potential for conflict: intraregional, extraregional, and intrastate.

#### Central Asia

In terms of ethnic conflict that has intraregional origins and implications, Uzbekistan—more specifically, Uzbek aspirations in the Ferghana Valley—is the primary source. The existence of Uzbek extraterritorial enclaves in Kyrgyzstan (administratively part of Uzbekistan’s territory but not contiguous to Uzbekistan), heavy intermixing of Uzbek, Kyrgyz, and Tajik populations, tensions over access to resources between Uzbekistan and the other two countries, “ethnic redress” policies in all three countries, Uzbek ambitions of

---

<sup>21</sup>Hugh Griffiths, “A Political Economy of Ethnic Conflict, Ethno-nationalism and Organised Crime,” *Civil Wars*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (1999).

regional dominance, and a recent record of ethnic riots and tensions in the Ferghana Valley all suggest the potential for strife. The strife could take the form of Uzbekistani assistance for Uzbeks just beyond Uzbekistan's borders (with a goal, for example, of effecting boundary changes that would attach directly to Uzbekistan the Uzbek enclaves in adjoining countries). Historical Uzbek-Tajik rivalry and, to a lesser extent, Uzbek-Kyrgyz historical distrust (combined with a sense of Uzbek superiority), provides ample room for exploitation by leaders who wish to play the "ethnic card."

In terms of ethnic strife with origins from beyond the region, there are at least three potential sources. Depending on the evolution of domestic Russian politics, the millions of Russians and Russophones in northern Kazakhstan could emerge as a secessionist group supported by Russia. Nationalist figures in Russia, including Alexandr Solzhenitsyn, have called for the incorporation of all or part of Kazakhstan into Russia. If the policies of "ethnic redress" in Kazakhstan lose their current cautious edge, the likelihood of Russian secessionism gaining strength in northern Kazakhstan is strong. Russian leadership in Moscow would be hard pressed not to support their fellow Russians.

Political Islam, supported from abroad, is another potential source of potentially severe communal (not strictly ethnic) conflict in Central Asia.<sup>22</sup> Although political Islam is a homegrown threat to the current regimes, the outside support strengthens it greatly.<sup>23</sup> The potential for strife arising from political Islam is most acute in the southern states of the region (Tajikistan, where it has already contributed to a civil war, as well as Uzbekistan and perhaps Turkmenistan), but geography and Soviet-era boundary lines between the states of Central Asia mean that the strife would be difficult to control.

---

<sup>22</sup>An examination of the relationship between ethnic and religious causes of intrastate strife since the end of the Cold War shows a close correlation between the two. Moreover, Islam is more highly correlated than other religions with ethnic conflict. The study involved the Minorities at Risk data set (the most comprehensive data set of minority populations in the world). Jonathan Fox, "The Ethnic-Religious Nexus: The Impact of Religion on Ethnic Conflict," *Civil Wars*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (2000); Jonathan Fox, "Is Islam More Conflict Prone Than Other Religions? A Cross-Sectional Study of Ethnoreligious Conflict," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (2000).

<sup>23</sup>Anna Zelkina, "Islam and Security in the New States of Central Asia: How Genuine Is the Islamic Threat?" *Religion, State and Society*, Vol. 27, No. 3-4 (1999), pp. 355-372.

Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan would also be involved in any strife that centered on the Uzbekistani portion of the Ferghana Valley (as has already happened on one occasion). Complicating matters, the Central Asian regimes have used Islam to further their own nation-building schemes (since Islam is part of the cultural heritage of the indigenous people of the region). But such use of Islam has the potential to backfire, if the officially sanctioned Islam metamorphoses into political Islam at odds with the secular Soviet-legacy regimes in power across the region.<sup>24</sup> As it currently stands, the most likely path to conflict (based on political Islam) would take the form of the current Soviet-legacy regimes in power (or their similarly inclined successors) in Central Asia attempting to suppress an armed movement aimed at establishing Islamic republics. However, such a movement would probably target the “infidels” (citizens of these countries that are members of ethnic groups not indigenous to the region) as well as the “collaborators” from the groups indigenous to Central Asia. While not strictly ethnic, such strife would have an ethnic dimension. The U.S.-led operations in Afghanistan may have diminished the short-term direct threat of Islamist insurgency to the Central Asian states (by denying bases, support, and expertise to the homegrown militants). But the problems that led to the emergence of the Islamist militants still persist. In the medium term and beyond, those problems may spawn renewed efforts at insurgency.

A third source of ethnic strife that has origins from beyond the territory of the five Central Asian states is the spillover of conflict from the ongoing low-level insurgency among the Turkic population of China’s Xinjiang region (or East Turkestan to the Central Asian groups). The Uighurs, one of the groups involved in the strife in Xinjiang, also inhabit eastern Kazakhstan. Although hardly a monolithic group, the Kazakh Uighurs sympathize with their co-ethnics in Xinjiang and support the goal of establishing an independent Uighurstan from a part of Xinjiang.<sup>25</sup> Under certain scenarios, such

---

<sup>24</sup>Shahram Akbarzadeh, “Political Islam in Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan,” *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 20, No. 4 (2001), pp. 451–465.

<sup>25</sup>Sean R. Roberts, “The Uighurs of the Kazakhstan Borderlands: Migration and the Nation,” *Nationalities Papers*, Vol. 26, No. 3 (1998), pp. 511–530; Witt Raczka, “Xinjiang and Its Central Asian Borderlands,” *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 17, No. 3 (1998), pp. 373–407. For more on Xinjiang, see the special issue (devoted to Xinjiang) of *Inner Asia*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (2000).

as weakening central Chinese control over Xinjiang, the support could become more overt and lead to direct involvement of the Uighurs of eastern Kazakhstan. The reaction of Kazakhstan to such an evolution could range from a crackdown on the Uighurs to covert support for their cause. Either way, if the strife from Xinjiang were to spread to Kazakhstan, it would have extraregional ramifications.

Finally, in terms of ethnic conflict that has internal sources (purely within specific Central Asian countries), the Karakalpak of western Uzbekistan are the most likely source of potentially severe ethnic conflict. Karakalpakstan has a special administrative status in Uzbekistan, providing it with a large measure of autonomy. Since such a status leads to the development of local elites that have little attachment to the central government, and since autonomous political structures based on ethnicity have already led to secessions in other post-Communist countries, the special status for Karakalpakstan is a potential source of severe conflict. Under the current conditions of the Uzbek government's strong central authority, such an evolution seems unlikely, but under other evolutionary pathways for Uzbekistan (for example a weakened regime, perhaps because of Islamist insurgency), an opportunity structure that might lead to Karakalpak moves toward secession is plausible.<sup>26</sup>

Toward the upper range of the next 10–15 years, if the current regimes in power in Central Asia show signs of unraveling or even sustained weakening, then the subnational identities that now seem secondary may re-emerge. If that were to happen, then additional sources of potential ethnic conflict could also arise.

### South Caucasus

The primary source of ethnic conflict in South Caucasus with intraregional origins and implications is the import of strife from the northern Caucasus (predominantly Muslim regions that are a part of Russia). Georgia and Azerbaijan stand to be most affected by such strife. The continuing war in Chechnya is the most obvious case for potential spillover into Georgia, with possible Russian intervention

---

<sup>26</sup>Reuel R. Hanks, "A Separate Space? Karakalpak Nationalism and Devolution in Post-Soviet Uzbekistan," *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 52, No. 5 (2000), pp. 939–953.

and/or actions to detach parts of northern Georgia from central control. Other existing disputes that could evolve to sustained armed strife include the following: the unresolved Ingush-Ossetian conflict (especially as it affects Georgia's South Ossetia), an upsurge in tensions between the Karachai-Balkars and Circassians in the western portion of Russia's north Caucasus (affecting Georgia), the potential for Lezgin nationalism spreading from Dagestan to northern Azerbaijan, and the potential for multifaceted ethnic strife in Dagestan (affecting Azerbaijan).<sup>27</sup> Though all of these conflicts involve Russia, they are in fact intra-Caucasus region conflicts that might be exploited by Russia. The conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia over Nagorno-Karabakh is not discussed here, since it is essentially an interstate conflict at this stage (though it evolved from an ethnic conflict internal to Azerbaijan) and has to be resolved at the interstate level.

In terms of ethnic strife with origins from beyond the region, further Russian attempts (beyond Abkhazia) aimed at fragmenting Georgia along ethnic lines are the most plausible source of potential severe ethnic conflict in South Caucasus. Given the presence of many ethnic groups and subethnic identities in Georgia, a plausible list of options in the next 10–15 years is long and includes Ossetia, Adjara, or even support for Armenian designs on the Armenian-inhabited parts of Georgia that are contiguous to Armenia.

Political Islam does not figure as a major potential source of communal strife in South Caucasus in the near term.<sup>28</sup> It pertains only to Azerbaijan and only in the medium or longer time frame (and depends on the political and economic evolution in Azerbaijan over the next decade). Under certain scenarios of the Islamic parties taking power in Turkey, political Islam also would become a more powerful force in Azerbaijan. For political Islam to become a factor in

---

<sup>27</sup>Svante E. Cornell, "Conflicts in the North Caucasus," *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 17, No. 3 (1998), pp. 409–441; Robert Bruce Ware and Enver Kisriev, "The Islamic Factor in Dagestan," *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (2000), pp. 235–252; Vladimir Bobrovnikov, "Muslim Nationalism in the Post-Soviet Caucasus: The Dagestani Case," *Caucasian Regional Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (1999), <http://poli.vub.ac.be/publi/crs/eng/0401-01.htm>.

<sup>28</sup>It is important to note that religion has played a limited role in the conflicts in the Caucasus (north and south) since 1991. Svante E. Cornell, "Religion as a Factor in Caucasian Conflicts," *Civil Wars*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (1998).

Ajaria (an area inhabited by ethnic Georgians who are Muslims) in the short or medium term is currently beyond the plausible, since ethnic Georgian identity is stronger than any subgroup sectarian attachments and the Ajars tend to secular.

Finally, in terms of ethnic conflict that has internal sources (purely within specific countries of South Caucasus), the multitude of internal fissures in Georgia is the clearest and most immediate potential source of severe conflict. Whether the conflict comes about depends greatly on the institutionalization of rule of the current regime over all of Georgia. Under certain scenarios, especially centering around political succession, the internal fissures may widen. Although Georgia is the weakest of the three states of South Caucasus in terms of internal fissures, should the current regime in Azerbaijan show signs of unraveling, then over the next 10–15 years, subnational identities that now seem secondary in Azerbaijan may re-emerge.

## **FINAL OBSERVATIONS**

Given the multitude of plausible scenarios for further ethnic conflict to arise in the CASC region over the next 10–15 years and the fact that conditions that can lead to these conflicts have been in place for much of the 1990s, the important question is why conflict has been relatively absent in the past decade. The persistence of authoritarian Soviet-legacy regimes in all the countries of the region, and particularly in Central Asia, provides one explanation. All of the regimes have pursued policies of “ethnic redress” but, for reasons of their own, have not followed drastic measures in implementing them. Had they done so, the likelihood of mobilization of the affected groups against these regimes would have been higher. The relative risk aversion and caution toward ethnic minorities shown so far by the regimes of the CASC region are not a given but a specific outcome based on domestic political calculations as well as a cost-benefit assessment of more assertive policies. As Soviet era recedes further into the past and the cumulative effects of a decade of “ethnic redress” become apparent, the calculations are bound to change (either toward even greater acquiescence or toward ethnic assertiveness). In the near term, the regime in Uzbekistan is the most likely to shift to more assertive policies, a move that will have an ethnic di-

mension and regional implications. In the longer term, potential exists for such a shift in all the states of the CASC region.

Would mobilization of an ethnic group for political action or even ethnically based strife in one country lead to mobilizations or conflict in other countries of the CASC region? The answer varies greatly, depending on the country and the group. At minimum, the potential for spread of ethnic assertiveness or strife between South Caucasus and Central Asia is low. Any such contagion is likely to be within the specific subregion. In Central Asia, strife in the Ferghana Valley is unlikely to be contained to one country because of the way ethnic groups are intermixed and the manner in which the borders were drawn.<sup>29</sup> Political Islam is also unlikely to be limited to just one country. But beyond these easy observations, the situation is too murky and too scenario-dependent to predict the potential for spread of conflict with any degree of confidence.

One thing is clear, however. If an ethnic group were to mobilize for political action in the CASC region under the political and economic conditions approximating the situation today, violence is likely to follow. Using the framework for anticipating ethnic conflict developed by RAND,<sup>30</sup> the types of states prevalent in the CASC region are prone to resort to violence in response to mobilization by an ethnic group for political action. Using the terminology of that work, the CASC states fit three of the eight state types (G, D, or F).<sup>31</sup> These are

---

<sup>29</sup>The republican borders of the Central Asian republics date back to the 1930s and were made to ensure Moscow's control over the region rather than to achieve the most "fair" solution to ethnic-territorial delimitation, one that would include considerations of historical pattern of settlement or economic links. Thus, large numbers of ethnic Tajiks and the historically Tajik cities of Samarkand and Bukhara ended up in Uzbekistan. Conversely, areas historically associated more with Uzbeks, like the Khujand region (overlooking the Ferghana Valley), became part of Tajikistan even though the region remained more linked economically to Uzbekistan than to the rest of Tajikistan. In fact, intracountry surface communication between the Khujand region and the rest of Tajikistan is impossible for half the year because of the Turkestan, Zarafshon, and Hisor mountain ranges, whereas transportation links with Uzbekistan are extensive and operational year-round. Though not as egregious, similar problems exist in other Central Asian states and, to a smaller extent, in South Caucasus.

<sup>30</sup>Szayna, *Identifying Potential Ethnic Conflict: Application of a Process Model*.

<sup>31</sup>The Caspian states are generally type G (strong leadership, weak fiscal position, exclusive regime) or, arguably (and depending on the relative position of the group in

the three most violence-prone of all the state types. The conclusion makes sense intuitively, in that the states of the CASC region do not have the institutions in place to accommodate group demands easily; they are developing states and cannot buy off dissatisfied groups with economic benefits, but they generally have sizable coercive apparatus in place. Moreover, the coercive apparatus are more suitable for domestic use than for external conflict. The above does not mean that ethnic conflict is a given in the CASC region, since mobilization of an ethnic group for political action may not take place even if the group in question has real and numerous grievances. But it does mean that mobilization of an ethnic group is likely to end up with the state using violence against it.

How the U.S.-led military operations in Afghanistan will affect the potential for ethnic conflict in the CASC region, and especially Central Asia, remains unclear. At a minimum, the ongoing military operations have made forecasts even more difficult, and any predictions beyond the short term are downright foolhardy because of so many unknowns. Suffice it to say that conditions continue to be in place for severe ethnic strife, though there is nothing inevitable about such strife. Any assessment of the potential for ethnically based conflict depends greatly on the situation in Afghanistan (and the extent and length of time of any U.S. military presence in central and southwestern Asia), the extent to which the conflict may spread to other parts of southwestern Asia, the scope of international efforts to assist the CASC states in dealing with the fallout from the conflict, and the overall long-term impact of the conflict on the appeal of fundamentalist Islamist ideas to the Muslim populations of the states of the CASC region. The latter especially deserves to be monitored closely, both in a regional sense as well as in terms of impact on specific ethnic groups (and demographic subgroups within them) within the region.

---

question), types D (strong leadership, strong fiscal position, exclusive regime) or F (weak leadership, weak fiscal position, exclusive regime).